

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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ON IDOLATRY OR IDOL-WORSHIP

IDOLATRY is defined as the worship of an idol, and it involves worship of an image of the deity, or even images of saints, prophets, animals and other religious symbols. Catholic and Orthodox Christians worship religious objects such as statues, Crosses, Icons, Bible, etc., whereas the Protestants reject idol worship. Hindus not only worship idols (*murtis*) of various gods and goddesses as representative of One God or *Parabrahmam*, but also such abstract symbols of God such as the *Siva-lingam* and the *Saligram* stone. Idol worship may be seen as part of *saguna* (with attributes) *bhakti*, where the devotee ascribes various attributes to the deity, which are depicted by various idols. Human history shows that in the beginning when man identified himself with nature, he worshipped animal gods. But as time passed and man became aware of himself as the crown-piece of evolution, he endowed God with human form and attributes.

Those who reject idol worship argue that God has no shape or form, and is incomparable, hence no idol, image or idea could ever capture or represent God's essence. The Upanishads stress the formlessness of One Reality and mention that God is unimaginable, unspeakable and without attributes. Judaism prohibits any form of idolatry. The use of a created thing as a representation of God in order to assist in the worship of God, is also considered a form of idolatry, and making something a

mediator between ourselves and the Almighty is considered a great insult to God.

Like Semitic religions, Veda-centric Hindu reformist movements, such as, the *Brahmo-Samaj* and *Arya-Samaj*, were also highly critical of image worship. Dayanand Saraswati was the founder of *Arya-Samaj*. Once, on the occasion of *Shivaratri* (vigil night of Shiva), Dayanand had to sit awake the whole night in front of the idol of Shiva, when he saw a mouse eating the offerings to the God and running over the idol's body. After seeing this, he questioned himself; if the God could not defend himself against a little mouse then how could he be the saviour of the massive world!

To Arjuna's question as to which is better, the worship of the unmanifested or that of the manifested, Shri Krishna says that worship and devotion to the unmanifested is difficult, so we being in physical bodies always try to give form to the Supreme and see it separate from us. Idol worship is an integral part of *Bhakti* movement or the Path of Devotion. Hinduism accepts idol worship as a simple way of expressing one's faith, love and devotion to God. Ideally, an idol should be looked upon as a symbol or a form which enables a devotee to concentrate the mind and form a link with the deity.

Vivekananda seems to suggest that worship of images is a stepping stone to self-realization, and which must be discarded as one progresses in spiritual journey. In his speech at World Parliament of Religions he said, "The Hindus have associated the ideas of holiness, purity, truth, omnipresence, and such other ideas with different images and forms....Man is to become divine by realizing the divine. Idols or temples or churches or books are only the supports, the helps, of his spiritual childhood; but on and on he must progress....He must not stop anywhere. 'External worship, material worship' say the scriptures, 'is the lowest stage,' struggling to rise high, mental prayer is the next stage, but the highest stage is when the Lord has been realized....To the Hindu...all the religions

from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the Infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association, and each of these marks a stage of progress; and every soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength till it reaches the Glorious Sun....Crosses and crescents are simply so many symbols—so many pegs to hang spiritual ideas on."

H.P.B. points out that Theosophy does not teach atheism, except in the Hindu sense of the word *nastika* or the rejection of *idols*, including every anthropomorphic god. *Astika* is a Sanskrit term derived from *asti* which means "it is" or "it exists." or "one who believes in the existence." *Nastika* is its negative, literally meaning, "not believing."

Many people feel that we may reject Idol-worship, but we still need an image, a divine something, to which we offer our reverence and spiritual gratitude. Can we call this image-worship also idolatry? We might say that idol is concrete form of image, while image is a subtle form of idol. Whether we take idol or image, so long as we do not limit God to that particular idol or image, but use it as a means to establish faith and devotion, we are at the intermediate stage. We also have to be careful about our *idea* or *concept* of God, because, if we say that "my idea of god is the only true idea," it becomes a form of idolatry. H.P.B. points out that when we hold an idea or a concept, in the beginning we are unable to form a mental picture, but over a period of time we begin to formulate our idea into mental picture. But no matter how wonderful that picture may be, it does not represent reality. As time goes on this picture begins to fade and is lost, and for a while we experience void, and there is a temptation to revive the cast-off picture. If one does not yield to the temptation, then a larger, more abstract mental picture arises, which too fades away. All the while one has to be aware that no picture will ever represent the truth. This process of evolving more and more subtle and abstract mental pictures goes on till the mind and its pictures are transcended and

