

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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ON DEPENDABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

THE TERM DEPENDABILITY is generally taken to imply reliability and trustworthiness. It is an important quality which must be cultivated by every person. For the smooth functioning of an office it is extremely important that the employees are dependable. Being dependable means arriving for work on time, meeting deadlines, being at the right place at the right time, and doing the right thing at the right time, in the right manner.

Dependability is not always exhibited by those in higher positions. Often, it is exhibited by people in humble position by carrying out the work entrusted to them or by defending or protecting the person or a thing entrusted to their care. One such was a peasant woman of an old tale, who, carrying two small children and meeting some strange soldiers, tried to run away with the children. Finding them too heavy to permit speed, she set one down and ran on with the other. The soldiers picked up the child left crying in the field and gave chase. When they caught up with her they questioned why she had left that child behind and were told it was her own child; the one she had run on with was her sister's child, entrusted to her care. When the soldiers returned with this report to their General, he gave up his project of a marauding invasion of that province, thinking that if a peasant woman there could put her sense of responsibility even before her motherly instinct, what opposition might the invaders not anticipate from her countrymen!

A person's dependability depends upon his sense of responsibility, and again a dependable person is likely to be given greater responsibility. In her last message, H.P.B wrote: "In your hands, brothers, is placed in trust the welfare of the coming century; and great as is the trust, so great is also the responsibility." We are reminded of the "Parable of the Three Servants," in which the master, before going on a journey, called his servants and put them in charge of his property. He gave to each one according to his ability: to one he gave five thousand silver coins, to another he gave two thousand and to the third servant he gave one thousand coins. When the master returned he found that the servant who had received five thousand coins had doubled the amount by earning five thousand more coins, and the same was the case with the servant who had been given two thousand coins. The Master was happy, saying, "You have been faithful (dependable) in managing small amount, so I will put you in charge of large amounts." The third servant who had received one thousand coins had dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money; relying on the power of his master, he had expected that the money will multiply. The master drove away the lazy servant. (*Matthew, 25:14*)

All of us who have benefited from the teachings of H.P.B. have the responsibility of promulgating and applying the same in our daily lives so that we would not go back to the narrow confines of our former ways of thinking and living the life. Mr. Crosbie said that we have not undertaken this mighty work because we think ourselves to be eminently fit, but because there is need for it, and there is no one else to do it. The position is the same even now. It is extremely important that the student-worker should hold out the teachings whenever he sees the opportunity, and work through and upon himself to become "brand ambassador" of Theosophy. Brands like IIT (Indian Institute of Technology), Cambridge and Oxford at once bring certain high image and respect in our minds. Without realizing it, associates of U.L.T. are its brand ambassadors, for good or bad. People are bound to judge Theosophy by how we live our

lives. Failure is not that of Theosophy but of its adherents who are unable to live up to its high standards. There has to be a burning desire to reach out Theosophy to as many people as possible. Let us forget the personality in the service of humanity. It is then and then alone that Theosophy can become a Living Power in our lives and touch the hearts of others.

"The woman represents the principle of Dependence, inasmuch as she is the vehicle, *Vahan*, who first receives and then carries the seed of life. The preserving, sustaining work of Vishnu is carried forward through the dependability of his Shakti...Dependability is a high spiritual quality...and it is necessary for the future life of Chelaship," writes Shri B. P. Wadia. He adds that obedience is necessary in a disciple towards his Master, and in a personality towards its Inner Ruler, the Higher Self. In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Mr. Judge mentions that the general tendency of women is to keep things as they are and not to have change. Female element tends to the *established order*. Thus, dependability involves the *ability to preserve*—in our case, to preserve the "seed" ideas that have the potential to change the mind and heart of humanity, and to keep them in their pristine pure state.

Mr. Judge's story, "A Curious Tale," contains a vivid illustration of the vital importance of dependability. Mr. Judge mentions that once the great Masters had settled themselves in Ireland and were tending and keeping alive the fire in various towers. When the time came for them to go away, they left behind strict injunctions to watch the fires, in every tower, and take care so that no fires on these towers should go out. The tale goes on that when the one who was entrusted with the task of watching the last burning fire became inattentive for a few moments—as he glanced at the fires on the other towers that had died—to his horror his own fire expired. Obviously, it refers to the fire of spiritual knowledge, which needs to be kept burning, and the task is especially daunting when the cycle is descending. Without getting distracted or despaired by other dying fires, one needs to pay attention to the "fire" entrusted to

one's care.

It is very important that we learn to hold on firmly, and to have perfect confidence, without wavering in our attitude and in our efforts. Things may not work out, people may not respond, but we have to work right on. The opinions of the people around—family, society or office should not influence our basic decision. It is so easy to get carried away and think that we have made a mistake and that other things must get priority, and so on. That is why *The Voice of the Silence* cautions: “Beware of change! For change is thy great foe.” We are assured that if we work earnestly and continually, and not allow our aspiration and enthusiasm to weaken, help will come from the unknown quarters, when it is the least expected.

True dependability stems from obedience—determination to obey the behests of our divine nature. “Dependence may safely be placed only on the man of conscience who, during his waking hours is in constant and positive control of his instruments of action—accurate and heedful at all times. Dependability is not a spectacular quality; it is the solid bedrock for the lack of which no decorations on the superstructure can compensate.... Dependability means living in the present, alert and concentrated here and now, not fumbling our tasks while we dream of a glorious future. A dependable man will keep a promise at whatever cost.” (*Theosophy*, December 1926)

“Each man is personally responsible to the Law of Karma for every word of his voluntary production,” writes a Master of Wisdom. But, so also, is he responsible for his thoughts and actions. *We create, with every thought, a demon or an angel.* Since we are all interconnected on the invisible plane, we are continually helping or hindering others in building their character, not only by our actions, but also by our thoughts—for good or ill. By not resisting the temptation to take bribe or tell a lie, or by allowing a material or sensual thought to enter the mind, we are giving an impulse to some weak person with similar tendency to indulge in sin. The converse is also true. Every attempt to overcome vices in us sends out an impulse for good that strengthens another individual who may be

fighting similar weaknesses. Mr. Judge writes:

We attract what we love, and we may derive a greater strength from the vitality of thoughts infused from without than from those self-produced within us at a time when our nervous vitality is exhausted. It is a solemn thought, this, of our responsibility for the impulse of another. We live in one another, and our widely different deeds have often a common source. The occultist cannot go far upon his way without realizing to what a great extent he is “his brother's keeper.” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, pp. 16-17)

We are our brother's keeper, whether we realize it or not. A keeper is a guardian or a protector. It is said of the Great Ones that they form the Guardian Wall, remaining in the invisible atmosphere, and protect humanity from further and far greater misery and sorrow, by their pure and noble ideations. A Master of Wisdom writes, “Let every Theosophist only do his duty, that which he can and ought to do, and very soon the sum of human misery, within and around the areas of every Branch of your Society, will be found visibly diminished.” The duty of a Theosophist to himself is to control and conquer his lower through his Higher Self. There is a duty to humanity, to those poorer and weaker than ourselves. Often we find a picture of a Saint or a Yogi in meditation, surrounded by ferocious animals, subdued to a state of calm. Tigers, deers, snakes and doves are all in harmony in the vicinity of such a being. The state of total harmlessness within him gets reflected outside, creating an atmosphere of calmness and harmony. Pure thoughts give rise to pure magnetism. Hence we say that the great ones entertain only such benevolent thoughts that they charge the atmosphere *with entities powerful for good alone.* So also, our good thoughts can create the atmosphere of amity and goodwill in the neighbourhood. Each student, if earnest and unselfish, can become a centre of powerful influences, gathering like-minded people around him and benefiting the whole neighbourhood.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE CAPTAIN'S DOUBLE

[This article is abridged and reprinted from *The Path*, Vol. II, for October 1887. It is translated from German mystic J. Kerneing's work called "Paths to the Immortal."]

