

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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AT PEACE WITH THE PAST

HOPES, fears, memories and anticipations keep the human consciousness in a non-integrated state. Generally, feelings of anxiety and anticipation are associated with future, whereas we remain clinging to our past through feelings of revenge, bitterness, pain or longing. Some of these are subtle emotions which eat us up from within, and we are not even aware of them. *The Voice of the Silence*, a Mahayana Buddhist text, describes these as “cruel crafty powers,” which tend to obstruct the spiritual progress of a spiritual-aspirant. Modern man lives in a state of perpetual anxiety. Having consulted the doctor, the mother worries no end about her sick child. Peace Pilgrim suggests that “One negative feeling which the nicest people still experience...is *worry*. Worry is not concern, which would motivate you to do everything possible in a situation. Worry is a useless mulling over of things we cannot change.” She mentions that instead of agonizing over the past or being apprehensive over the future, we must learn to live in the present.

We seem to live life carrying with us a heavy load of past baggage. We seldom appreciate situations and people as they present themselves from moment to moment. Our reactions are predominantly based on a storehouse of memory, impressions and preconceived notions. For instance, when a person greets us, our reaction—consciously or unconsciously—is based on the image of him stored in our memory. Should memory, based as it is on

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experience, have such an overriding influence on our response as to render ineffective our capacity to meet life afresh, moment to moment? asks Satyendra Kaushik.

We seldom live in the present. We live life, oscillating between past and future. *The Voice of the Silence* advises: “Kill in thyself all memory of past experiences. Look not behind or thou art lost.” The suggestion is to forget the emotional experiences attached to the past events that tend to take control of our mind. Once we have extracted the lesson from an event we must let it pass without brooding over it. George Washington said, “We should not look back unless it is to derive useful lessons from past errors, and for the purpose of profiting by dearly bought experience.” We begin the New Year with a hope, looking forward to pleasure and happiness, and at the same time carry with us past memories. We are asked to obliterate the past and make it non-existent. Thus:

The past is a torrent madly rushing by, that we face incessantly, without one second of interval; every wave of it, and every drop in it, being an event...Yet, no sooner have we faced it...than it is carried away and disappears behind us, to be lost sooner or later in the great Sea of Oblivion. It depends on us to make every such event non-existent to ourselves by obliterating it from our memory; or else to create of our past sorrows Promethean Vultures....In the first case, we are real philosophers; in the second—but timid and even cowardly soldiers of the army called mankind, and commanded in the great battle of Life by “King Karma.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 28*, p. 4)

Sometimes, “obliteration” of the past, involves forgiving ourselves or others, for the wrong done. Often, we carry with us feelings of pain, shame, guilt or anger as a result of traumatic experiences in the past. The advice normally given is to release these bottled-up feelings by talking over with some sympathetic person or writing things down on a piece of paper. But the best course of action is to forgive, and thus be at peace with the past.

At times, some of us are not able to get over self-blame. These “barbs of guilt,” “pangs of conscience,” and “feelings of remorse,” have purifying effect on the individual, *when experienced within healthy limits*. But when carried to excess, they can lead to despair, which is considered to be one of the cardinal sins, as it tends to paralyze the soul. By being in a perpetual state of self-blame, we brood over the wrong, and give that evil thing a power—a pure waste of psychic energy. Mr. Judge advises us not to dwell in regret over past follies. The golden rule of spiritual life is to learn the lesson from the situation and then move on, extracting and retaining only the *essence* of the experience.

In some of the Rajput families in India, the enmity between two families is kept alive for generations together, where both families refuse to forgive and forget. Lord Buddha says that when our mind is tied with the intention of retaliation all our mental energies are taken up by that single emotion, destroying inner peace. Forgive, forgive and *largely forget*, says W.Q.J. Some of us cannot forgive and forget for many years and many months. Gradually, with discipline, we learn to forgive in few days, then within few minutes, and so on. There are examples of people, who have forgiven the worst of offences. Gladys Staines, whose priest husband and two sons were murdered by youths in Orissa, said that she had forgiven the murderers, because forgiving brings healing, and liberates both the forgiver and the forgiven.

In Jainism, *Kshamapana* or supreme forgiveness is one of the main virtues to be cultivated by the Jainas. One of the Jaina practices is known as *Pratikramana*—means to go back, to reflect and review. It involves confession and atonement for transgression of mind, body, and speech in one’s daily activities. *Pratikramana* means sincerely repenting and confessing our faults, forgiving faults of others, asking forgiveness from others for our transgressions.

Our capacity to do good in the present is adversely affected, when we dwell too much over the past, which drags us down from our present level of consciousness. Psychologists Les Parrott and

Neil Clark Warren have given graphic description of a person clinging to his past, thus: “Dwelling on the past is like driving your car with your foot on the brake, your eyes on the rear-view mirror, and your gas tank empty. You are wondering why you are not moving forward, and yet all the while you are focused on the wrong direction. Even if you want to make progress, dwelling on your past keeps you stuck.” People often justify their poverty, failure in relationships, inability to make their mark, or achieve success in their studies or career, by attributing it to some event or some person in the past. “My mother was so over-protective that I never had the chance to brave the odds and develop courage.” In another case, an overbearing parent is held responsible for one’s timidity. “If I had money I would have joined coaching classes, and then probably I could have become a doctor or an engineer,” says another.

In order to make progress we will always have to face “past-conditioning,” not just from this life but also from previous life. William Faulkner, very correctly said that, “The past is not dead, in fact, it is not even past.” What we are in the given life is the result of thoughts, feelings and actions of our past lives. And some people make the mistake of saying, “What can I do, I am born like that?” Both inner and outer environment is the result of Karma, and does not come to us arbitrarily. Great Beings are those who have triumphed over their environment. We bring with us the load of our past Karma and *skandhas* (tendencies)—some favourable and some inhibiting. Once we become aware of the conditioning forces, we may make concentrated efforts to break the chain of causality and take a totally different course. The longer we delay in making the inner change, the harder it becomes, till we reach a point where we feel that we are completely determined. The fact is that even the most conducive environment cannot transform a weak and timid child into a courageous leader, because ultimately it depends upon how best we *use* the environment, and that in turn depends upon the inherent character.

Let us realize that clinging to positive past or pleasant memories,

to an abnormal extent, can be as detrimental to our present, as dwelling on a *negative* past. A girl brought up in luxury and comfort of a rich home, and married in a middle-class family, could shatter the happiness and peace of entire family, by continuing to compare and contrast her present circumstances with her past comforts. So also, “resting on your past laurels,” is never conducive to progress. For instance, we seem to take undue pride in the past spiritual and cultural glory of India; becoming so complacent that we have failed to notice that “India has been going down for thousands of years. She must take equally long for her regeneration,” as pointed out by a Master of Wisdom.

Every “revolution” is an attempt to break away from the past, from the familiar. In developing countries, industrial revolution met with great resistance, and only over a long period, industrialization was accepted as being inevitable—whether it was industrialization of farming industry, leather industry, or simply a matter of introducing computers in an office. Gradually and often reluctantly, braving the threats of employees’ unions, every office was forced to replace calculators and Facit machines with computers. Likewise, a doctor who clings to “tried and tested” method of operation, refusing to adopt new technique, runs the risk of being considered “old-fashioned” or “orthodox.”

