

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 11, No. 5

September 17, 2019

HOPE AND OPTIMISM

HOPE is a simple word with many meanings. It means different things to different people. Hope means to hold on rather than to give up, because hope shows that something can be done, things can improve and tides may turn. According to Dr. Judith Rich, “Hope is a match in a dark tunnel, a moment of light, just enough to reveal the path ahead and ultimately the way out.” To be hopeful about something is to look on the future positively, to anticipate the desired thing or outcome. Hope is misinterpreted to mean wishful thinking, Pollyanna optimism, utopian dreams and passive expectations. False hopes lead to disappointment, frustration and passivity. We cannot hope to pass an examination after submitting a blank paper. But interestingly, even false hope is considered better than doubt. Writing to a student-aspirant Mr. Judge says: “Better a false hope with no doubt, than much knowledge with doubts of your own chances.” One has to be hopeful and not doubt one’s capacity even in the face of all adversities and bodily or mental handicaps, especially, in living the spiritual life. In a sense, it is not false hope, because the impossibility and the consequent “hopelessness” at a given point in time is only apparent, because we judge things from our limited viewpoint. A Master of Wisdom advises an aspirant to not fight misfortune in advance if things do not happen as one’s worldly wisdom expects them to happen. He is asked to cultivate cheerful confidence and hope, because doubt unnerves and pushes back one’s

progress. True hope is never a fool's blind optimism, but as Christopher Lasch expresses it, "Hope implies a deep-seated trust in life....[which] would not be worth much if it had not survived disappointments in the past, while knowledge that the future holds further disappointments demonstrates the continuing need for hope."

Hope is an integral part of human life. It keeps us going. Science has repeatedly proven that hope has positive impact on our wellbeing. We live with the hope for a better tomorrow. In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl writes that his experiences in the concentration camp showed that there is a close relation between the state of mind of a man—in terms of courage and hope, or lack of them—and the state of immunity of his body. Sudden loss of hope and courage can have deadly effect. He observes that majority of prisoners had lived in the naïve hope that they would be home again by Christmas, and so, when that did not seem to happen, many of them died. Also, prisoners who had lost any hope for the future, and had no future goal were also doomed. But those who had something to look forward to, who hoped to come out of the concentration camp and tell about their experiences to the world, survived the tortures.

Hope is a universal stimulant shared by all beings. It is the basis of all our endeavours and efforts. We set our minds and hearts on achieving many goals. It is hope which stimulates us to strive towards achieving them. Constancy of hope determines the persistency of effort in any direction. This is especially true when effort is being made to achieve a spiritual goal. Since a hopeful or optimistic person is ready to try one more time and find different ways of approaching the problem, researchers have found a close link between hope and divergent thinking, because divergent thinking is marked by richness of ideas and originality of thinking.

The term Optimism is derived from the Latin *optimum*, meaning "best," and hence being optimistic means expecting the best possible outcome from any given situation. Thus, optimism is a mental attitude reflecting a belief or hope that the outcome of some specific

endeavour, or outcomes in general, will be positive, favourable and desirable. The opposite view is termed pessimism. A common idiom used to illustrate optimism versus pessimism is a glass filled with water to the halfway point: an optimist is said to see the glass as half full, while a pessimist sees the glass as half empty. Optimism may be described as the attitude of seeing brighter side of life or seeing opportunities in challenges. Just like hope, the attitude or attribute of optimism seems to be connected with the higher and nobler aspect of human mind. Explaining the dual nature of human mind, higher and lower, H.P.B. says that the higher part of the mind is connected with the spiritual soul or *Buddhi*, and the lower is connected with *Kama* or animal soul. There are only very few people who think with the higher faculties of the mind, which concerns exercise of intuition and imagination. She differentiates such people from the materialists, who believe only in the material reality, and reject Spirit, Soul, God, etc., and hence would find it very difficult to raise themselves to spiritual level. Optimism and pessimism depend on it—the tendency to think with the higher faculties of the mind—in a large measure, writes H.P.B. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, p. 205)

In Christianity there are three "Theological" virtues, Faith, Hope and Love, which are considered to be spiritual gifts of God. Thus, from a religious context, Hope being a theological virtue, is not to be looked upon as a mere human emotion. It is a virtue with divine origin. "At the very base of your nature you will find faith, hope, and love," says *Light on the Path*. In a deeper sense it is the hope of becoming a better human being. True hope has its foundation in knowledge—*knowledge* of an ultimate objective possible of attainment by every human being. It is a hope of reaching unconditional happiness. It is also hope for spiritual progress of humanity. Therefore, it is said that hope springs eternal in the human breast. It is the well-spring of life, which brings hidden energies and powers to the surface. It is the kind of hope which cannot be dashed or extinguished completely. It rises, phoenix-like, from its ashes. Life on earth is full of fruitless strivings and disappointments,

and yet what is it that keeps us striving and aspiring to achieve? Hope is unique to man, and so is aspiration, which in a way is proof that life has a noble purpose, that intellect and reason are not man's highest powers, and that there is the immortal soul in man which is superior to all obstacles. That is why even when, seemingly, there is nothing to live for, human beings continue, intuitively, as expressed in *Prometheus Bound*, "To love, and bear; to hope, till hope creates from its own wreck the thing it contemplates."

Hope is related to Greek mythology of Prometheus and Pandora. The myth of Prometheus relates to evolution of man. Prometheus' two great gifts to humanity are fire and hope. There was a time in evolution of man, when man was really no better than a beast, though in human form. According to this myth, Prometheus stole "fire" from heaven and brought it to earth. Zeus punished him for this act by tying him to a rock and sending a vulture every day to peck at his liver. Every time that the bird tore out the organ, new organ would grow and once again the torture would be repeated. This agony lasted for thousands of years, until he was freed by Hercules. This myth refers to the "light of the mind" given to man by solar deities, endowing him with the power to choose, think and to reason. At incarnation this mind becomes dual. The aspect of mind, which is entangled in Kama (passions), represents the eternal vulture of unsatisfied desires, despair and regret. Thus, man gifted with the mind, has misused the powers of the mind, breaking the harmony between the divine and earthly natures. Man is no longer Prometheus, one who could see ahead, but has become Epi-metheus, "he who sees only after the event." The mythology says that a beautiful woman, Pandora, was created by the gods under the orders of Zeus to be sent to Epimetheus, brother of Prometheus; she had charge of a casket in which all the evils, passions and plagues which torment humanity were locked up, which she opened, and thus set free all the ills which prey on mankind. However, hope remained at the bottom of the casket, and she closed it before it could fly away. In the words of Hesiod, "Epimetheus, befooled by the charms of

Pandora, accepted her destructive gifts—gifts of the immortals—and thereby brought misery and destruction to human race." In a sense, the aspirations of Mankind for higher things are represented as the actual cause of human misery. Hope aids our struggle for better future, using the "fire" of mind, through self-induced and self-devised ways and means, checked by Karma.

The Doctrine of Karma is the Doctrine of Responsibility, and the Doctrine of Rebirth is that of Hope. Those who believe in the strict justice of the law of Karma will never entertain false hope of future mercy or salvation by proxy. We are a long way off from becoming a Buddha. It is no easy task to improve our nature. To overcome a single defect in our character or develop a single virtue takes enormous effort and time. The Buddha said: "Far hath he gone whose foot treads down one fond offence." Rebirth provides an opportunity for progress. In the face of such stupendous task of overcoming evil within oneself and without, in terms of great wickedness of the individual and collective heart of man, one is bound to experience despair. "Hope deferred makes the heart grow weary" is the old saying, but which should never be uttered by the genuine aspirant to Higher Life. He must know that he is himself responsible for his lack of progress or slow progress. These encouraging words from a Master of Wisdom, written to a disciple, "Why feel 'unhappy' and 'disappointed'? My good, my *faithful* friend, remember that hope deferred is no hope lost," bring comfort to all aspirants to chelaship. There is also the fountain of joy and hope in the consideration that there are Masters, the perfected beings, who fought this very fight and have triumphed.