A CERTAIN von Hardteck, of the sixth regiment of the line, at P**rch* had a remarkable experience. His parents sent him to the military academy, although he had shown no special inclination for an army career. Nevertheless he adapted himself to his calling. He was diligent, attentive to his duties, and on entering active service he was particularly favoured, so that his promotion was hastened. He soon became a captain, and then for the first time he began to reflect upon the conditions of his profession. "It is difficult," he once said to himself, "to unite the true man with the soldier, inasmuch as the latter, too severely bound to forms, very easily loses himself in them and holds them for the essential. But even when the forms are strict, the heart must be yielding and humane if one is not to oppose himself to the first law of human nature."

Amid such reflections he had passed three years as captain, when he began to feel a strange sensation internally and upon his head. "What is that?" he thought; "are my broodings injuring my health or confusing my understanding?" He examined himself closely, but found nothing that could cause concern. One evening when alone in his room he seemed to feel a presence at his side. He looked, but that which he thought to see turned backwards as he turned. He looked straight forward again and behold, at his side there stood a figure which, by turning only eyes and not his head, he recognized as the image of himself. He fled from the chamber to rid himself of his strange companion. Outside the house, he saw the figure no more, but continually seemed to feel its presence.

The next day, at the same hour, the apparition came again, but this time much plainer than before. When he sat down, it sat beside him; when he paced the room it accompanied him; and when he

stood still it stood still also. "This is no illusion!" he cried.

Captain von Hardteck had long been betrothed to Fraulein von Blum but could not obtain permission to marry from the King through the ministry of war. Three days after sending his third petition, the colonel of his regiment congratulated him on his speedy marriage, saying, "The permission of the King has arrived!" This news did not cause him such joy as it formerly would have done, for it was his duty to inform his betrothed of his peculiar condition, and he was doubtful how it would be received. His beloved was horrified to learn of his ghostly companion and begged for time to reflect and consult her parents. Captain Hardteck passed two days in uncertainty. On the third day he received from the father of his beloved a letter which said that under the circumstances the proposed marriage could not take place. Hardteck read the letter with silent resignation and said at last: "It is not my destiny to be happy; I must bear this loss, heavy though it be." Everybody wondered that the affair should come to an end at the moment of fulfilment. The colonel himself summoned the captain and questioned him about the matter. After a struggle with himself the captain confessed that for some time a ghost had been at his side and refused to leave him. The young lady, when informed of this extraordinary circumstance, could not master her fear, and therefore the engagement had been broken off.

The colonel gazed in astonishment. "Ghost? Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "That is a notion which you have hatched out in your lonesome life, and it will disappear of itself as soon as you have a wife." But he added, "Ask the doctor for advice; perhaps he knows some way to banish your unbidden companion." The captain spent half a year in trying useless medicines. Then he refused further physical remedies, accepting his condition as fated. However, the colonel knew a man who had attained the gift of knowing all things, and could give advice or help in unusual matters. The colonel wrote to him and received his answer the same day:

"The condition of your friend, which you have described, is a peculiar one. It originates in a too great conscientiousness, in that

the captain doubts that the better nature of man can be joined to the life of a soldier. In consequence of this conflict two beings have been developed within him; one a soldier and the other an ordinary human being; these two would like to become one, but the indecision of the person prevents them. Greet your friend in my name and tell him he should befriend himself more with his ghostly companion and endeavour to become one with him in order that the latter may become absorbed in and make a completed man of him. Then he will see that true human worth excludes no calling and confines itself to no garb, but manifests itself where the inner life releases itself from the external and gives to the latter the laws of thought and action. If your friend takes the contents of this letter to heart and carries them into practice, it will be well for him from time to time to give me news of how it stands with him, so that in case he should go astray I can set him right again.”

This letter made a great impression upon the captain and he exclaimed: “He speaks of an inner life! Is not the apparition which has come to me perhaps the beginning of that? I will follow his advice and see what comes of it.” Hardteck kept his promise. The figure which for a long time had kept at his side at last changed his position and appeared before him, turned itself around with the circle of his thoughts and gradually began to think and to speak with him.

“Man is a wonderful creature” he said to himself; “spiritual and divine in his nature when his inner life awakens; but dead without this, however much of acquired theories he may have taken up. I perceive that now I am on the way to truth, and my first duty is to thank my friend and the teacher whom I found through him.”

There is a subtle body or *sukshma sarira*, also known as astral body or model body on which physical body is built. It is the invisible double of the human body. The captain’s double seems to refer to *Mayavi rupa* or illusion body, which is an aspect of astral body. In ordinary human beings, the *Mayavi rupa* is projected out of the

physical body due to unconscious exercise of *Kriyasakti* or power of thought. It is, in fact, described as “walking thought,” probably because it is the aspect of astral body that gets projected out as a result of some intense thought or desire. If the dying person thinks very intently of the person he is anxious to see, then his thought travels and becomes objective. The astral body of the dying person that visits another man is like a reflection in a mirror.

An article on “Autoscopic Phenomena” by Dr. N. Lukianowicz, of Barrow hospital, England, appeared in the August 1958 issue of the *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry*. He gives the literal meaning of “autoscopy” as “‘seeing’ oneself in the visual space, as if it were one’s image reflected in a mirror.” He gives several instances of people seeing one’s own astral body. A certain Mrs. A., a retired school teacher, had repeatedly had the experience of seeing her “astral body,” as she used to call it, sometimes with her eyes open, sometimes with them closed, but moving exactly as she moved. She felt it emotionally, she said, “as a living, integral part of myself....It is me, split and divided.” The autoscopic experience of Mr. C. who suffered from depression, was seeing his own face, sad and distressed, right in front of him, about a yard away.

In the above incident of the captain, it appears that he unconsciously disowned that aspect of him that was concerned with doing the duty of a soldier, and hence, as stated, two beings seem to have developed within him, and since the captain was not willing to acknowledge the “soldier” as part of his true being, the astral connected with the life and duty as a soldier got projected out.

“By doing the proper duty in the proper place, a man may make the world his debtor.” A soldier who kills the men in the opposite army, only with the intention of protecting his nation and not out of vengeance or with a feeling of animosity, performs his whole duty. “And in so far as we purify and elevate the motive and the aim, we become spiritually enlightened, reaching in time the power to see what should be done and what refrained from,” writes Mr. Judge.

