

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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GURUS AND GURUS

GURU PURNIMA is celebrated on the full moon day in the lunar month of *Ashadha* (July-August). It is traditionally celebrated by the Hindus, Jains and the Buddhists to pay their respects and express their gratitude to their academic and spiritual gurus. This day is also celebrated as *Vyasa Purnima* as it was on this day that Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa, the author of *Mahabharata* was born to sage Parashara and Satyavati. Vyasa is one of the seven *Chiranjivis* or Immortals. The title “Vyasa” is common to many authors and compilers, but it is especially applied to Veda-vyasa, “the arranger” of the Vedas. Vyasa does not exactly mean a “recorder.” It means one who amplifies. It means a “Revealer,” who explains the mysteries to the candidate for initiation by *expanding* and *amplifying* to him the meaning. In ancient times, the term “vyasa” was applied to the *Highest Guru* in India. (*The Theosophist*, May 1882)

Traditionally, *Guru Purnima* is celebrated by the Buddhists in honour of the Buddha who gave his first sermon on this day, at Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh, India. In the Yogic tradition this day is celebrated as the occasion when Shiva, the *Adi-Yogi* or First Yogi, transmitted the yogic sciences to the *Saptarishis* or seven celebrated sages, who in turn, spread this knowledge throughout the world. Thus, *Adi-Yogi* became the *Adi-Guru* or First Guru on this day. Interestingly, *The Secret Doctrine* describes Shiva as the fountainhead, “the-ever-living-human-banyan” from whom all the

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historically known Sages and Hierophants, such as Rishi Kapila, Hermes, Enoch, Orpheus, etc. have branched off. He is the MAHA GURU (the great guru) under whose guidance other less divine teachers and instructors taught the first lessons of arts, sciences and spiritual knowledge to infant humanity and laid the first foundation-stone of the ancient civilizations. An inspiring passage in the *Secret Doctrine* describes Shiva as a GREAT SACRIFICE, a being who has nothing more to learn and yet remains in the atmosphere of this earth—in contact with human misery—in order to help humanity to cross over the ocean of life safely.

Often distinction is made between *Acharya* and *guru*. *Acharya* is a guide or instructor in religious matters; founder, or leader of a sect. The word *acharya* is derived from *acharana*, which means conduct, practice or behaviour. An *acharya* is a spiritual teacher who teaches not only by verbal instructions but also by personal conduct or example. The word *guru* is derived from two words, *gu* and *ru*. The Sanskrit root *gu* means darkness or ignorance, and *ru* denotes the remover of that darkness.

The Subject of Guru is a holy and a sacred one, and its true significance can be comprehended only by an open and responsive heart. There are gurus and gurus. There are false gurus, those who teach for money and boast of their powers. Among thousands of *sadhus* and fakirs, there are only a few who possess knowledge, and are also pure in character, though one often comes across mentally pure individuals, who may not be proficient in spiritual knowledge. The credulous and the gullible fall prey to false gurus, who are not only ignorant men, but are often frauds and charlatans. Beware of the person who proclaims himself to be a guru, asserting proudly, “Behold I know,” or who asks to be followed blindly.

The most important tool on the spiritual path is cultivation of intuition that will help us judge the quality of a person’s soul. A truly awakened soul is necessarily free from desire for money, fame, power or sex. A true guru seeks to make his pupil self-dependent, by helping him to turn within and awaken the inner guru. The best

method is to go from the teachings to the teacher. Adi Shankara says that a true guru possesses tranquillity, self-control, compassion and desire to help others, and he is versed in the Vedas and Upanishads; he is unattached to pleasures. He is devoid of weaknesses such as, ostentation, pride, deceit, egotism and attachment. H.P.B. describes the “true Guru,” thus:

The real Guru is always an Adept in the Occult Science. A man of profound knowledge, exoteric and esoteric, especially the latter; and one who has brought his carnal nature under subjection of the WILL; who has developed in himself both the power (*Siddhi*) to control the forces of nature, and the capacity to probe her secrets by the help of the formerly latent but now active powers of his being—this is the real Guru. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, p. 1)

One of the missions of Theosophy is to re-elevate the chair of the guru to its noble height. The function of a true Guru is to inspire and awaken human Souls to recognition of their own dignity and their own divinity. This is achieved by keeping the Light of Wisdom ever burning in the world. The bond between guru and chela of the true secret science or *Gupta Vidya* is a purely spiritual one. A true guru who makes spiritual rebirth possible, who brings about inner, spiritual transformation is not to be found in psychic and material world, but beyond them, in the Spiritual world. The Guru plays the same important role in the Spiritual Rebirth of the disciple that the mother plays in giving birth to the body of her child. There is a Sanskrit sloka to the effect: what the mother and father are to the body, the Guru is to the Soul; what the elder brother is to the younger, that the Guru is to the Soul; what a loyal and faithful friend is to the person, that the Guru is to the Soul; what wealth and knowledge are to the senses and the mind, that also Guru is to the Soul.

If we turn to ancient Hindu tradition we find that the Gurus of old occupied a very different and exalted status. They speak of *Guruparampara* or the chain of Gurus, of which the first link is in the World of Spirit, and its last link is here on earth, constituted by

teachers who instruct in religious and mystical lore. Mr. Judge writes:

From the earliest times...the teacher was given great reverence by the pupil, and the latter was taught from youth to look upon his preceptor as second only to his father and mother in dignity. It was among these people a great sin, a thing that did one actual harm in his moral being, to be disrespectful to his teacher even in thought. The reason for this lay then...in the fact that a long chain of influence extends from the highest spiritual guide who may belong to any man, down through vast numbers of spiritual chiefs, ending at last in mere teacher of our youth. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 42)

In fact, the *guruparampara* chain may be thought of as ending in the teacher who taught us our alphabets. In a sense, the suggestion is to look upon the entire universe in the form of Guru, because the real Guru is the Seventh principle centred in the Sixth, *i.e.*, the divine nature in man or the Krishna within, which is present everywhere. *Srimad Bhagavatam* mentions that Krishna is in each human being as fire is in the wood, but to be able to draw out the fire the wood must be dry. So also, unless each individual becomes like a dry wood, free from the moisture of personal and human feelings and attachments, gradually expanding and universalizing his love and care, he cannot contact the Guru within. However, the Supreme Guru, manifest in visible Nature, can teach the most valuable lessons of life, as happened in the case of Avadhuta Dattatreya.

In *Shrimad Bhagavatam* Krishna narrates the story of Lord Dattatreya and his 24 Gurus, to his friend Uddhava. Once King Yadu saw Lord Dattatreya happily wandering in a forest, and he enquired of the name of his Guru. Lord Dattatreya replied, "My bliss and contentment are the fruits of self-realization. *Atman* alone is my Guru, yet I have gained the necessary wisdom from the whole of creation, through 24 individuals who were therefore my Gurus." He said that from the earth he learnt the art of tolerance, patience and altruism. The air taught him to remain free from all

contaminations and disturbances of the material world. The dancing girl, Pingala, taught him that abandoning expectations from people leads to contentment and infinite joy. The Arrow-smith taught him that one should remain focussed and concentrated towards the goal. A little boy taught him to be unmindful of honour or dishonour, not to nurse a grudge or a prejudice against anyone, and to create happiness from within oneself, not requiring any external object or condition to be happy. His other gurus were a moth, spider, snake, honeybee, pigeon, elephant, ant, caterpillar, sky, sun, moon, fire, etc. "No man is your enemy: no man is your friend. All alike are your teachers," says *Light on the Path*. A good person constantly teaches by his example, but there is learning even in dealing with weaknesses of human nature. In handling an unruly child parents have an opportunity to learn patience.

