

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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MAKING A GOD OF PAIN

MORE often than not, we read that lives of saints and holy personages are fraught with troubles and suffering. And yet, some of these saints are known to have prayed to God to give them *more* suffering. An ordinary person shuns pain, he almost wishes that God should take away pain, and bring in pleasure, like a magician who makes things appear and disappear with his magic wand. “How I wish I could get back my carefree days of youth!” says one, while another anticipates a future filled with comforts and luxuries. Ordinary people look for happiness, not realizing the importance of pain as a purifier and uplifter. A saint asks for more pain because he has recognized and realized that pain, when received rightly, takes him closer to God and strengthens his faith in Him.

Pain is necessary for growth and some of us have begun to recognize it. But often there is a warped understanding of the necessity of pain. We then seek pain, or seek to inflict it on others, or even abstain from helping others in pain, saying that pain purifies and makes for growth! A sadist takes pleasure in inflicting pain on himself or in causing pain to another. In some country children are tied to camels and then the camels are made to run, and the spectators take delight when these children scream in fright! What a perversity of human mind! If we are not careful, we may end up carrying this perversity in our religious and spiritual life. Vices of ordinary men undergo a subtle transformation and will reappear with changed

aspect in the heart of the disciple, cautions *Light on the Path*.

In *Letters That Have Helped Me* Mr. Judge writes about a vision seen by a seer, while he was in Paris, gazing at the waters of river Seine. He was thinking about the history of the life of a friend, when he saw a figure of a man bending over some object in the hand. It appeared that the whole being—the mind, heart and soul of this person were riveted on this object. A closer look revealed that a worm transfixed on a pin was writhing in agony. He regarded the worm with interested pity and yet with satisfaction. When the seer asked him to take off the worm from the pin, that figure turned. It was the same person whose life history the seer had been pondering over. His inflicting the pain on the worm was the symbol of his life. His life had been one of Worship of Pain. It was sublimated form of selfishness, where he welcomed pain and martyrdom. There was in him a passion for pain, which made him feel that “to inflict pain on others was to confer a benefit rather than a wrong.” How could they (others) grow without pain? “See how I have grown through pain!”

This is the mistake we may make in glorifying pain. We see this streak in religious fanatics. There were Christian saints, who tortured their bodies, for the “greater glory of God.” There is the belief that “the more I torture my body and the more I suffer, the more I glorify the God.” *The Voice of the Silence* cautions: “Think not that breaking bone, that rending flesh and muscle, unites thee to thy ‘silent Self.’” Generally, mortification or *tapas*, is taken to mean torturing of the body, denying to one’s self the comforts of food and clothes. It is comparatively easy to perform this sort of bodily mortifications. There are many examples of high caste people, especially in the olden days, who would rather starve than accept food from the low caste people. This shows control over the bodily wants, but what of Brotherhood and pride? As William Law puts it,

Hence we may learn the reason why many people not only lose the benefit, but are even the worse for all their mortifications....They think them to be real parts of holiness,

and so rest in them and look no further, but grow full of self-esteem and self-admiration for their own progress in them. This makes them self-sufficient, morose, severe judges of all those that fall short of their mortifications. And thus their self-denials do only that for them which indulgences do for other people. (*The Perennial Philosophy*, p. 130)

There are *Hatha-Yogis* who torture their bodies for developing powers. Are we trying to say that pleasure has no place in one’s struggle for spiritual life? In the book, *Through the Gates of Gold*, the author points out that the stoic, who subscribes to the philosophy of being indifferent to pleasure and pain, misses the point and thus throws away the baby with the bath water. “The stoic does not allow that there is joy within pleasure, and by denying himself the one loses the other. But the true philosopher... sees that the kernel is within the shell, and that instead of crunching up the whole nut like a gross and indifferent feeder, the essence of the thing is obtained by cracking the shell and casting it away.” It would be a folly to eat the walnut along with the shell. We have to take the trouble of separating the husk from the grains; the shell from the kernel. Every emotion, sensation and experience must be subjected to this process. Hence the need of testing and valuing every joy and pain our existence brings. Our involvement in any event is like raw material and reflection upon it is like processing of raw material. We process it the best when we are detached. We can learn to experience pain and pleasure with detached concern.

However, let us be careful that we are not guilty of making a God of pain in a perverse manner. Each one needs to introspect. Often pain is the best teacher, and the vilest nature is kept down and remains subdued under terrible pain. But should we therefore abstain from helping another, saying to ourselves that the pain will do him good? Often, the reaction to unbearable suffering is the hardening of heart. Sometimes parents, who have experienced poverty and hardships, tend to be very harsh with their children, depriving them of the comforts and luxuries of life. If they were brought up under

military discipline, they seek to impose the same on others. But each soul is different and we, as human beings, are not the one to decide the amount of pain and pleasure which others must undergo. We think we are doing it for their good. They should know what pain and hardship is all about!

It is a morbid way of making a God of pain, when one either becomes a stoic or worships pain for its own sake. But there is a healthy way of looking at pain and valuing pain and adversity. It happens when we understand happiness to be the hidden side of pain. We are used to avoiding conflicts and adversities and all that which makes for pain, like an amoeba, which carefully avoids all other food till it reaches a particular variety of Spirogyra. We hunt for pleasures, avoiding pain. But life is a package deal; you cannot have only the pleasure and not the pain. Wisdom consists in learning to accept pain, nay, in understanding pain and giving it the rightful place of honour. The “easy” and happy times are the periods of rest; the “hard” times are the periods of training—opportunities for gaining strength and knowledge, writes Mr. Crosbie. Right response to pain comes when we recognize that true happiness lies hidden within this pain. Mr. Crosbie writes:

The old adage, “Necessity is the mother of invention,” points to the process of growth; we do not “invent” until we see the necessity. In the great economy of Law and Nature, each being is exactly where he needs to be to eradicate defects; all necessary conditions are present for his growth. The only question lies with him: will he take them as “pain” or as opportunities? (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 24)

Anything that challenges us or makes us suffer, also makes us change. At the end of terrible suffering, people are sometimes heard saying, “It was painful, but I am a better person because of that experience.” A nagging wife, a criticizing neighbour, an ungrateful relative, an incorrigible son or subordinate, all such people exasperate us. We may want to run miles away from such people.

Who wants to be with a fault-finder? But surprisingly, saint Tukaram used to ask God, “Let the fault-finding person be my neighbour!” Gurdjieff, was a Russian born spiritual teacher. While everyone shunned company of a difficult person who rubbed people the wrong way, and who eventually left the town, it is said that Gurdjieff went in search of him and begged him to return. He valued him as a great teacher. Some people make up their minds to “take equal fortunes with the world.” So that, in spite of having money and hence the possibility of leading a fairly comfortable life, they choose to live life of want—always using public transport, no matter how crowded the buses or trains may be; keeping only two pairs of clothes; educating their children in public schools, and so on. There are those who go a step further and embrace the suffering of others by taking up the cause of domestic violence, child abuse, rape victims and helping those suffering from AIDS, and so on.

“Growth does not depend on the amount of pain or pleasure that is endured, but on our attitude of mind towards all that may meet us on life’s journey,” writes Mr. Judge. When we are convinced that the laws of Karma and Reincarnation work intelligently and impartially, suffering and pain take on different colouring and meaning. We begin to see that the mental defects, moral lapses and bodily diseases are Karmic effects for which *we* are primarily responsible. Mental gloom, loneliness and depression are ailments of the lower psychic person and if not checked in time, they precipitate as bodily ailments. We have to at once take remedial steps for psychological ailments, before it is too late, by making inner adjustments. For, our physical illnesses are like imprisonment with hard labour, while psychological disturbances are like solitary confinement. For our bodily diseases the doctors can prescribe medicines and relatives and loved ones can look after us. But it is comparatively difficult to help the person suffering from emotional and mental disturbances. One who aspires to live the spiritual life recognizes that the mood swings and mental afflictions are the tests of our mental and moral vigour. Loneliness, depression, “blues,”

feeling of dullness, and the like, are in the ultimate analysis, indicators that we have moved away from the “source.” If we are connected with our divine nature, which is indeed, the Witness, the Resting place, the Asylum and the Friend, we could never feel lonely. Pain gives us an opportunity to build our character—to eliminate defects and incorporate virtues. We love to hear stories of people who have been transformed by their disasters. Only those who are able to recognize and appreciate the transforming power of pain can repeat with the Irish mystic poet George William Russell:

Men have made them god of love,
Sun-gods, givers of the rain,
Deities of hill and grove;
I have made a god of Pain.

Of my god I know this much,
And in singing I repeat,
Though there is anguish in his touch,
Yet his soul within is sweet.

No outward thing—nothing, nobody from without—can hurt me inside, psychologically. I recognized that I could only be hurt psychologically by my own wrong actions, which I have control over; by my own wrong reactions—they are tricky but I have control over them too; or by my own inaction in some situations....When I recognized all this, how free I felt! And I just stopped hurting myself. Now someone could do the meanest thing to me and I would feel the deepest compassion for this out-of-harmony person, this psychologically sick person who is capable of doing mean things. I certainly would not hurt myself by a wrong reaction of bitterness or anger. You have complete control over whether or not you will be hurt psychologically, and any time you want to, you can stop hurting yourself.

—PEACE PILGRIM

THE PROMISE OF THE NEW YEAR

IT is customary to celebrate the arrival of the New Year. It is celebrated in various ways. One is just merry making. There is nothing wrong in it, but when it is carried to extremes of self-indulgence, in hedonistic revelries, as is commonly seen in wild celebrations in social circles, undesirable consequences must necessarily follow, through dissipation, devitalization and death—moral and physical. This is the way of the irresponsible.

Another way is that of the thoughtful, the reflective and the wise. Even among these there are various levels; some are superficial, and some perceptive and insightful. They look back on the events and experiences of the year which is closing, by way of introspective recounting of the deeds done, the good, if any, that is accomplished, the mistakes made and the lessons learnt; and look ahead to the New Year, which has begun to unfold. Some wonder what promise and prospects the New Year holds for them individually by consulting astrological prognostications, and others try to divine, by the signs in the heaven, the fate of nations, and vicissitudes of geology and climate which might affect them.

In Rome a temple was dedicated to god Janus after whom January, the opening month of the year, is named. He was the god of the good beginnings and, consequently, of good ending also, as what begins well must end well. He was a two-faced god, one young and the other old, looking in opposite directions. The temple sacred to god Janus had two doors opening to east and the west between which he stood facing the two doors with his two faces. Just born New Year is young and the year that is closing is old. The two faces of Janus symbolized the harmonious blending of the energy of youth and the wisdom of the aged. One without the other is counter-productive; youthful energy without the guiding light of the beacon of wisdom will end in folly; and the light of wisdom, on the other hand, without the force of the life energy as the vehicle and the medium to act outwardly and shed its beneficent light, will be as

ineffectual as the lamp hidden under a bushel. But whenever and wherever the energy of the youth is under the influence and guidance of the Wisdom of the Aged, when the mind and soul blend and act in unison, “there with certainty are fortune, victory, wealth and wise action.”

On the eve of every New Year the popular press and audio-visual media are full of retrospective analysis of the events gone by, and speculations on the promise and prospects that the New Year holds. A little reflection is enough to show that such an exercise in self-appraisal has not any sound basis in universal principles, by which the effects are correctly traced to their producing causes in the mind of man, to see and understand that it is through right seeds of thought and action alone can come change for the better and reform of society. In the absence of true knowledge mind is darkened, which, consequently, sees events as mere accidental happenings, and fails to comprehend moral bearing of human ideation in shaping of events and moulding human character.

Janus, the two faced god, sees the past and the future at once. The symbolism implies that the three divisions of time, the past, the present and the future, exist only in the limited vision of the human mind, whereas, in reality, they are one continuum, an unbroken flow of time and consciousness, for time and consciousness are inseparable. What is it that bridges the apparent gulf between the past, the present and the future? It is the Self or Spirit or Consciousness, the Eternal principle to which the past, the present and the future are as Eternal Presence, transcending time and space.

What we call the present was the future lying in the womb of the past, and what we call future is child of the past not yet born, modified, more or less, by the action in the present, lying in its womb. The events and experiences we encounter in life are not, therefore, accidental happenings but legitimate and inevitable effects resulting from causes we ourselves produced by our own ideation and action at another point of time and in other places and circumstances.

Self is Eternal, beyond time and space, but when acting in Matter

as the Ego or the embodied Spirit, imagines itself separate from all, and through this delusion, falls into error, reaping the consequences of its own actions, attributing good and evil experiences to wrong causes, vainly seeking remedies outside of itself. Man can overcome illusion of Matter by falling back in thought on, and arousing in himself the innate spiritual perception of, his own true self and nature—which “although undivided it appears as divided among creatures.” Wisdom flows from a discernment of unity in apparent diversity, of the principle of continuity throughout the innumerable, endless divisions of time.

Once this truism of the Eternity of Self is conceded then we begin to see that the apparently diverse and different human actions at different periods of time are interrelated by complex chain of cause and effect relationships, woven like a web by ourselves, around ourselves, as Eternal Thinkers. We are the actors, we are the judge and the jury of our own actions, and we ourselves, and no others, are executioners of the decrees of Justice uttered by the Inner Ruler who is ourselves.

What promise, then, the New Year holds for us? Nothing, except what we have decreed for ourselves. So long as we think and act in ignorance of the truth of our real Self, which is One and not many, and of the law of our being which is Absolute Justice and Mercy, so long shall we be wandering in the desert of life mistaking shadows for reality. We will continue to seek happiness in things external which end in disappointment and sorrow.

To contemplate and introspect as the year closes and to make new year resolutions in order to renew and recreate ourselves in the image of a higher ideal is a natural and inherent impulse in human nature, as man ever tends to reassume the Ideal of Archetypal Heavenly Man whose image he is. Let us then, with Alfred Tennyson, resolve to Ring out the mean, the selfish, the narrow, the old undesirable traits in ourselves, and “Ring in the nobler modes of life, the love of truth and right, and the love of the common good.”

ZANONI—THE TRIALS OF OCCULT LIFE

I

[Reprinted from THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, Vol. XX, pp. 125-130, for May 1950.]

[The lecture published here, condensed to meet our space limitations, was delivered at the United Lodge of Theosophists, Bombay, on February 14th 1950. We have omitted the able narrative of the story given in the lecture.—EDS.]

THEOSOPHY, in its essence, is an ever-present body of true knowledge. It has been known in different ages and nations under different names. But it was always open to the seeker to “take Knowledge.” Of the knowledge of the higher mysteries there is only a single condition—that the mind which seeks to know must be not only acute and diligent, but also pure and unselfish. Intuition brings to such minds great ideas from the realms of pure Akasa, and then they speak of “things invisible to mortal sight.” Thus, though not consciously aware of any such knowledge, some devoted artist expresses truths drawn from this ever-present body of knowledge.

No wonder, therefore, that even in the works of men who lived in an age or a country where Theosophy was not promulgated under that particular name, we discover an insight into some of the aspects of occult philosophy. Hence a novel like *Zanoni* which refers unmistakably to occult life, though it was written before Madame Blavatsky once more brought the occult philosophy to the notice of the world. On the other hand, greatly perceptive minds of novelists did not possess an explanation of the total system; and therefore, while Theosophical ideas are scattered throughout their work, and often developed to a considerable extent, they are rarely found without admixture. Therefore, in attempting to see the working of these great ideas in the books of such novelists, we must carefully distinguish the intuitive aspect from the work of prejudice and conventional literary artifice.

Lord Bulwer Lytton is one of such inspired writers. His books

make it quite clear that he was acquainted with the writings of profound mystics like Iamblichus and Von Helmont. His *Strange Story* contains a character clearly representing the soulless entities known as black magicians. His novels *The Coming Race* and *Zanoni* are referred to in *The Secret Doctrine*, and characters from *Zanoni* are mentioned in the notes appended to *Light on the Path*. The author himself states explicitly that beneath the romantic narrative related in *Zanoni*, typical meanings are concealed. And if we were seeking a warrant for interpreting the story with reference to the occult life, nothing more would be necessary than the phrase at the close of the Dedicatory Epistle: “...the Everlasting Brotherhood of whose being *Zanoni* is the type.”

Almost every character of any importance in *Zanoni* is connected, in some way or another, with the occult life. The chief ones are: *Zanoni* himself, the Adept of vision and compassion, not yet, however, beyond the touch of human passion; Adon-Ai, the high Spiritual Potency who counsels him; Mejnour the austere, without interests beyond high occult knowledge and attainments; Glyndon, the rashly daring neophyte who fails in the trials, evoking the dread Guardian of the Threshold: Viola Pisani, the pure and beautiful but unawakened soul, for whose sake *Zanoni* relinquishes his lofty status and to save whom, during the Reign of Terror, *Zanoni* meets his death upon the guillotine in Paris, in 1793.

The passage describing Viola’s early feelings about *Zanoni* contains these significant words, that it was like

something found that has always been sought for by a thousand restless yearnings and vague desires, less of the heart than of the mind; not as when youth discovers the one to be beloved, but rather as when the student long wandering after the clue to some truth in science, sees it glimmer before him, to beckon, to recede, to allure and wane again.

Zanoni for his part fears for her the danger of linking her life to his:-

“If she fall to me, I know not what her lot may be but I know that there is a terrible ordeal which few can pass, and which hitherto no woman has survived.”

We have said before that the narrative conceals typical meanings; and Lord Lytton adds that there are many hues which commingle in the light the artist seeks to cast upon truth, so it is impossible to elucidate them all. To most men, the narrative appears a glorious fantasy; and naturally, for they know nothing of the truths that lie behind the work. Examining the story in the light of Theosophy, however, will yield some of these inner truths.

We shall carry out our examination from two angles. First, we shall regard each of the characters as typifying a principle in the human constitution; upon this interpretation, we may regard the story as the record of a psychological process within the human being. Secondly, each character will be considered as separate intelligence, each at its own level of development; upon this interpretation, the story will yield a picture of the trials of the life of aspiration to hidden knowledge—a picture of the progress through that curve of evolution which may be called occult life.

No authority is claimed for these lines of interpretation. We will quote here the author’s own words in a Note appended to a subsequent edition. He writes:-

The author of *Zanoni* gives, then, no key to mysteries, be they trivial or important, which may be found in the secret chambers by those who lift the tapestry from the wall; but out of the many solutions of the main enigma—if enigma, indeed, there be—which have been sent to him, he ventures to select the one which he subjoins, from the ingenuity and thought which it displays, and from respect for the distinguished writer (one of the most eminent our time has produced) who deemed him worthy of an honour he is proud to display. He leaves it to the reader to agree with, or dissent from, the explanation. “A hundred men,” says the old Platonist, “may read the book by the help of

the same lamp, yet all may differ on the text; for the lamp only lights the characters—the mind must divine the meaning.” The object of a Parable is not that of a Problem: it does not seek to convince, but to suggest. It takes the thought below the surface of the understanding to the deeper intelligence which the world rarely tasks. It is not sunlight on the water, it is a hymn chanted to the Nymph who hearkens and awakes below.

The interpretation follows under the caption “Zanoni Explained.” What the present speaker is doing in offering interpretations is not claiming to make any authoritative pronouncement. He is trying to understand the great story by the light of his own limited understanding of Theosophy as recorded in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky. *The Psychological Key*, then yield, the following roles for the several characters:

We may begin with the highest, Adon-Ai. The clue is obvious. He is called the “Son of Light” and “the Dweller of the Starbeam.” Now, the “Sons of Light” in Theosophical literature are divine spiritual entities, from whose essence comes the ray that is the Ego in each human being. Among the principles of the human constitution, therefore, Adon-Ai represents the highest self—the ray of the Supreme Spirit.

Zanoni and Mejnour both possess wisdom, are rich in ancient lore, have pierced great secrets of nature. Obviously, therefore, they represent aspects of the thinking principle, *Manas*. Of the two, Zanoni is distinguished by a quick sympathy, and desire to relieve distress. He also is a companion of Adon-Ai—the spirit. Hence, Zanoni is that aspect of the mind which is united to the sixth principle, *Buddhi*, through which alone the mind can seek communion with the Spirit. But he is also shown as being deluded and losing his power to communicate with Adon-Ai; the union of Mind with *Buddhi*, therefore, is as yet unstable and incomplete.

(To be continued)

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

OLD AGE—II

8-9. *Many a House of life
 Hath held me—seeking ever him who wrought
 These prisons of the senses, sorrow-fraught;
 Sore was my ceaseless strife!
 But now,
 Thou Builder of this Tabernacle—Thou!
 I know Thee! Never shalt Thou build again
 These walls of pain,
 Nor raise the roof-tree of deceits, nor lay
 Fresh rafters on the clay;
 Broken Thy House is, and the ridge-pole split!
 Delusion fashioned it!
 Safe pass I thence—deliverance to obtain. (153-154)*

THESE were the words uttered by the Buddha immediately after attaining enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. Buddha had finally accomplished life's purpose. The ceaseless and agonizing quest for the builder of the prison of the sorrowful bodily existence that began many lives before was finally over. This was achieved not by any intermittent and lukewarm inquiry, but through perseverance and sustained efforts of many lifetimes. And having caught the culprit, he triumphantly declares: "Thou Builder of this Tabernacle, I know Thee." This builder is *tanha* or *trishna*—the thirst for life. A note on *tanha* explains its nature thus:

Tanha: Craving, is regarded as the origin of suffering and its extinction should be the aim of man. Of the four Noble Truths, the second and the third refer to the existence—origin and continuity—of craving. Three main cravings are mentioned—(1) Thirst for earthly objects (*Kama-tanha*); (2) Thirst for living on (*Bhava-tanha*); (3) Thirst for spiritual experience (*Vibhava-tanha*). Says the Mahayana text: "Kill love of life; but if thou slayest *Tanha*,

let this not be for thirst of life eternal, but to replace the fleeting by the everlasting" (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 15). *Tanha* is "the will to live, the fear of death, and love for life, that force or energy which causes rebirth." Nyanatiloka's Buddhist Dictionary gives them as (1) *Kama-tanha*, sensual existence, (2) *Rupatanha*, fine-material existence and (3) *Arupa-tanha*, Immaterial existence. *Tanha* is a vast field and is related to Karma, *Skandhas* and *Nidanas*. (*The Dhammapada*, p. 109)

It is desire for life and worldly existence which brings us back to earth. The thousand chords of desire bind the man to earthly existence. It is caused by delusion. Krishna says: "All beings fall into error by reason of the delusion of the opposites which springs from liking and disliking. But those men of righteous lives whose sins have ceased, being free from this delusion of the 'pairs of opposites,' firmly settled in faith, worship me." But the one who has overcome delusion becomes free and is one with the Supreme.

He whose heart is not attached to objects of sense finds pleasure within himself, and, through devotion, united with the Supreme, enjoys imperishable bliss. For those enjoyments which arise through the contact of the senses with external objects are wombs of pain, since they have a beginning and an end; O son of Kunti, the wise man delighteth not in these. He who, while living in this world and before the liberation of the soul from the body, can resist the impulse arising from desire and anger is a devotee and blessed. The man who is happy within himself, who is illuminated within, is a devotee, and partaking of the nature of the Supreme Spirit, he is merged in it. Such illuminated sages whose sins are exhausted, who are free from delusion, who have their senses and organs under control, and devoted to the good of all creatures, obtain assimilation with the Supreme Spirit. (*Gita*, V)

10. *Men who have not lived the disciplined life of a chaste mind, who have not gathered soul wealth in young age,*

pine away like old cranes in a lake without fish. (155)

11. *Men who have not lived the disciplined life of a chaste mind, who have not gathered soul wealth in young age, lie like worn-out bows, sighing after the past. (156)*

These verses show us the true intent of Buddha's discourse on old age. It warns us of the consequences of not making good use of the young age. Living of spiritual life must not be postponed to the old age. It must begin when we are young and strong. In old age, we are like worn out bows which have lost tension and are useless to the warrior. In the same way, one who has not lived the disciplined life in young age will have nothing to reflect upon. This is the reason why some religions have initiation ceremonies such as *Navjyot*-ceremony, thread-ceremony, etc. to impress upon child's mind the importance of gathering spiritual wealth. What cannot be moulded in young age will be difficult to mould when we are old. The old crane in a lake without fish does not have strength to fly to another lake. A person would find it difficult to begin the arduous journey in an old age, and can but sigh for the lost opportunity.

(Concluded)

WE cannot achieve anything of value unless we invest it with freedom and allow it the kind of time it needs fully to develop. All the things that season our character—love and trust, friendship and faithfulness—must come freely through the medium of time or they do not come at all. All life moves toward freedom, toward a healthy and responsible independence achieved only by those who commit themselves to a participation in the sacred mystery of time. Nothing that is ultimately good comes in chains or outside of time. Even lovers whose hearts beat to a timeless pulse and who long for union must finally work out their relationship in freedom and patience. In patience, the scriptures tell us, we shall possess our souls.

—EUGENE KENNEDY

ON “IDLE WORD”

The “idle word” condemned by Jesus is inactivity of Being. It is the cessation of the homogeneous resonance, the Logos or Word. The Word in its highest activity is pure spirit; in stagnation it is hell. To each man it is given in trust for all men; if he misinterprets it he is tortured. If he sequesters it, he is condemned to eternal death that it may be free; for it is eternally free. Through misuse, he may learn its use. If he denies it, he is lost; for by it alone he lives. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 17)

THE “idle word” referred to in the above paragraph appears in the *Gospel According to St. Matthew*: “For every idle word that man speaks, he will have to account for it on the Day of Judgement. For, it is by your words alone that you will be justified and by your words alone you will be condemned” (*Matthew*:12, 36-37). Mr. Judge has given unique interpretation of “idle word” in the above paragraph. When it is taken to mean “spoken word,” the meaning is obvious. We are judged by our speech. It is worth asking what use do we make of the power of speech? Idle talk easily degenerates into gossip. As one of the Masters writes, “each man is personally responsible to the law of karma for every word of his voluntary production.” Gossip, which is so natural in today's world, is to be avoided. In fact, for the students of Theosophy Mr. Judge advises that students, when they meet, must never part without discussing some ennobling subject.

At the base of every word there is thought. Thus speech is the faculty which is directly related to the mind. Speech is the *logos* of the thought. *Logos* means outward expression or effect of the concealed cause. Thus, on the higher plane, *Manifested Logos* is the expression of Divinity. The plan for the phenomenal universe resides in the Divine Mind, which is like unexpressed thought. At cosmic level, the Word or *verbum*, which is *Nada Brahma* or Divine Resonance, is represented by AUM. It is the homogeneous resonance,

which pervades the whole universe. Vowel “a” represents the vivifying power, which stirs up all molecules to action. This is creation, for without this resonance or motion among the quiescent particles, there would be no visible universe, writes Mr. Judge. Sound “a” alters into “au” which represents preservation. This utterance closes with sound “m” or stoppage, representing destruction. Sound “m” indicates cessation of divine resonance and it brings about death and destruction. Thus, idle Word or inactive Being—may represent cessation of Word or Divine resonance, at cosmic level.

“The Word in its highest activity is pure spirit.” In man, at an individual level, Word means Christos or divine principle, and also Wisdom. In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. points out that *Logos* in man is the Eternal EGO, that which reincarnates and lasts forever. When personality is paralyzed the Spirit or individuality can manifest uninterruptedly. “But in stagnation it is hell.” What happens when we do not allow the Christos principle to shine through or allow its expression? When this Individuality is clogged with heavier weight of matter than it can bear, the harmony will be destroyed, and then there is stagnation—state of “lost soul.” A similar idea is symbolically represented in the *Gospel According to St. John* (ch. 15). Jesus says:

I am the *true* vine and my Father is the Husbandman.
Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh
away....As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it
abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in me.
(*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 184)

H.P.B. explains that *Atma* is the “Husbandman,” *Buddhi-Manas* or Spiritual Ego is the Vine, while the animal (Vital) Soul or Personality is the “branch.” When the branch or personality ceases to take guidance from the Divine nature, it is gradually annihilated.

“To each man it is given in trust for all men; if he misinterprets it he is tortured.” Each has this divine or Eternal Ego but only when we allow it to shine forth, can we become the sort of person like Buddha or Jesus. On the other hand, not understanding the real

nature of things and therefore treating others and your own self as only the personality can only lead to suffering. We might take “Word” to represent spiritual knowledge. If we do not interpret the knowledge of the scriptures correctly, or if we deliberately interpolate or make dead-letter interpretations, then we bring suffering upon ourselves and on others.

“If he sequesters it,” *i.e.*, if he tries to confiscate, or seize by authority, or separate it, “he is condemned to eternal death.” “Wind bloweth where it listeth,” or rather, “*Spirit* goeth where it willeth.” Only when we have made our personality a worthy tabernacle, does the divine descend. The same is true of the “word” or spiritual knowledge. It can never be the exclusive property of the few.

“Through misuse he may learn its use.” The power to do anything at all comes from the Spirit. We are continually wasting the power of Spirit, when we misuse this power through the avenues of thought, speech and action. Instead of using these powers constructively we use them destructively. It is only when we are brought to utter ruin or suffering, through our thoughts, words or deeds that we learn its use. We may discover that harsh and angry words may silence people but not always. Then we may try using gentle, kind and loving words, and so on.

“If he denies it, he is lost; for by it alone he lives.” A rank materialist utterly denies the existence of Spirit. He believes only in things, which can be perceived by five senses. He denies survival of any spiritual entity after the death of the body, and hence his philosophy of life is, “eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we shall die.” Such a person is indeed *lost*, if in addition to his unbelief in spirit and spiritual world, he is also a selfish wicked egoist, who never shed a tear for any one but himself. In his case, after death the shining thread, which linked his spirit to the personal soul, from the moment of birth of the child, is violently snapped, and the personality is disconnected from the Divine Ego, and is annihilated.

HAVE WE LIVED BEFORE?

II

THE DOCTRINES of Karma and Reincarnation are the fundamental teachings of Theosophy. Theosophy itself is based on the accumulated wisdom or *testimony* of the sages down the ages. It teaches that man is a threefold being—body, soul and spirit. Body is the instrument of the soul. The soul is the thinker, who uses the body to contact the world and pass through the experiences of life to become perfect. But above these two is the Spirit, the source of all the forces and consciousness, unchanging and immortal. When the soul becomes of the nature of spirit, universal and impersonal, it becomes immortal.

The whole purpose of evolution is to learn that we are verily the Immortal Spirit within, the Perceiver and Experiencer. For this, the soul has to pass through the experiences, first in the lower kingdoms, like mineral, vegetable and animal, to reach the human stage and then strive to attain physical, intellectual and spiritual perfection. Progress in the lower kingdoms takes place through the *natural impulse*. But man has power to think and choose. Man has free will. Evolution is now in his own hands. Unlike animals, he has mind which can discriminate between the good and evil. Therefore, man becomes morally responsible for his actions. He can co-operate with nature and other beings to accelerate his progress or retard it by his evil actions.

In the infinite universe, there are infinite possibilities. In a single life, out of numerous aspirations, we are able to pursue only a few and may or may not succeed in fulfilling all of them. What happens then? In the Sixth Chapter of the *Gita*, Arjuna asked Shri Krishna, what happens to the person, who has not attained to perfection in his devotion at the end of a life, because his uncontrolled mind wandered from the discipline? Are his efforts of this life wasted? Does he have to start all over again? Shri Krishna's answer was:

Such a man, O son of Pritha, doth not perish here or hereafter...The man whose devotion has been broken off by death goeth to the regions of the righteous, where he dwells for an immensity of years and is then born again on earth in a pure and fortunate family; or even in a family of those who are spiritually illuminated...Being thus born again he comes in contact with the knowledge which belonged to him in his former body, and from that time he struggles more diligently towards perfection, O son of Kuru. (*Gita*, VI)

Each individual takes birth into the family and environment, which best answers his karmic needs. He is reborn in the company of those with whom he had set up affinities of love or hatred in past lives. Also, between two lives, man enjoys a stay in the “regions of the righteous,” or heaven world. This period for an average person is from one thousand to fifteen hundred years; but lasts for “immensity of years,” for the righteous person. This is quite logical. If the person were to be reborn *immediately*, there would be no rest for the tired soul. The period of stay in heaven or *devachan* is restful, and provides for the assimilation of noble aspirations. It also gives opportunity to the soul to be reborn into the civilization which must have changed in the intervening period. Krishna tells Arjuna, “Thou art born with divine destiny.”

But those who persist in evil, incarnation after incarnation, begin a downward journey and take birth in the “infernal wombs.” They are finally destroyed. But this does not mean that a human being may be reborn as an animal or lower creature. The occult teaching maintains, “once a man, always a man.” It is only the atoms or “lives” that he used in one form or the other, which having received beastly impulses and brutal impressions, fly back to lower kingdoms, making serpent more poisonous and the wild beast more ferocious. Man does not and cannot become an animal again.

Another misconception regarding reincarnation is that it is the same personality that takes birth again—the same person, with same

mannerism, thinking and even appearance. It is not so. In each life, the new personality taken up by the reincarnating Ego is not the same as the previous one, but it is a new combination in accordance with the karma of the past lives. The only exception being the cases of abortion, child death and idiocy as mentioned in *Isis Unveiled*:

Thus, in cases of abortion, of infants dying before a certain age, and of congenital and incurable idiocy, nature's original design to produce a perfect human being, has been interrupted. Therefore, while the gross matter of each of these several entities is suffered to disperse itself at death, through the vast realm of being, the immortal spirit and astral monad of the individual—the latter having been set apart to animate a frame and the former to shed its divine light on the corporeal organization—must try a second time to carry out the purpose of the creative intelligence. (I, 351)

Is there any way by which we can *convince* people who do not believe in the doctrine of reincarnation? While some reject it without much thought, others reject it on the basis of testimony of their prophets, which at times is the distorted or misinterpreted version of the actual teachings of the prophet by his later day followers or priests. There is firm belief that there is only one life, after which, we go to *eternal* heaven or hell. This cautions us against indiscriminate acceptance of *testimony* of others. Vyasa's commentary on the Yoga aphorisms of Patanjali points out that "if the original speaker has seen or inferred it, you generally do not suspect the authority. But when a speaker says questionable things, neither seen nor inferred by himself, it is fallacious authority" (p. 84). It is false testimony. Also, our direct perception may be faulty or illusory, like seeing the Sun rising in the East and setting in the West, or thinking that a rope is actually a snake. It is therefore important to cross-check the *individual perception* as well as testimony, even of someone you immensely respect, by reasoning and comparing it with the traditional or scriptural wisdom, found in

other religions.

This brings us to the third approach to arrive at truth, an approach of *inference*. We can use logic, reasoning, arguments and counter arguments to check our belief to see whether it stands the test of inference. Let us question the belief, "A new soul is created for every new born baby and that there is only one life, after which there will be *eternal* heaven or *eternal* hell for the soul, depending on how we have lived our life." The question is, if the new soul is created for every baby, why some children are born with congenital disease or defects while others are born healthy? Why some are born in a poor family, to a drunkard parent who cares not for the child, while others are born in a rich family and to caring parents? Our sense of justice rebels against such iniquities perpetrated by supposed God. Also, how can a just and merciful God cast a man into an *eternal* hell for evil actions, or reward him an *eternal* heaven for his good actions of *only one* life? Is not the punishment or reward disproportionate? Moreover, eternal hell does not give this man any opportunity to change himself and become good. This becomes particularly terrible in those cases where death is untimely, say, by accident or murder or capital punishment. It is only the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation that can explain the miseries and iniquities of life and offer solace and solution. Karma is the doctrine of responsibility, and Reincarnation is the doctrine of hope. As you sow, so shall you reap.

It is here, on earth, we have created karma in company with other people and therefore, must necessarily come back here, in their company, in one or another life, to reap the consequences. Soul seeks to take birth in a family which closely answers its bodily and environmental requirement. The soul is born in a family with whom it has developed close ties. So a wayward child may be born to the presently good parents because they are connected by past actions. It is the occasion of punishment to the parents but opportunity to reform for the child. This also explains how a child prodigy with exceptional musical, mathematical or intellectual abilities is born. It

is simply the case of the soul being able to express its past learning because the instrument of mind-body is just right. It also explains why, without any apparent reason, we tend to like or dislike a person. Love at first sight or instantaneous and intense dislike for a total stranger are the experiences of life, which cannot be explained on the basis of one life.

Some people oppose it by saying that we get our body and environment from our parents. The law of heredity is held out as an explanation of diseases or mental traits in a person. Heredity is actually one of the means used by Karma to provide the soul the appropriate environment for further progress or to mete out the just deserts. While it explains similarities, a large number of deviations are not taken into account. Every mother knows that each of her children is unique, like the five fingers of our hand. If heredity was an unerring law, how do we explain the disappearance of musical genius from the family of Bach? How do we explain birth of someone like Napoleon in an ordinary family, most unlike his warring genius?

Each being is unique. While the physical constitution and composition of all human beings is more or less similar, the expression of intelligence or consciousness differs. Some scientists attribute the mental capacity to the quality of human brain. If our brain and gray matter are the true measures of our mental capacity, then why the savage who has similar or even superior brains as compared to men of civilized nations is not able to use that capacity? It is because the soul is not experienced enough to make full use of the instrument.

Also, phobias could be explained on the basis of past lives. Some persons have strong fear of height, or fire or water or closed spaces, and so on. Nothing in their present life could explain such fears. Often this is a manifestation of the memory of past life. If the person died in some fire or was drowned, his soul may carry the strong impressions of that experience in a future life, which may then manifest as phobia.

Rewards and punishments are the ways of Karma to bring us consequences of our action. It may come to us in this life or in some future life. What comes to us is strictly in accordance with our action. It is the knowledge of these laws that provides the basis of practice of ethics. If a man realizes that there is no escape from Karma, he would shun evil. No confession, no declaration of one's belief in the blood of Christ can absolve us of our sins. If repentance is sincere, we will refrain from repeating the sin. We would also do everything that is in our power to reduce the pain of our victim. Such an attitude would help us to face the consequences when it comes.

The materialistic science appears to be the biggest opponent of the theory of reincarnation. But its proofs and principles actually strengthen the case of reincarnation. Science teaches the principle of conservation of energy, wherein one form of energy can be transformed into another, but it is not destroyed. While the forms change, the total mass-energy of our globe remains constant. Now, if "matter" *per se* is indestructible, is it not logical to say that the "consciousness" which vivifies and moves matter must also be indestructible? Spirit and Matter are coeval and co-eternal in the manifested world. Thus:

For logic, consistency, profound philosophy, divine mercy and equity, this doctrine of Reincarnation has not its equal on earth. It is a belief in a perpetual progress for each incarnating Ego, or divine soul, in an evolution from the outward into the inward, from the material to the Spiritual, arriving at the end of each stage at absolute unity with the divine Principle. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 182)

(Concluded)

If you love people enough, they will respond lovingly.

—PEACE PILGRIM

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[In this section we seek to answer frequently asked questions, at U.L.T. meetings or during private conversations and discussions with people who seek the answers in the light of Theosophy. Answers given in this section are by no means final. Only a line of thought is being offered by applying general principles of Theosophy.]

Question: In the *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, why does H.P.B. describe ants as *interesting insects*, saying that in relation to its own plane of conception and perception, the ant has as good an intellect as we have ourselves, and it possesses very high reasoning powers besides instinct?

Answer: In the *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, H.P.B. suggests that man is not the only intelligent creature. Not only are we not aware of consciousness beyond or below the human plane, but we do not know all about consciousness even of the insect. She says that Sir John Lubbock, who spent many years experimenting with and observing ants, has not discovered all that is to be known about ants. There is more to the consciousness of the ant than grasped or inferred from observation and experiments. “If a scientist could become an ant for a while, and think as an ant, and remember his experience on returning to his own sphere of consciousness, then only would he know something for certain of this interesting insect,” writes H.P.B. The ant’s idea of time and space is very different from ours and hence we cannot deny the existence of planes of matter and consciousness higher and lower than our own.

Experiments conducted by Sir John Lubbock and other scientists have shown that ants exhibit various characteristics and behaviour, which we associate with intelligence and civilization. Ant hills have complex ventilation system which allows throwing out of carbon dioxide, and bringing in of the fresh air. A lot of planning, organizing and co-ordination is involved when one ant colony wages war on another ant colony, for the sake of capturing food resources. The

real intelligence of the ants is observed in their ability to find the shortest path between the food source and ant nest (or mound), as also in their symbiotic behaviour. It has been found that the ants deposit on their path a chemical known as pheromone as they walk. Their tendency is to follow a trail *rich in pheromone*. Thus, when the ants are travelling in a single line from the food source to their nest, if an obstacle is placed in their path, half of the ants would go to the left, the other half would go to the right. In case the path to the left of the obstacle happens to be the shorter path, naturally more ants would have covered that path as compared to the path on the right, and hence more pheromone would be deposited on that trail, attracting rest of the ants. This method of finding the shortest path is studied by the scientists and made use of in re-routing the network traffic in a busy telecommunication system. In the same way, studies have shown that the ants in the Sahara desert find their way back home through the technique, which involves very complex mathematical activity called *Path Integration* and *Horizontal Projection*. Ants also enter into symbiotic relation with plant lice called aphids. They nourish and take care of the eggs of the aphids and once hatched they select the appropriate host plant for the young ones of the aphids. In return they get the honeydew, which is a sweet, sticky substance secreted by the aphids.

Its perception of space and time must be unique to it. Even in its perception of sound and colour it differs from man. In the article “Occult or Exact Science?” (*H.P.B. Series No. 19*) H.P.B. refers to the research work of Sir John Lubbock. He points out that for an ant, colours such as violet, blue and green are associated with bright light, while red, orange and yellow with darkness. In the experiments, when ant eggs were placed in bright light or violet light, they immediately moved the eggs to the dark areas. But, when red light was thrown on the eggs, they behaved as if they were in dark and did not move the eggs. For an ant, violet ray is the brightest of all the spectral rays. This is quite opposite of the perception in man. So also, if we take ultra-violet and infra-red rays, both are

beyond man's perception. However, when the eggs are subjected to action of these dark rays, they would drag them to a patch lighted by infra-red rays. From this we can infer that objects seen by the ants must appear to them quite different from what they appear to us. They must be able to see hues and colours in Nature about which we are not aware. If there is an object that absorbs all rays of solar spectrum and scatters only ultraviolet then such an object would remain invisible to us, but the ants would perceive it very well. The same is true of sounds. They do not hear the sounds that we are able to hear, but they are not deaf. They hear the sounds, which are inaudible to us. A human ear is insensible to vibrations beyond 38000 per second, while ants are able to hear them. Hence, they must be able to enjoy so many melodies of nature, which we mortals are not able to.

We are told that the consciousness of ant, spider and certain sensitive plants is "astral instinctual consciousness." Through use of *Sanyama*, a *yogi* can completely identify his consciousness and know what is passing through the mind of an ant. Sir Arthur was turned into an ant, a bird and a fish, by his teacher Merlin, who was a magician. The boundaries (imaginary lines dividing states and nations) seen by him through the mind of an ant, disappeared when he viewed them through the mind of a bird. When a disciple felt disgusted on seeing a drunkard, his Guru made him enter into the body of a drunkard (through *parakayapravesh* or the power of temporarily entering the body of another) to see if he could maintain his stability as he worked through the body and brain of one so drunk. Though we may not know how the consciousness of an ant functions, use of certain drugs such as opium and hashish can transport us to other planes. The question is whether that is a desirable thing. Such use cannot raise us to spiritual planes of consciousness.

Question: What is astral light? Why is astral light termed a recorder and hypnotizing agent? How long do the impressions made on the astral light remain?

Answer: Theosophy teaches of the existence of the universally diffused and highly ethereal medium, called "Astral light," or "Akasa." Strictly speaking, Akasa is the noumenon of the phenomenal Ether or astral light. The prototypes or ideas of things exist first on the plane of Akasa, which is the plane of divine eternal consciousness. These prototypes become reflected and reversed in the astral light.

Astral light in nature corresponds to astral body in man. In man, astral body is the model body or design body, called *linga sarira*, on which the physical body is built. They are both made up of substance that is electromagnetic in nature. Astral light is an invisible register, a photographic plate and a picture gallery. Each thought, word and act makes an image there. Astral light has the power of retaining all the images. These images have two lives. There is the life of the image itself, which remains in the astral light for a definite period of time. Then there is the *impress* left in the matrix of the astral light, when the image fades away. Each thought as it is evolved by a person coalesces instantly with an elemental and forms an entity. The time for which this entity exists depends upon the intensity of thought and will of a person; and the power of the elemental with which the thought coalesced. The power of the elemental is determined by the class to which the elemental belongs. These factors must play some role in determining the time for which the images of our thoughts last in the astral light.

Astral light, says Mr. Judge, is symbolized by the eye, and especially by the retina and its mode of action. On the retina are received the images of the objects passing before the person, and on the astral light are impressed the pictures of thoughts, feelings and events. The images remain on the retina for a specific period of time, undergoing change, before fading away completely. Likewise, pictures in the astral light go through changes, and fade away after specific period of time. To arrive at the period for which the impressions in the astral light remain, we must make use of proportion, thus: as the time of fading from the human retina is to

the healthy man's actual due of life, so is the time of fading from the astral light. The missing term may be discovered by working upon the doctrine of four yugas and the length of one life of Brahma, writes Mr. Judge (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 3*, pp. 2-3). In other words, knowing that the image persists on the retina of the human eye for 1/16th of a second, and taking the average lifespan of a human being to be 70 years, we can calculate the time period for which the impressions remain in the astral light, knowing the Age of Brahma or 100 years of Brahma's life, *i.e.*, 311 trillion years.

Astral light is the "tablet of the memory" of the animal man, while *akasa* is that of the Spiritual Ego. Astral light is the dregs or reflection of *Akasa*. As a radiation it is pure, but, as it differentiates, it becomes impure. The layers of astral light nearer to earth are polluted by base and even wicked thoughts and actions. By the law of consubstantiality, we attract these thoughts when we engage in similar thoughts of anger, jealousy, hatred or greed. Often, we find good people behaving in a manner which is unlike them. The suggestion often comes from the astral light. Our good and bad thoughts get impressed on the astral light. These pictures in the astral light throw upon us the *suggestion* to repeat the same act or thought. Each one of us attracts from this pool, the thoughts that are consubstantial with one's nature. "The astral light gives out nothing but what it has received; that it is the great terrestrial crucible, in which the vile emanations of the earth (moral and physical) upon which the astral light is fed, are all converted into their subtlest essence, and radiated back intensified, thus becoming epidemics—moral, psychic and physical," writes H.P.B. However, we can make the Astral Light a Divine Uplifter by impressing upon it ennobling thoughts, feelings and actions, which can influence many for good, setting into motion a new current, whereby the great and long-gone *Gnanis*, or wise ones, will be attracted back to incarnate among men on this earth, and bring back true life and true practices, writes Mr. Judge.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

When we share, we break out of the boundaries of our Ego. Sharing breeds interdependence, happiness and harmony. For a planet with limited resources, sharing is the way forward, writes Anisha Anilraj. "We are not cisterns made for hoarding, we are channels made for sharing," writes Billy Graham, an American Evangelist. Yet, in a consumer-based economy where each one has ready access to goods, there is neither need nor inclination to share. Over a period the West has cultivated a society where people can live independently of each other. But such life style in the long run has produced loneliness and isolation, and to grapple with it people seek out others with the same set of beliefs and ideals. In America, there are co-operative housing ventures, in which a number of unrelated families share a big house, work together in organizing the household, its maintenance and upkeep, which provides opportunities to interact with others. In a sense, co-operative living is a return to olden days of yore, when people sought each other's company, realizing the hollowness of life, when objects replace real-life experiences.

In India, on the other hand, children grow up sharing their story books, cricket bats, cell phones, etc. Some of them have no option but to share, because of limited resources. Almost three decades ago, it was very common for all the residents of a building to huddle around a television set in a single household to watch a movie, or cricket match. These moments of sharing were equated with pure happiness. In India it is not uncommon for people to probe, out of concern or curiosity, and when one is willing to share his problems, people go at great lengths to help. Joys are shared, as neighbours and friends come together to celebrate weddings, festivals and achievements of their children. The noblest virtues like compassion, love, kindness and empathy can develop only when we open our hearts to those around us. It is not always that the more fortunate share with those who have less. "The truth is that each of us,

irrespective of how rich or successful, needs something which we often receive from the most unexpected sources. In giving and taking, we are not better or worse off than each other, but united in our co-dependence and hence we must share,” writes Anilraj. (*Life Positive*, January 2011)

In the present-day acquisitive culture where most of us are running around to gain too much too soon, we have very nearly forgotten the art of sharing and caring. Break down of the joint family system and the advent of nuclear families has contributed to erosion of some of the good values. In the name of independence we have alienated from each other. Our outlook towards the institution of marriage and family life has undergone radical change. It looks like our generation wants to have the cake and eat it too! We want companionship of other human beings but we want it to be without any responsibilities. We want to *take* but we are either not ready to reciprocate, or are ready to give only when it suits us. Even today, in many Hindu households, food is set aside, as share of dogs, cows and birds. The *Gita* too emphasizes sharing, when it asks us to continue revolving the wheel of sacrifice. “Those who dress their meat but for themselves eat the bread of sin,” says Lord Krishna. Sharing and caring is fundamental to human existence. We must learn to share not only our material goods, but also our joys and sorrows.

It is not sharing out of the surplus but willingness to give even when *we* are put to the pinch. “There are those who have little and give it all. These are the believers in life and the bounty of life, and their coffer is never empty,” says Kahlil Gibran. Sacrificial giving brings about the inner transformation in the giver.

We are called upon to become wider philanthropists by ministering to the needs of the inner man, the thinking man, who must be given right philosophy. It is life and its sorrows that destroy our peace, and every human heart wants to know the reason for it. We are asked to seek out those who know still less than us, and share our

knowledge with them.

Ankh or Ank is the Egyptian symbol which looks like the Christian cross but with a loop above the horizontal line or transverse bar. Ankh is an integral part of tomb paintings and so we see Queen Nefertari receiving Ankh from goddess Isis. Egyptian gods are often shown carrying Ankh in both their hands. Ankh is regarded as the gift of life. However the origin and significance of Ankh continues to baffle the Egyptologists. According to one school of thought Ankh symbolizes sunrise, where the loop represents the rising sun while the transverse bar represents the horizon. Ankh was worn by the Egyptians as an amulet, which not only protects one from evil influences but also bestows upon the wearer intelligence, power and abundance. Ankh is associated with copper, which is known as a sacred healing metal. Ankh represents eternal life and is said to bestow immortality upon the one who possesses it. (*The Speaking Tree [The Times of India]*, January 16, 2011)

Ankh is the Egyptian cross, and it represents the regenerated man as well as life. The top oval or loop represents matter, while the transverse bar or the lower arms represent spirit, which joined to matter is life, both material and eternal. The Ankh is also the sign of Venus. According to the *Secret Doctrine*, Venus is the elder sister of the earth, Changes on earth are felt on Venus, while changes on Venus affect us. “The Egyptians symbolised *Ank*, life, by the ansated cross, or , which is only another form of Venus (Isis) , and meant, esoterically, that mankind and all animal life had stepped out of the divine spiritual circle and fallen into physical male and female generation,” writes H.P.B.

In the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, the soul or the candidate enters the Hall of Two Truths to be judged by Osiris, and on entering stands before goddess Isis, who holds in her hand Ankh, symbolizing

life. This cross is found in almost every Egyptian papyrus.

The most sacred cross of Egypt that was carried in the hands of the gods, the Pharaohs, and the mummified dead, is the *Ankh* ☩ the sign of life, the living, an oath, the covenant. . . . The top of this is the hieroglyphic Ru ☉ set upright on the Tau-Cross. The Ru is the door, gate, mouth, the place of outlet. This denotes the *birth-place* in the northern quarter of the heavens, from which the Sun is reborn. (*S.D.*, I, 547)

H.P.B. points out that the above explanation is astronomical and phallic. However, the Puranic interpretation is more metaphysical. She says that the “Ankh-tie” ☩ does not belong to Egypt alone. It exists under the name of *pasa* or a cord in the hand of Siva. The cruciform noose or *pasa* in the hand of Siva, when he is represented, as an ascetic, the *Mahayogi*, is an emblem of “door, gate, mouth, the place of outlet,” and signifies the “strait gate,” that leads to the kingdom of heaven. “It is a *Cross in a Circle* and *Crux Ansata*, truly; but it is a Cross on which all the human passions have to be crucified before the Yogi passes through the “strait gate,” the narrow circle that widens into an infinite one, as soon as the *inner* man has passed the threshold.” (*S.D.*, I, 548-49)

Where do Ideas come from? Steven Johnson, the author of *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*, and Kevin Kelly, the author of *What Technology Wants*, both longtime contributors to the magazine *WIRED*, explore the origin of ideas. They feel that the best environments for creativity are diverse, collaborative, and tolerant of failure. They argue that great discoveries typically spring not from individual minds but from the *hive mind*. Mr. Johnson explores in his book the sorts of environments that nurture ingenuity. Mr. Kelly explores the past history of some

50,000 years and he looks nearly that far into the future. The two authors express their views on inventions, ideas and creativity in the discussion that appeared in the October 2010 issue of the magazine *WIRED*. Both of them are fascinated by the history of simultaneous inventions, where two or more people hit upon the idea, at almost the same time. For instance, Calculus, the electrical battery, the telephone, the steam engine and the radio, were all discovered at the same time, by multiple inventors, separated by distance, and working in parallel. Though the myth of the lone genius has persisted for long, “we must think of ideas as *connections*, in our brains and among people. Ideas are not self-contained things; they are more like ecologies and networks,” says Kelly. He points out that the ideas that are far ahead of their time are never implemented. Gregor Mendel’s ideas about genetics were formulated by him in the year 1865, but they were ignored for 35 years. Only when the collective mind of people was ready, three different scientists re-discovered his work. “Innovating is about more than just having the idea yourself; you also have to bring everyone else to where your idea is,” says Kelly.

We find similar ideas echoed by Albert Einstein, in his explanation of his genius. He says, “In science . . . the work of the individual is so bound up with that of his scientific predecessors and contemporaries that it appears almost as an impersonal product of his generation.” A true genius does not claim it as his own. Newton said: “I appear tall because I am standing on the shoulders of the giants.” A genius, too, is not made in isolation as suggested in *Through the Gates Of Gold*:

If the mind of man is turned upon any given subject with a sufficient concentration, he obtains illumination with regard to it sooner or later. The particular individual in whom the illumination appears is called a genius, an inventor, one inspired; but he is only the crown of a great mental work created by unknown men about him, and receding back from him through long vistas of distance. Without them he

would not have had his material to deal with....It is impossible to separate an individual of any species from his kind. (p. 12)

However, modern man is ever eager to claim name, fame and glory for the ideas, inventions, discoveries and achievements that he sincerely considers to be the result of his own individual effort. We are told in the *Vernal Blooms* that as soon as we take up a thought or seek more light on a problem, a thread, a finger or a long darting current flies out from the brain to seek for knowledge. It goes out in all directions and touches all other minds it can reach, so as to receive the information, if possible. There are no patents on true knowledge, and generally, when the unseen messenger from one mind arrives at another mind, and if that mind possesses the required answer or knowledge, it gives up. (p. 196)

Theosophy states that there is nothing new under the sun. Theosophy posits the existence of invisible register called Astral Light, which acts as the repository of the ideas, the philosophy, the arts and sciences of long buried civilizations. The pictures from the astral light are continually being projected in the brains of the living men. "This gives meaning not only to the oft-recurring 'coincidences' of two or more inventors or scientists hitting upon the same ideas or inventions at about the same time and independently of each other, but also to other events and curious happenings," writes Mr. Judge (*Echoes from the Orient*, p. 62). In other words, it is possible for two scientists, who are thinking along similar lines on the same subject, to pick up relevant ideas from the astral light, and hence write about and make same discovery at the same time.

Both scientific and philosophical ideas could be in advance of time. "If either a religion or a philosophy is too much in advance of a nation it can do no present service but must bide its time until the minds of men are ripe for its reception....Every science, every creed has had its martyrs," wrote H. T. Buckle in his work, *History of Civilization*. (S.D., I, 298)