

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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TANHA—THE DESIRE TO LIVE

IN MAHABHARATA, a Yaksha (*devata*) put a question to the eldest Pandava prince, Yudhisthira: What is the most wonderful thing in this world? The reply given by Yudhisthira is thought-provoking: “Day after day there enter into the Temple of Death, countless lives. Looking on this spectacle, the rest of them, those who remain, believe themselves to be permanent, immortal. Can anything be more wonderful than this?” The desire to live is expressed in Pali by the term *Tanha* and in Sanskrit by *Trishna*—thirst for life. The desire to live is not peculiar to human beings, but is at work even in the tiniest of creatures. Even the smallest organism, in which we can discern no trace of mind, exhibits desire to live. The desire to live seems to be instinctive, built into the psyche of the organism, which impels the organism to seek elements and conditions which tend to enhance its chances of survival. Generally, it is expressed as an “instinct for self-preservation.” Animals have right instinct in regard to what to eat, and in regard to what is dangerous to them, for their instinct is acquired experience. There is wisdom in this instinct. We find that the dog stops eating completely when it is unwell and that is one of the ways he recovers. Dogs sometimes eat certain type of grass and then vomit as a result, throwing out unwanted things from the system. There are survival strategies which include hibernation during periods when the food supply is low. Human beings also tend to avoid situations that are likely to result in injury or death. In

case of danger there is an instinct to fight or flight. If a car is speeding towards a person he instinctively jumps out of the way. Self-preservation is therefore an almost universal hallmark of life.

The Secret Doctrine mentions that the “Causes of Existence” include not only physical causes, but also *metaphysical causes*. The most important metaphysical cause being the “desire to exist,” or “desire for sentient existence.” The desire for sentient existence is in everything in manifestation, from the atom to the sun. The “Desire to exist” seems to specifically relate to man, and may be connected to *Kama* principle. Desire or *trishna* is an important link in the chain of causes or *Nidanas*. The first *Nidana* is *Avidya* or ignorance. Shankaracharya describes *Maya* as illusion-producing ignorance. As the drunken man sees things differently from what they really are, *Avidya* makes us mistake conditioned as unconditioned and impermanent as permanent, leading to *Samkhara* or Karma-formation—actions done in ignorance create karma which prove binding. The fifth *Nidana* is *Sparsa* or contact, producing pleasant or unpleasant sensation or *Vedana*, which produces craving or *Trishna*. This is followed by remaining *Nidanas* and finally *jaramarana* or decay and death. It is the thirst or craving for the sensation which brings us back to life again and again. When we have learnt to experience the sensation, without allowing the corresponding craving to arise, we succeed in breaking the link between *vedana* and *Trishna*, and overcome the necessity of rebirth. In “*Forum*” *Answers*, Mr. Judge mentions that desire of any sort, satisfied or unsatisfied, deludes the Ego, and creates a magnetic attraction in which the Ego is caught and compelled to take birth. Desire to live *does not belong to general human nature, and is more subtle and powerful, for it relates to life itself*.

Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali (Book II, Aphorism 3) mentions *Abhinivesha*, which is usually translated as “clinging to life” or “tenacious wish for existence upon the earth.” It is one of the mental afflictions and an obstacle to Yoga. Self-preservation or attachment to life is the subtlest of all afflictions. It is found even in wise men

(Book II, Aphorism 9). Mr. Judge comments that the tenacious wish for existence upon earth is inherent in all sentient beings, and continues through all incarnations, because it has self-reproductive power. “There is in the spirit a natural tendency, throughout a Manvantara, to manifestation on the material plane, on and through which only, the spiritual monads can attain their development.”

“I emanate these creatures again and again, without their will, by the power of the material essence” says Shri Krishna (*Gita*, IX, 7). Mr. Crobie explains that “without their will” implies that no human being is in a body because he, as such, desired to be; nor does he leave his body because he desires to; the impelling force proceeds from the inner self, the real man. It is the indwelling Spirit which evolves the instruments (bodies) for Its use, and impels them towards higher perfection.

Thus, it appears that the desire for sentient existence, which impels the Ego towards greater perfection, flows from *Atma-Buddhi* (Monad). The desire for material existence and sense-life seems to flow from the personal man which can drag down the Ego, and is the cause of its entanglement in the wheel of life and death. Thus:

That which propels towards, and forces evolution, *i.e.*, compels the growth and development of Man towards perfection, is (a) the MONAD, or that which acts in it unconsciously through a force inherent in itself; and (b) the lower astral body or the *personal SELF*. The former, whether imprisoned in a vegetable or an animal body, is endowed with, is indeed itself, that force. Owing to its identity with the ALL-FORCE, which, as said, is inherent in the Monad, it is all-potent on the *Arupa*, or formless plane. On our plane, its essence being too pure, it remains all-potential, but individually becomes inactive: *e.g.*, the rays of the Sun, which contribute to the growth of vegetation, do not select this or that plant to shine upon. Uproot the plant and transfer it to a piece of soil where the sunbeam cannot reach it, and the latter will not follow it. So with the Atman: unless the higher Self or EGO gravitates towards its Sun—the Monad—

the lower *Ego*, or *personal Self*, will have the upper hand in every case. For it is this Ego, with its fierce selfishness and animal desire to live a senseless life (*Tanha*), which is “the maker of the tabernacle,” as Buddha calls it in *Dhammapada*. (*S.D.*, II, 109-10)

“Thou Builder of this Tabernacle, I know Thee,” were the words uttered by the Buddha, immediately after attaining to enlightenment. This builder is *tanha* or *trishna*—the thirst for life. It is desire for life and worldly existence which brings us back to earth. The thousand chords of desire bind the man to earthly existence. It is caused by delusion. But the one who has overcome delusion becomes free and is one with the Supreme. H.P.B. mentions that while the good and the pure strive to reach Nirvana, the state of absolute consciousness, the wicked, being aware that they can never hope to reach Nirvana, cling to life in any form, rather than give up “desire for life,” or *Tanha* which brings about new aggregation of *skandhas* and birth in new personality. “The struggle for life” has been described as the prolific parent of most of our sorrows and crimes. Some of the religions have inculcated great fear of death with their fearful description of hell and damnation. When people believe that the present life is the only one, they struggle to keep the body and soul together at any cost. A Master of Wisdom mentions that during famine in China, in the localities where there were the most Christian missionaries to be found, mothers were seen devouring their own children; but where Buddhist monks had sway, the population died with the utmost indifference.

“KARMA, TANHA and SKANDHAS, are the almighty trinity in one, and the cause of our re-birth,” says H.P.B. A large portion of our mind which was involved in lower propensities and worldly pursuits is left behind as mental deposits or unexpended Karma. It forms *skandhas* which await the return of the Ego and brings forth the tendencies when the suitable environment is found in a particular incarnation.

In the article “The Elixir of Life,” we are told that we only die

when our will ceases to be strong enough to make us live. So, for most of us, death comes when for some reason, for one single instant, our “clutch on life” or the tenacity of the will to exist, is weakened. Thus, a person in whom there is a *strong realization* of the sense of completing the life-task, or the feeling of worthlessness of one’s existence, that realization will produce death as surely as poison or a rifle-bullet. Thus, more intense and true is the realization, less would be struggle in leaving the body.