In a very subtle way we are clinging to the past when we seek to repeat a pleasurable experience, or do not let go of a familiar mode of thought. We fail to realize that the joy experienced at the first drinking of the cup of pleasure is unutterable, but when we seek to repeat the pleasure, it loses some of its charm and intensity. With every repetition we add a drop of poison in the cup, so that, at last, the entire cup is filled with poison. It is the same with intellectual pleasures; great writers and philosophers, who might have thrilled humanity with their inspiring thoughts and ideas, at last, come to a dull clinging to familiar thoughts and enter a “tread-mill of thought.”

When the acme of physical and mental perfection is reached, there is an inkling of the existence of something beyond the physical.

It is indolence and incredulity that makes man cling to the familiar things. A good man must recognize the need and feel the urge to change. “The child becomes the man; he cannot retain his childhood and repeat and intensify the pleasures of childhood except by paying the inevitable price and becoming an idiot,” says *Through the Gates of Gold*.

What we call future becomes present, and then disappears into the womb of past. The past influences the present and also the future. And hence, it is necessary to develop balanced attitude towards past, present and future. Writing to a theosophical worker, Mr. Crosbie explains that when we take a stock of the past, we know it to be what it was, and we are able to judge its *relative* importance. But when that past was “present” or “future,” we dreaded it, and it was of great importance, because either we were anticipating resistance or experiencing it. In the hindsight, things look simple. We must not allow the personality to get the sinking feeling, which comes from observing that there is a vast gulf between our ideals and achievements. In fact, as time passes, we realize that given the circumstances, what was achieved was more than what we had hoped for. He says that present circumstances may not be the matters that smile (convenient and acceptable to us), but they will be matters to smile at later. Thus:

Things past are always easier than things present or things yet to come. The past can be judged by relative importance; it is the hollow of the wave of our progress, whereas the present and the future represent the crest and the resistance felt or feared. Yet, if we remember—the past, when it was both present and future, held such disturbances, which we now see were a waste of energy...I think that practically all that troubles us is unnecessary, as troubles, but necessary for experience. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, pp. 205-06)

REFLECTIONS ON HUMAN CONDUCT

IN HER *Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. comments that selfishness, indifference and brutality can never be the normal state of the race. Yet, the fact that she singled these out for mention is significant. If we review the records of nations that regularly grace the halls of the United Nations, we shall find that hardly one of them is free from the clutches of these three scourges of humanity.

Brutality is something that the salutary touch of a civilized education should have banished long since. Wars may be characterized as a form of insanity that grips nations in the mass. But the brutality that the wars legalize has now dominated times of peace and has percolated through nearly all strata of the social structure. It has overspread towns and communities and has assumed alarming proportions in educational institutions, sports, business houses and even homes. The strife and rivalry that are the harbingers of brutality have been commented upon and discussed in the press and other opinion-forming media, and though our thinkers have been disturbed by brutality erupting into the open, they have been unable to formulate any workable solution. The canker remains and thrives on the life-blood of our social structure.

One sometimes wonders whether in the minds of those most vocal for the eradication of brutality there is not a sneaking doubt about its usefulness under certain circumstances. Third degree methods to break down a man’s resistance (getting vital secrets for one’s country); chastisement strong enough to satisfy retributive justice (cutting off a thief’s hand); inflicting untold torture on men and animals (for “sport” or vivisection)—these come readily to mind. There are doubtless others that are winked at as necessary for self-preservation and human welfare.

If an individual views brutality as a relic of barbarism, why does he tolerate it and in some cases even encourage it? Why does he allow it to remain as a stain on the national character? Why does he, even if unconsciously, become a protagonist of the undesirable?

The search for an answer must go deep down to the roots of the man's basis of thought. Within him, there must be lurking a germ of soul disease that, getting stirred into activity, paralyses all noble sentiments so that, with only the unobstructed brute within him, he revels in the horrors of viciousness. The restraints that morality is wont to put on his actions are for the time being atrophied.

The inflicting of pain upon another becomes permissible to him who differentiates between religion and religion, sect and sect, soul and soul. Parents are no longer interested in getting their children to imbibe the ideas of a Buddha or of a Plato. They want their progeny to learn how to fight off competition, how to climb to the top, even if it be over the wrecks of others, and how to exploit the general gullibility through what is euphemistically called salesmanship. As though Twentieth century had not inherited enough of engines of demerit from the past, it has added one of its very own. The labour movement which originated as a champion of the downtrodden discovered very early that its strength lay in its muscles. Since then it has been flexing those to the general detriment of law and order and the fiscal difficulties of governments.

The remedy for all this does not lie merely in a study of ethical behaviour. That will come later. To be productive of good, attention has to be directed to the demolition of old established fetishes, superstitions and wrong beliefs. Reasoning man still holds on stubbornly to the belief that he can get away with anything through prayers and propitiations. Belief in a personal god whose favours can be won is still deeply rooted in men despite the iconoclasm of modern scientific thought. Idolatry in its worst forms is still being practiced. Removing this debris of a benighted age is not easy. The effort has to begin with the individual, percolate the home through his influence, and then spread out in widening circles till the conscience of the community gets aroused.

Brutality, indifference and selfishness is a trinity that has its roots deep in the idea of separateness of (1) God from man, (2) man from man, and (3) man from nature. Remove these three misconceptions

and you will have transformed humanity and made it once again fit to have the direct guidance of one or more souls that are on the road to divinity. The remedy for our twenty-first-century ills lies in (a) providing, ready at hand, literature that can grip and convince; (b) lighting up of an inner faith that what is universal and imperishable must always have precedence over the particular and the perishable; (c) arousing within oneself of a desire to honour each principle by giving it a place in one's own life and action. If devotion to the interest of another is the duty that each Theosophist owes to its CAUSE, then are each of these steps important ingredients in his acts of service.

In its diurnal motion, the sun shines on the just and the unjust. Each Theosophist has to be, if not the sun, then at least a lesser light. The smallest light of the feeblest intensity, if it is self-luminous, will be a beacon of hope to thousands. In a sense it becomes a pathfinder, an illuminated arrow that points to the way.

The real effort has to be individual. Each one has to ask himself whether he has started universalizing himself. Is he acting as a brother to all that lives and breathes? Has he abandoned, for instance, all forms of thought and action that tend to differentiate men by religious labels and adherence to rites and ceremonies? Does he pay lip-homage to Karma and at the same time make petitions to gods and angels to evade a calamity or eliminate an enemy or one who has aroused his jealousy by remaining ahead of him in study and application? Has he remained indifferent to the pain of another, or to his claim for sympathy and succour? Again, has he remained indifferent to unjust attacks on another? Has he failed to support universality against superstition, dogma and fanaticism? Has he honoured every truth by use?

To be convinced of the truth of a proposition, one has to apply to it the touchstone of universality. Metaphysics, ethics, science and religious tenets have thus to be tested—the most evident as the most abstruse. Until this is done, the pupil will only import dogma and fanaticism into Theosophy and his words and actions will not draw

upon that heart force which alone has the potency to impress and transform. Further, a little consideration will show that both indifference and brutality erupt in the man who has succumbed to selfishness: and therefore at each turn of events, at each moment of choice, the practitioner has to pause to ascertain whether behind the peacock feathers of altruism he is not giving cover to a desire to inflate his ego, his purse or his desire for peace, power and precedence.