These Elder Brothers of Humanity despair not of humanity and are there to guide us on the right path. We must emulate them. To be able to say that with all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams it is still a beautiful world, or with all its pride, cruelty, wickedness and dissembling, there is still hope for humanity, is the mark of true optimism, rooted in the belief expressed by Carlyle: "From the lowest depth, there is a path to the loftiest height." What may appear to us

as a thoroughly selfish, wicked, brutal and indifferent person, may not be a “hopeless” case, in the eyes of the merciful law of Karma, which is ready to give one more chance to him as long as there is some goodness, or even potentiality of the same. That potentiality of good thought or action is not lost so long as one’s connection with the divine nature is not completely severed. “It is not so easy to go to hell as preachers declare it to be,” says *Through the Gates of Gold*. A Master of Wisdom explains that even a person, who may be a monster of wickedness, sensuality, ambition, avarice, pride, deceit, etc., has still in him the spark of divinity “smouldering under a heap of dirt,” and has therefore not yet become a *soulless brute*. He is punished in *Avitchi*, “uninterrupted hell,” which could well be a state or place on our earth, “where the culprits, *die and are reborn without interruption—yet not without hope of final redemption.*” (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

But when the lower mind repeatedly ignores the guidance of the Higher Self, one gradually stops hearing the voice of conscience. Then, after several life times, after being given chance after chance by nature, to turn the corner, if a person deliberately chooses evil and continues to do so, finally, there comes a point when there is not a single good or noble thought, feeling or action, that is worthy of being part of the Higher Ego. Then the path of communication between the lower mind which is the child is broken from the divine parent, resulting in a *lost soul*. When the lower mind breaks its connection with the divine Self, it is like a stem of a tree asking to be separated from the roots which nourish it. When it is disconnected, it perishes. Only such people are “beyond hope of redemption.” But such “hopeless” cases are rare, and that is why H.P.B. says that no student of Theosophy should despair of humanity, but aid in the development of the nobler qualities. “Even if the man of most evil ways worship me with exclusive devotion, he is to be considered as righteous, for he hath judged aright. Such a man soon becometh of a righteous soul and obtaineth perpetual happiness.” (*Gita*, IX)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE TELL-TALE HEART

“THE TELL-TALE HEART” is a short story by American writer Edgar Allan Poe, first published in James Lowell’s *The Pioneer* in 1843. It is considered to be one of Poe’s best known short stories, a classic of the Gothic fiction genre. The term “Gothic fiction” refers to style of writing that is characterized by elements of fear, horror, death and gloom. The story begins with the unnamed narrator giving a detailed account, of the events that have already taken place, to another unnamed and unknown person. It begins with the line, “True!—nervous—very, very nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad?” The narrator insists that he is sane, but is suffering from a disease (nervousness) which causes “over-acuteness of the senses.” He says that his sensitivities allow him to hear and sense things in heaven, hell and on earth that other people are not even aware of. Is it his over-sensitivity which is responsible for his obsession for the old man’s eye? The old man with whom the narrator lives has a clouded, pale blue, “vulture-like” eye, which distresses the narrator so much that he plots to murder the old man, despite insisting that he loved the old man.

The narrator insists that his careful precision in committing the murder of the old man proves that he cannot possibly be insane. For seven nights, the narrator opens the door of the old man’s room in order to shine a light from his lantern onto the “evil eye,” but the old man’s “vulture eye” is always closed, making it impossible for him to kill the old man.

On the eighth night, the narrator’s hand slips and makes a noise, waking up the old man. He says that he could hear the beating of the old man’s heart. It grew louder and louder every moment. He says that at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, such a strange noise excited him to terror. As the beating grows louder and louder, he is anxious that the sound would be heard by a neighbour! So, he enters the room with a scream,

opens the lantern, and allows the light to fall on the “evil eye,” and finds that it is wide open. The narrator drags the old man off the bed and smothers him with his own bed. He says that for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound, and at length it ceased. The old man was dead.

The narrator then dismembers the body and conceals the pieces under the floorboards, and ensures the concealment of all signs of the crime. He insists again that he is not mad, because he took “wise” precaution to conceal the body. Even so, the old man’s scream before dying causes the neighbour to report to the police. The narrator invites them in to look around, and explains that the scream heard by the neighbours was his own, as he saw a nightmare. He says that the old man is out of town. The narrator being confident that the police will not find any evidence of the murder, brings them into the old man’s bedroom, and talks with them, sitting on the very spot where the body of the old man is concealed. The police suspect nothing, as the narrator has a pleasant and easy manner.

But very soon the narrator gets very uncomfortable, as he hears the terrible ticking noise. As the noise grows louder, the narrator comes to the conclusion that it is the heartbeat of the old man coming from under the floorboards. The sound increases steadily, but the police seem to pay no attention to it. The narrator wonders how it could be possible that they did not hear the loud beating. Terrified by the violent beating of the heart and convinced that “they [the police officers] were making a mockery of my horror...[and] anything was better than this agony,” he breaks down and confesses, saying, “Villians! Dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks here, here!—It is the beating of his hideous heart!” He tells the police to tear up the floorboards to reveal the remains of the old man’s body.

Is this yet another story of horror? The analysis of the story reveals that in this story Edgar Poe has tried to explore the dark side of human mind and heart. It is intriguing, as we get no clue to the motive for murder. The narrator denies having any feelings of hatred

or resentment for the old man. The only motive for murder is the old man’s “vulture-like” eye, which the narrator says, chills his very blood when it looks upon him. To rid himself of the eye, he must take the old man’s life. His fear of the eye eventually leads to his obsession over it. Ultimately, this obsession leads to his insane decision to murder the old man, to get rid of the eye. Why does the author use the “eye” as the focal point of the narrator’s obsession and anger? According to some critics, “eyes” held a certain powerful, recurring force for Edgar Poe, as can be seen in his other stories and poems. Thus, for instance, the “eye” tormented the narrator, just as the empty socket of the cat did in another short story, “The Black Cat.” The Eye is considered to be the window of the soul, which allows us to look into the inner side of a person, to be aware of his thoughts and feelings.

However, when the complex mind of the narrator is looked upon from the psychological view point, the tormenting “Eye” is not seen as the “evil eye” in a traditional sense, which brings harm to whatever it sees. The old man’s eye has no supernatural power which can pose a threat to the safety of the narrator. Both the critics, B.D. Tucker and Arthur E. Robinson, suggest that evil “eye” may be equated with the evil “I.” The old man’s evil eye seems to reflect the unwholesome side of the narrator that he is not willing to acknowledge. The narrator seems to view the old man’s eye as an all-seeing eye, the piercing eye of God which can see his true self, the dark side that he tries to escape from. Robinson writes, “In the death of the old man he [the narrator] sought to kill a part of himself, but his ‘demons’ could not be exorcised through murder, for he himself is their destined victim.”

