

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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SORROW AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

SORROW is the first great lesson of life that man learns at the time of his birth as an infant. To abandon its happy, parasitic existence in cozy womb of mother, is the most painful experience that the infant undergoes. It pays a heavy price for its freedom and independent existence. From now onwards, not only it has to breathe, but even eat the food and digest it in order to remain alive and grow. It cries. Its tiny being is pitted against the mighty law that rules the world, the law of “survival of the fittest” and “struggle for existence.” Man has to struggle right from birth till death, for existence. There is fierce competition in every walk of life, whether it is school, college, office, business, profession, art, sports, politics or social life. “All men seek happiness,” says the Buddha. But all cannot have what they desire and the result is sorrow due to unfulfilled desires, aspirations and dreams. There is failure in exam, failure in love, failure in getting admission to desired stream or desired college, failure to get desired job, and so on. They bring sorrow and frustration.

Moreover, human wants are never-ending. A person may have everything and yet he may have desires like seeing the son or daughter happily married, to see the face of great grandson before he dies. Even when one has got everything, there may remain anxiety as to what will happen to one’s wealth or business empire. Little realizing that one accident, one earthquake or one tsunami can devastate all

that one had acquired with great pain. That is why Sophocles has written: “Call no man happy till he has carried his happiness safely to his grave.”

Sometimes, one suffers from satiety. Young people work hard to earn lots of money, and acquire best of amenities and comforts of life. Initially, one goal after another keeps him busy, but then he reaches saturation and begins to feel a void within, a terrible feeling of loneliness, discontent and futility. Therefore, the very first truth which the Buddha taught was: “Sorrow is.” In the *Gita*, Krishna tells Arjuna to endure heat and cold, pleasure and pain, which come and go, and are brief and changeable. He says that *light* and *darkness* are the world’s eternal ways. They come by turns.

Suffering can be at various levels: physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. It can be of various types: actual, imaginary and even potential. *Emotional* and *mental suffering* can arise when one fails to obtain what one desires, or loses that which one cared for. That which now gives us pleasure can become the cause of our pain upon loss. It is called *potential suffering*. There can also be *spiritual suffering*. It is the sort of suffering which Arjuna experienced when he had to fight in the battle and kill his near and dear ones. It represents destruction of our vices and giving up of fond habits as a matter of spiritual discipline. When a person has taken a vow to walk the spiritual path, there is no turning back; he cannot retrace his steps.

Great Ones experience suffering out of their compassion for the suffering humanity. It is the “helpless pity” for the ignorant people who are constantly sowing the seeds for their own suffering. Let us see what the Buddha and Jesus said:

“I Buddh, who wept with all my brothers’ tears,
Whose heart was broken by a whole world’s woe,
Laugh and am glad, for there is Liberty!” (*Light of Asia*,
p. 217)

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered
thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens

under *her* wings, and ye would not! (*Matthew*, 23:37)

It is clear that sorrow is part and parcel of our life. There is no getting away from it. But every experience has something to teach us. There has to be some significance or purpose behind our suffering. What is it? “Pain arouses, softens, breaks, and destroys. Regarded from a sufficiently removed standpoint, it appears as medicine, as a knife, as a weapon, as a poison, in turn,” says *Through the Gates of Gold*.

Life, the great task master and the teacher, uses pain to teach us the lessons of sympathy, fortitude, contentment, courage, appreciation, humility and detachment, among other things. Let us examine them one by one. Queen Marie Antoinette, who had no idea of poverty, could not appreciate the fact that people were starving as they did not have bread. Her reaction was: let them eat cake! She paid the terrible price of being jailed and guillotined in the end. Often, we fail to sympathize because we are not imaginative. We do not try to put ourselves in that situation to feel what the other feels. But when we pass through that painful experience, we are able to understand.

Pain and adversity can teach us fortitude. Fortitude means staying power, stamina, strength, courage, resilience, grit, determination. Blind, deaf and mute, Helen Keller’s education, training and work as author and educator represent extraordinary accomplishment of a person with these disabilities. Mr. Judge says: “It is a contest of smiles if we really know our business.”

Thus, it is not the pain but our attitude to pain which makes it terrible or bearable. There is the story of a king who was annoyed by the crowing of the crow, so he asked his servants to catch the crow and shut him up in the big vessel of ghee. The crow sang out aloud that he was having great fun lapping up ghee. When lowered into a well, he said that he enjoyed going below the water and coming up again, and so on. Fed up with his cheerful attitude, the king finally released him. No matter what may be the circumstances, some people are able to find joy in the midst of adversity. In most

circumstances it is possible for us to see the bright side of life, see something positive even in a bad situation, because our Ego knows what is good for us. An Ego may actually choose adverse circumstances in order to learn fortitude and sympathy.

We experience pain in leaving our comfort zone. Fear of the unknown, fear of failure holds us back. A lay-off, a transfer, additional responsibility, etc., though unwelcome and unpleasant, has potential to teach us something. When we were forced to face certain situation, we often found that after all it was not so terrible. Adversities and pain often bring to the fore our inner strength which we never thought we possessed. A simple housewife having lost her husband is sometimes thrown into the world to eek out a living for her little ones. Not only does she manage to earn money, but may also surprise herself by setting up a successful business of making cakes, pickles, etc.

We may not always get what we want in life, and hence the wise parents make their children understand this fact instead of trying to fulfil all their demands, at any cost. Those who fail to learn this important lesson live perpetually in misery and also make the life of others miserable. An ambitious wife, who goads her husband to be competitive, and to earn lots of money, may eventually have the money and amenities, but no family life! And that can ultimately teach her the lesson of contentment. Credit cards and easy loans actually tempt people to live much beyond their means. But when the creditors knock at the door and they are pushed to the corner, they realize that they were much happier with meagre resources than now when they have acquired many things, sadly, with accompanied pain.

When in pain, they say, you must count your blessings, and tell yourself “it could be worse.” When we lose someone or something, we realize their value. If the washing machine or grinder breaks down and we have to do the work manually, we realize their importance. If the servant maid goes on leave and we have to do everything ourselves, we realize her importance for our comfortable

living. When the mother falls sick and she is unable to work or cook, her husband and children realize how blissfully unaware they were of so many things that she managed silently to make their lives comfortable and happy. The realization sobers the husband, and he might want to take the eighth vow—in addition to the seven vows taken at the time of marriage—to share her burden or show how much he appreciates and cares for her.

Some individuals live as if they were born as full-grown, independent adults, needing no help from anyone. But when one suffers huge financial loss, or loss of health due to some incurable disease, one is forced to accept help from other people, even though most unwillingly. Someone, who prided himself on being independent and boasted of never having taken help from others, is humbled by the experience and learns the stern lesson that it is through mutual co-operation and interdependence that we can live. Initially there may be anger and feeling of frustration and helplessness, but later, one begins to accept and appreciate the kindness shown by other people, and mellows down.

There is a saying that “you laugh and the world laughs with you but when you cry, you cry alone.” Those who shared our good times, good fortune and our generosity are not necessarily there to share our suffering. When close relations on whom we showered all our love, and shared everything with, turn away their faces in the hour of our need; the loved ones by whose sickbed we spent many anxious nights refuse to reciprocate our kindness, then it is that we learn the most painful lesson of detached concern. We learn to act without any expectation in return. It is the toughest and hardest lesson. A real learner will not allow the bitter experience to harden his heart or become a stoic but will do everything in his power to be as gentle, kind, helping and loving as before, but with detachment.

