

**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”

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**THE SPIRIT OF FRIENDSHIP**

FRIENDSHIP DAY is enthusiastically celebrated every year, in many countries, in the month of August, by meeting with friends and exchanging of cards, flowers and gifts, but with very little reflection on the significance of this unique human relationship called friendship. Good human relations have the power to alter the world. Today we increasingly suffer from strained relationships. With loneliness on the rise, people are willing to pay for companionship. According to an article in *The Guardian*, in the West, especially, if you have the money, you can Rent-a-Friend. The demand for such services is justified on the ground that our children and grand-children are growing more and more incapable of making friends of their own! We seem to be forgetting the art of making friends.

In his book, *The Four Loves*, Professor C. S. Lewis shows that a human being is capable of at least four different kinds of love, namely, Affection, Friendship, Romantic love (Eros) and Charity. In one sense, every human relationship is based on what Professor C. S. Lewis calls, the “Need-love.” There is a *need* for help, support, sympathy, understanding or sharing, in a mother-child, husband-wife, brother-sister, relationship. It applies also to the relationship between human beings and God, when that God is thought to be something or someone outside of us. It is true that we cannot build a firm and strong relationship on the basis of need-love, but as Professor Lewis observes, “not to feel [need-love] is the mark of

the cold egoist...the illusory feeling that it is good for us to be alone—is a bad spiritual symptom.” The principle of give and take is the basis of all friendships.

Hence, at a very simple level, the definition of a friend is, “A friend in need is a friend indeed.” A friend is a person who understands and supports one in times of need or crisis, and shows kindness and sympathy. The friendship between Krishna and Sudama is an example of this. The story goes that though Krishna hailed from a royal family, while Sudama was born in a poor brahmin family, this difference did not in any way hinder their friendship and the two were inseparable during their stay in Rishi Sandipani’s ashram, where they studied together. After finishing their studies they lost touch. Both Krishna and Sudama got married, and Sudama continued to be poor. Sudama’s wife repeatedly requested him to visit his old friend Krishna and beseech him for some financial assistance, knowing that he would help his friend in the time of need. Finally, Sudama decided to visit Krishna, and took with him some flattened rice as a gift for Krishna. They talked for a long time, and Krishna ate some of the flattened rice his poor friend had brought. Meanwhile, Sudama forgot what the purpose of his visit was. But Krishna sensed it. So when Sudama reached home he was surprised to find that his humble little cottage was replaced by a large gleaming palace. At a deeper level, this story depicts the eternal bond of true and divine friendship between man and God.

One of the nine forms of *bhakti* is *sakha-bhav* or friendship. *Sakha-bhav* is the cultivation of the bond of friendship with the divine within. In the process of spiritual development, help and guidance comes from the inner planes of being, and to avail of it we must observe periodical silence, and retire within. Loneliness, depression, feeling of dullness, and the like, are, in the ultimate analysis, indicators that we have moved away from the “source.”

The Buddha once saw an old monk lying in his own excrement and on asking him learnt that he was suffering from dysentery. Why was it that the other monks did not take care of him? His answer

was, “I am useless to the brethren, Lord: therefore the brethren do not care for me.” This is a very shocking statement, says Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher. It shows that there was no kindness between the sick monk and the other monks. There was no ordinary human friendship. The other monks did not see the sick monk as a person. To them he was an old worn-out broom. Sometimes we are more interested in someone’s talent as an accountant or a lecturer, and therefore, when one is no longer able to employ his talents, one has a very disappointing experience that nobody wants to be “friends” anymore. In a *Sangha* or spiritual community, it is essential that we learn to see persons as persons and treat each other with sensitivity, sympathy and awareness. This is called *Kalyan Mitrata* or Spiritual friendship.

Sangharakshita points out that the essence of friendship is communication. We do not stay healthy and happy if we are shut up in our own shell without much communication with others. Being able to share our thoughts and feelings with another human being is the great benefit and blessing of friendship. A friend is like some beautiful poem or a painting, which has come alive. The primary meaning of the word *Kalyan* is “beautiful.” In ordinary friendship, and to a far greater extent in spiritual friendship, we take delight in the spiritual beauty of our friend. We rejoice in his or her merits. Therefore, having no friends could be emotionally damaging in some cases. In Greek and Roman times, friendship was thought of as being an essential constituent of both a good society and a good life.

There develops, or ought to develop, in spiritual friendship, a strong bond of sympathy between the student-aspirants, because only then is it possible for them to derive any spiritual benefit from the teachings. They must be in perfect harmony in thought and feeling, which the Master of Wisdom describes as, “What hurts one, ought to hurt the other—that which rejoices A must fill with pleasure B.” Probably such is the kind of friendship, Aristotle, a Greek philosopher, had in mind when he said, “What is a friend? A single soul dwelling in two bodies.” The other two kinds of friendships,

he said, were based on utility and pleasure.

It is said that Emerson regarded himself as something of a hermit, so the warmth of friendship was almost a novel sensation to him. It was one of his friends who got him to write an essay on “friendship.” He speaks of two elements which are absolutely essential for true friendship, even at ordinary level. One is Truth. He says, “A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. Before him, I may think aloud. I am arrived at last in the presence of a man so real and equal that I may drop even those under-most garments of dissimulation, courtesy, and second thought which men never put off.” We are able to appreciate this qualification of a “true” friend, as these days it is difficult to find someone with whom one can share the deepest secrets, problems and weaknesses, without the risk of being ridiculed, and the information being used against one self.

The other element of friendship is tenderness. We are bound to others “by every sort of tie, by blood...by fear, by hope, by lucre, by lust...by admiration...but we can scarce believe that so much character can subsist in another as to draw us by love. Can another be so blessed, and we so pure, that we can offer him tenderness?” asks Emerson. It is this “tenderness” which is the essence of a true friendship, more than shared interests.

With our set pattern of thinking and feeling we refuse to adjust with other minds and hearts. Only those people interest us who share our tastes and outlook on life. As Professor C. S. Lewis remarks, such companions with common interest create a barrier between themselves and others, and thus form a *partial brotherhood*. Depending upon the kind of things held in common, there can be partial brotherhood of extremely fanatic and despotic people. Friendship based on pure love and tenderness does not depend upon like-mindedness, shared interests or reciprocity, but is broad and generous enough to accept human beings with varied idiosyncrasies. Impersonal friendship is the highest form of friendship, which contains warmth, understanding and affection that remain undisturbed by the storms of personalities. Such friendship is based

on impersonal love. Mr. Crosbie said that among other things, impersonality means that we should feel ourselves expanding in sympathy, get to like our friends better, and extend the circle. We have these inspiring words from Edwin Markham: “He drew a circle that shut me out—Heretic, a rebel, a thing to flout. But Love and I had the wit to win; we drew a circle that took him in.”

True friendship, Emerson believes, not only gratifies and nourishes the heart or emotions, but it is something which expands and enriches our intellect. Our intellectual and active powers increase with our affection. But besides enriching an individual at the emotional and intellectual level, a true bond of friendship, helps him experience bliss at the level of the soul itself. He writes: “The moment we indulge our affections, the earth is metamorphosed; there is no winter and no night; all tragedies, all ennui vanish....Let the soul be assured that somewhere in the universe it should rejoin its friend, and it would be content and cheerful alone for a thousand years.”

