

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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PERFECT PATIENCE

We should strive for calmness, patience, and fortitude, and also have full confidence that the tide is bound to turn, even at the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour. “If the candidate has faith, patience and confidence, verily he will not have to wait too long.” There is one thing that should be remembered in the midst of all difficulties; it is this—“When the lesson is learned the necessity ceases.”

—ROBERT CROSBIE

ORDINARY patience is the opposite of hurry. Speed and hurry characterize modern life. Everything moves fast. Modern man looks for instant coffee, instant gratification, and even instant *moksha* (liberation). Has the mother, who may also be a career woman, the time or patience to listen to the woes of her child? Often, half the pain is relieved, *if only* the doctor would lend a patient ear. But has the doctor the time to patiently listen to the troubles of his patients? We move through life so fast that we have no time or patience to look into another’s problems or point of view, and so marriages, instead of being lifelong commitments, dissolve in a year or two. “Learn to look intelligently into the hearts of men,” says *Light on the Path*.

There is the moving story of a young, successful executive, driving down the neighbourhood street in his new Jaguar—a bit

too fast, to notice anything or anybody. Suddenly, a brick smashed into the car's side, at which the angry man got out, only to be told by an apologetic young boy that he was compelled to throw the brick, as no one would stop. He desperately needed someone to help him put back his brother into the wheelchair. Moved beyond words, the driver hurriedly lifted the handicapped boy back into the wheelchair and walked back to his car. The brick had made a big dent in the side of the car, but the driver did not bother to repair it. He kept it as a reminder: "Don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention!" As we hurry through life we miss tasting the sweetness of human relationships. U.S. journalist Carl Honoré says that going slow does not mean ignoring deadlines, but allotting appropriate measure of time to one's duties and pleasures.

In this jet age, can we possibly live up to Mr. Judge's advice to perform our duty "carefully and cheerfully," putting "our whole heart into it"? Often quality is sacrificed to quantity, when things are done hastily. Haste is related to anxiety and haste can be counteracted by patience, which is a very important ingredient of spiritual life. Mr. Judge writes:

As calmness is one thing necessary for the spirit to be heard, it is evident how important patience is. It also prevents one from precipitating a thing, for by precipitation we may smash a good egg or a good plan, throw the Karma off for the time, and prevent certain good effects from flowing.

Nothing is gained, but a good deal is lost, by impatience—not only strength, but also sight and intuition. So decide nothing hastily. Wait; make no set plan. Wait for the hour to make the decision, for if you decide in advance of the time you tend to raise a confusion. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

And then there is patience needed to appreciate a given system of philosophy, its books and tenets. Often, we come across people who go hopping from one system of thought to another—like tasting a little of every dish—in their quest for a "right" philosophy.

The reason being, they cannot stay long enough to get to *know* a system. Attending two or three Theosophical meetings is considered by them enough to judge the philosophy! A scripture or a book must be read and reflected upon, over and over again, till finally it *yields* the inner meaning. Why do we have to be in a hurry to accept or reject a new idea? It could always be laid aside till the meaning dawns on us. Mr. Judge speaks of "higher patience," defines it as the fine line between pride and humility, and says, "How shall we be proud when we are so small? How dare we be humble when we are so great?" We are asked to select the firm spot between pride and humility, on which to stand calmly, not overshadowed by any man however great. However, he cautions:

"Not overshadowed" does not mean that we are not to show reverence to those through whom the soul speaks.... We are to examine thoughtfully all that comes to us from such persons, and all that comes to us from any source wearing the aspect of truth, and try faithfully to see wherein it may be true, laying it aside, if we fail, as fruit not ripe for us yet. We are not to yield up our intuitions to any being, while we may largely doubt our judgement at all times. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

The Voice of the Silence describes patience as a transcendental virtue, *Kshanti*. *Kshanti* means patience, forbearance and a state of calm and peace. Mr. Crosbie writes:

Your studies and your efforts are futile if you are disturbed inwardly. The first thing then is to get calmness, and that can be reached by taking the firm position that nothing can really injure you, and that you are brave enough and strong enough to endure anything; also that all is a necessary part of your training.... We must "have *patience*, as one who doth forevermore endure"— *and forget ourselves* in working for others. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 11)

Kshanti is "Patience sweet, that nought can ruffle." Thus, it is the "long suffering" spoken of by St. Paul. It is being patient with

others, with the society, with the political and social system, and above all, as Mr. Judge says, with our own selves. Change must be gradual. Every action has equal and opposite reaction. Every reform meets with a great resistance. It is by keeping the ideas again and again before the people that we can hope to bring about the desired change.

To be patient is to learn to forbear. It is mature deliberation or taking time before reacting to another's behaviour. It is *acting* and not *reacting* to people and circumstances. When H.P.B. was asked what one should do when one gets undeniable proof of the evil-doing of another, her reply was: "Pity and forbearance, charity and long-suffering, ought to be always there to pass the gentlest sentence possible upon those who err." The reason being, one must never forget what is due to the shortcomings and infirmities of human nature—something we always tend to forget, in trying to get even. Equally grand is the Buddhist ideal of forbearance and "long suffering." There is the story of a Bhikkhu who meets a robber in his journey through a forest. The robber began cutting his skull with a saw. All the while the Bhikkhu thought to himself what terrible karma the robber was creating for himself!

"Enduring patience is the highest *tapas*." It is patient resignation practised in the midst of the trials of life. We find ample opportunities to practise the same on simple occasions. A Buddhist monk, going for the first time to a big city, was advised, "If you are approaching the bus stop and you see that the bus is about to leave without you, do not panic, there will be another bus." One's duty as a theosophist is to drink without a murmur, up to its last bitter dregs, whatever the cup of life may hold for us. To those of us who might be worried about our progress and grumble about life not being what we want it to be, Mr. Crosbie's advice is:

Are you thinking too much of yourself, your present conditions and your prospects? This is not a firm reliance on the Law of your own being which brings to you the very opportunities that your soul progress needs. What if the future

presents no clear view; what if your desires are not fulfilled; what if your progress is not at all apparent—why worry about it? You cannot change it. All you can do is the best you can under existing circumstances, and *that is the very thing you should do*, dismissing from your mind all thought of those things which are not as you would have them. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, pp. 10-11)

All the affairs of life must be regarded as a passing phase. "The ocean of life washes to our feet and away again, things that are both hard to lose and unpleasant to welcome, yet they all belong to life." As one advances on the spiritual path, a change begins to take place in one's consciousness, resulting in a feeling of utter silence and loneliness, which, more often than not, is accompanied by despair. Mr. Judge writes:

I would never let the least fear or despair come before me, but if I cannot see the road, nor the goal, for the fog, I would simply sit down and wait: I would not allow the fog to make me think no road was there, and that I was not to pass it. The fogs must lift. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

