

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

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 1, No. 1

April 17, 2009

WHY DO GOOD PEOPLE SUFFER?

What is this pain that will not kill us, this ache that has learned how to follow us so closely through life? It is the pain of being alive, the pain of always having to face a new challenge, the pain of wanting to love (and the pain of finding it), the ache of starting again when we don't feel like it, the tension of coming to terms with life that keeps shifting under our feet....We can do more with our pain than suffer it....We should not let it keep us from reaching out to others....Our pain will grow less as our hearts grow larger.

—EUGENE KENNEDY

WHY do *good* people suffer? We might also ask, why do bad people seem to suffer less or not at all? One obvious answer to these questions could be that good people suffer because of their *awakened conscience*. It is possible to do bad and not feel anything. The good people are sensitive to people around them—to their likes and dislikes, their needs. When a good person makes a mistake, being well aware of right and wrong, his conscience will not let him be. The state of a person with awakened conscience is well described in the *Dhammapada*: “The evil doer laments here, he laments hereafter. ‘Evil have I done,’ he soliloquizes. Greater his torment when he is in the place of evil.” But, a thoroughly evil person is free from this subtle form of suffering and torment, the pricking of

conscience, as he has gradually suffocated and stifled the inner voice.

But then there is suffering that stems as a result of wrong actions, such as, eating stale food brings about stomach upset. Viewed in the light of the Law of Karma, the question is, why does a good man suffer in spite of doing good? It is as if his good actions are bringing him bad results. It is as if the Law is obscured. There is a lament in the question that there seems to be no justice, no mercy, no God. Why does all-powerful and all-merciful God not intervene? Can God help? If yes, how? Can He help by taking away our pain or miraculously changing the circumstances? The answer is, no. If a child falls down while learning to walk, the parents watch with pain, but still make him walk till he learns to walk properly. We have a wrong understanding regarding Divine Goodness and Divine Omnipotence. If God were kind, then creatures would be happy. If He were omnipotent, He would have the power to make us happy. If we are not happy and suffer, it shows that either God is not kind or not powerful or both. What is difficult to accept is that there is God who hurts in order to heal. The only help that can come is from God, who is within us, and that help can only be in terms of strength to bear the suffering or overcome it.

H.P.B. says: “Virtue in distress and vice in triumph, make atheists of mankind.” But the law of Karma is unerring, just, 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. Likewise, the bad person who *appears* to go scot-free *now*, will reap the consequences and suffer in some subsequent life. “Utter true its measures mete, its faultless balance weighs; Times are as nought, tomorrow it will judge, or after many days,” says *The Light of Asia*, describing the working of the Law of Karma.

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 and towards choosing between good and evil. As the saying in the Bible goes: “Blow hot or blow cold, the lukewarm I spew out of my mouth.” Life brings us to a point where our eyes may be opened, and instead of drifting along, we may begin to take evolution into our own hands. A Christian writer, Janina Gomes, narrates the parable of the canyon from a Ralph Connor book. It is said that at first there were no canyons, only the broad, open prairie, with tall grasses. One day, the Master of the prairie noticed that it had no flowers and so he spoke to the birds that carried seeds and soon the prairie bloomed with roses, crowfoot and wild sunflowers. However, it had not the violets, ferns and many other flowers that the Master loved the best. The birds carried the seeds of these flowers and dropped them in the prairie but the flowers did not remain long and withered all too soon. Then the Master spoke to the lightning, which cleft the prairie to the heart. The prairie rocked and groaned many a day in agony, mourning over its gaping wound. But now the river carried water through the cleft and once again when the birds scattered seeds over the canyon, all the beautiful flowers bloomed and remained for long without withering. “Left to ourselves none of us would like to be cleft and have gaping wounds. But there are sometimes strokes of lightning in our lives. . . . We are struck by pain, illness, misunderstanding, and ever so often rejection,” writes Janina Gomes. 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. H.P.B. puts it thus:

Woe to those who live without suffering. Stagnation and death is the future of all that vegetates without a change.

And how can there be any change for the better without proportionate suffering during the preceding stage? (*S.D.*, II, 475)

To grow as a result of pain, we need to learn from the experience. It is said that men are wise not in proportion to their experience but in proportion to their *capacity for experience*. Some of us suffer intensely and then at the end of it say: “I want to forget the whole thing as a bad dream.” We then carry on with life just as before, all the time hoping that we will not be placed in a similar situation again. If we are afraid of being placed in the similar predicament again and again, then it shows that we have not learnt the lesson. There is a need for us to be placed in similar kind of painful situation again and again, to enable us to learn the necessary lesson.

We not only learn through proper response to *our own* pain, which is one of acceptance instead of rebellion, but also through proper understanding of another’s pain. The extent to which we are willing to embrace and understand others’ suffering, to that extent we are better able to cope with our own suffering. But generally we are sensitive to our own pain and not so aware of another’s suffering. Is it possible that our incapacity to tackle our own suffering is in some way related to our lukewarm attitude when others suffered? Very rarely there is genuine and deep concern at another’s loss, as if it were our own.

A spiritual man has not only knowledge but also Compassion. He has *Mahaprajna* (or Great Spiritual Insight) and *Mahakaruna* (or Great Compassion). A spiritual man is one who is the personification of self-sacrifice and has reached the extinction of desires. A “good” person has still to achieve these qualities. Says Lord Buddha:

Not only by discipline of moral principles, nor only by resolutions and vows; not only by much study, nor even by attainment in meditation, or in seclusion and solitude, do I release myself from bondage unto Bliss. This is not attained by worldlings. O Bhikkhu, be not deceived in self-

confidence as long as you have not reached the extinction of desire.

To acquire spiritual insight one must begin to understand and realize the three characteristics of the conditioned existence: All conditioned existence is *Dukkha* or suffering. All Conditioned existence is impermanent. All conditioned existence is devoid of true selfhood. We see that the process of birth, growing up, old age up to death is full of suffering. There is suffering arising from our likes and dislikes. It does not mean that there are no pleasant experiences in the world. But it means that at the bottom of even pleasant experiences, there is pain. There is concealed suffering. So it is said: “We look before and after, and pine for what is not; our sincerest laughter, with some pain is fraught.” Something may be a source of pleasure but it may be tied up with anxiety, as we are afraid of losing it. It could be a person, a thing, or position or power. The predicament of the person who enjoys position or power is described in Buddhism by giving the illustration of a hawk. Suppose there is a hawk that takes a piece of meat and flies away holding it in his beak. Soon, hundreds of other hawks will be seen flying after him. Some peck at his body, some at his eyes, trying to take away that piece. In the same way, possessing so many pleasures in this highly competitive world is like holding a piece of meat. To look at, a person may be happy, surrounded by all the comforts of life, but there may be underlying anxiety and fear. There is always *potential suffering* attached to everything in this world. Something may be a source of joy, at a given moment, but sooner or later, you may have to give it up.