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

THE EVER-DYING MAN—II

NOW AS WE look at the world, we find that desires manifest and express themselves in a very varied fashion. We find that no two human beings have the same desires, and we also find that our civilization has certain standards which really make some desires appear good, and even *spiritual* to us, and others as evil. Now the standards of civilization are always changing, therefore, that basis is, of course, the wrong one, to determine the real nature of a desire in ourselves. According to civilization, some desires are legitimate but desires which were legitimate in the past have now been recognized as illegitimate. Take the case of slavery, at one time it was recognized that slavery was a good thing, and that it was right to try and possess slaves. Now, today, the world knows it is not so, and that slavery is a wrong conception altogether. We also find that certain things are allowed in the world under certain circumstances, and the same things are not allowed in a different set of circumstances. For instance, we see that the idea of murder is condemned in the world by all people, but we know that the idea of wholesale murder, *i.e.*, the notion of war, is accepted today in the world, and children are being trained for it. The same is true of robbery, or dishonesty: though we recognize that to go into the house of our neighbour, and make their things our own is wrong, yet in the business world we think nothing of getting money from others to preserve our own interests, and many things in the business world from the “business point of view” are nothing more than trying to get money which is not our due. And so, we cannot base ourselves on the standards of our civilization, but there is a spiritual basis to recognize our desires, and that is given very fully in theosophical literature.

Mr. Judge explains that *Kama* is the balance principle. All these desires, trying to draw our consciousness towards the lower part of our being are wrong, bad, evil desires, and on the contrary, desires

arising in that very same nature, but aspiring towards the Immortal in us are spiritual and good desires, and will lead us ultimately to the knowledge of the Self. It is difficult to classify desires since they manifest themselves in manifold ways, but we can, in a general way, group them in certain compartments.

Desires of different types and kinds exist in each one of us, but, however, in a general way, we can say that we have three types or classes of desires. The desire for objective possessions is, so to speak, the one which arises first in human beings. Then we have another kind of desire, which is, to try and enjoy those objects which we already possess—those desires include all the desires of qualities and faculties in ourselves, which enable us to get greater excitement, pleasure and joy, out of the things of this world. In that second compartment, we will find psychic and mental desires, and even desires which clothe themselves in the garb of spiritual desires. We build up faculties in the moral and intellectual nature which will enable us to have greater pleasure from the things we possess, but we cannot forever desire objects, and forever enjoy those objects, and so there comes a time—and this is the third group—when we say, “Why cannot I create objects of enjoyment, and go within myself to get, not only satisfaction from the things that exist, but to create new things, things created by myself for me to enjoy?” And then we find that we want creative faculties and activities.

If we take the illustration of a man desiring books, we will perhaps be able to understand the three types better. A man may want books for the mere fact of possessing the objective volumes. We know people who want collections of beautiful, old, ancient texts, though they do not understand even the Language in which they were recorded. Then, that man, having accumulated a great number of books, may begin to want to enjoy them, and then he will go in quest of the literary culture necessary to enjoy the writings in these volumes, and then the man, having enjoyed the volumes may want to begin to create stories so that he can enjoy the creative faculty, and then the man will try to develop the power to write. But

it will not stop there. He cannot forever write for his own pleasure, and the time will come when he will start thinking of other people, and he will say, "How can I write to give pleasure not only to myself but to other people?" Having started with the idea of giving pleasure and joy, he will ultimately come to the one fundamental idea, "What are those people?" "How can I give them joy?" And then, perhaps and probably, he will, come to the idea of wanting to understand the Self, the real Nature of the people, and therefore his own nature, and so, he will through a very eventful and sometimes painful journey, through many desires, turn back within himself to ask the basic and fundamental question: "What is the Self?"

In other words, from the third class of desires, the higher desires are bound to work up in time. Generally speaking, desires first take us outside of ourselves, then within our own *kamic* nature, and ultimately within our nature, *beyond* the *kamic* nature. In other words, we are taken to the spiritual ideal of how can I serve humanity, or how can I know my own self, through the process of lower desires and the gratification of these desires. We see then how Krishna brings Arjuna to the position from which we started, the point that there is the Self in Arjuna and that the same Self is to be found in all beings and objects in this manifested universe, for it is the One and Only Reality.

Now, to realize the Self completely, we must ultimately give up and surrender all the desires that belong to the personal and even to the individual man, and that is where the difficulty arises. This position at which Arjuna has arrived, he has to make the ultimate and final surrender, and he knows that once he has given up his personal life forever, he will follow the Higher Self and stand alone, and it is this realization and understanding which brings upon Arjuna that deep affliction and sorrow. Now in us, the minute the higher desires have been awakened, the fight starts between the lower desires which will try to bind us to the outside objects, and these higher desires which are aspirations towards the Higher Nature. This fight is a long one, and while it is going on, we go through

many stages. For instance, we pass through the stage where we try to justify the fulfilling of desires, by even quoting the holy writ to serve our own personal purposes. That is, of course, strongly condemned by Krishna, and he says:

The unwise, delighting in the controversies of the Vedas, tainted with worldly lusts, and preferring a transient enjoyment of heaven to eternal absorption, whilst they declare there is no other reward, pronounce, for the attainment of worldly riches and enjoyments, flowery sentences which promise rewards in future births for present action, ordaining also many special ceremonies the fruit of which is merit leading to power and objects of enjoyment.

And he goes on to explain how the spiritual man will not try to quote the scriptures to justify the gratification of lower desires. We must go within ourselves and hear the sanction of the only judge there is, and that is Krishna himself within our heart. Now, how are we going to know the Self? The answer is given very definitely by Krishna:

Let then, the motive for action be in the action itself, and not in the event. Do not be incited to actions by the hope of their reward, nor let thy life be spent in inaction. Firmly persisting in Yoga, perform thy duty, O Dhananjaya, and laying aside all desire for any benefit to thyself from action, make the event equal to you whether it be success or failure.

Yet the performance of works is by far inferior to mental devotion, O despiser of wealth. Seek an asylum, then, in this mental devotion, which is knowledge; for the miserable and unhappy are those whose impulse to action is found in its reward. But he who by means of Yoga is mentally devoted dismisses alike successful and unsuccessful results, being above them; Yoga is skill in the performance of actions: therefore do thou aspire to this devotion. For those who are thus united to knowledge and devoted, who have renounced all reward for their actions, meet no rebirth in this life, and go to that eternal blissful abode which is free from all disease

and untouched by troubles.

Now this is very clear. It is not by intellectual recognition that we can get at *Buddhi* in ourselves, nor by mysterious and strange practices of one kind or another. It is not by going into the silence that we will find the Self. In fact, we may find the very opposite. We will understand the Self, and unite ourselves to *Buddhi*, through the performance of action without concern for the fruits of action. In other words, the aspirant has to dissociate himself from the feelings he experiences in performing action. He must stop measuring his life with pleasure and pain, sorrow and suffering, but begin to keep his balance and equipoise in all circumstances, and look upon these experiences as teachers from which he has to learn a definite lesson, as opportunities, to come nearer to the Self within, and therefore, to the understanding of the Self in all creatures. Krishna says, “Yoga is skill in the performance of action.” In other words, Krishna tries to show Arjuna that all men must act, that inaction is not possible when we are living in this world, and that we have incarnated in the ever-dying man, in the personal, but that we must use the personality with complete detachment, as the means to perform action for the sake of the Self in us. Then we are able to perform skilful action. As long as we are attached to our experiences, and to the results of these experiences, we are not able to perform skilful action. We see, then, how this ever-dying man, because he is constantly changing and dying many, many times in one incarnation, goes through the other period, the period of death which we call the death of the physical body, until it slowly unfolds within *that desire nature*, which is going to enable the ever-dying man to cling to the non-dying man, the immortal Self, and thereby gain its own immortality from body to body.