"Violent control is not so good as gentle control, continuous and firmly unrelaxed," says Mr. Judge. Patient perseverance is demanded while overcoming defects. *The Voice of the Silence* asks us to attack the enemy, again and yet again. "Twenty failures are not irremediable if followed by as many undaunted struggles upward." The process of self-purification is necessarily slow and gradual, and is likened to the process of breaking the iron rod by rubbing it with cotton wool. That surely needs a lot of effort and patience! Hence Buddha's simple but profound advice is:

Let a wise man remove his impurities, one by one, little by little, day by day, as a smith removes the impurities of silver. (*The Dhammapada*, Verse 239)

Think not lightly of good, saying "it will not come unto me." Even a water-pot is filled by the constant falling of drops

of water. A wise man becomes full of goodness even if he gathers it little by little. (*Ibid.*, Verse 122)

Real patience is related to having faith in the Karmic Law. We often murmur, in impatience, “How is it that my spiritual labours do not seem to bear fruit”? Well, our only prerogative is to work. We may not draw crowds, but the ideas have been set into motion and they will bear fruit—may be, we will not be around to see them fructify. There are processes going on beneath the surface, unbeknown to us. Let us take to heart these encouraging words from a Master of Wisdom:

Ah! If your eyes were opened, you might see such a vista of potential blessings to *yourselves* and mankind lying in the germ of the present hour’s effort, as would fire with joy and zeal your souls! Strive, towards the Light, all of you brave warriors for the Truth, but do not let selfishness penetrate into your ranks, for it is unselfishness alone that throws open all the doors and windows of the inner Tabernacle and leaves them unshut.

To be robbed, cheated, deceived, ay, misled and trapped and then mocked, yet with it all to look down from the height of your larger self and smile, knowing that there is a spring that will come to your garden to dance in your leaves, and an autumn to ripen your grapes; knowing that if but one of your windows is open to the East, you shall never be empty; knowing that all those deemed wrongdoers and robbers, cheaters and deceivers, are your brothers in need, and that you are perchance all of these in the eyes of the blessed inhabitants of that City Invisible, above this city.

—KAHLIL GIBRAN

NARADA BHAKTI SUTRAS—SOME REFLECTIONS

The few elevated minds... who only disbelieve because they do not know, we would remind of that apothegm of Narada, the ancient Hindu philosopher:

“Never utter these words: ‘I do not know this—therefore it is false.’”

“One must study to know, know to understand, understand to judge.”

—*Isis Unveiled*, I, 628

NARADA is said to be the old Vedic Rishi, philosopher and astronomer. His character is most mysterious. He is said to be the son of Brahma in *Matsya Purana*, but in *Vishnu Purana* he is the progeny of Kashyapa and the daughter of Daksha.

He is referred to by the honourable title of Deva Rishi (divine Rishi, more than a demi-god) by Parasâra, and yet he is cursed by Daksha and even by Brahma. He informs Kansa that Bhagavat (or Vishnu in exotericism) would incarnate in the eighth child of Devaki, and thus brings the wrath of the Indian *Herod* upon Krishna’s mother; and then, from the cloud on which he is seated—invisible as a true *Manasaputra*—he lauds Krishna, in delight at the Avatar’s feat of killing the monster Kesim. Narada is here, there, and everywhere; and yet, none of the Puranas gives the true characteristics of this great enemy of physical procreation. Whatever those characteristics may be in Hindu Esotericism, Narada—who is called in Cis-Himalayan Occultism *Pesh-Hun*, the “Messenger,” or the Greek *Angelos*—is the sole confidant and the executor of the universal decrees of Karma and *Adi-Budh*: a kind of active and ever incarnating logos, who leads and guides human affairs from the beginning to the end of the Kalpa.

“Pesh-Hun” is a general not a special Hindu possession. He is the mysterious guiding intelligent power, which gives the impulse to, and regulates the impetus of cycles, Kalpas and universal events. He is Karma’s visible adjuster on a general

scale; the *inspirer* and the leader of the greatest heroes of this Manvantara. (*S.D.*, II, 48)

H.P.B. says, “What Narada *really* is, cannot be explained in print.” His only motive is, verily, to serve and guide universal progress and evolution. He is said to be reborn in every cycle or race.

Narada, is the leader of the *Gandharvas*, the celestial singers and musicians; *esoterically*, the reason for it is explained by the fact that the latter (*the Gandharvas*) are “the instructors of men in the secret sciences.” It is they, who “loving the women of the Earth,” disclosed to them the mysteries of creation; or, as in the Veda—the “heavenly Gandharva” is a deity who knew and revealed *the secrets of heaven and divine truths*, in general...Narada, while refusing to procreate, leads men to become gods. Moreover, all of these, as stated in the Vedas, are *Chhandajas* (will-born) or incarnated (in different Manavantaras) *of their own will*. (*S.D.*, II, 584)

In the Tenth chapter of the *Gita*, which describes the Universal Divine Perfections, Shri Krishna says, “Of the celestial Sages [I am] Narada.”

Narada Bhakti Sutras reveal Narada’s vision of immortal, divine life. The composition of *sutras* (aphorisms) requires the unique art of conveying the full meaning in a minimum number of words. The essence of a *sutra* or aphorism is wisdom and common sense and not dissertation. It requires the use of special forms, idiom, construction appropriate to the thought-content, which the composer expounds.

Seekers of Truth can find *Sutras* in Sanskrit—containing profound metaphysical truths and leading to self-realization—in four great classics: The *Dharma Sutras* of sage Jaimini; the *Brahma Sutras* of Veda Vyasa; the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali and the *Bhakti Sutras* of Sandilya and Narada, dealing respectively with the moral, intellectual, higher psychic and spiritual development of man in his life-pilgrimage. Of these, the *Bhakti Sutras* (Aphorisms on

devotion) of Narada contain the reflections of a *Deva Rishi* whose only motive is to serve and guide humanity in its spiritual evolution. The *Sutras* deal mainly with the evolution of man to become immortal, to be one with the Deity.

There are 84 sutras arranged under four heads. In fact, Narada is believed to have rescued Vyasa himself from the anguish of his soul at a critical moment. According to Narada, *Bhakti* (devotion) is the fruit of all other *yogas*, it is *Raja-Vidya*—Kingly Knowledge, and *Raja Guhya*—Kingly Mystery. Narada is supposed to have inspired Vyasa to write *Srimad Bhagavata*. “Esoterically Narada is the Ruler of events during various Karmic cycles, and the personification, in a certain sense, of the great human cycle; a Dhyan Chohan....He was...a great ‘lawgiver.’” (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

Narada comes to remove the darkness of human ignorance. Narada’s *Bhakti Sutras* mainly deal with the following topics:

Nature of Devotion (Verses 1-24); The Superiority of the Path of Devotion (Verses 25-33); The Various methods of Devotion (Verses 34-50), Manifestations of Devotion (Verses 51-66), and glorification of supreme devotees who have reached the terrace of enlightenment by becoming one with the Supreme Deity.