Emerson believed that friends come unsought and that they have nothing to do with effort, worldly accomplishments, or physical beauty, but are rather matters of attraction and affinity. H.P.B. writes that sympathy is a holy and natural power of magnetism. Spiritual love of the mother for her child, or love as pure friendship, is purely magnetic manifestation of sympathy in congenial natures. (*Isis*, I, 210)

Our parents, brothers, sisters, and also our friends are the result of karmic affinity. We are born in the company of those with whom we have set up strong karmic affinity. No man becomes our friend in the present life by reason of our behaviour in the present life alone. Our present acts but revive the bonds of friendship. The tendencies of enmity and friendship last at least for three lives. Towards those who are hostile to us, if we practice charity, kindness, and love, at least in thought, then this tendency of enmity will be one-third lessened in every life. Likewise we can strengthen the bond of friendship by our behaviour in this life.

Our affinities save and also damn us. Often, past affinities may draw us into friendship with a drunkard or gambler, who could be the cause of our downfall. On the other hand, through past affinities, one person can help to hasten the spiritual progress of another. Mr. Judge explains: Suppose in some past life a person had established a deep and interior intimacy with a friend. Death separates them, and in subsequent lives he pursues pleasures, while this friend seeks truth and wisdom. After many lives they meet again and the old intimacy asserts itself. Then the former friend has a strange power to touch his inward life, and wake him up to search for truth. Through unexpended affinity, nature works his salvation.

Platonic love in its modern popular sense is defined as an affectionate relationship in which two people of opposite sexes share a non-sexual friendship. That is the kind of bond shared when a man and a woman find “true love.” In *From the Book of Confidences*, the sage tells the pupil that when she has found true love, she would find one homogeneous to her nature. “Thou shalt know thy love is true, if thou art Friend to him, Mother, Sister, Daughter and Companion; if to thee thy need of Friend and Father, Son and Brother all find fulfilment in him, yet leave the doors flung wide to the world of all Friends, Fathers, Sons and Brothers...to know in all a deeper kinship and to make thee tenderer, wiser and more thoughtful...”

The Great spiritual beings have expanded their circle of love, sympathy and concern to include the whole of humanity. They are the friends of humanity. They remain present in the invisible atmosphere of the earth and purify the invisible atmosphere with currents of noble thoughts and thus save mankind from further and far greater misery and sorrow. Their concern is progress of humanity. “The most intelligent being in the universe, man, has never, then, been without a friend, but has a line of elder brothers who continually watch over the progress of the less progressed,” by making available the great spiritual truths to receptive minds.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE WAY TO FREEDOM

MASTER, why do we want to be free? What prevents us from being free? How can we become free?

Friend, the urge of the spirit within this casket of flesh and blood is to free itself from the *tamas* of the body, the *rajas* of the emotions, and even the *sattva* of the mind. These are the bonds that the spirit within would break asunder. They are also like the clouds that hide *Surya*, the sun, from the earth and which the former is ever striving to pierce and then dispel. The same spirit is to be found, not only in all men, but also in the clod of earth, the lightning and the storm, the volcanic eruption and the peace of spring. Therefore the life within is ever pushing its way through the forms to join with the life freed from other forms, for there is but one life. That is evolution. Just as water runs downhill to join the ocean, so the spirit within our body and in every atom of that body and throughout Nature is constantly struggling to be free of its limiting forms, whether of dense matter, of emotions and desires, or of ideas. This is growth. The plant pushes its way up out of the seed and out of the darkness of the earth to the light, and goes on pushing to the extent of the limits prescribed by its nature in order to reach the sunlight and perform its duty of cyclic sacrifice and growth. The seed sacrifices itself to become a plant, the bud sacrifices itself to become the bloom, and the bloom sacrifices itself so that the seed it contains may begin a new cycle of life.

Follow this cycle of activity in your own life and you will see what makes you bound, to what you are bound, and what constitutes freedom. But, Master, how shall I know what binds me? All I sense is the urge to be free. What freedom means, I do not know!

Friend, are you dissatisfied with your life, with your capacities, your environment, outer and inner? Do the hundred cords of desire keep you bound? Are you longing for “something afar from the sphere of our sorrow” and trying to overcome setbacks and hindrances? Yes, Master, that is just how I feel.

Then, O Friend, realize now, by dwelling upon the idea and not merely on the words, that your trouble lies in your mind, with your thoughts, both with their misuse and their lack. Begin to think what freedom means and how it can be achieved. Look at your everyday life. It is ruled by certain laws. When we know what to do under any given circumstance we are freed from the hold of that circumstance on us. The power of the mind is greater than the power of the desires, of the emotions and even ideas; but we relinquish that power because it is hard to use and so become bound by desire-emotion-ideas. Once grasp that the power of the mind is greater than that of its vehicle (*kama*) and you will emerge victorious from the battle. Ideas are the limitations of the mind, and are as limiting to freedom as emotions or desires are. Therefore we should constantly remember that everything that has a form is a limitation that must be overcome if we would be free.

Am I, then, to be a constant destroyer? I do not like wars and destruction, for they destroy the beauty of life.

Friend, do you call the destruction of the seed, the bud, the bloom, the destruction of beauty? Is not the very sacrifice of the bloom for the sake of its “child,” the seed, a beautiful thing? The rose has had its prime; its petals still give off their perfume—a return to all nature, in joyous gift, of their essence. And deep within the “child,” the seed, lies the replica of the future plant.

So with the destruction of desire. Each desire destroyed should leave as its child a greater, more beautiful desire, until in the end we realize that the desire of union with all Nature, with the Parent Sun, to become one with it and to help to give life to all, is the only desire which, far from limiting our powers, makes them universal. In other words, we thus learn that only in universal understanding and universal love, is there freedom because life and its purpose are at last understood. Only then the life of the world thrills through us, and we unite with the essence of all things.

O Master, this is what I aim at, but what do I do *now* to attain it?

Cease, O Friend, from trying to *attain* anything. To try to attain

implies that there is a desire to *get* something. Spiritual life is a *giving up*, not a *getting*! In time we have to give up even our individual will to become one with the corporate Will of Nature—in the sense that we help Nature and work on with her laws. Aspiring after the sun of life which shines for all, we can begin by looking at ourselves and asking, “What do I desire to do *today*? How shall I meet with the obstacles, physical, emotional, mental, that affect my repose *today*?” That is the beginning. It will keep us busy all day long. Have we been able to control our thoughts all the day and to decide mentally how to react to all things? A nightly review of our day’s activities will show us which way danger lies.

But the power to do this comes from an aspect of our mind that is higher than that which we usually use, and we must feed that higher aspect at the fount of wisdom. That is why Krishna told us to do all things in His name, for Him; and, as He is the All, we can call on this universal power at every turn.

So, Friend, it is all very simple and yet very difficult. The idea is simple, but in practice there must take place a hard fight against the obstacles that arise. Think of this fight as a freeing of the imprisoned beauty of Life or of the glory and splendour of Krishna, which has been likened to the radiance of a thousand suns rising together in the sky. The living of the daily life must become, and will become if we make the effort, a glorifying of the God within. Our life-light will shine forth, so that others, too, shall see the glory of the God within and the way to it.

\* \* \* \* \*

The love of freedom is innate in man. Freedom, according to current ideas of ease and comfort, is generally conceived as escape from enslavement, and relates mostly to the personal self. For the imprisoned person, freedom means escape from confinement, but once the prisoner is released, he is satisfied with open air and free space, only for a while, and soon becomes conscious of other forms of slavery, such as, the binding force of poverty or the new

environment, and seeks to escape from it. In whatever conditions we find ourselves, we build for ourselves ideals of freedom based on the limitations of that condition. Thus, we find ourselves continually striving towards freedom from one or another form of conditions and limitations, in the belief that the cause of bondage is something outside of ourselves.

