

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### SAT-CHIT-ANANDA

GOD, Supreme Reality or *Brahman* in Theosophy is an Impersonal, Eternal, Boundless, Omnipresent and Unchanging Principle. To assign to it any attribute is to dwarf it. It is difficult for us to conceive of God as all-inclusive. The Supreme Reality or *Brahman* cannot be described, and the most one can say of it is that it is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. *Sat* means existence or Being, pure and absolute. *Chit* means knowledge or consciousness, pure and absolute. *Ananda* means bliss, pure and absolute. These may be regarded as three aspects, and not three characteristics of the Supreme Reality.

Sat is pure and Absolute Being and existence, designated as *Be-ness*. It is possible for us to conceive of any *one* type of triangle at a time, an equilateral or an isosceles triangle, say, that satisfies all properties of a triangle. But it would be impossible for any of us to visualize “triangularity”—an abstraction, embracing all types of triangles. God or Absolute is like triangularity. According to a poem by a Kabalistic Rabbi, Solomon Ben Gabirol: “Thou art one, the root of all numbers, *but not as an element of numeration*; for unity admits not of multiplication, change or form. . . Thou art one, and Thy unity is never diminished, never extended, and cannot be changed.” IT is Unity or One, and root of all numbers, but it is ABSOLUTE UNITY. What is Absolute Unity? In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 8), we read: “Absolute Unity cannot pass into Infinity,” which means it is not something finite, in space and time, to begin with, which then stretches or extends itself into Infinity.

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IT is Absolute ALL or Eternal Infinite ALL. To the Occultists it is impossible to accept the idea that Absolute ALL creates or even evolves the “Golden Egg” into which it is said to enter, in order to transform itself into Brahma—the Creator, who expands himself later into gods and the visible Universe. Such can be attributed only to the finite, the two chief deities, Brahma and Vishnu.

The poem goes on to say that “Thou art Existent, but in thyself alone, there being none other that can exist with thee.” IT is *Absolute Existence*, because etymologically, the term existence is derived from the roots, *ex*, meaning, “from” or “out of,” and *sistere* means “to stand.” Thus, “existence” shows that something appears at a place where it was not before. Also, it implies that there is a beginning and an end to that thing. But the Absolute *always is*. The Supreme Reality being *pure existence*, may be thought of as Causeless Cause of all causes, not involved in a cause-effect chain. All existing things can be traced back to IT, which is their essence, as the ultimate essence of all pots is clay. All things that we know are existent or have existence, but in their ultimate analysis they are pure existence. For instance, the cause of rain is clouds, which in turn are formed by vapours, and they have their source in evaporation of water by the sun, and so on. We go into an infinite regress, as we trace back through physical and metaphysical causes, till we come to First Cause and then the Causeless Cause.

It is the noumenon of all the noumena which must underlie all phenomena and give to them whatever shadow of reality they possess, but which we are not able to cognize at our level. H.P.B. gives an example to understand this. The atoms of gold scattered throughout the substance of auriferous quartz may be imperceptible to the naked eye of the miner, yet he knows that they are not only present but that they alone give his quartz any appreciable value. The relation between noumenon and phenomenon is similar to that between gold and quartz. But whereas the miner knows what gold will look like when extracted from quartz, we, at our level, cannot form any conception of the reality of things as separated from the

veil of *Maya* which hides them, *i.e.*, we are able to grasp only its manifested aspect (*S.D.*, I, 45). We and the variety of objects that we see around us are due to *Maya*, or the power of creating appearance, but they are *essentially* nothing but *pure existence*.

The Supreme Reality is *Chit*, Pure Consciousness or *Absolute Consciousness* which becomes *relative* consciousness in manifestation, and this latent or potential consciousness in everything may be compared to a vacuum in the vessel. On breaking the vessel, it seems to disappear; it is everywhere and nowhere. *Kena Upanishad* shows that *Chit* or Pure Consciousness is the real agent or basis for all our actions. In the first verse of the first chapter the disciple asks the question: Impelled and directed by whom the mind soars forth? What intelligent power directs the eye or the ear in the performance of natural functions? The answer given by the Master is, “It is the ear of the ear, mind of the mind, the speech of the speech, the breath of the breath, and the eye of the eye.” In the article, “Modernized Upanishad,” Mr. Judge explains that outer organs are the means by which the real, but unseen inner, astral organs of sight, speech, hearing, etc. make themselves manifest and are able to cognize outside objects. But the real powers to see, hear, smell, touch, etc., flow from the Spirit. This Spirit is a portion of the eternal Spirit or *Brahman*.

Shankara taught that *Jivatma* is not separate from *Paramatma* or Supreme Reality. The Higher Self or *Atman* is like a ray of the sun, which may *appear* separate but cannot be detached from the Sun. *Buddhi*, *Manas*, body, etc., are various vehicles (*upadhi*) which reflect the light of *Atman*, giving rise to the sense of self. T. Subba Row gives an illustration in his *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* (pp. 31-32). When the sun is reflected by a mirror, and the rays reflected by the mirror fall upon a polished metallic plate, and these rays reflected from the plate in turn fall upon the wall, three different images of the sun are created. We may compare the mirror to *Karana-sarira* (*Buddhi-Manas*), the metallic plate to astral body, and the wall to the physical body. In each case the *bimbam* or reflected image that is formed is for the time being considered as the self. The reflected image in the astral body gives the

idea of self apart from the physical body, and the one formed in *Karana-sarira* gives rise to the prominent form of individuality. The lustre of these reflected images is not the same and if we compare this lustre to man's knowledge, then we see that it grows feebler and feebler as the reflection is transferred from a clear *upadhi* to one less clear, till we come to the physical body. Our knowledge depends upon the condition of the *upadhi*. The image on a clear surface of water may be disturbed or even made invisible by the motion of the water, so also by our passions and emotions we may make the image of our true self disturbed and distorted in appearance, and even make it so indistinct as to be altogether unable to perceive its light.

When we are able to transcend the self-identifying attachment to not only family and loved ones, but also to physical form, ideas, desires, emotions, etc., we succeed in merging the personal "I" into Individual "I." But even when we cease to identify ourselves with the personality, so long as there remains even a subtle sense of separateness, union with the divine is not possible. When the universe grows "I," there is the realization that "I am verily that *Brahman*." It is described as *Samadhi* state, when the higher spiritual consciousness of the Initiate is entirely absorbed in the ONE ESSENCE, the Pure Consciousness. *Samadhi* is the state in which the ascetic loses consciousness of every individuality, including his own.

Supreme Reality is *Ananda* or unconditioned happiness. In other words, happiness is the very nature of the Self. We know only of happiness which arises out of sense enjoyment, and as a result of desire fulfilment. There is a greater, subjective happiness in the heavenly world or Devachan as a result of performing certain ceremonies and penances. The Upanishads say that all happiness is only a reflection of the happiness of the Self, and it can be experienced by a calm and serene mind. The state of *Samadhi* is described as Real ecstasy, which is "liberation of the mind from its finite consciousness, becoming one and identified with the infinite."

Mr. Judge says that there is only one consciousness, and it is not

waking consciousness as different from sleeping consciousness, but consciousness itself. That consciousness is Being. Sat or *Being* is itself both *Chit* (Mind or Consciousness) and *Ananda*. The appearing together in full harmony of Being and Consciousness is Bliss or *Ananda*. This One consciousness of each person is the Witness of the actions and experiences we pass through. "Thus in waking life, *Sat* experiences fully and knows. In dream state, *Sat* again knows and sees what goes on there....In *Sushupti*—beyond dream, and yet on indefinitely, *Sat* still knows all that is done, heard or seen."