The central theme of this story is considered to be “guilty conscience” of the narrator. We should not commit crime because in the end our own sense of guilt will expose us. “Tell-tale” means anything which reveals, indicates, or betrays something that would otherwise not be noticed. The narrator’s “tell-tale” heart causes him to convict himself. Even when he is sure that the police do not suspect

him of having committed the crime, the guilt and remorse he subconsciously feels, brings him to confess his crime. When we have done something wrong, guilty conscience pricks. We may try hard to silence the terrible judgment that comes from within, and also try to fool others, but we cannot get away from ourselves. The beating heart is the narrator's guilty conscience that continues to remind him of his evil deed. He begins his narration by confessing that he was "very, very dreadfully nervous," thereby showing that he was not a cold-blooded murderer, and that somewhere there was an awareness in him that he was about to do something wrong.

H.P.B. writes that Heart is "the organ *par excellence* through which the 'Higher' Ego acts—through the Lower Self." Hence, the Heart is considered to be the organ of Spiritual Consciousness, and associated with spiritual discrimination and intuition. *Chhandogya Upanishad* speaks of the "lotus of the heart" within the body, and is compared to one's Ego, or *Buddhi-Manas*, where there is sheer perception of truth, without reference to our likes and dislikes. Hence, the pangs of remorse for wrong done and the prickings of Conscience are said to come from the Heart.

It is useful to turn to the article on the writings of Edgar Poe that appeared in *The Theosophical Movement* magazine of November 1949, as it throws some more light on the aspects of the story which elude explanation. In the article, "The Theosophy of Edgar Allan Poe," we read that this American poet, who died at the age of forty was a genius in his own way, though not to be compared with the Buddha or Jesus. "And yet, if his creative powers were but the flowering of aptitudes cultivated in previous lives, they were *sui generis*. Few, if any, have excelled Poe in the depiction of the macabre, the sinister, in the painting of ruin, the evoking of despair, of dread, of awe before the superphysical. Some of his poems, like many of his tales, are incomprehensible as to their motivation if considered out of the context of his unhappy life and of the alcohol to which he turned to forget his troubles. Poe's adult life was a long battle with poverty and sorrow and with the temptation that alcohol

presented. Some of his most thrilling and horrible tales...were written during the hours of maddening intoxication." Reference is made to an unsigned review, that appeared in *The Theosophist* magazine, of his most famous poem, "The Raven," in which a hint is thrown out to explain the perverted aspect of Poe's genius. Thus,

The scenes suggested by his sombre, wild, and morbid imagination, are yet sketched with a most wonderful power of naturalness. There is such a ring of truth about them, showing in the author such a subtle faculty of analysis, that to the really *spiritual* mind, they are fully suggestive of the psychological possibilities, nay—of the *realities* in the "Night-side of Nature."

Under the influence of opium or alcohol, it is explained, an abnormal disturbance takes place in the brain, tending to paralyze its functions for the time being and to banish moral sentiment, "during which period, those far keener perceptions of the so-called 'spiritual' mind, come into play." (*The Theosophist*, April 1882)

Poe himself, in one of his sombre but not horrible tales, "Eleonora," puts in the mouth of his hero a suggestion of the value of "*moods* of mind exalted at the expense of the general intellect. They who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night. In their gray visions they obtain glimpses of eternity, and thrill, in waking, to find that they have been upon the verge of the great secret. In snatches, they learn something of the wisdom which is of good, and more of the mere knowledge which is of evil. They penetrate, however, rudderless or compassless into the vast ocean of the 'light ineffable'" (*The Theosophical Movement*, November 1949). The article goes on to point out that Edgar Poe's wonderful analytical powers made his mystery tales real work of art, though devoid of any depth of human sympathy.

THE MARRIAGE IDEAL

II

IT IS believed by many that modern progress has freed men and women from the obligations of marriage and family ties sanctified in traditional society so that they could enjoy personal freedom and pursue unfettered their individual goals. Individualism has come to be seen more and more as the most desirable virtue. Is marriage necessary at all, is the oft repeated question. Freedom to have children outside the wedlock, single parenting, surrogacy, childfree marriage, etc., are common popular choices. Public debate on these issues is mostly centred round constitutional rights of individuals and legal implications. There seems to be no clarity regarding the bearing of moral and ethical considerations on these issues.

Views of modernists on the question of marriage and family as briefly stated above seems to find their justification from the standpoint of modern scientific conception that man is no more than *homo sapiens* descended from the primates, and narrowly self-interested *homo economicus* as a social being. But sociologists point out that the social, psychological and moral fallout of a course of conduct based on such assumptions are so complex and far reaching that the moral and ethical implications implicit in such behaviour not only cannot be ignored but have to be taken into account as a part of the solution to the problem. But social ethic of the modern conception is an extrinsic value, and not intrinsic virtue arising out of the mandate of conscience, perception and soul-wisdom of man himself. Only in the latter, when allowed unhindered expression in the lives of people, that there lies the key to redemption of society from the endless affliction of its many ills. Therefore, the question of sanctity and ideals of married life are to be considered from a knowledge of the spiritual and moral laws.

It is perfectly natural that men and women, being one of the pairs of opposites of the great duality of nature, seek companionship of one another in wedlock for an enduring satisfaction in mutual love and affection, and desire to bring forth progeny. Ways of life

and conduct that are in conformity of laws of nature can never be wrong. Conjugal life conducted in conformity with those laws unites the couple in the enduring bliss of spiritual union and constitutes the foundation of true human happiness and higher human evolution. Infringement of these immutable laws of higher life, on the other hand, is the principal cause of the many ills and diseases which afflict individuals and society at large, and of human degradation.

What are those laws of life? *The Secret Doctrine* teaches, “Man ought to be ever striving to help the divine evolution of *Ideas*, by becoming to the best of his ability a *co-worker with nature* in the cyclic task” (I, 280). Is not the *Ideas* referred to “the ideal forms which lie buried in the bosom of the Eternal Ideation, as the future lotus leaves, the immaculate petals, are concealed within the seed of that plant...”? (S.D., I, 380). The Archetypal Heavenly Man, the heavenly Adam, in the image of which divine perfection is the terrestrial man, the earthly Adam, modelled, and is the provisional reflection of the Heavenly Man. Man ought to be ever striving to unfold the innate divine perfection of his true Self and nature while living on earth in the body by faithfully conforming to cosmic and Karmic laws, which ever tend to raise the earthly types to the perfection of their divine prototypes; becoming, in other words, a co-worker with nature in her cyclic task of evolving perfect Man. The institution of marriage and householder stage in the school of life of the human being on earth have lessons of vital importance which have to be learned in the great journey of the Soul on the road to perfection. Many an aspirant wishing to cultivate spiritual life to attain liberation avoids marriage and severs family ties, and adopts the life of celibacy and monasticism. The belief is that celibacy is a pre-requisite condition for spiritual development. This was one of the misconceptions the Theosophical Teachers had to contend with when the Theosophical Society was first founded, and point out the true way.

In answer to the question whether a man must marry or remain celibate, H. P. Blavatsky points out that there is no hard and fast rule

applicable to all men and women, but varies with the needs, circumstances and development of each individual. She says that if an individual intends to live in the world, has ties and wishes, even though a good and earnest Theosophist and an ardent worker for the Theosophical cause, aspires to know the Truth to help others, there is no reason why he should not marry. Theosophy, she points out, is not so fanatical as to preach against marriage altogether. On the contrary, she propounds a very important truism: “Marriage is the only remedy against immorality” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 260, Indian ed.). St. Paul also propounded the same psychological truism when he said that it is good if they can remain single as himself was, “But if they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn” (I, *Corin.*, VII/7). In other words, merely restraining the outer senses but living in desires in the mind and imagination is the worst of hypocrisies and immorality productive of great harm to man and society, and the only preventive remedy for such is marriage. Such are called in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the “false pietists of bewildered souls.” But, H.P.B. teaches that celibacy is prerequisite condition only for *practical Occultism*.

