

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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HYPOCRISY—AN UNPARDONABLE SIN

EVERY religious system speaks of vices and virtues. The seven *deadly sins* or *cardinal sins* of Christianity are: pride, greed, anger, envy, lust, gluttony and sloth. Hindu exoteric teachings speak of the six enemies which are described as six gates of hell. These are: (1) Personal desire, lust or any passion (*Kama*); (2) Hatred or malice (*Krodha*); (3) Avarice or cupidity (*Lobha*); (4) Ignorance (*Moha*); (5) Pride or arrogance (*Mada*); (6) Jealousy, envy (*Matsarya*); forgetting the seventh, which is the “unpardonable sin,” and the worst of all in Occultism. The esoteric philosophy speaks of seven inner enemies. (*The Theosophical Glossary*, under “Indweller.”)

Some of these sins are but abuses of one’s natural desires. For instance, gluttony is abuse of one’s desire to eat. Comparing Lust and Anger with Vanity, Mr. Judge says that “lust (so-called) is the gross symbol of love and desire to create. It is perversion of the True in love and desire.” But Vanity, he says, “represents in one aspect the illusion-power of Nature—Maya, that which we mistake for the reality.” He makes a significant observation that anger and lust have some of the *rajasika* quality, but that Vanity is almost wholly of the *Tamogunam*, thereby probably showing the difficulty of detecting and overcoming that vice.

A sin is the breaking of divine or moral law, especially by a conscious action. A mistake is an error of judgement. The sins enumerated in various religious systems do not mention hypocrisy, which, says H.P.B., is an unpardonable sin. Hypocrisy is variously

described as pretence, dissimulation or dissembling.

We have mastered the art of dissembling. “Chameleon,” a short story by Anton Chekov, is about a puppy who bit the finger of a workman in a timber yard, and the indignant inspector vowed to teach the owner of the dog a lesson and fine him heavily. However, when he learned that it was the General’s dog, he began to caress it and was angry with the workman for complaining, saying that it was impossible for such a little dog to reach up to the finger and bite it. Then, when the Constable pointed out that he was sure it was not the General’s dog, but a stray dog, again the inspector was ready to punish the owner. Thus, by turns, like a Chameleon, the inspector changed colours, depending upon whether the dog belonged to the General or not. Truly, “there is simulation of feelings according to a received standard,” says H.P.B. We are all guilty of it at some time or other. We do not dare to express what we *really* feel. Do we honestly express our opinion when we come across a painting or a classic? As Erich Fromm points out, more often than not, if the painting is by a famous painter like Picasso or Van Gogh, we judge it to be extremely beautiful. If we were honest, we would admit that we did not find the painting particularly impressive, but judged it beautiful because we are *supposed* to find it so—because we have heard from our childhood that certain authors and artists are great and that it is a mark of “good taste” to like and admire their work.

Pretence is a false show of intentions, feelings or motives. A Master of Wisdom writes that in our civilization we are surrounded by lie and falsehood. One often feels surprised and offended whenever he comes across a person who will bluntly tell the truth to his face. That is because almost everyone in every field of life conceal their thoughts and feelings, and rare is that person who would tell another plainly and abruptly, what he thought of him. He goes on to say that to conceal anger and permit others to believe that one is calm and has overcome all anger would be a kind of pretension. “If it is a meritorious act to extirpate with the roots all feelings of anger, so as to never feel the slightest paroxysm of a

passion we all consider sinful, it is a still greater sin with us *to pretend* that it is so extirpated.” Further, he says that in the West, everything is brought down to *appearances* even in religion. “A confessor does not inquire of his penitent whether he *felt* anger, but whether he has *shown* anger to anyone. ‘Thou shalt in lying, stealing, killing, etc., *avoid being detected*,’ seems to be the chief commandment of the Lord gods of civilization—Society and Public opinion,” says a Master of Wisdom. (*The Mahatma Letters*, No. XXX, pp. 232-33, *Second edition*)

In the spiritual context, hypocrisy is the assumption or postulation of moral standards to which one’s behaviour does not conform. That is why H.P.B. says that “better one hundred mistakes through unwise, injudicious sincerity and indiscretion than Tartuffe-like *saintship*, as the whitened sepulchre, and rottenness and decay within.” Hypocrisy may be rooted in vanity, or ostentatious display, combined with the trait of human psychology, observed by Niccolo Machiavelli, who noted that “the mass of mankind accept what *seems* as what *is*; nay are often touched more nearly by appearances than by realities.” Thus, for instance, the best and the ideal way to cultivate a reputation for being a fair person, is to really *be* fair. But since it is much harder to *be* fair than to *seem* fair, and since *laziness* is built deep into human nature, humans more often choose appearance over reality. This is brought out vividly in the statement made in *The Story of St. Vespallus* by Saki: “I do not mind being revered and greeted and honoured; I do not even mind being sainted in moderation, as long as I am not expected to be saintly as well.” The Buddha condemns a man who tries to project himself as an ascetic but is full of passions within. Likewise, Jesus condemns the “hypocrites” who make a vain display while giving charity or saying prayers or while fasting. He says that when you give alms, “let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.” (*Matthew*, VI)

Hypocrisy is insincere moral behaviour, wherein one hides the truth and projects one’s self as one wants people to believe. In the

words of Mrs. Montague, “While every vice is hid by hypocrisy, every virtue is suspected to be hypocrisy...and the suspicion is looked upon as wisdom.” A hypocrite hides his vices, and in doing so he deludes himself and also others into thinking that he is indeed a spiritually progressed person. The first step in self-improvement is to become aware of one’s vices and weaknesses. A deluded hypocrite who refuses to acknowledge his weaknesses loses his chance to follow the true discipline. If he lacks right philosophy, he imparts the same to the multitudes. H.P.B. says that our whole civilization is built on dissembling. There is “falsification on every plane; falsification of moral food and the same falsification of eatable food. *Margarine* butter for the soul, and margarine butter for the stomach; beauty and fresh colours without, and rottenness and corruption within,” writes H.P.B. in her article, “Our Cycle and the Next.” That means the genuine gets replaced by the fake, just as margarine butter, made of vegetable oils with added flavour to taste like butter, is used as a substitute for real butter.

Our age is characterized by an increasing number of self-styled godmen, *swamis* and *babas* who pretend to possess great knowledge and powers, and are able to dupe and misguide people, including the educated class, by posing as spiritual gurus. There have always been counterfeits for the genuine. Jesus warned people to beware of false prophets. In the last quarter of nineteenth century there were a number of pseudo-occultists claiming to possess occult knowledge and spiritual powers. There were so-called secret societies and “lodges of magic” which claimed to give occult knowledge and powers to people and even initiate them for a fee. They used some of the esoteric terms and symbols to give an appearance of genuine teachings to the trash they gave out to the gullible. There were promises of helping people to reach Adeptship in few weeks or months! People fail to recognize that true knowledge comes slowly and is not easily acquired.

The direct result of such hypocrisy on those who are waylaid, is suspicion, as then people are likely to be suspicious of even a really

virtuous man. Is that desirable? The Buddha teaches, “Trust is the best of relationships.” Doubt leads to eternal wavering, and prevents one from committing oneself to any particular path of discipline. Moreover, people who are fooled by pretension are going by appearance, and not learning to assess the real worth or inner worth. Therefore, it is easy to see that both, the one who is a hypocrite and those who are taken in by hypocrisy, are likely to be kept away from appreciating genuine spiritual values and leading a true moral life. Moreover, one cannot be a hypocrite without denying or being deaf to the “still small voice” of one’s divine nature, which ultimately may stop guiding. Generally, when one genuinely repents, the link that was broken with the divine nature, when one committed sin is established again, but it appears that the same should be extremely difficult in case of a hypocrite who has knowingly alienated himself from his divine nature. That may be the reason why “hypocrisy” is considered to be an unpardonable sin.