In the book, *The Dream of Ravan*, we are told that man is in SPIRIT-CONDITION or *Atma-dasha* in *Turya* State, a state of high spiritual consciousness, and is a state beyond Dreamless Sleep State. In this state the individualized spirit lives the ecstatic life, where it possesses true knowledge and the universal, eternal, ever-present intuition. The opposite or reversed mode of being is called *Jiva-dasha* or LIFE-CONDITION, which consists of Waking, Dreaming and Dreamless sleep states, beyond which is *Turya* state. It is ignorance of real nature of things which precipitates man from the SPIRIT-CONDITION into the LIFE-CONDITION. In dreamless sleep state the Ego exists in Causal body; in the dream-state it exists in subtle or astral body, is identified with astral body and the lower mind, believes in the universe of light and shadow. In the waking state the Ego begins to identify itself with the body. Thus, as the individual spirit or Ego moves from *Turya* to waking state, the True Being is more and more forgotten and obscured through false identification.

All Upanishads consistently proclaim that each one of us is one with *Brahman*, the Supreme Reality, and that each one is verily *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. According to Vedanta, everything in the external world, animate or inanimate consists of five things, namely, it exists (*Asti*), it is revealed (*Bhati*), it is pleasing (*Priya*), and it has a name (*Nama*) and form (*Rupa*). Once we eliminate name and form, which is the external layer, we will realize that we are all made of the same stuff—pure consciousness; we can realize the substratum, *i.e.*, *Sat*—

*Chit-Ananda*. The difference between us is just of name and form. Each one of us is potentially divine, and the goal of evolution is to manifest the divinity within.

We try to get happiness by fulfilling our desires. We try to overcome desires by satisfying them through contact with the outside world. Desires arise on account of ignorance of real nature of things. What we call the world is the network of name and form, or name-form complex. There is in us the urge to realize *asti-bhati-priya*. We want perpetual existence and do not want to die. This is the sense of *astitva*, or being or *Sat* in us. There is an urge for knowledge, wisdom, illumination, understanding, which is the urge for *bhatitva* or *Chit*, or consciousness. The urge for delight, satisfaction, pleasure is the urge of that infinite delight of existence-consciousness, *priya* or *ananda*. Thus, *asti-bhati-priya* is existence, consciousness, bliss or *sat-chit-ananda*. In our contact with things, or name and forms, we seek *asti-bhati-priya*, and thus seek *sat-chit-ananda* through *nama-rupa*; we seek Reality in appearances, explains Swami Krishnananda.

*Sat, Chit, Ananda* of Ancient Indian philosophy may be translated as Existence, Ideation, Bliss, or also “Be-ness, Becoming, Being.” The trinity as the unit is named *Sat-Chit-Ananda-Ghana*. “Why Being is of the nature of Bliss, how Ideation is Becoming, what Existence is Be-ness, are the primal most intimate and highly practical questions, for in answers to them are found the meaning and purpose of our own life, growth and ultimate regeneration.” Existence (or Absolute Existence) is *Sat* or *Be-ness*. Being always is, it may be on the plane of realization of unity with the All, in *Atma-dasa*, or on the phenomenal plane where such realization of unity is absent, and is therefore in *Ahankar-dasa*. We might say, when in *Atma-dasa* it is of the nature of Bliss. Ideation, related to unfoldment and progress, is Becoming. (*Studies in “The Secret Doctrine,”* p. 88)

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT OF HUMAN BONDAGE

“OF HUMAN BONDAGE” is a novel by W. Somerset Maugham, published in 1915. It is considered to be his masterpiece, though initially it met with a mixed response. It is strongly autobiographical in nature, containing many details from the author’s life. The novel depicts the emotional isolation of a young man and his gradual insight into life. It is the story of a nine-year-old orphan boy, Philip Carey, who is sent to live with his aunt and uncle, Louisa and William Carey. His uncle, an Anglican Vicar, is coldly disposed towards him. He reads a variety of books, which helps him to forget about his solitude. He has a club foot, a congenital deformity in which the foot is twisted out of shape or position. He is acutely sensitive about his handicap. In less than a year’s time he is sent to a boarding school. His deformity and introverted nature, make it difficult for him to fit in with other students, who taunt and humiliate him. He excels at school, and though his uncle and aunt want him to go to Oxford University, he insists on going to Germany. After many philosophical discussions with his two friends, he comes to the conclusion that it is possible to be “virtuous” and “unbelieving.” Philip renounces his religion and becomes an agnostic. He then begins to seek the meaning of life, through reading, studying, conversations with friends and through art.

Having returned from Germany to England, he soon leaves for France where he attends art classes and makes new friends, including Fanny Price, who falls in love with him, but he has no feelings for her, and she subsequently commits suicide. In Paris he meets an artist, Cronshaw, who tells him that the meaning of life can be found in a Persian rug, and gives him a piece of it as a parting gift. It was many years later that in a moment of despair he realizes what Cronshaw was trying to convey through the symbol of Persian rug.

On realizing that he will never be a professional artist, he returns to England to study medicine. During these years he comes across Mildred,

who is working as a waitress in a tea shop. He falls desperately in love with her, although she does not show any affection for him. He is obsessed with her. He fails in his examination and is nearly dismissed from medical school. When he proposes to marry her, she declines saying that she was going to marry someone else, who ultimately refuses to marry her. Clearly, she was a woman with no moral value, and was taking advantage of Philip's soft heart and generosity, and was only interested in money. Philip subsequently enters into an affair with Norah Nesbit, a kind and sensitive author. Later Mildred returns, dejected and pregnant and confesses that the man for whom she had abandoned Philip never married her. Philip breaks off his relation with Norah, and supports Mildred financially. But soon Mildred falls in love with Philip's good friend, Harry Griffith and runs away with him.

A year later, Philip meets Mildred again and takes her in, feeling sympathy for her. He no longer loves her and hence rejects her advances. She gets angry and leaves him forever. Again, towards the end of the novel, she approaches him for medical opinion because probably she was suffering from syphilis, resulting from her work as a prostitute. She is not ready to give up her life as a prostitute.

While working at a hospital Philip befriends a family man, Thorpe Athelny. When Philip is left nearly penniless having invested in mines, Athelny takes him in and finds him a department store job. Meanwhile, his uncle William dies, and Philip inherits enough money to allow him to finish his medical studies and become a licensed doctor. Upon receiving his diploma, he goes to work in a village for Doctor South. He proves to be an excellent physician, and is offered a partnership, which Philip declines as he intends to go to Spain and then explore the world by ship.

He goes on a summer holiday with the Athelnys and finds that their daughter Sally likes him. They get intimate, and when he discovers that Sally is pregnant, he decides to marry her and accept Doctor South's partnership offer. In a final twist, Sally discovers that she is not pregnant after all. Despite learning that it was a false alarm,

Philip becomes engaged to Sally, concluding that "the simplest pattern—that in which a man was born, worked, married, had children, and died—was likewise the most perfect." He stops searching for happiness and decides to be content with his lot.

*Of Human Bondage* is classified by some critics to be *Bildungsroman*, which in literary criticism means a literary genre which focuses on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood, *i.e.*, *coming of age*, undergoing change in character. The term comes from the German words *Bildung* meaning "education," and *Roman* meaning novel. It relates to the growing up of a sensitive individual who goes in search of answers to life's questions with the expectation that these will result in gaining experiences of the world. Thus, in the novel we are able to trace the journey of the protagonist, Philip Carey, who makes mistakes in choosing his friends, women, his life work, ideologies, meets on his way guides and counsellors, and eventually learns to adjust himself. Some critics see his journey as a transition from holding idealistic view of world and people to realistic.