(Concluded)

MAN-NATURE RELATIONSHIP

MAN-NATURE relationship has been a subject of intense and a serious international debate since a couple of decades in the wake of unmistakable signs of global warming and climate change which are evident everywhere. These climatic disturbances are believed to have been caused by the impact of unrestrained industrial and commercial activities by nations on the delicate balance of Nature. Scientists have been warning with concrete evidence that if nations do not voluntarily curtail their carbon emitting fossil-fuel driven industrial activity and bring them down to a critical minimum level, the cumulative “green-house effect” might trigger irreversible cataclysmic geological and climatic changes which might well undermine the civilization itself. World leaders are seized of the problem and are trying to arrive at mutually acceptable formulae for the reduction of carbon emission and adoption of environmentally clean renewable energy technologies.

There are, however, some scientists who believe that human activities have no significant effect on the global climate but that climates do undergo radical change in parts of the globe due to the operation of natural geological and climatic cycles, about which, they admit, not much is known to them due to paucity of past geo-climatic data. Theosophists say that they need not be constrained by lack of empirical data, as the whole science and philosophy of evolutionary history of the world is available in Theosophical literature.

Unfortunately, scientists are not willing to impartially consider the ancient Theosophical discourse which gives a comprehensive retrospective view of the whole of the anthro-geo-logical evolutionary history of our earth, and a prognostic perspective of the future course of evolution of Man and Nature, and of the Karmic and Cyclic Law which governs the same. This has been broadly outlined in *The Secret Doctrine*. Though what has been given is an outline of the history of evolution, yet it is comprehensive enough

for us to understand the depth and complexity of Man-Nature relationship in its totality, in its spiritual, psychic and physical aspects and the immutable Karmic Law which governs it.

It is precisely because of the absence of such a holistic perspective that the deep divide between Man and Nature has come about at the present time. Estrangement of man from nature and natural ways is the inevitable outcome in a civilization which places the highest value on an idea of progress which is wholly material, devoid of spiritual values and moral responsibility. The modern view is that Man is just a physical creature, evolved from the animal world to be a thinking animal with a highly organized brain structure, and that Nature is the aggregate of known causes and effects in the visible and tangible world of matter. It is the mechanistic view of nature, devoid of soul and spirit. If this were the whole truth, as is believed to be at the present time, then it is ethically right and proper for individuals and nations to have as their supreme object of existence, pursuit of selfish interests and aggrandizement, regardless of interests of others. Such is the modern world-view. It is no wonder at all that accumulation of wealth, economic power and luxuries of physical existence are considered to be the greatest good, in which nations vie with each other for pre-eminence.

The natural world, rich in diverse gifts for the diverse needs, sustenance and well-being of all creatures, is looked upon, including fellow human beings, as “resources” to be exploited to feed the engines of modern progress for the aggrandizement of the powerful few. Such an enterprise invariably robs many weaker brethren of their subsistence which Nature freely provides, and destroys the natural world, for the benefit and material advancement of a privileged few. Social inequality, human degradation and ecological disasters have been so severe all over the globe as a consequence of the pursuit of such a model of “progress,” that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) funded research study has highlighted that the global industrial civilization may well collapse in coming decades due to unsustainable resource exploitation

and increasing social inequalities and deprivation. The study has marshalled compelling historical data to show that “the process of rise-and-collapse is actually a recurrent cycle found throughout history,” and “cases of severe civilisational disruption due to precipitous collapse—often lasting for centuries—have been quite common.” The findings of the research study is partially true, as the scientists do not seem to be aware of, and, therefore, have not taken into account, the Cyclic and Karmic Law which govern the rise and fall of Races and civilizations, and vicissitudes of climates.

Theosophy points out that Man is not a mere physical creature but a spiritual being evolving through a series of reincarnations on earth towards universal divine perfection; and that Nature or universe is embodied consciousness, an aggregate of sentient beings and intelligent forces in various stages of evolution, together constituting Universal Soul, “Anima Mundi.” Thus:

The whole Kosmos is guided, controlled, and animated by almost endless series of Hierarchies of sentient Beings, each having a mission to perform, and who—whether we give to them one name or another, and call them Dhyān Chohans or Angels—are “messengers” in the sense only that they are the agents of Karmic and Cosmic Laws. They vary infinitely in their respective degrees of consciousness and intelligence...For each of these Beings either *was*, or prepares to become, a man, if not in the present, then in a past or coming cycle (*Manvantara*). They are *perfected*, when not *incipient*, men. (*S.D.*, I, 274-75)

Man, as the Eternal Thinker, is not a material creature but spiritual and divine; the perishable physical frame he periodically occupies in cycles of reincarnation is the crown-piece of physical evolution which serves as his instrument in order for him to come in touch with Nature and experience life under Karmic Law. As individual cycles of reincarnation turn their rounds according to the Karma of individual Egos, so do the great mass of Egos evolve through great cycles of what are called in Theosophical parlance as Rounds and

Races under the same Law of Karma. Divine Egos have descended into matter during the course of planetary evolution in three and a half Rounds, to meet on earth the perfect human form evolved by “Nature,” the physical evolutionary power. The Celestial “*Manasa Dhyanis*,” representing the evolutionary power of Intelligence and Mind, furnish the fire of Mind (*Manas*) to act as the link between the Divine Ego and the physical form. Thus Man, a marvellous mix of physical, intellectual and spiritual forces, is born on earth, in whom Spirit and Matter are perfectly balanced.

In the first three and half Rounds Divine Man descended into Matter to become a three-fold human being—spiritual, psychic and physical. In the next three and half Rounds his destiny is to ascend, through self-effort and merit, to Spirit, to Divinity, with corresponding dissipation of Matter, which imprisons him to conditioned existence. As Root Races and Sub-races run their cycles of birth and death, the geological features of the earth and climates also undergo corresponding changes under the same Law, as both are intimately related. We are in the Fourth Round. Of the seven Root Races to be evolved in it, four have already been completed, and fifth subdivision of our fifth Root Race is now evolving on earth. Of the geological and climatic changes linked to the Karma of the Races, in this fourth Round, it is said:

Our globe is subject to seven periodical *entire* changes which go *pari passu* with the races. For the Secret Doctrine teaches that, during this Round, there must be seven terrestrial *pralayas*, three occasioned by the changes in the inclination of the earth’s axis. It is a *law* which acts at its appointed time, and not at all blindly, as science may think, but in strict accordance and harmony with *Karmic* law. In Occultism this inexorable law is referred to as “the great ADJUSTER.” (*S.D.*, II, 329)

The Secret Doctrine says that since the appearance of *Vaivasvata Manu*’s Humanity on this Earth, there have been four such axial disturbances, during which the old continents—except the first

one—were sucked in by the oceans, other lands appeared, and new mountain chains rose up. Each time a Root Race completes its cycle, it is destroyed in the cataclysm that occurs with corresponding climatic changes, old land masses disappear, and new ones appear from under the ocean to receive the next succeeding Race. It is taught that the sub-races as well as the family races—the branchlets of former—are also subject to the same cleansing process. It is the sifting and sorting of the fit and unfit—not in the Darwinian sense of struggle for animal existence and supremacy, but in terms of *moral* fitness and spiritual maturity. Unfit ones are swept off the face of the earth, and fittest nations and races survive the cataclysms, who, then constitute the *sishta*, the seed, for the new one which follows. The failures are provided with fresh opportunities in new cycles of existence to learn and progress on the right lines. Civilizations must produce spiritual fruit and learn to work with great Nature in her incessant work of transformation and perfection; else, be swept off as failures by the Just Law.

