

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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ON PANTHEISM

THE WORD Pantheism is derived from the Greek roots *pan* (meaning “all”) and *theos* (meaning “God”). In Greek mythology, Pan is the god of the wild, shepherds and flocks, hunting and rustic music. In some myths Pan is the son of Zeus, though generally he is the son of Hermes or Dionysus. According to some other sources Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, slept with all 108 suitors, in the absence of her husband, and gave birth to Pan as a result. This myth reflects the folk etymology that equates Pan’s name with the Greek word for “all.” Pan was at first absolute nature, but later became a lesser god of the fields, a rural god. He has a flute with seven holes which represent seven forces, seven planets, seven musical notes, etc.

At its most general, pantheism may be understood positively as the view that God is identical with the cosmos, the view that there exists nothing which is outside of God. It is rejection of any view that considers God as distinct from the universe. We find pantheistic ideas being reflected in the Advaita Vedanta philosophy, in Kabalistic Judaism and in Sufi mysticism. In literature, writers such as, Goethe, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Emerson, Walt Whitman and Lord Tennyson have intuitively expressed pantheistic concepts. Pantheism was popularized in the modern era based on the work of the seventeenth century philosopher Spinoza. In one of his letters, dismissing the belief in personal God, Albert Einstein wrote, “We,

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

ON PANTHEISM	3
FOOD FOR THOUGHT	8
EAST O’ THE SUN AND WEST O’ THE MOON	
STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA	13
THE BRAHMANA—II	
LOYALTY TO THE CAUSE	17
THE PLANET MERCURY	22
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	28
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	32

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followers of Spinoza, see our God in the wonderful order and lawfulness of all that exists and in its soul, as it reveals itself in man and animal.”

Pantheism was known, seen, and felt by the whole of antiquity. Pantheism manifests itself in the vast expanse of the starry heavens, in the breathing of the seas and oceans and the quiver of life in the smallest blade of grass. Philosophy rejects one *finite* and *imperfect* God in the universe, and cannot imagine a universe *outside* that Deity, or the latter absent from the smallest speck of animate or inanimate substance. In *The Key to Theosophy* H.P.B. mentions that while *Pan* means “all” and *theos* means “god,” meaning thereby the presence of god in everything, it does not mean that every stone and every tree in Nature is a god to be worshipped. God in Nature is the immanent aspect of One Reality. In true or Spiritual Pantheism, it is the Spirit-Soul which pervades and animates all Nature, and there are various degrees of its expression. It is latent in a stone but manifests in man. In Spiritual Pantheism it is said that everything that is high or low is of divine origin, and ultimately returns back to that Divinity. Thus Pantheism means all-divine or rather *all from divinity*, so that all that is power and form is from THAT. All comes from the divine. All is divine *in essence* but not in form. H.P.B. points out that the Deity is identical and coeval with *eternal and uncreate* nature. It is everywhere, in every atom of the visible and invisible Cosmos. It is the mysterious power of involution and evolution. It is eternal, incessantly evolving builder of the universe. The universe unfolds from within without, and is not built.

Many writers and poets were intuitively pantheists. A large and essential nature of each one of us remains hidden. Both man and universe have their roots in eternity. There is immanence of God in the infinitesimal atom and the vast system. This is well brought out by Tennyson in his little poem: “Flower in the crannied wall, I pluck you out of the crannies, I hold you here, root and all, in my hand, little flower—but if I could understand what you are, root and all, and all in all, I should know what God and man is.”

Pantheism teaches omnipresence of God. We find it emphasized by Visoba Khechar, the yogi-guru of poet-saint Namdev, of Maharashtra, India. Visoba was a disciple of saint Dnyaneshwar. Visoba preached the omnipresence of God and thus denounced idol-worship. When Namdev set out in search of a guru he came across Visoba, in a temple, resting with his feet on the sacred *Siva-lingam*, the symbol of Siva. Namdev reproached him for having insulted Lord Siva. Visoba asked Namdev to place his feet elsewhere. Wherever Namdev placed Visoba’s feet a *Lingam* sprang up. Thus, through his yogic powers, Visoba filled the whole temple with *Siva-lingas* and taught Namdev the omnipresence of God.

Aitareya Upanishad throws a little different light on the relation between the *Parabrahmam* and the Universe. The first verse in *Aitareya Upanishad* says that “in the beginning,” *i.e.*, before the production of the universe, the world (*Jagat*) or Universe was ONE only. It is the common experience that change can be perceived in relation to that which is relatively stable. The moving train has a rigid ground to move upon. Similarly, the world around us is ever changing. For this phenomenon of continuous change, we must have a changeless, permanent factor. Just as in a cloth shop before all the varieties of fabrics came into being all those were nothing but cotton, in the same way, before the manifested world got projected, it was one with the Absolute. In the state of non-manifestation, not only the universe but also the host of intelligent powers, the divine creators, are hidden within the Un-nameable ONE.

However, that ONE never enters manifestation, but cyclically, there comes a point when the One Reality casts a reflection of Itself on the infinite Spatial depths and exhibits certain aspects of Itself. By the process of emanation the intelligent creative powers within the ONE, pass into manifestation. In the *Gita*, Shri Krishna says, “I established this whole Universe with a single portion of myself, and remain separate.” The coming into existence of a universe or its dissolution does not diminish or add to the One Reality. Take out the full from the full, and yet the full remains the full.

To the Occultists it is impossible to accept the idea that absolute ALL creates or even evolves the “Golden Egg” or Brahma’s Egg into which It is said to enter in order to transform Itself into Brahma—the Creator, who expands himself later into gods and the visible Universe. Such can be attributed only to the finite, the two chief deities, Brahma and Vishnu. Brahma is derived from *Brih*, “to expand” and Vishnu from the root *Vis*, “to pervade.” Hence it is said that the incognizable *Karana* does not put forth evolution, whether consciously or unconsciously, but only exhibits periodically *different aspects of itself* to the perception of *finite Minds* (*S.D.*, II, 487). *Parabrahmam* can have no attributes. It is the sexless, numberless—One Unity. The Kabalistic poem quoted in the *Key to Theosophy* says, “Thou art one, the root of all numbers, *but not as an element of numeration*; for unity admits not of multiplication, change or form...Thou art one, and Thy unity is never diminished, never extended, and cannot be changed.” The various emanations take place within the PAN-THEOS, the Absolute ALL-GOD. The teaching of Pythagoras and of Plato is grounded in this doctrine of unity in multiplicity, of the ONE evolving the Many by emanations and pervading them. This is considered to be the first, the original Pan-Theism.

The Indo-Iranians of old believed that the world was created and sustained by many gods and goddesses and that these divinities must be propitiated by prayers, sacrifices and offerings. Behind the physical, visible nature there is invisible, energizing nature, which consists of intelligent beings, which are powers and forces. Thus, there is god of rain, god of ocean, god of tree, god of sun, etc., and when these are worshipped it is only a symbol that acknowledges the role of various powers and forces of nature, in maintaining the universe. In the beginning, trees were worshipped as animated things, so that each tree was regarded as a conscious and living thing. Tree-spirits were considered to have powers—of making the rain to fall, the sun to shine, flocks and herds to multiply, and women to have smooth delivery.

