

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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ALCHEMY—SCIENCE OF SELF-REALIZATION

THE word *Alchemy* is a combination of *Al* and *Chemi*. *Chemi* means Fire. *Khem* was also the name of ancient Egypt. Hence, it was believed that the science of alchemy originated in Egypt. In the article “Alchemy in the Nineteenth Century,” H.P.B. mentions that Alchemy was cultivated in China, in 16th century B.C. It was only towards the end of fourth century A.D. that it penetrated into Europe. From the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, knowledge concerning Alchemy, imported from China, was transformed into Hermetic writings and later fabricated by the Greeks and Arabs, making it incomprehensible.

Alchemy is studied under three aspects—cosmic, human and terrestrial. Terrestrial alchemy is concerned with transmutation of gross metals like lead into pure gold. This process is going on in the bowels of the earth. But this is only one aspect of alchemy—purely material and symbolic. Like in the bowels of the earth, alchemy goes on in the body of man. Whatever we eat gets transmuted into blood, bones, mucus, tissues, etc. Shri Krishna says: “Becoming the internal fire of the living, I associate with the upward and downward breathing, and cause the four kinds of food to digest.” (*Gita*, XV)

“The occultist-chemist, spurning the gold of the mines, gives all his attention and directs his efforts only towards the transmutation of the baser *quaternary* into the divine upper *trinity* of man, which when finally blended are one,” *i.e.*, towards transmutation of lower, animal nature into divine nature (*The*

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Theosophical Glossary). H.P.B. mentions that in the course of development, in their egotism and vanity, humanity denied the existence of spirit and soul and hence forgot this science of their earlier ancestors, viz., spiritual alchemy. The sole aim of the modern alchemist has been transmutation of lead into gold. The great alchemist, Eiranaeus Philalethes, writing in the seventeenth century, says:

Would to God that all men might become Adepts in our art.
For then gold, the great idol of mankind, would lose its value,
and we should prize it only for its scientific teaching.

In other words, when people are satiated with making and obtaining gold, they might inquire into its symbolic meaning. Alchemists say that Gold represents perfection and it is the highest form that any metal can reach. Gold can withstand the action of fire and all known corrosive liquids, except *aqua regia*. Alchemists say that all metals have the *potentiality* of becoming gold. Thus, gold may be taken to be a symbol of spiritual perfection. All men have the potentiality of becoming spiritually perfect. Paracelsus declared that man and the universe are composed of “Three Substances”—Salt, Sulphur and Mercury. H.P.B. explains:

Man, in their eyes, is a trinity, which they divide into *Sol* [salt], water of *mercury*, and *sulphur*, which is the *secret fire*, or, to speak plain, into *body*, *soul*, and *spirit*...Man is the philosopher’s stone spiritually—“*a triune or trinity in unity*,” as Philalethes expresses it. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 309)

Thus Salt refers to the physical form or body, Mercury symbolizes the soul, while Sulphur represents the Spirit. Sulphur was taken by the alchemists to represent the principle of combustion. The alchemists took Mercury to represent the metallic principle and to Mercury was attributed malleability and lustre. Salt represents the principle of fixity and solidification. Malleability is the capacity of the metal to be moulded without breaking down. Mercury represents soul or mind and in man the process of change or transmutation must begin with the mind. Mind is often compared

to water. Just as water takes the shape of the vessel it is poured into, so mind becomes that to which it is devoted. Mind in its lower aspect is *Kama-Manas* and comparable to the base metal lead. If left to itself lead stays lead, and nature takes very long to transmute it into gold. An alchemist accelerates this process. So also, it would take man many lifetimes to reach perfection, unless the incarnated mind or “everyday mind” undergoes transmutation and is so purified as to be capable of being absorbed by the Higher Trinity. In the process, the four lower principles, body, astral body, *Kama* and *Prana* are also purified. For this, one has to decide to become an alchemist and the beginning is to be made by *earnestly aspiring* for spiritual life. In the language of Occultism, one has to decide to become a chela. The sooner we decide the better it is. As a Master points out:

The process of self-purification is not the work of a moment, nor of a few months but of years—nay, extending over a series of lives. The later a man begins the living of a higher life, the longer must be his period of probation, for he has to undo the effects of years spent in objects diametrically opposed to the real goal. The more strenuous one’s efforts and the brighter the result of his work, the nearer he comes to the Threshold.

What is it to become a chela? H.P.B. writes:

Chelaship was defined, the other day, by a Mahatma as a “psychic resolvent, which eats away all dross and leaves only the pure gold behind.” If the candidate has the lust for money, or political chicanery, or materialistic scepticism, or vain display, or false speaking, or cruelty, or sensual gratification of any kind, the germ is almost sure to sprout; and so on the other hand, as regards the noble qualities of human nature. The real man comes out. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, p. 7)

As soon as one offers himself for chelaship, he rouses and lashes to desperation every sleeping passion of his animal nature. All the weaknesses and drawbacks in one’s nature, of which one was not even aware, come to the surface. One experiences an inner conflict, a strife between one’s will and carnal nature.

The heart of alchemy is transmutation and that implies change. We resist change, because it involves going from one state of consciousness to another. It involves surrendering personal will to the divine will. It involves leaving behind the familiar in order to obtain spiritual perfection, which to us is a mere abstraction. Mr. Crosbie describes such a transition stage in the disciple's life:

There may, and there often does come a time when one feels...like "standing on nothing, in nothing and about to topple over." The centre of consciousness has been changed; old landmarks are slipping away, and sometimes black doubt ensues. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 8)

"Tale of the Sands," a traditional Sufi tale, is an allegory of alchemy (from *The Sufis* by Idries Shah). Once a bubbling Stream was unable to cross the desert. The Stream said aloud: "My destiny is to cross this desert, but I can see no way. Whenever I try, I am absorbed into the sand." The Stream symbolizes the disciple or spiritual aspirant whose destiny it is to cross over this "limitless desert of illusion called earth-life."

Then the voice of the Desert answered, in the hidden tongue of nature, saying, "The Wind crosses the desert, and so can you." The Stream said, "The Wind can fly, and I cannot." "You are thinking in the wrong way; trying to fly by yourself is absurd. Allow the Wind to carry you over the sand. Allow yourself to be absorbed in the Wind," replied the Desert.

Does not *Light on the Path* give the same advice to the disciple? "Stand aside in the coming battle, and though thou fightest be not thou the warrior. Look for the warrior and let him fight in thee....He is thyself, yet thou art but finite and liable to error. He is eternal and is sure." The "warrior" is one's Higher Self, the gentle but fierce Krishna. The help and guidance for spiritual living comes from inner planes of being. It is only when we are ready to efface the personality and are prepared to surrender our personal will to the divine will that we can get the help. And this is difficult. The story goes on that the Stream protested, as it did not want to lose its identity in that way. If it did, it might not exist again. The Sand

explained that when the Wind absorbed moisture, it carried it over the desert, and then let it fall again like rain. The rain again became a river. But how, asked the Stream, could it know that this was true? The Sand replied that if the Stream did not believe, after many years it would be sucked by the Sand and form a quagmire. Here again we can see that if the aspirant resists change from fear of the suffering it entails, he invites stagnation. H.P.B. explains:

Woe to those who live without suffering. Stagnation and death is the future of all that vegetates without a change. And how can there be any change for the better without proportionate suffering during the preceding stage? (*S.D.*, II, 475)

Finally, the Stream asks, "Will I be the same Stream that I am today?" The Sand answered, "You cannot be the same Stream that you are today. The wind will carry your essence, the finer part of you. When you become a River again, on the other side of the desert, men may call you by a different name, but you yourself, essentially, will know that you are the same." Thus spiritual perfection is not annihilation, but it is self-realization, it awakens in the aspirant the true sense of identity, so that the "I" is no longer limited to personality but encompasses the whole of creation. As Buddha says, "The Universe grows I."

Alchemy, says H.P.B., is the foundation of all occult sciences. In the article "Occultism vs. the Occult Arts," she describes *Atma Vidya* as true Occultism and considers it superior to all other occult sciences like *Yajna Vidya*, *Maha Vidya*, etc. Thus, true or spiritual Alchemy is the same as true Occultism. While learning occult sciences requires no previous preparation or adopting a restraining mode of life, pursuit of Occultism or Spiritual Alchemy requires unselfishness and purification of thoughts and desires.