But let us not glorify pain. Pain can break. It can destroy a man who finds it too much to bear. However, this limit to endurance is set by man himself. Something that one man takes in his stride, another may find it the most devastating. When man’s spirit is broken,

his “will to live” deserts him. Suicidal thoughts torment his heart. “Despair” is considered to be one of the cardinal sins. When a person is suffering intensely, he forgets that “nothing befalls a man, which he is not fitted by nature to endure.”

We must pay heed to wise words of the Buddha to overcome all suffering. The first truth he taught was: “Sorrow is.” The second truth he gave to the world was about the “Cause of Sorrow.” He showed that it is our craving for pleasure which is the chief cause of our birth and suffering. The third noble truth is that there is “Cessation of Suffering.” If the misery depends on some conditions and if those conditions are removed, then misery would cease. Then he shows us the path by which the suffering can be ended. It is called the Noble Eightfold Path, consisting of eight steps that will lead the person to freedom from birth and death. Knowing well that it is our own which is coming back to us, we have to practice “resignation,” for whatever befalls us. Let us remember that the suffering does not cease till one attains perfection. There can be no growth, no progress or regeneration without prior pain.

EXPERIENCE we must have, and if we accept it at our own hands we are wise. That is, while striving to do our whole duty to the world and ourselves, we will not live the past over again by vain and hurtful regret.

Try to make it a part of your inner mind that it is no use to worry; that things will be all right, no matter what comes, and that you are resolved to do what you see before you, and trust to Karma for all the rest.

—W. Q. JUDGE

ON PREDESTINATION

Look! The clay dries into iron,
But the potter moulds the clay;
Destiny today is master,
Man was master yesterday.

— EASTERN PROVERB

PREDESTINATION, often called Kismet, or just Karma, is difficult to comprehend, for it embodies two aspects: (1) the binding force of Kismet or Karma, action and reaction, and (2) the position of the actor-recipient of Kismet or Karma.

One of the main arguments for predestination, when the subject is viewed apart from the pseudo-religious aspect, is that Karmic action “may be known by calculation from cause to effect; and this calculation is possible because the effect is wrapped up in and is not succedent to the cause” (Aphorism No. 8 on Karma, *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 21*). And if each life is the outcome of previous lives, then man is doomed by those previous lives.

Here we leave out the aspect of the actor who acts and who receives effects, for we say, we, the personality we now are, did not perform those prior actions, and that therefore it is unfair that we should receive the effects. We regard these effects as bringing the difficulties we meet, and fail to remember that not only the bad but also the good in our present character, our present environment, our present opportunities, is a heritage from the past for which we, the present personality, did not work and strive. They are a “free gift,” and the balance of Nature is such that the “good” that comes to us is capable of over-whelming and conquering the “bad.” In the process of overcoming the difficulties, we gain in character. The poet Robert Browning felt this intuitively when he wrote that we should welcome each rebuff because of its value to our character. Our present life, therefore, with its environment and opportunities (or lack of them) should not be thought of as merely composed of difficulties and

sorrows and suffering, but as an opportunity to overcome them, and to strengthen the good or spiritual in our character, our environment and circumstances.

How shall we progress within these limits? We grow by using our inherent power to choose—how to act, how to accept, how to reject. Granted that the strength and wisdom or otherwise of the power which enables us to choose is a “gift” from the past, yet we have to use the power; no one else does it for us.

What is it that makes us choose in a particular manner in any circumstance? Let us try to see the factors that govern our choices: (1) desire of that which is pleasant; (2) avoidance of what is unpleasant; (3) indecision as to what should be done; (4) recognition of universal law and the spiritual nature of man and of the universe.

The first two of these factors should hold no place in our choice at this stage of our evolution, though, unfortunately, they are the main deciders of choices today. The last two factors deal with the *voice of conscience* and the *voice of the Ego*. Indecision ceases when we appeal to the conscience (what we should not do), and then to the higher voice (what we should do in terms of the highest knowledge we possess). Conscience is like a tool given us to use. It is the knowledge gained by past experiences. The voice of the Inner Ego is a tool we are fashioning for use today and in the future. It is the use of these tools that guides our choices.

We are therefore bound by the effects of actions performed in past lives. We cannot change our stature, or our race, or our family line. We cannot change our civilization. But in all conditions we have the power of free choice, and we are never bound by any circumstances to act in a way we do not want to act. The only thing we are bound by as regards present actions is their *effects*. For example, no one compels us to get up in the morning and go to work. But we get up because of the effect our not getting up would have on our work and on ourselves. Here we know the effect. But in many other complicated cases we do not know what the effect will be, and so we choose without true knowledge. Krishna says

that we must be unconcerned as to the results of our actions. Let us act rightly—and we all know the moral principles which should guide our actions—and leave the effects to the Law. As by our present actions we are predetermining the effects which will come to the Ego’s new personality in another life, we have to think of this angle to predestination.

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STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA THE ENLIGHTENED ONES—II

4. *Difficult it is to obtain birth as a human being. Difficult it is to live the life of a man. Difficult it is to get to hear the True Law. Difficult it is to attain to Enlightenment. (182)*

THE SUBLIME nature of the Enlightened Ones is most likely to inspire many to walk in their footsteps and become like unto them. This verse points out the obstacles involved in reaching the state of Enlightenment. It is a long and up-hill task in which the soul has to first reach the human stage of development by passing through various forms in lower kingdoms, *viz.*, mineral, vegetable and animal. Hindus speak of 84,00,000 births in lower kingdoms before the soul reaches the human stage of development. The *Jataka Tales* give us an account of the journey of one of the greatest souls, namely, the Buddha.

In terms of time, it is a long wait before the soul reaches the human stage. But even when it has reached that stage, it is not easy for him to attain Enlightenment. Because, while its evolution up to pre-human stage is unconscious and natural, its further progress in human stage depends upon his own conscious choices and actions under the stern eye of the Law of Karma—the Law of Moral Retribution. Man has free will. But its exercise in the right direction depends upon his knowledge of the real purpose of life and of the true nature of the spirit. The ignorant and foolish man gets entangled in the world by thousand cords of desire. His involvement in the world and complete identification with personality and circumstances of life is due to ignorance. Why does man remain ignorant? Because he gets too engrossed in the mundane life which he thinks is the only real existence. Moreover, the false doctrines and false religions instead of pointing out the truth give to him the false ideas which cater to the needs and desires of the worldly man, against which Jesus warned his disciples.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that

no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many....Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (*Matthew*, 24)

Moreover, after departure of the great teacher, the teachings tend to become rigid, by hard and fast ideas in the hands of less progressed disciples. Often, these ideas are no better than the customs and views necessary for maintaining order in the society. They are not final. For continuous progress, we have to go beyond formal religion, categorical morality and conventions. If we fail to do that, we get stuck or slide down. Histories of religions have been stained by innocent blood. Lofty doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation have been expunged and replaced by confessions and vicarious atonement. Sometimes, the priests and pundits withhold the true teachings and control the minds of men through fear or favour.