The article, “Morality and Pantheism” (*The Theosophist*, November 1883) mentions that exoteric religions base their morality on hope of reward and fear of punishment at the hands of an Omnipotent Ruler of the Universe. The scientific basis of morality can be found in true pantheistic doctrine of the Buddha and Shankaracharya, which involves clear perception of the unity of the one energy operating in the manifested Cosmos. The practice of morality is the most powerful means for the realization of the oneness of existence. The greatest obstacle to the realization of this oneness is the habit of placing ourselves at the centre of the Universe. What is required is that all our thoughts, feelings and actions must be in unison with nature and not in discord with it. They must be in step with the onward march of nature. The work of evolution begins by the movement or the action of the force away from spirit. But there is another force which acts from the pole of existence or “matter” towards the pole called “spirit.” The whole system of nature is moving in the direction of the Spirit. It is this centripetal force which must ultimately prevail. “If an individual attempts to move in a direction other than that in which Nature is moving, that individual is sure to be crushed, sooner or later, by the enormous pressure of the opposing force...The only way therefore, in which happiness might be attained, is by merging one’s nature in the great Mother Nature, and following the direction in which she herself is moving...The effort to assimilate the individual with the universal law is popularly known as the practice of morality.” A *Mahatma*, perfected being, will never neglect the laws of morality. In fact, he is identified with Nature, and is therefore, constitutionally incapable of violating any law of nature. As honest men are honest without the least consideration of the criminal law, so a *Mahatma* is moral without reference to the law of morality. “Help Nature and work on with her, and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance,” says the *The Voice of the Silence*.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

EAST O' THE SUN AND WEST O' THE MOON

ONCE UPON a time there was a poor husbandman with many children, but the youngest was the prettiest. One wild, wet Thursday night there came three taps at their window, and there stood outside a great White Bear. "Pray give me your youngest daughter and I will make you as rich as you now are poor," said the Bear.

At first the girl said, "No," but her father talked her round and the Thursday next off she went on the Bear's back. They went a long, long way, to a steep hill at which the White Bear knocked. A door opened into a grand castle inside, and the Bear gave the girl a silver bell to ring for whatever she needed. After a wonderful meal she slept. When the light was out, the White Bear, who had thrown off his beast shape, came as a man and lay down beside her. But he always went away before dawn, and she could never get a sight of him. Things went happily till she began to feel lonely and wished to visit her family. "Very well," said the Bear, "but promise never to talk with your mother alone, for that will bring misfortune."

And she promised. So, he took her to meet her family. She told them nothing about herself. But somehow or other her mother persuaded her to tell the whole story.

"Goodness," said the mother, "he may be a Troll! Hide this bit of candle and, when he is asleep, just light it and look. But don't drop the tallow on him." The girl took the candle to the castle, and that night, as the White Bear slept, she got up softly and lit it. There was the loveliest Prince you could ever imagine, and she fell so deeply in love with him that she leaned over and kissed him on the lips. But as she did so, three hot drops of tallow fell on his shirt and he awoke.

"What have you done?" he cried out. "I had been free if you had held out just for one year. My stepmother bewitched me into a White Bear by day and a Man by night. And now I must leave you for where she lives in a castle East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon. There too is a Troll Princess with a nose three ells long, and

she is now the wife I must wed." The girl wept and wept, and set out in search of the castle, to save him. Having walked for many days, she met an old woman, who gave her a horse which would take her to her sister's house. "Take this apple with you and, when you reach her, give the horse a switch under the left ear and bid him go home," said the old woman. The girl rode on, a long, long way, and met another old woman, who directed her to the third sister, and gave her a carding-comb. Again the girl rode on, till she came to a third old woman, who gave her a spinning-wheel, bidding her to ride to the East Wind and send the horse home.

On rode the girl, to the house of the East Wind and asked him the way. Yes, he had heard of the castle, but had never blown so far. But he would carry her to the West Wind, who was stronger than himself. The West Wind took her to the South Wind, and they asked him the way. Finally, they approached North Wind and asked, "Here's the girl who should have had the Prince in the castle East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon. Can you show her the way?"

"I once blew an aspen leaf there," said the North Wind, "but was so worn out I had not a puff left in me for days. Still, if you wish it, my girl, and are not afraid, I will see if I can blow you thither." Early next morning the North Wind puffed himself out, terrifying and huge and strong, and off they went, and finally, the North Wind just managed to throw her on the shore before the castle East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon. Next morning the girl sat down before the castle and began to play with the golden apple, and who should see her but the Troll Princess who was to wed the Prince!

"What do you want for your apple? Name your price" said the Troll Princess.

"That I may spend the night with the Prince who lives there," said the girl. The Troll Princess agreed, but when the girl came to the Prince's room he was fast asleep, and remained asleep, and the girl was chased out of the room in the morning.

Once more she sat down and began to card with the golden carding-comb. Again Long-Nose wanted it and again the girl refused, except for a night with the Prince. The Troll agreed, but

when the girl went up, she could not rouse the Prince. And again Long-Nose chased her out in the morning. A third time the girl sat down and began to spin with the golden spinning-wheel, and that too Long-Nose wanted, and allowed the girl to spend the night with the Prince. The girl went up to the Prince. But now fortunately, some good folk who slept next door had heard the girl weeping and calling the past two nights, and so they had told the Prince. That evening, when the Long-Nose came with her sleepy-drink, the Prince threw it away unnoticed. So when his true love came in, she found him awake and told him all her tale.

This has something to teach at all levels. From it the youngest child can learn the simple virtues, *e.g.*, of courtesy even to those whose appearance is queer (who knows what opportunities they bring?); of courage, for the emphasis on it is unmistakable; of perseverance that keeps steadily on, despite weariness and disappointment. One cannot miss the dangers of breaking a promise, or curiosity, or fail to see the justice of the fact that those who dirty a garment are the ones to clean it.

But it is when we look at the symbolism of the tale that we begin to sense its profounder lessons. For the Constellation, the Great Bear, in the individual, symbolises septenary ray of his septenary life-cycle, the Monadic Heavenly Man. Just as the Monad is the inherent immortal part of man that compels his growth towards perfection, so does the bewitched White Bear (white including all the colours) calls for the human-soul-to-be, the youngest [child] upon the material scene of evolution. But the personal soul only knows its divine lord by night, in sleep; by day it is only aware of it in its animal nature and form. Touched by the divine contact, the unsatisfied soul aspires, desires, but does not know yet, what it desires. It turns back to satisfy its longing, to the familiar things of matter. And here we find a link with the Promethean myth. By the light of mind, the human soul becomes

aware of divinity and is enamoured of its beauty. And yet, in some mysterious way, that light, in its tempting material aspect, is premature, and plunges both the human and divine soul into an intensification of difficulties and tribulations. For the human soul's view of its divine partner is conditioned by the material, personal outlook (the bit of candle given by the mother) and so its attitude mars the Spirit's garment with the three spots of tallow, ambition for progress and success, desire for life and desire for comfort and happiness—for self. The soul desires to hold the Spirit for itself, and then finds itself bereft.

With self-conscious perception still rooted in the personal, the human soul is seemingly further from its lord than when it felt its presence instinctively. It has to find it again with self-conscious pain and effort, or else the monadic spark is doomed to union with the most gross, material element, the psychic, personified by the Troll Princess with a nose three ells long. For each of the senses is correlated with an element. Spiritual teachers are represented with long ears to denote that their consciousness is centred on the pure *akasic* plane whose characteristic is "sound." The sense of smell is equated with the earth, or matter; so the lengthening of the nose clearly indicates the gross, material character of the lower psychic principles that claim the monad, the sleeping Prince, unless the human *Manas* can find and call it awake.