If we seek to suppress the lower desires by a strong effort of will, instead of slaying them, it is like allowing "the fire to smoulder under a thin layer of ashes," so that a whiff of wind can make it leap into flames. We need to purify our desires. Even love for one's wife and children becomes a barrier for the alchemist-occultist. In the ultimate analysis, such love is selfish, as one is perfectly willing

to sacrifice the happiness of others for the sake of one's wife and children. When our heart is full of thoughts for our near and dear ones, what percentage of love and care will remain to bestow on other units of mankind? Alchemy is transmutation of passion into compassion. How does one purify one's desires?

When the desire is for the purely abstract—when it has lost all trace or tinge of “self”—then it has become pure. The first step towards this purity is to kill out the desire for the things of matter, since these can only be enjoyed by the separated personality. The second is to cease from desiring for oneself even such abstractions as power, knowledge, love, happiness, or fame; for they are but selfishness after all. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 7*)

The aspirant has to be extremely vigilant, for, his vices also undergo transformation—from gross to subtle. As *Light on the Path* says: “For the vices of the ordinary man pass through a subtle transformation and reappear with changed aspect in the heart of the disciple.” For instance, ambition is very tricky; as we drive it out at one level, it reappears at a subtler level. It can appear at the level of wealth, fame, power or love. A person may not look for any compensation in terms of money or material wealth for his good turn to others, but he may still want public acclaim, recognition, praise and so on. So long as there are even traces of pride, longing, envy, anger, etc., there is a possibility of reverse transmutation, as sometimes takes place in nature. For instance, uranium can decay and transmute itself into radium and then into lead. So also it is possible to fall down, slowly and gradually, from great heights, if we are not vigilant. *The Voice of the Silence* cautions the aspirant who is trying to build for himself an island of pure thoughts, to beware of pride, saying, “a sense of pride will mar the work,” even when the victory is very nearly achieved. After reaching the desired goal, we must sustain it. It is said, “Let him who thinketh that he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”

THE MEANING OF SACRIFICE

SACRIFICE as ordinarily understood is a kind of offering or propitiation to god and gods, to certain powers or elementals, on special occasions, in order to obtain some benefit or fulfil some cherished desire, and as such it is divorced from the daily duties and hourly affairs of life.

True sacrifice is an inner attitude of mind and heart based on real understanding of the unity and harmony of the one divine life and law. It is the giving of oneself in loving service to all, on any and all planes, without any selfish motive. Such acts of service become sacrificial acts.

Throughout nature we see expressions of sacrifice, which is related to the law of interdependence operating in all her kingdoms. They provide us with nourishment; fresh air and water keep us alive; without light and sunshine everything would perish. What sacrificial actions do human beings perform to enrich Nature? It is daily robbed in all its departments. Is it not our duty to help the forward progress of various kinds of lives, which we use all the time, by impressing them with pure thoughts and noble feelings? “Help Nature and work on with her; and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance.” Nature is the material ally of man, who has to become a co-worker with her, by understanding her laws.

The great teachers have sacrificed themselves for the sake of mankind. Sri Krishna instructs Arjuna in the Fourth Discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita*: “I produce myself among creatures, O son of Bharata, whenever there is a decline of virtue and an insurrection of vice and injustice in the world; and thus I incarnate from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of righteousness.” In the Eighth Discourse he speaks of himself as the great sacrifice, *Adhiyajna*.

The great teachers of the world have indeed made the supreme sacrifice of renouncing the peace and bliss of *Nirvana*, their well-earned rest, to take birth in human bodies for the spiritual welfare

of the human race. Time and again they have pointed to the way of life and love, of truth and wisdom, but the frailty of human nature soon makes people forget all about it. Cyclically the messengers appear on the scene to revive the Message, and in *The Voice of the Silence* the image is given of the Guardian Wall formed by them to protect mankind from further and far greater misery and sorrow. But for their compassion and sacrifice, the world would be in greater darkness and gloom than it is today.

On the metaphysical plane, it is the eternal thought in the eternal mind that brings about differentiation, so that the one becomes the many—unity in diversity. In the germ of the universal mind arises the pure desire for the progressive evolution of different lives on different planes, and at the appointed hour the rest and repose of all beings ends, and there begins the activity of a new period of evolution, leading to further progress. At the midway point of evolution, the solar gods, the great divine intelligences, sacrificed themselves to incarnate in the mindless incipient men, to give them the spark of the higher Manas. In every atom of life there is intelligence of a kind, but man alone has the higher consciousness which was awakened in him by the sacrifice of these great gods.

Hence, tradition shows the celestial *Yogis* offering themselves as voluntary victims in order to redeem Humanity—created god-like and perfect at first—and to endow him with human affections and aspirations. To do this they had to give up their natural status and, descending on our globe, take up their abode on it for the whole cycle of the Mahayuga, thus exchanging their impersonal individualities for individual personalities—the bliss of sidereal existence for the curse of terrestrial life. (*The Secret Doctrine*, II, 246)

It is only the recognition of the superior mind in us and the control of the lower mind and the personal nature—a daily sacrifice of the lower at the altar of the higher Self—that will enable man to be self-redeemed and to act on the basis of his higher nature.

Lord Krishna instructs Arjuna not to abandon three kinds of acts—those of *dana*-charity, *yajna*-sacrifice, and *tapas*-

mortification. They have to be considered as the daily duties of life, and not to be kept aside for special occasions. This attitude will make any and every action a sacramental one, dedicated to the highest in us and in all. As Sri Krishna puts it:

I accept and enjoy the offerings of the humble soul who in his worship with a pure heart offereth a leaf, a flower, or fruit, or water unto me. Whatever thou doest, O son of Kunti, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever mortification thou performest, commit each unto me.

We are not asked to offer something we cannot afford, something great and valuable; all that is indispensable for true sacrifice is a pure heart, which augments the value of whatever is offered.

There are so many wrong types of sacrifice. Some offer animal sacrifices in the false belief that this will wipe away their sins. Others torture their bodies and disfigure themselves. Still others run away from their homes, neglect their own duties and live in seclusion in forests or on mountain tops. “Some sacrifice the up-breathing in the down-breathing and the down-breathing in the up-breathing, by blocking up the channels of inspiration and expiration,” says the *Gita*. Such sacrifices produce their own effects on the physical and psychic planes, but the sacrifice through spiritual knowledge is superior to all others. This is not understood correctly and therefore there are so many misconceptions about sacrifice.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, in the very important section “What Is Practical Theosophy?” there is a sub-section entitled “On Self-Sacrifice,” which, H.P.B. says, is “giving to others *more* than to oneself”; but she further states: “Self-sacrifice has to be performed with discrimination.” Hence the need for reflecting before acting, before taking a step in one or another direction. “A man has no right to starve himself to *death* that another man may have food, unless the life of that man is obviously more useful to the many than is his own life.”

Once the great law of Karma is understood to some extent at least, the ways and means to sacrifice will suggest themselves

naturally, and the higher aspects of sacrifice will manifest themselves. We get daily inspiration from the lives and teachings of all the great teachers down the ages, but there are also examples of true sacrifice among the common people. There was Florence Nightingale, the Lady of the Lamp, who went to Crimea to nurse the soldiers who were dying without help. There was St. Francis of Assisi, the great lover of animals and a great humanitarian. H.P.B. gives the illustration of the young Belgian, Father Damien, who volunteered to go to Molokai to help the lepers there, to give them light and comfort and solace. He lived with them for 18 years, and succumbed to the disease in the end. Such examples can be multiplied. All are reflections of the “great sacrifice,” the archetypal sacrifice, mentioned in *The Secret Doctrine*. We are told about the “Wondrous Being” descended from a “high region” in the early part of the Third Race:

