

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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THEOSOPHY AS PHILOSOPHY

THEOSOPHY is a synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy. These are the three aspects of Theosophy. We may say, Theosophy is not *a* philosophy but philosophy itself. It is the philosophy, which is not taught in any *one* of the six schools of Indian philosophy, because it pertains to their synthesis. To get the secret and mystic meaning of Vedic texts we need to have proper knowledge of the Upanishads, and to understand Upanishads and get their full meaning one needs the Master Key, which is lost to the world today. That “Key,” to some extent, is provided by the philosophy of Theosophy, which is a perfect blend of ethics and metaphysics.

Theosophy is philosophy itself because it satisfies all the essential characteristics of philosophy. What is philosophy? In broadest sense, philosophy is the love of knowledge (from *phil*, “love,” and *sophia*, “knowledge”). Man wishes to live his life in the light of the knowledge of himself and the world. Desire for knowledge springs from the rational nature of man. Philosophy is an attempt to satisfy this desire. In Philosophy, one tries to know of things which immediately and remotely concern man, such as, what is the real nature of man? What is the nature of this world? Is there any creator of man and the world? Philosophy has been called the queen of sciences. H.P.B. defines philosophy as the knowledge of phenomena as explained by and resolved into, causes and reasons, powers and

laws. When applied to god or gods, it becomes *theology*; when to material nature, it is called *physics* and *natural history*; concerned with man it is termed *anthropology* and *psychology*, and when it pertains to higher regions it is known as *metaphysics*.

Science is analytic in description, whereas philosophy is synthetic in interpretation. A scientist describes a fact but a philosopher tries to establish its relation to human experience in general. As Thoreau puts it: “To be a philosopher, is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school but to so love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, magnanimity and trust.” Aldous Huxley expresses similar views, stating that the Perennial Philosophy is primarily concerned with the One, divine Reality; but the nature of this Reality is such that it cannot be directly and immediately apprehended except by those who are loving, and are pure in heart and poor in spirit. In every age, there have been a few who chose to fulfil these conditions and consequently, had *Immediate Knowledge*, which is the result of direct perception. They have tried to put their experiences into one comprehensive system of thought. These beings are called sages, seers, prophets or the Enlightened Ones. For instance, Vedas are said to be the result of direct perception—an immediate insight into ultimate Reality. Such scriptures are described as *Shruti*.

In this sense, Theosophy is true philosophy, because Theosophy is Divine Wisdom, *i.e.*, Wisdom such as arises out of divine consciousness and is not mere speculation. The Ancient Source, which speaks of the source of Theosophy, states that this knowledge is the accumulated wisdom of the ages. It is the result of the observations made by initiated sages and seers, of the workings of the laws of nature in every department and kingdom of nature—physical, psychic and spiritual. It was possible because the spiritual perceptions of these beings were so trained as to range beyond material limits, enabling them to penetrate into the actual reality of things. As regards the book, *The Secret Doctrine*, H.P.B. states that the truths which she gives out are by no means *revelation* and that

she has put down the oldest tenets together in a harmonious unbroken whole. She did not have to resort to personal speculations and theories, because firstly, this is what she was taught by her Masters, and secondly, she had supplemented it in few details by her own observation and study, *i.e.*, some of these teachings are the result of her first-hand experience.

In Plato’s view, philosophy is the faculty of contemplating reality in a direct and immediate manner. It is *real* knowledge and the aspiration for this knowledge constitutes philosophy or love of wisdom. A true philosopher is one who possesses knowledge of the *always existing* as opposed to the transitory things. In this sense, philosophy is not mere love of knowledge but it is love of Truth. The Alexandrian philosophers were called Philaletheians or lovers of truth, who first used the term “Theosophy.” It is this love of truth that leads us to Divine Wisdom. The six schools of Indian philosophy are called six *darshans* or six different visions (facets) of Truth. It is the function of true philosophy to disengage the soul from the bondage of senses and raise it to the vision of Eternal Truth.

Theosophical philosophy aims at inculcating this love for truth. Mr. Crosbie says, “Truth is not a man, nor a book, nor a statement... Truth, as we ought to know, always explains. When we have the explanation, we have found the truth.” H.P.B. says that Theosophy is the philosophy of rational explanation of things. Philosophy is also defined as “science of things possible,” and this applies to theosophical philosophy because its doctrines reject *miracles* and provide rational explanation for observed facts. On the other hand, dogmatic religions and modern materialistic philosophical systems reject even the “possible,” whenever that contradicts their assertions, says H.P.B.

In the article, “What is Truth?” H.P.B. agrees that Absolute Truth can only be obtained by a person who paralyzes his lower nature. In every age there have been sages and seers who had mastered the Absolute Truth, yet no one can give out this whole and final truth to another. Each one has to perceive it himself. This is difficult and

hence, people are satisfied with relative truths. But to approach even relative truth, there has to be love of truth for its own sake. H.P.B.'s magazine, *Lucifer*, aimed at inculcating this love of truth. There was the willingness to accept truth from whichever quarter it came, hence this magazine excluded no philosophical or religious views. She believed that every philosophy is based on truth and by giving them place in *Lucifer*, readers were given a chance to compare, analyze for themselves and segregate the true from the false. Thus:

Theosophy is divine knowledge, and knowledge is truth; every *true* fact, every sincere word are thus part and parcel of Theosophy. One who is skilled in divine alchemy, or even approximately blessed with the gift of the perception of truth, will find and extract it from an erroneous as much as from a correct statement. However small the particle of gold lost in a ton of rubbish, it is the noble metal still, and worthy of being dug out even at the price of some extra trouble....It is often as useful to know what a thing *is not*, as to learn what *it is*. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 17*, p. 9)

The Second object of U.L.T. is Comparative study of World Religions, Sciences and Philosophies, to extract therefrom, the universal ethics. The most important feature of a true philosophy is rejection of authority. Buddha wanted his disciples to strive for truth themselves and trust their own experiences. He said, "You yourself must strive, Buddhas are but signposts." Theosophy states that the final authority is man himself. "To the mentally obtuse and lazy Theosophy must remain a riddle." It must be left to the receiver to decide truth or falsehood of the philosophy of Theosophy. One, who has gold and has proved it to be so, has a right to say so, but he would not ask others to believe on the basis of *his authority*. He would present his gold for testing. "This is the kind of authority you would find in Theosophy," says Mr. Crosbie.

That philosophy is the true philosophy, which tends to diminish the sum of human misery. Theosophical philosophy aims to achieve this. Hence, the emphasis on study, practice and promulgation of

the Fundamental Principles of the philosophy of Theosophy. At least two-thirds of world's suffering and evil is due to man's inhumanity to man. Humanity sins, sorrows and suffers because of Ignorance. What humanity needs most is the right philosophy, such as is enshrined in the fundamentals of Theosophy. Thus:

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. (*Friendly Philosopher*, p. 77)

The fundamentals of Theosophy try to show that there is no personal god outside of us who can punish us or who can be propitiated. It speaks of One Reality as Unthinkable, Omnipresent and an Omniscient Principle. Humanity is an emanation from divinity on its return path thereto. We are inherently perfect and not born in sin. Theosophy teaches that evolution of man is through self-devised and self-induced methods, checked by karma.