To mould the national character, these universal ideas—the essence of impersonality—have to be acknowledged and then adopted by families, educational institutions and the body politic. Educational literature, text-books of philosophy, the mass media, and books meant for lighter reading, all have to reflect the new orientation, the central theme and pivot of which would be amity and not animosity, forgiveness and not recrimination, co-operation and not rivalry. Impossible? Not quite so. The fact that a single individual—Gandhiji—succeeded in arousing the nation’s conscience in the space of a few years should give heart to any pioneer in the task of starting a global movement towards establishing true spirituality as a cementing bond for all human endeavour.

The Theosophical Movement has its temples of service throughout the world. What is required is a united moving forward, the drawing up of an approved plan and the inviting of volunteers of recognized integrity and unselfishness to give life and movement to that plan. The coming years are those where action and words must be made to harmonize—years of honest striving, alone and in company with others, towards the forging of a true brotherhood between all men and nations throughout the world.

Let us then, as one in all and all in one, develop the Will to Do, the Soul to Dare.

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA THE WORLD—II

9. *The swans take the path of the sun because of their supernormal powers. So do the wise; having conquered Mara and his hosts they leave the world. (175)*

SWANS are long-necked, heavy-bodied, big-footed, graceful birds that glide majestically when swimming, and fly with slow wing beats, with necks outstretched. They migrate in diagonal formation or V-formation at great heights: no other waterfowl moves as fast on the water or in the air (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). Swans can soar very high. Hansa or swan symbolizes Divine Wisdom. In exoteric allegory, *Hansa* (or *Hamsa*) is a fabulous bird, which when given milk mixed with water for food, separated the two, drinking the milk and leaving the water, thus showing inherent wisdom. Milk symbolizes spirit and water symbolizes matter, writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 79). *Kalahansa* or *Hamsa* is the name given to Brahma neuter or *Parabrahmam*—he who uses the *Hansa* as his vehicle. *Hamsa* is equal to *a-ham-sa* or *so-ham* or *sah-aham* meaning “I am he” or “he (is) I.” It contains the doctrine of identity of man’s essence with god-essence. (*S.D.*, I, 78)

Those who have conquered their lower nature soar high. The *Gita* speaks of times at which devotees departing from this life do not return. It includes, among other things, the day time, the bright fortnight and six months of the Northern solstice. But those who die during night time, the dark fortnight or during the six months of Southern solstice are said to return or are reborn (*S.D.*, I, 86). Having conquered Mara—the great tempter, the perfected ones leave the world.

Hindu *shastras* prescribe four *ashrams*—*Brahmacharya*, *Grihastha*, *Vanaprastha* and *Sannyas*. The last one is the highest and members of first three can choose to enter into it by renouncing *all* worldly considerations. There are four successive stages in the life of a *sannyasi*, viz., *Kutichaka*, *Bahudaka*, *Hansa* and

Paramhansa. In the stage of *Hansa*, the ascetic lives apart from his family and the world, maintains himself on alms collected from seven houses, devotes himself to the contemplation of *Parabrahmam* and carries one-knotted bamboo. *Paramhansa* stage is the same as the previous three stages except that the ascetic wears the sacred thread and his hair and beard are quite long. A *Paramhansa* who shows himself worthy is on the very threshold of becoming a *Dikshita*.

Sufis of Syria called *Druzes*, is a large sect living on Mount Lebanon in Syria. They call themselves the “disciples of *Hamsa*,” their Messiah, who came to them in the ninth century from the “Land of the Word of God.” Their Messiah to come is called *Hakem*—the “All Healer.”

10. *There is no evil the man will not do who violates the good law, who speaks falsely, who scoffs at the existence of another world. (176)*

Man’s actions depend upon the ideas he holds regarding Deity, Nature and Man, writes Mr. Crosbie. Believer in God and divine Law knows that he is expected to follow the teachings of truthfulness, love, kindness, altruism, forgiveness and justice. The belief in the law of Karma and the existence of the other world restrains him from becoming animalistic and sinful. But the wicked among men, the deluded and the low-minded, deprived of spiritual perception due to illusion, and inclining toward demoniacal disposition, do not have recourse to me, says Shri Krishna in the *Gita*. Attitude of such a man and his ultimate fate has been described by Shri Krishna as follows:

They deny that the universe has any truth in it, saying it is not governed by law, declaring that it hath no Spirit; they say creatures are produced alone through the union of the sexes, and that all is for enjoyment only. Maintaining this view, their souls being ruined, their minds contracted, with natures perverted, enemies of the world, they are born to

destroy. They indulge insatiable desires, are full of hypocrisy, fast-fixed in false beliefs through their delusions.... Fast-bound by the hundred chords of desire, prone to lust and anger, they seek by injustice and the accumulation of wealth for the gratification of their own lusts and appetites...Wherefore I continually hurl these cruel haters, the lowest of men, into wombs of an infernal nature in this world of rebirth. And they being doomed to those infernal wombs, more and more deluded in each succeeding rebirth, never come to me, O son of Kunti, but go at length to the lowest region. (*Gita*, XVI)

11. *Verily the niggardly do not know heavenly bounty. Fools do not appreciate generosity. But the wise, rejoicing in charity, enjoy that world. (177)*

Misers do not go to *devaloka*—the world of Gods or heaven. He is reluctant to use his good fortune even for his own needs, let alone the needs of others. Krishna calls such a person a “thief.” He says: “Those who dress their meat but for themselves eat the bread of sin, being themselves sin incarnate...He who, sinfully delighting in the gratification of his passions, doth not cause this wheel thus already set in motion to continue revolving, liveth in vain.”

In the article, “Friends or Enemies in the Future,” Mr. Judge explains the importance of charity. He points out that charity is love of our fellows and if that be missing, other virtues are of no importance. Because, they die with the death of the uncharitable person; their value is naught, and that person is reborn without friend and without capacity. H.P.B. gives a definition of what a true Theosophist is not, and thereby presents simple but lofty ideal to the spiritual aspirant. She writes:

He who does not practice altruism; he who is not prepared to share his last morsel with a weaker or a poorer than himself; he who neglects to help his brother man, of whatever race, nation, or creed, whenever and wherever he meets suffering, and who turns a deaf ear to the cry of

human misery; he who hears an innocent person slandered, whether a brother Theosophist or not, and does not undertake his defense as he would undertake his own—is no Theosophist. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 31*, p. 12)

Charity covereth multitudes of sin, said Jesus. Hinduism speaks of earning merit through charitable deeds, which brings to such a person enjoyments of the heaven world and favourable circumstances in next life. The foolish and the niggardly pay no attention to this important truth.

12. To enter the Srotapatti stream is better than world sovereignty, is better than going to heaven, is better than lordship over many worlds. (178)

Enjoyment of the heaven world or lordship over many worlds is not the highest ideal. The disciple, who knows that such enjoyments have a beginning and also an end, seeks unconditional bliss of *Nirvana*. Entering the stream or reaching the *srottapati* state is a definite stage in the life of spiritual aspirant. The Stream-entrant (*srottapati*), is one who has developed great spiritual insight into the nature of existence. If he keeps up the struggle, he is *sure* to reach *Nirvana*, the state of highest bliss. The Mahayana Buddhist text, *The Voice of the Silence*, describes the journey of the *srotapatti*, thus:

Calm and unmoved the Pilgrim glideth up the stream that to Nirvana leads. He knoweth that the more his feet will bleed, the whiter will himself be washed. He knoweth well that after seven short and fleeting births Nirvana will be his.

Such is the Dhyana Path, the haven of the Yogi, the blessed goal that *Srotapattis* crave.