He is...the “Nameless One” who has so many names, and yet whose names and whose very nature are unknown. He is *the* “Initiator,” called the “GREAT SACRIFICE.” For, sitting at the threshold of LIGHT, he looks into it from within the circle of Darkness, which he will not cross; nor will he quit his post till the last day of this life-cycle. Why does the solitary Watcher remain at his self-chosen post? Why does he sit by the fountain of primeval Wisdom, of which he drinks no longer, as he has naught to learn which he does not know—aye, neither on this Earth, nor in its heaven? Because the lonely sore-footed pilgrims on their way back to their *home* are never sure to the last moment of not losing their way in this limitless desert of illusion and matter called Earth-Life. Because he would fain show the way to that region of freedom and light, from which he is a voluntary exile himself, to every prisoner who has succeeded in liberating himself from the bonds of flesh and illusion. Because, in short, he has sacrificed himself for the sake of mankind, though but a few Elect may profit by the GREAT SACRIFICE. (I, 208)

THE WONDER THAT WAS EGYPT

I

WORDS like Egypt and Egyptian Civilization at once bring to our mind the images of a great nation of marvellous achievements and mighty civilization showing tremendous advancement in arts and sciences. Our proud, modern mind is amazed to find that these ancient people possessed such fantastic knowledge in so many areas, some of which the science of today is unable to duplicate. When we say Egypt, the image of great pyramids immediately comes to our mind. That the Egyptian civilization has many unique achievements to its credit is beyond doubt. Thanks to the conscientious archaeologists, Egyptologists and sincere historians who have spent their lifetime in its study, the enigma of Egypt stands partially revealed to us. But it is to *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* one ought to turn for better understanding of what has reached us as little understood mass of information.

The great Pyramid of Cheops stood 82,111,000 feet tall and weighed 63,16,000 tons. Exhibiting unparalleled skill of Egyptian quarrymen, it was made up of immense number of square stones, the joints of which were barely perceptible, united by indestructible cement, which holds the mammoth blocks together even today. Obelisks ninety feet high and statues forty feet were each made out of one stone. And we are told that there are many such. It is believed that each successive king erected a pyramid to commemorate his reign, and serve as his sepulchre. But the real purpose, inner significance and symbology of the pyramids is explained by H.P.B. as follows:

Externally, it symbolized the creative principle of nature, and illustrated also the principles of geometry, mathematics, astrology, and astronomy. Internally, it was a majestic fane, in whose sombre recesses were performed the Mysteries, and whose walls had often witnessed the initiation-scenes of members of the royal family. The porphyry sarcophagus, which Professor Piazza Smyth, Astronomer Royal of Scotland, degrades into a corn-bin, was the *baptismal font*, upon emerging

from which, the neophyte was “born again,” and became an adept. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 519)

The Egyptian Pyramid also symbolically represents this idea of the mundane tree. Its apex is the mystic link between heaven and earth, and stands for the root, while the base represents the spreading branches, extending to the four cardinal points of the universe of matter. It conveys the idea that all things had their origin in spirit—evolution having originally begun from above and proceeded downward, instead of the reverse, as taught in the Darwinian theory. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 154)

The peculiar architecture of the Pyramids shows in itself the drift of the metaphysical thought of their builders. The apex is lost in the clear blue sky of the land of the Pharaohs, and typifies the primordial point lost in the unseen universe from whence started the first race of the spiritual prototypes of man. Each mummy, from the moment that it was embalmed, lost its physical individuality in one sense; it symbolized the human race. Placed in such a way as was best calculated to aid the exit of the “soul,” the latter had to pass through the seven planetary chambers before it made its exit through the symbolical apex. Each chamber typified, at the same time, one of the seven spheres, and one of the seven higher types of physico-spiritual humanity alleged to be above our own. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 296-97)

With their superior knowledge of hydrostatics and hydraulic engineering, Egyptians are credited with having changed the course of the three principal branches of the river Nile to bring it to Memphis during the reign of Menes. They were versed in the art and practice of war, constructed war-engines and war weapons. Egypt is called the birthplace and cradle of chemistry. Chemistry of colours seems to have been well known in that country. They were proficient in mathematical sciences and medicine—with which they brought about wonderful and almost magical cures. Circulation of the blood was known to them. They had their dentists and oculists, and no doctor was allowed to practise more than one speciality. They had knowledge of the heliocentric system,

spherical shape of the earth, starry composition of the Milky Way and the fact of borrowed light of the moon. They divided time, knew the true length of the year, and the precession of the equinoxes.

The art of making linen and fine fabrics was one of their skills. The linen of Egypt was famous throughout the world. The mummies are all wrapped in it and the linen is beautifully preserved. Linen worn by priests is spun and dyed in brilliant and gorgeous colours, the secret of which is likewise now among the lost arts. All the ornamental arts seem to have been known to the Egyptians. Their imitation of precious stones in glass is far above anything done at the present day.

Likewise, most of the Egyptians cultivated the musical arts, and understood well the effects of musical harmony and its influence on the human spirit. We can find on the oldest sculptures and carvings, scenes in which musicians play on various instruments. Music was used in the healing department of the temples for the cure of nervous disorders. Further:

But it is in the process of preparing mummies that the skill of this wonderful people is exemplified in the highest degree. None but those who have made special study of the subject, can estimate the amount of skill, patience, and knowledge exacted for the accomplishment of this indestructible work, which occupied several months. Both chemistry and surgery were called into requisition. The mummies, if left in the dry climate of Egypt, seem to be practically imperishable; and even when removed after a repose of several thousand years, show no signs of change. “The body,” says the anonymous writer, “was filled with myrrh, cassia, and other gums, and after that, saturated with natron....Then followed the marvellous swathings of the embalmed body, so artistically executed, that professional modern bandagists are lost in admiration at its excellency.” Says Dr. Grandville: “...there is not a single form of bandage known to modern surgery, of which *far better and cleverer examples* are not seen in the swathings of the Egyptian mummies. The strips of linen are found without one single joint, extending to 1,000 yards in length.”... There was not a fracture

in the human body that could not be repaired successfully by the sacerdotal physician of those remote days. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 539)

According to Herodotus, Greece owes everything to Egypt. Moses was raised by an Egyptian princess and was taught by the wife of Pharaoh, Batria, an initiate, all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Similarly, Plato learnt secrets from priests of Egypt and imparted the same to his initiated disciples orally. Pythagoras spent some twenty-two years in the temples of Egypt. He learned music in Egypt and made a regular science of it in Italy. He studied esoteric sciences with the Brahmins of India and astronomy and astrology in Chaldea and Egypt. Profound facts arouse our respect and make us wonder as to who really were the Egyptians and whence their learning. We are told that Egypt owes her learning to pre-Vedic India.

Egypt furnished Greece with her civilization, and the latter bequeathed hers to Rome. Egypt herself had, in those unknown ages when Menes reigned, received her laws, her social institutions, her arts and her sciences, from pre-Vedic India.

And when we say, indiscriminately, “India,” we do not mean the India of our modern days, but that of the archaic period. In those ancient times countries which are now known to us by other names were all called India. There was an Upper, a Lower, and a Western India, the latter of which is now Persia-Iran. The countries now named Thibet, Mongolia, and Great Tartary, were also considered by the ancient writers as India. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 589)

Bunsen and Champollion have already shown that the Egyptian sacred books are by far older than the oldest parts of the *Book of Genesis*. And now a more careful research seems to warrant the suspicion—which with us amounts to a certainty, that the laws of Moses are copies from the code of the Brahmanic *Manu*. Thus, according to every probability, Egypt owes her civilization, her civil institutions, and her arts, to India. (*Isis Unveiled*, II, 431)

H.P.B. points out that the Egyptians were the ancient Indians. She draws our attention to the fact that until very recently nothing was known of Old India and that these two nations, India and Egypt, were quite similar. The Eastern Ethiopians—the mighty builders—had come from India as a matured people, bringing their civilization with them, and colonizing the then unoccupied Egyptian territory.

