

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

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“COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM”	361
WHAT IS MAN?	365
WHAT IS TRUE?	372
TRUE BASIS FOR SOCIAL WORK	377
OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOUL-EXPRESSION	382
KARMA—THE DOCTRINE OF RESPONSIBILITY	385
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	390

“COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM”

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Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

—*Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (vi, 14-17)

THE ordinary man is an idolater. Idols are not only of stone, mud, metal or stained glass. Customs and habits, social shibboleths and religious dogmas and a hundred other varieties of “idols” exist, and bowing down to these frustrates the soul. Man generally lives according to the routine established for him; unconsciously to himself he is a slave to family, communal, religious, national and racial customs and taboos. Instead of seeking a rational basis for his actions, he is guided by what is done and what is not done in his own set or circle. The aspirant who earnestly resolves to emancipate himself from slavery to the lower self and daily attempts

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to purify himself, to give up non-rational living and to be guided in all circumstances by philosophical principles only, is often dubbed “queer.”

His enemies are twofold: his own innate weaknesses, and his affinities with relatives and friends, who would persuade him to be “normal and natural,” *i.e.*, to be as they are. The second enemies strengthen the first; hence the advice of the Initiate Paul to “come out from among them, and be...separate.”

This separation in thought is not from the souls of people but from the tendencies and weaknesses inherent in them. The aspirant must learn to distinguish between the evil-doer and the evil act, between his friends and kin and their wrong tendencies. The people we contact have to be helped and served and not to be condemned. But we cannot help and serve them by continuing in the ways of personality, prides and prejudices. By ourselves rising above these limitations we make it easier for our Karmic affinities also to rise.

What are those tendencies which we must overcome in ourselves and which demand that we come out from among those surcharged with them? From what shall we abstain because it is right to abstain?

The religious tendencies which we must shake off include (a) looking outside ourselves for salvation; (b) belief in the efficacy of any priest or ceremony to purify or to elevate us; (c) fancying that we can evade the consequences of our acts; and (d) the false assumption that we are inherently weak and sinful creatures instead of Gods in the making.

Modern science has rendered yeoman service in freeing many minds from thralldom to popes and priests everywhere; large numbers have awakened to the mental and spiritual exploitation to which they had been subject. But while science has helped in overthrowing religious exploitation, it has acquired in some measure the vice of its conquered enemy—the vice of dictating to and exploiting the human mind. In the name of science numerous superstitions and malpractices are being fostered. All the same, the spirit of enquiry and of quest is energizing an increasing number

of men and women.

The social tendencies to be transcended by the aspirant include (a) habits of life which cannot meet the challenge, “Is it necessary?”; (b) indiscriminating acquiescence in what is expected of him by his family and friends, his club and his social set; (c) customs which mean nothing; and (d) partisanship to his own caste or class.

Prominent among the wrong national tendencies to be overcome is unreasoning patriotism—better called chauvinism—which champions the interests of one's own country, irrespective of the demands of right and justice. Political exploitation is only one remove from religious exploitation and there is little to choose between a pope and a dictator.

“Evil communications corrupt good manners,” and vice grows by being fed. The aspirant cannot afford to trifle with his own discipline to suit the idiosyncrasies of others or to placate friends and kin. Neither priest nor politician, neither financial magnate nor social welfare worker, can really help him; but he can gain for himself the impetus to move to the region of the righteous. If he waits for his own regeneration till legislators act and society undergoes a change and nations rise in morals and capacity, he will wait till the day of doom. One by one, men have freed themselves from outside domination as also from the domination of the senses; one by one, they have taken the Kingdom of Heaven by violence, and have enjoyed the freedom of thought, will and action. And what men have done in the past we too can do today. The needed inspiration can be found in such words as these:

Even if thou wert the greatest of all sinners, thou shalt be able to cross over all sins in the bark of spiritual knowledge. (*The Bhagavad-Gita*, IV, 36)

Shun ignorance, and likewise shun illusion. Avert thy face from world deceptions; mistrust thy senses, they are false. But within thy body—the shrine of thy sensations—seek in the Impersonal for the “Eternal Man”; and having sought him out, look inward: thou art Buddha....Remember, thou that fightest for man's liberation, each failure is success, and each sincere attempt wins its reward in time. (*The Voice of the Silence*, pp.

28-29, 68-69)

Within you is the light of the world—the only light that can be shed upon the Path. If you are unable to perceive it within you, it is useless to look for it elsewhere. (*Light on the Path*, pp. 3-4)

What does it mean to look within? Within man are good and evil, God and Devil, Buddha and Mara. How can a man looking within and finding virtue and vice, ambition and aspiration, jostling each other, learn infallibly to be directed by the noble and not to be insidiously influenced by the ignoble? There is one and only one way—by acquiring right knowledge, not blindly accepting that knowledge but calmly studying and considering it, and then applying it to our own affairs. Before we come upon the Divine in us, Krishna-Buddha-Christos, there is work to be done.

People begin at the wrong end. In this, our nuclear age, on everybody's lips are the sincere words: "We must save our world." It is not acknowledged in full measure that saving the world implies saving ourselves. The issue has not been raised, save by a few: "What is wrong with us as individuals?" Selfishness manifesting in varied forms divides and subdivides the human family and causes all our woes. We live by the law of division and disintegration. Political rivalries, social degradation, religious superstition, scientific puzzlement—these are present now as before, however differently disguised.

That which is the forlorn hope for collective humanity is not forlorn for the man of courage who resolves aright, who pulls himself out of the milling, aimless crowd, and takes opportunity in his hands.

PATIENCE is bearing the burden of life cheerfully.

—*Bhagwat Purana*

WHAT IS MAN?

EVERYWHERE Nature is alive. In all her kingdoms the Light of Spirit or God abides, as it does in the heart of every man, woman and child.

While it is true that the Spirit of God moulds the mineral, beautifies the vegetable, energizes the animal, in the human being it manifests in a special way. In old Asiatic Psychology and in modern Theosophy, the special relation between God and Man is portrayed. We are taught that God is the Great Universe, the Macrocosm; and Man, the small universe, the Microcosm. Man is a miniature copy of the Great Universe of Light and Space and Motion and Time. In the mighty Universe, composed of Spirit, Intelligence and Matter, a variety of powers, known and unknown, manifest themselves. But in man alone all the powers of Nature are present.

This is an important point to understand, and perhaps it will make it easy for us if we use an analogy. Take a photograph: a photograph is an exact copy of the man. However small the photograph, it enables us to recognize the person whose photograph it is. So with man. Man himself is a copy of the Universe, the great Cosmos. But then one might ask: What is the difference between man and God? To understand the difference, take another analogy. Take a seed—the lotus seed, for example. The seed is a living photograph of the lotus in the sense that all the powers and the beauty of the lotus are latent in the seed. The seed, when fully fructified, becomes the lotus; the man, when fully unfolded, becomes God. The seed is the lotus in latency; man is God in latency. Therefore is God called in mystical language the Heavenly Man. In Jewish mysticism man's name is Adam and God's name is Adam Kadmon. It is the same conception which is brought out in the words—*Purusha* and *Uttama Purusha*, *Atma* and *Maha-Atma* in Hindu mysticism.

