

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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KENA UPANISHAD—UNDERSTANDING BRAHMAN	3
STORIES FROM THE MAHABHARATA	11
STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA—HAPPINESS—II	15
THE “ARABIAN NIGHTS”—FACT OR FICTION?—II	20
SOME REFLECTIONS ON MEDITATION	24
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	28
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	33

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KENA UPANISHAD—UNDERSTANDING BRAHMAN

THE vast Vedic literature that was passed on by word of mouth is divided into four different types: *Samhitas*, *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas* and *Upanishads*. There are four collections or *Samhitas*: *Rig-veda*, *Sama-veda*, *Atharva-veda* and *Yajur-veda*. *Yajur-veda* has verses that are used in various religious sacrifices. The *Brahmanas* are theological treatises in prose and they explain the sacred significance of different rituals. The *Aranyakas* are forest-treatises, which were probably composed for old people retiring into forests. The *Aranyaka* age was a period during which free thinking tried to shake off the shackles of ritualism and paved the way for the *Upanishads*.

Upanishads provide a key to understanding the Vedas. *Upa-nishad* is a compound word meaning “the conquest of ignorance by the revelation of *secret*, *spiritual* knowledge.” The name, “Upanishads,” is usually translated “esoteric doctrine.” These treatises...are generally attached to the *Brahmana* portion of the Vedas, and they treat of and expound the secret and mystic meaning of the Vedic texts. They speak of the origin of the Universe, the nature of Deity, and of Spirit and Soul, as also of the metaphysical connection of mind and matter. They contain *the beginning and the end of all human knowledge*, writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 269-70)

The doctrine of the one essence pervading the entire manifestation and the nature and knowledge of *Parabrahman* is the key teaching of the upanishads. In every Upanishad we find that the highly

abstruse and metaphysical truths are put in a homely and simple manner by the ancient sages.

The *Kena Upanishad* belongs to the *Talavakara Brahmana* of *Sama Veda* and is therefore also referred to as *Talavakara Upanishad*. It has four *khandas* or sections. It derives its name from the first word *Kena*, meaning “by whom,” or “impelled and directed by whom.” The first chapter is concerned with showing the real agent, the substratum and basis for all actions. The nature of the agent is all-conditioning yet inscrutable. In the first verse of the first chapter the disciple asks the question: Impelled and directed by whom the mind soars forth? Impelled and directed by whom goes forth the first breath, and men utter speech? What intelligent power directs the eye or the ear in the performance of natural functions? The answer given by the Master is, “It is the ear of the ear, mind of the mind, the speech of the speech, the breath of the breath, and the eye of the eye.” In the article, “Modernized Upanishad,” Mr. Judge explains that outer organs are the means by which the real, but unseen inner organs of sight, speech, hearing, seeing and breathing make themselves manifest and are able to cognize outside objects.

The real centres of sense organs for seeing, hearing, etc., are within the astral body. We might say that the powers of seeing, tasting, smelling, hearing and the sense of touch are all in the astral body. But the real powers to see, hear, smell, touch, etc., flow from the Spirit. This Spirit is a portion of the eternal Spirit or Brahman. This spirit experiences the objects of sense by presiding over the ear, the eye, the touch, the taste, and the smell, and also over mind, as mentioned in the Fifteenth Chapter of the *Gita*. Whenever the Spirit withdraws itself the organs cannot be used, as it happens in the case of a sleep-walker who moves with his eyes open, which are normal and uninjured, and yet he is unable to see the objects in front of his eyes.

Like a tortoise withdraws its feet and head within the shell at the approaching danger, the advice is to draw in all the senses and restrain them from running in their accustomed directions. The perfectly

trained man, who has gained control of these organs, both within and without, and who can locate his consciousness in the inner being, gains immortality, and is not compelled to take birth, again and again.

In the remaining verses of the first chapter, Brahman is described as that which is beyond the known and also above what we consider to be the unknown. It is beyond description in words used on this plane, and yet It is that by which speech is expressed. It cannot be comprehended by the mind, and yet it is that by which mind is made to think. Likewise, it cannot be seen by the eye, heard by the ear, inhaled by the breath, but it is that by which the eyes see and the ears hear. To assign to It any attribute is to dwarf it. So the Upanishadic sage says, “*neti, neti*,” “not this, not this.”

Though Brahman or Atman is the agent or basis for all our actions, paradoxically It is not involved in any of the cause-effect chain. It is the Causeless Cause and the Rootless Root. Though the power to see, hear, speak, think, feel and act comes from the Self, yet, Self within is not the actor. Hence, in the Third Chapter of the *Gita* we are told that “knowing that the qualities act in the qualities, and that Self is distinct from them, [he] is not attached to action.” Electricity in itself is static energy but when it flows through the wires it manifests as light in the tube light, in the movement of the blades of a fan, and thus becomes dynamic energy. Hence, the energy of the Self manifesting through different matter-envelopes appears to be the agent for different actions. Likewise, a car is driven by the driver, but without the petrol he is unable to drive the car. Though petrol is essential to drive the car, we do not make the mistake of considering “petrol” to be driver of the car.

In the article “Eternal Pilgrim” in the *Studies in the Secret Doctrine* it is said that there is a witness in us of the panorama of growth, who has watched in the beginningless past, as he is watching today, and as he will watch in the endless future. This is *Atman*, the One Life, mirrored in *Buddhi*, the unbreakable vehicle—the *Eternal Spectator*. *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*, the immortal triad is called *Eternal Pilgrim*, which is the experiencer, enjoyer, sufferer, who learnt in

the mineral and grew in the vegetable, and moved in the animal, and acts, feels, thinks and wills in the human.

The Second chapter of Kena Upanishad brings home the paradox of inscrutability of the Brahman, saying: “If you think that you know the form of Brahman, well, it is certain that you know it but little, whether it refers to you or to the gods. So then what you think you know has to be further examined. . . . It is really understood by those who do not understand it.” Thus, one who conceives It—does not really know. He who does not conceive It—to him It is known.

The fact is that we cannot perceive or understand It like we perceive any other object, because It is Itself the Knower, and the “Knower” cannot be the object of its own knowledge. Fire can burn other things but it cannot burn itself, nor finger catch hold of itself. A stage is reached in meditation when one enters the light but cannot touch the FLAME. In *Samadhi*, the knower, the knowledge and the object of knowledge, or the Cognizer, Cognition and that which is to be cognized, all become One. We might say that to know It is to become It. Till one reaches the state of full realization, one has to live with the paradox that one cannot describe It, and yet one is aware of Its presence, both within and without. What comes in the way of realization is *Ahankara* or egotism. When Sri Ramakrishna was asked: “When will I be liberated?” Sri Ramakrishna replied, “When you are liberated from the ‘I.’”