the learner enters and dwells in the world of no-form. Iconoclasm relates not only to breaking of images, but also to attacking cherished beliefs, which include dogmatic and narrow concepts of God. “The evolution of the GOD-IDEA proceeds apace with man’s own intellectual evolution. So true it is that the noblest ideal to which the religious Spirit of one age can soar, will appear but a gross caricature to the philosophic mind in a succeeding epoch! The philosophers themselves had to be *initiated into perceptive mysteries*, before they could grasp the correct idea of the ancients in relation to this most metaphysical subject,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 326)

However, an idol or image may be taken as stepping stone to something higher, as suggested in the *Samatha* meditation of the Buddhists. *Samatha*, is divided into three degrees or levels: concentration on a gross material object; concentration on a subtle counterpart of the gross object; and absorption into subtle counterpart of the gross object. For instance, one can concentrate on the picture or idol of the Buddha, by simply looking at it, not paying attention to anything else. In the second stage one tries to visualize the image of the Buddha with closed eyes, just as clearly as one saw the material image with eyes open. The image that is seen vividly with eyes closed is the subtle counterpart of the gross material image. In third stage one continues to concentrate on the subtle image till one becomes, as it were, assimilated or absorbed into it. At this stage the distinction between subject and object disappears. For those who concentrate on the image of a god or goddess there is also the suggestion that after meditation one should dissolve the mental image, because another person who might be concentrating on the image of the same deity might attract the image created by oneself and be affected by the impressions and ideas associated with that image. H.P.B. mentions that outside every temple in India, there is a lake, stream, or reservoir full of holy water, in which the statues of gods, goddesses and idols are immersed in water by the priests. The object of the ceremony was

to wash away from them the sins (impressions) of their worshippers.

Could we correlate *Viswarupa darshan* experienced by Arjuna with image worship? *Viswarupa darshan* is normally explained as “Vision of the Divine form as including all Forms.” Arjuna is made to see that the whole of manifestation is contained within the Absolute. To prove that mud is the essence of all pots, we not only need to prove that all pots have mud in them, but also that the mud always potentially contains all pots of all shapes and dimensions. *Viswarupa darshan* is at a much higher level, because Arjuna is given the divine eye, *i.e.*, he is required to have spiritual perception to see the whole of manifestation in the “Body” of Krishna, which represents highest conceivable primordial matter. It shows that various forms in manifestation are differentiation of one and the same Primordial Substance.

In case of saints like Mirabai and Ramakrishna Paramhansa, there was such intense devotion that the idols are said to have responded to them. We sometimes read or hear of such unusual occurrences as the statue of some holy figure like Mother Mary, shedding tears, talking, etc. Such abnormal occurrences are neither supernatural nor fraud. In the article “Animated Statues” H.P.B. explains that the word *fetish* was derived from the Portuguese word *feitico*, meaning, “enchanted,” “bewitched,” or “charmed.” Every miracle-working image, tomb or statue of a Saint, Virgin or Christ, in the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches, has to be regarded as a *fetish*; as those images or statues do become “the receptacle or dwelling,” for a longer or shorter time, of God or an “angel of God,” when the miracle is wrought. As a result, the statues could walk and talk and even prophesy. In antiquity, people believed that such statues were endowed with the prophetic gift and could tell the people in whose possession they were, “all that was useful and salutary to them.”

There has existed from antiquity a mysterious and awful science called *theopoea*, of endowing the symbol of gods with temporary life and intelligence, which explains phenomenon of walking and

talking statues. H.P.B. explains that an idol or statue can be animated by transferring one's life energy, or by sending an aspect of one's own astral body to animate it, or by causing an elemental spirit to enter and animate the statue. Thus:

Statues and blocks of inert matter become animated under the potential will of the hierophants...Left to itself the life-principle will blindly follow the laws of nature...But, guided by the will of the adept, it becomes obedient...and produces physical and psychological miracles, well-known to mesmerizers. Infused in inorganic and inert matter, they create an appearance of life, hence motion. If to that life an individual intelligence, a personality, is wanting, then the operator must either send his *scin-lecca*, his own astral spirit, to animate it; or use his power over the region of nature-spirits to force one of them to *infuse* his entity into the marble, wood or metal; or, again, be helped by human spirits. (*Isis*, I, 616)