However, when such withdrawal of desire is the mood of the moment, there must necessarily be an inner conflict. As Mr. Judge suggests, if the person who says life here is worthless were offered life on some other planet in most harmonious, beautiful and gratifying circumstances, he would find his deep seated *wish for life* suddenly blazing up, and he would express his wish to continue living.

To an “inquirer” who felt that in some cases suicide “is not only justifiable, but also morally desirable,” H.P.B. answered that both murder and suicide are never justifiable, from the occult point of view. No man has a right to put an end to his existence simply because it is useless. She mentions that there is a law among the savage tribes of the South Sea Islanders, to put to death, with war-like honours, their old men and women. They do so out of ignorance. She differentiates between a person who *takes away* his life because it is useless, and the other who *offers his life in sacrifice* to save other lives or to fulfil his duty. For instance, the captain who remains alone on board of a sinking ship or a physician or a nurse who remain by the side of a patient dying of an infectious disease. In these cases the impulse which prompts them to override the strong and instinctive impulse of self-preservation, is grand and noble, writes H.P.B. (*H.P.B. Series No. 15*, pp. 33-35)

In both man and animals there is a strong instinct for self-preservation. Human beings often override that strong instinct and give up their own lives for another. So too, there are instances of tamed animals, instinctively rushing to protect their master, unmindful of their own lives. However, animal lovers have always wondered

if animals are capable of committing suicide. Priyanko Sarkar mentioned in an article that it has been found that the donkeys in Sudan are so miserable that they end their lives. Abodh Aras, CEO of Welfare for Stray Dogs, an NGO, says that perfectly healthy dogs stop eating for more than a week after being abandoned, and were later found dead. Chhatrapati Shivaji's dog had jumped into funeral pyre when the remains of Shivaji were being burned (*Sunday Times of India*, March 23, 2008). Both in human beings as well as animals there is fight or flight tendency and hence what appears to be a suicide might only be an act of *instinctive escaping* from the unpleasant environment. Let us be compassionate and caring in our treatment of animals. We are our Brother's Keepers, which includes plants, animals and the whole of creation.

Generally, desire to live is the innermost desire of every person, which shows that all other desires man has are acquired after coming to earth, but this desire to live he has brought with him on earth. This desire to live indicates the possibility of continual life. There is no desire in the world, which has no answer or no fulfillment. Therefore doubtless, this desire for continued existence must be fulfilled one day. And the fulfilment of this desire is in getting above the illusion which is caused by the ignorance of the secret of life, writes a sufi teacher, Hazrat Inayat Khan. In *Light on the Path* we are told: "Before the soul can stand in the presence of the Masters, its feet must be washed in the blood of the heart." Blood represents the "vital creative principle" in man's nature, which drives him into human life in order to experience pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow. When the disciple lets the blood flow from the heart he stands as a pure spirit, with the crude wish to live departed from him. He takes birth only in pursuit of a divine object and not for the sake of emotion and experience. When one has given up the life of personality, he lives in spirit, or experiences life eternal.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

PLATO'S ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE—I

[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.]

BEHOLD! human beings living in an underground den, which has the mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by their chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

I see.

And do you see, I said, men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them are talking, others silent.

You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

Like ourselves, I replied; and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?

True, he said; how could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads?

And of the objects which are being carried in like manner they would only see the shadows?

Yes, he said.

And if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?

Very true.

And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?

No question, he replied.

To them, I said, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.

* * * * *

“Out of Plato,” says Ralph Waldo Emerson, “come all things that are still written and debated among men of thought.” Plato was not merely the greatest philosopher of Greece but also an adept who belonged psychically, mentally and spiritually to the higher planes of evolution. He is described as a “Fifth-rounder;” someone who possessed immensely higher wisdom than our present humanity. He imparted truths through myths and allegories with the aim to awaken *Manas* and *Buddhi*, the intuitive faculty, of the race.

In this allegory we are asked to imagine human beings living in an underground cave, whose mouth opens towards the light. From childhood there are people imprisoned in the cave, chained in such a way that they cannot move nor turn their heads, with their backs to the mouth of the cave where there is blazing fire. On the wall of the cave, which is in front of the people, they see their own shadows, as also the shadows of people which pass in front of the cave. The prisoners take the shadows on the wall to be the only realities. Most of us are like the people in the cave who have lived all their lives watching the shadows projected on the wall, of the things that passed in front of the fire which is behind them.

In his allegory of the cave Plato expounds the Theosophical teaching that there is a truth pertaining to the eternal noumena underlying earthly phenomena, a deeper realm of reality which cannot be appreciated by five senses and rational mind.

This is put a little differently in the *Secret Doctrine*, (I, 278),

where H.P.B. mentions that during manvantara the real Kosmos is like the object behind the white screen and only its shadow appears on the screen when light is thrown on the object from a magic lantern. The actual things remain invisible. The magic lantern is the mighty magic of *prakriti* which allows us to see only the shadows and not the realities.

Maya is not distinct from *Brahman* but is indistinguishable from It, just as power to burn is inseparable from fire. The world is an *appearance* which God conjures up with his power, *Maya*. When rope appears as a snake, we have superimposed snake on the substratum or reality called rope. We see many objects in the one Brahman on account of our ignorance, which conceals the real Brahman from us and makes it appear as many objects.

Thus, Sankara teaches gradual evolution of the world out of Brahman, through *Maya*, by a process of apparent change of the subtle to the gross. There are three stages in the process of evolution, analogous to the stages in the development of a seed into a plant. There is undifferentiated seed stage or causal stage, the subtly differentiated germinating stage, and the fully differentiated plant stage. All change and evolution belong to the sphere of *Maya*. It is *Maya*, the creative power, which at first remains unmanifested, then becomes differentiated into subtle objects, and then into gross ones.

We might perhaps compare this with three aspects of the Universe: the *Ever-existing* from which evolves the *Pre-existing*, and the third aspect is *Phenomenal* which is the reflection or shadow of the last, mentioned by H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 278). We might look upon “Ever-existing” Universe to represent *noumenal* or archetypal world or *Akasa*. We are told that “prototypes or ideas of things exist first on the plane of Divine eternal Consciousness (*Akasa*) and these become reversed in the Astral Light.” In the astral light, we have the subjective picture, which develops into physical, objective tangible form in the phenomenal world.

This is further explained in the article, “The World of Archetypes,” in *Studies in “The Secret Doctrine.”* The Universe of

Phenomena, illusions, *maya*, is the universe of relativity. Metaphysicians posit a universe other than and beyond that of relativity, which is the world of *noumena*, of unity of ideas, of things-in-themselves of Immanuel Kant. The entire phenomenal world is a reflection of the *noumenal* world. The world of *noumena* may be described as the subjective aspect of the world of phenomena which is objective. The *noumenal* world in Platonic philosophy is the world as it existed in the mind of the Deity. The *noumenal* world is followed by the world of models or model world. The “Builders,” the hierarchy of intelligent beings, build models after the patterns in the mind of the Deity or *noumenal* world. The world of models is made up of models and is in itself the model of succeeding worlds, writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

In the article, “The Subjective and the Objective,” Mr. Judge interprets the allegory in terms of human evolution. The *doctrine of emanation* says that there is involution of spirit into matter and then evolution through matter. This doctrine states that nothing can be evolved, or unwombed, or born, unless it has first been involved, thus indicating that life is from a spiritual potency above the whole.