There are various aspects of freedom. Aristotle declares freedom to be the condition of human well-being, “an activity of the personality directed towards virtue, or excellence, in a complete life.” E. M. Forster believed that the desire for freedom should be combined with the desire to love, to devote oneself to another person or persons. In the 1930s, Walter Greenwood, based on his years of slavery, experienced some deeper truths about freedom, which he expressed thus: “What was unrestricted freedom but—to anyone who could think at all—to exchange one prison for a larger. . . . The world was a prison in itself, or, rather, we were prisoners to ourselves and there could not be any freedom except through self-mastery.” Thus, self-sacrifice and self-mastery may well be regarded as the keys for the attainment of true freedom. The leaders of a nation should possess both these qualities in some degree at least, if any real reform is to be accomplished. In democratic countries such as India, it is absolutely necessary for the leaders and people to understand correctly the nature and function of liberty.

The word freedom has also another meaning—the state of being unencumbered, *i.e.*, detached. To be unencumbered is to remember that the bondage is not imposed from without, by the outer environment, but rather it relates to the environment within. Pride, ambition, vanity, envy, hatred are the real tyrants resident in the stronghold of man’s heart, which bind man in perpetual slavery, and which are not to be easily dislodged. It is relatively easier to overthrow a tyrant outside of us but not so easy is it to subdue and overcome the invisible and impalpable tyrants within, resident deep in our hearts and minds.

## STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA THE WEB OF LIFE—I

[Adapted from the Lectures on the *Bhagavad-Gita*, delivered at One West Sixty Seventh Street, New York City, 1927-28.]

IN VERSE 21 of the Thirteenth Discourse of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna explained that when *Kshetrajna, i.e.*, Soul or the Reincarnating Ego comes in contact with *Kshetra, i.e.*, matter or body, it gets attached to the qualities which are inherent in matter and therefore, exist in the body. The Soul or the Ego identifies itself with those qualities, and thinks of itself as the material qualities, thereby producing what we know as the *personality*. This Soul, the *Kshetrajna*, is capable of knowing himself, and of saying “I am I,” but incarnating into the body he falls into the wrong idea that he is the qualities of that body, and hence, no longer says, “I am I,” but says, “I am so-and-so” and thus the personal egoic consciousness springs up. It is through its self-identification, and its attachment to the qualities of substance that each one of us, and all of us are born again and again into wombs which are evil or good, as Krishna points out, and they are evil or good in terms of the predominant quality of matter with which we have just identified ourselves.

The Fourteenth Discourse opens with a wonderful statement in which Krishna points out that there are beings, however, who are not reborn any more, that they have taken refuge in sublime, complete, spiritual knowledge, and thereby they are no longer forced to be reborn even at the time of the new evolution, nor are they disturbed at the time of general dissolutions. Such beings, who have thus become really and truly immortal beings, are called *Anupadakas*, in the phraseology of H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine*. These beings are the *Anupadakas*, the Parentless race, also, the “Open Eye of *Dangma*,” the Absolute Wisdom; and all these terms simply signify the Great Lodge of Perfected Men, the Great Masters of Theosophy. These Beings remain awake throughout the period of non-manifestation or *Pralaya*; they are not disturbed or affected,

*i.e.*, they do not go to sleep, and at the beginning of a new period of manifestation they are what Krishna refers to as the Father of that new Manifestation, whereas all other beings slumber throughout *pralaya* until the new *manvantaric* impulse wakes them up. These Beings have watched throughout that eternity, and at the beginning of manifestation, through their own fecundating power they are able to help the awakening of all the beings, who have thus gone to sleep. This is what Krishna means in verses 3 and 4 of the Fourteenth Discourse, in which he says:

The great Brahma is my womb in which I place the seed; from that, O son of Bharata, is the production of all existing things. This great Brahma is the womb for all those various forms which are produced from any womb, and I am the Father who provideth the seed.

Mr. Judge writes that in this verse Brahma is to be taken to mean *prakriti* or nature. In terms of *The Secret Doctrine* this Father is simply the Absolute Wisdom, and this Absolute Wisdom mirrors itself in Divine Ideation, and thereby manifestation and differentiation result immediately. This is the important point for us to remember, about the part played by the Great Lodge or *Mahatmas*, who never, ever go to sleep. All other beings in the Universe fall asleep at the time of dissolution, and they slumber in *Purusha-Prakriti*, in Consciousness and Substance. But as soon as differentiation begins, *i.e.*, *Purusha* and *Prakriti* once more become separate, these beings immediately find themselves exactly where they left off at the previous manifestation. In terms of the three qualities, they find themselves as *Tamasic*, *Rajasic* and *Sattvic* Beings.

The Self, *Atma*, identifying itself with the physical body and the astral body in man's constitution produces what we know as *Tamas*, and that same Self, identifying itself with *Kama-Manas*, the middle principles of man, produces *Rajas*, and the same Self identifying itself with *Buddhi-Manas*, the Higher Principles in man produces *Sattva*. When that Self no longer centres itself, or identifies itself

with just some of the principles of man's constitution, but unites itself to *Maha-Atma*, the Great *Atma*, the Universal, All-pervading Principle, then that Self has become a Perfected Man, having attained true self-conscious immortality. Here, it is useful to note that all these metaphysical truths and universal verities can be examined from different points of view. When one presentation is offered to the students for their own meditation and contemplation, they should not think that it is the only way to look at these Truths, and rather than stop at the words which are used in one presentation, they should try and examine the ideas, thereby looking at the other aspects of these same metaphysical truths.

These qualities which we want to study in reference to man must exist throughout Nature; they inhere in *Mulaprakriti*, in substance or matter, and wherever there is manifestation, there is substance of one kind or another, so that these qualities are to be found not only in the human kingdom but in the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms as well. However, we may begin by looking at them in reference to the human constitution. Looking at ourselves from the point of view of the three *gunas* or qualities we could see that all of us belonged to one or another of three classes of beings, beings in whom the *Tamas* quality predominates, beings in whom *Rajas* predominates and beings in whom *Sattva*, the third quality, predominates. These three classes of beings could be said to follow or to walk three different paths, corresponding to the three qualities. These paths are known in the Sanskrit language as follows:

The beings in whom *tamas* predominates follow the path of *A-pravritti*, meaning motionlessness, stationery, quiet; beings in whom *rajas* prevails follow the opposite path of motion, or that of *Pravritti*, that is the path of forthcoming and going outside of themselves, of mobility; and those in whom *sattva* prevails follow the *Nivritti* path, the path of return, within themselves. These two words, *Pravritti* or outgoing, and *Nivritti* or returning within oneself, have come to mean in the Sanskrit language, the one interested action, and the other un-interested action, showing that the beings in whom *rajas*

predominates are of the nature of selfishness, and those in whom *sattva* prevails are of the nature of unselfishness. When we say that we belong to one of these three classes, we naturally do not mean that we do not possess the other *gunas* of nature—these *gunas* exist, all three, in our own lower natures, and at one time we may identify ourselves with one of the *gunas*, and at another time with another of the three *gunas*. Even throughout the course of a week, or a day, we may show in our different moods, self-identification with different *gunas*, but through the whole life there is one predominating *guna* or quality with which we identify ourselves, and which binds us to the body, and to this personality. This primary tendency or faculty determines the very thing upon which our heart is set during that one life, and also determines the class to which we belong.