An ordinary person becomes a "lay chela" when he determines to be wise in spiritual matters. At this stage he receives no direct instructions from the Guru. But already there is an unseen link between him and his Guru. The inner training of the lay-chela is never to give way to vice, and also never to act by mere feelings, however good. He must initiate action by combining reason with heart feeling. He will not succeed all at once, but every effort draws him nearer to the invisible Guru, whose presence he may feel as he strives to overcome his personality. When the disciple in his spiritual need thinks of the Guru, he receives the response from him. The growth of the disciple is seen in his capacity to adapt himself to any and every situation and in his power to turn the evil forces to good.

Is it necessary to go in search of a guru? The aspirants to higher planes of being need to undergo a specific course of training, for which guidance of a guru is necessary. But till such time self-discipline is needed. As H.P.B. says, "Of what use would Professor Clerk Maxwell have been to instruct a class of little boys in their multiplication-table"? We are assured, "When the pupil is ready the Master will appear." A story in Buddha's life speaks of his halting in a potter's cottage for a night, while on his journey to spread the

Dhamma. Buddha had to share the room with a traveller named Pukkusati. Buddha learnt that the traveller had left home searching for the Exalted One. He said, “My faith is in Him, my mind approves of His teachings.” When Buddha asked him if he knew where the Exalted One was at the moment, Pukkusati replied, “Somewhere in the North.” Buddha said, “You have never seen him, would you recognize him if you were to meet him”? Pukkusati answered, “No, I would not know him because I have never seen him.” Then Buddha told him to listen carefully as he expounded the doctrine of sevenfold man. When the preaching was over, Pukkusati prostrated himself before Buddha and said, “I have found the Master!” With faith in the Doctrines he had learnt and practised, Pukkusati had prepared himself and was ready. So the Master came where he was. But this meeting with the Guru in flesh and blood comes at a far later stage. Before this, there is a period of transition, in which the disciple has to prepare himself and in which he is tested.

Unless our inward eyes open, it is vain to go in search of a Guru. Many false prophets and teachers have led astray people, who are glamourized by the charisma and handsome exterior of the so-called spiritual teachers. On the other hand, judging by the appearance and through sheer blindness, as Mr. Judge puts it, many failed to see the lion’s glance and diamond heart of our teacher H.P.B.

Traditionally, on completion of the training, the *Sishya* (pupil) gives a gift to the guru, known as *guru-dakshina*, as a token of his gratitude. The best *guru-dakshina* that a pupil can give to his teacher is through a regular study and practice of the teachings, and through sincere effort to promulgate the same. “That law is immutably fixed which declares that he who has received spiritual benefit, no matter how little, must not willingly die, unless he has communicated that which he has received to at least one other person. And therein it is also stated that by communicating is meant, not merely verbal delivery, but patient care until that other person fully understands,” writes Mr. Judge. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p.163)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT VASAVADATTA

[Reprinted from *The Gospel of Buddha* by Paul Carus.]

THERE WAS a courtesan in Mathura named Vasavadatta. She happened to see Upagupta, one of Buddha’s disciples, a tall and beautiful youth, and fell desperately in love with him. Vasavadatta sent an invitation to the young man, but he replied: “The time has not yet arrived when Upagupta will visit Vasavadatta.”

The courtesan was astonished at the reply, and she sent again for him, saying: “Vasavadatta desires love, not gold from Upagupta.” But Upagupta made the same enigmatic reply and did not come.

A few months later Vasavadatta had a love-intrigue with the chief of the artisans, and at that time a wealthy merchant came to Mathura, who fell in love with Vasavadatta. Seeing his wealth and fearing the jealousy of her other lover, she contrived the death of the chief of the artisans, and concealed his body under a dunghill.

When the chief of the artisans had disappeared, his relatives and friends searched for him and found his body. Vasavadatta, however, was tried by a judge, and condemned to have her ears and nose, her hands and feet cut off, and [to be] flung into a graveyard.

Vasavadatta had been a passionate girl, but kind to her servants, and one of her maids followed her, and out of love for her former mistress ministered unto her in her agonies and chased away the crows.

Now the time had arrived when Upagupta decided to visit Vasavadatta.

When he came, the poor woman ordered her maid to collect and hide under a cloth her severed limbs; and he greeted her kindly, but she said with petulance: “Once this body was fragrant like the lotus, and I offered you my love. In those days I was covered with pearls and fine muslins. Now I am mangled by the executioner and covered with filth and blood.

“Sister,” said the young man, “it is not for my pleasure that I

approach you. It is to restore to you a nobler beauty than the charms which you have lost.

“I have seen with mine eyes the Tathagata walking upon earth and teaching men his wonderful doctrine. But you would not have listened to the words of righteousness while surrounded with temptations, while under the spell of passion and yearning for worldly pleasures. You would not have listened to the teaching of the Tathagata, for your heart was wayward, and you set your trust on the sham of your transient charms.

“The charms of the lovely form are treacherous, and quickly lead into temptations, which have proved too strong for you. But there is a beauty which will not fade, and if you but listen to the doctrine of our Lord, the Buddha, you will find that peace which you never would have found in the restless world of sinful pleasures.”

Vasavadatta became calm and a spiritual happiness soothed the tortures of her bodily pain; for where there is much suffering there is also great bliss.

Having taken refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, she died in pious submission to the punishment of her crime.

* * * * *

The story has more than one lesson for every aspirant. The monk Upagupta refused to go to the beautiful Vasavadatta for he knew that there were pain and suffering entombed in that beautiful body—that in reality it was ugly. But when affliction overtook her, the compassion of the Bhikkhu led him to her—to counsel, to help and to inspire the fallen woman. The ripening of Karma brings pain. But it carries within itself its own reward. The departure of outer beauty and the oncoming of outer ugliness, which looks like terrible affliction, contains the seeds of future bliss. “Where there is great suffering there also is great bliss,” reminds us of H.P.B.’s words: “Woe to those who live without suffering. Stagnation and death is the future of all that vegetates without a change. And how can there be any change for the better without proportionate suffering during

the preceding stage?” (*S.D.*, II, 475). Suffering and Sorrow are natural concomitants of Evolution and Progress. Ordinary men by the million are engrossed in sensuous existence.

Shankara asks in his *Crest Jewel of Wisdom*: “How can a man escape, who is fascinated by all five senses?” And he adds: “Things of senses are more penetrating in the hurt they cause than the venom of the black serpent. The poison slays only him into whom it enters, but things of sense destroy through mere beholding.”

Like Vasavadatta, there are many today who determine a man’s worth by money and appearance, and while knowledge and character are respected, it is lucre which counts the most. The truth that poverty itself has virtue is not seen. Mr. Judge writes, “*Poverty has no natural tendency to engender selfishness, but wealth requires it.*” Money begets selfishness. Our body is only an instrument of the soul, and follows the natural cycle of birth, decay and death. These days we are obsessed with the beauty of form, and wish to acquire it at any cost. The beauty of form is evanescent. As Walter De La Mare puts it, “But beauty vanishes; beauty passes; however rare, rare it be.” It is inward beauty we must strive to acquire by leading the life necessary, and it is sure to find reflection in the outer garment.

