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**A Magazine Devoted to
The Living of the Higher Life**

ON DIVINE INTERVENTION	3
FOOD FOR THOUGHT	10
THE COMING RACE—II	
FREEDOM OF CHOICE	17
EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS	21
YOGA OF DESPONDENCY	
MODES OF PROCREATION—III	23
COMMON BASIS OF WORLD RELIGIONS	28
REGRET NOTHING	32
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	33

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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ON DIVINE INTERVENTION

WHAT does divine intervention mean? The word “intervention” means “stepping in” by “something extraneous.” The term “divine” means “of or pertaining to God or a god.” Thus, divine intervention may be defined as an involvement or interference of a deity in the human affairs. In the earlier times, in Christian religion, *divine intervention* was regarded more or less as providence or divine providence. A distinction is usually made between “general providence,” which refers to God’s upholding of the existence and natural order of the Universe, and “special providence” which refers to God’s extraordinary intervention in the life of people. By the early twentieth century, the term divine intervention has been used to describe any event that appears to have been guided by a greater force, wherein a calamity is averted miraculously. Miracles fall in the category of *special providence*.

At a simple level, divine intervention refers to a situation when God steps in and changes the outcome of a situation. We tend to attribute certain happenings to divine intervention when there is no other explanation. Miraculous healing, people being in the right place at the right time, circumstances that protects someone from being hurt, are all examples of Divine Intervention. Whenever we are unable to explain certain events, we attribute them to “chance.” Those who believe in a personal God account for this “chance” as the conscious exercise of the Will of God for the good of his creatures. An instance is quoted to support this view. A certain person was

sleeping in a room, as always, he had kept by his side, a lantern and a stick. In the middle of the night, he woke up on his own, lighted the lantern and leaped out of his bed, with stick in his hand. He looked up and saw a snake just above his bed. Just then the snake dropped down on the floor, which he threw out with the stick. This is considered to be an *extraordinary phenomenon*, indicating “protecting hand of God.” The person narrating this incident is of the view that although there are fixed laws of nature operating in this universe, there are gaps called accidents, which must be filled before we can accept the theory of an “Impersonal God.”

H.P.B. comments that considering that the incident happened in India, which is a country full of snakes, and given the understanding that people do wake up unconsciously and at the slightest noise, there is nothing extraordinary about this incident. It is absurd to say that it is the result of the Will of the personal God. Instead of acting as body-guard to every man, woman and child, she argues that this personal God could have by a simple exercise of his Will, either kept the snake away, or still better, not to have created snakes at all! (*The Theosophist*, October 1883)

Likewise, in *The Theosophist* (February 1884), Dr. C. W. Rohner, contributed some interesting facts about people being found uninjured after falling out of fast-moving trains, or having other “miraculous” escapes from impending dangers, and seeking explanation for the same. H.P.B. mentions that some people might look upon these events as chance or miracle, while others may explain them on the basis of spirits, guarding and protecting these individuals, or as plain *Divine Providence*. Are we to believe that those individuals thus saved were important units of humanity, while thousands of those who die in man-made and natural calamities are useless dross, with no “spirit hand” to protect them?

H.P.B. narrates two other cases of “chance” or “miraculous” escape. In one case, two lap dogs who were madly chasing each other fell from the terrace of a house over sixty feet high. They remained unhurt, except for stiffness in the limbs. In another case, a

young squirrel fell out of its nest and a voracious crow pounced upon it and caught it in its mouth for a second. Then, as if struck with some thought, he dropped it out of its mouth and flew lazily away, giving the mother-squirrel enough time to rescue her little one. Had these dogs and squirrel also “guardian-spirits” to protect them, or was it due to *chance*? asks H.P.B. Karma alone can explain such cases of unexpected escapes.

At a simple level, we define Karma as the Law of cause and effect, which adjusts each effect to its direct cause. It is an all-seeing, intelligent and an impersonal law. H.P.B. makes clear that the working of the law of Karma is complex and therefore, it is not always possible to connect or trace back the effect to its cause or causes. It is precisely because the ways of Karma cannot be easily understood by us that some of us mistake its working as Providence or a chance. We cannot equate the Karmic Law with providence because providence has been interpreted theologically as “the *foresight* and *personal design* of a personal god, while in the active laws of Karma—*absolute Equity*—based on the Universal Harmony, there is neither foresight nor desire; and it is our own actions, thoughts and deeds which *guide that law*, instead of being guided by it. ‘For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap’” writes H.P.B. (*Lucifer*, April 1889)

In *The Theosophist* magazine (May 1881) H.P.B. mentions meteorological and cosmological predictions by Dr. Rudolph Falb. After long years of researches and labour, he had discovered a method that helped him to foretell, every earthquake, storm or flood, months and even years in advance. For instance, in 1874, he was able to foretell the quite unexpected eruptions of Etna, in Sicily, Italy. His colleagues in science told him that there was no reason to expect such a geological disturbance. Yet, it happened, just the way he had predicted. H.P.B. remarks that theories and teaching of Dr. Falb were not new in that department of science, as the same were propounded two hundred years ago by a Peruvian and again a hundred years ago by an Italian person. H.P.B. seems to suggest

that his views were cabalistic or one might say they were those of the mediaeval Christian mystics and fire-philosophers—those who knew and practiced the “secret sciences.” It just goes to show that there are secrets of nature which are not available to those who try to “snatch” them from her bosom, and “Nature’s workshop is one vast clockwork guided by immutable laws in which there is no room for the caprice of *special providence*.” Yet, those who are able to understand the ultimate secrets of nature are able to make use of “unknown correlations of natural Force” to produce *effects* that would seem miraculous and impossible to those who do not know their *causes*.

Miracles are considered to be performed by breaking the laws of nature. It is said that they are due to intervention of God, who could break his own laws. The Old and the New Testaments mention the miraculous phenomena performed by Moses and Jesus. In the twelfth century both the Catholic and Protestant Churches maintained that such phenomena could be performed exclusively by their chosen ministers and holy saints, by “Divine Intervention.” The knowledge of modern scientists is limited, not only due to imperfections of instruments used, but because of their unwillingness to probe beyond the material realm. Neither Science nor religion admits the existence of the occult or super-material region, governed by laws. Religion attributes it to the Will of the God, and science—not being able to weigh, classify, analyse the knowledge of the ancients—rejects it as a fraud and superstition. Theosophy says: “There is no miracle. Everything that happens is the result of law—eternal, immutable, ever active....There may be laws once ‘known,’ now unknown to science.” The performance of magical feats and miraculous phenomena require extensive knowledge of the various and now forgotten branches of natural science.

