

Vol. 14

December 2022

Rs. 3/-

No. 8

**A Magazine Devoted to
The Living of the Higher Life**

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 14, No. 8

December 17, 2022

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

THE best way we can understand the spiritual significance of Christmas is by understanding the allegory of Jesus' life. H.P.B. says that the whole of the New Testament, in a way, is an account of the Cycle of Initiation, from the birth of man in a body of flesh up to his second or spiritual birth and initiation—allegorized in the life of Jesus. There are various aspects to the mysterious character of Jesus. There is the historical character of Jesus, and there is also the deep and allegorical side. For instance, John-the-Baptist baptizing people with water, signifies purification brought about by knowledge. Jesus baptizing people “by fire” symbolizes purification through trials of spiritual life that separates grain from the chaff, burning the dross of the non-essentials and leaving behind the noble qualities in one's nature, bringing about spiritual regeneration.

H.P.B. writes: “Christ—the true esoteric SAVIOUR—is *no man*, but the DIVINE PRINCIPLE in every human being” (*The Esoteric Character of the Gospels*). Christ is not the only Son of God; we are all sons of God in our divine nature. But unfortunately, this divine nature, though all-powerful on its own plane, is quite powerless on our plane. Every time we refuse to listen to our divine nature—the Christ within—we crucify the Christ. Every time we want *our* will to prevail over the Divine Will, there is a minor crucifixion. Resurrection of Jesus implies spiritual re-birth. The Soul has a series of progressive awakenings, each representing a spiritual rebirth. Self-conscious and deliberate effort, however, is required.

To celebrate Christmas is to remember that we are Sons of God potentially, and that we need to *actualize* that potentiality.

A human being's journey towards divinity is marked by his deeper appreciation of moral and spiritual values. The enemy of progress, individual and collective, is selfishness. It has its roots in personality. "The power of the personality is great and insidious." It is the most difficult thing to overcome in our race. Today we regard personality as something that should be developed and strengthened. The personality is not to be destroyed. We only need to change our attitude towards it. The personality has to be refined so that it becomes an instrument or a channel for the manifestation of the divine in us.

The Delphic Oracle said, "Man, know thyself!" If we wish to become better human beings then we must introduce into our lives the practice of self-examination. In bringing about this change self-examination is very essential. "Whether vicious or virtuous, those who do not examine themselves, their motives and ideas, their methods and habits, are like animals. They may live like angry tigers or happy sparrows, but they do not grow, they do not progress" (*The Theosophical Movement*, April 1932). One who wishes to progress spiritually must undertake self-examination at the end of the day. We must note our good points and weak points, and resolve to strengthen the good and eliminate the weaknesses.

Unless we are earnest, we remain satisfied with ourselves, not finding any need for higher goodness. As Professor C. S. Lewis points out, it is only when this natural goodness lets us down, only when some experience shows that being good and nice is not enough, that we realize the need to become "new men." We start with our ordinary self with its various desires and interests and discover with pain that morality often requires giving up some of our desires that we consider legitimate. We experience an inner conflict. "Living the higher life" means waging a war not only against our *vices*, but also against our habits, beliefs, pet theories, and our likes and dislikes. In an ordinary person, the good and bad tendencies exist as complex collective forces, but when one decides

to achieve some spiritual goal, these tendencies separate out into two opposing camps—into *Kaurava* and *Pandava* armies. When one earnestly aspires towards a higher life, the good tendencies flourish, but it is a death sentence for the bad tendencies.

At a higher level, these separated tendencies act as an *abyss*, preventing the warrior from retracing his steps. In other words, having made the choice and undertaken the spiritual discipline, it is not possible to go back to living the irresponsible life. As *Light on the Path* suggests, this is as impossible as that a man should become a child again.

No doubt, this is a long and difficult battle. As we have been building up these tendencies over many lifetimes, we cannot expect things to change overnight. Mr. Judge says, “Be patient even with yourself.” We may begin by conquering small enemies. We may begin by practising a little asceticism every day. The most difficult foe to overcome is *Ahankara* or egotism.

Our vices when conquered in their gross form reappear in subtler form. For instance, we may not steal or take wallet lying unattended, but are we sure that we will not be tempted to obtain money by unfair means, if one is not going to be found out? Some people practice ethics and good behaviour with an ulterior motive. They will not spoil their relationship on the premise that “you never know when you may need the help of another.” Such a basis is limited, selfish and wrong as against maintaining human relation on the basis of the fact of brotherhood. It is not easy to accept calmly our many faults and weaknesses, unless a certain amount of detachment is cultivated, and the position of a *drashta* or a witness is assumed.

We tend to get completely identified with pleasure and pain. To give right response to pleasure and pain requires one to assume the position of a witness, which means one aspect of our mind gets involved in the pleasure or pain, while the other remains a witness. One of the signs of spiritual progress is to have cultivated greater sensitivity which allows one to enjoy and suffer more keenly than an ordinary person, and yet not allow these joys and sorrows to

cause inner disturbance. It is a gradual process in which one “wears out,” first pleasure and then pain. What does “wearing out” pleasure mean? In the systematic search for pleasure, the ego learns not to seek pleasure by hurting someone. Then, one learns to sacrifice legitimate pleasures for others’ sake. Then one comes to analyse the pleasures and appreciate that pleasures are short-lived. Then the person may reach a stage when he is able to say, “I have seen all sorts of pleasures, and I am not going to go searching for them. It is fine if they come, and it is perfectly alright if they do not come my way.” However, that does not mean becoming indifferent. Simultaneously, there is refinement of pleasures. For instance, we would prefer quiet and solitude of mountains and seashore, proximity to nature than activities and pleasures that involve going to crowded places. There is attraction for artistic pleasures such as music, painting, drama, literature, etc., but as our taste refines, we look for more depth and substance in these pleasures to satisfy our psychic nature. The test of inner progress is whether there is an easier acceptance when any or all of such pleasures are denied. We are so dependent on outside things and people for our happiness that if any of them are missing we feel thoroughly miserable.

Our response to pain is a good measuring rod for evaluating our spiritual progress. Our supposed unshakable faith in the justice of Karma is set at naught when we resort to all kinds of ceremonies and rituals to avert the calamity. On the other hand, our readiness to go through inevitable and unalterable pain and adversity without complaining or grumbling and using the situation as a raw material to extract the necessary lessons, becomes a stepping stone to higher progress. The correct attitude of an aspirant to what life brings has been described by Mr. Judge, thus: “The way of inward peace is in all things to conform to the pleasure and disposition of the Divine Will.” Those who always wish that things should happen according to their wish and expectation do not experience inner peace but lead a harsh and bitter life. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 36*)

What is important in this journey is not how *far* we have

progressed, but in what direction we are heading. One great mistake we could make is to view the spiritual life in isolation. Spiritual progress is indissolubly connected with family duties. Explaining the importance of family duties, a Master of wisdom writes: “Does it seem to you a small thing that the past year has been spent only in your ‘family duties’? Nay, but what better cause for reward, what better discipline, than the daily and hourly performance of duty? Believe me my ‘pupil,’ the man or woman who is placed by Karma in the midst of small plain duties and sacrifices and loving-kindnesses, will through these faithfully fulfilled rise to the larger measure of Duty, Sacrifice and Charity to all Humanity.” Besides fulfilling one’s obligations as wife, father, mother, etc., family duty consists in cultivating and elevating emotional nature of oneself and other members of the family, and strengthening noble qualities in oneself and others. In the article, “Musings on the True Theosophist’s Path,” Mr. Judge observes that as aspirants strive earnestly to live the life, their cares will increase and their family will make new demands upon them. To create extra time and energy one will be compelled to give up some personal habits and adopt some ascetic rules, such as curtailing the time for recreation.