The novel is considered semi-autobiographical because while the protagonist, Philip had a club foot, Maugham had a stammer. Just as the physical defect makes the protagonist extremely vulnerable and tends to stunt his emotional and mental growth, so also, Maugham faced psychological trauma due to his stuttering problem. Like the protagonist, the author too lost his mother when he was a child and was sent to live with his uncle and aunt. He was interested in art, though he did not practice it himself. All the difficulties and problems of life, including bodily and mental defects, come to us under Karma. Interestingly, at the end of the novel we find the protagonist accepting his deformity which had made his life so hard, and warped his character. He even begins to regard it as an opportunity afforded to grow, as "by reason of it he had acquired that power of introspection which had given him so much delight. Without it he would never have his keen appreciation of beauty, his passion for art and literature, and his interest in varied spectacle of life. The ridicule and the contempt which had so often been heaped upon him had turned his mind inward and called forth

those flowers which he felt would never lose their fragrance. Then he saw that the normal was the rarest thing in the world. Everyone had some defect of body or mind: he thought of all the people he had known...some with illness of flesh, weak hearts or weak lungs, and some with illness of the spirit, languor of will, or a craving for liquor....They were helpless instruments of blind chance.” Each and every one of us is suffering from some defect, not by chance, but due to our own past karma. All that we have in our hands is our response to the condition brought by ourselves. Mr. Crosbie sums it up, thus: “In the great economy of Law and Nature, each being is exactly where he needs to be to eradicate defects; all necessary conditions are present for his growth. The only question lies with him: will he take them as ‘pain’ or as opportunities? If the latter, all is well; he is bound to conquer whether the way be long or short...The purpose of life is to learn, and it is all made up of learning. The various conditions that confront us are opportunities and means afforded us to increase our discrimination, strength and knowledge.”

The idea of “bondage” in the title of the novel refers to bondage of human emotions and the yearning for freedom. Human beings are slaves to their emotions, attachments and desires, which is the main cause of unhappiness. Since the author explores psychological and philosophical aspects of human nature, and how human beings get caught in emotional entanglements, the title chosen for the novel is, “Of Human Bondage,” which has been borrowed from Spinoza’s work, *Ethics*, part IV, entitled, “Of Human Bondage, or the Strength of the Emotions.” Spinoza defines bondage or enslavement as human weakness in controlling the influence of emotions. According to him some emotions, such as hatred, are always bad, while some other emotions are always good. But emotions such as love and desire, vary in their effects according to context.

The Buddha, the greatest psychologist of all time, has given us a list of tendencies which cause bondage and produce grief. Attachment arises from our likes and dislikes. We are attached to that which we like. Affection involves deeper emotions, particularly towards other

beings—son, daughter, father, mother, a friend or any other individual. Attachment to sensual pleasures leads to indulgence. Our personal desires, including the lofty feeling of love, contain the seeds of grief. Craving (*tanha*) is the thirst or longing. It is the thirst for life which brings us back into the world again and again. Attachment and affection are personal, what we need to cultivate is detached attachment, universal compassion and loving kindness. The Buddha shows how the freedom from bondage is through control of the mind and of the heart.

According to some critics the novel suggests that free will is merely an illusion, as our decisions are influenced by a variety of known and unknown forces, and we are held in bondage by the power of these forces. For instance, why would a self-respecting man put up with the vulgar woman like Mildred? Also, the protagonist had always felt persecuted by some cruel fate. Theosophy teaches that man is a free agent during his stay on earth, but “there are *external and internal conditions* which affect the determination of our will upon our actions.” The fact is that we are conditioned, to an extent, by our previous right or wrong actions so that our present choices are, as it were, determined or influenced by the past. In other words, the exercise of free will is conditioned or limited by the *external* circumstance, as well as, the *inner* capacities and conditions—both being the result of past Karma. A person may think ten times before he makes the choice, but having made it, that choice becomes his destiny, by which he is bound. Today’s destiny is made by our choice in the past. Today’s choice weaves our destiny in the future. Just as a spider weaves the web, thread by thread, so we are *seemingly* enwrapped in the network of our own doing, and are under the empire of *self-made* destiny. This is partly hinted at in the novel, while discussing the meaning of life.

Almost at the end of the novel, when the protagonist is assailed by the feeling that life was without meaning or purpose, he remembers the Persian rug, gifted to him by an artist, symbolizing the meaning of life. Upon reflection, it suddenly becomes clear to him that “As the weaver elaborated his pattern for no end but the pleasure of his

aesthetic sense, so might a man live his life, or if one was forced to believe that his actions were outside his choosing, so might a man look at his life, that it made a pattern.... Out of the manifold events of his life, his deeds, his feelings, his thoughts, he might make a design, regular, elaborate, complicated, or beautiful; and though it might be no more than an illusion that he had the power of selection... that did not matter....” The protagonist is thrilled by this new way of looking at things. “His life had seemed horrible when it was measured by its happiness,” but now he saw both pain and happiness as also other details of his life as forming part of design or pattern, adding to its complexity, and the work of art would be completed when the end came.

Theosophy teaches that life is intrinsically meaningful, worthwhile and valuable, and it is left to each individual to realize and sense the value and meaning of life. Every life is meaningful, provided we change our attitude towards what life brings to us. Theosophy says with sage Patanjali that the whole universe exists for the experience and emancipation of the soul. Each one of us is a weaver of his own destiny in this world. We choose our own threads for the loom. Our thoughts and our words, our acts and our feelings, are the materials with which we weave our destiny, refined or rough, pure or impure. We often make mistakes in weaving, and then instead of repairing the wrong, we go on involving ourselves more and more in the disordered pattern. In despair and sorrow, we seek refuge in selfish prayers for forgiveness. We try to bribe the gods. But that will not repair the wrong. The only way out of the difficulty is to undo or recompense the wrong, by creating fresh good karma, and learning necessary lessons to weave, “the simplest pattern” and appreciate its meaning, purpose and beauty.

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NOBODY has things just as he would like them. The thing to do is to make a success with what material I have. It is a sheer waste of time and soul-power to imagine what I would do if things were different. They are not different.

—DR. FRANK CRANE

## THE POWER OF RESOLVES

WISHES, resolves, vows are closely connected with this cyclic season. This is the season when, as the sun moves northwards, the seeds underneath the earth begin to germinate and all Nature becomes active once again, silently and secretly. All the Saviours and Teachers of humanity pour their influence in certain directions and upon certain centres at this seasonal cycle when the occult forces in nature have an upward and increasing tendency; and so it is with man, in whom is reflected what happens in Nature. This is a season of awakening; hearts and minds and souls are more open to spiritual influences at this time. And so, this festive season serves to remind us of something that is stirring within—within the heart of human nature as well as the heart of Mother Nature. Hearts and minds that are open may profit by the resurgence of life and energy, and receive added strength to keep a resolution after it is made.

A resolve implies a decision, a choice. To judge our ability to hold to a decision, let us always pause and think, and act coolly and deliberately. In social life, in household and family life, as also in our inner life, we are continually called upon to act and to make decisions regarding our future actions; and in each instance if our decisions are based on knowledge, and if we hold to them, we shall have varying degrees of success. On looking back at some of our decisions, we may wish we had not made them; there are also decisions we wish we could adhere to, but something prevents us. Why? It needs to be understood that conjoined with decisions and resolves is *search*. We as souls are at different stages of evolution and we know that some are searching, not for the real values of life, but for useless pursuits and paths. That sort of search will not bring us to the position where we can make wise decisions and resolves and adhere to them. But there are those who have begun to see that they are responsible beings, that they are souls, and that they must not only make a decision but must *act* in accordance with it.

