

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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ON GENEROSITY

GENEROSITY is defined as the quality of being generous. To be “generous” means to be liberal in giving, characterised by a noble or kindly spirit. Generosity of spirit certainly refers to the manner or the inner attitude with which anything is given. Hence, generosity seems to include, over and above the intention of benefiting or helping another, also the attitude with which that help is given. There is generous-mindedness or generosity of mind, which includes other than physical charity. It means being charitable to the weaknesses of others. Instead of seeing follies, weaknesses and negativities of others, a generous-minded person sees all that is positive or redeeming in the other person. Our normal tendency is to spot the defects and faults. A teacher showed to the class a large sheet of white paper with a small black dot in the centre. When asked, what they could see, the students unanimously replied that they saw a black dot. None could see the large sheet of white paper! The generous-minded are the ones more concerned about the debts they owe to others rather than what others owe to them. To the generous-hearted, forgiving an offence comes easy. There is a natural sensitivity concerning emotional needs, hopes and expectations of others. An act of charity is often marred by an expectation of return, or even the wish to see in the recipient a feeling of obligation. Charity, as we know it, is mostly out of the surplus, and with the hidden desire to earn merit, or acquiring name, fame and recognition. The

charity given by a generous-hearted person is not only free from such feelings, but is in fact, invigorated by *personal* sympathy; *personal* mercy and kindness; *personal* interest in the welfare of those who suffer, which is more likely to arouse the feeling of gratitude in the receiver. The whole difference between the act of charity and the act of generosity is beautifully summarised by Kahlil Gibran, showing that an element of spontaneity and selflessness characterises a generous act. The giver possesses little and gives it all. “Generous” actions are worthy of gratitude rather than worthy of praise. Thus:

It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding;

You often say, “I would give, but only to the deserving....”

And who are you that men should rend their bosom and unveil their pride, that you may see their worth naked and their pride unabashed?

See first that you yourself deserve to be a giver, and an instrument of giving.

For in truth, it is life that gives unto life—while you, who deem yourself a giver, are but a witness.

It is only a person of a generous mind and heart that is able to help others to overcome in themselves faults and weaknesses. “It is true that the ‘door to the Masters’ lies through Their work, and in no other way. You remember that W.Q.J. wrote, ‘Generosity and love are the abandonment of self.’ The Masters love humanity and all creation; Their generosity and love are not stinted, nor tainted with selfishness. We can get rid of our hindrances only by following the Path They indicate. That Path little by little rids us of our besetting ‘sins.’” We are given a method for reaching the Masters and overcoming our faults. That method is to follow the Path shown by them, which is the Path of Altruism. They work for humanity through their unlimited generosity and love. The moment we concentrate on helping others with love and generosity, without being partial or holding back our help from people that we may not like much, that

moment we are enabled to separate ourselves from our lower nature.

Since charity includes giving of both material and immaterial things, the spirit of generosity must pervade all forms of giving, which includes, besides material possessions, giving of knowledge, sympathy, protection, as also one’s time and energy. “One has to be cautious about giving out knowledge, pouring out affection, or spending money—all these are the Soul’s possessions which under *Karma*, at this period of time, are in one’s hands,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia. We must give knowledge with all humility, and not try to pose as a little guru. We must give love, unconditionally. We should not spend money for sense-gratification or self-glorification, but cultivate the attitude that we are trustees of our possessions. It is wrong to be a spendthrift, just as it is wrong to be a miser. We must avoid the extremes of extravagance and stinginess, but follow the golden mean of generosity and frugality. Generosity, in a true sense, is the spirit of giving, tempered by *Viveka* (discrimination) born of *Vairagya* (detachment). It is possible for the Masters to acquire gold, silver and wealth, but they will not bestow these as gifts on the poor and starving, nor do they use their power to heal indiscriminately. They will not practise compassion by violating the law of *Karma*, nor do they pour their knowledge, but give it out to right people, at the right time. Their generosity rests on the foundation of wisdom, so that they use their “possessions” with the right knowledge and the right motive in the service of humanity. However, “our attitude to money could be *Kama-Manasic*, or *Manasic*, or *Buddhi-Manasic*. There are students who think of their own comfort in the present, and their own security in the future, and give of money what can be conveniently spared. The Cause comes third or fourth. We are asked to place ‘Theosophy first’ in time, money and labour or work,” writes Shri Wadia. Stinginess is the direct opposite of generosity. But a frugal person is someone who uses his possessions carefully.

Stingy people are always calculating and seldom give without thinking. They are extremely reluctant to spend money on themselves

or on others. Hence, there is a humorous sloka in Sanskrit which describes a stingy person as the most generous and charitable person in the world, because when he dies, he leaves all his wealth for others, without using any of it for himself! St. Paul cautions, “For it is in giving that we receive.” To this effect there is a poem called “Kripon” or “Stingy” by Rabindranath Tagore, which is a parable. The poem says that one day the poet-beggar was begging from door to door in the village path, and saw a golden chariot coming towards him with the King of all Kings (God) seated in it. The chariot came near him and stopped, and the King came down from the chariot and stood before the poet-beggar. He felt that now he will receive something from him, but contrary to his expectation the King held out his hand and asked for alms. The poet-beggar thought that the King was making fun of him. He took out the smallest grain of corn from his bag and offered it to the King reluctantly. At the end of the day when he went home and emptied his bag on the floor, to his great surprise he found a little grain of gold in the heap of alms. Then he realized his foolishness. He wished that he should have had the heart to give his *all* to the King because then he would have got it all back in gold. God sometimes comes down on earth in the guise of a poor beggar to test a man if he is ready to sacrifice his all to God.

If we get help in this life, it is because we had given help to others. We may not be aware, but in every effort we made, to give knowledge and open another’s mind to Truth, we were helped ourselves. “Those pearls you found for another and gave to him, you really retained for yourself in the act of benevolence.” When we live so as to help others, materially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually, we are gradually enabled to overcome the “sense of separateness” and are fitted to appreciate the Truth, writes Mr. Judge.

We could be “stingy” about our appreciation of others. H.P.B. advises, “to rather sin through exaggerated praise than through too little appreciation of one’s neighbour’s efforts.” We could be “stingy” about sharing our love and affection. For most of us, our love is

restricted to our family, friends and relatives. Such “narrow” love becomes a “barrier” to Spiritual life. The process of spiritual development consists in making the personal, animal nature in us subservient to the divine nature, and the first requirement for achieving this is “the entire eradication of selfishness in all forms, and the cultivation of broad, generous sympathy in, and effort for, the good of others.” One of the Upanishads describes a spiritually perplexed person to be a miserly man, who is unable to solve the problems of life, and therefore, he dies none the wiser, without attaining to self-realisation, in spite of having lived the life as a human being. “Difficult it is to obtain birth as a human being,” but having obtained it, if we do not utilize this opportunity, then we are misers, because just as a miser is overly attached to his money, we are overly attached to our possessions, and are greatly affectionate towards our near and dear ones, or to our society and country, to the exclusion of the rest of humanity.