In other kingdoms of Nature, some of her powers are fructifying, but in man the whole of Nature is fructifying. For

instance, in the animal kingdom there is no basis, no seed for reason and compassion to fructify; in the mineral kingdom there is no basis, no seed for passions and feelings to fructify. But in man, every aspect and every power of Nature can fructify. Therefore we say that man is the small universe. Man is Divinity in latency.

That brings us to the next point: the various compounded forms of Life in the Universe are made up of different aspects of Nature. For example, an animal is composed of certain aspects of Nature; there is matter, there is vitality, there is the assemblage of feelings and appetites; whatever form of life we examine and analyse, we find that it is made up of certain constituents which exist in Nature. Just as our own physical body is made up of oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, sulphate, phosphorus and so on, and these are derived from the ocean of matter, so also all our other constituents. The human body is derived from matter; when it disintegrates, its constituents go back to the ocean of matter. Similarly, our energy, vitality, or *Prana*, is derived from the ocean of vitality or *Jiva*; when the body disintegrates, human *Prana* goes back to the ocean of *Jiva*. Similarly, the human mind is derived from the Divine Mind, *Mahat*. Thus the view which Theosophy gives of man is that he is a highly complex being, and is made up of derivatives from the great spiritual and material kingdoms of Life. There is not a single constituent of our being which is not derived from the womb of Mother Nature. Human spirit and soul, human mind and intelligence, human feelings and body, are all derived from the Living Universe called God or Deity.

That is the first answer to the question: What is Man? Man is a compound. Karma and evolution have

“centred in our make such strange extremes
From different Natures marvellously mixed.”

The idea that we need to grasp is that between each one of us and great Mother Nature there is a most intimate relationship. Just as through our physical bodily senses and organs we are in constant touch with the material universe, so through our mind and soul and spirit we are in constant touch with the divine mind, divine

soul and divine spirit. Recognize this and the rationale of *Yoga*, union between man and god, is obtained. Keep that basic idea and principle in mind, and you will have a key to numerous mysteries of Nature and Deity.

We can well begin our study of man's constitution by first looking at him in a simple way as a triad of spirit, soul and body. In his first aspect, man is a spiritual being; as soul, man is the self-conscious thinker with a will that is free; and the body represents the garment or vehicle of the soul. These are the three aspects of the one man, and psychologically or philosophically, no study is complete till all three are taken into account. Modern science fails to understand or to explain man because its conception of the soul is wrong. Modern philosophy fails because its view of the relationship of spirit and soul is wrong. Modern psychology borrows the faults both of science and of philosophy and has become dangerous, for it has begun to advise practically on subjects of which its knowledge is most partial and fragmentary. In orthodox religions, confusion prevails and no knowledge is available in church or mosque or temple about spirit, soul and body. Theosophy possesses the knowledge and offers it to its student. It has answers for the inquirer.

Man is triune because God or Nature is triune. Man-spirit proves God-spirit; human mind is able to fathom Divine Mind. This intimate relation between God and Man should never be overlooked.

Bearing this fundamental principle in mind, let us begin at man's lowest aspect, the body, with which we are all familiar. In studying the human body, we are not studying something simple. Any medical student, any ordinary reader of books on physiology and anatomy, knows that the body is a highly complex organization. Occult physiology reveals it to be still more complex. The most important function of the human body is performed by the senses. Esoteric Philosophy looks upon the body as the dwelling of the soul; our senses, eyes, ears, nose are doors and windows through which the soul contacts the outside world, receiving impressions

from without and responding to them; the brain is the final station in the body where sense-impressions are gathered; also, the brain is the station at which soul-expressions come and from there are distributed to the organs of action.

Next, there is the invisible foundation on which the very stability and existence of the physical body depend. In Theosophy it is called the Astral Body. It is composed of substance which is magnetic in essence; and because that substance is radiant, shining like starry matter, the term astral or starry was used. It is not a new invention of modern Theosophy; in Hindu psycho-philosophy it has definite names. Because as foundation it gives a design to the physical body, it is called design body or *Linga Sharira*. As it is composed of subtle matter, it is named *Sukshma Sharira*, the subtle body. This is a very important constituent; it plays a prominent part in the process of death, and during the life of the body its condition determines the health of the body, for one of its primary functions is that it acts as the channel for the absorption and flow of vitality, energy, or *Prana*. One of the names of the Astral Body, according to Vedantic classification, is *Pranamaya Kosha*, the sheath of *Prana* or vitality.

Just as physical air surrounds us on every side, so there is the ocean of vitality which surrounds us, though it too, like the air, is not visible. We breathe the air, so also we absorb *Prana* from the vast ocean of life. This *Prana* circulates in the Astral Body, keeping it alive, bringing it health. All through the life of the body it circulates, functioning in one kind of way; at death, its function changes; in the corpse it functions differently, disintegrating it. This *Prana* or vitality is Life-Energy in more than one sense. In conjunction with the Astral Body it also becomes the basis and channel for the next constituent of man, called desires and passions, *Kama*.

Kama-desire is also known as *tanha*, the thirst or longing for life. It is also called *trishna*, the force of love. *Kama* may be good or bad. The root desire is the desire for separated existence. Look for a moment at the animal kingdom: the desire for life as a

separated unit results in the desire to know itself as a separate unit. In the vegetable kingdom, *tanha* or desire manifests in a corporate manner. There is no separate desire for life in the flower, in the branch, in the bark. The desire for life is in the whole tree. But in the animal kingdom that desire is so formulated that there is consciousness of life. The dog and the cat *feel* the consciousness of life as separate entities; but the dog and the cat do not *know* themselves as separate entities. Man does. Therefore we say the root desire of man is desire for separated existence in self-consciousness. This is called *Ahankara*, egoity, the root of egotism and pride. This power of desire to perpetuate *Ahankara* is derived from the next higher principle called *Manas*—the human soul.

Manas is the Thinker, who is self-conscious. Because of *Manas*, man is able to say, I am so-and-so; without it, the dog or the cat is not able to give itself a name or to know itself. *Manas* is the Human Soul and its power to think and to reason is known as mind. By the aid of mind, the soul expresses itself, the thinker is able to think its own thoughts. But Theosophy says that man, as thinker, has two aspects—incarnate, in the flesh or in the body; and discarnate, or outside the body. As human soul, we are not fully incarnate. What is in the body is but a portion or fragment of the highest aspect of man. The self-conscious Intelligence, *Manas*, is a ray of the Sun of Spirit, our whole Self. That pure Spirit is our Higher Self—*Atma-Buddhi*. The human soul, *Manas*, self-conscious intelligence, is attached to *Atma-Buddhi*; so in our highest aspect we are *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*; in our incarnate aspect we are a fragment or portion of *Manas*.