This philosophy aims to diminish the human misery also by putting these teachings into practice. This is in keeping with what Thoreau said, *viz.*, to be a philosopher is to so love wisdom, as also to live according to its dictates. In *Five Messages*, H.P.B. asks, "Would you be partakers of divine wisdom or [be] true Theosophists? Then do as the gods when incarnated do. Feel yourselves the vehicles of the whole humanity, mankind as part of yourselves, and act accordingly." In other words, though we appear to be separate from one another, in our consciousness there must be concern for the whole race, for the pain and sorrow of the whole humanity.

To sum up, “Theosophy...is indeed the quintessence of the *highest philosophy* in all and every one of its aspects. All of which proves that according to every definition—old and new—of philosophy, he who studies Theosophy, studies the *highest transcendental philosophy*,” writes H.P.B.

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REALITY AND ILLUSION

The existences belonging to every plane of being...are, in degree, of the nature of shadows cast by a magic lantern on a colourless screen; but all things are relatively real, for the cogniser is also a reflection, and the things cognised are therefore as real to him as himself. Whatever reality things possess must be looked for in them before or after they have passed like a flash through the material world; but we cannot cognize any such existence directly, so long as we have sense-instruments which bring only material existence into the field of our consciousness. Whatever plane our consciousness may be acting in, both we and the things belonging to that plane are, for the time being, our only realities. As we rise in the scale of development we perceive that during the stages through which we have passed we mistook shadows for realities, and the upward progress of the Ego is a series of progressive awakenings, each advance bringing with it the idea that now, at last, we have reached “reality”; but only when we shall have reached absolute Consciousness, and blended our own with it, shall we be free from the delusion produced by Maya.

—S.D., I, 39-40

WHAT is Real? That which is eternal and changeless amidst all changes, without beginning or end, comprehending the whole, is Real. We may take the idea of “space” as an example for a better comprehension. Universes come into existence, evolve and then disappear in space, but the space remains changeless, unaffected, beginningless, endless, containing all and pervading all.

What is Illusion? All that is subject to change through decay and differentiation and has therefore beginning and an end is regarded as *maya*—illusion. (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

How can we understand this and relate the idea to our lives? We may take a few examples to illustrate the illusive nature of life. We all feel, and tacitly accept as true, that every day the Sun rises in the

east and sets in the west at regular intervals of time, causing day and night. But we know by scientific demonstration that the Sun neither rises nor sets, that there is, in fact, neither day nor night beyond the boundaries of the earth in space, but that owing to the way we are situated on earth, and the motion of the earth relative to the Sun, an effect is produced which makes us see and believe that Sun rises and sets.

Our physical senses give us the impression that the material objects we see, touch, etc., are real, solid objects. Physical science, investigating the nature and structure of matter, as we know it, found that it is made up of atoms. But atoms themselves are infinitely divisible, and the exact nature of it *vis-a-vis* the perceiving consciousness is shrouded in mystery. Thus, our physical sense-perception does not bring to us the real nature of matter but only a phenomenal appearance of it, which is illusive. When we closely examine the process by which we cognize objects, it is evident that the things we see, touch, taste, etc., are only the *ideas* of things, and not *things in themselves*. In other words, we do not know, as physical beings living in the world of three dimensions, the true nature of things we cognize and experience, and that the real nature of the world is different from our perception of it.

A little reflection makes it evident to us that “cognizer” is distinct and separate from the thing “cognized” or perceived. In fact, we all know this truth intuitively, as we always refer to *our* body, mind, emotions, feelings and ideas, as, *my* body, *my* mind, saying, “I think,” “I feel,” etc. Yet, we scarcely pause to think and reflect, who is this “I”? Why is it that we identify ourselves with the body, mind and emotions? Such a mistaken notion arises in us due to mixing up of “one who sees” with “things he sees,” and that is indeed an illusion, which, as it were, throws a veil and thereby hides from us the reality, or the true nature of things. This tendency in us to mistake our Self or Ego to be what is not self is another illustration of illusion of life.

Every normal person without exception experiences dreams. In dreams we cognize objects of sense and experience emotions. So

long as the dream lasts we believe the dream experiences to be real. It is only when we wake up that we realize the dream experiences to be illusions. Just as in the dream state we as cognizers come to identify ourselves with dream experiences and emotions, so do we in waking state also. Thus, we are misled into believing untrue to be true, unreal to be real, and *vice versa*. Hence, there is a certain falsity or unreality, an inherent error in our understanding of life, and in our evaluation of things, events and persons. This is called *Maya*—Illusion.

Carrying this line of thought further, we can easily see that we constantly deceive ourselves. This is one of the lessons which life constantly teaches us. For instance, we know well that everything in this world, of which we are an inseparable part, is changing. Our bodies, minds, ideas we hold, our emotions, thoughts and motives change continually with the world around us. All things born in time come into existence due to a concatenation of cause and effect, and cease to be when the cause or causes are neutralized, and therefore, have no independent existence by themselves. Yet, we think and act as if we are going to be here permanently and enjoy all the objects of our happiness. Thus deluding ourselves, we ceaselessly seek permanent satisfaction in things that are inherently impermanent, and suffer pain and sorrow. Is this not a fond illusion we labour under, of trying to find permanence in things impermanent?

The feeling that we, as persons, are distinct and separate from other beings is the greatest of all illusions under which we labour, which is the chief cause of world’s woe. “All labour...under the great illusion (*Maya*) that they are, as personalities, distinct beings from other beings, and that even their *Selves* or *Egos* will prevail in the eternity...as such; whereas not only we ourselves, but the whole visible and invisible universe, are only a temporary part of the one beginningless and endless *WHOLE*, or that which ever was, is, and will be” (*Transactions*, p. 32), which alone is real. Buddhists call this feeling of the sense of independent and separate self in us as,

“the great dire heresy of separateness.”

Reality, then, is the eternal, changeless, formless, timeless Soul or Self, the Real Man within the apparent, changeable outer man, because that which is changeless is the Soul, the Perceiver, *Purusha*, the Spirit. By self-examination and self-study we can understand and intuitively sense this great truth. We have been through ceaseless changes in mind and body from infancy to the present time, and will go through further changes till death—death itself being a transition from the objective into subjective states or conditions which are again subject to change. Through all these changes the perceiving Self, the Soul, is the changeless, eternal sustainer and witness of them all. There is only one Self but it appears as many due to illusion produced by the limitation of the instruments of perception and its connection with the qualities proceeding from Nature.

Eternity and universality of *true* Self is a logical and self-evident fact, the sense of separateness we experience being a deception of our senses.

Alone the highest and invisible *originals* emanated from the thought of the Unknown are real and permanent beings, forms and ideas; on earth, we see but their reflections; more or less correct, and ever dependent on physical and mental organizations of the person who beholds them. (*Isis*, I, 158)

Knowledge of the true nature of the Self gives rise to a deep conviction that Universal Brotherhood is a fact and the highest truth of existence. Unity, integrity, eternity of the Self is evident to our intuitive thought in the appreciation of the fact that one and the same Ego witnesses and experiences all the changes in the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, upholding the memory of all states. Yet, essentially the Self is not affected by any and all experiences, all states, and nothing adheres to the Self, as taught in the *Brahadaranyaka Upanishad*.