He points out that we are only familiar with physical, material, visible body or the world of matter, which may be taken to represent the inner wall of the cave or den, on which fall the shadows which are taken to be the only realities by the prisoners. If we take Ego (or Monad) to represent one of the prisoners confined in the cave and visible, tangible matter to represent the wall then the Ego in its descent, from spirit into matter, goes deeper into the cave, until it reaches the wall. It stops there because it can go no farther, retraces its steps towards spirit (away from the wall, towards the mouth of the cave). In its descent towards the wall till it reaches the wall, there is no consciousness as is known to us. So far, there has been development of only unintelligent or purely spiritual consciousness, which is not *manasic*. But as the Ego ascends through matter towards Spirit, or recedes back from the wall, there is development of astral or *kamic* man, within the physical man, which is the lowest form of

mind, which can apprehend external physical nature as sensation, such that it is able to distinguish these sensations, one from the other and group them. This is the lowest form of consciousness, but it is not intelligent. This is the lowest form of mind which is called *kama* or Animal Soul. Mr. Judge points out that the development of physical and astral bodies till they could become suitable vehicles for the development of emotional and perceptive faculties, has occupied immense period of time. It is *Kama-manas* or lower mind which perceives. The action of lower mind in interpretation of sensations is called perception. The lower mind is referred to as the logical faculty or principle, which performs the function of sorting out the sensations, and of tracing each one of them to the cause or source in the outer world.

There is consciousness on every plane of its own kind. To the stone belongs molecular consciousness, which is not consciousness as we know it. So also, to the plant belongs astral consciousness which is recognized as sensation. To the animal belongs emotional consciousness, which marks the dawn of perception. In its journey from the wall of the cave to the mouth of the cave, the monad reaches finally, human stage, with self-consciousness or consciousness of self. At this stage, Mr. Judge points out that the prisoner has retreated far enough from the wall of his cave, when he is able to relate the experiences and the sensations to his own identity.

(To be Concluded)

BETWEEN Pantheism and Fetichism, we have been repeatedly told, there is but an insignificant step. Plato was a Monotheist, it is asserted. In one sense, he was that, most assuredly; but his Monotheism never led him to the worship of one *personal* God, but to that of a Universal Principle and to the fundamental idea that the absolutely immutable or unchangeable Existence alone, really *is*, all the finite existences and change being only appearance, *i.e.*, *Maya*.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA ON MEDITATION—I

[Adapted from the Lectures on the *Bhagavad-Gita*, delivered at One West Sixty Seventh Street, New York City, 1927-28.]

THERE IS one striking characteristic in the world of manifestation which reveals itself throughout the whole of nature and that is the great law of duality. Everything in this universe presents a two-fold aspect, and we have seen this duality in the teachings of Krishna. In all of these teachings we notice two opposite things presented. As we look in and remember the answer of Krishna in terms of the Sankhya and Buddhist Philosophy, we notice that on the one hand he spoke of the Universal Self, and at the same time he spoke of the many manifested selves to be found in the universe. He said to Arjuna, “kill all your enemies, and at the same time that he ordered Arjuna to kill, he also said that no one can really be killed, because all these selves are rooted in the One Self, which is immortal and eternal. Then when Krishna presented the idea of action, the union to be attained in the performance of deeds, he immediately again separated the actions in a two-fold way, showing on the one hand that there are certain actions that should be abandoned, and on the other, that there are actions to be definitely performed.

The same idea was found in reference to knowledge. He spoke of Absolute Knowledge which is handed down generation after generation to mankind, and also relative knowledge, which is false compared to this true wisdom. Again this quality was seen in the question of duty and sacrifice, for we were definitely explained that we could perform duty and offer sacrifices with material possessions, or through spiritual knowledge without material things. Finally, on the question of sacrifice and sacrament, there is a two-fold difference: sacrifice means the giving up of our own possessions be they mental, moral or physical, and sacrament implies the giving up of the actor himself, the giving up of our own life energy.

This duality which is seen everywhere in nature, of course, finds

itself also in our own constitution, and so as human beings we are also two-fold beings. We know that we have Higher Self and a lower self, but it is essential to grasp the idea that these two have different ancestors. That is in our higher nature we descend from the solar beings, and in our lower nature, we are the progeny of the lunar *pitris*. These two ancestors have definitely sprung from two different sources, therefore they manifest their powers on two entirely different planes. But there is the principle that everything on the spiritual plane reproduces itself on a lower scale on the material plane—the great axiom “As above so below.” There must be a similar power in these two natures of the Higher and the lower, and this power although it is the same from one point of view, does express itself on different planes, one being the spiritual plane, and the other the plane of desires or *kamic* plane.

This power that the two natures possess is the same power of procreation, the power of reproduction, to reproduce ourselves and to multiply. This procreative energy in us is rooted both in the higher and in the lower nature. Brahma, the Creator, brings the whole world into manifestation, and he is responsible for the differentiation in the Universe. It is *Kama* in us, our desire nature, which represents Brahma. We can see that by following our many and varied desires we accentuate the differentiation that exists in the Universe, and we are constantly multiplying the objects of our desires. It is very difficult perhaps to conceive that the Higher Self also has a creative energy which enables It to produce and multiply higher objects. Thus, for instance, if we take into account the great law of Reincarnation we will see that it is necessary for this Higher Self to create a new incarnating Ego or soul for each new rebirth—on this point we see a very good illustration of the higher procreative spiritual energy of our own being. Another good example of this higher energy is that which is found in the way the great Masters of Wisdom take chelas under Their guidance, thereby giving them the opportunity of self-growth and self-discipline, enabling them to become Perfected Beings in their turn, to enter the great Brotherhood of wise men,

thereby multiplying their own ranks. So here again we have an idea of what it means to *create* from the spiritual point of view. It is in a thorough comprehension of this dual nature of ours in reference to the creative power that we will find the clue to the understanding of the opening verse of the Sixth Discourse, a verse which has puzzled many of the students and translators. This first verse reads as follows:

He who, unattached to the fruit of his actions, performeth such actions as should be done is both a renouncer of action and a devotee of right action; not he who liveth without kindling the sacrificial fire and without ceremonies.

The original of this last sentence of this verse is “not he who is without fire and without action.” *Kriya* means the performance of action itself. It is in the understanding of the two creative energies that we will get a picture of what this verse signifies. We have in us the spiritual procreative energy which is known in *The Secret Doctrine* as the power of *Kriyashakti*, and we also have the lower creative energy which is simply the energy or power of our own desire or *kamic* nature. Whether we are aware of the fact or not, we are constantly reproducing ourselves, not only at each new incarnation of our being, but at every single moment of time, for all our thoughts, feelings and emotions and our actions have the power inherent in their own nature to reproduce similar thoughts, feelings and actions. This is the explanation really of that verse which is found in *The Voice of the Silence* where it is said that no effort not even the smallest, whether in right or wrong direction is ever lost, for every single effort that is put forth by our own nature, whether by the spiritual or *kamic* (desire) will increase the capacity in ourselves to put in more effort along that line that has already been determined, and so the question entirely lies with the fact of trying to use our creative energy on the higher level of our being, and not on the lower.