In the Third Chapter of Kena Upanishad we are given the allegory of ignorance of the gods or *devas* regarding Brahman. Brahman obtained the victory for the *Devas*. The *Devas* became elated by the victory of Brahman, and they thought, “this victory is ours only, this greatness is ours only.” Brahman perceived this and appeared to them. But they did not know It, and said: “What spirit (*yaksha*) is this ?” When Agni was sent to find out what that spirit was, he ran towards It, and when asked who he was and what were his powers, Agni replied: “I am Agni, I can burn everything here, whatever is on this earth.” Brahman put a straw before him, saying: “Burn this.” He went towards it with all his might, but he could not burn it. Then

he returned thence and said: “I could not find out what spirit this is.” Likewise, the gods sent Vayu to find out the nature of this spirit and he was asked similar questions. Vayu replied that he could blow off everything, whatever there was on this earth. He was likewise asked to move the straw, which he could not, and returned back wondering who that spirit was. Finally, Indra approached the spirit, but It disappeared from before him, and in the same space he came towards a woman, highly adorned: it was Uma, the daughter of Himavat. He said to her: ‘Who is that spirit?’ She replied: “It is Brahman. It is through the victory of Brahman that you have thus become great.” After that he knew that it was Brahman. Therefore these *Devas*, viz., Agni, Vayu, and Indra, are, as it were, above the other gods, for they contacted the Brahman the closest. And therefore Indra is, as it were, above the other gods, for he first knew It. Originally, Agni, Vayu and Surya were considered to be the Vedic *trimurti*, but later Surya was replaced by Indra. “In esoteric interpretation, these three cosmic principles, correspond with the three human principles, *Kama*, *Kama-manas* [lower mind] and *Manas*.” (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

In the article, “Modernized Upanishad,” Mr. Judge interprets the above allegory from the theosophical viewpoint. *Devas* refer to elemental spirits, which form the soul of the elements. He points out that the elemental spirits of all grades that work in nature on every plane, in air, water, earth, and fire, were evolved from lower and less conscious states through the effort of the highest mind, over a long period of time. In the beginning, all life, all consciousness, all matter was in one homogeneous condition. In order to arrive at the universe we now live in, that homogeneous matter had to be differentiated on seven planes. Since Spirit and Matter are coeval and coeternal, we are told that Cosmic Ideation (the “Universal Mind”) reawakens concurrently with and parallel to the emergence of Cosmic Substance. Fohat or *Daiviprakriti* is the dynamic energy of Cosmic ideation, and it is the guiding power of all manifestation. Fohat is also described as the synthesis of creative powers or

collectivity of Dhyanchohanics intelligences, which impel to activity, inert substance and guide its differentiation on seven planes of consciousness. Without this informing power the elemental spirits could not have come into existence, as they had no power of their own to stir the depths of cosmic matter. Hence, “Brahman obtaining victory for the *Devas*,” refers to evolution of the elemental spirits from One Homogeneous substance, explains Mr. Judge. They were evolved on many planes, each to a different degree. Some of these elemental spirits are considered to be of the higher order, and they are related to fire [Agni], air [Vayu], and nascent mind [Indra]. Mr. Judge mentions that elemental spirits of fire are wise, those of air are powerful, while those of water are dangerous. These higher elemental spirits possessing consciousness peculiar to their own plane of existence were destined to become conscious human beings of the future.

In *The Ocean of Theosophy* Mr. Judge writes that at a point of time far from now what is now known as mineral matter will have passed through vegetable matter and raised to animal stage and then into human flesh. Thus, at some remote point in the process of evolution, the atoms of mineral matter would reach the stage of organic fleshy matter and then into the stage of *self-conscious thinkers*. If we understand this then it is easy to imagine that the mass of vital matter which constitutes our blood, tissues, nerves, flesh, etc., was, few years ago, in the simple state of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen or sodium atoms. We see the transition from inanimate (from the point of view of science) to becoming sensitive. Carry it further and we find that atoms and cells in certain portions of our body are not only sensitive but are *extremely* sensitive, and immediately respond to our will. We *will* to speak, and the atoms forming our vocal cords adjust and we are able to throw out sound. We *will* to walk, and the atoms of leg respond to our *will* and enable us to walk. Perhaps we are able to imagine the next step when the so-called inanimate matter that became sensitized, will remain that way and not slip back. In other words, the sensitized matter will

become *self-conscious* and act of its own will. This is possible, because every time we use our “will,” we make an impression on the atoms of various parts of our body. After repeated impressions, this matter comes to the stage of acting of its own will. We know that the baby takes some time in training the atoms of his brain and body to respond to its will, and hence takes time in learning to speak, walk, talk, etc.

However, in order to raise these cosmic spirits by gentle steps to a higher state of development, the highly progressed entities from other *Manvantaras* appeared to them on their own plane and in their own sphere of consciousness, but they were not comprehended. Hence, the allegory speaks about Agni or ruling spirit of fire, not able to burn the straw and Vayu or ruling spirit of air unable to move the straw, created before them. Even the nascent power of mind and imagination represented by Indra is not capable of understanding Brahman. Hence, when Indra tried to approach Brahman, the spirit disappeared and was replaced by Uma, *i.e.*, the primordial root and basis of matter. In other words, Indra could perceive only *Mulaprakriti*, which is a veil over *Parabrahmam*, for Spirit as distinguished from matter cannot be perceived. Hence, the allegory points out that the principles of fire and air, and the thinking man, are nearest to Brahman in the eternal scheme of nature’s evolution.

In the manifestation there is something which links spirit to matter. This something is the “bridge” by which the “ideas” existing in the divine mind are impressed on the substance as the “laws of Nature.” It is the intelligent medium, the guiding power of all manifestation, which is transmitted and made manifest through divine beings called Dhyan Chohans, the architects of the visible world. We might say that these Dhyan Chohans represent the “informing power,” which stirs the depths of cosmic matter and also they are the “highly progressed entities from prior periods of evolution,” mentioned in the allegory, which aid in further evolution of elemental spirits.

H.P.B. points out that Indra represents the Cosmic principle *Mahat*

and the human principle *manas*, which is dual in nature: connected with *Buddhi*, or allowing itself to be dragged down by passions and desires. Indra was, in the beginning, one of the greatest gods of Hindu Pantheon, but later fell and became the opponent of asceticism, the enemy of every holy aspiration. Perhaps in the latter aspect he is shown to have married *Indrani* or senses, because of her *voluptuous attractions*.

The highest of the *devas* were unable to comprehend Brahman, and so it is stated in the Fourth Chapter of Kena Upanishad that the Brahman flashed forth only to disappear at once from the sight of the gods. As far as mind of man is concerned, he first becomes aware of One Reality through thinking and reflection, and is able to perceive Its being reflected in manifestation. Only after repeated experiences of these reflections of truth he is able to look directly on it, and then he becomes consciously immortal. Brahman is to be meditated upon as *Tad-vana* or “The desire of it,” or “the object of adoration.” In other words, once we have grasped that realization of the Brahman or self-realization is the true aim of life, we must make all our desires centre upon and lean to that one aim. The Upanishad ends by revealing the mystic doctrine that Austerity (*tapas*), self-restraint (*dama*) and sacrificial work (*karman*) are the foundation of It, or they pave the way to self-realization.

BRING together in yourself all opposites of quality, heat and cold, dryness and fluidity; think that you are everywhere at once, on land, at sea, in heaven; think that you are not yet begotten, that you are in the womb, that you are young, that you are old, that you have died, that you are in the world beyond the grave; grasp in your thought all this at once, all times and places, all substances and qualities and magnitudes together; then you can apprehend God.

—HERMES

STORIES FROM THE MAHABHARATA

ONE DAY King Yudhishtira asked Bhishma how a good king should conduct himself when surrounded by enemies. He said he had heard Bhishma say before that that intelligence which enabled one to plan for the future and meet present emergencies was good, whereas destruction followed the one who procrastinated. Guided by what intelligence, then, should a king make friends and foes when assailed on all sides? How should he behave towards each? If those who profess to be his friends turn later into enemies, how then should he act? With whom should he make war and with whom should he make peace?