To make a resolution and to hold it requires knowledge. For one

thing, when we make a resolution and stick to it, we have to break others. We have to destroy old habits of thought and feeling, weaknesses, inefficiency, ineffectual and flaccid wills. That is the real difficulty in the way of making resolves and holding to them. The carrying through of a line of action is not as difficult as the breaking of old habits of thought, will, feeling based upon our previous knowledge, preconceptions, traditions.

What we do not always realize is that at this time of the year we are being influenced, stirred, awakened by the great Intelligences, the presiding deities of the season. Each one has different ways of fulfilling his decisions and resolves, but if we would after making a resolve begin to control ourselves, to think of the highest thoughts that we have ever had, to recall the most sublime and spiritual feelings we have experienced and the noble deeds we have performed selflessly, forgetful of whether or not they please our personal nature, then if we would study the knowledge that all true teachers have given out in reference to the Path of Action, to the power of resolves and of vows and to the nature of the Soul, we would come upon a science of the fulfilment of decisions and vows and be freed from the thralldom, the turbulence and unceasing strife caused by ignorance. We would come to the realization that great Souls and High Beings were once erring mortals like ourselves; but, having determined to change their way of living, they stuck to their vows. All present decisions are based upon past decisions, and the power to adhere to them comes from performing little selfless acts until they accumulate and become one great symphony of thought and will and feeling.

Once this stage is reached, we have but one aim, one purpose; all others become subsidiary. This aim and this purpose persistently adhered to gives us the strength which comes from the chamber of the heart, and will bring us into the presence of those Great Souls who have similarly vowed to serve others from age to age.

## REMEMBERING MAHATMA GANDHI

EVERY new year in India begins with the nation paying grateful homage to the national heroes who attained martyrdom in the cause of India's freedom from colonial rule. It begins on 30th January with a commemoration of Mahatma Gandhi who fell victim to the assassin's bullet on that day in 1948. It is marked by a formal state ceremony, and recalling by numerous individuals and organizations of the unique contribution of Gandhiji in practically demonstrating in the freedom struggle the power and the efficacy of the virtues of Truth and Non-violence in overcoming the opposing brute force and injustice, without a drop of blood being spilled.

Gandhiji is no more physically but his ideas live on and continue to inspire many. Abolition of apartheid, the system of segregation on the grounds of race and colour in South Africa, non-violent struggle to secure civil rights for the blacks in America, were inspired by Gandhiji's movement of *satyagraha*—insistence on, and holding on to, truth and non-violence in the struggle against oppressive forces, for freedom, equity, right of self-determination, self-rule, and brotherhood. These ideas continue to reverberate in the world even today. Embroiled as the world is in crises of climate change, ecological disasters, terrorism, diseases, poverty and hunger, rivalries and wars for world hegemony among powerful nations, and so on, academics, leaders, and social and political analysts are taking a serious look at the Gandhian philosophy as a sane and a viable solution to the world problems.

Gandhiji did not teach anything new. His unique contribution is that he practically applied in his private and public life the teaching of the age-old truth of selfless action for the good of the world and renouncing any thought or intent of any personal benefit flowing therefrom. It is sacrifice or *Yajna* in practice, to serve without desire. He said that only thus do we discharge the deep debt we owe to our country, to humanity at large, thus lighten our burden and fulfill our duty. It is the teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and of all great teachers of mankind.

It is very easy to read the scriptures and deliver learned discourses on them. Of such the world abounds. But very few indeed are there who practically apply in thought, word, and deed continually and consistently twenty-four hours of the day throughout their life the philosophical and ethical principles of the higher life. It requires unshakable conviction, sincerity, indomitable will, moral courage, fearlessness, dauntless energy, and love of mankind to perform at such an intensity self-sacrificial action solely for the good of the world, thought of personal self wholly discounted. Gandhiji was one such rare brave individual who dared to abide unflinchingly by the behests of truth and non-violence in the struggle against the then world's mightiest powers and win them over. He practically lived the moral principles he preached so completely—though he was humble enough to candidly admit in public that the perfect ideal he strove for, forever receded before him—that his life and activities themselves are his message and his teachings. This is a hallmark of absolute sincerity.

Gandhiji's non-violent struggle was not confined to political action alone. He shed the clear light of moral principles, having their basis in the science of truth and non-violence, on all issues of social, economic, national, and international relations. It is the practical application of Universal Brotherhood which Theosophy shows to be the fundamental truth of existence in which is found the harmonious resolution of all world problems. No individual, no community, or a nation can achieve lasting happiness and true progress either at the expense of the happiness of others or when someone, somewhere is suffering, because humanity—in fact, all life—is One in essence. Therefore, each unit of the human family ought to live and act on this scientific principle. In other words, as each nature reacts on all, everyone must live and act for the good of all. Speaking of Unity of Man, Gandhiji said: "I do not believe...that an individual may gain spiritually and those who surround him suffer. I believe in *advaita*, I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, of all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the

whole world falls to that extent." (*The Mind of the Mahatma*, p. 223, Navjivan publishing house, Ahmedabad, 1967)

This scientific moral principle was well known in ancient India and the social order was organized on the law of sacrifice. "*Adhiyajna* is myself in this body," says Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (chapter 8). Man ought to live to benefit all, else he lives to no purpose. During the reign of Ashoka, a golden period in Indian history, the whole of India carried out *en mass* this ethical principle. It was one of those high points of culture and civilization rare to find in the annals of history.

This goes to show that Gandhiji's struggle against forces of oppression, against such social evils as the tyranny of caste, untouchability, exploitative Western economic and industrial civilization, and so on, was just and much needed reform; and his vision of a non-violent, equitable social order in which each one lives and works for all and all for each, was not a utopia, after all.

In his vision, mere material progress devoid of moral improvement is productive of evil, and such a civilization he described as satanic. It is moral elevation and soul development of the human being which should be the civilizational ideal—the end which the material or economic growth should subserve. He said: "I do want growth, I do want self-determination, I do want freedom, but I want all these for the soul. I doubt if the steel age is an advance upon the flint age. I am indifferent. It is the evolution of the soul to which the intellect and all our faculties have to be devoted." (*ibid.*, p. 231)

Such indeed is the teaching of Jesus, the Buddha, Mahomed, Rama, Krishna, and it was the civilizational ideal of ancient India. Modern India has lost sight of the ideal and embraced the Western idea of material progress, based on greed and exploitation, as an end in itself, the dehumanizing and destructive effects of which are evident everywhere.

Gandhiji's utter humility, and his selfless devotion to humanity in which he saw God, was of such purity that he never wanted him as a person to be remembered, or in any way commemorated, after his death, but that the ideals for which he lived and died may be remembered

and pursued. But, alas! the very opposite of his last wish is observed. To his message, the practical application of Wisdom of ages to all aspects of social and national life, if not forgotten, mere lip-service is paid in a formal ceremonial commemoration. During the visit of Martin Luther King to India in 1959, he said that while he went to other countries as a tourist his visit to India, hallowed by Ganhiji's holy strivings, was a pilgrimage; and he expressed in his public speeches his disappointment that India has given up the Gandhian way and taken the opposite course.

Gandhiji knew even during his life that India as a whole was not ready to take to the path of truth and non-violence in its progress. But he was an optimist having firm faith in the divinity latent in man which he said will manifest and prevail, however far that consummation may be.

While the nation as a whole is not ready to adopt the Gandhian way, not a few individuals whose minds and hearts resonate with the Gandhian thought strive to uphold the seminal ideas and incorporate them in their lives, as much as it is in their capacity and moral power to do so. To practice truth and non-violence in one's life is to think and act as the Self, the Self of All, and place entire reliance on Karma, the Just Law: to drink to the last drop whatever the contents the cup of life may have in store for us, without a murmur, as our just desert. Moreover, to perform every obligatory duty, renouncing motive of self-interest in their outcome, as sacrifice to the Self which is One, for the highest good of the world, always remembering our moral responsibility to the whole pointed out in the profound truth uttered by the Mahatma: "If one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent."