That is why it is said we must have fire. Fire here is the symbol of the power of *Kriyashakti* or the higher creative spiritual energy—without this fire which comes to us from our spiritual nature our

actions become mechanical soulless actions. Sacrament required the living energy of *Atma*, the Self, in everything. This living energy is the higher power, without which actions are only outward expressions with no real soul significance in themselves, so that, if we have fire, we can offer true sacrament because our actions will be “ceremonies” from the true spiritual point of view. Thus, mere ceremonies, expressing themselves without the spiritual fire, become rituals with no true meaning or purpose, and therefore without any true spiritual benefit or result. Unless we have this fire, and unless we perform this particular type of sacrificial action, we cannot be renouncers or devotees, *i.e.*, yogis, and so the question comes up what is this Yoga or Union we want to attain?

This Sixth Discourse has for its title in the Sanskrit origin the meaning of union or yoga with *Adhi Atma*, the Supreme Spirit, but various translators and commentators have given different names to this discourse. Some have used the title “Union with the Supreme.” But others have called it *Dhyana Yoga* or Yoga of Meditation or attention, while others still have changed the title into “Devotion or Yoga through self-restraint,” and that is the title used in Mr. Judge’s translation of the *Gita*. One seems to deal entirely with Union with the Universal Spirit, present everywhere, whereas the other seems to deal with the science which belongs to the lower man, and the title of *Dhyana Yoga* seems to occupy a middle position between union with the Higher supreme Spirit, and restraint of the senses. In this union or yoga which is advocated by the *Gita* we have gained two very definite aspects, one which has to do with the Universality of the Principle of Life, and the other with the individual Differentiation and Manifestation of that same principle. This Yoga is simply the Yoga of the Higher and the lower self in man. That is why it is also called The Middle Path, because it unites and combines in its own harmonious blending both the higher aspirations of man, and his own lower personal self. Without a thorough understanding of respective duties, values and position of these two selves, which combine to make up a human being, *i.e.*, without an understanding

of the higher and lower self, the middle path cannot be found or trod. A clue to this union of the Higher and the lower natures is to be found in this very Discourse where we are told that our duty is to raise the self by the Self: “He should raise the self by the Self; let him not suffer the Self to be lowered; for Self is the friend of self, and, in like manner, self is its own enemy.”

The play here, of course, on the word “Self” applies both to the Higher and lower beings in man. Both these higher and lower selves are necessary. We should unite our individual life to the great Universal Life. Our aim in evolution is not to lose this individual differentiated self that we have obtained through a long course of many lives, and merge ourselves, so to speak, in the ocean of life, unconsciously ourselves, nor is it to remain separate from the great whole and accelerate this separate tendency of the lower self. It is to attain, personal immortality, for which we must use the personality in the right way. We are to create within this lower self, so to speak, a centre wherein we can gather, collect, and focus the divine life present everywhere. In other words, the lower self must become a pure mirror, a reflector, which will reflect the true nature of the Self, and show forth the radiance of that light, and it is to attain this real immortality that we must understand both the higher and lower selves. The aim will help us to become as the spiritual man described in verses 18 and 19, by Krishna where he says:

When the man, so living centers his heart in the true Self and is exempt from attachment to all desires, he is said to have attained to Yoga. Of the sage of self-centered heart, at rest and free from attachment to desires, the simile is recorded, “as a lamp which is sheltered from the wind flickereth not.”

(To be concluded)

It is spiritual fire that burns out all the dross.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

THE ILLUSION OF TIME

I

AS YOU ARE reading this sentence, you probably think that this moment—right now—is happening. The present moment feels special, it is real, we are conscious of it. However much we remember the past or anticipate the future, we live in the present. In fact, time flows like a river, in the sense that the present is constantly updating itself or slipping by. We seem to have an intuition that the future is out there, open, until it becomes present, and that the past is fixed, gone and cannot be undone. As the time flows, this structure of fixed past, immediate present and open future gets carried forward in time and it is built into our language, thought and behaviour.

How we live our lives hangs on it. The concept of time forms the foundation and basis of our thought, speech and act. We are always running to meet the demands of the fictitious time. Yet as natural as this way of thinking seems to be, we will not find it reflected in science. The equations of physics do not tell us which events are occurring right now—they are like a map without the “you are here” symbol. The present moment does not exist in them, and neither does the flow of time. Further, Albert Einstein’s theories of relativity suggest not only that there is no single special present but also that all moments are equally real and possible in the now.

From the so-called fixed past to the tangible present to the unknown future, modern science has barely begun to consider the question of how we perceive the passage of time. The passage of time is probably the most basic facet of human perception, for we feel time slip by in our innermost selves in a manner that is altogether more intimate than our experience of, say, space or mass. The passage of time has been compared to the flight of an arrow and to an ever rolling stream, bearing us inexorably from past to future. Shakespeare wrote of “the whirligig of time,” and his countryman Andrew Marvell speaks of “Time’s winged chariot hurrying near.”

Physicists insist that time does not flow at all; it merely is. Some

philosophers argue that the very notion of the passage of time is nonsensical and that talk of the flux of time is founded on a misconception. How can something so basic to our experience of the physical world turn out to be a case of mistaken identity? Or, has the truth about time not yet been discovered by science?

In our daily life we divide time into three parts: past, present and future. The grammatical structure of language revolves around this fundamental distinction. Reality is associated with the present moment. The past we think of as having slipped out of existence, whereas the future is even more shadowy, its details still unformed. In this simple picture, the “now” of our conscious awareness glides steadily onward, transforming events that were once in the unformed future into the concrete but fleeting reality of the present, and further relegating them to the fixed past.

Obvious though this common sense description may seem to be, it is seriously at odds with modern physics. Albert Einstein famously expressed this point when he wrote to a friend, “The past, present and future are only illusions, even if stubborn ones.” Einstein’s startling conclusion stems directly from his special theory of relativity, which denies any absolute, universal significance to the present moment. According to the theory, simultaneity is relative. In other words, if one observer thinks that two events are simultaneous, another might not. To understand this we are asked to imagine a long platform with an observer located at its midpoint. At the two ends of the platform marked A and B there are two momentary flashes of light, and the light propagates from these two ends to the observer. The observer experiences that the light from both the ends reached him at the same moment, and hence he will decide that the two events happened simultaneously. We are then asked to consider the same process from the point of view of an observer who moves relative to the platform along its length. Suppose that the observer at the midpoint of the platform is moving away from light at point A and moving towards the light at point B of the platform. When light from both the points propagates towards the

observer, they reach the midpoint at the same moment, but the observer will feel that the light from A must cover greater distance to catch up with the receding midpoint than the light from point B. Also, in order for the light from both points to arrive at the midpoint at the same moment, the flash of light at A must have happened earlier than the flash at B. Thus, according to the moving observer these two events did not happen simultaneously. Thus, simultaneity of two spatially separated events is relative to an observer with a definite state of motion, explains John D. Norton of the University of Pittsburgh. Hence for this reason, physicists prefer to think of time as laid out in its entirety—a timescape, analogous to a landscape—with all past and future events located there together.

A number of philosophers over the years have arrived at the same conclusion by examining what we normally mean by the passage of time. Heraclitus once said: “No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man.” They argue that the notion is internally inconsistent and baseless. The concept of flux, after all, refers to motion. From the perspective of Science it makes sense to talk about the movement of a physical object, such as an arrow through space, by gauging how its location varies with time. The arrow in this case forms the common reference point for our comprehension. But what meaning can be attached to the movement of time itself? Relative to what does it move? Whereas other types of motion relate one physical process to another, the putative flow of time relates time to itself.