Whether we are seeking true beauty or lasting happiness, we need to go beyond the physical. *Through the Gates of Gold* suggests that we must learn to look for the kernel within the shell and the essence of a thing is obtained by cracking the shell and casting it away. We must lend all our emotions, thoughts and ideas to this process, so that instead of being tied to a treadmill of emotions or thoughts we will be able to enjoy the peace, happiness and beauty that arises from appreciation of subtler aspects of things. It will enable us to recognize the *soul* within the person we love, and see within our thought the finer qualities of spiritual truth, as we soar beyond the action of our *mental machinery*, mounted on the broad back of the eagle of *intuition*.

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA THE KINGLY SCIENCE—I

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

THE BHAGAVAD-GITA is divided into three distinct portions. The first six chapters give the philosophical notions prevailing at the time when Krishna taught humanity. He examines various notions and gives his own comments. In the second portion, he lays aside all these prevailing systems of thought, and concentrates on the task of making clear his own particular message to the world. The cycles repeat themselves and what Krishna did 5,000 years ago, Madame Blavatsky did to the modern world in the nineteenth century. She too, first discussed science, theology and spiritualism, as they existed in the nineteenth century, in her first book, *Isis Unveiled* and then having thus cleared the ground, and prepared the mind of the race, she gave her own message in the book, *The Secret Doctrine*. In the second section of the *Gita* Krishna talks more about himself. For instance, in the Seventh discourse, Krishna describes himself as the three-fold being, explaining that he had a lower nature, a higher nature and above them both, himself, separate and superior to both. In the Eighth he uses this classification to divide human beings into three classes. There are the three distinct paths in terms of this classification. The beings who follow the path of darkness or matter are born again and again on this earth. Those who follow the path of light become emancipated beings. Only those who follow the path of Krishna become perfected human beings or *Mahatmas*.

The Ninth discourse unfolds the *system and the method* whereby we can make ourselves living *Mahatmas*. It is known as the Kingly Science, and the Kingly Mystery, the first and the highest among all sciences, and the most profound of all the mysteries. In Sanskrit this is known as RAJA YOGA. Unfortunately, today, we hear of many speculative doctrines, circulating under that wonderful title of *Raja Yoga*. But this Science is a very definite science, which will enable

men to avoid the path of darkness, and overcome the illusion of the path of light, and thus follow the path of Krishna himself. We might ask: “Who is Krishna?” Krishna in this discourse is that Living *Mahatma*, the Embodiment of all Wisdom, the example of human evolution achieved to perfection. For Krishna, calls himself a Divine Incarnation, the Great, the Supreme Sacrifice (*Adhiyajna*). He is not only the Supreme Self, the Universal Principle of Life, but also the Supreme Man, and when he says “I”, “Me”, “My”, “Mine,” he means the Great Brotherhood of Perfected Men. Krishna is the symbol of that Great Lodge, the Living Representative of the Great Masters. The specific message that emerges from the Ninth discourse is that the whole of Krishna’s mission is to point out that ancient path to the Brotherhood of Perfected Beings.

The Ninth discourse simply repeats on a higher spiral the Third discourse. The Third discourse dealt with three types of actions: actions rooted in desire, actions energized by the ideal of duty and actions performed as sacrifice. These three kinds of actions correspond to the three natures of Krishna, and to the three paths—of light, darkness and that of chelaship of the Master. In fact, in this discourse, there is reiteration of these three types of action. The beings who follow *kamic* action, tread the path of darkness, and Shri Krishna speaks of them in verses 11 and 12. Thus:

The deluded despise me in human form, being unacquainted with my real nature as Lord of all things. They are of vain hopes, deluded in action, in reason and in knowledge, inclining to demoniac and deceitful principles.

So those beings that were described in the Seventh discourse, who take refuge in the lower world, *Mulaprakriti* or Matter, naturally strengthen their own demoniacal, *i.e.*, their own *kamic* tendencies, and in the course of time become demons or *asuras*. But there are those beings, who follow the ideal of duty, and they are of various kinds, just as the beings of first type can be divided into varied classes. In verse 13, Krishna describes three classes of beings holding the ideal of duty:

Others with the sacrifice of knowledge in other ways worship me as indivisible, as separable, as the Spirit of the universe.

Those beings who worship Krishna as indivisible are those who are called today in modern theology, *Monotheists*—they worship one single being, or principle, according to their own philosophical evolution. Then there are those who worship Krishna as separable, who worship him separately in every one of his aspects, *i.e.*, in every single form of the manifested universe, and those we call the *polytheists*. Finally, we have those who worship Krishna as the Spirit of the Universe, as Nature Itself, and we know them under the title of *Pantheists*. The destiny of those who have an ideal and try to follow it has been given in verse 20:

Those enlightened in the three *Vedas* offering sacrifices to me and obtaining sanctification from drinking the soma juice, petition me for heaven; thus they attain the region of Indra, the prince of celestial beings, and there feast upon celestial food and are gratified with heavenly enjoyments. And they, having enjoyed that spacious heaven for a period in proportion to their merits, sink back into this mortal world where they are born again as soon as their stock of merit is exhausted; thus those who long for the accomplishment of desires, following the *Vedas*, obtain a happiness which comes and goes.

The highest class of human beings, who worship Krishna as the Living *Mahatma*, their destiny is quite different. They are described in verses 13 and 14:

.....those great of soul, partaking of the godlike nature, knowing me to be the imperishable principle of all things, worship me, diverted to nothing else. Fixed in unbroken vows they worship, everywhere proclaiming me and bowing down to me.

And then again in verse 22, we read:

But for those who, thinking of me as identical with all,

constantly worship me, I bear the burden of the responsibility of their happiness.

And in verse 32:

I swear, O son of Kunti, that he who worships me never perisheth.

This last verse shows us the superiority of the spiritual path of the Masters over that of darkness, and also the path of light. For, the last two paths naturally have an end, only the first is unending, and gives the man the possibility of never perishing, *i.e.*, of becoming truly self-conscious, immortal. The beings who take the path of darkness go to the condition of *Mulaprakriti*, and are pulverized, or destroyed, so to speak in matter. The second class, who attain *Nirvana*, become emancipated beings and they do enjoy what appears to us like an eternity of peace and bliss, but even that eternity has an end, and they “fall from heaven” as Krishna says. But the beings who follow the path of the Masters are those who are treading the path of Sacrifice, or Renunciation which is also the path of woe. The earlier chapters of the *Gita* dealt with the concept of sacrifice, explaining that the sacrificial actions are those actions which are duties offered in a particular way as sacrifices or sacraments upon the altar of our own Higher Self. In the Ninth discourse Krishna presents a still higher and superior idea of sacrifice, and that is the offering of these self-same duties not upon the altar of our own Higher Self, but to the Masters, or the Living Lodge of the *Mahatmas*. That is how this discourse describes what is known in Theosophy as the path of *Chelaship* or of discipleship. It is the path where the only ideal and aspiration of the disciple is to serve the Master, and to find and contact those Human Living Beings, the Great Lodge of Adepts. Two central thoughts that we gather from the Ninth discourse are: first, that we always get the legitimate reactions to our own actions, and that whatever worship we offer, we are going to get the exact, and under law, the legitimate result of that particular worship. This has been clearly expressed in verse 25:

Those who devote themselves to the gods go to the gods; the worshippers of the pitris go to the pitris; those who worship the evil spirits go to them, and my worshippers come to me.