Higher Self then is essentially unconditioned and the only reality.

All else, our objects of perception and experiences on whatever plane or state are relative, and, therefore, illusions, though real to the Ego so long as it identifies itself with them and believes them to be real. In the realization of the true Self alone, can we be free from *Maya* and attain to clear vision.

That which reasons is higher than reason....That which perceives forms and acquires knowledge, is beyond all form, and is not limited to, or by, any degree of knowledge. These sages declare, and show, that all limitations are *self-imposed* and impermanent; hence they speak of the manifested universe as the “Great Illusion” [*Maha-Maya*] produced by a general and temporary sense of separateness on the part of the beings involved. Their efforts at all times have been directed towards aiding the advancing intelligence of mankind to a truer realization of the essential nature of beings, from which alone come perfection in knowledge and hence the highest happiness. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 145-46)

We have to learn then to live the Higher Life, which is following the dictates of the Real Self or God within, and overcome illusion through renunciation of personal self to Self-Impersonal, leading to assimilation with the Supreme even while living in the perishable body of illusion. H.P.B. writes:

It is only “with a mind clear and undarkened by personality, and an assimilation of the merit of manifold existences devoted to being in its collectivity (the whole living and sentient Universe),” that one gets rid of the personal existence, merging into, and becoming one with, the Absolute, and continuing in full possession of Paramartha. (*S.D.*, I, 54)

WHEN love and skill work together, expect a masterpiece.

—JOHN RUSKIN

THE THEOSOPHICAL MAHATMAS—MYTHS AND FACTS

MOST people from the days of H.P.B. up till now have tried to understand the Theosophical Mahatmas, but most have failed in comprehending Them. We have to try to apprehend Them and Their work, and that is a matter more of higher feeling than philosophical thought. Who are the “Theosophical Mahatmas”? Are they “Spirits of Light” or “Goblins damned”? Are They supernatural beings or myths—invention of fanciful imagination? Is it true that some of them are thousands of years old? Such were the questions, with which the expounders of theosophy were assailed, in the early days of theosophy. H.P.B.’s definite answer was, They are *living men*, born as we are born, and doomed to die like every other mortal. Some of them do exceed ordinary age of men but very few of them care to live very long. By knowledge of the occult laws of nature it is possible for such advanced beings to live for nearly four hundred years. The term “Mahatma” is composed of *Maha* great and *Atma* soul, *i.e.*, great soul. Since all men are souls, the Mahatma differs from other human beings in that he is a *great* soul. They are men of great learning, having perfected themselves in prior periods of evolution and endowed with powers over space, time, mind and matter. But just because they possess supernormal powers, they can not be classed as “supernatural” beings. Every human being has the germ of all the powers that these *Mahatmas* manifest. We have not developed the germ while They have developed it through training and experience. Hence, they are in possession of godlike and miraculous powers. Just as great musical ability is not usual or common so also these powers are *natural*, although unusual. They are also called Masters, Elder Brothers and Initiates.

People argue that if the Masters exist and are all-powerful then everything must be possible for them. They can help their disciples (chelas) and the Society to overcome their suffering and difficulties and prevent them from making mistakes. Why do They not use Their powers and step-in to save the business or life of some

disciple’s dying brother? First of all, They are embodyers of the Law of Karma and hence would not contravene the Law. If the Master uses occult force then it produces far-reaching effect. Just as, if we were to explode gunpowder to split a rock, it might knock down a house in the vicinity. In the earlier days of the Theosophical Society many members would request H.P.B. to carry to the Masters, totally worldly questions, pertaining to family or financial matters. She writes that people failed to understand that there is an occult law that whenever an *intense desire* is concentrated on Their personalities, *i.e.*, whenever an appeal comes from a man of even an average good morality, requiring their attention on some trifling worldly matter, They are disturbed by it, and the desire would take a material form and haunt Them. They are then forced to create some impassable barrier, an Akasic wall between that desire, thought or prayer to isolate themselves. In doing so, They cut themselves off from all those who consciously or unconsciously come within the circle of that thought or desire (*H.P.B. Series No. 20*). Though they do help deserving individuals in their spiritual endeavours and beneficently influence the destiny of nations, it is only as much as the Karma of the nation and the individual permits. They write: “Cycles must run their rounds...and we, borne along the mighty tide, can only modify and direct some of its minor currents.”

How do they help individuals? Are they helped to dodge Karmic consequences? How is it that many a chela and even the founders were allowed to suffer without the interference of the Masters? When the world called H.P.B. the greatest imposter of the age and a medium, why did Masters not intervene to defend her and save her reputation? The reply, in the words of one of the Masters, is:

“*The chela becomes, he is not made,*” is true to the letter. Since every one of us is the creator and producer of the *causes*, that lead to such or some other *results*, we have to reap but what we have sown. Our chelas are helped but when they are innocent of the causes that lead them into trouble; when such causes are generated by foreign, outside

influences. Life and the struggle for adeptship would be too easy, had we all scavengers behind us to sweep away the effects we have generated through our own rashness and presumption.... Step by step, and after a series of punishments, is the chela taught by bitter experience to suppress and guide his impulses; he loses his rashness, his self sufficiency and never falls into same errors.

So, the Master goes on to explain that it was due to sublime, self-denying, noble and meritorious zeal on the part of H.P.B. which made her say that the phenomena she performed were not done by her *personally* but by her Masters. Noble as was her humility, this was mistaken by the outside world and they called her a deceiver, an imposter and a medium. Masters could only warn her, but They always allow Their chelas, “full and entire freedom of action, the liberty of *creating causes*.”

They are called “Himalayan Brothers” and many feel that if they were to go to Tibet or the Himalayas they could meet one of Them. Is it so easy to meet a *Mahatma* in flesh and blood? There is the case of Mr. S. Ramaswamier, a member of the Theosophical Society, who rushed to Himalayas in search of the Masters, and did actually meet one in flesh and blood, but he was asked to go back and wait patiently if he wished to become an *accepted* chela. However, for those of us who are unprepared, it would not be conducive to meet a Master in flesh and blood, as great and powerful forces play around Him. We are told to *deserve* before we *desire* the intimacy with the Masters. Of what use would Professor Clerk Maxwell or Einstein be, teaching a class of little boys their multiplication table? Besides, if a person were to go in the presence of the Masters, *unprepared*, he would be exposed to powerful magnetism or currents belonging to the Master, and he might faint, fall asleep or slip into coma. His whole nature would be stirred up. He might find that his Karma has begun to precipitate faster and evil tendencies have come to the surface and that he has not enough power to deal with either. He may become doubting and superstitious. There is nothing surprising

about the consequences described above, as we observe in everyday life that if a small boat comes too close to a big ship, without making certain adjustments, it is likely to get capsized because of great currents created in water around the big ship while it is moving. So, when a Master visits any person, he deliberately veils his magnetism or protects that person from the consequences ensuing from such meeting.