Bhishma answered that a foe can become a friend and a friend can become a foe, for the course of human actions, through the combination of circumstances, becomes very uncertain. Therefore, as regards what should be done and what should not, it is necessary that heed be paid to the requirements of time and place. There come times when one has to trust one’s foes. One should not only make friends with men of intelligence and knowledge, but also make peace with foes, when one cannot otherwise be saved. Foolish is the man who never makes peace with foes, for he stands to gain nothing. He who, when surrounded by foes, acts after a full consideration of circumstances, succeeds in obtaining good results.

In this connection Bhishma recited the old story of the mouse and the cat.

In the midst of a forest there once grew a very large Banyan tree. It was covered with many creepers and, as is the case with Banyan trees, had many branch-roots which, reaching to the ground, in turn became large trunks, thus making a beautiful shady place. Birds nested in the branches and many animals made the tree their home.

Palita, a mouse lived in a hole at the foot of the main trunk, and, being wise, he had bored many other holes and passages so that when in danger he could escape.

Lomasa, a cat, lived happily on the branches of the tree, daily

devouring birds and mice who were not wise enough to escape his claws. But Palita kept out of his way.

One day a man, a trapper of animals, came into the forest and built a hut for himself. Every evening he set his traps and snares and every morning he went to see what had been caught. One night Lomasa carelessly allowed himself to be caught in the snare, and seeing this Palita came out of the hole and roamed about without fear. When he saw the meat that the trapper had spread here as a bait for the cat, he jumped onto the trap and began to eat it. Feeling very brave now that his enemy was helpless, he even got upon the back of the cat and continued to eat the meat.

But, alas, though one enemy was caught, other enemies were free, and suddenly he saw one of his foes coming towards him. It was a mongoose by the name of Harita, who, having scented the mouse, was coming there to devour his prey. Palita beheld at the same time another foe of his, Chandraka, the owl, sitting on a branch of the Banyan and looking down at him.

Poor Palita, very frightened, began to ask himself what he ought to do. He could not jump down from the trap, for if he did so the mongoose would devour him; he could not remain on the trap, or the owl would seize him. If his third enemy Lomasa, succeeded in disentangling himself from the net, he also would be certain to kill him. Palita determined that he would not lose his wits; for surely one possessed of intelligence and wisdom never sinks, however great and terrible the danger that threatens him.

His only hope seemed to lie with the cat, for the cat himself was in grave danger. Palita in his wisdom knew that when in distress one should make peace with even one's enemy. If, he reasoned, he could free Lomasa, perhaps the latter would help him. With this in mind he addressed the cat and told him that he had thought of a way of escape for them both. He said that he would free Lomasa by cutting the net in which he was entangled if Lomasa in turn would give him shelter and would agree not to kill him when he was freed. Naturally, Lomasa, being wise, agreed, saying, "Let there be peace

between us, O friend." Palita, having thus made Lomasa understand his own interests, trustfully crouched beneath his erstwhile enemy's body. Beholding the cat and the mouse make a covenant for accomplishing their mutual ends, the mongoose and the owl both gave up hopes of seizing their prey and left the spot.

Then, very slowly, Palita, as he lay under the body of the cat, began to cut the strings of the noose that held him. Lomasa became restless, asking him to hurry, for he was frightened that the hunter would return any moment. But the wise Palita said that Lomasa should not be impatient; as soon as he saw the hunter coming he would cut the last string, for at that time Lomasa would not think of anything else save the safety of his own life. He added that if he freed Lomasa before this, he would have to stand in great fear of him, for Lomasa might feel tempted to eat him up. Lomasa begged for forgiveness for any wrong done in the past and again urged him to hurry up. But Palita told him that friendship founded on fear and which could only be kept up by fear should be maintained with great caution. He who does not protect himself, after having made a covenant with one stronger than himself, finds that covenant to be productive of injury rather than benefit.

While they talked together night vanished and with the morning the hunter appeared on the scene. Quickly Palita cut the last cord and, trembling with fear, Lomasa fled up the tree and Palita ran into his hole.

After the hunter had gone, Lomasa came out of hiding and tried to lure Palita to come out too, so that they could talk together. He said that they were now friends, that he was very grateful to Palita for cutting the cords and setting him free, and that he longed to talk to him. Palita listened to the cat's sweet words and then replied that sometimes friends assume the guise of foes, and foes assume the guise of friends, and compacts of friendship are often formed from considerations of self-interest and gain. It is force of circumstances that creates friends and foes, and therefore neither friendship nor hostility is permanent. But, he added, self-interest is permanent! In

the course of a few hours Lomasa had changed from a foe into a friend, and now he was a foe again, for his very nature, as a cat, made him the enemy of mice. Just as circumstances changed him into a friend, so now a different circumstance had again made him an enemy.

Poor Lomasa blushed with shame and said that this was not true, for he would lay down his life for Palita, and he begged that the mouse should not be suspicious of his motive but should come out of his hole fearlessly. But Palita declined again, saying, “One should never trust a person who does not deserve to be trusted. Nor should one repose blind confidence in a person deserving of trust. One should always endeavour to inspire others with confidence in himself. One should not, however, himself repose confidence in foes. For these reasons one should, under all circumstances, protect his own self. A mouse should always guard his life from cats, and the cat should protect his own life from the hunter.”

At the mention of hunter, Lomasa took fright and ran away as quickly as he could, and Palita, in his wisdom, went into another hole.

NINE requisites for contented living:
 Health enough to make work pleasure.
 Wealth enough to support your needs.
 Strength to battle with difficulties and overcome them.
 Grace enough to confess your sins and forsake them.
 Patience enough to toil until some good is accomplished.
 Charity enough to see some good in your neighbour.
 Love enough to move you to be useful and helpful to others.
 Faith enough to make real the things of God.
 Hope enough to remove all anxious fears concerning the future.

—JOHANN GOETHE

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA HAPPINESS—II

IT IS by practicing reflection and detachment that we come to the realization that “personal existence,” which is but the assemblage of five *skandhas*, is full of sorrow. The five *skandhas* or attributes in the Buddhist teachings are: “*Rupa* (form or body), material qualities; *Vedana*, sensation; *Sanna*, perception (abstract ideas); *Samkhara*, tendencies—both physical and mental; *Vinnana*, mental powers or consciousness. Of these we are formed, by them we are conscious of existence; and through them we communicate with the world about us.” Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, explains that *skandha* means heap. Our personality is composed of *skandhas* or heaps. They are like labels in grocer’s shop—“Rice,” “Maize,” “Millet,” and so on. These are not entities but are themselves composed of millions of grains. The *Rupa-skandha* comprises of primary material phenomena, cohesion, undulation, radiation and vibration; and 24 secondary material phenomena like masculinity, femininity, bodily and verbal expressions, physical vitality and physical buoyancy, plasticity, adaptability, decay, impermanence, and so on. *Vedana* (sensation) consists of our bodily and mentally pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feelings. It may be *Sattvic*, *Rajasic* or *Tamasic*. Therefore, what is pleasant to one may be absolutely distasteful to another.