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LET us not look back in anger, nor forward in fear, but around us in awareness.

—JAMES THURBER

## EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

### LETTERS OF PERSONAL COUNSEL—V

OUTSIDE THE home there is a world; outside your own mind-world and heart-world there is a universe. It has lessons on the one hand; it needs service on the other. You must begin to cultivate a deliberate attentiveness to the Inner Light by whose aid alone you can perceive truth. As bodily age creeps on, the inner has to be attended to with speed and clear vision. What saving of time and energy and how? What giving of what is saved to the Great Cause and to Them? Less fluctuating and more steadiness and steadfastness of and in the within is becoming your pressing need. More study, not only of Theosophy but of cognate subjects, becomes necessary. You need consideration, which means thought; reflection, which means seeing in the Mirror of the Mind: meditation, which means gaining familiarity with the Divine Astral—*Maha Smriti*; and, above all application, which means descending from the Inner *Akasha* to the outer brain. We cannot be less strenuous in living the Life and serving the Lords of Life—our Living Mahatmas. You must prove to your own self that you are an officer and not only a soldier or sepoy in the Great Army.

Well, enough of the past. Let us look to the future, both near and distant, and labour in the present to sustain the motions of the Mighty Plan of the Mighty Holy Ones. Holiness, like love, is a misunderstood term; the world needs Holiness and it can best be taught by personal example. So, I say, live the Life and make your home a centre of the Theosophic Light of true Holiness, for which you will need the association of *The Secret Doctrine* ideas and the companionship of the writings of W. Q. Judge.

You hold on to the Lines—inner especially. You are learning many things all along the line—even teaching at the U.L.T., etc., is learning and gathering experience. Make it all precious and store it away for the future. Get yourself a position which the world recognizes, for we have to work with the mind of the race; you must carve out a place for

yourself in this world's civilization and then you will be of mighty service to the Blessed Holy Ones. Keep your Faith and Devotion burning in silence and secrecy and thus you will do for Them what They need.

Never consider any problem from the viewpoint of whether it is pleasant or unpleasant to persons; each problem should be decided on its own merit. We should not try to judge of our efforts from the results of others. We have to do that which is right and leave Karma to settle all the rest.

If you make discerning use of Karmic activity in and of your environment you will gain experience which will strengthen your feet. Remain silent and think and seek out teachings applicable to each situation. Your silence will endow you with purity while your endeavour to learn will develop and deepen your sense of truth. Apply the *Shila Paramita*; let not there be any room for Karmic action started by you. Have love in your heart and no adverse thought in your head about conditions. Keep up your noble efforts at service. Take care of your precious body, your psychic temperament and your thoughts. The purity and spirituality of thoughts are the best protectors and also the energizers of the body to be healthy and wise; these two are the best of wealth.

Do take great care of yourself, not only of your good mind and your pure heart, but also of your body. Keep it in good magnetism so that from its every pore streams forth Light, benign and gracious. May peace and happiness be with you, and may you grow like a flower of colour and fragrance and beauty of shape! Have love for all, even for the mean and the crooked and the selfish. Forgiveness comes from faith in the Higher. Each one carries the light of the Soul. Some obscure it very grotesquely, but it is there. Look for it. Do not minimize your own light of mind, of heart, of hands.

May all good and real prosperity envelop you every day of the coming year! If you truly take care of your body and improve its health substantially your mental energies will gain vitality and even your weakening memory will improve. But you really must learn to

take good care of your body. The Work and our Cause need every loyal and devoted helper. Though you have suffered in the physical body there is enough stamina, pranic and other, to keep you going provided you work in silence and collectedly in your mind and calmly with your heart.

No use preaching to you about anything today, but let me wish you success in your effort to gain calmness, desirelessness, sanctified common sense.

May your life and labour prove beneficent in an increasing measure! To live is to be. We need to know so that we may become better and brighter—enlivening and enlightening all deeds. Life all live, but some without light, some by the glare of the street lamps. We want the Light of the Spiritual Sun—it is there, all ready to be tapped. Tapping it means recalling, remembering and then using our divine faculty of Imagination. May Their blessings surround you every day of this coming year! My love is always with you.

Work is progressing and I am cogitating about the labourers in the world-field which belongs to Them and on which Their watchful eye ever falls.

Great privileges as well as responsibilities spread out before you and I hope that you will value them from the point of view of the Inner Ego and not of the outer man. You will have many tests, many trials and many temptations, but if you remain faithful to the Teachings you will be able to save yourself many a pitfall. And it is only through the teachings that you will be able to know really who the Teachers are. You have begun to feel for the great Masters and Their nearness to you; you must now endeavour to come face to face and light to light with Them. You will succeed if you keep the three things of study, application and promulgation well and properly balanced. Also, avoid the extremes of either going too much in the outer world or restricting this too much and neglecting the external.

What do I wish for you? Prosperity of the ordinary type? Health, wealth and happiness? Of course, yes. But these are effects and we must look deeper into the plane of causes. It is mental calm and psychic

contentment which begets physical health. It is disinterestedness, generosity, enjoying Nature through *yagna*-sacrifice which attracts wealth to us and makes us trustees of the money which comes to us. Real happiness of the *sattva* kind is described in the 18th chapter of *The Bhagavad-Gita*; in our sensorium it reflects the inner joy, *Ananda*, bliss. May you have all these! But above them all, may your heart glow with enlightenment and may the Tathagata Light burn therein increasingly! May your mind radiate the Divine Paramitas whose virgin mother is Compassion Absolute! These are high hopes, my dear, but better ever to hope as high as the heavens and derive for our human devotion what the stars send forth. So acquire true knowledge by study, send it out by teaching it to others, and be united, for that and all purposes, with those who are like-hearted and like-minded. May the bond of old days sustain us in common endeavour for the good of the Great Cause of the Blessed and Holy Masters!

Inner Heart-Feeling, true Compassion, assembles knowledge from without, garnering the same all the time, while within Wisdom spontaneously springs up. Inner Contentment needs a great deal of outer silence: to appear as nothing in the eyes of men; to do real *Dana* so that our left hand knows not what our right hand does—this is real *Siddhi*, in which *Buddhi* is present. Aim at this, for by this and this *alone* real Masters are to be found. “Seek for Him who is to give thee birth in the Hall of Wisdom.” That is my first wish. Attain this inward Contentment and all the necessary things will come to you, more or less naturally. Real and regular study of the Stanzas and of *The Voice of the Silence*, of Judge’s articles and of *Light on the Path*, will strengthen your psycho-spiritual Heart and brighten up with real shade all your deeds. Be true to the Inner God, to Them, to the Lines laid down by H.P.B. May you succeed!

(To be continued)

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HUMOUR is an affirmation of dignity, a declaration of man’s superiority to all that befalls him.

—ROMAN GARY

## GOD AND DEVIL—SOME REFLECTIONS

### II

THE DISTORTION of esoteric ideas by exoteric religions and theologies, leading to contradictions is also to be found in the Hindu *Puranas*. Thus, for instance, Rishi Pulastya is a “Son of God” and a progenitor of Rakshasas and Demons, the tempters and Devourers of men. This seeming contradiction can be understood once we grasp the true meaning and nature of Rakshasas and Demons. *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 78) points out that the seven Rishis, Marichi, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vasishta are all mind-born sons of Brahma, and they are mind-born sons of Third Manvantara, which refers to Third Round and also to third Root-Race, as also, its branch races in the Fourth round. These Rishis are *Prajapatis* and creators of various beings on this Earth. Since mankind of Third and Fourth Root-Races were all giants, we can understand the meaning of Pulastya being the progenitor of Rakshasas and Demons.