In the second chapter of the *Gita*, we read that Arjuna, too, is confused and refuses to fight the righteous war, and is said to be suffering from *karpanyadosha*. It has been explained as a defect of the mind which tends to narrow down the mind, as opposed to spiritual wisdom which tends to expand or enrich the mind with courage and confidence. This restriction of the mind arises from the narrow identification with one’s family, community or nation. This restrictive and separative view arises from the poverty of mind. A miserly person is the opposite of a generous person. The former restricts his charity to himself and a few near him, while the latter extends his charity to all. A sloka in Sanskrit from an Upanishad reads: *ayam nijah paro veti gan ana laghucetasam; udaracaritanam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam*. This means, “this is mine, that is his, say the small-minded; the wise (those of generous character) believe that the entire world is a small family.” To be able to fight the righteous war against our lower nature, we must expand the circle of love and affection, to include the whole world. In the righteous war, which has to be fought by all those who aspire for

spiritual perfection, the “friends and relatives,” that must be fought and conquered, represent our pet theories, our narrow views, our legitimate desires and our harmless habits. At another level, this sloka implies cultivating an all-inclusive attitude, so as to recognize unity in diversity, since all that lives and breathes is an emanation from the same divine origin, the *Brahman*, the Ultimate Reality.

“A generous man is free because he owns his money, while a stingy man does not deserve to be called free because his money owns him,” teach the wise. A genuine act of generosity benefits the doer and inculcates the spirit of generosity in the receiver. “Mere expenditure of money is nothing, but the really altruistic, unselfish use of it is much. Every time such a person thus expends for the good of others, he thereby excites in all who are benefited a sympathy and a portion, small or large, of love. This cannot be wiped out, any more than an evil act, until it is exhausted by a corresponding action on the part of the person who thus gets the benefit. Hence such a millionaire necessarily makes to himself friends who will one day in some life benefit him,” writes Mr. Judge.

Unless people’s minds and hearts are charitable, few people pouring forth their wealth is not of much use. Thus, if people lack integrity and feel that it is right for them to cheat and prosper—though others may suffer—the mere physical acts of charity are not enough to bring about peace and happiness. Poverty indicates that those who “have,” the rich, have neglected their social duty by leading lives of careless indifference, material luxury and selfish indulgence. “The function of Theosophists is to open men’s hearts and understandings to charity, justice, and generosity, attributes which belong specifically to the human kingdom and are natural to man when he has developed the qualities of a human being. Theosophy teaches the animal-man to be a human-man; and when people have learnt to think and feel as truly human beings should feel and think, they will act humanely, and works of charity, justice, and generosity will be done spontaneously by all,” writes H. P. Blavatsky.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE STRANGER—I

THE STRANGER is the first novel written by Albert Camus, published in French in 1942. It was also published in England as *The Outsider*. The novel has been translated four times into English, and also into numerous other languages. It has been considered a classic of twentieth-century literature. Albert Camus was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1957 for his contribution to French and world literature. The title character and the narrator of the novel is Meursault, a young man, an indifferent French settler in Algiers, the capital and largest city of Algeria. He is described as “a citizen of France domiciled in North Africa,” who hardly partakes of the traditional Mediterranean culture. Meursault receives a telegram informing him of his mother’s death, who has been living in an old age home in the country. He takes time off from work to attend her funeral, but he shows none of the indications of grief or mourning that the people around him expect from someone in his situation. This tone of aloofness runs all through his relationships, both platonic and romantic. The novel is famous for its first lines: “Mother died today. Or may be it was yesterday. I do not know.” After reaching the old age home, he finds that his mother’s body has already been sealed in the coffin. Hence, he declines the caretaker’s offer to open the coffin. That night, before the burial, Meursault keeps vigil over his mother’s body. He smokes a cigarette, drinks coffee, and falls asleep. The funeral takes place on an unbearably hot day, after that he happily arrives back in Algiers. He reports that he remembers little of the funeral.

After arriving in Algiers, the very next day after his mother’s funeral, Meursault meets his former co-worker, Marie, and the two swim together, watch a comedy film and begin to have an intimate relationship. Over next few days, Meursault helps his neighbour and friend, Raymond Sintes, who is rumoured to be a pimp, to get revenge on his girlfriend, who he feels has been cheating on him.

Raymond requests Meursault to write a letter inviting the girl over to Raymond's apartment, to meet him, so that Raymond can then throw her out. Meursault listens to Raymond but is unfazed by any feelings of empathy, and therefore he does not express concern that Raymond's girlfriend would be emotionally hurt by this plan, and agrees to write the letter. He considers other people, either interesting or annoying, or feels nothing for them at all.

When Raymond's girlfriend visits him on a Sunday, he tries to throw her out. She retaliates, so Raymond beats her. A policeman arrives and takes him to the police station. He asks Meursault to testify that the girlfriend had been unfaithful, when he is called to the police station. When Meursault testifies, Raymond is let off with a warning.

Meursault's boss asks him if he would like to work in a new branch of the firm that was likely to be opened in Paris. At that same time Marie asks him if he wants to get married. In both the cases Meursault does not have any strong feelings of his own, but is willing to move or get married if that will please the other party. Meursault learns from his neighbour that some people had said "nasty things" about him after he sent his mother to an old age home. Meursault is surprised to learn about this negative impression of his actions.

The following Sunday, Raymond invites Meursault and Marie to a beach house owned by one of his friends. There they see two Arabs, one of them is the brother of Raymond's spurned girlfriend. They confront Raymond and his friends, and the brother wounds Raymond with a knife before running away. Later, Meursault walks back along the beach alone with a revolver he has taken from Raymond to prevent him from acting rashly. He encounters the brother of Raymond's mistress. He shoots when the Arab flashes his knife, and for no apparent reason, he shoots the man four more times after a pause.

Meursault is put into jail for having killed the Arab. Though he admits having killed the Arab, his lack of remorse is intriguing for

his lawyer. The prosecuting attorney focuses more on Meursault's inability or unwillingness to cry at his mother's funeral than on details of the murder. Meursault's quietness and passivity are seen to demonstrate his criminality. He denounces Meursault as a soul-less monster who deserves to die for his crime. The Attorney shows a crucifix and demands that Meursault should put his faith in God. When Meursault insists that he does not believe in God, the attorney dubs him "Monsieur Antichrist."

Meursault is taken to the courthouse for his trial. He is found guilty and sentenced to death by beheading. He is put in a new cell. He repeatedly refuses to see the prison chaplain, but one day the chaplain visits him anyway. Meursault bluntly tells him that he does not believe in God, and is not even interested in the subject. The chaplain endeavours to lead Meursault away from atheism or maybe even apatheism. He attacks the chaplain's worldview and tells him that in confronting the certainty of the nearness of his death, he has had insights about life and death, which he is sure, is beyond the insight possessed by the chaplain. He also tells him that although what we say, do or feel can cause our deaths to happen at different times, or under different circumstances, none of these things can change the fact that we are all condemned to die one day. So, nothing ultimately matters. He declares that he is right in believing in a meaningless, purely physical world. He begins to feel that human existence has no real meaning. He has lost all hope, and is able to open his heart to "the benign indifference of the universe." He decides that he has been, and still is, happy. His final assertion is that a large hateful crowd at his execution will end his loneliness and bring everything to a consummate end.

At one level, the novel depicts the dispute between the Arab residents of Algeria and the French colonies in that nation. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Albert Camus wrote *The Stranger* "from a place of tragedy and suffering. His father had died in World War I, and the unfolding carnage of World War II forced a questioning of life and its meaning." When the French

occupied Algeria in the first half of the nineteenth century, Camus had witnessed mistreatment of native Algerians, which was opposed by the nationalist movement. It is this conflict that is reflected in Meursault's killing of "the Arab."

