

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 10, No. 9

January 17, 2019

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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LIFE—SUCCESSFUL OR MEANINGFUL?

AS WE BEGIN the year 2019, some of us may wonder if the last year was successful. The answer would vary from person to person. It would depend upon what each of us means by success. For many, success means having a lot of money, many degrees, name, fame, power and position. There is no one definite answer to the question: What is success, or even true success? There is social success, wherein people spend their lives trying to attain a certain prominence and position socially. But when they have attained it, are they really satisfied? Then there is economic success. From a worldly viewpoint, success is ordinarily associated with material possessions. The more wealth and possessions one has, the more successful in life he is supposed to be. There is another sort of success, which pertains to professional or artistic lines. This type of success also is at the personal level, but involves a different aspect of the personality. This success also involves ambition, but with a difference. Here, there is a desire to make some contribution of one's own to the profession or art. There is less selfishness than in the mere desire to gain money and possessions. Thus, there are many kinds of success from a worldly point of view, and each one of us desires some kind of success.

The dictionary defines success as achievement of a desired aim. If we use the word success in that literal sense, then we see that a criminal is successful from his viewpoint. Whether criminal or saint,

each one, who realizes his ambition along his or her particular line of achievement, is a successful person. But often we find people who seem to be successful during one phase of their life, but are almost failures, in the latter part of their lives. Moreover, success in one field does not necessarily mean success in other fields as well. A successful businessman may find that his success has come to him at a price, of being alienated from his family and friends. Is this truly a success? At a dinner party of wealthy entrepreneurs, there was a candid confession by one of them that he certainly did not consider himself successful as his relationship with his wife and children was extremely strained, and his only friends were friends for business purpose only.

Luckily, the traditional view of “success” is gradually undergoing change. A wealthy person is not necessarily a model of success, and so also, a poor person is not a failure. Success—what is it? What is the secret of success? Can we honestly state that the gaining of that which we desire brings us happiness and satisfaction that we expect? If we are fully satisfied with our wealth, possessions, home, luxuries, we are apt to feel pity for those who have not what we possess, and perhaps say, “Poor Mr. John, he could never make any money; he is a total failure!” He may be a failure according to material standards, but from the spiritual point of view we take a different position. If that person, though not able to make a great deal of money, merely manages to keep his body and soul together, and is putting into his honest work all that he is capable of, without desire of reward, then spiritually speaking, he is better off than the man who makes a lot of money. It matters not how “menial” one’s work may be, as the world understands it. To reach contentment or peace we must learn the great law of sacrifice. “The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit,” says Nelson Henderson.

Each one of us desires “success” and shuns failure because society lauds success and the successful person. Praise fosters ambition—ambition to shine, to be looked up to. Ambition breeds

competition, which arises out of and accentuates the “sense of separateness.” Worldly success comes when limited and temporary knowledge is applied and the results aimed for are achieved. This, in fact, hinders the true growth of the being. Success gives birth to pride and strengthens the personality, thus creating a barrier between the outer man and the inner God.

The seed of spiritual or true growth lies in failure. Failure makes us realize the limitation of the futile exertion in a temporary situation, the purpose of which is short-lived pleasure of achieving the desired result. It is indeed a short-lived or even elusive pleasure.

Then, why is it that we yearn for success? It is because of the false perception of the purpose of our existence. Real success is what is learnt through failure. It is in failing that we learn how to become. And in “becoming” lies our growth, our success. As becoming is an endless, ever-unfolding process, so is success. Every drop of mastering failure and transforming it into perfection makes an ocean of success. In spiritual life, the only failure recognized, is the failure to *try*. Mr. Crosbie writes: “Mistakes will occur, perhaps many of them, but, as said, ‘twenty failures are not irremediable if followed by as many undaunted struggles upward.’” Every seemingly abortive attempt at purifying our character has already borne fruits. Even when we fail, let us remember that at every attempt we weaken the enemy (our vices), so that the next attempt makes the task easier. “No efforts, not the smallest—whether in right or wrong direction—can vanish from the world of causes.”

Every failure makes us better navigators. Every failure makes us accept others with their own limitations. Every failure brings about humility. Every failure strengthens us and makes us grow. Let us take to heart these encouraging words from *The Voice of the Silence*, as we struggle towards spiritual perfection:

Remember, thou that fightest for man’s liberation, each failure is success, and each sincere attempt wins its reward in time. The holy germs that sprout and grow unseen in the disciple’s soul, their stalks wax strong at each new trial,

they bend like reeds but never break, nor can they e'er be lost. But when the hour has struck they blossom forth.

A very pregnant sentence occurs in a book called *Shree Manache Sloka*, written by Samartha Ramdas Swami, a Maharashtrian saint. It is a small book which advises ethical behaviour and love for God. The eighth sloka of the book reads: “Let us do something so that our good name remains even after perishing of our body (*dehe tyaagita kirti maage uravi*). Let us do all good deeds honestly. Let us wear out like sandalwood. Let others get benefit out of our sufferings.”

Commenting on the first line of the sloka, Swami Shri Savitanand observes that when understood superficially, this line seems to suggest that we must so live the life that after death we survive in the form of fame (*kirti*), and that leads people to chase success. The way we understand “success” and “fame” are but short-lived. We will have difficulty recalling names of famous and successful singers, actors, prime ministers, administrators, writers, poets or even those altruists who built roads, colleges or hospitals some ten to fifteen years ago. We may be able to recall only a few. Obviously “fame” is used in a deeper sense. Moreover, when we closely observe the lives of successful and famous people, and enquire into their beliefs, their outlook on society and social problems, their relationship with people, and above all, their character and moral values, and ask ourselves, “how many of them lived lives that are worth emulating?” The answer will be, very, very few. That is because, in the first place, in some cases, success was achieved by fair means or foul. In most cases, in pursuing one field, other facets of life got neglected. Success often has intoxicating effect, making the person arrogant, self-centred, competitive and egoistic. As a result, we have examples of very successful sportsmen, singers or actors, taking to drinks or drugs, or being found guilty of stealing, murder or rape. Some are unable to handle failure or sudden poverty, and many other ups and downs of life. Some even admit that they have made success of everything in life, except human relationship, and then all the money,

fame and name, notwithstanding, they are miserable. Success, more often than not, takes us away from the divine within. But when successful people take care to remain humble, to be vigilant so as to not compromise with principles, to live in harmony with others and endeavour to live an altruistic life, they are able to touch the lives of people, and become role models.

In short, a “successful” life is not necessarily meaningful (*sarthak*), but a meaningful life is always “successful” in the true sense of the word. To make our lives meaningful, we must try to understand the plan, see our place in it and then work towards realization of that plan. Theosophy says with Sage Patanjali that the whole universe exists for the experience and emancipation of the soul. The purpose of life is to learn and it is all made up of learning. Generally, we believe that a person’s life is meaningful if he has devoted himself to a cause. So Gandhiji, Thoreau, Lincoln, Mother Teresa and all those with some dominant overall goal seem to have lived a meaningful life. Is the life of an ordinary person meaningless? Every life is meaningful, provided we change our attitude towards what life brings to us. The life of a teacher, a businessman or a sweeper could be meaningful, provided each lives his life with the aim of self-actualization and self-transcendence. “The more one forgets himself in serving a cause or in loving another person, the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself,” writes Victor Frankl in his book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*.

