

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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ON FEAR AND FEARLESSNESS

MODERN men and women live in a culture of fear. Each one of us has a fear of something or the other. We experience fear right from our childhood. There are irrational fears, such as, fear of ghosts, devil, boogey man, which are instilled from the childhood. H.P.B. affirms that suggestions made by an adult during the childhood period do not fade away but leave an impression, which surfaces later. Thus:

Crying children frightened into silence by the *suggestion* of a monster, a devil standing in the corner, by a foolish nurse, have been known to become insane twenty or thirty years later on the same subject. There are mysterious, secret drawers, dark nooks and hiding places in the labyrinth of our memory, still unknown to physiologists, and which open only once, rarely twice, in a man's lifetime, and that only under very abnormal and peculiar conditions. (*Lucifer*, June 1890)

There are many kinds of fears. The psychological fears are called phobias. A phobia is an excessive or unreasonable fear of an object, place or situation. Claustrophobia is the fear of closed spaces, while agoraphobia is the fear of open spaces. There is also fear of water, fear of heights, fear of the darkness, etc. Some fears result from traumatic experiences. We bring some of these fears from experiences of past lives, and they are deep-rooted. For instance, in

the case of a person who might have died in a fire accident, in a particular life, his physical and mental memory is so impressed by that experience that in the next life he may have instinctive fear of fire.

There is fear of being different or going against the accepted norms, generally termed as fear of public opinion. Very few dare to express and follow their convictions, defying public opinion. We are afraid to be ourselves because of the fear of being judged and criticized. We are afraid of being ostracized and isolated. For instance, many women continue to remain in an abusive relationship, tolerating domestic violence, rather than seeking divorce, for the fear of, “what will people say?” Also, good moral behaviour is often out of the fear of society. For instance, one curbs the temptation of having an extra-marital affair, or takes adequate care of old parents, resisting the desire to put them in an old age home out of such fear.

Social psychologists have spent decades demonstrating how difficult it can be to say “no” to other people’s propositions, even when they are morally questionable. Many studies have shown that we generally find it difficult to resist social pressure from peers, friends, and colleagues. In a study, participants were asked to think of a series of ethical dilemmas, such as, telling at work place that they were too sick to attend office, and then attending a baseball game. These people were found to be strongly influenced by the advice received. They said that they were not very comfortable committing a misdeed when they were advised not to. It is felt that we often fail to recognize the power of social pressure when we are the one doing the pressuring. (*Sunday Times of India*, February 9, 2014, Courtesy, *New York Times News Service*)

We seem to suffer from what Dr. Erich Fromm calls, *the fear of freedom*. We are afraid to choose and be different because we are afraid of becoming isolated. It is easier to swim in the direction of the stream. We are free, but we have used that freedom to choose those things which have consent or approval of the majority around us. Dr. Fromm points out that we accept ready-made goals and

pursue a career that has approval of the society. Modern man thinks he knows what he wants, while he actually wants what he is *supposed to want*.

There is a fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of isolation and fear of losing what one has achieved. A rich man fears losing his wealth, while one in power fears losing his control. There is fear of death and fear of losing loved ones. Some of these fears arise because we fail to realize that “all conditioned existence is impermanent.” There is always the underlying fear of losing the person we love, a thing, or position or power. The predicament of the person who enjoys position or power is described in Buddhism by giving the illustration of a hawk that takes a piece of meat and flies away holding it in his beak. Soon, hundreds of other hawks will be seen flying after him. Some peck at his body, some at his eyes, trying to take away that piece. In the same way, the one possessing many objects of pleasure is generally in a state of fear and anxiety. This is partly because we see ourselves as separate, and as competing with each other.

The Buddha, the greatest psychologist of all time, says, “From attachment arises grief; from attachment arises fear. There is no grief for one who is free from attachment. Whence, then, can there come fear?” Likewise from indulgence, affection, desire and craving, arise grief and fear, teaches the Buddha. At the base of fear is attachment to the personal self and the sense of separateness. We are continually afraid and being distrustful of other human beings. “He that loveth not, abideth in fear,” (*John*, iii, 14). “With right knowledge, or at any rate with a confident conviction that our neighbours will no more work to hurt us than we would think of harming them, two-thirds of the World’s evil would vanish into thin air,” says H.P.B. (*S.D*, I, 643)

Many fears arise from excessive attachment and identification with the personality, especially the physical body. Fear of death arises because death means end of everything that we depended upon for our sense of self. Fear is essentially fear for oneself and

hence can be overcome by eliminating the ego-sense, and consequently the *sense of separateness*. Why would I be afraid if another person acquires more strength or power, if *he is myself*? James Sainbury puts it thus:

At the root of fear is the idea that we are fully independent beings. The more we become aware of the interconnectedness of creation, the more we can see that our own interests are inseparable from those of other humans and other beings. As we move towards that understanding, the world seems less frightening and more supportive. If we could react with less fear and more love, then surely the world would be a far safer place.

There are various ways of dealing with fear. It is important to stop *avoiding* the feared situation. When the fear is not deep-rooted the recommended method in cognitive behavioural therapy is to confront it or meet it head on. It is suggested that there must be gradual exposure, confronting the least feared situation first before moving on to the more threatening ones. Another method is to *live out* our future anxieties and fears, as was done by Mr. Crosbie. He writes:

I used to look calmly and dispassionately at the very worst picture I could conjure up as happening to myself, and found it helpful in getting rid of “fear of consequences.” I mentally took account of the very worst, saw myself in it with all that it entailed, went through it in all its parts leaving myself alone, dishonoured, stripped of everything. Those very things have happened to me, but I knew them, and went on undismayed. Had I not done it, I would not be where I am today. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 85)

There are many spiritual exercises in Buddhism, which especially aim at the conquest of fear. Midnight visits to graveyards and other fearsome places; meditation on death, etc. In all such exercises, fear is induced in the conscious mind, so that it can be faced and conquered. “The enemy must be dragged out into the open before it

can be slain,” writes Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher.

The more faith we have in the law of Karma, more fearless we are able to be. We must gradually learn to prepare ourselves to face the worst, knowing that we are always greater than the situation, no matter how grave or dreadful it may appear initially. The best antidote for anxiety and fear of the future is to lose one’s self in helping others. “No earnest one who feels called to work persistently for the good of humanity, and not for his own, need fear aught that heaven or hell holds,” says Mr. Judge.

Only a person who has cultivated complete harmlessness in him, is able to be truly fearless. Fearlessness is a godlike quality. A spiritual man is fearless; he is not afraid of any one and also *no one is afraid of him*. An important kind of giving, that is mentioned in Buddhism is the giving of *fearlessness* or *abhaya*. Each one of us can give the gift of “fearlessness,” to others by sharing our confidence with other people, and by creating a feeling of security among those around us, by our very presence.

Religion has always made use of fear to make people blindly accept dogmas. No lasting reform can be achieved by instilling fear. Many of our fears are rooted in ignorance and could be removed by knowledge, especially the knowledge of Karma and Reincarnation. Absolute fearlessness is synonymous with Enlightenment. Fearlessness stems from spiritual integrity. A spiritual person has to learn to rely on the judgement based on his own “inner voice” or intuition. This intuition could be developed only by him “who is untameable, who cannot be dominated, who knows he has to play the lord over men, over facts, over all things save his own divinity,” says *Light on the Path*.