In this novel Camus also explores the philosophy of Absurdism, which claims that life is not inherently meaningful. There is no predetermined meaning to be found through fields such as, science, religion or philosophy. Each individual, like Meursault in the novel, has to learn to confront and deal with the indifference and meaninglessness of life. The "Absurd" refers to the conflict between the human tendency to seek inherent value and meaning in life, and his inability to find the same with any certainty. Though his philosophy of Absurdism has been considered to be influenced by nihilism and existentialism, according to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Camus did not consider himself a philosopher and also did not subscribe to "arm-chair" philosophy. He believed that thinking alone was not enough, one must live the life. He accepted the existential thought that life has no inherent meaning, but did not subscribe to the view that advocated the pursuit of personal meaning. His concept of the absurd implores us to accept the meaninglessness of life and "rebel by rejoicing in what life does offer." Meursault in the novel embodies this philosophy, and "does not play the game," *i.e.*, he does not somehow try to see meaning where none exists.

In January 1955 Camus wrote: "In our society any man who does not weep at his mother's funeral runs the risk of being sentenced to death.' I only meant that the hero of my book is condemned because he does not play the game." Some critics feel that the hero of the novel is content to, more or less, just exist. He is concerned with his day-to-day life, but quite indifferent to the death of his mother. This gets conveyed through the opening sentence of the novel: "Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can't be sure." However, in the end, he seems to become aware that instead of "existing," one can and should develop a passion for life.

Camus himself developed the philosophy of Absurdism, and

coined the term "the Absurd." *The Myth of Sisyphus* is his well-known essay that explains the philosophy of the Absurd. *The Stranger* was published before *The Myth of Sisyphus* to provide an example for the Absurd. In "Discussion of the Absurd in Albert Camus' Novels, Essays and Journals," by Melissa Payne, we read: "Meursault is presented to man as a lesson, a lesson to face the absurd situations in life with perseverance to continue to find the beauty in nature and a perseverance to live day to day without having the need of hope.... Each moment carries its worth in itself. Man must not search for a transcendent meaning; he must be content to live each day.... Sartre says that Meursault is the 'stranger confronting the world, man among man' and man against himself, his mind, and the universe.... Even if Meursault is condemned as an enemy to society, and even if the universe is against him, Meursault continues to seek harmony with the universe because he can accept daily living as being valuable within itself; he can accept death. Philosophers assert that when a man gives up his compulsion to change the world and avoid death, he can then find happiness and will then no longer be a stranger to himself (*Camus, Adele King*)."

The philosophy of Absurdism seems to suggest that each individual must learn to confront the indifference and meaninglessness of life, as is done by Meursault, who is quite matter-of-fact about various experiences, such as, his mother's death, the killing of the Arab and also his own trial and death sentence. He has a special kind of freedom and refuses to give reactions as suggested and expected by society, church or tradition and customs. We saw that the jury judged him and found him guilty, not because he had committed a murder, but because he did not cry at his mother's funeral. According to Camus's philosophy of Absurdism a man must be committed to himself, to his own values and should not feel constrained to follow the value judgment of others.

According to the philosophy of Absurdism moral orders have no rational or natural basis. And yet, it does not imply an attitude of moral indifference but rather suggests that one should not despair

even though life lacks any “higher” meaning. Camus upheld the value of justice and human dignity. This attitude is reflected in the novel. When Meursault accepts the “benign indifference of the universe,” he finds peace with himself and with the society that persecutes him.

Human life has no grand purpose or meaning, but the only certain thing in life is the inevitability of death. Since death is certain for all human beings, all lives are meaningless. Here we are able to see that Meursault, and hence the Absurdist philosophy, believes that physical death represents the complete and final end of life. However, the chaplain who came to meet Meursault in the end, believed firmly that there is life after death, and he tells Meursault that the one who does not believe in that must be a miserable person. The chaplain refuses to accept that Meursault did not believe in an afterlife. “I am sure that you have often wished that there was an afterlife,” he tells Meursault. The latter replies that he had wished that there was an afterlife. “Everybody has that wish at times. But that had no more importance than wishing to be rich, or to swim very fast, or to have a better-shaped mouth. It was in the same order of things.” Likewise, at another point he says that if one believes that life is meaningful, it does not make it so. Life only has a meaning which people assign to it. When asked what did he expect should happen in life after death, he replies that he wished that to be the life in which he would be able to remember this life on earth. However, he believes that ultimately, how you live your life does not matter, because each one of us is going to die and that is the end. At one point he says, “when I was a student, I had lots of ambitions like that. But when I had to give up my studies, I learned very quickly that none of it really mattered.”

Camus writes in this novel that we think we choose fate, but “one and the same fate was bound to ‘choose’ not only me but thousands of millions of privileged people,” and that fate is death.

(To be concluded)

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS BUILDING AN INNER CENTRE

OUTER influences do affect us more and more directly. We have to make a deliberate attempt to turn within and study is the first step; remembrance of the Inner World of Masters is the second. Then follow reflection on what is studied and meditation on the Masters. In the Heart is the Lotus—the spiritual Heart—and within that is the Jewel—Manas, Buddhi, Atma. Manas is triple—I mean Higher Manas—and so is Buddhi, and so is Atma. It is a nine-petalled Lotus, so to speak, and the seed is the Jewel—*Mani*, a Diamond. Let the Lotus develop one petal after another—seven branches of knowledge, seven Paramitas, and for us they must evolve side by side. That inner work of gaining the inner wisdom of Compassion, which is peace and light, is your immediate task and these will begin to radiate without.

So, the inner life must go on. What after all are outer turmoils? Real to the brain and the sensations felt, but the Inner Man has to learn to rise above these. Tranquillity comes from within, turmoil from without. The latter we have to endure by adaptability. The pairs of opposites of the 12th Chapter of *The Bhagavad-Gita* have to be seriously and sincerely considered. The world is “too much with us” and tempts us to forget Heaven. Theosophy teaches us how to ascend to Heaven and we must do that.

Steadfastness is an important quality. No doubt you will be cultivating it. Let nothing disturb you. Keep Masters alive in your heart, Their Teachings in your mind. Keep close to the Great Ideas which nourish the embodied soul and purify it of all dross. Elation and depression must and will come like the heat of May and the cold of January, but it is we who feel heat and cold; in themselves heat and cold are natural conditions in the right place; so also with elation and depression and all other pairs of opposites. The very best antidote to these pairs is to be found in the 12th Chapter of

The Bhagavad-Gita—numerous pairs are mentioned and by rising above them Devotion, true *Bhakti*, results. Steadfastness is not possible without a deepening devotion.

So build your Inner Centre. Do not wait. Study and reflection, self-examination and right resolves daily considered will form that Centre. By all means go slow, but emphasize “go” not “slow”! Live in the Centre within, not only in hours of study and reflection, but try even when you are eating food, doing chores. Our food feels better to the tongue, our pots and pans shine brightly by an inner radiance of their own. Believe me, it is true that we can and should bring out the radiance inherent in every person, in every object and in every event. This enriches life, makes it good and beautiful and true.