The Teachers say that cycle of sub-races coincide with the cycles of Sidereal year of 25,868 years, in each revolution of which tropics recede *four degrees*, from the Pole. It is generally well known that at the present time the tropic is twenty three degrees and a little less than half degree from the equator. Therefore, it has still two and half degrees to run before the end of the Sidereal year. Calculating with this hint, present sub-race of ours has about 16000 years lease of life (*S.D.*, II, 331). It appears that here the allusion is to “Family-Races,” which have an average existence of 30,000 years, which being a little more than a Sidereal year. In fact, H.P.B. writes, “It is somewhat curious to mark the comparative approximation of duration between the lives of a ‘Family-Race’ and a ‘Sidereal year.’”

Humanity is the child of cyclic Destiny, and not one of its Units can escape its unconscious mission, or get rid of the burden of its co-operative work with nature. Thus will mankind, race after race, perform its appointed cycle-pilgrimage. Climates will, and have already begun, to

change, each tropical year after the other dropping one sub-race, but only to beget another higher race on the ascending cycle; while a series of other less favoured groups—the failures of nature—will, like some individual men, vanish from the human family without even leaving a trace behind. Such is the course of Nature under the sway of KARMIC LAW: of the ever present and ever-becoming Nature. (*S.D.*, II, 446)

Teachers say that it is the Karma and the mission of America to sow the seeds for the next superior sixth sub-race, followed by the seventh, who will be in Manasic and Spiritual development far superior to the present generation. Cataclysmic changes in the distribution of continents and displacement of oceans, and in climates, according to the Karmic Law, will necessarily follow, the premonitory symptoms of which have already begun to be felt.

It is in such a wider context of racial evolution by Cyclic and Karmic Law that the present signs of global climate change, with which nations are seriously concerned, should be understood. It will then be realized by leaders of nations and the champions of modern progress that no nation, not one individual Unit of the human family, can escape the duty and obligation of entering into intelligent co-operative work with Nature in her resistless progressive march towards higher life, or else face the inescapable prospect of being wiped out from the face of the earth in the course of the Karmic sifting and sorting of nations at the intersection of cycles. It calls for an awareness of the profound truth that no man is separate from others in the Cosmos but that all beings are bound up together in a bond of interdependent reciprocity and brotherhood. Such awareness compels one from within to so think and act as to produce no discord by him in the great universal stream of evolution. It will bring about a change in the thoughts and ethics of people and revolutionize the whole social and economic order and international relations.

CULTIVATION OF THE SOUL

CONTRARY to popular opinion the masters in the Science of the Spirit asserted that our permanent identity is the soul. We are not this body carrying a Soul, but as Epictetus puts it, “You are a soul, carrying a corpse.” The body, mind, and all the visible (and invisible) faculties and senses are but our instruments. The puppeteer and the puppet must never be confused.

Remember that what pulls the strings is that part of us hidden inside: that is the power to act, that is the principle of life, that, one could say, is the man himself. So never give any equal thought to the vessel which contains it or the organs built round it. These are an instrument like an axe, differing only in their attachment to the body. There is no more use in these parts without the agency which starts or stops them than in the shuttle without the weaver, the pen without the writer, the whip without the driver. (*Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius, 10:38)

It is spiritual knowledge alone which can aid us in the journey of true self-knowledge, or cultivation of the Soul. In the epistemology of the ancients, the knowledge arising from the channels of the senses and the brain was rejected as an illusion. In fact, control and voluntary paralysis of the physical senses was a precondition to arousing one’s spiritual senses. This is because our real self is a spiritual entity, and not of material nature. We are spiritual beings—eternal and immutable—on a pilgrimage in this world of Matter. In this journey, like in any other that we undertake in this world, we must be good navigators, and know well the pitfalls and dangers on the path, as also, the destination. If the “Kingdom of Heaven” is only obtained by a holy war—as the Kabalists put it—then the soldier had better know well the enemy’s strength and weaknesses.

The greatest obstacle to resuming one’s spiritual nature and power is oneself. When Sri Krishna says in the Sixth Chapter of the *Gita*, “Self is the friend of the Self. . .” he points to this fact. He also shows,

in the same verse, that there are two distinct aspects in every one of us: the spiritual and the material. Abu Bakr al-Shibli, the Sufi, was asked who his first guide was. He replied that it was a dog! When asked to explain, he recounted the story of how he saw a dog dying with thirst, even as he stood by the water's edge. Every time the dog looked at his reflection in the water, he withdrew in fright, mistaking his own reflection for another fearsome creature. Finally, out of dire necessity, he cast away his fear and leapt into the water. At that moment the reflection disappeared. He found that the obstacle between him and the object he sought was his own reflection. In the same way, Shibli says, the obstacle vanished when he realized "himself," *i.e.*, his false idea of self, to be the greatest obstacle.

The analogy of cultivation of plants gives us useful hints on cultivation of the Soul. Soil is a necessary medium for the seed to grow, and which either offers a bed for the growth of the seed, or becomes its grave. Our mind is the soil. The seeds of ideas, thoughts and feelings either help or hinder the growth of our spiritual nature. The weeds of wrong ideas and false knowledge consume the nutrients of the soil, and consequently inhibit the growth of plants we wish to grow. The weeds as well as the good plants are our moral character carried forward from our past lives.

First we must understand the *science* of cultivation. One must study and understand the works of those who are the master cultivators, and have reaped rich harvests. We have to value their teachings and experiences. Mere emotional appeal and expectation, devoid of studious efforts towards gaining knowledge, is useless. Instead, the first step is to theoretically acquaint oneself with the teachings of the sages, recorded in the sacred books.

The next step is to prepare the soil. The mind is the soil in which the seeds of wisdom have to sprout and grow. Various obstacles are faced in this step. If the soil at hand is harsh and dry, the medicine of kindness has to be applied persistently. An overly humid soil, with too much self-pity and emotionalism, has to be balanced with the strength and confidence naturally arising from a study of one's

immortal nature. If the soil of the mind lacks nutritious elements, it has to be enriched with true metaphysical conceptions regarding the nature of Man and Kosmos. The physical and spiritual identity, in essence, of Man and Kosmos, is to be always kept in mind. The mind is gradually made ready for acquiring spiritual knowledge through rectification of deficiencies in one's acquired nature by application of right knowledge of Self.