Quintessence of Bhakti (Verses 2-6): “That (devotion) is of the nature of supreme love of Deity (*asmin*)” (Verse 2). This is the key-verse. It does not refer to any name or form or attributes of Deity. The word *asmin* means “in *That*.” It is like the word “*Tat*” in the *Maha-vakya*, “That thou art” or *Tattvamasi*. Unfortunately, this has been misinterpreted by many as personal God idea or anthropomorphism. It is important for us to understand that the work of Narada is non-sectarian. What else can it be, coming from a Dhyan Chohan; a *Kumara*—Mind-born Son of Brahma, who is not only a lawgiver but also an agent of Karma? Verse 3 expresses the immortal ecstatic state in which the real devotee is. Verses 4 to 6 point out that the path of devotion leads to perfection and to certain occult and divine qualities.

Verses 7 to 14 define the basic philosophy of devotion by clearly stating what it is and what it is not. Verse 7 says that devotion is not of the nature of worldly desire, but that of renunciation. Verse 8 explains that *Nirodha* is resignation and total surrender to the Lord (law), giving up all secular and religious activities. Verses 9 to 11 elaborate the idea of renunciation as one-pointed devotion to the deity within and complete indifference to all things opposed to it. Verses 15 to 18 mention different definitions of “Devotion” by different schools. Sage Sandilya defines true devotion to the deity as self-realization—a combination of *Gnana* (knowledge) and devotion. Narada says that total dedication of all actions to the Deity within is true devotion. Verses 25 to 33 point out that true devotion is superior to both karma and *Gnana* because it is the fruit of these two.

Aids or Means of devotion (Verses 34-50) : Teachers say that there are various means of devotion. It is obtained by renunciation of sense-objects and also by giving up attachment to them. By rendering service to humanity with tender and loving care and with the blessings and guidance of the Masters of Wisdom.

To come in contact with Great Souls is indeed very difficult. Nevertheless, it is possible through ideation on them and by keeping company with Wise Men. Man is known by the company he keeps. Buddha says:

Beneficent it is to catch sight of the Noble Ones; to live with them is continuous happiness. A man is happy if luckily he escapes the sight of fools.

He who consorts with fools experiences great grief. The company of fools is like company of enemies—productive of pain. Company of the wise is like meeting of real kinsfolk—it brings happiness. (*The Dhammapada*, Verses 206-207)

Bad company is the cause of lust, anger, delusion, loss of the memory, loss of discrimination and total ruin. “They start as ripples, but through association, swell into a veritable ocean,” says Narada. Thus:

Think not lightly of evil, saying, “it will not come unto me.” Even a water-pot is filled by the constant falling of drops of water. A fool becomes full of evil if he gathers it little by little. (*The Dhammapada*, Verse 121)

Do not believe that lust can ever be killed out if gratified or satiated, for this is an abomination inspired by Mara. It is by feeding vice that it expands and waxes strong, like to the worm that fattens on the blossom’s heart. (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 18)

Verses 46 to 50 deal with crossing *Maya* (illusory glamour of the world). Who crosses *Maya*? Narada says that it is he who gives up attachment to sense-objects; who serves the Great Masters and is free from egoism; who loves solitude and has cut off his bondage with the world; he who has risen above the three *gunas* (qualities); who has renounced all anxieties about his welfare; who relinquishes the fruits of action and has given up self-centred action; who has become free from the pairs of opposites; he who gives up even the Vedas and attains to pure and unbroken devotion; he indeed crosses *Maya* and also helps others to cross.

What is the nature of Devotion? Verses 51 to 66 point out that the nature of devotion is indescribable, like the dumb man’s experience of delightful taste. It manifests in certain persons who are fit recipients. It is beyond the *gunas*, without attributes and is an innermost experience. Although supreme devotion to the Deity is predominant in these *sutras*, Narada lays great emphasis on spiritual knowledge, compassion and service to all beings. *Jignasu* or lover of spiritual knowledge is a devotee who is asked to sacrifice all his actions to the *Ishwara* within and thus renounce the fruits of action. Such a devotee should also cultivate *ahimsa*—non-violence, *satya*—truth, *daya*—compassion, and faith. He who believes and has faith in these teachings of Narada, as commanded by Shiva, he attains to Supreme Devotion and becomes THAT.

CAN THE DEAD COMMUNICATE?

II

IF Theosophy affirms that it is not our dear-departed who appears at a séance, then what is the entity that appears, talks, answers questions with seeming intelligence through tapping or by writing on paper in the handwriting of the departed? What is it that repeats past incidents and happenings, moves objects without touching, and bears strong resemblance to the late being? Theosophy says that it is the shell, the kama-rupa of our dear departed, or worse still, the shell of another person masquerading as our loved one under the guidance of wicked and depraved entities who are always present at séances. These are the depraved beings who severed their contact with their higher nature through several lives of evil actions, now destined to go to pieces through the slow process of disintegration, and who try to hold on to life vicariously through the vitality of the mediums and sitters in séance rooms. These are called controls or Elementaries.

On the astral body are impressed all the thoughts and feelings of its owner; it carries, like a sensitive photographic plate, the record of everything that happened in and around the life of the man. It is this shell which now repeats, like a gramophone, the words and thoughts of its owner, acts and moves as it did during life, using borrowed vitality, helped by the class of beings called elementals. It shows the signs of automatic life and intelligence like a vivisectioned frog or a beheaded cock. Would you make the mistake of calling the gramophone, which faultlessly reproduces the song, “the great dead singer”? Moreover, these shells are saturated through and through with the lower and at times positively evil and vicious thoughts of the dead person. It happens in case of an executed criminal who is rehearsing his crime, hatred and feeling of revenge against those who, in his opinion, got him unjustly executed. Such men are only *partly* dead and they inject their ideas of murder and

revenge into sensitive persons, inciting them to commit similar crimes, against their better nature. A shell is truly the devil in man who appears at the séance—the *bhut* of the Hindus. That is why we are advised never to indulge in such practices.

The medium’s astral body becomes a channel for making connection with the shell that is vivified into artificial life by absorbing the vitality from the body of the medium and sitters. The shell then gives off old impressions like a replaying of a gramophone record. This is the reason why in almost every case such communications have nothing spiritual or worthwhile to offer. Such practices eventually ruin the physical, mental and psychic health of the mediums whose vitality is depleted at each sitting. Often, it is the medium’s astral body that oozes out, without his knowledge, to form an electro-magnetic surface to be used to reflect the images or pictures of the dear-departed, from the astral light. In this case, there is no presence of the shell. Often, the electromagnetically prepared form is used and reused to reflect images of different persons according to the desire of the sitters, the images of their loved ones being picked up from their minds by the medium or the controls at the séance. Such was the explanation offered by one of the learned spooks—Jim Nolan.

Mr. Judge tells us that the fact of death, kind of death, place where the dead person’s will might be found, have been told by the “spirit” appearing at the séances; personal peculiarities of the deceased have been revealed; and these have all been too easily accepted as a proof of his identity. These facts are no proof. Moreover, such cases are very rare. When the elementaries impersonate great men of history, they betray their falsehood in one way or another. This, unfortunately, is treated as a kind of entertainment by some people who have made it their hobby, little knowing that the subtle evil influences that radiate from these entities that crowd the séance rooms diffuse moral poison in the mental atmosphere of all present.