But each one of us could also become a Buddha, actualizing our potentialities, and raising the whole of manifestation to a higher level, ever so little. But Buddhahood or perfection—mental, moral, psychological and spiritual—cannot be achieved in one life. At the end of every life, what survives death, are not money, name, fame, power, position or success in any field of life, but actual character of the person. How noble was our character when we died? That is real “*kirti*” or fame, which survives, like fragrance of a flower. As the bee gathers honey from the flowers, so also our divine Ego, gathers and assimilates all the nobler qualities—sympathy, love for

beauty, harmony, art, and the abstract things of life—in *Devachan* [*swarga*], so that the soul comes back enriched.

Some have made a case for success saying, success makes us feel happy, and achieving happiness is the ultimate goal of our lives. Success moves us all forward. There is in each one of us a, “will to meaning.” Man needs something to live for. When the rush of the busy week is over, the void within becomes manifest. To fill this void we indulge in drinks and drugs. But pursuit of wealth, comfort, pleasures and power is ineffectual in filling this void. Man’s concern about the worthwhileness of his life is a spiritual distress and not a mental illness. We keep experiencing this existential vacuum at various levels of our spiritual progress. The more one strives to go close to the divine, the more one becomes aware of the illusory nature of existence, which in turn produces the feeling of meaninglessness and hopelessness.

The one who wishes to live a successful and meaningful life must cultivate complete resignation to the Law. He is able to use all, good and bad, that life brings, as raw material for experience and growth. For him, “all the passing shows of life, whether fraught with disaster or full of fame and glory, are teachers....He who neglects them, neglects opportunities which seldom the gods repeat. And the only way to learn from them is through heart’s resignation,” writes Mr. Judge. He is someone who does not chase fame, name, glory, success, wealth, but when they come he enjoys and also learns from them. The possibility of change and the capacity to change gives meaning to human life. No matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, if we regard them as opportunities to learn from, then we grow. It is not as if always there is *conscious learning*. If we could but face our life problems without grumbling or trying to run away, we are gradually drawn closer to the centre of our being. When we are close to the divine centre, life acquires meaning which no words can express.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT HITLER AND THE “LORD OF FALSEHOOD”

YOU HAVE said that these beings of the vital world are attracted by the spiritual life. Why?

They are attracted, but this does not mean that they have decided sincerely to follow the spiritual life. The chief characteristic of these beings is falsehood: their nature is made of deceit. They have power for illusion; they can take the appearance of divine beings or higher beings, they can appear in a dazzling light, but truly sincere people are not deceived, they immediately feel something that warns them. But if one likes the marvellous, the unexpected, if one loves fantastic things, if one likes to live a romance, one is likely to be easily deceived.

Not long ago there was a historical instance, that of Hitler, who was in contact with a being whom he considered to be the Supreme: this being came and gave him advice, told him all that he had to do. Hitler used to retire into solitude and remain there as long as it was necessary to come into contact with his “guide” and receive from him inspirations which he carried out later very faithfully. This being which Hitler took for the Supreme was quite plainly an Asura, one who is called the “Lord of Falsehood” in occultism, but who proclaimed himself as the “Lord of the Nations.” He had a shining appearance, he could mislead anybody except one who really had occult knowledge and could see what was there behind the appearance. He would have deceived anybody, he was truly splendid. Generally he used to appear to Hitler wearing a silver cuirass and helmet; a kind of flame came out of his head and there was an atmosphere of dazzling light around him, so dazzling that Hitler could hardly look at him. He used to tell Hitler everything that had to be done—he played with him as with a monkey or a mouse. He had decided clearly to make Hitler commit all possible extravagances till the day he would break his neck, which did happen. But cases like this are frequent, though on a smaller scale, of course.

Hitler was a very good medium, he had great mediumistic

capacities, but he lacked intelligence and discrimination. This being could tell him anything whatever and he swallowed it all. It was he who pushed Hitler little by little. And he was doing this as a distraction, he did not take life seriously. For these beings men are very tiny things with whom they play, as a cat plays with a mouse, till finally they eat them up.

Are mentally deranged people possessed?

Yes, unless there is a physical lesion, a defect in the formation or an accident, congestion. In all other cases it is always a possession. The proof of it is that if a person is brought to you who is altogether mentally deranged, if he has a lesion, he cannot be cured, while if there is no physical lesion, if it is a possession, then one can cure him. Unfortunately, these things happen only to people who like them; there must be in the being much ambition, vanity, combined with much stupidity and a terrible pride—it is on such things that those beings play. I have known cases like that, of persons who were partially possessed, and I succeeded in freeing them from the beings who possessed them. Naturally they felt some relief, a kind of ease for a time, but it did not last long; almost immediately it wore off and they thought: “Now I have become quite an ordinary creature, whereas before I was an exceptional being!” They used to feel within them an exceptional power, even if it was a power to do evil, and they were satisfied with it. So what did they do? They called back with all their force the power they had lost! Of course, the being that had been destroyed could not come back, but as these beings exist in thousands it was replaced by another. I have seen this happen three times consecutively in a case, so much so that in the end I had to tell the person: “I am tired, get rid of it yourself, I am no longer interested!”....

8 March, 1951

[Extracted from *Stories Told By the Mother*, II, pp. 92-95, Published by, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry.]

There are various degrees of the Beings of light, and so also

there are degrees of the Beings of darkness, some above and some below man, on the ladder of evolution. The Indo-Iranians of old believed that the world was created and sustained by many gods and goddesses and that these divinities must be propitiated by prayers, sacrifices and offerings.

Besides, the beings on the Light side of nature feed on good thoughts, noble aspirations and noble deeds. The beings on the dark side of nature thrive on evil. They are normally described as negative entities or energies. Yogi Ashwini explains that these beings of darkness survive and coexist with us. In *Satya Yuga* positive forces were at the peak, but as we moved towards *Kali Yuga* the influence of negative forces began to increase till finally in *Kali Yuga*, negative forces completely control, as *dharma* has been forgotten. These negative energies look for vulnerable individuals for their food. They feed on negativity and negative energies.

Mediumistic persons are susceptible to the influence of such beings. A medium is a person “through whom the action of another being is said to be manifested and transmitted *to an abnormal extent* by the consciously or unconsciously active will of that other being.” Mediumship means yielding of weak nature to the suggestions and control of “spirits” and intelligences other than one’s own immortal, divine spirit within. Also, the black forces cannot affect a man unless he offers an opening, unless he has a chink in his armour. Clear conscience and an intense desire to benefit humanity works as a shield, and protects that person from evil influences.

Mr. Judge suggests that when a spiritual aspirant advances sufficiently so as to make a difference in this world of moral darkness, the dark forces get busy to thwart his efforts, and lead him away from the right path. One of the things they would do is to arouse irritation and increase it where it already exists. Mr. Judge’s advice to the aspirants is to learn to curb the trifling ebullitions of our lower nature, *i.e.*, fretting and fuming and getting irritated over trifling matters. By doing this we will conserve energy and gain inner strength. The “evil” entity may be an elemental or an elementary.

The word *Daimon* was given by the ancients to all kinds of spirits, *whether good or bad*, human or otherwise, but the appellation was often synonymous with that of Gods or angels. Some of these *daimons* are elemental spirits. Socrates had his own *daimon*. He was frequently warned by a *daimon*. He maintained that a god (*daimon*) gave him secret warnings; and he warned his disciples to do or not to do certain things, according to the dictates of his genius, writes Xenophon, a disciple of Socrates. While the angels or *daimon* may guide us, consulting of these elementary spirits may easily lead one to mediumship and consequently, in time, one may completely come under their sway, something undesirable for one who wants to walk the spiritual path.

