

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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THEOSOPHY COMPANY (INDIA) PRIVATE LTD.

40 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020, India  
email: ultmumbai@mtnl.net.in ♦ Phone : 22039024  
website:www.ultindia.org

### ENTHUSIASM—SOME REFLECTIONS

THE ETYMOLOGY of the word suggests that Enthusiasm means, “possessed by God,” or “to be inspired by God.” Eminent writers like Bulwer Lytton and Emerson have praised enthusiasm. “Nothing great has been achieved without enthusiasm,” said Ralph Waldo Emerson. For success in any field enthusiasm is the most essential ingredient apart from hard work. Intense desire arouses enthusiasm lending strength to the individual. It is a strong feeling for a cause or a situation. How can one achieve some great good with its help, if enthusiasm is only momentary, which soon tends to fizzle out? In a person who is enthusiastically involved in some work, the physical body and the desire nature come in harmonic rapport and vibrate to one particular tone. These psycho-physiological changes clearly show that what is known as enthusiasm is pre-eminently an emotional energy, though the mind plays its part in arousing it. Though devotion could be a mere emotional effervescence, *true devotion* springs from one's divine nature and is not evanescent. Likewise, enthusiasm also could be at a superficial level. It could be the mood of the moment, a fleeting emotion when one is taken up by some idea. We find people dedicating themselves to a cause, even without trying to understand its nature. All too often people are “carried away by their enthusiasm.” Most of us have yet to cultivate the ability to switch enthusiasm at will from one field of endeavour to another.

True enthusiasm is not mere impulsive force. In living the higher life the kind of enthusiasm we need has its root and origin in the divine nature, which enhances faith that can move mountains. In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. points out that “conviction” breeds enthusiasm. What happens when we are convinced about the efficacy of certain medicine or system of cure? We enthusiastically recommend it to all those people, who might be in the need of it. Similarly, when study and application of the teachings of some philosophy convince us that it is true and that it works, and if we find that by its application our life changed considerably, then, as Mr. Crosbie puts it, we will naturally keep our faces turned in that direction. We would want to spread the teachings with enthusiasm, saying, “Just as I have benefitted let others also benefit.” In the preface to *The Ocean of Theosophy* Mr. Judge says that “the tone of settled conviction which may be thought to pervade the chapters is not the result of dogmatism or conceit, but flows from *knowledge based upon evidence and experience*.” It is this sort of conviction which gives rise to true enthusiasm, which cannot be shaken and which is contagious. One enthusiastic person can touch several others around him communicating his zest and fervour. Such a person may appear to make an appeal to “reason,” but what goes with his exposition is “enthusiasm” that touches the *heart* of the listener. In his book, *The Last Days of Pompei*, Edward Bulwer Lytton writes:

It is men of this mould whom nothing discourages, nothing dismays: in the fervour of belief they are inspired and they inspire: Their reason first kindles their passion, but the passion is the instrument they use. They force themselves into men’s hearts, while they appear only to appeal to their judgment. Nothing is contagious as enthusiasm. It is the real allegory of the tale of Orpheus—it moves stones, it charms brutes. Enthusiasm is the genius of sincerity, and truth accomplishes no victories without it.

Emerson has also said that enthusiasm is the mother of effort. Enthusiasm must be the motive power or energy that moves all things.

We are able to put in *sincere and sustained* efforts when we are enthusiastic about something. Hence, it is called “genius,” meaning guardian spirit of sincerity. The higher enthusiasm causes, so to speak, integrated flow of life energy throughout body, mind and soul, merging various aspects of man’s make-up so as to produce the dominant feeling of ecstasy.

A worker is enthusiastic when he is convinced about the usefulness of his work; when he understands the importance of his duty. Yet, success and enthusiasm work reciprocally on each other. Enthusiasm leads to sustained effort and that in turn leads, at last, to success. But again success breeds enthusiasm. Edward Butler said: “Some men can stay enthusiastic for thirty minutes; some for thirty days but the successful man stays enthusiastic for thirty years!” An enthusiastic person gives his whole self to the task to be performed, and he can work wonders. Emerson most truly remarks that “every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is the triumph of enthusiasm.”

Enthusiasm for life is not always based on possession of money, wealth or comfort, but seems to be based on meaningfulness of life. The psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl writes in his book, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*: “As the struggle for survival has subsided, the question has emerged: survival for what? Ever more people today have the means to live, but no meaning to live for.” What helps a person to pull through even the most painful conditions is a future goal. Nietzsche’s words are very profound: “He who has a *why* to live for can bear with almost any *how*.” (*Man’s Search for Meaning*, pp. 97 and 103)

We are interconnected on the inner plane. One person’s unhappiness pollutes not only his own inner being and of those around him, but also the collective psyche of which he is an inseparable part. Further, any negative inner state is contagious: Through the law of resonance, it triggers and feeds latent negativity in others. Likewise, a person with zeal and zest for life affects and tends to uplift others around him. In U.L.T. the inner state of the

student—one of indifference or of enthusiasm towards the teachings and the teachers, helps or hinders the progress of the entire lodge.

The second stage of the Noble Eight-fold path, *samyak sankalpa*, is generally translated as perfect resolve, but Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, translates it as “perfect emotion.” He points out that it is comparatively easy to understand a religious or philosophical teaching intellectually and theoretically, no matter how abstruse, complex or difficult it may be. But putting the teaching into practice is extremely difficult. When a Chinese emperor was told by a spiritual teacher that the fundamental principle of Buddhism was, “Cease to do evil; learn to be good; purify the heart,” his reaction was that it was so simple that even a child of three can understand it! The Teacher had to remind him that it was so simple that even a child of three can understand it, but was also so difficult that even an old man of eighty cannot put it into practice. We must grasp that man is not just his mind, intellect or reason. There is also emotional, volitional and instinctual aspect. There is really no spiritual life until the heart is also involved. It is only when the heart is involved, and we begin to *feel* what we have understood, engaging our emotions, that spiritual life begins. Sangharakshita hastens to add that “emotions” do not mean crude emotions with irrational, pseudo-religious concepts and attitudes. Perfect emotion is the emotion transformed by spiritual insight into the nature of existence, *viz.*, all the conditioned existence is impermanent, full of pain and without true self-hood. When the whole emotional nature is transformed, we derive energy to practice the teachings. Thus, energy of enthusiasm results from the transformation of ordinary emotional nature in keeping with universal ideas.

In other words, *Buddhi* remains a passive principle in man until it is aroused and activated when mind puts itself *en rapport* with it. This conjunction, for however short a period of time, brings into the personality of man an influx of a particular, superior aspect of *Prana*, which otherwise remains unfelt. Some message gets conveyed from *Buddhi* to *Manas*, and as a result of temporary

conjunction of these two principles, the personality is suffused with an enthusiasm, which is not boisterous. In fact, a certain amount of calmness and strength are experienced by the aspirant as a result of this union, and though these are not wholly lost, to retain them in full force the aspirant must recharge his enthusiasm, again and again, by endeavouring to raise his consciousness to a higher level. It is easy to see that dwelling on universal principles of Theosophy, such as Reincarnation and Karma energizes the Soul from above and arouses the energy of true enthusiasm. Mr. Judge advises reading of holy books, or whatever books were found by experience to have elevating influence.