Sowing of seeds is the next effort. It is wise to choose good quality and high yielding seeds. These golden seeds of eternal verities have to be obtained from the teachings of the sages. Meanwhile, one must take heed not to allow the old weeds to grow again. The narrow, false ideas should be replaced with the right seeds of thought and action. We will, nevertheless, find that we tend to allow the weeds to grow. It is not easy to make the field free of weeds at once. The tendencies generated in past life, manifesting as our mental and moral nature in this life, are not cleansed easily and quickly. It is a long process. Dhu 'l-Nun al-Mesri, the Egyptian Sufi, was asked by an aspirant whether he could join, and how he could join, the caravan of the Sufis. Al-Mesri replied that he can join, but on a condition: the aspirant will be expected not to do what he likes, and do what he dislikes. "In every purpose of the senses are fixed affection and dislike. A wise man should not fall in the power of these two passions, for they are the enemies of man." (*Gita*, V)

Our sense of right and wrong is distorted and dictated by self-centeredness. We mistake weeds for useful plants and allow them to grow at the cost of the latter. The master cultivators show that the body is a sepulchre, the soul's prison. Soul is punished through its union with the body, and "the soul, indeed, till purified by philosophy, suffers death through its union with the body." "Ignorance is the notion that the non-eternal, the impure, the evil, and that which is not soul are, severally, eternal, pure, good, and soul." This distortion, arising from a wrong notion of self, eternally deflects us from the path of righteousness and true happiness.

True progress in spiritual life does not come through mere intellectual acquaintance or even mastery of sacred texts; nor is a proficiency in Sanskrit or Hebrew a sign of inner development. The seeds in hand are of no use unless they are sown in the soil. What is more important than intellectual understanding is an application in our daily life of what we study and understand. Metaphysical understanding, when translated and applied, becomes ethics.

Nurturing and caring for the soul-plant is a daily effort. The experiences of life, when viewed from the higher perspective obtained from the study of true philosophy of life, water the soil of mind. A sincere farmer of soul-life diligently engages in daily examination of the field of mind, removes the weeds of passion and harmful insects of negative emotions, lest they consume all the nutrition of the mind-soil and kill the soul-plant. When Prahalad was asked by Lord Narasimha to ask whatever boon he wished, he said his desire was that no desire should arise in his heart.

Even with all this care, the plants cannot grow in darkness. The light of the Spiritual Sun shining within us should not be obstructed by the clouds of delusion arising from our personal self. A daily contemplation towards the spiritual self in us as the Self of all beings gradually washes away the false notion of separate self. "As a single sun illuminates the whole world, even so doth the One Spirit illumine every body," says Sri Krishna (*Gita*, XIII). This process is as important as photosynthesis is for the plants. In other words, Universal Brotherhood is the very heart and soul of spiritual development.

The question is: Who can do all this for us? It is foolish to expect anyone else to do this for us. True teachers always show the way, but constantly inculcate self-reliance. One is saved by one's own merit and self-effort. Sri Shankara states this law in *Vivekachudamani*, in no uncertain terms:

Sons and kin can pay a father's debts, but none but man's self can set him free. If a heavy burden presses on the head, others can remove it; but none other than oneself can quench

one's thirst and hunger. Health is gained by the sick who follow the path of healing: health does not come through the acts of others. The knowledge of the real by the eye of clear insight is to be gained by one's own sight, and not by the teacher's....None but oneself can untie the knots of unwisdom, desire, and former acts, even in a myriad of ages.

The harvest of one season provides the seeds for the next. The golden grain of virtues, as well as, defects and negative qualities, are carried forward from one life to another. Wise is he, who, in every life takes up the earnest task of removing the weeds of vices, and of nurturing the sprouts of wisdom. The ultimate aim of cultivation of the soul is not a selfish intent of golden harvest for oneself, but that of becoming "the better able to help and teach others." The process is poetically expressed by Allama Prabhu, a mystic-saint of 12th century, as:

Making the body the garden, and the mind the pick axe,
I uprooted the very roots of illusion.
Breaking the clods of Samsara,
I sowed there the seed of Brahman.
From the well of boundless life, with every breath as a pulley,
I irrigated the garden with water drawn from the channel
of Sushumna.
Wary of the mischief of the five bulls,
I fenced the field with equanimity and tranquility.
Awake and vigilant, I took care of this sapling,
Oh Guheshvara!

The five bulls are the five senses. The seed of Brahman is the teaching of the sages, which when planted in mind and tended, transforms man into a great tree of Wisdom. "Each man, assimilating by self-effort, knowledge and experience, grows, and as he is a free-will being he becomes a tree of life or a withering tree," writes Shri B. P. Wadia. An Adept of the good law is called "the tree of life," while those of the *left* Path are referred to as the "withering trees." (*S.D.*, II, 496)

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: Is it possible to wipe away or mitigate some of the karma created in the past, stored up as *sanchita karma*?

Answer: Karma is considered to be of three kinds: *Sanchita*, *Agami* and *Prarabdha*. In Vedantic literature, there is a beautiful analogy. The bowman has already sent an arrow and it has left his hands. He cannot recall it. He is about to shoot another arrow. The bundle of arrows in the quiver on his back is the *sanchita*; the arrow he has shot is *prarabdha*; and the arrow which he is about to shoot from his bow is *agami*. *Sanchita* Karma is that which is stored up and not in operation now, because there is not the appropriate environment or condition for bringing it into action. It is like the vapour held in suspension in the atmosphere, which will fall as rain upon earth, when conditions are ripe. *Agami* is Karma we are making in the present life and will be felt by us in this or in future births. It is being generated by our thoughts, feelings, words and deeds, day by day. Every Ego at re-birth brings with it only a portion of the stored Karma. Thus, *Prarabdha* Karma is the portion or aspect of Karma with which one is born, and for whose precipitation the field is ready. It is operating in the present life and body, bringing about all the circumstances and changes. Destiny or Fate is the irreversible Karma that has ripened, so that its expression cannot be averted or postponed. For instance, we cannot change the sex, family, nation or race into which we are born.

Patanjali describes the “stored-up karma” as mental deposits. We feel the effect of mental deposits created by our thoughts, actions and feelings in this or in previous lives, when we have obtained just

the right kind of bodily or mental frame, constitution and environment, necessary to bring them into operation. Thus, for instance, so long as one is in a male body, he cannot have the experience of motherhood.

An aphorism on Karma says that “while a man is experiencing Karma in the instrument provided, his other unexpended Karma is not exhausted through other beings or means, but is held reserved for future operation; and lapse of time during which no operation of that Karma is felt causes no deterioration in its force or change in its nature.” Thus, the force of stored-up Karma will neither become stronger nor get diluted due to lapse of time.

It is important to note that *Sanchita Karma* is regarded as our total Karmic balance, taken as combination of Karmic Credit and Karmic Debit. Unlike the bank account, in the karmic account the record of Credit or good karma, and Debit or bad karma is maintained separately. The credit and debit can never cancel each other, but in fact, the ego has to face the consequences of each type of karma, good as well as bad, separately, through appropriate instruments. It appears that the good and bad karmic causes can cancel each other only at the time of karmic precipitation. If *sanchita karma* is regarded as the bundle of arrows in the quiver on the back of a bowman, then it is easy to see that till these arrows are shot they cannot counteract each other. Hence, when it is said that one can mitigate one’s “stored up” karma through prayers, meditation, selfless service, we might look upon these as means to create new good karma. The only way one can nullify bad karma is by setting into motion right or good karma. If one has erred by lying, stealing or backbiting, one has to set into motion good causes by resolving and learning to abstain from repeating the same wrongs. True repentance must lead to inner transformation. We are then sowing new causes that can counteract or mitigate the bad effects generated by previous causes. What we experience is the resultant or sum total of the old, bad karma and new, good karma. The Aphorism on Karma says:

The effects may be counteracted or mitigated by the

thoughts and acts of oneself or of another, and then the resulting effects represent the combination and interaction of the whole number of causes involved in producing the effects. (Aphorism 13)

There is the law of parallelogram of forces, wherein the good and the bad cause may either partially or completely counterbalance each other's effect and then what we experience is the resultant. There is also the *doctrine of nullification of Karma*. According to the well-known law in physics, two equal forces opposing each other, lead to equilibrium. "Thus, a person may have in his Karmic account a very unpleasant cause and at the same time a cause of opposite character. If these come together for expression at the same time they may so counteract each other as that neither will be apparent and the equilibrium is the equivalent of both," explains Mr. Judge.