In the article on “Mediatorship” H.P.B. distinguishes between a medium and a mediator. A medium is a passive instrument, but a Chela, on the other hand, is conscious and active receiver. He throws his mind into receptive passivity, while receiving a message from the Master. There are Masters and *Nirmanakayas* who are constantly engaged in the task of the betterment of the soul of man and the elevation of the race, which they accomplish through human agents. These wonderful beings have swayed and are shaping even today the destiny of nations through their human agents. Thus, pillars of peace and makers of war such as Bismarck, or saviours of nations such as Washington, Lincoln and Grant, were under the influence of these Great Beings. It is said that Lincoln always felt that in some way he was to be an instrument for some great work, and the stray utterances of Bismarck suggest that some unknown and unseen impulse was pushing him to whatever good he may have done. (*Echoes from the Orient*, pp. 31-32)

Insanity could be due to various reasons, and is also called *madness* or *lunacy*. When there is sudden joy or sudden pain, we begin to identify ourselves with that pain or pleasure so that our sense of “I” is centred in one feeling and this may lead to insanity—the loss of identity. Broadly, we may define insanity as the condition in which the Ego loses all control over the psycho-physiological

side of his body without losing the body itself. Mr. Judge explains that total disarrangement of physical and astral forces result in total inability to correlate the soul and the body, and that is called insanity. Our mind is connected to the body through certain electric and magnetic channels. Just like the water leaks out of the tank, which has cracks, so also our hold on the body could become weak and we are not able to remain in possession of these channels. Then we leave the body for some time for other forces or intelligences—good or bad—to take over. Since the Ego is able to take possession of the body for a short term, intermittently, the insane man exhibits lucid intervals. Finally, a time comes when all the magnetic and electric channels are so clogged or destroyed that we have to leave the body forever. (*Forum” Answers*, pp. 32-33)

One form of insanity is witnessed during the state of hypnotism. In the article “Hypnotism,” Mr. Judge explains that in a sane man, his body, soul and astral man are in proper relation with each other. A hypnotized man is not wholly sane, since the relation between the Ego and the astral man is temporarily broken. Acute maniacs are those in whom the disjunction between astral man and the soul is complete. In such a condition there is a possibility that another and different entity may enter the body and brain and masquerade as the real person. Such entities do exist and are the astral shells of men and women out of the body. If they enter, the person becomes insane; and many a maniac is simply a body inhabited by an entity that does not belong to it.

One of the forms of obsession is insanity. Obsession or possession is a very old phenomenon. The more passive a person is, the more he becomes suggestible. A time comes when that medium becomes perfectly and completely passive. It is then that, “his own astral body may be benumbed and even crowded out of his physical body, which is then occupied by an elemental [or even the ‘elementary,’ *i.e.* disincarnate spirit] who proceeds to use it as his own,” writes H.P.B.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SARVODAYA

INDIA CELEBRATES 30th of January every year as *Sarvodaya Day* in grateful memory of Mahatma Gandhi, who revived and preached the ancient Indian civilizational ideal of *Sarvodaya*, worked in practical ways to implement the same in his private and public life on the foundational principles of Truth and Non-violence. He demonstrated that it is the only means for the realization of the grand practical ideal of collective human progress and happiness. *Sarvodaya* is a compound Sanskrit word meaning *Welfare of all*—*sarva: all; udaya: rise, progress or development*. One constant, recurring refrain of the philosophy and teachings of the great Sages of India from time immemorial was, and is, “may all beings be happy,” in the true sense of the word—happiness. The idea is that Universal Brotherhood being a dynamic reality, there can be no lasting individual happiness and progress, or of even one or several communities or nations in one part of the world, when injustice, misery and suffering reigns in other parts; and that true progress and highest happiness is attainable only when realization dawns on one and all that humanity is one and indivisible on the plane of reality, and, consequently, reciprocally interdependent on the utilitarian plane of everyday life of diverse natures, of needs and of aspirations.

All human endeavour has for it, in the ultimate analysis, one principal aim, and that is, happiness. Various political and economic theories have been evolved and are being tried out in practice to realize the idea of human happiness in terms of fulfilment of basic human rights—right of life, security, dignity of every citizen as also the needs of their mental, moral and intellectual development. Historical experience in the experimentation of the many systems of governance has been that none of them have been able to achieve the goal of equitable development and well-being of all. It is, therefore, thought practical and achievable by the leaders if the nations aim at the greatest good of the greatest numbers.

Gandhiji pointed out that such progress, however impressive it may seem, but which leaves out a section of the population impoverished and degraded, violates the moral law, and, is therefore, unjust; and that the retributive Karmic reaction arising out of the violation of the law of universal brotherhood would be such as to nullify the apparent partial progress so achieved in the long run. Very few of our statesmen and rulers appreciate the profound truth that Gandhiji spoke. Undoubtedly, he must have been keenly aware of the Theosophical doctrine of *Distributive Karma* in that the Karma of individuals is indissolubly bound up with the collective Karma of nations for good or ill in view of interdependence of humanity. Theosophy teaches: “It is this law which affords the solution to the great question of collective suffering and its relief” (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 200-01). It at once points out the cause of collective suffering, and the one and the only means by which it may be relieved. It is a deep moral question. This indeed is the crux of the ancient philosophy of *Sarvodaya* which Gandhiji tirelessly preached and practiced till he breathed his last.

“It is an occult law, moreover, that no man can rise superior to his individual failings, without lifting, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part. In the same way, no one can sin, nor suffer the effects of sin, alone. In reality, there is no such thing as ‘Separateness’; and the nearest approach to that selfish state, which the laws of life permit, is in the intent or motive,” writes H.P.B. (*ibid.*, p. 201)

Any nation adopting a political-economic philosophy which ignores these profound inviolable laws of life, and concerns itself with mere acquisition of material wealth as the index of real progress, will ever be found wanting in peace and social harmony, and failing to achieve the goal of happiness of even the greatest numbers.

Sarvodaya indeed is socialism, said Gandhiji; but, he added, that it is not the socialism of the brand of Western political thinkers, whose scheme of achieving equality in society did not rule out resorting to violent means. He, however, commended their spirit of

quest for an equitable society, and sympathized with their intention of realizing the noble end they aimed at. But, he said, they have failed to achieve it because they overlook the fundamental moral law that good and noble ends cannot be achieved by ignoble and questionable means. Political histories of nations are replete with failure of socialism and communism of this kind. Their emphasis on material progress as the desired end, forcible equalization in material things of the haves and the have-nots, and robbing individuals of freedom, ends in violence and human degradation, and produces the very opposite of what they aimed to accomplish.

The brand of socialism which Gandhiji advocated—in which each lived for the greatest good of *all*, especially for the uplift of the weakest and meanest of their fellowmen—is based on his unshakable belief in the ennobling and transforming power of Truth and Non-violence, which are the very law of our true being and self. It is nothing new but was taught and practiced by all the great Teachers and Guides of humanity in every age, which is best articulated in the immortal words of the opening verse of the *Isavasya Upanishad*. It, said H.P. Blavatsky, is the socialism of the noblest kind which was preached and exemplified by the noblest of compassionate Ones, the Buddha and Jesus. The Western scheme of socialism is based on the belief in the essential selfishness of human nature, whereas the saints and sages have demonstrated in all ages and climes that the immortal spirit in man—his real being—can overcome and transform the brute in him and make it obey its divine fiat as the benevolent force for the service of humanity. It is the moving spirit of altruism.