If only men would listen to these warnings! Hindus recognize

these dangers well. Their after-death ceremonies are aimed at speedy departure of their dead to the heaven world. They try to satisfy the raging unfulfilled desires of their dead by distributing the belongings and things that were dear to the dead person among the Brahmins and the poor, making special offerings with *mantrams*, hoping that the *kama-rupa* or *bhut* of the departed would not linger around to harass them. Among them, holding of séances is called the “worship of the dead”—for that is what it is—and is forbidden.

The dead do not return, as was proved by innumerable failed attempts of the great magician Houdini to contact his dead mother. It is said that in his sincere quest, Houdini ended up exposing frauds committed by mediums and even antagonized his close friend Conan Doyle. The great magician did not give up easily. He struck a deal with his wife that if anyone could return and speak from the grave it would be the great Houdini. They agreed on a secret code. Furthermore they agreed that Mrs. Houdini (Bess) would hold a séance every year on the anniversary of his death. For ten years Bess tried to communicate with her husband. Her final attempt was on October 31, 1936, when she announced to the entire world that it was impossible to speak with the dead. To this day, enthusiasts of both stage music and the supernatural, conduct séances on Halloween night—the anniversary of the great magician’s death. However, to this day, there has been no proven communication.

Theosophy says that spiritual, holy love is immortal, and the law of Karma brings, sooner or later all those who loved each other with such spiritual affection to incarnate once more in the same family group. More important is the fact that while we miss the physical presence of our loved ones in our waking hours, we meet them during the quiet hours of our sleep.

Hence, although there is hardly a human being whose Ego does not hold free intercourse, during the sleep of his body, with those whom it loved and lost, yet, on account of the positiveness and non-receptivity of its physical envelope and

brain, no recollection, or a very dim, dream-like remembrance, lingers in the memory of the person once awake. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 30)

(Concluded)

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SIGNIFICANCE OF RITUALS AND CEREMONIES

I

It was the Atlanteans, the first progeny of *semi-divine* man after his separation into sexes...who became the first “Sacrificers” to the *god of matter*. They stand in the far-away dim past...as the first anthropomorphists who worshipped form and matter. That worship degenerated very soon into *self-worship*, thence led to phallicism, or that which reigns supreme to this day in the symbolisms of every exoteric religion of ritual, dogma and form.

—*S.D.*, II, 273

TODAY, spirituality and religiosity are equated with ritualistic worship—careful performance of rituals and ceremonies as per the scriptural injunctions. All the obligatory duties of the Hindus, from the cradle to the grave, are performed according to old Vedic rituals. So also a Christian or a Zoroastrian performs a series of rituals and ceremonies based on his own religious scriptures. “Rite” means observance or practice; “ritual” is prescribed order of performing these observances; while “ceremony” is religious worship, *or* practices and observances performed at formal or religious occasions. However, these days, rituals and ceremonies have acquired a derogatory connotation, implying an elaborate but meaningless observance, performed mechanically. Often, a Hindu devotee performs an elaborate worship of his several deities, purely mechanically. He considers his worship as an end in itself, instead of the means to his goal. It tends to become sacrosanct and is often performed at neglect of one’s duty. A doctor refused to attend to a serious patient as he would not leave his *puja* (worship) halfway. What good is such worship if a person refuses to help another? Hence the caution:

This affection for set forms and hours of mental prayer must never...be allowed to become excessive. To neglect any urgent

call to charity or obedience for the sake of practising one’s spiritual exercises would be to neglect the end and the proximate means for the sake of means which are not proximate, but at several removes from the ultimate goal. (*The Perennial Philosophy*, p. 348)

Moreover, such worship only invokes *minor* deities, powers or forces of nature and not God—the Supreme Deity. Most of these rituals and ceremonies are with a purpose of obtaining powers or some mundane or heavenly gain.

If ritualistic [worship]...is regarded as being in itself true religion; if the real presences it evokes are taken to be God in Himself and not the projections of human thoughts and feelings about God or even about something less than God; and if the sacramental rites are performed and attended for the sake of the “spiritual sweetness” experienced and the powers and advantages conferred—then there is idolatry....The consequences of worshipping God as anything but Spirit and in any way except in spirit and in truth are necessarily undesirable in this sense—that they lead only to partial salvation and delay the soul’s ultimate reunion with the eternal Ground [God]. (*The Perennial Philosophy*, p. 339)

The Indo-Iranians of old believed that the world was created and sustained by many gods and goddesses and that these divinities must be propitiated by prayers, sacrifices and offerings. Says Shri Krishna:

When in ancient times the lord of creatures had formed mankind, and at the same time appointed his worship, he spoke and said: “...With this worship...nourish the Gods, that the Gods may nourish you....The Gods being nourished by worship with sacrifice, will grant you the enjoyment of your wishes.”... Beings are nourished by food, food is produced by rain, rain comes from sacrifice, and sacrifice is performed by action. (*Gita*, III)

In *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, Mr. Judge explains that it is

not as if food will not be produced if sacrifice, according to Vedic ritual, is not performed, but that *right food*, leading to bodily conditions enabling man to live up to his highest possibilities, will not be produced. It is produced only in the age where the real sacrifices are properly performed. We may conclude that if the sacrifices that thus nourish the gods are omitted, these “gods” must die out and go to other spheres. Moses being an initiate recommended certain sacrifices to the Jews, purely for sanitary reasons. The efficacy of the sacrifices rested in magnetic laws, as the priest, collected into his own person, the *bad effects* of the sins of the people, and communicated those deleterious influences to the animal—the scapegoat—by laying his hands upon it. The animal was then driven into wilderness to exhale these influences. The killing of certain clean animals was recommended, as the death of clean animals attracted wholesome preservative influences. As Moses was dealing with tribal people, he ordained certain sacrifices as religious duty for sanitary reasons of his own. In India, many religious observances are performed from the point of view of sanitary effects. “For instance the cholera dance—a religious matter—in which, while disinfecting camphor is burned in heaps, a curious flower-umbrella-dance is engaged in with religious chants and music,” writes Mr. Judge. (*Ibid.*, pp. 88-91)

An offering made to these gods is only a symbol that acknowledges the role of various powers and forces of nature, in maintaining the universe. Hence, when Shri Krishna says, “Those who dress their meat but for themselves eat the bread of sin, being themselves sin incarnate,” he speaks of brotherhood or reciprocity.

Sacrifice is inseparable from ancient Indian tradition. The *Puranas*, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* mention various kinds of sacrifices or *Yajna*, such as *Ashvamedha-Yajna* (horse-sacrifice); *Rajasuya-Yajna*, performed at the time of coronation; *Putrakameshti-Yajna*, sacrifice performed by one desirous of obtaining a son, etc.