Now we have the whole picture of man: look at it from above downwards. In our highest aspect we are Spirit—*Atma, Buddhi, Manas*. Only a portion of *Manas* incarnates in the body; this is joined, so to speak, with *Kama*, the desire for separated existence, which affects the *Prana* or vitality of the Astral Body, which is the foundation of the physical body.

What is the good of knowing all this? Can any of this knowledge make us better men or women, more efficient, more

virtuous, of a more beautiful character? What practical application can we make of our study?

Let us look at ourselves: What are we? We, ourselves, are the human soul, *Manas*, the thinker. As *Manas*, we are linked with our own Father in Heaven—*Atma-Buddhi-Manas*. Our own Divine or Higher Self broods over us, can be invoked by us. It has knowledge and power which we can utilize, but we must learn the art or the technique of coming in close and active co-operation with our Higher Self. This we do not know at present, because the incarnated soul, *Manas*, is affected and coloured and even controlled by the root desire for a separated existence. From that root desire spring many different desires, good and bad. Love and lust, affection and aversion, pride and patience and a dozen others arise from the root of egoity or *Ahankara*. They press into their service—or to be more accurate, it is *Ahankara* that presses into the service of its progeny—the power of thought or mind, which is the power of *Manas*, the soul. Thus *Kama* drags and exploits and prostitutes the power of thought and ideation, and these desires, aided by thought-power, become alive, vital, energetic, because *Kama-Manas* uses *Prana*. *Manas* is taken hold of by desires and becomes *Kama-Manas*, and the creatures of *Kama-Manas* become alive by the aid of *Prana*, and they all dwell in the Astral Body, *Linga Sharira*, or *Pranamaya Kosha*. These creatures or progeny of *Ahankara* are forces called elementals, known in Sanskrit under the name of *Devatas*. So *Prana*, which is permeated by *Kamic* or *Tanhaic* elementals, good, bad or indifferent, circulates in and emanates from the Astral Body.

Our Astral Body throws out fluid just like our physical body throws out perspiration. The magnetism of a person is the fluid or emanation manufactured in the Astral Body and which goes into his senses and organs and then flows out or emanates from every pore of the body. The health or disease of our physical body depend upon our magnetism; the dull appearance or the bright appearance of the body is entirely because of magnetism—this astral fluid. Not only dull or bright appearance but dull or bright mood is also the result of magnetism. When people say, so-and-so has a magnetic

personality, they hardly know what they are talking about, but it is the result of this astral fluid which has in it thoughts and feelings. Saintly people have haloes, it is said, and there is *Tejas* or *Ojas* surrounding such people. All human beings have their invisible flow of magnetism, but in all it does not shine forth as it does in saints and sages. Evil and wicked men and women emanate dull, dark, foul magnetism. Just as there is tone to our human voice, and lustre to our human eyes, so also there is a smell to the human personality. That tone of voice, that lustre of eyes, that smell of personality, are the results of magnetism.

Theosophy teaches how to purify magnetism. Ordinary hygiene and sanitation teach us how to be clean physically; occult hygiene and sanitation bring us the knowledge of how to make our dull magnetism radiant, how to handle our moods which affect that magnetism. Numerous diseases of the body are rooted in the magnetism of the Astral Body, and this fact is not known to medical science. Injections and serums, certain foods and drinks, befool the magnetism; but worse still are our thoughts and feelings.

In ancient days, prophets and sages taught the masses how to keep their own magnetism pure. When the true Religion of Life was followed, men and women were taught the technique of remaining pure—not only clean in body, but also pure in magnetism. Certain rites were prescribed, but they were intelligently performed by each one to retain his or her pure magnetism. Today, all religions have become corrupted and true knowledge is forgotten. Modern science teaches us to take care of the body, but its knowledge is partial and in Theosophy we come across the knowledge of inner purification which teaches us to emanate for the benefit of others that Light whose source is in the Soul. Within us is the Light of the Fire, but it is obscured by the winds of petty thoughts and is almost put out by the torrent of desires.

WHAT IS TRUE?

“WHY do you not help me?” cries the disturbed mind of the youth of today. “Help me to progress and to know the meaning of life.”

Young men and women today hold many mistaken notions, however much they may think they are after self-expression and individualism. Having discarded the dogmas and taboos of the past, they are at the stage when they are trying to swim in a raging torrent, while refusing to learn how to swim, even though there are those who can help them. They cannot be helped unless they are willing to listen.

The whole trouble stems from non-recognition of the purpose of life as explained, age after age, by the philosophers of the past. The youth of today believe that no one in the past has answered the questions they ask, and hope that someone in the present may be able to answer them, or that they will be able to find out for themselves. They stand in their own light, while seeking light to illuminate the present and the future.

Truth eludes them partly because they are not content with mere hearsay and require proof as to what is true; and proof today means something which can be demonstrated in the laboratory, something which can be seen with the eyes, or heard with the ears, or felt by the touch. Our youth refuse to acknowledge that to understand anything is proof enough to him who understands. Understanding is a faculty of the mind and functions either through the senses, or through mental perception, or, higher still, through spiritual-mental perception.

Youth, by mind-changing drugs, are trying to get out of the realm of the physical senses into a different world. The mystic tries to get out of the physical sense world into another world, not of the senses with objects to perceive, but of the essence of things, beyond form, ideas themselves ceasing to exist in the flood of mystic vision. Can we deny that some have had these visions? Do we know whether they are true or not? Can we prove them?

Here is the most important thing for all of us to grasp; we can

neither prove they are wrong, nor prove they are true. Denial is a sign of the times. The youth of today deny all things which cannot be proved by sense-perception. Let us look at some of the things that are denied.

We deny *reincarnation* because it cannot be proved to us. Why not deny that *we have only one life on earth*, for this, too, cannot be proved to us?

We deny that there is a *subtle form* of matter beyond the reach of material instruments, or of the senses, or of feelings. Why not deny that there is *no such subtle form*, because this also cannot be proved to us? Many things are proved today that were denied yesterday.

We deny the *spirit* in man. Why not deny that there is *no spirit* in man, for that, too, cannot be proved to our satisfaction?

We deny that the *words* of great Teachers and Philosophers are true. Why not deny that *they are untrue*? Unless we experiment with them, we cannot prove whether they are true or not, and until we have as great a knowledge as they had, how can we prove either way?

We deny that there is *God*. Why not deny that there is *no God*? Neither proposition can be proved in the laboratory or by the physical senses.

Only logic and the innate feeling common to all human beings can take the middle position and say: “*I do not know.*”

This difficulty has always been with us, and the cry in the Christian scripture, “Lord, help thou mine unbelief,” is a pointer to us, provided we do not fall into the error of taking anything *on trust*. To prove anything we must use the laboratory of our own nature.

It would be worth while if the youth of today would take a good look at the ethics of Theosophy, which are the same as the ethics of Jesus, of Buddha, and of every other great Teacher and Philosopher.