This may be linked with the impermanent nature of things also. Our body, our ideas and emotions, all keep on changing. We try to derive pleasure out of sensations. *Light on the Path* says: “In sensation no permanent home can be found, because change is the law of this vibratory existence. That fact is the first one that must be learned by the disciple. It is useless to pause and weep for a scene in a kaleidoscope which has passed.” Things and pleasures of the world

are as fleeting as the scene or pattern formed in a kaleidoscope. In fact, the law of diminishing returns seems to govern the realm of pleasures. We do not derive the same pleasure the second time and still less the third time, and so on.

There is the highest kind of suffering which very few of us experience, and that is metaphysical suffering, and which is often described as “divine discontent.” It is the pain arising out of the feeling that nothing that is conditioned and worldly can satisfy the unconditioned aspect in us. A spiritual person is not a stoic. On the contrary, he feels more keenly the pain and pleasure, and yet does not allow them to shake him or influence his decisions. He is able to achieve this by allowing only part of the incarnated mind to experience the emotion, while keeping another part detached, and thus assuming the position of an observer. When suffering is experienced and lessons are extracted then there arises insight into nature of life. One is able to enjoy without getting involved. We play all the games that other people play, but we know that they are games. A child takes the game very seriously, but the adult playing the game with the child is not upset, even if he loses it. A spiritual man is one who does not allow his surroundings to determine him or put him down. We may say that a good person or, for that matter, any person *suffers*, as *we* understand suffering, because he allows himself to suffer. As Mr. Judge writes:

You have been in storms enough. A few moments’ reflection will show you that we make our own storms. The power of any and all circumstances is a fixed, unvarying quality, but as we vary in our reception of these, it appears to us that our difficulties vary in intensity. They do not at all. We are the variants. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

We can create heaven in hell’s despair. Great beings do not have Karma of their own. At times, they take upon themselves the collective Karma of humanity and suffer as a result.

THEOSOPHY AND H.P.B

Theosophy is divine knowledge, and knowledge is truth; every true fact, every sincere word is thus part and parcel of Theosophy.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

BEFORE our next issue is out, the entire Theosophical world will have observed White Lotus Day—the 8th of May. On that day in 1891 the greatest Theosophist of our age, known as H.P.B. to her students and devotees—“but otherwise to us,” a Master wrote—cast off the body in and through which she had toiled and suffered for the sake of toiling and suffering humanity.

While all Theosophists affiliated to different organizations will celebrate the Day, each one and each group will do so according to his and its understanding of the Message and appreciation of the Messenger. On one point all are united—reverence for the Soul who was the inaugurator of the Theosophical Movement of the 19th-20th century, though different views exist as to the real nature and character of the Great Sacrificer and of the Work she planned, and also as to the exact purpose and purport of the Teachings she recorded. True students of Theosophy care only to be united on the basis of similarity of aim, purpose and teaching. Of these three, the teachings are the most important, for it is by the comprehension of those teachings that the aim can be attained and the purpose fulfilled.

Theosophy is as wide as the ocean and its genuine appreciation demands humble tolerance and persevering search. But its depth is so great, so profound, that at times its width looks restricted and even narrow. Being the mathematics of the soul, it offers precise and definite views and instructions. “Never will they find *us* compromising with and pandering to public prejudices,” wrote a Master. And along the same line of reasoning H.P.B. stated in her *The Key to Theosophy*: “We have no two beliefs or hypotheses on the same subject.” This is assertive and unequivocal, but not dogmatic.

This question—“What is Theosophy?” lies at the very threshold

of the real study of the Divine in man and the world of Spirit stretching on all sides. The student of Theosophy must lead himself to see that real knowledge is concerned with eternal verities and primal causes. His very first task is to perceive clearly that Theosophy is a body of knowledge, the science of the soul, as exact, if not more so, than physical mathematics; that its philosophy does not encourage speculations leading to fanciful abstractions, but proceeds from well-established universal principles to concrete facts and particulars, some, if not all, of which are analyzable by the logical unbiased thinker; that it is the religion of experience which discards blind belief, kills sectarianism and enthrones faith born of pure reason and intuitive intellection.

Unless the preliminary question, “What is Theosophy?” is raised for study and the line of reasoning leading to unavoidable deduction is perceived, confusion will persist, acceptance of ideas which are not Theosophical will take place, and the precision and accuracy of Theosophical doctrines will be neglected when not rejected.

What is the answer that H.P.B. herself has made? How has she described this body of knowledge? Where lies its root? When was it first given on Earth? Why is it of the most vital importance to Humanity that some few at least, if not the vast majority, study, apply and promulgate it?

On the comprehension of the answers to these questions very much, nay, all, will depend. He who perceives the truth of the answers will have found a light which will enable him to extend his search, and, when he has proceeded a little farther in his quest, he will find the tolerance and the faith which will renew him.

I DO not at all understand the mystery of grace—only that it meets us where we are, but does not leave us where it found us.

—ANNE LAMOTT

RISHIS—WHO ARE THEY?

III

DAKSHA, one of the ten *prajapatis* as also one of the *saptarishis*, represents physiological or biological evolution, and since evolution cannot proceed through physical form only, Shiva is shown to destroy Daksha’s sacrifice. Daksha is the chief Progenitor, who established the era of men produced by sexual intercourse. Before the time of Daksha, living creatures were variously propagated—by the will, by sight, by touch, and by Yoga-power, mentions Vishnu Purana. (*S.D.*, II, 182-83)

Once a Hindu student of Theosophy had asked whether any Hindu *Rishi* of old still existed in flesh and blood? H.P.B. remarked that in the fifth race of the fourth Round, no person can live for more than 300 to 400 years in one body, and there have been examples cited by physicians of a few people living for 150 and even 170 years. In the article “Do the Rishis Exist?” H.P.B. points out that there are reasons to believe that some of the great Hindu Adepts of ancient times have been reincarnating themselves occasionally in Tibet and Tartary.

However, longevity of the *Rishis* could be explained on the basis of “permanent astral.” Traditionally, *Rishi* Vashishtha is considered to be Lord Ram’s guru and the Vishnu Purana makes him the family priest of Ikshwaku (or Solar) Dynasty. He is considered to be not only contemporary of Ikshwaku himself, but of his descendants down to the sixty-first generation. How could this be possible? Perhaps we can understand it if we grasp the concept of “permanent astral.” Each one of us possesses an astral body on which the physical body is moulded and that astral body is built on the basis of *skandhas*, and is governed by the stock of Karma to be exhausted in a given life. “Permanent astral is constructed during life on the basis of the aspirations and self-induced efforts. Only those who have arrived at a certain stage of development or initiation return to incarnation with a “permanent astral.” All others form a new astral for each

incarnation. Since, our physical body is modelled on the astral body, the changes in the astral body reflect in the physical body; since the astral body changes very gradually in a given life, the physical body and appearance also change very slowly. Thus perfected beings, who have constructed for themselves “permanent astral,” would be born with almost the *same astral body* every time they take birth, and consequently, with almost the same physical appearance. This might have given rise to the stories of the sages and rishis living for thousands of years.