The second and the most important idea is that only by treading the path of chelaship can man become truly immortal from the spiritual point of view. This thought and this teaching of Theosophy has puzzled many, and even students of the great Ancient Wisdom are confused about this particular teaching. If *pralaya* or non-manifestation were to set in now, at this hour, the teaching is that all beings would lose their own self-identity, they would be affected and destroyed by *pralaya*, save and except one single class of beings, and those are ones who are treading the Ancient Spiritual Path. What would happen to them? They would naturally go to sleep but they would go to sleep, so to speak, under the roof of those Great Masters. They would be housed and lodged in the Great White Lodge of Adepts, for that Lodge is verily like unto Noah's ark, and it is never affected or destroyed even at the time of general dissolution, or even at the time of a new period of manifestation. The next question to ask ourselves is, can this highest of all Paths, the Path of Chelaship, be entered by any and all human beings? The clear and unmistakable answer is: it is open to all. Krishna says that even the man of most evil ways, "if he worships Me with exclusive devotion," he must be accounted as righteous, for he has judged aright. The condition is to make the supreme resolution, the determination to find the Masters, and to dedicate one's whole life to that one ideal. Any man, however wicked he may be, has the right and privilege to make that great resolution, and if he is exclusively devoted to this supreme resolution, he will in time become a righteous and spiritual man, for it is the power of this resolution that enables him to transcend the path of darkness, to overcome even the path of light, and to find himself treading the path of chelaship.

(To be concluded)

ON SACRED PLANTS

I

PLANT and tree worship forms part of nature worship. From the remotest antiquity trees and plants were treated with veneration and connected with gods and mystical forces in nature. Every nation had its sacred tree, with its peculiar characteristics and occult properties. The Sanskrit word *Vanaspati* refers to the entire plant kingdom, and it literally means "lord of the forest." Tree worship has been very old, writes James Frazer, in his book, *The Golden Bough*. In the beginning, trees were worshipped as animated things, so that each tree was regarded as a conscious and living thing. At that point, each tree was looked upon as the "body" of the tree-spirit. Later, the tree was regarded as a lifeless inert mass, but inhabited by a supernal being—and thus became the *abode* of the tree-spirit. H.P.B. seems to agree with the former view when she writes that *every plant without an exception* feels and has a consciousness of its own, and Occultism teaches that every plant—from the gigantic tree down to the minutest fern or blade of grass—has an Elemental entity (or *devata*) of which it is the outward clothing on this plane. (*Transactions*, p. 97)

In the book, *Sacred Plants in India*, the authors, Nanditha Krishna and M. Amrithalingam, mention that sacred trees are generally associated with Hindu deities, Jaina Tirthankaras, and the Buddha. Each Tirthankara had a special sacred tree associated with him, under which he received *Kaivalya Jnana* or special knowledge. Thus, for the first Tirthankara, Adinath, the sacred tree was Banyan, while the sacred tree associated with Mahavira, the twenty-fourth Tirthankara, was Sala tree. Likewise, the Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment under the Pipal tree.

The emphasis in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism was on idols and images housed either in rock-cut caves or beneath a tree, which gave rise to special kind of trees called *chaitya vriksha* or *Chaitya* trees and *Sthala Vriksha* or trees associated with a town or a village.

The *chaitya* tree was a protector of the idol or image which was placed beneath it. The *sthala vriksha* was the protector of town, village or a certain place. Interestingly, the authors give a table of twenty seven sacred trees corresponding to twenty seven constellations and likewise twelve sacred trees corresponding to the twelve signs of zodiac, and also, nine trees corresponding to nine planets. The word *graham*, Sanskrit word for planet, means energy, and so each tree represents the energy symbolized by its corresponding planet. Thus, Jupiter or Guru symbolizes both wisdom and the teacher, and so also, Pipala tree corresponding to planet Jupiter is associated with wisdom and the great teachers like the Buddha.

There are several references in Rig Veda and Atharva Veda showing that in antiquity trees, grasses and herbs were held sacred. Some of the sacred plants mentioned in Rig Veda are Ashwattha, Pipal, Nyagrodha, Shami, Soma, Water Lily, Blue lotus, and among the grasses, there is Durva (Bermuda grass), Kusha and Trina (lemon grass).

In one of his books, Shri M. Agrawal has given interesting classification of plants and trees. According to Chraka and Dhanvantari, the founders of Ayurveda, there are mainly three kinds of plants and herbs: *Divya*, (Divine), *Siddha* (magical) and *Aushadh* (medicinal). The divine plants are like some god or goddess incarnate, and they work as *Sanjeevani*, bringing back the dead to life, and also help in astral travel, act of disappearing, assuming any form at will, or in overcoming physical, mental and moral suffering. *Siddha* plants are wish-fulfilling, as by keeping them with oneself, or by being in the vicinity of such plants, one is able to fulfil one's wishes, such as, acquiring wealth and luxuries of life, secure protection against ghosts, bandits, accident, fire, snake and scorpion bites. Those plants which are useful in curing physical and mental illness are called *Aushadh* or medicinal plants. One rarely comes across divine and magical plants, whereas medicinal plants are of different varieties and they grow in almost all the countries. Regarding *Siddha*

plants he writes that in order to find them or to use them one has to have the knowledge of *devas*, constellations, time, and various *mantrams*, connected with that specific plant. He says that Rudraksh of one facet (*ekmukhi*) is considered to be *divya* plant. He speaks about a plant called "Varuni," which can obstruct the flow of water; and a plant called "shikhabandh" which can prevent the fire from advancing further. In *Isis Unveiled* (I, 527) H.P.B. writes: "Tracing back the knowledge of thunder and lightning possessed by the Etruscan priests, we find that Tarchon, the founder of the theurgism of the former, desiring to preserve his house from lightning, surrounded it by a hedge of the white bryony, a climbing plant which has the property of averting thunderbolts." While describing the mysterious race of *Yanadis*, who live mostly in the Nellore District, Madras Presidency, H.P.B. mentions that they plant round their huts certain herbs believed to possess the virtue of keeping off venomous reptiles. (*The Theosophists*, January 1883)

The tenth fundamental proposition of Oriental Philosophy mentions that like minerals, plants also have mystical properties, and the secrets of the herbs of dreams and enchantments are lost to European science, and they are aware of these only in the form of opium and hashish. Yet, the psychical effects of even these few upon the human system are regarded as evidences of a temporary mental disorder (*Isis*, II, 589). Elsewhere H.P.B. states that our scientists and naturalists know nothing of the intimate nature of the vegetable and mineral kingdoms, and hence, of many powers that lie concealed in the *inner* nature of the plant or stone.

H.P.B. mentions the Verbena plant which influences the inner senses of a person and aids in clairvoyant perception. She writes: "We have verified the influence of that plant upon sensitives. Wild verbena excites and intensifies seership, as to the action of the cultivated plant it is wholly a mystery. Let any woman, who can isolate herself, place upon her head a wreath of wild verbena when writing or doing any other mental work, and she will find herself safe from all bad influences and her faculties will reach their

maximum of activity” (*The Theosophist*, February 1884). Another magical plant closely allied to verbena is *diktamnon* or *dictamnus*, which H.P.B. describes as the evergreen shrub, whose contact can develop as well as cure somnambulism. In *diktamnon* perhaps we have the example of a plant corresponding to a planet, as this plant is associated with moon and the moon goddess Diana, who is also known as *Diktyinna*. H.P.B. points out that in botany, this plant is considered to possess strongly sedative properties, and is thus connected with nerves and nervous system. But so also, the moon acts upon nerve-cells, which play a prominent part in mesmerization. During childbirth the Cretan women were covered with this plant, and the roots were administered to soothe acute pain and also to reduce irritability, and they were placed within the precincts of the temple sacred to the moon goddess and also, wherever possible, under the direct rays of the moon (*Isis*, I, 264). *The Theosophical Glossary* points out that mixed with verbena it will produce clairvoyance and ecstasy.