What determines that a pleasant cause must precipitate at the same time when an unpleasant cause comes into operation? Probably, the explanation of the term "Karmic Stamina" might help. What we call as karmic stamina is the effect or fruit of past unselfish good Karma that has ripened. The ripening of the past good Karma depends upon stock of unselfish good thoughts in the present life. Thus, a spiritually advanced person might have an immense quantity of past unselfish good Karma stored up. Yet, if during the crisis there is not sufficient number of present unselfish good thoughts to ripen the past good karma, then he may find himself destitute of necessary stamina. "Few are they who have already laid up a good quantity of unselfish good Karma; and fewer still are they who have the requisite degree of unselfish and spiritual nature during the period of trial." (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 34*, p. 13)

Another way of understanding the mitigation of karma is in terms of learning the lessons of life. When the lesson is learnt the necessity ceases. Even when the unwholesome stored up karma are not completely nullified, if the person has evolved spiritually and morally, then when the unwholesome karma precipitates, he is able to give

right response to the circumstances or people that come to him as a result of these Karma.

Question: What is the difference between discerning and judging (criticizing)?

Answer: The article, "Discernment and Criticism" appeared in *The Path* for January 1890, mentions that discernment, discrimination and criticism are not synonymous terms. True discernment refers to human understanding, and when this passive quality of understanding becomes active we discriminate. To discern is to know; to discriminate is to do. Criticism differs from both discernment and discrimination though it involves both. By discernment we learn to *know* good from evil; by discrimination we *choose* either good or evil; by criticism or judgment we undertake to approve or condemn either good or evil in others. Discernment and discrimination are necessary for acquirement of real knowledge and for right living. In exercising these two faculties we contrast good with evil, and choose the good and reject the evil. Here our teacher is observation and experience, and we are guided by the highest and the best motive. It is, however, a very different thing to contrast another person with ourselves, wherein, we are most likely to seek out all possible faults and weaknesses in the other person, and all possible perfections in ourselves, which is what we often do in criticism. The motive of a critic may be that of instructing and helping another to improve, or it may be simply to experience the feeling of superiority at the expense of another.

The one whose attention is always directed towards the imperfections and shortcomings of others, is not likely to become aware of his own faults, and has little time to cultivate noble qualities. More often than not the motive which incites strong personal criticism is spite or anger, and the desire to seem better than the person criticized. Criticism stirs up the feelings of anger and revenge in the one who is criticized, rather than that of repentance and reformation. Criticism is mainly the judgment based on the outward action of the person, without taking into account his inner state, or motive.

Mr. Crobie observes that *actions* are no safe basis to judge from, because the person may be acting with best of intentions. No two people act from the same basis of perception; how then can any one judge? In the article “Is Denunciation a Duty?” H.P.B. suggests that it is better to condemn and attack the *root* of evil rather than dealing with the effects. Often the guilty person is victim of circumstances. However, if one happens to be in the position of a public officer, a magistrate, a barrister, and if cases of treachery, falsehood and corruption are brought before him, then it is his duty to condemn the individual. But even then one should condemn the act rather than the individual. He must pass an impartial judgment. Mercy consists in being impartially just, and not in allowing the guilty to go scot-free. When these factors are kept in mind, there is a gradual shift from criticism to discernment.

Ultimately, a person who discerns and discriminates generally withholds criticism. If he sees faults in others, they serve only to make him more careful in searching into his own life; being constantly vigilant and always seeking to reform himself, and at the same time learning to exercise still greater charity and consideration for others. Such people, instead of condemning another, will try to reform through their own example; instead of opposing the wrong or harmful views of others, they would seek to express the right views without reference to the erring person, and their views, because they are passionless and do not excite opposition, will hold by their own force and inherent truthfulness. The opponent is disarmed and convinced by truth itself.

“He who is found active in a good cause; who stipulates nothing and demands nothing, but works wherever he can find a foothold; who takes pains to commend and approve, but who never condemns or criticizes others; such an one has learned the true spirit of discernment and the wisest discrimination, and is a power such as few persons conceive of,” writes Mr. Judge.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What has caused a series of Himalayan earthquakes which has devastated Nepal? A Hindu religious leader believes that the cause of earthquakes is that an allegedly beef-eating Rahul Gandhi, belonging to Congress party, made a pilgrimage to Kedarnath, thereby offending the gods by this act of sacrilege. Many believe that the calamity is a possible karmic debt incurred by Nepal on account of its annual Gadhimai Festival that involves animal slaughter. The belief that wrongdoing of any sort can bring about natural disasters is common to all societies. The Bible recounts the calamities that befell Egypt because of its persecution of the Jews. The earthquake of 1934 was attributed by Mahatma Gandhi to the evil of untouchability practised in Bihar. However, Rabindranath Tagor pointed out that there was no scientific basis to justify the claim that natural calamities like flood, earthquakes, etc. had an ethical moral cause.

This is termed as “pathetic fallacy,” or projecting of human emotions into the world of nature. For instance, if one feels sad on a cloudy day, he is tempted to relate his somber mood to the gloomy weather. Our minds are programmed to provide a causative link, says Nicholas Taleb, the author of *Foiled by Randomness*. Thus, for instance, the queen died; later, the king also died. We conclude that the queen died, and the king died of grief. We might say that our great technological advancement has adversely affected the natural order of things through environmental degradation and climate change, but our individual sins of omission and commission are not literally earth-shaking events, writes Jug suraiya.

On the other hand, it is felt that the Gadhimai festival in Nepal which is celebrated to appease the Goddess of Power, Gadhimai, is a blood bath, involving slaughter of more than five lakh animals. It is difficult to decipher the karmic pattern with exactness, as some of those who condoned the ghastly massacre might have escaped the calamity. But, Madan Mohan Bajaj’s research work titled,

Vishprabhaw gives scientific viewpoint. Bajaj and his associates are of the view that every time, living beings, whether animals or humans, are killed in slow torment, their bodies and cries emit Einstein Pain Waves (EPW). These EPW cause Acoustic Anisotropy in the atmosphere, and the intensified Anistrophic stress accumulated during mass slaughters of animals puts immense pressure on tectonic plates, creating havoc beneath the surface of the earth and causing earthquake. There have not been any counter arguments to disprove Bajaj's work, and it is a novel approach which needs further investigation. The Gadhimai Festival may or may not have been the cause of Nepal's earthquake but increasing number of studies substantiate that earthquakes are a possible reaction to heightened human intervention of Nature, writes Krupali Shah. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India, May 17, 2015*)

In spite of scientific explanations for natural calamities—earthquakes, volcanoes, cataclysms, etc.—we are always left wondering: “Who is responsible for them, man or God?” While the scientists attribute them to physical causes, Theosophy explains that there are spiritual forces working behind the physical forces. Thus:

It is absolutely *false*, and but an additional demonstration of the great conceit of our age, to assert (as men of science do) that all the great geological changes and terrible convulsions have been produced *by ordinary and known physical forces*. For these forces were but the tools and final means for the accomplishment of certain purposes, acting periodically, and apparently mechanically, through an inward impulse mixed up with, but beyond their material nature....But spiritual Forces having been usually confused with the purely physical, the former are denied by, and therefore, have to remain unknown to Science, because left unexamined. (*S.D.*, I, 640)

Everything that happens is the result of Law. The Law of Karma seeks to restore the disturbed harmony, bringing the effects back to the point of disturbance. Are we not guilty of disturbing the harmony

of nature in various ways? Instead of working on with nature we have only sought to conquer nature for selfish ends. Besides undue interference with nature, there is a direct relation between man's thoughts and natural calamities.