The castle East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon surely lies, then, in the mid-region of our being, neither sun-immortal nor moon-immortal—the bridge of *Antaskarna*, where the *final choice* is to be made. *Antaskarna* is the bridge connecting the lower, psychic mind with the Higher Divine Mind. At the time of making the choice, the consciousness is, as it were, standing on *Antaskarna*. But before that moment of making the final choice, the human soul, one-pointed in its aim, must make its own destiny. The three old women are unmistakably blood-sisters to the Greek Parcae, the Fates, as also to the Scandinavian Norns—Past, Present and Future. The golden apple must have grown on the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for the actions we do with full human awareness

are those which bring the experiences by which we approach our goal. The carding-comb is the judgment with which we must comb out the dross of the experience and retain the essential, in order to spin from it the thread of our true destiny, the line of our life's meditation. Later, what time has given us—experience, judgment, will—must be all be traded, offered up for the possibility of awakening the Spirit.

The Four Winds stand for the Regents or the intelligent powers behind the four great cosmic forces, presiding over the cardinal points, each with a distinct occult property. They are the material agents by which Karma restores equilibrium. Mankind sets up causes, both individual and collective, which awaken corresponding powers in the cosmos, and these are magnetically attracted to, and react upon, the makers of those causes. The thoughts, feelings and deeds of the soul produce reactions in the cosmos which bear it onwards, as do the Winds in the story. These Winds, the principles of the Cosmic Space, are intimately connected with the Pole-Star, which is linked with the Bear constellation and therefore the *North Wind* finally carries the soul across the ocean of *samsara* to the castle where the last struggle between the principles takes place.

There the soul must surrender one by one the results of all its individual experience, its judgment and its will, for a higher purpose. It has at length to wash away the three blots of individual desire—ambition, separate life and happiness. The more the psychic nature—personal thoughts, feelings and sense impressions, as personified by the Trolls—concerns itself with these faults, the greater and darker they grow. We do not overcome our vices by thinking and worrying about them. The touch of the beggar-soul, with nothing left to call its own, removes all stains of former selfishness from the heavenly garment. The evil embodiments burst, the soul and Spirit, reunited, gather into the storehouse of eternal memory the treasures of wisdom gained through the vicissitudes of the life pilgrimage.

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

THE BRAHAMANA—II

7. *None should attack a Brahamana; a Brahamana should not retaliate; woe to him who strikes a Brahamana; more woe to the Brahamana if he retaliates. (389)*

8. *It is no slight benefit to a Brahamana when he holds back his mind from the allurements of life. Moreover, when the intent to harm ceases, then in direct measure is the cessation of suffering. (390)*

9. *Him I call a Brahamana who offends not by body, speech or mind; who is controlled in these three things. (391)*

IN THE OLDEN days when the caste system was properly understood, all men were respected for their contribution to the society, particularly the Brahmins. The Brahmins studied scriptures and taught others. They performed ceremonies, rites and rituals prescribed in the scriptures. It was considered sinful to injure a Brahmin. Brahmin on his part would not retaliate but would show exceptional degree of tolerance. An ignorant or a vicious man may disrespect and torment a Brahmin, but the Brahmin would bear it all with calmness. Remaining detached from personal attacks, he strives to see the *Atman* in every person, including the tormentor. A true Brahmin would be a practitioner of *Sanatana Dharma* which teaches: “Hatred ceases not by hatred, but by love.” Knowing the terrible consequences of an act of violence against the innocent and the harmless as described by the Buddha in the chapter on “The Rod of Punishment,” the Brahmin feels pity and forgives his tormentor. The Brahmin who retaliates will have to face severe karmic backlash because he has erred despite his knowledge.

We come across stories in *Puranas* of the sages who had progressed much in spiritual life, but failed to overcome anger or pride. Every time he gave vent to his anger, he lost the merit of many years of penance and austerities. Beautiful *apsaras* (nymphs)

managed to tempt even the great *rishis*. Therefore, when the Brahmin succeeds in conquering the temptations, he makes much progress. Total harmlessness is the characteristic of a true Brahmin. By controlling his body, speech and mind, he controls the three avenues through which spiritual energy is wasted by the ignorant.

10. *Even as a Brahamana worships the sacrificial fire, so should one reverence him who understands the Law of the fully Enlightened One. (392)*

Brahamana has certain duties to perform, one of which is kindling of sacrificial fire. Offerings are made to the sacrificial fire. The Brahmin regularly attends to the fire by offering *ghee* (clarified butter) to keep it going throughout the ceremony. This is an outward expression of what happens on the inner plane. It refers to the tending of the inner fire which was given to mindless man by the Solar *Pitris* which made him a thinking man. In the allegory, Prometheus stole the fire from heaven and brought it down to earth to allow man to proceed consciously on the path of spiritual evolution, thus transforming the most perfect of *animals* on earth into a potential god, and making him free to “take the kingdom of heaven by violence.” The Brahmin keeps this inner fire burning. It also represents the fire of knowledge which burns to dross all his ignorance. Therefore, just as the Brahamana worships the sacrificial fire, so should one reverence him who understands the Law of the fully Enlightened One, because they can impart to him the knowledge of the Law which can enlighten him.

11. *Not by matted locks, not by lineage, not by caste does one become a Brahamana. By his truth and righteousness man becomes a Brahamana. He is blessed. (393)*

12. *What avails thy matted hair; O fool? What avails thy deer skin? Outwardly you clean yourself, within you there is ravening. (394)*

Brahamana is a self-realized being. He is truthful and righteous. Therefore, we must not go by outward appearance alone. It is not

the matted locks or the lineage or one’s caste or wearing of the deer skin that makes a man, a Brahmin. Similarly, one does not become pure merely by outward cleaning as long as one has not removed the impurities of mind and desires. Krishna calls such a person, “a false pietist of the bewildered soul.”

13-14. *Him I call a Brahamana who, alone in a forest, is plunged in meditation, on whose emaciated body veins stand out and which is covered in old rags. I call him not a Brahamana because of his origin or his mother. He may be an affluent and supercilious Bhovadi. He who is detached and possessionless, he is a Brahamana. (395-96)*

15. *Him I call a Brahamana who has destroyed all fetters and has nothing to fear, who is unshackled and emancipated. (397)*

There comes a stage in the life of a Brahmin when he retires into forest, lives alone and meditates. He has destroyed all fetters that bind the man to worldly existence. Plunged in meditation, he cares neither for food nor for fine clothing. One does not become a Brahmin simply by being born in a Brahmin family. He may be a “Bhovadi” — the one who says “Bho.” “Arrogant and supercilious Brahamanas of the day considering themselves equal in Wisdom and Purity addressed the Buddha as Bho Gotama. They called out ‘Bho’ also for their menials. So a Brahamana in name but not in reality is here named Bhovadi.”

16. *Him I call a Brahamana who has cut the straps of hatred, and the thong of craving, and the rope of heresies and its appurtenances of latent tendencies, who has burst the bar of ignorance and has awakened. (398)*

Straps, thong, rope and bar are used for securing, holding together, fastening, restraining free movement, etc. These are used here to represent purely personal and animalistic nature of man that holds him back from spiritual awakening. Hatred is the strap, desire is the thong, the heretical doctrines are the rope, the

appurtenances are doubt, ignorance, etc., and ignorance is the bar. These have been surmounted by a true Brahamana. He has put aside false doctrines and erroneous tendencies. He has risen above exoteric, formal practices. He has embraced wisdom.

17. *Him I call a Brahamana who though innocent of all offence patiently bears reproach, ill-treatment and confinement. Patience is his force, his own strength his army. (399)*

An average person considers it to be his duty to fight for his rights and justice. But the Brahamana who has overcome the sense of separateness, regards everyone as part of himself; for him, his individual rights have no existence. He patiently bears reproach, ill-treatment and confinement even though he is innocent of all offence. He is wise. He knows that there never was, nor will be there now to be found anyone who stands wholly praised or utterly condemned. “Enduring patience is the highest *Tapas*,” says the Buddha.