What is the lesson one has to learn in married life? This question is resolved in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. When asked which is better of the two paths, renunciation of action or devotion through action, Sri Krishna categorically stated: “But to attain to true renunciation of action without devotion through action is difficult, O thou of mighty arms; while the devotee who is engaged in the right practice of his duties approacheth the Supreme in no long time. The man of purified heart, his body fully controlled, his senses restrained, and for whom the only self is the Self of all creatures, is not tainted although performing actions.” (V, sloka 6)

In the third chapter Sri Krishna exhorts Arjuna to perform all duties of life with all motives of self-interest set aside, for the sole object of benefitting the world (*loka sangraha*). This is the lesson that men and women have to learn in wedded life. Once attained to

self-mastery and learned the mystery of divine creation in the school of life of the *grihasta*, the devotee is ready to become an Occultist who is the true renouncer, the perfect performer of all actions, wholly devoted to the task of emancipation of orphan humanity.

Meditating on these sacred themes gives us an inkling into the deep meaning of the admonition, addressed to Theosophical student-aspirants who aspired to Occultism avoiding marriage, by the other great Teacher and Occultist, W. Q. Judge:

One of the most exalted of the Divine Mysteries lies hidden here [married state]—therefore, Oh Man, it is wise to cherish that which holds so much of God and seek to know its meaning; not by dissolution and cutting asunder, but by binding and strengthening the ties. Our most ancient Masters knew of this and Paul also speaks of it (in *Ephesians* v. 32). (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 36*, p. 5)

“Theosophy considers humanity as an emanation from divinity on its return Path thereto” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 214). In his descent into matter the spiritual Being that man was, ended up from being an immaculate divine creator by Will into physiological procreator, entombed, as it were, in body, in the course of involution of spirit into matter. Kingdom of Spirit can only be won thence by a long imprisonment in matter. “The creative faculty in male and female was a gift of Divine wisdom” (*S.D.*, II, 217). It was the programme of nature and natural evolution. The “curse” allegorically said to have been pronounced on man in *Genesis*, say the Teachers, is not in exercising by him the procreative faculty for the legitimate purpose it is meant to serve, *viz.*, bringing forth progeny, but for abusing it for animal gratification and bestiality—a far reaching sin against Divine Wisdom, making him a weak and scrofulous being, an heir to hereditary diseases afflicting mankind.

It is in the householder state that men and women have the opportunity of redeeming themselves of this ancient transgression against the law of higher life, learn to control the divine gift of male-female generative and formative faculty, and transmute creative

energy into creative Will of divine wisdom. Thus:

That state will return to it and to the world at large, when the latter shall discover and really appreciate the truths which underlie this vast problem of sex. It will be like “the light that never shone on sea or land”....That light will lead on and up to the *true spiritual intuition*. Then... “the world will have a race of *Buddhas and Christs*, for the world would have discovered that individuals *have it in their own powers to procreate Buddha-like children—or demons.*” (S.D., II, 415)

Such is the ideal of marriage and the responsibility of *Grihasta Dharma*. Distant though it appears from our present condition, it is nevertheless the ideal to be ever kept in mind and striven after. No true devotee of ancient wisdom would ever prostitute the divine gift of creative power for animal gratification, nor subscribe to such abominable practices as birth control and contraception. Self-control is wholly possible once one dedicates one’s life to the study and practice of Occult philosophy and service of humanity through right performance of duties. It is only when the couple lives for the ideals of higher life that true friendship and companionship develop between them which tends to divinity. Theosophical Teachers say that it is the duty of married students to create conditions of a pure family devoted to higher ideals so that high Souls—*jnanis*—who have left this earth to higher spheres with the spread of inimical influences of the dark age are attracted back to incarnate on it for the benefit of humanity. Masters say that children of Theosophists are likely to be Theosophists. Bringing forth and nurturing children to grow into responsible citizens and benefactors of humanity is the true purpose of married life. Family members learn unselfishness, mutual help, sacrifice, responsibility, and service. Mr. Judge teaches that “all the lessons which are taught the true occult student are given in daily life and through nature’s laws,” and that “the highest attainment is never reached until a man has passed through this experience” (*The Path*, November 1887). A Master of Wisdom wrote

to a student, a householder, on the importance of the discipline to be cultivated and lessons to be learnt in the right of performance of family duties, thus: “Does it seem to you a small thing that the past year has been spent only in your ‘family duties’? Nay, but what better cause for reward, what better discipline, than the daily and hourly performance of duty?”

(*Concluded*)

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EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS STUDY, APPLICATION AND PROMULGATION—V

IT IS encouraging to note what you say, that you feel much better and stronger in several ways. Your desire to be fit and worthy of spiritual attainments will be realized by you in proportion as you engage yourself in the service of others. But to serve is not an easy thing: we require not only capacity and zeal, but also the knowledge to serve *rightly*. This world is full of well-meaning good people who are willing to do all they can for their fellows; but to do the right thing in the right place at the right time is possible only when the tenets and the doctrines of Theosophy are applied. Such application makes study an uttermost necessity. The goodness of men is in their hearts, as the intelligence of men is in their heads, but neither of these is a safe or complete guide; even the voice of conscience has its limitations. Our intelligence and moral nature require a guide and a friend; such guidance and friendship are to be found in the philosophy of Theosophy and the ethics which are logical outcome thereof. Herein you will get something to brood over with a view to practical application. After due reflection should come determination and then persistent, persevering application, in continuity, as much as possible. Generally speaking we know too much, not too little, and what we lack is application of the things we know. If study is to be continued—and it must be fruitful to be continual—then application of the study-themes becomes part and parcel of the study. Now this application has to do with service. Quick and correct application is rooted in service. Just as when we are able to explain to others what we think we know, we prove to ourselves that we do know, so also when we are able to help others to apply to themselves what we have been able to apply to ourselves, we prove that our application has been a true one. I hope this is clear to you.

Regular study, every day, at a fixed time, is what you need. Next to that, it will help if you show the wisdom of practising control of speech and spend some time every day in quietness and thought.

Control of speech means not only avoidance of gossip, but also the cutting out of small talk and unnecessary verbiage. Thus, you will conserve energy and put to use what goes to waste at present.

Theosophy teaches that while it is valuable to consider what we do, it is much more important to reflect upon how it is done. Above all, labouring in unison and harmony with others on the spot and in thought and imagination with those who are not visible, you will be able to achieve very substantially. We belong to a far-flung kingdom and the work which you will do in London will affect brothers and sisters in the Movement, and without it, and draw to you and your colleagues influences and inspirations. It is a grand and glorious work in which we are engaged and, if we but attempt it, it will cleanse us of our follies and foibles, remove our weaknesses, and strengthen and even unfold capabilities.

We need help in time, money and work. So vast a field and so few the tillers and the sowers! But one gets what one deserves. Often, I have been thinking lately how much we hinder the Great Workers in comparison to the help and service we render. Well, we have to keep on purifying ourselves and become as radiant as is possible for us.