Sanna skandha consists of perception of forms. Sound, smell, taste, bodily impressions, and mental impressions are all objects of perception or forms. Our perception consists of an idea of an object to which we give some name—a tree, a house, a village, etc. Thus, perception enables us to distinguish one object from the other. *Samkhara* consists of tendencies of mind. They are of three types: *Kushala*, *Akushala* and *Avyakrut*. *Kushala* tendencies include love, helpfulness, truthfulness, etc. *Akushala* tendencies include greediness, envy, cunning, contempt, etc. *Avyakrut* tendencies include our innate skills, aptitude, abilities, or leanings. This is what

makes each person unique and makes him feel that he is separate from other people. *Vinnana* refers to consciousness. It is simply the collective term for all our evanescent mental states. It does not refer to the permanent, unchanging element or ultimate principle of consciousness. Through consciousness, we perceive our separateness from the surrounding environment. They give us illusion of individuality and keep us from reaching our full potential of Buddhahood. When we are able to transcend these, we are able to attain to enlightenment and then there is no rebirth and no suffering.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. tells us that the new personality in each succeeding re-birth is the aggregate of “*skandhas*” or the attributes of the *old* personality. During life, the *skandhas* are continually changing through continual waste and reparation of body, through change of mind and character, and hence even though the man of forty is identical with the youth of eighteen he is not exactly the same being. And yet, as the man in his old age justly reaps the reward or suffering as a result of his thought and actions of every previous stage of his life, so the new being of the re-birth, being the same *individuality* as before, but not the same *personality*—a new aggregation of *skandhas*—justly reaps the consequences of his actions and thoughts in the previous existence. In that sense, our sorrow stems from the “personal existence,” or *skandhas* generated in past incarnations.

H.P.B. explains that after death, spirit or reflection of those *Skandhas* which are the most ennobling attach themselves to the incarnating Ego and are added to the stock of its angelic experiences. But all those attributes connected with material *Skandhas*, with selfish and personal motive disappear between two incarnations, only to reappear at the subsequent incarnation as the Karmic result to be atoned for. The law of retribution which rewards the most spiritual in *Devachan* with unalloyed bliss also furnishes appropriate body for further development. Karma, with its army of *Skandhas*, waits at the threshold of *Devachan* whence the Ego re-emerges to assume a

new incarnation. It is in the rebirth selected and prepared by this mysterious, inexorable, but in the equity and wisdom of its decrees infallible LAW, that the sins of the previous life of the Ego are punished. Our “propensities” which force us to take another birth is therefore considered to be the worst of sufferings.

8. *Health is the greatest of gifts; contentment is the greatest wealth; trust is the best of relationships; Nirvana is the highest happiness. (204)*

Health is the most precious gift. We do not realize its worth till we suffer from its loss. To be healthy is to be in wholesome state, not just bodily but also in our psychic and mental nature. Perfect physical health is one of the qualifications of *chelaship*. It does not mean that those who suffer from some bodily or mental disease cannot strive to become more spiritual, they can; but ill-health poses obstacles which make it difficult for him to attain higher degrees of perfection. This is particularly so for the mental health. “It is well known that a man who has melancholia cannot expect to reach a high development in occultism.” Secrets of occultism cannot be entrusted to the mediumistic person. To become medium is to have become disorganized physiologically and in the nervous system, writes Mr. Judge. So that instead of controlling, he gets controlled by entities, high or low, divine or demoniacal. Man must think and choose, exercise his reason and discrimination and learn from experiences. To become mediumistic is to relinquish this prerogative, consciously or unconsciously as a result of excessive passivity or dabbling in psychic realm in this or some past life. We have to be aware of the importance of health for the whole man from this higher perspective.

True happiness comes from contentment. Contentment is truly the greatest of wealth.

There is the beautiful story by Leo Tolstoy, *How much land does a man need?* It is about a man who had insatiable desire for possessing larger and larger areas of land. His greed leads him to a

village where the elder tells him that as much land as he can cover by walking, from morning till sunset, will be his, with the condition that he should return to the original spot by sunset. The greedy man tries to cover a very large area, with the result that he is breathless by sunset and dies of exhaustion as he reaches the original spot. Ironically, the villagers bury him by digging a patch of land, just long enough to hold his body, *i.e.*, seven feet! Some of the ambitious “achievers” of our day fall in the same category. A simple villager is far happier when his basic needs of food, shelter and clothing are fulfilled than the urban man who is surrounded by all the luxuries.

To trust is to have conviction that one would not be betrayed or let down. Trust forms a strong basis for lasting relationship. It does not mean that all people are trustworthy. But it is better to begin with trust in any relationship. *A priori* judgment of another person, purely on hearsay or based on your mental biases is not conducive to a healthy and happy relationship. Lot of energy gets wasted in doubt, analysis, anxiety; and the bond which must exist between individuals does not get formed. Your friend becomes an extension of yourself when you trust. Trust is like nature’s laws which you can count on and rely upon in your actions. It is the very basis of action. If we were not certain that the law of gravitation would work, we would be all the time anxious while walking. When there is mutual trust, the relationship can mature and bring out the best in each person. Also it is said that “Be true to yourself and you cannot be untrue to others.”

9. *He who has tasted the sweetness of solitude and the flavour of tranquility, he becomes free from sin and fearless, and enjoys the ambrosia of the Good Law. (205)*

10. *Beneficent it is to catch sight of the Noble Ones; to live with them is continuous happiness. A man is happy if luckily he escapes the sight of fools. (206)*

11. *He who consorts with fools experiences great grief. The company of fools is like company of enemies—productive of pain. Company of the wise is like meeting of real kinsfolk—*

it brings happiness. (207)

12. *Therefore, even as the Moon follows its path among the stars, so should one follow the wise, the discerning, the learned, the steadfast one, the dutiful, the noble. One should follow such. (208)*

Man is a “social animal.” He seeks company of other people. This is quite normal. But the one who aspires for spiritual wisdom has to learn the importance of solitude. If the mind is constantly engaged in interactions with other people, it does not get time for silent reflection. No sooner are we alone, we pick up the phone to call up a friend or chat on internet. We find it difficult to be in our own company. But one has to learn to value solitude. Study of the scriptures and reflection upon them, at least for half an hour every day, is considered to be a good practice for the one who is serious about spiritual living. By shutting out external and internal chatter, ideas and images, mind gets trained to focus itself on a seed idea taken up for meditation. It becomes receptive to intuitive flashes from our divine nature. Scriptures assume deeper meaning. Mr. Judge tells us to study the *Bhagavad-Gita* by the light of the spiritual lamp—be it small or great—which the Supreme Soul will feed and increase within us if we attend to its behests and diligently inquire after it. Right knowledge, coupled with its realization through practice diminishes sinful propensities and removes all fears. Practice of detachment is an important step in attaining tranquility, says the *Gita*.

Since ignorance is at the root of all our suffering and since only the wise and discerning possess the true wisdom, we have to exercise caution as to the company we keep. There is no companionship with the fools. Whose company should we keep? We are asked to follow the wise, the discerning, the learned, the steadfast one, the dutiful and the noble. Each has something valuable to teach. Each can be of great help in taking next step in the right direction.

(Concluded)

THE “ARABIAN NIGHTS”—FACT OR FICTION?

II

THE REMAINING two classes of wicked elemental spirits are *Kumila* and *Porthu Madan*. *Kumila Madan* is an elemental spirit of water. This elemental spirit can help in bringing about rains and in knowing the present and the future through hydromancy or divination by water. *Porthu Madan* are elemental spirits of the earth and they are of use in all such feats where physical force is required. These elemental spirits help in levitation, or raising the body above the ground, and in taming of the wild animals.