Egypt owes her civilization, commonwealth and arts—especially the art of building, to pre-Vedic India...it was a colony of the dark-skinned Aryans, or those whom Homer and Herodotus term the eastern Ethiopians, *i.e.*, the inhabitants of Southern India, who brought to it their ready-made civilization in the ante-chronological ages, of what Bunsen calls the pre-Menite, but nevertheless epochal history. (*Isis Unveiled*, II, 435)

These Hindus are *supposed* to have entered the country from the northwest; they are *conjectured* by some to have brought with them the Brahmanical religion, and the language of the conquerors was *probably* the Sanskrit. (*Isis Unveiled*, II, 435)

Tracing the origin of Egyptian civilization, H.P.B. says :

It was the latest, seventh sub-race of the Atlanteans, already swallowed up in one of the early sub-races of the Aryan stock, one that had been gradually spreading over the continent and islands of Europe, as soon as they had begun to emerge from the seas. Descending from the high plateaux of Asia, where the two Races had sought refuge in the days of the agony of Atlantis, it had been slowly settling and colonizing the freshly emerged lands. The emigrant sub-race had rapidly increased and multiplied on that virgin soil; had divided into many families, which in their turn divided into nations. Egypt and Greece, the Phoenicians, and the Northern stocks, had thus proceeded from that one sub-race. (*S.D.*, II, 743)

(*To be continued*)

If you wish to untie a knot, you must first understand how it was tied.

—*Surangame Sutra*

RIGHT OCCUPATION

And our own people must be taught to engage in honest employment to produce the necessities of life; they must not be unproductive.

—*Titus*, III, 14

EMPLOYMENT is the act of using. It is the occupying of oneself in turning energy to desired uses. When a person engages himself in any occupation, he is said to employ himself. His use of time, force and matter constitutes that employment. He may think he can laze away the time, yet is he mistaken, for even whilst lazing he does consume time and his consciousness continues to live and function in each of its moments. He may refuse to act, and think that he thereby does not use force. He forgets that his very effort to restrain and cease action constitutes the use and expenditure of force. He may exercise the force of his will not to use or affect matter. His willing is in vain. The matter which goes to make up his body and the various other sheaths of his make-up is instantly affected by his slightest thought and feeling. The exercise of his will is but the play of energy upon matter. Granted, then, that he is constantly employed, it follows that he colours his employment by the bright or dark colouring that his motives give to his actions.

At the very commencement of a study of the subject, it becomes necessary to specify what types of effort become unproductive when assessed according to norms that the Soul of man provides. Time is a concretized aspect of the limitless duration. How does the student propose to keep it punctual and pure and therefore productive of beneficial results? Energy is an aspect of the great infinite motion which never ceases. How does the student qualify himself to use it so that it will follow the divine pattern—the programme and the plan for the fulfilling of which the present Universe was brought into manifestation? Weighty questions these, and yet they cannot be ignored lest the Soul find its incarnation misspent, its life's span frittered away in pursuits which hinder and obstruct the divine purpose.

That act alone is productive which augments the Soul's treasures or helps another soul upon its upward way. Any lesser employment will be found to cater to the perishable part of the person and must for that reason be given an ever diminishing value depending on the degree of selfishness that it generates. Where the validity of these truths is questioned, where one has doubts that one is soul, there arises such a mental fog that one fails to see the logic and the sanctions that give to ethics and religion their force. In seeking his own felicity, he but cheats himself and has finally to yield himself up to the sway of such laws as govern in these matters.

To such class also belong those who see in themselves nothing higher than the intellect, who put great store by it and who therefore remain immersed in the study of the ephemeral things with which the intellect deals. The scientist who uses force or energy to study matter in its variegated forms and who thereby unwittingly saturates himself with it through constant attachment will be unable to burst through the outer shells and crusts of things. Eyes that are fascinated by material things are unable to open upon the spiritual. Intuition is not the culmination of reason or intellect. It has nothing to do with the personal, nor with the tardy processes of ratiocinative thought. The rank materialist firmly believes that man is made up of various forms of matter, and that beyond these, there is nothing. His instruments have gone on reducing matter to its atomic structures. From there, matter eludes him and he perceives a blank negation, an unbridgeable void.

For such an one, life is without a goal. To him, productive effort and earning a livelihood can only mean such pursuits as enrich him in his material benefits. For him, the diverting of energies to plan for an after-life is futile because his reason tells him that there is nothing in him that will survive the ordeal of death. He does not believe in charity and sacrifice because these have a tendency to lessen and not heighten his ease during the all too short time of life that is his before oblivion descends and snuffs out his flame. Any wonder, then, that for the majority of people their efforts will remain unproductive and their contribution to the fund of human goodwill

be negligible?

When the human child attains that age when duty lays its first claims on him, he mercifully has meaningful employment chalked out for him by duties to family and nation. Some of these comprise the actions to be performed daily (duties to oneself are some), while others have to be carried out on specific occasions. These duties are obligatory. In fact, just because the soul needs that experience, is the incarnation planned for birth in that particular environment of race, nation and family. Such duties when respected are productive of lasting good. It is when they come to be understood as avenues for growth that “honest employment” takes on a deeper meaning. Besides these and enriching the person are actions which he may perform to bring the world to duty and benefit humanity. To be employed in helping others to carry out such self-appointed tasks is meritorious and comes to him who through incarnations has earned the right to such service.

Besides the performance of duties, the person has to toil to earn his livelihood. He has to barter his labour or skill for another’s use. In essence, it provides an avenue for the practice of brotherhood, a joining together in a co-operative effort to achieve the larger good. Right livelihood deals with the means of living—the employment, the fruits of which will sustain life; the utilization of energy for the providing of the necessities of life to the many. Where the occupation is such as feeds the urges and desires of the person or where it gets its remuneration by providing others with pleasures of dubious value, it becomes productive of evil. In such cases, the force of the life energy is being used to abuse the life of others, is in fact made to turn around and oppose the mighty evolutionary impulse.

Whichever way we look at it, we must admit that when we use energy for purposes other than the production of life’s necessities, we, by that action, steal a larger or a smaller amount of force from nature’s storehouse. By so doing we do not waste force and despoil nature, but pit the force so appropriated to fight the momentum of a planned evolution which embraces galaxies and universes. Few

people, even if they understand it, remain consciously aware at all times of the fact that nature allows them to borrow from its storehouse the energies which they wield, and that such borrowings carry with them all the obligations of a trustee. Since we use energy every moment of our life through our thinking apparatus, the ideal position for any person would be the retaining at all times of the awareness of this responsibility. Any action, even if it be in thought, which does not carry the soul forward on its evolutionary cycle is not a worthwhile employment and becomes a source for dissipation and not conservation of energy. Following the same line of thought, right livelihood is not achieved by the following of those pursuits which retard the evolution of oneself or of others. If the lending of one’s energy to any organization does not have as its end-result the production of a necessity of life, the effort is vain and any extra attempt at evolutionary progress has then to be relegated to hours outside those of employment.

In our times, when a person chooses his vocation his main concern is to see that it will earn him money. All else is incidental. The needs of the soul are not thought of and are, therefore, not planned for nor given adequate weightage. Later, he may change vocations and seek more congenial pursuits even as his mind develops and his soul approaches its awakening. For the one who awakens to the larger perception, the chief and only question which he has to answer is: Is he producing that which is a necessity of life? To the poet and the artist nature shows that aspect to which the ordinary person’s sight and senses do not respond. The scientist and alchemist try to probe into the finer forms of matter and the essences of things. In time they do reach their flowering, yet are their efforts vain, the efflorescence a mere mirage on the sands of time.

Why should this be so? Why, when the scientist stands on the threshold of startling discoveries, does he find and feel a frustration and a letting down, a feeling that the sweetness of his achievement has turned sour? A long unfamiliarity with the worlds of light has made such people forget that the touch of matter defiles, and that

too great a familiarity with matter arouses the passions which bring in their wake the horrors of anger and greed. Matter has a tendency to generate attachments. The senses, when they come into contact with objects of sense, produce heat and cold, pleasure and pain, attachments and revulsions. It is thus that desires are aroused which attract or repel. When a whole civilization takes the downward trend, a decadent society results where morals are weak and ethics low, and where flippancy hobnobs with vice and calls it pleasure.

But, if there is degeneration, there also exists its opposite. In places least suspected by the ordinary person, there still exist oases of spirituality. In town and city, amidst the din of the market-place and the haunts of the rich and the poor, there labour the few who see in right livelihood the way open to all to reach up to the divine. Riches and affluence do not come their way; ease is not wished for, though it could be had; publicity and the accolade of the many is shunned. They spin on the wheel of life. Their self-abnegating effort produces that which satisfies another's necessities of life. But, far surpassing the seen results is the example which they set. Their life preaches a twenty-four-hour sermon. Their sweat produces seeds that will yield a rich harvest in another's field. Nature recognizes the worth of such people, and though it cannot turn back the force and fury of results for causes planted in past lives, it still shelters and nurtures them, for they are its dear ones—precious for the work to be done in other centuries, valuable recruits for the carrying on of the fight for the re-establishment of righteousness.