All the difficulties that naturally arise in our work carry within them the germs of beneficence, and our Movement would not be a living Movement without difficulties. So, however much one grumbles, one is thankful that there are not only people who are *tamasic* and stagnating but that something is moving.

Everywhere people are ready to listen to the Message of H.P.B. and W. Q. Judge and there are enough in many places who even seem willing to turn students. But there is a dearth—and that is not very unnatural—of those who feel for human souls sufficiently keenly to shoulder the responsibilities of Theosophical service along our lines. The immense value of those lines is rarely perceived.

All of us have to do our best in the interest of the Movement. We must all try to live and let live, to give and take, while we adhere strictly to the lines and programme as far as the work is concerned.

We have all of us to bear in mind Mr. Judge's short but excellent article, "Methods of Theosophical Work."

Some students are more occupied with trimming and training the animal self than with unfolding the Higher by seeking friendship with the Inner Ego or Higher Manas. The outer shows itself and speaks openly; the inner is silent and in secrecy shows and speaks its benign blessing. Therefore, our students need right study, both metaphysical and moral, which awakens and confirms convictions. One must see before he acts.

We lack workers and not only funds. The pull and the lure of the world is great on many of the modern generation of young people and their spirit of sacrifice naturally suffers. But all the same if we do our best with faith and trust we are bound to succeed. Like Tennyson's "Brook," Theosophy will keep going though men may come and men may go. It is one thing to start working for Theosophy. It is another thing to stick to the path year after year.

Many have lost faith in the philosophy and its Teachers, because they themselves credulously fell prey to false ones; such is human nature! Lack of knowledge and disinclination to study even at this hour have worked and work havoc with them; but after a while of vegetating let us hope they will return to clean fields and immemorial pastures to graze and grow. Till then one must like a good shepherd tactfully drive them to those farms.

Devotion and enthusiasm are like nourishing vegetables which must be procured from those who have grown them, and then one must learn how to cook them and that means one's own tasty temperament. We are attempting at the U.L.T. to sell these commodities at the price of discretion and understanding. New people get it and some work at it by study and reflection. Persistency is lacking; procrastination is indulged in and perversity might result. If we indulge in *Rajas* and let the motions of Time overtake us, then *Tamasic* perversity is the outcome and we take to the path of frustration and failure. But if we overtake time and at seconds and minutes and during hours and days move rightly, then *Sattvic*

perseverance results and we feel more and more energized. *The Voice of the Silence* indicates that the sublime Patience of the Inner Ego and the Perseverance of the embodied Soul form a pair which we neglect in life. Our ideas of Patience and Perseverance must be from the higher and spiritual point of view. Patience is connected with the "star whose ray thou art," while Perseverance is an act of memory of the being for whom the hour shall never strike. The divine aspect of human virtues—that is *the* requirement. It is easy to blame others and the philosophy itself for our failures and frustrations. You name some classes—let us look at them: Those who are bored—have they adopted the method we have suggested? What do we bring to the meetings, our feeling of boredom? What about one's own contribution by thought on Sunday, by right question on Wednesday, by attention and preparation on Friday, and so forth? Then there are those who feel frustrated because they have not the opportunities for platform work: Is service of Theosophy the pure motive or is there also the ingredient of "Behold how much I know"? In apportioning work, justice and fair play should be used. But you have put your finger on one major factor—lack of unison, the beginning of which is in lack of friendliness. There is talk of brotherhood without an effort at brother-life on part of some. Brotherhood is and remains an abstraction; concrete brothers are needed—brothers of service to the older by devotion, to our equals by affection, to our dependants in age of body or mind by kindness and encouragement. *Acts* of a brother are needed in our Movement. And if it is not to deteriorate we must brighten up our own inner selves as you yourself truly point out. Companionship follows association, friendship follows acquaintanceship. Cultivation of the former is needed. Our students have to learn to sustain themselves by Theosophical attitude, but often their conversation deteriorates into mundane lines and even personality washing and gossip. It all comes round or boils down to one's own head and heart. Cliques is another feature. A going round, a generous gesture, universality—such expressions are rare. It will do you immense good to cultivate these expressions before or after Lodge meetings. Try!

(To be continued)

ON VIBRATIONS

I

VIBRATION refers to the to-and-fro motion or rapid back and forth movement. Col. H. S. Olcott's article entitled "Mrs. Watts Hughes' Sound-Pictures," that appeared in *The Theosophist* magazine for September 1890, deals with geometrical and other forms produced by sound. Fine powder was scattered on the drum of an instrument, and the vibration of the voice caused a miniature storm among the particles, which on subsiding, left the atoms grouped in regular geometrical figures. The same note always produced the same configuration. The instrument used by her was an eidophone. According to the pitch, intensity, and the duration of a note, however, the form of the voice-figure differed. When she sang a deep full note into the tube, tiny clouds of dust arose, rolling and whirling about, just as it happens when a hurricane sweeps over a dusty high-road. Slowly the chaos was reduced to order, and when the last vibration ceased, an accurate, clear geometrical figure was formed on the disc. In this manner sound was shown to be at the root of manifestation. In other words, it showed that "Word" or Logos, is that by which all things are made.

The article "The Hindu Theory of Vibrations as the Producer of Sounds, Forms and Colours," by C. Kottaya, F.T.S., that appeared in *The Theosophist* magazine for October and November 1890, deals with the subject of vibrations in Nature as treated in Hindu metaphysics, which is based on the general proposition that all phenomena, whether in the form of the cosmos as a whole or that of its constituents, *i.e.*, twenty-five *Tattwas*, with their attributes of colour, sound, etc., are caused by motion, vibration, or Spirit acting on or in conjunction with matter. *Nada*, *Swara* and *Sabda* are the Sanskrit equivalents of sound. *Nada* signifies spiritual sound, vibration or motion. It is this inner motion which is the noumenal cause of all the manifestation.

In the Hindu philosophy *Aum* or *Omkara* is described as the primordial vibration pervading the entire universe. The subject of

sound and vibrations is closely related to AUM. In the article, "AUM!" Mr. Judge points out that the Hindu Puranas and other philosophical texts have extensively dealt with AUM, and in doing that they were analyzing sound. The syllable *a* represents the Word, the Logos, or the *Verbum* of St. John, and is comparable to Brahma of the Hindus. It represents the Divine Resonance, or *Nada Brahma*, which pervades the whole universe. It is the vivifying power which stirs up all the particles in the universe. Without this resonance or motion among the particles there would be no visible universe. The sound *a*, after being produced, is altered into sound *u*, which represents preservation. The utterance is closed with sound *m*, which marks *stoppage* or destruction. In other words, the *au* sound or the Divine Resonance indicates conservation of energy during the "Day of Brahma" or manifestation, and the *m* sound indicates re-absorption of the energy during the "Night of Brahma." This Divine Resonance, says H.P.B., is "vibrations," or that which gives impulse to every kind of phenomena in the astral plane.