The *Kshetrajna*, or the reincarnating soul, partakes in greater or less degree, of all the three qualities, but in each life there seems to be one predominating quality. These three qualities are: *tamas* means darkness, ignorance, indifference; *rajas* means desire or passion and *sattva* means light, truth, goodness. In this, Fourteenth Discourse, Krishna goes into the detail, into the subject of the nature of these three qualities, as well as the influence of all three upon man's own nature—the effect that these qualities have upon the soul. He does this through varied and diverse ways of approach and presentation, thereby giving us full description of the characteristic marks which these qualities assume in persons of all the three classes. As a result, we are able to examine our own nature in the light of this classification, and thus determine for ourselves how we show each of these qualities in our different activities, and which quality predominates in our own nature. This enables us to understand what our weaknesses are, how we can get rid of these weaknesses, and what our next step is on the ladder of evolution.

If we examine briefly the effects or characteristics shown in man's constitution by the three qualities we find a very helpful basis for ethics and application, and in doing so, it is better to begin with *tamas*, continue with *rajas* and end with *sattva*, simply because

that is the natural order and sequence of the law of evolution, of growth and progress. This is because a man must be a *tamasic* being before he becomes the *rajasic* being, and must have gone through the *rajas* state before he enters the *sattvic* condition. What do we mean when we say that a being is a *tamasic* being? We simply mean that the quality of *tamas* predominates in his nature; that the man is living in ignorance and in darkness; he is identifying himself with the blind impulse, with the brutal appetites of his own body, and he is responding to that impulse almost passively, in an inattentive and indifferent manner. A *tamasic* person shows himself as dull, indifferent, quiet and subdued, and we can say that he is insensible and almost senseless—senseless means he is not taking any active or any conscious note of all the impressions which come to him through his senses. Such a person is indifferent to pleasure and pain, because he is not yet *experiencing* pleasure and pain. He does not use his own judgment and therefore, we call him a deluded man, not able to discriminate between good and evil. Thus, when we call him indifferent, we mean that he does not care about pleasure or pain, not because he has overcome this pair of opposites, but because his desire nature is still asleep, is in a deadening condition, it does not react or respond; there is no feeling or emotion in the sense in which we understand feeling and emotion in a human being. Also, such a person does not want to act, but wants to depend on others for everything. His condition is that of immorality, of laziness, of heedlessness, of passivity and indifference. This *tamasic* person, in order to leave this dull, quiet and passive condition, must awaken in himself *reaction* to pleasure and pain, *i.e.*, the outside impression which would produce in a person some feeling or desire, and this he can do only when he begins to aim at the characteristics of the next stage or the *rajasic* state. The *rajasic* man instead of liking to be idle and lazy is animated by an intense desire to do things, and to keep himself actively engaged.

(To be concluded)

## ON TEMPLES AND TABERNACLES

## II

THE TABERNACLE, according to the Hebrew Bible, was a movable structure, supposed to be the meeting place of God with the children of Israel. According to the Book of Exodus God instructed Moses on Mount Sinai and he was shown the pattern of the tabernacle, and it was built according to the specifications revealed by God to Moses. The Tabernacle was in part a portable tent, and in part a wooden enclosure draped with ten curtains. The cube-shaped inner room, called the “Holy of Holies,” housed the Ark of Covenant, inside which were two stone tablets, and on which were written the Ten Commandments.

In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 314) we are told that Moses, an Initiate into the Egyptian mysteries, is supposed to have constructed in the wilderness a tabernacle, copying the Pyramids of the Egyptians, and after him the Jewish High Priests constructed Solomon’s Temple. In the section “The Holy of Holies, Its Degradation,” (*S.D.*, II, 459-474) H.P.B. points out that the *Holy of Holies* or the *Sanctum Sanctorum* of the ancients, was that structure in the temple which was enclosed on three sides by blank walls but with one door hung over with a curtain—also called the *Adytum*. A little later in that section H.P.B. describes the Egyptian “Holy of Holies,” making clear its inner significance.

The “King’s Chamber” in the *Pyramid of Cheops* is the Egyptian “Holy of Holies.” Mysteries of initiation were enacted in the Pyramids. On the days of the mysteries of initiation, the candidate representing the solar god had to descend into the Sarcophagus. The sarcophagus is oblong and boat-shaped, representing the female principle, containing the germs of life. The candidate for initiation represents the solar god or the energizing ray of the sun that enters the sarcophagus, fecundating the female principle. This represents *spiritual conception*. After remaining there for two days and two nights, and after undergoing most cruel trials on the last night, the

candidate for initiation is resurrected. In India, instead of the sarcophagus, it is the “golden” Cow through which the candidate has to pass, in order to become a *Dwijā* or twice-born. The ceremony of passing through the *Holy of Holies* meant *spiritual conception* and *spiritual rebirth* of an individual, and his regeneration. The *Holy of Holies* which was earlier symbolized by *Hiranyagarbha* or golden egg, and is now symbolized by the cow, is the symbol of universal abstract nature. The stooping man at the entrance of the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, ready to pass through the matrix of mother nature is the physical man ready to re-become the original spiritual being, explains H.P.B.

We find a similar concept connected also with the Hindu temple. When a devotee enters the temple, at the main gateway he is supposed to bend down and touch the threshold before crossing it, this marks the transition from the outer, material world to the inner, spiritual world. The erotic figures found on the outer walls of some temples, such as, in Khajuraho, depict pursuit of joy, sex and emotional pleasures which must be left behind before entering the inner recesses of the temple.

The *sanctum sanctorum* of the Hindu temples is surrounded by seven *praharas* or corridors. Commenting on the second *Brahmana* of the first chapter of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, Swami Krishnananda writes: The temples, especially in Southern India, are constructed in the shape of *Virat*, the divine and cosmic form of God. The *Holy of Holies* is the head of the *Virat*, which is represented by a luminous glow of a sacred light in a dark room, comparable to the *Anandamaya Kosha* (causal sheath) which is dark but illumined by the *Atman* within, and encompassed by seven *praharas* or corridors. Sometimes these are five, comparable to the five *Koshas* or vestures of the body—*Annamaya kosha* [physical body], *Pranamaya kosha* [vital sheath or astral body], *Manomaya kosha* [intellectual sheath or lower mind] and *Vijnanmaya kosha* [Higher Mind]. And there is *Balipitha*, the sacrificial altar, at the entrance, which is represented by a huge post. Before you enter the body of

the *Virat*, you have to offer yourself first; otherwise no entry is possible. You have to pay a fee to the *Virat* before you gain access to it, and the fee is your own self. You have to cease to be, first, as you are now, in order that you may become what you want to become, explains Swami Krishnananda.

In the article, “The Roots of Ritualism in Church and Masonry,” we are told that the Tabernacle refers, among other things, to the Temple of Solomon, which is built as an “oblong square,” and so also is Kaaba, which is the great temple at Mecca.

The geometrical figure of a square and a rectangle seems to have a great significance in the construction of both temples and tabernacles. *The Theosophical Glossary* points out that the edifice of Kaaba is not large and is of a cubical form, 23 x 24 cubits in length and breadth, and 27 cubits high, with only one aperture on the East side to admit light. In the north-east corner is the “black stone” of Kaaba, said to have been lowered down directly from heaven. In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 347) we find that the Cosmic Tabernacle of Moses, erected by him in the desert, was *square*, representing the four cardinal points and the four Elements.

In the Egyptian as well as Jewish temples there is an immense curtain which separates the tabernacle from the congregation. In fact, that curtain separated the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, wherein only the priests were permitted to enter. This curtain is drawn over five pillars and there are four colours in the curtain. The five pillars represent five senses and the five Root-races. The four colours represent four cardinal points and the four Elements. “The whole was an allegorical symbol. It is through the four high Rulers over the four points and Elements that our five senses may become cognisant of the hidden truths of Nature; and not at all, as Clemens would have it, that it is the elements *per se* that furnished the Pagans with divine Knowledge or the knowledge of God.” (*S.D.*, I, 125)

H.P.B. points out that it was erroneously believed by Clemens Alexandrinus that our five senses acquired divine Knowledge or even hidden truths of Nature, through the four elements. In fact, in

the section “Four Elements” (*S.D.*, I, 461), she makes it very clear that Cosmolatry was never the worship of the external form, or matter aspect, of elements or any other thing in nature, but of their noumenon. Fire, Air, Water, Earth are but visible symbols of the invisible, informing Souls or Spirits or the Cosmic gods to whom the worship is offered. Thus, Divine knowledge is acquired through the Four Maharajahs or “Rectors of light” which preside over the four cardinal points and the four elements.

This can be understood in two ways. The term “Rector” means the chief or head of the hierarchy, who personifies the hierarchy, and thus represents the entire hierarchy of celestial beings of which he is the head. Similarly, we might take Four Maharajahs to include the *devatas* or elementals, which preside over the four elements. Our five senses may acquire hidden truths of Nature through these elemental spirits.

In the article, “Spiritualism Old and New,” Mr. Judge points out that there were “consulters with the familiar spirits,” who opened up communication with powerful nature spirits of air or fire element. They can use the inner senses of man, and help a person to obtain information about matters which are not normally available to an ordinary person; just as a hypnotiser paralyzes the physical man and awakens the inner, astral man. These “familiar spirits” are dangerous because they are devoid of conscience, and act automatically. They make use of the inner senses and intelligence of the person, and influence mainly the lower nature of that person, so that in the course of time such a person finds that his moral qualities are paralyzed.

The term “Rector” would also include higher gods. It was a mystic belief that by making oneself pure, by regaining one’s pristine pure nature, man could move these gods to impart to him Divine mysteries and even cause them to become occasionally visible. In the note on “Theurgy” and “Iamblichus” in the *Glossary*, we are told that the Brahmin had to purify himself and then utter the Word several times and project his astral body, which is then clothed or animated by the

image or a soul of a god with whom then he confabulates. It can also be understood by referring to *Manticism*, or mantic frenzy, in which the soul of man is put *en rapport* with his divine essence and receives direct illumination from his divine nature.

In fact, in the article, “The Idols and the Teraphim” H.P.B. explains that in the ancient times a fit “tabernacle” was necessary for being able to communicate with the gods. It was equivalent of our modern electrical telephone. The “tabernacle” of old was made of specified metals, wood, and had certain special arrangements. Moreover those who communicated were high priests and hierophants, whereas today these are replaced by mediums, and therefore, while the former (hierophants) communicated with the Planetary gods, the present-day mediums communicate with astral shells and elementals.

In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 464) H.P.B. mentions the cave or grotto of Zarathushtra, in the deserts of Central Asia, which has four seemingly natural apertures at the four cardinal points, through which sunlight enters the cave, from noon till nearly sunset time, and the light that streams in is of four colours, red, blue, orange-gold and white. This light converges in the centre around a white marble pillar. White is supposed to represent the fifth element (Ether), which synthesizes the four other elements.

Further hints on the allegorical and symbolical aspect of the Tabernacle may be found in the article, “Nebo or Birs-Nimrud” which was published after the death of H.P.B. She says that the student of Occultism will do well to ponder over the materials and measurements used in the construction of the tabernacle. Then he would learn how the “abode of a god,” which is variously termed as Pyramid, tabernacle, temple, tower or a house, was constructed for *occult purposes*. The article goes on to say that much more can be discovered regarding the significance of the tabernacle if we were to study the architecture and the material of the tabernacles by the light of *alchemy*, and by occult correspondences. There are secret potencies latent in every metal, wood, colour and fabric that has been said to be used in the tabernacle. For instance, Moses

recommends building of the tabernacle of shittim wood. H.P.B. explains that shittim wood does not mean “a kind of acacia tree” but any sweet smelling wood consecrated for *Theurgical purposes*, such as sandal, cypress, etc.

Further, she mentions that almost the same combination of metals, colours and materials—such as, gold, silver and brass, and “blue, purple and scarlet,” colours, as also the fine linen of goat’s hair, shittim wood and goat’s skin dyed red, etc.—were required in the tabernacle of the Chaldean god Bel or Nebo, and of the Jewish god Jehovah. We may probably look upon these as objects with magnetic properties which help in preparing the place. We may compare it with the suggestion made in the article “Practical Occultism,” which mentions that before sitting down for receiving instructions the disciples must *prepare* the place by surrounding themselves with magnetic objects and also by arranging five sacred colours in a *circle*. Likewise, in the tabernacles built for Jehovah or Nebo, these preparations were made, for the manifestation of these Powers (gods), who could speak from their respective magical recesses.

We find similar emphasis on the use of certain metals in temple construction. For instance, the Hindu *Shastras* are considered to be strict about the use of metals, such as iron, in the temple structure because iron is mystically the crudest, most impure of the metals. The presence of iron is believed to attract lower, impure forces. In fact, only gold, silver and copper are used in the structure so as to attract the most sublime forces during the *puja* or worship. Moreover, while constructing certain parts of the temple, such as placing of *sanctum sanctorum* door frame, pieces of gold, silver and copper, as well as precious gems are ceremoniously embedded in small interstices between the stones, which adds to the temple’s inner magnetism.

(To be concluded)

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## WHY DEMOCRACY?

THE PROBLEM of government is one that has pressed upon the minds of men from the most ancient times. In *The Key to Theosophy* H.P.B. makes it plain that as a body, the Theosophical organization would avoid the useless effort to improve the lot of the masses through political reforms, which she characterized as being as foolish as “putting new wine into old bottles.” She points out that “No lasting political reform can ever be achieved with the same selfish men at the head of affairs as of old,” and added that until a “reform in human nature” is brought about, success in ameliorating the social condition of men can hardly be achieved. The history of the past 2,000 years seems to support her contention. In order to understand and solve the problem of government a much more extensive study of the history of man must be made than is generally admitted as possible by modern historians.

We should know why government of the people, by the people, for the people, is the best form of government for mankind at the present time. We should know why man’s real progress in this cycle demands the observance of democratic principles throughout the world. Both tradition and history are enriched with descriptions of great and benevolent Kings and their kingdoms. What could be more inspiring than the account of the people of Ayodhya under King Rama? And there is no doubt of the benefit accruing to the masses under such monarchs as Janaka, Vikramaditya, Asoka and Akbar. These few examples from Indian history could be paralleled by others in many parts of the world. Then, why democracy?