*Daityas*, *Danavas*, *Rakshasas*, seem to refer to humanity of later Third and the Fourth Root races, and some of them were extremely pious, and followed the precepts of the Vedas, and some of these were even great Yogis. These were opposed to Rituals, Sacrifices, dead-letter interpretation of scriptures and priest-craft, and therefore they are designated as Devils or Demons.

H.P.B. says that probably the *Gibborim* of the Bible are the Rakshasas of the Hindus, but certainly, both of them refer to the Fourth Race Atlanteans. Christian theologians consider Satan or Devil to be the source of everything that is evil, and they intensely curse him and hate him. As contrasted with this the sages of the *Puranas* have a philosophical view of Satan. As an example, we are given the story of Rishi Parashara, who gets angry because a Rakshasa had eaten up his father.

The story goes that on a narrow path, when Parashara’s father Sakti met a king, who wanted him to move away and he refused,

the king beat him with a whip. Then Sakti cursed the king which turned him into demon (Rakshasa) who ate human flesh. After the curse, as soon as the king turned into a Rakshasa, he devoured Parashara's father. After that Parashara was raised by his grandfather, Vasishtha. When Parashara comes to know that his father was killed by a Rakshasa he performs a sacrifice or a magical rite, in which hundreds of Rakshasas are reduced to ashes. When their race was about to be completely destroyed, Vasishtha tells him to control his anger, because the Rakshasas are not to be blamed for his father's death; it came to him under Karma, and in that sense, he seems to suggest that the Rakshasas were only agents of Karma. Hence, he is told that anger brings about destruction of all that is acquired after great exertion. Interestingly, he says that do not destroy any more, these "unoffending" spirits of darkness. Here, perhaps, there is a reference to dark powers or dark forces which are co-workers with nature, in that they carry out karmic decree, and that is why they are termed "unoffending." Thus, sage Vasishtha advises Parashara to assume compassionate attitude towards demons, unlike theologians who abused them.

The term "unoffending" can be understood in the light of Karma and elementals. Elementals are centres of force, and are described as the carriers of Karma. Mr. Judge explains how elementals are connected with the Karma of man. Being unconscious, automatic, and photographic, they assume the complexion of the human family. In earlier ages, when man had not yet begun to make bad Karma, the elemental world was more friendly to man because it had not received unfriendly impressions. But so soon as man began to become ignorant, unfriendly to himself and the rest of creation, the elemental world began to take on exactly the same complexion and return to humanity the exact pay, so to speak, due for the action of humanity. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 144)

The Rakshasas and Demons, the so-called devils, are described as "tempters" of men. The term "tempting" must be understood in its various meanings, to understand Satan or Devil in right perspective. Thus, for instance, "The Lord's Prayer," is the one prayer that Jesus gave, and

his command was to pray "in secret." The sixth petition in the prayer is "Lead us not into temptation," which is addressed to "the Father, who is in Heaven." H.P.B. observes that this is contradicted by what is said by Apostle James, who says that man should never say when he is tempted that he is tempted by God or that God is leading him to temptation, because God is not tempted by evil and he does not lead any man into temptation. Moreover, if Jesus says that it is God who tempts us, why do Christians say that it is Devil who tempts them? We see that according to Jesus it is God who tempts us, and according to St. James, God does not tempt us. These two are contradictory teachings. We have two meanings of the word "temptation": (1) God tries and tests people through troubles and afflictions. (2) It is temptations or enticements used by devil to entangle people in worldly life and take them away from spiritual path. The contradiction between Jesus's saying and that of St. James can be resolved only if we accept Devil as an inseparable aspect of God. (*S.D.*, I, 414)

In the *Book of Job* the Sons of God and the Satan, both present themselves before the Lord. H.P.B. points out that the allegory of Job is the allegory of Karmic purification and initiation. If we understand it correctly, it will give us a clue to the real meaning and function of Devil. Thus, in preliminary trials the neophyte has to pass through trials called "Twelve Tortures," wherein he has to learn to govern his passions and never lose sight of God. After which there are three trials and three initiations. Then the neophyte is brought to the "Hall of Spirits" to be judged by them. (*Isis*, II, 364-65)

In the scene of Judgement, Osiris is sitting on his throne, and before him are the "Sons of God" and they are the forty-two assessors of the dead. In the *Book of Job*, "clearer and plainer than anywhere else, do we find the meaning of the appellation, Satan. It is a term for the office or character of *public accuser*. Satan is the Typhon of the Egyptians, barking his accusations in Amenthi; an office quite as respectable as that of the public prosecutor, in our own age" (*Isis*,

II, 493-94). In other words, at the time of Judgement of the soul, after death, Satan performs the function of an accuser, or public prosecutor in our days, who carries out the legal proceedings in the court of law against the criminal.

The other function of Satan who is analogous to *Mara* of Buddhism is to tempt the candidate and thus test him and also bring about discipline. Thus, for Jesus, wilderness is the place of probation where Satan tempts him. In such cases, Devil or Satan is no malignant principle, but one exercising discipline. In the *Book of Job*, the Lord counsels with Satan and gives him complete freedom to test the fidelity of Job. So, for instance, Job loses all his wealth and family, and also suffers from incurable disease. He is tested by Satan (*Isis*, II, 484-85). These instances depict Satan in a positive light.

Often when *Danavas* and *Daityas* and *Rakshasas* are regarded as devils, they may be seen as representing evil in human nature which arises from misuse of free will. “The real evil proceeds from human intelligence and its origin rests entirely with reasoning man who dissociates himself from Nature,” writes a Master of Wisdom. Mind is the cause for both human bondage and freedom. Lucifer is the so-called Satan in us. “It is our *Mind*—our tempter and Redeemer, our intelligent liberator and Saviour from pure animalism (*S.D.*, II, 513). Without this principle of mind, we would be no better than animals. In the article, “The Fall of Ideals,” H.P.B. observes that the present state of the society is due to “fall of values,” *i.e.*, the failure to live up to the values of civilization. The real obstacle in reaching the ideal of human perfection is the devil within man, and not any external anthropomorphized devil. “Satan is an elastic term, and no one has yet ever given even an approximately logical definition of the symbolical meaning of the name,” writes H.P.B.

There are three aspects of the mind: (1) When involved in desires and passions, the mind is *reactive*, making man an animal-man. (2) When the mind functions on its own plane—thinking and reasoning—it is mind *per se*. (3) When the mind works in conjunction with spiritual nature, it is *creative*—making man divine.

The Fourth Race Atlanteans of the later period are renowned for their magic powers and wickedness, as also for their ambition and defiance of gods. H.P.B. points out that no one can fail to recognize the Atlanteans of the Secret Doctrine in Ravana and the Rakshasas of Lanka. They worshipped form and matter which degenerated into self-worship and later into phallic worship. They lost their *spiritual perception* owing to the gradual increase of materiality. The Atlanteans perished in the cataclysm brought about by their extreme materiality and sin. It shows that one who uses his free will to choose evil, cannot infinitely go on so as to become an immortal force opposed to God. Sooner or later, such an individual is annihilated, as is found in the instance of Ravana, Kansa, Hiranyakashipu and Sishupala.