As *Light on the Path* puts it, until a man has become, in heart and spirit, a disciple, he has no existence for those who are teachers of disciples. And he becomes this by one method only—the surrender of his personal humanity. He regards his own life as a part of a whole. Never again can another man be regarded as a person who can be criticized or condemned; never again can the neophyte raise his voice in self-defense or excuse. Further, after parting with the sense of individual rights, he must part also with the sense of self-respect and of virtue. Because, he who thinks himself holier than another, he who has any pride in his own exemption from vice or folly, he who believes himself wise, or in any way superior to his fellow men, is incapable of discipleship. A man must become as a little child before he can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

(To be continued)

LOYALTY TO THE CAUSE

THE DECLARATION of the U.L.T. is a charter of responsibilities. One of the chief commitments to which each of the affiliating Lodges subscribe is that each will remain loyal to the great Founders of the Theosophical Movement. Although this obligation and accountability is assumed by all U.L.T. s, it is by no means unique and exclusive to them. Wherever students of Theosophy join in a concerted endeavour to further its Cause, there, among those students, this loyalty would normally and naturally remain as the sustaining and vitalizing Force. If it is absent or is honoured only by lip professions, there the real work slackens, the power to attract inquirers is lost, and though the body may go on living, the Soul will have fled and no light comes.

U.L.T., or for the matter of that, any theosophical organization, can remain loyal only so long as its principal Associate workers are themselves loyal. When they meander forth into new and even alien pastures, when personal claims of grand achievements or high status are put forward, wherein the group allegiance is more to a person than to a Theosophical principle expounded in the Teaching, there Universal Brotherhood takes a backward place and the interests of the many are sacrificed for the glorification of the few. In such cases, Theosophy is reduced to a name used for cashing in on the claimant’s pretensions at familiarity with the Occult Sciences. The great Founders are invoked merely to gain merit in the eyes of others. History shows that the names of the Founders have been used in the past to bolster up the claimant’s fictitious familiarity with Them.

What *is* this “loyalty” that the Declaration demands and expects from any U.L.T. and therefore from any true student of Theosophy? Why is it considered so very important that by implication, any Lodge, Society or Association would be deemed to be not united to the great effort if its loyalty falters or drags or dies?

In the seventies of the eighteenth century and for the first time in recorded history, it was Madame Blavatsky who hinted at the

existence not only of individual Prophets or Seers or Patriarchs but of a whole hierarchy of exalted Beings who together formed the Great Lodge of White Adepts and whom she called the Sages of the Orient. These are Men who are infinitely superior and wiser than the men of our day. They have perfected themselves in all departments of Nature and by that achievement have become the custodians and preservers of the ageless Wisdom. These Men because of their attainments and the consummation of solidarity with all Nature have gained mastery over space, time, mind and matter. It is these Masters who sent H.P.B. out into the world to represent Them and help carry on Their work of establishing among men an isle of refuge where through union and harmony a Brotherhood could be made to emerge which, through its oneness of purpose and feeling, would deserve the imparting of the higher Wisdom pertaining to the hidden soul of things.

From out of the great Lodge of White Adepts, two Masters of Wisdom undertook the task of watching over the newly started Theosophical Movement. So, there was the Great Lodge at the apex of the triangle while the two Masters represented the two bottom angles of the triangle. To impress the Wisdom residing in the trinity and to make it active on earth, this Trinity had to be transformed into a Quaternary. For this purpose, H.P.B. was chosen and acknowledged as their sole representative on earth. From this quaternary flowed Wisdom, Knowledge and Instructions in such abundance as had not been witnessed in historical memory. It is to this Quaternary that loyalty is due. The fundamental principles dealing with God, Law and Being and other universal Truths came from Them. The idea that Universal Brotherhood remained a FACT in nature even though men hated and pilfered and killed, was propounded by Them in the 1870s, and the pale shadow of it is haunting the thought of the bellicose nations of our day.

Very, very few would have the qualifications which would enable them to come into direct contact with one or the other of these Masters of Wisdom. Loyalty must therefore find its roots and

anchorage in Their Teachings. The loyalty of students must turn to the purpose for which the Movement was launched and to the aim which They had in mind when They broke the silence of centuries. This loyalty is their due, not only because it is rooted in gratitude, but for the reason that in it alone will be found that bond which will bind each aspiring heart to the Lodge of the truly Immortal Ones. “From the Teachings to the Teacher” is a saying the wisdom of which has been demonstrated by centuries of experience. When in the progress of time these Teachings percolate through to the daily life of the disciple, then loyalty burgeons in him because of his conviction that he has found the Way; and as faith follows conviction, there comes veneration in his life—the love and the adoration that transcend understanding. A real sense of loyalty to the founders is impossible without there being a sense of loyalty to the Teachings.

There are several distinct spheres of action in which the person can work and which in turn have their reactions on him. Loyalty would, therefore, be expected to spread over each of these spheres, and so spreading, to ennoble them. When because of laxity of application or loss of contact with the Teachings over long periods lethargy of soul sets in, then these spheres of action reflect a waning of loyalty and in some regrettable cases its total disappearance. The earnest Associate has to be on the *qui vive* against such possibilities. Loyalty to the Instructions can be real only when these are worked out in life. Theosophy has to become (in time, of course) the only way of life. The two bodies (astral and physical); *Prana* (the principle of Life) with its polarities; *Kama* (desires) reflecting at one time the base, at the other the divine—all these aspects which make up the lower man have to be made to owe allegiance to the great Instructions. Any deviation must be taboo as growth under the impulse of the Teachings attains its fulfillment. Till then, the frailties and deficiencies have to be noted and guidance sought in the Teachings for their ultimate effacement.

Considering only the physical body, it becomes apparent that it

can be elevated or corrupted by food, environment, physical contacts as well as the usages to which it may be put or to which it may be forced by the will, desires and lusts of others. Drinks that effectively shut off higher influences, drugs that do the wit abuse, and the inhaling of intoxicants that by their heady fumes paralyse the soul functions and allow the animal in man a free and unbridled licentiousness—all these tend to create conditions in which the soul gets stifled; and how can a stunned soul pay homage to Instructions or Teachers? If loyalty has to be established in one's entire make-up, then the aspirant has to turn his back on the dark aspects of life and face the Light even though that light may reveal the stark ugliness which he has fashioned for himself. What loyalty can mean is shown in the beautiful *slokas* (verses) of the *Bhagavad-Gita* in which Arjuna expresses his regret at lapses in loyalty even in matters which to the undisciplined modern mind may appear trivial. Addressing Sri Krishna, the Sovereign Lord and the Prototype of all Teachers, Arjuna reveals in his own words of supplication the awakening of his spiritual perceptions. Says Arjuna, the devoted disciple:

Having been ignorant of thy majesty, I took thee for a friend, and have called thee “O Krishna, O son of Yadu, O friend,” and blinded by my affection and presumption, I have at times treated thee without respect in sport, in recreation, in repose, in thy chair, and at thy meals, in private and in public; all this I beseech thee, O inconceivable Being, to forgive.