The most important moral precept given to us by ancient Buddhism and reiterated by Theosophy is: Stop living the life of

pleasure. Live not for yourself; *live to benefit mankind*. To do this, knowledge is necessary.

Put very simply, we have the *Panchasila* of the Buddhist, the Sermon on the Mount of Jesus, the Code of Zoroaster, the teachings of Pythagoras. These are ethical principles which all can apply.

The first important precept given to us is: “Kill not.” Study this. What does it mean? Does it mean we can go hunting or fishing, and kill for pleasure, or even for food? Does it mean we can kill “pests”? Does it mean we can use insecticides and poisonous sprays? Or does it mean that we must help Nature to keep her balance by not giving opportunities for the proliferation of rats, insects, etc.? Not by various processes of extermination but by cleanliness can we help Nature and Nature can help us. There is another form of killing—the killing of reputations. Do we hurt others by slander, harsh words and ill feeling? Non-injury to others has many ramifications.

“Steal not.” This, too, covers all forms of stealing, the theft of worldly possessions being the least. There is the stealing of another's job, of another's ideas, etc. Let us remember to say, when we have lost a material possession, “I have returned it,” for law works, and whatever we take that does not belong to us, we shall in some life or another have to return.

“Bear not false witness.” This, too, covers many aspects of life. To slander others, to make excuses for oneself, to psychologize people by advertisements, etc., to deny without a reason what others say—all this, as well as the telling of untruths in business or personal life, comes under this head.

“Covet not.” Is not the mass of advertisements and films making us covet the life of others, tempting us to act as they do, to possess what they possess? What are wars—not all wars, but most—caused by save covetousness for the land or possessions of others?

“Lust not.” Here is a field in which more damage is being done today than perhaps at any time, for the youth are being taught that lust is a physical necessity. Impurity is lust, wrath and delusion,

said the Buddha. We are blindly following those who delude us, and we also delude ourselves. People follow what they want to follow for the gratification of sense-life. But the toll will have to be paid.

Why is this so? Because law rules every aspect of the universe, not just the physical aspect. Causes produce effects in every department of life, and effects become future causes. There is no possible escape from this. All is governed by LAW. The Buddha made that one of his prime teachings. Learn and obey the law; that is all we have to do.

We hear of moral education in schools. The ethics of all religions and philosophies can be taught in story form as also be given as laws. These laws were not produced by a “god” any more than they were found out in the laboratory, but they are the means by which Nature works. We teach children the mathematical tables, the rules of grammar. Why not also the rules of conduct so that we can live more harmoniously together?

By teaching ethics, not as a superimposed set of rules, but as statements of law which have to be learnt and applied; by teaching that man has his life in his own hands and must decide for himself what his future is to be, we shall turn out a new generation of thinking beings consciously ruling their lives for the good of the whole. A real civic sense must be cultivated; from that will come a national sense, and then an international sense. But all this needs *cultivating*, and here is where education can help. True education should give the youth the capacity to live their lives to the best of their ability and to learn the nature and purpose of the universe and of man; the capacity to understand all creatures and know the relationship that exists between every aspect of Nature, known and unknown.

Have the older students of Theosophy taken their responsibility seriously? Have they taken to heart the words of the Master, that what constitutes the true Theosophist is “the self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead on the right path our neighbour, to cause to benefit by it as many of our fellow creatures as we possibly

can”? Have they spoken to the “awakening Spirit of Humanity, to the human Spirit and the Spirit in man”? Have they taken to heart the suggestion that the great mission of true Theosophy is, “first, the working out of clear unequivocal conceptions of ethic ideas and duties, such as shall best and most fully satisfy the right and altruistic feelings in men; and second, the modelling of these conceptions for their adaptation into such forms of daily life, as shall offer a field where they may be applied with most equitableness”?

It is pointed out that

our age...is inferior in Wisdom to any other, because it professes, more visibly every day, *contempt for truth and justice, without which there can be no Wisdom*. Because our civilization, built up of shams and appearances, is at best like a beautiful green morass, a bog, spread over a deadly quagmire. Because this century of culture and worship of matter...has no encouragement to offer to morality; no prize to give for any moral virtue....Because it encourages, legally and tacitly, vice under every form, from the sale of whiskey down to forced prostitution and theft brought on by starvation wages, Shylock-like exactions, rents, and other comforts of our cultured period. (“The Dual Aspect of Wisdom”: *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 32*, p. 2)

It is time we did some stocktaking of our own (not other people's) shortcomings. And let each one of us say “*mea culpa*.” That way we may change our criticisms of others into active work on and by ourselves.

IF we mean by peace slavery, then nothing is more wretched. Peace is the harmony of strong souls, not the fightless impotence of slaves.

—SPINOZA

TRUE BASIS FOR SOCIAL WORK

SOCIAL work is the outgoing impulse to help the less fortunate—either by alms-giving or through other forms of service—and seems to have its basis in the scriptural injunctions, which advocate feeding the poor, care for the sick and the old, etc.

Madame Blavatsky writes in *Five Messages* (p. 8): “Theosophists are of necessity the friends of all those movements in the world, whether intellectual or simply practical, for the amelioration of the condition of mankind.” But we must not lose sight of the fact that man is not just his body, nor just his mind but something more. Instead of laying emphasis on mere material charity—providing food, clothing and shelter, or amenities for the diseased—more importance must be given to alleviating mental and moral suffering. Mr. Judge observes that the physical woes of the race are only skin-deep; the real cause of these woes is mental and moral.

It has been observed that in the last few years, the usual problems of poverty, lower life expectancy, malnutrition, etc., are not so much a cause for concern as mental and moral problems. Today, a social worker is more concerned about helping people combat loneliness, competition, stress, etc.

Today, the majority of people going to a psychiatrist are not “sick” in a conventional sense. According to Dr. Erich Fromm, “They complain of being depressed, having insomnia, being unhappy in their marriages, not enjoying their work, and any number of similar problems.” What they really suffer from, says Dr. Fromm, “is an inner deadness. They live in the midst of plenty and are joyless.” Another psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl, writes in his book, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, that of the students attempting suicide at an American University, 85 percent did so because life seemed meaningless. He writes:

This happens, in the midst of affluent societies and in the midst of welfare states! For too long we have been dreaming a dream from which we are now waking up; the dream that if we

just improve the socio-economic situation of people, everything will be okay, people will become happy. The truth is that as the struggle for survival has subsided, the question has emerged: survival for what? Ever more people today have the means to live, but no meaning to live for.