(*Concluded*)

ON OUR FIVE SENSES

I

WHEN we describe ourselves as “sentient” beings, we mean that we are conscious. The word “sentient” is derived from the Latin root *sentire*, “to feel.” However, the more literal and encompassing meaning of *sentient* is that we have sense perception. To begin to understand consciousness we must try to understand our senses—how they have evolved, how they can be extended, what their limits are, and what they can teach us about the world around us, writes Diane Ackerman, in the book, *A Natural History of the Senses*.

Senses are used by our body to get information about the world around us. Senses are often called powers and faculties, and in Sanskrit they are designated as *Indriyas*. There are five *Jnanendriyas* or five powers of perception or cognitive senses, which act like the entrance doors, bringing in the data. They are the means of acquiring knowledge, and hence called *Jnanendriyas*. The five *Jnanendriyas* or physical senses are, sense of smell, sight, hearing, taste and touch. There are five *Karmendriyas* or five means of action. The five *Karmendriyas* are hands, feet, mouth, organ of evacuation, and organ of generation. There are five sense organs, which are instruments or groups of sensory cells, through which five powers of perception operate. For instance, eye is the organ of sight; tongue is the organ of taste, and so on. To know about Alphonso mango, we need co-operation of four senses—sight, taste, touch and smell. We cease to get perfect perception or complete picture, if one or more senses are damaged.

In fact, there are limitations to our senses. At the peak of our youth our ears hear frequencies between 16 and 20,000 cycles per second. Humans do not hear low frequencies very well, and that is merciful, because, otherwise sounds of our own bodies would be as deafening as sitting in a lawn chair next to a waterfall. But we are skilled extenders of our senses. For instance, a doctor listens better to a patient’s heart with a stethoscope. Doctors rely on ultrasound,

consisting of over 20,000 cycles per second, to help diagnose tumors, writes Diane Ackerman (*A Natural History of the Senses*, pp. 188-89). There are almost infinite gradations of colours and sounds in the cosmos. Our eyes are able to perceive seven prismatic colors, but there are vibrations slower than those of the Red, and more rapid than those of Violet, called infrared and ultraviolet respectively. They are not perceptible to our eyes. But an ant is able to perceive them. X-ray, Gamma-rays, Ultraviolet rays have higher vibrations than that of Violet colour. Similarly, micro-waves, radio-waves, etc., have vibrations lower than that of Red colour. But even if we take the perceived colours, there can be innumerable shades for every colour which can be perceived clearly by a sensitive eye.

Similarly, there are seven notes of a musical scale. We could obtain first, second, third octaves of these notes by doubling the vibrations, and in fact, can have infinite octaves. The seven notes of the Indian musical scale, namely, Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni, are separated by intervals which are measured in terms of *shrutis*. For instance, Ri is three *Shrutis* away from Sa—there are three perceptible intervals between Sa and Ri, and so on. A *shruti* may be said to be the smallest interval of pitch the ear can detect. We might say *shrutis* are mini-notes, which only a person with sensitive ears or a musician can detect. *The Voice of the Silence* (pp. 55-56 fn.), says, “It is a well-known fact in Physical Science, as well as in Occultism, that the aggregate sound of Nature—such as is heard in the roar of great rivers, the noise produced by waving tops of trees in large forests, or that of a city heard at a distance—is a definite single tone of quite an appreciable pitch. This is shown by physicists and musicians.... This tone is held to be the middle F of the piano; which may... be considered the tonic of Nature.” In other words, it seems to suggest that all the different sounds in nature produce a single note, Fa, of diatonic scale. But how many of us have ears sensitive enough to discern this note?

In all of us the senses are not acutely developed. A gourmet of food or connoisseur of wine is an expert judge in matters of taste.

Such an individual has a highly *refined* discerning palate, and can distinguish one flavour from the other. On the opposite scale are those who will report that the curry does not taste right, but they would not know if it needs more sugar or more salt! Then there is Hans Christian Andersen’s story, “The Princess and the Pea.” It is the story about a prince who wanted to marry a *real* princess. One evening a young girl stood at the palace door drenched in rains and claiming to be a princess. To test if she was a real princess, the queen removed all the bedding off the bedstead and laid a pea on the bottom; then she took twenty mattresses and laid them on the pea, and then twenty eiderdown beds (quilts) on top of the mattresses. In the morning, the young girl reported that she could not sleep all through the night because she was uncomfortable, lying on something hard! We are told that nobody but a real princess could be as sensitive as that.

In his lecture on the *Lost Arts*, Wendell Phillips proves that the psychological nature of man is affected by a change of climate. Moreover, he proves that Oriental people have far more acute senses than the Europeans. The French dyers of Lyons say that the Europeans cannot see a certain delicate shade of blue. Also, the Kashmiri girls making shawls can show three hundred distinct colours, which the dyer of Lyons is unable to make and which *he cannot even distinguish*. H.P.B. remarks that the eye of the Kashmiri girl is able to see a colour which actually exists objectively, but which is imperceptible to the eye of the European person. We can see that there is a vast difference between the acuteness of the physical senses of two races, and likewise we must accept that there could also be vast difference in their psychological powers. There are some peculiarly endowed organisms that possess mysterious faculty called *second sight*. (*Isis*, II, 211)

There are those whose perceptions range beyond the five senses and they are called “sensitives.” They have developed astral senses. The real centres of sense organs for seeing, hearing, etc., are within the astral body. The powers of seeing, tasting, smelling, hearing

and the sense of touch are all in the astral body. Astral body is *design body* or model body on which physical body is built. The physical sense organ would be useless if the corresponding astral sense organ is damaged. Often, in congenital blindness or deafness it is the astral organ, which is damaged, so that even if the physical eye or ear may be normal and uninjured, the person is not able to see or hear.

Normally, this astral body is inextricably interwoven with the physical body, cell for cell and fibre for fibre, like the fibres of a mango in the pulp. Ordinarily, it is difficult to demarcate the inner and outer organs. But when a person begins the practice of concentration in earnest, the inner, astral organs gradually begin to awake and separate from the outer. Then the person begins to duplicate his powers, *i.e.*, he can use physical sense organs to function on the physical plane, and the inner, astral organs to function on the astral plane. In fact, “Occultism teaches that physical man is one, but the thinking man septenary, thinking, acting, feeling, and living on seven different states of beings or planes of consciousness, and that for all these states and planes the permanent Ego has a distinct set of senses,” writes H.P.B. (*Transactions*, p. 73)

What is the order of development of the senses in human beings? In the recent past, observation of animal and human foetuses has shown that the sense of touch is the first to develop in a foetus, followed by taste, smell, hearing and sight. Until recently, scientists did not believe that foetuses would have any sense of smell, since it was assumed that smelling depended on air and breathing. A baby’s ears are said to become structurally complete at about 24 weeks, but even before that the baby is said to be able to hear sounds such as mother’s heartbeat and blood moving through the umbilical cord. Many pregnant women report a foetal jerk or sudden kick just after a door slams. Vision is the last sense to develop. Observers have found that unborn infants turn their heads away if a bright light is directed at the mother’s stomach.

In *Transactions* the enquirer remarks that according to embryological research the sense of touch is the first and primary

sense, and that all the other senses are evolved from it. All the senses are differentiated forms of touch. Perhaps one way of understanding it is that every physical sense functions primarily on the basis of vibrations coming in contact with the sense organ and producing some sensation; “touch,” in that sense may be considered first and primary sense.