People seem to rush head-long for acquiring psychic powers, and seem to equate development of psychic powers with the spiritual progress. Theosophy terms these powers as abnormal (and not supernatural), and differentiates between lower, psychic, mental energies on one hand and spiritual powers on the other hand. It is better to approach the psychic realm from above, *i.e.*, instead of going after the psychic powers, one must live the spiritual life; these powers would be developed as a kind of by-product. In *Letters That Have Helped Me* (pp. 11-12) we read that it is possible to bypass astral plane by those who have focused their attention on the spiritual plane. Those students are fortunate, who have made progress to a marked degree in spiritual things, as they will not have any conscious experience of the astral plane. They can later learn from *above*, rather than *below*, in which case the danger of experiencing

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

confusion, of being led away from the path, etc. is less. In other words, having made sufficient progress spiritually, they can go back to the astral realm and learn what that world has to teach. As for the powers, *Light on the Path* suggests, “The power which the disciple shall covet is that which shall make him appear as nothing in the eyes of men.” Spiritual progress can be measured by the extent to which one has been able to efface the personality.

Initiation may be described as a trial or a test, which every earnest spiritual aspirant has to pass through and which helps to determine if the aspirant is ready to take the next step on the Path. There are levels and levels of initiation, wherein the aspirant is subjected to progressively difficult trials. Mr. Judge observes that each aspirant has to learn to face “daily initiations,” which come from moment to moment. They are met in our relation with our fellows, and in the way we react to all circumstances of life. And if we fail in these, we never get to the point where greater ones are offered. If we cannot bear momentary defeat, if a chance word from someone shatters our self-esteem, if we give way to the desire to harshly judge others, or if we are oblivious of our most apparent faults, then we cannot build up necessary strength to be masters of nature. There are daily initiations through daily duties, which pave the way for *Viveka* or spiritual discrimination, “to the knowledge of what is good to do, as to the right discrimination of good from evil.”

For the earnest and devoted workers of Theosophy, Mr. Judge observes that it is likely that they have successfully passed through some trials and have been initiated in some past life, but they do not carry its memory in the present life. He writes: “None of us, and especially those who have heard of the Path, or of Occultism, or of the Masters, can say with confidence that he is not already one who has passed through some initiations, with knowledge of them. We may already be initiated into some higher degree than our present attainment would suggest, and are undergoing a new trial unknown to ourselves. It is better to consider that we are, being sure to eliminate all pride of that unknown advance we have made.”

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

Altruism is an integral part of self-development. Mr. Judge puts it thus: “It is in and through the incidents of daily life, in work well done, in duties thoroughly performed, that we to-day can most readily make progress in the higher life,—slow progress, it may be, but at any rate sure. These are stepping stones to better things. We advance most rapidly when we stop to help other wayfarers. We receive most when we sacrifice most. We attain to the largest measure of Divine love when we most unselfishly love the brethren. We become one with the Supreme most surely when we lose ourselves in work for Humanity.” (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 33)

“Thou hast to travel on alone. The Teacher can but point the way,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. Until the seeker has reached the stage wherein he has developed self-reliance, intuition and more or less, complete control over his personal nature, he gets help only from the inner planes of his being, in terms of hints, ideas and inspiration. If the Guru or Master were to help or interfere at every stage there would not be proper growth, as illustrated by the incident of a man who came across a cocoon with a small opening. As he watched, for several hours, the butterfly struggle to break open the cocoon and force its body through, he decided to help the butterfly and so snipped off the remaining part of a cocoon with a pair of scissors. The butterfly emerged with a swollen body and small, shrivelled wings, and remained so for the rest of his life, never able to fly. In the natural process, as the butterfly tries to force itself through the tiny opening of the restricting cocoon, the fluid from the body is forced into the wings, so that they expand and develop, and are ready for the flight. “In the world mental as in the world spiritual each man must progress by his own efforts,” writes H.P.B. Even at the eleventh hour, we have a chance to turn the corner and seek the guidance of our Higher Self. The warrior “will never utterly desert thee.” We may *feel* deserted when we lose touch with our divine nature, temporarily.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT A SOUND OF THUNDER—II

FROM birth to death, we are travelling through time. When we consider backward time travel, we need to differentiate between “literally going to the past” using some time machine and visiting the past in our memories and dreams. The backward time travel research and theories have as their basis Einstein’s theory of relativity. Time travel to the past is theoretically possible in certain general relativity spacetime geometries that permit travelling faster than the speed of light, such as cosmic strings and traversable wormholes. The theory of general relativity does suggest a scientific basis for the possibility of backward time travel in certain unusual scenarios. As compared to fantasy and fiction, the methods of backward time travel suggested by science are not only complicated but they are likely to lead to absurd consequences.

According to *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, we must differentiate between *changing* the past and *participating in* or *influencing* the past. In science fiction stories we read about the possibility in the backward time travel to change the past, such as, correcting the wrongs or mistakes in history, preventing one’s younger self from doing things which one later regretted and so on. Such an idea is incoherent and involves contradiction. An example is given to show two versions of the past: one in which the time traveller is present and plays a role, and the other is without the time traveller. There are two perspectives: The perspective of the younger self, without the presence of the time traveller, and the perspective of the older time travelling self. If these two perspectives are inconsistent, *i.e.*, an event occurs in one but not in the other, then the time travel scenario is inconsistent. For instance, in one scenario the time traveller burns all her diaries at midnight on her fortieth birthday in 1976, and in the other, does not burn all her diaries at midnight on her fortieth birthday in 1976. It shows that a time traveller “cannot even stir a speck of dust on a certain day in the past, if on

that day, the speck was in fact unmoved. But this does *not* mean that time travellers must be entirely powerless in the past: while they cannot do anything that did not actually happen, they *can* (in principle) do anything that *did* happen. Time travellers cannot change the past: they cannot make it different from the way it was—but they can participate in it: they can be amongst the people who did make the past the way it was.”

Probably this is conveyed in “A Sound of Thunder” when the adventurers are asked not to do anything so as to disturb the past. We read that the animal that they are going to kill is a Tyrannosaurus rex, specially chosen and marked by Travis’ assistant—an animal that would have died just a few minutes later in any case, by a falling tree branch, so that in killing him they would not be interfering with the past. Thus, just after the hunters fire their guns directly at the monster’s head, who drops to the ground, a massive tree branch falls on the dinosaur—the branch that would have fallen on him and killed him anyway. Hence, his death has not affected the future in any way. At another level, it has a profound implication, as explained in the Eleventh Chapter of the *Gita*. When Arjuna hesitates to kill his friends and relatives in the opposite army, Shri Krishna tells Arjuna, “They have already been slain by me: be thou only the immediate agent.” Krishna says that He is *Kala* or “Time matured, come hither for the destruction of all these creatures.” “Time matured” means the completion of cycle, or ripening of karma. It is our action or actions which produce cycles and determine the duration of cycle. One such cycle is the cycle of birth and death. Shri Krishna tells Arjuna that even without him, *i.e.*, even without the intervention of Arjuna all the warriors in the opposing army were going to die. Arjuna is invited to become a mere instrument for the manifestation of the law.

The one-way direction or asymmetry of time is often referred to as the arrow of time, and it is what gives us an impression of time passing, of our progressing through different moments. Most of the events we experience are irreversible. For instance, it is easy to break

an egg, but extremely difficult, if not impossible, to make whole (un-break) an already broken egg. The arrow of time refers to the way we always see things progressing in a particular direction—eggs may break, but they never spontaneously reform. Philosophically, it is impossible to travel back in time, except in thought, or clairvoyantly perceive the impressions or pictures of past events in a universal register called Astral Light. Also, it is not possible to affect, change or nullify the past. We can affect only future. If we look at it from the point of view of the law of Karma—the law of cause and effect, it is easy to see that we cannot change the cause created in the past, but we can, in certain cases, change or even nullify the effect flowing from the past cause, and thus change the future.

If a bowman has already shot an arrow, he cannot recall it. It is a cause set into motion. If it is of the nature that it brings quick effect then there is no scope for changing the effect flowing from that cause. If a child puts his finger into the fire, it will be burnt. Karmic causes that do not bring about immediate effect are stored up, and they bring about effect in the same life or some other life. On the other hand, in the case of overeating or eating of stale food, there is a possibility of averting stomach-ache by taking appropriate medicine. It is like shooting another arrow to counteract the first one, before the first one hits the target. However, there are causes so powerful that they cannot be counteracted because they have already started bringing their effects. Destiny or Fate is the Karma that has ripened, so that its expression cannot be averted or postponed. For instance, we cannot change the sex, family, nation or race into which we are born. The Karma that is irreversible may be called fate or destiny. Also, when a past cause brings incurable disease, it becomes an irreversible destiny. Destiny and free-will co-exist. A person may think ten times before he makes the choice, but having made it, that choice becomes his destiny, by which he is bound. Today's destiny is made by our past choices. Today's choice weaves our future. If a man makes the choice to go in the right direction, he goes forward, else he goes backward.

There is the law of parallelogram of forces, wherein the good and the bad cause may either partially or completely counterbalance each other's effect and then what we experience is the resultant. There is also the *doctrine of nullification of Karma*. According to the well-known law in physics, two equal forces opposing each other, lead to equilibrium. "Thus, a person may have in his Karmic account a very unpleasant cause and at the same time a cause of opposite character. If these come together for expression at the same time, they may so counteract each other as that neither will be apparent and the equilibrium is the equivalent of both," explains Mr. Judge.

That which we call future arises from the past and present *and is continuous with it*. Between the past and the future there is continuity of change and continuity of causation. The story suggests the intimate connection between the past, present and future, by showing, for instance, that the death of a single butterfly has dramatically changed the world, by bringing back the authoritarianism which was dreaded. It also shows how a small disturbance can produce far-reaching consequences, described as Butterfly effect, wherein the flapping of a butterfly's wings in one part of the world could create a hurricane on the opposite side of the globe. It clearly proves that our whole world exists in a delicate balance and even a small disturbance due to disharmony can have vast unpredictable outcomes because of the interconnectedness of all things.

A Master of Wisdom points out that the law of sympathy works at all levels. "Nature has linked all parts of her Empire together by subtle threads of magnetic sympathy, and there is a mutual correlation even between a star and a man." Francis Thomson expresses it by saying that all things near and far are linked by immortal power such that if we even stir a flower here, we would bring about disturbance on a distant star. There exists a special and intimate connection between our earth and planet Venus. Our earth is the adopted child and younger brother of Venus. Archaic tradition states that Venus changes simultaneously (geographically) with the Earth;

whatever takes place on the one takes place on the other; and that many and great were their common changes. “Every sin committed on Earth is felt by *Usanas-sukra* [Venus]. The Guru of the *Daityas* is the Guardian Spirit of the Earth and Men. Every change on *Sukra* is felt on, and reflected by, the Earth.” (*S.D.*, II, pp. 24 and 29-32)

We affect each other through our thoughts, feelings and actions. These get impressed on a subtle medium, called the astral light, which is a universal register, and these are reflected back to us. It all works on the law of similarity. Like attracts like. Hence, it depends upon what thoughts or desires we allow to arise in our minds. Ordinarily, a bad thought of taking revenge or telling a lie, attracts another thought of the same nature and gives us a push in doing that. Our thoughts, feelings, actions and also the ideas we hold can influence not only the present humanity but also the future ones, because, images in the Astral Light persist for centuries. Therefore, it is easy to see that when we are born again on earth we would be affected, for good or evil, “by the conduct, the doctrine and the aspirations of preceding nations and men,” writes Mr. Judge (*Echoes From the Orient*, p. 12). Likewise, *our* ideas and actions will affect future generations of humanity. Mr. Judge observes, writing in 1890 that humanity of that time was influenced by “the impressions made in the astral light at the time when the Indians, the Spaniards, and harsh Puritans lived upon the earth.” For instance, the Puritan society of the seventeenth century may be described as restrictive and rigid society, which discouraged individuality and individual desires. They punished anyone seeking material and sexual gratification, because they considered material and sexual desires to be unnatural and evil.

Mr. Judge explains to us by means of an analogy, the time for which an impression remains in the astral light. He observes that the image of every thought, feeling, word and action is made in the astral light, and when that fades away it leaves behind a sort of vague impression. We may compare it with a coin in a muddy soil. Even when the coin is removed from the mud, there is an impression or outline of the coin, created in the mud. It will take some time for

even that impression to fade away. In the same way, Mr. Judge says that all our thoughts make a picture in the astral light, but when that picture has faded, it leaves behind an impression which also takes some time before fading away.

Astral light is at once a photographic plate and a reflector, as it retains the “mistakes of ages past which it continually reflects upon us.” Therefore, even though we consider ourselves to be free, we often act blindly under the suggestions coming from the astral light, which acts as a hypnotizing agent.

However, it is also true that a picture of evil lasts longer in the astral light because there is a stronger will attached to evil thoughts and feelings. Moreover, astral is the lower form of material, suited for lower forms of thoughts and desires. Just like anything written with a chalk on a stone will last some time, but if it is carved, it remains for much longer time, so also, spiritual and ennobling thoughts and desires do not make deep impression on the astral, for them the more suitable material is *Akasa*.

In our times, we find that more than religious dogmatism, it is scientific materialism that has an upper hand. In this age, there are great triumphs of science but they are connected with *effects*, and do not take away the *causes* of evils, which lie deep in the minds of men and can only be eradicated by spiritual ideas. As a result, when cure for certain diseases has been found, new diseases arise. Therefore, those in the present age, especially the students of Theosophy, must *live* a better life and by their example imprint upon the astral light the picture of a higher aspiration. “We have, each one of us, to make ourselves a centre of light—a picture gallery from which shall be projected on the astral light such scenes, such influences, such thoughts, as may influence many for good, shall thus arouse a new current, and then finally result in drawing back the great and the good from other spheres, from beyond the earth.” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 73)

(*Concluded*)

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS PLANETARY INFLUENCES

AS to the position of stars and real Astrology: Judge has said that it is not solitary stars or sidereal bodies that affects us but the whole dome—the complete conjunction of all the bodies in the firmament it is that affects us. I would not bother to get a horoscope prepared for any child that is born. Please see what Vol. I of the *Secret Doctrine* says—the section on Karma and Cycles.

In an early volume of *The Theosophical Movement* (Vol. XIII, January 1943) we have reprinted several articles on astrology. The basic principle of the whole process is well described by H.P.B. in the *Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 646. All prognostications are founded upon cyclic computations. The chart of the heavens is a photograph, so to speak, which says, “Such-and-such an influence is now due”—like the clock or watch which we use. We determine that our breakfast is at eight, but the watch tells us, “Now it is eight’ go for your breakfast.” Do you get me?

Suppose instead of saying that heavenly bodies affect us we say that we make an impress on heavenly bodies in their respective motions, and we will be able to glimpse the truth. But not only humans so affect; all the visible and invisible kingdoms affect the bodies of the sky. But it is true, it is well-nigh impossible to calculate what any particular person will do at a given moment; the free will of man is in itself a motion and for most an erratic motion. Then, H.P.B. speaks in the *Secret Doctrine* (I. 572) about the star of the personality which changes at every incarnation and the Manvantaric star of the Individuality.

The question of free will arises only in the human kingdom. So astrology has its correspondence in natural impulse and then in self-induced ways and means. It is difficult to reconcile determinism and free will. But the force of will, in quality as in quantity, to be exerted by a person is *calculable* by an Adept, maybe a very high-grade Adept.

The passage you ask about in *The Voice of the Silence* (pp. 39-40) is puzzling, especially the Sun “falling” and becoming

a planet. By analogy and example we can grasp at least one meaning. Think of a great scholar who, instead of going on with securing further knowledge, takes a teaching job in a college to help a certain grade of pupils who are stuck because there is no one to teach them. Venus points the way; it is by turns the morning star Lucifer and then the evening star Hesper; the Goddess of Wisdom, patron, so to speak, of the Higher-Mind Hierarchy. She is responsible for the Birth of Man and also for his Passing. Our Higher Manas should and does point out to us the way; and when it is active in us, even for a while, it energizes and inspires us to serve other *souls* and *minds*. Mars is the God of war and Love; our higher aspirations fight our lower desires—or ought to; the lower desires conquering lower Manas is the material aspect and similarly love. There is the blind Cupid and the all-seeing Eros—the Love that sees and understands. The watchful single-eye of Mars sweeps over slumbering humanity. Read what the *The Theosophical Glossary* says about Kamadeva. Mercury is the God of Wisdom—Budha—the Patron-Saint of all who seek the Secret Wisdom, Gupta Vidya. The Power of Protection comes from It or Him,. These Dhyanis symbolize forces and powers of significance in Occultism.

In more than one place it is stated that Planets stand for Regents or Dhyanis whose Homes these Planets are. Every Planet has a Dhyani-Buddha, and in each of the seven Hierarchies there are Intelligences, and so each Manas as Thinker belongs to a “House” as they say in astrology. The *Secret Doctrine* says that a Planet results in evolution after a long travelling.

The seven groups are evolving along seven lines. Let us compare them to seven professions—architect, engineer, lawyer, doctor, artist, etc. No one is superior or inferior to the other. They are different and equally useful to civic life. The difference in the seven Rays or Lodges is not of powers and knowledge and virtues as of technique. They all have the power to know and to serve, but each Ray has a technique of its own. Of course individualistic differences do seem to persist. Shelly and Keats are both poets with intuition; there is similarity of message but difference in technique.

METAPHYSICS—SOME REFLECTIONS

II

WHAT is this real Self which remains immutable while matter and mind are subject to continual change? Science says that the sense of “self” may just be an illusion created by 100 billion neurons at work. Our brain is the seat of mind, thoughts and also the sense of our existence. Neuroscientists locate our consciousness in the brain and not in the soul, saying that sensations, thoughts, joy and pain are the result of physiological activities in the brain tissues. Consciousness can be manipulated by physical means. We think, feel and see differently when the brain is affected by chemicals, such as alcohol or Prozac. Thus, science seems to locate the sense of “self,” and the sense of “I” in the brain—making “mind” redundant.

As far back as the 1930s Wilder Penfield, who was a pioneer in the use of electrode stimulation of the brain, kept his patients fully conscious and stimulated various portions of the brain until he found the damaged tissue during epileptic treatment. These experiments gave rise to what Penfield termed “double consciousness”—the patient was fully aware of the hospital setting and his actions, and at the same time “reliving” the memories stored in the stimulated portions of the brain. At the end of extensive research he had this to say in his book *The Mystery of the Mind*: “It seems to me certain that it will always be quite impossible to explain the mind on the basis of neuronal action within the brain, and because it seems to me that the mind develops and matures independently throughout an individual’s life as though it were a continuing element, and because a computer (which the brain is) must be programmed and operated by an agency capable of independent understanding, I am forced to choose the proposition that our being is to be explained on the basis of two fundamental elements [brain and mind]....

As for modern psychologists, H.P.B. points out the utter inability of the best among them to explain the nature of mind and their complete ignorance of its potentialities and higher states. She says

that though memory—*remembrance* and *recollection*—is a faculty depending entirely on the more or less healthy and normal functioning of our physical brain, *reminiscence* is the memory of the soul, which is intuitional perception apart from and outside of our *physical brain*. Brain is the instrument of the mind, and is a canal between two planes, the psycho-spiritual and the material. It is through this canal or instrumentality of the brain that every abstract and metaphysical idea filters from Manasic down to our lower human consciousness.

H.P.B. aptly describes memory as the despair of the materialist, the enigma of the psychologist and the sphinx of science. Scientists and psychologists are unable to understand the nature of memory because of their inability to understand the *nature of mind and potentialities of Higher Mind*. The brain cells are *receivers* and *conveyors* of memory, but not their preservers or *retainers*. When it is said that one has lost his memory, or that it is weakened, it is partly because the memory cells have become enfeebled. H.P.B. gives an analogy. Through the window glass we are able to see the objects outside, but if the windowpane is cracked, we shall see only distorted images, and if it is replaced with cardboard, we are unable to see anything. However, the objects outside the window have not disappeared and can be seen once the windowpane is repaired. So, too, the Universal Memory (Astral Light) preserves every impression. Astral Light is the tablet of memory of the animal man, while *Akasa* is the tablet of memory of the spiritual Ego. Memory, says H.P.B., is unconscious looking into and reading the impressions in the astral light.

Since the process of remembering involves brain, and brain cells are constantly changing, it is easy to see why we are not able to remember things that happened many days or months or years ago. And yet all through the life, we experience a kind of *continuity of perception*, because of soul memory. The complex feeling, “I am Mr. Smith or Mrs. Brown” arises out of a long series of daily experiences strung together by the thread of memory. These experiences produce the sense of *Egoity* only while they last, which we call *personality*.

Self-consciousness belongs to man alone and proceeds from the higher Manas (Mind). Hence, unless science admits the existence of lower (animal) and higher (divine) mind in man, free will and higher manifestations of mind will remain a riddle to it. It is the higher mind which enables us to say “I am I” and in conjunction with *Atma-Buddhi*, becomes the Individuality or Reincarnating Ego or “Hidden Self.” When a person wakes up in the morning he does not feel that he is a different person. There is a continuity of consciousness. Even in case of loss of memory or schizophrenia, a person may forget his name and address but he still feels that “I am myself and no other.” This feeling of identity is the proof of the “Hidden Self.” It is termed “Soul” and “Perceiver” by Patanjali and it is not dependent on body and brain but works through and feels sublunary things through its *alter-ego* the (lower) mind.

The most common objection to belief in rebirth is that if we have lived before why do we not remember our past lives? This lapse of memory is an experience of everyday life. Of so many experiences from our childhood to youth, we are able to recall only a few and that too not in full detail. Memory is the record pertaining to a particular existence. At every new birth there is a *new* body, a *new* brain and *new* memory. In a new birth a *new* record pertaining to that existence is developed. However, our Higher Ego is omniscient and has the memory of all our past lives. Reminiscence is the memory of the soul or the Higher Ego.

In physical memory we have separate details, and an orderly sequence of relations, but it is not the preserver of *experience*. Experience relates to feeling and consciousness; memory, to time and sense. Hence, *memory* belongs to the personality, while *reminiscence* belongs to the permanent individual (*The Path*, Vol. IV). We may say that reminiscence is the aroma or nectar of the spiritual qualities of past personalities. For the soul-memory to become available in our waking consciousness, the brain must be made porous and receptive so that it could be impressed with this memory of the past. For this, it is essential to think and act along the

right lines during waking life. Spiritually advanced beings such as Buddha and the Initiates remember all their past incarnations.

Apart from the memory of past lives, Soul memory alone can explain dreams concerning future events, also dreams that are concerned with past lives and dreams that bring solution to one's problems. We pass from waking to dream and then to dreamless sleep state. Then once again we pass from deep sleep to dream state and to waking. There is that consciousness in us, called Higher Mind or Ego, which is always awake and aware. When we go to sleep, it is the body which sleeps not this Ego. Hence, this Ego moves between the waking and sleeping state. When we pass from the waking to sleeping state or from sleeping to the waking state, we pick up the memory of that state, and do not have memory of the other state. Our brain is not trained to retain the impressions of what happens during our sleeping condition, and therefore, we remember only sometimes, the fragments of our dreams.

In *Sushupti* or the dreamless sleep state, our lower nature is paralysed, which includes lower emotions and intellect. In *Sushupti* we exist as our true individuality, unhindered by personality. In this state our ego acts on its own plane and is fully conscious and omniscient. For the real Ego, the past and future are as present. The Ego tries to impress on the sleeping brain, what it witnessed on its own plane. The brain throws out these impressions as dreams, which are called *real dreams*.

There are “prophetic dreams” or “dreams of premonition,” which are impressed on the memory by divine nature. In these dreams either a voice is heard or the coming event is foreseen clearly. Prophetic dreams concern what is going to take place in the future and they are the reflection of what is seen by the Ego while it is on its own plane. In the dream of a Pharaoh there were seven fat cows followed by seven lean cows coming out of a lake, warning the king of seven years of prosperity to be followed by seven years of famine, and so on. In *Sushupti* we find solutions to our problems. Many artists and inventors have received inspiration or solution in

dream of a problem which they were struggling to solve while awake. For instance, Kekule dreamt of a serpent biting its own tail and he was able to give the closed ring structure of Benzene molecule. Generally, the solution obtained is in a symbolic form. The language used by our ego on its own plane is quite different from any that we know of in waking life. When the ego resumes its life in the body, it conveys its experiences to our brain in the form of pictures and images.

There are retrospective dreams of events belonging to past incarnations. During deep sleep, when the higher Ego functions on its own plane, it is able to witness actions based on causes generated by it in past lives, which in turn must produce certain results. We have an instance of it in the “Karmic Visions” which first appeared in *Lucifer* for June 1888. King Fredrick III, while travelling in the train from Germany to Prussia, for his coronation, dreamt of his previous lives. He saw himself as King Clovis I, the cruel tyrant, who killed the prophetess for refusing to reveal to him the place where the treasure was hidden and for prophesizing his suffering in the future birth for all his evil deeds, and cursing him. He killed her by piercing a spear through her throat; for which in the present life he saw himself suffering from incurable throat cancer. He also saw his other lives, fighting wars and killing other men, with consequent suffering and loneliness in the present life. His brief reign of 99 days ended with his death. Thus, for the real Ego of Fredrick, the causes sown in past life formed the basis of his experiences in deep sleep, which revealed to him the cause of his present suffering and what was to come.

Our ability to remember the real dreams depends upon the state of our consciousness before falling asleep. In the article “The Psychology of Dreams” (*Theosophy*, Vol. 6), we read that various classes of dreams are but the impressions made on the brain; and brain is the instrument of lower mind or waking human consciousness. The experiences remembered are subject to the limitation of the brain instrument, which could be a palimpsest, and

then impressions from the higher states get mixed up with the impressions made in the waking state. Palimpsest means the manuscript which is written over twice. The first writing is rubbed out and written over with something else, thereby causing confusion. Hence, the brain can act as a dull surface, mirroring shadows and distorted images. It can act as a polished surface, reflecting brilliantly but evanescently. It can also be like a sensitive photographic plate, and then it will faithfully mirror and retain every impression of the soul.

To be able to remember dreams, the brain must be made porous and receptive, and we are told that by living according to the dictates of the soul the brain may be made porous to the soul's recollections. Our ability to recollect real dreams, or the *thought-actions* of the real Ego depends upon the ability of the inner Ego to impress the physical brain of the outer man. This in turn depends upon the spirituality or otherwise (materiality or sensuality) of the inner man or the incarnated consciousness. The more spiritual the man, the easier it is for the Ego to awaken the sleeping hemispheres, and arouse into activity the sensory ganglia and the cerebellum, and to impress the former with the vivid pictures of the subject so transferred.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. observes that when the lower personal self is paralyzed, the Spiritual Ego, being omniscient or all-knowing, is able to act. She gives an example of the servant-girls in a poor farm-house who could speak Hebrew and play the violin in their trance or somnambulatory state, and knew neither when in their normal condition. In *Transactions*, (p. 78) H.P.B. points out that a person suffering from advanced consumption is daily severed or disconnected from his physical body and therefore becomes clairvoyant in proportion. In other words, in consumptive state the physical body gets gradually paralyzed, and as death approaches, the body wastes away and is no longer a barrier or obstacle between the brain and the Ego.

(To be continued)

PRAGMATISM OF NONVIOLENCE

THE term violence is ordinarily understood to mean commission of such acts by one, which causes pain, distress, or loss to another or many others; and refraining from such acts is understood to mean nonviolence. Injury to others, especially to lower forms of animal and vegetal life, is imminent in one form or another in the very act of living our daily lives. We unavoidably harm or inadvertently destroy many forms of micro-organisms in consuming food and drink, and in other daily activities. The practitioner of nonviolence not only refrains from deliberate acts of harming or killing any form of life but endeavours to so order his daily chores and performance of duties as to cause minimal inadvertent loss or injury to others.

Acts of violence are generally considered as pertaining to such physical acts that cause physical injury or loss to others. What is not generally known, or overlooked, is the fact that genesis of human action of every kind is in thought, will, feeling, intent and motive, and that heart and mind are the real plane of action.

Physical act alone without much thought behind it is not of much consequence. What makes an act productive of good or bad results is the intensity of thought and feeling which prompts the act, and motive that actuates it, the latter determining the moral quality of the act. For example, the act of rebuking a friend, though apparently an act of verbal violence, yet it is not productive of evil, or it may even be good in the end result, if it was actuated by good intention, as a help to the one addressed. On the contrary, if chastisement was directed against another out of a *mala fide* intention to harm, to humiliate, or out of vengeance, it becomes an act of violence. Since heart and mind are the springboard of all actions the one who would practice nonviolence must watch his thoughts, motive, and attitude. Courteous and polite though one's conduct may be in social intercourse to all appearances, if the thoughts, feeling and motive of the person, which are hidden from view, have malevolent intent, he is actually full of violence, productive of much evil not only to

himself but to all who come within the sphere of his influence.

Vegetarian diet is considered to be a way of nonviolent life but if the general trend of the thoughts of such an one is sectarian, dogmatic, selfish, spiteful, violence lurks in him. On the contrary, one may be by habit given to meat diet but if his inner disposition is charitable, kind, tolerant, forgiving, he is to be considered virtuous and nonviolent. Jesus has spelt out this moral verity in strong and unambiguous terms when he said, “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. . . .but those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies” (*Matthew*, 15:11-20). Powerful words, these, which unravel and expose self-deception and hypocrisy from which none of us can say with certainty that we are entirely free. Misfortune, misery, and diseases which afflict people, social evils of every kind, wars and pestilences that sweep across the globe—all of these originate in the minds and hearts of people. Violence and wars manifest in the outer world have their rife source in the violence implicit in minds and hearts of men.

Much attention is given these days to the upkeep of the health of the body through a regimen of balanced diet, yogic postures and breathing, and other exercises. What is overlooked is the fact that mind and soul—the Inner Man—too are in the need of the right kind of food and appropriate exercise, in the absence of which attention to the body alone is worse than useless.

What then is the right food for the mind? It is altruism, charity, compassion, forgiveness of wrongs done to oneself and doing good in return, devotion to the good of humanity, aspiration to be governed by Higher Self, and studying sacred books and meditation thereon. Dwelling upon and practicing these virtues of higher life is the food that our minds and souls need, which if attended to with diligence and consistency brings about salutary change in the whole nature of man and render the body tractable and responsive to the higher

nature, making the man whole and healthy in mind, body, and spirit. This is practicing nonviolence in its true sense.

These considerations show that the notion generally held by people that practicing nonviolence is an impractical proposition in this world, where one has to compete in the struggle for existence, is baseless. Struggle for existence and survival of the fittest which rules in the natural world, as Darwin pointed out, is true in the domain of animals and plants, and it is played out in the world of men when animal element of the lower nature of man, his passions and desires, has the upper hand as the chief driving power of human action and conduct. Violence is implicit in the one who holds to such a world-view, which, in fact, is the basis of modern civilization.

But the fact is that man is far above the animal. Man is not evolved from the animal but a god celestial descended into the flesh of man terrestrial. He is an incarnated spiritual being endowed with reason, free will, and spiritual perception. The whole purpose of human existence is realization by him of his true Self and Being to be the Supreme Soul of the world, and to raise up the sub-human kingdoms of nature to a higher life, where he stands in the ladder of evolution, and thence to divinity. That is the great Duty-Dharma of Man—to conquer and subjugate his lower animal nature by the exercise of higher reason with a basis in spiritual knowledge. It is the law of sacrifice which governs the higher human progress, and all Nature below his estate looks up to and depends on him for their higher development.

A consideration of these varieties gives us a better understanding of the statement of Gandhiji that Truth and Nonviolence are an inseparable pair. A knowledge of the truth of universal brotherhood, of the unity of Self, and of the implacable justice of the Law of Karma awakens in us a profound sense of individual responsibility towards humanity and all life, with which we intuitively feel our solidarity.

Even in the perspective of ordinary life, reason and commonsense tell us that the ethics of truthfulness and nonviolence in thought,

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feeling and intent alone make for lasting happiness, and broadens one's sympathies to embrace larger life, with a corresponding loosening of the hold of the false idea of separateness.

With a knowledge of laws of higher life, visitation of adversities in life or offenses done against us are seen as the just punishment for our own thought and action in the past that disrupted the harmony of life, that caused harm to many, and, at the same time, as an opportunity to restore the harmony we had disturbed through corresponding suffering. The offender is seen as a Karmic agent through whom came the retributive justice—the hand that smites us being our own—and who is to be considered as a friend and a benefactor, a part of oneself. Love alone conquers hate, which the Buddha says is the *Sanatan Dharma*. This is nonviolence in thought, word and deed. The policy of an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth is the outcome of ignorance, which, Gandhiji said, renders both the contending parties blind.

Efforts made by the international community to resolve disputes and differences, to cooperate for mutual benefit, will remain a distant dream so long as the laws of higher life and duty proper to the high estate of the human being are not understood and complied with. Good things do come, however, as Mr. Judge says, through much suffering and pain, but wiser is the man who heeds the words of wisdom and learns, avoiding thereby the terrible lessons wrought by the hard task master, Karma Nemesis, through blood and fire.

THE BEST things are nearest: breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of God just before you. Then do not grasp at the stars, but life's plain, common work as it comes, certain that daily duties and daily bread are the sweetest things in life.

—ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

STEPS ON THE PATH

THE title of one of the devotional books the student of Theosophy prizes, the *Dhammapada*—the Footfalls of the Law—suggests some significant ideas. There are many kinds of movements in the body: every muscle has its own movement, but when the feet move, the whole body finds itself in a new environment. With every step we take we come into a new environment, a new world. Our feet symbolize the urge to go forward, to move on—the great march of Evolution.

We speak of the Lotus Feet of the Great Gurus. The feet of the Guru are worshipped by the *Bhaktas*, the Devotees, because they are symbols of the Great March of Life that the Guru has finished. Those Feet have become purified. From those Feet flows the strength of long marches of experience.

We are all children, learning to walk. The Path of Life stretches all around us, in all directions. Shall we walk the pleasure path of sensuous life and find our garden path turning into a dry, sandy desert, trackless, waterless, where we shall famish and die? Or shall we walk the routine path of waking and sleeping now well, now ill, till birth leads to death, and death to new birth and another routine of life? Or shall we walk the lonely path of the creative intellect, of poet, philosopher, artist, who seeks beauty of form and allows the beauty of life and spirit to elude him; who, even when he serves his fellows, serves gropingly because his is but a partial, a shadowy vision? Or shall we take the narrow and difficult path of the Sage, of the Buddha, the path of Wisdom and of Compassion?

There is a fundamental distinction between the first three paths mentioned above and the last one, the Path of Enlightenment and of Service. The path of sensuous life, the path of routine, the path of the intellectual, or that of the creative artist, are not single paths. There are millions of ways in which the senses move. Every home and every member in every family has a different routine. The painters and poets, the critics and philosophers, all differ from one

another; for unless they differ they are called imitators, plagiarists, and rejected by the world. But the “strait gate” and the “narrow way” of which the Sermon on the Mount speaks, the Path of the *Gita* and of the Upanishads, the Noble Path of the Arhats, is to be walked in single file. On that Path we but follow faithfully in the footsteps of our Illustrious Predecessors. On that Path the senses are to be controlled in one way and one way only; the routine of life for each and all is one and the same routine; the philosophy which teaches Truth, the art which reveals Beauty, the religion which enhances the Good in each of us is a single philosophy, is an art that repeats itself, is the good that makes us like unto the Predecessors who have walked the selfsame Path. It is ever the same old Path, the Ancient Way, the Grand Trunk Road on which all souls progress, the Highway of the Spirit which leads to Nirvana.

Thus, on this Path of the Soul the virtues to be practiced, the powers to be unfolded, the mortifications to be performed, are the same for all. This conception of the Path compels one to break the fetters of castes and creeds, to do away with religious partisanship, social distinctions, racial differences. He who says, “I am a Brahmana superior to the Mlechha,” he is an untouchable, unworthy to walk this Path. He who says, “I am a Muslim, the only true and faithful one,” he is an infidel as far as this path is concerned. He who says, “I am a follower of Jesus Christ, the only son of God, superior to the heathen and the pagan,” he cannot walk this Path.

For the man or woman who is willing to reform himself or herself, however poor he or she may be in worldly possessions, the sayings of the Master Gautama which make up the *Dhammapada* are a guide which illumine the Path, like an electric torch on a dark, unlit road. By that light we can walk this wilderness, named the civilized world.

And what a wilderness it is! Hardly do people know that there is a sure Path leading out of this maze and jungle of life. Some are sticking to their own old ways, while others are attempting to construct new bridges; but few there be who see the ancient Noble

Way of the Great Arhats. The Buddha named it the Noble Eightfold Path. In the Yogacharya School of Mahayana Buddhism there exists a tradition that the Illustrious Predecessors of Gautama taught the Sevenfold Path, which the Buddha himself walked; but, seeing to what extent blind belief flourished, one more step was added—what is now the first of the eight steps—Right Belief or Right Seeing.

Study and examination of the Eightfold Path with the aid of the *Dhammapada* would prove most rewarding for the student-practitioner. The eight steps are: (1) Right Seeing (*Samma-ditthi*); (2) Right Resolve (*Samma-Sankappa*); (3) Right Speech (*Samma-vacha*); (4) Right Action (*Samma-Kammanta*); (5) Right Means of Livelihood (*Samma-ajiva*); (6) Right Striving (*Samma-Vyayama*); (7) Right Mindfulness (*Samma-sati*); (8) Right Meditation (*Samma-samadhi*).

The Pali word “*samma*” (the Sanskrit “*samyak*”) is not at all easy to translate. It is rendered into English by “right,” “correct,” “perfect,” and so forth; but “*samma*” in the original carries its own atmosphere. Perhaps if we keep in mind the trinity of the good, the true and the beautiful we may be able to enter into the very soul of these steps. That speech or that action which contains within it truth, goodness and beauty, all three, is alone worthy of the prefix “*samma*.” Our words may be true, but if they are not also good and beautiful, they are not *samma-vacha*; our deeds may be beautiful, but if they are devoid of truth and of goodness, they are not *samma-kammanta*; and so on for each of the noble steps.

The Buddha, speaking of the Noble Eightfold Path, described how the knowledge of the steps was acquired by him in three stages; and it continues to be in three stages for any and every one of us. First, in him arose the insight as to the Path and its Goal, and he perceived clearly the steps necessary to walk that Path. Then in him arose the understanding that he must walk that Path, he must go through the eight steps, he must apply what his insight had revealed. And lastly, in him arose the light which comes through application. Thus, having actually seen and resolved, he applied, thereby

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assimilating his vision and proving to himself by repetition of the Teaching that he was master of it. We may see a truth but unless we practice and live the truth it is of little use to us. We may see and even practice the truth, but unless we teach what we have learnt we are of little service to our fellows; we have neither seen that truth in reality nor lived it fully and correctly. And so the Buddha says: “Brothers, as long as my knowledge and insight were not quite clear about this truth in these three degrees, so long was I uncertain that I had gained mastery of this wisdom which is unexcelled in heaven or earth, among ascetics or priests, among gods or men.”

So, we must first hear and learn; next, we must practice and apply; and thirdly, we must live and teach. That is the real treading of the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Buddha began his exposition of the Teachings by stating that the Path he taught was the Path of Moderation, the Middle Path. Even before he detailed his teaching of the Four Noble Truths, the last of which is about the Eightfold Path, he referred to the necessity of avoiding the two extremes. The outward manifestation of the inner struggles, hopes and aspirations of every human being often ends in two extremes. Ordinary people desiring joys, thrills, excitements of sense life follow one extreme; this is the path of the profane. Then a reaction sets in and people go to the other extreme of rigid asceticism, torture of flesh, which deforms the inner senses. The rich man, learning that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for him to enter the Kingdom of Righteousness, might fancy that poverty is the way, and proceed to get rid of all his money. Neither gold nor its absence, however, takes us to Nirvana, but our *attitude* to the presence or absence of gold might, and, if it is the correct attitude, *will!* So, extremes in all things, even in our discipline, have to be avoided.

GREEDINESS of getting more, deprives...the enjoyment of what it had got.

—THOMAS SPRAT

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Different people experience the world in different ways. It is only when we become conscious of the nature of the experience that we begin to observe it in a totally different way. We make a good beginning if we can learn to make note of every experience and observe the feelings that the experience generates, as for example while sipping a cup of tea. One can try to feel the sensation of that tea touching the lips, feel the aroma, etc. In doing so, one is going from grosser to subtler levels and thus learning to go to higher levels of consciousness. This gives rise to the question, why some people's experiences go beyond the material interactions, while others get stuck in the gross or material aspects of their experiences. How does one find truth? Is it by turning inward? How does one turn inward? As we move in from the outer edges of consciousness, we enter the state of being one with the universe, and it is called *Shoonyam*, where truth is constant.

Gradually one is able to differentiate between ordinary experience and spiritual experience. As one advances, the act of experiencing merges into the experience. "The journey becomes enjoyable when you are completely immersed in the act, a sort of detachment from the outcome, which allows for a transformation," writes Mickey Mehta. We are far away from the centre when we are in a state of anxiety, anger or craving. In a balanced state or state of equanimity or *Shoonyam* when one dissolves oneself in the ultimate state of being, one is able to respond instead of reacting, and it is then that creation really happens, writes Mickey Mehta, a global leading holistic health guru and life coach. (*Sunday Free Press Journal*, November 6, 2022)

It is the Soul or Ego in man that is the Perceiver and an Experiencer. The Perceiver uses the lower mind as its instrument for that purpose, just as the astronomer uses his telescope for acquiring information respecting the heavens. If the telescope is not properly adjusted or is out of focus, there will not be correct perceptions, leading in turn to wrong action.

The instrument, mind, “is like a mirror; it gathers dust while it reflects.” We are not able to see things as they are because our mind is covered with dust of attachment, dust of passions, dust of prejudice and biases. “Men and women do not live; they only exist and go through life; they pass through numerous experiences but fail to learn the lessons,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

In order to perceive and experience the subtler aspects of things we need to develop higher faculties of the mind, such as can be seen in artists, poets, writers, etc. who think of even ordinary matters from a higher plane, and therefore, see “poetry in a cabbage or a pig with her little ones,” writes H.P.B.

We need to make our mind porous and receptive to the guidance from our divine nature. For this we must acquire the breadth and the depth of mind. The *breadth* of mind is, in one sense, a large scope of awareness. It also means acquiring *non-parochial* views. We must be able to welcome truth from whichever quarter it comes. We must let our minds contact the universal ideas through good books, scriptures, etc. The *depth* of mind comes from enthusiasm and commitment to go deeper into the subject, when we learn to relate a multiplicity of things to the Universals. But this is intellectual depth. Depth of mind also results from nobility of ideas, *i.e.*, by having kindly concern for one’s opponent. Besides developing both breadth and depth of mind we must cultivate the *heart quality* of mind, such as altruism, kindness and compassion.

In the recent past a series of laws were passed in several states of the United States of America that discourages or prohibits teachers across the country from having explicit conversation about race, racism and racial inequalities. The same is with the view to avoid making any student feel “discomfort, guilt, anguish or any other form of psychological distress on account of that individual’s race or sex.” However, psychologists who study how parents and teachers communicate with kids about race, are of the view that such laws

are not likely to help children, because years of research has shown that from an early age children notice racial ethnic disparities, such as, in wealth, so that white families have nice cars and bigger houses, and black families possess lower-wealth items, which may result in white children preferring and choosing to play with other white children of their age than Black. Secondly, it is natural for children to seek explanation when they find differences between people or groups. According to psychological concept of “inherence bias,” when we come across someone who behaves in a distinctly different way, we assume that there is something inherently different about that person. Likewise, children are likely to attribute wealth difference between communities to their capabilities or intelligence, and may also think that the groups are biologically or innately different. Thus, differences between groups are attributed to some deep, underlying and often unknown “essence.”

Scientists agree that race is the product of social and cultural ideas that are imposed on groups of people and that they influence the way we interact with each other, producing the inequalities we see in the world. It is necessary to explain to children that external factors like injustice and racial discrimination are responsible for differences between groups, else they could mistakenly believe the racial difference to be inherent, which is the foundation of racial bias. Hence, researchers believe that conversations with children about racial disparities can help reduce some of the negative consequences, and can help decrease racial biases in children, write Camilla Mutoni Griffiths and Nicky Sullivan. (*Scientific American*, August 2022)

On July 18th 1950, Unesco published a Declaration prepared by its Committee of Experts on Race Problems, which not only affirmed the fundamental unity of mankind but further asserted, in the official summary of its conclusions, that “according to present knowledge, there is no proof that the groups of mankind differ in their innate mental characteristics....The scientific evidence indicates that the range of mental capacities in all ethnic groups is much the

same.” In the article, “The Concept of Race,” (*The Theosophical Movement*, August 1951) we read that the above definition of race is based on scientific evidence, which takes into account the physical factors. Theosophy offers evidence for the intellectual differences between certain races and the rest, but insists that they do not justify discrimination against those with lower intelligence. Theosophy calls for full recognition of equal rights and privileges for all, without distinction of race, colour, social position or birth.

The inequalities of the intellectual capacity were part of the process of “the Lighting up of Manas (mind).” Just as one lighted candle lights up other unlighted ones, so also, the light of mind was given to humanity by *Manasputras* or solar pitris, endowing man with self-consciousness, power to think and choose, and intelligence. Those monads who were “half ready” received “but a spark” and they constitute average humanity. But those monads which had just evolved from animal forms to human stage, remained narrow-brained, and they will arrive at the level of the average humanity when they reach Fifth Round. They are described as those in whom the sacred spark is missing or is latent, or those whose brains are devoid of intellect. These formed the tribes of savages, such as, Bushmen of Africa, or Veddhas of Ceylon, or South-sea Islanders, etc. whose reasoning power is only a little above the level of the animals, and are the only inferior races, intellectually. In order to understand the racial differences, we also have to take into account the teachings of reincarnation and the process of individual evolution.

Drawing attention to spiritual and intellectual superiority, a Master of Wisdom writes: “...the highest people now on earth (spiritually) belong to the first sub-race of the fifth *root* Race; and those are the Aryan Asiatics; the highest race (physical intellectuality) is the last sub-race of the fifth—you yourselves the white conquerors.”

We also find that some of the physical traits of man, like the colour of his skin, the shape of his face and the length and breadth of his body, are so strikingly different among people in different parts of the world that they were and are used to classify man into

broad groups, called the human races. However, according to the views expressed in *World Health*, the magazine of the World Health Organisation (December 1971), racism has no genetic support. It says: “We cannot attach to racial traits a judgment of value in a rational way. Yet an arbitrary judgment of value is often attached to racial traits, and this constitutes racism. . . . Some groups have codified their racism into rules or laws, for the advantage of some and disadvantage of others.”

The concept of human hibernation may sound fanciful but mounting evidence suggests that humans have the biological hardware to benefit from some aspects of hibernation. It can help in treating cardiac arrest, boost longevity and aid people to travel further into space. In 2019 a patient with acute trauma such as a stab wound or gunshot was placed in a state of “suspended animation” by replacing blood with cold saline solution, which cooled the body and slowed down all internal processes, as it happens in real hibernation. It allowed doctors to carry out surgery involving many hours.

Hibernation centres on a state called torpor, characterised by decrease in physiological activity, reduction in body temperature and metabolism, in an animal. There is a possibility that ancient humans could hibernate as there is evidence suggesting that non-hibernating mammals retain an ability to enter reduced-energy states. “The distribution of hibernating species on the tree of mammals makes the likely conclusion that the common ancestor of all mammals was a hibernator. It is possible that we all have the genetic hardware,” says Sandy Martin at the University of Colorado. For many decades, Martin has collected and frozen tissue samples taken from a wide range of mammals over the course of their hibernation. The tissue bank was carefully timed to get information “about levels of gene products, which change across a torpor bout, or change very rapidly during the rewarming period, and change seasonally.”

Her idea was to identify the genes that control hibernation in mammals so that they “could be studied and possibly modified to mimic the beneficial properties that hibernation bestows.”

There is also research carried out with a view to understand the changes happening within the brains of hibernators, and for that purpose focus has been on a neurotransmitter called adenosine, which is linked with sleep. When Adenosine binds to receptors in the brain’s hippocampus, it slows down neural activity and makes one sleepy. Some researchers are of the view that if we learn more about the neuroscience of hibernation then drugs might be created in future that could influence the neural activity involved in hibernation.

“While hibernation’s mysteries still abound, our efforts to better understand it are finally beginning to gather momentum—and we are now waking up to the potential benefits,” writes Alex Wilkins. (*New Scientist*, October 15, 2022)

Animals go into hibernation or a state of inactivity especially during winter months, when food is scarce. A hibernating animal’s heart rate, metabolism, body temperature and breathing rate is dropped, in order to conserve energy.

H.P.B. said that “human hibernation” belonged to the Yoga system and might be termed one of its many results. The article on “Yoga Vidya” (*The Theosophist*, November 1879) mentions: “While average mortals maintain their perceptions only during the day, the initiated Yogi has an equally real, undimmed, and perfect appreciation of his individual existence at night, even while his body sleeps. He can go even further: he can voluntarily paralyze his vital functions so that this body shall lie like a corpse, the heart still, the lungs collapsed, animal heat transferred to the interior surfaces; the vital machine stopped, as it were, like a clock which waits only the key that rewinds it, to resume its beating. What nature does for the scores of hibernating quadrupeds, reptiles and insects, under the spontaneous action of her established laws, the Yogi effects for his physical body by long practice, and the intense concentration of an undaunted will.”

Quiescence, hibernation, torpor, etc., represent different degrees of suspended animation, displaying drastic reduction in both metabolism and cellular activity. Are humans capable of entering into suspended animation? In *Isis Unveiled* H.P.B. cites several examples of suspended animation in human beings, as also of revival and resuscitation from that state. She writes: “What they [medical men] call ‘suspended animation,’ is that state from which the patient spontaneously recovers...In these cases, the astral body has not parted from the physical body; its external functions are simply suspended; the subject is in a state of torpor.”

According to many modern witnesses, fakirs, by a long course of preparation, have been able to bring their bodies into a condition that enabled them to be buried six feet under ground for an indefinite period. In such cases, after six weeks, the body showed no heat or pulsation in the heart, the temples, or the arm. There was, however, *a heat about the region of the brain*. The process of resuscitation involved bathing with hot water, friction, rubbing of the eyelids with ghee and clarified butter, and applying hot wheaten cake, about an inch thick, “to the top of the head.” (*Isis*, I, 477-78)

The change that happens to the functioning of vital organs during hibernation in animals may be consciously brought about by someone who is well versed in Yoga Practices. In one of his articles, Mr. Judge describes the effect of certain sort of breathing used in Hatha Yoga practices upon the physical system through experiments instituted by him. The experiment showed a reduction in the pulse action of 20 beats in 14 minutes. It also showed that after the first three minutes of the experiment, the intermission of five minutes was not enough for the pulse to go back to its normal beats at which the experiment started. However, his intention was to warn students of theosophy against rushing into Yoga practices without an expert guide and without the knowledge of antidotes that tend to neutralize the bad physical effect.