Madame Blavatsky observes that “true evolution teaches us that by altering the surroundings of the organism, we can alter and improve the organism;” but this is not the complete solution. In “Let Every Man Prove His Own Work” (U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 31), she shows that philanthropists who sought to make people happy by improving their physical conditions or external environment—by building homes, starting soup kitchens, etc.—were ultimately disappointed. Those who had spent their lives doing such works confessed that, “as a matter of fact, misery cannot be relieved. It is a vital element in human nature, and is as necessary to some lives as pleasure is to others...that misery is not just endurable, but agreeable to many who endure it.” For instance, a woman who worked all her life for the amelioration of prostitutes, confessed in the end that it was not possible to better the condition of these girls, because they seemed to “love the very state which wealthy people may call misery.” Even today, we find that when blankets are given to the poor during winter, they sell them off. At times proper houses are built for them, yet they sell those and go back to living in their huts. Madame Blavatsky advises the exercise of discretion even in helping others. She writes :

...it takes a very wise man to do good works without the danger of doing incalculable harm. A highly developed adept in life may grasp the nettle, and by his great intuitive powers, know whom to relieve from pain and whom to leave in the mire that is their best teacher...Kindness and gentle treatment will sometimes bring out the worst qualities of man or woman who has led a fairly presentable life when kept down by pain and despair. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 31*, p. 10)

We, not having such intuitive power, will do well to follow the advice of Mr. Judge: “If some pathetic story of suffering has moved

you, act on the emotion while your cheeks are still wet with tears.” However, in the above-mentioned article, Mme. Blavatsky puts human suffering in a much wider perspective. Pain has a definite and important place in man's life. When we learn to see pain in the right perspective, we should not want to shun pain. Often people are driven to commit suicide for trifling reasons like inability to pass an exam, unrequited love, etc. We should not grumble, fret and fume but regard every unfavourable situation as an opportunity to learn and grow. Growth involves change and every change is accompanied by pain.

Pain arouses. It is only when we experience pain that we wake up and begin to ask questions of life. Why me? What have I done to deserve this? Often pain makes us realize that we need to surrender our personal will to the Divine Will. Yet, pain also *softens*. Pain arouses sympathy in us. Pain often brings out the best in a human being. There are many incidents of people working to relieve the suffering of spastics, of cancer patients, of leprosy victims, all because someone in the family had undergone similar suffering. Pain increases the moral capacity. We do see people who would not steal or beg even in grinding poverty, but bear it with dignity. The ladder which takes us to the top, is made up of rungs of suffering and pain. Life is a school. We are put in a certain painful or unfavourable situation again and again till we learn the necessary lesson.

We need to exercise discrimination even in physical charity. We should think twice before giving money to a beggar, if we see him buying cigarettes, tobacco or alcohol. It has been observed time and again that lakhs of rupees are given in charity by sympathizing people toward cyclone or flood relief, but a lot of it is retained by the middlemen—very little actually reaches the needy.

Unless people's minds and hearts are charitable, it is no use their pouring out their wealth. Thus, if people lack integrity at higher as well as lower levels, if they feel that it is right for them to cheat and prosper—no matter how many others suffer—mere physical acts of charity are not enough to bring about peace and happiness.

Madame Blavatsky writes:

All good and evil things in humanity have their roots in human character, and this character is, and has been, conditioned by the endless chain of cause and effect....Progress can be attained, and only attained, by the development of the nobler qualities. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 232-33)

This also implies that it is not enough to impose laws, in order to improve any social, economic or political system. It has been noticed, for instance, that so long as men are dishonest, bullies and twisters, they always find out some new way of cheating and evading tax. However stringent the laws, people succeed in finding loopholes. As a Christian author observes, we cannot have good society without good men, and we cannot have good men merely by imposing laws. The emphasis must be on individual morality.

When someone asked Robert Crosbie, “Why is it that Theosophists are so passive to political and social conditions?” He replied:

No true Theosophist is passive to *anything*; his knowledge, however, shows him where his energy can be best used for the benefit of humanity. He does not waste his energy poulticing the boils on the body corporate, but devotes it to the pointing out of the seat of the disease and the remedy. It is apparent to anybody that the cause of all human troubles is selfishness and ignorance....The prevailing idea is that there is but one life, and that each must struggle for himself as against all others....The Theosophist knows what the true way is; that man lives many lives, and that in each life he reaps what he sowed in other lives, as well as in this one; that if every man were to have this knowledge, he would see that true happiness for all can be obtained only when each human being uses all his powers for the good of others. Under such a way of thinking, no man would be allowed to suffer for one moment, because there would be many willing hands to help on every side. The greatest need, then, is to have a right and true philosophy of life....(*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 77)

Madame Blavatsky suggests the “true basis” for social work

in *The Key to Theosophy*. Accordingly, for the efforts towards social amelioration to be fruitful, they must be based on four principles: “Universal Unity and Causation; Human Solidarity; the Law of Karma; Reincarnation. These are the four links of the golden chain which should bind humanity into one family, one universal Brotherhood.”

Why is there such obvious disparity in society? Why are the rich becoming richer and the poor, poorer? It is due to neglect of social duty on the part of the rich toward the poor. It is because we do not realize that we are pilgrim-souls. What each one of us needs to do, has been suggested in *The Voice of the Silence*: “Give light and comfort to the toiling pilgrim.” It shows that we must not only give comfort—physical and mental relief—but also give “light” *i.e.*, “right knowledge” or the “bread of wisdom,” to the distressed. We must look upon every human being as a “toiling pilgrim.” This at once changes the whole attitude of mind. Every ordinary man is really a toiling pilgrim—because, a man, besides being a businessman, a sweeper, a teacher, is a pilgrim in the ultimate analysis, as one side of his nature is toiling towards human evolution.

The laws of Karma and Reincarnation are doctrines of responsibility and hope. When people are taught that they cannot escape the consequences of their actions, then, “besides feeling in themselves the true dignity of human nature, they will turn from evil and eschew it as they would a physical danger.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 245-46). When people feel that this life is the only life, they struggle to keep body and soul together at any cost.

As we take to heart the words of *The Voice of the Silence*: “let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain; nor ever brush it off, until the pain that caused it is removed,” let us also remember the *true basis* for helping others.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOUL-EXPRESSION

ONE of the most important steps on the Path of the Soul towards enlightenment is its first contact with the Ancient Wisdom, known today as Theosophy. This may take place in many ways, but in our day and age such contact generally takes place either by reading about Theosophy or by hearing of it. The work of the Theosophical Movement is therefore in the main twofold—promulgation of the Teachings through the written word and the spoken word.

One may happen to read some of the recorded Teachings, using the medium of the eye. Or one may hear a stray word expressed by a friend who is a student of Theosophy, or chance upon the meetings held in one or another of the several Centres which function throughout the world for the promulgation of the Message of Theosophy. In the latter case, contact is made through the spoken word, which requires the medium of the ear.

Both the spoken and the written word carry with them an innate power, the power of true Ideas, which makes its impact on the brain and mind of the individual. This impact alerts the inquiring soul to an awareness of the Message of Theosophy which has been recorded by its Teachers and reiterated by its pupils. This stage of listening or reading on the part of the “awakened soul” may appear to be of a passive nature, yet soul-growth begins by imbibing the nourishment provided by the lectures and talks on Theosophy at the meetings of the United Lodge of Theosophists, and by the independent study of the genuine writings of Theosophy.