The only way we can attract Their help and attention is by trying to constitute ourselves the servants of humanity. “As They are *Atman* and therefore the very law of Karma itself, They are in everything in life, and in every phase of our changing days and years. If you will arouse your faith on this line you come nearer to help from Them than you will recognize.” If They are in everything in life then it is up to us to feel Their presence while performing mundane duties, be it writing letters, cooking food or reading proofs. They adjust the mind of a disciple and without interfering with his Karma try to help him to do his duty, meet his Karma and learn from it. If the disciple goes wrong in his conclusions then the Master can throw a hint to adjust his mind. A true Master never pours vast masses of knowledge into disciple’s mind because then he would cease to be any better than a well-written book.

In the early stages of one’s spiritual endeavour there is expectation and even false belief that Masters do and should guide and direct one as to what to do and what not to do. In the *Book of Confidences*, in the dialogue between the Master and the disciple, the pupil tells the Master that if only he would instruct him to “go here,” “stay there,” etc., then he would be happy to follow the Master’s advice and would perhaps be able to make progress without making mistakes. Many of us wish for such sure guidance. But the reply of the Master is worth paying heed to. He says that if He were to ask the pupil to “do this,” or “do that,” then the pupil would never be able to strengthen the muscles of his “will.” Perhaps under the guidance of the guru he will never make mistakes, but he will never learn *how not to make mistakes*, and by doing so, says the Teacher,

he would steal from the disciple the sovereign power of choice which can make of him a god. Till a complete mastery over simple human emotions is achieved no Master can accept the aspirant as a chela. A lot has to be accomplished by chela's unhelped exertions.

These Great Ones are continually radiating noble thoughts but only those of consubstantial nature can pick up these thoughts and ideas and benefit by them. They have been known to make special efforts to influence certain prominent persons and through such prominent persons They influence and shape the destiny of nations. Some of these persons are saviours of nations, such as Washington, Lincoln and Grant, as also great writers and poets such as Shakespeare and Aeschylus. There are times when they dictate passages verbatim, but most of the time they only inspire ideas and leave the literary form to the writers.

It is only natural that we desire contact with Them on the physical plane, but it is far more important to *feel* Them inwardly. One should not go searching for the Master because when the disciple is ready, the Master appears. How shall we become ready? We must contact the Master on the spiritual plane by rising to Their level and not by dragging Them down to our level. The Master can be met in the "Hall of Wisdom" or in the dreamless sleep (*Sushupti*) state, when our consciousness is free from the body and the senses as also from the *kamic* (passions and desires) nature. Hence, the importance of preparing for sleep, and of living a morally pure life and performing every task with complete concentration during the waking state. The study of the nature and powers of the Masters helps us create a clear channel, which in turn enables us to bring back the memory of activities of our higher nature in the dreamless sleep state.

If you want to know us, then know our philosophy; if you want to serve us then serve our humanity, said one of the Masters. We must not try to reach out to Them with our minds, but through gentle service, strong search, and humility in study and work, we will at last gain that wisdom which will enable us to *know* them.

THE GREATEST SATISFACTION IN LIFE

PHILOSOPHERS have asked themselves: What gives the greatest satisfaction in life and at the same time a lasting sense of completeness often termed, life's fulfilment? After all what is it that most human beings need in life? To answer that we have to consider the nature of man and his psycho-biological and spiritual constitution. We also need to take into account factors that motivate people to carry on their daily activities such as occupation and leisure, socializing, personal relationships and love, hobbies, pleasures, recreations, education, etc. Consciously or not, all creatures without exception seek "happiness." As Dante puts it:

All indistinctly apprehend bliss
On which the soul may rest;
The heart of all yearn after it.

Happiness is an all-inclusive term covering a vast range of pleasant experiences, from a fleeting genial feeling and a sense of physical well-being to the extreme pleasure, joyfulness and ecstasy. For our purpose, we shall distinguish a pleasant sense of satisfaction and all other "happy" feelings from what is poetically described as "*self-fulfilment*," and philosophically, as being "at peace" with the self and with the environment or life's conditions.

A mature person is clearly aware of the object on which his heart is set. It is the unwavering focus of his pursuits, which invariably results in an optimum sense of well-being and, on rare occasion, in *self-fulfilment*. Dr. Abraham Maslow, one of the exponents of Humanistic Psychology, called it "peak-experience," reached by the "Self-actualized" person.

The above philosophical distinction is made because many poets and thinkers, such as Milton, Edward Spencer, and spiritual leaders affirm that what passes off as happiness, is but an evanescent and unpredictable experience. Whereas, there is such a genuine and sustained sense of quiet mind which can bask in the sunshine of its own inner state of tranquillity even without any external stimuli.

The latter state may be termed *self-fulfilment* and being “at peace,” interspersed with an occasional exalted state of “ecstasy.” This latter is in reality a purified and higher psychic condition, and yet it is not to be mistaken for the “*ecstasis*” which latter term is used in the Greek Mysteries for the high spiritual condition, to be rarely reached, and is equivalent to Oriental *Samadhi*.

Also, there are lesser shades of genuine sense of total well-being, felt spontaneously. For instance, many nature lovers have been touched by a kind of quiet thrill in close proximity with Nature. This is just a foretaste of the Supreme Joy of life’s final consummation, recorded by the great Mystics.

Some people cannot think beyond their “Comfort Zone,” and therefore, resort to the imitations of exalted pleasures (called “kick” or “high”), by means of stimulants, drugs, sex, etc. But this is merely an enforced and altered state of mind, such as is found in religious frenzy, and leaves the individual drained in the end! Even the so-called “peak” of the sexual episode is mistaken for “ecstasy” whereas the latter when true is known only to the advanced souls. Milton expresses it poetically thus: “Vain deluding joys, the brood of folly without father bred!”

There is a rare inner condition, which when genuine, preserves a state of tranquillity and simplicity of true satisfaction throughout life. This may mask the real inner strength and enthusiasm behind an external front of peacefulness of the whole nature. It is sometimes described as the “stillness after the storm”! Indeed, such a heightened consciousness follows great trials of mental and spiritual grit and stamina. David Grayson hints at it, thus: “At the back of tranquillity lies always conquered unhappiness.” And the *Psalms* go much further to state: “They that sow in sorrow shall reap in joy.” Suffering undertaken for righteousness and for the sake of others is blessed with strength and joy.

It is not intended here to go into mysticism nor extol the heightened sense of well-being in order to undervalue the common joys and simple pleasures of plain folks, who can feel spontaneously elated

at pursuing and achieving their own unsophisticated but worthwhile objects, having an innate ability to enjoy the simple pleasures of family life. They are contented with what the poet Thomas Gray calls, “the even tenor of their way.” Happy mothers (like Sujata of *The Light of Asia*) are known to find great inward strength and pleasure from endearing relationships which nurture unconditional love, trust, and caring. These, in themselves, are intangible rewards which other pursuits and vocation seldom offer.

Also, there are mature and thoughtful persons in whose unassuming life there is a place for legitimate and deep satisfaction arising from their productive orientation. These are the people who have made a difference in the lives of others through their valuable contribution to the society. It is not that their personal life is without strife, struggle, disappointments and desertion, but they have learnt, what may be called, “philosophical resignation,” based on faith and on their inner stamina and personal purity.