He said that socialism of this kind will not rob the well-to-do and the rich capitalist—as they are valuable members of civil society who know how to generate wealth—but educate and persuade them, appeal to their conscience to regard the immutable law of means and ends, and, with that understanding, to treat their wealth and energies as Trust for the welfare of all and uplift of weaker and oppressed sections of society. To the oppressed victims of social

injustice, he said, he would teach them by example that no one can really compel them to do anything against their will, and that they can secure freedom by learning the art of non-violence, and self-suffering.

Gandhiji was wise in his disapproval of industrialism of the Western nations which he said is a curse for mankind, as H.P. Blavatsky, before him, had demonstrated how machinery dehumanizes man, enriches a few at the expense of the many who will be impoverished, destroys nature and everything that man holds sacred, and spells destruction of art and beauty. Gandhiji held that it is beneath human dignity to lose one's individuality to become a cog in the machine. He pointed out that the mania of mass production is responsible for the world crisis. His humble hand operated spinning wheel, the *charkha*, which symbolizes the alternative development paradigm of production by the masses in millions of people's homes and cottages throughout length and breadth of India in the backdrop of natural rural life of simple living and high thinking that brings about non-exploitative social order conducive to material, moral and spiritual development of all. Gandhiji and H.P.B. concur perfectly in their criticism of industrialism. Machinery has its place, he said, but that it must not be resorted to displace necessary human labour. His message was, "replace greed with love." It needs wisdom and compassion on the part of individuals to restrict their wants to basic needs, and live and act as Trustees of their possessions for the well-being of all. This practical ideal of Trusteeship is the soul of *Sarvodaya*, and Truth and Non-violence are incarnate in it. It is soul-blind, or materialistic idea which is popularly held that the problem of poverty and other evils are due to over-population—as though human beings are no higher than prolific breeding rats. It is apathy, indifference, selfishness and greed—which the Teachers say is abnormal at this stage of human evolution—which is the prolific source of the evils which afflict the world.

"When every individual has contributed to the general good what he can of money, of labour, and of ennobling thought, then, and

only then, will the balance of National Karma be struck, and until then we have no right, nor any reasons for saying that there is more life on the earth than Nature can support,” writes H.P.B. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 203)

Gandhiji laboured under no illusion that the ideal of *Sarvodaya* would be accepted at once and acted upon in India, though many a noble minded philanthropists are carrying out even today, in villages, on a limited scale, across the country, rural based socio-economic development on the lines of the ideal of *Sarvodaya*. But he was certain that long experience of ineffectiveness of various theories and experiments in political economy which are being tried out will ultimately lead mankind to the recognition of the ancient ideal of *Sarvodaya* as the only viable means for collective progress and enlightenment of all.

THE MANNER of using our money or spending our estate enters so far into the business of every day, and makes so great a part of our common life, that our common life must be much of the same nature as our common way of spending our estate. If reason and religion govern us in this, then reason and religion have got great hold of us; but if humour, pride and fancy, are the measures of our spending our estate, then humour, pride and fancy, will have the direction of the greatest part of our life....

If you do not spend your money in doing good to others, you must spend it to the hurt of yourself. You will act like a man, that should refuse to give that as a cordial to a sick friend, though he could not drink it himself without inflaming his blood. For this is the case of superfluous money; if you give it to those that want it, it is a cordial; if you spend it upon yourself in something that you do not want, it only inflames and disorders your mind, and makes you worse than you would be without it.

—WILLIAM LAW

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS MASTERS—III

WE ARE asked in *The Voice of the Silence* to look for our Guru in the Hall of Wisdom; in other words, in *Sushupti*. Read the paragraph which follows and note that there is something in us which is also in that Hall; we are called upon to blend the two. When your Higher Self and your Guru-Teacher, H.P.B., are constantly in your consciousness, when your body sleeps that consciousness, plunging into *Sushupti*, carries the work one step forward, without undesirable interference from the five senses and the organs, or from the desires and feelings. It is the spiritual Heart, and that alone which can function in the Hall of Wisdom. If that does not function, we plunge into *Sushupti* and emerge rested and refreshed but not energized and enlightened. This *Sushupti*-preparation exercise is of vital importance. Of course the Master will appear when the disciple is ready—but how shall he become ready? The Master can be met only in the Hall of Wisdom; how to ascend to that Hall to see Him, to hear Him, has to be considered and preparation made.

First I will answer the questions which refer to the conception of the Guru—how anyone can know a real Guru from a false one. One of the favourite phrases of H.P.B. was: “By their fruit ye shall know them.” You cannot know the status and dignity of a teacher even on the physical plane save and except by the test of knowledge. How will a student of physics or mathematics know a true physicist or mathematician save and except by testing the knowledge that these teachers impart in their own subjects as against our own knowledge? So, through our own spiritual insight alone we are able to see the profundity of the spiritual nature of a real teacher. Apply this to no less a person than H.P.B. How can we know that H.P.B. was a real teacher? If we go by all that her colleagues as well as those who lived with her and worked with her say, we would very much bring her down, not only to the ordinary human level but perhaps to an extraordinary human level where she becomes a

mixture of falsehood and truth, of fiction and genuine philosophy, etc. We have to proceed on the basis of the spiritual rule—from the teaching to the teacher.

In the early years, during the first 25-year cycle when the Masters were often visible, not only psychically but even physically, many, many people saw Them, but how could they judge of the real nature of a Master by looking at His physical body or seeing Him perform psychical and psychological phenomena? Can we know the knowledge of an ordinary fakir or juggler, whether he performs his tricks by merely physical means, as so many people do, or by psychological means, as a few fakirs and yogis perform? I will give you an example of my own experience. Many years ago in Bombay, near the Rajabai Tower, I saw the performance of what is ordinarily called a rope trick. I actually saw with my own eyes a little boy climb up the rope and disappear in the air. Some people were so credulous that they fell at the feet of the juggler, who had no wisdom but who had the power of hypnotization—what is called mass hypnotization. Are we to judge this as a wise man because he performed the phenomenon and collected money for it?

So now comes your proposition: How shall we know Them? There is only one way of knowing Them. By our own silent development. And how shall we develop ourselves? H.P.B. has shown the method directly and indirectly in *The Voice of the Silence*. She has indicated that we must contact the Master on the spiritual plane by rising to that level and not by dragging the Master down to our level. This level is really speaking *Sushupti*. When our consciousness is freed from the body and its senses and from the kamic nature which works even in the *Swapna* condition, we so to speak rise to a plane where our Monadic Triad functions in what is called the causal body by H.P.B., or *Anandamayakosa* in the Vedantic classification. Mr. Judge speaks of it as the ethereal vesture. We function there in *Sushupti* that way, but not being accustomed to the subtle vibrations of that state we naturally go to sleep and fall into subjectivity. All the same we begin to absorb whatever is there

in that state of consciousness for us. Please turn to *The Voice of the Silence* and note that it is said that there abides in that hall something that is uncreate and it also abides in the disciple's heart. And therefore there is a kind of a consubstantiality between the Hall of Wisdom and the person who rises to the plane of that Hall. Ordinary people return without any experience of any kind, but those who know of the Masters, who are aspiring to be chelas, become, by certain practices on the physical plane, more and more aware of the activities of that which is uncreate in the *Sushupti* level.