The vast Vedic literature that was passed on by word of mouth

is divided into four different types: *Samhitas*, *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas* and *Upanishads*. There are four collections or *Samhitas*: *Rig-veda*, *Sama-veda*, *Atharva-veda* and *Yajur-veda*. *Yajur-veda* has verses that are used in various religious sacrifices. The *Brahmanas* are theological treatises in prose and they explain the sacred significance of different rituals. The *Aranyakas* are forest-treatises, which were probably composed for old people retiring into forests. As in the forest they would be unable to perform elaborate sacrifices, the actual sacrifices were replaced by various symbols. The *Aranyakas* emphasized the value of meditation and showed self-knowledge to be the goal of life. The *Aranyaka* age was a period during which free thinking tried to shake off the shackles of ritualism and paved the way for the *Upanishads*. Shankara was the most eminent exponent of the *Upanishads* and he held that they are meant for those who are above worldly or heavenly prosperity. Those who follow the *Upanishads* have no attraction for Vedic rituals but look for emancipation (*A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, pp. 12-14 and 30). *Upanishads* provide a key to understanding the Vedas.

The *Upanishads*—*Upa-ni-shad* being a compound word meaning “the conquest of ignorance by the revelation of *secret, spiritual knowledge*”—require now the additional possession of a Master-key to enable the student to get at their full meaning....The name, “*Upanishads*,” is usually translated “*estoeric doctrine*.” These treatises...are generally attached to the *Brahmana* portion of the Vedas, as their third division....They treat of and expound the secret and mystic meaning of the Vedic texts.... They CONTAIN *the beginning and the end of all human knowledge*. (*S.D.*, I, 269-70)

However, it is not as if these rituals and sacrifices are inefficacious. In fact, when properly performed by one well versed in occult knowledge, they would not fail to produce desired results. There were mystical ceremonies even for injuring one’s enemies, or obtaining worldly prosperity at the cost of others. Are the

ceremonies performed for the dead effectual?

Shraddha and *Pinda* are now neglected, because the inner constitution of man and the constitution of Macrocosm are not understood in such a way as to make the ceremony of the slightest use. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 22 fn.)

Swami Dayanand Saraswati has this to say:

The original meaning of the word *Shraddha* (ceremonies for the dead) is *Shraddhà*, “devotion.” It is the duty of every son to serve his parents with all possible devotion while they are living. But the performance of *Shraddha* does not bear out the original idea at all. *Shraddha* really signifies to serve living parents with all devotion, not the dead. And it is, therefore, useless to offer *Pinda* (rice balls) in honour of the dead, as it results in no good. (*The Theosophist*, March 1880)

H.P.B. was asked if there was any ceremony or rite to protect the personality (Kamarupic shell) during its period of disintegration, and make it impenetrable to mediumistic and other evil influences. She pointed out that such ceremony to be efficacious should be performed, on the night of the death, by a true occultist—thoroughly acquainted with the knowledge of the *Magi* of old—and these are not found at every street corner. (*The Theosophist*, August 1883)

The prescribed steps must be followed to the minutest detail. Even if a word in the *mantram* were mispronounced, dreadful results would follow. For instance, “when Tvastr performed a sacrifice for the production of a demon who would be able to kill his enemy, Indra, owing to the mistaken accent of a single word the object was reversed and the demon produced was killed by Indra.” (*A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 21)

There are ceremonies performed to dodge the karmic consequences. A priest may tell you—and may even claim the authority of the scriptures—that to absolve yourself of the sin of killing the cat you need to offer a cat made of gold, etc. It is questionable if such ceremonies and offerings can help us dodge

the karmic consequences, and even if they do, we are only postponing the day of settlement. Explains H.P.B.:

It has been explained numberless times that no Adept of the Right Path will interfere with the just workings of Karma. Not even the greatest of Yogis can divert the progress of Karma, or arrest the natural results of actions for more than a short period, and even in that case, these results will only reassert themselves later with even tenfold force, for such is the occult law of Karma. (*H.P.B. Series No. 32*, p. 34)

One of the qualifications expected in a Chela is:

Truthfulness and unswerving faith in the law of Karma, independent of any power in nature that could interfere: a law whose course is not to be obstructed by any agency, not to be caused to deviate by prayer or propitiatory exoteric ceremonies. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

In the Ninth Discourse of the *Gita*, the worship of the Supreme Spirit is ranked as the highest, pointing out that the reward or happiness resulting from the rituals and ceremonies is short-lived. Thus:

Those enlightened in the three *Vedas*, offering sacrifices to me and obtaining sanctification from drinking the soma juice, petition me for heaven.... They, having enjoyed that spacious heaven for a period in proportion to their merits, sink back into this mortal world where they are born again as soon as their stock of merit is exhausted; thus those who long for the accomplishment of desires, following the *Vedas*, obtain a happiness which comes and goes. But for those who, thinking of me as identical with all, constantly worship me, I bear the burden of the responsibility of their happiness.

(*To be concluded*)

OVERCOMING KARMA

It knows not wrath nor pardon; utter-true
 Its meares mete, its faultless balance weighs;
 Times are as nought, tomorrow it will judge,
 Or after many days....
 Such is the Law which moves to righteousness,
 Which none at last can turn aside or stay;
 The heart of it is Love, the end of it
 Is Peace and Consummation sweet. Obey!

—*The Light of Asia*

WHETHER we believe ourselves to be immortal, eternal beings in our innermost natures, or whether we do not, the point of view we take will determine (*i.e.*, widen or restrict) our own self-chosen goal, our ideals.

If our Real Self, our Higher Self, is a spark of the Universal Over-Soul, temporarily circumscribed in a form of material flesh for the purpose of learning and experience, then our potential growth is as unlimited as the great Universe in which we live.

If such is the case, then we can begin to look upon the circumstances that affect our forms, sometimes causing pain and sometimes pleasure, in a different way from the man who has not this understanding of the *Unity of All*.

Aphorism No. 12 on Karma reads: “Karmic causes already set in motion must be allowed to sweep on until exhausted...” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 21*). *The Voice of the Silence* makes a similar statement: “Teach to eschew all causes; the ripple of effect, as the great tidal wave, thou shalt let run its course.”

First, then, being limited in power ourselves we have no capacity to change “causes already set in motion,” causes whose effects are in the process of manifesting themselves. Can one stop an earthquake, or a tidal wave? No! But one can lift a child out of the way of an onrushing car. The concept of the *right use* of the powers

at hand, of circumstances, call them Karmic precipitations, leads us to see that we have *opportunities*—opportunities to employ *now* our powers in meeting the results of our past actions and in creating causes for our future, and our own future is inextricably bound with that of others. Karma has helped to place us where we are, but Karma does not hold us there. In this context, Aphorism No. 12, quoted above, continues: “...this permits no man to refuse to help his fellows and every sentient being.”