What modern historians call mere tradition or legend places before the dynasties of human Kings those of the Heroes and demi-gods; and still earlier than these, the marvellous reign of the gods. Many are the stories of the Golden Age of humanity that have come down to us. One feels surprised that narratives so instructive and so universal should have been rejected by almost all modern historians, especially, as the ideas connected with them were once admitted by

all peoples. But they have been rejected principally because they are no longer understood. H.P.B. quotes a suggestive passage from Boulanger:

Plato in his fourth book of *Laws*, says that, long before the construction of the first cities, Saturn had established on earth a *certain* form of government under which man was very happy. As it is the golden age he refers to, or to that reign of gods so celebrated in ancient fables...let us see the ideas he had of that happy age....Our traditions tell us of many marvels, of changes that have taken place in the course of the Sun, of Saturn’s reign, and of a thousand other matters that remained scattered about in human memory; but *one never hears anything of the EVIL which has produced those revolutions, nor of the evil which directly followed them.* Yet...that Evil is the principle one has to talk about, to be able to treat of royalty and the origin of power...” (*S.D.*, II, 372-73)

H.P.B. explains that the *evil* Plato sees is “in the sameness or consubstantiality of the nature of the rulers and the ruled.” He says that in those golden days there was naught but happiness on earth, for there were no needs.

Why? Because Saturn, knowing that man could not rule man, without injustice filling forthwith the universe through his whims and vanity, would not allow any mortal to obtain power over his fellow creatures. To do this the god used the same means we use ourselves with regard to our flocks. We do not place a bullock or a ram over our bullocks and rams, but give them a leader, a shepherd, *i.e.*, *a being of a species quite different from their own and of a superior nature.* It is just what Saturn did. He loved mankind and placed to rule over it no mortal King or prince but—“Spirits and genii of a divine nature more excellent than that of man.” (*S.D.*, II, 373)

Students will have no difficulty in understanding that the above

refers to the time when the Great Teachers lived openly amongst men, ruling and instructing them. Also, that the great changes and revolutions came about as the cycles rolled on, and the time came for the withdrawal of the Great Ones in order that men might learn to shoulder the responsibilities of their own unfolding manhood.

As loving parents protect, guide and teach their children in their infancy, but gradually withdraw their authority as the children mature, in order that they may learn to take care of themselves and help others in their turn, so in the history of the great human family. At the present time, human beings are beyond the point where the authority and constant direction of the Elders would be helpful or even accepted. We have reached a point in evolution where we *must*, by ourselves and each one individually, test and put to use the knowledge, They impressed us with in our infancy and still remind us of when They come from time to time as prophets and reformers. As the children of any family must learn to co-operate, to work and play together in the balanced harmony of a home that will permit of the exercise, control and extension of their differently unfolding powers and capacities, so we, children of the human family, are now at the age, when we must work out our own salvation, create our own order, by self-induced and self-devised ways and means.

In the present cycle Divine Kings do not rule us—we must seek the Divine Ruler within; Divine Heroes do not incarnate to lead us—we must evoke courage and guidance from our own hearts. The Teachings and the Teachers are with us ever, it is true—but *we must now see Them*. As this is done, leaders will arise from our own ranks, not claiming “rights” as kings, or “authority” as dictators, but seeking opportunities to serve, to inspire all, as brothers. They will ask nothing for themselves that they do not seek for all, offer to all. These will be true democrats.

Those who would uphold democracy must begin with themselves, and with learning one of the most evident facts of our time, that man cannot rule man “without injustice filling forthwith the universe through his whims and vanity.” In this era, the seemingly

greatest may be the least, and the seemingly least the greatest among us. Claims and pretensions go for naught. “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

But what of the future? We have looked back; can we look forward? Are there any indications as to what may be beyond democracy? Are there even the outlines for a future government, a future state, in the world? Some believe that there are. There is little doubt but that the democratic states stand more for liberty of thought and of speech than do the totalitarian *regimes*. But the democracies are still in the grip of the evils of nationalism. In them dead nationalism tempts and corrupts, even divides, although it has run its course and the great Wheel of Life rolls forward to enter the cycle of Internationalism, of One World.

Is it conceivable that at some future time, when the Teachings of Theosophy have further permeated the race-mind, men in appreciable numbers will be drawn together to seek Truth and the Knowers and Teachers of Truth? It is conceivable, for what men have done, man can do, and it is a vision worth working for. Both H.P.B. and W. Q. Judge wrote of this possibility. We should seek out in their writings the pictures they have given of the future and dwell upon them—for we are working for the future, for a change in the *Manas* and the *Buddhi* of the race.

We are not left to invent a method to follow; the method is to begin in and upon ourselves, to create in our hearts and minds centres of order, harmony and unity, that these qualities may fecundate other minds and hearts in this age of democracy. It is not now through societies and mass movements of any sort that mankind is to progress or be “saved” but through individuals who dare to follow in the steps of the Great Predecessors, the Spiritual Fathers of Mankind. They teach that the first step into the future for each one is “to live to benefit mankind” by acquiring the right knowledge as to how to do so, and then making the attempt to act up to it.

## 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 food carry the psychic impression of the person cooking it? Can it affect the person eating that food?

**Answer:** The taking of food, whether mental or physical, is a sacred function. We should be as careful about not feeding the body on questionable or positively bad food as we should be in corrupting the mind with unethical principles or wrong knowledge. We should try to nourish the body with wholesome clean food in wholesome clean surrounding.

It is important to understand how the psychic impressions of the person cooking the food, gets transferred to the food. The *Pranic* currents circulating in the astral body ultimately stream forth as our magnetism in the form of magnetic fluid. “Man makes his magnetism with his mind,” says an occult aphorism. The quality of *Prana* that partakes of man’s psychic nature is dependent on his thoughts. Since we are always thinking, our magnetism changes every hour, for better or for worse. It gets reflected in our magnetism or magnetic emanations. Each one of us gives out or projects this magnetic fluid from the eyes, the fingers, and the palms of the hands. All the objects we touch or hold in our palm, we impart our magnetism. It is not for nothing that in India we have instances of elderly people who refuse to eat food made “by the hands” of certain person, who could well be a family member! In a certain family, an elderly lady insisted that she would eat *chapattis* [flat, unleavened bread from India], only if the dough was prepared with a spoon and not with *hands*, knowing well that the person working in the kitchen would positively wash hands with soap and water before cooking.

Not only has each foodstuff its own magnetic property, but there

is also the magnetism of the housewife herself, which affects the food she cooks. The occult philosophy teaches that when we throw down a book in anger, we affect the “lives” or atoms in the book. It is as if even without our speaking, our anger “talks to” these “lives.” A housewife, who cooks the food in bad mood, with impatience and irritability, certainly imparts these impressions to the food she is cooking. Wine and spirits are supposed to contain and preserve the bad magnetism of all the persons who helped in their preparation and bottling.

Food cooked with an impure mind, with emotions of unhappiness, anger, tension and dislike, carries negative energy, which affects the person eating that food. There is the tradition of offering the food to the Divine before eating. It is believed to help purify the food of its negativities. Chanting while cooking the food is another way of getting rid of negative energy from the food.

There is a story to the effect that once a saintly person ate food at the house of a very rich devotee. The food was served in silver plates and bowls. After eating the food the saintly man was tempted to take away the silver bowl in which he was served food. He succumbed to the temptation and took home the silver bowl. After reaching home, he wondered, “How was I tempted to *steal* a silver bowl?” He directed his inner eye to assess the nature of the host, and found that his host earned money by unfair means. He vomited the food and then went back to the host and returned him his silver bowl. Thus, the impact of eating food in the house of one who earned money by unfair means was corruption of character.

In verse 21, in the First Discourse of the *Gita*, Arjuna asks Shri Krishna to place his chariot between the two armies so that he could survey the army of his opponents. While commenting on this verse Swami Tadrupananda writes that Arjuna wishes to survey the opponent’s army not only to assess their strength but also to know those individuals who had decided to help wicked Duryodhana. Arjuna saw Bhishma, Drona, Kripacharya, and the like supporting Duryodhana, and thus being on the side of unrighteousness. These

were *preceptors* and *grandsires* of Pandavas and Kauravas, but it is not surprising that they were obliged to fight for Kaurvas, because they had eaten their food and enjoyed their hospitality and wealth which was acquired unrighteously! It was as if they had temporarily lost their *viveka-buddhi* or discrimination.