Loyalty, wherever placed, has to be complete. When loyalty is given unreservedly, the individual casts off all other pulls on himself. There can be no aspect of his life which he can segregate and to which he can say that loyalty does not extend. Resolves may break down under terrific strains; fear may cause the disciple to thrice deny his Master; memories of past escapades may haunt the disciple for years, egging him on to have just one more fling. The Soul that is trying to gain its feet may succumb and fall to these, and each such fall becomes a reminder that the strength

required for serving loyally was insufficient. But it is through falls that the babe in spirituality can induce stability in his legs. If through disgust at one's own feebleness, or through fear of greater ordeals ahead, or through a shock to his personal and emotional nature the man gives up his convictions, his vows, his perception of truth, then must he be ranked a failure. But there *are* warriors still who carry on the ancient fight, who fall and rise to fall again, and who flinch not, but with many a gash and wound strain to keep the flag high and fluttering, to pass it on, their life-work done, to stronger hands. For such, loyalty becomes the breath of their life that will survive transformations and even death.

For the student who is about to embark on the long, long trail that leads to the realms of Light, an indication of paramount importance can be given. The loyalty, both as ideal and fact, will remain barren of results unless it is translated into conscious action. In this cycle, the student can contribute to the over-all effort by putting forth a strenuous endeavour to spread broadcast the Teachings of Theosophy recorded in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky and W. Q. Judge. However humble he may be in knowledge, status or worldly possessions, the student will always have the capacity to devise avenues by which he may improve the general condition of men's minds and hearts and especially of those who surround him daily. He can help in the task of carrying the Teachings to homes where sorrow broods or where ignorance spreads its darkening veils. If through inherent inability he is unable to do this, then may he devote himself to the task of removing some of the prejudices and dogmatic illusions that plague people's minds. Even making Theosophical literature readily available to those in need of it would be no small victory for loyalty. But the most valued contribution will always be that of unreservedly joining other like-minded aspirants in keeping the Lodge, Association or Society united in Aim, Purpose and Teaching, and making it ready and deserving of help and encouragement that always come from the inner planes of being when they are deserved.

THE PLANET MERCURY

MERCURY is the planet closest to the sun. With the discovery of Pluto, Mercury is considered to be the second smallest planet in the Solar System, and is only slightly larger than the earth's moon. Mercury takes nearly 88 earth days to complete one revolution or orbit around the Sun. A day on Mercury is the time taken by Mercury to rotate around its own axis, which is 59 earth days. Oddly, one observes very queer phenomenon of sunrise and sunset on Mercury. After a few earth days, the Sun's upward movement slows down, and then it starts to sink back towards the horizon. A few days later it disappears completely, plunging the landscape back into darkness, and then it rises again. Thus, from the surface of this planet, *the sun appears to rise briefly, set and rise again* before it travels westward across the sky. At sunset, the sun appears to set, rise again briefly, and then set again. This double sunrise is unique to Mercury. Because Mercury's orbit is an ellipse, the planet changes speed as it moves around the Sun. Mercury moves fastest when it is closest to the Sun—so fast, in fact, that its rotation cannot keep up. As Mercury races past, the Sun backtracks through the sky, before moving forwards again when the planet slows down.

Mercury does not experience seasons in the same way as most other planets, such as Earth, because, like most planets, Mercury spins around like a top, but it is almost upright. Earth is *tilted over*, which causes seasons. The half of the earth which is tilted towards the sun experiences summer, while the other half that is tilted away from the sun experiences winter.

One can measure the length of the day by finding out how long a planet takes to rotate once—its sidereal day, or one can measure the time from one sunrise to the next. For most planets the two are about the same. But on Mercury they are very different. The Sidereal day for Mercury is 59 earth days. But the Mercurial day from one sunrise to the next is 176 earth days. If you are standing on Mercury at sunrise, then you would have to wait for a whole Mercurial year

for sunset, and then another year for the next sunrise. Thus, a day on Mercury, from sunrise to sunrise is equal to two Mercurial years, and one Mercurial year is equal to 88 days.

Mercury's surface is heavily cratered and similar in appearance to the moon, indicating that it has been geologically inactive for billions of years. The surface of Mercury which faces the Sun sees temperatures of up to 427°C, whilst on the opposite side this can be as low as -173°C. This is due to the planet having no atmosphere to help regulate the temperature. This may be one of the reasons why it is said that no evidence for life has been found on Mercury. Mr. Crosbie points out that it is not right for the scientists to conclude that because a planet is nearer the Sun than our Earth, its climate and conditions would make the sustaining of life there impossible. Life always adjusts itself to whatever conditions exist. H.P.B. writes that some forms of life as we know are possible on Venus, Mars and Mercury. All the three planets have very dense atmosphere. Their poles are covered with snows and their surfaces are hidden by clouds. The geographical configuration of their seas and continents, the variations of their seasons and climates are closely analogous. (*S.D.*, II, 707)

There are only seven planets especially connected with our earth. Each planet may be looked upon as a house or sphere in which dwells its own special *Dhyani* (a celestial being). Each human group or race on earth is born under one of these seven planets. Each human race receives its physical life and light from the planet under which it is born, and receives spiritual life and light, guidance and influence, from its own special *Dhyani*. Thus, *the first race is said to be born under the Sun; the second under Jupiter (Brihaspati); the third under Venus (Sukra); the fourth under Moon (Soma) and Saturn (Sani) and the fifth is born under Mercury (Budha)*. (*S.D.*, II, 29)

H.P.B. points out that it is still a mystery to science why Venus and Mercury have no satellites, and when they did exist, how they were formed. It is because science has only one key—the key of

matter—to open the mysteries of nature, while occult philosophy has seven keys. H.P.B. writes:

Mercury and Venus have no satellites but they had “parents” just as the earth had. [Our moon is considered to be the mother of the Earth.] Both are far older than the Earth and, before the latter reaches her seventh Round, her mother Moon will have dissolved into thin air, as the “Moons” of the other planets have, or, have not, as the case may be, since there are planets which have *several* moons—a mystery again which no Oedipus of astronomy has solved. (*S.D.*, I, 155-56 fn.)

It appears that what science regards as satellites or moons, the occult philosophy regards as “parents” of the planet. It seems that Venus and Mercury have no moons at present, but may have had them in the past, but they have disappeared because both these planets are in their Seventh Round. But what is a Round? Each planet is sevenfold and has seven globes, A to G, say. These seven globes, while differing from one another in the substance of which they are made, are united together in a single mass. They are not seven separate balls; and may be seen when we are in the corresponding state of consciousness. The course of evolution begins on globe A and proceeds through globes B, C, D, up to G, and these seven globes constitute a *Planetary Chain*. When the Egos have completed their evolution on A to G globes, then one circling is completed, and that is termed as one “Round.” We, on earth, are in the middle of the Fourth Round. The evolution of the egos on a planetary chain is completed at the end of seven rounds.

Mercury’s swift movement through the sky led to its being seen as a messenger. The Babylonians called it Nabu—the messenger god and the god of writing. The Babylonians influenced Greek astronomy. Planet Mercury was called *Apollo* by the Greeks when it was visible in the morning sky, and *Hermes*, when visible in the evening. Apollo has been variously recognized as a god of light and the sun, truth and prophecy, healing, music, poetry, and more. Hindu Mythology used the name Budha for Mercury, and this god

was thought to preside over Wednesday. The god Odin or Woden of Germanic paganism was associated with the planet Mercury and also Wednesday. Mercury’s modern name comes from the swift-footed Roman messenger god, Mercury. Moreover, the element Mercury, also known as quicksilver, is fast-moving and fluid. Someone with a mercurial temper is very changeable.

Metaphysically, we can see that symbols of almost all planets are a combination of circle, semi-circle and a cross; wherein circle represents pure spirit, semi-circle or crescent represents soul, and the cross represents matter, or body. In the symbol of planet Mercury (☿) we find all three: crescent on top of the circle which is on top of the cross. Mercury has been called the messenger of gods, and in the symbol of Mercury we find Venus with wings, or consciousness expressing itself through matter and soaring higher to unknown regions. The symbol of Venus is circle on top of the cross.