Closely allied to the term “Divine Intervention” is the Latin phrase *deus ex machina* which means “god from the machine.” The term was first used in ancient Greek and Roman drama, where it meant the timely appearance of a god to unravel and resolve the plot. In

ON DIVINE INTERVENTION

some Greek drama, a god would appear to solve a crisis by divine intervention. Thus, it is a person or thing that appears or is introduced into a situation suddenly and unexpectedly and provides an artificial or contrived solution to an apparently insoluble difficulty. Since ancient times, the phrase has also been applied to an unexpected saviour or to an improbable event that brings order out of chaos. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

Sometimes while we are in the middle of a hopeless situation and when there seems to be no way out, suddenly, a new factor is added and things begin to change for the better. It could be illness of a loved one or business, which is on the verge of sinking, etc. When no way is found, people sometimes invoke god to come and take charge of the situation. What may actually happen is that if under karma the relief has to come then things begin to change for the better and we feel that there is divine intervention. In this respect the stories in the *Mahabharata* or in the lives of saints and very holy people indicate the working of the karma which is difficult to understand and explain. For instance, in the *Mahabharata*, Yudhisthira, the eldest Pandava, puts his wife Draupadi at stake in gambling and loses her. As was agreed, Draupadi then becomes the property and slave of Kauravas. Dussashana, one of the Kaurava princes, began to disrobe Draupadi and when not a single person in the assembly, including the Pandava princes, came to Draupadi's rescue, she appealed to Krishna. Immediately Draupadi's sari started increasing in length as Dussashana continued to pull the sari. The sari seemed to become infinitely long. At last, completely exhausted Dussashana fell down unconscious. We may call this divine intervention, where Shri Krishna almost magically helped Draupadi. However, such intervention is not outside the law of Karma. Draupadi had merited such a help because of her past action. The story goes that when Krishna was wounded while fighting Shishupala, a person who had committed several evil acts, Draupadi rushed to Shri Krishna and bandaged his wound by tearing a piece of her sari. Krishna was very pleased and he told Draupadi that he

would be by her side whenever she called out for Him. Hence, the “divine intervention” at the time of disrobing of Draupadi.

Similarly, there are several stories in the lives of saints where help seems to come, in the most unimaginable manner, because of intense faith and trust of the devotee. “The truth is that faith is a great engine, an enormous power, which in fact can accomplish all things. For it is the covenant or engagement between man’s divine part and his lesser self,” says *Light on the Path*. There is the story of a Gujarati saint-poet Narsi Mehta, who was extremely poor. When his daughter had to be married and he had no means to meet the expenses, his relatives humiliated him. At the last moment Shri Krishna saved his honour by providing timely help in the form of presents and gold. The legend goes that Krishna Himself came in disguise as a wealthy merchant and honoured a *hundi* (similar to a present-day cheque/draft) issued by Narsi Mehta.

Similar divine intervention is seen in the doctrine of *Avatar*, when collective Karma of the people permit divine beings to take birth in human form. Divine beings take birth to instruct, guide and mould the races of humanity from time to time. A divine being like Krishna comes as an *Avatar* when wickedness is at its peak. In other words, the bad Karma of the world goes on increasing with the lapse of time and produces at last a creature who is, so to say, the very flower of wickedness. He is not only wicked, but also wise with magic powers. Then an *Avatar* such as Krishna appears “in visible shape, a man with men,” for the destruction of the wicked and establishment of the righteousness.

What appears to be the divine intervention may be simply working of the law of Karma, often in a manner that is difficult to explain. When we seek to be brought out of pain, adversity or difficulty, without making effort, through “divine intervention,” we are only trying to dodge the law of Karma. It would be better to do our best in a given situation and leave the rest to the Law. “All things work together for good, for him who loves the Lord,” and we may replace the word “Lord” by “Law.” In a sense, the divine

ON DIVINE INTERVENTION

within is always ready to help if we would only turn within. But the help that comes from the inner planes of our being, aids us in meeting the karmic consequences in the right manner, and not in escaping them.

God, in Theosophy, is an Impersonal, Eternal, Boundless, Omnipresent and an Unchanging Principle. God is Law. God is all-pervasive and so is Law. In fact, in the manifested Universe the presence of God is felt through the Law, which works impartially and unerringly. It is this Law which makes the universe orderly and gives it meaning. Neither the gods nor the God has personality and human traits such as anger, jealousy, wrath, etc. Gods and Angels are agents of Karmic and Cosmic Laws. These Celestial Beings are subservient to the Law, *i.e.*, they would never contravene the Law. In *The Light of Asia* we read: “Seek nought from the helpless gods by gifts and hymns, Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruits and cakes, Within yourselves deliverance must be sought.” Man can neither propitiate, nor command *devas*, because they have *become* “Karma,” which means that they will never bend the law for themselves or for others. Since law of Karma is just, merciful and impartial, so are these beings, impartial and impersonal.

The moment one definitely commits oneself, the Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help that would never otherwise have occurred. A stream of events issues from the decision, raising unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way.

—W. H. MURRAY

SO WHEN the crisis is upon you, remember that God, like a trainer of wrestlers, has matched you with a tough and stalwart antagonist...that you may prove a victor at the Great Games.

—EPICTETUS

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE COMING RACE—II

A MASTER of Wisdom writes that the Vril mentioned in the *Coming Race*, was the common property of races which are now extinct. He seems to refer to gigantic humanity of later third and fourth race. It is from the Fourth Race Atlanteans that “the Aryans inherited their most valuable science of the hidden virtues of precious and other stones, of chemistry, or rather alchemy, of minerology, geology, physics and astronomy.” The terrible Sidereal Force was known to and named by the Atlanteans MASH-MAK. We are being told that this force was known in India, especially to Aryna Rishis, and was part of their *Ashtra Vidya*, though its name cannot be given. In ancient times there were two kinds of weapons—*Shastra* or physical weapons, and “*Ashtra*,” which means extraordinary weapons or divine weapons, that were endowed with powers by use of some *mantra*. This Sidereal Force known to the Atlanteans is the *vril* of Bulwer Lytton in “Coming Race.” H.P.B. says that “the name *vril* may be a fiction; the Force itself is a fact doubted as little in India as the existence itself of their Rishis, since it is mentioned in all the secret works.” It is the force that will become known to the coming races of mankind. H.P.B. describes it as a vibratory Force that formed part of *Ashtra Vidya*, which when aimed at an army, could reduce to ashes 100,000 men and elephants, as easily as it would a dead rat. (*S.D.*, I, 563)

There is an allegorical reference to this force in *Ramayana*, *Vishnu Purana*, etc. Thus, for instance, Sage Kapila’s glance reduced 60,000 sons of King Sagara to ashes. The esoteric works describe it as *Kapil-aksha* or “Kapila’s eye” (*S.D.*, I, 563). At one level, this story is about the force, the power of Will, exercised through one’s glance. H.P.B. describes several cases of “evil eye” or *jettatura*, in which animal magnetism or magnetic fluid is charged with malicious Will and hatred. It is directed from one person to another, and it is sent out with the intention of harming him. H.P.B. says that it may

be employed for good or for evil purpose, and then it becomes magic or sorcery (*Isis*, I, 144). In other words, this “force” is concerned with the power of Will.

In the article, “The Two Aspects of Occultism,” Mr. Judge writes that Electricity produced by dynamo is the most powerful force in nature. The nervous, physical and mental systems of man acting together can produce the same force, as the force produced by the most powerful dynamo. Dynamo produces electrical energy from mechanical energy by rotating coils of copper wire. This force can be used to kill, to alter, to move and also to change any object or condition. This force, he says, is called *vril* by Bulwer Lytton in his book *Coming Race*.