Fear does serve short-term purpose, working as a deterrent. In the absence of enough time and energy to persuade the wrongdoer, to make him see right from wrong, individuals, society and state resort to threats of punishment, fines, imprisonment, etc. Then again, since some people could be fearless in the wrong sense, being *rashly bold*, they could be held in check by the fear produced by the severe

consequences of their thoughtless or even downright wicked acts. “The fear of Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction,” is a Proverb of the wise Solomon.

Courage is not necessarily absence of fear. It is the ability to overcome fear by an act of will, and doing that, which must be done. We need courage to uphold a moral principle, to defend an innocent person, to bring about social and political reform and to begin and sustain spiritual life. There is a difference between Hitler’s and Gandhiji’s courage. In the former case there is arrogance and false spirit of independence, which makes one feel that one can conquer the source of all opposing and fearful forces. Gandhiji’s courage sprang from conviction. He fought his war of Independence with two weapons—*satyagraha* (truth-force) and civil-disobedience that shook the very foundation of British empire. *Vajra*, the thunderbolt is the celestial weapon possessed by Indra. Among other things, it represents punitive and reformative aspect of the Law of Karma. Shri B. P. Wadia explains that when “free, independent and fearless” people obstinately disregard the Law that works to Righteousness, they are broken by the Divine *Vajra*. When people rashly assert independence and disturb the harmony of the universe, they suffer a severe karmic backlash, which at last, teaches them the lesson of interdependence. Thus:

Increasing obstinacy weakens the Will of such persons; pitting themselves against the Law they are tossed hither and thither, are bruised and maimed by the *Vajra*, till at length they learn to fear the Law that pardons only through punishment. Fear leads to search through knowledge; then “independence” is given up, interdependence is recognized and inspiration comes—inspiration enshrined in the mantram phrase—“Work with the Law.” When the Lesson is learnt the necessity for punishment ceases and the protective aspect of *Vajra* is active. *Vajra* defends the oppressed while it strikes the tyrant. (*Thus Have I Heard*, p. 183)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE WHITE CROSS KNIGHT

[This article is condensed and reprinted from *The Path* for April 1893, pp. 3-8, written by Stanley Fitzpatrick]

ONE DAY Bertrand had gone into the town with some of his companions. They observed that a huge crowd of people were eagerly listening to a man of venerable aspect, a Sage who spoke of things mysterious and deeply hidden. Though the youths listened attentively they could comprehend little of that which was taught. Soon, all the youths silently departed, except Bertrand, for though he did not understand the words of the Teacher they seemed to burn within his heart. He observed a light which shone from his breast, and when he appeared most earnest in delivering the message of the Master it shone with a dazzling radiance. The lad could not determine whence it proceeded. Later, as he sat alone, musing upon what he had seen, he was startled by a voice which asked:

“Why think you so intently upon the Light and the Sage from whose breast it shone?” Bertrand looked up and saw one much like the Teacher upon whom he meditated. So he replied without hesitation: “The Light was glorious, and I felt that so also must the words have been, could I but have understood them.”

“The Light is glorious because it proceeds from the One Source. And the words thou hast heard are the words of Truth.”

“But tell me,” said Bertrand, “what is this which the Sage wears, and of what is it the symbol? To me it seemed like the cross of purest white.”

“It is; and it is only worn by those who are faithful in the service of the Master.”

“How is it attained? May I, even I, hope to reach it?”

“Truly thou may’st. It is within the reach of all, even the lowliest. It is to be won by seeking the Path and walking therein. There is but one way: the way of duty. That will lead thee into the Path. If thou

art fully determined to become a Knight of the White Cross, thy weaknesses will be aided, thy ignorance guided.”

“O Master!” cried Bertrand, “I am ready even now to go with thee and become thy pupil. Shall I follow thee to thy dwelling?”

“Nay,” said the Master. “The way for thee lieth not so. Alone must thou walk. Yet at thy need will I come to thee. Farewell!”

Even as he spoke the last word he had disappeared. But not before Bertrand had caught a glimpse of the White Cross gleaming on his breast so that he knew that he also was a Knight. The youth went back to the duties of life. Yet in his heart he carried the memory of these things, and the hope of winning the cross. He endeavoured to rule his estate with kindness and justice. He wished to enlighten the people and provide the means of education for their children. In the midst of these occupations, he longed to receive and wear the shining cross which should proclaim to all his acceptable service to the Master. One day the Sage stood before him and asked, “On what dost thou now meditate?”

“On the duties of life, and the way of their performance. Thou told me that the way of duty led into the Path. Have I not walked in that way?”

“Thou art so walking; but thou hast not yet travelled far. Inquire within. There wilt thou find thy highest counsellor, there the kingdom wherein thou art to rule.”

Now there was a war in the land, which was to decide a question of justice and right; and so Bertrand went into the field, and fought bravely in the cause of truth. Privations and wounds he bore without murmuring. Most of his wealth he gave to sustain the cause. His estates and territories were laid waste and devastated by the enemy, led on by one who had ever been his rival and his most deadly foe. His beloved wife and a young child perished, and his heart was wrung with the anguish of bereavement. But at last there was peace, and Bertrand returned to his ruined and desolate home, thinking bitterly of him who had wrought the ruin of his family, and sought to find means to avenge them. One night as he sat mourning over

the desolation of his life and hopes, the Sage again stood before him. “O my Teacher,” cried Bertrand. “My losses are beyond repair. And yet could I but gain the cross, I might perchance be able to rise and press on. Hast thou brought it?”

“Nay, not so. Thinkest thou it is I who can confer it upon thee? There is but one, who can do that. Seek for that Master within.”

“And what shall I find there save ruin and desolation?”

“Thou wilt find the Highest. The only road to the *Master* whose symbol thou would’st wear lieth through toil and suffering and tears. The Kingdom of Heaven is within. When thou hast found it thou wilt also find the *Master* whom thou seekest, for He dwells there.”

Then Bertrand went into the councils of the Nation and for many years he toiled for the public good. Those who desired to plunder the public hated and feared him. At last, worn out with cares of the State, saddened and depressed by the malice and want of appreciation and gratitude in those he had so arduously laboured to serve, he sought again the solitude of his home. “If I could have gained and worn the cross it would have secured me attention and respect, and my enemies would not so often have triumphed,” he murmured sadly as he walked under the great oak trees. The Sage stood before him and asked if he desired the cross for its own sake without the taint of ambition and self-seeking mingling with his desires. Had he not thought more of the glory of wearing the cross than of serving the *Master* who would bestow it upon him? All the desires and passions of humanity were his, and he had to train them into obedience and usefulness.

“Seest thou now how important it is to conquer thine own kingdom? It is the work of all who would enter the Path and wear upon their breasts the emblem of the White Cross.”