Touch is a sense with unique functions and qualities, and frequently combines with other senses. Saul Schanberg, a neurologist who experimented with rats at Duke University, has found that licking and grooming by the mother rat actually produced chemical changes in the pup; when the pup was taken away from the mother, its growth hormones decreased. “Touch is ten times stronger than verbal and emotional contact,” says Schanberg. A foetus in the womb is surrounded by amniotic fluid and it feels the warmth of the liquid as also the heartbeat of the mother. Hence, after birth a human (and monkey) mother holds her baby very close to her body—especially, against left side of her body, where her heart is. In primitive cultures, infants are in touch with others about 90 per cent of the time. Maternity Hospital in Cambridge, England, discovered that if a premature baby were placed on a lamb’s wool blanket for a day, it would gain an average of fifteen grams more than usual, because it was something akin to swaddling, and provided the comfort of touch, writes Diane Ackerman (*A Natural History of the Senses*, pp. 77-78).

However, H.P.B. points out that in the Eastern philosophy touch is not the primary sense. “In the Eastern philosophy, however, the sense of sound is first manifested, and next the sense of sight, sounds passing into colours,” says H.P.B.

In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 107) we are given the order on parallel lines, in the evolution of the Elements and corresponding Senses. According to this, first comes element Ether and with that the sense of Sound or hearing. Next comes Air, and with that the sense of Touch. Next comes Fire and with that the sense of Sight. With element Water there is sense of Taste and then with Earth there is

sense of Smell. However, in the “Hidden Hints in the Secret Doctrine,” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet. No. 16*, p. 10), we are given the esoteric order of the elements, as Ether, Fire, air, water, earth, and hence, we might say that sense of Sound is followed by sense of Sight.

Samkhya Philosophy teaches that five *tanmatras* or five potential elements (or *generic essences*) of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell, are very subtle and cannot be ordinarily perceived. The gross physical elements arise from the *tanmatras* as follows: From the essence of sound (*sabdatanmatra*) is produced *akasa* or Ether with the quality of sound perceived by the ear. From the essence of touch or *sparsatanmatra* combined with *sabdatanmatra* arises air with the attributes of sound and touch, and so on. Finally, the essence of smell or *gandhtanmatra* combined with the earlier four gives rise to earth, which has all the five qualities of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. We might say five *tanmatras* are the characteristic properties or qualities of matter.

In the article, “Occult or Exact Science?” H.P.B. explains that Human speech, as known to us, developed at the very beginning of, *i.e.*, in the first sub-race of Fourth or Atlantean Race, and simultaneously with it was developed *sight* as a physical sense. The other four senses remained in their latent, undeveloped state as *physical senses*, although fully developed as *spiritual faculties*. Our sense of *hearing* developed only in the third sub-race. Human “speech” was in the beginning, a mental articulation of sounds. People could understand each other and *talk* with the help of only *sight* and *touch*. In fact, H.P.B. explains that during the first three Root-races, *i.e.*, in the period before the Atlantean Race, the whole set of senses formed but one SENSE, namely, *spiritual perception*. But gradually, as man fell lower and lower *into matter*, the physical smothered the spiritual, the whole set of senses fell asunder to form henceforth five distinct senses.

(To be continued)

THE INSTITUTION OF CASTES

I

THE HEREDITARY caste hierarchy which has characterized the Hindu society for the past several centuries is certainly not the same as the *natural* caste system, on the basis of which the social life was organized in ancient India. Originally there were only four castes, or *Varnas*, as they were called: first, the learned class whose office was to teach and guide others; the second, the natural rulers and warriors class whose duty it was to govern and protect society from internal and external dangers; the third consisted of those who produced wealth, grain, and engaged in trade, which met the essential needs of the community; and the fourth class consisted of those who were fitted to serve by their manual labour. The distribution of duties of the people belonging to the four *Varnas*, it must be noted, was based upon their respective character, capacity and fitness, and not as a hereditary right. In fact, distribution of vocation of people broadly along these four lines may be seen in all societies and communities, in which a formal caste system as prevails in India does not obtain. It is the innate propensity of individuals, broadly speaking, which leads them to choose avocations along these four lines, more or less: Intellectual, governance, trade and service. It is evident that this natural tendency in human nature follows an inherent universal pattern. It is about this natural pattern that the Fourth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita* speaks:

Mankind was created by me of four castes distinct in their principles and in their duties according to the natural distribution of the actions and qualities. Know me, then, although changeless and not acting, to be the author of this.

The three qualities spoken are *Sattva*, which is light or truth; *Rajas*, or passion or desire; and *Tamas*, or indifference or darkness. All beings, seen and unseen, and the whole of manifested universe, are shown in the ancient doctrine to be made up of these three

qualities. Furthermore, the infinite variety in the nature, distinctive qualities and powers of individual entities and classes of beings are what they have *acquired* by their actions along the lines of these three qualities and their various combinations, in the course of their evolution. Once we admit that the universe is sentient, intelligent and evolving, not a product of blind mechanical forces without aim or purpose; and that all of these arise from, is sustained by, and rest in the Eternal all-pervading Spirit, which is present as the Eternal Witness, in the heart of all beings, we then begin to sense the profound meaning of the above verse in the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

The nature and character of every individual human being is an effect which flows from causes instituted by himself by his own thoughts and actions in the long course of his journey in life through reincarnation, and it is this character which is thus fashioned by himself which determines his “caste.” He, therefore, acts perforce along the lines of his predominant *acquired* tendencies of mind and body, though his real Self, Spirit, stands transcendent and beyond all these qualities, actions and their result.

In ancient India the social order was organized on the basis of duties and responsibilities of individuals according to their “caste,” as determined by their predominant qualities and character in the interest of social harmony and progress of all in the right direction. Of the distribution of duties according to natural qualities it is said in the Eighteenth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

The respective duties of the four castes, of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras, are also determined by the qualities which predominate in the disposition of each, O harasser of thy foes. The natural duty of a Brahmin compriseth tranquility, purity, self-mastery, patience, rectitude, learning, spiritual discernment, and belief in the existence of another world. Those of the Kshatriya sprung from his nature, are valour, glory, strength, firmness, not to flee from the field of battle, liberality and a lordly character. The natural duties of the Vaisya are to till the land and to

buy and sell; and that of the Sudra is to serve, as is his natural disposition.

It is evident from the foregoing, and from a study of other ancient scriptures of India, that the four castes mentioned in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, with their characteristic qualities and natural duties, are not the castes which people at the present time assume and enjoy privileges as a hereditary right in India. Few indeed are there in the so-called high caste people at the present time who display qualities and character which define the true caste as taught in the *Bhagavad-Gita* verse cited above.

The four castes have now proliferated into numerous castes and hundreds of sub-castes, all mutually exclusive, antagonistic and exploitative. Instead of uniting and harmonizing society and leading it on to a higher end, as was originally envisioned by Aryan Sages, it has divided people by rigid caste barriers, and led it along a downward course. One of the worst outcomes of this downward trend is the growth of the degrading, inhuman practice of untouchability in the Indian society. It is a well known fact of history that the corruption of caste is the chief cause of the downfall of India, and that the cause of this corruption of caste is loss of India’s ancient spirituality. Restoration of India to her past glory is possible only through a revival of the *true* spiritual knowledge and practices which are now obscured by divisive sectarian dogma, superstition and selfishness. The first step in the direction of reform is to understand the meaning and significance of the *natural* caste system which prevailed in the ancient Aryavarta, the cradle of civilization, which has left to posterity the legacy of a richest ever thesaurus of spiritual knowledge, culture and tradition for the benefit of the world.