On the other hand, when a mother puts her heart and soul into the food she cooks, the food so cooked, with love and care, is more nourishing, in its own way, than any other vitamin-rich food. That mother, for a moment, becomes the Mother Nature, “*Mata Annapurneshwari*,” nourishing her family. When Buddha was nearly fainting—after indulging in wrong ascetic practices—he was given food by Sujata, a simple and pious housewife. It is said that so wonderful was the virtue of that meal that Buddha experienced strength and life returning to him instantly.

At our level, however, we need not unduly worry about defiling our magnetism through food, because we do contaminate our magnetism through unwholesome thoughts and feelings. Also, each body extracts from any kind of food only that which conforms to the nature of the possessor of the body, and that nature is subject to change from within. Ultimately, food is necessary to keep the body fit for the soul to inhabit.

**Question:** It seems we are punished or rewarded *twice* after death for our moral discipline or moral lapses: firstly, in states after death, such as in the passage through hell or *Kama-loka*, and in heaven or *devachan*; and secondly, in the next life. Is this just and necessary?

**Answer:** The Theosophical concept of heaven and hell is somewhat different from the popular ideas. A finite cause should produce a finite effect. But according to some religions there is a single life and no re-birth, and there is *eternal* heaven and *eternal* hell, based on moral or immoral actions in *one* life. According to Mr. Judge the question of heaven and hell must be decided on the basis of the fact that man is a thinker. Hell and heaven are subjective states of suffering and enjoyment. They may be compared to a dream state. In an

oppressive dream the mind devoid of the body is suffering, and likewise it is the mind which enjoys in case of a pleasant dream. Life, at any time or place, is the result of one’s thoughts. Thus, in the case where a person had encouraged high and noble aspirations, these thoughts will be expanded in the state of *devachan*, and in the process a feeling of peace and happiness is experienced.

We seem to have a fuller explanation in the article, “*Reward for Unmerited Sufferings*” by W. Q. Judge, in which he explains that pleasure and pain, or reward and punishment experienced by the Ego in the after-death states of so-called heaven and hell are subjective. *Devachan* or *swarga* is a subjective condition in which no objective experiences are undergone by the Ego, but certain kinds of good thoughts and aspirations engendered by the Ego during earth life produce the blissful subjective experience necessary for the rest of the soul. All suffering is the direct result of some unwholesome actions committed in previous lives. But as the personality or personal man has no recollection of the actions of the past lives, when suffering comes in any given life, the personal man feels that the suffering or punishment was *undeserved*. Hence, when in the physical body, the personal or human soul feels itself unjustly treated by fate or nature, and so, for the suffering which *appears* to be unmerited, the Ego when released from the body experiences the “reward” or blissful state in the plane of *devachan*. But such reward, subjectively enjoyed, is like the comforts and pleasures enjoyed in a dream state. Likewise, the opposite of *devachanic* reward or bliss must also be on a subjective plane, and it should be the “hell” spoken of by the Buddhists, called *Avitchi*.

A Master of Wisdom asks us to consider a person who is a monster of wickedness, avarice, ambition, pride, deceit, etc., but who still contains in him the *germ* of goodness, the divine spark smouldering under a heap of dirt. Such an entity is not annihilated but is *punished*, in a state called *Avitchi*, which corresponds to *devachan*, and is perfect antithesis of *devachan*. These have been vulgarized by the western nations into Heaven and Hell.

*Kama loka* is *not* normally described as hell, because for an averagely good person, it is the *kamarupic* shell or the astral body impressed with portions of lower thoughts and desires, which finds itself in *kama loka*, while the real man or the reincarnating ego goes to *devachan*, almost immediately. The *Kamarupic* shell is without mind or conscience. *Kama loka*, as the name suggests, is the plane of desires where all the hidden desires and passions are let loose, uninhibited by the physical body. However, the *kama loka* state is different for those who die violent or unnatural death, such as in suicides, executed criminals, or those dying in accidents, etc.

For instance, a person committing suicide finds himself in the astral atmosphere only partly dead, only *minus* the physical body. If the person committed suicide at the age of thirty and his natural life term was seventy then the astral entity will remain in the astral atmosphere for the next forty years, and only after that period is there a final separation of the Ego from the lower principles. Suicide is a huge folly, because it places the committer of it in infinitely worse position than he was under the conditions from which he in his ignorance hoped to escape. He exists in an astral realm, entirely eaten up by his own thoughts. His whole nature is in distress at the helplessness experienced; because though conscious and aware he is unable to do anything that he desires, because the instrument of action—his body—is no longer available. Similar is the plight also of the executed criminal. Thus, at least in these two cases of unnatural death, there is hell like suffering, “and to which earth-life is heaven in comparison.”

It appears that reward and punishment, on earth, can be experienced both subjectively and objectively, involving conscious pleasure and suffering, with the opportunity to draw the lesson and grow, which is not the case in the after death states of *kama loka* and *devachan*.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Are stars sentient overlords who can control our destiny? Though the common man eagerly reads the astrological predictions appearing in the magazines and newspapers, these are ridiculed by scientists because they say that stars are nothing better than luminous spheres of hot gases and stuff held together by their own gravity. They shine due to thermonuclear fusion of hydrogen into helium in their core, and after a few billion years of such activity they generally die. Hence the scientists maintain that stars are not sentient overlords who can somehow control our destiny. Celestial bodies like stars are not sentient entities. They argue that the gravitational influence of the Sun on our earth, or the partial responsibility of the Moon in the formation of high tides, is merely a physical phenomenon.

If we examine what is known as Parenago’s Discontinuity, based on the observation of the stars in our Milky Way Galaxy, it states that relatively cooler stars near the outer edge, like our own Sun, revolve around the Milky Way faster than other hotter stars which are closer to the centre. However, according to Newtonian physics they should all be revolving at the same speed. It was found that this happened in case of all the galaxies and the reason was the presence of dark matter creating a halo around galaxies that makes the outer stars revolve faster.

However, the Parenago’s Discontinuity theory was revisited by two scientists—Gregory Matloff and Bernard Haisch—in the early years of our century and according to Matloff’s views, recently published in the *Journal of Consciousness Exploration and Research*, the cooler stars may be moving faster due to “the emission of a unidirectional jet” early on in their creation. He suggested that this could be an instance of the star *consciously* manipulating itself, in order to gain speed. He thinks that stars do not move according to the current model we have in astrophysics, and this data can be viewed as evidence that “proto-consciousness can manifest itself in celestial objects as a way for a particular galaxy—and the universe—

to achieve a more elegant organisation. It is called panpsychism and is the philosophical view that consciousness, mind, or soul is a universal and primordial feature of all things....Who knows, may be the stars can foretell,” writes Mukul Sharma. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, July 9, 2017)

The ancients believed in the influence of planets and stars on human destiny and on the affairs of the earth. They regarded the celestial bodies as abodes or dwellings of the gods or planetary angels. Mr. Crosbie observes that man is not just his physical body. There is the astral body, mind, desire nature, and so on. Planets too, are not just the physical orbs that we see, but there is also an intellectual something, an astral something and a spiritual something to them and behind every orb there is divine intelligence—call it Planetary Spirit, Regent or Rector. These Planetary angels are called “Heavenly Snails,” because their own bodies are like breaths and therefore they are described as formless intelligences, which inhabit the dwellings or homes represented by physical orbs, or planets and stars, and just as the invisible creature within the shell of a snail moves and carries the shell with it, so also, these informing forces carry the planets.