Regarding medicinal plants H.P.B. writes that no country in the world can boast of more medicinal plants than Southern India, Cochin, Burmah, Siam and Ceylon. Though native doctors are often brushed aside by modern learned physicians as quacks, the best febrifuges have been learned by the British physicians from the Hindus. For instance, where the patients, deafened and swollen by abuse of quinine, were slowly dying of fever under the treatment of enlightened physicians, the bark of the Margosa, and the Chiretta herb cured them completely, and these now occupy an honourable place among European drugs. The Yogis and Lamas know certain secrets which include the knowledge of medicinal plants using which they are able to heal the most rebellious wounds in a few days, and restore broken bones in a few hours. When H.P.B had contracted a fearful fever near Rangoon, she was cured in a few hours by the juice of a plant called *Kukushan*. (*Isis*, II, 621-22 and fn.)

(To be continued)

ECONOMICS OF HAPPINESS

THE WORLD is in the throes of a great change. The idea of progress, inspired by the modern scientific world-view, which challenged and over-threw the constricting theological view that had held hostage free thought in the western world for over a millennium, is itself now found wanting, after experimenting with it for over two centuries, and is being challenged by the unrelenting quest of the human spirit for a higher meaning of life and truer happiness and justice. Cartesian idea that the objective world, independent of the subjective self—the latter itself being conceived by scientific schools as an ephemeral phenomenon produced by the mechanical working of the laws of the former—has come to be looked upon as the only reality and the sole object of research and analysis. In exploration of matter alone, then, bereft of spirit or soul, is to be found, in the world-view at the present time, the promise of human progress and happiness. This is materialism, the ruling spirit of our times, which is evidently a natural reaction against the age of bigotry of the sacerdotal caste. H.P.B. defines it as, “...the fruit of a disbelief in all but material things, a disbelief which has increased enormously during the last century, and which has led many, after a denial of all existence other than that in matter, into a blind belief in the *materialization of Spirit*” (“*Five Messages*,” p. 6). Blind belief in salvation by the arbitrary will of an anthropomorphic God has now metamorphosed into an as blind a belief in the determinism of soulless matter and its mechanical laws as the arbiter of human destiny.

Human progress proceeds in cycles. Speaking of cycles of progress in literature, the Teacher says, “An age of great inspiration and unconscious productiveness is invariably followed by an age of criticism and consciousness. The one affords the material for the analyzing and critical intellect of the other” (*Isis*, I, 34). This seems to be true not only of literature but applicable to all aspects of human intellectual activity. The keynote of materialism having thus been struck the great upsurge of free thought of the renaissance western

world should consequently tend in that direction and pervade social relations and institutions. Publication in 1776 of the path breaking classical modern economic theory, *An inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, by Adam Smith, laid the foundation of modern political economy based on the assumption that it is in the motivation of self-interest and drive for profit in individuals that lie the means of creating wealth and prosperity of peoples and nations. His work came as a complement to the Industrial Revolution that had just then appeared, spurred on by technological innovations, which together rapidly transformed the world of agrarian social economy into industrial political economy, not, however, without the pangs of radical change. His theory is summed up in his famous statement:

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity, but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.

In other words, the theory is that material prosperity is the end, and the means to accomplish it is through appeal to base human drive of self-interest and personal advantage. His theory that the selfish within society, when kept under restraint, and acting in competitive market, worked for the good of all, found wide acceptance and lent an ideal framework for building a system of global market for mass industrial production and consumption of consumer goods and services. Ever-increasing production of money and material wealth came to be looked upon as the end and aim, and the measure of progress of nations. The assumption has been that benefits accruing from it get distributed to wider populace through dynamics of the market, bringing prosperity to all. Technological innovations revolutionizing quick means of transport and communication, transformed the world into a global village, facilitating linking and mingling of far flung countries, peoples and cultures, and a global market cutting across national borders for

free movement of capital, labour and industries. Age old traditional societies, nurtured for centuries on an outlook on life based on spiritual values, succumbed to the irresistible tide of the idea of modern progress at the cost of losing their moorings in wisdom of hoary antiquity. Adverse effects of the pursuit of the idea of mere material development on society and the natural world raised questions of its efficacy.

The first major criticism of the idea of modern progress came from the great naturalist, Rachel Carson, in her revolutionary work, *Silent Spring*, in 1950s in which she put forth scientific evidence of destruction of natural ecosystem by industrial agriculture dominated by chemical pesticides, and industrial pollution. It stirred the conscience of the world, and spawned environmental activism all over the world, protesting against the violence inflicted on the natural world in the name of progress. Her work inspired development of science of deep ecology, the study of intricate interdependence of all life forms and environment in a complex web of life, damage to which through indiscriminate commercial and industrial activity, argued the ecologists, will undermine civilization itself through the collapse of the natural life-support system.

Then came another classic, *Small is Beautiful*, (Vintage Publishers, 1993) in the early 1970s from the pen of the humanistic economist of eminence, E. F. Schumacher. It was a soul stirring criticism of economic structure of the Western world and a call for change from mass production by mega industrial, capital intensive monopolies to production by the masses on small scale, by widely diffused decentralized communities with simple and affordable technologies for local self-sufficiency with least violence. He pointed out that the current pursuit of profit and progress, promoting giant commercial organizations and increased specializations has resulted in gross economic inefficiency, wastage, environmental pollution, dehumanizing working conditions, destruction of traditional skills, enslavement of man to machine, and impoverishment of masses while wealth got concentrated in the hands of the few. In his famous

essay on *Buddhist Economics* he delineated in sharp contrast the profligacy of soulless modern economics, which degrades man, with the wisdom of the ancient world—epitomized in Buddhist holistic world-view—which provided for development of the whole man in harmony with Nature. Contrasting the qualitative difference between work and leisure, machine and tool, in the two opposite perspectives—the modern and the ancient—he pointed out that creative work of the craftsman with his hands and simple tools stimulated his soul development besides earning his bread for his body, whereas the machine of mass production destroyed both these functions and impoverished him. He argued :

Buddhist economics must be very different from the economics of modern materialism, since the Buddhist sees the essence of civilization not in a multiplication of wants but in the purification of human character. Character, at the same time, is formed primarily by a man's work. And work properly conducted in conditions of human dignity and freedom, blesses those who do it and equally their products. (p. 40)

In modern economics, he pointed out, consumption is more important than creative activity and goods more important than people; and that materialism is mainly interested in goods, whereas the Buddhist is mainly interested in liberation, key-note of the means to which are simplicity, frugality and non-violence.