Saint Augustine of Hippo, the famous fifth-century theologian, remarked that he knew well what time is—until somebody asked. Then he was at a loss for words. Because we sense time psychologically, definitions of time based on physics seem dry and inadequate. For the physicist, time is simply what (accurate) clocks measure. However the same clock becomes useless in other dimensions or to measure deep space galactic time.

According to conventional wisdom, the present moment has special significance. It is all that is real to the consciousness.

Researchers who think about such things, however, generally argue that we cannot possibly single out a present moment as special when every moment considers itself to be special. Objectively, past, present and future must be equally real. According to science all of eternity is laid out in a four-dimensional block composed of time and the three spatial dimensions. “Block time” or “Block universe” theory describes space-time as an unchanging four-dimensional “block,” as opposed to viewing the world as a three-dimensional space modulated by the passage of time.

If we look around, through the eyes of modern Science, we will observe that nature abounds with irreversible physical processes, mentioned in the second law of thermodynamics, which states that in every natural thermodynamic process the sum of the entropies of all participating bodies is increased. In the limiting case, for reversible processes this sum remains unchanged. This plays a key role in imprinting on the world a conspicuous asymmetry between past and future directions along the time axis.

The symmetry of time can be understood by a simple analogy: if time were perfectly symmetrical, a video of real events would seem realistic whether played forwards or backwards. Most of the events we experience are irreversible. For instance, it is easy to break an egg, but extremely difficult, if not impossible, to make whole (un-break) an already broken egg. The arrow of time refers to the way we always see things progressing in a particular direction—eggs may break, but they never spontaneously reform. The one-way direction or asymmetry of time is often referred to as the arrow of time, and it is what gives us an impression of time passing, of our progressing through different moments. The arrow of time is the uniform and unique direction associated with the apparent inevitable “flow of time” into the future. The arrow of time denotes an asymmetry of the world in time, not an asymmetry of flux of time. The labels “past” and “future” may legitimately be applied to temporal directions, just as “up” and “down” may be applied to spatial directions, but talk of the past or the future is as meaningless

as referring to the up or the down. Time’s asymmetry is actually a property of states of the world, not a property of time as such.

The thermodynamic arrow of time is provided by the Second Law of Thermodynamics which says that in an isolated system, entropy tends to increase with time. Thus, the Second Law implies that time is asymmetrical with respect to the amount of disorder in an isolated system: as a system advances through time, it will statistically become more disordered.

The First Law of Thermodynamics states that energy cannot be created or destroyed; the total *quantity* of energy in the universe stays the same. The Second Law of Thermodynamics is about the *quality* of energy. It states that as energy is transferred or transformed, more and more of it is wasted. The Second Law also states that there is a natural tendency of any isolated system to degenerate into a more disordered state.

Why is it that when you leave an ice cube at room temperature, it begins to melt? Why do we get older and never younger? Why does heat not flow from cold body to hot body? Certain things happen in one direction and not the other, this is called the “arrow of time.” The thermodynamic arrow of time (entropy) is the measurement of disorder within a system. Entropy is defined as, the quantitative measure of the amount of thermal energy *not available to do work*, in a closed system. It is the measure of the amount of disorder within a system. Thus, for instance, the entropy of the ice cube is lower than that of the gas. Entropy of a whole plate is lower than when it is in pieces on the floor. Whereas every other physical law we know of would work the same whether time was going forwards or backwards, this is not true for the second law of thermodynamics. However long you leave it, a boiling vessel of water is unlikely to ever become a block of ice. A smashed plate could never reassemble itself, as this would reduce the entropy of the system in defiance of the second law of thermodynamics. Some processes, it has been observed, are irreversible.

THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

II

IF THE INSTITUTION of marriage is to serve its high purpose it is absolutely essential that the spouses must be grounded in spiritual knowledge. True nature of man as a spiritual being and the purpose of life must be well understood. Man is in reality a soul, a spiritual Ego. The soul is embarked on a great journey, in quest of Absolute perfection, through a numberless reincarnations, assimilating essential experiences of all phases and aspects of universal life and intelligence, in the fire of self-conscious experiences, checked by its own Karma. The eternal reincarnating Ego, a god in reality, is neither male nor female. The gender differences, castes, creeds, social distinctions are all qualities pertaining to the bodies and personalities with which Ego becomes clothed, so to say, at every rebirth, but is distinct from and above them. Hence it is said that it takes a god to become a human being.

Men and women are mutually complementary in physiological constitution and functions and psychic temperament. This too, as everything on earth, is but a shadowing forth in physical life on earth of the archetypal pattern in the spiritual world. Universe is pervaded by duality of pairs of opposites, without which universe cannot exist. It is only by balancing of the contrary natures that harmony is established. For example, centripetal force cannot be without its opposite, centrifugal force, acting in contrary way to balance it, and the two thus acting in opposite ways produce the resultant harmonious revolution of spheres. The universe exists and evolves by a whole gamut of forces of nature, polarized into oppositely charged energies, called by the ancient Chinese as *Ying* and *Yang*, by the Hindus as *Siva* and *Sakti*, or Spirit and Matter.

Spirit or *Purusha*, the pre-cosmic Ideation of the Universal Mind, energizes the pre-cosmic root substance or Primordial Matter, or *Prakriti*, which is coeval with it, at the dawn of creation, so to say; and the latter gives shape and form to the seed Idea impressed upon

it by the former, and brings forth the universe of form. Men and women on earth shadow forth in their nature, qualities, functions and mutual relations, this celestial Archetypal pattern. Spirit and Matter is an inseparable pair, one in essence, dual in manifestation. The mutual interdependent action of Spirit and Matter is allegorized in the Sankhya philosophy. Without Spirit, Matter is blind. Without Matter, Spirit is lame, and can accomplish nothing by itself. Hence, *Purusha* mounts on the shoulders of *Prakriti* and acts as her eyes to see, and Matter lends him, the Spirit, the basis and the power of action. They both evolve through mutual help, towards the final goal—which is the realization of the two opposites to be but One.

The eternal correlation of Spirit and Matter is described in the *Vishnu Purana*, that Vishnu is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, and Lakshmi, his inseparable consort is power of manifestation of the divine idea into universe of infinite forms and variety. The whole range of contrasted qualities, from the most spiritual down to the most material, are said to be correlations of Spirit and Matter. This truism is represented in personified symbols. It is said that Lakshmi is the eternal mother of the universe and the inalienable consort of Vishnu, and omnipresent; he is the understanding, she is the voice; he is virtue, she is virtuous conduct; he is wisdom, she is intelligence; he the creator, she is the creation; he wears the earth, she is the earth; he is happiness, she is contentment; he is the sun, she is the radiance; he is the moon, she is the effulgence; he is all-pervading Air, she is the universe of activity and firmness; he is passion, she is desire; he is the lamp, she is the light; he is the tree, she is the creeper; he is the flag-post, she is the flag; he is greed, and she is thirst; he is attachment, she is enjoyment; he is day, she is night. The whole universe is said to be, in the final analysis, nothing else but constituted of these two pairs of opposites of Spirit and Matter.