From this day Bertrand ceased to grieve over the apparent failure of all his schemes. He also ceased to cherish feelings of hatred and revenge toward those who had wronged him, and strove to forgive even those who had wrought the ruin of his house and the destruction of his family. But this was not a thing to be speedily or easily

accomplished. He found that the Kingdom within was vaster and more wonderful than all that could be found without. He also found that its subjects were harder to conquer and to keep in subjection than those he had met on the field of battle. Nevertheless he would not yield, but kept ever a faithful watch over this kingdom, while busily employed in aiding his neighbours and toiling unceasingly for the welfare of all around him.

Yet many for whom he laboured returned him evil for good; and the foe who had wrought him much harm, now openly reviled him, since he knew that he was striving to walk in the Path and therefore would not return his evil unto himself. And this to Bertrand was the bitterest draught that was pressed to his lips. Again and again he put it aside, declaring that he could not drink. But the thought of the *Master* would prevail; and a time came when he could listen to his enemy's reviling with calmness and say to him: "Depart in peace: for thou art my brother even though thou knowest it not. I will not sin against the *Master* by failing in love toward thee."

And it came to pass that as he sat one night in his chamber meditating on what he might do to reconcile this foe and turn him toward the Path, the Sage was again with him. A smile was on his face and he said in tones full of love and gladness: "Peace be with thee my brother. Tell me, on what dost thou meditate?"

He said that he meditated on one who was his most ancient and deadly foe, to find out how he would win his love.

"And hast thou ceased to care for the cross, once so highly prized?"

"Nay, Master! But more I prize the winning of my brother."

At that moment the cross of the Lodge shone out with such luster that Bertrand's eyes were dazzled by the radiance. Not only did the White Cross shine brightly on the breast of the Sage, but when Bertrand turned to a large mirror near him, upon his own breast gleamed a cross of glowing light. And it was not of silver, nor of precious stones; it was the pure and lambent flame of Love, the White Symbol of the Master which each must win for himself, and

which no man giveth nor can take away.

It is said that H.P.B. was *born* great, while William Judge *achieved* greatness. He is called the "victorious disciple." In recording the Message of the Great Lodge for the cycle which opened in 1875, H.P.B. pointed to the Path of Discipleship. She drew attention to the ancient truth of the Guru-Chela relationship, of which only distorted shadow survives today. The first question to be asked by an aspirant to discipleship should be: How shall I make myself *worthy* to be the pupil of the Great Ones—the Masters of Wisdom? However, when this question is not asked seriously enough, the aspirant to discipleship meets with disappointment, as his initial enthusiasm very quickly dies out. H.P.B. mentions that chelaship is a *state of mind* rather than a life according to hard and fast rules on the physical plane. The *first* and chief necessity of chelaship is a spirit of absolute unselfishness and devotion to Truth; then follow self-knowledge and self-mastery. One's aspiration works as heat, and brings to the surface both good and bad qualities which were so far lying latent. The aspirant has to work a hundred times harder to overcome the weaknesses of his nature. *Light on the Path* mentions that ordinary humanity goes through life waveringly, without any definite spiritual goal, and hence their Karma operates in a confused manner. But a spiritual aspirant is compelled to make a choice between good and evil. Every step on right or wrong path brings about great karmic results. In his case there is hastening of Karma, which if met rightly, would accelerate his spiritual progress.

There are many kinds of chelas. A probationary chela is tried and tested for at least seven years, or many more, till he reaches a point, when he may be either accepted or rejected. An accepted chela on probation has to strive to get rid of the strength of the personal idea, and work unselfishly for humanity, writes Mr. Judge.

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

THE BHIKKHU—IV

15. *What time, with perfect recollection, he recognizes the rise and fall of skandhas (origin and destruction of the personal self) joy and happiness are his. This is life eternal. (374)*

Whenever the Bhikkhu reflects upon and recognizes the true nature of *Skandhas*, he experiences joy and happiness. As explained in the chapter of “Happiness,” Buddhism speaks of five *Skandhas* or attributes that form our personality. These are: *Rupa* (form or body), material qualities; *Vedana*, sensation; *Sanna*, abstract ideas; *Samkhara*, tendencies of mind; *Vinnana*, mental powers. Of these we are formed, by them we are conscious of existence; and through them we communicate with the world around us. What we call as our personal self is nothing but five “heaps” of psycho-physiological phenomena. When we say “I,” we mean our brain and body, thoughts and emotions, our physical and mental tendencies, capacities, powers, and so on. While the life of the ordinary man revolves around his personality, the Bhikkhu reminds himself of the profound words of the Buddha: “Impermanent are all conditioned beings; full of pain are all conditioned beings; unsubstantial are all conditioned beings.” Because, *samkhara* also means “conditioned beings” or “that which has been set up,” put together, formed or compounded or created and therefore it has a beginning or birth and also death. *Samkhara* refers to any compound form in the universe whether a tree, a cloud, a human being, a thought or a molecule. All these things are *samkharas*. The Buddha taught that all such things are impermanent, arising and passing away, and are subject to change.

There is constant renovation and dissolution going on in our body from birth to death. Our ideas and emotions change. Our mind does not persist in the same state for even two consecutive moments.

Our powers and possessions undergo change, for better or for worse. Bhikshu Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, writes that insight consists in seeing, wherever one looks, within or without, not a “self” but simply five “heaps” of ever changing psycho-physiological phenomena. A graphic simile from the Pali text points out:

Suppose a man not blind were to observe the multitudinous bubbles being borne rapidly along on the surface of the river Ganges, and should watch and carefully examine them. After he has carefully examined them they will appear to him empty, unreal, and unsubstantial. In exactly the same way does the monk behold all corporeal phenomena...all feelings...all perceptions...all mental formations...and all states of consciousness, whether they be of the past, the present, or the future...far or near. He watches and carefully examines them, and after he has carefully examined them, they appear to him empty, unreal and unsubstantial. (*A Survey of Buddhism*, p. 200)

The subject of *samkhara* can become the subject of meditation. Thus, one can look at every pleasant or unpleasant thing about oneself and analyze it objectively to discover that it is conditioned and evanescent. It could be one’s beauty, brain, refined manners, pleasant disposition or even virtues. Can we say with certainty that these things will remain as they are forever? No. An accident can disfigure the body which we admire so much, and render the brain incapable of doing even simple tasks; ruffled pride or a stressful situation can make us forget our manners and pleasantness. Put in a tight spot, one may even be willing to make compromise with one’s virtues and principles, cleverly working out justification for such lapses. All these things are part of our personality and have no permanent existence. So, when we are elated at our success or feel cast down by our failure, we can step aside from that emotion and see it as a sensation—mere rise and fall of *samkhara*. When we learn to look at ourselves and our experiences in this manner, we stop oscillating for that moment and rise above vibratory existence

to experience the joy of eternal life. The Bhikkhu has to increase such moments in his life. The Bhikkhu is able to achieve this by cultivating perfect recollection. Perfect recollection does not refer to memory but to perfect awareness. With perfect awareness, the Bhikkhu is able to trace even the cause of a dream to his waking consciousness.