In the *Secret Doctrine*, in the section entitled “The Coming Force,” H.P.B. gives details of the “Inter-Etheric Force” discovered by John Worrell Keely of Philadelphia. This force was based on “vibratory sympathy.” In 1873 he announced that he had discovered a new physical force which can produce tremendous power. He said that he had discovered a principle for producing power, based on musical vibrations of tuning forks. These vibrations produced by tuning forks could resonate with atoms or with the aether. He claimed that using one litre of water he could produce enough energy to move a 30-bogey train from Philadelphia to New York City. For achieving this he began to construct an engine, which could give an idea of the machine he was trying to develop. He observed that he was developing a motor to obtain power from “intermolecular vibration of ether.” An electric motor is an electrical machine that converts electrical energy into mechanical energy. He repeated his experiments and came up with what is known as “Keely’s motor,” in 1885. The etheric force that was generated was found to be great enough to lift large weights.

Keely explained that he was tapping “latent force” in nature, or the vibratory energy of the ether. He used various musical instruments, such as, harmonica, violin, and flute to produce vibrations and thus activate his machine. A central idea of Keely’s

theory was that the musical tones could resonate with atoms or with the ether itself. Probably, he was not able to bring his discovery to its perfection, because what he was trying to discover and use was bordering on the occult. The force that he was about to discover was tremendous, using which he could have reduced an army to dust. And he did reduce a dead ox to dust or atoms. It is evident that he was trying to tap faculties or potencies latent in the super-physical regions of ether, and that is why H.P.B. says “the results obtained from the fifth and the sixth planes of the etheric (or Astral) Force, will never be permitted to serve for purposes of commerce and traffic.” (*S.D.*, II, 562-63)

For generating a tremendous force, Mr. Keely did not require any mechanical means, but rather it was all based on sympathetic vibrations. It is partly evident by the fact that gradually he was able to replace the huge machine, a generator, that was originally used, with a machine of the size of a watch. By his personal influence or his “Will power” he was able to produce force from the fifth and sixth planes of Astral matter.

A Master of Wisdom says that Vril can be understood if only one understands *Akasa*, with its combinations and properties. In *Isis* (I, 126-27) we read that Akasa of the Hindus, Astral light of Eliphas Levi, nerve aura and fluid of magnetists, the psychic force of Prof. Crookes, galvanism and electricity, are but various manifestations or effects of the what the Greeks call *Archeus*. It is also the *Vril* of Bulwer Lytton. Since Vril is described as a Sidereal force, it may pertain to the astral light or an aspect of ether which mingles with the astral light.

After years of experiments, he was able to acquire mastery over subtle and strange force and was able to do away with complicated machinery. It was operated by his will power or personal influence. However, till the end he could not succeed in developing a machine that could produce a force which could be regulated without the intervention of his conscious or unconscious Will power or personal influence. That is the reason why the discoveries made by Keely

could bring wonderful result but only when they were applied or used by him or through himself. That his personal influence was necessary was proven by the fact that *he himself only could operate the machine*. It has been reported that a person watched Mr. Keely operate the machine for six months and then he offered to operate it himself. However, when he turned the cock, nothing happened. He again watched Mr. Keely perform the operation and tried again, but did not succeed. Then *Mr. Keely put his hand on the shoulder of the man and asked him to try again. This time it worked.*

We may understand *sympathetic vibrations* as those vibrations which are in attunement. We can understand it by examples. 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, a hypnotic state is produced by fixing the eyes on some bright spot, a metal or a crystal. 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 that 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. The Will of the operator radiating through his eyes produces the required unison between his Will and the Will of the person operated upon.

H.P.B. goes on to explain that out of two objects attuned in unison, such as two chords, one will be stronger than the other, and will have mastery over the other. Thus, for instance, consider the "sensitive flame." If a note is struck in unison with the ratio of the vibrations of the heat molecules, then the flame will respond to the note struck and dance or flicker in unison with the sound. But occult science teaches that the flame may also be extinguished, if the sound is intensified.

Likewise, in telepathy or thought-transference, in order to communicate with another mind at any distance the Adept attunes all the molecules of his brain and all the thoughts of the mind so as

to vibrate in unison with the mind to be affected, and that other mind and brain also should be either voluntarily thrown into the same unison or fall into it voluntarily, explains Mr. Judge.

Mr. Keely, however, could not utilize this etheric force, for various purposes, as he had envisaged, and that was already predicted by the occultists. And yet, he was able to perform almost miraculous phenomena. It was said about Mr. Keely that he was a natural-born magician and would remain unconscious or unaware of the full range of his powers because he attributed these powers to a wrong source. Since these powers were inherent in his psychic nature, he could not reveal the secret of their nature or teach its use to another person for its practical use.

Yet, the power possessed by Mr. Keely was not really very rare. H.P.B. says that if not the whole of humanity, the principle at the base of this power must be present in all those human beings, whose inner selves have been derived from the group of Dhyan Chohans called “the first-born of Ether.” She says that psychically mankind is divided into various groups, such that each group belongs to a Dhyanic group that formed its psychic nature. Thus, the principle concerned is connected with psychic nature. The psychic nature includes astral body, *prana*, *kama* and the lower mind. Mr. Keely not only had developed psychic nature but also, he was intellectually a genius or had great aptitude for mechanics, and therefore had achieved wonderful results. Some of his achievements were such that it could only have been possible for someone who was *initiated into final mysteries*. Mrs. Bloomfield-Moore wrote in her pamphlet, “Keely’s Secrets,” that all the different kinds of material, which can generate fuel or energy, such as, water, electricity, coal, etc. are in short supply. Once that the etheric force has been discovered air travel will become easy and so also talking to one another over telephone across continents. This force will rule various areas of life, as it will be applicable to both arts and mechanics. A new moral future is waiting for humanity, if this force is used for beneficial purposes.

In the article, “The Blessings of Publicity” H.P.B. mentions that

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Professor Faraday was of the opinion that it was very unwise to acquaint general public with certain discoveries of modern science. It is easily seen that those who call themselves Socialists and Anarchists have misused dynamite and other explosive substances. The article goes on to tell us about the stand taken by the manufacturer of “dynamite toys” manufacturing destructive machines in the shape of oranges, hats, boats, etc. and arguing that his machines are “harmless to look at” and that the one who uses these machines to kill or murder people is a criminal, not the one who manufactures. The article mentions a device known as “Little Exterminator” which is a simple vessel of the shape of the jug, and it contained neither dynamite nor any powder, but a deadly gas, and attached to it was some sort of a clock which could not even be seen clearly, and that was supposed to show the time when this gas would escape. If it was a closed room then this gas could suffocate and put to death any person who was within a radius of a hundred feet from that jug. H.P.B. says that if such explosives are in the hands of a “modern Attila” they would reduce Europe to ashes. Attila was a brilliant military leader. He and the Huns built a vast empire by ruthless violence.

Just as it was extremely dangerous to make known discoveries of modern science to lay public, so also, it was dangerous to make known discovery of Keely’s force. Certainly, such a force can be used by Psychists and Spiritualists, *i.e.*, people with psychic development. However, complete discovery of this force is premature, as humanity is likely to use it only for commercial purposes. H.P.B. writes that his discovery was premature by several hundred thousand years. A Master of Wisdom says that the secrets of certain forces cannot be given to anyone but the regular chela of many years’ standing, through successive initiations. Mankind as a whole has to progress morally and come to a certain stage, where such mysteries can be revealed to it. That will happen only towards the beginning of the Sixth Race. Nature is reluctant to reveal her secrets unless it is a necessity.