Caduceus is represented as two serpents entwined around a rod. The Rod of the Caduceus represents the trunk of the *Ashwattha* tree or the tree of Life and Being. It grows from and descends at every new *manvantara* from two wings of the Swan or *Hansa* of Life. The two serpents coiled around the rod represent Spirit and Matter, and descending along the trunk they are interlaced in close embrace so that the two tails embrace on the earth, which forms the manifested universe (*S.D.*, I, 549-50). Astronomically, the head and tail represent the points of the ecliptic where the planets and even the sun and moon meet in close embrace.

In Greek mythology Mercury is symbolized by a dog, which is a symbol of vigilance. A dog is kept to watch over the flocks, so Mercury, also known as Anubis or Hermanubis watches over celestial flock or occult wisdom. The Egyptian god Thoth Hermes is described as the god of wisdom and of authority over all other gods. Thoth carries the serpent-rod, emblem of Wisdom, the rod that became the Caduceus. Hermes, Orpheus, Asclepius, are all those demi-gods and heroes, to whom is ascribed the revelation of sciences to men. Serpent is an emblem of both good and evil—the

right and left-hand magic or sorcery. The serpent has ever been the symbol of the Adept, and of his powers of immortality and divine knowledge. Mercury conducts and guides with the caduceus the souls of the dead to Hades and even raises the dead to life with it. It shows the dual power of the Secret Wisdom: the black and the white magic. It shows this personified Wisdom guiding the Soul after death, and its power to call to life that which is dead—a very deep metaphor if one thinks over its meaning, writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 364)

Virgil depicts him as taking his wand to evoke the souls plunged in Orcus, or the land of the dead. When Mercury guides the souls to Hades, it stands, symbolically, for death of the physical body, and hence birth in spiritual body. Moreover, the state after death for every soul is determined by Karma of life. Hence, Thoth-Hermes, the god of wisdom is the recorder and the judge. He records the thoughts, words and deeds of men, and weighs them in the balance, just like the *Lipikas*. Thoth-Hermes is simply the personification of voice or sacred teaching of the sacerdotal caste of Egypt; the voice of the Great Hierophants, writes H.P.B.

Planet Mercury is also known as *Budha* as it is connected with *Buddhi*, and known as Lord of Wisdom. Mercury is Budh, Wisdom, Enlightenment, or “Re-awakening” into the divine Science. There is the allegory of Tara, Soma and Brihaspati (Jupiter), wherein Brihaspati represents *dead-letter* and ritualistic or ceremonial worship, Tara, his wife, symbolizes a person, who although wedded to dogmatic worship longs for true wisdom. She is *carried away* by Soma—who initiates her into mysteries, *Gupta Vidya* or esoteric Wisdom. This is represented by saying that union of Tara and Soma was Budha—(Greek Hermes or Mercury), *i.e.*, God of Wisdom or Ganesa. Thus, the incarnated consciousness of the aspiring soul unites with *Buddhi* giving rise to wisdom.

The real property of the *true* Soma was (and *is*) to make a new *man* of the Initiate, after he is *reborn*, namely once that he begins to live in his *astral* body; for, his spiritual nature overcoming the physical, he would soon snap it off and part

even from that etherealized form... The partaker of Soma [juice] finds himself both linked to his external body and yet away from it in his spiritual form. The latter, freed from the former, soars for the time being in his ethereal higher regions, becoming virtually “as one of the gods,” and yet preserving in his physical brain the memory of what he sees and learns. Plainly speaking, *Soma* is the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge forbidden by the Elohim to Adam and Eve. (*S.D.*, II, 499 and fn.)

Although good deal of rare and valuable esoteric knowledge about the planets has been given out in Theosophical writings, H.P.B. says that no one “could expect to have the secret teachings explained to him thoroughly and completely, before *he had irretrievably pledged himself to the Brotherhood and passed through at least one initiation.*” (*S.D.*, I, 164)

THIS being human is a guest house.
 Every morning a new arrival.
 A joy, a depression, a meanness,
 some momentary awareness comes
 as an unexpected visitor.
 Welcome and entertain them all!
 Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
 who violently sweep your house
 empty of its furniture,
 still, treat each guest honourably.
 He may be clearing you out
 for some new delight.
 The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
 meet them at the door laughing,
 and invite them in.
 Be grateful, for whoever comes,
 because each has been sent
 as a guide from beyond.

—JALALUDDIN RUMI

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: The source of all western languages is considered to be Greek and Latin, while Sanskrit is said to be the source of all oriental languages. What is the source of *all* languages in the world? Why Sanskrit is called “mother of all languages”?

Answer: To understand the development of language we must take into consideration the development of speech, in the earlier races of humanity. The early mankind (first three races) did not possess articulate speech. Some scientists assert that “human speech has developed from a few simple sounds,” but that is not true. Theosophy asserts that “a *human* brain is necessary for *human* speech.” When we compare the brain of an ape with that of man we find that a great gulf separates the two.

Speech is also connected with mind. The First Race of humanity was mindless and therefore speechless. The Second Race had a “Sound-language,” consisting of chant-like sounds composed of vowels only. The Third Race developed in the beginning a kind of language which was only a slight improvement on the various sounds in Nature, such as the cry of gigantic insects and of the first animals. During the second half of the Third Root Race, after the sexes had separated and mind was awakened, speech developed. This speech was, at first, monosyllabic, *i.e.*, consisted of vowels mixed with consonants. The Fourth Root Race or the Atlantean Race developed what is known as agglutinative language, *i.e.*, consisting of loosely connected words. These agglutinative languages were spoken by some Atlantean races. The primitive speech of the most civilized Atlantean races was the language, referred to as “Rakshasi Bhasha” in old Sanskrit works. This

language decayed and almost died out, paving the way for the “inflectional speech”—the mystery tongue of the Initiates of the Fifth Race—which is the root of the Sanskrit language, which in turn is the mother of the Greek language. “The ‘Semitic’ languages are the bastard descendants of the first phonetic corruptions of the eldest children of the early Sanskrit,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 198-200). In *Transactions*, H.P.B. mentions that the Sanskrit, as now known was not spoken by the Atlanteans.

In the article “Was Writing Known Before Panini?” H.P.B. mentions that the direct progenitor of Vedic Sanskrit was the sacerdotal language, which has its distinct name but cannot be given. Vedic Sanskrit is described as comparatively rough and unpolished when compared with the classical Sanskrit. Classical Sanskrit is attributed to Panini. She comments that Sanskrit alone, of all the languages has survived and has had its cycles of perfection and cycles of degeneration. It has survived even as “dead” language. Sanskrit was nearly lost, but is now spreading in Europe and America. Classical Sanskrit has been only restored, and in parts perfected by Panini. But neither Panini nor Patanjali created it. Sanskrit language has had its rise and fall several times. According to Max Muller, Sanskrit, as compared with Greek and Latin is an elder sister. However, the Sanskrit word *Deva* (god) has become the Latin *dues*, and points to a common source, writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, I, 348 fn.). It appears that the root of both eastern and western languages, now known to us, is Sanskrit, and hence it may be called the “Mother of all languages.”