There is an inward Examiner whose judgment is worth more than all worldly approbation. It can pass also an adverse verdict when things are over-stretched to gain one’s immediate personal objectives at the expense of one’s most precious possessions—contentment, peace and the capacity for selfless love and moral integrity.

One of the chief traits in the “self-actualized” persons is a natural concern for the welfare of others. They find great inner satisfaction in contributing their best to the general good of others. And yet, they are inwardly free to enjoy their unique spontaneity, without dependence on persons and pleasures, position and privileges. Nor do they crave for the superfluities of the riches. Such a remarkable individual of inward liberty is described in the *Gita* as, “Happy within himself,” or as the Bible suggests, “having nothing, possessing all things.”

FACING LIFE SITUATIONS

DAILY situations that we encounter are full of paradoxes. *To do*, or *not to do*, is the constantly recurring question. Where, then, is there any surety?

Involvement with individuals is invariably a bitter-sweet experience, and the decision facing us is, generally, a galling one. Three dimensions of the personal crisis in terms of intensity, and three separate levels of choice lie before every one of us at such times.

Troubles come to all. How shall we meet them? The only way is: *head on*. Unless all factors, physical, emotional, mental, which come into play in our contact with persons, things and events are carefully analysed, confusion in decision and in discrimination results.

What, then, should we do? Let us use the *Bhagavad-Gita* to help impersonalize our motives, by impersonalizing our interest in future events, in future results from present thoughts, words and acts. Discrimination (Buddhic discernment) is the only true key.

Events pass, but leave their impress behind them. Our character and abilities express the impress made upon us by those *lives* which now make up our personalities.

It is better to be trusted and respected than to be feared. If people do not tell us the straight truth, or make indirect insinuations, then let us ask ourselves what is the matter with *us*.

How can we discharge our responsibilities fairly if we know (and others sense) that we are *self-seekers*?

The first quality or faculty of those who are of a “godlike” character, says Sri Krishna in the Sixteenth Chapter of the *Gita*, is “fearlessness.” The second is “sincerity.” “Assiduity in devotion, generosity, self-restraint” then follow and are the direct outcome on the plane of action of the first two. What other guides do we need? We need only to remember and *use* them.

There lies the entrance to the Path!

KING LEAR

A STUDY IN KARMA

I

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“The Adepts assert that Shakespeare was, unconsciously to himself, inspired by one of their own number.”

—*Echoes from the Orient*, by WM. Q. JUDGE

ADEPTS’ use of drama for Their purposes is a long story. In the ancient Mysteries—which were Schools of Wisdom, Science and Philosophy—teachers and students enacted events that represented some of the basic facts of Nature and of Man. The facts and the Enactments were viewed with religious reverence, and were indeed profound occult realities, though they were often protected by a veil of myth or fable. For the pupil, the Enactments were initiations into phases of Adeptship. He learned to universalize his consciousness, to enter through self-experience into those degrees or states of the World-Soul which the events symbolized. His knowledge was thus greatly increased of other planes of being. By living through them, he came to understand the operations of the principles of Man and of Nature; and thus aided by the Enactments, he grew to be a “knower” of the Kosmic principles and then a “knower” of Atman. This is proof of how superior in spirituality were the Enactments in the Mysteries to even the most kosmic dramas of Æschylus, the initiate who ventured to create exoteric presentations, the actors of which were probably not students of the Mysteries.

After Æschylus, drama thus existed as an art, quite apart from the Mystery Enactments. Using the living body and mind as its medium of expression, its appeal is most immediate. Through this fact the Adepts may have seen in it special possibilities of service for the uplift of men. If so, They would encourage impersonally all

who were connected with dramatic creation. The ethical intention in the Makers of the Mysteries and that of the Adepts who inspired Shakespeare was the same. From their viewpoint of human betterment, the drama of Shakespeare was only a particular repetition, adapted to 16th-century England and its future expansions, of Their ancient purpose and perennial effort. Therefore the occult link is evident between the great tragedies of Shakespeare and the great tragedies of Greece. They are companion activities.

In nothing is the spirit of the Englishman's finer tragedies more like the Greek than in the clear proof they afford of the law that to each man comes back what he has given. The higher logic of a situation is not shambled. Understanding of what the Greek called Nemesis and the Theosophist calls Karma was an important aim in the Enactments of the Mysteries. Hence the evidence of karmic law in both the Greek and the English tragic dramas is only natural.

King Lear is especially strong in its karmic values. It is Greek-like, too, in the affinities the personages feel between themselves and the powers in Nature; and, like the ancients, they call these powers gods—not God. The theme of this drama concerns the relations of parents and children. It appears in two main lines, at first seeming unconnected.

The cause of the tragedy in the one line is indicated unmistakably in the first few words, in which the Earl of Gloster reveals to the Earl of Kent his family secret—the son Edmund, there present, whose “breeding has been at Gloster’s charge,” at whose acknowledgement he has often “blushed” but now is “brazed,” whose “mother was fair” and “made good sport,” who has “been out nine years and shall away again,” yet who is as dear to Gloster as the “son by order of law, some year elder than this.” Gloster’s breezy way of recounting his past fault with its resulting unhappiness for wife and elder son, does not blind an observer to his cruel disregard, past and present, of the son Edmund’s feelings of injustice, as with bitter resentment he listens to his father in silence and thinks “base, base, why base?” The whole miserable situation of a bastard

son—a situation in which the selfish licence of the husband and father does irreparable injury to everyone concerned, including at last himself, is laid bare in these few lines. Gloster’s light manner, Kent’s praise of Edmund’s fine personality, and Edmund’s reserved answers, hint at the mixed and dark colours given to the drama by the Gloster story.

The other branch of the twofold theme is shown in the first scene by the arrival of Lear and his court for business of state. Just as Gloster is accountable for a broken family life in the past and is to meet the results, so Lear is now about to do deeds which break his own family life, and meet the results. As types the two stories and the personalities reflect and intensify each other.

An apotheosis of self—self-will, self-power, self-domination, these are Lear. For scores of years he has seen in himself only THE KING. The reverence of feudalism for the one at the pinnacle of its giddy social scale, for the Overmost of the overlords; the reverence of theology for its supreme Regent of God on Earth; combining with the age-long tradition of absolutism from such Single-Willed oriental empires as those of Darius and Xerxes, pictured so graphically in the Biblical story of *Esther*—these built up in the West, and in minds such as Lear’s “that divinity which doth hedge a king.”

A very different idea of the divinity in a king had been held in those far-preceding Golden and Silver Ages of Man when great spiritual Beings, who by their own persistent efforts had in earlier *manvantaras* raised their lower selves into harmony and identification with the Divine Self of All—when these incarnated among men in order to give them the teachings of the Ancient Wisdom, and to rule over them in mildness and in observance of Nature’s laws: thus inculcating and illustrating by both doctrine and practice the divine and the kingly in man.