There are many stories of sages and *rishis* getting charmed by the beauty of *apsaras* (nymphs) and marrying them. Many of these stories are allegorical. For instance, the Second Race humanity is said to be “sweat-born.” There is corroboration for the “sweat-born” race in the allegory of the *Puranas*. Sage Kandu was performing pious austerities when Indra, the “King of the Gods,” sent an *Apsara* (nymph) called Pramlocha to tempt the sage and disturb his penance. She spent 907 years, six months and 3 days in the company of the sage, which seemed to him like *one day!* H.P.B. points out that these are the esoteric figures, which are purposely distorted, but they are supposed to represent the duration of the cycle between the first and second human race. When the sage wakes up from this psychological or hypnotic state he curses Pramlocha, who is terrified and flies away from him, wiping the perspiration oozing out of her body with the leaves of the trees. The child she had conceived by the sage came out from the pores of her skin in drops of perspiration. The wind collected these drops into one mass, which matured by the rays of the moon, gradually increased in size and in time became a lovely girl, named Marisha—the symbol of Sweat-born Race. Kandu stands for First Race. He is a son of the Pitris and therefore *devoid of mind*, and hence mistook the lapse of nearly one thousand years for one day. H.P.B. says that the *Apsara* (nymph) is the ambassador of *Kama* (not Indra). *Kama* is the personification of that feeling which leads and propels to creation. This is very suggestive and it shows the psychic element developing the

physiological, before the birth of Daksha. Patriarch or *Prajapati* Daksha is the progenitor of real physical men and he is shown to be born from Marisha. (*S.D.*, II, 174-76)

In the article, “The Future Occultist,” H.P.B. explains the symbolical meaning of the marriage of the *Rishis*. They are purely allegorical accounts. *Buddhi* or spiritual Soul in man, (in relation to the Universe, it is spoken of as *Prakriti*) is represented as “female,” because it is passive and represented as the vehicle of *Atman* or Spirit. This *Atman*, when spoken of in relation to the entire Universe, is referred to as *Purusha*, and is depicted as active “male,” for it is the Centre of Energy, acting through and upon its female vehicle. She mentions that when the occultist is thoroughly identified with the seventh principle or *Atman*, he acts upon *Buddhi*. Thus, the Mahatma, who has become one with the *Atman*, (or *Purusha*), becomes practically a creator, because he has identified himself with the evolving and the manifesting energy of nature. It was in this sense that the *Rishis* are said to have “married.” Further:

The more and the sooner the animal sexual affinities are given up, the stronger and the sooner will be the manifestation of the higher occult powers which alone can produce immaculate conception....The “Adept,” whether in the *Sthula Sarira* be male or female, is then able to bring a new being into existence by the manipulation of cosmic forces. Anasuya, a female adept of the ancient times, is thus said to have conceived immaculately Durvasas, Dattatreya and Chandra—the three distinct types of adeptship.

A *Rishi* has the creative power of speech and he can bless as well as curse. However, whenever he curses he loses the merit earned through many years of *tapasya* (mortification).

(Concluded)

W. Q. JUDGE—THE EDITOR

II

PERHAPS that was written on one of those days of physical weariness when depression does tend to creep on us, but Mr. Judge shows neither depression nor weariness when dealing with two themes which do indeed at times bear his hallmark. They are Brotherhood and Truth. In the issue for April 1887, which begins the second volume, “In this joyous season of returning Spring, *The Path* wishes all its readers a ‘Happy New Year’ in the fullest and best sense of the term—a progress in the knowledge of the great and vital truths of Theosophy, a truer realization of The Self, a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood.” Little could W.Q.J. foresee that in penning those words he was furnishing a clause for the future Declaration of the United Lodge of Theosophists, words to be repeated week by week around the world, until—Ah, there one can only put a question-mark!

In all his writings he urges Brotherhood. No more indubitable hallmark could be placed on any of them. As we have seen, he reminds his readers that in 1875 the Masters were known by the name of “Brothers”: therefore, if it is to be “loyal to the great Founders of the society,” *The Path* must promote “the spread of that idea of universal Brotherhood which aims to benefit all, from highest to lowest” (April 1887). Warning, as he always does, against foolish tampering with “hidden forces,” Mr. Judge, in his opening Editorial, that for April 1886, affirms that “the very first step in true mysticism and true occultism is to try to understand the meaning of Universal Brotherhood, without which the very highest progress in the practice of magic turns to ashes in the mouth,” and appeals for the support of “all who wish to raise themselves and their fellow creatures—man and beast—out of the thoughtless jogtrot of selfish everyday life. It is not thought that Utopia can be established in a day; but through the spreading of the idea of Universal Brotherhood the truth in all things may be discovered.” And in March 1893, which saw *The*

Path’s seventh birthday, he proclaimed the Theosophical aim with forthright brevity—“To break down materialism, revive spirituality, and create a nucleus for a Universal Brotherhood.”

“Let none mistake our attitude.” So wrote Mr. Judge in an Editorial already quoted, that of March 1888, reaffirming ringingly his faith in H.P.B. None *could*, either upon this or any other point! No man was ever more open, more unambiguous, more thoroughly consistent as a servant of the Truth. Yet—note the opening of that same Editorial: “It has never been claimed that these journals [*i.e.*, *The Path*, *The Theosophist*, *Le Lotus*, and *Lucifer*] alone knew of and expounded Truth; all that their conductors asserted for them was that they desired truth, and that they intended to remain devoted to the aims formulated by the Theosophical Society and to the Masters they believe are behind that body.” Naturally, *The Path* maintained the same attitude—independent devotion to the cause of Theosophy” (April 1887), and the motto of that cause was the gold-standard, if we may so put it, for Mr. Judge—“There is no religion higher than Truth.” “Mental diversities,” he wrote in March 1887, “inevitably cause diversity in the understanding of any proposition. Thus it happens that Theosophists have many different views of how the path should be followed, but none of them disagree with the statement that there must be *one* Truth, and that no religion can be called higher than Truth.”

“Sweet reasonableness” as evidenced here, is another hallmark of Mr. Judge. It stands to reason that different minds grasp Truth differently. It stands equally to reason that there *must* be ONE TRUTH. “We therefore have pursued, as far as possible,” he continues, “a course which is the result of the belief that the prevalence of similar doctrines in the writings and traditions of all peoples points to the fact that *the true religion is that one which will find the basic ideas common to all philosophies and religions.*” Surely that is but common-sense. W.Q.J. was richly endowed with the saving grace of common-sense. It, too, characterizes the pages of his magazine, in which he says, writing in March 1892, “attempt

has been made to present the common-sense of theosophy, because it knows that, sadly enough, many theosophists cease to use their natural common-sense when dealing with the movement and its literature.” But, not to diverge from the subject of Truth, of which his vision was always as clear as it was steadfast, he reiterates his credo as a Theosophist in the Editorial for March 1888, where, referring to the commencement of *The Path*, he says: “The object before our eyes when we agreed to carry on this project was to hold Truth as something for which no sacrifice could be too great, and to admit no dogma to be more binding than the motto of the Theosophical Society—“There is no religion higher than Truth.”

To conclude our gleanings from these old Editorials, so much to be prized for their still-fresh impressions of the guide, friend and teacher whom we honour, let us note also his unconscious reference to his own four main qualities, when *The Path* was entering upon its fifth year. “In the third month of the first year of *The Path*,” he writes, “its death within the year was predicted, but fate has ruled otherwise, and we have been accorded the opportunity of attempting to erect the four pillars of Sincerity, Devotion, Determination of Purpose, and Integrity.” Indubitably, these were the pillars of his own character, upon which his life of service to Theosophy rested. And the summons to action that follows, how characteristic!—“Let us press forward with new energy” in the work of the coming years.

As students of today he still speaks to us, leaving with us also, as with his readers in March 1896, this final message for our stimulus and encouragement: “Nothing can be accomplished without you; everything with you; and the last and apparently least of you is not always the most helpless.”

(Concluded)

TRUTH exists. Only lies are invented.

—GEORGES BRAQUE

ON “MISSING LINKS”

ON the questions of origin of man and differentiation of species, science is still groping in the dark, and encountering gaps and “missing links.” Science has been searching for “missing links” between the “Root-types” and the present fossils or living species, as also links that would show man as descending from the animals. Science has been unable to discover neither class of “missing links,” with her present methods and apparatus, because all of them exist in the astral plane and therefore are invisible to the physical eye.

How long has man been on this earth? Has he been here for a few thousand or for a few million years? Looking deep into geological strata, our explorers are finding, now and then, the remains of animals, birds and reptiles in the strata, but no human skeletons are found, indicating that these animals must have existed in far earlier ages than man. They doubt if man existed side by side with the dinosaurs and other huge reptiles, because no fossil pertaining to *genus homo* (man) is discovered in the same stratum. The *Secondary Age* with its three subdivisions—Triassic, Jurassic and Chalk or Cretaceous periods, is considered to be the age of Reptiles, such as Megalosauri, Ichthyosauri, Plesiosauri, etc. Science denies the presence of man in that period. But if man did not exist side by side with these monsters, how does man know of their existence? The old records of China, India and Egypt are full of the account of these huge animals. Science admits appearance of man only at the close of *Tertiary Age*, which comprises Eocene, Miocene and Pliocene periods.

The Esoteric philosophy teaches that for a vast period of time, about 300 million years, our earth, man and all kingdoms of nature, were in an astral stage. Before man and animals developed physical bodies, they had astral or ethereal forms. During the astral period, nature was proceeding with the task of preparing the prototypes on the astral plane. At the time of huge antediluvian animals, in the *Secondary Age*, animals absorbed so much of the total gross matter

available that astral man remained without physical frame, *i.e.*, without the “coat of skin.” However, this “gross matter” was not such as we know now. Yet, it is not claimed that this period of the Plesiosaurus was the period when man of astral body was completely devoid of a *material one*. However, it appears that animals then were in a comparatively grosser form than man—though both man and animals did not have corporeal frames. Man could therefore survive in the same place with huge reptiles and birds without being afraid of them. Since his body was of very ethereal nature, he left no impressions upon mud, soft lava or volcanic dust. At the end of 300 million years, the process of hardening began, and the form of man was the first to become solid. This process of condensation was gradual. Man was throwing off one astral form after another, to acquire density and to clothe himself with a dense frame.

As man thickened, drawing more and more gross matter, the animals felt the draught, and they grew smaller in size. This process of solidification went on for a long time, but it was not until man had acquired sufficient hardness, that he made mark on any strata of the earth. “Physical man, we say, existed before the first bed of the Cretaceous rocks was deposited” (*S.D.*, II, 679), indicating thereby that body of man hardened in the latter part of *Secondary Age*.

When man’s frame hardened his fossils were formed and then later discovered. When the form of man became solid, some of the astral prototypes of the animals from preceding periods (rounds) were also involved in the process of solidification. These fossils, so to say, solidified out of date. This is the reason why the fossil remains of man could be traced back to few million years, whereas the fossil remains of flora and fauna go back to hundreds of million years. H.P.B. writes:

At the expiration of these 300 million years, Nature, on the way to the physical and material, down the arc of descent, begins with mankind and works downwards,

hardening or materializing forms as it proceeds. Thus the fossils found in strata, to which an antiquity, not of eighteen, but of many hundreds of millions of years, must be ascribed, belong in reality to forms of the preceding Round, which, while living, were far more ethereal than physical, as *we know the physical*. That we perceive and disinter them as tangible forms, is due to the process of materialization or crystallization referred to, which took place subsequently, at the beginning of the Fourth Round, and reached its maximum after the appearance of man, proceeding parallel with his physical evolution....And thus man now finds, as tangible fossils, what were once the (to his present senses) ethereal forms of the lower kingdoms. (*S.D.*, II, 68 fn.)

Thus we have fossil remains of beings which never lived in our matter. When these fossils were discovered, it was argued that those huge creatures co-existed with gross physical body of man. Science would have to first admit of the existence of astral body and astral senses and then develop these inner senses, to discover the links in the astral plane. However, the fossils, which so to say, solidified out of date, form an exception to the impossibility of finding any missing links. In other words, had the *astral prototypes* of these earlier animals not hardened when man’s frame solidified, science would not be in possession of any missing links. “The Theosophic adepts insist that there are still in the earth bony remains of man, which carry his first appearance in a dense body many millions of years farther back than have yet been admitted, and these remains will be discovered by us before much time shall have rolled away,” writes Mr. Judge.

The second type of “missing links,” which science has been unable to discover, pertains to the *basic* or *Root types* from which various species have differentiated. How to put existing organic forms in a continuous line of descent? This point is discussed in the *Secret Doctrine* with reference to ungulate mammals or hoofed animals. We see that both the horses and oxen are hoofed animals,

but, while horses have split hoof, the oxen have but one toe. The farthest science could go (but has not been able to) in tracing the root of modern horse and oxen, are the families in Eocene period (early Tertiary period). Thus, oxen could be traced to the family called, *Anoplotheridae*, while modern horse seems to be derived from the family *Paleotheridae* in Eocene period. *The Secret Doctrine* points out that in the above example, differentiation and separation of species from these two families in the Eocene period, leading to modern horse and oxen, may be partly ascribed to climactic influences, “natural selection,” and other physical causes. But what is the “root” to which these two families could be traced back? “The root to which these two families lead back to is UNKNOWN,” *i.e.*, unknown to science. The above two families belong to what is termed as, “midway point of evolution.” The “midway point of evolution” is that stage where the astral prototypes begin to pass into the physical and become subject to differentiation, by intelligent forces of nature.

The *root-types* or *basic types*, which, after differentiation, produced the above two families (from which modern horse and oxen are derived), existed in the astral period. In the process of differentiation, in the astral period, there was intelligent aid and intervention from great souls, high and holy men of immense power, knowledge and wisdom, known as *Dhyanis*. It is stated that these *Dhyanis* began evolution by alteration and additions in these root-types, in purely astral period. Thus, in case of oxen and horses, science is unable to go back and trace the *ultimate Root type*, which must belong to the astral region. That “root” according to occultism is one of the seven primeval physico-astral and bisexual root-types. These were contemporaries of the early Lemurian races. The period of astral races of early Lemurian age is the *Jurassic age* of Geology (*S.D.*, II, 734-736). Thus, it appears that the astral root-types could be traced back to mid-Tertiary period or *Jurassic age*.