All the time we must try to take whatever Time develops—the sweet with the sour and even the bitter. It is most annoying when trifles interrupt work, but that too has its value; our spiritual Will develops as we remain steady and calm and are able to turn from one to the other thing, to execute a duty and then to return to the previous one. Spiritual Will requires this and incidentally teaches us to look upon all jobs as of value, and from and through each *Karma* fulfils itself. Patience is a great virtue and is needed at every turn, almost every hour. Do not allow anything to cause annoyance in you. You are building a centre within yourself—a centre of thought, feeling and will in consciousness. Unless we stand the shock of outer impacts by the thousand we are not *pukka* fellows! This is a most important exercise and I know we fail a million times. So take care of the Inner Centre and do not allow things to ruffle you. Put your attention constantly on the Masters, the Great Gurus, who are so patient and forgiving with us personally and with the race as it goes through civilizations. Devotion to the Blessed and Holy Ones who are perfect has to be developed, and They watch with joy as we overcome our small foibles and weaknesses. And are these really small? So piety and patience as holding powers are essential. There is psychic cohesion and not only bodily. In the last chapter of *The Bhagavad-Gita* there is something valuable for us on cohesion and steadfastness.

I find it more and more necessary to live within and to value the outer, including the body, at its true worth. We allow the without to affect us overmuch. “The world is too much with us”—there are some good things in Wordsworth. We must get hold of the within and make it a habit to establish truth and purity as bases for thought; from there we see and value the great without. That will be our firm position and the end in view should be to gaze still inwards and to the beyond where the Self is. More and more of this practice seems necessary not only to live as one should but also to serve as one should. We slip off and almost every five minutes we have to catch ourselves and bring ourselves to be the seeker and the seer within the brain-mind.

The one and only thing you can do under existing circumstances is to be firm in the *inner* position—the seat neither low nor high and the eyes fixed on Them. Study and work are not only your salvation and your protection; there is nothing else to do, without a bad fall which will cause injury. Be cheerful and let nothing daunt you. Resist without resisting. Your peculiar environment provides excellent opportunities to develop *Vairagya* within and thoroughness without. You may feel “imperfect” in your practice; are you? In what measure? Perfection is not there, granted; but persistency is the measuring stick. *Vairagya* in the mind and in the heart, in the small hourly affairs, will make your Inner Centre strong and then potent. Mundane things are mortal and will pass away, while we learn and grow through endurance. Higher carelessness, higher patience and higher resignation are the real roads to the Self, and before we reach It we meet Masters.

There is a bright side to every darkness. Each night is dark; but arising out of day it gives birth to another day. If we can but succeed in retaining our calm centre in mind as well as in heart! Trials and tribulations become helpers if we but remember their purpose in human evolution. We not only undervalue Nature’s gifts but do not recognize them as gifts. The blessed knowledge of Theosophy stirs us up but also proves a solace and a soothing grace.

Each one has a kind of heart shell in which he lives in a world of his own, and he often does not know the real outside world till the shell is broken and he can see the real world as it is, without any veils of delusion and illusion. Knowledge does it, but knowledge is not the final breaker of this shell. The real breaker of the heart shell is the accumulation of knowledge and the aspiration to use that knowledge out of love for humankind. That is where devotion, even to a few people or a single individual, is of real help to the aspirant. This idea is an important one and a real one, because the outermost layer of the subtle body is very hard, like the skeleton of the physical body, and unless it is cracked and breaks open, our real vision into the inner worlds does not begin to function.

TELL me not, in mournful numbers,
 Life is but an empty dream!...
 Life is real! Life is earnest!
 And the grave is not its goal;
 Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
 Was not spoken of the soul....
 Lives of great men all remind us
 We can make our lives sublime,
 And, departing, leave behind us
 Footprints on the sands of time;
 Footprints, that perhaps another,
 Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
 A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
 Seeing, shall take heart again.
 Let us, then, be up and doing,
 With a heart for any fate;
 Still achieving, still pursuing,
 Learn to labour and to wait.

—HENRY LONGFELLOW

THE SUN—PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL

II

THE ANNUAL festival of Christmas is celebrated all over Christendom on the 25th of December. The Roman Christians were not sure of Christ's birth date and so a committee of bishops fixed the date of the nativity of Jesus on 25th December which is the day on which the Pagans celebrated the birth of their Sun Gods. All the Sun Gods, the Egyptian Osiris, the Babylonian Adonis as also the Greek Apollo and the Persian Mithra were born at the Winter Solstice and were born of virgin mothers. Thus, the ancient festival of the Winter Solstice, the pagan festival of the birth of the Sun, came to be adopted by the Christian Church as the nativity of Jesus, and was called Christmas.

On solstices, the Sun stands still and after Winter Solstice, *i.e.*, December 21st the sun begins to move northwards. In the whole of Nature, a great change takes place as the sun begins its journey northward once again and the earth receives a greater amount of light and life. The Christmas season, the time of the Winter Solstice, is the birthday of the Sun, when it enters the Zodiacal sign of Capricornus. It is the most appropriate time for resolving to renew ourselves spiritually. The astral life of the earth is young and strong between Christmas and Easter. Those who form their wishes now will have added strength to fulfil them consistently, says H.P.B. Sun is the giver of life and light, physical and Spiritual. During the northward movement of the sun, there is renewal and refreshment of life energy. The astral body in man and astral light in nature is the vehicle of the life energy. Every thought and feeling leaves an impression on the astral light. Good thoughts and ideation impressed on the astral are attracted to us and support us—by the law of consubstantiality or similarity—whenever we make a resolve to be good. The astral acts as an unobstructed pipe or a sieve. This support is greater during this period due to renewal of life energy.

In India also the beginning of the northward journey of the Sun, or *Uttarayana*, is of special significance. *Dakshinayana* or the Sun's southern journey, which lasts for six months, is considered "the night of the Gods." The winter solstice marks the dawn of the Divine day, wherein pious people can start on pilgrimages and study the scriptures. The Southern journey of the Sun, according to Western calculation, is between June 21st to December 21st, after which northward journey of the Sun begins. The Hindu calculation of this date differs so that the northward journey of the Sun begins 23 days later, on the 14th January, when the Sun passes into the house of Makara (Capricornus). This day is called *Makara Sankranti* day, which marks the end of the dark half year. On the morning of this day, the pious people take the purificatory bath, preferably at a place where there is a confluence of two rivers. This day is considered auspicious for starting a good discipline, performing expiatory rites and for giving charity.

It is said that the hero of the *Mahabharata* war, the great Bhishma, had a boon to die at will. He waited patiently, lying on a bed of arrows, till the time of *Uttarayana*, to leave the world. We might say, Bhishma left the body during *Uttarayana* to impress upon the minds of the people that it was an auspicious period. In the Eighth chapter of the *Gita*, sloka 24 and 25 describe, symbolically, the conditions in which the soul departing from the body will go to a particular region (or state after death). Sloka 24 reads: "I will now declare to thee, O best of the Bharatas, at what time yogis dying obtain freedom from or subjection to rebirth. Fire, light, day, the fortnight of the waxing moon, six months of the sun's northern course—going then and knowing the Supreme Spirit, men go to the Supreme." H.P.B. says that "Fire, Flame, bright fortnight, northward journey of the sun," is symbolic of the Highest and Absolute Deity. Only the person who dies in absolute purity goes to *Brahman* and has the right to *Moksha* or *Nirvana*. According to the Upanishadic tradition, such a person will "enter through the Sun, and will go beyond it to Brahma-loka."