Spirit is the Higher Self, the divine Triad, in man, the male; his lower mortal nature is the quaternary, Matter, the female. The coming together and uniting of the two natures—spiritual and the material—in the course of cosmic evolution to produce the god-man, is

allegorized as the “marriage of Heaven with Earth” (*S.D.*, I, 417) the grand purpose of which is production of perfect septenary man.

It is only by the attractive force of the contrasts that the two opposites—Spirit and Matter—can be cemented on Earth, and, smelted in the fire of self-conscious experience and suffering, find themselves wedded in Eternity. (*S.D.*, II, 103)

Wedding in Eternity is merging of Manas with Buddhi, and birth of the Divine Man. Ancient Sages saw in the dynamics of the duality of Spirit and Matter the ideal basis for, and a perfect correspondence in, the relationship between man and woman. Family life had, therefore, a deep spiritual significance and served a high purpose. To this day in India, where lethal materialism of the times has not wholly corrupted the minds, and where piety and tradition still lingers, like embers covered over with ash, people see in every couple the archetypal idea of Lakshmi and Narayana, and honour them.

Barring exceptions, general tendency of the nature of the male is to be intellectual, given to abstract thought, broad and proactive, whereas that of the female nature is generally prescient, imaginative, conservative, protective, caring and providing. Each complements the qualities lacking in the other, and striving together in harmony replicate themselves in their progeny and evolve towards the grand end, of life transcendence, beyond qualities and duality.

Numbers 3 and 4 are respectively male and female, Spirit and Matter and their union is the emblem of life eternal in spirit on its ascending arc, and in matter as the ever resurrecting element—by procreation and reproduction. (*S.D.*, II, 592)

Realization of this profound mystery of creation is the chief purpose of the institution of marriage. Theosophical Teachers have shown that men and women cannot progress on the path of spiritual cultivation unless they have learnt the divine mystery hidden in married life. In response to a question whether an earnest student

who aspires to work for Theosophical cause can marry, H.P.B. said that he should, if he still has attachment to worldly life and obligations of relationships, and that it is a safeguard against immorality. Mr. Judge says :

One of the most exalted of the Divine Mysteries lies hidden here—therefore, Oh Man, it is wise to cherish that which holds so much of God and seek to know its meaning; not by dissolution or cutting asunder, but by binding and strengthening the ties. Our ancient Masters knew of this and Paul also speaks of it. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 36*, p. 5)

“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband,” said St. Paul (*Ephesians*, V-33). In the Vedic tradition the marriage ceremony consists in the bride and the bridegroom swearing to live together in mutual love and life-long friendship for the fulfilment of their desires and material well-being strictly in accordance with the moral law (*Dharma*) as well as for the good of society, and bring forth children of noble qualities. Unfortunately, this has come to be observed in India only in dead-letter sense and the spirit of it is lost. It is given to devoted students of Theosophy to revive the lost spirit by example. It is only in married life that husband and wife have the opportunity of overcoming their defects and weaknesses of personality, practice self-restraint, and renunciation of self through devotion to the good of humanity. A celibate student misses these precious lessons in the school of life. Says Mr. Judge :

The result of celibacy is that the student works by intellect alone. It is necessary for true occult work that the heart be used also. One of the greater of the “mysteries” can never be learned by the celibate, for he never stands hand in hand with God a controller of a creative force. (*The Path*, November 1887)

The *Kriyasakti*, the power of creation by exercise of Will and Thought, inherent in the Spiritual Man, is transformed, in the course of physical evolution of humanity, into male and female procreative

faculty in the earthly man, a gift of Divine Wisdom. Abuse of it for mere animal gratification, warn the Teachers, leads men and women into regressive path fraught with diseases and death. “Controller of creative force” is practice and perfection of *mental and moral celibacy* which elevates and purifies men and women, for it is in mind and heart that evil of slavery to sensual passion is conceived and it is there that it has to be nullified by placing both on the highest ideal of life. The source of evil, teaches *Light on the Path*, is wiped out by the very atmosphere of eternal thought. It not only fits the couple for progress on the higher path of practical Occultism but pure family life they create thus furnishes the conditions for Egos of like nature to incarnate in it, for like attracts like. The Great Master said, “Sons of Theosophists are more likely to become in their turn Theosophists than anything else.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 33*, p. 2)

Theosophy teaches, and Ordinances of Manu assert, that even Egos high in spiritual development, called *Jnanis*, who have repaired to higher spheres with the onset of dark period on this earth plane, are attracted back to incarnate for the benefit of mankind when requisite conditions are thus furnished by devoted couples. “Individuals *have it in their own powers to procreate Buddha-like children—or demons*” (*S.D.*, II, 415). Though the evolution of the mysterious power of conscious creation, *Kriyasakti*, without physical union, by the manipulation of cosmic forces through exercising of spiritual Will, is a very far off ideal, realizable by the perfected human race towards the very end of the term of the planetary evolution, yet it is the duty of man to be ever striving, through Theosophical education, to raise himself in the image of his heavenly prototype.

But when once this possibility and actuality of this fact is recognised, the course of living and education may be so moulded as to hasten the approach of that eventful day when on this earth will descend the “the Kingdom of Heaven.” (*The Theosophist*, August 1884)

(Concluded)

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: How much can we rely on old “proverbs” supposed to be an appropriate advice during some situation? For instance, “In Rome, do as the Romans do.” This may prove to be harmful if you obey it literally, because some “Roman” habits could be wrong morally and socially. We often use proverbs to emphasize our point of argument before children. Is that proper? Are proverbs useful?

Answer: What is a proverb? It is a short, well-known pithy saying, stating a general truth or piece of advice. A proverb expresses a truth based on common sense or experience. They are often metaphorical. A proverb that describes a basic rule of conduct may also be known as a maxim. Wolfgang Mieder has proposed a comprehensive definition: “A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed, and memorizable form and which is handed down from generation to generation.”

It is important to bear in mind that a proverb has been described as “pithy” saying—terse and full of substance. Sometimes literal meaning of proverb makes sense. But when metaphorical, it has more than the literal meaning and can be applied to a variety of situations. For instance, the literal meaning of the proverb, “Don’t cry over spilled milk,” does make sense on its own. But we are able to appreciate the real point of the proverb only when we apply it to broader set of situations. Thus, “Don’t cry over spilled milk,” means “Do not get upset over something that has already happened. It is too late to worry about it, because it is irreversible or beyond repair.” Often, taking literal meaning of a proverb may do more harm than good. The proverb cited in the question falls in this category. The

point being made in that proverb is that it is advisable to conform to the tradition and social norms of the place one may be visiting; contrary behaviour may bring about friction.

Normally proverbs are used and understood more by adults than children. Using proverbs well is a skill that even adults develop over years. It would be only confusing for a child when metaphorical proverb is used to drive home a point, as children have not yet mastered the patterns of metaphorical expressions. However, proverbs are indirect and hence use of proverbs allows a person to disagree or give advice in a way that may be less offensive.

Interpreting proverbs is often very complex, especially when it is metaphorical proverb, as there can be several meanings. For instance, while interpreting the proverb, “A rolling stone gathers no moss,” some see it as condemning a person who keeps moving, and moss is seen as something positive. Others interpret the proverb as praising the person who keeps moving and moss is seen as something negative, representing negative habits or sloth, which that person does not gather. Another difficulty arises when one has to interpret “counter proverbs,” or “antonymous proverbs.” These are proverbs that contradict each other. For instance, “Look before you leap,” and “He who hesitates is lost.” Likewise, in vernacular language there is a proverb, “The one who speaks, his goods are sold,” with the counter proverb, “There are nine virtues in observance of silence.” When there are such counter proverbs, each can be used in its own appropriate situation, and neither is intended to be a universal truth. There are also “paradoxical proverbs,” which contain seeming paradox, and require skill or insight to interpret correctly.