An ordinary magician has power over these elementals. These elementals can be communicated with, through colour and sound. It should be possible for anyone who might stumble upon the secret of communicating with them to command and use these elementals, as can be seen in the story of Aladdin and his magic lamp. A person had to merely rub the lamp and a Djinn would appear, ready to do any task he was asked. While Aladdin possessed the magic lamp he came to much grief and hardships because a wicked magician wanted to possess that lamp. The story ends by saying that the clever princess broke the lamp into little pieces. Some she burned, some she buried and the rest she cast into the sea. She did this because she feared human envy, wickedness and the desire for power, for they can often be stronger than goodness.

An Adept is the true magician who has complete control over the elementals as well as knowledge of the occult laws, which govern certain occult processes in nature. Now and then mention is made in the *Arabian Nights* of the power of King Solomon and his seal. Mr. Judge points out that Solomon was a great Adept with great magical powers. In the *Arabian Nights* stories we find him dealing with wicked genii or elemental spirits, and he would bury them in the Red Sea. The Red Sea was believed to cover hell. It plays prominent part in the *Arabian Nights* tales and has some significance.

Since Solomon was a Jewish King in the land of Palestine and since there is no mention made of his travel, how did he get to Red Sea? We must therefore accept that “Solomon” does not stand for any particular king or Adept, but stands for vast knowledge of magic arts possessed by the Adepts of antiquity. Solomon’s 700 wives and 300 concubines, are merely the personifications of man’s attributes, feelings, passions and his various occult powers. “The building of the Temple of Solomon is the symbolical representation of the gradual acquirement of the secret wisdom, or magic.” It represents building or development of the spiritual from the earthly, and manifestation of the power and glory of the spirit in the physical world through wisdom and genius of the builder, writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, II, 391)

The Six-pointed star symbolizes *macrocosm* or the great cosmos. It is represented as “double triangle” composed of two triangles, white and black. It is known in Europe as “Solomon’s Seal,” and in India as the “Sign of Vishnu” or *Sri Chakra*. These two triangles are interlaced. The tip of the *white* triangle pointing upwards or towards heaven represents Spirit. The lower point of its *black* triangle pointing downward or towards the earth represents matter.

The symbol of interlaced triangle was called “Seal of Solomon,” because it was believed that the great Adept Solomon used this seal when dealing with the genii or elemental spirits that obeyed him. In one of the *Arabian Nights* stories a fisherman hauls up a large iron pot, with a metal cover, with Solomon’s Seal engraved upon it. When the fisherman opened the pot, vapours arose which on condensing gave rise to a monstrous form. The story goes that many years ago this wicked elemental spirit was confined within a bottle by Solomon and at that time the genii had taken a terrible oath that anyone who let him out in two hundred years, he will make that person rich. A person who liberated him in five hundred years, he would reward him with power. But he would kill the person who would let him out after one thousand years. The fisherman told the genii that he was too large to have been confined within a bottle. To prove it to the fisherman, the elemental spirit assumed the vaporous condition

and sank into the iron pot. The fisherman quickly put the lid back on the bottle and cast it into the sea. It was only when the djin begged for mercy and promised to serve him that he was released.

Mr. Judge explains that the djin remained confined to the bottle for several hundred years because the pot was made of metal, which prevented the *djin* from making magnetic connection for the purpose of escaping. Also, the talismanic seal on the lid prevented the djin from escaping from the top. The elemental spirit could spread into vapoury mass, which showed that it was an elemental spirit belonging to airy kingdom. There are four major elements—earth, water, air and fire, which are made up of tiny “lives” or elementals. These elementals are called “nature spirits.” The elementals are the soul of the elements. Thus, we have *Gnomes* or earth-elementals, *Undines* or water-elementals, *Sylphs* or air-elementals, and *Salamanders* or fire-elementals. Mr. Judge writes that fire elementals are the wisest, while air elementals are powerful and malignant, and those of water are dangerous.

There are other classes of elementals called *Incubi* and *Succubi*. In one story a young person is shown to visit an elemental of the nature of *Succubus*. There are people in India who make magnetic connection with elementals of this class. These elementals can bring any article that has been previously touched by the person, no matter how far away. The article may have been locked in a box, but that will not prevent this class of elementals from bringing it for the person, provided that article was touched by him—going by similarity of magnetism.

The *Incubi* and *Succubi* are the names given in the Kabalistic world to the male and female elementals, which are taken as celestial brides and celestial husbands by certain sensitives and mediums. A person can form a psycho-physiological tie with these elementals, which can be broken by an exercise of will power or by a mesmerizer. In India, the *Succubi* are known as *Kama-rupins*, because they can take shapes at will. They are also described as *Pishachas*. These are Ghoods, vampires and soulless elementals.

They are subjective protoplasms, but can be given definite form by the diseased imagination of certain mortals. Thus, unnatural sexual union can arise between a living man and these beings of the Elemental world, due to abnormal excitation of the nervous system and animal passions, combined with unclean imagination in some mediums and sensitives.

These genii or elementals are not “out there,” but are closely linked with man and his destiny, because elementals are the carriers of Karma. They fulfil the will of the gods (Karma) by means of storms, tempests, transitions of fire and earthquakes; likewise by famines and wars, for the punishment of impiety. They are present in our nerves, our marrow, our veins, our arteries, and our very brain substance. Since man is composed of all the Great Elements: Fire, Air, Water, Earth and Ether, the elementals which belong respectively to these elements feel attracted to man by reason of their co-essence. The element which predominates in a given constitution will be the ruling element for that person throughout life. Thus, if a person has a preponderance of the Earthly, or gnomic element, the gnomes will lead him towards assimilating metals, *i.e.*, money and wealth. We are given the assurance that no matter how dangerous, powerful or malignant these genii may be, they have no power in the presence of a single ray of God, *i.e.*, the Divine Principle in man. (*S.D.*, I, 294-95 and fn.)

Study and interpretation of myths, fairy tales, fables and folklores form an aspect of the third object of U.L.T. “Popular folk-lore and traditions, however fanciful at times, when sifted may lead to the discovery of long-lost but important secrets of nature,” writes H.P.B. She says that it is our duty to oppose superstition and belief in miracles or anything supernatural, and to keep alive in man his spiritual intuition.

(Concluded)

SOME REFLECTIONS ON MEDITATION

SO MUCH has been written in popular works concerning meditation, concentration and will-force that one is confused as to how and where exactly to make a beginning. It seems that they are mental disciplines and are indispensable as the first steps in living the “higher life.”

This vast subject is an aspect of the spiritual discipline, which cannot be fully covered, nor could be given as hard and fast instructions, in few pages of this magazine. To begin with, we must have clear definition, necessary for understanding and for venturing into such an abstract pursuit.

Concentration is the inherent power of the “inner man” which can be used by all men at all times for whatsoever objects pursued. For, it is simply the willful state of consciousness and thought to focus attention on a point, a seed-idea, an outer object, an everyday act or largely on a burning desire!

It is the con-centralizing energy of mind and heart placed upon and circled around a definite subject or object. However, this power is not to be limited to the plane of the mind. The whole being, including the body, mind, emotions and the Soul may gather together in the state of concentration, with different intensity and duration, depending on the training of this faculty. While engaging in any worthwhile pursuits one may concentrate aspiration and will-energy for successful results. The power by itself is neutral but one’s moral responsibility still lies in employing this god-given faculty, like any other, towards *proper objectives*, such as obtaining self-control, overcoming weakness, in search of truth, or as the highest pursuit of consecrating oneself to the Divine. In any case, one must desire it ardently, for, that gives strength and direction toward the goal.