But as evolution proceeded down into our Iron Age, that noble idea gradually came to be personalized, debased. The King-Being ceased to embody a godlike principle involving duties and

responsibilities. Instead, the “king” became only a foisting up of the psychic, passionate *persona*, ethically the mere lower cover and false concealer of the neglected inner Spirit. The precedence which in the true condition had been based on spiritual development, came to be exchanged for the precedence based on mere externals of costume, subserviency and primogeniture. The exaltation of the *persona*, decked out with most elaborate trappings, believed in and revered with doctrines and conventionalities worked over and matter-clouded from the teachings and customs properly belonging to the earlier pure faiths and ceremonies—this *mockery* became the absolutism and the absolute monarch, as recorded in Græco-Persian and in succeeding European periods and kingdoms. Such a monarch was in some cases nothing less than a bestial corruption in himself and a debaucher of others—though he claimed and used the power of life and death over his subjects. His family affections were bent almost wholly toward gilding and perpetuating his own greatness. Hence, similar in sources to the absolutism of king was the absolutism of father.

Lear in the first scene is an exhibition of a mind accustomed to absolute, irresponsible rule both as king and as father. After the first scene, when he has given away his powers and made himself a pensioner on his daughters, the play is a complicated presentment of karmic reaction, unfolding from the action of both Lear and Gloster. Lear is then a psychological picture of an absolutist forced out of his former habits and facing life from an opposite position. The change is so sudden and violent, and what it involves is so little understood by Lear, that for a time his mind becomes unbalanced.

In that pregnant first scene as he gives their shares of his kingdom to his two elder daughters, he makes a pompous display of his grandeur. Flattery is poured upon him by them, to which he pays little attention; and knowing full well the young Cordelia’s love for him always, he tenderly and half jestingly demands: “And now, our joy, what can *you* say?” He expects even more from her—not of flattery, but such an outwelling and display of affection as he would

be proud and glad to have his court witness. Quintessence of fatherly pride and self-satisfaction he expects to enjoy. But Cordelia, knowing her treacherous sisters and despising flattery, is disgusted with what she has just heard. She is hurt at the thought of affection being measured in a contest. Not openly demonstrative by nature, she shrinks from making of herself a public display. She trusts her father’s knowing of her love and tries to make him see her sisters’ falsity; but, not fully weighing the situation or foreseeing its outcome, she blunders by persisting too far in her reserved answers: till Lear, utterly astonished, furious, feeling himself disgraced in public instead of honoured, bursts into a blind violence that piles mistake on mistake, never to be undone—such an insanity of wrath as may easily befall an absolutist.

From this point Lear’s mind is in a state of tumultuous confusion, dying down at times to almost quiet, as with the Fool; at other times, mounting again to the heights of rage. How these feelings repeat themselves! Beginning with shocking intensity toward Cordelia, they rise through the terrible curse on Goneril, and still higher into the more terrible because more pitiful appeal to the heavens: “If you do love old men, make it *your* cause.” Again they obsess him when Regan asks concerning his personal retinue, “What need (even one follower) in a house where so many have a command to tend you?” To this he can only exclaim: “O, reason not the need. . . . O Fool, I shall go mad!” And he dashes away weeping in self-pity for the bitter injustice done him. Dazed and frantic, he rushes out into the terrific storm in Nature, “and bids what will take all”—that storm which is an exact parallel in the physical world to the fierce turmoil in Lear’s mental world, a precise balancing of action and reaction. The roaring tumults of his fury in those imprecations on each of his daughters have been fierce, destructive malevolence—extraordinary forceful volumes of it he has sent forth. It must create its own correspondence, must bring an exact return—just such as that cyclonic outburst of lightning, thunder and rain which breaks upon him and all who are unsheltered. The fact that he recovers after

such psychic and moral ravage proves the strength of that convulsed mind when normal, and the karmic merit in him as a Soul.

In Gloster selfism has never been so rampant as in Lear. He has never been so high but that he had to admit superiors and equals immediately around him. But his good sense is hardly greater. Foolishly trusting Edmund, his illegal, almost stranger son, to the point of cruelly exiling in anger his lawful and familiar son Edgar, he soon finds himself heartlessly betrayed by Edmund, who is working to get estate and name. Thus the seeming greatness of both Lear and Gloster is overthrown. Both grow morally through the process of their suffering. Lear takes simple lessons in such self-control as he never exercised while he was king. Seeing his hastiness with Cordelia, he says of his other daughters: "I will be patient...I will endure." And in the cold of the storm he learns pity for the beggars and unclad wretches who in his pomp as king would have been to him an offence. Thus his excessive grandeur and haughtiness gradually disappear through the extreme lowness he reaches; humility and fellowship arise in his wandering mind. The insanity of self-grandeur had afflicted him while he was called sane. Now, through the stages of his mental unbalance, his regeneration proceeds.

Gloster's loyalty to Lear, and to Cordelia's French army coming to reinstate Lear by war, the other sisters punish by having his eyes torn out. Yet this result is not unsymbolical of the soul-blindness Gloster was in when young. With Gloster the shock of his downfall and torture does not unseat his reason. It remains more on the outer planes. Yet the moral lessons it can give he sees and takes to heart. He learns much through his agony. Most patient he grows and most humble. And the finest karmic retribution is his when the son he had exiled becomes his nurse and protector, and at last explains it all to the tired old father; so rousing mingled joy and grief that the soul slips away out of the poor mutilated body.

(To be concluded)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[In this section we seek to answer frequently asked questions, at U.L.T. meetings or during private conversations and discussions with people who seek the answers in the light of Theosophy. Answers given in this section are by no means final. Only a line of thought is being offered by applying general principles of Theosophy.]

Question: What is it that transforms a normal man into a "mad man"? What are the changes taking place in the brain? Is the link between the brain and the soul broken?

Answer: Insanity is the most mysterious of all mental ailments—the nature, cause and cure of which are almost beyond modern psychology. When there is sudden and intense joy or pain, we begin to identify ourselves with that pain or pleasure so that our sense of "I" is centred in one feeling and this may lead to insanity—the loss of identity.

We may define insanity as the condition in which the Ego loses all control over the psycho-physiological side of his body without losing the body itself. Mr. Judge explains that total disarrangement of physical and astral forces result in total inability to correlate the soul and the body, and that is called insanity. Our mind is connected to the body through certain electric and magnetic channels. Just like the water leaks out of the tank which has cracks, so also our hold on the body could become weak and we are not able to remain in possession of these channels. Then we leave the body for some time and other forces or intelligences—good or bad—may take over. However, since the Ego is able to take possession of the body, intermittently, for a short term, the insane man exhibits lucid intervals. Finally, a time comes when all the magnetic and electric channels are so clogged or destroyed that the man has to leave the body forever. (*"Forum" Answers*, pp. 32-33)

One form of insanity is witnessed during the state of hypnotism.

In the article “Hypnotism,” Mr. Judge explains that in a sane person, the body, soul and the astral man are in proper relation with each other. In hypnotized state, the channel in the brain through which Ego, the real man, controls the brain is paralyzed, so that the person receives only the suggestions from the hypnotizer. Thus, a hypnotized man is not wholly sane, since the relation between the Ego and the astral man is temporarily broken. Acute maniacs are those in whom the disjunction between astral man and the soul is complete. Then, another and different entity may enter the body and brain and masquerade as the real person. Such entities do exist and are the astral shell of men and women out of the body. If they enter, the person becomes insane; and many a maniac is simply a body inhabited by an entity that does not belong to it.