Two great ideas are known to be the most powerful awakers of human consciousness in that *Sushupti* subjectivity. One is study and meditation on the nature and character of the Monadic Triad, *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*. Therefore study and meditation on this subject is an important link, but is not altogether sufficient. Our Higher Self is far away, and there are many links forged by various hierarchies of intelligences between our physical-plane consciousness and the consciousness of the physical Triad. The link which helps most is that of the real Teachers or Gurus. It is necessary for us to take note that a study of the nature and powers of the Masters is recommended both by H.P.B. and by Mr. Judge. This enables us once again to open a more intimate layer of our subjective consciousness in *Sushupti*. The Masters teach their chelas first in that spiritual state of consciousness. And for long years the chelas do not even remember what they are learning and assimilating, because on their return journey they are caught up once again in the *swapna* state, and finally in bodily sense-life. But as we continue to study and meditate on these two subjects we begin to build up a new centre of consciousness in ourselves at the back of the ordinary normal sense consciousness, and we bring the two centres of consciousness closer and closer by a repeated endeavour and by giving ourselves wholly up to a contemplation of these two subjects. This is the real reason for the practice of retiring which is recommended by so many spiritual teachers. In our civilization, physical retirement is neither recommended nor possible, but this inner retirement is possible and

has to be undertaken by every earnest student who wants the light of guidance directly from the Masters. The teachings can take us so far and no further.

You also ask about the function of intuition in relation to the Masters. Intuition, as H.P.B. points out in the *The Theosophical Glossary*, comes to us directly in the *Sushupti* condition. She says, “*Buddhi*, the Spiritual Soul, is the direct cause of the *Sushupti* condition.” *Sushupti* is entirely subjective for most people because *Buddhi* is passive in them. Intuition or *Buddhi* has to be *activated*, says *The Voice of the Silence* in an important footnote. How? By the application of the principles of correspondence and analogy. That is one of the ways in which intuition on the subject of the Higher Self and the Masters has to be viewed.

People who rise to the higher planes, like *Sushupti*, have to take precautionary measures on the physical plane, otherwise there will be a confusion caused by the mixing up of two opposing planes. You cannot understand spiritual truths by the senses and brain which are full of personal ideas. Therefore it is necessary to take precautions. The purification of the brain and the senses is recognized in all systems of exercises for meditation. One sense after another has to be purified of its own peculiar kamic tint till the body loses its lower memory and is responding to the higher aspect.

MY UNIFORM experience has convinced me, that there is no other God than Truth...the only means for the realization of Truth is Ahimsa....To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face, one must be able to love the meanest of creation oneself....Identification with everything that lives is impossible without self-purification; without self-purification the observance of the law of Ahimsa must remain an empty dream; God can never be realized by one who is not pure of heart. Self-purification therefore must mean purification in all the walks of life.

—GANDHIJI

THE CONCEPT OF TIME

III

PUNCTUALITY in time is an important Theosophical principle very much missed out in our modern civilization. We find nothing wrong in being unpunctual in private and public life because somehow, we have failed to recognize the value of time. We do not understand how cycles of time occur and how they should be taken advantage of, so that we do not undertake any deliberate planning ahead. Time is both finite and infinite. Infinite time is called eternal duration. It is the subjective whole in which objective phases of time take birth from the moment of manifestation. Thus, finite time, as is experienced by our finite consciousness, comes into existence only during manifestation. Before that “Time was not, for it lay asleep in the infinite bosom of duration” (*S.D.*, I, 27). Each period of time is known as a cycle or wheel, so that a period of manifestation is made up of wheels within wheels, the smaller wheels within larger wheels, but the motion of each and every one of them is precise and punctual. The period of manifestation called the “Day of Brahma” equals a thousand *Maha-yugas*, and that is followed by the period of dissolution, called the “Night of Brahma,” of the same duration. This denotes utmost punctuality in time, in this vast universe, and it is symbolized by Great Breath, which represents Absolute Abstract Motion. The appearance and disappearance of the Universes is pictured as an outbreathing and inbreathing of the Unknowable Deity. The breathing out corresponds to the period of activity, and the breathing in corresponds to the period of rest. Absolute Space, Duration and Motion are the three aspects of the Supreme Deity or *Parabrahmam*. In the Tenth Chapter of the *Gita*, one of the Divine Excellences of Shri Krishna is described as: “Among computations I am Time Itself.” So nothing in the Universe is haphazard; everything takes place precisely. Man alone hinders this great Law in Nature through his unpunctual behaviour.

The great Teachers of humanity appear on earth cycle after cycle.

They follow not only the law of cycles but also the law of necessity in order to bring humanity out from the darkness of ignorance to the light of Wisdom. The Divine Discipline of Yoga which leads to meditation emphasizes, among other things, being regulated in sleeping and waking. At the present time, there are many, who turn night into day and day into night.

We feel that there is always so much to do and so little time to do it! We then hurry to get the work done so that we can move on to the next job. One of the first things that we are taught is punctuality, which is a recognition of the fact that there is a *right time* for everything in life. But how do we learn to be punctual?

How is it that some people are never late? They are punctual by force of habit. Habit is the building up of an attitude towards something which results in its working almost without conscious thought. We train our fingers to write, and then the rest of our life we are able to write without conscious thought. By constant practice for many months, this habit gets established. Thus, punctuality becomes a habit by constant practice, until in time we find that we cannot be unpunctual!

Sometimes life itself forces us to cultivate this habit. If we are late for work we may lose our job and then sometimes our sense of duty towards others makes us punctual. By the law of analogy and correspondence we can learn to apply this principle of punctuality to all virtues and we see that there is a right time for practicing these also. There is a time to be gentle and a time to be firm, and a time to be both at once. Discrimination is needed to determine, what the right time is, *i.e.*, the time at which any action will produce such repercussions in the environment as will be beneficial all round. Discrimination is a faculty or power whose range and value depend entirely upon the knowledge and understanding of the individual using it. Discrimination is the ability to do the right thing, at the right time, and in the right place, on every plane of action, writes Mr. Crosbie. If we hurry we may choose the wrong moment; if we delay we may lose the right moment. We can neither hurry nor delay,

if our thought-emotion is not fixed on the doing of an action, but on the right performance of action. Hence, knowledge is necessary in order to perform the *right* action, in the *right* way, at the *right* time.

But discrimination is also necessary so that we do not end up practicing punctuality in a mechanical way. *Through the Gates of Gold* cautions us that in practice of virtue we might fetter ourselves into one groove, one changeless way of living the life. For instance, there could be over-anxious insistence on the virtues of accuracy or punctuality, so that there is rigid adherence to an immutable timetable. Some people feel lost unless they get up at the same time, eat at exactly the same time, and follow the same daily routine. These are *slaves* rather than *masters* of punctuality—slaves to automatic action of the bodily atoms. A doctor cannot be rigidly punctual like an office employee, because he may be called upon to attend an emergency case, while on his way to his clinic. Unlike the person who practises virtue *mechanically*, the person who has sinned deeply and is steeped in selfish gratification, stands a better chance of entering the spiritual life because sooner or later, he wakes up, either through satiation in pleasures, or through severe consequences for his evil actions.

We speak about “time-management.” Let us remember that a day is always of the same duration—twenty four hours—and it is up to each one of us to wisely apportion that time between essentials and non-essentials; between work and pleasure. Many people feel that “me” time is necessary for happiness. “Me time” is one’s own personal time to be alone. It is felt that most of us know that self-care is essential for happiness, but we do not know what it should entail. We must spend some time doing what we like, such as, reading a book, playing table-tennis or badminton, or going for a walk. But more importantly, we must allow some time for ourselves for self-discovery and deep thinking. We should plan our activities so that apart from recreation, we have some time left to connect with our divine self within. We spend very little or almost no time, to build a rapport with our divine parent. “With *each* morning’s

awakening try to live through the day in harmony with the Higher Self,” writes H.P.B.