The powers of concentration and will are indispensable for the purpose of successful meditation. The inherent power of the Will is necessary for persistence in maintaining the focus of attention on the object of Meditation. All human powers are available free whether

employed for higher or lower purposes. Here, the sacred energy of the soul, the liberated energy of Will is available for high aspiration and elevating contemplation if not frittered away and usurped by personal desires and wasteful activities. The latter is the chief obstacle to the practice of meditation and for living the higher life.

The process of meditation or simple concentration on an idea (or words), may begin at the habitual level of personal consciousness or mind, but may be made to rise in intensity and depth to the higher state of Egoic consciousness, if such be the aspiration of the Soul. Of these two states of consciousness, personal and higher Manasic, one alone can surface whether one functions at the intellectual level or from the vantage ground of the higher mind. But the choice is with the individual, and it requires training.

Meditation is largely a mental movement, at least at the start, using thought, feeling and Will, for developing the subject of one’s enquiry. It does lead to some knowledge and understanding, and a certain sense of fulfilment and peace, if pursued to its logical end. The qualitative results will depend not only upon the *object* on which the heart is set, but also on the penetrating power of concentration, and the capacity to crystallize one’s thoughts. One has to learn, first of all, to calm the mind and to engage the Will in order to prepare the quiet ground for developing the “seed-idea” one wills to explore. Mr. Judge wrote in one of his “*Letters*,”: “Calmness is the one thing necessary for the spirit to be heard.”

There are different methods of meditation depending on the goal, motive, knowledge, inclination and experience. We may describe one common type used to quiet the mind first, for receptivity and clarity.

One has to take the position to bring calmness and be self-possessed. It is with this object the consciousness quietly stands aside and simply watches the natural movements of the mind as the thought-pictures rise and pass away, without attending to them or suppressing them. This calm non-participation gradually helps to silence oneself sufficiently so that one becomes ready to take up for

consideration, any chosen proposition or theme, a sacred word or an image, an object of devotion, etc. Such a seed idea for the field of contemplation is then entertained uninterruptedly up to the logical end.

Mr. Judge writes: “Here is advice given by many Adepts: every day and as often as you can, and on going to sleep and as you wake—think, think, think, on the truth that you are not body, brain or astral man, but that you are THAT, and THAT is the Supreme Soul.” We are helped in arriving at such realization by letting the thought-images, feelings, etc., to surface on the screen of the mind, and passively observing them as witness, without involvement. At this stage there is no effort made to interfere or control. The impressions are allowed to pass before the mind’s eye, and are recognized to be not the true self, the observer. This is one way to associate and gradually familiarize oneself with the Ego, and distinguish all else that may come up. Such passive self-examination is useful in recognizing the real Self as truly apart from the physical, mental, emotional and psychic movements, arising and passing on like the clouds passing across the ever-present “blue sky.”

We are habitually identified with our thoughts, our preferences and our feelings. A seeker after wisdom has to develop the faculty of discernment which can discriminate the personal self involved with itself from the real Ego who is the perceiver of things within and without. And this is the form of concentration which can be carried on also during our waking life. Only then one can detect and control one’s lower nature, if we learn to be vigilant. This also helps during the practice of self-examination at the end of the day, in the light of higher values or transcendental virtues. This may also be regarded as a form of meditation and a method of self-purification.

What is the prime importance of concentration and meditation? One learns to train one’s whole being into the state of concentration and alertness as against one’s habitual lax tendencies. This is an indispensable character trait necessary for success in any pursuit. Seekers who practice regular meditation experience slow inner

transformation, if it is pursued with proper motive and method. We are helped to become detached from mundane objects and concerns that have a hold on our unregenerated nature. A sincere seeker succeeds in building an island of pure thoughts in his mind. With regular meditation one’s latent power of discernment and the higher faculty of discrimination come into activity. One learns to detect and reject the non-essentials and to value the essentials that promote the higher purposes of existence. One may use the Will and Thought to be fixed on the Truth, eternal and real, behind all, and attain to it. True knowledge can surface only under this condition. Meditation as a form of ardent worship, is a sure way, for a purified mind, to turn to the Divine within and to open oneself fully to its influence. A state of passivity and unguarded practices may lure one away from true illumination. Meditation is like “going into a retreat” without deserting one’s station in life and duty to men and nature.

The chief condition for success in living the higher life and for the culture of concentration is purity of consciousness. “Purity is the prime condition in which consecration becomes entire and effective.” The first two steps in Patanjali’s Yoga system are *Yama* and *Niyama*. The remaining steps, if practiced to the exclusion of the first two steps, may not bear any result or may lead to *Hatha-yoga*. The mirror of the lower mind must be cleaned by removing the dust of attachment, dust of ignorance, dust of prejudice and biases, dust of emotions, so that it can reflect the pure light from within. Self purification involves self-effacement.

Habitual concentration, *i.e.*, a state of attentiveness and determination, is enlisted to overcome our *tamasic* (sloth) and *rajasic* (forceful) qualities, which are easily aroused by the outer lures of life. True sattvic natures are orderly and freed from moral, psychic and magnetic taints. People who are capable of surrendering themselves to the Divine and to the welfare of others alone can become natural contemplators or “Dhyanis.”

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: Theosophy recommends that every earnest seeker must examine his words and deeds, and his thoughts and feelings, and hence genuine concentration and meditation, *conscious* and *cautious*, upon one's lower self in the light of the inner divine man is an excellent thing. How does one go about practising such self-examination?

Answer: We do not grow or progress if we do not have a place in our lives for self-examination. Nature forces us at the time of death to take review of the life just ended. Similarly, we must set apart a fixed time at the end of the day to examine all our activities in terms of our motives, thoughts, feelings and actions during the day. As Seneca puts it:

We should every night call ourselves to an account: What infirmity have I mastered today? What passion opposed? What temptation resisted? What virtue acquired? Our vices will abate of themselves if they be brought every day to the shrift.

We may begin with the morning and analyze ourselves hour by hour. We are asked to note our good points as well as our weak ones, taking the position of a witness or observer, and not make excuses or allowances for our slips and blunders. It is precisely because we have a tendency to *explain away* our mistakes, that it takes us time to detect our faults, even though we pursue self-examination. Only when there is sincerity of heart and intellectual honesty are we able to evaluate our weaknesses.

As one advances on the spiritual path, it ceases to be an ordinary

self-examination of outer actions, but involves scrutiny of motives behind them. An outward action may be very good but the motive may not be very pure. We may not perform any obvious evil act, say, of stealing or taking bribe, etc.; but these vices appear in us in their subtle form. Gandhiji said that you may not steal; but when you are found in possession of something which you do not need, you are a thief. You are holding on to that which can belong to and benefit another and in that sense you are a thief. *Light on the Path* points out that the vices of the ordinary men pass through a subtle transformation and reappear with changed aspect in the heart of the disciple, which are difficult to detect and hence it requires *deeper introspection*. For example, we may give money to other people with an expectation that they in turn would help us in our hour of need. When we have overcome this tendency, we may find ourselves giving away money because it brings us name and fame. *Or*, having given a lot of money, we want to control the affairs and thus are seeking power without knowing it. If not any of these things, then we may find that we have a desire that people should love us for our help and good works. These are personal and selfish desires. It is the astringent power of self. In the book *Living the Life*, Shri B. P. Wadia tells us that ambition must be transmuted into altruism. There will be ambition for wealth, power, fame and love; all of which have to be transmuted. When we have driven them out from their outermost strongholds, they recede and appear in their subtle form on inner strongholds which we need to detect and conquer. *Light on the Path* says: "You are a part of the world; in giving it food you feed yourself. Yet, in even this thought there lurks a great danger."