We might say that vibrations are the immediate cause of the sensation of sound. But apart from that there are also transcendental set of causes put in motion, which are outside the limited range of our perceptions. H.P.B. points out that Mr. Tyndall, for instance, has studied and recorded the whole course of *atmospheric vibrations*, till the point of their setting up vibrations in the tympanum, but this constitutes the *objective part* of the process in nature. When, however, they cause vibration of the auditory nerves, then it constitutes the *subjective side* of the process, which we may call sensation of sound. What is involved in this process can be seen by a psychic or a spiritual seer, using their inner Eye, which penetrates the veil of matter. The undulations, waves and vibrations studied by science are caused by molecular motion, but molecules themselves are propelled to activity, *from within*, by atoms. She says that Atoms are called "Vibrations" in Occultism. We must know that atoms of occultists are primordial divine units, or the seventh principle of a molecule. Brahma himself is called *Anu* or the atom,

differentiating and fashioning the shoreless ocean of the primordial matter. “Atoms fill the immensity of Space, and by their continuous vibration, are that motion which keeps the wheels of Life perpetually going,” explains H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 633). The sensation of sound is produced by the motion of Nature-Spirits or elementals, but even behind these are the guiding intelligences and *noumenal* causes, or higher spiritual beings or Dhyan Chohans.

The mechanical forces are only secondary ones guided by psychic and spiritual forces. The “Sound Pictures,” produced by Mrs. Hughes, though apparently the result of musical notes sung into the eidophone, had subtler forces acting behind the veil of physical matter. According to Hindu philosophy the five principles or *Tattwas*, namely, Akasa (ether), Vayu (air), Agni (light and heat), Apas (water) and Prithvi (earth) are only different forms of vibration, which produce the phenomenal world on the *Sukshma* (subtle or astral) and *Sthula* (gross or physical) planes.

The article on the Hindu theory of vibrations points out that no form can be produced without motion. Science tells us that Motion is caused by the difference in the density of material particles, wherein the dense or gross substance is moved by and through subtle substance. Modern Science applies this law only to physical or gross matter, going up to ether. However, occult science goes beyond ether and applies it also to invisible and subtle matter. We may understand this by referring to the “Secret Doctrine” teachings. The theory of Democritus and Leucippus held that everything is composed of “atoms,” which are physically, but not geometrically, indivisible. The atoms move in all directions in infinite space and they strike against each other, and produce lateral movements and vortices, and thus they bring similar atoms together to form elements. They also cause the formation of innumerable worlds, which grow, decay and perish. In the article, “The Babel of Modern Thought” we read that Leucippus and Democritus, Lucretius, Anaxagoras and Epicurus taught that celestial bodies were formed of a multitude of atoms, whose vortical motion existed from eternity; which met,

and, rotating together, the heaviest were drawn to the centres, the lightest to the circumferences; each of these concretions was carried away in a fluidic matter, which, receiving from this rotation an impulse, the stronger communicated it to the weaker concretions.

Swara ordinarily means breath. In the article, “Nature’s Finer Forces” by Rama Prasad, quoted by H.P.B. in the article, “Psychic and Noetic Action,” we read that *Swara* is the Spirit itself, the ONE LIFE or motion. This motion is the cause of the evolution of cosmic undifferentiated matter into the differentiated universe. Theosophy teaches that Fohat, the light of the Logos, is the creative force, which impels matter to differentiate at various levels. Fohat is a Tibetan term for energetic or motion aspect of the Supreme Spirit or One Life. It has the power to transform that which is subjective into the objective, like the ideal image in the mind is translated into concrete form. Occult philosophy teaches that Fohat, the creative force, in its incessant task of transformation, produces colour, sound and numbers, in the shape of rates of vibration, which compound and dissociate the atoms and molecules. All the matter and hence everything in manifestation has a definite rate of vibration, though these are invisible and inaudible. And yet, the synthesis of these variety of vibrations is audible on the material plane as, what the Chinese called the “Great Tone.” It is a well-known fact, in Physical Science, as well as in Occultism, that the aggregate sound of Nature, such as is heard in the roar of great rivers, the noise produced by the waving tops of trees in large forests, etc., is a definite single tone of quite an appreciable pitch, which the Chinese described as “the great tone” in Chinese music, and which corresponds to note *Fa* on the musical scale. All the variety of sounds in nature culminate into *Fa*, considered to be the key-note of Nature. (*The Voice of the Silence*, pp. 55-56 fn.)

(To be concluded)

APHORISMS ON KARMA—SOME REFLECTIONS

IV

[Preface to the article “Aphorisms on Karma” by Mr. Wm. Q. Judge, appearing in *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 21*, reads: “The following, among others not yet used, were given to me by teachers, among them being H. P. Blavatsky. Some were written, others communicated in other ways. To me they were declared to be from manuscripts not now accessible to the general public. Each one was submitted for my judgement and reason; and just as they, aside from any authority, approved themselves to my reason after serious consideration of them, so I hope they will gain the approval of those my fellow workers to whom I now publish them.”]

APHORISM 6 says: “*Karma is not subject to time, and therefore he who knows what is the ultimate division of time in this Universe knows Karma.*” This aphorism is profoundly metaphysical dealing with the abstruse questions relating time, the ultimate division of time, consciousness, the moral law of Karma which is said to be beyond time, all of which are interrelated. An attempt is made in this article to present in brief, and in as simple a language as possible, an outline of the Theosophical teachings on these questions.

It is evident that time and consciousness are inseparable. But what is consciousness and what is mind? What is the relation between the two? We have to admit and begin with what Plato calls the universal first principles. Occult metaphysics postulates that the ultimate Reality, or Truth, is Absolute Consciousness, infinite, boundless, eternal, immutable, the causeless Cause, the rootless Root, of all that was, that is, and ever shall be. In IT periodically radiates by the fatality of the Law which is ITSELF, a conscious spiritual quality, the Logos, or *Iswara*, Brahma, which is the creative cause of the manifested universe, reflected from Absolute NIRGUNA. While the Logos, *Iswara* is subject to cycles of time and Karma, in its manifested aspect, it is beyond Karma in its essence or Spirit. THAT in which it radiates is beyond Karma, being Itself that Law; It is Absolute Time or eternal indivisible Duration. It is thus that Karma is not subject to

time. Hence it is stated in the *Bhagavad-Gita*: “All worlds up to that of Brahman are subject to rebirth again and again, but they, O son of Kunti who reach to me have no rebirth.” (VIII, sloka 16)

All beings, or Souls, each one of which is a unit of consciousness, reflecting in themselves potentiality of *Iswara*, the manifested cosmic Intelligence, are subject to time, and, therefore, to Karma and rebirth, till, in their evolutionary journey during the cycles of the Manvantara, merge their Individuality with the former and Absolute Consciousness—reach Krishna, allegorically. In other words, when the purified consciousness of the earthly personality, the lower mind, merges with the divine parent, then the *Atma-Buddhi-Manasic* triad is beyond Time and Karma. Such an One will know the “ultimate division of time in the universe,” and hence, knows Karma, as the aphorism says.

In order to understand this better we need to obtain a clearer conception of relation between time, divisions of time, mind, consciousness and Karma, to some extent, at least. Mind as we know which works with the brain, its vehicle on the physical plane, is but a temporary reflection in this body of Higher Manas, which is a divine ray on the spiritual plane of Cosmic Intelligence (Mahat). The Divine Ego can work on the earthly plane, in case of the unregenerate man, only indirectly through its earthly alter Ego—the brain-mind complex. It is the latter, the earthly personality, the mortal man, who is the maker of Karma and the product, or the result, of his own past Karma. The latter, therefore, is subject to time and Karma. Though the Ego is divine and takes no active part in the thoughts and actions of the lower personality yet it takes the responsibility of the Karma of the latter and thus becomes subject to Karma and rebirth. It is the mission of the Manasic Ray—the “Father in Heaven” of each man on earth—to rid the personal consciousness of the deceptive element arising out of the sense of separateness of its earthly shadow and bring it gradually to subserve its great purpose of attaining complete self-consciousness—to rebecome one with the Universal Mind from which it had emanated in the beginning—

through assimilation of experiences of many weary reincarnations regulated by the Karmic law.