In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 132) H.P.B. mentions that according to *Visishtadwaita*, the one who reaches *Moksha* enjoys the bliss in a place called *Parampadha*, which place is not material but made of *Suddasatwa*. There, the *Muktas* are never again subject to the qualities either of matter or *Karma*, and they may voluntarily incarnate on earth for the benefit of humanity. It further points out that the way to *Paramapadha* is called *Devayana*. It is described as a path in which the *Jiva* goes from the heart of the body, to the *Brahmarandra* in the crown of the head, traversing the *Sushumna*, a nerve which connects the heart with the *Brahamarandra*. Then, the *Jiva* breaks through *Brahmarandra* and goes to the region of the Sun (*Suryamandala*) through the solar Rays and ultimately reaches *Parampadha*.

Sloka 25 (*Gita*, VIII) reads: "But those who depart in smoke, at night, during the fortnight of the waning moon, and while the sun is in the path of his southern journey, proceed for a while to the regions of the moon and again return to mortal birth." Here again, "Smoke, night, dark fortnight and southern journey of the Sun" are symbolical of matter and darkness of ignorance. In other words, those dying in the state of incomplete purification, must necessarily be reborn.

The festival of Winter Solstice is of astronomical significance and symbolizes soul-awakening. The northward journey of the sun, which commences from December 22, marks a six-month cycle of natural progress: physical, psychical, moral, mental and spiritual. It marks the end of a cycle of darkness and ushers in the cycle of light and growth. Spring, summer, autumn and winter are the outer and visible signs of something that takes place invisibly, on the inner planes, in nature and in man.

The astronomical points, *i.e.*, the equinoxes and solstices, which mark the four seasons, have their psychic and spiritual roots. In fact, the astronomical points are the reflection of the psychic and spiritual natures of planetary bodies. Earth renews herself in every Spring, like the snake sloughing off the old skin. She does so by the powers of her psychic nature. But behind both physical and psychical

natures is her spiritual being. “New physical life in Spring is caused by the astral life of the Earth which is born at the Winter Solstice, later to die. Between the 21st of September and the 21st of December, the psychic life draws within itself; the autumnal forces turn inwards and life becomes subjective; and like man after the death of his body, Earth turns inward to contemplate her past incarnation. The autumnal cycle is the gestation period with its two parts of death in life, and life in birth again.” (*The Theosophical Movement*, December 1947)

The Winter Solstice Festival is a reminder to every human being of the need for the Spiritual Birth or Second Birth. To participate really in the Festival of the Winter Solstice every human mind must turn away from the life which oscillates between pain and pleasure, likes and dislikes, and turn within. This can be accomplished by gradual purification of our desires, till at last, the only desire that remains is to achieve the union with the Divine within, the Spiritual Sun or Atman. Let us understand that in a sense, what causes the Earth-Being to re-manifest itself at the time of Winter Solstice, is the earth’s desire for the Sun, and her power to absorb and assimilate the psychic currents of the Sun.

The death of the lower personal nature must precede the Second Birth, or Birth in Spirit. This requires a realization that we need to free ourselves not only from the desire for wealth, name, fame, power and position, but also from a subtle desire for personal security and to avoid suffering. During the Autumn season, nature denudes herself and prepares for receiving the warmth of the Sun from Winter Solstice. So should we shed the non-essentials and prepare ourselves to receive the light and warmth of the inner Sun. We must keep ourselves energized by right study and real devotion. Study illumines our intelligence, while devotion brings peace and power to the heart.

As the Sun moves northwards with precision, we must move upwards with precision. The birth of the Sun in nature is symbolic of the Spiritual Rebirth of the spiritual-aspirant. What is spiritual rebirth? H.P.B. explains that one striving after spiritual perfection

must have *three* births: (1) physical, from his mortal parents; (2) *spiritual* through Initiation; and (3) his final birth into the world of the spirit—at death. (*Isis*, II, 565)

H.P.B. observes that Jesus was a Chrestos. The *Glossary* explains that *Chrestos* means a disciple on probation—a candidate for hierophantship. When he had attained to this through initiation, long trials and suffering, and had been “*anointed*,” *i.e.*, “rubbed with oil,” as were the initiates—as the last touch of ritualistic observance—then his name was changed into “*Christos*,” the “purified,” in the esoteric language.

In the Puranic allegory, Viswakarman’s daughter Sanjana (spiritual consciousness), who was the wife of Surya the sun, complained to her father of the too great effulgence of her husband. Viswakarman, the divine carpenter, crucified the Sun on his lathe and cut away the eighth part of his rays—creating round him a dark aureole. After that, Surya looked as though he had been crowned with dark thorns and he became “Vikarttana,” one who was shorn of his effulgence. Vikarttana is the type of initiated neophyte. All these names were given to candidates who were going through trials of initiation. The candidate for initiation personifies the Sun, who has to kill all his fiery passions and wear a crown of thorns, before he can rise into new life and be reborn.

The ancients believed that it was on 21st December that the Sun-god went down under the earth, to help the souls or seeds, imprisoned there and remained for three days to come up triumphant on 25th December. What does it mean? It represents something that happens actually during the mysteries of initiation. “Sun” represents the candidate who aspires for spiritual rebirth. The candidate for initiation personifies the sun, who has to kill all his fiery passions before he can rise into new life and be reborn. By cutting off the sun’s rays, Viswakarman created darkness. This is equivalent to descent into lower worlds or Hades, wherein the candidate touches the lowest levels of his consciousness. After facing and purifying it, he rises with fully purified consciousness.

Behind the physical sun is the True Sun or Central Spiritual Sun. Sun symbolizes the very *Atman* in man, the Christos or the Divine Principle. So, Christ, the true esoteric Saviour, is not a man but the divine presence latent within the hearts of men. In Zoroastrian philosophy, the visible sun and its invisible counterpart are known as Khorshed and Meher, respectively. They are prayed to and invoked together, especially at sunrise, and are never separated. Herein lies a key to the true understanding of the great festival.

In the article, “A Commentary on Gayatri,” Mr. Judge translates the Gayatri mantra as: “Unveil, O Thou who givest sustenance to the Universe, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, that face of the True Sun now hidden by a vase of golden light, that we may see the truth and do our whole duty on our journey to thy sacred seat.” Mr. Judge comments that the whole verse is an aspiration in the highest sense and “unveil” is the cry of the man who is determined to know the truth; the cry is made to the Higher Self. Just as the True Sun is hidden behind the physical sun, so also, the Higher Self is hidden by the passions and desires, the personal self and the thirst for life. “So long as desire and the personality remain strong, just so long will the light be blurred, so long will we mistake words for knowledge and knowledge for the thing we wish to know and realize.” *The Voice of the Silence* suggests that unless the flesh is passive, the head cool and the soul is firm and pure as a flaming diamond, the sunlight will not reach the inner chamber and do its work of illumination.