We are also asked to compare ourselves with others. When we compare ourselves impersonally with other pilgrim souls we may discover in them the qualities that we need to cultivate. Calmness and humility of another person may inspire us to cultivate these qualities in ourselves. We would also discover that each person has his faults and hence we would not get disheartened by our own faults or shortcomings. When we examine our own thoughts and

actions and that of other people, we are asked to do so in the light of *Paramitas* (transcendental virtues) or “firmly established principles.” For example, when we meet one, two or even three individuals who are very trusting, but were betrayed by others; we may hasten to conclude that one must never trust another. This would be judging by “isolated instances” without the help of firmly established principles. The firmly established principle says: “Trust is the best of relationships.” Similarly, when we see a truthful and honest person persecuted, we must remind ourselves that “truth always triumphs in the long run.” Otherwise, our judgment based on these isolated instances is likely to mislead us into adopting wrong attitude.

No self-examination should end with the noting of the foibles and frailties of the lower self. One last act in the ritual of introspection should always be performed: the higher nature must be gentle to the lower, like a mother who, after chiding the child who has done wrong, speaks soothing words and encourages him to do better, for *he can do better*. Our *Kama-Manas* is a pupil and a learner. To “raise the self by the Self” is the real business of life.

Question: A spiritual seeker experiences that his duty to his Higher Self, *i.e.*, the duties involved in living the spiritual life or theosophical work, often seem to produce conflict of duties in personal life. How should he resolve the conflict?

Answer: The Sanskrit word for “duty” is *Dharma* or the property of the Soul. Whatever is one’s *Dharma* it must manifest in action. For instance, *Dharma* or property of fire is to burn, which is manifested in action. Moreover, fire not only gives warmth but also burns up and destroys. Our duties and actions must be such that they give warmth and comfort to others, but at the same time consume and destroy the personal ties and possessions of our own lower nature, writes Shri B. P. Wadia. Theosophical ideas are very clear. One is not allowed to desert family duty in order to devote himself almost entirely to Theosophical work or to spiritual pursuits. A great emphasis is laid on performance of family duties. Besides fulfilling

one’s obligations as wife, father, mother, child, etc., family duty consists in cultivating and elevating emotional nature of oneself and other members of the family and strengthening noble qualities in one’s self and others.

We have to perform all our family duties in addition to the Theosophic work. And in order to do justice to both, we have to do the balancing. In the article, “Musings on the True Theosophist’s Path,” Mr. Judge mentions that as you strive earnestly to live the life, your cares will increase and your family will make more demands upon you. The extra time and energy must come by making adjustment in your own nature. As a result, we will find that we are compelled to give up some of our personal habits and adopt some ascetic rules. On the physical plane it may be in terms of practicing moderation in eating and sleeping. At a mental level, we might practice mortification by reading something ennobling every day. On the psychic level it may mean not watching television for three to four hours in the evening in order to unwind. The desire for going out of town will have to be controlled. In the *Friendly Philosopher*, Mr. Crosbie tells us that it is better to take relaxation or to attend to “social” matters or Art Exhibit at other than meeting times. He writes that at certain stage of his student life, the Disciple often feels that getting away alone somewhere with regularity helps him to keep his *psychic balance*. But he says that it is not a good thing to depend upon externals for balance. It does not mean that we have to give up recreation or our good habits; but we have to be able to do without them, if necessary. While our psychic nature requires suitable “food” such as may be found in artistic pleasures, as of music, painting, dance, drama, books, gardening, etc., we must train ourselves in such a way that when any or all such pleasures are karmically denied to us, we are able to accept it without a murmur. At the same time let us realize that we must do justice to our own soul-self. We recognize that body needs nourishment and so does our psychic nature. But so also, spiritual endeavours, theosophical study and service provide food for the mind and soul. As we develop discrimination we are

able to see to which duty priority is to be given.

Often we experience conflict because we have been performing many tasks in the name of duty. “That which is not *necessary* for you to do is not your duty.” Lending a helping hand is our duty, but that “help” depends upon our knowledge and capacity to understand, so that we are able to help. Often in helping another we end up doing another person’s job instead of just aiding him. We are required to make the choice between duty and inclination. We are inclined to perform certain tasks which are not our duties. That which is necessary to do alone is regarded as duty. It does estrange us sometimes from family and friends. But if we live truly according to Spiritual principles the bonds and bondage of Karma will fall away, writes Shri Wadia.

It is very important for a spiritual seeker to learn to conserve time and energy and above all to use one’s leisure to recoup one’s own strength and magnetism. Else, he will find that soon the quality of his work has begun to deteriorate.

THE ENTANGLED creatures, attached to worldliness, talk only of worldly things in the hour of death. What will it avail such men if they outwardly repeat the name of God, take a bath in the Ganges, or visit sacred places? If they cherish within themselves attachment to the world, it must show up at the hour of death. While dying they rave nonsense....The singing parrot, when at ease, repeats the holy names of Radha and Krishna, but when it is seized by a cat it utters its own natural sound; it squawks, “Kaa! Kaa!” It is said in the *Gita* that whatever one thinks in the hour of death, one becomes that in the after-life.

—SRI RAMAKRISHNA

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

On his recent visit to the Great Wall of China the author, Jug Suraiya, was reminded of Franz Kafka’s short story, “The Great Wall,” which is an allegorical account of the building of this Great Wall whose purpose, supposedly, was “to keep out the barbarians from the North.” In Kafka’s story many generations of men and women that were engaged in building the barricade were cut off from rest of the world. They grew old and died in isolation, and were replaced by their children and grand-children. Only after a gap of a generation or two, this community of construction workers would get a message from the emperor, sitting in the capital city, which was so far away from the Wall that the message had to be relayed by a series of couriers, and was always conveyed orally. The workers had no assurance that the self-proclaimed messenger was in fact in the employ of the Emperor, or was only an imposter. Then again, even if the messenger was genuine, the message or the orders could have easily got garbled in being passed on from mouth to mouth. It was also possible that by the time the message reached the workers that particular Emperor would have died, to be replaced by a new Emperor who might issue entirely different orders. The workers on the Wall had no choice but to obey the latest orders, in order to avoid imperial retribution, and hoping that they were doing the right thing.

Kafka’s parable about the Wall has been interpreted to imply the inscrutability of the powers that shape our existence. Who are we? What is the purpose and meaning of everything, if at all there are such things as purpose and meaning? Now and then there are messengers, in the form of Messiahs, gurus and saints, coming to us from an infinitely far-off Emperor telling us what we should do and why, and we have no assurance of their authenticity. We do not know if the Emperor [God] really exists. We do not have answers to many of our questions, and yet, like the workers on Wall we lead our lives the best we can, taking full responsibility for what we do.

“The only thing that is real is the next decision to make, the next block of stone you place on the Wall,” writes Jug Suraiya (*The Speaking Tree [The Times of India]*, November 13, 2011)

It is true that to the majority of us, who are engaged in building the wall of a self-enclosed universe, the purpose and meaning of life is not known. The building of the wall might well be the metaphor for life which is full of repetitive tasks, which we seem to be performing day-in and day-out, not understanding their value. The truth is that as the struggle for survival subsides, the question arises: survival for what? Most of our questions could be answered if we study the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation.