16. *This is the beginning for a wise Bhikkhu: guarding of the senses; contentment; discipline according to Patimokha rules; cultivation of friends who are noble, pure and zealous.* (375)

Theosophy points out that all religions have sprung from the same source and hence they are all true at the bottom, false on the surface. Comparative study of world religions reveals striking similarity in ethics, as shown by H. P. Blavatsky in her book *Isis Unveiled*. The rules of Manu, Buddha's *Patimokha* rules for Bhikkhus and Sermon on the Mount by Jesus reiterate age old truths of spiritual living. If we turn to the *Pratimoksha Sutra* and other religious tracts of the Buddhists, we find the following ten commandments, writes H.P.B. (*Isis Unveiled*, II, p. 164):

1. Thou shalt not kill any living creature. 2. Thou shalt not steal. 3. Thou shalt not break thy vow of chastity. 4. Thou shalt not lie. 5. Thou shalt not betray the secrets of others. 6. Thou shalt not wish for the death of thy enemies. 7. Thou shalt not desire the wealth of others. 8. Thou shalt not pronounce injurious and foul words. 9. Thou shalt not indulge in luxury (sleep on soft beds or be lazy). 10. Thou shalt not accept gold or silver.

These are ten basic rules or ethical injunctions which are obligatory and binding on every Bhikkhu. If he breaks any of these rules, he is expelled from the *Sangha*. These rules include the five rules of *Panchashila* enjoined upon a Buddhist. Control of the senses and contentment, together with cultivation of friends who are noble, pure and zealous are the additional steps that would help the Bhikkhu

to keep these rules in the face of temptations.

17. *Let him be hospitable, kindly and courteous—skilled in the discharge of his duties. Then his happiness, being profound, his suffering comes to an end.* (376)

18. *As the vasika plant sheds its withered flowers, so you, O Bhikkhus, should shed passion and ill-will.* (377)

19. *The Bhikkhu who is calm in body, calm in speech, calm in mind, who is firm, and who has thrown out the baits of the world, is named "The Tranquil One."* (378)

When the man of the world is inspired to become a Bhikkhu, he does not acquire the qualities of a Bhikkhu overnight. Habits formed by many years of worldly life and similar tendencies carried from past incarnations would have become ingrained into the very fabric of his psycho-physical nature. This is why the Buddha takes so much pain to list out the qualities and behaviour expected of a Bhikkhu. A conscientious Bhikkhu who remembers these qualities will work diligently upon his own nature to acquire these qualities to become a true Bhikkhu.

When the familiar mode of life is given up, a void is created. It has to be filled up by undertaking that which is worthwhile. Being hospitable, kindly and courteous and discharging his duties, the Bhikkhu experiences happiness of a different kind, which ends his suffering. He should be able to give up his passions as the Vasika plant sheds its withered Jasmine flowers. As the withered flower falls off without struggle, so should the passions of the Bhikkhu who becomes disinterested in them. Through practice of discipline and unflinching determination, he frees himself from the lures of the world.

(To be concluded)

THE CAUSE OF HUMAN SUFFERING AND SORROW

The power of any and all circumstances is a fixed, unvarying quality, but as *we* vary in our reception of these, it appears to us that our difficulties vary in intensity. They do not at all. We are the variants.

—W. Q. Judge

MR. JUDGE wrote to one of his students, underscoring the bright side of life, “It is a contest of smiles if we really know our business.” Proficient in the science of life and a past-master in the art of right living, he taught by precept and personal example that we all have the power to make our lives full of hope and cheer, purposeful and sublime, irrespective of whether the conditions surrounding us are personally favourable or unfavourable. This truism is well illustrated in everyday life in the different ways in which different people meet adversities and challenges in their lives. Some are demoralised in the face of adversities, blame others for their difficulties, despair and even resort to extreme measures in hurting themselves and others in the grip of unrestrained negative emotions. It is not uncommon sight, however, that some others, under similar adverse conditions, meet the situation with courage, confidence and responsibility, maintain a cheerful attitude amidst difficulties, and even triumph over them. There are also numerous examples of heroic souls, though not very common, who not only bear personal sorrows and sufferings with a stoic indifference, but also engage themselves in active philanthropic works, unmindful of their personal sorrows, which they keep to themselves, and always have words of encouragement and help for others in their difficulties. Most of us in our individual lives have also experienced that our relations with our fellowmen and the way we have come to cope with knotty situations in life has undergone change owing to experience and better understanding gained in life over the years. This shows that it is not so much the circumstances and conditions of life, which seem inimical to us, which are the real cause of our sorrows and suffering as our view of

life, and our attitude to life’s circumstances.

This truism has an important bearing on the problem of the cause of human suffering and its remedy. One who is happily placed in life rarely questions why he is happy while others are in distress, and what is the meaning and purpose of life. It is only when sorrows and disappointments come into one’s life that the afflicted soul seeks for the moral cause of pain and its remedy. People in distress, often, and very naturally, turn to religion for solace and inner peace, for man is essentially a moral being. But religious doctrines in their exoteric and sectarian garb may not always have basis in truth and fact. One may derive hope and comfort in the belief that it is by the will of God that trials and tribulations come in the life of his creatures with a view to secure for them the joys of eternal heaven; while believers in destiny may resign themselves passively to their lot as preordained by blind fate, or seek counselling of astrologers for ways and means of appeasing the planetary gods who are said to be in unfavourable position in their lives, which is believed to be the cause of their troubles, by performance of prescribed religious rituals in the hope of mitigating their difficulties, a practice which is quite common in India.

It is important to consider whether these various attitudes, beliefs and ways by which people meet their life’s situations have a basis in truth. Mind which is steeped in wrong beliefs and ideas can but lead one into error. What is, therefore, required is the knowledge of our true self and nature, and of the law of our being, which gives us the wisdom to discern the truth that the true cause of the condition in which we are placed lies in ourselves, is in our own thoughts and actions. This knowledge enables us to realize our individual responsibility in every situation, and the knowledge and power to act in ways which bring about the best results for the good of all, and consequently our own happiness.

Viewing life impartially, thus, from a higher perspective, it is evident that the universe is pervaded by the pairs of opposites, such as, light and darkness, heat and cold, pain and pleasure, virtue and

vice, and so on. Heliocentric planetary system is harmonious in its perpetual motion because of the perfect balancing of the mutually opposite centripetal and centrifugal forces operating in contrary directions. If one of the pair is arrested the other would vanish also, and that would be the end of the world. This is so with all existence. It is perfectly evident that without darkness there would be no perception of light; without pain there would be no perception of pleasure; without sorrow there would be no perception of happiness and joy; without vice there would be no appreciation of the supreme value of virtue, which enables a person to learn to discriminate and make a moral choice between the two.

We cannot live to have happiness alone and wish away its opposite, sorrow. Everyone naturally seeks what seems to one as pleasure and happiness, and strives to keep away pains and sorrows. But we cannot have one of the pairs and avoid the other; when we seek happiness, its opposite, sorrow, *nolens volens* accompanies it, and makes its presence felt at one time or another. Our very struggle to keep the visitations of pain in our life at bay, and preserve and perpetuate that alone which seems good to us, is itself a source of fear and anxiety which dampen our happiness. So long as we desire to live for personal happiness, and it is quite natural that we so desire, so long will the unwelcome experience of pain and sorrow persistently haunt us, because pain is co-ruler with pleasure.