A DEEP reverence for human life is worth more than a thousand executions in the prevention of murder; and is, in fact, the great security of human life. The law of capital punishment, whilst pretending to support this reverence, does in fact tend to destroy it.

—JOHN BRIGHT

TRAINING THE MIND

BOTH ancient and modern psychology recognize mind as the most important constituent in the make-up of the human being. But the identity of view about the mind between the two schools stops there. What the mind is, its origin, its working, its training, its goal, are all differently explained by the exponents of the ancient Eastern and the modern Western schools. Most of the Occidental psychologists have not seriously examined the old Eastern views; the Indian scholars who are familiar with the psycho-philosophical propositions of Patanjali and others are either not inclined to recommend them for application—perhaps because their own conviction is not strong enough—or else they are not in a position to insist upon a proper try-out, let us say, in schools and colleges.

It is not our purpose here to argue the case for ancient psychology. We can show how very logical, thorough and satisfying are its propositions. Further, taking the aid of ancient philosophy, we can show how much more reasonable are its propositions than those of modern schools on such questions as the genesis of the mind and the goal it is expected to reach. In this article, however, we desire to confine ourselves to a less debatable subject—the control of the human mind.

Every human being possesses the thinking organism. Its control and culture are fundamentally dependent upon the recognition of the Thinker, which is other than and superior to his organ of thinking. The human Soul is the Thinker and his mind is an organ or instrument which he uses to understand the universe around him. The Thinker is Manushya, the Man; the organ of thought is Mind, Manas. This very fundamental is a matter of dispute and discussion, and even when the Soul is recognized as distinct from the mind it is often regarded as the product of the mind, wholly dependent upon the body, its senses and its brain. It is essential, however, to put forward this fundamental proposition for the ordinary man or woman who is interested in the practical task of schooling his own mind. For, unless the controller of the wandering

mind is recognized, its control is not possible. What good is a school to any boy or girl where there is no teacher to instruct him or her in reading, writing and arithmetic?

The Soul has been called the great Guru; the Soul is the controller of the wandering mind, the instructor of the listening mind, the admonisher of the wrong-going mind, the guide and friend of the perceiving mind. Take the Soul out of the picture and mind-schooling becomes an impossibility. It cannot be taken out of the picture; some substitute will have to be found, or else the admission must be made that the mind must follow its own nature and go its own way—wicked or weak, selfish or strong, ruthlessly destroyed or destroying.

It is essential that the dual principles of Soul and mind be recognized at the very outset. The schooling of the mind, first, last and all the time, is done by the Soul, the real man, the Manushya. Books, teachers, and all other outer means are aids which the Soul uses. The teacher at school assists the boy or girl—the real learner. The finest and most capable of teachers cannot enlighten the mind of an idiot or bring forth beauty of character in a congenital fiend. Half the battle is won by any parent at home or any teacher at school when he perceives, not vaguely but definitely, this highly important and fundamental fact—that behind the learning mind of the pupil is the learner himself, the Soul. From a clear perception of this fact other valuable ideas will naturally and logically arise, *e.g.*, that of reincarnation as an actual law of human evolution.

In self-education and self-improvement this fact plays an equally important part. Let a person see that he is the Soul and that the mind is but his instrument, and once again half his battle is won. For such recognition will lead that person, if he is logical and mentally honest, to seek out the principles of the spiritual psycho-philosophy of the ancient sages.

The second fact about the mind is this: it is a mirror in which the Soul can cast a perfect reflection if other things do not utilize it to cast their reflections upon it. The body with its brain and senses not only contacts the outer universe, but also, because of the desires

and feelings which animate it, impresses the mind with a million images. The eyes see and the ears hear, and the things seen and heard affect the desires of the blood—they may be good or bad, beautiful or ugly. Old desires are reawakened by these sights and sounds, and new desires are aroused. These desire-pictures impress themselves on the mirror of the mind and delude the very consciousness of man, rendering it oblivious of the existence of the Soul. In our civilization, this forgetting of the existence of the Soul is a common phenomenon. Neither at home for the infant, nor at school for the boy or the girl, is any serious attempt being made to point to the Soul, above and beyond, or to be more accurate, within the mind. The adult finds it somewhat difficult to trace out the Soul within the mind because that mind is full of impressions which show forth as his beliefs, his views, his opinions, etc.

The action of the senses and of the desires on the mind is unduly encouraged by modern culture. The result is that the human mind has become the organ and the instrument of the senses and the desires, and has ceased to be the organ and the instrument of the Soul. Desires and senses have usurped the place of the Soul and they now exploit the mind. The exploitation of labour by capital, of the patriot by the politician, of the devotee by the priest, is nothing compared to this archetypal exploitation of the mind by the desires and the senses. Most human beings are thus exploited; only a few, those who perceive the Soul as a reality and recognize the mind as its instrument, resist that great exploitation. They alone undertake the task of really schooling the mind. They see the truth of the remark of Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita* that there is a state of man in which Kama, passion, beclouds the Atman, the Soul, and that it is a highly objectionable state.

Mind is placed between the Soul and the desires which animate the senses and which in their turn are activated by the senses' contacting the universe of sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touch. The vibrating universe is the same for all human beings, but in each person it produces, through the fivefold response of the sensorium, different effects.

Science trains the senses to contact the outer universe. Philosophy helps the mind to understand the processes taking place in the universe. But the control, purification and culture of emotions and feelings are neglected. It is generally believed that to be a great physicist or chemist or astronomer one need not be a moral man. Similarly, it is held that to speculate upon the Absolute, the nature of Reality, of Space, of Time and of Motion, one need not be a moral person. Ethics and Morality are not demanded as necessary concomitants of scientific or philosophic training. The result is that modern scientists and philosophers have not been able to see the great psychological facts presented above. Their knowledge, great as it is, has not truly benefited humanity. The general complaint is that modern science and philosophy have not removed the carnal and cruel tendencies of human nature.

Only when the schooling of the mind is undertaken according to Eastern Wisdom and the Soul is utilized to check the mind, and the mind in its turn trained to think along lines of purity and altruism will our knowledge prove beneficial to us. At present the power which education brings to the mind is utilized by men and women to fulfil their personal greeds, their selfish ambitions and their secret and lusty passions. Verily, what *The Voice of the Silence* says is true: "The Mind is the great Slayer of the Real."

The first step in right schooling of the mind consists in the following instruction, also to be found in the same little book:

Withhold thy mind from all external objects, all external sights. Withhold internal images, lest on thy Soul-light a dark shadow they should cast.

We see external objects with a mind coloured by desires and passions. Thus we allow ourselves to be exploited by our lower nature: the longings of the senses, the intense desire for possessions, the fiery ambitions, all lead us to put false values on things. These longings and desires for things impress themselves on the mind and these internal images cause further excitation. These internal images are memory-pictures which become active periodically and produce results. A memory-picture arousing the desires makes us

seek the aid of our mental intelligence and thus prostitution of the mind occurs. When our desires are fulfilled the vibration of greed in us is enhanced; when they are not fulfilled then the vibration of anger is enhanced.

In training the mind, therefore, the Soul as controller has to be sought and the feelings, desires and emotions have to be so weakened that they do not fasten upon the mind. The blending of the mind and the Soul, effected even in a small measure, will enable the individual so to handle his desires that they themselves will become added channels for the activity of the Soul. The mystic, the occultist, the yogi, is not devoid of love; his love has become divine, that is, impersonal. That all-seeing love has to be unfolded in us and the mind-Soul alone can succeed in bringing it to birth. Love sees correctly, understands accurately, and therefore acts justly. It is said that to understand is to forgive; but this love which understands is not blind; it is illumined by the knowledge of the mind, which knowledge is the light of the Soul.

Is there any subject of greater value to us than this? All wish to control their minds and to gain concentration, and many go wrong, chasing shadows of false teachings. All aspire to unfold charity and love and compassion, but caught in the maze of personal affections and attachments they miss the way toward the Light of that Divine Love which is both Wisdom and Peace. The Great Buddha's short statement is profound:

As a man thinketh so he becomes.