Just as the first step can be considered as the awakening into awareness on the part of the now quickened soul, so the second step is the pursuance of the quest for Truth by questions. The progress from the listening to the questioning stage shows that the now awakened soul seeks further knowledge of the Truth which has set the chords of mind and heart into vibration. Again the U.L.T. provides for this through its question and answer meetings as well as by the opportunity offered to send written questions which may be answered through correspondence. It will be perceived that the

mind of the awakened soul is now passing from a passive perceptive stage to a more active inquiring one, and this constitutes a second step on the Path of Enlightenment where the further “lighting up of Manas” is now taking place by self-induced ways and means. So the transition from “listener” to “questioner” shows the progress that the soul has made.

From “listener” to “questioner” and from “questioner” to “student” covers three steps on the Path of the Soul. From direct study of the Teachings develops independent devotion to both the Teachings and its Teachers, because the awakening soul now begins to feel a sense of gratitude towards those Teachers who, through the power of the word, recorded and spoken, have brought it some illumination. The soul is now ready to continue on the Path in company with other “awakened” brothers and sisters. Again the various Centres and study groups of the U.L.T. provide in their study classes ample food for the digestion, assimilation and eventual promulgation of the Teachings which, as the soul is now realizing, carry with them a potent force both in their written and spoken form.

Active participation in the meeting at the Lodge provides the opportunity for transmitting to others the Teachings learnt, and through this opportunity of participation in the work, realization of the necessity for meditation on the Teachings arises in the mind-heart of the student. The companionship the Lodge meetings afford helps the striving student to feel the solidarity of Brotherhood that exists between co-students, and through this sensing the student begins to attune the instruments of the soul to the vibration of the “word” or message reborn within his own mind and heart. Participation by promulgation through the written or spoken word provides the necessary channels for that service which the Great Teachers expect of us and of which they are the living exemplars—the service of Humanity.

It will be seen that the Lodge provides the necessary steps to fan the spark of the awakened mind into a quickening flame, and thereby helps to spread the light acquired to others.

The obstructions that prevent the soul from expressing the true Ideas that it perceives and feels when it contacts Theosophy by both the written and the spoken word arise from the imperfections of the instruments of body, mind and feelings, that the soul is now using. To work to remove these obstructions is to follow the steps on the Path towards enlightenment, some of which steps have been indicated in this article.

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KARMA—THE DOCTRINE OF RESPONSIBILITY

KARMA is the fundamental law of the universe. All other laws are subservient to it and are the means by and through which it operates. Therefore it is called the Law of all laws. Karma, in the physical sense, is action and its appropriate reaction, like a ball thrown against a wall rebounds with a force equal to the force with which it was thrown. Science demonstrates that an amount of energy expended in producing a work generates a series of correlation of forces which are endless. But Theosophy shows that every act also has moral basis and metaphysical dimensions. This means that the universe is guided, controlled and animated by an almost endless series of hierarchies of sentient beings, from within without, in obedience to Cosmic and Moral Law, called Karma, so as to bring about the evolution of beings.

As applied to man, it means every action of his is produced and preceded by a thought, desire, intention and motive, and is productive of innumerable effects on the physical, mental, moral and emotional planes of being, causing disturbance in the equilibrium of the universe. Motive is the all-important factor which determines whether an action is productive of good or evil results. If the motive behind the thoughts and desires underlying the actions of a man is selfish, moved by desire for personal gratification, it cannot but, in the dynamic, intricate, interdependent web of being, deprive and hurt many other fellow-men and fellow-creatures and hinder their harmonious, unceasing, universal progression towards a higher life. The ever-active law unerringly and undeviatingly tends to restore the disturbed harmony by adjusting the effects along the lines of their causation through the beings that produced the cause, and during the process of such restoration of balance the latter feel the reaction as pain and suffering, and the beings hurt and deprived tend to be compensated or rewarded. Hence it is called the Law of Retribution in the one case and the Law of Compensation in the other. If, on the other hand, a desire and thought underlying an act has an altruistic motive and unselfish love, it harmonizes with the

essential unity and aids the universal progression of all beings, and, consequently, brings about happiness, light and harmonious progress of all. The fruit of such action comes to the man as help and benefit to himself from all sides.

Therefore, the good and evil experiences that come to us are in reality caused by ourselves, depending on whether the thoughts and motives behind our actions have been in tune or out of tune with the universal harmony and progression. “‘Good’ and ‘Harmony,’ and ‘Evil’ and ‘Disharmony,’ are synonymous.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 204). Therefore we have to revise our *personal* basis of judging good and evil—what is pleasing and comforting as good and the contrary as evil—and adopt the impersonal, eternal verity expressed in the above axiom as our guide to right thought and action.

Our Karma is inseparably bound up with the Karma of our nation and of mankind because of the law of universal unity and universal causation, which means that each one is a copy of the whole, is in essential being the whole, evolving or unfolding on the basis of one universal plan towards one common goal. The sense of separateness that we feel is the illusion of the senses and in reality there is no separateness. Each unit of the race must make that inner progress by which each one may sense and feel one's real oneness with the all and realize that each labouring for the good of all without thought of self is the only way to true knowledge and true happiness. Selfish action indifferent to the general weal, can but be retrogressive, obstructive and productive of ignorance and sorrow. Hence Krishna's admonition in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (II, 49): “Miserable and unhappy are those whose impulse to action is found in its reward.”

Our modern idea of “progress” is based on the idea of personal aggrandizement and national selfishness, oblivious of our deep obligation to the well-being of our fellow-men and fellow-creatures, especially those who are weak and needing help. This ignorance and negligence is the main source of the world's woe. It is contrary to the law of our being. It is wrong knowledge and false ideas that

move the world today, the basis of materialism, which has contaminated even dead-letter religions and sects with the lethal idea of exclusiveness, indifferent—and often hostile—to others outside their fold. This is the real bane of India, the cause of its degradation.

If our actions were to affect only ourselves individually and no one else, it would not matter whether we sinned or lived a life of indifference. But the truth is that the action of each individual has far-reaching effect on the whole of mankind as well as on all the lower kingdoms of nature, for good or ill. This makes each one morally, and inescapably, responsible and accountable for his thoughts and actions. Thought is the real plane of action, and thought is far more potent in producing evil results than a deed, physical act being a mere mechanical expression which automatically follows the potency and power of thought. An evil or sensuous thought, as soon as generated in our mind, instantaneously acts on all mankind on the mental plane, stimulating similar thoughts of dark quality in other minds and even impelling many a sensitive prone to lower tendencies to commit the act. The countless lives which go to make up our incarnate existence receive the brute impulse and are condemned to fly to the brute kingdom when they leave our body, thus retrogressing. The sum of evil in the world thus swells by the prolific effects of our evil thoughts. Similarly, every noble impulse, thought and feeling of gratitude, kindness and good will, goes to swell the sum of good and to aid progressive forces in the world. And, these, like the homing birds, come back to affect us as our Karmic heirloom and family heredity, and determine our tendencies and true character—*Samskaras*.