The Gayatri mantra is a Vedic prayer, a sacred mantra, the unity that underlies the diversity of many forms in the world of manifestation. Gold is one, but from it, we can make various gold ornaments, such as, earrings, bracelets, necklaces, etc. So also, there is but one Divine Self or *Atman*, which pervades all things and resides in diverse forms. The deluded despise me in human form, not recognizing my presence in human beings, says Shri Krishna. (*Gita*, IX)

(*To be concluded*)

ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS

ECONOMICS is defined by social scientists as “a science which is concerned with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.” Diverse are the needs of humans, both material and non-material. Basic material needs are food, apparel, and dwelling. The natural world provides in abundance various organisms in the plant and animal kingdoms, and such fundamental elements as water, soil, land, and minerals of various kinds for the use of man. The activity in which individuals, privately-owned organizations, the state, and the financial institutions coordinately engage in harvesting the bounties of nature, converting the same to various kinds of usable products and distributing them through trade, commerce, and the market mechanism to meet the needs of the population, and thus, at the same time, generate employment opportunities, and create national wealth, is, in layman’s language, economics. It includes development of human potential, skills, art, and culture. It is like running a household in which the needs, aspirations, and development of the members of the family, young and old, are catered to by the head of the family through judicious allocation of limited means.

It is not that economics is a new science. It is as old as man as can be seen in the historical fact that sound economic management has always been crucial to the prosperity of communities and strength of kingdoms. Economic activity involving mining, industrial production, transport, communication, disposal of waste, etc., invariably causes more or less destruction of the natural world and makes for an imbalance in the harmonious interdependent progressive order of nature, which, in turn, cannot but adversely impact human wellbeing.

Before the Industrial Revolution the effects of human activity on nature were not of much consequence as they were agrarian economies and of traditional arts. The integrity of the natural world was better preserved. Then came the change. The dawn of the era

of Industrialisation in the early 19th century in Europe and England radically changed man's attitude towards and relationship with the natural world. With the advent of mass production of goods by means of innovative technologies, machines replacing human labour; exploitation of natural resources on a massive scale to feed voracious industrial demand; destruction of the natural beauty of the landscapes and subjecting them to commercial speculation; industrial emissions and effluents poisoning the air, soil, rivers and seas; depletion of animal and plant species; social convulsion which followed the violent transition from agrarian subsistence society to urban industrial civilization marked by unrestrained consumption of material goods and services, characterized the narrative of the modern industrial economy. Romantic poets of England, like William Wordsworth, Percy Shelley, Keats, William Blake, etc., lamented the dehumanizing effect of subversion of Nature and of all that is sacred, the true and the beautiful to commercial interests and speculation. They published critiques on urbanization and composed verses to recall people back to the simplicity they found in nature.

Truly said Victor Hugo, "No force on earth can stop an idea whose time has come." The idea that material progress is the highest civilizational ideal had cast a spell on the nations of the world in both the hemispheres, under the irresistible impulse of the advancing cycle of material progress aided by that of scientific discoveries, innovations, development of rapid means of mass communication, travel, and transport. Economies of nations of the world came to be integrated with multinational trade agreements, allowing for free movement of capital and labour across national boundaries in quest of higher and higher profits, buttressed by the establishment of a globalized market and financial system. The world thus shrunk in time, and bound together with interdependent economies, has come to be viewed as a global village.

Amazing as is the progress in science and technology, which have entered into every aspect of human life, revolutionizing the production, distribution, and consumption of material goods and

services through the globalized market system on a scale not seen before, the world is now seized of the humanistic, social, and environmental problems the unrestrained globalized industrial economic activity have brought about. If social inequity, impoverishment, evils of crime and immorality of consumerist urban culture, etc., have been some of the adverse social consequences, the ecological and environmental destruction of the natural world has been the other catastrophic consequence. Rachel Carson's environmental classic, "Silent Spring," stirred the conscience of the world and gave rise to the Environmental and Ecological Movements in every country, calling for a rethinking of the unsustainable modern development paradigm. Though the idea of Ecology—the study of the complex web of the interrelationship between the biological and the life-supporting a-biological factors of the natural world—is not new, it assumed prominence in the latter half of the 20th century in the wake of environmental crisis brought on by industrialism.

The argument of one school of thought is that pursuit of unlimited economic development as is the case at the present time is self-destructive in view of the fact that the availability of non-renewable resources of nature as well as the capacity of nature to recover and renew herself from the ecological imbalance caused by indiscriminate human activity are limited, and that it would be irreversible once the critical point is passed. They advocate a restrained, responsible, and sustainable development model which harmonizes with nature's cycles, together with the principle of social equity and justice. They call it Ecological Economics.

The other school of thought holds that scaling down the pace of economic development would be regressive and inadvisable and that the environmental problems could well be managed through scientific and technological innovation. The latter option seems to be the trend of nations though scientists have been warning in one voice of the serious consequences of global warming and climate change the ominous signs of which are increasingly becoming evident all over the globe. Reduction of carbon footprint and

replacing fossil fuel with various renewable energy options like solar power technology to run the economy are being tried out. But it is being increasingly realized that not only the supposed environment-friendly alternative technologies cannot meet the ever-increasing power demand by industries, unless the development targets are considerably scaled down, but even the so-called green technologies are not without adverse impact on the environment, especially on the biological life of the planet.

Between these two opposite perspectives, there has been silently simmering in the consciousness of the times a certain discontent with the materialistic assumptions of the modern culture and a distrust of technological innovations as the means for building a new world order based on social equity, justice, and environmental integrity. Emerging from the depth of consciousness of the common people from different walks of life, who feel, think, and perceive with their hearts, the view is gaining ground that the crises of the civilization have spiritual and moral dimension in which alone lies the key to reform and reconstruction. It is variously termed as Deep Ecology, Spiritual Ecology, and so on. It is an environmental philosophy and a social movement based on the belief that nature has its inherent value and purpose and not solely for supplying the insatiable wants of man. It is a call for enlightened conformity of human action to nature's ways and purpose. It is a recognition of the fact that ancient cultures and indigenous people communed with the soul of nature and derived all their knowledge and wisdom from the sacred union. A deep appreciation of the wisdom of the past ages, and of the indigenous people, and a longing to recover the values of the lost cultures are clearly discernible. It is a clear sign of the awakening spirit of man which had been made captive by dogmatic creeds in the Middle Ages, and by one of agnosticism, and materialism, its progeny, which succeeded it, which now reigns. Writes H.P.B. in her article, "The Cycle Moveth": "Thus was once more demonstrated that human life, devoid of all its world-ideals and beliefs—in which the whole philosophical and cultured antiquity, headed in historical times by Socrates and Plato,

by Pythagoras and Alexandrian Neoplatonists, believed—becomes deprived of its higher sense and meaning. The world-ideals can never completely die out. Exiled by the fathers, they will be received with opened arms by the children."

Teachers of all ages have shown that embarking on material progress before mankind has made progress on moral and spiritual planes will always be worthless and barren, and a tyranny. Leaders of nations, seeing on all hands the portentous signs of climate change, are coming together to redefine the development models.

In this growing awareness of man's relationship with and responsibility to nature, there is a promise of a change to come for the better, towards reformulating a more just and equitable social order, and worthier national goals.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
 And sorry I could not travel both
 And be one traveller, long I stood
 And looked down one as far as I could
 To where it bent in the undergrowth;
 Then took the other, as just as fair,
 And having perhaps the better claim,
 Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
 Though as for that the passing there
 Had worn them really about the same,
 And both that morning equally lay
 In leaves no step had trodden black.
 Oh, I kept the first for another day!
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
 I doubted if I should ever come back.
 I shall be telling this with a sigh
 Somewhere ages and ages hence:
 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
 I took the one less travelled by,
 And that has made all the difference.