In connection with Dr. Pirogoff’s speculation on the subject of lunacy, in the article, “Problems of Life,” H.P.B. explains the partial and total insanity thus:

Lunacy or *loss* of mind, as it is very suggestively called, is explained in Occultism as being primarily due to the paralysis of the higher functions in *Kama-Manas*, the physical mind—and, in case of incurable insanity, to the reunion of the superior portion of the lower with the Higher Divine Ego, and the destruction, in consequence, of *Antaskarana*, the medium of communication, an event which leaves alive in man only his animal portion, whose *Kamic* mind lives henceforward on astral plane.

In other words, in case of incurable insanity, the connection of the lower and higher mind is destroyed forever and the lower mind functions on *astral plane*, and hence is not connected with the physical body. Elsewhere, H.P.B. explains that unlike the case of temporary insanity where the principle of intelligence is paralyzed, in case of incurable insanity, the principle of intelligence deserts the tabernacle forever, the link between the animal and the divine essence is broken.

There are various other factors responsible for insanity. For

instance, madness could be caused by an overwhelming shock of electricity. The moon acts perniciously upon the mental and bodily constitution of human beings. Charles the Sixth, in 1399, became a *lunatic* at every new moon and at the beginning of the full moon.

Question: What is “Spirit” or the Soul (the undying entity in our physical body)? Why scientists have no access to it? It is said that soul’s seat in our body is between the two eyebrows. Is that so?

Answer: Though the terms, “soul” and “spirit” are loosely and interchangeably used, they are not synonymous. Mr. Crosbie explains that Spirit is universal. It cannot be said to belong to anything or anybody in particular. It is like air, universal and everywhere. It cannot know Itself except as Soul. In other words, “Spirit” is *Atman* or Higher Self or “Father-in-secret” of Jesus, which is universally diffused *divine principle*, and is not the individual property of any person. It is the divine essence, which has no body or form, and which is imponderable, invisible and indivisible. Like sunlight It shines on all. It is inseparable from One Absolute, like a sunbeam is inseparable from sunlight. However, It only overshadows the mortal. Hence it is stated that the spirit never descends hypostatically into the living man, but showers more or less Its radiance on the *inner* man. Probably, that is the meaning of “dove,” representing “Holy Ghost,” settling on the head of Jesus, during baptism.

Spirit is the “power to become”; Soul is “the becoming.” Spirit is the power to see and know; Soul is the seeing and knowing. The popular notion is that man *has* a soul, like a capsule in a bottle, while Theosophy teaches that man *is* a soul. “Soul” indicates essential nature of things. For instance, “sweetness” is the soul of sugar, *i.e.*, even if other qualities of sugar—its colour, size of the crystal, etc.—might change, so long as it is sweet, it does not cease to be sugar. So also, the basic or essential nature of man is “self-awareness,” which comes from soul. That which endows man with self-consciousness and the power to think and choose, is called *human soul* and that is what distinguishes man from animals. Soul is a generic term, and

there are in man, three aspects of Soul—the terrestrial or animal soul; the Human Soul; and the Divine or Spiritual Soul. *Animal soul* is the soul that is present in animals as well as human beings. It consists of our lower tendencies or passions and desires together with animal instinct. This soul perishes at death as in the case of animals. *Human soul* is *Manas* or mind. *Buddhi*, the vehicle of Spirit, is called *Divine Soul*. The entity that survives the body is *Buddhi-manas*, also termed, the reincarnating Ego. These three kinds of soul are designated as three principles. Though there are organs in the body which are described as seats of these three kinds of soul, soul *per se*, is not tangible like our physical body and cannot be perceived by our five senses. Hence, science is unable to have an access to it. Spleen, stomach and navel, are called *kamic* organs or seats of passions and desires (animal soul). Similarly, brain is said to be the seat of intellectual consciousness or *Manas*. Heart is the centre of spiritual consciousness or *Buddhi*.

When it is stated that soul's seat in our body is between the two eyebrows, it refers to the "Third eye," which was believed to be in the middle of the brows, in the earlier races of humanity, endowing man with spiritual insight and indicating that spiritual element reigned supreme over the psychic and intellectual element. Due to disappearance of spirituality and gradual increase of materiality, the "Third Eye" got atrophied and exists today as pineal gland. Science is ignorant of the fact, and regards pineal gland to be a pea-like mass of grey nervous matter attached to the third ventricle of the brain, and containing *mineral concretions* and *sand*, and "no more." H.P.B. points out that Descartes was far nearer the occult truth when he described pineal gland as the Seat of the Soul, as that gland is far more connected with Soul and Spirit than with physiological senses of man. According to Descartes, though Soul pervades every part of the body, there is one special portion of it (pineal gland) in which the Soul exercises its functions more especially than in any other. (*S.D.*, II, 295-98)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Science has been catching up and even actualizing some of Science Fiction's most far-out and fantastic ideas. The latest in their list of achievements is *invisibility*. According to the scientific journal, *Optic Letters*, researchers at the University of Illinois have demonstrated by means of a computer simulation how it is possible to make an object appear to vanish from the sight. The object is coated with multiple layers of a type of silicon crystal, so that when light of a particular wavelength strikes the coating, it *bends* around the object and continues on its way, like water flowing around a rock—instead of being *reflected*. This process is called "optical cloaking." This way the object is rendered invisible, because in order to be able to see the object, it is necessary for light waves to actually strike the object and then *reflect* off so as to impinge on our eyes.

However, "optical cloaking" has been successful only with small samples, the size of a human hair, and it was demonstrated using only red light. True invisibility would be achieved only if it worked with all waves of light along the entire visual spectrum. "However, when and if they do get light to bend around, say, battleship or a tank...the entire meaning of stealth warfare could change drastically....If anyone could become invisible using Harry Potter like cape, a whole lot of issues relating to privacy would have to be addressed. That is the problem with science approaching the magical," writes Mukul Sharma. (*The Times of India*, July 10, 2008)

In the *Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, aphorism 21 mentions that by performing concentration in regard to the properties and essential nature of form, the ascetic acquires the power of causing the disappearance of his body. Commenting on this aphorism, Mr. Judge points out that according to modern science, for the object to be seen the rays proceeding from the object must reach the eyes of the observer. But ancient philosophy teaches that not only is it necessary for rays of light to proceed from the object to the eye, but also light must proceed from the eye towards the object. If the light from the

eye of the observer falling on the object is *cut off* then the object disappears. If the character of this light or luminousness coming from the eye is only *altered* (and not cut off) then the object is altered in shape or colour for the perceiver. It is called “glamour” or “witchery over the eyes” using which, a person could be changed into the appearance of animal or bird and then apparently at the touching of a magic wand, he regains his former appearance. Pure motive and ethical basis are essential before one desires to acquire magical powers. When modern science accepts the existence of psychic and spiritual realms in nature, as also the existence of inner—psychic and spiritual—nature in man, then will she understand the rationale underlying such magical phenomena.