The division of social life into four orders, called *Varnas*, was based on, as already said, a natural law. Hence it was called *Varna Dharma*, signifying that *Varnas* arose out of *Dharma*, or the universal law of evolution of human nature, which has for its end and aim the possibilities of highest perfection and emancipation of all mankind. We have to study the philosophy of the three qualities.

The Sage Patanjali shows in his Yoga Aphorisms that the essential nature of the universe, visible and invisible, is constituted of the three qualities, *viz.*, purity, action and rest, and of the elements, and organs of action, and that it exists for the soul's experience and emancipation. Sri Krishna teaches that there is no creature on earth, or among hosts in heaven who is free from these three qualities which arise from nature (*Gita*, XVIII). Various classes of beings of lower order of nature are unvarying in their qualities and instinctual behaviour. Humans, on the other hand, standing as they do on the pinnacle of the evolutionary ladder, endowed with self-consciousness (mind) and free-will, vary widely from one another in their character, tendencies and capacities according to their thoughts and actions. The dispositions of individuals according to the predominance of one or the other of the three qualities is described in the Fourteenth Chapter of the *Bahgavad-Gita*, thus:

When wisdom, the bright light, shall become evident at every gate of the body, then one may know that the *sattva* quality is prevalent within. The love of gain, activity in action, and initiating of works, restlessness and inordinate desire are produced when the quality of *rajas* is prevalent, whilst the tokens of the *tamas* quality are presence of idleness, heedlessness, and delusion, O son of Kunti.

And it is shown that fruit of righteous acts are pure and holy, from which wisdom is produced, and that they who have it mount on high; that from the quality of passion, *rajas*, pain is gathered, and such remain in the middle regions, among men; and from *tamas*, the dark quality, is produced senselessness, ignorance and indifference, and that such sink below. But it is clearly taught by Sri Krishna that man is capable of rising from the gloomy quality of *tamas* through the power of *rajas* to the state of purity and light, or *sattva*, and of even transcending this last to merge with the Spirit to become one with the Supreme; and that it is his duty to do so, because man is essentially Divine in his inmost self, which is free from

qualities, by which he can overcome these three qualities and attain perfection.

But when the wise man perceiveth that the only agents of action are these qualities, and comprehends that which is superior to the qualities, he attains to my state. And when the embodied self surpasseth these three qualities of goodness, action, and indifference—which are co-existent with the body it is released from rebirth and death, old age and pain and drinketh of the waters of immortality. (*Gita*, XIV)

Such is the destiny of man. It is his inherent birthright, irrespective of caste, creed or social status, to reach perfection and become one with the Supreme, because man is potentially divine. The social order was organized on the basis of *Varna Dharma* with a view to facilitate harmonious progress of all towards that high World Ideal.

The *Varna Dharma* was inter-woven with the four stages of human life (*Chatur-ashramas*) and the four-fold goal of all human striving (*Purusharthas*). The stage of youth was devoted to learning under great Teachers under vow of celibacy, who was thus, through initiation into the Science of the Self, fitted to live the Higher Life; the second stage was that of the Householder in which man discharged his duties and obligations to all his fellow-men and fellow-creatures through five-fold sacrifice (*Pancha Yajna*) (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 1:4-16, and Sri Shankaracharya's commentary thereon; and *Manu*: 3:70-78); the third stage was one of retirement and retreat for contemplative life; and in the final and the fourth stage man renounced all worldly ties and entirely devoted himself to the great World Ideal. Fulfilment of natural human desires and economic needs were subjected to the Eternal Law of universal and human evolution and perfection, called *Dharma*, with the great World Ideal of emancipation of souls from conditioned existence ever in focus.

(*To be concluded*)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[In this section we seek to answer frequently asked questions, at U.L.T. meetings or during private conversations and discussions with people who seek the answers in the light of Theosophy. Answers given in this section are by no means final. Only a line of thought is being offered by applying general principles of Theosophy.]

Question: At the feast of Passover, Jesus drank wine, and he also gave it to others to drink. Then again, the Sufis mention wine and intoxication. But Buddha and other spiritual teachers have advised that all intoxicating substances were to be rigidly abstained from. How to reconcile?

Answer: Consumption of intoxicants, such as drugs or alcohol, is forbidden to a spiritual aspirant, because these affect his faculty of discrimination, and hinder the development of intuitive faculty. When a spiritual teacher seems to sanction consumption of wine, etc., it is almost always allegorical, and must not be taken literally.

The night before he died, Jesus was celebrating Passover with his disciples. He took bread, and after giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.” In the same way he took the cup of wine, saying, “This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (*Luke 22:19-20*). Following the injunction of Jesus literally, those who call themselves Christians assemble to eat bread and drink wine. The Catholics call it Eucharist, while the Church of England calls it Holy Communion. According to the *doctrine of Transubstantiation*, in Eucharist, the substance of wheat bread, and grape wine are changed into the substance of Body and Blood of Jesus, respectively, while all that is accessible to the senses (the appearances) remains as before.

In *Isis Unveiled*, H.P.B. compares the drinking of wine at Eucharist with the drinking of soma juice by the Initiated Brahmins. “Thus the Hindu soma is mystically, and in all respects the same

that the Eucharistic supper is to the Christian. The idea is similar,” says H.P.B. Brahmins believe that by means of sacrificial prayers or mantras, the soma juice gets transformed into real soma, or the angel, and even into Brahma himself. Thus:

The soma makes a new man of the initiate; he is reborn and transformed, and his spiritual nature overcomes the physical; it gives the divine power of inspiration, and develops the clairvoyant faculty to the utmost. According to the exoteric explanation the soma is a plant, but, at the same time it is an angel. It forcibly connects the *inner*, highest “spirit” of man, which spirit is an angel like the mystical soma, with his “irrational soul,” or astral body, and thus united by the power of the magic drink, they soar together above physical nature, and participate during life in the beatitude and ineffable glories of Heaven. (*Isis, xl*)

“While the initiate drinks (albeit sparingly) of this sacred soma-juice, the Brahma, or rather his ‘spirit,’ personified by the god Soma, enters into the man and takes possession of him. Hence, ecstatic vision, clairvoyance, and the gift of prophecy.” (*Isis, p. xxxv*)

The Mystery of Eucharist does not pertain to Christians alone, but was instituted many hundreds of years before the “Paschal Supper.” The sacrificial bread and wine were common to many ancient nations (*Isis, II, 43-44*). During the Mysteries of initiation, wine represented Bacchus, and bread Ceres. The hierophant-initiator presented symbolically before the final *revelation*, wine and bread to the candidate, who had to eat and drink of both in token that the spirit was to quicken matter, *i.e.*, the divine wisdom was to enter into his body through what was to be revealed to him (*Isis, II, 560-61*). This rite was adopted by the Christian Church. “The Hierophant who was called the ‘Father,’ has now passed, part and parcel into the Father priest, who today administers the same communion. But between this noble rite...and its later anthropomorphic interpretation, now known as *transubstantiation*, there is an abyss of ecclesiastical sophistry,” writes H.P.B.