Thus the consciousness of the Higher Manas is cosmic and divine, whereas that of its temporary shadow on earth, of the mind-brain personal self, is subject to, and limited by, time, space, causation, and the three-dimensional world of matter—unless he breaks the fetters of time and space and realises his oneness with his “Father in Heaven” and becomes divine.

What then is time? Theosophy teaches that time as we know in our waking state on earth is “an illusion produced by the succession of states of consciousness as we travel through eternal duration” (*S.D.*, I, 37). In our waking hours our personal consciousness is ceaselessly receiving impressions from our five senses, and impressions arising out of memory and association of ideas. The modification of our mind caused by the stream of impressions, causing succession of changing mental states, produce in us the notion of time, of the idea of separate self, and the idea of time as past, present and future. Hence time is an illusory subjective notion produced by succession of states of consciousness.

By means of analogies H.P.B. explains that we seem to have only an illusion of a present moment. Before we know it, the future moment turns into the past. The term “duration” applies to that which has no beginning and no end. In that sense, we can never have experience of “duration” while we exist in the phenomenal world. There is constant change or *nitya pralaya* going on. Nothing remains without change even for *the billionth part of a second*. Our sensation of “present” is really blurring of momentary glimpses, or succession of glimpses as given out by our senses, as those impressions pass from the region of future to the region of memories which we call past. Thus, we experience only a “sensation of duration” in what we term as “present” when the succession of moments are blurred so that we do not have a perception of the beginning or end of the moments as in case of the instantaneous electric spark.

It is only when the modifications of the mind are hindered through

the practice of Yoga, and the mind is free from servitude to the senses and desires, and the purified mind and heart are assimilated to the all-perceiving Ego (the Higher Self) that we can free ourselves from the endless bondage to illusions of conditioned existence, and attain to true knowledge of *things in themselves*—Absolute Truth. Such a person raises himself from the realm where Karma operates and becomes free from the bonds of Karma. He attains to the knowledge of the *ultimate division of time*. Knowledge of the ultimate division of time, then, is the spiritual discriminative awareness of order of precedence and succession of the minutest periods of time which cannot be further divided. Knowledge of it makes one a “Yogi of Time’s Circle,” knowing all Karma and Karmic cycles. The Aphorisms of Yoga of Patanjali speak of it and of the ways and means of realizing the same. It is gained by developing the latent power of Buddhi, the faculty of spiritual discriminative knowledge of Truth in all things.

When a Yogi practises *Sanyama* with regard to moment and the continuous flow of moments, he comes to possess discrimination which in turn leads to subtle knowledge, *i.e.*, knowledge not limited by space and time (Book III, Aphorism 53). Here, Patanjali speaks of the ultimate division of time, *i.e.*, moments (*kshana*) and the order in which these moments precede and succeed. The (*kshana*) or moment, that cannot be further subdivided, is smaller than a second, nanosecond or pico-second of science. It may be looked upon as minutest particle of time. We are aware of, and can distinguish, such periods as days or hours. There are born mathematicians who can perceive the succession of minutes and can tell without a watch how many minutes would have elapsed between any two given points in time. A yogi is able to distinguish between the succession of *moments*.

When did the first moment begin for the earth? Science cannot answer this question with any degree of certainty. Mr Judge gives a very important teaching on this subject in his work, *The Ocean of Theosophy*. Thus, “But it can be said that the truth is held by the

ancient Theosophists to be that at the first moments of the solidification of this globe the mass of matter involved attained a certain and definite rate of vibration which will hold through all variations in any part of it until its hour for dissolution comes. These rates of vibrations are what determine the different cycles” (p. 126). What determines the first moment and the rates of vibration of the mass of matter and the subsequent cycles of growth, maturity, decline and death? It is not the arbitrary handiwork of a God nor is it a random event, but the Karmic effect of the combination of thoughts and acts of all beings, from the highest evolved beings down to the mineral monad on the lowest rung of the evolutionary ladder.

Karma is not merely action and reaction, cause and effect, in the Newtonian sense, but the moral, mental and physical consequences which unerringly follow our thoughts, desires, feelings, loves and hates leading to cycles of reincarnation in which we reap good and evil experiences as just deserts, and which shape our tendencies and character, called *samskara*. The same law applies everywhere—to individuals, nations, whole of humanity, systems of worlds and the universe; Karma of the world being the aggregate of the Karma of all beings, from the lowest to the highest, involved in them, mutually connected through interdependent indissoluble threads of the web of life. We can thus appreciate the meaning of the verse in the *Bhagavad-Gita*: “Karma is the emanation which causes the existence and reproduction of creatures.” (VIII, Sloka 3)

Individuals can however rise inwardly by overcoming illusion of the notion of separate self which fetters the soul by Karmic bonds, through development of perfection of spiritual discrimination of true Self as the SELF which is beyond Karma. Such liberated ones will be masters of the recondite knowledge of the relations between moments and their order, and will have perfect knowledge of all the Karmic cycles of this universe.

(To be continued)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

IS reality real? We assume that our senses see reality as it is, but it appears that evolution blinds us to the truth about the world. The world out there is the objective reality, and our experience of it is subjective reality. We create subjective reality through our conscious experiences, *e.g.*, experience of a headache, which is real to the person, but disappears if that person ceases to exist. A red cherry seen with our eyes assumes a grey colour when we try to visualize it by closing our eyes. One presumes that an objective reality does not fade to grey. What is the relation between objective and subjective reality? Experiments performed to test the kind of sensory perception acquired through evolution show that “we may all be gripped by a collective delusion about the nature of the material world,” writes Donald Hoffman. Plato showed in his “Allegory of Cave,” that what we perceive differs from objective reality. It shows human beings as prisoners chained in a fire-lit cave, with real actions happening behind their backs, and of which they only perceive the shadows projected on the wall of the cave in front of them. We have made progress assuming the reality of physical objects as well as the space and time in which they exist. We have also assumed, as Robert Trivers puts it: “Our sense organs have evolved to give us a marvellously detailed and accurate view of the outside world.”

The author explains by means of an example that our senses tell us only what we need to survive. We know that too much or too little oxygen in the air kills us. If we are in a place where the levels of oxygen in the air fluctuates, and if there is a colour scale from green to red, indicating the levels of oxygen from high to low, then this becomes objective reality wherein we know the amount of oxygen, but we do not know whether we will die or live. Alternatively, if there was a colour scale from green to red that indicated the levels of oxygen that kill you or not, then we see how much oxygen we need to survive, but do not see the objective truth of how much oxygen there is. Thus, it is believed that selections

made by evolution are such as to allow us to survive but not allow us to see objective reality. We are asked to consider a green rectangle in the centre of a desktop, representing the novel that we may be writing using the computer. The green rectangle is a desktop interface which hides the complex reality of software, circuits and digital 1s and 0s to provide a simple way to interact with it. That is what evolution has done for us by giving us “sensory systems that are a simplifying user interface for the complexity of the world.” All the same, the author says that though the green icon is not the novel, but if we dragged and dropped that icon in the recycle bin, the novel will disappear. Again, we humans agree about what we see because we have all evolved a similar interface. We have created our scientific theories by treating our observed reality as objective reality, but science admits that perceptions and reality do not match completely.