Does God exist? Man has been posing this question for thousands of years. But it is even more important to understand how the concept of God has come to play such a dominant role in man’s life. If we look at the popular notion of God, we find that there is a Hindu God, a Muslim God, a Christian God, and that every one of them is all-powerful. Each of them has performed miracles to save humanity from crises in the past and can again do so in the future. Thus, psychologically speaking, it appears that man is ready to bestow anyone with the status of a god if he can save him from trouble and that only a miserable man needs god, when life metes out a raw deal. God thrives on the soil from which the plants of poverty, famine, pestilence, greed and war sprout. Would these gods have come into existence if man lived a life of benediction? “People get lured into becoming believers primarily because they are led to think that there is always going to be a saviour who will shoulder their responsibilities. Unfortunately, they do not realize that freedom comes from assuming responsibility, not shirking it. Followers, in reality, are slaves,” says T. S. Sreenivasa Raghavan. Instead of

debating about the existence of God, we should turn to the dormant god within, and that can happen only when we stop searching for an out-of-the-world saviour. It is up to us to decide whether we want to believe in an outside God or in the God that we already are, writes Raghavan. (*The Times of India*, July 9, 2008)

Except for the atheists, each person has his/her concept of God. Human history shows that in the beginning when man identified himself with nature, he worshipped animal gods. But as time passed man became aware of himself as the crown-piece of evolution, and endowed God with human form and attributes, and created God in his own image. “The evolution of GOD-IDEA proceeds apace with man’s own intellectual evolution” (*S.D.*, I, 326). An *extra-cosmic* god is fatal to philosophy, an *intra-cosmic* Deity is a philosophical necessity. (*S.D.*, II, 41)

Theosophy rejects the idea of a personal, or an extra-cosmic and anthropomorphic God, who is but gigantic shadow of *man*. The *Gita* mentions four classes of men who worship God—the afflicted, those who desire possessions, the searchers for truth and the wise. Majority of believers falls into first two categories. It is when a person believes in a personal God, somewhere outside of himself, that he indulges in petitionary prayers. H.P.B. points out that such prayer kills self-reliance. The idea of passing one’s whole life in idleness and having one’s work and duty done by another is most degrading to human dignity. “He [man] would do better far to remember that every man has a god within, a direct ray from the Absolute, the celestial ray from the One; that he has his ‘god’ *within*, not outside, of himself” (*Transactions*, p. 53). God, in Theosophy, is an Impersonal, Eternal, Boundless, Omnipresent, Omnipotent and an Unchanging Principle. Our God *within* us, or “our Father-in-Secret” is what we call the Higher Self, and one should turn for help to one’s own Karma and Higher Self.

A seeker's self-esteem goes through various stages before it comes to rest at a place where nothing and no one can disturb it. In psychology, self-esteem refers to an individual's assessment of his self-worth. It is difficult to develop healthy self-esteem because the self has to continually learn to adjust to the changes within and without. For instance, when a woman has finally become comfortable with her marriage, she finds that motherhood is around the corner. Our self-esteem started developing even before we were born. Mother's thoughts and feelings, during pregnancy, have a strong impact on a child's self-esteem. Studies have shown that when babies are unplanned and parents think of aborting them, then such babies are found to grow up with feelings of guilt and inferiority. In the growing years, if the child is shown that she is loved, valued and protected, it will help in building a healthy self-esteem in the child. But as we grow up, our self-worth begins to depend on *what we own* or, a particular person, group of persons or the world at large. Renowned psychologist, Nathaniel Branden, explains that when our self-esteem is dependent on others, we constantly seek approval for every action. A single negative remark from a person who mattered, would leave us depressed for days. However, after many meanderings, wanderings, and hurtful experiences borne from a dependent self-esteem and consequent introspection, a seeker recognizes the futility of such externalized seeking and begins the journey of true self-recognition. Then one feels depressed on not meeting one's own expectations. But there are others, who begin to love themselves so much that they start thinking that this stage is final destination. "Life is truly mysterious. You spend years finding yourself, and when you can proudly proclaim that you know who you are, you must begin again: by destroying that very self that you have discovered." This self is an illusion, a false identity.

Self-esteem that is no longer dependent on things, people or even one's self, but exists with the realization that it is a part of a whole, is untouchable and absolute. No differences, no boundaries, no judgments remain for such an evolved soul, writes Megha Bajaj.

(*Life Positive*, July 2008)

We tend to derive our identity from what surrounds our true Self, *i.e.*, our body, ideas, feelings, education, etc. This derived sense of self could be extremely fragile, requiring continual maintenance, nurturing and defending. For instance, when we derive our sense of identity from our interaction with others, we may work towards getting approval from others and avoiding criticism. To bolster the sense of identity we gather possessions. A Master of Wisdom advises not to set very high value on other people's opinion of ourselves, as no one can know us *as we really are*. We are not the personalities, which continually change. Yet, let the worth of even that personality be decided by the approval and condemnation of our own *Inner Self*, which is the real prosecutor, defence, jury and judge. Mr. Judge refers to "higher patience," which he describes as the fine line between pride and humility. How shall we be proud when we are so small—in our personal nature? How shall we be so humble when we are so great—in our inner, real nature?

Is Turing test, named after the English mathematician Alan Turing, the best test to determine whether a machine is intelligent or not? In this test, a judge engages in natural language conversation with two parties which remain hidden—one is human, while the other is a machine. If the judge cannot make out which is machine and which is human being then machine may be said to have humanlike intelligence. What if the machine was programmed to give humanlike responses? Then it would not be machine intelligence but that of the programmer. It would only prove the presence of some kind of consciousness in the machine but to prove the existence of an awareness inside a machine we need another type of test, like the placebo test, that would demonstrate an internal mind in operation, writes Mukul Sharma. A placebo is a dummy medicine, which when administered by a doctor, tricks the mind into causing the brain to

bring about physiological changes in the body and to effect healing. Similarly, when a phoney antivirus patch can cause a computer's operating system to get rid of an infection by using its own hardware capability, then we would know that there is awareness in the machine, suggests Sharma. (*The Times of India*, July 21, 2008)

A good "thinking" machine can remember, classify, choose between alternatives on the basis of logic and, acting on past experience, can even correct itself; but activity of any one machine is strictly limited to the instructions with which it is fed, in the form of mathematical formulae or other code mechanisms. In spite of its speed, precision and infallibility, the most "intelligent" computer cannot correlate dissociated ideas and events spread out in time and space and present an original thought, or answer an unexpected query.

We are made aware of the need, not only to distinguish between brain and machine, but also between brain and mind as also between the higher (*Buddhi-Manas*) and the lower (*Kama-Manas*) mind. Mind is not an epiphenomenon of matter, as some believe, and brain is only an instrument of the mind.

A placebo is a blank sample used in place of actual drug or medicine. If somebody believes something will work, that positive expectation by itself, through different connections in the brain, activates mechanisms that suppress pain. "With faith all things are possible," says *Light on the Path*. Faith springs from divine nature of man. To expect a phoney antivirus patch to cause a computer's operating system to get rid of infection, in a manner similar to placebo effect, is to expect the machine to simulate faith. But, can a machine simulate faith?

THE secret of being miserable is to have leisure to bother about whether you are happy or not. The cure for it is occupation.

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW