

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 13, No. 12

April 17, 2022

ALCHEMY OF HAPPINESS

WE ALL desire happiness. Yet, few people understand what true happiness is. Happiness does not depend upon what happens outside of us, but on what happens within us. Happiness grows out of harmonious relationships with others, and from putting our hearts into our work and doing it with joy and enthusiasm. King Yudhishthira said that happiness is the result of good conduct. Our attitude to life is a good measure of our happiness. As the quote attributed to Lincoln says, “Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” Happy people are emotionally positive and are used to seeing the brighter side of life.

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, one of the great Islamic philosophers, writes in his book *The Alchemy of Happiness*, “He who knows himself is truly happy.” According to him happiness consists in the transformation of the self which in turn leads to realizing one’s identity with the Ultimate Reality, through personal experience. It is not easy to attain to self-knowledge, and therefore, only a few have attained to such supreme happiness, who are known as prophets. He considers prophets to be the happiest people because they have attained the goal of human existence. Most of us are in a state of disconnection from the Ultimate Reality, and experience a “pain in the Soul,” which we try to relieve by recourse to physical pleasures. But physical pleasure cannot relieve the pain that is essentially spiritual. Everyone perceives that something is missing

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

ALCHEMY OF HAPPINESS	3
FOOD FOR THOUGHT	9
LEININGEN VERSUS THE ANTS	
EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS	16
GRATITUDE, FAULT-FINDING AND RETALIATION—I	
THE ASHWATTHA TREE—SOME REFLECTIONS—II	19
THE FOUR GOLDEN LILNKS	25
REFLECTIONS ON DISCIPLINE—I	29
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	32

THEOSOPHY COMPANY (INDIA) PRIVATE LTD.

40 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020, India
email: ultmumbai@mtnl.net.in ♦ Phone : 22039024
website: www.ultindia.org

and that we need to correct the way we are living life. This nagging feeling could be the source of greatest joy because once we are conscious of it, we can change our course and begin to move towards a life of meaning and self-transcendence. We are happy to the extent to which we can emulate the prophets. They are sent to earth to teach humanity the alchemy of purifying their hearts from baser qualities in the crucible of abstinence.

Alchemy is studied under three aspects—cosmic, human and terrestrial. Terrestrial alchemy is concerned with the transmutation of base metals like lead into pure gold. This process is going on in the bowels of the earth. But this is only one aspect of alchemy—purely material and symbolic. Alchemy goes on in the body of man. Whatever we eat gets transmuted into blood, bones, mucous, tissues, etc. Shri Krishna says: “Becoming the internal fire of the living, I associate with the upward and downward breathing, and cause the four kinds of food to digest” (*Gita*, XV). “The occultist-chemist, spurning the gold of the mines, gives all his attention and directs his efforts only towards the transmutation of the baser quaternary into the divine upper trinity of man, which when finally blended are one,” *i.e.*, towards transmutation of lower, animal nature into divine nature (*The Theosophical Glossary*). This refers to spiritual alchemy, leading to spiritual perfection. Paracelsus declared that man and the universe are composed of “Three Substances”—Salt, Sulphur and Mercury.

Salt represents the physical form or body, Mercury symbolizes soul or mind, while Sulphur represents the Spirit. Mercury represents metallic principle and to Mercury was attributed malleability and lustre. Malleability is the capacity of the metal to be moulded without breaking down. Mercury represents soul or mind and in man, the process of change or transmutation must begin with the mind. Mind is often compared to water. Just as water takes the shape of the vessel it is poured into, so does the mind; it becomes that to which it is devoted. Mind in its lower aspect is *Kama-manas* and comparable to the base metal lead. Left to itself lead remains lead, and nature

takes very long to transmute it into gold. An alchemist accelerates this process. So also, it would take man many lifetimes to reach perfection, unless the incarnated mind or “everyday mind” undergoes transmutation and is so purified, as to be capable of being absorbed by the Higher Trinity. In the process, the four lower principles, body, astral body, *Kama* and *Prana* are also purified. For this, one has to decide to become an alchemist, and the beginning is to be made by *earnestly aspiring* for spiritual life. In the language of Occultism, one has to decide to become a chela. The sooner we decide the better it is. What is it to become a chela? H.P.B. writes: “Chelaship was defined, the other day, by a Mahatma as a ‘psychic resolvent, which eats away all dross and leaves only the pure gold behind.’” The dross refers to all negativities, vices and materialistic desires.

The heart of alchemy is transmutation and that implies change. We resist change because it involves going from one state of consciousness to another. It involves surrendering personal will to the divine will. It involves leaving behind the familiar in order to obtain spiritual perfection, which to us is a mere abstraction.

“The Tale of the Sands” a traditional Sufi tale, is an allegory of alchemy (from *The Sufis* by Idries Shah). Once a bubbling stream was unable to cross the desert. The Stream said aloud: “My destiny is to cross this desert, but I can see no way. Whenever I try, I am absorbed into the sand.” The Stream symbolizes the disciple or spiritual aspirant whose destiny it is to cross over this “limitless desert of illusion and Matter called Earth-Life.”

Then the voice of the Desert answered, in the hidden tongue of nature, saying, “The Wind crosses the desert, and so can you.” The Stream said, “The Wind can fly, and I cannot.” “You are thinking in the wrong way; trying to fly by yourself is absurd. Allow the Wind to carry you over the sand. Allow yourself to be absorbed in the Wind,” replied the Desert.

Does not *Light on the Path* give the same advice to the disciple? The help and guidance, for spiritual living, come from the inner planes of being. It is only when we are ready to efface the personality

and are prepared to surrender our personal will to the divine will that we can get help. And this is difficult. The story goes on that the Stream protested, as it did not want to lose its individuality in that way. If it did, it might not exist again. The Sand explained that when the Wind absorbed moisture, it carried it over the desert, and then let it fall again like rain. The rain again became a river. But how, asked the Stream, could it know that this was true? The Sand replied that if the Stream did not believe, after many years, it will be sucked by the Sand and form a quagmire. Here again we can see that if the aspirant resists change from the fear of suffering it entails, he invites stagnation. H.P.B. explains: “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)

Finally, the Stream asks, “Will I be the same river that I am today”? The Sand answered, “You cannot be the same stream that you are today. The Wind will carry your essence, the finer part of you. When you become a river again, on the other side of the desert, men may call you by a different name, but you yourself, essentially, will know that you are the same.” Thus, spiritual perfection is not annihilation, but it is self-realization, it awakens in the aspirant, the true sense of identity, so that the “I” is no longer limited to personality but encompasses the whole of creation. The Buddha says, “The Universe grows I.”

Pain is beginning to be regarded from a different perspective. It is being increasingly recognised that adversity and pain are the hidden sides of happiness. We need more than pleasure to live the best possible life. As long as we depend upon outside things for our pleasures, we are going to encounter pain. We cannot plan our life in such a manner that we shall have only happiness. Sooner or later, we realize that pain is co-ruler with pleasure, and hence instead of searching for pleasure, we may alchemize pain. There is a healthy way of looking at pain and adversity and valuing them, which in a

way implies learning to look upon pain as the other side of happiness. When we cease making happiness our goal, we shall definitely have it, as a by-product.

There are those rare few who are able to see that just as there is pain concealed beneath pleasure, there is also pleasure, nay, happiness and bliss concealed beneath the pain. They begin to value pain and adversity. The “easy” and happy times are the periods of rest; the “hard” times are the periods of training—opportunities for gaining strength and knowledge, writes Mr. Crosbie. The right response to pain comes when we recognize that true happiness lies hidden within this pain.

We love to hear the stories of people who have been transformed by their disasters, saying, “I wish it had not happened, but I am a better person for it,” because it supports a psychological truth that there is a built-in human capacity to flourish under the most difficult circumstances. “Those who weather adversity well are living proof of one of the paradoxes of happiness: We need more than a pleasure to live the best possible life. Our contemporary quest for happiness has shrivelled to a hunt for bliss—a life protected from bad feelings, free from pain and confusion....Compassion, wisdom, altruism, insight, creativity—sometimes only the trials of adversity can foster these qualities, because sometimes only drastic situations can force us to take on the painful process of change. To live a full human life, a tranquil, carefree existence is not enough. We also need to grow—and sometimes growing hurts....” (*Psychology Today*, March-April, 2006)

“Pain arouses, softens, breaks and destroys,” says *Through the Gates of Gold*. Pain arouses. It is only when pain comes that we sit up and ask questions of life. Pain is necessary not only for physical growth, but is also an integral part of spiritual growth. Spiritual life involves effecting a transition from being a good person to becoming a spiritual person. There is a great gulf between a good man and a sinner, but there is still greater gulf between a good man and a spiritual man, one who has attained to knowledge, says *Light on*

the Path. 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.

Alchemists say that Gold represents perfection and it is the highest form that any metal can reach. They say that all metals have the *potentiality* of becoming gold. Thus, gold may be taken to be a symbol of spiritual perfection. All of us have the potentiality of becoming spiritually perfect. The ancients said that the Divine Self is in all beings, but in all, it does not shine forth equally. Each of us carries within him every power and potentiality of the divinity. For instance, each one of us has the powers of *kartum*, *akartum* and *anyatha-kartum*, *i.e.*, the powers of creation, destruction and regeneration. Gradually, as one stops identifying oneself with the personality, and begins to identify with the Divine, unchanging self, one begins to manifest the power, glory and wisdom of that Divine Self. The process of perfection is from within, without. Nothing needs to be added from the outside, but calls for a gradual change in the quality of the instruments which will then allow the manifestation of the light, wisdom and power of the Self within. We may understand it by the analogy of light surrounded by a glass covering. For the light to shine forth we need to clean the soot on the glass. The light of wisdom is covered by layers or sheaths or vehicles, which need to be purified. “Perfection is not achieved when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away,” said Antoine de St. Exupery. “I saw an angel in the marble and carved until I set him free,” said Michelangelo.

The Higher Self or *Atman* is like a ray of the sun, which is *Parabrahm* or One Reality. The Supreme Reality or *Brahman* is often described as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. *Ananda* means bliss, pure and absolute. Supreme Reality is *Ananda* or unconditioned happiness. We know only of happiness which arises out of sense enjoyment, and as a result of desire fulfilment, happiness which comes and goes. But once we know our true nature, we partake of the unconditional happiness of *Atman* or *Brahman*.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT LEININGEN VERSUS THE ANTS

LEININGEN VERSUS THE ANTS, a classic short story written by Viennese author Carl Stephenson, was originally published in German in 1938. The translation of the story, probably by the author himself, was published in the December 1938 edition of *Esquire* magazine. The story is about Leiningen, the owner of a plantation in the Brazilian rainforest. He is warned by the district commissioner that a swarm of ferocious and organised flesh-eating ants is approaching, so he should leave the plantation as quickly as possible. The commissioner tells him that “they are not creatures you can fight—they are an elemental—an ‘act of God!’ Ten miles long and two miles wide. And every single one of them a fiend from hell; before you can spit three times, they will eat a full-grown buffalo to the bones. I tell you if you do not clear out at once there will be nothing left of you but a skeleton picked as clean as your own plantation.” However, Leiningen is unwilling to give up years of hard work and planning to “an act of God,” as he believes in the superiority of the human brain and has already made preparations. He says with confidence, “When I began this model farm and plantation three years ago, I took into account all that could conceivably happen to it. And now I am ready for anything and everything—including your ants.” He believes that he has lived in Brazil long enough to know how to defend himself, his workers and his plantation against the deadly ants. During his three years as a planter, he had met and defeated drought, plague and all other “acts of God.” He attributed his success to the observance of his lifelong motto: “The human brain needs only to become fully aware of its powers to conquer even the elements.” Such disasters only affirmed his argument that “intelligence directed aright, invariably makes man the master of his fate.” He had always known how to grapple with life, and even now “he was sure he would prove more than a match for the ‘irresistible’ ants.”

He convinces his workers to stay and fight with him, even as the commissioner continues to warn him in an imploring voice, “You don’t know them, I tell you! You don’t know them!” The workers have confidence in the wisdom of their boss. The animals first become aware of the arrival of the ants. Many animals, big and small, rush from the jungle, to escape the advancing ants.

When the ants reach his estate, Leiningen seals it by filling a moat that surrounds it on four sides, the fourth being a river. The ditch empties into the river. He has also built a dam, which allows him to re-route water from the river into the twelve-foot ditch. To prevent the ants from using branches as a bridge to the moat, he cuts the branches of large tamarind trees. A smaller ditch lined with concrete, receives petrol from three large tanks. Even if the ants are able to cross the moat filled with water, they would have to pass the one filled with petrol, which would kill them.

The workers line up along the water ditch to keep a look-out. The ants advance towards the water ditch. The author gives a beautiful description of how intelligently the ants seem to advance: “The hostile army was approaching in perfect formation; no human battalions, however well-drilled, could ever hope to rival the precision of that advance. Along a front that moved forward as uniformly as a straight line, the ants drew nearer and nearer to the water ditch. Then, when they learned through their scouts the nature of the obstacle, the two outlying wings of the army detached themselves from the main body and marched down the western and eastern sides of the ditch. The surrounding manoeuvre took rather more than an hour to accomplish; no doubt the ants expected that at some point they would find a crossing. During this outflanking movement by the wings, the army on the centre and southern front remained still. . . . It is not easy for the average person to imagine that an animal, not to mention an insect, can think.” As Leiningen sees thousands and millions of voracious jaws bearing down upon them and only an insignificant narrow ditch lay between them and the ants, he thinks, “Hadn’t this brain for once taken on more than it could manage?”

When the ants are halfway across the ditch, the workers try to defend themselves by using their spades to throw clumps of dirt at the advancing ants. They also make use of petrol sprinklers. They dam the river more strongly so that more water flows through the ditch, and faster. As the water in the ditch rises, the ants retreat. The workers kill every ant that reaches the riverbank. However, on the opposite bank, another army of ants, watches and waits.

The ants attempt to cross over by covering the waters with tree leaves, but they are not allowed to succeed as Leiningen repeatedly asks his men to empty and flood the moat. Eventually, the ants breach that line of defence and the men retreat behind a second moat that is filled with petrol. The ants reach the inner moat of petrol, but they are disinterested in crossing, as they can now reach the plantation, where they eat and destroy the crops.

After fighting for many days, the ants succeed in breaching the last defences. It begins to appear that all is lost. However, Leiningen realizes that if he dams the main river itself, the whole plantation will flood, drowning all the ants. He and his men can take refuge in the heights of the manor house on a hill. He realizes that this plan required reaching the dam that is long overrun by the ants.

Leiningen puts on a makeshift protective suit, douses himself with petrol, picks up two spray cans of petrol and runs for the dam—through the ants. He reaches the dam controls and floods the plantation. He is aware that it means the destruction of his one year’s crop, but at least that would save his men and preserve the contents of his granaries. The climax of the story occurs on the return journey when he is knocked down by the ants and almost devoured. At that time recalling what he had seen, a stag being devoured to the bones by the ants, he forces himself to get up. Despite suffering horrible injuries, including ant bites to the inside of his nose and directly below his eyes, he continues running. He reaches the concrete ditch with the blazing petrol and survives. This plan ultimately saves him and his remaining workers while destroying the ant army once and for all.

Leiningen reaches the other side of the ditch, and his workers carry him into the ranch house. Leiningen rests in his bed. The workers have salved and bandaged his wounded body. In the end, Leiningen awakes while recovering from his injuries and tells his workers before going to sleep: “I told you I would come back, even if I am a bit streamlined.”

“Leiningen versus the Ants,” symbolizes “man” versus “nature,” or more specifically, it may be taken to represent the materialism and rationalism of science versus the uncontrollable and unpredictable forces of nature. Interestingly, going by appearances, an “ant” seems to be quite tiny and insignificant as compared to the intelligent and powerful “man.” In the course of the story Leiningen and his men are taken by surprise when they witness the intelligence and persistence of the ants in their organized attack. Nature is not an aggregate of flitting shadows and finite realities. When a man considers nature only in its physical aspect, he has the ambition to conquer nature. But sooner or later, like Leiningen in the story, he is forced to acknowledge that he foolishly overestimated his ability to command nature.

The ancients believed that the world was created and sustained by many gods and goddesses. Behind the physical, visible nature there is an invisible, energizing nature, which consists of hierarchies of intelligent beings, which are powers and forces. Thus, there is a god of rain, a god of the ocean, a god of tree etc., and when these are worshipped it is only a symbolic acknowledgement of the role of various powers and forces of nature, in maintaining the universe.

In true or Spiritual Pantheism, it is the Spirit-Soul that pervades and animates all Nature, and there are various degrees of its expression. It is latent in a stone but manifests in man. In Spiritual Pantheism it is said that everything that is high or low is of divine origin, and ultimately returns back to that Divinity. Thus, Pantheism means all-divine or rather *all from divinity*, so that all that is power and form is from THAT. All comes from the divine. All is divine *in essence* but not in form.

Man and Nature are inseparably interrelated in an intricate web of life from the very origin of the earth. Science is increasingly admitting the significant link between the life of humanity and the environment. But when man, as a part of the whole, is told: “Help Nature, and work on with her” and with nature’s laws, he does not seem to see the value of the mystery words. How is man responsible for nature’s unpredictable behaviour? All he has done so far is to use thoughtlessly her blessings and gifts for his purpose as per the Biblical injunction: “Fill the earth and subdue it; and have *dominion* over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air” (*Genesis*). Man has found it convenient to interpret this injunction to mean that he has unquestionable lordship over nature, and his is the prerogative to domineer or imperiously rule over lower kingdoms for his own welfare. But he forgets that he has a special responsibility also toward the lower kingdoms. “Dominion” was never meant as exploitation, plunder or ill-treatment, but as acting as a caring and trustworthy elder brother. Mystically, it means for man to hold communion with beautiful nature and its invisible counterpart.

Theosophy has a lot to say concerning the intelligence and perception of ants. In the *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, H.P.B. describes ants as *interesting insects*, saying that in relation to its own plane of conception and perception, the ant has as good an intellect as we have ourselves, and it possesses very high reasoning powers besides instinct. She suggests that man is not the only intelligent creature. Not only are we not aware of consciousness beyond or below the human plane, but also we do not know all about consciousness even of the insect. She says that Sir John Lubbock, who spent many years experimenting with and observing ants, has not discovered all that is to be known about ants. There is more to the consciousness of the ant than grasped or inferred from observation and experiments. “If a scientist could become an ant for a while, and think as an ant, and remember his experience on returning to his own sphere of consciousness, then only would he know something for certain of this interesting insect,” writes H.P.B.

The ant's idea of time and space is very different from ours and hence we cannot deny the existence of planes of matter and consciousness higher and lower than our own.

Experiments conducted by Sir John Lubbock and other scientists have shown that ants exhibit various characteristics and behaviour, which we associate with intelligence and civilization. Anthills have complex ventilation system which allows the throwing out of carbon dioxide, and bringing in of fresh air. Like human beings, ants farm food, in the sense that they build special chambers in which they keep leaves and allow them to decompose so that there grows fungus on them, which is consumed in the future. The growing of the fungus requires a lot of planning and forethought, where appropriate chambers must be built and the right kind of leaves must be gathered, and so on. A lot of planning, organization and co-ordination is seen when one ant colony wages war on another ant colony for capturing food resources. The real intelligence of the ants is observed in their ability to find the shortest path between the food source and ant nest (or mound), as also in their symbiotic behaviour. It has been found that the ants deposit on their path a chemical known as pheromone as they walk. Their tendency is to follow a trail *rich in pheromone*. Thus, when the ants are travelling in a single line from the food source to their nest, if an obstacle is placed in their path, half of the ants would go to the left, and the other half would go to the right. In case the path to the left of the obstacle happens to be the shorter path, naturally more ants would have covered that path as compared to the path on the right, and hence more pheromone would be deposited on that trail, attracting the rest of the ants. This method of finding the shortest path is studied by scientists and made use of in re-routing the network traffic in a busy telecommunication system. In the same way, studies have shown that the ants in the Sahara Desert find their way back home through the technique, which involves a very complex mathematical activity called *Path Integration* and *Horizontal Projection*. Ants enter into symbiosis with plant lice called aphids. They nourish and take care of the eggs of the aphids

and once hatched they select the appropriate host plant for the young ones of the aphids. In return, they get the honeydew, which is a sweet, sticky substance secreted by the aphids.

Its perception of space and time must be unique to it. Even in its perception of sound and colour, it differs from man. In the article "Occult or Exact Science" (*H.P.B. Series No. 19*) H.P.B. refers to the research work of Sir John Lubbock. He points out that for an ant, colours such as violet, blue and green are associated with bright light, while red, orange and yellow with darkness. In the experiments, when ant eggs were placed in bright light or violet light, they immediately moved the eggs to the dark areas. But, when the red light was thrown on the eggs, they behaved as if they were in dark and did not move the eggs. For an ant, the violet ray is the brightest of all the spectral rays. This is quite opposite of the perception in man. So also, if we take ultra-violet and infra-red rays, both are beyond man's perception. However, when the eggs are subjected to the action of these dark rays, they would drag them to a patch lighted by infra-red rays. From this we can infer that the objects seen by the ants must appear to them quite different from what they appear to us. They must be able to see hues and colours in Nature of which we are not aware. If there is an object that absorbs all rays of the solar spectrum and scatters only ultraviolet then such an object would remain invisible to us, but the ants would perceive it very well. The same is true of sounds. They do not hear the sounds that we are able to hear, but they are not deaf. They hear the sounds, which are inaudible to us. A human ear is insensible to vibrations beyond 38000 per second, while ants are able to hear them. Hence, they must be able to enjoy so many melodies of nature, which we mortals are not able to. Through the use of *Sanyama*, a *yogi* can completely identify his consciousness and know what is passing through the mind of an ant.

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

GRATITUDE, FAULT-FINDING AND RETALIATION—I

APPRECIATION should be given and adverse criticism should be avoided. H.P.B.'s *Five Messages*, especially the fifth, lay down the principle; you will also find it in her *The Key to Theosophy*. To balance the position see *Raja-Yoga*, p. 12, regarding emotionalism and philosophy. It seems to me that if heart and mind both go into any judgment a balance will be observed. Whether we give appreciation or we do not, one thing must be avoided—fault-finding. I can very well imagine and comprehend your own experience. There is nothing else you can do but keep silent and just look at the persons who criticize you adversely and say not one word. Then go on as if they had not spoken. It is your opportunity to practise *Vairagya-Shanti* which unfolds *Virya*. Don't you worry or even be concerned about their fault-finding. If you want to understand the inwardness of it look at the *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* by Judge, p. 18. He says that those whom we meet in the world “instinctively array themselves against one who is thus starting upon a crusade that begins with his own follies and faults.” And why? Because of the force of the good and right example. You keep the company of your own heart, of your textbooks and of those who are like-minded and like-hearted.

Without being concerned about _____'s foibles and frailties, go on with your inner tasks in silence and secrecy. The less talk, the better. Listen to him and say as little as you can manage. No use provoking him. Silent love radiating from your own heart will change him; speech and discussion will not. You take to and keep to the Esoteric Philosophy and Occult Wisdom aspects of Theosophy, not with the “Behold, I know” but the “Thus have I heard” attitude. Seek the scriptures every time and at every turn and you will be safe.

You do what is right, which means what is necessary from our point of view. The esoteric viewpoint and the worldly social ones

differ fundamentally. You are trying to adapt yourself to the former and this very effort of yours will teach without preachment and by example. You stick to Theosophical principles in action and, if adversely criticized, do *not* retaliate or try to explain. You have to set others thinking. Puzzlement provokes thought.

You are bound to draw to yourself adverse criticism because you are honest and earnest about living the Higher Life, especially as you are observing secrecy and silence. Shall we not be tested and even tempted about our sincerity and earnestness, our silence and secrecy? Judge says in his *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* that those who do not want to attempt for themselves what they see another achieving become resentful and critical. Karma brought you to Theosophy. Right Ideas appealed to you, gripped you, and by your self-effort and discernment you found the Silent Way to the Inner Life. You have been endeavouring honestly, and adverse criticism is the badge of all our tribe; such criticism builds strength and creates heroes. The more you go on, the nearness of the Blessed Masters will become more real. Consider the psychological aspect of the *nearness* of Krishna to Arjuna; he was *Partha-Sarathy*. Turn to the last chapter of *The Bhagavad-Gita*; read verses 64 to 69. The religion of the Higher Self as Guru ends in the grand Liberation from the bondage of self and of matter. The religion of the Path of the Guru has another consummation—more glorious—the Liberty of the *Nirmanakaya* who remains in bondage to serve the race, to become a father and a mother to Orphan Humanity. The more you *feel within* yourself the presence of the Guru, the greater will be your strength and nothing adverse will come which you have not the strength to bear. The Great Ones are compassionate; They are grateful.

Criticism by others of our Movement and of ourselves may prove healthy or the reverse, depending upon us. If I adversely criticize you, you may retaliate, and then am I not responsible for arousing retaliation? But if you have love in your heart for me, though my criticism is full of antagonism you will act with love and

consideration. Will I not learn from it? Our own attitude colours everything, including both giving and receiving criticism. We are all human and our love is limited by our pride and selfishness, in receiving and in giving. We need to develop love, not only to give advice, but also to receive it. The springs of most of our actions are selfishness and pride and egotism. Advice should always proceed from the heart. Advice without a core of love is not as beneficial as advice with a core of love.

The seeds of resentment are insidious and long-lasting. Each one of us can make his own effort to take hold of them and throw them out. In the soil disturbed by this throwing-out process some right action and adjustment should take place and seeds of love have to be planted. It takes time. And we are not only makers of our own Karma; we become agents of Karma for so many others—in fact for all the kingdoms of Nature. Esotericism calls us to this double care: what we do has its effects not only on us but also on others. We do not always perceive this, but Nature functions ever.

As students of Theosophy we arouse criticism, but do we do it because of righteousness? In “Some Words on Daily Life” written down by a Master of Wisdom (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 22*), the value of worldly opinion is explained. Every time we come up against motive and method. One without the other does not produce Theosophical action—both must be harmless. As harmlessness widens, our perception of truth deepens. The wrong motive of modern physicists blinds them to true perceptions. Would they have commenced their destructive work were they altruists with a wisdom of the good of humanity and not only the national good?

(To be concluded)

HAPPINESS is a by-product of an effort to make someone else happy.

—GRETTA PALMER

THE ASHWATTHA TREE—SOME REFLECTIONS

II

THE ASHWATTHA is the mundane tree (or Tree of Life) of the Hindus. It is described as having its roots above and branches below. The most obvious implication of the *Ashwattha* is that the entire world is presently “upside down” from the standpoint of spiritual perception and evolution. The description of the tree given in sloka 2 and 3 of the Fifteenth Chapter of the *Gita* has been expressed a little differently in the *Secret Doctrine*. Thus, *Parabrahmam* (or *Brahman*) is the seed, First Cause (*Brahma* or *Iswara*) is the root, *Mahat* or Universal Soul is the trunk, while the branches are the great egoism. Egoism is Egoism or *Ahamship* which leads to every error. In the holes of these branches are the sprouts called senses, of which the invisible elements (or *tanmatras*) are the flower bunches, and the gross elements are the small boughs, which are always possessed of leaves and flowers. The leaves are the Vedas or the universe in its intellectual or moral character. This tree is eternal. When this tree is cut with the excellent sword of knowledge or secret wisdom, one attains immortality, and is released from the wheel of birth and death.

It is the tree that symbolises evolution, showing that everything in the manifested world descends from the Highest, the *Parabrahmam*. That *Parabrahmam* is the seed from which comes the sprout, which represents the occult nature, which is the source or root of all. On p. 406 (*S.D.*, I) we are told that Krishna or *Brahman* is that which is beyond the roots, whereas the roots represent the First Cause or the Logos or *Brahma*. We may compare it with verses 4 and 5 in the ninth chapter of the *Gita*: “All this Universe is pervaded by me in my invisible form; all things exist in me, but I do not exist in them.” The trunk of the tree represents *Mahat* or Universal Soul.

Mahat has several aspects. This *Ahamship* or Egoism as applied to man means *Mahat* is transformed into human *Manas*, or develops into the feeling of self-consciousness, “I” and then called *Ahamship*

or Egoism. This Mahat is that of Second Creation (referred to as Ninth or Kumara Creation) mentioned in Vishnu Purana. But we also read that Mahat is called Lord in Primary Creation in Vishnu Purana when applied to the cosmos.

In Book I, Ch. ii, of Vishnu Purana we read that *Pradhana* (Prakriti) is called Chief Principle. When that Chief Principle invests that Great Principle, Intellect or Mahat, then Mahat becomes threefold, influenced by the three qualities of matter, of goodness (*Sattva*), foulness (*Rajas*) and darkness (*Tamas*). One meaning of “invest” is, to provide with qualities. Thus, Mahat is provided with qualities of Prakriti. As a result, from Mahat arises threefold *Ahankara*, namely, *Sattvic*, *Rajasic* and *Tamasic*. From the *sattvic Ahankara* arise five *Jnanendriyas* or organs of perception, five *Karmendriyas* or organs of action and manas (mind); from *tamasic ahankara* or *Bhutadi* arise five subtle elements or *tanmatras*.

Tanmatras are subtle elementary principles or particles, or subtle essence of five elements, out of which *mahabhutas* or gross elementary principles or particles are evolved. Thus, from the essence of sound (*sabdatanmatra*) is produced *akasa* (ether), with the quality of sound. From the essence of touch (*sparshatanmatra*) combined with that of sound, arises *air*, with the attributes of sound and touch. From the essence of colour (*rupatanmatra*) combined with that of sound and touch, arises *light* or *fire*, with the qualities of sound, touch and colour. From the essence of taste (*rasatanmatra*) combined with that of sound, touch and colour arise water, with the qualities of sound, touch, colour and taste. The essence of smell (*gandhatanmatra*) combined with the previous four gives rise to earth, which has all the five qualities of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell.

The gross physical elements arise from the subtle elements, by the process called *panchikaran* or Quintuplication. It is the process by which the five elementary constituents of the universe are said to be compounded with one another to form grosser entities that serve as units in the composition of the physical universe.

Alternatively, through the symbology of the *Ashwattha* tree or the tree of life Krishna once again explains to us the constitution of the macrocosm and the microcosm, of the universe and of man, and especially shows us the identity and unity which exists between the two. The *Ashwattha* tree represents and symbolizes the whole of the manifested universe, the whole of manifested and conditioned existence. The Immortal Ones, those great Beings who have transcended the universe are not in this *Ashwattha* Tree, as they are above and beyond the tree of life. They are not any more affected or bound down by the cyclic or periodical expression of that tree of life.

Krishna in relationship to the tree can be called the Rootless Root and the Causeless Cause which has produced this tree of life. The roots which are above, in this tree, which are in the regions of heaven itself, is the Higher Nature of Krishna, this nature has been designated as *Daiviprakriti*, his Divine, illusive Nature, that aspect of Himself which energises and sustains the whole of the Universe. This *Daiviprakriti*, these Invisible Roots, sustain all parts of the tree that we are able to see, because they are objective. The branches and the roots which ramify in the region of mankind represent the lower nature of Krishna, *Mulaprakriti*, or the material aspect of all beings. However, both natures, *Daiviprakriti*, the Divine and Higher Nature of Krishna, as well as, *Mulaprakriti*, the very substance and lower nature of Krishna, are rooted in Krishna himself. Thus, this whole tree emanates from Krishna, and that is the reason why each divine fragment in this Universe has within itself the divine potentialities of going through a complete cycle of evolution and growth, and thereby not only overcoming matter, but also transcending the higher nature of Krishna, and reaching Krishna himself, going to the very essence of the whole universe.

If we turn to man, we see that this symbol contains within it both natures in man. The heavenly invisible roots in the tree are man’s higher nature, or *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* principles, the real man, and it is that individual which is the invisible root of all our various

personalities on earth. From those invisible roots spring forth the branches and the roots below, which symbolize the personality in man, the lower quaternary, the four lower and material principles. This two-fold application of the same symbol, first the universal and then the particular, shows also the relationship existing between Krishna and ourselves. *Daiviprakriti*, the Divine Illusive Nature of Krishna corresponds in a human being to *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*, the Higher Self. Likewise, *Mulaprakriti*, the material aspect of the Universe, corresponds to our own personal nature, to the lower principles of our own constitution. What is Krishna Himself in us? Krishna, the *Parabrahm* in the universe corresponds to *Atma* in man. A Master of Wisdom writes: “It is that Eternal Life Principle which resides but in *Atma*, the highest principle, and which man, the individual, this *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*, must assimilate in order to become truly a self-conscious immortal man, to become a universally immortal man.”

From the universal viewpoint, the *Ashwattha*, the sacred tree, is the symbol of the never-ending universe. In the description of the tree in the *Gita*, we have an example of progress from the universals to the particulars. This tree has (1) “its roots above,” (2) “its branches below,” (3) “the lesser shoots,” (4) “the leaves,” and (5) “those roots which ramify below.” An article in *Theosophy* magazine (July 1951) offers deeper insight into the symbology of the *Ashwattha* tree as described in the Fifteenth Chapter of the *Gita*. The growing of the tree “from above” is easy to understand, as it refers to the beginning of each period of evolution on the spiritual plane above. The psychological parallel of it is to be seen in the initiation of all material effects by the “Higher Self.” The evanescence of leaves, blossoms and fruit is an evident analogy for the transitory, purely personal pleasures. Here we may note how aptly the leaves also symbolize the “Vedas” in the world of Doctrine. They also, “come and go and are brief and changeable,” against the background of eternity. Yet the *tree*, its roots and stable trunk can also be the tree of all knowledge about manifested things. Proceeding from this earthly plane we first

contact the branches, which are closest to us, and like the giraffe, man nibbles on the leaves of the “Vedas,” to finally stretch his neck for further food of learning. But the “eating” of the “Vedas” is never fully satisfactory, and the being who feeds thus is never self-sufficient, ceaselessly seeking provisions. The true stature of Mahatmaship is said to be attained only when neither ordinary doctrines nor the most common food is needed.

Further, the *Gita* mentions not only the roots which come from the “regions above,” but also, “those roots which ramify *below* in the regions of the mankind.” It is very difficult to imagine such a tree. The tree appears to have both branches and roots, mingled, at the earth-level of material existence. What are these secondary roots? If they grow from the branches, they fasten the tree down so securely that it can no longer respond with a graceful motion to gentle breezes which might be favourable for evolutionary adaptation. These terrestrial roots probably represent the lowest and grossest of our material appetites, which, at death, become *kamarupa*, or desire-body. This is left behind by the Ego in its flight to *Devachan* or *swarga* or paradise. These “*tamasic*” roots may be thought of as the possessive nature of man, with his strange passion for expensive jewels, self-esteem, and his self-identifying attachment to children, wife and household. These are roots indeed, hard to dislodge. Such rigidity endangers the whole tree, from bottom to top, since in case of a storm, insufficient pliancy is left for the trunk.

However, one has to go beyond the roots to unite oneself with Krishna, the *Brahman* by cutting the tree with the axe of secret wisdom, or with the strong axe of dispassion as explained in the *Gita*. When the mind is free from *kama*, it becomes an organ of free will in man and also the guide of the highest mental faculties. It means one has to free himself from attachment to sense objects and sense life. Also, we need to cut the trunk which represents egotism. The personal Ego seeks to keep things as they are, resists change and challenges of life, and thus brings about stagnation instead of progress.

Alternatively, the *Gita* says that the whole of the manifested

universe is made up of three qualities, *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. Therefore, the one who knows this truth that it is the three qualities that goes in the formation of all things, which cause illusion, is emancipated from the error of mistaking the Self to be identical with these changing things. Only those who take refuge in Krishna or are identified with *Atman* or *Brahman* are able to know It to be immutable and distinct from the manifold things in the world.

Vishnu, in one of his incarnations is shown resting under the Banyan tree and there he taught humanity philosophy and the sciences. Under the shade of this Banyan tree, the gurus teach their disciples lessons of immortality and initiate them into the mysteries of life and death. The Banyan tree is called both the “Tree of Knowledge” and the “Tree of Life” (*S.D.*, II, 215). *The Secret Doctrine* mentions “the-ever-living-human-Banyan” which represents a “Wondrous Being” from whom all sages, rishis and hierophants have descended in antiquity. Thus:

It is under the direct, silent guidance of this MAHA—(great)—GURU that all the other less divine Teachers and instructors of mankind became from the first awakening of human consciousness, the guides of early Humanity. (*S.D.*, I, 208)

Each human being assimilates by self-effort, knowledge and experience, and grows. He becomes a tree of life because he realizes Unity of all and therefore lives the life in and of Spirit. In other words, when a person is able to overcome the illusion of manifested universe, he becomes a “tree of life,” or the Adept possessed of Wisdom. But as a free-willed being, he grows either into a tree of life or a withering tree (black adept).

The symbol of the “Tree” standing for various Initiates was almost universal. Jesus is called “the tree of Life,” as also all the adepts of the good Law, while those of the *left* Path are referred to as the “withering trees.” (*S.D.*, II, 496)

(Concluded)

THE FOUR GOLDEN LINKS

IN THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY, H. P. Blavatsky gives four principles which should be applied “so that social co-operation may be promoted and true efforts for social amelioration be carried on.” She designates these as “universal Unity and Causation; Human Solidarity; the Law of Karma; Reincarnation.” These, she says, “are the four links of the golden chain which should bind humanity into one family, one universal Brotherhood.”

What is there in these ideas that will help to bind humanity into one universal Brotherhood? If we turn to what H.P.B. says elsewhere in *The Key to Theosophy*, we shall find a basis for her statement. This is what she says about the first of the four links—universal Unity and Causation: “We believe in a Universal Divine Principle, the root of ALL, from which all proceeds, and within which all shall be absorbed at the end of the great cycle of Being” (p. 62). “Our DEITY is neither in a paradise, nor in a particular tree, building, or mountain: it is everywhere, in every atom of the visible as of the invisible Cosmos, in, over, and around every invisible atom and divisible molecule; for IT is the mysterious power of evolution and involution, the omnipresent, omnipotent, and even omniscient creative potentiality.” (p. 64)

If, as seen from the above quotations, there is a Universal Divine Principle which is the root of all, and if it is all-pervasive and every atom and molecule is a part of it, then it necessarily follows that everything in our visible and invisible universe is bound together in one great Whole. All have come from the same source; all will return to it at the end of the great cycle of being. Not only that, but inasmuch as we have all come from it, we must have an aspect of it mirrored in ourselves and shared equally by all. Just as all sunbeams come from the same sun, none being superior to the other, any more than one drop of the ocean is superior or inferior to any other drop derived from the same source, so all things and creatures in our universe are united by reason of their living together in the same great ocean of life, or the one Universal Divine Principle.

Where does the idea of Universal Causation come in? If we look at the words “Omniscient creative potentiality” in the second of the above quotations, we shall find a clue. For, there must be the creative, dynamic aspect of this Deity which causes it periodically to bring forth all things and creatures. “It is an eternal and periodical law which causes an active and creative force (the logos) to emanate from the ever-concealed and incomprehensible one principle at the beginning of every maha-manvantara, or new cycle of life.” (p. 62 fn.)

Therefore, we can see not only that the idea of universal unity is a binding force, but also that the same force, which is both active and creative, brings all things into manifestation. This is not done in a haphazard fashion at the whim and fancy of some personal God, but is done according to law, as the above quotation points out—an “eternal and periodical law” which is ever active in the universe. It is this law which is the connecting link between past, present, and future, and is the active aspect of the one Universal Divine Principle.

While universal Unity and Causation are facts in Nature, whether or not we accept them as such, Human Solidarity, the second of the links, must be worked for. The dictionary definition of solidarity, “community of interests and responsibilities,” gives us a hint. As H.P.B. puts it: “Unless every man is brought to understand and accept as an axiomatic truth that by wronging one man we wrong not only ourselves but the whole of humanity in the long run, no brotherly feelings such as preached by all the great Reformers, pre-eminently by Buddha and Jesus, are possible on earth.” (*ibid.*, pp. 46-7)

Unless and until mankind is able to accept that in essence all are members of one vast family by reason of the sameness of their origin, no brotherhood is possible, except in a partial sense. Just as an injury to any part of our body eventually affects the whole body, so, too, every member of the human race is united with every other by reason of our coming from the same source; and, as H.P.B. says, any injury we cause must eventually spread throughout the whole human family. If the evil that men do, spreads to all their fellow men, so

does the good, because “It is an occult law . . . that no man can rise superior to his individual failings, without lifting, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part. . . . In reality, there is no such thing as ‘Separateness’” (*ibid.*, p. 201). This last sentence, “In reality, there is no such thing as ‘Separateness,’” is a very telling one, for an understanding of it brings home to us, as nothing else can, just how much interdependence and interaction there is among human beings.

Having understood the basis underlying the first two links, we are in a position to accept the laws of Karma and Reincarnation. In regard to Karma, H.P.B. says: “Our idea of the unknown Universal Deity, represented by Karma, is that it is a Power which cannot fail, and can, therefore, have neither wrath nor mercy, only absolute Equity, which leaves every cause, great or small, to work out its inevitable effects” (*ibid.*, p. 197). And again: “Our Philosophy has a doctrine of punishment as stern as that of the most rigid Calvinist, only far more philosophical and consistent with absolute justice.” (*ibid.*, p. 138)

In other words, we receive in exact measure what we have sown; there is no “escape.” It is only by the recognition of the law of Karma that we know how and why human solidarity must be worked for. While it is true that no man receives more or less than his just due, we do help or hinder others, and each is in reality his “brother’s keeper.” We never act alone.

One incarnation is not enough to exhaust all the causes generated in the past or to learn all that there is to be learnt from this school of Life, and, therefore, we must come into incarnation again and again until we have exhausted all past and present Karma, and have made none for the future, for we have become one with the Universal. Thus it is that Karma is the power behind reincarnation.

Reincarnation which means a series of births for each Ego, implies that that reincarnating Ego is furnished with a new body, a new brain, and a new memory—“new” in one sense, yet very old in another, because the new personality in each succeeding rebirth is

the aggregate of *skandhas* or attributes of the old personality. The thoughts and feelings, works and deeds, that we have generated in the past are not wiped away, and we must reap their effects in this incarnation. “It is this, and this alone,” says H.P.B., “that can account for the terrible, still only apparent, injustice in the distribution of lots in life to man”—why some live in dire poverty, and others in luxury. But we must remember what the Buddha taught, that a man might be a king in one incarnation and be a ragged wanderer in the next, “for things done and undone.” H. P. B. states that this doctrine of reincarnation has not its equal on earth “for logic, consistency, profound philosophy, divine mercy and equity.”

In regard to these two laws, Karma and Reincarnation, H.P.B. says that a belief in them is the only way to uproot the most fertile source of all crime and immorality—the belief that it is possible for people to escape the consequences of their own actions. “Once teach them that greatest of all laws, Karma and Reincarnation, and besides feeling in themselves the true dignity of human nature, they will turn from evil and eschew it as they would a physical danger.” (*ibid.*, pp. 245-46)

We see, therefore, that while these four golden links should bind humanity into one universal Brotherhood, this can only come about when certain conditions have been fulfilled, *i.e.*, when we believe in a Universal Divine Principle, when we accept as an axiomatic truth that by wronging one man, we wrong not only ourselves, but the whole of humanity; and, finally, when we realize that Karma and Reincarnation are fundamental laws.

In the words of one of the Mahatmas: “The term ‘Universal Brotherhood’ is no idle phrase . . . It is the only secure foundation for universal morality. If it be a dream, it is at least a noble one for mankind: and it is the aspiration of the true adept.”

REFLECTIONS ON DISCIPLINE

I

IN ITS march across aeons of time, nature evinces an order and a pattern eminently suited to the nights and days of human destiny. Law governs nature and becomes embodied in nature’s workings. It is only when man emerges on the scene that a new force comes into play. Man alone has the choice of going wrong. He is “free.” He has been exercising this freedom for some eighteen million years and the consequences of his wrong choices hinder his efforts at self-redemption.

To retrace his erring steps and then take the road that leads to knowledge, peace and power is possible to the man. Except for the truly depraved, there are hardly any hopeless cases; for, if a spark of aspiration remains, there exist the potentialities of success. But the man has to search for his own medicine and take it. No one else can do it for him. That is why it is stated that he has to progress by self-induced and self-devised means checked by Karma. The urge to mend broken fences, the devising of ways by which this can be achieved has to come from the Self. It is not that self which delights in evil or which seeks to steep itself in sense-indulgence that has to be relied on. In the task of reformation, reliance has to be placed implicitly on that starry part of the man—his true Self—which in moments of calm is perceived in the voice of conscience, in prophetic dreams and in a thousand other ways which escape the blurred vision and the dulled consciousness of the man who has exiled himself from the state where truth and goodness and beauty abide.

The self-inducement is generated in several ways. The afflicted of fate, the searchers after truth, those who desire possessions (tangible and intangible), and the wise, have each within them the inducement to seek for the knowledge which human ingenuity fails to provide. But this “inducement” may desert the afflicted and the inquirer and the man of high desire unless they turn themselves into the wise; for, when affliction is ended and the inquiry and desire are satisfied, there may

come a sense of fulfilment followed by complacency. This feeling of achievement may induce the desire to drift, to lie back and take it easy. Danger lies in such somnolence, for the hold on the Self is for the time being loosened, and the veil of matter begins to turn opaque again.

The self-devising of ways to reach the goal is an exercise not to be lightly undertaken, nor attempted at levels lower than those of the higher mind. That this devising is a periodical and continuous process is evident, since for each new stage of effort a different curriculum is inevitable. The disciplines of the kindergarten stage are not for colleges or for research institutions. But here, any resemblance to ordinary teaching academies and their programmes comes to an end. If the aspirant wants to survive the ordeals of the chela stages, he has to devise such ways as will provide within themselves the near automatic generation and sustenance of a spirit of enthusiasm. The fanatic revels in his fanaticism because he finds a regenerating enthusiasm in the propagation of his belief. He is not deviated from his course by reason of fear or any humanitarian considerations. He has tenacity of purpose and his mind is so full, it has no room for doubts. He refuses to envisage failure. This fanaticism is a characteristic of the lower mind which is ensnared by desire and which narrows the idea of brotherhood to a clique, faction, community or group.

The man devoted to an ideal and whose aspirations have their roots and origin in the higher mind, is also enthusiastic—even more so. He too has tenacity of purpose and is without fear. He too refuses to envisage failure. Yet the difference between them is as marked as is that of light from darkness. The man of the higher mind cannot, dare not, violate the laws of brotherhood. He refuses to dominate the minds of men. He is compassionate and charitable to others' failings, yet is unflinchingly fixed in the True. The truly devoted does not blazen forth his devotion. He does not wear its insignia upon his sleeve. He loses himself in the stream of humanity, yet is apart from them; he takes his knowledge from divine sources, yet

remains humble. He becomes a co-worker with nature.

Envisaging this goal, that of devotion through works, how is one to set about the task of devising ways for attaining it? The start of any effort in this direction must be on the basis of one's assets or the lack of them in the mental and moral aspects of one's nature. In formulating any course of conduct, it has to be constantly kept in mind that any activity initiated on the inner planes of being should not be allowed to deteriorate into a form of outside ritual. All movement has to be a natural and not a forced outflow within outwards.

It is a self-evident fact that it is only the higher which can in justice examine the lower, assess its performance and prescribe remedies where some principle is broken or a moral precept violated. It is as dangerous to relegate this function to the lower mind as it is to entrust the cure of diseases to a quack. But the higher mind is so swathed in the fogs generated by the lower as to be hardly perceptible or even recognizable. The first act of discipline is therefore the invoking of the Higher Mind. For this, the lower mind has to be made free of all impure desire, which includes all desires to which the personal man of name and form reacts. The beginner is never sure where the lower stops and the higher begins. Therefore the discipline demands that he concentrate on attaining a calmness where all or nearly all cerebration ceases. Then is he required to sit in judgment on his own acts, deeds, thoughts and feelings of the past twenty-four hours, and decide how far they fall short of the Paramitas. It is a long and arduous course of self-discipline. Does he feel elated or ashamed during the review? Then is he no longer the impersonal judge and it is only the lower mind that is masquerading as the higher. Heavy falls, severe jolts, the sense of shame and guilt will come as the student oscillates between the personal and the impersonal. Yet, through it all, the discipline has to be adhered to, the pose maintained when facing the records of failures and successes.

(To be concluded)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Has man descended from Apes? If humans evolved from apes, why do apes still exist? In other words, if we evolved from apes why are there still apes. This question was tweeted in 2017 by Tim Allen, an actor-comedian. His tweet got almost 50,000 likes and 13,000 retweets, showing that there are many who are seeking an answer to this question.

According to Zach Cofran, an anthropologist at Vassar College, humans did not evolve from the Chimpanzees or Gorillas we see today nor from any of the animals that are alive today. It would be quite erroneous to say that the apes are only a step away from becoming human or they are on the way to it. He says that Charles Darwin, who has put forward the theory of natural selection, speaks about there being common ancestors to human beings and apes that lived millions of years ago and are now extinct. He describes evolution as “descent with modification.” In other words, though human beings and apes share a common ancestor, over a period of time, they changed, as they adapted to their own environments or specific circumstances. “It is believed that this human divergence from the chimpanzee lineage of apes happened between 9.3 and 6.5 million years ago.”

Cofran speaks about universal relatedness and points out that we share ancestors with almost everything that is alive on earth because we are all descendants of a single species that lived millions and millions of years ago. Yet, we might say that the apes are the “closest living relatives today.” According to Cofran humans are still evolving just as much as animals do, but it is a misconception to believe that the goal of evolution is to become human, or that everything is evolving toward humanity because human beings are not the pinnacle of evolution. In fact, evolution does not really have a goal.

Evolution is not a linear process, following a straight line, progressing from primitive to an advanced stage. It must be thought

of as a “branching process,” which science describes as *cladogenesis*. It refers to “the creation of a new group of organisms through ‘evolutionary divergence’ from that shared ancestor,” such as when one species “splits” into two.

There are two main approaches to studying human evolution: The “top-down” approach involves the study of existing apes like chimpanzees, while the “bottom-up” approach focuses on the fossils of mostly-extinct apes. Some researchers are of the opinion that it is by combining both approaches that we can get the whole picture of evolution, arguing that “the living ape species are specialized species, relics of a much larger group of now extinct apes,” and likewise, the study of fossil apes may help to reconstruct the starting point from which humans and chimpanzees evolved, writes Cari Shane (*Discover*, February 16, 2022)

The basic idea is that there can be no evolution unless, at first, there is involution. It implies that all life proceeds from spiritual potency from above (*Isis*, I, p. xxxii). Theosophy teaches that there are three lines of evolution: physical, intellectual and spiritual, and may be described as the process of expressing or manifesting the wisdom and power of the divine spark (Monad) through experience in better and better forms. It is summed up in Kabalistic aphorism: “A stone becomes a plant; a plant, a beast; the beast, a man; a man, a spirit; and the spirit a god,” which also expresses the goal of evolution as achieving of self-conscious godhood while in the body. Science only deals with physical evolution or evolution of form.

The development of the baby from the fertilized ovum repeats the entire process. The embryo grows from its stone-like composition to resemble a plant with three or four leaflets, a tadpole with branchiae and then a mammal with a tail, before the human form is developed; thereby repeating the journey through the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdom in a short span of nine months

Although great similarity in anatomical structure and behaviour had led scientists to think that man has descended from the apes, or that man and apes have common ancestors, the adepts say that man

has neither descended from apes nor has he risen from the apes. If so, how does one account for the human-like intelligence possessed by the anthropoid apes? Occult science teaches that at a certain point in evolution, the man was mindless, *i.e.*, devoid of thinking and choosing powers and lacking *self-consciousness*. These mindless men of the Third Race, millions of years ago, committed the sin of uniting with huge she-animals, producing man-like monsters. Such union was possible because man as well as animals, were in semi-astral form. “Medical science records such cases of monsters bred from human and animal parents, even in our own day. The possibility is, therefore, one of *degree*, not of *fact*” (*S.D.*, II, 689). The apes produced through such union, in semi-astral form, consolidated into physical and later dwindled in size, producing the lower apes of the Miocene period. After this, man was endowed with mind, and hence with the power to think and choose, and also with self-consciousness. But once again, men with minds belonging to the Atlantean Race, repeated the sin of the mindless, by uniting with the lower apes of the Miocene period, giving rise to the species of apes—Orangoutang, gorilla and chimpanzee—now known as anthropoid apes (*S.D.*, II, 683 and 689). They are described as “human presentments,” and are half descended from a man—distorted copies of early humanity. They are the “dumb races,” whose monads are already within the human stage. Thus:

The latter [Apes] are truly “speechless men,” and will become speaking animals (or men of a lower order) in the Fifth Round, while the adepts of a certain school hope that some of the Egos of the apes of a higher intelligence will reappear at the close of the Sixth Root-race. (*S.D.*, II, 262)

The “missing links,” which science has been unable to discover, pertain to the *basic* or *Root types* from which various species have differentiated. We see that both the horses and oxen are hoofed animals, but, while horses have split hoofs, 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 the Eocene

period (early Tertiary period). Thus, oxen could be traced to the family called, *Anoplotheridae*, while the modern horse seems to be derived from the family *Paleotheridae* in the 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 climatic influences, “natural selection,” and other physical causes. But what is the “root” to which these two families could be traced back? The above two families belong to what is termed as the “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.

A new mind-set can dramatically improve your creativity, because a “fixed” mindset tends to crush the creative process. We should learn to examine things with fresh new eyes. We get into a “mental comfort zone” by doing things in certain ways, thinking about things in certain ways, because we know that they will bring desired results. Sometimes it is very difficult to come out of the comfort zone. There are plenty of creativity books that offer advice, creativity strategies and lots of admonitions such as, “change your mind, change your thinking,” “Be your best self,” etc., which help in bringing about temporary change. That is because as Carol Dweck, author of the book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, points out, when people with fixed mind-sets read books which say, for instance, “Success is about being your best self, not about being better than others,” they are unable to put this into practice because their basic mindset is telling them something entirely different, *i.e.*, that success is about being more gifted than others. The most important ingredient in creative achievement is perseverance and

resilience generated by the growth mindset. Thus, creative, successful people all believe that intelligence is expandable, and they show more curiosity and open-mindedness. “Growth mindset” is focused more on the process than the outcome. “In essence, creativity is a continual process of growth and discovery as opposed to a stationary and immovable belief that ‘I am just not creative.’”

If we believe ourselves to be uncreative then we tend to avoid challenges, give up early, are not ready to consider other people’s ideas, tend to ignore useful negative feedback, do not look upon failure as a learning tool and only tend to focus on the “right answer.” However, if we think we are creative we are ready to take risks, use our creativity, try out new approaches and come up with new ideas, writes Anthony D. Fredericks, a Professor Emeritus of Education at York College of Pennsylvania. (*Psychology Today Post*, November 19, 2021)

Creativity is the ability to make new things or think of new ideas. It includes exploring new ways of doing things and also realizing dreams. The created thing may be intangible such as an idea, a scientific theory, or a musical composition or it may be a physical object such as an invention, a literary work or a painting.

Some have felt that creativity need not be restricted to any particular activity, such as music, painting, writing, poetry or dancing. Creativity may be regarded as a quality. It is not a mysterious quality possessed only by a few. This quality, one can bring to bear upon any activity. Anyone who is ready to go beyond the routine, ready to explore new possibilities, or ready to adopt a new approach to a familiar problem may be regarded as creative. Our first step is to learn to do the task perfectly, but then some of us have the urge to go beyond tried and tested methods. For instance, having learnt to cook perfectly, a housewife may decide to cook her routine meals a little differently. One can be creative or innovative while cooking or else we would not have so many recipes! In India, in various fields of life, an improvised arrangement called *jugaad* is resorted to because of lack of resources. In rural India there are *jugaad*

vehicles, such as a diesel engines fitted to a cart or rickshaws. India has invented several low-cost implements, which have inspired management gurus across the world.

The ability to see things in a fresh way is vital to the creative process. A creative person is willing to try many different approaches, even if they prove to be futile. Thomas Alva Edison made 1000 unsuccessful attempts at inventing the light bulb. When a reporter asked, “How did it feel to fail 1000 times?” Edison replied, “I did not fail 1000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1000 steps.”

According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* a creative person relies strongly on intuition instead of adopting a rational approach while solving the problems of life. Above a certain level, intelligence seems to have little correlation with creativity, *i.e.*, a highly intelligent person may not be as highly creative.

Reciprocity is a vital factor in all relationships. Reciprocity is undertaking exchange for mutual benefit, and it forms the very foundation of society. It appears that even the impartial Lord reciprocates the one who is more devoted with greater kindness. However, reciprocity is not always an even exchange, as we may end up getting less than what we had given. Yet, people are often willing to perform proportionately larger favour in return for something small.

There are many types of reciprocity. In balanced reciprocity there is an expectation that the favour will be returned within a certain time frame and also there is a calculation of the value of the exchange. If the reciprocation is not as per expectation, then it can cause the breakdown of relations. There is generalised reciprocity in which there is give and take among friends or within families, which is without expectation of return, wherein it is assumed that the other person will likewise reciprocate at some other time. This form of reciprocity is based on the acceptance of delayed gratification, and helps build trust and stability in society. Our belief in Karma is the

internalisation of reciprocity, which drives us to live righteously, and engage in philanthropy and charity with the hope, in return, to escape karmic bondage and rebirth. Negative reciprocity, which weakens the framework of society is where one takes more than gives back, writes Sandeep Chakravorty. (*The Speaking Tree*, March 4, 2022)

In the Third Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna speaks of the sacrifice and sacrificial deeds and reminds us that the “wheel of sacrifice” or the “wheel of co-operative action,” was set into motion by Him. Thus, “By means of this sacrifice ye shall be propagated. It shall be to you a cow of plenty. By means of it do ye support the gods, and let these gods support you. Supporting one another mutually, ye shall obtain the highest felicity.” It refers to an element of sacrifice inherent in the cosmos from the very beginning. Human beings have to emulate it and act with compassion, without attachment to result, for the sake of others, renouncing the doership (*kartabhav*). Only human beings have the capacity to sacrifice their self-interest for the purpose of a higher cause. It enshrines the principle of Brotherhood or reciprocity. Sacrifice means cooperation, keeping in mind the claims of others beings—plants, animals, human beings and even gods—on us, making our contribution to meet their requirements. Such sacrificial actions will prove to be for us “*Kamadhenu*,” a wish-fulfilling mythological cow of sage Vasishtha, with divine qualities, and with the ability to grant any wish asked of it. If one continues to work selflessly, both material and spiritual benefits will be showered upon him.

We must always remember that we are indebted to many people, even for our morning cup of tea and bread. Since there are plumbers, electricians and servants, we save time and energy. We must contribute in our turn by utilizing the time thus saved for the good of others. Instead of complaining about crime, pollution, and corruption in the country we must do our best to eradicate them.