In order to solve the problem of reality we need to solve the problem of consciousness. We must know how and why our brain generates conscious experiences. Neuroscience has been trying to show correlations between neural activity and specific experiences. The author pertinently remarks that perhaps “those neurons themselves are just icons in a subjective interface.” So how can we break through our subjective perception and find objective reality? “Now we realise that evolution itself may be just an interface projection of deeper dynamics stemming from a network of conscious agents,” writes Hoffman. (*New Scientist*, August 3, 2019)

Occult Philosophy teaches that what we see of man and world, the objective reality, is only the tip of an iceberg. There is a visible and invisible aspect to man and nature: Behind the visible physical nature, there is psychic and astral nature, which change constantly. The “real” is the unchanging, immortal, spiritual nature. What our senses perceive are only phenomena of matter. That which is denominated by us as “matter” is an illusion. The “real” matter is the Primordial matter, the root of matter, which cannot be tested, weighed or measured by human instruments. Though we say eyes see, ears hear, etc., the organs and the senses do not cognize objects.

From Spirit comes the power to know, to act and to become. Soul is the seeing and knowing. Our senses bring us raw data in the form of sensations. Our lower mind interprets these sensations, which we term as “perception,” and is itself an instrument of the ultimate “perceiver” which is our Higher Ego. When we see an object, say a chair, our senses bring to us its details as raw data. The lower mind synthesizes it or transforms it into the idea of a chair, which may be quite different from the *real* chair. Our perception is affected by our conceptions and imperfections of the instruments that bring the data and hence, we do not see the *thing in itself*. We are not able to see things as they are because our mind is covered with dust of attachment, dust of passions, dust of prejudice and biases. “Occultism teaches that physical man is one, but the thinking man septenary, thinking, acting, feeling, and living on seven different states of being or planes of consciousness, and that for all these states and planes the permanent Ego has a distinct set of senses.”

We live in the world of relative realities. Though this world is not completely false, Plato argues that above and beyond this world of appearance there is a supersensible world, called archetypal or noumenal world, on which the phenomenal world is based. The ultimate realities that the metaphysician seeks to know are precisely things as they are, which are exempt from change. It is through series of progressive awakenings, when our consciousness has blended with the Absolute consciousness that we will rise beyond appearances, free from the delusions produced by Maya.

“There is a book inside every person,” are the words inscribed at the entrance to the library of Kaslik University in Beirut. This statement is metaphorical and is related to human experiences. Toni Morrison, an American Nobel laureate, said, “Human life is a book of experiences, excruciating as well as exquisite.” Every experience provides us an opportunity to learn something, and when that learning happens our life is enriched. It is a good practice to introspect old pages of the book of life, as they give us new insight. In

understanding the book of life sometimes external books are helpful, as French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre expressed: “What you read in books is already immanent in the inner book of your existence. All you need is a fine tuning with external and internal books.” By constant awareness one is able to bring attunement with the book which is within, and then he can exclaim, as J. Krishnamurti said, “I have read my book. I need no other books,” writes Sumit Paul. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, August 11, 2019)

The incidents and experiences of each person provide material, on which biographies and autobiographies are based. Mediocre and humdrum existence, provide material for mediocre books. Some lives make for inspiring or only interesting books. Those reading these accounts may decide to emulate or determine never to go that way and repeat those errors. They are like signposts which guide us on the right path by revealing the pitfalls on the way. “Every man is a volume, if you know how to read him,” said William Channing. We can read other “volumes” if we can learn to adjust our mind to other minds. Mr. Judge compares the human mind with the flanged wheel of an engine. A flanged-wheel of an engine can run only on a track of particular size. The human mind, too, is generally, a “one-track” mind. But if you take off the flange, and make the face of the wheel broader, then it can run on any track. When we adjust our nature to other natures, then in one life, “we might have the benefit of many, for the lives of other men are lived beside us unnoticed and unused because we are too broad and flanged in wheel, or too narrow and flanged also.”

There is a book inside every person, because each one has a creative potential to write a book using the raw material at his disposal. Mr. Judge writes that if a young person aspiring to live the spiritual life was trained to read the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Upanishads* and the *Secret Doctrine* for a long time, and apply these teaching in daily life, then he would be able to make books for himself out of these. The seeds of wisdom exist in *Buddhi-Manas*, the divine nature of man. Therefore, in a far deeper sense, every person, without

exception, has this book of wisdom within him. However, we can understand and manifest the ideas in this book within, by altruistic life and with the help of external books, as the latter give to our mind the necessary breadth and depth. Once he understands the book within, he is in possession of Truth. Mr. Crosbie says, “Truth is not a man, nor a book, nor a statement.” Scriptures are only pointers—means of reaching the truth. “As many benefits as there are in a tank stretching free on all sides, so many are there for a truth-realizing Brahman in all the Vedic rites.” (*Gita*, II)

According to a study, life may have once existed on warm and rainy Mars. It is believed that once Mars must have been warm with flowing water, and thus must have had an environment that could support simple life. The conclusion was reached by comparing Earth data to Martian minerals, detected using the Nasa Crism spectrometer, currently orbiting the Mars. On the basis of data taken also from the Mars Curiosity rover, the researchers from Purdue University in the United States suggest that around three to four billion years ago, the climate on Mars was “warm enough to provoke substantial rainstorms and flowing water, followed by a longer cold period where the water froze. This may have implications on the conditions for the development of life on Mars, according to the findings presented at the Goldschmidt Geochemistry Conference in Spain.” The researchers suggest that due to warm condition life would have independently developed on Mars. (*The Times of India*, August 22, 2019)

Occult Philosophy teaches that Life always adjusts itself to whatever conditions exist. Scientific observation and reasoning coincide with the view of the seers and intuitional feeling in man that intelligent, conscious life *must* exist on other worlds than ours. Laplace, Herschell and many others believed that most of the planets, as the stars beyond our system are inhabited, and that conclusion was supported by the well-known French Astronomer, C. Flammarion. He points out that it would be erroneous to suppose

that our mode of existence must apply to other planets, because the surroundings and conditions of existence on other planets would be essentially different and the substances which enter into the constitution of the planets and the inhabitants would be essentially distinct (*S.D.*, II, 701-03). “Another quite occult doctrine is the theory of Kant, that the matter of which the inhabitants and the animals of other planets are formed is of a *lighter and more subtle nature and of a more perfect conformation in proportion to their distance from the Sun.*” (*S.D.*, I, 602)

Occult Philosophy teaches that like our earth, all the other planets are septenary, with seven globes. Thus, Mars that we see is the fourth plane globe, on the same plane of matter and consciousness as our earth, while its other six globes are invisible. The Mars that we see is not inhabited, at present, because it is in the state of obscuration. The *obscuration* is similar to the sleep of man’s body, making a reawakening possible. The visible and other invisible globes of Mars would go into *dissolution* only when evolution of monads and Egos would be completed at some future time. Mr. Judge explains “obscuration,” thus: “This means that the body of the planet is, as it were, sleeping in space, as it rolls about the sun and has no inhabitants on it such as we. The life-wave belonging to it has passed on to the next or some other globe of its own chain, but since that wave has to return, the body of the planet does not go into pralaya, but waits for the new day. Its life as a sleeping globe is maintained by a certain subtle principle which is not publicly referred to by those who know of it, and which will not permit it to die until the whole chain of globes of which it is one has been traversed seven times, or the equivalent of seven, by the wave of life belonging to it.” Mars and Mercury bear an occult relation to the earth which will not be explained, because these explanations belong to high grades of initiation. (*S.D.*, I, 163 & 164 fn.)