The Bread represented regeneration of life from the seed, and the grape is the emblem of wisdom and knowledge; the accumulation of the spirit of things, and the fermentation and subsequent strength of that esoteric knowledge being justly symbolized by wine. “I am the vine, and my Father is the husbandman,” says Jesus, alluding to the secret knowledge that could be imparted by him. Jesus knew of the symbolical meaning of bread and wine, and hence the injunction, “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life” (*John vi, 54*).

In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 45), H.P.B. explains that as soon as Noah descends upon the earth, he plants a vineyard, drinks of the wine, and gets drunk on it, signifying that the pure spirit becomes intoxicated as soon as it is finally imprisoned in matter.

Sufis use the analogy of intoxication to refer to a certain mystical experience. Moreover, the grape is the raw form of the wine, while wine is the real essence of that fruit. The “wine,” is the essence, or the inner doctrine. A despondent man seeks consolation in intoxicants. If the wine is good it may help him reach a state of material ecstasy and forget his sorrow. But if bad, then his state can be worse than before. So also, it is true of Spiritual wine—spiritual progress and knowledge. If it is true and pure it can lift the disciple to the realm of perfect contemplation of the truth, but if adulterated, then it can throw him back even further than the point that was attained. For instance, dabbling in the psychic realm, without proper training or guide, can produce more harm than good, as is seen in the case of wrong meditation practices, exercises to cultivate clairvoyance, etc. Often a little progress in the psychic realm, such as being able to look into the astral light or hearing of distant fairy-like bells, may produce the delusion in the aspirant of having attained great heights. Mr. Judge describes it as *astral intoxication*.

Question: What is passivity, and why is it considered to be dangerous?

Answer: Passivity is the opposite of activity, and we might describe

it as physical and mental inactivity. Many forms of concentration require passivity on the part of the practitioner. Thus, a person is asked to stare at a spot on the wall for a fixed period, or to remain for a while in a perfectly vacuous mental state, which soon runs into sleep. In such a state of passivity, the person isolates himself from the physical objective world, and opens the door to invisible powers and forces—good or bad—about which he knows nothing. Passivity is one of the main characteristics of mediumship. Hence, prolonged passivity may lead to mediumship. Often, people passively stare into the white of an egg or a cup of coffee to develop clairvoyance. They may succeed in perceiving in the astral light through astral senses, but if one attempts to develop the power of seeing in the astral light without proper training of the mind, only confusion results. “There is a tendency to dwell on this subtle sense-perception which at last will cause an atrophy of *Manas* for the time being,” writes Mr. Judge.

But there is another form of passivity and that is when we do not exercise our powers of thinking and choice. Every human being has the power of conscious willful action and choice. The beings in the lower kingdoms act un-self-consciously, in accordance with Natural Law or following natural impulse. Super-human beings act self-consciously, following the dictates of the great Self and not the little personal self. They have the power of choice but they always choose to live and act in harmony with the Great Laws of Nature. Human beings do not always exercise the power of choice. Sometimes they act instinctively or un-self-consciously; at other times they act self-consciously by making deliberate choice, based on knowledge or desire. On rare occasions they act self-consciously in harmony with the Universal Laws of Nature. It is necessary for us to watch how far we are moved by desire. How far are we passive followers of instinct and crowd-mentality? How far are we becoming receptive to Universal Ideation and acting in harmony with Universal Laws? Though it is in the fitness of things that the animal should obey its own instincts, the human being becomes

passive if he follows instinct only, because he has to evolve by exercising conscious choice. The recognition that we are a part of the Harmony that exists in the Universe is a tremendous step forward in evolution. It marks the turning-point from a life of selfishness and isolation to that of Brotherhood with Nature in all its realms. We begin to develop *receptivity* when we open our heart to “Humanity’s great pain,” and use our knowledge and our compassion to heal it. In *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* Mr. Judge states that in India, when help is needed for some orphanages, they pray to some patron god and help comes. What happens in such cases is that strong and resolute faith carries the thoughts of the prayer into the receptive mind that is moved to action.

A medium is a person who allows himself to be influenced by outer suggestions to such an abnormal extent as to lose his self-control. In that sense we are all mediums to a greater or lesser extent. We must resist *reaction* to outer suggestions, and instead train ourselves to evaluate the outer suggestions before acting upon them. Let us speak and act only after proper consultation with our own Ego. Receptivity to the Inner Ego is quite different from the unconscious mediumistic passivity.

In what is described as instantaneous “mental telegraphy,” ideas and pictures are transferred from Master to disciple, and it requires complete concentration on the part of the sender, while complete *receptive passivity* on the part of disciple. The disciple consciously gets into a passive state to receive the message from the Master in order to precipitate it later.

In India especially, many have misinterpreted the word *sannyasa* or renunciation to mean complete inaction and even running away from life and retreating to a monastery or forest, thereby evading Karmic duties and responsibilities. This is a form of passivity. The *Gita* advocates passivity and indifference only towards the fruits of actions.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Gandhiji advocated “hating the *crime* and not the *criminal*,” but how does one put it into practice? No one would consider employing an ex-convict. The fact that he had served his sentence is not considered as penitence for his wrongdoing. A crime is described as “an action or instance of negligence deemed injurious to the public welfare or morals or to the interests of the state that is legally prohibited.” A criminal that is guilty of crime is prosecuted and imprisoned but no thought is given to his dilemma once he is set free. It is true that many of these criminals are impenitent and once free they are drawn to a life of crime again. “But for the truly repentant shouldn’t we be giving another chance? May be they are victims of circumstances; why shun them?” writes Pachu Menon (*Bhavan’s Journal*, May 15, 2011). Efforts are being made to reform the prisoners by educating them and encouraging them to participate in the management of their welfare activities while they are in the prison. In many jails, inmates have enrolled for various courses offered by IGNOU and their respective state universities. Vocational training is imparted to them in diverse disciplines. However, rehabilitation of prisoners will be meaningful only if they are effectively employed after release. The insensitivity shown towards ex-convicts stems from distrust: They have done it once, and they might do it again. To make people sensitive to the ex-convicts, a Hindi motion picture “*Do Aankhen Barah Haath* (Two Eyes, Twelve Hands),” was released in the year 1957. It was inspired by the story of an “open prison” experiment where a jailor successfully moulds a bunch of hardcore criminals into responsible citizens. However, no one seems to be ready to pioneer the cause. “It is said that every saint has a past and a sinner a future! But it is the present that is a matter of consternation for the ex-jailbirds. Our society does not appear to be an epitome of condescension when it comes to issues related to their future,” writes Menon.

H.P.B.’s advice has been that human laws must be reformative

and not punitive. We are asked to “condemn the sin, and not the sinner.” But dissociating the sin from the sinner is most difficult. We tend to brand people for their smallest mistakes and transgressions. We should be willing to take a fresh look at the person. We tend to think, “once a sinner, always a sinner.” To change this mindset we have to begin small, by forgiving and forgetting, *i.e.*, by not holding against another the wrong done to us. Often, we are willing to give another chance to a friend for his gravest of misdeed. Certainly, we are ready to give a second chance to our sons, daughters, sisters, brothers. Let us remember that all crimes are not premeditated. At times, they are committed on the spur of the moment and the person is truly repentant. “We have to learn to look intelligently into the hearts of men.” There is no such thing as separateness because we are all united on the inner planes of our being. We cannot isolate ourselves from the wicked and foolish people, because the world that we live in today is of our own making. “Remember that the sin and shame of the world are your sin and shame; for you are a part of it; your Karma is inextricably interwoven with the great Karma,” teaches *Light on the Path*.