Religion holds a man back from the path, prevents his stepping forward, for various very plain reasons. First, it makes the vital mistake of distinguishing between good and evil. Nature knows no such distinction; and the moral and social laws set up by our religions are as temporary, as much a thing of our own special mode and form of existence, as are the moral and social laws of the ants or the bees. We pass out of that state in which these things appear to be final, and we forget them forever. (*Through the Gates of Gold*, p. 66)

“Evil” is not to be feared, in other words, but *understood*, which can in turn only be accomplished by penetrating beyond traditional categories of Right and Wrong. Do we, today, really need anything more desperately than to find a way of retaining ethical awareness while rejecting categorical morality—and its accompanying self-righteousness? (*The Dhammapada*, Foreword)

But even if one is fortunate enough to have heard the true teaching, only few truly strive to reach Nirvana—the highest stage of development in which he is freed from the rounds of birth and death. And among those who thus strive, only a few reach the final goal. This is confirmed to us by none other than Krishna himself who says in the *Gita*: “Among thousands of mortals a single one perhaps strives for perfection, and among those so striving, perhaps a single one knows me as I am.” Looked at from the positive standpoint, this verse encourages us not to miss the opportunity of attaining enlightenment, which is possible to every human being. Mr. Crosbie puts it thus:

The opportunity to understand and apply Theosophy comes under Karma to the very few, not because it is withheld from anyone, but because their prevailing tendencies are not of a nature to leave the mind open to the consideration of new truths, or to enable them to take advantage of the ways and means afforded. This comes from neglect or misuse of opportunities in former lives, in many cases. Especially is this true in this age when so much of the ancient Wisdom is once more made available to all who will. All get this chance, some more favourably than others. It is the height of unwisdom to neglect the opportunity again, most especially in those cases where it is brought home to them without effort. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 379)

5. *Eschew all evil. Cultivate and establish thyself in good. Cleanse thy mind. So teach the Buddhas.* (183)

6. *Enduring patience is the highest tapas; Nirvana is the supreme state—so teach the Buddhas. He who oppresses another is no recluse; he who harms another is no ascetic.* (184)

7. *Reville not, harm not, discipline thyself according to the Law, be moderate in eating, dwell with solitude, be devoted to higher thought—such is the teaching of the Buddhas.* (185)

8. *Lusts are never satisfied, not even by a shower of gold. He who knows that enjoyment of passion is short-lived and also is the womb of pain is a wise man.* (186)

9. *Even in celestial pleasures he finds no delight. The disciple of the Supremely Enlightened delights in the destruction of craving.* (187)

Having told us that the path to enlightenment is full of difficulties, the Buddha shows us the way. In clear and unambiguous terms, he points out the steps, issues warning, and utters wise words for the guidance of every true aspirant. He tells us that all evil has to be uprooted, and one has to be grounded in good. This will take time. One has to begin by avoiding evil and making conscious effort to follow that which is good in spiritual terms. This cannot come about by holding onto our old ideas and biases. Much has to be unlearned before one can hope to get established in the good. It involves letting go of fond habits and ideas as to who we are, the purpose of life, why one has to be good, and why Nirvana is called the supreme state.

To attain that supreme state requires extraordinary patience. It is called highest *tapas* or asceticism because the practice of patience in true spirit cannot come about unless one begins to simultaneously cultivate many other virtues such as detachment, control over one's desires and emotions, cultivating reliance on the Self and *Dhamma*, having unswerving faith in the existence of the Enlightened Ones and their teachings, courage of conviction and above all, never allowing doubt or despair to deter one from the path under heaviest trials—knowing that the Self is not touched by anything that befalls a man.

“Pride” or “Holier than thou” attitude is an enemy of the man who proclaims his resolve to walk the spiritual path by becoming a disciple, a *sannyasi*, an ascetic, a monk or a *swami*. His outward garb—yellow, saffron or a white robe—announces his supposed intent, but unless he has overcome his desires, greed, anger and other vices, he is likely to succumb to them when tested. Too soon

he thinks that he has become spiritual and has the right to run the life of other people. No matter what spiritual level one has attained, oppressing or harming another immediately makes one unfit for spiritual life. Harmlessness and goodwill towards all are fundamental to spiritual life.

“Judge not, lest ye be judged,” said Jesus. The Buddha says: “Reville not.” Condemnation creates rift and enmity, particularly when it comes from one who has no business to do so. And even in those cases wherein you are required to judge another, H.P.B.’s advice is:

Pity and forbearance, charity and long-suffering, ought to be always there to prompt us to excuse our sinning brethren, and to pass the gentlest sentence possible upon those who err. A Theosophist ought never to forget what is due to the shortcomings and infirmities of human nature. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 248)

The Buddha asks us to follow the middle path. Not to attempt too much, too soon. One has to be slow, steady and firm in one’s approach to life which must be guided by the Law. But even when one is thus devoted, there is danger from our lusts—uncontrollable desires. When Arjuna asked Shri Krishna: “By what, O descendant of Vrishni, is man propelled to commit offences; seemingly against his will, and as if constrained by some secret force”? Krishna tells him that it is due to lust.

It is lust which instigates him. Its empire is over the senses and organs, the thinking principle and the discriminating faculty also; by means of these it cloudeth discrimination and deludeth the Lord of the body. (*Gita*, III)

Desire grows on what it feeds. A flame cannot be extinguished by feeding fuel but by starving it. It is craving which binds the man to the endless chain of birth and death.

(To be concluded)

ON OUR FIVE SENSES

III

THE TERM “sixth sense” is used in various contexts in our literature. In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, pp. 251 and 258), H.P.B. points out that extension, colour, molecular motion, taste, and smell are various characteristics of matter and they correspond to the existing senses of man. Its next characteristic called “Permeability,” will correspond to the sixth sense of man, which she calls “Normal Clairvoyance.” The fifth Element called *Ether* will become a familiar fact of Nature to all men, as air is familiar to us now, only in the fifth Round; and with this will also develop man’s higher senses. When this happens, *permeability* will become so manifest a characteristic of matter, that the densest forms, *i.e.*, gross matter of present will seem to man’s perceptions no more obstructive than thick fog.

Five Years of Theosophy, (p. 237) mentions that our *fifth* race has so far developed *five* senses. The sixth sense in our race has hardly sprouted above the soil of its materiality. The exceptions may be found only in some rare cases of constitutional, abnormally precocious individual evolutions such as the Seeress of Prevorst—a creature *born out of time*, a rare precocious growth, ill-adapted to the uncongenial atmosphere that surrounded her. The other exception refers to men who have fully developed by certain occult methods their sixth and in rare cases even the seventh sense, as in case of Count St. Germain. Sixth sense may also be equated with spiritual intuition, wherein there is conjunction of *Manas* with *Buddhi*.

However, often, *Manas* is called the sixth sense, while *Buddhi* is called the seventh sense. In *Anugita*, when Speech and Mind fought over the issue of their superiority, lord tells them that Mind is superior. Moreover, none of the senses are independent. All the senses are greatest in their own spheres. However, *mind on the sensuous plane* is superior to the senses, and in the dialogue the mind says, “The nose smells not without me, the eye does not take in colour, etc.”