Recently, journal *Nature*, mentioned discovery of 290 million-year-old fossil *Gerobatrachus hottoni* or elderly frog, known as

“frogomander,” which is supposed to link modern frogs and salamanders and help to throw light on amphibian ancestry. The evolutionary ancestry of modern amphibians, such as frogs, salamanders and earthworm-like caecilians, has since long remained uncertain because of the gap in the fossil record. The discovery of “frogomander,” suggests that modern amphibians may have come from two groups, with frogs and salamanders related to an ancient amphibian known as a temnospondyl, while worm-like caecilians to another group of ancient amphibians called lepospondyls.

The third type of “missing links” is the link that would help to trace back man and apes to a common ancestor. In the first place, there is no “common ancestor” to man and apes. The present-day apes have descended from the anthropoid apes produced through unnatural union between mindless man and huge female animals. In those early periods, Man and mammals had semi-astral form and the mammalian root-types were not far enough removed from human types, and hence the union was invariably fertile. Further:

As time rolled on and the still semi-astral forms consolidated into the physical, the descendants of these creatures were modified by external conditions until the breed, dwindling in size, culminated in the lower Apes of the Miocene period. With these the later Atlanteans renewed the sin of the “Mindless”—this time with full responsibility. The resultants of their crime were the species now known as the Anthropoids. (*S.D.*, II, 689)

LISTENING to, and participating in, music creates neural pathways in your brain that stimulate creativity. Studies have shown that music actually trains the brain for higher forms of thinking.

—STEVE GILLMAN

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

MIND—I

THE chapter is called *Chittavaggo* or Mind. A note on the term *Chitta* in the Cunningham Press edition says: “The term is used in almost every verse of this chapter. It has been variously translated—Heart, Mind, Reflection, Thought. The term implies Mindfulness, Mental Attentiveness, Mental Deliberateness. It is a state of human self-consciousness. *Chitta* is not mind which, attracted by the objects of senses and contacting them, wanders. *Chitta* is the superior power which can check, control and use the mind. It is sometimes spoken of as abstracted consciousness. It is the power of the Thinker who uses it to control, purify and elevate the mind. The mind is the instrument of the Thinker, the Human Soul, the Real Man or *Manushya*. *Chitta* is that state of mental consciousness in which the mind steadied becomes porous to the higher, spiritual and divine influences of the Real Man.”

1. *Just as a fletcher makes straight his arrow, the wise man makes straight his crooked thinking. This is difficult to guard. This is hard to restrain. (33)*

A fletcher is an arrow maker or arrow seller. In Archery, the quality of the bow and arrow play a vital role for an archer to hit his mark. If the arrow is not straight, it would fly off in wrong direction and fail to hit the mark. In a war or when faced with some ferocious animal, failing to hit the mark would mean risk to the life of the archer himself. Man is endowed with mind, the power to think and choose. Mind uses brain to function through physical body. Mr. Judge explains the four peculiarities of the mind, thus: *First*, to naturally fly off from any point, object, or subject; *second*, to fly to some pleasant idea; *third*, to fly to an unpleasant idea; *fourth*, to remain passive and considering naught. Complete concentration on the job on hand is most likely to achieve the desired result. What comes in the way is the slippery and unruly nature of mind. Even its

owner knows not how and where it may move. But mindfulness can give him an insight into his own nature. It can help him to straighten up his “crooked” thinking. We do not see things as they are. Our ideas, biases, likes and dislikes, immediately give a coloring, which distorts clear view of things. Perverted thoughts, personal biases, personal desires and false views due to ignorance, indulgence in sense objects lead to crooked thinking. Even when one has intellectually understood the nature of the real Self, it takes considerable effort to get rid of past habits. It has its set grooves—the pet theories and ideas—and it takes a while to fill up those mental grooves and to learn to look at things from different and higher perspective. It is not easy. Even Arjuna, the greatest archer found difficulty in controlling the mind. He told Krishna: “O Krishna, the mind is full of agitation, turbulent, strong, and obstinate. I believe the restraint of it to be as difficult as that of the wind.” Krishna shows the way by saying: “Without doubt, O thou of mighty arms, the mind is restless and hard to restrain; but it may be restrained, O son of Kunti, by practice and absence of desire.”

2. *Like unto a fish snatched from its watery home and cast on land, the mind trembles and quivers leaving the dominion of Mara. (34)*

In an ordinary man, his mind lives in the domain of Mara—the personified temptations that make him live for his own pleasures or perhaps for the happiness of his loved ones. Thus living, he is in control of Mara that wants mankind to live the ordinary animalistic life, or even worse. He is at home like a fish in water. But when the ordinary man realizes the higher purpose of human life, he makes efforts to escape from the prison.

Mind becomes dual during incarnation. One aspect works through the body and makes him feel that he is Mr. X or Mrs. Y. Completely identified with personality, his life is full of pleasure and pain, joys and sorrows of worldly existence. But there is the other aspect which yearns to know the meaning of life. There are

flashes of higher impulses and aspirations, which make him forget himself. It encourages him to stretch out a helping hand without any consideration of return. It wants him to chart out new path where status, praise, power, wealth are not the prime objects of living. Alas, such flashes are far fewer in number and are quickly forgotten as passing fancy. It is the “still small voice,” which is lost and ignored in the worldly noise.

But when one understands the futility of worldly attainments, when one has experienced “joys of the greater worth,” and sensed the serenity and peace of the spiritual living, one resolves to break the golden chains by which Mara has kept the person bound to the worldly existence. Freeing oneself from the desires, which spur men on to action, and keep one going, day in and day out, in the hope of the attainment of desires, such freedom frightens him. Because he is leaving the familiar ground to venture into new territory about which he has not much experience. There is natural resistance from one’s own personal nature which does not like the change. Resistance also comes from one’s own family and friends who often do not understand or sympathize with what one has undertaken. One is restless like a fish cast on land. Even for a mountaineer, it is not always easy to step out of the safety of the tent to scale new heights. Uncharted path, the prospect of gusty wind and snowstorms, fear of not reaching the next base and the possibility of losing contact with the current base makes one so afraid that one is tempted to rush back. This is the transition state wherein the person has not yet found firm footing in the new ground, because he has not yet become familiar enough to feel comfortable in the new territory. As the time passes, one becomes familiar with the new surrounding, feels reassured, and begins to settle down, only to realize that the journey has not ended, one has to move on, onward and upward.

This verse has also been rendered a little differently by Dr. Radhakrishnan as: “Even as a fish taken from his watery home and thrown on the dry ground (moves about restlessly), this thought quivers all over in order to escape the dominion of Mara (the tempter

or Death).” Mind working through the body is a ray of higher Ego which is immortal and is itself a child of *Kumaras* or *Manasaputras* or Solar *Pitris*. It is an “exile” on earth and yearns to return to its celestial divine abode. Thus the “divine discontent,” does not allow him to rest.