Moreover, to sustain higher enthusiasm the aspirant has to deliberately forego the lesser enthusiasm of the personal man. Though ambition is generally associated with gain of worldly things—wealth, name, fame, position and power—it is a force or energy which needs to be channelized properly. “Ah, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp, or what’s a heaven for?” said Robert Browning. *Light on the Path* advises us to “kill out ambition,” but also asks us to “work as those work who are ambitious.” An ambitious person is characterized by zeal, enthusiasm, perseverance and commitment. All these qualities are essential in a spiritual aspirant. In pursuing worldly ambition, a person gets training in developing these qualities.

A student-aspirant must be ready to put forward theosophical ideas before the world, *again and again*. The initial enthusiasm may begin to wane, and may even be replaced by a feeling of disappointment, when people do not respond. Great is one’s sorrow when one sees that there are only a few who can appreciate true philosophy, and yet is called upon to carry on the work of giving the waters of life, without losing hope or enthusiasm. One of the most important tests of a sincere student-aspirant is his attitude towards the teachings. Is he able to keep up the enthusiasm? The aspirant is promised that if he continues to work with enthusiasm and earnestness his efforts will be known in the right quarters and

he will receive unexpected help. “Earnestness is enthusiasm tempered by reason,” says Blaise Pascal.

As one progresses in spiritual life, enthusiasm must cease to be a mere fervour—“passion” to change things within oneself and in the world. The article, “The Enthusiasm of Neophytes” (*Theosophist*, June 1890) mentions that a neophyte who has learnt some occult truths and acquired some powers is filled with enthusiasm and zeal to assist everyone with whom he comes in contact, and probably even bring them to the state he is in, by helping them in a way in which he was helped. His enthusiasm makes him impatient and he wishes to accomplish the task very quickly. But soon he realizes that he has unrealistic expectations, almost like expecting the seed to grow in a full-blown tree within a day. The neophyte may want to know, “Is all zeal wrong, all fervour and enthusiasm to be crushed—are we to sit resignedly and give up that greatest of all pleasures, of helping others?” The article seems to suggest that before we are fit to help or teach others, in occult studies, much self-cultivation and self-development are necessary. Thus:

We are but the conduit-pipes, the instruments, for conveying spiritual help to others: indeed our power of helping is in exact inverse-ratio to our self-consciousness and pride—the more we think we are effecting the less we really do; but provided our aim be pure, and the key-note of our life be set in perfect accord with the Divine harmony, then the more we allow ourselves to be passive instruments, the more we shall be used as channels through which spiritual life may flow....Let not the Neophyte therefore be disheartened; his zeal and fervour are Divine gifts to be cultivated and cherished, but expended in a right direction, not recklessly as forces used with heedless youthful impulse, but in a steady, calm, ever-strengthening stream, united with others in the same single-minded effort to raise and help the whole human family to its destined perfect end.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

### PLATO’S ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE—II

[In the Seventh Book of *The Republic* of Plato, we come across the allegory of the cave. The allegory begins with a graphic picture of the pathetic condition of the majority of mankind. It is a dialogue between Socrates and his young follower, Glaucon.]

AND NOW look again, and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck around and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive someone saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being, and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision—what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them—will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him? “Far truer,” he said.

And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take refuge in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him? “True,” he said.

And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he is forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated? When he approaches the light his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are now called realities. He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. And first he will see the shadows best, next the reflections of men and other objects in the water, and then the objects themselves....

And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow-prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them? “Certainly,” he said.

And if they were in the habit of conferring honours among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honours and glories, or envy the possessors of them? Would he not say with Homer, “*Better to be the poor servant of a poor master,*” and to endure anything, rather than think as they do and live after their manner? “Yes,” he said, “I think that he would rather suffer anything than entertain these false notions and live in this miserable manner.”

Imagine once more, I said, such an one coming suddenly out of the sun to be replaced in his old situation; would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness? And if there were a contest, and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time that would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable) would he not be ridiculous? Men would say of him that up he went and down he came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death.

This entire allegory, I said, you may now append, dear Glaucon, to the previous argument; the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world according to my poor belief, which at your desire, I have expressed—whether rightly or wrongly God knows. But, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort;

and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and this is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed.

Any one who has common sense will remember that the bewilderments of the eyes are of two kinds, and arise from two causes, either from coming out of the light or from going into the light, which is true of the mind’s eye, quite as much as of the bodily eye; and he who remembers this when he sees any one whose vision is perplexed and weak, will not be too ready to laugh; he will first ask whether that soul of man has come out of the brighter life, and is unable to see because unaccustomed to the dark, or having turned from darkness to the day is dazzled by excess of light. And he will count the one happy in his condition and state of being, and he will pity the other; or if he, have a mind to laugh at the soul which comes from below into the light, there will be more reason in this than in the laugh which greets him who returns from above out of the light into the den. “That,” he said, “is a very just distinction.”

But then, if I am right, certain professors of education must be wrong when they say that they can put a knowledge into the soul which was not there before, like sight into blind eyes. Whereas, our argument shows that the power and capacity of learning exists in the soul already; and that just as the eye was unable to turn from darkness to light without the whole body, so too the instrument of knowledge can only by the movement of the whole soul be turned from the world of becoming into that of being, and learn by degrees to endure the sight of being, and of the brightest and best of being, or in other words, of the good.

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Our earth is the cave or the den of Plato’s allegory. As compared to the changeless Absolute, our world is an illusion or only relatively real. Things in the material world are not real. They are real before

they manifest on the material plane and when they have passed out of material plane. For instance, the real man exists in pre-natal and post-mortem states, and what we see of man in the world is only a tip of the ice-berg. Whatever plane our consciousness may be acting in, both we and the things belonging to that plane are, for the time being, our only realities. But as we rise in the scale of development, we realize that what we took to be the realities were only shadows. Thus rising through a series of progressive awakenings, one may reach the absolute Consciousness, and blend one's own with it, and then be free from the delusions produced by Maya. (*S.D.*, I, 39-40)

The first test that the liberated prisoner has to face is to get accustomed to his new condition and to forsake his long-cherished illusions. He has to see the unity of all things and detach himself completely from the false valuations and hierarchical distinctions made by the men in the den. However, when he is made to re-enter the cave of darkness, he would appear ridiculous to the prisoners who still cling to their former illusions centred on the shadows. They would say that he had become blind to realities since leaving the cave.

Commenting on the book *Through the Gates of Gold* Mr. Judge mentions the difficulty of comprehending the words of one who comes from the higher regions. Such a person chooses to remain silent because if he did speak, of things and experiences of spiritual realm, then people in this world would not be able to understand. "His hearers do not know what is beneath his words, and therefore his utterances seem profound....He is willing and anxious to tell all who wish to know, but cannot convey what he desires, and he is sometimes accused of being unnecessarily vague and misleading" (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 49). In fact, when spiritually perfected teachers—messengers, prophet-reformers and *avatars*—descend amidst humanity, they accept the risk of ridicule and rejection, with the hope that at least a few may be awakened from their state of slavery and illusion, and may be inspired to pursue the spiritual path.

"The parable also contains the mystical truth that, as the soul is

initiated into the higher realms of being, it experiences a sense of strangeness, a new birth, until it has become accustomed to the sights and sounds of its higher plane of consciousness and become wholly indifferent to the lower impulses of earthly life. In his ascent the mystic comes to worship the spiritual Sun, which gives sustenance to the whole universe, and to perceive the unity of all life and being. At the same time the mystic who has chosen the path of renunciation and not of liberation has to learn to preserve his vision of the unity of the unseen universe while moving among the shadows of earthly existence, to bring back the soul's memory of its inward ascent and spiritual faculties while also becoming able to cope with the limitations of incarnated existence in a phenomenal world. These truths pertain not merely to the mystic and the Initiate but also to the psychological evolution of our entire humanity. We are so overpowered by the shadowy attractions and images from the Astral Light that we shut ourselves from the archetypal ideas radiating from Akasha." (*The Theosophical Movement*, May 1962)

The one accustomed to darkness is blinded by light, and likewise, the one accustomed to light has to struggle to focus his eyes to see in darkness. The Sufis say that a teacher brings about gradual transformation in the disciple. Especially is this true as regards experiencing Truth, Reality or God. Illumination cannot be sustained by someone who is not ready for it. This may also be applied to the way we use our mind. H.P.B. points out that there are only a few, who think with the higher faculties of their mind. Others, who never think with the higher faculties of their mind will ridicule and laugh at the sublimest concepts and philosophies. "This is why it is very difficult for a materialist—the metaphysical portion of whose brain is almost atrophied—to raise himself, or for one who is naturally spiritually minded, to descend to the level of the matter-of-fact vulgar thought." (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, p. 205)

(Concluded)

## STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

## ON MEDITATION—II

THIS POEM is divided into three definite parts which thereby constitute a triad, and we are closing the first triad of the *Bhagavad-Gita* for we are at the Sixth Discourse. The seventh to the twelfth will be a second triad, repeating the first on a higher scale. Likewise from the thirteenth to the eighteenth will be the third and final triad, which will be the repetition of the very same teachings that we have been considering, so that we get here a summing up of the ultimate goal described to us in the philosophy of the *Gita*. What is said in the Sixth Discourse about this ultimate goal will again be shown to us in the twelfth and also in the Eighteenth Discourse. These verses show that the desired results can only be achieved through the treading of the middle path, or the path of moderation. We all know that even virtues can become excesses. If it is true that the Spiritual Self is the friend of the lower self, then the lower self must in turn become the friend of the Higher, which means the establishment of the right relationship between the Higher and the lower. The general tendency of mankind is unfortunately to follow extremes.

We have two types of men—those who want to accentuate spirit and deny matter; and on the other hand, those who emphasize the material and deny entirely the spiritual regions of this universe. Those who disregard and neglect their lower self, mortify their personal nature, and try to do it harm, for they think that by making the personal self suffer they can achieve spiritual greatness. This is a great error. To those men who think the Spiritual Self is an illusion and nothing is real but the material, you might ask the question—try to separate yourselves from the whole of nature, and see if it is possible. We all know logically that we cannot for one second isolate ourselves entirely, because the whole of this universe is interdependent, and we are dependent on other beings and nature for our very life, so that both the extremes are entirely wrong, and must be avoided, and it is this great spiritual fact that Krishna tries

to explain to Arjuna.

In describing the man engaged in meditation, Krishna mentions a seat “neither too high nor too low.” This is simply a symbol to convey the idea that if the higher and the lower are to unite and to work in absolute harmony and cooperation, they must meet on a seat which is neither too high nor too low, but where both can come together in a comfortable and harmonious position. The same idea is again given when Krishna says, “This divine discipline, Arjuna, is not to be attained by the man who eateth more than enough or too little, nor by him who hath a habit of sleeping much, nor by him who is given to overwatching. The meditation which destroyeth pain is produced in him who is moderate in eating and in recreation, of moderate exertion in his actions, and regulated in sleeping and waking.” This verse has sometimes been criticized because such usual trivial things as eating and sleeping should not take any fit place in a spiritual discourse or philosophy. However, it is in them that we can exemplify the great laws of nature, and it is by applying the fundamental principles of the spiritual philosophy to our everyday life that we really become spiritual beings.

We can apply this rule of moderation to our problems as students of Theosophy, because in Theosophy also we are sometimes tempted to run into various excesses and extremes. For instance, we should not study only Theosophical books, so as to entirely forget that there are books in the world today containing principles which are really the result of the energy put forth by the Theosophical Movement. On the other hand, it is a great error to read nothing but periodicals and non-theosophical books, so to speak, and lay aside all our own study from the recorded philosophy. Some of us, who are constantly thinking of doing service, tend to separate it from the study; others on the contrary want to study and concentrate, and they tend to separate study from the active service. There again the two extremes are wrong, and we have to find the middle path.

If there is a middle ground, there must be something else besides the Universal Self and the lower self. It is the conjunction and the

coming together of the Higher and the Lower Natures that produces in man a third factor which we call the meditative or the thinking self, the incarnating soul. The Higher Self in us which is universal in its own consciousness, sends forth in this body for reincarnation, a ray of its own nature, and the nature of that ray is that of meditation or reasoning. It is sent down here so that it may come in contact with the universe of matter and gather experience from this world. Unfortunately it gets entangled by matter, and forgets its own origin, and the spiritual source from which it has descended, and meets the lower self in this body. Thus, in the body, we have two definite aspects, one is the reasoning or thinking soul, designated *Manas*, the Thinker, in Theosophy, and the other is the *kamic* being or the being of desire and passions, which is absolutely personal and therefore selfish. The conflict in us when we attempt to live the higher spiritual life is between these two factors: *Manas* (reason or true thought and ideation) and *Kama* (desires and passions). At this present stage of evolution our desires give impulse to our own reasoning faculty, and we are not able to reason in definite way, so that the first step for the living of the spiritual life is the distinguishing between the *Manas*, the Thinker, and the Desires.

We have to separate the two tendencies or faculties in our own nature, and this can be accomplished by trying to examine and analyse the lower self in us, in the light of the Higher Self, and this is the first half of meditation. We are to practice as the first part of our discipline, “genuine concentration and meditation, conscious and cautious, upon one’s lower self in the light of the inner divine man and the *paramitas*,” writes H.P.B. Meditation is simply a minute examination of the lower self and its walk in life, which is known in Theosophy as the “Chela’s Daily Life Ledger.” It should not be spasmodic exercise, so to speak, done one day, forgotten another, and then renewed later on. It has to be a constant discipline and perseverance, on our part, for a ledger has to be checked up every day, and we have to make our entries. Therefore, at night placing all our actions, thoughts, and feelings in the two columns of credit

and debit, crediting only those things which are energized by our true spiritual self, and on the contrary, putting to the debit side those things which we found were rooted in the personal self. We have to examine, not only the action and the goal of that action, but also try to see what motive prompted that particular type of action. Checking our words would be, “what did I speak at that particular moment?” and having found out what we spoke, try to see what made us speak untruthfully or otherwise. It is the mental attitude of the performer which determines the purifying agent or on the contrary the entangling element, and that is why the importance of examining the motive. This is one of the processes of meditation.

There is another, and that is the aspiration in the lower towards the higher. We must not mistake sentimentality or emotionalism for true aspiration. The very quality of this true aspiration is more like determination and resolve on the part of the man to follow the dictates of the Higher. Therefore, it is a quality which must have fearlessness as its attribute. It must be settled peace and equipoise. Imagination plays a very great part in true aspiration. True imagination is not fancy. True imagination is simply visualization of the actual goal, truths and facts in Nature. To meditate does not mean to concentrate on a table, clock, or flower, as that would only make of a man a passive and blank instrument. If we want to meditate, we must choose adequate subjects of meditation. We must dwell on the high spiritual ideals. We can, for instance, meditate upon the nature of the Universal Self, and on the reflection of that Universal Self in us, *i.e.*, our own Higher Self. Dwell upon and meditate upon those great beings, who have attained this Yoga completely, and have become great Masters of Wisdom. Meditate on Their Lodge, on the method of Work that they carry on to serve humanity, on the power of universal brotherhood and really on all the great symbols of Nature that we can truthfully picture to ourselves in terms of laws and facts.

When we try to fix our attention on these high ideals we find that the mind is drawn in the direction of the desire nature. Arjuna says to Krishna that he has heard of this Divine Yoga, but how is it possible

to ever attain it since we have such a restless mind. Krishna gives two-fold remedy, corresponding to the two aspects of meditation. We must have *Abhyasa*, constant practice or repetition, and *vairagya* or detachment and aspiration. The first part pertains to the exercise of self-examination, while the other part, the detachment and aspiration will help the whole nature to slowly levitate towards the higher, allowing it to separate from the world of the material universe. It is indeed a very long process, and in fact, extends itself throughout a long series of lives so that we must not become discouraged. Moreover, the efforts made in this life will carry us through the next and the next life. We shall continue our task where we left it off, and there is the great hope in this doctrine of reincarnation, even for those who only inquire into the question of meditation, for the true inquirer becomes able to go even beyond the word of the Vedas in his succeeding rebirths. It is a process which needs tremendous faculty and effort on our part, because for so many lives we have built up the opposite in our nature, and now we are only undoing the errors of the past. That is why it is difficult and long. The one who has succeeded in attaining this is described as a man who is able to see the Supreme Self in all things. Says Shri Krishna:

He, O Arjuna, who by the similitude found in himself seeth but one essence in all things, whether they be good or evil, is considered to be the most excellent devotee.

We have the summing up of the first six discourses of the *Gita*, in verse 46 which reads: “The man of meditation as thus described is superior to the man of penance and to the man of learning and also to the man of action; wherefore, O Arjuna, resolve thou to become a man of meditation.” This is the final goal to be attained. The Seventh Discourse deals with the same subject, *viz.*, the Universal Self and the differentiated selves, but it will be studied from another angle and vision.

(Concluded)

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## THE ILLUSION OF TIME

### II

GIVEN THAT most physical analyses of time fail to uncover any sign of a temporal flow, we are left with something of a mystery. To what should we attribute the powerful, universal impression that the world is in a continual state of flux? Sautrantika school of Buddhist philosophy denies the real existence of time and space and, for this reason, also the reality of past and future. “The Sautrantika school argued against the notion of time as absolute. Dividing the temporal process into the past, present and future, the Sautrantika demonstrated the interdependence of the three and argued for the untenability of any notion of independently real past, present and future. They showed that time cannot be conceived as an intrinsically real entity existing independently of temporal phenomena but must be understood as a set of relations among temporal phenomena. Apart from the temporal phenomena upon which we construct the concept of time, there is no real time that is somehow the grand vessel in which things and events occur, an absolute that has an existence of its own,” writes His Holiness, Dalai Lama, in his book, *The Universe In a Single Atom*.

“Thought Moments” is a Buddhist term for the mental states experienced after a physical or mental object enters the mind. A physical object is something in the world outside that we can see, hear, touch or sense in any way. A mental object is something that is in our mind, that we can remember, or imagine, seeing, hearing or sensing in any way.

In Buddhist Psychology one does not speak of a thought, but a thought-process, since thought is not a unity. What we loosely call a “thought” is really a thought-process. When a man sees a tree, and instantly recognizes it as a tree, it means that there arose in him the consciousness or awareness of a tree. But this does not arise as a result of one single mental operation. Before such consciousness or awareness of a tree completely arose, seventeen stages or thought-

moments would have occurred, which are elaborated in Buddhist philosophy. Although 17 stages or thought-moments are necessary to complete one thought-process, it is wrong to imagine that much time is involved in the process. In fact, to emphasize the fact that the period of time involved is so infinitesimally brief, many commentators compare it with a flash of lightning or the twinkling of an eye. The unit of measure for the duration of thought-process is a thought-moment (*Chitta-kshana*), which is an infinitesimally small division of time. A thought-moment is like a wave in the ocean, which rises, remains for a brief moment, and then subsides. According to Abhidhamma School, each thought-moment consists of three phases—*uppada* (arising), *thiti* (development), and *bhanga* (dissolution or cessation). As per some of the commentators there is no intermediate *thiti* stage but only the stages of arising and passing away. Each thought-moment is followed by another. Time is thus the *sine qua non* of the succession of mental states. Thus, each mental process is made up of 17 thought-moments and each thought-moment is made up of three stages. There is no sharp dividing line between one mental stage and another, but each mental stage merges into the next. (*Collected Wheel Publications: Vol. XII*)

The time measurement system in ancient India was excellent and it covered a range from microseconds to trillions of years, including the cycles of the universe. In *Vishnu Purana* (Book I, chapter 3) we have a detailed mention of time measurement.

And the term for smallest time interval as per the “*Shrimad Bhagavad Purana*” was “permanu.” In the book *Units of Measurement: Past, Present and Future* by S. V. Gupta, we have the following data:

2 permanu = 1 anu; 3 anu = 1 trisrenu; 3 trisrenu = 1 truti; 100 truti = 1 vedh; 3 vedh = 1 lava; 3 lava = 1 nimesha; 3 nimesha = 1 kshana; 5 kshana = 1 Kashta (about 8 seconds); 15 Kashta = 1 laghu (about 2 minutes); 15 laghu = 1 nadika or ghadi; 2 nadika = 1 muhurta; 7 ghadi = 1 prahar or 1/4th of the cycle of a day or night. There are four praharas in each day or night. Kshana is the time between two

thoughts and 1 nimesha is equivalent to a blink of an eye.

*The Secret Doctrine* mentions: “Time is only an illusion produced by the succession of our states of consciousness as we travel through eternal duration, and it does not exist where no consciousness exists in which the illusion can be produced.” The present is only a mathematical line which divides that part of eternal duration which we call the future, from that part which we call the past. Nothing on earth has real duration, for nothing remains without change—or the same—for the billionth part of a second; and the sensation we have of the actuality of the division of “time” known as the present, comes from the blurring of that momentary glimpse, or succession of glimpses, of things that our senses give us, as those things pass from the region of ideals which we call the future, to the region of memories that we name the past. In the same way we experience a sensation of duration in the case of the instantaneous electric spark, by reason of the blurred and continuing impression on the retina.

The understanding of the concept of “Time” depends upon our perception, which further depends on our senses. Each of our senses has an associated sense consciousness. Each sense organ is specialized, and is a focus of sense consciousness on the astral plane. Now the experiences of our five sense consciousness and of mental consciousness give rise to constantly changing kaleidoscope of thoughts, mental afflictions, positive and negative feelings, sensations—both felicitous and painful, and subtle dualistic perceptions which have the power, in the absence of the experiential understanding of their illusionary nature, to involve us in the most outrageous, though sometimes very subtle, melodramas of the mind with their consequent related sufferings. However when we realise the true nature of things we cease to become attached to them, and become indifferent, the mayavic world losing its power to enmesh the mind. *The Voice of Silence* says: “Having become indifferent to the objects of perception, the pupil must seek out the Rajah of the senses, the Thought Producer, he who awakes illusion. The Mind is the great Slayer of the Real. Let the Disciple slay the Slayer.”

And we know that all is the “Present Moment,” and a particular so called experience is made of many moments. Each moment arises and then dies as per the cyclic nature, and previous moment becomes the cause of the next moment. So we have a chain of moments arising and dying which the mind-consciousness weaves through all the sense consciousness and perceives as one single thought, therefore all momentary experiences via the sense organs are collectively placed in front of the mind as one thought. Each of this leading to a change of the state of mind consciousness, hence successive states of mind consciousness give the perception of “time,” which is an abstract entity developed by mind.

Dispassion coupled with wakeful attention and self awareness, will help us to live neither in the past, nor in the future, but in the Eternal Now. While we deal with each day to the best of our ability and understanding, while we discharge our duties with zest and integrity, accepting cheerfully the limitations of embodied existence, we can endeavour to apprehend the presence of the Divine in everything, which can then form the basis of our thought, speech and action.

When the consciousness is active on the highest plane it will perceive the Unity of All and will perceive everything as the “One Eternal Harmony,” the ever present unchanging SAT, on whose background the panoramic view of the world on lower planes seem “dream like.” Hence everything in Absolute reality is Singular, ONE. There is only a periodic reflection on the surface of the ONE which is perceived as Manifestation similar to the screen of the movie theatre. We observe the movie of life, and based on our limited false perception get deluded and suffer. We get deluded by clinging to the false self, “I” and “You,” having the false perception of separateness based on our ignorance of the Truth, thus creating karma, and getting trapped in the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. We forget that on the lower planes of being the “One” only *seems* to become the “Many,” however it is always the ONE.

(Concluded)

## THE MYSTERY OF HIBERNATION

SOME animals go into hibernation or a state of inactivity especially during winter months, when food is scarce. A hibernating animal’s heart rate, body temperature and breathing rate is dropped, in order to conserve energy. Moreover, during hibernation, though electrical activity in the brain ceases almost completely, some areas remain active, which are concerned with responding to external stimuli, such as light, noise and temperature changes. Aestivation is similar to hibernation, observed in desert animals during dry months of summer. Both during sleep and hibernation there is reduction in metabolism—breaking down of the compounds to produce energy—but this reduction is more marked during hibernation than during sleep. Animals prepare for hibernation in Autumn by storing enough food to last them until spring. Going into hibernation is an extremely slow process. Hibernation occurs in bears, in small mammals such as bats and woodchucks, ground squirrels, mouse, lemurs, some snakes and marsupials.

The article, “The Secrets of Bear Hibernation” published in February 17, 2011 issue of *Science* magazine mentions that researchers at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, were figuring out, by observing five black bears for five months, as to how bears manage the spectacular feat of hibernation. The team found that bears’ body temperatures dropped only marginally, unlike ground squirrels and other small hibernators, whose body temperatures drop drastically. Yet their metabolism and oxygen consumption dropped by 75 per cent, suggesting that some other mechanism was involved in conserving energy. They observed that while sleeping the bears took only one or two breaths per minute, with the heart rate of about four beats per minute. During the few weeks before and after going into hibernation, the bears enter an intermediate metabolic state—eating normally but with lowered metabolism. They feel that the findings could be useful for slowing down the metabolic rate of an accident victim or bed-ridden patient, and can also be used for long-

term space travel. However, researchers feel that a lot of research still remains to be done to understand how the brains of the hibernating bears continue to function with low oxygen and how they manage to conserve their bone and muscle mass so precisely. It has also been found that unlike other hibernators, bears do not eat, drink or excrete while hibernating, which can be as long as six months.

It has been observed that aging is proportional to respiratory rate. If we observe the life span of animals and birds, it is evident that creatures with higher breath rate per minute have lesser life span, as is the case with birds, mice and rabbits. Those with lesser breath rate have higher life span, as in case of tortoise and whale.

Describing the process of hibernation in *Autumn Across America*, sometime in the year 1959, the naturalist Edwin Teale wrote that the hibernating creatures are fortified for their long fast by building up in late summer the surplus fat which they slowly assimilate during the months of hibernation while digestion is at virtual standstill, as are also other bodily processes. But whence the prompting to consume abnormal quantities of food before hibernation, and to begin hibernating at the proper time? Mr. Teale ascribed the hibernation of certain species to “racial rhythm.” This seems to be a generalized variant of “instinct” which cannot be accounted for satisfactorily on materialistic lines. He admitted that though scientists have been investigating the winter torpor of animals for centuries, the problem is still unsolved. It seems evident that no known drug could produce true hibernation, as in that state the animal is sustained by infinitesimal amounts of oxygen. “Hibernation banks the fire of life but, in its mysterious way, never extinguishes it,” wrote Teale.

How do animals know it is time to hibernate? In recent times, research seems to suggest that hibernating animals have something in their blood called HIT or “Hibernation Inducement Trigger,” which is some kind of opiate, chemically related to morphine. As the days get shorter and food becomes scarce, HIT triggers hibernation. However, why and how it happens is still a mystery.

Besides the obvious advantages of hibernation such as, escaping

the rigours of the winter’s cold and scarcity of food, the rest which it gives the bodily organs seems to increase the hibernating creature’s span of life. In 1930s, American experimenters with the painless “freezing” of patients recognized the possibilities of prolonging life by giving the heart nearly complete rest, in which the electrocardiogram alone reported the heart’s light rhythmic beat.

The article, “Induced Hypothermia: How Freezing People After Heart Attacks Could Save Lives,” appeared in *Newsweek* (December 20, 2014), mentions the case of a young man suffering from cardiac arrest, who was rushed to the University of Pennsylvania, where Dr. Lance Becker and his team cooled the young man’s core temperature to below 90 degrees Fahrenheit—a process called “induced hypothermia.” This involves injecting the patients with a cold saline solution or placing ice packs on them. But hypothermia—when your core body temperature drops so low that normal metabolism and bodily functions cease—is something of a medical contradiction. Though it can lead to death, it can also slow down the dying process. It all depends on timing. With hypothermia, that period of time in between life and death might more accurately be called a “hibernation-like state,” or temporary death, explains Dr. Becker. There are stories of young children surviving for several hours in the freezing cold after entering a hibernation-like state spurred by hypothermia. Erika Nordby, “Canada’s miracle child,” was revived after spending two hours without a heartbeat in the snow, her core body temperature reaching 61 degrees.

*The Secret Doctrine* states that “analogy is the guiding law of Nature.” What is the analogy between the winter sleep of animals and the method by which an Adept can greatly prolong the life of his physical body? H.P.B. writes that “some Adepts do exceed, by a good deal, what you would call the ordinary age; yet there is nothing miraculous in it.” In the September 1880 issue of *The Theosophist* (Vol. I, p. 314), 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 (energy production) and cellular activity (energy consumption). 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)

In this connection there is an interesting hint in the unsigned “Comment” on an article entitled “A Treatise on the Yoga Philosophy,” which mentions that ancient naturalists and philosophers had discovered that a serpent, before retiring into its hole for the cold season, would roll in the leaves of a certain plant which, when crushed, exuded a juice having the property of bringing on “a dead coma, during which all the vital functions are paralyzed and the processes of life suspended,” and that the name of the plant being “a secret among the Raja Yoga.” Further:

The Yogis have learned to regulate the duration of this trance. As, while this state lasts, no wear and tear of the organs can possibly take place, and hence they cannot “wear out” as they slowly do even during the natural sleep of the body...Thus, the Raja Yogis have been sometimes known to live the double and triple amount of years of an average human life, and occasionally, to have preserved a youthful appearance for an unusual period of time and when they were known to be old men—in years.

Such a yogi has the ability to completely suspend the functions of life each night, by holding the life in total abeyance, arresting the wear and tear of the inner and outer organism and thereby accumulating much vital energy for use in the waking state. In the induced state described, the brain no more dreams. “One century, if passed, would appear no longer than one second, for all perception of time is lost for him who is subjected to it. Nor do the hairs or nails grow under such circumstances, though they do for a certain time in a body actually dead, which proves if anything can, that the atoms and tissues of the physical body are held under conditions quite different from those of the state we call death. For, to use a physiological paradox, life in a dead animal organism is even more intensely active than it ever is in a living one, which as we see, does not hold good in the case under notice.” (*The Theosophist*, April 1881)

## 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 eleventh chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna reveals to Arjuna his Universal Form or *Vishwarupa*. Why? Wasn't Arjuna already aware of the majesty of Krishna by the end of the Tenth chapter? How many times the *Vishwarupa* was shown by Krishna as told in the great Epic *Mahabharata*? While Arjuna had to be endowed with "divine eye" by Krishna; Sanjaya seemed to already possess it. Can we consider Sanjaya to be spiritually more advanced than Arjuna?

**Answer:** In the Tenth chapter, Shri Krishna revealed to Arjuna his *Vibhutis* or excellencies, so that Arjuna could appreciate that Krishna is present everywhere. But that was theoretical appreciation. To enable Arjuna to appreciate it practically and actually, Krishna reveals to him the Universal Form or *Vishwarupa*. To prove that mud is the essence of all mud-pots, we not only should be able to prove that mud is present in all pots, but also that pots of all shapes and sizes are potentially present in the mud. It is easy to see that mud is in all pots, but to discern all kinds of pots within mud, the observer needs a different kind of perception, or a "special" eye. Likewise, to see the presence of the One Reality in all is comparatively easy. But it is not possible to see all manifestation present in the "Body" of Krishna with natural eyes because the "body" spoken of is the spiritual body. It represents highest conceivable primordial matter or substance. In one sense, Universal Divine Form as including all forms implies that there is no form in manifestation which is not already included in the Universal Form. Hence, vision of Universal Form might well represent glimpse of Archetypal world wherein every form in our world is present in its abstraction. For instance, various types of tables that we see in our

world exist as *tabularity* in the archetypal world. "Occultism teaches that no form can be given to anything, either by nature or by man, whose ideal type does not already exist on the subjective plane." On the other hand, *Vishwarupa* may also imply that every form we see in the world is potentially contained within *Mulaprakriti* or primordial substance, and is derived from it by differentiation. Krishna says, "I established this whole universe with a single portion of myself and yet remain separate." Arjuna wanted to understand this mystery.

From the *Mahabharata* story it is clear that Krishna reveals His Cosmic Form not once but at least thrice. On the first occasion it was to Yashoda, the foster-mother of Krishna, who doubtfully asked Him to open his mouth to see if He had swallowed clay. When Krishna opened his mouth, Yashoda saw in it the entire Universe with its vast expanse. Yashoda fainted, only to be revived by Krishna, and it is said that *maya* immediately cast a veil over her and she forgot the vision. The second time Krishna revealed his Universal Form was when He went to Hastinapura as an ambassador of Pandavas in an effort to prevent war. Duryodhana and his band tried to capture him but Krishna expanded himself so that his Universal Form was visible to Duryodhana and to all those present there. The third time it was revealed to Arjuna. When Arjuna saw the Universal Form not only was he terrified, but it was only then that he realized the majesty, power and glory of Krishna, and asked for his forgiveness, because so far he had treated Krishna as a human being like himself, only with vastly greater learning.

As for the comparison between Arjuna and Sanjaya, we know that Arjuna had to be endowed by Krishna with "divine eye," or the power of spiritual perception. Sanjaya had already received the power to perceive it from the great sage Vyasa. The article, "Sanjaya: The Witness of the Gita," (*The Theosophical Movement*, July 1935), mentions that as Arjuna had only then been initiated, he was dazzled by the Might and Majesty of the Lord. He was perturbed and knew not his place in the cosmic scheme. But Sanjaya who had already

the background cleared, described the transcendental figure in expressions which disclose his mental equanimity. It is evident that at that particular stage of Arjuna's mental development, Sanjaya was superior to him in point of Divine Knowledge. We might say that the process of "apperception" had already taken place in Sanjaya, while Arjuna as a Chela was only then experiencing it. Or, we might say that previous to this juncture the dominant quality in Arjuna was *Tamas-Rajasic*, while in Sanjaya it was *Rajasic-Sattvic*. The mind of Sanjaya was like ordinary soil, but already prepared for raising the crop; while that of Arjuna was virgin soil that only then had been cultivated. In terms of human principles, Arjuna represents mind, whereas Sanjaya represents *Antahkarana* or the bridge between the higher and lower natures in man.

The same article goes on to show that Sanjaya was the most trusted and wise Minister of the blind king Dhritarashtra. The *Dharmasastras* declare that ministers are king's eyes; the strength of a kingdom rests on the right choice of the chief councillor. Especially, the one who had to serve a master devoid of physical vision, should have possessed extraordinary powers of sight. Sanjaya was not only wise but was also gifted with superior powers of spirituality. As shown in *The Aryan Path* for July 1934 (p. 441), in the last chapter of the *Gita*, he sums up the essence of the teaching, by referring to the threefold processes involved in the Teaching of Divine Knowledge, *viz.*, the Wonderful Dialogue (*Samvadam*), the Marvellous Form (*Vishwarupa*), and the Eternal and Permanent Abode (*Sthana*) where the Master and Disciple stay united. "Sanjaya combined in one person a master of statecraft, a councillor of courage and conviction, and a sage of no mean order. These qualities seem to be summed up in the short but significant name *Sam Jaya* which means Complete Conquest."

**Question:** In reaping the effect of good or bad action, is it necessary for the two people to come together in order to settle the account? For instance, is it that if a person has raped a girl, she will in some life be reborn as a man and rape him who will be reborn as a girl?

**Answer:** Karma is not a mechanical law of action and reaction, so that if you happen to have slapped a person, he in turn will slap you in this or some future life. It is not possible for an ordinary person to know the *manner* in which the law of compensation exacts the due or brings reward for past actions. The general understanding is that if we persecute or ridicule a crippled person in this life, we will be persecuted and ridiculed in turn, in this or in the next life. Mr. Judge's explanation in *The Ocean of Theosophy* is that a child is born humpbacked *probably* because in some prior life he persistently reviled and persecuted a deformed person so as to imprint the picture of that person in his own immortal mind. On coming to birth again, the Ego carries that picture and causes the astral body, being formed in the womb, to assume a deformed shape, by electrical and magnetic osmosis through the mother of the child. Moreover, one or more actions may produce a single effect, and also, a single cause can produce multiple effects. In case when a good and bad karma comes to fruition at the same time, we experience the resultant—the bad result, tends to get balanced by the good result.

However, in some cases it may be that karmic account is settled only when two or more individuals, who were responsible for the good or bad action, come together again in some life. Thus, for instance, having generated causes for good or evil together as members of a family, justice demands that the same Egos come together again to meet the effects they produced together in the past. In no other way may the effects be worked out and Karmic adjustment effected. The same is applicable to the collective karma of a race or a nation. For instance, for those who engage themselves in slave trade or keep slaves, engaging them in hard physical labour, it is said that slave drivers of one age are driven as slaves in some other age and the snowball work of karma can be stopped only by an active contribution towards the spread of pure Liberty and Freedom—with the realization that man *is* his brother's keeper.

In case of a crime or ill-treatment meted out by one person to another, the karmic backlash may or may not come through that

same individual. For instance, a boy who may have ill-treated his parents might be ill-treated by his own children. A person, who had as a cashier cheated a person by giving him one hundred rupees less, was similarly cheated by a vendor, later in life. It is possible that having come together under karma, the person who becomes karmic agent through whom reward or punishment is received may be creating *fresh* bad or good karma. A person who rapes a girl might have been someone who was raped by her in some previous life, or might have been instrumental in the act, or might be creating a fresh bad karma. The reaction or punishment for this act may come through some other individual also, who may be making his fresh karma. It may also happen that for having committed rape in this or some other life, one has to indirectly and intensely suffer, say, by being the father or mother of a young daughter who is raped. The punishment for our actions is meant for our learning the necessary lesson. When the lesson is learnt the necessity ceases.

In many cases the person who was wronged may completely forgive the wrong-doer, and thereby does not create any karmic attachment, and in such cases, the law of karma may use some other agent to punish the person. In any human relationship, when *we* overcome aversion or attachment for a person, but if that person in turn does not overcome his aversion and attachment for us, then irrational and one-sided likes and dislikes develop. It is like the case of Lord Buddha and his cousin Devadatta. Buddha was full of charity towards Devadatta, and yet Devadatta continued to be inimical to him. We have to remember that we can have no attachment for a thing or a person we do not think about. When mind loses interest and stops clinging to the object or the person, with affection or dislike, there will no longer be a karmic link between us and that person or the object. Let us remember that karma operates on the plane of desire. If the rapist has turned the corner and advanced spiritually, he might experience the “punishment” by way of mental and moral obstacles in spiritual progress.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What is a *Mantra*? “That which inspires the mind is *Mantra*.” Gayatri *mantra* is an exemplary vedic hymn which praises God Almighty in his manifestation as solar spirit (*savitr*), who is the source of life, light and warmth. Gayatri *mantra* starts with an invocation to God, by vocalizing his sacred name symbolized by the divine syllable OM, which is also the mystic sound vibrating and echoing in the entire cosmos, ever since the beginning of the creation. The word Om is followed by three mysterious and most sacred syllables, namely, “*bhur, bhuvah, svah,*” known as *Vyahriti* or concealed utterance. It is believed that God Prajapati milked these three words from the Vedas, and they are believed to contain the essence of the three Vedas. They are believed to represent the three worlds: the earth, space and the celestial world (*bhuloka, pitrloka* and *devaloka*).

Gayatri mantra consists of 24 syllables. In these syllables, the magic power of the word *Savitr* is divine. *Savitr* is the name of Sun God, the eternal powerhouse of the entire cosmos, and sustainer of life on earth. In *Praunopanishad* (1.5) Sun has been described as the source of *Prana* or life energy. Before the cosmos was born, the mysterious sound of the divine word *Savitr* is believed to have brought the sun into existence.

Gayatri *mantra* is designated as *Ved Mata* or mother of the divine knowledge, containing substance of all the four *Vedas*. Sage Yajnavalkya describes Gayatri to be the essence of all the Vedas, and the destroyer of sins. The real purpose of acquiring knowledge of the Vedas is self-realization. Gayatri *mantra* has an indispensable role in all the rites and rituals of Hindu society. During the investiture ceremony the officiating priest whispers Gayatri *mantra* in the ear of the initiated candidate, which marks the beginning of his spiritual life, writes Arjun Rao Madas (*Bhavan’s Journal*, December 31, 2015)

Gayatri mantra is addressed to Surya or Sun, written in Gayatri metre and attributed to Rishi Visvamitra. Vach is the daughter of

Brahma and is named *Sata-Rupa*, “the hundred-formed,” and *Savitri*, “*generatrix*,” the mother of the gods and of all living (*S.D.*, II, 128). Thus Gayatri is correlated with Vach or sacred speech. Goddess Saraswati is personification of Vach or mystic speech. She is the wife of Brahma and also the goddess of the sacred or “Secret Knowledge.” The power of sacred speech depends upon the form that is given to the *mantra* by the officiating priest. The form consists in the numbers and syllables of the sacred metre. The *Gayatri Mantra* consists of twenty-four syllables—three lines of eight syllables each. H.P.B. explains that the Gayatri metre is considered the most sacred of metres. It is the metre of Agni, the fire-god, and becomes at times the emblem of Brahma himself, the chief creator, and “fashioner of man” in his own image. (*Isis*, II, 410)

*Bhur*, *Bhuvah* and *Swara* are said to be three *Vyahritis* or fiery words, and all three possess creative powers. When Brahma uttered the word *Bhur*, it became earth, when he uttered *Bhuvah* it became Astral light or firmament, and when he uttered *Swara* it became Heaven of Ideations—which may be taken to mean *Akasa*.

In his article, “A Commentary on the Gayatri,” W. Q. Judge, interprets Gayatri *mantra*, thus: “Unveil, O Thou who givest sustenance to the Universe, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, that face of the True Sun now hidden by a vase of golden light, that we may see the truth and do our whole duty on our journey to thy sacred seat.” Theosophy teaches that behind the physical sun is the True Sun or Central Spiritual Sun. Sun symbolizes the very *Atman* in man, the divine presence latent within the hearts of men and may be looked upon as the Seventh Kosmic principle. Mr. Judge comments that the whole verse is an aspiration in the highest sense. “Unveil” is the cry of the man who is determined to know the truth; the cry is made to the Higher Self. Just as the True Sun is hidden behind the physical sun, so also, the Higher Self is hidden by passions and desires, the personal self and the thirst for life. The sun we see is not the true sun, and so also the light of intellect is not the true sun of our moral being.

“So long as desire and the personality remain strong, just so long will the light be blurred, so long will we mistake words for knowledge and knowledge for the thing we wish to know and realize.” Mr. Judge explains that the object of this prayer is that we may carry out our whole duty, after becoming acquainted with the truth, as we journey to the Sacred Seat, which represents union with the Divine.

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Can we live a life that walks lightly on Planet Earth? Can we shrug off the wants that bind us, and find a lifestyle that enables us to lead a rich happy life in harmony with nature? The world that we inhabit is a manifestation of love—that of the Creator towards its creation. When we make conscious and conscientious choices towards the welfare of the whole, we pay gratitude to the Universe. Nature herself is a matchless example of sustainable living. For instance, living matter crumbles into soil giving rise to life again. Likewise, water from the sea evaporates and forms clouds, to descend again as rain water. Can we also create sustainable life cycles? Can we plant a tree for every tree that we cut? Can we establish a balance between what we consume and what we produce? This happened naturally in earlier times when our lives were embedded in nature, so that we took from nature and replenished it. We kept air and water pure. Industrialization has produced a gulf between man and nature. Now we pollute water, air and earth, and look upon nature as a resource that needs to be conquered and exploited.

Though we are far away from living in perfect harmony with nature, India is one of the highest ranked countries in the world, in leading a sustainable lifestyle. “A sustainable lifestyle touches every aspect of life, from environment conservation to food choices, from body-mind-spirit wellness to waste management, from economic balance to relationship with nature, from prudent consumption to community living. It is a circle joining many dots. A change in any one of these affects other spheres also, sooner or later. . . . One needs

to adopt practices which impact the body-mind-spirit-environment-community positively at the micro level while keeping in mind their effects at the macro level,” writes Punya Srivastava.

There are several inspiring examples of people who have made an effort to lead a holistically sustainable life. Alex Leeor, a British web developer, has built for himself a house called Earthship, in Kodaikanal, based on “biotecture” (biologically correct architecture) created by American architect Michael Reynolds. An earthship is a building that is built on the principles of solar heating and cooling, solar and wind electricity, is built with natural and recycled materials, and has facilities to conduct its own water harvesting and food productions. Another example is that of G.V. Dasarathi who has constructed his “house of trash” in which the use of cement, steel and sand was reduced by 80 per cent, and is based on the principle of Reuse, Reduce, Recycle and Rethink.

If India is declared to be the most sustainability-minded country according to the Greendex International report (2012) by National Geographic and research firm Globescan, it is because values of austerity and contentment are ingrained in us. We are not a use-and-throw society, but a reuse-and-recycle one. We turn our discarded clothing into dusters and mops, we repair our shoes and slippers time and again, and sell our newspapers as *raddi*, to be reused. It appears that sustainability is already ingrained in us, we only need to make a conscious effort to manifest it and sustain it by learning to drop unnecessary wants, writes Srivastava. (*Life Positive*, December 2015)

Man and Nature are inseparably interrelated in an intricate web of life from the very origin of the earth. Science is increasingly admitting the significant link between the life of humanity and the environment, just as the whole human body and its minutest parts are synergistically interdependent. As long as we think ourselves as separate from the one and indivisible Life, and not as units in It, as we really are, dire results will follow our actions. Harmony is the Law of life; it cannot be done away with or altered. Man can and must learn to conform to the Law, and act in accordance with its

nature, which is Compassion; otherwise he destroys himself. “The only way therefore, in which happiness might be attained, is by merging one’s nature in the great Mother Nature, and following the direction in which she herself is moving.”

“Help Nature and work on with her, and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance,” says the *The Voice of the Silence*. We can no more ignore threats to our living condition on earth and the future. We should be concerned with the “health” of Nature, which is intrinsically linked with the wellbeing of man. It is literally true that both nature and man thrive together physically and psychically. Besides undue interference with nature and her exploitation, there is a direct relation between man’s thoughts and natural calamities. It is true that the whole of creation waits upon man and groans that he keeps back the enlightenment of all. Is man’s evolution in isolation? As man uses the matter (atoms and molecules) he affects it by leaving upon them good or bad impressions. It is man’s responsibility to raise the entire mass of matter to nature stature and dignity of conscious godhood.

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Work gives meaning to our lives and influences our sense of self-worth. By putting our best effort and doing the work with deepest devotion brings a feeling of happiness and fulfilment. Just as crude oil has to be refined by removing impurities, so also work must be freed from selfishness to make it refined and cultured. A tree gives its fruit without any selfish motive. It does not say, “It is my fruit and only I can eat it.” Its role is to produce fruits, not for its own sake but for society at large. This is the highest form of work culture. After doing some very good work we must resist the temptation of saying, “I did it, I did it” because in subtle way that statement implies that nobody recognizes the good work done by us, and not being recognized makes us miserable. After having given our best, we must appreciate ourselves: Self appreciation is the biggest appreciation. “Your happiness lies in your own appreciation.

It should not be dependent on others' appreciation...Being great at what you do is a gift you give to yourself," writes Mamta Bhargava. Every attempt should be made to concentrate on the work, irrespective of who takes the credit. When we are more concerned about the credit we are not able to do justice to the work. People will recognize your work even if some other person takes the credit. *Gita* says, "Just do your duty without looking for the fruits of your labour. That is the best way forward and gives true meaning to life...When we do not expect anything from this world and go on doing selfless work, we will be able to get rid of bondages and move towards freedom" writes Bhargava. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India, January 24, 2016*)

Happy the person who succeeds in identifying his unique calling and is able to do what he truly loves. *Svadharmā* (one's own duty) is fulfilling *svabhava* (one's inner nature). By being in the place which matches our inner longings and skills we can give our best contribution to the world. However, we must also learn to discipline ourselves to love what comes to us under Karma. When we perform any action with the expectation of result or attachment to the result, or with the feeling that "I have done it," we offer an individual focus where consequences return and thus even good work or action becomes cause of bondage. We must continue to perform the actions, but renounce desire and concern for the fruits of them, as also the feeling of doership (*kartabhav*).

Doing every duty carefully and cheerfully is superior to ritualistic worship. Selfless action is that which is done without likes and dislikes, imbued with love. A person working in a toy factory may have a simple job of fitting nuts and bolts in various parts of the toy. But what is his attitude towards the work? Does he put his whole heart and soul into it, thinking all the time that the end result will be a lovely toy that might give happiness to some children? Does he work with same zeal as if he is making the toy for his own child? If yes, then the whole humanity becomes for him his family.