Sanskrit is also called *Devabhasha* or the “language of the gods.” It is a very old language. On the authority of Col. Van Kennedy, H.P.B. mentions that “Babylonia was once the seat of the Sanskrit language and of Brahmanical influence.” She writes: “Akkadians instructed the Babylonians in the Mysteries, and taught them the sacerdotal or *Mystery-language*. These Akkadians were then simply a tribe of the Hindu-Brahmans, now called Aryans—their vernacular language, the Sanskrit of the Vedas; and the sacred or *Mystery-language*,

that which, even in our own age, is used by the Hindu fakirs and initiated Brahmans in their magical evocations.” (*Isis*, II, 46)

Question: As a theory it is easy to state, but it is still more difficult to “demonstrate” to another “the existence of creative forces in Man that exist in Nature.” H.P.B. can say this out of her own personal experience of the “demonstrated” powers of the *Mahatmas* she met. But, how can we convince others of these facts?

Answer: To “demonstrate” does not only mean to visually show the fact by experiment, it also means to prove with certainty, and that could be done logically also. For instance, in the Preface to *Isis Unveiled*, H.P.B. mentions that by combining science with religion, the existence of God and immortality of spirit may be *demonstrated* like a problem of Euclid. The omnipotence of man’s spirit comes from the kinship of man’s spirit with God. If you tell someone who has not seen water about an ocean of water, he can accept it on faith or reject it. But allow a drop of water to fall upon his hand, then he has the fact from which all the rest may be inferred by him. Man-spirit proves God-spirit. If the spiritual Ego of a mortal man can display tremendous powers, and control the forces of nature, one can imagine that the greatness of the Father-Spirit must be relatively as much vaster as the whole ocean surpasses the single drop in volume and potency.

If we believe ourselves to be born in original sin, we must be *inherently imperfect*, and that which is inherently imperfect cannot by some process become perfect. But if we believe in the existence of the *Mahatmas*, we can understand that they must have become what they are as a result of evolution. Man is potentially divine, and evolution is the process of unfolding from within, without. Mr. Judge points out that great musical ability is not common but it is normal, and anyone who is ready to undergo the training can acquire that ability. The same is true of psychic and spiritual powers. The germs of all the powers which are in a *Mahatma* are in us, and we can manifest them if we are ready to undergo necessary training and experience.

We are not altogether unfamiliar with powers latent in man. At a simple level, there are several examples of powers of faith, thought and speech. Many a times a person is cured by intense faith in the doctor, thus displaying power of faith. When blessings given by a person who is truthful and of pure heart, come to realization, it is the creative power of speech. We are familiar with the power of “evil eye” which is but destructive power of thought.

Moreover, we have testimony of seers to go by. In *Isis Unveiled*, H.P.B. gives us innumerable instances of astonishing phenomena performed by men; but she also gives us the rational explanation of the laws that are brought into operation for the performance of these phenomena. We are able to accept powers latent in man only when we are able to appreciate that behind the physical man and nature, there is invisible, psychic or inner aspect, and above these two is the spiritual or divine aspect. In the article “The Two Aspects of Occultism” in *Vernal Blooms*, Mr. Judge writes that man is the highest product of evolution, and hence, has in him a centre or focus corresponding to each centre of force or power in the universe. For instance, Electricity is the most powerful force in nature. The nervous, physical and mental systems of man acting together are able to produce exactly the same force, which can be used to kill, to alter, to move, or change any object or condition. Mind of man is like a powerful dynamo. At a simple level, this power is used in *psychokinesis*, which is the action of mind on matter, in which objects are caused to move or change as a result of mental concentration upon them. For instance, a spoon can be bent by the power of mind. In nature, birds and animals use telepathy to communicate. It is a natural power. Man is able to use it for communicating of thought or idea from one mind to another. We all use this power unconsciously in our conversation, without which we would not be able to understand one another merely through exchange of words. When we say: “I see what you mean,” we are using telepathy to gain understanding of the real meaning behind words.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Seers in ancient India had established an ideal scheme for the structured evolution of man that enables him to gain the necessary knowledge and wisdom for the completion of life's journey. These sages were able to identify four different yet interdependent stages or phases through which each individual passes, from birth to death. These stages came to be known as "Ashrama Dharma." Ashrama did not mean a building, but a stage of life. As the individual passes through these stages, he learns to adapt himself to the outside world. The four stages of life are: (1) Studentship (called *Brahmacharaya*), (2) Householder (*Grihastha*), (3) Detached living (*Vanaprastha*), and (4) Renunciation or Asceticism (*Sannyasa*). The first two ashramas pertain to *Pravritti Marga* or the path of work (towards the world), and the latter two are the stages of withdrawal from the world, and pertain to *Nivritti Marga* or the path of renunciation (away from the world). The first two stages prepare a person for the life in this world, while the other two stages prepare him for the life after death.

Life is regarded as a journey towards the temple of truth, and one reaches the goal by fulfilling the duties and responsibilities towards self, family, society and nation. Each of these stages has its own specific goals, and it prepares the individual for the next stage of life and the goals related to it, giving him an opportunity to practice the highest ideals of life. As one passes through these four stages, one is able to fulfil the fundamental and prime endeavours of life, namely, *Dharma* (duty), *Artha* (affluence), *Kama* (desires or aesthetic bliss) and *Moksha* (liberation). The values which each stage seeks to inculcate in a human being remain valid even today.

The period between 5 and 25 years of age is considered as a period of studentship, during which the student lives in *gurukula*, with the guru and in company of other students, learns the *virtue of sharing with and caring for others*. Thoughts and inner feelings of young minds are moulded to recognize interdependence. The

householder or *Grihastha* stage lasts for 25 years, and during this period, the well-trained and mature individual enters the mundane world. It is the time of living, learning, giving and loving in his family and community. After fifty years of life, being satiated with the worldly matters, spiritual thinking takes precedence and slowly the person detaches himself from worldly responsibilities. While the word *Vanaprastha* literally means forest-dweller, this could also mean that one has chosen to live in retirement in simple ways. After seventy five years of life, comes the stage of living as wandering recluse. He has the ability to completely isolate himself mentally from the world. "The four ashramas of life enable people to enjoy their time on earth while making the best use of the precious opportunity that life gives them so that they can eventually leave the body behind just as joyfully as they lived in it and attain the bliss of *moksha*," writes K. Vamanan Nampoothiri. (*Bhavan's Journal*, May 15, 2014)

Modern man is entangled in the worldly pursuits and relations, attached to money, name and fame till the end of life. The four ashramas enable a person to live a fruitful and meaningful life, by reminding him to gradually withdraw from the personal attachments. During the student life one is expected to observe complete celibacy, obtaining "education for life," which aims at equal development of mind and heart. Before the animal man can become divine man, he has first to become human and humane. In the crucible called Home, the alchemical process of subduing the animal man with the help of the divine takes place. Therefore, Theosophy considers Home-Building a very necessary and beneficent mode of growth. Homes can be centres from which elevating influences radiate, exemplifying filial piety, marital piety and parental protection. "Family is a great school which teaches unselfishness and temperance, which provides opportunities of walking the Path of Renunciation in an easy way, which causes the birth of pure love, *i.e.*, sacrificial love, and rewards it as it is poured out," writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

The article, "Living the Higher Life" mentions that in the ancient

times, some who married did so with the purpose of assisting each other in living the higher life and in fulfilling the family duties, so that they could attain to qualifications for higher ashrams. However, those who were fitted in the past incarnations to lead the higher life, retired into the forest, after marriage, leading the life of celibacy and practical occultism. But before retiring they always obtained full consent of their parents and other members of their family. It is only after several incarnations, when one has fulfilled every family duty and risen beyond the family defects and weaknesses, that one is ready to enter the stage of complete renunciation or *Sannyasi*.