(Concluded)

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FREEDOM OF CHOICE

IN ORDINARY everyday life we are obliged by the compulsion of human nature to choose between various options that open before us in everything we have to do, be it the food we eat or the clothes we wear or the articles we want to buy, and so on. The criterion for exercising choice for the most part of our lives is personal preference and satisfaction. What seems to us to fulfil our personal desire and preference is considered as good, and the contrary as bad. This is on the material plane in material concerns. Even in such solely material concerns of our lives ethical considerations do figure in the choices we have to make with varying degrees of importance. The choices we thus make in our lives, whether based on purely personal considerations or impersonal ones, are not confined to our individual lives but have a ripple effect causing far-reaching consequences by their impact on society and also on our character and destiny.

As we are all inseparably bound to each other in an intricate interdependent web of universal life the effects we produce by our thoughts and actions unfailingly return to affect us. It is evident, therefore, that choices we make and decisions we take to act one way or another are generally influenced by the moral quality of the choices we had made and actions we had performed in the past. This happens by the law of cyclic return of impressions. Impressions created by our thoughts and acts on the many lives on physical, mental, moral planes, which together constitute our material nature, have a tendency to reproduce themselves and they come back to us as a tendency to act in the same way as in the past. Every act has for its basis a thought-desire, which produces a tendency, which, in turn, through repetitive recurrent action, forms habit, and habit shapes character. We thus shape our own character and make our own destiny.

However, as we are souls, superior to lower nature, we have innate power to freely choose to consciously suppress the past tendency and cut a new path by choosing to act in a different way

so as to bring on a change in our tendencies and character, and alter our destiny for the better in a significant way.

Considerations of these verities clearly shows us that we err in blaming others for conditions we find ourselves in life which seem unpleasant to us. For instance, we often hear of people blaming their parentage or family heredity for ills they suffer from, be they diseases of the body, inclination to vices, and so on. This is clearly a misunderstanding of laws of life and its purpose on the part of the one who holds such a view and attitude. We cannot in truth do so, because what are seen as undesirable gifts of nature are actually the gifts that we ourselves earned by our own thoughts and actions in the past. The family environment in which we take birth has tendencies similar to ours. Therefore, similarity of nature offers the line of least resistance for the birth-seeking Ego to enter physical life in that particular family, besides other determinative factors. It is the likeness of nature and character which leads the Ego to incarnate in a particular family, community or nation. Therefore, no one or nothing is responsible for the situation in which we find ourselves in life—whether as individuals, communities or nations. By an attitude of rebellion against immutable and just Law of Karma, or attempting to evade our responsibility for the ills to which we are heir, we only darken our lives and suffer the more. The Law requires us to work through the self-made conditions of our lives, however adverse and difficult they may seem to be in our experience. With right knowledge and right effort, we can overcome undesirable tendencies, cultivate virtues, strengthen character, and thus work towards creating better conditions and happier circumstances. Adversities that meet us in our lives are thus opportunities for working through and overcoming them with right attitude, and to think and act in ways that will create congenial and happier circumstances. That is the way to true happiness and higher progress.

No hurt can come to us if we had not acted in a way, deliberately or otherwise, that hurt another or many others. It will be done unto us as we did to others. Similarly, glad tidings that come to us is the

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

just reward we ourselves earned by cultivation of virtues and the good done to others. Whatever comes to us in life is the reaping of the fruits, the seeds of which we and none other sowed in the previous life or many lives before. It is destiny, self-made.

But we need not be helpless creatures of destiny. We have free-will to act in other ways to alter our destiny. Our attitude towards what comes to us by the decree of the just Law is the sowing for the future harvest. We have freedom to choose by way of attitude of mind how we receive what comes. As we choose and act so we make our future destiny. If our attitude is wrong, rebellious, or irresponsible towards what Karma brings us as *prarabdha* which seems irksome, we would have chosen to sow seed that can only bring forth bitter fruit which we would be compelled to partake of in the future. On the other hand, if our attitude is one of knowledge, understanding, acceptance and humility, it not only creates conducive conditions of a free mind in which we can learn the lessons implicit in the experience, but also sow good seeds for a happier and more harmonious life in the future.

The most common source of troubles in our lives is our ignorance of the power of our sympathies and antipathies. It is the same as liking and disliking, or love and hate. For instance, the Karmic effect of the feeling of dislike one may feel for another individual for whatever reason will be that the one who is the object of our hate will be the means for causing obstructions in the path of our life in the future lives. Paradoxically, what we dislike or hate will cling to us the more closely till we learn the lesson that there is, in truth, no separateness, and that our apparent adversary is a part of ourselves. This realization is wisdom which leads us to cultivate brotherly feeling and charitable attitude towards all alike, be they friends or enemies. Thus, with right knowledge enmity may be turned into friendship, hatred into love, adversities into opportunities.

This applies equally to communities and nations. Communities divided by mutual distrust and hatred whether on religious, ethnic, racial grounds or inimical historical experience will find themselves

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

embroiled in rising cycles of violence with tragic consequences. Communities involved themselves have to resolve their differences by exercising mutual tolerance with an understanding of the laws of Karma and Reincarnation. The communities have to choose between blind impulsive action driven by past tendency or attempt to curb the blind impulse and choose to deliberately act contrary to it with mutual understanding and responsibility, and thus gradually transform enmity into mutual trust and benevolence. Theosophy teaches that if nations were to work in union and harmony, instead of disunion and strife, two-thirds of the world's evil would disappear, and much desired but evasive world peace would be a reality very soon, which will pave the way for all round progress and prosperity, for humanity.

The whole aim of our life-effort ought to be to so think and act life after life as to fulfil the great aim of human life—which is attainment of freedom of soul and realization of universal brotherhood. This is the high road to human happiness and perfection.

THE LAME man who keeps the right road outstrips the runner who takes a wrong one...the more active and swift the latter is, the further he will go astray.

—FRANCIS BACON

IN each action we must look beyond the action at our past, present and future state, and at others whom it affects, and see the relation of all those things. And then we shall be very cautious.

—BLAISE PASCAL

I WOULD sort out all arguments and see which belonged to fear and which to creativeness. Other things being equal, I would make the decision which had the larger number of creative reasons on its side.

—KATHLEEN B. HATHAWAY

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS YOGA OF DESPONDENCY

YOUR valiant stand and your right resolve, as also your desire to tread the Right Path, for which purpose you sacrificed much, is a force which makes you a member of a Mighty Company. We put ourselves on probation as personalities by such resolve and sacrifice. This means that there is a new orientation in your life; you are on the Bridge which H.P.B. called *Antahkarana* and which Zoroastrians call the Chinvand Bridge. This bridges the deep waters which separate this from the Occult world. The latter is the world of the Ego. Purification of the personality by life means reverses to it, and these naturally produce irritation, non-understanding, depression, suffering, and—through them all—Realization. Each time pain transforms itself into a faculty—a spiritual faculty, and gradually produces Clear Vision. This Clear Vision has a double aspect; it not only is the vision of the Ego, but he sees the worlds through clarified and purified emotions and feelings as also thoughts and reasoning. Therefore it does not see colours—it sees through colours; it does not hear sounds—it hears through sounds; thus all colours and sounds and their forms and shapes are mere symbols which weave themselves into Emblems which the Ego fully understands.