Proverbs are used very effectively by authors, such as, J. R. R. Tolkien and Professor C. S. Lewis in their stories and novels. Some scholars are of the opinion that cultural values are reflected in proverbs. While others feel that proverbs should not be trusted as a simplistic guide to cultural values. In his book, *Proverbs are never out of season: Popular wisdom in the modern age*, Wolfgang Mieder remarks, “proverbs come and go, that is, antiquated proverbs with

messages and images we no longer relate to are dropped from our proverb repertoire, while new proverbs are created to reflect the mores and values of our time,” so old proverbs still in circulation might reflect past values of a culture more.

Proverbs are often used to drive home a moral, philosophical or metaphysical point. A Turkish proverb, “Thy word unspoken, thou can at any day speak, but thy spoken word, never again unsay,” emphasizes the value of deliberation before speaking. The Proverb, “Let sleeping dogs lie,” contains more than the very sound advice to not disturb “sleeping” dogs, as they might wake up and bite you. It is also interpreted to mean that people should leave situations or people alone else it might cause them trouble; or to leave things as they are. H.P.B., however, uses the same proverb, to drive home a very occult point. She points out that one should not hurry to offer oneself for discipleship, till one is sure, to some extent, of the purity of one’s moral nature because there is an occult law that as soon as one offers oneself for chelaship, all good and bad in his nature begins to come to the surface in a marked manner, and he will have to fight hard to overcome his weaknesses and vices. H.P.B. writes: “Does the reader recall the old proverb: ‘Let sleeping dogs lie?’ There is a world of occult meaning in it. No man or woman knows his or her moral strength until it is tried. Thousands go through life very respectably because they were never put to the pinch....One who undertakes to try for Chelaship by that very act rouses and lashes to desperation every sleeping passion of his animal nature. For this is the commencement of a struggle for the mastery in which quarter is neither to be given nor taken.”

Question: Ordinarily, *Paramartha* (*Param-artha*) means good-will or altruistic feelings. But philosophically, how to understand, *Paramartha* to represent good-will as well as the Supreme?

Answer: *Sanskrit* is a very rich language. A word can have several meanings. In the article, “The Twelve Signs of the Zodiac,” T. Subba Row mentions that the very names of the twelve signs of zodiac given by the ancient Aryan philosophers contain in them the key to

their understanding. Often a *Sanskrit* word has hidden meaning, which is very different from the literal meaning. He gives four rules for arriving at the deeper significance of a *Sanskrit* term: (1) Find the synonym of the word, by which you will know other meanings of the word. Thus, for instance, one of the synonyms of fifth sign of the zodiac, *Simha* (Leo) is *Panchasyam*, which shows that this sign was intended to represent the *five Brahmas* or even *five Buddhas*. (2) Using the methods given in ancient Tantrika works, work out the numerical value of the letters composing the word. For instance, numerical value of the seventh sign *Tula* (Libra) is 36, showing that the sign was intended to represent 36 *Tattvas*. (3) If the word is connected with ancient myths and allegories, examine them. (4) Use permutation of different syllables of the word and try to understand the meaning of different words that are formed. The tenth sign of the zodiac, “*Makara*” (Capricornus) is an anagram for *Kumara*. *Kumaras* incarnated in mankind under the tenth sign of the Zodiac.

Paramartha is a *sanskrit* term with many meanings. *Param* means supreme and *artha* means meaning. It is also translated as *parama* means *above or beyond* and *artha* means comprehension, which means that which is beyond comprehension, *i.e.*, the Absolute or Supreme. *Paramartha-satya* refers to absolute truth or absolute reality, and it is *para-vidya*. The one who has attained to *Paramartha-satya* is not swayed by *Samvriti* or false conceptions. Likewise, *Paramartha* also means Absolute Existence, as also *true self-consciousness*. The latter means the kind of self-consciousness in which one is not identified with the personality. In fact, the personal “I” is merged into Individual “I,” and then the Universe grows “I.” It is this identification with “all that lives and breathes,” which helps one to engage in *paramartha* or altruistic work, as against *svartha* or selfishness. The more altruistic you are the closer you are to the state of true self-consciousness. “Self-Knowledge is of loving deeds the child.”

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

The four gospels do not say what Jesus did in the 17 years—between the ages of 13 and 30—which are the most intriguing aspects in the chronology of the life of Jesus Christ. Alternative scholarly works open up several possibilities. Theories and speculations include the suggestion that Jesus might have spent some years in India, exploring and learning eastern spirituality. Another theory suggests that Christ might have survived the Crucifixion and returned to India, spending his last years in Kashmir. Holger Kersten’s *Jesus Lived in India* and Russian travel writer Nicolas Notovitch’s *The Unknown Life Of Jesus* (1894) are more of alternative scholarly accounts than fiction. Notovitch claimed to have been shown two ancient manuscripts in Pali by Hemis monastery monks in Ladakh which recorded the travels of a young man called Issa to India where he spent six years studying Buddhist scriptures and Eastern wisdom. Notovitch was mocked for these claims, and attempts were made by many scholars to expose him. However, in 1922, Swami Abhedananda, one of the 12 monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, visited Hemis monastery and was shown the original manuscript regarding Jesus’ stay in India, which was claimed to have been seen by Notovitch, and which he translated and published in his book, *Kashmir And Tibet*.

In a detailed examination of the Shroud of Turin, the cloth which Jesus is believed to have worn on the Cross, and examination of the time of crucifixion, Holger Kersten attempts to show that as soon as Jesus was brought down from the Cross, he was revived by using large quantities of aloes, myrrh and ladanum, and he saw in the notion of Resurrection, a physical act of resuscitation as well. Alternative scholarship holds that after having survived the crucifixion, Jesus went to east again as Yuz Asaph (meaning “Leader of the Healed”) and then settled down as a Prophet in Kashmir. Jesus’ Hebrew name is Yuza, and in *Quran* he is Hazrat Issa. Suzanne Oslon and Stephen Knapp along with Holger Kersten have done

extensive research, suggesting that Jesus died in Srinagar and was buried at the Roza Bal tomb.

While mainstream Christian scholarship does not acknowledge such narratives, alternative scholarship takes the position that in trying to reconstruct personal-historical life of Jesus, they do not undermine any one's outlook on Christianity, but rather strive to present a more rounded and human Jesus, which all could even better relate to, writes Pranav Khullar. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, December 20, 2015)

As far as secular history goes, there seems to be no accurate record of Jesus. If he lived in the first century A.D. we would naturally expect to find references to him in the works of the great historians of that century. But Philo Judaeus, who lived in Palestine during the very years that Jesus is supposed to have been teaching there, never mentions him, and Josephus disposes of his whole career in one short sentence. The second century offers little more. Neither Plutarch nor Dion Cassius, the two great historians of this century, refer to him. The ecclesiastical history of Jesus is quite as disappointing as the secular. Up to the year 180 A.D. none of the Christian writers seem to have known when Jesus was born, how long he taught or when he died. As Jesus and his twelve disciples are said to have been Jews, it is possible that Jewish history may be more correct than Christian. (*Theosophy*, May 1936)

The name *Jesus*, as found in several modern languages, is derived from the Latin *Iesus*, a transliteration of the Greek *Iesous*. The Greek form is a rendition of the Aramaic *Yeshua*, which is derived from the Hebrew *Yehoshua*. Theosophy regards Jesus, the Man, as a grand philosopher and moral reformer. According to the Talmudic *Sepher Toldos Jeshu*, he was the son of Joseph Pandira and was put to death at Lyd, also called Lydda. It is around this man Iassou, an adept ascetic, who lived a hundred years earlier than the Christian era that the legend of Christ was formed. "Jesus the *initiate* (or Jehoshua)—the type from whom the 'historical' Jesus was copied—was not of pure Jewish blood."