The subdivisions of time, into past, present and future, which seem natural, are man-made and purely subjective. So long as we do not learn to raise our consciousness on higher planes, on the plane of our divine Ego, our finite consciousness, *i.e.*, the lower mind, will continue to experience and work in the illusory divisions of past, present and future. There is that aspect of us, the personal man that constantly changes, so that the present man is the result of the thoughts, feelings and actions of the past man, while the present man, through his acts and thoughts, builds a future man. But through it all passes the continuous and imperishable thread of consciousness, the Divine man or the Divine Ego, called *Sutratma*, or thread-soul, which, the *Voice of the Silence* describes as, “It is the Man that was, that is, and will be, for whom the hour shall never strike.” It is that “consciousness” in us which is not caught up in the illusory divisions of past, present and the future. Corresponding to three division of time, action or karma is also divided into three types. *Sanchita* Karma is that which is stored up from the past, and not in operation now, because there is not the appropriate environment or condition for bringing it into action. *Agami* is Karma we are making in the present life and will be felt by us in future births. It is being generated by our thoughts, feelings, words and deeds, day by day. *Prarabdha* Karma is that portion or aspect of Karma with which one is born, and for its precipitation the field is ready. It is operating in the present life and body, bringing about all the circumstances and changes. Destiny or Fate is the Karma that has ripened, so that its expression cannot be averted or postponed. Thus, we see that these three kinds of actions are inter-related, forming a chain of cause and effect.

The observer who is able to fix his attention on his divine Ego, detaches himself from the panoramic view of nature, and becomes aware of both the past and future karma, as effect is wrapped in the cause. If we eat stale food, the effect is that we may suffer from a stomach problem, the same day, or the next. A person who indulges

in chain-smoking or eating of tobacco might experience cancer of the mouth or lungs in old age. However, some actions do not bear fruit in this life, but only after many lives. It is possible for Yogis and advanced Beings, or even pure and intuitive astrologers to predict a future event. A yogi knows the ultimate divisions of time and the intricate working of Karma, and does not see time in compartments of past, present and future. “Karma is not subject to time, and therefore he who knows, what is the ultimate division of time in this Universe, knows Karma,” says an aphorism on Karma.

For instance, a good doctor, can predict, at least approximately, the date of a woman’s delivery, once he knows the time of conception. A boy in a mathematics class can complete a semi-circle or half circle, once he knows the centre and radius of that circle. When the causes are definite, and almost with no scope for changing them by exercise of free will, the effect being wrapped up in the cause, an advanced being can accurately predict a future event, with the help of the astral light, or invisible register of nature. “In the Astral Light are pictures of all things whatsoever that happened to any person, and as well also pictures of those events to come, the causes for which are sufficiently well marked and made. If the causes are yet indefinite, so will be the images for the future,” writes Mr. Judge. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 150)

Light on the Path says that “Time” is a great deluder. A spiritual aspirant who experiences divine discontent is described as someone to whom the sense of space is like the bars of an iron cage, while sense of time is like the strokes of sledge hammer. His consciousness struggles to soar upward, breaking free from the confines of space and time. He wants to break these limitations and experience timelessness, where the oscillation between pain and pleasure ceases.

(Concluded)

SAINT TUKARAM—LIFE AND TEACHINGS

I

TUKARAM, a great saint-poet, was born in 1609, in a village named Dehu, near Pune, in Maharashtra, India. The family, in which Tukaram was born, was indeed a very pious one. Tukaram's parents, Balhoba and Kanakai were a godly couple. Tukaram's family was engaged in money-lending business, agriculture and trade. He was taught reading, writing and the art of trading from an early age. When his elder brother refused to take up the family business and money-lending, Tukaram was asked by his father to assume the responsibility. He was still very young when Maharashtra was in the grip of a dire famine, which lasted many years. Reeling under abject poverty, many begged and borrowed. Such was the case of a poor Brahmin who found himself sunk in huge debt which he was unable to repay. The local village chief sentenced him to wear a halter around his neck as punishment for non-repayment of loans. It is said that Tukaram could not bear to see this unfortunate Brahmin's state of shame and distress. When he learnt from the Brahmin that he owed Rupees two hundred and fifty, he cleared his debt. Tukaram was given some money by his second wife, Jijabai, by pledging her ornaments, so that he could set up some trade and earn money to feed his own family. This money was used up in paying off the debt of the poor Brahmin.

Tukaram had lost his first wife and his son and also his bullock during famine. His lands were sold to pay his debts and he was reduced to a state of abject poverty. He began to be filled with a longing for renunciation of the world. He decided to give up everything and threw all his account books and other worldly tokens into the river Indriyani. In a sense, he was very glad that he had lost his reputation, business, money, cattle and lands. He was happy that he could now devote himself entirely to Lord Krishna, Vithala. Thus, with the loss came *vairgya* or detachment, instead of despair.

He felt that he had wasted his life, so he began to change his life

with bodily penance. If anyone was hungry he gave him food. If he saw a load on anyone's head, he took it on his own shoulders and gave the man some rest. He lived more in the company of devotees of Vithal than his kith and kin. He would sing devotional songs with them. Just like Arjuna in the *Gita*, found his own friends and relatives in the opposite army, at the time of war, so also, Tukaram faced greatest opposition from his wife in his spiritual pursuit. Every genuine spiritual aspirant, once he is determined to live the higher life, arouses two sets of forces. "One of them consists of all his friends and relations who do not view life as he does, who are wedded to the 'established order,' and think him a fool for devoting any attention to anything else," writes Mr. Judge. Tukaram was no exception to this experience. His wife had little patience with his devotion and she nagged him continuously. She accused the devotees that came to their house to sing devotional songs with Tukaram, saying that they got what they liked without working. She used to shout "A completely shameless lot...singing day and night as if they have nothing better to do. It is indeed a pity they do not drop dead, for their wives must certainly be cursing them in their misery!" To escape the jarring atmosphere of his home he chose a spot on the Bhandara Hills, where he spent the day meditating on God and reading the works of saints such as *Bhagavat* of saint Eknath, *Abhangas* (devotional verses) of saint Namdev, and *Jnaneshwari* of saint Jnaneshwar. It is said that Jijabai, though nagging, was a faithful and devoted wife, and used to struggle uphill in the midday sun and take his meals up to where he was sitting. (*Saints of Maharashtra* by Savitribai Khanolkar)

Once there was nothing to eat in the house. As Tukaram was passing by a field, a farmer invited him and offered him some sugarcane juice for him to drink. At the time of departure the farmer requested him to take some sugarcane home for children. He carried it on his shoulder. When he entered the town, children of the town asked him for sugarcane which he gave them, as he did not differentiate between his own children and those of others. After

distributing the sugarcane among the children, there remained only one for him to carry home. When his wife saw it she flew into a rage, saying, how could he not think of his own children who looked so pitiful without food. She beat him on his back with the sugarcane and it broke into three pieces. Of which two fell on the ground and one remained in her hand. In his usual quiet way Tukaram addressed his wife, “Now the sugarcane is equally divided, because the Lord is our Helper. Your portion is in your hand. Two have fallen down and I shall lovingly divide them between myself and the children.” No simile can be found to describe Tukaram’s patience.