A United States scholar has claimed that several New Testament books of the Bible may have been actually written by people who lied about their identity, pretending to be the apostles Peter, Paul or James. Prof. Bart D. Ehrman wrote in “The Huffington Post,” that many religious scholars are aware of the “lies” of the Bible and have acknowledged the same; others refer to them as “pseudepigrapha,” meaning a falsely attributed work. In his book, *Why the Bible’s Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are*, Prof. Ehrman claims that “The Second Epistle of Peter” was forged. Someone else wrote it claiming to be Peter. He does not agree with the scholars who claim that in the ancient days it was acceptable for some authors to write books in the name of someone else, and points

out that it was, in fact, condemned as deceitful practice. Many scholars believe that six of the thirteen letters alleged to be written by Paul were actually written by someone claiming to be Paul. Likewise, Ehrman also claims that “1 Timothy,” attributed to Paul, was actually written by someone living, after Paul had died. He had to use Paul’s name because at that point in time women were exercising authority, and were teaching men, which had to be stopped. The author had to remind the readers about what happened the first time a woman was allowed to exercise authority over a man, in that incident in the garden of Eden. (*The Times of India*, March 28, 2011)

In the article, “The Esoteric Character of the Gospels,” H.P.B. points out that the Christian canon, especially the *Gospels*, *Acts* and *Epistles*, are made up of fragments of Gnostic wisdom, the groundwork of which is pre-Christian and built on the MYSTERIES of Initiation.

H.P.B. quotes the words of the great Manichean of the third century, Fauste, in *Isis Unveiled* (II, 37-38), who says that the *evangeliums* (Gospels) were written neither by Jesus nor by his apostles, but by some unknown persons, who knew that the posterity will not believe in things they wrote which they had not seen themselves, and hence headed their narratives with the names of the apostles or disciples of Jesus. H.P.B. points out that “the author of the *Revelation* was a Jewish kabalist *pur sang*.” “It is needless to state that *the Gospel According to John* was not written by John but by a Platonist or a Gnostic belonging to a Neo-platonic school” (*Isis*, II, p. 91 and fn.). The *Acts* and the fourth Gospel are full of Gnostic expressions.

The Gospel According to the Hebrews, was the original of *the Gospel According to Matthew*, which expounded the only true doctrine of Christ. It was the work of an evangelist who had been the friend and companion of Jesus. The *original Hebrew Gospel* was used for four centuries by the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites*, the true primitive Christians. St. Jerome found this authentic and original *evangel*, written in Hebrew, by Matthew the apostle-publican, in

the library at Caesarea, and states that he had received the permission from the *Nazarenes* to translate it. He confesses that the book which he authenticates as being written “by the hand of Matthew” and which he translated twice, was nearly unintelligible to him, for it was arcane or a *secret*. (*Isis*, II, 181-83)

H.P.B. point out that the “Book of Enoch” from which the author of *Revelation*, and the St. John of the Fourth Gospel have so profusely quoted is simply a *Book of Initiation*, giving out in allegory and cautious phraseology the programme of certain archaic mysteries performed in the *inner* temples. It is suggested that the so-called “visions” of Enoch relate to his experiences at initiation, and what he learned in the mysteries (*Isis*, II, 229). She points out that *Revelation* is written in the mystery language of the Initiates, and is the relic of Egyptian and Chaldean wisdom.

How do we protect ourselves from the negative energies that may harm us? Often we experience a series of misfortunes or are assailed with accidents or illnesses. For no explicit reason we feel uncomfortable in certain places, *or* experience a series of disasters in certain places, *or* feel uncomfortable in the presence of certain people or objects. At times, these events can be explained on the basis of invisible forces, influences or energies, which could be both, beneficent or maleficent. Many disasters and calamities are experienced by a person, because he is the victim of a psychic attack. Thus, a person could meet with misfortune because of “evil eye” or ill-wishing on part of another person. Sometimes negative words expressed with anger, pain or helplessness can also adversely affect the targeted person. For instance, there is the case of a person who suddenly developed asthmatic attacks and died, after his mother had apparently “cursed” him for going against her wishes. Then, there is the *geopathic stress*, which refers to the association of a specific negative energy field within a particular space. For instance,

places where there have been suicides, murders, slaughters or wars, are said to carry negative emotional energy imprints. There are astral attacks by the entities considered as spirits of people, who have died physically, but tend to exert strong negative influences on some living people, who could be intruding into their space. There is the casting of the spell or performing of a ritual to willfully direct a harmful energy at the victim to control his will.

However, we can protect ourselves from various psychic attacks by engaging in meditation and prayer, as also by encouraging pure thoughts. Genuine incense such as frankincense and myrrh or herbs can be burnt on charcoal in an incense burner to dispel negative energy. We may avoid being in places or in presence of people who we may have found by experience to impact us negatively. Water is known to retain mental intentions of the people. We may avoid consuming liquid which comes from a person who does not have good feelings towards us. Avoid possessing objects without knowing about their histories of ownership or origin, as sometimes negative influences are attached to antique objects. Work on keeping your aura pure. Moreover, any person who tends to be in constant grip of anger, hatred or fear, might impact himself and others around him, negatively. Hence, it is advisable to free ourselves of such emotions and also of the thoughts of resentment, vindictiveness, bitterness or fear, which tend to attract negative forces towards us. “The best advice is to contemplate and meditate upon our deep spiritual aspirations to know our ultimate goal of life,” writes Anjali Misra. (*Life Positive*, June 2011)

What is described as “negative influences” or “psychic attacks,” has mainly to do with magnetism and elementals. The Pranic currents circulating in the astral body affect the body, and ultimately stream forth as our magnetism in the form of magnetic fluid. Sympathy is a holy and natural power of magnetism, while fascination is evil and unnatural. “Man makes his magnetism with his mind,” says an occult aphorism. Hence pure magnetism is created by pure thoughts and feelings. Since we are always thinking, our magnetism changes, for

better or for worse, every hour. It gets reflected in our magnetic emanations. Any person who lives a morally pure life can purify his own magnetism and also the *psychic atmosphere* around him. Pure magnetism works as a wonderful talisman, repelling evil influences. Magnetic emanations of one person can affect another, quite unconsciously.

Wine and spirits are supposed to contain and preserve the bad magnetism of all the persons who helped in their preparation and bottling. A story, based on facts, by Arthur Conan Doyle, entitled “The Silver Hatchet,” shows that a certain hatchet which had been used to perform a crime, almost irresistibly impelled to crime all those who handled it afterwards. The handle of the hatchet was hollow and contained a written curse. Similar to the murderous influence impressed on the hatchet, suicidal influence lingered in a sentry box in Germany, wherein over a dozen soldiers committed suicide, one after the other.

There is the principle of “like attracts like.” We attract what we love. Also, we provide a chink in the armour by entertaining unwholesome thoughts and feelings. The Buddha says, “He whose hand has no wound may touch poison. Poison harms not one who has no wound. No evil is to him, who does no evil.” (*The Dhammapada*, verse 124)

Those who have the knowledge can protect themselves while going in crowded places, by wearing certain metals, gems or colours, which may help to repel negative influences. However, the best protection against every evil and negative influence is a *clear conscience* and a *firm desire of benefiting Humanity*.

A MAN should hear a little music, read a little poetry, and see a fine picture every day of his life, in order that worldly cares may not obliterate the sense of the beautiful which God has implanted in the human soul.

—JOHANN VON GOETHE