Another renowned American economist, Stephen A. Marglin, in his work *The Dismal Science, How thinking like an Economist Undermines Community* (2008) challenges the basic assumptions of modern economic theories and illustrates with a number of case studies how taking away the control of the market from community through creation of abstract globalized market economy destroys communities—which in pre-industrial world were knit together through interdependent extended families in co-operative control of their own lives and land—alienating man from man, man from Nature. Community includes ecology which is undermined. The

great American Ecologist, Aldo Leopold, in his classical work, *A Sand Country Almanac*, observes:

All ethics so far evolved rests upon a single premise: that an individual is a member of the community of interdependent parts...the land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land....A land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from the conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such. (*Leopold*, 1968 [1949], viii-ix, 203-204)

It is this culture of ancient traditional societies—of the Third World, so called—sustained by and through community, argues Stephen A. Marglin, which is undermined by the culture of the modern West with its sole emphasis on market as the organizing principle, wherever it penetrates, just as it has undermined the pre-industrial societies four hundred years ago in the West. He touches the crux of the problem when he says:

But individualism is balanced by holism, self-interest by obligation, algorithm by experience, materialism by spirituality, the nation-state by other allegiances. The culture of the modern West is, in my judgment, defined precisely by the absence of such balancing forces. (*ibid.*, p. 246)

It is a rejection of the exaggerated emphasis on economics in the calculations of which such meta-economic considerations as environmental ethics, social justice, cohesive conviviality of community, art and culture, which promotes total human development and happiness, do not enter. E.F. Schumacher argues that it is precisely the meta-economics which the economics of material needs of man should sub-serve and be governed by, failing which economics becomes the economics of violence and injustice. It is a call to return to “Buddhist Economics.” Prophetic indeed are the words of wisdom of H.P.B.:

Thus was once more demonstrated that human life, devoid of all its world-ideals and beliefs—in which the whole philosophical and cultured antiquity, headed in historical times by Socrates and Plato, by Pythagoras and Alexandrian Neo-Platonists, believed—becomes deprived of its higher sense and meaning. The world-ideals can never completely die out. Exiled by the fathers, they will be received with opened arms by the children. (*Lucifer*, March 1890)

When countless organizations and individuals were demanding an end to the economics of violence and working out and experimenting with alternative models of development consistent with social justice and environmental integrity, the pioneering lead came from Bhutan, the tiny Himalayan kingdom. Way back in 1972, as if answering the call of E. F. Schumacher to return to “Buddhist Economics,” and make of it a political movement, the fourth King of Bhutan announced “Economics of Happiness” as Bhutan’s philosophy of economic and social development. It is not the Gross National Product (GNP) as the index of progress, in the calculus of which meta-economic realities do not figure except creation of material wealth, but the Gross National Happiness (GNH), a holistic paradigm which gives equal attention to the basic needs and happiness not only of every individual human being but to every sentient being. The concept promotes collective happiness of people as the ultimate goal of development in which economic growth is one of the means, not an end in itself. It emphasizes that individual happiness is bound up with the collective happiness which must be realized as the societal goal, not as an individual or competitive good. Pursuit of economic prosperity must not cause miseries to future generations, other societies, or the creatures of the natural world. The GNH ideology works at strengthening the institution of the family and community, the spirit of voluntarism, tolerance, co-operation, virtues of compassion, altruism, honour and dignity which promote collective weal, and heals the moral contagion which is

the source of all crimes. The environmental policy of Bhutan predicates that human beings and Nature live in symbiotic relationship because both are inalienably bound together, so that no harm can be done to Nature without it adversely impacting on well-being of man. Bhutan preserves 72 per cent of its land area under forest cover and has declared that at least 60 per cent would always remain at all times under natural forests.

The GNH philosophy as an alternative paradigm of development has had an electrifying effect on politicians, economists and activists. “Local Futures,” for instance, launched in 1975, is an international society for culture and biological diversity, with a mission to promote a shift from economic globalization towards localization through strengthening local communities and economies worldwide. The Latvian Platform of Development Co-operation (LAPAS) is another international movement working towards transition to democratic market economy with participation by civil society in policy formulation and implementation, with an emphasis on local development and sustainable environment, ecological agriculture and preservation of indigenous seed varieties. The General Assembly of the United Nations Organization (UNO) unanimously passed a Resolution (65/309) in 2011 which places “Happiness” as the global agenda. Scholars, economists, politicians, activists from the East and West are working on the GNH concept as a practical and viable socio-economic model of holistic development as an alternative to the one pursued by nations now based on mere material acquisition, measured as GNP, as an end in itself, with all its social and environmental disasters.

Movement towards a humanistic and holistic idea of progress in which individual and collective happiness, and justice for all, is the central theme, the end and the aim is not, however, without a formidable challenge from the entrenched powerful commercial interests with State support who would have the status quo maintained at all costs. The idea of GNH represents the yearning of the human heart for deeper satisfaction, a truer happiness, and a

natural heart's aspiration for social equity and justice which mere acquisition of material wealth not only cannot give, but is decidedly antagonistic to it. Undoubtedly the new socio-economic movement for change is a part of the great psychic and spiritual change which, the Teachers of Theosophy say, began in the last quarter of the 19th century, and will end for either weal or woe of civilized humanity. In the article, "Our Cycle and the Next" H.P.B. writes:

But what has the new cycle in store for humanity? Will it be merely a continuation of the present, only in darker and more terrible colours? Or shall a new day dawn for mankind, a day of pure sunlight, of truth, of charity, of true happiness of all? The answer depends mainly on the few Theosophists who, true to their colours through good repute and ill, still fight the battle of Truth against the powers of Darkness. (*Lucifer*, May 1889)

Wider diffusion of the great Truths of Universal Brotherhood, of the Laws of Karma and Reincarnation with all that they imply, which are not unfamiliar to the general public in this century through spread of Theosophical Movement, will immensely aid the forces fighting for self-governance, freedom and justice. In this struggle Theosophists take encouragement, in their duty to humanity, in the prophetic words of the Teacher, "But it is not materialism which will gain the upper hand."

WE LIVE in an atmosphere of gloom and despair, but this is because our eyes are downcast and rivetted to the earth, with all its physical and grossly material manifestations. If, instead of that, man proceeding on his life-journey looked—not heavenward, which is but a figure of speech—but *within himself* and centred his point of observation on the *inner* man, he would soon escape from the coils of the great serpent of illusion. From the cradle to the grave, his life would then become supportable and worth living, even in its worst phases.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

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: "Questioning" is one of the methods of acquiring knowledge, recommended in the *Gita*. Is it necessary to exercise discrimination even in the matter of questioning?

Answer: In the Eighteenth Chapter of the *Gita* the knowledge or rather belief of a person which is held without questioning is considered to be *tamasic* knowledge. The gullible person who accepts everything without questioning and the cynic who rejects without questioning, may both be considered to possess *tamasic* knowledge. The person with honest doubt follows the middle path of questioning and evaluating. However, questioning often degenerates into mere inquisitiveness. "Inquisitive" means, unduly curious and prying as well as seeking for knowledge and inquiring. In *Sanskrit*, the former is termed *Kutuhhal*, and the latter, *Jignasa*. *Jignasa* or what is termed as quest for knowledge is essential, among other things, for a spiritual aspirant. *Jignasu* are the searchers for truth. Mr. Judge says, "Do not ask a question unless you intend to listen to the answer and inquire into its value."

It is quite harmless and often useful to find out a hundred different things by way of general knowledge—the "why," "what" and "how" of things. But, when it comes to another's personal life—be it sickness, food habits, lifestyle, relationships—it is clearly outside our province, and unless the other person volunteers to speak about it, we have no business to go prying. Cats are extremely curious creatures and hence can often be seen climbing high and narrow places, inviting injury or even death. Hence, it is said, "Curiosity killed the cat." Like the proverbial cat, some people invite trouble when they meddle with affairs that do not concern them.