Let us understand this. When we are selfish and concentrated upon actions that, we hope, will result in *personal* benefits, we form a *centre* on which impinge Karmic effects generated by the Will which our Desire sets in motion. We set ourselves up in isolation from the rest of Nature and the rest of mankind. The forces we generate disturb the harmony of Nature and they serve unconsciously as barriers to the resultant effects, and as mirrors to reflect these back upon the selfish centre *we* created.

When we are unselfish and compassionate, on the other hand, we establish a *universal centre* (*i.e.*, we are in harmony and unity with the Whole), and since such a centre is not *isolated*, there is in fact no particular focus to which the karmic effects of the unselfish act, feeling or thought flow; to the utmost confines of the illimitable Universe they go, harmonizing with the great purposes of *All Life*. Our acting centre is in such cases in harmony with all the other centres of consciousness and of life and with the great LAW, and the effect passes everywhere.

This emphasizes the necessity for self-reform, idealism in practice, unity with others, the learning and study of LAW and laws, so that we may consciously harmonize with our surroundings and “do our whole duty.” Thus we make of ourselves, as we advance on the Path of Compassion, a centre for good, a force that makes for righteousness.

The universalization of our feeling-mind produces emotional detachment from expectations of results—while leaving us free to

assist and help others whenever we can. This requires wakefulness and care. Each in his measure can try to emulate the interest in the well-being of others that the Great Ones have. *“The Masters are philanthropists and care only for that.”*

A consideration of this leads us to see why Aphorism No. 13 states:

The effects may be counteracted or mitigated by the thoughts and acts of oneself or of another, and then the resulting effects represent the combination and interaction of the whole number of causes involved in producing the effects.

This, perhaps, appears paradoxical, especially in view of what Aphorism No. 3 states: “Karma is an undeviating and unerring tendency in the Universe to restore equilibrium, and it operates incessantly.”

Note carefully that it is called a “tendency”—not an immutable, rigid and mechanical *force*. It is *undeviating* but can apparently be modified by setting up counteracting causes.

“Mitigate” is a term defined in dictionaries as: “to make easier to bear”; “to render less severe or harsh”; “to alleviate, abate, relieve, diminish.” While we can see that an individual can do this for *himself*, and mitigate, change and alter the Karma he has stored up for himself, it is difficult to understand how one can change or affect someone else’s Karma! Theosophy emphatically asserts that the doctrine of vicarious atonement is “pernicious” and false. This must be so if it is a fact that every act, word or thought has its consequence. Then why this paradoxical statement about another being able to mitigate *our* Karma?

Let us turn for assistance to Mr. Judge’s *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* (p. 67) and note a principle for the understanding of this.

Other beings once known to the man arrive into incarnation at the same time, and bring into action affinities, attractions, and powers that can only act through them and him. Their influence cannot be calculated. It may be good or bad, and, just

as he is swayed by them or as his sway the other being, so will work out the Karma of each.

Mitigation of another’s Karma is now seen to be a sharing in it—as a parent shares the Karma of the child while rearing it and training it, or a teacher shares that of a pupil, or an employer that of an employee.

Karma is a universal force, and to a greater or lesser extent we *share* one another’s Karma. To the extent that *we* are unselfish, to that extent we assume some responsibility for others’ Karma in helping them to bear with greater fortitude that which they have created for themselves and are now experiencing.

To achieve the capacity of doing this wisely, the disciple’s attention is drawn to the closing comments that Mr. Judge makes in his rendition of Patanjali’s *Yoga Aphorisms*:

Until this state [of true Isolation] is reached, the soul, continually affected and deflected by objects, senses, suffering and pleasure, is unable to consciously partake universally of the great life of the universe. To do so, it must stand firmly “in its own nature”; and then it proceeds further...to bring about the aim of all other souls still struggling on the road.

Implicit here is the height of individual achievement of the perfection of wisdom and of compassion. The ideal is offered to us of the state of the *Nirmanakaya*, one who gives up the bliss of *Nirvana* and remains in conscious existence outside of his body after its death, in order to help Humanity. This is the greatest sacrifice one can offer for the sake of mankind.

How may I bear hate now to any one,
When my own Lord goes round proclaiming loud
With his own blessed lips: “I am at play
Hidden behind the beating of *all* hearts.”

—SURDAS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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

Question: Is love between man and woman only *kamic* (psychic) or is it also spiritual, and hence necessary as experience for spiritual development?

Answer: Love between man and woman has been the favourite theme of writers and poets down the ages. Adolescence brings with it the longing and yearning for this love. At the familiar level, such love means sharing and total acceptance of each other. When one tries to accept, nay, *love* another *in spite* of all the peculiarities and weaknesses in him or her, discipline results. There is no greater agony or disappointment than unrequited love, and no greater ecstasy than finding true love. To love at all is to be vulnerable. In Kahlil Gibran's own inimitable words:

For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning. Like sheaves of corn he gathers you unto himself. He thrashes you to make you naked. He sifts you to free you from your husks. He grinds you to whiteness. He kneads you until you are pliant; and then he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become sacred bread for God's sacred feast. All these things shall love do unto you that you may know the secrets of your heart, and in that knowledge become a fragment of life's heart.

Though described as romantic, love generally takes on various hues, from romantic, sensual, erotic to Platonic or spiritual, depending upon the inner development of the man and the woman concerned. At its simplest level, this love is synonymous with

irresistible attraction or affinity—physical, emotional and even mental. “Man and woman are complementary in character....It is natural that each sex should enjoy the company of the other,” says Mr. Judge. Mutual affinity can result in intimacy and sympathy that leads to appreciation of unity and identity. “The more perfect the sympathy—in its best sense, of sharing another's life and penetrating it with filaments of love—the more clearly the truth is apprehended...that masquerading under very different appearances, the soul of man and the soul of woman are the same.” It is through the love between the two sexes that life teaches the lessons of sympathy and unity, writes Charles Johnston. (*The Path*, February 1888)

Love between man and woman is one of the most potent forms of love, which has the power to lift a person out of apathy and help him burst the hard shell of pride and egoism. Consider an egoist, “with stream of life half-congealed within him, waiting for some angel to stir the waters into life. By and by the miracle happens, the great teacher [life] brings him face to face with another soul, qualified in all things to supplement his deficiencies. At once he feels the infusion of supernal power....At last the poor egoist can burst his bonds, he tastes the divine sweetness of sympathy with another soul....And he learns one sublime lesson—the divinity of renunciation. Through giving he receives; through self-sacrifice he inherits his kingdom.” And his sympathy is not restricted to a single soul, but extends in an ever-widening circle, till at last he embraces all humanity in holy bonds of love, points out Johnston. (*Ibid.*)

Such love may well border on being one-pointed devotion, and then one is willing to do anything for the other. Often, the spirit of self-sacrifice, self-transcendence and self-surrender is as intense as that of the spiritual aspirant. For instance, Tulsidas, who later became a saint, was once madly in love with his wife. One day his wife taunted that if he had shown the same sort of fervour for God, he would have reached self-realization. That was the turning point

in his life, leading him to sainthood. Thus one could be the means of awakening the other to the higher possibilities, using that strange power to touch the inward life. Our affinities “anon save us and anon damn us,” says Mr. Judge.