Without me the senses do not shine. Without mind, we are like fuel or wood which is half-dry and half-wet, and cannot apprehend the qualities of objects, even when the senses are functioning. In the article “The Subjective and the Objective,” Mr. Judge confirms this fact. He writes that the lower mind (or *Kama-manas*) is the faculty that perceives. While the senses bring the data or sensations, it is mind which interprets them and makes of them a “perception.” In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, pp. 567-68), mention is made of *Vaishwanara* fire, which is the SELF, which is sevenfold. The sevenfold is explained as the nose (or smell), the tongue (taste), the eye, the skin and the ear, the mind and the understanding. These are the seven kinds of fuel for the divine Self and they are seven great officiating priests.

Though our senses bring the knowledge of external world, the *Gita* asks us to control the senses. When a person attends to the inclinations of the senses, there is produced concern, which in turn produces desire, which leads to anger, delusion, loss of memory and loss of discrimination. In the Third Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna shows Arjuna the method of overcoming desire. “In the first place, restrain thy sense.” If we neglect the senses and begin by controlling mind and heart, we gain nothing, because the foe remains undisturbed in the senses. “The tumultuous senses and organs hurry away by force the heart even of the wise man who striveth after perfection.” It is by means of outward senses and their inner counterparts that a great turmoil is set up first in the heart, and “the restless heart snatches away the mind from its steady place.” In other words, we are asked to *begin* with the senses, but not stop there. What happens when we are addicted to eating pizzas? In spite of our great determination, in the beginning, the sight of pizza or the smell of pizza being cooked is enough to shake our determination. A person who has weakness for pizzas may avoid going near the place where it is cooked, sold, stored, etc. Likewise, a person who is addicted to alcohol, movies, cakes and chocolates may avoid going near a theatre or a beer bar or shop where cakes and chocolates are

sold. We restrain the senses by not allowing the eyes to rest too long on tempting sights, or ears to rest on tempting sounds, and so on. Like a tortoise withdraws its feet and head within the shell at the approaching danger, the advice is to draw in all the senses and restrain them from running in their accustomed directions.

There is attachment created also by the data brought through the astral senses. There is an illusion of spiritual progress because one is able to see or hear at a distance. Just as a person gets addicted to sense-objects on the physical plane, so also it is possible to get addicted to astral visions. It may be comparatively easy to restrain physical senses, but it is extremely difficult to control the astral senses. A person who dabbles in the astral realm begins to live on the astral plane and, hears and sees things of that plane, without his control.

But simultaneously with the control of the senses, one must control the mind and heart, lest one becomes a “false pietist of bewildered soul.” At times, we give up the desire outwardly but within there is longing. As one controls the senses, one must also control the mind and not indulge in mental gratification by fantasizing. It is important to recognize that *ultimately*, it is the *mind*, and not the senses that lead us astray. “The senses, moving toward their appropriate objects, are producers of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, which come and go and are brief and changeable; these do thou endure” (*Gita*, II). Senses and organs produce sensation, when they contact external objects. For instance, when we put ice-cream on the tip of our tongue, the tongue reports that it is cold and sweet, but it is the mind that intervenes and says, “I like it, I want more of it.” We are cautioned in *The Voice of the Silence*, “Thou shalt not let thy senses make a playground of thy mind.”

However, loss of a single sense makes us restless, especially because, loss of one sense affects the working of some other sense. For instance, senses of smell and taste are physiologically related, so that loss of sense of smell deeply affects sense of taste. Someone who intermittently lost and gained her sense of smell reported that only when her sense of smell returned she could taste the food

properly. “We so take for granted the rich aroma of coffee and sweet flavour of oranges that when we lose these senses, it is almost as if we have forgotten how to breathe,” lamented the woman. (*A Natural History of the Senses*, p. 41)

Blindness or the loss of sight makes a person thoroughly helpless. Likewise, deafness gives a person feeling of complete isolation. Ackerman points out that most people prefer to lose their hearing than their sight. Yet, people who are both deaf and blind often lament the loss of their hearing than their blindness. Hellen Keller, for instance, said, “Deafness is a much worse misfortune. For it means the loss of the most vital stimulus—the sound of the voice that brings language, sets thoughts astir and keeps us in the intellectual company of man. If I could live again I should do much more than I have for the deaf. I have found deafness to be a much greater handicap than blindness.” (*A Natural History of the Senses*, pp. 191-92)

Edgar Allan Poe said, the eyes are the windows for the soul, the windows of that haunted palace in which it dwells. Eyes not only reveal the emotions of joy, pain or hatred, they also reveal the inner character of the person. Animal magnetism is a fluid, an emanation, and some people can emit it for curative purposes through their eyes and the tips of their fingers. Eyes play an important role in the phenomenon of Hypnotism. In Braid’s method, hypnotic state is produced by fixing the eyes on some bright spot, a metal or a crystal. The eye is the most occult organ of all, on the superficies of our body, and it serves as medium between the bit of metal or crystal and our brain. The eye catches the molecular vibrations of the objects gazed at, and passes them on to the brain, attuning the molecular vibrations of the nervous centres of the brain with those of the object gazed at. The hypnotic state could also be produced by the direct gaze of the operator, in which the eye is the chief agent of the will of the active operator, but it is a slave and a traitor when this will is dormant, writes H.P.B.

Another mysterious power of gaze is, “the sense of being stared at.” At one time or another, all of us would have experienced the

feeling of someone watching us from behind. In his book, *The Sense of Being Stared At*, Rupert Sheldrake mentions that this sense of being stared at is often directional. People sense that they are being looked at, and they also become aware *where* the gaze is coming from. However, not all people turn around when they are stared at, but react with signs of unease. In the Second World War, RAF fighter pilots were advised not to stare at the enemy pilot, while they were preparing to shoot him down. “The intensity of gaze had been known to make the enemy pilot look straight round at his attacker.” If the sense of being stared at is real, it shows sensitivity that goes beyond our five known senses. It can be thought of as a “sixth sense,” or “extrasensory perception.”

Everything that is objective and manifest has its source or origin in the hidden or subjective. Likewise, the invisible or subjective is within the manifest. Objective and manifest aspects of everything can be experienced by the senses, while the subjective and concealed aspect is *intelligible* but escapes *sensation*. It is interesting to understand what Aristotle has to say on knowledge. To him, all knowledge begins with sense-experience. Sense-perception brings to us the knowledge of qualities and attributes of the object of perception. But, by a process of abstraction, we can reach at its underlying essence or the universal. Thus, for Aristotle, universal did not exist apart from the particular, which according to him may be reached through sense perception. Thus, the knowledge of the sense-perception (*aistheton*) leads to knowledge of the intelligible (*noeton*). When you see a book, you see its colour, size, thickness, etc. But once you remove the perceived attributes or qualities of a particular book, you reach the very essence of book itself, the universal or archetypal idea of book. Thus, when mind is active, the *potentially* intelligible (during sense perception) becomes *actually* intelligible.