We can look upon earthquakes, tidal waves, tornadoes and tsunamis to be like sickness of the earth. Mr. Judge describes physical illness as discharge of the inner sickness of the inner being on the physical plane. Similarly, “the lives of the earth that have been impressed by the harmful thoughts—the selfish thoughts—of millions of men [and women] have reached a point of explosion, which comes about just as naturally in its own order and cycle, as day follows night. Those...who suffer most from such events have earned the suffering....Man *is* a part of Nature, and if he makes Nature suffer, he will suffer through Nature.” (“*Because—*”*For the Children Who Ask Why*)

Let us take a vow to charge the atmosphere with good and noble thoughts as we take to heart these words from the Bible: “For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.” (*Job, V:23*)

Everyone engages in self-talk. But much depends on the way we do it. Psychologist Ethan Kross heard Malala Yousafzai, the selfless Pakistani activist for women's education and the youngest person to win the Nobel Prize, on *The Daily Show*, recounting her approach to the Taliban. “‘If the Taliban comes, what would you do, Malala,’” she described herself as having said at the time. “Then I would reply to myself, ‘Malala, just take a shoe and hit him.’” That spurred Kross, the psychologist, to find out if self-talk was useful and whether the words used mattered. In a series of groundbreaking experiments, Kross has found that how people conduct their inner monologues has an enormous effect on their success in life. Through a series of experiments it has been found that when a person talks to himself with the pronoun *I*, then he is likely to fluster and perform

poorly in stressful circumstances, while addressing himself by his name, *i.e.*, talking to himself in the third person, allows a person to move further from the “sense of self” and all its emotional intensity. Gaining psychological distance enables self-control, allowing us to think clearly, and perform competently, and brings about dramatic reduction in anxiety levels. Thus, for instance, “I might just conquer the fear of elevators with ‘Now, Pam, go in that elevator and push 6,’” says the author, Pamela Weintraub.

Kross contends that the psychological distance gained by using one’s personal name confers wisdom, as generally, people are able to reason more wisely about problems of others than they do about their own. First-name self-talk shifts the focus away from the self, and that makes them as smart in thinking about themselves as they typically are about others. “The psychologically distanced perspective allowed people to transcend their egocentric viewpoints and take the big picture into account,” Kross reports. However, self-talk is not without its dark side, and people could use the self-distancing of self-talk to actually avoid their emotions, Kross notes.

Self-talk starts audibly during the toddler years. British psychologist Charles Fernyhough says, “Putting our thoughts into words gives them a more tangible form, which makes them easier to use.” As we grow, self-talk is internalized until it is mostly silent—still part of the ongoing dialogue with oneself, but more intimate, no longer broadcast. “The science of self-talk is just getting under way. There may be specific words, aside from our names, that can take us higher, faster, further. That possibility awaits study,” writes Pamela Weintraub. (*Psychology Today*, May 2015)

One of the techniques of overcoming pain, fear or anxiety is overcoming self-identifying attachment. The word “identity” is derived from the Latin *idem ficare*, means “to make the same as ‘I.’” Thus, our body, feelings or our possessions are not “I,” to begin with. We tend to equate them or associate them with “I.” We say, “I am happy, or I am sad,” “I am sick, or I am well.” These expressions are because of the self-identifying attachment to some form or

conditions which are changing. If we are able to dissociate our sense of “I” from the body, then there is no fear or pain. It is said of a disciple and a spiritually advanced person that he suffers and enjoys more keenly than an ordinary man, but does not allow these to shake him or influence his decisions in any way. He is able to do so by assuming the position of an observer. Thus, we have to learn to be a mere witness of the pain at body level; of sorrow at the emotional level; and of insult or non-acceptance of our ideas by others at the intellectual level, and then the “I” becomes a witness. In this state of dissociation we are better able to evaluate our emotions and the situations, and see them in proper perspective.

Probably, self-talk in its highest aspect may be described as an inner communion or attunement with the divine within—our true friend. In the process of spiritual development, help and guidance comes from the inner planes of being, and to avail of it we must stop inner and outer chatter. If we are connected with our divine nature, which is indeed, the Asylum and the Friend, we would never feel lonely. “There is scarcely any one who has not got an internal voice—a silent monitor,” which guides us in distinguishing between right and wrong, what to do and what not to do, if we can learn to put all problems and propositions before it.

Should there be an association of doctors with conscience? A few months back, there was report from London about how drug companies are fooling the medical world about the wrong drugs, to make money. The drug in question was the infamous statin. There has been a dishonest science doing that job. Recently there was a report on the wrong nutrition advice given by American science for more than 40 years. Chemical drugs seem to rule the roost today. A recent study by Douglas C. Wallace showed by elegant computer chip tagged analysis that all chemical reductionist molecules are rejected by the body and are sent to the liver for destruction, while herbal drugs are recognized as self and used! (*Genetics* 2008)

“Over-investigation and over-diagnosis are other methods of disease mongering. All in all, the hapless patient is in for an expensive journey through our system. If she or he survives all that, we claim the credit. . . . The whole science of western medicine is flawed as the human body works as a whole in consonance with its environment; we treat it linearly as a machine. We use dangerous chemicals as drugs, making it still more difficult for the body to recover from any disease. . . . Today private medicine has become a corporate monstrosity. But we doctors are either unaware of this or do not want to know it, as the change, we feel, might break our rice bowl! . . . Right-thinking doctors must come together to debate all these areas and come to some consensus as to how to tackle these complicated issues. . . . We do very little by way of preserving human health. We have become sickness managers instead. . . . Let us make a change for the better in this vital area of human health and wellness,” writes B.M. Hegde. (*Bhavan's Journal*, May 15, 2015)

The “moral dilemma” in the medical profession, highlighted from time to time, came in the wake of technological advances in medicine all over the world. The nobleness of the medical profession, the concern and compassion among medical men, the doctor-patient relationship that gave a physician a unique role in society—these have been fast disappearing. Medicine is no longer humanitarian, but has become technological. The need of the hour is recapturing the lost philosophical foundation of medicine. Despite the great technical advance of our day, the future of medicine may well depend upon the training of physicians who will once more be humanists. Regarding inclusion of the study of ethics in the medical curriculum, Dr. S. M. Sapatnekar, the then Administrator, Maharashtra Medical Council, had said, “It is very important that ethics is taught. Once inducted into the profession, a doctor is not only responsible for his deeds to his own conscience, he is accountable to his profession as well as to society. Studying ethics will help.”