“It is a familiar saying that a well-matched couple ‘grow together’ so as to come to a close resemblance in features as well as in mind,” says a Master of Wisdom.

In *From the Book of Confidences*, while discussing the love between man and woman, the sage replies that “Love is an Initiation.” Describing this love in its highest form, the sage says:

When thou shalt find true Love, shalt find one homogeneous to thy nature; to whom all Life is consecrate, who will have ardency to take with thee, the Bright Track of the Soul... Thou shalt know thy love is true, if thou art Friend to him, Mother, Sister, Daughter and Companion; if to thee thy needs of Friend and Father, Son and Brother all find fulfilment in him, yet leave the doors flung wide to the world of all Friends, Fathers, Sons and Brothers; all Mothers, Sisters, Daughters, to know in all a deeper kinship and to make thee tenderer, wiser and more thoughtful to thine own near Karmic bond. Never can true Love be ministrant where is exclusiveness—where happiness is sought for two alone; never where is sense of possession, be it of body, mind, soul, of house or wealth; never where is demanding of the other what may be taken only in participation, the gift of Life and Law and Duty.

The Sage further explains, as is also expressed by Mr. Judge, that when such a man and woman settle down as householders, they must bring up a family with right views and high purposes, leaving behind children who carry on a purposeful and altruistic life.

When this love culminates in family life, it acquires great significance. As the article, “On Philosophical Anarchism” (*The Theosophical Movement*, September 1958) suggests, family, tribe, community, nation, etc., are all playgrounds for the unfoldment of

the individual. There is a dual process: first the individual entwines himself with these various institutions and then he extricates himself from each of them, when he has nothing more to gain. Each of these institutions has certain virtues that the individual, passing through it, must acquire. He, as a soul, repeatedly takes birth in that environment till he acquires the virtues afforded by that institution. But slowly, as he has finished taking the necessary experience and imbibed the necessary virtues afforded by the institution, he begins to extricate himself. For instance, the inclination to marry and settle down would be less strong, when lessons of family life are learnt, and there would be genuine desire to practise celibacy.

Question: How are we to manage, if we are in the midst of conflicting ideologies, doctrines and theories, *or* differing opinions and beliefs on social and religious issues?

Answer: Many conflicts arise out of misunderstanding and egotistic refusal to consider another’s point of view. Public misunderstanding may arise from deliberate twisting of facts by the leaders or from faulty conclusions derived and entertained from either wrong premises or faulty logical deduction on the part of one or both sides. People feel secure in their cozy, self-opinionated and “time-honoured” traditions and belief-systems, which they would haughtily defend and aggressively assert.

Human life being such a complex reality with enormous differences, physical and mental, among groups of men, we should not expect the world to be led by one ideology and only one way of life and culture. In a diversified world scenario it is futile to expect uniformity in human thinking. And yet it is quite possible to co-exist peacefully in the midst of differing, even contrasting, life-styles and worships, if we all agree to disagree generously.

Having recognized the above *causes* of disunity, divergence of claims, assertions and even hostilities, what is our task as theosophists when we find ourselves in the midst of hostile

contenders? The first step, the most difficult, is to turn the bitter debate and contest into fair *discussion* and preferably an on-going “*dialogue* over a round table,” figuratively speaking. If we can succeed to bring leaders of differing ideologies together on a common “platform” for a sane discussion, not confrontation, as the first rule of the game, we have won half the battle. Then comes the difficult job of an “umpire” or an impartial arbitrator, to control and guide the disputants. Track two diplomacy, also known as citizens’ diplomacy, started by Professor Edy Kaufman, is the tool used for conflict resolution within the country, as well as bilateral and multilateral conflicts between two or more countries (*Span*, March-April, 2004). It is the technique of conflict resolution based on “transformation of the parties’ perceptions and attitudes.” Fundamentally, an attempt is made to build confidence and trust between the conflicting groups by showing that “they have more ideas in common and only a small percentage of disagreement.” We have to learn the difficult technique of creating greater sympathetic atmosphere that may, *in the long run*, lead to non-hostile and co-operative attitude among the majority of contenders.

Indeed, “Blessed are the Peace Makers,” for the dangerous role voluntarily undertaken demands much moral stamina and even sacrifice of time, energy and one’s own peace.

We have to see to it that there will be no “losers,” nor “winners,” but only beneficiaries and learners from the whole experience of free discussion and sharing of a few points, even if it remains inconclusive. In an open debate, carried out in order to bring about some understanding, everybody could learn from one another something of value, and may help to grow in clarity and good sense.

The duty of a student of Theosophy is to express the “right” ideas gently but firmly, leaving it for others to judge. Mr. Judge writes: “Harmony comes from balancing of diversities, and discord from any effort to make harmony by force.”

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

A 2400-year-old scroll—dated around 340 B.C.—originally, several yards of papyrus rolled around two wooden runners, was found in 1962, in northern Greece, in the grave of an ancient Greek nobleman. The scroll consists of blackened fragments, left after it was burned on the funeral pyre of its owner (then buried along with his ashes), and is expected to help unlock the secrets of early monotheistic religion, using new digital technology. “A team of U.S., British and Greek experts is working on a new reading of the enigmatic Derveni papyrus, a philosophical treatise on ancient faith that is Europe’s oldest surviving manuscript....The book [scroll] contains a philosophical treatise on a lost poem describing the birth of the gods and other beliefs focusing on Orpheus, the mythical musician who visited the underworld to reclaim his dead love” (*The Times of India*, June 3, 2006). The Orpheus cult revolved around the soul’s fate after death and influenced later monotheistic faiths. Orphism believed that man’s salvation depended on his knowledge of the truth.

Rolls of papyri, that possessed durability of best calf-parchment, were found in the tombs and monuments of the twelfth and fourth dynasty kings and queens of Egypt. Egyptians are known to have mastered the art of making papyri of excellent quality. It was later proved that the art of writing was known since the days of Egypt’s first human king—Menes (*Isis*, I, 529). H.P.B. mentions the *Papyrus Ebers*, purchased by the archaeologist Ebers, in 1872-73, of “a well-to-do Arab from Luxor,” being the Egyptian Medical Treatise—one of the six *Hermetic Books on Medicine*—written in the sixteenth century B.C. (*Isis*, I, 3). We have these almost prophetic words of H.P.B.:

The moment is more opportune than ever for the review of old philosophies. Archaeologists, philologists, astronomers, chemists and physicists are getting nearer and nearer to the

point where they will be forced to consider them....Unless we mistake the signs, the day is approaching when the world will receive the proofs that only ancient religions were in harmony with nature, and ancient science embraced all that can be known. Secrets long kept may be revealed; books long forgotten and arts long time lost may be brought out to light again; papyri and parchments of inestimable importance will turn up in the hands of men who pretend to have unrolled them from mummies, or stumbled upon them in buried crypts; tablets and pillars, whose sculptured revelations will stagger theologians and confound scientists, may yet be excavated and interpreted. Who knows the possibilities of the future? An era of disenchantment and rebuilding will soon begin—nay, has already begun. (*Isis*, I, 38)

As for Orpheus, H.P.B. mentions that before the separation of the sexes of the Third Race, the “Wondrous Being” described as “the ever-living-human-Banyan” descended from a “high region,” and from it, “in subsequent ages, all the great *historically* known Sages and Hierophants, such as Rishi Kapila, Hermes, Enoch, Orpheus, etc., etc., have branched off” (*S.D.*, I, 207). “Orphic theogony is purely Oriental and Indian in its Spirit... Truly Aryan Hindu spirit breaks forth everywhere in both Hesiod’s and the Orphic theogony.” (*S.D.*, I, 336 fn.)