However, once his wife accosted him and said, “You are without any sense of shame and scruple and you dance day and night in the praise-services of God. You never come home and on that account I weep bitterly at home.” She argued that he should be taking care of them. Tukaram replied by saying that Krishna (Vithal) and his wife Rukmini were his parents, and that she (Jijabai) should also worship them. Then, they will provide her with food and clothes. When his wife gave her promise to worship Vithal, Tukaram returned home. In eleven *abhangas* (verses) he advised his wife to abandon worldly pursuits and instead be a seeker of spiritual riches. As the advice fell upon her ears, her heart melted, and she carried out the worship of the Lord by staying awake the whole night. With pure heart she had made the resolve. In the morning she went to river Indrayani to take her bath, and on coming back invited the Brahmins. The Brahmins carried away the pots, cattle, clothes and grain. There remained only one female garment. Then, Lord Krishna’s wife, Rukmini took the form of a poor female Mahar (a low-caste woman) and asked Tukaram for a cloth, in order to test his devotion. Tukaram gave away the female garment that was drying in the rear of the house. When his wife learnt this, she flew into a rage, saying that she was foolish to believe her husband when he said that if she worshipped Vithal and his wife, and think of their feet, they will give her food and clothes when she needed them, but instead, she had experienced instant poverty. She said that since the Lord had

betrayed her she would go to the temple with a stone and smash the feet of the Lord (Vithal). The story goes that as she lifted up the stone to smash the feet of Vithal, Rukmini appeared and asked her the reason for her anger. On learning which she gave her a garment, a jacket and a handful of silver coins. She was satisfied with these gifts. However, once again Tukaram said to his wife, “You were very impatient and thereby you lost the benefit of spiritual riches.” He advised her to give away the silver coins to Brahmins, saying that we may have to give away a glass bead, in order to obtain a pearl. “In the same way, if you drive away from your heart *riddhi* (prosperity), *siddhi* (accomplishments), wealth, and fortune, then you will be absorbed into Brahman (Supreme Reality) which even the gods wish for in their minds.” Hearing these illustrations, his wife was satisfied and distributed the silver coins among the Brahmins. (*Stories of India Saints*, Translation of Mahipati’s Marathi *Bhaktivijay*, pp. 220-242)

Once Tukaram had accepted the job of protecting the fields of corn from birds. He did not wish to deprive them of their food, so he allowed the birds to feed on the corn. When the owner of the fields learnt this he made Tukaram give a promissory note for whatever sum might be found to be the loss. After the harvest, it was found that the owner of the field had gathered double the expected quantity, instead of losing. It is said that Vithal came to his devotee’s rescue, multiplying the crop at harvest.

At a certain point in his life Tukaram had only one desire, namely, to attain to self-realization and to have the vision of God. He received initiation in a dream from one Babaji of the line of Raghava and Keshava Chaitanya, direct disciples of Sachchidananda Baba whose Guru was Jnaneshwar. He gave him simple pure mantra of “Ramakrishna Hari” and blessed him. Tukaram composed heart-rending poems of longing for God and songs of praise and love for his Lord, writes Savitribai Khanolkar.

It is said that “In dreams and visions of the night, man is instructed.” There are dreams sent by Adepts. Sometimes people

get instruction in dream, for building a temple or a church at a particular place, or for performing certain ceremony or *yajna* for re-establishing peace and harmony in certain city, etc. Bulwer Lytton says, in the *Strange Story*, that man's first initiation comes in dreams. To be initiated means to be tested and tried by the *guru* (spiritual teacher) to determine if one is ready to take the next step on the Path. So also, it happened in Tukaram's life. One night the great saint Namdev appeared to him in a dream, accompanied by Vithal (Lord Krishna), and he was initiated into making "poetry," and was asked to compose devotional verses or *abhangas*. He was informed of the pledge taken by saint Namdev to compose one billion *abhangas*. Since Namdev was unable to achieve this target, Tukaram was asked to complete the task. It is said that devotional verses began gushing forth from his mouth. Ordinary people listened to them and repeated them while doing their daily work. Women sang as they rotated the mill stones grinding rice and wheat, and men sang while working in the fields. His verses encapsulated the essence of *shrutis* and *shastras* in a very lucid manner.

All this popularity had the effect of enraging a learned Brahmin called Rameshwar Bhat. He was jealous of Tukaram and accused him of stealing his poems and then presenting them as his own compositions. He branded Tukaram's *abhangas* as being against the Vedas and other scriptures and so condemned them to be thrown into water. Tukaram obeyed the pundit's order and wrapped his writings in a cloth, tied a stone to the parcel, and then threw it into Indrayani river. But after doing that Tukaram was a broken man. Tukaram sat by the banks of river Indrayani, fasting and praying, for thirteen days. It was on the thirteenth day that the miracle happened. The manuscript of *abhangas* surfaced on the water and glided gently to the shore. The word "*abhangas*" literally means "indestructible," and that is what they proved to be, when they were restored back to Tukaram, intact.

(To be continued)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

It seems that we are mistaken if we think that plants have no higher consciousness. It appears that plants can learn, adapt and remember without brains. We are not aware because they do not show it the way we do, says researcher Monica Gagliano, the author of the book, *Thus Spoke the Plant*. She discovered that plants have surprising range of abilities. What kind of abilities do they have? The plants seem to have acoustic abilities. "Plenty of organisms have mechanoreceptors that respond to mechanical forces and we now know plants have one that can pick up vibrations. Some can even 'hear' the vibrations of a caterpillar munching their leaves and strike back by emitting repellent chemicals," says Gagliano.

She believes that plants can learn. She created a set-up that allowed her to drop a mimosa plant from about 15 centimetres high. The Mimosa is a plant that quickly folds up its leaves when it feels threatened, and that was what it did when dropped first or second time, as if puzzled. But surprisingly some of these plants started reopening their leaves after two to six drops, as if aware of what was going on. In another experiment, she tried out Pavlovian learning with the pea plants. In the famous example of Pavlov's dogs, the dog learns that when the bell rings, it is followed by dinner. She tried with a fan and light, by putting the pea plants in the Y-shaped chambers so that after reaching certain height they were forced to grow either left or right. For three days she let the fan blow down one arm of the chamber, followed by the light. She changed sides, so that one day the fan and light would be near the left arm of the chamber and the next day, near the right arm. On the fourth day, she turned the fan on but it was not followed by the light. The instinctual response would be for the plant to grow towards the side where light was the day before, as plants are good at remembering where they saw light. But around sixty per cent of these plants seemed to have learnt to go against the instinct, as they continued to face the direction of the fan, as if expecting the light to follow the fan. She

believes that plants have memory, as memory is intrinsic to learning.

If plants have memories, where are they stored? She believes that plant memories are decentralised. That means memories will not be in a specific place, like the leaves or the roots. The plant functions as a total brain. Our memories are stored in the brain, in patterns of electrochemical activity. Plants are masters of electrochemical signalling. Plants are revealing that the brain is not the only thing to produce learning, writes Joshua Howgego. (*New Scientist*, November 24, 2018)

“Everything in the Universe, throughout all its kingdoms, is CONSCIOUS, *i.e.*, endowed with a consciousness of its own kind and on its own plane of perception,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 274). This consciousness expresses itself differently through different forms, and its expression differs in accordance with the degree of progress. A stone or a crystal has psychic intelligence. Crystals have their own sympathies and antipathies, their own attractions. In plants this consciousness expresses itself as power of sensation; in animals as instinct, and in man as reasoning and intuition. Psychic intelligence is non-self-conscious use of mind principle.