Now, what are called tests on the Path and trials of the neophyte are as much self-engendered as the resolves we make, or the sacrifices we offer. We put ourselves on the Path and thereby precipitate our own tests and bring forth our own trials. These tests and trials *seem* to us to be rooted outside of us—but this is due to our misunderstanding the Law of Karma. The Law operates within us and through us on others; within others and through them on us. Think on this and you will gain some illumination.

To continue—being what you have made yourself by your noble resolve and beautiful sacrifice and standing on that Bridge, you must perforce meet your *Kurukshetra*. You are *between* the two armies: the abyss of the material world is behind you; you can walk back

into it, but that will be equivalent to a boy of seven trying to make himself an infant of three—he will only disfigure himself if not destroy himself—for it cannot be done. Having left the abyss, you must be prepared to go through the *Yoga* of Despondency. Remember, please, it is not the despair of the world; it is a *yoga*; see the title of the first Discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Read carefully that first discourse and remember that Krishna is the Ego—your own Real Self—the Charioteer who has placed you in the midst of the two armies because *you*—Arjuna, the Reincarnating Self—the Personality, asked Krishna to take you there. Therefore, Arjuna-like, you have to survey the armies, and *which* Arjuna during these millions of years has not thrown down his weapon in the Despondency caused by that first survey? We are all the same, and if I write this it is to remind you that Krishna is near—nearer to you today than last year, nearer to you than your friend can ever hope to be, or, for the matter of that, anyone. We all of us become Krishna, are Krishna. Therefore do not fancy that your moods are something of a speciality of abomination. There is a danger lurking in that. Our subtle *Ahankara* forces itself forward, and if we cannot be an especially good someone then we want to be an especially bad someone.

Do you see the Personality—how it stealthily comes forth? Remember therefore not to grieve for your mistakes any more than to extol yourself for your good deeds. On the Bridge, in the midst of the two armies, the activities which we pursued in the World of Matter follow us and overwhelm our march forward to the World of Spirit. Be wise in living—look not behind, or far away into the Golden Age, yet to be. Do what is nearest at hand as a real warrior—chivalry, courage, love are our virtues, and the Sword of Knowledge destroys doubt, fear and the binding limitations of matter.

WHO except the gods can live without any pain?

—AESCHYLUS

MODES OF PROCREATION

III

SEX and Speech are the two avenues through which we lay waste our divinity. Sexual power is creative power. In the course of evolution, men of the Fourth Root Race (Atlantean Race) abused this creative power—wasting the life-essence for bestial and personal gratification. The result of such excessive sensuality and sexual indulgence, under law of Karma was that the healthy and gigantic bodies with great powers and intellect of the Atlantean Race were slowly replaced by dwarfed and weakened human beings. It is as a result of such Karma of the Atlanteans that the females of our Race bring forth progeny in pain. For, *we* are those Atlanteans. H.P.B. puts it thus:

“Nature had never intended that woman should bring forth her young ones ‘in sorrow.’ Since that period, however, during the evolution of the Fourth Race, there came enmity between its seed, and the ‘Serpent’s’ seed, the seed or product of *Karma* and divine wisdom. For the seed of the woman or lust, *bruised the head* of the seed of *the fruit of wisdom and knowledge*, by turning the holy mystery of procreation into animal gratification; hence the law of Karma ‘bruised the heel’ of the Atlantean Race, by gradually changing physiologically, morally, physically and mentally, the whole nature of the Fourth Race of mankind, until, from the healthy King of the animal creation of the Third Race, man became in the Fifth, our Race, a helpless scrofulous being, and has now become a wealthier heir on the globe to constitutional and hereditary diseases, the most consciously and intelligently bestial of all animals!” (*S.D.*, II, 410-11)

The main function of the sexual activity is production of progeny. H.P.B. describes the laws of Manu on connubial life as “far-seeing and morally beneficent.” She writes: “The Brahmin was a *grihastha*, a family man, till a certain period of his life, when after begetting a son, he broke with married life and became a chaste Yogi. His very

MODES OF PROCREATION

connubial life was regulated by Brahmin astrologers in accordance with his nature.” (S.D., I, 411 fn.)

H.P.B. observes that moon and her conjunctions regulate conception. Thus, during certain lunar phases, if man and woman unite, such unions would be sterile, and would produce no offspring. But those who used this knowledge and united during those phases were regarded as sorcerers and sinners. However, what was regarded as sinful in the days of old, *i.e.*, making use of the knowledge of phases of the moon to have sexual relation, without the fear of producing progeny, is preferable to sexual crimes perpetrated now. (S.D., I, 228 fn.)

Concerning artificial or physical birth-control methods, we read: “By using contraceptives, we prevent the egos waiting to incarnate, to come into the world....It encourages youth to gratify promiscuously their lust. This evil is widespread. It is sex impurity which corrupts marriage. Sex immorality has taken hold of our civilization. The best method is that suggested by Gandhiji, *viz.*, abstention and self-control.” (*The Theosophical Movement*, April 1952)

One desiring to live the Higher Life must learn to control the animal nature, as the sexual act on the physical plane, proportionately diminishes the activity of the creative power on the higher plane. There is a direct relation between sexual act and the pineal gland. In the article “The Pineal Gland and Morality” (*The Theosophical Movement*, March 1937), we read that “Practical Occultism founded on the Esoteric Philosophy recognizes the direct and intimate connection subsisting between the Pineal Gland and the genitalia. These two are creative poles, and when one is positive and active, a proportionate negative and passive condition is produced in the other. When the North Pole of the Pineal Gland is active, it creates children of ideas and thoughts; when the South Pole of the generative organ is active, children of the flesh are created.” In other words, sexual indulgence hampers the development of intuitive faculty.

The mode of reproduction in the later part of the Third Race was

MODES OF PROCREATION

by the union of the sexes. However, before that the living beings and men were procreated “by the will, by sight, by touch and by Yoga” (*S.D.*, II, 176). H.P.B. says that the earlier modes of procreation, such as, by Yoga or by *Kriyasakti* are likely to be regarded as magic, but there is nothing miraculous in them. It is by these methods that the Second Race humanity produced the Third Race. The Second Race humanity, though pure, was intellectually inactive. They have been described as “beings lost in abstract contemplation,” who produced the Third Race, unconsciously. Hence, the Third Race humanity was referred to as the “Sons of passive Yoga.” However, in these beings the mind was lying dormant like an unlighted candle. Once again, intervention of divine beings (Dhyanis) was essential. Beings called “Sons of Wisdom,” *Kumaras*, *Manasputras* or *Agnishwatta* pitris or solar angels, endowed man with mind, which formed the link between the Spirit of God above and the personal element below. These Beings had undergone evolution in other worlds and systems of worlds, in other evolutionary periods, before our solar system began.