3. *Thinking is difficult to discipline. Mind is flighty, alighting where it listeth. Good is to tame it. The tame mind is the bearer of happiness. (35)*

4. *Let a wise man watch his thinking. The mind moves with extreme subtlety and is not noticed. It seizes whatever it desires. To watch the mind is conducive to happiness. (36)*

Modern man suffers from what is known as, “short attention span.” Our mind cannot remain for long on a particular subject or topic. We are prone to get restless with details and lengthy discussions. We prefer an “executive summary,”—things expressed in a nutshell. There are others who just cannot stay on track. Some bosses are known for their ability to take discussions completely off the track. They move from one unrelated topic to another, while the restless subordinates, a captive audience, is obliged to hear him out politely. Office meetings are known to get stuck at the very first agenda point in related or unrelated discussions and detailing. They then set up “ground rules” for the meetings with someone specifically appointed to act as a “coach” or “moderator.”

If we watch our thought-processes we find that it is very difficult to remain on one subject for a long time. As we reflect, say, on the idea of brotherhood, before long we find ourselves thinking about H.P.B., and then about Russia which in turn leads us to think about airplane, and then to our first trip abroad, and so on. We find ourselves thinking at a tangent.

(To be continued)

JULIUS CAESAR

A STUDY IN VIOLENCE AND BLOODSHED

III

SOOTHSAYERS or truth-tellers were men possessed of some degree of natural clairvoyance, which they strengthened by various means of focusing their eyes and attention till their minds were closed to external matters and were open to conditions visible in the astral light. This light surrounds and interpenetrates the earth, and in it are impressions of past and future events, which may be read by those who know how.

Whether used by Adepts or not, the Soothsayer in this story faithfully declared his message of danger for Caesar on the Ides of March; but he met a frequent fate of truth-tellers, for he was called by Caesar a dreamer and disregarded. On the morning of the Ides he warned again, but with no better result. Too many others were claiming Caesar's attention. For Caesar it was a time of display and self-gratification.

Soothsaying is as well known today, under other names, as in the past—and perhaps as much (and as little) credited. The difference is only in externals. So too with dreams. Great numbers of intelligent people believe that dreams have forecasting value, but do not confess the belief. Theosophy declares that these inner experiences have some validity and it gives a true explanation of them. That for soothsaying has just been indicated.

As to dreams, some come from physiological causes and have little value. Those that are important spring from the deeper Egoic nature. Said H. P. Blavatsky, "The Ego is the actor, the real man, the true human self." In egoic or "real dreams...something of what was seen, done or thought by the Ego impressed itself on the physical brain...our dreams are the waking state and actions of the true Self, the dim recollection of which at the moment of awakening becomes more or less distorted by our physical memory." Since dreams are

true impressions of "things seen," "facts witnessed," they may and do convey to the physical brain happenings that for men are not yet present. Dreams of warning, such as Calphurnia's, are "real" and they require "the active co-operation of the inner Ego...Prophetic dreams...are impressed on our memory by the Higher Self, and are generally plain and clear: either a voice heard or the coming event foreseen." There are also "warning dreams for others who are unable to be impressed themselves." Caesar was one of those so "unable." It may be that keen intuition led Shakespeare to heighten Plutarch's account by making Caesar's report of Calphurnia's dream, and the conspirators' later enacting of it, exactly correspond; for in this way could be intimated that "Egoic co-operation" needed for a warning dream. Also, the effort put forth by Calphurnia's Higher Self may have been indicated by Caesar's saying that she "*thrice* in her sleep cried out, 'Help, ho! They murder Caesar!'" The dream by another personage—Cinna the poet—of danger to him, and his inattention to it leading to his death, subtly though powerfully reinforces the occult values of Calphurnia's warning dream and Caesar's disregard of it. There is no question that to Shakespeare and the people of his time dreams and other modes of prophecy had the importance attributed to them in this drama. There is also no question that Theosophical teaching, while it would most carefully analyze specific examples, does recognize the actuality of such experiences. The other important psychic phenomenon came to Brutus in his tent on the night before the last battle; Act IV, Scene 3. "A monstrous apparition, which made his blood cold and his hair to stare, and which named itself his evil spirit" (Plutarch's *Life of Brutus*); a "terrible and strange vision of a huge and frightful figure standing by him." It told him in the next battle he should see it again, "his evil genius," "his evil daemon." This vision Brutus interpreted as the Ghost of Caesar warning him that his "hour had come." The figure, however, never names itself the ghost of Caesar, nor does Plutarch call it so. Theosophy states that a "ghost," technically regarded, is the astral double of a previously living man and as such must look

like that man. The entity of Brutus's vision was undoubtedly of another order.

For an understanding it is necessary to consider the ancient belief that men have attendant spirits. Hastings' *Encyclopaedia* gives valuable information. The statement is made that an "evil spirit was often conceived as a ghost," at times the ghost of—"hero," possibly one murdered; in some stories "the two terms are used without distinction." The vision of Brutus is cited as an example of an evil demon "specially attached to an individual." But not all demons (daimones) by any means were evil. Plato remarked in the *Phaedo* (107D): "Every man has a distinct daimon which attends him during life and after death." Menander said: "By every man at birth a good daimon takes his stand, to initiate him in the mysteries of life." Likewise Hastings states that "an avenging daimon was thought to be appointed to punish the crimes of a particular family." Plutarch said of Caesar: "The great genius which attended him through his lifetime, even after his death remained as the avenger of his murder." Hastings also remarks: "By the Pythagoreans a belief in demons was always fostered, especially...as representing the souls of the dead.... All the air, they said, was full of souls, and these are called demons and heroes."¹

(To be concluded)

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person.

—ALBERT SCHWEITZER

¹ *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by James Hastings, IV, 590.

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: Does fear have a purpose? How does one overcome fear?

Answer: All the scriptures speak of acquiring fearlessness. There are many kinds of fear. The psychological fears are called phobias. A phobia is an excessive or unreasonable fear of an object, place or situation. Claustrophobia is the fear of closed spaces, while agoraphobia is the fear of open spaces. There is also fear of water, fear of heights, fear of the darkness, etc. Some of these phobias could be traced back to childhood, and are rooted in fearful objects or ideas which adults sometimes use to control children, such as ghosts, boogie-man, supernatural objects, etc. Some fears result from traumatic experiences. Some of these fears we carry with us from experiences of past lives, and they are deep-rooted. For instance, in the case of a person who might have burnt himself in a particular life, his physical and mental memory is so deeply impressed by that experience that in the next life he may have instinctive fear of fire.

There are various ways of dealing with fear. It is important to stop *avoiding* the feared situation. When the fear is not deep-rooted the recommended method in cognitive behavioural therapy is to confront it or meet it headlong. It is suggested that there must be gradual exposure, confronting the least feared situation first before moving on to the more threatening ones. Success in overcoming fear, gradually re-establishes confidence in oneself. Another method is to *live out* our future anxieties and fears, as was done by Mr. Crosbie. He writes:

I used to look calmly and dispassionately at the very

worst picture I could conjure up as happening to myself, and found it helpful in getting rid of “fear of consequences.” I mentally took account of the very worst, saw myself in it with all that it entailed, went through it in all its parts leaving myself alone, dishonoured, stripped of everything. Those very things have happened to me, but I knew them, and went on undismayed. Had I not done it, I would not be where I am today. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 85)

There are many spiritual exercises in Buddhism, which especially aim at the conquest of fear. Midnight visits to graveyards and other fearsome places; concentration on the various stages of decomposition in a corpse; meditation on death, etc. In all such exercises, fear is induced in the conscious mind, so that it can be faced and overcome. “The enemy must be dragged out into the open before it can be slain,” writes Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher.