But there is instinct working in the vegetable kingdom also. For instance, the Sunflower turns its face towards Sun; flowers assume beautiful colors and fragrance to attract insects and birds for pollination to ensure propagation. Sir J. C. Bose demonstrated that plants, too, have emotions. It has been found that music aids the plants to grow better and faster. During H.P.B.’s time, works of some German physiologists pointed to cases of consciousness and positive discrimination—one is almost inclined to say *thought*—in the amoebas or animalculae, known to be microscopical protoplasm. L. Cienkowsky observed that a certain amoeba hunted only for spirogyra among a number of other aquatic plants, rejecting every other food. “The way of acting of these monads during their search for and reception of food, is so amazing that one is almost inclined to see in them *consciously acting beings*,” writes Cienkowsky (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 20*). We might say that every atom is endowed

with consciousness, memory, intelligence and even discrimination of its own kind. Even in a human being, “Memory has no seat, no special organ of its own in the human brain, but that it has seats in every organ of the body.” (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, p. 72)

Is killing ever justified? Andy McNab, an English novelist and former British Army Infantry soldier, as well as a former Special Air Service operator, says “Yes.” Whereas, Mark Kurlansky, an American journalist and a writer, as also a winner of the 2007 Dayton Literary Peace Prize, answers “No.”

McNab argues that while he respects well-meaning people and pacifists, who say, “it is never right to kill,” he believes that “killing for domination, and ultimately for survival, is partly the reason why we are so successful as a species. Much like the fight against Hitler and fascism, the only way to win is to match the force and violence we face. As the quote often attributed to Winston Churchill says, ‘You cannot reason with a tiger when your head is in its mouth.’” He cites the example of Haitian slave rebellion of 1781. He says that their peaceful threats to withdraw their labour from the sugar cane fields unless their demands were met by their French owners, would never have been successful.

Mark Kurlansky counters it by giving examples. “Hitler could have been stopped without violence as the Danish demonstrated. As the Czechs demonstrated against the Soviet Union in 1989, as the Indians demonstrated against a brutal, racist regime...as Desmond Tutu showed against apartheid. There are many such examples of people standing peacefully against ruthless violent foes. Violence does not solve problems, it creates them. Violence leads to violence.” Biologist EO Wilson believes that human beings are “hard-wired for violence,” but he also believes that there is no reason why we should give in to this destructive impulse.

McNab agrees that there have been examples of non-aggression to resolve oppression, but in the meantime many lives were lost.

“How can killing a terrorist travelling on public transport and wearing a suicide vest be considered a failure in both moral and practical terms? Is it not both moral and practical to preserve the lives of the greater number? If not, you would be responsible for even more deaths, and would not that be considered an even bigger failure?”

Kurlansky argues that there are circumstances where one is forced to kill the killer, but that is a failure. “It is really a failure to find the alternative. To say ‘killing justifies killing,’ is a logical absurdism. It is like capital punishment, killing the killer because it is wrong to kill.” McNab argues that as a soldier he had to kill in order to prevent himself or others being killed. Kurlansky counters that he has come to endorse non-violence based on real-life experience, wherein he refused to kill even when placed in similar predicament. If we all refuse to kill then maybe governments would get more creative about statecraft. (*Prospect*, December 2018)

Bhagavad-Gita, says Mr. Judge, “is appealing alike to the warrior and the philosopher, it shows to the one the righteousness of lawful action, and to the other the calmness which results to him who has reached inaction through action.” In one sense, the Mahabharata war is a lawful or righteous battle that was fought, when the Kauravas unjustly usurped the kingdom, and were not willing to give back to the Pandavas even five villages. It was only when all the attempts at peaceful settlement failed, that Arjuna was asked to wage a war. Shri Krishna tells Arjuna, “Be thou only the immediate agent.” To be an “immediate agent,” or an apparent cause, is to act without the feeling of doership. Thus, Arjuna will have to face the consequences of killing the warriors, on the physical plane, but since he did not *initiate* the act of killing, we may say that he will not face the consequences on the moral plane. The same might be true of a soldier who fights and kills the men in the opposite army, only with the intention of protecting his nation and not out of vengeance or with a feeling of animosity.

Killing is never justified, as we cannot give life, we have no right to take life. The commandment of Moses is, “Thou shalt not

kill,” and makes no exception. But as we kill in self-defence or to protect others, we should at the same time strive to achieve non-violence in thoughts and feelings, in ourselves and in others. In *Isis Unveiled* H.P.B. mentions a certain lake in India, where, most deadly and enormous alligators could be seen basking in the sun. These alligators became *as harmless as kittens*, so long as a band of fakirs, lost in prayer and contemplation, was in the vicinity. An attitude of harmlessness within us suffuses the atmosphere with similar magnetism. What we need to develop is love, charity and compassion.

An important concept in Lao Tzu’s philosophy is that of *wu-wei* which means “without doing,” or “absence of action.” This doctrine of inaction advocates “resist without resisting.” How should we deal with our opponents? Resist without resisting is the plan of quiet passive resistance. Retreat within your own heart and there keep firmly still. When a person develops inner strength, inner integrity, total harmlessness, and therefore, total absence of provocation, he is able to subdue his opponent without effort. Says Lao Tzu: “The softest things in the world override the hardest. That which has no substance enters where there is no crevice. Hence I know the advantage of inaction.”

Everything will be a far easier task if you can smile through it instead of sulking or brooding, says science. According to latest research published in *Psychology Today*, cheerfulness is not a personality trait, but a virtue that we can all build and work upon, with time. One may not be born with a cheerful disposition, but cheerfulness can be acquired. David Byrne in his TEDtalk titled, *Reasons to be Cheerful*, has said, “There is a lot to be cheerful about, everyone needs to find their own reason.” Social psychologist Barbara Fredrickson observes that when we are young our parents, siblings and friends are there to ensure that we are okay and cheerful. But as we grow up we have to look out for things that tend to increase

our cheerful moments.

Some of the tips given to raise one's cheer quotient are: Listen to inspiring, happy and optimistic stories. Listen to elevating music. Clear negative thoughts through meditation as it allows us to look at the world in a different light. Think of cheerfulness as the habit of thinking and behaving in a way that is up-beat, optimistic and easy-going, regardless of how we may feel at the given moment. It is almost impossible to feel sullen when surrounded by cheerful and optimistic folks. In other words, we must be our own cheer-finders in life because cheery disposition brings with it optimism and boosts self-esteem, writes Nona Walia. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, December 23, 2018)

Cheerfulness is a state of mind and is the opposite of sullenness, moroseness and even despair. The latter is experienced when we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the unfavourable circumstances of life. "Whatever happens, it is well to remember that it was caused by ourselves, precipitated by ourselves, can be met by ourselves. We must, then, assure ourselves that nothing can possibly overwhelm us. It is better to assume a cheerful attitude to cultivate in one's self a feeling of confidence, and endeavour to impart it to our nearest," writes Mr. Crosbie. Thus, there is no need or scope for despair for one who understands the cause and cure for sorrows and adversities. At the base of our nature is faith, hope and love, so the practice of periodically turning within so as to build a rapport and friendship with our divine nature, increases our chances of maintaining cheerfulness even in the most trying circumstances. If we remain calm, thoughtful, persistent and cheerful, then we can gain insight and strength. "Nothing is as bad as we think it is, nor ever will be," says Mr. Crosbie. Mr. Judge advises that we must try to take pleasure in doing our duty, and especially in the little duties of life.