For a smooth circular motion the centripetal (centre-tending) and centrifugal (centre-leaving) forces must be in equilibrium. In the article “The Aryan-Arhat Esoteric Tenets on Sevenfold Principle in Man,” Mr. T. Subba Row observes that the ancients have compared man’s life and existence to the orbital motion of a planet around the sun, in which there is balancing of the centripetal and centrifugal forces. But when the planet in its *approach* to the sun passes over the line where the centripetal and centrifugal forces completely neutralize each other and is only acted on by the centripetal force, it rushes towards the sun with a gradually increasing velocity and is finally mixed up with the mass of the sun’s body. Again, when the planet in its *retreat* from the sun reaches a point where the centrifugal force becomes all-powerful it flies off in a tangential direction from its orbit, and goes into the depths of void space, and is ultimately, decomposed into atoms. In human beings, the Centripetal force is *spiritual attraction*, and Centrifugal force is *terrestrial attraction*. As the centripetal force predominates, the individual reaches a higher plane of existence and ultimately becomes one with *Paramatma*. On the other hand, if the centrifugal force becomes greater than the centripetal force, the individual comes to a lower level of existence and is ultimately annihilated.

In the *Key to Theosophy* we read that Spirit (or *Buddhi*) is the centrifugal and the soul (*Manas*) the centripetal spiritual energy; and to produce one result they have to be in perfect union and harmony. If we arrest the centripetal motion of the earthly soul tending towards the (divine) centre, by clogging it with a heavier weight of matter than it can bear, the harmony of the whole will be destroyed and we have the case of a black magician and a lost soul.

As explained in the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita*, Krishna comes when wickedness of humanity has reached a maximum development, and with the lapse of the ages, produces at last a creature who is, so to say, the very flower of all the wickedness of the past, counting from the last preceding *Avatar*. He is not only wicked, but also wise, so that his knowledge and powers match that of the *Avatar*. But ultimately, there is victory of good and destruction of the wicked, because the *Avatar* has on his side, the preservative, conservative forces, or *general will of nature*.

But so long as there remains a spark of love for the divine in the heart of the evil man, the Devil or Satan, it enables him to turn the corner. H.P.B. compares the concept of Satan given by various poets, in the article, “The Fall of Ideals.” Milton’s Satan is devil personified, which was used by the church to perpetrate the idea of personal devil. However, Victor Hugo’s Lucifer fights a fearful battle with *his own terrible passions* and again becomes an Archangel of Light, after the awful agonies ever conceived by mortal mind. Just as the lost jewel may be recovered from the very depths of the tank’s mud—because it is a jewel and keeps its identity even in mud—so can the most abandoned snatch himself from the mire of sin. So, God tells Satan that Man is bound by thee, but by her—Liberty or Free-will—he can be delivered.

(To be concluded)

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I LONG to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble.

—HELEN KELLER

## ON ANGER

WE ALL have experienced bouts of anger; the storm of anger comes swiftly even without our knowing and by the time we realize, we fall prey to the same. It destroys our peace of mind and leaves us completely shattered and helpless. From mental stress, high blood pressure, stiff muscles, to severe impact on the immune system are some of the varied effects of anger on the physical body.

Not only does it affect the physical, anger also has a severe impact on the inner, ethereal man as mentioned by Mr. Judge in the article “Culture of Concentration.” The influence of anger is felt by the ethereal body, “and manifests itself in an uncontrollable trembling which begins at the center and violently pulls apart the hitherto coherent particles.”

This shows its tremendous impact on man, so no wonder anger is also called the “Passion of Fools.” It is like first consuming deadly poison and then giving others to consume the same, for one must generate anger in oneself before one can exhibit the same.

In the same article, Mr. Judge says, “There is no such thing as having what is called ‘righteous anger’ . . . The anger is a force that will work itself out in its appointed way.” So why does man become such an easy victim to the same? How do we safeguard ourselves and others?

Anger is one of the outcomes of the deep-rooted feeling of separateness, few others being envy, vanity and pride, born from ignorance and wrong perceptions. One of the main causes of our suffering is rooted in the seeds of anger lying latent within us. Recognizing anger when it manifests itself is the first step. Then we need to own the responsibility for the same and act wisely with tenderness rather than trying to suppress the anger. We need to realize that “we” are not the anger, or the situation does not affect us. We can do this by taking the position of the “witness” or an observer. A constant vigil needs to be kept in monitoring the kind of thought we entertain.

We have been watering the seeds of anger in us since many lives. It has taken root and become too strong. Anger has roots in non-anger elements, such as the way we live our life, perceive things, people and the world.

Just like we consume a good healthy diet and not rotten diseased food, so we need to make sure that we entertain a healthy diet for our minds and entertain only harmonious altruistic thoughts based on knowledge.

Due to existing strong tendencies and cyclic return of impressions and our mental deposits, anger will come again in various subtle forms, as feeling of irritation, ill will, revenge, wounded vanity, etc. Once we consciously start observing the same, we can restrain ourselves from reacting to these destructive emotions by keeping high thoughts, altruistic feelings and compassion for others, in all situations and conditions.

Observing the arising of destructive emotions and not reacting is the key since everything is impermanent—our emotions, perceptions, body, etc. When we do not react, we consciously do not water the seeds of anger further and at the same time if we generate equal and opposite feeling of love and kindness towards the source of our irritation and anger, we water flowers instead of weeds. Over time the field of our mind will be full of beautiful flowers and all weeds will have been removed. This is a work of a life or several lives. However, we need to start somewhere. At the same time when the other person is exhibiting a feeling of anger, we need to keep our inner calm and act appropriately to the situation. Doing so will not add further fuel to the situation, especially, if we realize that every situation we come across is karmically due, and so is this. There could be some previous disharmony which is continuing its effects in this life, then it becomes even more important for us to dissipate the same and bring in harmony to whatever extent possible. With patience, constant practice and application of the above we can not only transform our lives but also contribute in making a beautiful world.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Divided attention is dangerous. In an excerpt, expanded and adapted from the book *Concentration: Staying Focused in Times of Distraction*, by Stefan Van Der Stigchel, we read that multitasking, though a time-saver, entails divided attention and that could prove dangerous, because our working memory can handle only one task at a time. In multitasking we do not perform two tasks simultaneously, though it *appears* so, but we switch between two tasks. Our brains are required to continuously switch between two activities, and this style of work ends up taking longer and creating more errors than when concentrating on a single task. However, such “switch cost” is lower when a person knows in advance, the task he is going to switch to, as it gives him a chance to completely empty his working memory. But when there is an interruption from outside, as one switches, a remnant of one’s attention remains behind in the previous task. The larger the remnant, the work switched to suffers in terms of time and accuracy.

Multitasking or task switching at work is very common, but that is often the result of outside interruption, such as answering the telephone, questions from colleagues, etc., which allows one to return back to the original work after a gap of time. But another reason for task switching is a lack of concentration, wherein an employee is in the habit of checking receipt of messages or emails, and if he has received, then there is temptation to reply immediately. When one regularly switches between tasks, or is regularly interrupted, then one tends to work superficially, hastily and less efficiently. We know that all important discoveries are a result of working in solitude with high concentration.

A 2006 study conducted at the University of California, Brain Research Institute, indicates that multitasking has a negative effect on our ability to learn. When one learns without any distractions, the hippocampus becomes active, which is the part of the brain that plays a crucial role in processing, retaining and retrieving information from long-term memory. When we learn while multitasking, the hippocampus is much less active or not active at all, and we are not

able to retain and use that information effectively at some later time. Social media and chat messages are the main distractors for students, who absorb less and perform poorly at school. Though it is very tempting to establish a negative correlation saying that heavier media usage, implies higher multitasking and poorer performance, one cannot conclusively say that one causes the other. For instance, someone who has poor concentration is more inclined to be distracted by media.