Also, it is hinted that terrible would be the karmic consequences suffered by a hypocrite. In the article, “Egyptian Magic,” H.P.B. writes that the hypocrite will be reborn at some future time as a good, sincere, well-meaning person, but his punishment for being a hypocrite and cheating people would be that “notwithstanding his real, good, intrinsic qualities, he will, perhaps during a long life, be unjustly and falsely charged with and suspected of greed and hypocrisy and of secret exactions, all of which will make him suffer more than he can bear.”

Hypocrisy could arise from ignorance. A person who is not aware of the real meaning of detachment may construe detachment to mean indifference, or absence of every feeling. Thus, observes Mr. Judge, when a student of Theosophy says that he could see his children, wife or parents die and not feel anything, we must infer that there is a hypocritical pretension or very great ignorance, *or*, we have before us a monster who is incapable of any feeling. The fact is that progress in spiritual life is accompanied by greater sensitivity. A spiritual person feels, both pleasure and pain, more keenly than

an ordinary person, but does not allow them to shake him or influence his decisions in any way. This is accomplished by assuming the position of an observer. Then, while one aspect of our consciousness may be involved in painful or pleasurable experience, the other aspect becomes a witness. It is then that we are able to learn from both pain and pleasure.

The one who pretends to have reached perfection and detachment from human affairs is not aware that it is not possible to attain perfection in a single life. It takes several life-times. This is a gradual process, because not only does it involve overcoming the individual vices, weaknesses and peculiarities, but also those pertaining to one's family, nation and the race as a whole. To attain perfection, there must be change brought about in the material and the immaterial man.

Man is a mixture of good and bad, of the godlike and demoniacal natures. In an ordinary person, the good and bad tendencies exist as complex collective forces, but when one decides to achieve some spiritual goal, and resolves to allow his higher nature to govern him, these tendencies separate out into two opposing forces of good and bad tendencies—represented in the *Gita* as *Kaurava* and *Pandava* armies. In moving from the familiar, personal and often base nature, to the unfamiliar and spiritual nature, a disciple is not only called upon to face all latent evil propensities of his own nature, but also the evil tendencies accumulated by the community and nation to which he belongs. The mass of evil that the disciple has to face and conquer before he can step across the threshold of the Higher Life, comprises: (1) The evil propensities common to himself and to his family; (2) those common to himself and his nation; (3) those common to himself and mankind in general, known as weaknesses of human nature. The charge of pretension and ignorance is graver still in the students of Theosophy who know that even in an advanced disciple there remains traces of defects due to family, tribal or national inheritance, writes Mr. Judge.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT MARKHEIM

“MARKHEIM” is a short story by Robert Louis Stevenson, first published in a magazine in 1884. Markheim is the main character of the story who is faced with making a decision between good and evil. He has to decide, whether he wants to continue walking the path of evil or take the path of good. The story opens in an antique store, where Markheim has come, even though the store is officially closed, to buy a Christmas present for a woman he will soon marry. The dealer points out that usually Markheim came to the shop to sell a rare item, claiming it to be from a late uncle's collection he has inherited, and thus hints his suspicions that more likely Markheim stole these items. Though somewhat incredulous, the dealer suggests that he should buy a mirror as a gift, but Markheim is frightened when he looks at his own reflection, saying that no man wants to see what a mirror shows him. When the dealer insists that he must buy or leave, Markheim consents to review more goods. However, when the dealer turns his back to show another item, Markheim pulls out a knife and stabs him to death.

Except for candle light, the shop is dark, and Markheim finds himself surrounded by mirrors and ominously ticking clocks. His motive for murder is robbery. He searches the dealer's body for keys and then goes to the rooms upstairs, where the dealer lived, to look for money, which he intends to use to start a business. As he searches for the right key to open the safe, he hears footsteps on the stairs, and then the door opens. “What to expect he knew not, whether the dead man walking or the official ministers of human justice or some chance witness blindly stumbling in to consign him to the gallows.” A man enters and asks, “Did you call me?”

The author presents him ambiguously. Though he never identifies himself, the stranger is clearly supernatural; he says that he has watched Markheim his whole life. “What are you?” cried Markheim, “the devil?” “What I may be” returned the other, “cannot affect the service I propose to render you.” That service is to let Markheim

know the right key to open the safe, and warn him that the servant-maid of the dealer, who had gone out to meet a friend, is returning to the store early. He also knows that Markheim's life, consisting of gambling and petty theft, has been largely unsuccessful. Markheim insists that, although he has committed evil deeds, he was driven to do so out of desperation and that he remains essentially good. The stranger acknowledges that some good people are driven to commit evil deeds by their circumstances but says that Markheim is not one of them.

Markheim tries to justify his life and conduct to the stranger, entering into a discussion of the nature of good and evil. When Markheim emphatically says, "I will do nothing to commit myself to evil," the stranger suggests death-bed repentance and says that though he does not exactly disbelieve in such repentance, he sees such things from a different side. A person commits all kinds of wrongs, even in the name of religion and also falls prey to temptations, and then at the dying moment tries to make peace with God by repenting for his sins. Markheim says that he was not that kind of a person: "Do you think I have no more generous aspirations than to sin, and sin, and, at the last, sneak into heaven?"

The stranger says that he professes interest in both sins and virtues, and declares that he lives for evil, manifested not in individual acts but inherently in evil character. He says, "The bad man is dear to me; not the bad act, whose fruits, if we could follow them far enough down the hurtling cataract of ages, might yet be found more blessed than those of the rarest virtues."

Markheim agrees that he has succumbed to temptations, and wandered off the path but that he will again come back to the right path. He says that he feels pity for the poor and is induced to help them; he loves every true and good thing from the bottom of his heart. It cannot be that his life would be guided only by his vices and that his virtues should be ineffective. But the stranger says that over the years he has observed that Markheim has only become steadily more wicked. Markheim admits that he has gone down in

all. The stranger then pronounces his verdict: "Then, content yourself with what you are, for you will never change; and the words of your part on this stage are irrevocably written down." It is as if this man was predestined to commit only evil. But Stevenson does not allow the readers to lose sight of the element of free will in a human being. Hence, though the stranger urges him to murder the maid-servant when she rings the door-bell, Markheim retorts: "Though I be, as you say truly, at the beck of every small temptation, I can yet, by one decisive gesture, place myself beyond the reach of all. My love of good is damned to barrenness; it may, and let it be! But I have still my hatred of evil; and from that, to your galling disappointment, you shall see that I can draw both energy and courage."

Despite having lived the life of evil, Markheim has not given up on being a good person and therefore, when the door-bell rings and he opens the door to find the maid-servant, instead of murdering her and running away with the money as was suggested by the "stranger," he confesses his crime to her and tells her to call the police. After he makes this decision, the features of the stranger "began to undergo a wonderful and lovely change; they brightened and softened with a tender triumph," as he disappears.