However, the entire Third Race humanity did not get the light of mind at once. The “Sons of Wisdom” *entered* or incarnated in the forms that were completely “ready,” and produced by *Kriyasakti*—the mysterious *power of thought*—a progeny called “Sons of Will and Yoga.” The “Sons of Will and Yoga” produced by the “Sons of Wisdom” were the conscious production. *Kriyasakti* is the mysterious power of thought, which enables it to produce perceptible phenomenal results by its own inherent energy. Any idea will manifest itself externally, if one’s attention (and Will) is deeply concentrated upon it, *i.e.*, by the use of *Itchasakti* (Will-power) and *Kriyasakti*. In the “Sons of Will and Yoga,” are said to have incarnated the highest Dhyanis, “Munis and Rishis from previous *Manvantaras*” to form the nursery for future human adepts on earth. From them the humanity has its prophets, reformers and saviours from time to time. These beings are said to be “Set apart,” from the rest of mankind. “The Third Race had thus created the so-called

MODES OF PROCREATION

SONS OF WILL AND YOGA, or the “ancestors” (the *spiritual forefathers*) of all the subsequent and present Arhats, or Mahatmas, in a truly *immaculate* way. They were indeed *created*, not *begotten*, as were” the beings of the Fourth Race, who were generated sexually after the separation of sexes. (*S.D.*, II, 207)

Perhaps along the similar lines the extra-ordinary births of Pandavas in the epic *Mahabharata* could be explained. The story goes that Kunti was the adopted daughter of King Kuntibhoj. Once during her youthful years, she was asked by her father to serve sage Durvasa who was known for his temper and spiritual powers. The sage, pleased by her devotion and service, granted her a boon. He taught her a *mantra* to invoke any of the gods and get a powerful son from him. To test the efficacy of the *mantra* Kunti chanted the *mantra* to call Surya, the sun god. She pleaded with the sun god to forgive her but she was told by Surya that the *mantra* must bear fruit, so that she would bear a son by Surya, but she will remain a virgin girl. That child was named Karna. Even after her marriage to King Pandu, Kunti could not bear children in a natural way because the King was cursed by a sage that when he sought pleasure with his wife, premature death will overcome him and his wife. The story goes that by using the *mantra*, god Yama, god of wind (Vayu), god Indra and twin-gods, Ashwini Kumara, were invoked, by Kunti and Madri, and as a result, the Pandava brothers, namely, Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva, were born.

The story of the birth of a hundred Kauravas is equally interesting. Queen Gandhari, the wife of King Dhritrashtra had received a benediction from sage Vyasa that she could have one hundred sons. After that Gandhari conceived and she bore the pregnancy for two years without delivering. When she heard that Kunti had given birth to a child of resplendent beauty, she was angry. She violently hit her womb. She then gave birth to a piece of flesh that was hard like an iron ball. When she was about to throw away the ball of flesh, sage Vyasa appeared. She complained that instead of a hundred sons she only got a ball of flesh. Vyasa assured her that his boons

MODES OF PROCREATION

always bear fruit. She was asked to prepare a hundred pots filled with clarified butter and sprinkle cool water over this ball of flesh, which separated into a hundred pieces, each about the size of a thumb. These pieces of flesh were then placed in the hundred pots filled with clarified butter. One by one, a hundred children were born, one from each pot. This seems to be a case of extra-uterine gestation, which science may succeed in achieving in the future.

However, it also reminds us of one of the modern methods of reproduction, namely, in vitro fertilization (IVF), involving surrogacy, and carries with it the possibility of multiple pregnancies. It is a procedure in which eggs are removed from a woman's ovary and combined with sperm outside the body to form embryos. The embryos are grown in the laboratory for several days and then either placed in a woman's uterus or cryopreserved, *i.e.*, frozen for future use. In medical parlance, the term surrogacy means using a substitute mother in place of the natural mother. Generally, a surrogate mother is a woman who carries a fetus for a couple with fertility problems and who surrenders the child to the couple once the child is born. In the traditional type of surrogacy, surrogate mother is artificially inseminated with the sperm of either the intended father or from a donor. However, since the egg of surrogate mother is used, she becomes *genetically* the mother of the resulting child. In *gestational* surrogacy the surrogate mother has no genetic ties with the offspring. Both the eggs and sperm are from the couple or donors, which after *in vitro* fertilization are implanted into uterus of the surrogate. *In vitro* fertilization involves ethical issues. A number of ova are fertilized and at times the unused embryos are discarded. According to Theosophy "life" starts with conception, so how correct it is to throw away unused embryos? H.P.B. describes foeticide as a crime against nature. "The crime committed lies precisely in the wilful and sinful destruction of life, and interference with the operation of nature." It is interference with the Karma of the mother and child.

(To be concluded)

COMMON BASIS OF WORLD RELIGIONS

THE WORD “Religion” comes from the Latin root *religare*, which means, “to bind.” It must bind Man to his fellow-men, to all sentient beings, as well as to the whole of Nature, since all these are but expressions of the same Deity. At present, however, religions tend to provide a fertile source of strife and discord between men, a justification for exploitation of other sentient beings, drawing man away, rather than closer to the Divinity residing in his own heart. Moreover, in their outward form, religions conflict with one another and disagree also with science. In the “guerrilla-skirmishes between the champions of the clergy and the materialistic Academy of Science,” the natural intuitions of man are stifled, resulting in either bigotry and superstition, or rank materialism.

The original impulse of world religions has its source in the irrepressible questions of *why* and *where*, which haunt the human mind. Those who not only entertain these questions but also diligently work towards a soul-satisfying solution, fitting oneself to be a worthy container of the clear waters of Truth, eventually shine as the Rishis and Hierophants of the East and the West. This journey leads them to investigate the nature of Reality, know the kernel of matter, and see the same Self shining in every being. The origin of Religion is thus an endeavour of the limited mind to transcend its boundaries, and aspire towards the Infinite which is its true source and divine Parent.

Perhaps one would be surprised to find the words “investigation” in the context of religion. The popular understanding is that religion is a question of *belief and faith*, while science is the realm of *reason and knowledge*. But such was not the case with ancients. Rooted in wisdom which pointed to the unity of all Life, their religion was scientific, and their science religious; from this cohesive body of knowledge stemmed their sociology which organised the society, their economic models for equitable growth and prosperity, their fine arts and literature extolling the omnipresent divine beauty, and

their psychology and medicine to cure the mind and body. This is in stark contrast to current day human endeavours, each of which works in silos, and hence fail to effect soul progress and human happiness.

Though born out of this comprehensive knowledge, over the course of time, vested interests and human weaknesses foist falsehood over truth and transform religions into an antithesis of their original intentions. This is similar to a river, being pure at its source, but gradually accumulating impurities in its course, and becoming entirely corrupt by the time it drains into the delta.

How can one ascertain for oneself the common basis of world religions? One can, among other methods, follow the *intellectual*, the *experiential* or the *intuitive* ways of investigation. There is, of course, an *all-comprehensive method* suggested in the theosophical literature, which too we will finally examine.

As to the *intellectual method*, we can take up a comparative study of the world scriptures. This has to be pursued with an unbiased mind, *i.e.*, a mind willing to revere truth, irrespective of its origin. It also requires an independent spirit which embarks on this journey unafraid of seemingly outward differences among scriptures, with a conviction that there exists a common basis which may be discovered through discernment and effort. The *Upanishad* says:

Cows are of many different colours, but
The milk of all is of one colour, white;
So, the proclaimers who proclaim the Truth
Use many varying forms to put it in.
But yet the Truth enclosed in all is One.

Compare this to similar teachings in the *Quran* (26:196):

Indeed, this is a revelation from the Lord of the Universe;
which the truthful spirit has carried down to your heart
that you might become one of those who warn, in clear
Arabic language, a revelation embodied in the scriptures
of the ancients.