The constant mental urge to gather irrelevant facts, as well as the subconscious desire to know everything, ruins the higher faculties of the mind and wastes *pranic* vitality. Though questioning is encouraged as against blind acceptance of the teachings, in every true spiritual tradition, there is emphasis on cultivation of self-reliance. Hence, the tendency to get readymade answers to one's questions is discouraged. Pythagoras was right in saying that we cannot and should not question till we know enough to question. When we ask a question without taking the trouble to find the answer by referring to relevant books, magazines or other sources, we tend to drag down the mind of the answerer, who might be dwelling on some higher theme, and waste his energy. The golden rule to follow is: Never ask a question until the books have been searched for the answer, until one's own energy and time have been spent in the search. Moreover, as Mr. Judge puts it, when we get a ready answer, without making an effort, it is like the miner giving you a nugget of gold, which he has discovered with effort. But when *we* make an effort and dig out knowledge, we drag down all the debris and rocks in the mind and thus become aware of the contents of our mind and also of our mental processes. For instance, one might become aware that one always has rational approach and never exercises intuition. The depth of mind is acquired when one is not satisfied with the first answer, but is willing to go deeper into the subject. To *know* an answer implies study, meditation and application.

In the Pythagorean School, initially, the person was not even allowed to ask questions, but only listen. Likewise, those who attend the Theosophical meetings with earnestness, move on from being listeners to the stage where they now question. That is because the person sees the importance of questioning, the philosophy and his own basis of thought, and does not mind their stability crumbling.

The article "Some Reflections on the Asking of Questions" (*The Theosophical Movement*, Vol. 29) mentions that both asking and answering the questions is an art. "An eagerness to learn and an ability to consider Theosophy on its inherent merits, putting aside

preconceived ideas...are essential requisites for the success of a meeting. The proper formulation of questions takes the class one stage further. Of almost every field of ideas and knowledge it is true to say that the ability to ask the right questions has played an important part in its development....On the questions asked depend the extent and kind of knowledge obtained."

There is, however, a deeper aspect to the asking of questions. It is to be found in *Light on the Path*, which mentions, "Those that ask shall have." A note of explanation says, "But though the ordinary man ask perpetually, his voice is not heard. For he asks with his mind only; and the voice of the mind is only heard on that plane on which the mind acts....To ask is to feel the hunger within—the yearning of spiritual aspiration."

Question: There is an incident wherein the Buddha refused to preach to his Bhikkhus because the assembly was not pure, and he refused to speak until the impure man had been put out of the assembly. Was this not unjust? Should we not give help and teach everyone regardless of his sins?

Answer: In ordinary circumstances of life, help and teaching have been and should be given without distinctions between the sinful and the righteous. We also say that Theosophy is for sinners and not for saints. However, the incident referred to is based on quite different principles. The Bhikkhu had entered into an agreement in joining the Sangha. He had agreed to follow the rules of life and conduct that were laid down. He had accepted his share of duties and responsibilities towards the Sangha as well as to himself. The Buddha must not be looked upon as a despot, but being a Teacher and the Head of the Order of the Bhikkhus he was obliged to follow the Laws laid down. Like unto the parent, the Guru is responsible for the well being of the growing soul. Warnings are given to those who do wrong. But it would not be fair or just either for the Teacher, even a Buddha, or for the fellow students to drag with them a dead weight, someone who pursued evil and set a bad example, not only to those around him, but to the world at large; someone who

tarnished the fair name of the Order to which he belonged and who would soon spoil and corrupt the Brotherhood. We say one rotten mango spoils other mangoes, and so we throw away the spoilt fruit lest the corruption spread and contaminate the remaining good fruit. In this connection we may recall what the Buddha says about the “fool” or a spiritually immature person. There is a categorical injunction: “There is no companionship with a fool.” Coming from the Buddha, this might sound very harsh. But the fact is that many a good people have strayed away from the true path as a result of wrong company. Until we have reached *samadana* stage wherein the *yogi* becomes constitutionally incapable of doing wrong, there is always a risk of falling.

The Teacher gives due warnings to the faltering pupil, but if the disciple continues to break the discipline, the teacher has no alternative but to suspend him. We witness this in schools and colleges. Many students go to college tacitly agreeing to follow the rules, follow the teachings and to learnt to the best of their ability. The student will not be allowed to remain when he fails year after year; when he makes no sincere effort to study and to learn. After due warnings the college asks him to go. Pupils and disciples also have to follow certain discipline, and pass certain examinations. If they fail and do not care to remedy their ways, they naturally fall out of the line of the army of warrior souls.

The Buddha beautifully explains this principle by giving the analogy of the ocean. “Just, O Bhikkhus, as the great ocean will not brook association with a dead corpse; but whatsoever dead corpse there be in the sea that will it—and quickly—draw to the shore, and cast it out upon the dry land—just so, O Bhikkhus, if there be any individual, evil in conduct, wicked in character, of impure and doubtful behaviour, not a Samana, though he have taken the vows of one, foul within, full of cravings, a worthless creature; with him will the Sangha brook no association, but quickly on its meeting together, will it cast out.”

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

It seems the whole world is waging war on unintelligent people. In earlier days intelligence or unintelligence of the person was not as important as it is today. Instead, emphasis was laid on factors like integrity, good work ethic, and the ability to get along with others. A college degree—especially in the Western world—was not necessary even as late as the 1960s. Today, both in India and in the West, we find that a college degree is a prerequisite for most jobs. According to jobs web site, Monster.com, “smartness” takes precedence over factors like “hard working” or “ambitious,” mentioned in job descriptions.

David Freeman at *The Atlantic* writes, “Those who consider themselves bright, openly mock others for being less so. Even in this age of rampant concern over micro-aggressions and victimization, we maintain open season on the non-smart. People who would swerve off a cliff rather than use a pejorative for race, religion, physical appearance, or disability are all too happy to drop the s-bomb: Indeed, degrading others for being ‘stupid’ has become nearly automatic in all forms of disagreement.” The Harvard Business School professor argued that smart people can make the worst employees because they are not used to dealing with failure and criticism.

We witness a rising trend in low-intelligence jobs being lost to automation, robots, online services and kiosks, so that in future, the drivers could lose their jobs to driverless automobiles, and waiters may be replaced by robots.