The sum of the results of our thoughts and actions from an immeasurable past are stored as mental deposits (*Vasanas*) in our higher immortal mind (*Karana Sarira*), as well as in the indestructible life-atoms we use, linked as the two are by subtle magnetic threads of life, which cause the series of reincarnations, determining the environment and condition of each. It may be helpful or obstructive, just as we ourselves determined it in other

previous bodies.

Human thoughts have dynamic power. They are living entities with power infused by the energy of our ideation and coloured by our desires. The cumulative force of human evil thoughts brings on cataclysms of nature and revolutions in society, affecting the masses who were responsible for its production, though the reaping of the effects of the causes they sowed may be far distant in point of time, after many incarnations, as Egos come back again and again together, in cyclic regularity, to reap the consequences of their past acts. Each individual, as each family and nation, thus becomes accountable for its thoughts and actions and can never escape from their consequences. Hence, to look for political or economic solutions to world problems, in ignorance of this potent moral law of being, is futile. Individual and national selfishness are the greatest enemies of man.

We often complain of an unfavourable environment that hems us in and wish that things were differently ordained for us. This is folly, as the environment in which one is born, one's individual situation, family peculiarities, social condition, national character and international relations, are all the outer expressions of the inner condition and character of the Egos who shaped these themselves. They cannot be mended by mere outer reforms, leaving the masses in ignorance of the law of our being. What are called good fortune and misfortune are nothing but the just deserts earned by each one. It is folly to try to escape them by calling upon the gods; they being impersonal forces and agents of Karma, cannot be enticed to bestow on man favours "by gift and hymn," or by ceremonies as recommended by the priest or the astrologer. Man cannot thus change his self-made destiny. It can be altered, improved and made better by none other than man himself by his own actions, with a full sense of responsibility and by a knowledge of the law of his being.

Retributive Karma does not reach us to castigate or condemn, it only brings to each individual or groups of individuals the exact and just results of their actions till the causes generated are fully

balanced and neutralized. The solemn, painful experience of the retributive justice rouses in man an impulse to inner search for the meaning of pain and purpose of life. It unfolds, after many buffetings in life, an understanding of and a concern for the suffering of others, and gradually brings to birth the latent power of spiritual discernment, Buddhi, the faculty of apprehending truth directly and knowing good from evil, real from false. There is no other way by which man may progress except through life's experiences, which often bring pain and suffering. "It is the seed of freedom from rebirth." (*The Voice of the Silence*)

Every mean and selfish action sends us backward and not forward, while every noble thought and every unselfish deed are stepping-stones to the higher and more glorious planes of being...Progress can be attained, and only attained, by the development of the nobler qualities. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 234-35, 233)

WOULD you know whence it is that so many false spirits have appeared in the world, who have deceived themselves and others with false fire and false light, laying claim to information, illumination and openings of the divine Life, particularly to do wonders under extraordinary calls from God? It is this: they have turned to God without turning from themselves; would be alive to God before they are dead to their own nature. Now religion in the hands of self, or corrupt nature, serves only to discover vices of a worse kind than in nature left to itself. Hence are all disorderly passions of religious men, which burn in a worse flame than passions only employed about worldly matters; pride, self-exaltation, hatred and persecution, under a cloak of religious zeal, will sanctify actions which nature, left to itself, would be ashamed to own.

—WILLIAM LAW

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

As a lost mountain climber could find his way again, sooner or later, by consulting his compass, so also it helps to consult the hidden compass within us, as we walk the Spiritual Path. Patrick Drysdale writes in “Are You on a Spiritual Path?” (*The Times of India*, July 6):

Finding a little bit of truth within is like discovering a hidden compass in your own pocket. Some find it sooner than others but when you discover it, you no longer need to go around asking other people to give you direction. How do you make contact with this inner guide? You have to do some digging in order to find it, like searching for a treasure buried in your own backyard. The treasure exists, but you need to know some sensitive secrets about locating it....

Not wanting to change is one obstacle. An unwillingness to forgive others and yourself, is a second. And believing that you already have this treasure and there's nothing more to experience, is the third.... Changing your reactions to external events will set new causes in motion and these new causes will inevitably produce new results. When things change on the inside, they produce a corresponding change on the outside....The more you change, the more your world changes.

Release just one unproductive habit for a week and see what happens. Let's take grumbling, as an example. Don't grumble when something goes wrong. This will feel strange at first, but do it anyway. The issue here is to challenge your everyday habits. When you don't go along with your customary reactions, you're setting into motion powerful forces that will change you internally. This same energy will also attract new conditions and new people into your life who, likewise, will be less complaining.

Give yourself permission to experiment with different ways of reacting. Don't shortchange yourself by using the same emotional response over and over again in every situation. Try something new.

It's never too late to start. Once you start, you'll feel a

refreshing, new sense of self starting to emerge and it won't be just another rearrangement of your old mental furniture. Discover your inner compass and go all the way. What you've always wanted is already there, waiting for you.

“As to the rationale of spiritual development,” says Mr. Judge, “Theosophy asserts that the process takes place entirely within the individual himself...however personal and interior, this process is not unaided, being possible, in fact, only through close communion with the supreme source of all strength.” (*An Epitome of Theosophy*, p. 28)

What is the cause of diseases? It is being increasingly accepted that there is a close relationship between our mind and our well-being. Anjali Mukerjee has this to say:

Most of us find answers in a physical cause as in a bacterial infection or wrong food, late nights, lack of exercise, genetics, etc. But these explanations seem inadequate when we see people, who follow every rule in the book and yet fall prey to diseases. Numerous studies indicate that at least 25% of the people who “can't cope” with the stressors in their lives tend to develop disease more than others.

Researchers estimate that about 80% of all major illnesses, including cancer, skin disorders, cardiovascular disease and even backache are related to mind and behaviour. Stress is perceived as a psychological problem but it has very real physical effects...

The stress hormones (cortisone and cortisol) suppress the immune system, making the body an easy prey to cold, cough, fever, respiratory infections, etc. It accelerates the metabolism of proteins, fats and carbohydrates, causing the body to excrete amino acids, potassium, magnesium, leading to leg cramps and muscle fatigue. Furthermore in a disturbed state of mind, your body cannot absorb nutrients from the food that you eat. Eventually you become overfed and undernourished...

Stress is an unavoidable part of life. It is how we react to it that makes a difference to our state of health. Some people handle stress well. These remain calm and collected in most situations and it has little impact on their physical or emotional health. (*Bombay Times*, July 8)

A diseased body means that we have ignored our inner nature and acted as though we were bodies. Writes Mr. Judge in *Letters That Have Helped Me*: "...a correct mental and moral position will at last bring a sound body, but the process may, and often does, involve sickness." According to him, sickness may be looked upon as manifestation on the physical plane of an inner sickness of the inner being.

World reform begins with self-reform. B.K. Jayanti writing from London speaks of fighting the devils within (*Purity*, July 2003):

Change in the world begins when we first change ourselves. It may seem a simplistic approach to the problems of the world, but the simplest answers sometimes make the most sense...