We must note that all multitasking is not harmful. We can study with the radio on, if we are able to ignore the information coming from the radio. According to a 2010 British survey, even surgeons listen to music while working. It depends upon what kind of music is playing. If the surgeon were to listen to the music intently or with attention, then it would become multitasking. Thus, although multitasking is on the rise in our times, “increasing our knowledge about how concentration works can help us choose wisely when we need to perform several tasks at once.” (*American Scientist*, January-February 2021)

The very term “divided attention” implies attention divided between two or more tasks, which means just the opposite of concentration or focussing of attention on a single task. Attention is the directing of the consciousness upon the subject to be studied or the thing to be done in such a way that we center the whole consciousness on that one particular thing and keep it thus steadily and uninterruptedly centred. It is similar to the focusing of the rays of the sun through a lens upon one definite spot so that the whole force of the rays operates on that one spot and no other. The operation of the rays is then intensified and strengthened in such a way as to produce results impossible of achievement when those same rays spread over a whole surface instead of converging at a focal point. That is why the power of our consciousness becomes intensified if attention is maintained and sustained, and the longer we are able to keep our attention the greater will be our knowledge or our ability.

That the focusing of our faculties through attention increases the

power of those faculties is well seen in cases of people who have lost the use of one or other of their senses. A blind person, for instance, will hear better, and sense through touch better. His sense of hearing and of touch will become intensified because the area of his activities has become smaller, and does not extend to sight experiences. This shows that multiplicity of actions results in a weakening of the attention. This too, is well known, we say, “give me your undivided attention—I want your whole attention.” Because we realize instinctively that if we try to embrace too many things at a time we weaken the power of our consciousness. That is the error of modern education. It covers a multiplicity of subjects and inculcates haste and rush to pass from one thing to another, instead of developing concentrated attention. This is because it has to impart knowledge from without, by cramming information on this, that and the other thing, instead of finding out the knowledge inherent within the consciousness.

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Is it desirable to be a perfectionist? The author, who was obsessed with perfectionism, confesses that she had developed tendency to brood over tiniest mistakes. She finally consulted Gordon Flett, a psychologist at York University in Toronto, who had studied inner workings of a perfectionist’s mind. According to him perfectionists have a tendency to constantly ruminate when they fall short of perfection, which he calls “mistake rumination.” Flett and his colleagues identified a link between amplified mistake rumination and two kinds of perfectionism: One concerns an internal drive for perfection, and the other involves the belief that others required you to be perfect. The results of Flett’s study published in 2019 in the *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, showed a connection between thinking too much about past mistakes and small increase in continuous thoughts that urge the person to be perfect. Perfectionists feel that they are not as good as others and they engage in a lot of self-reflection.

Perfectionism can lead to increased isolation and ultimately to

loneliness. In a study conducted in the year 2016 the investigators found that people who were not ready to admit their shortcomings and those who were worried that they will be seen as being less than perfect were not comfortable in their interactions with others. They tend to avoid people and as a result miss getting the support they may need when problems arise. All the time struggling to reach the high standards set for oneself, worrying about making mistakes, combined with the fear of negative evaluation by others can be exhausting. The author could not get a job in her endeavour to be perfect. But then “I was too tired to be perfect. I no longer attempted to hide my flaws. I took the chance to be myself. . . . It worked. I got the job,” writes Agata Boxe, a New York-based freelance writer. (*Discover*, December 2020)

Perfection means to be “exact, without flaw, blemish or fault.” It also comes from the Latin word, *perfectus*, which means “complete.” Since there are levels and levels of perfection, there is an ever-growing perfectibility. In that sense, then, there is nothing like perfect beauty, perfect happiness, perfect understanding or perfect friendship. Empedocles was of the view that perfection depends on incompleteness, since the latter contains the potential for development. Therefore, to strive for perfection, which we all do, in our respective fields of activity, is to change, to progress or to be better. We soon discover that the quest for perfection is an on-going quest. The ancient Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi teaches us not to look for perfection in *anything* on a daily basis, but learn to embrace life’s imperfections and its transient nature.

From the spiritual point of view, a perfect action is that which is performed with pure motive, by renouncing desire and concern for the fruits or results, and also by renouncing the feeling of doership (*kartabhav*). None of us is going to achieve this high standard at once. Hence, in a sense, a perfect action for every individual is that which is performed to the best of his ability and understanding. The *Gita* teaches that all actions are involved

in faults, as fire is surrounded by smoke, so that a perfectly good-intentioned action may end up bringing about harm. Thus, it would be a folly to categorize action as perfectly good or bad on appearances, without taking into account the motive, the inner state of the person, the degree of his development and knowledge.

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Truthfulness is an integral part of spiritual life. There are subtler aspects to speaking the truth. One of them is being aware of one’s mistakes and faults and being ready to own them up. On the other hand, on being accused of a wrongdoing one must find out if one’s conscience agreed with it or not. To enjoy clear conscience and a guilt free life we should be ever ready to accept the verdict of our inner self. There is “only as much scope for a person to grow spiritually as the number of honest admissions they could make to themselves,” writes Shivi Verma. A healthy and enduring human relationship in which conflicts can be resolved amicably is possible only if both the individuals are willing to look within and accept their mistakes and faults.

Another aspect of “speaking the truth” involves speaking uncomfortable truths to others, and that is not an easy task. Often, out of fear of upsetting the applecart of a relationship we avoid confronting the person and speaking uncomfortable truth. The author presents four sensitive situations: “Do I know of a sexual predator in my family who victimises children, yet I have stayed quiet about it? Does my room-mate steal money and belongings, yet I am afraid of confronting her? Is my uncle guilty of domestic violence, yet I have never called him out on that? Does my sister play mind games and set family members against one another?” If we wish for spiritual growth we must be able to speak uncomfortable truths.

The inner voice in each one of us when listened to, throws light not only on our own shortcomings but also exposes all that is decaying and decomposing in our environment. When we agree to speak uncomfortable truths, we should be ready for the backlashes. The only support during those times is the knowledge that our connection with

the divine will bring us courage and protection, writes Verma. (*Life Positive*, October 2020)

The most important aspect of truthfulness is brought out in the saying of Polonius: “To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou can’st not then be false to any man.” There are some specific and subtle precepts of speech given in the *Laws of Manu*: “Let him say what is true....Let him utter no disagreeable truth. Let him utter no agreeable falsehood.” We must speak the truth and in pointing out the wrong done by another we should be able to do so in a firm, clear yet gentlest possible manner.

When it comes to denouncing the wrong around us, in the family, society, office and world at large, there are subtle spiritual injunctions to be kept in mind. In her article, “Is Denunciation a Duty?” H.P.B. points out that individually, when the report of wrong committed by another person reaches us, we have no right to believe in it, until we get undeniable proof of the correctness of the accusation. If the report happens to be true, then pity, forbearance and charity should prompt us to excuse our sinning brother. “A Theosophist ought never to forget what is due to the shortcomings and infirmities of human nature.” However, if by allowing the guilty to go unpunished, we are going to cause injury to others in the society, then we must “speak the truth at all costs.” It is to be done after mature deliberation and after consulting our conscience. If it is our duty, under Karma, to point out the wrong in a person, we must do so openly and direct to his face. (*The Key To Theosophy*, p. 248)

“Severe denunciation is duty to truth,” on condition that we denounce and fight against the *root* of evil and not the evildoer, who is, most often, the victim and product of his environment. If a person happens to be “a public officer, a judge or magistrate, a barrister or even a preacher, it is then, of course his duty to his country, his conscience and those who put their trust in him, to ‘denounce severely’ every case of ‘treachery, falsehood and rascality.’” (*H.P.B. Series No. 33*)