Nice discriminations are troublesome....It is so much easier to make up your mind that your neighbour is good for nothing than to enter into all circumstances that would oblige you to modify that opinion.

—GEORGE ELIOT

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: Are ghosts a reality? Should we be afraid of them?

Answer: Why do so many people believe in ghosts? Is there a psychological need to explain the unexplained? Ongoing international studies on the paranormal suggest that ghosts, apparitions or spectres are not a fiction. It is said that ghosts flourish in the vicinity of people who believe in them. Most of the time the apparitions seen are of suicides or of people who died a violent death, by accident or at the hands of others. In *Isis Unveiled* (I, 69) H.P.B. describes apparitions of “unrestful ‘souls,’ hovering about the spots where they were murdered, or coming back for some other mysterious reasons of their own.” Often these apparitions are drawn to a particular spot by some attraction or association. Sceptics may scoff but proofs accumulate of the existence of an inner, unseen realm. H.P.B. writes:

The whole issue of the quarrel between the profane and the esoteric sciences depends upon the belief in, and demonstration of, the existence of an astral body within the physical, the former independent of the latter.

According to a true incident, some people saw, for several days, a man wearing a blue suit trying to cross the road, at a place where a pedestrian was killed in an accident. H.P.B. observes that when a person dies a violent death, the last thought of such a person may be so strong that the tragedy may be re-enacted a thousand times before the thought fades out. There is an instance of the Air Force station at Lichfield, Staffordshire, being haunted by the headless ghost of a Royal Air Force pilot who was decapitated during the war. It was said to walk in uniform and flying boots. H.P.B. tells

us that a sufficiently intense thought at the moment of death “becomes objective and under favourable conditions is very apt to be seen.” Then again, it was reported that in the Council chamber at Calcutta, in the presence of Warren Hastings, the then Governor-General, an official along with other council members saw the apparition of his father gliding into another room. It was learnt that his father had died in London on that same day. In the “Dialogues Between the Two Editors,” H.P.B. states that man’s phantom or apparition can appear before his dearest friend at the instant of death or the moment after his death. Such an apparition could be produced by the thought of the dying man.

If he [dying man] thinks very intently at the moment of death of the person he either is very anxious to see, or loves best, he may appear to that person. The thought becomes objective; the double, or shadow of a man, being nothing but the faithful reproduction of him, like a reflection in a mirror, that which the man does, even in thought, that the double repeats. This is why the phantoms are often seen in such cases in the clothes they wear at the particular moment, and the *image* reproduces even the expression of the dying man’s face. If the double of a man bathing were seen it would seem to be immersed in water; so when a man who has been drowned appears to his friend, the image will be seen to be dripping with water. The cause for the apparition may be also reversed....What then happens is this. Let us call the dying man A, and him who sees the double B. The latter, owing to love, hate, or fear, has the image of A so deeply impressed on his psychic memory, that actual magnetic attraction and repulsion are established between the two, whether one knows of it and feels it, or not. When A dies, the sixth sense or psychic spiritual intelligence of the *inner man* in B becomes cognisant of the change in A, and forthwith apprizes the physical senses of the man, by projecting before his eye the form of A, as it is at the instant of the great change. The same when the dying man longs to see someone; *his* thought telegraphs to his friend, consciously or unconsciously along the wire of sympathy, and becomes objective.

But what is a ghost? Man is not just his physical body. The physical body is changing all the time in its molecules and atoms. But we would not look like the same person, if there were not a pattern, or inner model body, for the new molecules and atoms to grow into. This model body is usually called astral body and is made up of much finer kind of matter than the physical body. Like a sponge it retains the impressions of all that a man thinks, feels, desires, etc., during life. When a man dies, he [soul] slips out of the physical body as well as the astral body and goes on living in still finer bodies on a different plane of consciousness till there comes a time to take birth in a new body. Meanwhile, the physical body undergoes decay and so also the astral body goes to pieces. It is this astral body—an ethereal body without soul—with thoughts and desires of the former owner impressed upon it, that we call the Kamarupic (or astral) shell or ghost. Left to itself, it disintegrates gradually, but it can be deliberately drawn to séance rooms through the agency of the mediums. It can become visible and tangible when the condition of air and ether is such as to alter the vibration of the molecules of the astral shell to make it visible.

These astrals shells or ghosts can speak under certain conditions, but that is only the throwing up of the impressions like a gramophone record. They are like educated parrots behind the screen, which makes us think that an intelligent man was hidden from view and speaking. There is nothing to fear from ghosts and there is certainly nothing to gain from thinking about them. The fear comes from not knowing what they are.

Question: It seems even infants express anger or resentment by crying. And yet anger (*Krodha*) is considered to be one of the cardinal sins—the other two being lust (*Kama*) and greed (*Lobha*). Is it ingrained in our nature? Why do men turn to extremes of violence of which we daily hear and read in the media? Is man inherently aggressive?

Answer: Most psychologists would agree that the aggressive tendency is inborn, *i.e.*, instinctual in human nature. This is not

surprising as the *Bhagavad-Gita* says that all human beings have a dual nature—Divine (God-like) as well as *Asuric* (evil). Each one of us experiences a constant conflict of opposite traits, which are further accentuated by the values we nurture and the environment which inculcates certain attitudes, practices and habits. Even while no one is free from feeling irritable, it is up to the individual to cultivate a healthy habit of not giving vent to anger at provocation. It is therefore by *habit* that a man becomes increasingly violent or its opposite in outward expressions, until one or the other tendency is crystallized into a part of his character and even his physiology—what is called “body language.” It is a false belief that by consciously checking our vices and the outward conduct, we “repress” these negative tendencies and store them up in our nature, until they burst out unexpectedly, at times, finding its expression in anger. On the contrary, “Hatred ceases not by hatred but by its opposite, Love,” says the greatest psychologist of our age—Lord Buddha.

As to the extreme violence referred to in the question, it is the end product of habitually nurturing and giving free vent to destructive feelings and action, culminating in a wild nature readily exploding at the slightest provocation.

Mindless violence is indeed a form of momentary madness capable of destroying both the victims and the perpetrators. And yet certain social groups, especially in the poor and underdeveloped localities, not regarded with respect by the mainstream society, nurture a simmering resentment and virulent feelings against the “privileged” class or caste. In such an environment, any form of rage or assault is tolerated and there are known hierarchies of violent men who are admired and feared in such a society. In other words, the explosive nature is more a product of social forces and circumstances, than a result of inherent “drives” and so-called “body chemistry.”

It appears that violence as a social evil is getting more widespread and is more freely expressed, and worse still, tolerated in the last few centuries. The present forms of awesome armaments

and weaponry are so devastating in range that we shudder at the consequences of a possible third “world war”! The hero or an “icon” in the modern movies, is an “angry young man,” ever ready to take to arms against perceived injustice or disagreement. Violence on television screens, in the movies, in sports and athletics and even in video games affects adolescents and children, leaving a deep impression on their plastic minds. The very origin of our frustration and anger is clearly related to our own overbearing personal concerns, in which our lower ego is involved, which reacts when frustrated. The *Gita* describes the chain of causation, which leads to anger and then to final degradation and destruction, by showing its origin in desire. Thus:

He who attendeth to the inclinations of the senses, in them hath a concern; from this concern is created passion, from passion anger, from anger is produced delusion, from delusion a loss of memory [of who we really are], from the loss of memory loss of discrimination, and from loss of discrimination, loss of all! (*Gita*, II)

So the remedy lies in cultivating more of “self” forgetfulness, and habitual control over lower tendencies by cultivating higher ones which are very much a part of our true nature. The idea that Man is inherently weak and susceptible to weaknesses like lust, anger, etc., has been maintained for long by orthodox religious creeds, and now even by some psychologists. We fail to see that essentially, in our true nature, we have a divine origin and therefore, an equally divine destiny that we must aim at. Man, having advanced to a state of becoming a “Thinker,” is also guided by higher faculties not yet explored by science. We can employ our inborn positive traits and cultivate them for the well-being of all, including ourselves. Let us pay attention to Mr Judge’s words:

Every aspiration of the soul for spiritual things, every resolve of the man to lead a pure life, every helping outstretched hand to a weaker brother...these and like yearnings and strivings of the soul have first of all come from above, from the Divine within. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 31)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Often people have an uncanny feeling of having experienced something before. It is termed *déjà vu* (French for “already seen”) and defined as “any subjectively inappropriate impression of familiarity of a present experience with an undefined past.” The phenomenon is studied by parapsychologists in the hope of finding answers to recalled memories and how the mind registers familiarity. “In the past, psychologists spoke not only of *déjà vu* but of the *déjà entendu* (already heard), *déjà senti* (already smelled), *déjà lu* (already read), and *déjà vécu* (already lived). Freud traced the feeling, somewhat predictably, to the mother’s genitals,” writes Joshua Foer. (*Discover*, September 2005)

Two explanations are offered. One is that *déjà vu* is the result of “double perception,” so that we see things twice in quick succession: the first time superficially and the second time with full awareness. If one has glanced at a building while talking on phone, it is registered by the brain, subliminally, and hence the second glance, after one gets off the phone, may seem oddly familiar. After studying several epileptics, neurologists have traced the phenomenon to the temporal lobe and its surroundings. They have even triggered *déjà vu* by stimulating those areas with electrodes. Alan Brown, psychologist and author of the book *The Déjà vu Experience*, writes:

It’s a real puzzle. We don’t know what causes it, what triggers it, who has it and who doesn’t and why. We don’t even understand why it dissipates with age. But the more we can understand about how this illusion occurs, the more we’ll understand our normal memory processes.

H.P.B. describes memory as “the most unreliable thing in us.” Memory “is a recording machine, a register which very easily gets out of order.” Further:

Memory—the despair of the materialist, the enigma of the psychologist, the sphinx of science—is to the student of old philosophies merely a name to express that power which man

unconsciously exerts....to look with inner sight into the astral light, and there behold the images of past sensations and incidents. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 178-79)

“Each plane has its own tablet of memory and produces the appropriate effects on any other plane—being accessible, in fact, but not perceived on account of other predominating perceptions,” writes Mr. Crosbie (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 180). During sleep, the astral body (soul) becomes free and travels round visible and invisible worlds. Pictures and images seen during astral travel are impressed on the brain, but we remember nothing upon waking up. However:

The impressions of scenes and landscapes which the astral body saw in its peregrinations are still there, though lying latent under the pressure of matter. They may be awakened at any moment, and then during such flashes of man’s inner memory, there is an instantaneous interchange of energies between the visible and the invisible universes. Between the “micrographs” of the cerebral ganglia and the photo-scenographic galleries of the astral light, a current is established. And a man who knows that he has never visited in body, nor seen the landscape and person that he recognizes, may well assert that still he has seen and knows them, for the acquaintance was formed while travelling in “spirit.” (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 180)

The Roslin Institute at Scotland created an embryo that will be mined for stem cells—the master cells that can form any tissues—to determine the possibility of using them in various medical treatments. The embryo was produced by “immaculate conception” procedure, known as “parthenogenesis” (Greek for “virgin birth”). Parthenogenesis involves the human egg cell developing into an embryo without the addition of any genetic material from a sperm cell, *i.e.*, it uses material from just the female. Will this make the male species irrelevant to procreation? “Parthenogenesis already exists in what are described as ‘lower’ animals, in some insects

and even lizards. If ever the embryo created through virgin conception is allowed to complete its term, it will only be a case of life imitating life,” writes Narayani Ganesh (*Times International*, September 13, 2005). Parthenogenesis was tried in 2004; mice were created from eggs that had two sets of chromosomes from two female mice.

Occult philosophy teaches, as shown in *The Secret Doctrine*, that in the course of human evolution, man has passed through various modes of procreation, as other animals have. Early humanity was first self-born, then egg-born, sweat-born, hermaphrodite, gave birth *parthenogenetically* (on the immaculate principle) to its young ones, and after the separation of sexes, the reproduction was through the union of the sexes—the present method of procreation (*S.D.*, II, 173 and 659). Occult philosophy shows

gradual development of organs; their solidification, and the procreation of each species at first by simple easy separation from one into two or even several individuals. Then follows a fresh development—the first step to a species of separate distinct sexes—the hermaphrodite condition; then again, a kind of parthenogenesis, “virginal reproduction,” when the egg-cells are formed within the body, issuing from it in atomic emanations and becoming matured outside of it; until, finally, after a definite separation into sexes, the human being procreating through sexual connection. (*S.D.*, II, 657)

Theosophy posits three streams of evolution—physical, intellectual and spiritual. The above methods of procreation concern only physical man. At present, is parthenogenesis in the scheme of nature? Hence, “if ever the embryo created through virgin conception is allowed to complete its term,” then most probably, scientists will only succeed in producing a human form—a mindless monster.

NASA’s Deep Impact mission which aimed at bringing about

the collision of a spacecraft weighing 362 kilograms with the periodic comet 9P/Tempel 1, on July 4, 2005, has been a success, returning images that show detailed view of a cometary nucleus and after-effects of the impact. The effect of this collision was studied by a network of Earth-based as well as space-based observers like European Space Agency's Rosetta spacecraft. Scientists are debating over the issues of the dust and water composition of the comet, Temple 1, and are left wondering: what is a comet—dusty iceball or icy dustball? "Comets are of interest because their composition is expected to reflect conditions that were prevalent when the Solar System was formed. So far, only the make-up of a comet's enveloping coma is known to any great extent," writes Paul D. Feldman (*Nature*, 13 October, 2005). "At this point, it seems that we have only scratched the surface of this comet, and that many of the conclusions about its make-up are likely to change."

"What does Science know of Comets, their genesis, their growth, and ultimate behaviour? Nothing—absolutely nothing!" wrote H.P.B. in 1888 (*S.D.*, I, 204). In *Transactions* H.P.B. explains that Milky Way is the storehouse of the materials from which the stars, planets and other celestial bodies are produced (p. 113). It is developed world-stuff, all the rest in space being crude material, as yet invisible to us. Comets begin their life as wanderers, detaching themselves from the Milky Way, and in their long journey, first settle where conditions are prepared for them by Fohat, and gradually become suns. Each sun, when its Pralaya comes, resolves into millions and millions of fragments. "Each of these fragments moved to and fro in space collecting fresh materials, as it rolled on, like an avalanche, until it came to a stop through the laws of attraction and repulsion, and became a planet in our own, as in other systems, beyond our telescopes." Our sun was Comet in the beginning of Brahma's age, then it came to its present position, after which it will burst asunder and then sun's fragments will become planets after the Solar pralaya. (pp. 145-46)

As for the composition of the comet, we are told that

All hypotheses to the contrary, cometary matter does not appear to possess even the common law of adhesion or of chemical affinity....The essence of cometary matter must be—and the "Adepts" say *is*—*totally different from any of the chemical or physical characteristics with which the greatest chemists and physicists of the Earth are familiar*—all recent hypotheses to the contrary notwithstanding. (*The Theosophist*, September 1883)

Moreover, it is said that the atmosphere of our earth has become a sort of crucible, so that the cometary matter, during its rapid passage through our atmosphere, undergoes a certain change in its nature (*S.D.*, I, 142). Similarly H.P.B. points out the difficulty encountered in using spectrum star-analysis in determining the presence of iron and sodium in the star, as no account is taken of the modification of the rays of the star, as they pass through the cosmic dust with which the earth is surrounded. (*Transactions*, p. 123)

New research indicates that the brain shows profound changes when under the influence of hypnosis. The way the brain processes information undergoes profound change, in the case of people acting on suggestions. "The new experiments, which used brain imaging, found that people who were hypnotised 'saw' colours where there were none. Others lost the ability to make simple decisions," writes Sandra Blakeslee (*The Indian Express*, November 23, 2005, courtesy *The New York Times*). "The idea that perceptions can be manipulated by expectations" is fundamental to the study of cognition, said Michael I. Posner, professor of neuroscience at the University of Oregon.