The cause of many of the world's problems today has nothing to do with external causes but can all be linked to man's ego, his inability to control his anger and even his greed...

When we have clean hearts and clear minds and lead by example, these will be manifested to others in the form of "vibrations" that we send out and these in turn will inspire others to emulate the positive direction that we have chosen, resulting in a wider net of people looking inward to initiate change.

Let's say that I have love for honesty, it's going to be that quality that others around me will appreciate and they will be drawn to me because of this quality. Although in the physical dimension it's always opposites that attract, in the spiritual dimension like attracts like.

The Law of consubstantiality is an occult law which advises

us to be watchful of our thoughts. Writes Mr. Judge, in *Letters That Have Helped Me*:

Thoughts are dynamic. Each one as it leaves the mind has a *vis viva* of its own, proportionate to the intensity with which it was propelled...A thought, on its departure from the mind, is said to associate itself with an elemental; it is attracted wherever there is a similar vibration, or, let us say, a suitable soil, just as the winged thistle-seed floats off and sows itself...in the soil of its natural selection. Thus the man of virtue, by admitting a material or sensual thought into his mind—even though he expel it—sends it forth to swell the evil impulses of the man of vice, from whom he imagines himself separated by a wide gulf, yet to whom he may have just given a fresh impulse to sin.

The tree is a graphic symbol with many meanings. It is more than a beautiful expression of Mother Nature's creativity. "It has Shakti," writes Aruna Jethwani (*The Times of India*, June 21):

It restores balance in the environment by its positive force. A tree doesn't have a mind of its own, only the cosmic heart of the universe. It responds to human sentiments.

The pipal tree is sacred to Hindus and Buddhists—the Buddha attained nirvana under this tree. In the *Bhagavad Gita* Krishna said: "I am as strong as the pipal is among trees..."

Trees have soothing qualities and medicinal properties. Like some animals, they have a sense of empathy, too....

T. L. Vaswani said: "A tree is a lesson in life. A tree has patience. It stands facing the sun, rain and storm, uncomplaining. A tree is symbolic of growth. It inspires me to spread out."

The Puranas exalt the tree, in economic terms as wealth, as a great asset to mankind. A tree is perhaps nature's best gift to mankind. It balances our existence on earth; it provides shade in summer and fuel in winter; it is economic wealth....

Tree worship links us with the Nature spirits. Nature in all its moods and manifestations represents harmony and joy. We should partake of it.

The tree is an important symbol, which affords us an opportunity to study the Law of Correspondence and Analogy.

From the highest antiquity trees were connected with the gods and mystical forces in nature. Every nation had its sacred tree, with its peculiar characteristics and attributes based on natural, and also occasionally on occult properties, as expounded in the esoteric teachings. (*The Theosophical Glossary*, p. 337)

The Symbol for Sacred and Secret Knowledge was universally in antiquity, a Tree, by which a Scripture or a Record was also meant. (*S.D.*, I, 128 fn.)

...the Asvattha, tree of Life and Being, whose destruction alone leads to immortality, is said in the *Bhagavadgita* to grow with its roots above and its branches below (ch. xv). The roots represent the Supreme Being, or First Cause, the LOGOS; but one has to go beyond those roots to *unite oneself with Krishna*, who, says Arjun (XI.), is “greater than Brahman, and First Cause...the indestructible, that which is, that which is not, and what is beyond them.” Its boughs are Hiranyagarbha, the highest Dhyana Chohans or Devas. The Vedas are its leaves. He only who goes *beyond* the roots shall never return, *i.e.*, shall reincarnate no more during this age of Brahma. (*S.D.*, I, 406)

All spiritual teachers, without exception, have emphasized “Forgiveness.” Many psychologists are of the opinion that “Forgiveness” does more good to the person who forgives than the one forgiven. “Let go of grudges to calm your soul and lengthen your life,” writes Line Abrahamian in *Reader's Digest* (April 2003, Indian ed.). Many psychologists share this view:

“When you're treated unjustly by another, anger is a natural response,” says Robert Enright, a professor of educational psychology....But if these resentful feelings are not resolved, a grudge will form. Victims may want to hold a grudge because it gives them a regained sense of control and superiority.

However, when nursing a grudge, you're essentially stuck in the victim role and inviting anger to become a companion in your everyday life—and a toxin to your body....

“Forgiveness,” says Carl Thoresen, principal investigator of the Stanford Forgiveness Project in California, “is to experience more moments of peace and to reframe how one feels about the offence and those seen as responsible. It is moving from continually replaying your personal grievance story to revising it so that you are no longer a victim of your past.”...

Remember how grateful you were when someone forgave you? Once you can empathize with your offender, forgiveness becomes an act of grace.

Even if the person to whom you're offering forgiveness doesn't seem to care or doesn't admit to being wrong, you will feel healthier and happier. “Forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves,” says Robin Casarjian, director of a foundation in Boston that teaches forgiveness in prisons.

“If we hold everyone up to our rigid expectations, we're setting ourselves up for disappointment,” says Kathleen Lawler, professor of psychology....

Start small by learning how to forgive minor slights. And over time, you'll be able to forgive tougher injuries....

“One forgiving act is the beginning,” adds Enright. “As you continue offering forgiveness, your identity will no longer be that of a victim but of one who's powerful in the face of adversity.”

Buddha, the greatest psychologist of all time, describes the inner state of the unforgiving man thus:

“He reviled me, he beat me and conquered and then plundered me,” who express such thoughts tie their mind with the intention of retaliation. In them hatred will not cease. (*The Dhammapada*, Verse 3)

Madame Blavatsky gives the rationale for practising “forgiveness” thus:

...we cannot recommend too strongly mercy, charity, and

forgiveness of mutual offences. *Resist not evil*, and *render good for evil*, are Buddhist precepts, and were first preached in view of the implacability of Karmic law. For man to take law into his own hands is anyhow a sacrilegious presumption....a man who, believing in Karma, still revenges himself and refuses to forgive every injury, thereby rendering good for evil, is a criminal and only hurts himself. As Karma is sure to punish the man who wronged him, by seeking to inflict an additional punishment on his enemy, he, who instead of leaving that punishment to the great Law adds to it his own mite, only begets thereby a cause for the future reward of his own enemy and a future punishment for himself. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 198)

MEN have always found that some events were so inevitable that, for want of knowledge of the law of Karma, they have said, "These things were destined." But when we grasp the meaning of Karma, we see that *destiny* is only the working out in action of causes so powerful that no act of ours and no other sort of Karma could by any possibility either avert or modify the result. This view does not conflict with what some call the "immutable decrees of Karma," because those decrees are the resultant of numerous Karmic factors, the absence, nullification, or postponement of any one of which would change the supposable result. If, however, we imagine that our life today is only that due to post Karma from a previous incarnation, we make the error leading to a belief in destiny or fate. But as we are experiencing the effects of Karma from this life as well as from many previous ones, it follows that the events in a man's life are due to the *balancing* of Karmic causes.

—W. Q. JUDGE