Another lesson life is constantly teaching us is that it is folly on our part to seek permanent happiness in the relativity of objective existence because everything is subject to time and change. It is like the ceaseless flow of a river. Nothing remains the same for one fraction of a moment but becomes something else, because life is progressive, and progress is inconceivable without change. If this were not so there would be stagnation. One chief source of pain in our lives stems from our folly of looking for permanent personal pleasure and satisfaction in things, situations and relationships which are inherently changeful and impermanent. To part, under the inexorable law of change, with things and relationships we love

and cherish is an experience fraught with pain and sorrow, and the very thought itself of such a prospect is unpleasant to us, and we turn away from it. But once we take an impersonal standpoint and view the great life, from a higher perspective, of which great life we are an integral portion, with an understanding of these truths of life; and of the great end and purpose for which we, as immortal Egos, are here launched in this mighty flow of conditioned existence; then, we would have raised ourselves above this illusion of personal life, in which the pairs of opposites reign supreme, and thus would have, to a large extent, weakened the moral cause which produces it. It is in the impersonal higher life of the Soul, which should ever be our endeavour to realize, that the pairs of opposites merge and become one, and get transformed into the bliss and peace of our Higher Consciousness.

“Pain and pleasure stand apart and separate as do the two sexes; and it is in the merging, the making the two into one, that joy and deep sensation and profound peace are obtained. Where there is neither male nor female, neither pain nor pleasure, there is the god in man dominant and then the life is real.” (*Through the Gates of Gold*, p. 58)

Though we may not be able to, at once, realize the higher unity, in which the pairs of opposites merge into endless bliss of life real, yet an intuitive understanding of the truth develops in us an aspiration to live the Higher Life, and an inner detachment from the transitory life of the personality, and an equanimity of mind that is not swayed by fluctuating fortunes of that life. Thus we will be in a better position to learn the lessons of life, which can never be learnt otherwise than through the contrasting experiences of the pairs of opposites.

Living the Higher Life comes naturally once we understand the truth of Universal Brotherhood, and of the laws of Karma and Reincarnation. Much that causes us pain and suffering in life comes from the ignorance of these truths, which show us that we are bound up indissolubly with mankind and all life, as all are but expressions of One Life, and that the Higher Self of each is that one indivisible

Eternal Self. Therefore, thoughts and acts imbued with charity, kindness, forgiveness, and goodwill to all alone bring about conditions that redounds to the good of all, and by reaction, to our own happiness. It is altruism in thought and action which is the foundation of true happiness, and development of nobler qualities alone makes for true progress. Much of the pain and suffering that come into our lives is the just retributive punishment we experience, as a reaction caused by our own act of injustice that hurt others. Mr. Judge wrote to one of his students, whose relationship with a fellow student apparently lacked that sympathy and toleration which ought to have been there, telling him about its Karmic consequences, thus:

I swear to you on my life that if you have been troubled or unfortunate, it is by reaction from such or similar thoughts about him or others. Drive them all out of your hearts, and present such kindness and brotherliness to him that he shall, by the force of your loving kindness, be drawn into full unity and cooperation with you. (*Letters that Have Helped Me*, p. 98)

Action is conceived in mind and heart, and outward act is only an outward expression of it. Motive and thought are the real springs of action, and whether physical action follows or not, they generate moral causation, and from which Karmic consequences follow with unerring justice. Guarding our mind and watching our heart against negative and unwholesome thoughts and feelings, and encouraging those of opposite kind, is conducive to happiness.

“All our troubles arise from ourselves, no matter how much they may seem to come from the outside; we are all parts of one great whole, and if you try to centre your mind upon the fact, and to remember that those things that seem to trouble you are really due to your own way of looking at the world and life, you will probably grow more contented in mind. It is your own mind you should watch, not the circumstances in which you are placed.” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 176)

THE ROAD TO REBIRTH

KARMA and Rebirth are twin doctrines. What happens after death is determined by the quality of life lived. After death, the Reincarnating Ego or *Sutratma* enjoys unalloyed bliss and happiness in *devachan*, which is the *swarga* of the Hindus, and paradise or heaven of the Christians. The time period in *devachan* depends upon the proportion and strength of a person’s noble and moral thoughts in his previous life. When the forces created by such thoughts are expended, under Karma, the Ego takes birth once again.

At death, the Ego takes a review of the life just ended. Similarly, on emerging from the *devachan* and before taking birth, the Ego is in a state of complete *manasic* consciousness with which it is able to analyze the acts of many past lives and the resulting causes. It is according to these causes that the Ego takes new birth. The Ego selects a portion of these karma to take birth in a place and surroundings which offer least resistance to their coming to fruition, as reward or punishment. The Ego itself selects and takes birth to such parents and family where he has strong karmic affinities through past Karma. It appears that a woman conceives when some ego makes connection with her. Hence, probably, when a woman does not conceive, even when both the partners are free from any biological defect, it could be because no ego or the birth-seeking entity, has made connection with that woman. We know almost nothing about the process of the descent of the Ego from the invisible *devachanic* realm to the visible realm; from the unembodied state to rebirth in a physical body. But there are one or two hints thrown out by Mr. Judge in *The Ocean of Theosophy*. He writes: “As we know that no human body is formed without the union of the sexes, and that the germs of such production are locked up in the sexes and must come from food which is taken into the body, it is obvious that foods have something to do with the reincarnating of the Ego. Now if the road to reincarnation leads through certain food and none other, it may be possible that the Ego gets entangled in food which will not lead

to the germ of physical reproduction, a punishment is indicated where Manu says that such and such practices will lead to transmigration, which is then a ‘hindrance.’”

Probably it implies that the germs of reproduction, *viz.*, female ovum and male sperm come from food. In Ayurveda we are told that when we eat food, it is converted into the *rasa* (nutritive fluid), and finally, *shukra* (male and female reproductive fluid). We have a hint in the *Mundaka Upanishad* which says: “From Him comes the fire that burns in the Sun; from the sky lit by the sun and moon comes rain; from rain comes food, from food the sexual seed.” In *Prashna Upanishad*, the sage explains that from food is produced *retas*, *i.e.*, sexual energy or semen, and from semen people are born.