Those of scientific temper call it a superstition. Plato and Aristotle believed in the influence of planets and stars. Paracelsus, the great physician, perpetrated the theory that the principal organs in man’s body have a correspondence with planets and various astrological signs, but no planet or star *determines* anything.

H.P.B. points out that we are inextricably linked and that there is ONE LIFE that is connecting human beings, the stars, the planets and the heavenly bodies. Planets and stars are only *indicators*. Every Ego is born with a backlog of Karma to be exhausted in a given life. The position of the planets at the birth of an individual is the result of the causes generated by the entity seeking birth. Mr. Judge goes to the extent of saying that the stars are inextricably linked with the Karma of man, but, if we have reached the stage where we are not making any more Karma, then the stars and planets have

nothing to indicate for us. For others, it is just the fulfilment of the Karmic law.

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How do we make our choices or decisions? Do we always carefully weigh the alternatives and choose the option that makes the most sense? Well, not always. It appears that “our assessment of situations and choices we ultimately make can be coloured by innate biases, flawed assumptions and prejudices born of personal experience. And we are clueless about how they influence our judgements,” writes Adam Piore. For instance, there are irrational, unconscious biases at play. When Malcolm Gladwell grew his hair long, his life changed in a small but significant ways, as he was pulled out of airport security lines, and was questioned by police in a rape case, even though the prime suspect was much taller, and so on. This experience inspired Gladwell to write the bestseller *Blink*, which looked at the science of snap judgments.

Daniel Kahneman won the 2002 Nobel Prize in Economics for his widely referenced work in the area of human judgement. According to Kahneman and others in the field, our decision-making process can be divided into two systems: In the first system, we are guided by nearly instantaneous impressions of people and situations. This system “tends to be fast, non-conscious and emotionally charged,” says Michael Pratt, a professor of organizational change at Boston College. Such type of decision-making can be useful for high-pressure, high-stress situations, like combat or basketball game and can be harnessed through training. Such a system of decision-making makes one vulnerable to unconscious biases.

In the second system, the decisions are analytical, deliberate and “rational.” The advantage of this form of decision-making is that it allows one to consider the consequences of a decision before one makes it. It can insulate the decision-maker from the corrosive effects of fear and emotions. However, this process of decision-making is slower and can break down under stress. Plato compares the human

will to a charioteer, driven by two horses, one representing our rational moral impulses, and the other the irrational passions.

In the 1980s, when Klein visited fire stations across the Midwest he discovered to his surprise that people did not use *logical* approach to make really hard decisions under the conditions of extreme time pressure and uncertainty. Twenty years' experience gave the firefighters the ability to do what Klein called pattern matching. The process seemed to involve complicated analysis of sensory information that occurs, somehow, entirely without their awareness. After the best approach popped into their heads they just acted, their thought process akin to the muscle memory of a trained boxer. According to Klein it is unconscious and intuitive, as the person concerned looks at the situation and recognizes it as something he has seen before, writes Piore. (*Discover*, July-August 2017)

Theosophy teaches that there are three aspects of the mind: (1) When involved in desires and passions, it is impulsive mind, which is often at play when we make snap decisions. (2) When the mind functions on its own plane—thinking and reasoning—it is the mind *per se*, which comes into play when we make rational decisions. (3) When mind works in conjunction with the spiritual nature, it is intuitive mind, guided from within to make the right choice. If our mind is not completely receptive to the guidance from the divine nature, then we would experience what is known as a *hunch*, which is partial reception on part of *manas*. Something within tells us to “do this” or “do not do that.” Some of us have gut feeling or a hunch as to the right course of action, even though we are not able to explain why. We just *know*. Intuition soars far above reason as the vision of the high flying eagle soars far above that of the ant crawling on earth.

Human beings have free will but in making choices and decisions our will is influenced by our preconceptions, biases, educational and cultural background, as also, the moral values we hold. We are predisposed to making certain choices, based on our previous choices. For instance, an occasional smoker with confidence in his

will power may finally become a habitual smoker, because having chosen to smoke several cigarettes he is only driven by the force of past choices. The fact is that we are conditioned, to an extent, by our previous right or wrong actions so that our present choices are, as it were, determined or influenced by the past. Hence, in a larger context, when applied to moral choices in life, H.P.B. points out that man is a free agent during his stay on earth, but “there are *external and internal conditions* which affect the determination of our will upon our actions.” In other words, the exercise of free will is conditioned or limited by the *external* circumstance, as well as the *inner* capacities and conditions—both being the result of past Karma.

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Are we convinced that the placard-carrying people are unable to change anything? It is probably true, and yet protests do matter. Recently, thousands of citizens gathered in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and other towns across India to express their grief at the series of communal killings in the name of the cow. It was a typical “Not in My Name” protest, not backed by any political party or organization. When people gather in large groups, they may not necessarily succeed in bringing about any change. And yet, it makes individuals feel less alone. The sight of each other, the sense of common cause and strength in numbers can be exhilarating. The general feeling is that instead of sitting at home and criticizing, it is better to go out and make yourself heard. Malcolm Gladwell points out that while social-media-enabled networked protests spread with ease, they also evaporate more easily because of the lack of a clear leader and structure.

Apart from the therapeutic value for those who participate, what do public protests achieve? Why do some movements succeed while others flounder? It is not about the numbers, the diversity or energy of the protest, explains sociologist Zeynep Tufekci. It is a complex, intertwining dynamic between the protesters and the powerful, both trying to read each other's signals. Among other things, a movement's success depends upon its capacities to set the narrative.

Every protest matters. “You do not fight because you know you will win, you do it because that is all that you can do at that moment,” says filmmaker Sanjay Kak. The indignation and involvement may not be sufficient to change the situation, but it is absolutely necessary. (*Sunday Times of India*, July 2, 2017)

Protests are one of the many ways of bringing about social, religious and political reform or change. A protest is a way of showing one’s disagreement or disapproval of some action, policy, custom, etc. In certain cases, protests are justified, but very often protesters are seen to oppose merely for the sake of opposing. It is important to keep in mind that one should not seek to attack without having constructive suggestions, alternatives, and a plan of action. It is good to protest against cruelty to animals, rapes, injustice to women, etc. but sometimes in fighting against violence, the protesters themselves are seen to become violent. Theosophically, it is compassion alone, not only for the animal but even more for the man who is ill-treating it, that will bring about the necessary reform. All problems have to be examined with logic, reason and knowledge *before* we act. The educative value of any reform consists in its ability to change and elevate the citizen’s character.

The manner of protesting is also important. For instance, rioting cannot be called a legitimate form of protest. An important concept in Lao Tzu’s philosophy is that of *wu-wei* which means “absence of action,” or rather to “resist without resisting.” How should we deal with our opponents? Resist without resisting is the plan of quiet passive resistance. Retreat within your own heart and there keep firmly still. It is the resistance exhibited through soul-force, by a person who has developed inner strength, inner integrity and total harmlessness. Henry David Thoreau and Gandhiji followed “non-violent non-cooperation” and were largely successful. Gandhiji used to say, “Non-co-operation with evil is as much a duty as co-operation with good.” It is not a passive state, but rather an intensely active state, and is not based on malice, ill-will or hatred.