Every tradition shows that Jesus was educated in Egypt and passed his infancy and youth with the Brotherhood of Essenes and other mystic communities. The Essenes were the descendants of the Egyptian hierophants in whose country they had been settled for several centuries before they were converted to Buddhist monasticism by the missionaries of King Asoka, and amalgamated later with the earlier Christians. It was among them that Jesus was initiated into the Mysteries. Jesus' knowledge of healing and the many "miraculous" cures attributed to him point to the fact that he must at one time have been a member of the community of men and women known as the *Therapeutae*, who formed an inner group within Alexandrian Judaism, an esoteric circle of wise men.

We may not be able to turn back time, but if we could, what would we tell our (own) younger selves? Would we tell ourselves to rush headlong into life? Or would we continue to look inwards, seek comfort in little discoveries? *The Sunday Express Magazine*, (November 1, 2015) carried the article "A Postcard to My Past" in which an author, an architect, a photographer, a filmmaker, a singer and an artist share their notes to the children they once were.

Balakrishna Doshi, an architect, in a postcard written to his younger self, recalls an incident when as a ten year old boy, he had seen a bare shack, without furniture or even a mat, in which a carpenter, working for his grandfather, lived. He had written in an essay that when he grew up he would like to make furniture so that people like that carpenter could afford it. He reminds himself that a few years later, he began to work on low-cost housing and eventually won the Aga Khan Award for the Aranya Low Cost Housing project at Indore. "So whenever you feel restricted or restive about something, go back into your past and find that moment that gave you the freedom to be yourself, where you could rekindle your dream, and that dream will take you to higher places....Always remember, life is an adventure....If you find the essence of life, you

will discover who you are, and if you discover who you are, there will be nothing to fear,” writes Doshi.

Anees Salim, the writer of *Vanity Bagh* and *The Blind Lady's Descendants*, recalls an incident, when his class teacher had rejected the story written by him, finding it too raw to be published in the house magazine. He writes in a postcard to his younger self that if you are keen on writing more stories then put away the rejection in a tiny corner of your mind after lamenting over it for a little while. Many successful writers have been rejected more times than they could count. He advises his younger self, “I think you should write a new story for the next issue of the house magazine, and chances are that also will be rejected, but then start writing another story.”

Kaushik, a Kolkata-based filmmaker writes to his younger self that “people may want to return to the past and alter things to align them more to their advantage, this is a dangerous idea. Have all the experiences you will stumble upon, and find yourself slowly. The time it takes to forge something makes us wise.”

These letters are written as a sort of reminiscence of one's recent past with a view to acknowledge lessons and insights learnt from past mistakes, identifying the good and positive moves that could help in the present. Such exercise gives one chance to introspect and reveal how much one has grown into stages of maturity. It requires an ability to impartially judge one's past mistakes and limitations without self-depreciation. This form of letter-writing to oneself can become a form of regular self-examination, which can aid in learning from all experiences. It may help us to become aware that we have not yet outgrown our weaknesses, and that if we are not mindful, we may have to undergo another “bump.” Looking at the past can also reveal missed opportunities and failures. One can discover some redeeming features, such as, retaining one's child-like curiosity, enthusiasm, ideals, optimism and the sincerity of the inner resolves of younger days to do something worthwhile, as in the case of Doshi and Anees Salim.

This exercise of glancing back, now and then, at the yesteryears

is recommended to spiritual aspirants. “Each who advances at all finds that with every new period of his inner life a new self rises before him.” From the vantage point of his spiritual maturity he smiles a pitying smile at the kind of person he was. But not all are able to do that, so that if one finds that he has been stagnating, or has fallen into the rut of even good, virtuous life, he must identify the causes which resist change and progress.

In the past few months, a lot has been said, written and tweeted about rising intolerance in India and the world. Inhuman, barbaric and violent incidents are on the rise. On the one hand, we see better standards of living, material comforts and technological advancement in our civilization. But on the other, we witness weakening human bonds, mistrust and intolerance escalating rapidly. Conflicts and wars, all over the world, are triggered by religious, cultural, linguistic, ideological and political divides. Why are we as humans becoming more and more intolerant? Is it wired in our psyche to hate and hurt each other because someone has different faith, colour, belief system and lifestyle? Incidents of intolerance are commonplace. People seem to lose their temper and become violent for trifling reasons such as, someone bumping into their vehicle or parking in their reserved space. Incidents of aggression, such as parents threatening teachers, patients assaulting doctors, commuters beating up the staff at toll gates, etc., are becoming increasingly common. More than the legal or political intervention, what is needed is the change in the mindset of leaders and the masses, which can be brought about by educating people about co-creating a culture of respect, tolerance and peace. Right spiritual ideas seem to be the need of the hour which can make people aware that each one of us is a soul, which is like an actor, playing different roles in the drama of life, and hence we must respect the diversity and uniqueness of each human being. Looking at others as personalities and identifying them with their nationality, creed, caste or social status, gives rise to strong likes

and dislikes, biases and prejudices. We love every member in the family in spite of their weaknesses and imperfections because they belong to us. We should extend this sense of “belonging” to the entire human family. Let us not forget that we are interconnected. If one person is hurt, the whole human race is affected. When there is a realization that every human being is a soul, there will be natural respect for all. (*Purity*, December 2015)

Tolerance of other people, as also the unfavourable circumstances, can come from acceptance. When we decide to accept people as we find them, we get an opportunity to cultivate the virtue of *Adaptability*. In a subtle way our likes and dislikes work havoc, reminding us that we must learn to adjust with those *we like*, as also, those *we do not like*. We always want things to go our way. Resignation consists in understanding that Law rules in everything and every circumstance, and that nothing can come to us, whether good or evil, of which we are ourselves not the cause.

Religious tolerance can result when one strives to acquire breadth and depth of mind, giving up parochial views. However, tolerance does not mean indiscriminate acceptance of everything and everyone. The feeling of intolerance often arises because of the tone of assertiveness and dogmatism. *Anekantvada* is one of the most important and fundamental doctrines of Jainism. It refers to the principle of pluralism and multiplicity of viewpoints, the notion that truth and reality are perceived differently from diverse points of view, and that no single point of view is the complete truth.

Bias means prejudice. But bias is also mental inclination or leaning, or one fixed way of looking at and understanding things. Even in everyday affairs it would be a good practice to endeavour to see things from another person’s view point. We not only need to listen, carefully and sympathetically, to another person, but if need be, get into another’s shoes. A well-balanced mind is practical, logical as well as mystical.