Almost towards the end of *Letters That Have Helped Me*, we come across notes which seem to pertain to Mr. Judge’s experiences in some of his previous lives. One incident describes the neophyte who is executed in the conflict between the old religion and the new selfish faith. After his execution he wanders in *Kama Loka*, seeking a birth. He hears a bell sound, a signal on the inner planes, and he consents to take birth, in Southern India. We have the following description: “The darkness and silence...he consents inwardly to assume life there, and soon a heavy storm arises, the rain beats, he feels himself carried to the earth and in deep darkness. A resounding noise about him. It is the noise of the growing plants. This is a rice field with some sesamum in it. The moisture descends and causes the expanding: sees around, all is motion and life. Inclosed in the sphere of some rice, he bemoans his fate. He is born in a Brahmin’s house. Shall the question of reincarnation—through cloud and rain and seed, and thus from the seed of the man—be gone into?” (pp. 251-55)

It appears that certain foods contain the germ of physical reproduction, and others do not. In 1925, two scientists in the University of California, discovered that any organism living upon food that lacked vitamin named “Fat Soluble E” was absolutely sterile. These vitamins have been known only through the effects

produced on the organism by their presence or absence, when certain or other kind of food is taken. It has been suggested that they might well be astral substances connected with various forms of *pranic* currents, which, however, remains to be established. (*The Theosophical Movement*, August 1939)

The article, “Science of Five Fires,” by Shri Nolini Kanta Gupta, appeared in *The Aryan Path* magazine for August 1939, mentions the cycle of birth, the passage of the soul into earth existence, or the descent of the soul into the body. The child is considered to be the fruit of the sacrifice. By offering one’s faith or ardent desire to Heaven or Sky-God, one calls into manifestation Soma or Rasa or Water, the basic principle of life; which in turn is offered to the Second Agni or Rain God, who sends down Rain. Rain is again offered to the third Agni, the Earth, who brings forth Food. Food is offered to the Fourth Agni, the Father or Male, who elaborates in himself, Semen or generative fluid, which is offered to the Fifth Agni, the Mother or the Female, who delivers the Child.

Esoterically, the above reflects a more subtle and psychological process. The Sky seems to be the far and tenuous region where the soul rests and awaits its next birth, which is the region of Soma, or *Devachan*. When the time comes for it to take birth, the soul journeys down, and that is Rain. “Next it enters the earth atmosphere and clothes itself with the earth consciousness. Then it waits and calls for the formation of the material body, first by the contribution of the father and then by that of the mother; when these two unite and the material body is formed, the soul incarnates.”

In *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 223 and fn.) we are told that the German embryologist-philosopher, Prof. Weissman showed that among millions of cells which work to form an organism, there is one infinitesimal cell, which determines the future image of an animal or man, as it would be, in its physical, mental and psychic characteristics, through constant multiplication and segmentation, without any other aid. It is that cell, which impresses on the face and form of the new individual the features of the parents or some

remote ancestor, and is also responsible for transmitting the mental and psychic traits of some remote ancestor. This Plasma is an immortal portion of our bodies, and accounts for hereditary transmission. He hypothesized that these *germinal cells* do not originate in the body of the individual, but are produced *directly from the ancestral germinal cell which is passed on from the father to the son through long generations*. H.P.B. says that this is an almost correct theory. But there is a problem for the Biologists to explain the first appearance of this everlasting cell.

Further, in “The Secret Doctrine Commentaries,” (p. 575), H.P.B. explains that “the germinal cell contains the seed or astral form only. The father plants the seed in the soil of matter...The Monad overshadows the foetus only in the seventh month, and enters fully the child after he reaches consciousness. The Devachanic entity envelops, so to speak, the new entity, lights it up, but begins its process of assimilation only after the first ray of consciousness, say at seven or eight months. Thus it does not enter it. It begins to overshadow it, it is there, it is led by Karmic law to it, but it cannot enter immediately.” From the foregoing it appears that the seed of the father carries the seed of the astral body, which is planted in the soil or womb of mother. At conception, probably, begins the formation of the astral body, on which physical atoms arrange themselves to form the physical body. It appears that from the moment of conception till the end of the seventh month, the Ego, which is referred to as *Devachanic entity*, only keeps a definite connection with the growing foetus, but does not *ensoul* it. Only after the completion of seventh month, the personal part of the Ego connects itself with the new body. But this should not be construed as license or an excuse for aborting the foetus in early months. The esoteric principle is, “As long as we cannot give life, we have no right to take life.” There is no denying that there is life from the point of conception, else how does the foetus grow?

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: It is said that a person’s nature can be known through his handwriting. Can we change our personality and our destiny by improving our handwriting?

Answer: A person’s handwriting is considered to be as unique as their personality, so much so that even identical twins do not have the same handwriting. Probably that is why it is argued that analysis of a person’s handwriting could give a reasonably good clue to their personality. Graphology or handwriting analysis is the science of inferring a person’s character, disposition and attitude from their handwriting. Graphology is generally considered to be a pseudoscience, and has been controversial for more than a century. However, its supporters claim that handwriting analysis over a number of years has shown that certain personality traits get reflected as certain characteristics in one’s handwriting.

A graphologist studies various factors, such as, spacing between words and spacing between sentences in a paragraph, which are supposed to indicate socializing. Too much spacing between words is supposed to imply that a person prefers to remain aloof, while too little spacing between words implies that the person craves company of other people. Average spacing shows balance. Another factor considered is line level, which is supposed to indicate emotional health, depending upon whether the line, written on an unlined page, ascends across the page, remains straight or descends across the page. There are other factors, such as, left slant, right slant or vertical writing; size of the letters—large, small or average; pressure in writing—heavy or light or average. One’s handwriting seems to be

affected and altered when one is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or when one is preoccupied with some other thoughts. Hence, various samples of writing, written at different times become necessary for accurate judgement.

It is almost unbelievable that by changing one's handwriting one can change or improve one's personality. However, handwriting analysis experts claim that it is possible to bring about this change through a technique called Graphotherapy, in which handwriting is used as a personal development tool, to change some aspect of one's personality. Bart Baggett, director of Grapho Analytic Institute of Handwriting, U.S.A. claims that "there are 72 typical personality traits that are revealed in certain styles of forming letters of the alphabet. These are present in different permutation and combinations in every person. For example, the way you cross the letter 't' reveals almost 17 things about you. If a person is crossing the 't' at a low point, then he has a low self-esteem, but if he is crossing it at a higher point then he has a much better sense of self-worth."

Handwriting experts suggest that each one's handwriting undergoes a change over a period of time. Our handwriting in adult life is significantly different from the way we wrote in our childhood or during school days. Thus, our handwriting seems to reflect our existing personality. Handwriting is referred to by many as "brain writing." We do not write with the hand alone, but with the brain, muscles and nerves which, in turn, react to conscious, subconscious and emotional stimuli. In fact, handwriting is looked upon as a channel between the person and his subconscious mind. Graphotherapy is based on the understanding that our handwriting comes from our subconscious mind, which is highly susceptible to suggestion. Just as subconscious mind affects handwriting, handwriting could affect the subconscious mind. Hence, when we determine to change certain strokes in our handwriting, through repetitive exercise, we are sending a powerful suggestion to the subconscious, and thus affect the corresponding traits in our

character. For instance, downward baseline or downward sloping line in one's handwriting signifies pessimism or depression. On the other hand, upward slope in the line signifies optimism and enthusiasm. Graphotherapy is considered to be particularly effective with children because both their character and their handwriting are in the formative stage, and therefore, it is possible to correct a negative trait through necessary changes in their handwriting.