—ROBERT FROST

OUR SOUL'S PILGRIMAGE

REINCARNATION is a concept which has become familiar to the mind of the race. It is important that at least a few should possess such right knowledge and meditate upon it so that they themselves could live in terms of the ethical principles derived therefrom.

Man is, at present, essentially a mind-being. Through his mind he gains knowledge, learns to know himself and the world around him. Having formed mental concepts as to the nature of life, he applies the knowledge acquired to his own life. By meditation upon birth, death, decay, suffering and sorrow he gains further insight into the working of the laws of life. Thus, ultimately, intellectual concepts have to become living realities to him.

How can knowledge of the law of reincarnation help us to live better lives and make those around us richer and happier? We are all brother-pilgrims. All sparks that have issued from the pure Essence of the Universal Sixth Principle or the Over-Soul have ultimately to become individually self-conscious divine beings and merge again into the One Universal Consciousness. There is a bond of natural kinship between all human beings and all living creatures. Our pilgrimage on earth does not last one lifetime only. Again and again we all come back to resume our duties, meet old friends and settle the past differences. The idea of the eternal life of the soul and of its pilgrimage through all forms of life must become familiar to every man. It would transmute all human relationships. Real kinship is rooted in the world of spirit. The light of the soul has to shine through the mind down into the world of matter. This light can illumine the path of the weary pilgrim.

It is the same ego-entity that passes from life to life. Within it must be stored the knowledge of all our past experiences. We must therefore distinguish between that which is real, enduring and immortal and that which is transient and mortal. It is the spark or flame of the Spirit which is the real light in man. His personality is but the vesture of one lifetime; his mental powers and soul faculties tools which he carries from life to life.

In our relationship with others we should endeavour to contact the real being, realizing that the personality is but a mask behind which is hidden the real self. Unless we see life as divine and sacred, our love for men and other creatures as part of the universal and all-embracing Love, our journey will remain fruitless. We become richer by giving up our dearest possessions and advance along the path of Life without moving. The real powers and faculties of the soul unfold when the personality has become pure, unselfish and radiant.

The purpose of all the great epics of mankind is to describe the spiritual adventure of the soul through this world of *maya* and illusion. Human experiences and happenings are reflections on the plane of matter of the mighty scheme in which the soul is engaged on the spiritual plane. Again and again man has to question his own understanding of spiritual truths. He has to lead his daily life in terms of clear spiritual vision and bring down on this plane of manifestation something of the knowledge and wisdom of his Real Self. Man must know that he has lived before, that this is not the first time he has to face difficult problems, suffering and finally death. Though we cannot remember, within us is locked up the essence of our past experiences and through self-effort and merit we can bring down to our present consciousness something of the wisdom acquired in past ages.

There are those who embody in their lives and work something of the accumulated wisdom of the ages. This is perhaps the best testimony we can have of the truth of reincarnation. A correct understanding of this law helps us to live ethically and morally. Even the dullest of men must feel at times that life is not just a string of events but that there must be an underlying purpose. Man is great; he is a God in the making. Through knowledge of reincarnation alone can he see his real position in the great Cosmic Plan. Through that vision man can shape his life and make those around him feel that they are his co-workers and brothers. He becomes a voluntary server of the great Cause of mankind.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

How important it is to possess the power of imagination? The ability to imagine is the foundation of knowledge, as it influences what we do, think and create. For Plato imagination meant dealing with illusions and make-believe, which tends to distract us from reality and affects our capacity to reason about reality. For Aristotle imagination was one of the foundations of knowledge. In our present times we all need to develop the faculty of imagination. Imagination may be defined as the ability to synthesise into patterns and concepts, by making associations among various bits of information with which we are bombarded all through the day. The process of creating images is complicated and subjective. Thus, for instance, when we try to create an image of a coffee shop, it gets coloured by personal feelings, memories and evaluations. As a result, perception is not a simple “objective” process of taking in the world. “It is the fast process of selecting, putting together, interpreting and experiencing facts, thoughts and emotions,” which makes you, you.

According to Charles Darwin, “imagination unites former images and ideas, independently of the will, and thus creates brilliant and novel results.” When we meet a person again or visit a place again, our present perceptions are enriched by our past experiences, memories, observations, etc. Hence, William Blake writes, “A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.”

We can improve our imagination and see reality more richly by constantly adding to the storehouse of our thoughts and experiences, or still better, by learning to imagine the world through the imaginations of others. Shakespeare displays such a skill, with his ability to disappear into his characters and inhabit their points of view. By exercising our imagination, we are able to predict possible futures and experience other viewpoints. Our schools should encourage the cultivation of the faculty of imagination, because if we neglect to cultivate imaginative faculty, one day we will find ourselves living in a society, where people are strangers to one

another and to themselves. (*The Economic Times*, November 19, 2021: Courtesy, *The New York Times*)

Generally, imagination is defined as the faculty of imagining or of forming mental images or concepts of what is not actually present to the senses. We see it being used in planning, hypothetical reasoning, picturing things in the past or the future, in design and creativity in engineering and the arts. Theosophy differentiates between fancy, phantasy, daydreaming and imagination. Phantasy is the faculty by which images, thoughts, impressions, are evoked from the storehouse of a conscious or unconscious memory and automatically rearranged and dramatized into a never-ending series of stories or pictures. Phantasy differs from the faculty of imagination in which there is conscious arrangement of impressions and images in the mind. Day-dreaming is a mild form of phantasy wherein the Ego has weak and intermittent control.

Albert Einstein said: “Imagination is more important than knowledge, for knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.” He imagined himself running alongside a light wave, a fantasy that ultimately led to his theory of special relativity. In his work, *Biographia Literaria*, Samuel T. Coleridge distinguishes between fancy and imagination, saying that fancy rested on the mechanical and passive operations of one’s mind to accumulate and store data, while imagination held a “mysterious power” to extract “hidden ideas and meaning” from such data. Coleridge argues that a good literary work employs the use of the imagination which he called “Esemplastic Imagination.” *Esemplastic* means having the ability to shape diverse elements or concepts into a unified whole. The “esemplastic power of poetic imagination” implies a process wherein the poet takes images, words, and emotions from a number of realms of human endeavour and thought, and unifies them all into a single work. Such an accomplishment, argues Coleridge, requires an enormous effort of imagination.

True imagination or *Sankalpa*, is a power that creates images by Will, Thought, Feeling or Aspiration. When we undertake self-discipline, we first make an ideal plan or *Sankalpa* and then execute it. It is described as one of the noblest faculties in man. It is the human soul, *Manas*, the Thinker, aided by *Buddhi*, who uses imagination. A Master of Wisdom writes: “Good resolutions are mind-painted pictures of good deeds: fancies, day-dreams, whisperings of the *Buddhi* to the *Manas*.”