Should we abolish the examination system in the field of education? This question crops up, time and again, and was asked by the experts in the educational field, even in H.P.B.’s time, when she wrote the section on “Theosophy and Education” in her book *The Key to Theosophy*, in 1888. The answer, some distinguished educationists think, lies in the third alternative. We are not to do away with the “system” entirely, nor need we continue with the present, well-established methods—employed both at the school

and university levels—but what is needed is to bring about bold reforms in the very system of education and examination.

The article, “The Tyranny of Examination” by Prof. Sandeep Pandey, the winner of the Magsaysay Award, narrates the author’s own short-lived experiments with the system for his final year Mechanical Engineering students at I.I.T. Kanpur, in 1993 (*Indian Express*, May 17, 2006). Pandey, who did his doctoral studies at the University of California and is a self-confessed Gandhian by orientation, observes that if the purpose of education is to acquire knowledge, why should it be necessary to pass or fail students by subjecting them to the examination process. Who and what are we evaluating? Are we testing the performance of students in their *effort* and *abilities*? “If a student failed an examination the failure must be considered that of the professor and not that of the student....If the student is lagging behind, or not doing well in a particular subject, it is the responsibility of the professor to ensure that he catches up,” writes Prof. Pandey. The emphasis here is on shifting or at least sharing the responsibility for the students’ performance by the educationists themselves.

Presently the criterion for efficiency and assessment of performance are measured on a convenient, standardized system of grading (marks). But there can be other ways of evaluation, if the teacher is left free to devise his own method, at least throughout the learning period. The pupils must be left free to advance in their studies at their own pace, and to submit for the tests when confident.

Prof. Pandey experimented with the above “non-intrusive ways of testing” his students but was firmly asked to discontinue by senior faculty members. He says, “We have to delink the learning process from examinations....Some of the most progressive schools considered are those which de-emphasize competition and concentrate on the development of humane values. If we want our students to become more sensitive to themselves and fellow human beings we must have an education system that does not destroy their sense of self-worth.”

What purpose does any method of evaluating serve? The present-day obvious objectives, in a fiercely competitive scenario, seem to be to facilitate entry into the “merit-list,” to achieve high grades, which can later help smooth entry into elite universities, and finally help us grab more lucrative jobs and positions. Hence in our “cutting-edge” competitive world, even friends are to be looked upon as rivals in the arena of exams and even of life! H.P.B. expresses graphically the role of examination and true education, thus:

The *infusion* of a little practical Theosophy would help a hundred times more in life the poor suffering masses than all this infusion of (useless) intelligence....

Every young man and boy, nay, every one of the younger generation of schoolmasters will answer: “The object of modern education is to pass examinations,” a system not to develop right emulation, but to generate and breed jealousy, envy, hatred almost, in young people for one another, and thus train them for a life of ferocious selfishness and struggle for honours and emoluments instead of kindly feeling.... Very little experience of examinations is enough to show that the education they produce is simply a training of the physical memory, and, sooner or later, all your schools will sink to this level. As to any real, sound cultivation of the thinking and reasoning power, it is simply impossible while everything has to be judged by the results as tested by competitive examinations....

Children should above all be taught self-reliance, love for all men, altruism, mutual charity, and more than anything else, to think and reason for themselves....we would endeavour to deal with each child as a unit, and to educate it so as to produce the most harmonious and equal unfoldment of its powers, in order that its special aptitudes should find their full natural development. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 262-64, 268)

Researchers claim that the Arctic once had tropical climate.

“First-of-its-kind core samples dug up from deep beneath the Arctic Ocean floor show that 55 million years ago an area near the North pole was practically a subtropical paradise, three new studies show” (*The Times of India*, June 2, 2006, Courtesy *Nature*). It must have been a watery, swampy world with dense sequoia and cypress trees, said Pagani, a member of the multinational Arctic Coring Expedition that conducted the research. It is believed that millions of years ago the Earth experienced an extended period of natural global warming, but around 55 million years ago, there was a sudden great emission of carbon dioxide, accelerating the greenhouse effect. Scientists are not sure what caused this “thermal event,” but are concerned that too much carbon dioxide—more than four times current levels—can cause global warming.

The research gave the scientists the idea that the simple fern may have helped in cooling down the earth by sucking massive amounts of carbon dioxide, over many million years. Scientists theorize that with heat and fresh-water lakes forming in the Arctic, a fern called *Azolla* grew deep and wide in Arctic regions and sucked up carbon dioxide, thus cooling the Arctic.

H.P.B. mentions that Greenland and Spitzenberg—which are remnants of the Hyperborean Continent—*had almost a tropical climate* during “The Miocene Age.” During that period, “Greenland developed an abundance of trees, such as the Yew, the Redwood, the Sequoia, allied to the Californian species, Beeches, Planes, Willows, Oaks, Poplars and Walnuts, as well as Magnolia, and *Zamia*.” In short, Greenland had Southern plants unknown to Northern regions (*S.D.*, II, 11). The Hyperborean Continent is the land “which stretched out its promontories southward and westward from North Pole to receive the Second Race, and comprised the whole of what is now known as Northern Asia” (*S.D.*, II, 9).

H.P.B. points out that during the Third Race, since the appearance of man, the climate in the arctic region has been, more than once, frigid and tropical by turns. Climate in Arctic region was also semi-tropical, adapted to the primitive wants of nascent

physical man (*S.D.*, II, 329). Further, in *Isis Unveiled*, we have:

At the close of each “great year,” called by Aristotle—according to Censorinus—the *greatest*, and which consists of six *sars* [saros], our planet is subjected to a thorough physical revolution. The polar and equatorial climates gradually exchange places; the former moving slowly toward the Line, and the tropical zone, with its exuberant vegetation and swarming animal life, replacing the forbidding wastes of the icy poles. This change of climate is necessarily attended by cataclysms, earthquakes, and other cosmical throes. As the beds of the ocean are displaced, at the end of every decimillennium and about one *neros*, a semi-universal deluge like the legendary Noachian flood is brought about. This year was called the *Heliacal* by the Greeks, but no one outside the sanctuary knew anything certain either as to its duration or particulars. (I, 30-31)

WHAT man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me: for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

—*Luke 15:4-7*