In Theosophical literature there is no mention of handwriting analysis. Since handwriting is unique to every person, it is logical to accept that they may indicate something about the personality of a person to an expert analyst. When one changes one's handwriting, one makes a *conscious effort*, which is bound to affect both brain and mind. However, the process of changing the character must necessarily be from within, without. Our destiny is the result of causes, *i.e.*, thoughts and actions generated by us in this or in some other life, and it can be changed or overcome by conscious effort, by setting into motion appropriate causes, which would mitigate or cancel the effects of our prior actions, and by learning from the experiences of life.

However, it is possible to work at the subconscious level in order to achieve certain personal objectives, such as, to overcome addictions and bad habits, by using different methods of suggestion. Much warning has been given in Theosophy explaining how some powerful suggestions have their strange effects on sensitives, and that they often interfere with the free will of a person. Self-reformation by the help of one's Higher nature, is far more challenging and rewarding. This will strengthen our character and Will, and the Karmic reward is assured for many future lives, as we carry forward the fruits of exertion in the right direction.

Question: We are told that the office of the Guru is to guide or *adjust* the disciple in his progress and that the disciple has to discipline himself and develop his inner nature by his "un-helped exertion." How are we to understand then that Guru's help is always there?

What is meant by “Guru’s protection”?

Answer: Earnest students of Theosophy call themselves chela-aspirants. Every person who enters the path of Self-realization through self-purification, has a Guru. But the time between such determination and the hour when he will really know the Master may be long, writes Mr. Judge. That is because the process of purification is a long process. In the article, “Chelas and Lay Chelas,” it is indicated that all the points enumerated in the rules for chelaship have to be developed in the inner nature by the chela’s “Un-helped Exertions.” It is only when the chela has become a master of his body, senses, faults and pain is he ready to be taken in hand by one of the Initiates. A disciple has to progress by making moral choices and through his own efforts. H.P.B. points out that a guru helps the disciple in his spiritual progress in many ways, but it is not a case like the one depicted by a great artist in a painting in which the Satan is seen playing a game of chess with a man with his soul at stake, and with a good angel standing by his side constantly counselling and assisting him. It is not so. It is a fight between the Chela’s Will and his carnal nature, and Karma forbids that any angel or Guru should interfere until the result is known. It is he who has to turn to his Higher Self for help, and with determination, crush out his animal nature. In a dialogue between a Sage and a pupil when the pupil says that if only the Guru would tell him “to do this” and “not do that,” then he would never make mistakes. The Guru answers that by such guidance, the pupil will never learn *how not to make mistakes*, and that he would deprive the pupil of the sovereign power of making choices, and becoming a God.

When ready and receptive, the chela may get inspiration for some work or insight into something he is struggling to understand. H.P.B. writes that They may inspire the sincere student only with an idea, leaving the literary presentation to him. One may get hints as to right or wrong course of action, but the choice has to be made by the person. However, a Guru or Master will not and cannot interfere with Karma. Mr. Judge writes, They (Masters) are in everything in

life, and in every phase of our changing days and years. By having faith along this line, one can come nearer to help from Them.

When we study the teachings, struggle to subdue our lower through our higher nature, make every effort to help others, and make a continuous effort, every hour of the day to keep the ideal of the Masters before our mind’s eye, then “They speak to us through all men; They also speak to others through us. As we walk the streets, as we greet our friends, as we do our common task and go our daily round, as we read, as we write, as we speak, They act through us, if we will only let Them,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia. H.P.B. points out that the Guiding Hand of the Master may be sensed if the disciple is attentive in daily and hourly events of life. There is no trivial incident or interaction with another. A casual remark made by another may contain some hint and a meaning. Masters have without interfering with Karma, precipitated and in other cases retarded some events and contingencies in the lives of all who are earnest and true.

People argue that if the Masters exist and are all-powerful then everything must be possible for them. They can help their disciples (chelas) and the Society to overcome their suffering and difficulties, and prevent them from making mistakes. Why do They not use Their powers and step in to save the business or life of some disciple’s dying brother? First of all, They are embodiments of the Law of Karma and hence would do nothing to contravene the Law.

How do they help individuals? How is it that many a chela and even the founders were allowed to suffer without the interference of the Masters? They will never help the disciple to dodge the consequences of his actions. Each one has to reap what he has sown. A Master of Wisdom writes: “Our chelas are helped but when they are innocent of the causes that lead them into trouble; when such causes are generated by foreign, outside influences. Life and the struggle for adeptship would be too easy, had we all scavengers behind us to sweep away the effects we have generated through our own rashness and presumption.”

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Why cannot we allow a child to be a child? Why should we make him smarter than he need be? Why do we fast-forward the cassette? Babies grow, develop and mature gradually. But in the present times, we find that the baby that demanded undivided attention of everyone is demanded to pay undivided attention to what his teacher says in the class! The symbiotic union with the mother is separated at very early age. Endless repetition of the alphabets, days of the week, and related mumbo-jumbo would have been stuffed into tiny heads by overzealous mothers, hell-bent on admitting children into prestigious prep-schools. It is important that children are allowed to grow naturally and spontaneously, and that nothing is taught under coercion, as that tends to breed aversion. It is foolish to accelerate the blossoming of bud into flower, and likewise, it is far from prudent to drive kids to ascend the cognitive hillock in rapid strides. We should conceive of a system whereby we could relieve children of their mental and physical burden of carrying knapsack of books and note books.

There must be wise distribution of time to work, play and rest, each day. Overemphasis on scholastic work tends to cause anxiety and aversion. Play can mitigate the harmful influence of verbalism and memorisation. Children would learn much better if we free them from the practice of reward and punishment. Let the day begin with a question and end with a question. Let them learn by observation. Thus, for instance, “Show them disarranged books and arranged books in the library; ill-arranged and well-arranged furniture; ill-dressed and well dressed children drawn upon a board, short-tempered and even-tempered behaviour in a mock play, the effect of balanced diet and imbalanced diet upon health by showing illustrative cartoon, and leave the choice to children. You do not choose for them!...Reinforce in them the belief that you CARE for them for what they ARE and not what they ‘ought’ to be.” writes S. Dandapani. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, February 15, 2014)

The question repeatedly asked in our society characterized by strained parent-child relationships, is: “How should we, adults, raise our children, so that they become self-reliant, without becoming self-willed, selfish or overly liberated?” The principle to keep in mind is that each child is an old soul in a new body, having its own destiny to fulfil in the midst of his family, with which he is karmically linked. Each child has its unique “soul- background,” and character from its past lives lived on earth. Like gardeners, we as guardians, should preserve a balance between “nurture” and “nature,” for the normal development of the tender plant called a “child.”

It is generally accepted that the upbringing at home and an exposure to some formal education will contribute greatly to our nature and character, right from the childhood. But it is said that even before birth the little developing life in the womb is capable of being “educated,” in a sense, by the way the mother conducts her life, by her thoughts, and by the conditions which may affect her. Thus, there is such a thing as the non-verbal education, *i.e.*, the transmission of ideas and feelings between the two closely related bodies and souls. This less-known observation implies that the concept of education should not be restricted to the academic field only.