(Concluded)

ON ANTIQUITY OF THE VEDAS

IN ANCIENT India, knowledge was divided into three main compartments: (1) Sruti—revelation; (2) Smriti—Laws and Tradition; (3) Itihasa-Purana—History and Mythology. Sruti means Revelation. Smriti results from remembrance of “what is heard,” *i.e.*, Sruti. In the Western religions, Revelation connotes that which is revealed by God to his chosen Prophets. In Hinduism it does not mean that at all. By purity of life, study, and meditation the human soul becomes capable of hearing the Song of Life which Mother Nature chants in the Voice of the Silence; such highly evolved souls *repeat* in the language of words what is heard.

The Sruti is composed of the Four Vedas. Occultism teaches that these were delivered by Primeval Sages on the shores of the Lake Mansarovar beyond the Himalayas, tens of thousands of years ago. It is, comparatively speaking, not important to argue out the exact era in which the Vedas were first transcribed, or subsequently arranged. The stages seem to be, first, the age when they were heard and remembered; second, the age when they were fully transcribed; and third, the age when they were rearranged till their present form was reached. H.P.B. says, “They are the most ancient as well as the most sacred of the Sanskrit works.”

There exist to-day four Vedas: Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva. Whether or not the Vedas known to-day retain their Original Impulse and their Original Vision is doubtful; this, however, may be taken as certain, that the efficacy of even what exists does not consist in their surface-meaning, but in their correct chanting. Originally there were three classes of priests, learned and holy, Hotri, Adhvaryu, and Udgatri; the first used the Rig, the second the Yajur, and the third the Sama. The use of the fourth or Atharva Veda was confined to a few versed in the esotericism of the three. (*Theosophy*, October 1931)

The date and the antiquity of the Vedas is the most difficult question for scholars and orientalists, as well as, for the Brahmins

and Pundits. No two orientalists agree on the antiquity of the Vedas. The antiquity assigned by the orientalists to the Vedas in their present form is between 1000 and 2000 B.C. Even today, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says, “No definite date can be ascribed to the composition of the Vedas, some of which possess high literary merit, but the period of about 1500–1200 B.C. would be acceptable to most scholars.”

In the article, “On the Vedas” (*The Theosophical Movement*, March 1935), the editorial comment draws our attention to two articles in *The Aryan Path* magazine: “Vedic Chronology: A Case for 11,000 B.C.” (April 1931) and “Antiquities of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro” (January 1930), both by Prof. S. V. Venkateswara. The article, “Vedic Chronology,” mentions that Orientalists like Sir William Jones, Charles Wilkins and Max Muller, seem to have been influenced by Archbishop Ussher’s work, who seems to have based his deductions on Hebrew records, prejudiced by the theological atmosphere of Oxford. To them the world was created in 4004 B.C. and Noah’s Deluge was in 2349 B.C. Likewise, accepting the Biblical chronology, which teaches that the first man appeared on earth 6,000 years ago, Professor Max Muller described the contents of Rig Veda as “babblings of infant humanity,” which is the humanity of 3,000 years ago. However, it is questionable how the foolish and undeveloped humanity of three thousand years ago, has become brilliant, acute and highly analytical men of the nineteenth century, writes H.P.B.

Also, there seems to be reluctance on part of the scholars to show Vedas to be older than the Old Testament. H.P.B. draws our attention to Prof. Muller’s comment: It will be difficult to settle “whether the Veda is ‘the oldest of books,’ and whether some of the portions of the Old Testament may not be traced back to the *same or even an earlier* date than the oldest hymns of the Veda.”

On the other hand, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, who was perfectly familiar with the Sanskrit literature, asserts that “The Vedas have now ceased to be objects of study for nearly 5,000 years,” and

places the first appearance of the four Vedas at an *immense antiquity*. Swami Dayanand Saraswati maintains that both Professor Muller and Dr. Wilson have been guided in their researches and conclusion by the inaccurate and untrustworthy commentaries of Sayana, Uvata and Mahidhar, whereas he himself has founded his work, the Veda Bhasya, on the old commentaries of ante-*Mahabharatan* period, to which western scholars had no access. If Swami Dayanand's claim is true then we cannot hesitate to follow him. However, between the two extreme claims by the Brahmins and the Orientalists for the development and growth of the Vedas, there ought to be a just mean, writes H.P.B.

Various factors must be kept in mind before commenting on the antiquity of the Vedas. For instance, H.P.B. points out that the Vedas were first taught *orally* for thousands of years, and were later compiled on the shores of Lake Mansarovar, beyond the Himalayas, in Tibet. The article, "Vedic Chronology," mentions that in deciding the cultural epochs of the vast Vedic age, we must bear in mind that there are different chronological strata in the vast collection, known as "Vedic literature." The *Rig-veda* is the earliest, and the hymns contained in Books 2 to 7 of *Rig-veda* form the earliest stratum, while those in Books 8 and 9 are later, and in Books 1 and 10 are the last. The *Yajur Veda* and *Atharva Veda* are of still later date.

In this article, Professor Venkateswara of Mysore University pushes the Vedic era to 11000 B.C., by studying the Vedic data under three heads: (1) Using philological evidence, by comparative study of languages. He argues that some of the western scholars have based their inference on short periods involved in the evolution of modern languages. Though modern languages may have evolved, one from the other, in short periods, we cannot assign such short period of evolution to earlier and older languages. He explains it by giving the illustration of the evolution of wheel and steam engine. It is a well-known fact that evolution of "wheel" took ages, whereas, transition from rude to advanced forms of steam engine took only few years, and not ages. (2) We might be able to ascertain the Vedic

era by studying the relation of Vedic Aryans with other people. The author argues that the earliest portion of *Rig-veda* shows that Agni was given the place of prominence in the Vedic pantheon, but later Soma and Indra succeeded in prominence as time rolled on. In the inscriptions of Asia Minor we find Agni missing, and Indra, Varuna and Nasatyas are given the place of prominence. Thus, Aryanism in the western Asia represents later stage in the development of Vedic religion. (3) Using astronomical evidence, we find that *Jyotishvedanga* contains a clear reference which connects the beginning of the year with the constellations. Thus, winter solstice was marked by constellation *Dhanishtha* or Delphini, which refers to about 1400 B.C. The *Upanishads* belong to an earlier age than the *Vedangas*, and in one of the *Upanishads* Pole-star has been mentioned as *Dhruva*, *i.e.*, fixed. This term could have been applied only to Alpha Draconis, and this was approximately at the pole of the equator at about 2800 B.C., it is argued. In *Brahmanas* or theological treatises in prose which explain the sacred significance of different rituals in the Vedas, we find still earlier references.

We find an interesting editorial comment on the article, "Vedic Chronology": "Fresh enquiry may push the era further back [further than 11,000 B.C.], and if teachings of the ancient Esoteric Doctrine are studied, surprises will be in store for our learned author himself. The article examines Vedic chronology from three points of view; we wish the talented Professor had added in the astronomical examination the consideration of the origin of the Hindu Zodiac. Also, we think the time is overdue to examine critically some of the old myths and find their historical significance, and use them in fixing Vedic ages. Thus, for example, when did the Great Deluge, so fully described in the eighth Adhyaya of the *Satapatha Brahmana* occur? Interested readers will find a wealth of material on both these items (the Aryan Zodiac and the Indian Flood) in the two volumes of *The Secret Doctrine*." It is interesting to note that in the *Secret Doctrine* H.P.B. mentions that Stockwell and Croll enumerate some half dozen Glacial Periods and subsequent Deluges—the earliest of

all being dated by them 850,000, and the last about 100,000 years ago. (*S.D.*, II, 140).