It is felt that poverty is linked to child’s performance at school and that the over-all intelligence may be raised by alleviation of poverty because biggest gain in intelligence is made during a child’s early years. “We must stop glorifying intelligence and treating our society as a playground for the smart minority,” but instead shape our economy and our culture with an eye to the abilities and needs of the majority, writes Freeman. (*Sunday Times of India*,

June 19, 2016)

Almost a hundred years back H.P.B. wrote that our civilization is built on sham and appearances, to which we may add “smartness” and “intelligence.” Intelligence is a double-edged weapon. We may use a pole to help the drowning man and we can use the same pole to keep him under water. “Great intellect and too much knowledge are a two-edged weapon in life, and instruments for evil as well as for good. When combined with Selfishness, they will make of the whole of Humanity a footstool for the elevation of him who possesses them, and a means for the attainment of his objects; while, applied to altruistic humanitarian purposes, they may become the means of the salvation of many.” (*S.D.*, II, 163)

With youngsters and adults committing suicide for trifling reasons, deteriorating interpersonal relationships, depression and deteriorating morals, it is being gradually recognized that more than the IQ (Intelligence Quotient) we need to worry about EQ (Emotional Quotient). Many are able to appreciate that development of emotional skills, which include self-awareness, managing one’s feelings, controlling the impulses, delaying gratification and the ability to handle anxiety and stress is the dire need of the hour. In his book, *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman writes that to build a powerful moral character, we need to learn self-control. We should be able to put aside our own interests and learn to empathize and see another’s point of view, and this empathy would lead to altruism and compassion. Such education must be given right from childhood. We find him echoing H.P.B.’s views who says that our education must aim at teaching children things which enable them to carry the burden of life with fortitude, and inculcate in them love for one’s neighbours instead of competitiveness. “I tell you the heart, the soul, and the bowels of compassion are of more consequence than intellectuality. The latter will take us all sure to hell if we let it govern only,” writes Mr. Judge.

Prejudice is said to be “the reason of fools.” It is an opinion without

judgement that logic cannot tone down and reason cannot alter. Ambrose Bierce describes it as a vagrant opinion without visible means of support. Our religious beliefs and social customs are sustained by age-old prejudices. “National and racial prejudices have made beasts of men and drenched Earth with human blood,” writes Dr. Satish Kapoor, a noted educationist, historian, spiritualist and meditation teacher. He narrates a typical incident of prejudice: When an eminent anthropologist asked his students in a western university at the time of the Armenian trouble, “Which is the worst race in the world?” the class roared, “The Turks!” The professor then questioned: “How many of you have ever known a Turk?” Not a single one had. Cecil Rhodes argued that the British race was the finest which history had produced, and Victor Hugo contended that France was necessary for the human race, and Hitler asserted that out of all races, the Aryan race is the superior. Man for long was prejudiced against “Eve” and dubbed her as “the temptress of the forbidden fruit.” Prejudice reigns supreme in the domain of religion. Prejudice foment intolerance in man, which Lord Macaulay describes by saying: “I am in the right and you are in the wrong. When you are the stronger, you ought to tolerate me, for it is your duty to tolerate truth. But when I am the stronger, I shall persecute you, for it is my duty to persecute an error.”

Racialism has given birth to social inequality, aggressive wars and mass annihilation. There is deep-seated prejudice in the mind of the “whites.” Prejudice, says Macduff, “is the conjurer of imaginary wrongs, strangling truth, overpowering reason, making strong men weak and, weak men weaker.” Prejudice has given rise to regionalism, parochialism, communalism, sectionalism, chauvinism, and many other evils.

Can prejudice be weeded out of man’s mind? Some say that it cannot be, since it was not reasoned into him, and so it cannot be reasoned out. Since we are influenced by our experiences, we can recognize our prejudices but cannot eliminate them. The American historian Bancroft rightly held that the prejudices of ignorance are

more easily removed than the prejudices of interest, the first are all blindly adopted, the second willfully preferred. What alkali is to acid, prejudice is to truth, writes Dr. Kapoor. (*Bhavan's Journal*, May 31, 2016)

Bias and prejudice are synonymous terms and they mean preconceived opinion not based on reason or actual experience. Someone who wants to apprehend truth must be able to lay aside his preconceptions. If he holds on to his preconceptions, he can never really acquire a new idea or a new point of view. Bias is also mental inclination or leaning, or any special influence which sways one's thinking. We may be more inclined towards ethics, and hence metaphysics feels irksome, but then let us become aware of our mental bias. Mr. Judge suggests that we must try to give up our own mental bias, and enter into the bias of another's mind to see his viewpoint. That "another" may be a speaker or a writer. Even when the view point is wrong, we will gain something, because in order to know what a thing is, we must know what it is not.

Mr. Judge writes: "Before you can become an occultist you have to give up every prejudice, every earthly liking, every feeling of preference for one thing over another....The natural tendency is to Black Magic, and that is why several years' training is necessary to cut away every source of prejudice before power can be intrusted to you." (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 160)

"Too many of our prejudices are like pyramids upside down. They rest on tiny, trivial incidents, but they spread upward and outward until they fill our minds," said William Martin. Hence, one of the ways by which prejudice can be reduced is by analyzing and finding out the reasons *why* prejudice occurs. To reduce or eliminate racial and religious prejudice people may be trained to become more empathetic to people of other religions and race.

Why are addicts dependent on drugs to experience ecstasy? Would not achieving perpetual high (real bliss) with only beneficial side-effects, be a better option than mood elevation *via* harmful

chemicals that would destroy you and your loved ones? ask spiritual gurus, on International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, observed on June 26. Addiction to drugs, alcohol and tobacco is very common these days and it mostly occurs among those with predominantly negative instincts, or when they find themselves in similar company or when they suffer low self-esteem. Interestingly, in some cases, the justification for taking drugs has apparently spiritual basis. For instance, Shiva is associated with *bhang*, a mild narcotic drink made using the leaves of the male cannabis plant, and on *Shivaratri* the devotees drink *bhang*. In many tantrik schools, cannabis is said to be the mysterious *Soma* mentioned in the Vedas, an idea that is rejected by the Vedantic school that is more puritanical and mainstream. Moreover, in Shiva temples there is offering of venomous and hallucinogenic flowers and fruit of *dhatūra*. Shiva as Kala Bhairav receives alcohol as offering.

Likewise, *Bhang* is an important part of rituals in Vishnu temples. The *Bhang* is offered to Krishna's elder brother, Balarama, whose image is bathed with it. Balarama's symbol is the toddy palm, whose sap is used to make a drink that is mildly alcoholic. What are these gods trying to communicate? To understand this mystery we have to appreciate that Hinduism divides the world into realm of the householder and realm of the hermit. Shiva and Balarama are the reluctant householders who prefer the wilderness that is associated with cannabis, toddy palms and *dhatūra*. In this form they are celibates and withdraw from all sensory pleasures. Thus, the drugs are tools for *yoga* and not for *bhoga* (pleasure). But for ordinary people drugs are a means to escape from harsh reality, or to ease the tensions of life, and they are resorted to when one is unable to handle social responsibilities, social pressures, or when feeling unloved, alone and misunderstood. Shiva is a yogi, who withdraws, but simultaneously he also participates in the worldly affairs. "Until we can become this Shiva, who helps the world, and does not fear it, it is best to stay away from drugs," writes Devdutta Pattanaik. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, June 26, 2016)

More harm is done than good when scriptures are interpreted literally. Religious and spiritual traditions, as also, scriptures should be interpreted metaphorically to draw their inner significance. 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. Did they recommend drinking of alcohol?

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. By the use of drugs and narcotics, “the consciousness is put into an artificial state and is more entangled than ever, although showing knowledge of things not known in the normal state.” H.P.B. writes: “Alcohol in all its forms has a direct, marked, and very deleterious influence on man’s psychic condition. Wine and spirit drinking is only less destructive to the development of inner powers, than the habitual use of hashish, opium and similar drugs.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 259-60)

In *Isis Unveiled*, H.P.B. explains that “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.” The symbolic intoxication may perhaps be compared to “Manticism,” or mantic frenzy, during which the person experiences ecstatic vision, clairvoyance, and the gift of prophecy. 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. Spiritual wine represents spiritual progress and knowledge, which can lift the disciple to the realm of perfect contemplation of the truth.