The other option is to *experience* different approaches of the

religions, each with its own idiosyncrasies. Like a bee which gleefully gathers the nectar from different kinds of flowers, the mystically-minded person gathers the good from every religion, rejecting the temporal and terrene aspects of each. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was one such advanced soul. In *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* by Swami Vivekananda, we read: “The next desire that seized upon the soul of this man [Sri Ramakrishna] was to know the truth about the various religions. Up to that time he had not known any religion but his own. He wanted to understand what other religions were like. So, he sought teachers of other religions. By teachers you must always remember what we mean in India, not a bookworm, but a man of realisation, one who knows truth at first hand, and not through an intermediary. He found a Mohammedan saint and placed himself under him; he underwent the disciplines prescribed by him, and to his astonishment found that when faithfully carried out, these devotional methods led him to the same goal he had already attained. He gathered similar experience from following the true religion of Jesus the Christ. He went to all sects he could find, and whatever he took up he went into with his whole heart. He did exactly as he was told, and in every instance, he arrived at the same result. Thus, from actual experience, he came to know that the goal of every religion is the same, that each is trying to teach the same thing, the difference being largely in method and still more in language. At the core, all sects and all religions have the same aim....”

Theosophy teaches that all religions are true at the bottom, and all are false on their surface. Every religion or religious offshoot starts originally as a clear and unadulterated stream from the Mother-Source. But over a period of time each one of them becomes polluted with purely human speculations and even inventions, due to interested motives.

As an alternative, one could *intuitively* decipher the great scriptures, with the science of symbolism. It is said that beyond the words which clothe the ancient texts, there are seven hidden branches

of knowledge. Depending on the key used, the same text opens up one of the branches of occult knowledge, such as Anthropogenesis, or Cosmogensis, or the Psycho-Spiritual evolution of human Soul, and so on.

The *best method* is to acquaint oneself well with the tenets of Occult Science, and use its light to unravel the single thread of knowledge that runs through all religions. Just as the same eternal Thread Soul—*Sutratma*—broods over the many births in different nations and families and outward conditions; so also one Wisdom-Religion underlies all religions. Theosophy being a restatement of the basic tenets of this body of Wisdom, serious students of Theosophy become genuine and truer adherents of their own religion.

A Hindu student becomes deeply appreciative of the ancient Vedic corpus, and develops an *Advaita-vedantic* outlook on life; a Muslim touches the mystic verve in the Holy Quran, and recognizes the same Light—*al Noor*—in all beings. Each student recognizes the portions of truth in his own religion, as well as the complementary portions in that of others, thus realising that all are “brother-pupils, disciples of one Teacher, the sons of one sweet mother.” A Sufi poem expresses it thus:

Sceptic or faithful, both run after Thee,
 Seeking the One Great Ultimate of all.
 Sober, inebriate, sane or insane,
 Each one for the Beloved One doth seek;
 Musalman’s mosque or Magian’s fire-place,
 Each is the sacred shrine of Love Divine.
 Thou art the Goal for which all are asearch,
 Temple and Ka’ba are but roads to Thee.

ADAPT yourself to the things among which your lot has been
 cast and love sincerely the fellow creatures with whom
 destiny has ordained that you shall live.

—MARCUS AURELIUS

REGRET NOTHING

“REGRET is a thought, hence an energy. If we turn its tide upon the past, it plays upon the seeds of that past and vivifies them” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 20). Shall we then pass through life content with all that we have done, without regrets for lost opportunities, for wrong or mistaken actions?

What is regret? In what principle of our make-up is it rooted? It is different from recognition of a fact. Recognition is a mental process; regret belongs to the emotional nature. Why do we regret something? Is it not because our pride is hurt, or because we feel ashamed or annoyed or because we know that others have lost their faith in us? Why do we regret any action while at the time we performed it we believed it was the right thing to do? Are we not reviewing the circumstances in the light of the knowledge and experience we have gained since then, or of our quietened emotions? Therefore, regret is useless whereas recognition is important. Through recognition of a mistake, we search for its cause. That cause almost invariably is ignorance or selfishness, emotionalism or pride. Recognition will help us to apply the remedy to root out these bad traits from our character and will prevent us from committing the same error in the future. One other point: we never act alone; our action or inaction always affects the whole and may indeed bring pain and sorrow to others.

Let us always remember that we commit sins of omission and commission all the time but often we are unaware of them. So, instead of harbouring feelings of regret when we do recognize the error, let us be glad, for it offers us an opportunity to gain knowledge and wisdom, sympathy and understanding.

Where does retribution come in here? In our effort to right the wrong. For example, if we knock someone down and he is hurt, we recognize our negligence, regret it and do all we can to help. We accept the responsibility. So perhaps we can see that recognition, regret, responsibility, resignation are steps which take in different aspects of our being.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Why do good people always suffer? We often see that a submissive employee ends up getting more work or a loyal friend is often cheated. Some of us would have experienced that our generosity and goodness are taken for granted or others take advantage of our kindness. When we suffer in spite of our goodness, we may feel that God is being unjust. But the scriptures seem to say, “If you are good, you will not suffer and if you are suffering, then you are not good.” In other words, our suffering is the result of some wrong act in this life or in some past life. Therefore, whenever we suffer, instead of blaming another or others, we should strive to find out “where did I go wrong?” It may happen that someone gets a heart attack although he eats healthy meals and exercises daily. No doubt, one must go for the best treatment, which may bring temporary relief, but we know that the disease may relapse if we have not found out the root cause. For instance, the heart disease may have been the result of a guilt which was never confessed or the result of breaking another’s heart either in this life or in some past life. Most of us get easily influenced by others’ opinions or try to act as per their expectations. “It is too bad to be too good.”

One cannot escape suffering, as even great *avatars* like Rama and Krishna also had to face painful situations. It is by using our head, heart and hands together and equally that we can overcome suffering. It is easy to see that by only possessing wisdom one becomes an egoistic scholar; by hard work alone one becomes a skilled labourer and with only a good heart one will always be taken advantage of. Even wisdom combined with hard work makes one arrogant, in the absence of a good heart. Likewise, in the absence of wisdom, having a good heart and capabilities exposes one to manipulation and exploitation. “The lack of any one of these or using all three but in disproportion can make you suffer.” Therefore, one should study ancient scriptures like the *Gita*, the *Upanishads*, and learn what one’s duties are and how to perform them wisely.

“No matter how good you are, life will always present you with favourable and unfavourable situations. . . . You should be the leader of your own life rather than just being a follower and complainer,” writes Acharya Upendraji, a spiritual leader and the founder of Antar Yog foundation. (*Sunday Free Press Journal*, August 7, 2022)

H.P.B. says: “Virtue in distress and vice in triumph, make atheists of mankind.” But the law of Karma is just, unerring and impartial. It is possible to suffer in this life as a result of our action in some prior life. Thus, a good man who suffers now must have been guilty of disturbing the harmony by some wrong action in one of his past lives. However, another answer to the question: “Why do good people suffer?” could be, because they are not *spiritual*. As *Light on the Path* says: “Remember, O disciple, that great though the gulf may be between the good man and the sinner, it is greater between the good man and the man who has attained knowledge; it is immeasurable between the good man and the one on the threshold of divinity.” Whether we understand it or not, we are being pushed to higher levels. Life brings us to a point where our eyes may be opened, and instead of drifting along, we may begin to take the evolution into our own hands. Then virtues, which could not flower under comfortable circumstances of life, begin to develop under adversities—virtues of gentleness and courage, sympathy and endurance, patience and sacrificial love.