The story graphically illustrates that good and evil are relative terms and that even a man of most evil ways can hope to become righteous through right choices, as a water-pot is filled by the constant falling of drops of water. We need to dig deep and go to the base of apparent good and evil actions. Mr. Judge points out in *Letters That Have Helped Me* that what seems evil and "painful" may be necessary for the soul's progress. Murder is evil, we may say, but if the person is severely punished for the same, or in the next life the soul is incarnated into adverse and miserable circumstances, and as a result, this person is chastened and softened. Then was the deed wholly evil? Not really. This also shows that the path of spiritual progress often passes through darkness and evil. Mr. Judge explains that only a person of great moral strength can

walk the path without wavering. For many of us spiritual progress involves sinking very low and then rising. Thus, “Do you not know that it takes a nature with some strength in it to sink very low, and that the mere fact of having the power to sink low may mean that the same person may in time rise to a proportionately greater height?” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 94)

This possibility is beautifully conveyed in the article, “Reflections,” by Mr. Judge. “More saving grace may be found in the society of thieves than in that of fine persons who never reverberate to a true thought. In the first there is rebound; the latter is the negation of life....Expiation is the kernel of sin. ‘Evil’ containing its own punishment continually defeats itself, and sows the seed of ‘good’ in its own regeneration” (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 18). “Fine persons” are those who may follow conventional morality, and keep up the appearance by fine talk, good manners, even show of honesty, but they have never appreciated or tried to live the virtuous life, in true sense. Saving grace is a redeeming quality or characteristic. So, a person may be a thief but may respond to the virtue of kindness, generosity or courage, which could act as a footstool and help him take a higher step. Also, expiation or atonement is the kernel of sin. An evil act is the shell, the outer covering, by which we normally judge a person. But there is potential good hidden within evil, because the heart or centre of evil is expiation. True repentance can bring about an inner transformation in the sinner. So, the author puts these significant words in the mouth of the stranger: “Bad act, whose fruits, if we could follow them far enough down the hurtling cataract of ages, might yet be found more blessed than those of the rarest virtues.”

The story explores three most important themes, that of victory of good over evil, made possible by “free will” in man, which comes into operation as a result of genuine repentance, which is contrasted in the story with death-bed repentance. The latter is taken to mean sudden repentance, linked to the idea of vicarious atonement. Here there is belief that it is possible, by profound regret and an act of

confession, to set aside the working of the law of karma. In this belief we seem to be saying that it does not matter if one has sinned, since that person can cancel the consequences of past sins by invoking the compassion of the divine beings or by asking the divine within for forgiveness. True repentance, however, consists in resolving to mend the ways and acting in accordance with such resolve. If one has erred by lying, stealing or backbiting, one has to set into motion good causes by resolving and learning to abstain from repeating the same wrongs, and compensating the aggrieved by remedial action. True repentance must lead to inner transformation. We are then sowing new causes that can counteract or mitigate the bad effects generated by previous causes. What we experience is the resultant or sum total of the old, bad karma and new, good karma. In choosing to turn the corner, Markheim shows true repentance.

As for the “stranger,” commentators usually refer to it as the devil, but that would be a very simplistic interpretation, because Stevenson presents him ambiguously. The visitor or the stranger in the story is described as having outlines that seem to change, at times looking like Markheim himself, and at other times, “like a lump of living terror.” He was convinced that “this thing was not of the earth and not of God.” Interestingly, this “stranger” says that he has watched Markheim his whole life, knows him “to the soul,” and he also knows about his future. We might say that this supernatural “stranger” could well be Markheim’s alter ego, his other self, assuming the role of devil to test him by advising him to run away with the money, but in the end is pleased to see him choose the right course. “We are all human, and thus weak and sinful,” says Mr. Judge. But we need not remain so. When we sin, we temporarily move away from our divine nature. But whenever we are ready to remedy the wrong, and re-establish the broken connection, our divine nature is delighted. Markheim is truly the “lost sheep” of the Bible, for whom, Jesus says, “There is more joy in heaven over one repentant sinner than over the 99 just men who need no repentance.”

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

In this life, there is only one thing of value, to live out your life in truth and justice, tolerant of those who are neither true nor just. —MARCUS AURELIUS

IN a garden of sunflowers every sunflower turns towards the sun, so does our soul tend towards the transcendental. This is a natural quest, since our real self is eternal, and aspires to merge back to its Parent Source. The longing of the “intoxicated” Sufi for the love of the Beloved, and the devotion of Mirabai towards Krishna are all symbolic of this perennial quest for the boundless within the confines of the human heart.

But what can show us the way to the other-worldly Beauty we are in search of? Would the science of the day quench the thirst, or the rituals of the religions satisfy the soul? “Between these two conflicting Titans—Science and Theology—is a bewildered public, fast losing all belief in man’s personal immortality, in a deity of any kind, and rapidly descending to the level of a mere animal existence.” (*Isis*, p. x)

Education, whose province it is to prepare the soul by directing it to the *light within oneself*, fails in its paramount duty. It caters to the animal within us, but fails to humanize us and put us on the path of nobility. Unable to satisfy the soul’s need, education leaves an empty void and encourages animal gratification.

The purpose of true education is “to cultivate and develop the mind in the right direction; to teach the disinherited and hapless people to carry with fortitude the burden of life (allotted them by Karma); to strengthen their will; to inculcate in them the love of one’s neighbour and the feeling of mutual interdependence and brotherhood; and thus to train and form the character for practical life.” Unfortunately, the modern education system is geared towards passing of examinations and acquirement of lucrative jobs, “a system not to develop right emulation, but to generate and breed jealousy, envy, hatred almost, in young people for one another, and thus train

them for a life of ferocious selfishness and struggle for honours and emoluments instead of kindly feeling.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, Indian ed., p. 263)

A surge of interest in spiritual topics is characteristic of the age, and a side effect of the neglect of those parts of human nature which are important for soul evolution. We read in the article, “The Cycle Moveth,” that those who gazed into the mental and moral realm of humanity noted that the “ship of Materialism” was leading her passengers towards the “Maelstrom of annihilation.” Fortunately, there was a resistance on this path to perdition, so that puffs of wind in the rigging of the proud ship called Materialism, turned into a breeze, and finally blew into a gale! “It was the inner voice of the masses, their spiritual intuition—that traditional enemy of cold intellectual reasoning, the legitimate progenitor of Materialism—that had awakened from its long cataleptic sleep” (*H.P.B. Series No. 6*, p. 4). It is this spiritual intuition, within the breast of each one, which demands answers to questions which the sciences and religions are unable to respond to.

How shall we understand spirituality? One approach is to understand what “Spirit” is, and then decide that course of conduct as spirituality which is in accord with the nature of Spirit. Another approach is to take the example of a spiritual person, and emulate him or her. Lord Krishna employs both these approaches in his discourses in the *Gita*.

Spirit is the other pole of Matter, and spirituality is the opposite of materialism. As to materialism, we all know what it is, because we are all materialists, to a certain extent. We need to daily examine our motives dispassionately before we deny this. Thyagaraja, the saint-poet of South India, says in one of his *kirtanas* (hymns) that we—the so-called devotees of Rama—do not know the path of Devotion. We are ostensible and outwardly pious, wearing on our body the marks of a holy person, while in our mind and heart we are perpetually anxious to increase our material wealth! The other approach is to enquire into the character of a spiritual person and

emulate it. We can safely name three such qualities, expressed as a *Triad of A's*: Acceptance, Action and Altruism.

The root cause of our suffering—as the Stoics recognize—is not what happens to us, but how we react to it. All our anxieties arise from not wanting to accept what happens to us. Wise is one who sees the hand of *Justice* in every event of life, and unto such a person alone is reserved the Kingly Knowledge and Kingly Mystery, as Lord Krishna promises in the Ninth chapter of the *Gita*. Arjuna's eligibility for such knowledge was his ability to not complain about life. Unfortunately, this idea of acceptance goes against the very spirit of our civilization and produces an immediate allergic reaction in the go-getters of this world!

It is wisdom to accept what happens in our life as well-deserved, take responsibility, and proactively make amends where necessary, since nothing happens to us unless we have sown the cause for it in this life or the past ones. It is said that “we must cultivate complete resignation to the Law, the expression and operation of which is seen in the circumstances of life and the ebb and flow of our inner being.... All the passing shows of life, whether fraught with disaster or full of fame and glory, are teachers; he who neglects them, neglects opportunities which seldom the gods repeat. And the only way to learn from them is through the heart's resignation; for when we become in heart completely poor, we at once are the treasurers and disbursers of enormous riches.” (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 46)

Marcus Aurelius, the stoic King-philosopher, notes that each one of us is a part of the one intelligent whole. The laws which govern this Whole are geared towards harmony, and thus, every event in our life is the outcome of this harmonious adjustment. We must be content with our life experiences, since “it has happened to you, was prescribed for you, and is related to you, a thread of destiny spun for you from the first by the most ancient causes.” Also, “what comes to each individual is a determining part of the welfare, the perfection, and indeed the very coherence of that which governs

the Whole.” (*Meditations*, 5.8). We cause damage to this delicate fabric of life when we “fret at our lot.”

Does this acceptance make us a passive onlooker, a weak person with a meek mind? On the contrary, the mystic “finds his daily life among the roughest and hardest of the labours and trials of the world perhaps, but goes his way with smiling face and joyful heart, nor grows too sensitive for association with this fellows, nor so extremely spiritual as to forget that some other body is perhaps hungering for food” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 36*, p. 2). This takes us to the next “A” in the triad: *Action*.

The journey of our mortal frame, *i.e.*, *Sharira yatra*, can be accomplished by (our) action alone, and the right action performed in the right manner—*Duty*—is the Royal Talisman for the aspirant. While everything in nature progresses naturally, by the inherent impulse in the spirit for self-expression, “man alone has the power to retard his ‘journey to the heart of the Sun,’ by refusing to perform his properly appointed and plainly evident *dharma*.” When Shri Krishna found the people of his village in Vrindavana preparing to worship the gods, he chastised them and showed them the right path: Do your duty by performing all your duties of life. This is the secret to true progress as well as happiness.

Here we must remember that *thought* is action, and that thought is more potent than the physical act. For instance, we may not physically harm a person, but our *intention* to harm causes immense damage, and the laws of life hold us accountable for the disturbance, though human law is ignorant of it. In the ultimate analysis, it is the intention underlying the action which is of more consequence than the act itself. For example, Shri Krishna warns us that the “gift which is given with the expectation of a return from the beneficiary or with a view to spiritual benefit flowing therefrom or with reluctance, is of the *rajas* quality, bad and partaketh of untruth” (*Gita*, XVII). Let us then examine our hearts and search for our true motive, and not deceive oneself with ostensible motives. True renunciation, then, would be renunciation of desire for rewards in one's action, and not renunciation of action itself!

But what is one's duty? What ought one to do, and what to avoid? It is a sad commentary on our education system that makes us learn facts about the world, but neglects addressing the questions on the meaning and purpose of existence. Marcus Aurelius describes the condition, thus: "His time is a mere instant, his existence a flux, his perception fogged, his whole bodily composition rotting, his mind a whirligig, his fortune unpredictable, his fame unclear. To put it shortly: all things of the body stream away like a river, all things of the mind are dreams and delusions; life is warfare, and a visit in a strange land; the only lasting fame is oblivion" (*Meditations*, 2.17). Further he adds, "what then can escort us on our way? One thing, and one thing only: Philosophy." Many of us who revere Theosophy do so because it gives us a comprehensive, verifiable map and compass to navigate the vast ocean of existence.

The right attitude to be assumed is expressed thus: "Do all those acts, physical, mental, moral, for the reason that they must be done, instantly resigning all interest in them, offering them upon the altar. What altar? Why, the great spiritual altar, which is, if one desires it, in the heart" (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 1). These two practices, namely, Acceptance and Action, are but two sides of the same coin, *i.e.*, Effect and Cause. Our actions are causes which weave our destiny. Wise is he who accepts his destiny, all the while producing causes for a better tomorrow. But, why act, and why accept the consequences of action? What is the purpose for which we are here? For this we understand the third "A"—*Altruism*.

The root cause of suffering is that we are only concerned about ourselves, while the purpose of life is welfare of all, since all are but aspects of One Self. Many of the so-called "spiritual pursuits" today are founded on selfishness, self-benefit and self-aggrandizement, while true spirituality is losing the sense of separate self, and making oneself a fit instrument for the welfare of others. Without a broader understanding of life, and a higher purpose, based on a realization of the All-Self, even "spiritual pursuits" become positively harmful.

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS H. P. BLAVATSKY

Who *was* H.P.B.?—"known otherwise to us," said a Master. What kind of a divine incarnation was hers? Some spoke of her as even less than a chela. Like the housemaids in Kipling's poem, "They talk a lot of loving, but what do they understand?" Her recorded Message radiates its knowledge to our lower mind, can radiate it to our Higher Mind, can further make our Buddhi active, and so forth. The more I learn the greater is my amazement at what she knew. And think who or what keeps us going when we know our foibles and frailties, our errors of omission and commission! When assailed one's whole temptation is to give up. What keeps us going? I, for one, am convinced it is her compassion. H.P.B.'s knowledge, its memory, its depth and her magnanimity and love protect and guide in the darkest hour. Consider this viewpoint calmly and dispassionately. But for her record of the Teachings and the Masters, I would feel lonely.

To understand the real H.P.B. is difficult and it does take time. Her *avatara*, appearance or personality was and is apt to mislead. The Masters Themselves wrote of her and Her and it requires some *viveka* [discrimination] to evaluate Their words and accord them the right place. What was hidden behind the "peculiar mannerisms" of her personality? She had a purpose every time—to help, to instruct, to guide, to protect; always an unselfish purpose founded upon Compassion Absolute (see the clauses in *The Voice of the Silence* on pp. 75-76). The testing of people's fidelity was rare. She wanted them to be faithful to the Teachings and to the Real Pitris and Masters. My own view is that as an Occultist she was deliberate and purposeful every hour and in every event. She was *Dharma-pravin*, knew not only what to say but also how to act. Her deeds were small and great *yagnas*, sacrifices. Holiness was in her heart. To my way of thinking she made no mistakes. The safe way to proceed is from the Teachings to the Teacher. No doubt H.P.B. baffles, but every time calm consideration reveals her as a Being of

Light and Sacrifice, the Justice which is Mercy and Mercy ever just.

She did not belong to our *Kali Yuga* or even to our Fifth-Race evolution, though she was affected by both. An incarnation like hers cannot be evaluated by our rules, our cycles, etc. Herein is a clue to understand her. Her motives and methods were hers, deliberate in wisdom and in compassion.

H.P.B. is our anchor when we are in harbour, our compass when we are travelling abroad, to high heavens or to dark hell. We have to find our *Dharma* as an inner force to shape our outer Karma. You are wise in determining that every day and in whatever way you can you will strengthen your perception about H.P.B. The more you study the more you will find what a Personage she is.

Devotion to H.P.B., if it is of the right type, and so enduring and lasting, must be rooted in her recorded message. It is as we assimilate her writings that we see the breadth and depth of her mind and the magic power of her heart.

Among us who look upon H.P.B. as our Guru there ought to be a bond of love and devotion. It seems to me that among our students, if they in their own consciousness *truly* regard H.P.B. as Teacher, there ought to be the sign or omen of mutual affection and trust. Where this is absent, real attachment to H.P.B. remains to be born.

About devotion to H.P.B.: you are bound to develop this virtue as you study and serve. She did not love Humanity because she taught the race; she loved all mankind and therefore she came to teach, for ignorance is the great foe. You will have slowly to deepen as well as widen your sphere of service. That also will come.

As to an intermediary on the Way to Chelaship, even Lay Chelaship, for this cycle it is H.P.B. and remains so. She is akin to our Higher Manas joined to Atma-Buddhi. She is *alive* in her instructions. Then, she has said that Judge is the *Antahkarana*, the Bridge, and the implication is that our own *Antahkarana* is the principle of right personal action.

Chelaship in this cycle, especially the beginning of such a life, *is*

different, thanks to the sacrifices of H.P.B. She has done a tremendous beneficence to all devotees and aspirants by opening a regular door to the Masters. The knock at the door becomes necessary.

That H.P.B. is the Guru is not a truth to be spoken from the platform as is so often done. What I mean is that so often students speak without any real feeling or true understanding. Reread Judge's article "Blavatskianism In and Out of Season." That H.P.B. was an Adept-Soul who can doubt if he is a student of the *Secret Doctrine*? But how many of those who repeat "our Guru H.P.B." from the platform are real, intelligent devotees?

As to the biographies of H.P.B., there are several attacks written by or under the inspiration of the Roman Catholic Church. There is not a biography of hers which is, from my point of view, very reliable; even those which are favourable and are written by her friends naturally are partial and do not do justice to her colossal mind and her lion heart. These will have to be read for what they are worth, for it is one thing to know about the events and incidents in the life of a person and altogether another thing to understand their real significance and interpret them accurately. I am saying this because my approach to H. P. Blavatsky has been through her works. Her *Secret Doctrine* has been a constant companion for over half a century; and knowing her mind, not only versatile but profound, I have come to the conclusion that her personality was but a mask and that a really powerful intelligence worked within it.

Of course all students want to know about the real H.P.B., but there is hardly anything that is printed which would give you an absolutely clear picture. You can read several books, but between the facts and the interpretation there is a hiatus, and we shall have to bridge that gulf. It seems to me that the very best we at the present hour have to do is to study her writings, because invariably the law of the spiritual life is: From the teachings to the teacher. It is only by an elevated mind that we can understand the great mind of H.P.B. So the study of the *Secret Doctrine* and the promulgation of its

doctrines is very necessary for the purpose of reading the books on H.P.B. to determine what is what.

In the case of the martyrdom of a great soul like Jesus or Gandhiji, however, or the sorrows and persecutions visited upon our H.P.B., another aspect of Karma has to be taken into account: the Karma of the group, nation or race which they are trying to help and for which they become, as it were, a focus, drawing upon themselves the opposition of all reactionary forces. Is there a Prophet anywhere who does not have the priests of all creeds in league against him? It was Jewish orthodoxy that martyred Jesus as aggressive Hindu orthodoxy martyred Gandhiji. Gandhiji's martyrdom, like crucifixion of Jesus, was his own deliberate action. Both clearly foresaw what was ahead; both acted in the knowledge of the forces they were challenging and both were therefore willing martyrs. Suffering may be voluntarily undergone, not only for self-purification and self-development, but also for the sake of others—in case of H.P.B. and Gandhiji, for the sake of the world.

WHAT after all is right and what is wrong? That thought or action which takes you towards God is right, and that thought or action which takes you away from God is wrong. You can find out for yourself whether you are progressing towards God; all thoughts cease and all duality is transcended. Your life then flows spontaneously for the good of all. You live and act in the divine consciousness. The so-called sin has no significance for the saint who has realised God. He becomes totally pure and holy. His entire life is an offering at the feet of God.

—SWAMI RAMDAS

ARYANS—WHO ARE THEY?

ACCORDING to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, originally, the term Aryan referred to people “who were said to speak an archaic *Indo-European language*, and who were thought to have settled in prehistoric times in ancient Iran and the northern Indian subcontinent.” Indo-European languages refer to “family of languages spoken in most of Europe and areas of European settlement and in much of Southwest and South Asia.” The theory of “Aryan Race” has been explained by the hypothesis that probably light-skinned Aryans invaded and conquered ancient India from the north and shaped the course of their culture. However, since the late twentieth century, many scholars have rejected the Aryan invasion hypothesis. The term Aryan is used strictly in the linguistic sense, recognizing “the influence that the language of the ancient northern migrants had on the development of the Indo-European languages of South Asia.”

This concept has been dealt with in detail in an article, “Who are the Aryans?” by John Fiske, in *The Atlantic* magazine (February 1881). As linguistic term, “Aryans” refers to people who spoke Aryan or Indo-European languages. Referring to the *Vendidad*, one of the sacred books of the Persians, he writes that “when the *Vendidad* was composed the worshippers of Ahura Mazda must have believed that their ancestors came from somewhere beyond the Oxus, and travelled in the direction of Hindustan, until something occurred which turned them westward again.” On surveying the languages and legends of this whole region, it becomes clear that the dominant race in ancient Persia and in ancient India was one and the same. In Vedic hymns the dominant people of India called themselves Aryans, contrasted with the inferior races of India, known as *Dasyus*, which they had subdued. Moreover, “Aryan is properly applicable, not merely over an Indo-Persian, but over an Indo-European area, comprehending the most dominant races known to history—the Greeks and Romans, Slavs and Teutons, with the highly

composite English.” From the comparative study of languages, it was clear that Sanskrit was akin to Greek and Latin, both in grammar and vocabulary. “In 1808, Friedrich Schlegel maintained that the languages of India, Persia, Greece, Italy, and Germany were connected by common descent from an extinct language...and for the whole family he proposed the name Indo-Germanic,” which was later called Indo-European. Still later, under the influence of Max Muller’s writings, the designation “Aryan” was used for them. Thus, Aryan is the name of the race which advanced northward and acquired supremacy over the countries lying between Euphrates and the mouth of Ganges. As to their origin, we read: “Whence these people originally came it would be idle to inquire, but we may fairly conclude that they first attained to something like world-historic importance in the high-lands of Central Asia, somewhere about the sources of the Oxus and the Jaxartes.”

In the 1850s there emerged the notion of white racial superiority, and some used the term “Aryan” to mean “white race,” of which the Nordic and Germanic peoples were considered the purest members. Though this notion was rejected by anthropologists by the middle of the twentieth century, Hitler and the Nazis used it as a basis for extermination of Jews and other “non-Aryans.” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

The word Aryan is the name of the Hindu and Iranian people. But at later times in India, in a cultural sense, the word designated three higher castes. The word is also used to designate a loyal or faithful person, a highly esteemed person. Among the Buddhists, “Arya” is one who has mastered the four noble truths, and who follows *Ahimsa* or non-violence, at the level of thought, word and deed. In short, the term “Aryan” implies Spiritual Nobility. In its highest sense, Arya means “the Holy” and originally it was the title of the Rishis. In this sense, Nazis in Germany, and all those who have indulged in burning of books, persecuting people of other religion and insulting thinkers and teachers, certainly cannot claim to be Aryans. On the other hand, Akbar, the Muslim; Asoka, the

Buddhist; Abraham Lincoln the American, may well be regarded as Aryans.

The Zend-Avesta of Zoroastrians, refers to “the Aryan paradise” and “the Aryan country,” namely, *Airyana Vaego*, the primeval land of bliss, where Ahura Mazda delivered his laws to Zoroaster. H.P.B. says that it refers to *Sveta-Dwipa* or “Mount Meru” of Puranic literature, also called the land of Gods, *swarga* or heaven. The occult teachings place it in the very centre of the North Pole. One of the reasons why North Pole is called the abode of the gods is that it was the site of the first continent on our earth, after solidification of the globe. It is the cradle of the first man and the dwelling of the last *divine mortal*, chosen as *Sishta* for the future seed of humanity. It appears that this continent, which is at the North Pole, will last till the evolution on the earth chain of globes is completed, and will be the dwelling of the *divine mortals*, the Buddhas and Christs, of the seventh Round and the Seventh Race. (*S.D.*, II, 6)

In the article, “*Historical Difficulty*”—*Why?*, we read: “The ‘Adepts’ deny most emphatically to Western science any knowledge whatever of the growth and development of the Indo-Aryan race which, ‘at the very dawn of history,’ they have espied in its ‘patriarchal simplicity’ on the banks of the Oxus” (*Five Years of Theosophy*, p. 313). As contrasted with purely speculative hypotheses of modern Science, based on the observations covering a few centuries, which they call their “history,” the adept possesses knowledge based on the ancient esoteric records of the East, which covers pre-historic periods.

In Theosophical terminology the Aryan Race refers to very ancient people whose first appearance is said to be a million years ago. Occult philosophy teaches that we are in the Fifth Root-Race, which is generally called Aryan. But this race was largely mixed up with races to which ethnology gives other names.

To understand fifth race, we need to understand the concept of the race and something about earlier races. Every Root Race consists of seven sub-races. A sub-race is made up of family races, and a

family race is made up of ethnological races. At present, we are in the Fifth Root-Race and fifth sub-race. Our present Fifth Root-Race, was preceded by four other Root races.

The First Race is described as the shadows of the shadows of the Lords, *i.e.*, “*Self-born*,” being the (astral) shadows of their Progenitors. The Lunar Pitris created men out of their own divine essence, *i.e.*, they became the First Race. It is called *chhaya*-birth, or primeval mode of sexless creation, where the First Race *oozed out* of the bodies of the Pitris. The Second Race is said to be “sweat-born.” It “was the product by budding and expansion; the a-sexual (form) from the sexless shadow.” The Second Race gives birth to the Third, which was at first a-sexual. From being a-sexual, humanity became hermaphrodite or bisexual, like snails and earthworms. This is followed by separation of sexes into male and female. The first solid human race appeared only after the middle of the Third Race. It is interesting to note that the Third and Fourth Race humanity were giants. The Third Race was called Lemurian Race while the Fourth Race people were called Atlanteans. Having completed our evolution in four Root Races, the humanity of our earth is now in the Fifth Root-Race or Aryan Race. A new Root-Race does not begin *after* the completion of the preceding race, but there is “enormous overlapping of one race over the race which succeeds it, though in character and external type the elder loses its characteristics, and assumes the new features of the younger race,” explains H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 444). Thus, for instance, Esoteric philosophy shows that the whole of the Fourth or Atlantean Continent did not perish at once. “This event, the destruction of the famous island of Ruta and the smaller one Daitya, which occurred 850,000 years ago in the later Pliocene times, must not be confounded with the submersion of the main continent Atlantis during the Miocene period” (*S.D.*, II, 314). The main Atlantean Continent perished several million years ago. Poseidonis, the last remnant of the great Atlantean Continent, which is the “Atlantis” of Plato, and known as *Sanchadwipa* in the Puranas, perished around 11,000 years ago

(*S.D.*, II, 407). It is the inhabitants of the “Atlantis” of Plato, who took their abode on what is now Ireland. We are also told that our Fifth Root-Race has already been in existence about one million years. Thus, “we find the last of the Atlanteans still mixed up with the Aryan element, 11,000 years ago,” showing the overlapping of the Atlantean Race with the Aryan Race. Further we are told that since we are in the fifth sub-race of the Fifth Root-Race, which has been in existence now for 1,000,000 years, “it must be inferred that each of the four preceding Sub-Races has lived approximately 210,000 years, each Family-Race has an average existence of about 30,000 years.” (*S.D.*, II, 435)

According to the story in the “Mahabharata,” while Vaivaswata Manu was engaged in devotion on the riverbank, a fish appears and pleads to be saved from a bigger fish. He saves and places it in a jar, where growing larger and larger, he tells him of the forthcoming deluge. H.P.B. points out that it is the well-known “Matsya Avatar,” the first *Avatar* of Vishnu and many other things besides. Vishnu orders a ship to be built, in which Manu is said to be saved along with the seven *Rishis*. The seven *Rishis* stand for *seven Races*, the seven principles and various other things. In one sense, it refers to the Atlantean flood, and Vaivaswata, the great sage on Earth, who saved our Fifth Root-Race from being destroyed along with the remnants of the Fourth or Atlantean Race (*S.D.*, I, 139-40). Thus, Vaivaswata Manu is one of the seven *minor* Manus, who preside over the seven Root-Races on globe D, or our earth. Manu Vaivaswata is the progenitor of our Fifth race. Manu is not a man, but collective humanity, writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 309 and fn.). Thus, “The Aryan races, for instance, now varying from dark brown, almost black, red-brown-yellow, down to the whitest creamy colour, are yet all of one and the same stock—the Fifth Root-Race—and spring from one single progenitor, called in Hindu *exotericism* by the generic name of Vaivaswata Manu.” (*S.D.*, II, 249-50)

(*To be continued*)

APHORISMS ON KARMA—SOME REFLECTIONS

XV

APHORISM 22: “*Karma may be of three sorts: (a) Presently operative in this life through the appropriate instruments; (b) that which is being made or stored up to be exhausted in the future; (c) Karma held over from past life or lives and not operating yet because inhibited by inappropriateness of the instrument in use by the Ego, or by the force of Karma now operating.*”

The first part of the aphorism bespeaks of destiny ordained by none other than the one subject to it in the previous or some other prior life on earth. The second part of it is indicative of the fact that there is indeed innate in everyone a certain free-will to so think and act in the present—even while experiencing the effects of past Karma—as to alter the course of the destiny towards happier circumstances and a higher end for oneself in the future. The third part of the aphorism implies that in each one of the many lives we come to live on earth we, the embodied souls, are able to exhaust through the body we acquire only a small portion of the vast store of unexpended Karma we have accumulated in countless reincarnations in the past for aeons. Hence all the Karma of the past cannot be exhausted in a single life. Effects produced by the actions performed in each life on earth added to balance of the unexpended Karma brought over from the past, form a vast store of accumulated Karma, called *Sanchita Karma*. This entails an endless series of rebirths unless the Ego acquires spiritual knowledge and destroys *ignorance* which is the principal cause of involuntary rebirths. The cause of this *ignorance* and the means of its destruction leading to freedom of Soul will be considered presently.

Thought underlies every act. In other words, thought leads to action; nay, thought itself is action. Every thought is associated with desire or feeling. When a desire-thought arises in mind the act is already done, and it leaves an indelible impression in the mind. Moreover, the thought entities we constantly generate and expel,

influence for good or ill the collective Karma of the race, and we are bound to experience the effects of it also. Our bodily organs are full of impressions of desire-thoughts. It is thus that the mental tendencies and bodily tastes and habits are induced and cultivated by us. Body by itself, composed of organs—each of which is an entity and having an intelligence of its own kind, composed in its turn by smaller lives in the same manner—is an irresponsible factor. That is because since they belong to sub-human kingdom, they have no mind or moral sense and cannot initiate action by themselves with any intention except such as are assigned to them to perform several distinct roles by instinct. Thought begets act; repetition of the act due to the law of return of impressions in our corporeal frame makes for a habit; habits nurtured by indulgence go to make character. The sum of predominant character that we thus acquire in one life follows the Ego after the death of the body, and go to make the character and environment of a new tabernacle for the Ego in the next or some future birth.

As our actions are not done in isolation but always in relation to, and in the company of, our fellowmen, we reap the fruit of our Karma in every life, always in relation to companion souls, in exact measure with which we, individually and collectively, meted out to each other and to the world at large, for weal or woe. Therefore, every event in our life, every experience that comes to us, and every thought, intent and desire that arise impelling us to act, are strongly influenced not only by our past individual Karma but also by the collective Karma of the race. Every individual shares in the defects which are common to human nature. There is thus a certain unvarying destiny in our individual life as well as in the collective life of humankind within which fold we struggle. This is Karma we experience in every life in and through the instrument we thus acquire. This is called *Prarabdha Karma*.

Thus, *Prarabdha Karma* is the portion or aspect of Karma with which one is born, and for whose precipitation the field is ready. It is operating in the present life and body, bringing about all the

circumstances and changes. Destiny or Fate is the Karma that has ripened, so that its expression cannot be averted or postponed. For instance, we cannot change the family, into which we are born. The Karma that is irreversible may be called fate or destiny. Mr. Judge defines Destiny thus:

Destiny is the English word applied to a Karma so strong and overpowering that its action cannot be counteracted by other Karma; but in the sense that all happenings are under Karma, all things are destined as they occur.

The circumstances of life and personal surroundings with which we are environed—however distasteful it may seem to us at times—are in perfect accord with unerring justice of Karma. It is due to ignorance that we find fault with circumstances of life which seem unfavourable, and blame others who seem to us to be the cause of it. The seemingly external environment is not real; it is the reflex of nature and qualities of the Karmic causes we had generated in the past lives, which remain as indelible impressions on ground of our minds, called mental deposits, which we have carried forward from the past to the present life. It is past Karma operating through the instrument we have acquired. If we understood the subtle working of this Karmic law we would not be making the mistake of quarrelling with distasteful circumstances or adversities but diligently seek inwardly for the moral causes we produced in ignorance, and learn to mitigate them with right attitude and initiate such actions which are productive of good. The wise man, therefore, is uncomplaining—neither rejoicing when all seems going well with him nor dejected when meeting with adversities. He looks inward, trying to understand the complexity of the principles of his personal self, which are produced by, and constitute the field of operation of, his past Karma. Similarly, with the collective Karma of families, communities and nations. The Law is unvarying and immutable. Are we thus helpless creatures of a destiny to which we must passively submit? Not necessarily, teaches Theosophy, unless one assumes such a negative attitude and remains passive.

H.P.B. says in *The Key to Theosophy* that “though we do not know what Karma is *per se*, and in its essence, we *do* know...its mode of action with accuracy” (p. 199, Indian ed.). Study and application of the accurate knowledge of the working of the Karmic law show us that if Karmic law binds us down to consequences produced by our actions in endless cycles of rebirths, it is at the same time equally the means to escape from bondage and become liberated. This brings us to the second part of the aphorism, which says that what Karma we are making in the present bear fruit in the future, either in the same life or in future life or lives.

The important point we have to bear in mind is that though past Karma of ourselves individually and of the community and nation we belong to—collective Karma being the aggregate of the Karma of individuals—have a compelling influence on the way we think, will and act, the fruit of which we have to reap in the future, yet we all possess a degree of free-will and a faculty of discrimination to choose and act in ways different from the impulse which arises by the force of past Karma. This is well illustrated in the lives of people who act with courage, determination and conviction and prevail over adversities, and also in our own individual experiences when we begin to practically apply even the little of the knowledge we have acquired of the nature of the true Self and of the working of the Karmic law.

Firstly, we have to learn well the truism that Self is not the actor, nor is the real Self or Soul, subject to limitation of time, space and causality; but is eternal, universal, the Spirit in the body; it is “called *Maheswara*, the Great Lord, the spectator, the admonisher, the sustainer, the enjoyer, and also the *Paramatma*, the highest soul” (*Gita*, XIII). Self is One, not many. The *Agent*, the personal self, temporary reflection of the true Self in the body, is the actor, the maker of Karma and is the product of Karma. We have to continuously discriminate that we are not the actor but the Self, the Witness or the Perceiver, “vision itself pure and simple...and looks directly upon ideas.” We can, to some extent, prove to ourselves the

truth of this axiom by a little self-introspection and by a study of the three planes of human consciousness—waking, dream and deep sleep. Change cannot perceive change; only changeless can perceive change; Self is changeless, and “we” are that Self. The truth of it can be seen with the eye of reason and intuitive perception. “Realization comes from dwelling upon the thing to be realized,” is the *mantra* Mr. Judge repeats and inculcates in his students. Egotism arises from mistaken notion that the *agent* or *actor* is the Self. By that delusion we fall prey to the power of passion of liking and disliking, love and hate, pleasure and pain, and a host of duality of existence which bind us at every turn. When that notion is gradually got rid of by constant exercise of reason and contemplation while engaged in action, maintaining equanimity in gain and loss, in adversity and prosperity, with friends or enemies, and inwardly renouncing self-interest in the fruits of actions while performing every obligatory duty of life, offering them up as oblations in the fire of Devotion to the Supreme Self who is One, we gradually, by degrees, over many lives, break the fetters of bondage. Krishna says that even a little of this practice saves one from great danger. It is the right attitude and unselfish motive based on right knowledge which enable one to break the fetters which binds one to miseries of endless rebirths.

We cannot escape *Prarabdha Karma*. But we can, and ought to constantly try to, make no new Karma while suffering and enjoying whatever the great Law of unerring justice, Karma—which is the chief attribute of our True Self—has in store for us. “Teach to eschew all causes; the ripple of effect, as the great tidal wave, thou shalt let run its course,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. We cannot become perfect in this practice at once. It takes many lives of persevering devotion in action which brings us closer to the great goal of emancipation that we may be the better able to help all sentient beings to cross over to the other shore of the mighty sea of sorrow.

(To be continued)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

The Dead Sea Scrolls consist of about 1,000 ancient manuscripts. Which include various versions of books of the Hebrew Bible and various other religious, legal and philosophical documents. Most of these scrolls were found between 1947 and the 1960s, which were mainly found in eleven caves near Qumran, located in Judean desert. Molecular biologist Oded Rechavi of Tel Aviv University and his colleagues observe that since the scrolls made of sheepskin and cow skin retain DNA from those animals, analysis of that DNA could help to figure out which of the more than 25,000 scrolls came from the same animals, and therefore from the same documents. Thus, for instance, the researchers assumed that scroll fragments from closely related sheep were more likely to come from the same document than those from distantly related sheep or from cows.

This can help the researchers to piece together the scrolls’ history. Dead Sea Scrolls are estimated to have been written between the third century B.C. and the first century A.D., which is known as the late Second Temple period. The DNA evidence suggests that the ideas in the scrolls from the Qumran caves extend beyond Qumran community and are not restricted to a small Jewish sect that broke from mainstream Judaism, as previously surmised.

The investigators believe that the four Qumran fragments from the Hebrew Bible’s book of Jeremiah, probably came from two different versions of that book and that two sheepskin fragments likely belonged to one book, and two cow skin fragments belonged to another. According to Tel Aviv University Biblical scholar Noam Mizrahi, the cow skin scrolls must have been produced elsewhere, as cows could not have been raised in dry Judean desert. Moreover, it was noticed that the style of writing on the cow skin fragments differed from that on other pieces from the book of Jeremiah. Likewise, in a Qumran fragment of the biblical book of Isaiah, distinctive sheep DNA suggests that it might be from some site outside Qumran, writes Bruce Bower. (*Science News*, July 4, 2020)

The article, “The Dead Sea Scrolls,” (*The Theosophical Movement*, June 1956), points out that the historical period from 200 B.C. to 400 A.D. was brought under discussion by the findings of thousands of ancient manuscripts in caves on the shores of the Dead Sea. In his book, *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea*, published in 1955, Mr. Edmund Wilson, an able writer and critic, has carefully recorded the train of events between their discovery in 1947 and their recognition as priceless Biblical treasures, with his appraisal of the conflicting opinions of the experts. He says that these documents have threatened a variety of rooted assumptions. The article points out that these assumptions are those concerned with the origin of Christianity and the claims to uniqueness and superiority advanced by both Christianity and Judaism. These documents supply “a whole missing chapter for the history of the growth of religious ideas between Judaism and Christianity” which tends to revolutionize our approach to the beginnings of Christianity. Mr. Wilson explains that a library had been hidden in the caves on the shores of the Dead Sea, “a library which seems to have included almost all the books of the Bible, a number of apocryphal works and the literature of an early religious sect,” namely, the Essenes (the Holy Ones).

The article points out that no doubt the Christians’ hostility toward knowledge and education (which was eventually kept entirely under the priests) and the swelling of their ranks largely from the dregs of society explain why the historians of the early centuries fail to mention them. How could anyone accept the notion that the Jews were the *only* nation to whom Truth had been revealed, and that the Jewish Bible was the *only* scripture of true revelation? Or, that Jesus was the first and only Saviour? The great beings cannot fail to recognize that the teachings attributed to him but repeated the ancient ethical precepts, and that the legends surrounding his life were the usual mystical allegories, identical with those associated with his predecessors. The Dead Sea scrolls confirm this. The teachings contained in the Sermon on the Mount as well as many other passages in the Gospels (especially that of John), can be traced to

these pre-Christian scrolls. The discovery of these scrolls will probably open men’s eyes to the fact that the superiority or inferiority of any religion is determined by the degree to which it reflects the One Truth that is at the root and base of all.

Sometimes we get our answer in a dream. The author, Deirdre Barrett, says that he has found hundreds of examples of dreams contributing to science, the arts and world decisions, in many biographies and history books. One such example is that of British officers held prisoners in Laufen Castle in Bavaria, a Nazi prisoner-of-war camp, in World War II. A unique set of dreams recorded in the archives of the Wellcome Library Medical Collection included the data regarding three prisoners who had repeatedly dreamed about escape before they successfully broke out of prison in real life. He came across many examples of dreams helping scientists to solve problems. For instance, chemist Otto Loewi, who dreamed the experiment that led to the discovery of chemical signalling between nerve cells.

Most dreams occur during rapid eye movement (REM) stage of sleep. The author has shown in his studies, the importance of dreams for healing deep emotional traumas. Earlier efforts were towards exploring the effect of dreams on creativity and problem-solving. In 1892, the problem solving by college students in a dream, included playing a chess game, solving an algebra problem, detecting a book-keeping error and translating a passage from Virgil. About 80 years later, psychologists developed a technique called *dream incubation* which “involves directing one’s dream contents through bedtime self-suggestions.” In other words, one thinks about the problem at bedtime, even tries to visualize it as a concrete image, and tells oneself that one wants to dream a solution. Research has shown that any kind of problem can be solved during dreams, especially the one on which the person has been working intensively while awake. The author says that his studies show the importance of dreams for healing

deep emotional traumas. Researchers describe techniques that would assist the trauma survivors in coming up with a script for a dream that would master the event in the recurring nightmare, so that the survivor would wake up feeling comforted. Also, telling yourself before going to sleep that you want to remember your dreams on waking up, will help in recalling your dreams, writes Deirdre Barrett. (*American Scientist*, July-August 2020)

Waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep (*Sushupti*) are described as three planes of human life, or three states of consciousness, which could be visualized as three concentric circles. We must distinguish between “ordinary” and “real” dreams. We pass through dream state twice—in going from waking to dreamless sleep state, and these dreams are called “ordinary” dreams, as they reflect impressions and activities of daily life. But once again while coming back from the *Sushupti* to waking state, we have “real” dreams which are reflections of the activities of the real man, or Higher Ego on its own plane, when brain and body are paralyzed during sleep. For the Higher Ego, the past and future are as present, and is all-knowing on its own plane. Hence, in *Sushupti* state we find solution to our problems. Many artists and inventors have found inspiration or solution of a problem in dream which they were struggling to solve while awake. A king who is concerned about his kingdom and his territories etc., his Ego becoming aware of impending war may try to impress the brain of the sleeping king with pictures of battle tanks, rifles, etc. It is possible to receive an answer in dream, from our divine nature, if before falling asleep a *strong desire* is formulated to receive that answer. But that desire must be high and altruistic, because our divine nature has no concern with material things and temporal affairs. “A sincerely devoted man who earnestly calls upon the Higher Self for aid in right conduct will receive in the dream state that succeeds the condition of *Sushupti* the aid asked for. . . . This power will of course vary with each man according to his nature and the various combinations between his physical, astral, and psychical planes,” writes Mr. Judge.

Our ability to remember the real dreams depends upon the state of our consciousness before falling asleep. Mr. Judge recommends that in order to bring back the memory of the experiences in *Sushupti* state, we should not only live the life of awareness but also concentrate on high thoughts, upon noble purposes and the divine in us. By doing that we make our brain porous and receptive and also, make a channel of communication from waking state to *Shusupti* and back, clear like a lens, or an unclogged pipe.

It appears that knowledge of the truth might have nothing to do with our own efforts or character, as we gather many facts from newspapers, magazines, television, etc. Moreover, for those facing restrictions because of language, transport, money, sickness, technology, etc., it is much harder to access truth, while there are those who seem to receive it on a platter. “Pride in this mere knowledge of the truth ignores the way in which some people come to possess it without any care or effort, and the way that others strive relentlessly against the odds for it and still miss out,” writes Jonny Robinson. Instead of praising people who possess knowledge, we must praise those with some piece of knowledge but having the right attitude towards it, which shines through various character traits, which philosophers call epistemic virtues. These virtues include, intellectual humility (readiness to correct oneself), intellectual courage (to pursue truths that makes one uncomfortable), open-mindedness (to contemplate all sides of the argument, limiting preconceptions), and curiosity (to be continually seeking).

The answer to the question, “Is it better to know, or to seek to know?” includes the attitude of the seeker. We can understand by an example: “Would you rather have a fish or know how to fish?” Certainly, it would be better to know how to fish, than waiting around for someone to give you a fish. The ideal condition would be having the fish as a result of knowing how to fish. The same also applies to knowledge. “We should prefer seeking to knowing. As with the

agent who knows how to fish, the one who seeks knowledge can go out into the world, sometimes failing and sometimes succeeding, but in any case, able to continue until she is satisfied with her catch, a knowledge attained. . . . The consistent posture of seeking the truth gives us the best shot at seeing clearly, and that is what we should praise and value,” writes Jonny Robinson, a tutor and casual lecturer in the department of philosophy at Macquarie University, in an article in *Aeon* magazine.

It is essential to cultivate self-reliance both in worldly and spiritual life. The Fourth Chapter of the *Gita* suggests the attitude and the methods for acquiring spiritual knowledge, saying, “Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions, and by humility, the wise who see the truth will communicate it unto thee.” We must strive to receive answer ourselves instead of wanting a readymade answer from another. Mr. Judge points out that getting a ready answer is like a miner giving a nugget of gold and that is all we get at that time. But when we make an effort to dig out knowledge, we drag out of our mind rocks and debris and thus become aware of the contents of our mind—useful or useless. Moreover, there must be an ongoing quest for truth, instead of being satisfied with the first answer we receive. We should leave aside the teachings we do not understand as, “fruits not yet ripe,” because unripe fruits get ripe in the course of time, as we rise in our level of perception. Aldous Huxley says, “Knowledge is a function of being,” as we change in our being, the quality and quantity of knowledge acquired also changes. Hence, the need for cultivating humility. “Be humble, if thou would’st attain to Wisdom. Be humbler still, when Wisdom thou hast mastered,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. It is important to bear in mind that we are continually influenced by the ideas of the people around us, showing that there is very little *original* thought anywhere, and also the need for verifying the ideas received, through exercise of reason and intuition.