A recently published book, *Thought-Forms and Hallucinations—Some Curious Effects of the Holographic Mind Process*, by Chidambaram Ramesh, published by Notion Press, India, seeks to understand true nature of human mind and consciousness by exploring several mind-related phenomena. The classical approach to cognitive science treats the mental processes like vision, thought, perception, imagination, etc., solely as products of electrical and chemical changes taking place within the physical organ called the brain. According to this view, thoughts are body-dependent, and one person's thoughts cannot affect another's. At death, all thought and consciousness abruptly come to an end. It is the object of this book to demonstrate, through a series of cases reported across the world at various times relating to many curious mind-related phenomena like the creation of mental entities, the imprints of indelible images on the human body, stigmata, thought photography, materialization experiments, etc., that (1) Human mind can bring into being thought-forms and can exteriorize them giving them some objective consistency. (2) There can be continuity of thoughts even after the destruction of the physical brain.

Thoughts are things. A thought-form is a strong thought or feeling taking a form in astral substance. Its power and duration

depends upon the degree of force of the thought or feeling manifesting it. It is first generated in the aura of a person, but then emitted into space. If a person thinks of a creature, place, or thing, the object of his thoughts may appear in miniature in front of him. This phenomenon applies even to objects of the imagination. In one case, a gentleman in Ohio, in 1833, had built a new house, seventy or eighty yards distant from his old residence, on the other side of small ravine. One day his wife, looking from the old house, saw their elder and younger daughters on the doorstep of the new house. The children were in the old house and they were called downstairs to see their exact double sitting on the doorstep of the new house.

Thought-forms can also be photographed. There are people who could transfer to a photographic plate whatever they had in their mind, without any physical contact with the film or the camera. These thought images acquire a capability of externalization, and thus producing objective pictures. Parapsychologist Dr. Stefan Bolling experimented with a fifteen year old boy, who had the ability to transmit mental images to photographic film with the power of his mind alone. He picked up his father's camera and thought of shooting his girlfriend's pictures, but did not do so. His father took pictures of his sister's birthday party, and when he got the print back from the photo lab, he found that the film had been double exposed with the images of the party, and also the boy's girlfriend!

The author mentions several cases of pregnant mothers' imagination making an impression on the developing foetus in the womb. He mentions several cases of "stigmata" wherein words or pictures are marked on the iris or on the surface of the skin, which go to prove holographic nature of body and mind. Holography is the science of recording the complete wave fronts of objects, intensity as well as phase, to create true three-dimensional images. When a girl aged twelve, near Abbeville, France, was asked questions, answers appeared in bold letters on her arms, legs and shoulders. In these cases there is strong evidence that some sort of

psycho-somatic process is involved, and this has led to experimental attempts to produce stigmata by hypnotic suggestion. “Our thought processes are much more intimately connected to the physical world than has been previously thought. Telepathy, precognition, mystical feelings of oneness with the universe, and even psycho-kinesis can be explained through the holographic model,” writes the author.

Theosophy teaches that brain is only an instrument of the mind, which it uses to reason from premises to conclusion. “Mind is a name given to the sum of the states of consciousness grouped under Thought, Will and Feeling.” As soon as a thought leaves the brain, it combines with a unit of life energy called an elemental and forms an *entity*. The length of life of this “entity” depends upon the intensity of the thought. Each one carries in his aura these thought-images created by him. These thoughts are also impressed in an invisible register called *astral light*, forming a common pool of thoughts. Each one of us attracts from this pool, the thoughts that are consubstantial with one’s nature. *Kriyasakti* is the mysterious *power of thought* which enables it to produce external, perceptible, phenomenal results by its own inherent energy.

In psycho-somatic diseases and cure, and in the case of appearance of stigmata on the body of a religious fanatic, it is thought and imagination creating an impression on the astral body, which, in turn acts on the physical body. Within the physical man is the astral, inner man. Stimuli are often sent from the astral man within to the periphery or the physical body, which can bring about changes in the physical body. For instance, in cases where hair turns grey overnight, due to intense grief, thoughts and emotions first affect the astral body which in turn affects the physical. Likewise, a blister is produced on the arm of a hypnotized subject when a hypnotizer puts a plain paper on his arm with the suggestion that he has put a burning coal on his arm and that it will soon produce a blister. Mr. Judge explains that the picture or the idea of a blister is impressed on the astral body of the subject by the power of suggestion of hypnotizer and that in turn controls all the nerves,

sensations, currents and secretions. It is done through the sympathetic nervous plexus and ganglia. In case of stigmata the ecstatic fanatical men and women by brooding over the pictured idea of the wounds of Jesus produced the same on their own bodies. In such cases, the constant brooding over the wounds of Jesus produced an internal impression and imprinted the picture deeply on the astral body, and then the physical molecules were gradually impressed from within resulting in the stigmata. (*W.Q.J. Series No. 16*, pp. 12-13)

A very intense desire or thought can bring about the projection of the astral body, called *mayavi rupa*, which is seen by oneself or another. *Mayavi rupa* is the result of unconscious exercise of *Kriyasakti* or power of thought. It is in fact described as “walking thought.” “Autoscopy” is “‘seeing’ oneself in the visual space, as if it were one’s image reflected in a mirror.” In the example quoted above, a very intense desire to be in the new house could have caused the *mayavi rupa* of two girls to appear at the threshold of the new house.

The idea of travelling to a sacred place, known as going on pilgrimage or *tirtha yatra*, is a universal practice. Hindus refer to a holy place as a *tirtha*, which means a ford, the shallow part of a water body that can easily be crossed. Perhaps *tirtha* referred to river Ganges, the most sacred river in India. The earliest pilgrimage may have been the *yatra* or journey undertaken by people after completing all worldly duties. The river provided the spiritual bridge that prevented man from sinking and drowning in the material world. All such places, connecting the mundane and the transcendental became *tirthas* or pilgrimages which one was encouraged to take. In the earlier days, except for the monks, only traders, performers and soldiers travelled outside the village. Hence, *tirtha yatra* offered everyone an opportunity to see the world.

In the “Aranyaka Parva” of the *Mahabharata* which describes

the exile of the Pandavas, there is a section on pilgrimage, in which sages like Lomasha and Narada speak about various sacred sites and encourage the Pandavas to visit them so that they could earn spiritual merit. “They are also told it will offer them an opportunity to grow emotionally and intellectually. The Pandavas take this advice and at the end of the exile are shown to be wise, strong and more humble, reinforcing the value of the pilgrimage to those who hear their tale,” writes Devdutt Pattanaik. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, April 27, 2014)

Pilgrimages are good metaphors for life, as they revive the real values, such as, learning to live a simple life, not carrying too much luggage, etc. Pilgrimages have always been looked upon as voyages of self-discovery. Pilgrimages are constant reminders to humanity that each one of us in our essential aspect is an “Eternal Pilgrim.” Like sparks from the great fire, humanity is an emanation from divinity on its return path thereto. Emanating from divinity and garnering experiences by passing through the elemental, mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, the Monad (*Atma-Buddhi*) returns back to the source, *plus the experience gained*.

“The whole of India is dotted with...sacred shrines, to which pilgrimages are made,” writes Mr. Judge. These holy places are like “Spiritual Seminaries.” The Adepts founded these places in order to keep alive in the minds of the people the inner significance of pilgrimage. Moreover, it is asserted that at most of the famous places of pilgrimage there is an Adept, who is ready to guide and give spiritual insight to all pure-hearted pilgrims visiting the place.

A traveller becomes a pilgrim when the heart participates and guides the journey. To be a true pilgrim, we should first know and understand the divine purpose of life and our place and duty in this world else, we might end up becoming wanderers instead of pilgrims. All through the pilgrimage, one should not lose sight of the sacred goal, and the needs of co-pilgrims.