Pain is necessary for growth. To grow as a result of pain, we need to learn from the experience. “It is by working with present conditions that the nature of the future is changed, and in no other way. This is reliance upon the Law and a working under it. The various conditions that confront us are opportunities and means afforded us to increase our discrimination, strength and knowledge. . . . In the great economy of Law and Nature, each being is exactly where he needs to be to eradicate defects; all necessary conditions are present for his growth. The only question lies with him: will he take them as ‘pain’ or as opportunities? If the latter, all is well; he is bound to conquer whether the way be long or short. ‘The

purpose of life is to learn, and it is all made up of learning.’ Even those who repeat errors life after life are in process of learning, for evolution makes for righteousness, being an unfoldment from within.” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 24)

According to World Health Organization (WHO) data at least 700,000 people die by suicide each year. In the United States over 45,000 people die by suicide, which is higher than those dying from breast cancer, leukaemia or prostate cancer each year. It is believed that one of the solutions to the problem of rising suicide rates is to establish mental or psychological indicators for suicidal tendency along with physiological biomarkers that could show the way to new, timely interventions. Between 2000 and 2010 an effort was made to encourage everyday mentors like teachers, coaches and pastors to notice warning signs and refer at-risk people to medical support but the health care system was not well prepared. In the recent times, the dynamic treatments and therapies have advanced, but many of them are centred on mental conditions like anxiety or depression.

Ideation broadly refers to “thoughts of suicide.” A 2021 review of suicidal ideation showed that there is no clear association between someone contemplating killing themselves and acting upon that thought. However, Michael Lindsey, a mental health researcher, indicated rising suicidal behaviour and particular patterns among Black Youth. According to him trauma, limited access to resources and a reticence to acknowledge sadness or depression may ultimately result into hopelessness or self-harm behaviour.

Igor Galynker, director of the Suicide Research and Prevention Lab at Mount Sinai Beth Israel, speaks of Suicide Crisis Syndrome and has given five criteria for identifying suicide risk in a person, which include, frantic hopelessness, extreme panic, loss of cognitive control and acute social withdrawal. Some of the common triggers include financial or career failure, a romantic breakup, bullying and homelessness.

It is becoming increasingly clear that contributing factors in suicide are not always psychological. Also, it is not easy to decide how to treat someone before they become an actual risk to themselves and others. For efficient prevention care one must speak more about wellness and resiliency, as opposed to focusing on stories of people who died. There are lots of people who think about suicide, though they do not act on it. To help such people and to curb the number of suicide victims, “demands an approach that expands concern and responsibility beyond the individual—and toward the entire community,” writes Timothy MeinckJul. (*Discover*, July-August 2022)

There has been unprecedented increase in the number of people committing suicide, for various reasons, and some of them for trifling reasons. Materialism, consumerism and glamour also seem to be responsible for suicides in a marked way. Weakening family bonds and deteriorating human relationships wherein we are not sensitive to the needs and sorrows of another human being, are also to be blamed for increasing number of suicides. Besides identifying the factors that are responsible for suicide, it is also necessary to spread the knowledge of the purpose of life, man’s state after death and that man is more than his body. Pain must be seen as being necessary for growth. Ultimately, what we need is the right philosophy which can open our eyes that when we commit suicide, we are actually trying to dodge the law of Karma. By ending our life, we are trying to run away from a person or the situation in which we are placed under Karma, in this life. We may seem to succeed in escaping, but not forever. In any of our next births we will be once again placed into similar situation from which we tried to escape by committing suicide, till we have learnt to handle that situation and learnt the necessary lesson. By ending our life, we feel that we are able to escape the pain but actually one is only leaving one well-known house with familiar surroundings to “go into a new place where terror and despair alone have place.” It involves change of mode of existence and “perhaps more active form of misery,” says *Through the Gates of Gold*.

If there is a criminal, a murderer or a suicide, we are responsible for that person, because just as there is individual karma, there is also collective karma. Since we are connected on the inner planes of our being, we are responsible for the total situation as we find it in a family, society and a nation. It is true that contrasted with the physical help, which when given, shows definite results, the work of giving right ideas, may not show any tangible result but works silently and effectively to bring about change in man for a lasting benefit.

Why should we learn Sanskrit today? We should not dismiss Sanskrit as one more classical language or a dead language that is only used for chanting mantras during religious rituals, but having no practical use. “In a recent scientific study, MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scans showed that memorising ancient Sanskrit mantras increases the size of the brain regions associated with cognitive functions such as memory and decision-making. This phenomenon was termed the ‘Sanskrit Effect’ by James Hartzell,” writes Vivek Desai. Besides being a means of communication, a language shapes the worldview of the culture. It is necessary to have the knowledge of Sanskrit, the mother language, else vernacular languages are likely to be contaminated with words from foreign languages. For instance, what is “third person” in English is termed “*pratham purush*” or first person, in Sanskrit and that is why the traditional Indian greeting is “*namaste*.” There are no accurate equivalent words for the Sanskrit words, such as, *guru*, *mantra* and *dhyana* in any other language, that could express all that the Sanskrit words imply. Sanskrit can act as a powerful aid in evoking compassion.

The concept of *sandhi* or conjunction between two letters, and *samasa* or compound between two words, in Sanskrit language, point to the value given to collaboration and unity. Sanskrit is considered to be “language of gods.” The science of metres governs

Sanskrit poetry and that in turn “makes Indian classical literature full of aesthetic delight....Sanskrit is the language of Yoga, Ayurveda and Indic spirituality—from Bhakti, devotion to Advaita, non-duality, traditions. The treasure-house of knowledge is the gift of India to the world,” writes Vivek Desai. (*The Times of India*, August 12, 2022)

In an article that appeared in *The Times of India* (January 6, 2005), we read that Sanskrit is studied in twenty-two universities in the U.S.A., eighteen German universities, five British universities and four Italian universities. Sanskrit is co-original with the Vedas. It is used in *Shastras* as well as software. The language is particularly suited for encrypting without ambiguity. “This is particularly apparent in scientific treatises in Sanskrit, such as works of Aryabhata, Varahamihir, Bhaskara and others of that era.” It is ideal for coining new scientific and technological terms. Another useful feature of this language is its ability to be brief yet informative.

Mr. Judge records a prophecy concerning the Sanskrit language, thus: “The Sanskrit language will one day be again the language used by man upon this earth, first in science and in metaphysics, and later on in common life. Even in the lifetime of the *Sun*’s [New York *Sun*] witty writer, he will see the terms now preserved in that noblest of languages creeping into the literature and the press of the day, cropping up in reviews, appearing in various books and treatises....The new language cannot be English....but will be one which is scientific in all that makes a language, and has been enriched by ages of study of metaphysics and the true science.” (*The Heart Doctrine*, p. 204)

H.P.B. describes the potency of the Sanskrit language, thus: “In the Sanskrit, as also in the Hebrew and all other alphabets, every letter has its occult meaning and its rationale; it is a cause and an effect of a preceding cause and a combination of these very often produces the most magical effect. The vowels, especially, contain the most occult and formidable potencies.” (*S.D.*, I, 94)