Can there be repressed memories? It was Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, who put forward the idea that memories can be repressed. It means that certain painful experiences and unwholesome desires or urges are locked away from the conscious mind but pushed deep down into one’s non-conscious mind, so as to be inaccessible. The idea that memories can be repressed and then suddenly re-emerge years later, was put aside as being false, in the 1990s, since this concept did not go well with all that was known about how memory works. Moreover, it was observed that it is so easy to implant false memories that it would be impossible to distinguish between recovered memory from an implanted one. But the reason for the resurfacing of this idea could be based on the belief that buried memories of trauma can explain why some people experience mental health conditions in later life. These can be treated by persuading them to recall the traumas and processing them. Lawrence Patihis, a forensic psychologist at the University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom, points out that often false memories take hold of people, because certain kinds of therapy encourage people to imagine certain scenarios or ask them to elaborate on some fragments of events that they remembered.

According to Chris Brewin at University College London, it is not possible to be certain whether an event took place or not, and therefore, recovered memories of trauma could be “genuine, false, or a mixture of the two.” There is a need to develop techniques that

can separate true from false memories, because “false memories can be just as upsetting as memories of real events. People who claim to have been abducted by aliens are totally convinced by their memories of what happened, and when recalling the ‘memory’ of the event they get just as stressed as people who have experienced documented trauma.”

“Recovering” memories is not an aid to improve the mental health and well-being of the person, but in fact seems to produce adverse effects. For instance, in a study published in 1996, 30 individuals were made to recall childhood abuse during therapy. Of these, only three had considered committing suicide before “remembering” abuse, whereas twenty of them contemplated suicide after therapy. Likewise, as against two that needed to be hospitalized before, there were eleven who were hospitalised after therapy.

“Most researchers do not believe that faded or forgotten memories can somehow be retrieved in detail years later, as if the repression lock has been suddenly removed. ‘There is no credible scientific support for that idea,’ says Elizabeth Loftus, a psychologist at the University of California. Indeed, there is no known mechanism for storing away memories without being able to access them...If the brain has a way to lock away memories, it has not been found.” Some memory researchers are of the opinion that to deter people from believing in this “scientifically unlikely idea,” of repression and recovering of old memories, lay people, therapists, as also, those working in criminal justice, should be educated, writes Jessica Hamzelou. (*New Scientist*, October 9, 2021)

H.P.B. describes memory as “the most unreliable thing in us.” Memory “is a recording machine, a register which very easily gets out of order.” There are three types of memory—*Remembrance*, *Recollection* and *Reminiscence* or soul-memory. Broadly speaking, “Memory is an innate power in thinking beings, and even in animals, of reproducing past impressions by an association of ideas principally suggested by objective things or by some action on our external sensory organs.”

What is the seat of memory? The brain is the instrument of the mind, and is not the seat of memory. Astral Light is the tablet or repository of the unseen universe, where every fleeting impression, feeling, thought and action as every pulsation of the visible cosmos is recorded. Memory, says H.P.B., is that power which every human being unconsciously exercises, to look with an inner sight into the astral light and there see the images of past sensations and impressions. In other words, *memory is unconscious looking into and reading the impressions in the astral light*. Brain cells “are the receivers and conveyers of all the pictures and impressions of the past, not their retainers. Under various conditions and stimuli, they can receive instantaneously the reflection of these astral images back again and this is called memory, recollection, remembrance; but they do not preserve them.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 25*, Foreword)

During sleep, the astral body (soul) becomes free and travels around visible and invisible worlds. Pictures and images seen during astral travel are impressed on the brain, but we remember nothing upon waking up. However: “The impressions of scenes and landscapes which the astral body saw in its peregrinations are still there, though lying latent under the pressure of matter. They may be awakened at any moment, and then during such flashes of man’s inner memory, there is an instantaneous interchange of energies between the visible and the invisible universes. Between the “micrographs” of the cerebral ganglia and the photo-scenographic galleries of the astral light, a current is established. And a man who knows that he has never visited in body, nor seen the landscape and person that he recognizes, may well assert that still has he seen and knows them, for the acquaintance was formed while travelling in ‘spirit.’” (*Isis*, I, 180)

H.P.B. affirms that suggestions made by an adult during the childhood period or by a hypnotizer do not fade away but leave an impression that surfaces later. Thus: “Crying children frightened into silence by the suggestion of a monster, a devil standing in the corner, by a foolish nurse, have been known to become insane twenty or

thirty years later on the same subject. There are mysterious, secret drawers, dark nooks and hiding places in the labyrinth of our memory, still unknown to physiologists, and which open only once, rarely twice, in man’s lifetime, and that only under very abnormal and peculiar conditions.” (*Lucifer*, Vol. VI, June 1890)

Mr. Judge suggests—in another context—that we carry pictures and images in our aura—which include pre-natal impressions—which are not always developed into memory, but await appropriate conditions. Thus: “These pictures are found in the aura of the person, and are due to pre-natal impressions. Each child emerges into life the possessor of pictures floating about and clinging to it, derived from the mother; and thus you can go back an enormous distance in time for these pictures, all through the long line of your descent.... There would be no justification for going over a whole lifetime’s small affairs in order to tell a person at what time or juncture an image was projected before his mind. Thousands of such impressions are made every year. That they are not developed into memory does not prove their non-existence. Like the unseen picture upon the photographer’s sensitive plate, they lie awaiting the hour of development.” (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 171)

A lot of our suffering arises from loss and the fear of loss. Even as we fall in love and are assured of the other’s love, we begin to worry about losing the love. When we buy a new vehicle, with it comes the fear of damage. We live in an acquisitive world, and therefore strive to acquire name, fame, power and position, oblivious to the fact that we live in an impermanent world. Everything arises to pass away. We are born and we die. In order to acquire lasting peace, we must learn the other half of the equation, which is to let go. Practically everything around us is subject to change and destruction. There is pain caused when we break our favourite porcelain dinner plate or our coffee mug. There is the fear and anguish of parting when children leave home to study in another

town or country. Then there is the death of near and dear ones, and we have to learn to grieve and release that relationship. In the Hindu tradition there are four stages of human existence, going from studenthood to householdership to retirement and ending in renunciation, which prepares the person to let go of the possessions as well as the roles one played, and prepare for the final exit. We must “stay attuned to the cycles of time that take away some things and bring in others. Letting go frees us of attachment and, eventually, of the ego which identifies itself with roles, possessions and relationships,” writes Suma Varughese. (*Life Positive*, November 2021)

To acquire spiritual insight, one must begin to understand and realize the three characteristics of the conditioned existence: All conditioned existence is *Dukkha* or suffering. All Conditioned existence is impermanent. All conditioned existence is devoid of true selfhood. There is always *potential suffering* attached to everything in this world. Something may be a source of joy, at a given moment, but sooner or later, you may have to give it up. This may be linked with the impermanent nature of things also. Our body, our ideas and our emotions, all keep changing. We try to derive pleasure out of sensations. *Light on the Path* says: “In sensation no permanent home can be found, because change is the law of this vibratory existence. That fact is the first one that must be learned by the disciple. It is useless to pause and weep for a scene in a kaleidoscope which has passed.” Things and pleasures of the world are as fleeting as the scene or pattern formed in a kaleidoscope. In fact, the law of diminishing returns seems to govern the realm of pleasures. We do not derive the same pleasure the second time and still less the third time, and so on. “We must be able to appreciate and enjoy the places where we tarry, and yet pass on without anguish when we are called elsewhere. We must be able to live in loving association with people without feeling that we possess them and must run their lives. Anything that you strive to hold captive will hold you captive, and if you desire freedom, you must give freedom,” writes Peace Pilgrim.