The more faith we have in the law of Karma, more fearless we are able to be. We must gradually learn to prepare ourselves to face the worst, knowing that we are always greater than the situation, no matter how grave or dreadful it may appear initially. The best antidote for anxiety and fear for the future is to lose one’s self in helping others. “No earnest one who feels called to work persistently for the good of humanity, and not for his own, need fear aught that heaven or hell holds,” says Mr. Judge.

Many fears arise from excessive attachment and identification with the personality, especially the physical body. In one story, Socrates teaches the child to be fearless, who got frightened of a man running towards them with an open knife. He points out that if the man runs his knife through his tunic, he would only cut the cloth and if he did run it deeper, he might produce a wound. Even if he ran the knife right through the body, “he could not have hurt that part of you, which is yourself, and does not die.” That is why, Socrates was not afraid. Fear is essentially fear for oneself and hence can be overcome by eliminating the ego-sense, and consequently

the *sense of separateness*. Why would I be afraid if another person acquires more strength or power, if *he is myself*?

Only a person who has cultivated complete harmlessness in him, is able to be truly fearless. Fearlessness is a godlike quality. A spiritual man is fearless; he is not afraid of any one and also *no one is afraid of him*. An important kind of giving, that is mentioned in Buddhism, is the giving of *fearlessness* or *abhaya*. Each one of us can give the gift of “fearlessness” to others by sharing our confidence with other people, and by creating a feeling of security among those around us, by our very presence.

Religion has always made use of fear to make people blindly accept dogmas. No lasting reform can be achieved by instilling fear. Many of our fears are rooted in ignorance and could be removed by knowledge, especially the knowledge of Karma and Reincarnation. Absolute fearlessness is synonymous with Enlightenment. Fearlessness stems from spiritual integrity. A spiritual person has to learn to rely on the judgment based on his own “inner voice” or intuition. This intuition could be developed only by him “who is untameable, who cannot be dominated, who knows he has to play the lord over men, over facts, over all things save his own divinity.”

Fear does serve short-term purpose, working as a deterrent. In the absence of enough time and energy to persuade the wrongdoer, to make him see right from wrong, individuals, society and the state resort to threats of punishment, fines, imprisonment, etc. Then again, since some people could be fearless in the wrong sense, being *rashly bold*, they could be held in check by the fear of the severe consequences of their thoughtless or even downright wicked act.

Question: A Master of Wisdom has written: “Nature consciously prefers that matter should be indestructible in organic rather than inorganic forms, and works slowly but incessantly towards the realization of this object—the evolution of conscious life out of inert material” (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 142). What is implied in this quotation?

Answer: The above quotation is part of the Master’s answer to a scientific thinker in India, and hence the use of terms such as, “organic” and “inorganic.” Moreover, when it is stated, “Nature consciously prefers that matter should be indestructible in organic rather than inorganic forms,” it seems contrary to our observation. We find that vegetables and other organic forms perish much faster than inorganic forms, such as stones or metals. But the real import of this statement is conveyed in the latter part of the quotation. The quotation from the Master of Wisdom briefly states the object of evolution and the clue to its understanding lies in the words, “the evolution of conscious life out of inert material.”

The philosophy of Theosophy declares that there is no inorganic matter, as every atom is alive and has the germ of self-consciousness. Occult philosophy does not differentiate between organic and inorganic matter and asserts that Life is ever present in every atom of matter. When the life-energy is active in the atom, that atom is organic, when dormant or latent, then that atom is inorganic. H.P.B. points out that when life-energy becomes inactive in a stone, its particles lose their cohesive property and the stone would crumble, but each particle of the stone would still contain life-energy in dormant state.

The object and the scheme of evolution described by Mr. Judge on p. 67 of *The Ocean of Theosophy*, enables us to understand this a little better. Mr. Judge writes that at a point of time far from now what is now known as mineral matter will have passed through vegetable matter and raised to animal stage and then into human flesh. Thus, at some remote point in the process of evolution, the atoms of mineral matter would reach the stage of organic fleshy matter and then into the stage of self-conscious thinkers. If we understand this then it is easy to imagine that the mass of vital matter which constitutes our blood, tissues, nerves, flesh, etc., was, few years ago, in the simple state of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen or sodium atoms. We see the transition from inanimate (from the point of view of science) to becoming sensitive. Carry it further and we find that

atoms and cells in certain portions of our body are not only sensitive but are *extremely* sensitive, and immediately respond to our will. We *will* to speak, and the atoms forming our vocal cords adjust and we are able to throw out sound. We *will* to walk, and the atoms of leg respond to our *will* and enable us to walk.

Perhaps we are able to imagine the next step when the so-called inanimate matter that became sensitized, will remain that way and not slip back. In other words, the sensitized matter will become self-conscious and act of its own will. This is possible, because every time we use our “will,” we make an impression on the atoms of various parts of our body. After repeated impressions, this matter comes to the stage of acting of its own will. We know that the baby takes some time in training the atoms of his brain and body to respond to its will, and hence takes time in learning to speak, walk, talk, etc. But at our level, we only have to think of going to a library and all the atoms of the body and brain adjust themselves and respond, and enable us to go to the library.

At another place, Mr. Judge describes the object of evolution as that of raising the entire mass of manifested matter to the stature, nature and dignity of conscious god-hood. When we make good impressions on the atoms which come in our contact we refine that matter and keep it on human stage, instead of making those atoms fly back to lower kingdoms to form the bodies of animals or plants, by giving them animalistic impressions.

THE chemist who can extract from his heart’s elements, compassion, respect, longing, patience, regret, surprise, and forgiveness, and compound them into one, can create that atom which is called love.

—KAHLIL GIBRAN

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

“Learn to die, and thou shalt learn to live,” says *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. More and more spiritual seekers are becoming aware that death is but another form of life, because, although the body dies, the soul is immortal. This awareness has given rise to the concept of drafting a “spiritual will.” Instead of a blind compliance to tradition, seekers are drafting their own unique spiritual wills leaving instructions on how they would like to go, and how they would like to be remembered. Many people feel that drafting a spiritual will is an important exercise as it forces us to take a stock of our activities. Do we have enough time to cultivate good qualities of love, compassion, patience, forgiveness, and truthfulness? The thought of writing one’s will comes at various times to various people. It may be on seeing the sudden death of someone close to you, or just on observing the pattern of life. In China, there are mock cremation rituals that help people to revitalize their sense of purpose in life. Some spiritual seekers and writers have left instructions in their spiritual wills as to method of disposing of the body, to either have no rites or ceremonies *or*, to have simple ceremonies; to observe calmness at the moment of death, to play *Vishnu Sahastranama* (Thousand names of Vishnu) as long as the body is awaiting cremation, and then cremate the body accompanied by vedic chants, and so on. Vinoba Bhave had made clear that he wanted his ashes buried at the same spot where he died, and there should be no condolence meetings or formalities. Every year, the day of his demise is celebrated as *Mitra Divas*, (Friendship Day), as his true legacy was binding people together, writes Jamuna Rangachari (*Life Positive*, January 2009)

Cremation, *i.e.*, burning the body by lighting the fire or in an electric crematorium is considered to be the best method of disposing of the physical body, for various reasons. Primarily, cremation facilitates quick disposal of the physical body and it is comparatively more hygienic method. Moreover, it helps to separate psychic body

or Kamrupic shell from the physical body. Death of the body implies that now the body is going to dissolve into its constituent elements, the *Panchamahabhutas*, and cremation expedites this process. Orthodox religions in the West object to cremation because it makes impossible the *literal resurrection of the body*, in which they believe. Often, people belonging to a religion, which does not sanction cremation, wishing their body to be cremated, mention it in their will.