H.P.B. mentions that as compiled by Ved-Vyasa, the Brahmins unanimously assign to the Vedas, the date 3100 B.C., when Ved-Vyasa flourished. However, we cannot say that the Vedas are only as old as this date, because they are written in an ancient form of Sanskrit, which is different from the Sanskrit used now. Only the most learned of the Brahmin Pundits can read the Vedas in their original. In Preface to *Transactions* (p. xi), H.P.B. mentions that “Sanskrit, as now known, was not spoken by the Atlanteans, and most of the philosophical terms used in the systems of India, of the post-*Mahabharatan* period are not found in the Vedas.” H.P.B. asserts in *Isis Unveiled* that Sanskrit was the language of the inhabitants of the lost continent, Atlantis. “The Vedas, Brahminism and along with these, Sanskrit, were importations into what we now regard as India. They were never indigenous to its soil.” (Editorial Appendix to “The Sevenfold Principle in Man,” *The Theosophist*, January 1882)

Moreover, the four Vedas in totality, or taken each separately, are not a single work, but have been written at various periods of the ethnological evolution of the Indo-Aryan race. Hence, at best, we might say that the Vedas were *finally* arranged and compiled fourteen centuries before our era, as claimed by Mr. Colebrooke. But their antiquity is proven by the learned article by Krishna Shastri Godbole of Bombay, based on purely astronomical data, which proves that the Vedas must have been taught at least 25,000 years ago. To each hymn of the Rig-Veda, the name of the Seer or Rishi to whom it was revealed is prefixed. It, thus, becomes evident on the authority of these very names (such as Vasishtha, Viswamitra, Narada, etc.), all of which belong to men born in various *manvantaras* and even ages, that centuries, and perhaps millenniums, must have elapsed between the dates of their compositions. (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

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 meant when it is said in our literature that “Nature un-aided fails”?

Answer: Normally, the term “Nature” is taken to mean the sum total of all things existing around us, *i.e.*, the whole of creation, or the universe. In Theosophy, Nature is not viewed as an aggregate of flitting shadows and finite unrealities, *i.e.*, an aggregate of oceans, mountains, trees, etc. By Nature is meant eternal and uncreate nature, which is considered to be coeval and identical with the Deity. To understand the true meaning of “Nature” we must understand what is implied by “Deity.” This Deity is present in every atom of the visible and invisible cosmos. It is the mysterious power of *involution* and *evolution*. It is the incessantly *evolving* and not *creating* “builder” of the universe. The universe is not made but unfolds out of its own essence. Hence, when it is said that “Nature unaided fails,” it is implied that this mysterious power of evolution or One Law needs help of intelligent beings.

Every human being is a combination of Spirit and Matter or the Lower, personal self and Higher, Spiritual Self. Hence, there is a part of his being which is always in need of help from a higher plane. The child needs the help of his parents; the pupil unaided by a teacher fails; and every aspirant to higher Wisdom is in constant need of the advice and guidance of Those who have gone before. It must also apply to the very process of evolution. Impulse to evolution comes from the Monad or *Atma-Buddhi* unit. In the first stage, when the Monad passes through elemental, mineral, vegetable, animal and then human kingdom, there is an impulse from within to evolve

better and higher forms. However, the history of evolution on our earth shows that when time came to evolve human form, “Nature unaided failed.” There was need for aid or intervention of lunar *pitris* or lunar ancestors, who projected their *chhayas* or shadows which became the prototype or model over which nature concreted the present physical body. A graphic description has been given of the early attempt of the forces of nature to produce physical man, in the *Secret Doctrine*.

We are told that for 300 million years or three occult ages, man and earth were astral in nature. After this period there was the tilting of the axis of the earth, and consequent deluge. We are told that Earth or Nature created forms from her own materials, without calling for the help of “Sons of Wisdom” or “Sons of Heaven.” In her first attempt to create man, monsters half-animal and half-man were generated. These are described as “water-men terrible and bad,” who were the product of the “evolutionary impulse,” and are shown to be failures. We find it being mentioned in the “Book of the Dead,” and in the Chaldean account of creation, on the Cutha Tablets. These “water-men terrible and bad” are described as hideous beings—men with wings, four and two-faced men, human beings with two heads, with the legs and horns of a goat or “goat-men,” bulls with the heads of men, and dogs with the tails of fishes. In other words, there were combinations of various animals, men, fishes and reptiles, assuming each other’s shapes and countenance. H.P.B. says that the Chinese have the same tradition. In the book *Shan-Hai-King* or “Wonders by Sea and Land,” by the historiographer Chung Ku—from the engravings on nine urns made by the Emperor Yu (2255 B.C.)—mention is made of men having two distinct faces on their heads, before and behind, as also of monsters with bodies of goats and human faces. These are all accounts of physical nature having failed, when left to herself in the creation of animal and man. She (Nature) can produce the mineral and vegetable kingdoms and even lower animal kingdom, but when it comes to man, help of spiritual and intelligent powers is required for his creation (*S.D.*, II, 52-56).

Hence, help and intervention of Lunar and Solar *pitris* was sought for creating the form of man and to activate his mind.

The account goes on to say that these grotesque forms were destroyed. Only when the astral model was perfected did we get material bodies. This astral model or *chhaya* is the gift of Lunar *Pitris*, *Barhishad Pitris*, or *Pitar-Devata*, who evolved their shadows or *chhayas* to form the First Root Race on our Earth. But these lunar *pitris* could not give man the sacred spark, light of mind, or self-reflective consciousness that distinguishes man from animals, and this was left to the class of divine beings symbolized by Prometheus, also known as *Kumaras*, *Manasputras* or *Agnishwatta pitris*.

Question: What is worship? How should we worship God?

Answer: Right concept of worship emerges from the right concept of God. If God is considered to be an anthropomorphic being, outside of us, who must be prayed to and propitiated, then we are more likely to make an idol of God, and worship it ritualistically, thus giving it name, form and locality. God is everywhere. It is formless and nameless. There is but one God which manifests through its innumerable powers and forces, which we know as various gods and goddesses. They are all worthy of our reverence but not of worship. Worship means “worthy of having a relationship with,” and hence to worship the One Ultimate Reality, we must fit ourselves by serving the humanity. Selfless service is worship.

We may worship through our heart, our mind or our body. Generally we indulge in bodily worship, which involves *puja* or making offerings to idols of gods and goddesses or kneeling down, bowing down or prostrating before the idol of god several times in various directions. Sufi tradition differentiates between *Jismani Amul* or Practical worship which consists in fasting, prayers, pilgrimages, ablutions, rites, ceremonies, etc., and *Roohani Amul* or Spiritual worship, in which the spiritual seeker has to engage in mental abstraction and contemplation of the Soul and Deity. In other words, true worship is becoming worthy of having relationship with

our divine nature and that means opening up the channel of communication with the divine. We become aware of the presence of the divinity within through “the still small voice,” which guides us in our spiritual endeavours. We are asked to worship this divinity within, in the silence and solitude. “Enter into thine inner chamber and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret,” taught Jesus.