It is difficult to be *certain* even regarding physical occurrences and phenomena. Does the sun *really* rise in the east and set in the west? It only appears to. We experience similar uncertainty regarding moral and philosophical questions. What is the yardstick for ascertaining that the message and the messenger are genuine or bogus? Any philosophy that is presented as a “revelation,” can never be a true philosophy. A true philosophy must be impersonal, universal in its application and must be true at all times. It must enhance the feelings of goodwill and brotherhood. Similarly a true teacher always presents the truth in the spirit, “Thus have I heard,” and leaves it open to be accepted or rejected. In deciding the validity of any philosophy, we must ask ourselves two questions: Does it satisfy my reason? What is my heart response? When we encounter truth, there is an intuitive feeling: “This is true.” “Intuition is the direct cognition of truth in all things.” Mr. Judge explains that we have “within us a series of wires whose vibrations are all true, but which will not be vibrated except by those words and propositions which are in themselves true.”

As for the existence of Emperor [God], belief in God’s existence rests mainly on the anthropic principle, while non-belief rests on unaccountability of so much pain and wickedness. God is Law, and it is not difficult to see that our universe is an orderly universe of Law. The anthropic principle seems to emphasize the existence

of intelligence behind the orderliness of the universe. There is evidence of law and order from all branches of science. For instance, if the electromagnetic force were even slightly weaker than the gravitational force, stars would have burnt a million times faster, burying the universe in darkness a long time ago.

“Yes” is the most powerful three-letter-word. Life constantly throws us opportunities to grow and expand if we would say “Yes.” The more we say it, the more swiftly and smoothly does our authentic life unfold, writes Aparna Sharma, a writer, seeker and an educational consultant by profession. She was inspired to reflect upon the power of “Yes” by the movie, *Yes Man*, in which a withdrawn, sullen negative banker is shaken up by an inspirational guru, who tells him, “You say ‘no’ to life and therefore you are not living.” He makes a covenant with himself to say “Yes” to every request and opportunity, because when you say “Yes” to things, you embrace the possible. He began to say “Yes” to everything, and that included learning Korean, taking flying lessons, learning to play the guitar, and dating a Persian woman, amongst many other things. When we say “Yes” to things that really matter, we are enabled to come out of our comfort zone. Every day gives us a chance to come out of our shells.

Saying “No” requires no effort. It comes up spontaneously, almost like a natural defense mechanism. On the other hand, a deep attitudinal shift is required in saying “Yes.” Saying “Yes” requires courage and a deep level of commitment. “Being a timid person wary of taking on challenges, it took me a long time to even start imbibing the idea. But from the moment I said ‘yes,’ my life started gaining momentum. Long-standing dead-locks started opening up, the inertia in my mind started to melt,” confesses Sharma. So far, she has learnt to say “yes” to five things: learning something new; stepping out of her comfort zone; making choices and taking responsibility; Helping others unconditionally, and helping myself.

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you did not do than by the ones you did do...Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.” wrote Mark Twain. We are meant to travel along a spiritual pathway, and not remain stunted in one place for very long time, writes Sharma. (*Life Positive*, November 2011)

“Yes” is an affirmation. We must affirm the presence of divinity within and without us. We must affirm the working of a just and impartial law in the universe. We must affirm the universal ethics. We must affirm, over and over again, the inherent perfectibility of man and the existence of the Masters, lest we slip into a state of denial. We have to learn to say “Yes” to life, *i.e.*, instead of sinking into apathy and indifference, one has to keep up the zest for life. In a deeper sense, saying “Yes” implies accepting the woes of birth. Since the Law of Karma is just and merciful, there cannot be a misshapen day. So, instead of complaining or grumbling there must be acceptance or resignation. We might even go a step further and say, “This is not only what I deserved, but what in fact I desired.” This is an attitude of supreme surrender, of unswerving faith in the Law of Karma—an inward stance necessary to cultivate by every true spiritual aspirant. With such attitude, we will not resort to any prayers or propitiatory ceremonies, to cause to deviate the course of the Law and dodge the karmic consequences. It is total acceptance that “my own comes back to me.”

Saying “Yes” to change is even more essential for spiritual growth. We resist change, because it involves going from one state of consciousness to another. It involves surrendering personal will to the divine will. It involves leaving behind the familiar in order to obtain spiritual perfection, which to us is a mere abstraction. “Stagnation and death is the future of all that vegetates without a change. And how can there be any change for the better without proportionate suffering during the preceding stage,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 475)

Jugaad is recognized worldwide as a very Indian trait. *Wikipedia* describes it as “an improvised arrangement or work-around, which has to be used because of lack of resources.” In rural India there are *jugaad* vehicles, such as a diesel engine fitted to a cart or rickshaw. India has invented several low cost implements that has inspired management gurus across the world, such as the \$800 electrocardiogram, the \$24 water filter, the \$2,500 car, etc. In India, *jugaad* or improvisation finds its way in every sphere of life. Apart from technology, we have the example of *jugaad* in the Barefoot college started by Bunker Roy to train poorest women to become professionals, even though they do not know how to read or write. There are examples of “*jugaad*” in everyday life, when for instance, a driver manages to be in two places at the same time, when a cook manages even when one has run out of the essential ingredients, or when an electrician resolves a seemingly impossible demand for light fitment, and then one hears of being *jugaadu* enough to beat back the world.

“*Jugaad* is not a negative trait to be used to invent shortcuts to success through corrupt or illegal means. *Jugaad* is a very promising quality, hailed worldwide by management experts as one of the reasons for India’s rapid economic growth.” In his book *The Rise and Rise of Jugaad*, Virendra Kapoor writes about India producing world class engineers, doctors, lawyers and teachers, despite poor infrastructure, average teachers and lack of libraries. In a recent survey 81 per cent of Indian businessmen named *jugaad* as the key to their success. *Jugaad* is the daily struggle of trying to achieve what we can within the given constraints rather than despairing, writes Vinita Dwara Nangia (*Times Life!* [*Sunday Times of India*], November 27, 2011)

Philosophically, *jugaad* could be a grand concept which enables us to make the best of what life brings to us. It is playing to the best of your ability, the cards dealt by life, rather than waiting for the best or winning cards. Every painful or unfavourable situation, every difficult person is raw material at one’s disposal. We are expected

not only to triumph over it but also learn the necessary lessons. Mr. Judge says that sometimes a pure and powerful soul decides to take birth in painful and adverse situations, so as to learn fortitude and sympathy, and to eliminate defects.

There must be recognition, as Mr. Crosbie points out, “In the great economy of Law and Nature, each being is exactly where he needs to be to eradicate defects; all necessary conditions are present for his growth. The only question lies with him: will he take them as ‘pain’ or as opportunities?...We must, then, assure ourselves that nothing can possibly overwhelm us. It is better to assume a cheerful attitude, to cultivate in one’s self a feeling of confidence, and endeavour to impart it to our nearest.”

In fact, life becomes worthwhile and meaningful only when we learn to become *jugaadu*. Every life is meaningful, provided we change our attitude towards what life brings to us. Life of a teacher, a businessman or a sweeper could be meaningful provided each lives his life with the aim of self-actualization and self-transcendence.

ALL the hundred and twenty four thousand prophets were sent to preach one word. They bade the people say “Allah” and devoted themselves to Him. Those who heard this word with the ear alone, let it go out by the other ear; but those who heard it with their souls imprinted it on their souls and repeated it until it penetrated their hearts and souls, and their whole being became this word. They were made independent of the pronunciation of the word, they were released from the sound and letters. Having understood the spiritual meaning of this word, they became so absorbed in it that they were no more conscious of their own non-existence.

—ABU ‘L-FADL HASAN OF SARAKHS