Though it is hard to believe how ceremonies that are performed mechanically can help the deceased, people spend large sums of money for these ceremonies. *Shastras* are often quoted, saying, “He who omits to perform *Sraddha* (ceremony) on the anniversary of the day of death, will be born a *chandala* (a low caste person) a crore of times.” When it is mentioned in one’s will not to perform any ceremonies, it would save unnecessary expenses. Observing silence while the body of the dead awaits disposal is essential because the soul is busy with process of “reviewing” the life just ended. A Master of Wisdom writes: “Especially have ye to keep quiet just after Death has laid her clammy hand upon the body. Speak in whispers I say, lest you disturb the quiet ripple of thought and hinder the busy work of the Past casting its reflection upon the veil of the Future.”

Bathymetric (or sea floor terrain) data is often collected from boats using sonar to take measurements of the sea floor. The lines reflect the path of boat as it gathers data. The network of criss-cross lines (grid), 620 miles off the coast of north west Africa, near the Canary Islands, on the ocean floor of the Atlantic ocean, which was the suggested location for the Atlantis, by Plato, led British aeronautical engineer to believe he had found Atlantis. According to Plato’s account, written around 355 B.C., Atlantis sank to the bottom of the ocean in around 9600 B.C., and that the Atlanteans

were a highly advanced civilization. Some people believe Plato's account to be historically accurate but geographically inaccurate. Some experts believe that sinking of Atlantis relates to massive volcanic eruption on the island of Thera (now Santorini), around 1500 B.C. damaging the island of Crete. (*Mumbai Mirror*, February 21, 2009)

“Atlantis,” says the *Secret Doctrine*, was the Fourth Continent, and the home of the Fourth or Atlantean Race—the other three being, the Imperishable Sacred Land, the Hyperborean and Lemuria. It is on the last two continents that the Second and the Third Races flourished. The famous island of Plato, which he calls Atlantis, was but a fragment of this great Fourth Continent. According to the Esoteric Doctrine, our Fifth or Aryan Race has been in existence since last 1,000,000 years, and it has been around 850,000 years since the submersion of the last large island, Ruta, which was part of the Fourth Continent Atlantis, which was inhabited by the Fourth Race. Daitya island, also a part of Atlantis, which was inhabited by mixed race, was destroyed about 270,000 years ago (*S.D.*, I, 650-51). The last remnant of this continent, which was called by Plato, “Atlantis,” or “Poseidon,” submerged 11,000 years ago (*S.D.*, II, 324 fn.). Atlantis developed as prolongation of Lemuria, than as an entirely new mass of land.

Lemuria perished about 700,000 years before the commencement of what is now called Tertiary age (the Eocene). The destruction of Atlantis was brought on by successive disturbance in the axial rotation, and it began in early Tertiary periods. It continued for long ages, and carried away successively the last vestige of Atlantis, with the exception of Ceylon and a small portion of what is now Africa. (*S.D.*, II, 313-14)

What do dreams mean? Is the interpretation of our dreams influenced by our biases? Suppose one night you have two dreams.

In one, God appears and commands you to take a year off and travel the world, and in the other he commands you to take leave and work in a leper colony. Which of these two dreams would you consider to be meaningful? Social scientists feel that they are better-equipped to answer dream-related questions today, instead of sticking to the “two-gate” hypothesis proposed in the *Odyssey*, where Penelope was skeptical when she dreamt about return of her long-lost husband and said that only some dreams matter. A series of studies were conducted with more than 1000 people, by two psychologists, Carey Morewedge of Carnegie Mellon University and Michael Norton of Harvard University. When they asked college students of three countries—India, South Korea and United States—as to the significance of dreams, it was found that majority people in all three countries believed, along with Freud, that dreams reveal important unconscious emotion. They also seem to consider dreams to be valuable “omens” so that if they dreamt of a plane crash, they were likely to cancel the trip. However, when these people were asked to interpret their dreams, they attached more significance to a *negative* dream if it was about someone they *disliked*, and they gave correspondingly more weight to a *positive* dream if it was about a *friend*. Similarly, they considered the dreams about their friend protecting them against enemies as more “meaningful,” than the dreams about their own partners faithlessly kissing that same friend, writes John Tierney (*The Times of India*, March 12, 2009, courtesy *New York Times News Service*)

H.P.B. asks us to distinguish real dreams from idle visions, which are ordinary dreams that do not have much to convey. The real dreams are reflection of the action of the Ego on its own plane, when it is free during the sleep of the body, and are of great significance. These two types of dreams are described as one, coming through the “gates of ivory,” and the other through “gates of Horn.” Some of these dreams reflect our unconscious nature—our hidden desires and emotions. They are also avenues for fulfilment of unfulfilled desires. For instance, a lady dreamt that she was standing

before a mirror, trying out a new bonnet. She was feeling pleased on being the first one to get that bonnet of new style, and she saw her rival entering the room and going green with envy. In this dream there was gratification of her love for personal decoration, mixed with the desire to stand ahead of others. There are idle dreams which are result of indigestion. There are *real dreams* or visions of the night, in which our Ego, the real man, sees many facts of life, of history, of family, of nations. Ego being on its own plane and omniscient, during the sleep of the body, may see a war because it sees all the facts that must lead to the war, and these are impressed on the brain of the sleeping person as pictures of armies, tanks, battles, and so on. A king may have dreams which has relation to his kingdom. Sometimes in dreams we get warning. We are unable to sense the danger we are going to get into, in the waking state, as our minds are involved in the multiplicity of desires. These are called warning dreams. There are also allegorical and prophetic dreams.

We are the only ones who can interpret our dreams. Just as in waking life thoughts of different people are different, so also dream is peculiar to a person. Except for an adept who can look into the inner nature of a person and be able to interpret the dream, no other person or dream-books could do this accurately.

As children bring their broken toys with tears for us to mend,
I brought my broken dreams to God because He was my friend.
But then instead of leaving them with Him in peace to work alone,
I hung around and tried to help with ways that were my own.
At last I snatched them back and cried, "How can you be so slow?
"My child," He said, "What could I do? You never did let go."

—LAURETTA P. BURNS