Generally, our concept of worship consists of making an offering of some “material thing” to an external deity. Even that would deserve to be called “worship” only if it is done with a *pure heart*. But there is more to worship than that, as expressed in the *Gita*:

Whatever thou doest, O son of Kunti, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever mortification thou performest, commit each unto me. Thus, thou shalt be delivered from...the bonds of action, and thy heart being joined to renunciation and to the practice of action, thou shalt come to me. (*Gita*, IX)

True worship is performing every action as an offering to Shri Krishna and that means performing it selflessly and without attachment to the results. Selfless action is that which is done without likes and dislikes, imbued with love. A person working in a toy factory may have a simple job of fitting nuts and bolts in various parts of the toy. But what is his attitude towards the work? Does he put his whole heart and soul into it, thinking all the time that the end result will be a lovely toy that might give happiness to some child? Service to humanity is equivalent to worshipping and serving the Lord, as expressed in the *Bible*:

For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in...Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me. (*Matthew*, xxv:35-40)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

“Mimicking” is one of the methods resorted to by the animals for survival. In 1848 Henry Walter Bates, a young British naturalist, discovered during his 11-year stay in the Amazon forests that the local relatives of a European butterfly known as the cabbage white or the pierids, had begun to develop showy red and yellow colours of rain forest butterflies called heliconids. The heliconids possess toxins and hence are unpalatable to predators. Observing this, the pierids variety of butterflies appeared to mimick the heliconids’ warning colours and escape predation. Bates called the pierids the “mockers.” His discovery provided the first independent evidence to corroborate Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection. A century and a half later, biologists are increasingly recognizing the significance of impersonators, and mimicry is fast becoming a model system for studying evolution.

Besides visual mimicry, animal mimicry takes many forms. There are chemical, acoustic and even behavioural mimics. Among behavioural mimics there is *Thaumoctopus mimicus*, the so-called mimic octopus from Indonesia, which masquerades as a flounder, by holding its arms together to copy the flatfish’s shape, and undulating them to replicate its mode of swimming. It is known to copy not only the colouration of lion fish and the banded sea snake, but also mimics their *shapes*. Likewise, large blue caterpillars in Britain, emit a chemical signal to attract local ants, and trick them into believing the caterpillars as one of their own. The bamboozled ants not only carry the caterpillars to their underground nests, but they even feed them by killing their own larvae. That is because in addition to copying the ant’s *chemical* signal, the caterpillars replicate an *acoustic cue*, *i.e.*, they mimic a tiny noise the queen ant makes, and thus assure for themselves steady food supply.

Animal mimicry also seems to explain the process by which one population of a species becomes reproductively isolated (unable to mate with other populations) and gives rise to a new species. For

instance, Marcus Kronforst of Harvard University worked with two populations of *Heliconius cydno* butterflies in Costa Rica. He observed that *H. cydno* butterflies with mutant yellow wing colouration, instead of the normal white, prefer yellow mates because the gene for wing colour is linked to the gene for mate choice. In Costa Rica the yellow form has evolved into a separate species, writes Peter Forbes, a London-based science writer. (*Scientific American*, May 2011)

Mimicking or imitating seems to be going on in Nature all the time. H.P.B. points out that there are insects which copy with almost a mirror-like fidelity the colour and even the outward form of plants, leaves, flowers, pieces of dead twigs, etc. These are exceptions, and could be explained on the basis of some invisible intelligence *outside* the insect, which copies with such accuracy from larger originals. There are hierarchies of “Builders of forms,” the lower forms being fashioned by Elementals or Nature Spirits. She points out that the theory of natural selection is inadequate to explain this mysterious faculty of imitation. We are asked to believe that the “imitation of protecting colours is caused by the use and benefit it offers the imitator,” as a “potent weapon in the struggle for life.” Yet, daily experience shows us quite the reverse. It is not true that imitation of the colour of the soil is invariably found in the weaker animals, because we find that lion—who need fear no stronger enemies than himself in the desert—has a coat of skin that exactly matches the rocks and sandy plains of the desert. There are a number of animals in whom the most pronounced forms of the imitative faculty is entirely useless, and often pernicious and self-destructive, as in case of the monkeys, magpies and parrots, who imitate human speech or human behaviour. She points out that Occultism attributes this imitative faculty to early intermediate links. Thus, for instance, in case of leaf-like insects, there are intermediate links between certain vegetations and the insect kind. Millions of years ago, these “missing links” were numerous, but now they are becoming rare,

and found only in a limited number of localities. (*Transactions*, pp. 129-132)

H.P.B. mentions a curious tale of the sacred tree of Kumbum (*The Theosophist*, March 1883), bearing, on every one of its leaves, a Tibetan character. The bark of the tree and branches were also covered with these characters. H.P.B. mentions that this is not an uncommon happening in nature. On the shells in the waters of the Red Sea some Hebrew alphabets were found. Upon certain locusts, English alphabets were found. On the wings of certain German butterflies numerals of the year 1881 were found to be marked. So also, we find animals mimicking vegetable growths and caterpillars looking like tree-barks, mosses, etc. Tiger’s stripes are mimicry of the stalks of jungle grass. H.P.B. states that the letter-tree of Tibet is a fact and the inscriptions in its leaf-cells and fibres are in *Senzar*—a sacred language used by the adepts.

What gives birth to civilization, agriculture or religion? Just twenty years ago most researchers believed that they knew time, place, and rough sequence of the Neolithic Revolution which involved transformation from scattered group of hunter-gatherers to farming villages, and then from there to technologically sophisticated societies with great temples and towers. But in recent years multiple new discoveries, prominently the discovery of pillars at the temple of Gobekli Tepe in Southern Turkey— 11,600 years old and up to 18 feet tall—have forced the archaeologists to reconsider. At first Neolithic Revolution was viewed as a single event that occurred in a single location, *viz.*, at Mesopotamia (or Sumer), between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, in what is now Southern Iraq, and then spread to India, Europe, and beyond. Sumer represented the beginning of civilization. Most archaeologists have believed that this sudden blossoming of civilization was due to environmental changes. In fact, there are two theories about the turning point in history which

marked the advent of Neolithic Revolution. According to one theory, the ending of Ice Age in about 9600 B.C., might have led to warmer climate and more abundant vegetation and wild game, and that may have led to agriculture. After people began settling in villages and engaged in farming, religion might have arisen to promote social co-operation. Alternatively, wonderment at changes in the natural world might have led to religion, first, and then people coming together for rituals, might have created the need to grow food for large groups gathering near sacred sites.