Mr. Crosbie explains that in hypnosis, the hypnotizer paralyzes that channel in the brain of the subject, through which the subject, as Ego, operates and controls his brain. There are two methods of hypnosis. Hypnotic condition can be produced by a purely

mechanical means, *i.e.*, by fixing of the eyes on some bright spot, a metal or a crystal, *or* it can be produced by “mesmeric” passes on the patient by the hypnotizer. H.P.B. explains the rationale of both these methods, thus:

It is the eye—the most occult organ of all, on the superficies of our body—which, by serving as a medium between the bit of metal or crystal and the brain, *attunes* the molecular vibrations of the nervous centres of the latter into unison (*i.e.*, equality in the number of their respective oscillations) with the vibrations of the bright object held [catching the rhythm of the latter and passing it on to the brain]. And, it is this unison which produces the hypnotic state....In the hypnotization by the preliminary passes, it is the human will—whether conscious or otherwise—of the operator himself, that acts upon the nervous system of the patients. (*Lucifer*, December 1890)

THOREAU pointed out that there are artists in life, persons who can change the colour of a day and make it beautiful to those with whom they come in contact. We claim that there are adepts, masters in life who make it divine, as in all other arts. Is it not the greatest art of all, this which affects the very atmosphere in which we live? That it is the most important is seen at once, when we remember that every person who draws the breath of life affects the mental and moral atmosphere of the world, and helps to colour the day for those about him. Those who do not help to elevate the thoughts and lives of others must of necessity either paralyze them by indifference, or actively drag them down....Everyone lives, and thinks, and speaks. If all our readers...endeavoured to learn the art of making life not only beautiful but divine, and vowed no longer to be hampered by disbelief in the possibility of this miracle, but to commence the Herculean task at once, then the coming year will have been fitly ushered in by the gleaming star.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

THEOSOPHY IN DAILY LIFE

Men cannot all be Occultists, but they can all be Theosophists. Many who have never heard of the Society are Theosophists without knowing it themselves; for the essence of Theosophy is the perfect harmonizing of the divine with the human in man, the adjustment of his godlike qualities and aspirations, and their sway over the terrestrial or animal passions in him. Kindness, absence of every ill feeling or selfishness, charity, good-will to all beings, and perfect justice to others as to one's self, are its chief features. He who teaches Theosophy preaches the gospel of good-will; and the converse of this is true also—he who preaches the gospel of good-will teaches Theosophy.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

There is great confusion and misunderstanding in the public mind about the beneficent influence of Theosophy. It would be wrong to judge and condemn the great philosophy because of the limitations and weaknesses of its students and votaries. To belittle the teachings of the Buddha because professing Buddhists are not living according to the *Panchasila* would be an injustice to the Teacher and his pure teachings. Similarly, professing theosophists, being human, often do fail to live up to the very high ideals, the lofty principles and noble precepts of Theosophy; and further, they do err in numerous ways; but that should not deter a justice-loving mind from examining and accepting Theosophy on its own merits.

Again, it would be unfair and wrong to condemn, for example, Jesus and his Sermon on the Mount because many of those who claim to be his followers preach doctrines he never taught, and propagate views he never held. If one wants to ascertain what the pure and genuine doctrines of Jesus are, one must go, not to the priests and prelates of any church, but to the Sermon on the Mount and his other authentic sayings. Similarly, if anyone desires to find out what Theosophy actually is, he should not just read and listen to those who call themselves theosophists, but must read what the

Teacher of Theosophy taught. Let a truth-seeking enquirer or a justice-loving doubter go direct to the writings of H. P. Blavatsky; let him read the simple, straightforward presentation given by her in *The Key to Theosophy*, for instance.

In her very first book, *Isis Unveiled* (II, 124), Madame Blavatsky gave three propositions which constitute the basis and foundation of Theosophic living:

- (1) Everything existing, exists from natural causes.
- (2) Virtue brings its own reward, and vice and sin their own punishment.

Anyone desirous of living the life of the Soul will find in these three propositions all that is necessary. No doubt he will require further knowledge to grasp their implications, but as a starting point, and as a stable foundation for day-to-day living, any person will find these propositions of great practical value. All the ethical and metaphysical instructions to be found in the profound philosophy of Theosophy may be said to flower from this triple root. As Madame Blavatsky herself wrote:

We might add that on these three principles rested the universal foundation of every religious creed; God, and individual immortality for every man—if he could but win it. However puzzling the subsequent theological tenets; however seemingly incomprehensible the metaphysical abstractions which have convulsed the theology of every one of the great religions of mankind as soon as it was placed on a sure footing, the above is found to be the essence of every religious philosophy, with the exception of later Christianity. It was that of Zoroaster, of Pythagoras, of Plato, of Jesus, and even of Moses, albeit the teachings of the Jewish lawgiver have been so piously tampered with.

These three propositions may be examined briefly:

- (1) Everything existing, exists from natural causes:

This is not at all difficult for anyone to accept in this era when modern science is so greatly worshipped, for it only extends the scientific axiom that law governs the whole universe. Modern

science asserts that law and order prevail everywhere in visible nature—in the dust below our feet and in the stars above our head. Theosophy or ancient science accepts this teaching, but extends it to the invisible universe. Moral and mental conditions, also are governed by Law, and there is the rhythm, harmony and order of Justice in the realm of human thought, will and feeling. In other words, there is no miracle and everything that happens is the result of Law—eternal, immutable, ever active. So-called miracles are but the results of the operation of natural laws not yet known to the world of ordinary knowledge; but such laws were and are known and their working can be theoretically understood and practically used in human service, just as the modern scientist utilizes the law of gravity, etc.

From this recognition of the entire universe as manifesting and existing under Law, men and women have to admit that their own love and labour, their own thoughts and feelings, their own relationship to others, are also governed by that Law. There is, therefore, the second proposition:

- (2) *Virtue brings its own reward, and vice and sin their own punishment.*

Our greatest puzzle when we ourselves experience misery or face the sufferings of others consists in explaining the reasons. The religious explanation that vices, weaknesses, diseases and evils of all sorts are created by God is a most unreasonable, depressing and blasphemous doctrine. How absurd is the notion of an all-powerful God creating weaknesses, an all-wise God creating ignorance, an all-loving God creating hatred, an ever-living immortal God creating disease and death! Even man-made law does not without a trial condemn a person for crimes committed, but an all-just God visits agony upon the bodies of infants who have not had even an opportunity to commit wrong! Many sophistries are advanced as possible explanations, but none will satisfy our intelligent minds if we persist in our enquiry, and none will bring relief to our hearts troubled by afflictions of a hundred kinds. There is one and only one explanation and that is to be found

in the Law of Karma or of Ethical Causation, which is embodied in our second proposition—“Virtue brings its own reward, and vice and sin their own punishment.” This Law teaches that each one of us must pay his own debts; that the hands which smite us are our own hands; and that we reap whatever we have sown.

It knows not wrath nor pardon; utter-true
Its measure mete, its faultless balance weighs;
Times are as nought, tomorrow it will judge,
Or after many days.

By this the slayer’s knife did stab himself;
The unjust judge hath lost his own defender;
The false tongue dooms its lie; the creeping thief
And spoiler rob, to render.

But even then, in the final analysis, it is not yet clear to us why we are here and what the purpose of life is. The puzzler and the riddle of life is solved when to the Law of Karma or Justice we add the truth of the third of our propositions:

(3) *The state of man in this world is probationary.*

All repeat that this world is a school and that each one of us is here to learn the lessons of life, to know himself as he really is, joined to this universe in which good and evil, light and darkness, continuously alternate. Shall it be ever and ever so? Shall we wake up but to go to sleep and then wake up again—for ever and for ever? Shall we go through the round of pleasure and pain for ever and for ever? The answer of Theosophy is simple and self-evidently true: “When the lesson is learnt, the necessity ceases.” When we have perceived and realized life’s objective, when all the lessons of life are learnt, Liberty and Enlightenment of Soul become ours. Life in this world is probationary—we are on trial; pleasures tempt and pains test us; when the temptations are resisted and overcome and when the tests are faced and passed, the Soul enjoys the Bliss-*Ananda* of its own divinity and its own immortality.

Liberty of Soul springs from the enlightenment of the Soul; we therefore need knowledge of how to free ourselves from every kind of slavery, limitation and weaknesses. Theosophy is the science

which enables us to achieve this illumination and to realize this liberty by making us stand on our own feet, breathe the air of freedom, and accept the responsibility for our own deeds.