If man is considered to be in essence, an immortal being, and having superior potentialities dormant in him, then the *System of Education* ought to be directed to an all-round development of the body, mind, and character. H.P.B. writes: “Children should above all be taught self-reliance, love for all men, altruism, mutual charity, and more than anything else, to think and reason for themselves. We would reduce the purely mechanical work of the memory to an absolute minimum....We would endeavour to deal with each child as a unit, and to educate it so as to produce the most harmonious and equal unfoldment of its powers, in order that its special aptitudes should find their natural and full development.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 268)

The devil has been known by many names—Satan, *Shaitan*, Eblis, the demon, the evil one, and in its lesser known incarnations as monster and villain. There is a tendency to assign all our ills to the abstract entity called the devil. Spiritually, Satan is considered to cause disturbance, and disrupt the *rapport* or resonance between man and god. Mythologically, Satan or the devil was a good angel who was cast out of heaven for disobedience and pride, and hence became personification of evil. The word Satan originally meant adversary. Origen, the third century Christian theologian, says that spirit stands for progress, and evil is that which refuses progress. The word “diabolic,” which is derived from the Greek *diaballein*, meaning to divide or separate, implies the attitudes and actions which advocate dichotomization of “us versus them.”

In our days, we tend to demonise or villainise other people. “I take my internal tyrant and project it onto another person...forgetting my own role and contribution in the interaction. And I can conveniently label the person, ‘devil incarnate.’ Such projections of internal prejudices, fears, or anything vile to an external entity are more often than not a kind of escapism....The opening up of the unconscious by psychologists allowed us a peep into the seeds of demons residing within, without the necessity for any devil to have caused it....The genesis of all institutionalized evils of racism, apartheid, ex-communication, or sexism, which caused us to dehumanize people, needs to be seen more within us than extricate and put at the doorstep of the devil,” writes Homayun Taba.

There is no doubt that negative entities do exist, otherwise, it would be difficult to explain Buddha’s experiences with Mara, Jesus’ temptations in the desert and the battle of Ahura Mazda with Ahriman. We must exercise our will to resist the evil forces. Luckily, not all people look outside for the source of evil. Poet Kabir says: “I went in search of evil; I found nobody is worse than myself.” The Zoroastrian *Gathas* tell us that each human being has freedom of choice between good, truth, righteousness and evil. A strong conscience should guide us not to do unto others what we would

not like them to do unto us, writes Taba. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, February 16, 2014)

Pagans regarded good and evil as twin brothers born from the same mother—Nature. However, when people started believing in a just, merciful and perfect anthropomorphic god, there was a need to create his opposite, the *Devil* or *Satan* to explain injustice, cruelty and evil in the world. H.P.B. points out the absurdity by arguing that if God is Omnipresent, Omniscient and Infinite, that God must also include evil. Either God must include evil, or he must be the direct cause of it or he must cease to be Absolute, Supreme and all-embracing. The Ancient philosophers defined evil as lining of God or Good. If good is represented by Light, then evil could be represented as its shadow, and hence inseparable. In the story of *Kaliyadaman* we find that Krishna does not *destroy* snake Kaliya, but asks him to retire into the fathomless depths of the sea. It implies that even if we may get rid of evil from our *individual* natures, evil will always remain in the Kosmos as the opposing power to active goodness which maintains the equilibrium in Nature, writes H.P.B. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 26*, p. 15)

One-third of evil is inherent in manifestation, and is immanent in the illusions produced by matter. To be free from evil one must recognize that matter and material things are continually changing and are ephemeral. “The real evil proceeds from human intelligence and its origin rests entirely with reasoning man who dissociates himself from Nature. Humanity then alone is the source of evil,” writes a Master of Wisdom.

One of the meanings of good angel Lucifer being cast out of heaven is, “Lucifer was once a prince of light, admitted to the councils of the Most High. He fell through pride, and dragged downward in his fall all who worshipped the demon of pride. This is no foolish fable, but a terrible tragedy, re-enacted at the gates of paradise, in the face of the assembled universe, and re-enacted in the heart of man,” writes Mr. Judge. Pride and ambition are the worst foes of a spiritual aspirant.

Mara is not an evil entity outside of man, but it is personification of man's vices, which exercise fascination and temptation to lead the spiritual aspirant away from the true path. When a person is sufficiently advanced on the spiritual path, the combined evil influence that is the result of the wicked thoughts and acts of the age in which the person lives, assumes for him a definite shape, and only strongest effort of will and faith could dispel this evil influence, writes Mr. Judge.

What happens when we use foul language? Some of us occasionally use swear words to give vent to our anger, pain or frustration. For some others, swear words are a part of their vocabulary, and they habitually indulge in it. "Using any kind of negative language pollutes the aura which eventually pollutes the person's mind or psyche. Also, using dirty words and shouting at people is like throwing garbage on the person. This is a major negative karma," says Anupama Sharma, energy healer with Yoga Prana Vidya, Delhi. She is of the opinion that swearing does not alleviate anger. Meditation is the antidote to anger. When we meditate we develop the potential to think in a wider perspective—from our own point of view, from the other person's point of view and from a neutral point of view. It is believed that the more profane our language, the further away we move from peace and joy. According to Yoya Vallee, a Yugoslavian researcher with the Spiritual Science Research Foundation, our ego is activated when swearing. She shows the diagrams that illustrate that the vibrations of the swear words draw distressing energy from the environment. A ring of the distressing energy is activated in the subconscious mind, affecting the person's consciousness, and eventually polluting his environment. A habitual use of swear words would attract more negativity, and eventually such a person loses touch with his higher

consciousness, as he develops traits of being judgmental and selfish. Dr. Seema Anand, an energy healer in Delhi, offers another point of view. She observes that swear words like crap, damn, shit, hell are merely an outlet to your emotions. But when one says, "I wish you a screwed life," with an intention of causing harm, it will definitely have an effect, because now it has taken the shape of a curse. The best way to overcome this habit is to be mindful, which can prevent anger. We may pray for the offender instead of using swear words. Feed the good in you and starve the bad, writes Punya Srivastava. (*Life Positive*, February, 2014)

All of us would have experienced, at some time or another, the power of speech and the magical effect of spoken words. Who can forget the soothing effect of "Don't worry, this too shall pass away," in the middle of adversities? And yet, sadly, we have missed to appreciate the sacredness of speech. One of the evils by which modern society is debased is constant misuse of the power of speech. Speech is unique to man and Speech is one of the greatest privileges acquired by human beings in the course of evolution. One of the Masters writes, "Each man is personally responsible to the Law of Karma for every word of his voluntary production." "Gentle speech which causes no anxiety, which is truthful and friendly, and diligence in the reading of the Scriptures, are said to be the austerities of speech." (*Gita*, XVII)

Like all other powers, speech can be used constructively or destructively. Constructive or Creative speech which ever blesses is that of the sages and seers. The creative power of speech is also dependent upon heart feeling and the quality of thoughts. Words are things. They become alive and potent in proportion to the reality and purity of the thoughts behind them. Let us use with care those living messengers called words. To produce beneficent effect words should be spoken meaningfully, backed by intense and pure emotions.

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