Klaus Schmidt, a researcher at the German Archaeological Institute, and his team, excavated several huge stone pillars at Gobekli Tepe, in South eastern Turkey. Though hundreds of people must have been required to carve and erect these pillars, amazingly, there was no sign of habitation, showing that hunter-gatherers had constructed Gobekli Tepe. Civilization is a product of the human mind, says Schmidt. Increasingly, archaeologists studying the origins of civilizations in Southeastern Turkey are coming to the conclusion that perhaps there is no single path to civilization. In one place agriculture may have been the foundation; in another art and religion; and in still another place it could be population pressure or social organization and hierarchy, writes Charles C. Mann. (*National Geographic*, June 2011)

Theosophy traces back the origin of civilization to the point of first awakening of human consciousness—when man’s mind was lighted up or activated. The early humanity had divine instructors. It is through them that the infant humanity of the Third Race got its first notions of arts and sciences, as well as of spiritual knowledge; and it is they who have laid the first foundation-stone of those ancient civilizations which puzzle our modern scholars, writes H.P.B. The extraordinary knowledge possessed by the ancients is a mystery. In the architecture of Vitruvius Pollio we find all the rules of proportion being followed, which were taught *anciently at initiations*. To understand his truly divine art, one has to understand the deep esoteric significance hidden in every rule and law of proportion. H.P.B.

challenges that no man descended from a Palaeolithic cave-dweller could ever evolve such a science *un-aided*, even after many millions of years of intellectual evolution. Such knowledge of architectural proportions was passed on by the rishis and sages of Third Root Race, from one generation to another, to Egypt, Greece, and later to Gnostic priests. (*S.D.*, I, 208-9 and fn.)

There is overlapping of races and hence also of civilizations. The Aryan nations have descended from the Atlanteans and they in their turn are descendants of still more spiritual races of the Lemurians. Savage man lived side by side with the civilized man. Thus, in some regions of the Earth, a portion of mankind preferred leading a nomadic and patriarchal life, and in others savage man was hardly learning to build a fire and to protect himself against the Elements. But at that same time, there were more evolved races of men, who helped by divine intelligences, built cities, and cultivated arts and sciences. Civilizations have ever developed physical and intellectual at the cost of psychic and spiritual. (*S.D.*, II, 318-19)

Writing about Palaeolithic and Neolithic man, H.P.B. seems to suggest that there have been savages at all times, so that even during Palaeolithic and Neolithic period there might have been civilized people and cultured nations living side by side with rude savages. Neolithic man immigrated from Asia and Northern Africa. H.P.B. points out that tribes peopling Northern Africa were certainly of an Atlantean origin, hundreds of thousands of years before the Neolithic Period in Europe, but gradually they diverged from the parent type. (*S.D.*, II, 716 and fn.)

In the article, “India—‘The Alma Mater,’” we are told that India is the home of the parent-stock of the Aryan Root Race. It has been like the Foster Mother nourishing the daughter races or sub-races with her culture. It was India of 6,000 years ago which has played a major role in building the civilizations of Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome, Judea, and Babylonia, and hence called the “cradle of civilization” (*Theosophy*, May 1931). In the article, “More Light on Sumeria” there is an indication that Sumerian civilization flourished

where there was first Mesopotamian civilization, which was between the two rivers, Euphrates and Tigris. It was also north of Persian Gulf. The Aryan Adepts travelled to West and taught the barbarians of Mesopotamia. Archaeologists find close similarities between the Sumerian culture and that of Indus Valley civilization. (*Theosophy*, July 1933)

August 13 is celebrated as Left Hander's Day. A quarter of the world's population are defined as sinister, not because of their thoughts or actions, but because they prefer to use left hand over right hand. Till a few decades ago, left-handers were associated with witches. Using left hand is considered bad omen in Hindu rituals, which insist on using right hand. It is the rule of Indian dining that one eats only with the right hand. In English language we have expressions such as, being at the *right* place, at the *right* time. If you have a good day, then you probably got up on the *right* side of the bed. However, left-handers are more likely to be geniuses. According to a study, left-handers are, on an average, 15 per cent richer than right-handers, if they attended college. A lefthander is called "southpaw." However, "I often take solace in knowing that other southpaws include Amitabh Bachchan, Mahatma Gandhi, Julia Roberts, and another 260 million geniuses from Picasso to Joan of Arc," writes Shaili Chopra.

It is strictly prohibited to salute with the left hand, explains the left-handed cop, who was reprimanded for the same, by his superior. "The [Left Hander's] day was first celebrated in America on August 13, 1976, elected for both, its date (13) and day (Friday)—a double devil whammy because left-handers were also considered unlucky, writes Joanna Rebello. The Pune Association of Left-handers was formed by Bipinchandra Chaugule, a television producer, who says that when a left-handed person is forced to use his right hand, his left brain is taxed, and it leads to problems like stammering, dyslexia and personality changes. There are "confused handers," who do

not know which hand to use for what purpose, due to neurological problem. "People should be allowed to do what comes naturally, and not be forced," says Chaugule. (*The Times of India*, August 13, 2011)

The Latin word *sinistra* originally meant "left," but later on was associated with "evil" and "unlucky," and hence we have the English word "sinister." The Latin word for right-handed is *dexter*, and historically right hand has been associated with skill. Duggas and Sorcerers are said to be Adepts of the Left Hand Path or Black Magic. The Initiates and the Wise Ones are said to be the followers of White Magic or Right Hand Path.

In the article, "How Shall We Sleep?" reprinted in *Five Years of Theosophy*, Nobin K. Bannerji draws our attention to rules laid down by sages, such as, Garga and Markendya, as to the sleeping position, for the inhabitants of plains and not for the dweller of the mountains. The rule is that on retiring a man should first lie on right side for the period of sixteen breathings, and then turn on his left for double that time, and after that he can sleep in any position.

It is difficult to show any specific reason why right hand is considered more auspicious than left hand. Probably the explanation lies in terms of magnetism of human body and magnetism of our earth. Explaining human magnetism, H.P.B. tells us that the body of man is filled with an aura, "dynamide," "fluid," vapour, or whatever we may choose to call it; that it is alike in both sexes; that it is specially given off at the head, hands, and feet. Like the aura from the magnet, it is polar; that the whole left side is positive, and imparts a sensation of warmth to a sensitive to whom we may apply our left hand, while the whole right side of the body is negative, and imparts a feeling of coolness. "The two poles are called the right and left ends of our globe—the right being the North Pole—or the head and feet of the earth. Every beneficent (astral and cosmic) action comes from the North; every lethal influence from the South Pole. They are much connected with and influence 'right' and 'left' hand magic." (*S.D.*, II, 400 fn.)

However, not all prefer right hand over left hand. The Scouts and Guides use left-handed handshake to greet fellow members, because left hand is nearest the heart, which is offered as a token of friendship. According to another version, Left hand shake is centred round African warriors, who use the left hand to hold their shields, and they lower it to shake the left hand of the person, to show that they trusted each other. According to yet another version, left hand shake is symbol of bravery. Ashanti warriors told Lord Baden Powell, the founder of Scouts and Guides, that in their land only the bravest of the brave shake hands with the left hand, because to do so we must drop our shields and our protection.

HE is the real Sadhu [saint], who can reveal the form
of the Formless to the vision of these eyes:
Who teaches the simple way of attaining Him
that is other than rites or ceremonies:
Who does not make you close the doors, and
hold the breath, and renounce the world:
Who makes you perceive the Supreme Spirit
wherever the mind attaches itself:
Who teaches you to be still in the midst of
all activities.
Ever immersed in bliss, having no fear in his
mind, he keeps the spirit of union in the
midst of all enjoyments.
The infinite dwelling of the Infinite Being is
Everywhere: in earth, water, sky, and air:
Firm as the thunderbolt, the seat of the seeker
is established above the void.
He who is within is without: I see Him and
none else.

—*One Hundred Poems of Kabir*