Ancient hierophants could animate the statues and make them act and speak like living creatures. As per historian Titus Livy's account, after the conquest of the city of Veii, when a Roman soldier requested goddess Juno to change her abode from Veii to Rome, she answered in the affirmative. After which the statue of the goddess lost its immense weight and seemed to follow them to Rome of its own accord (*Isis*, I, 614). H.P.B. mentions that it was not only in antiquity that idols and statues of gods acquired intelligence and locomotive powers, but that the same has been witnessed even in the nineteenth century. There have been newspaper accounts of the statue of the Madonna of Lourdes running away from the parish to the nearby woods and being brought back. Usually such occurrences are followed by a series of "miracles," healing, prophesying, letter-dropping from on high and what not.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE LESSON OF THE LAW OF SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT

TO BE A GARDENER, tending the grounds of a fine estate might be accounted a pleasant lot, and Nikhil knew that he was fortunate to pass his days in such fair surroundings and in the service of a master who was generous, kind and good. The dissatisfaction that haunted him was not due to his circumstances. He realized that it was dissatisfaction with himself. "How can I be content," he thought, "full of faults as I am, even as a plot is full of weeds? Yet a plot, through steady toil, may be redeemed, whereas all my efforts at self-improvement come to nothing."

He had once overheard his master in conversation with a friend—two old scholars discoursing together—and part of a sentence had caught his ear strangely: "*Advancement on the higher planes of thought and spiritual life.*"

"I make no advancement there," he reflected sadly, when, perhaps, he lost his temper and aimed a blow at an idle underling, or when he mistakenly accused a seedsman of dishonesty and was too proud to admit it and ask pardon, or when he envied a fellow-gardener's success in producing a finer strain of some plant. True, he never committed the same fault twice. In sincere repentance he uprooted it like a weed. But lo, another and another would follow fast. The soil of his nature seemed full of them.

Meanwhile, he worked faithfully. The lovely garden was a model of neatness, with every flower and shrub cared for, every weed removed the moment it appeared, and a certain portion, which a former owner had called "the wilderness," nicely reclaimed and set with fruit-trees. Yet Nikhil himself remained unhappy, and at last his sad face caught his master's attention. "Why Nikhil," said the master, rallying him, "what a countenance of woe! Have you lost a prize bloom?"

"That I have," he said. "The prize bloom of hope. Do not mock

a man at odds with *himself*, Master, a man well-nigh in despair.”

“What hope have you lost?” asked the Master.

“The hope of advancement in spiritual life. I heard you use these words once and their import seemed to flash on me,” answered Nikhil. Nikhil poured out his woes. “Ever,” he said, “I aim afresh at self-improvement, and ever again I fall. I conquer a fault, and lo, I see another. Now, I have finally lost hope.”

“Tell me,” said the master, gazing across the garden, “why you planted those fruit-trees. Why, in the first place, you cleared the wilderness, imposing order where all had been unkempt?”

“Because fruit-trees,” Nikhil answered promptly, “are of value, and what grew formerly was worthless. It was, as you know, Master, a long, laborious task, but we looked ahead to future gain.”

“Good!” said the master, smiling. “Now tell me why you weed the beds so diligently. If it is in the nature of weeds to grow again, why trouble? Why not let them work their will?”

“Surely, Master, you need not ask, you who love flowers,” said Nikhil swiftly. “Would you have your roses choked by mere weeds? It may be a tedious task, but above all others it is necessary.”

“You are a man of common sense. But what ground have you for believing that all these things will come about—that a wilderness, when tended, will bear fruit-trees, that if weeds are removed, flowers will thrive? For that matter, why sow seeds? How do you know that flowers will spring from them?” said the master.

“You have me there, Master,” said Nikhil, smiling wanly in response. “I only know it is so—well, because it always *is* so. A poor reason, doubtless.”

“Nay, the best!” said his master gravely. “For by giving it you bear witness to the Law. All is under Law, Nikhil, be it a garden or a soul, and the Law for all things is advancement—from less to more, from the imperfect to perfection. You have answered my question well, showing that you honour that Law instinctively; yes, even when you give me what, in words, you deem a poor reason, for you prove by your actions that you know it is a good

one. Yet in your own inner cultivation you tell me you have failed. There, Nikhil, you would have me see you as a lawbreaker.”

Nikhil looked uneasy, only half understanding, and once again fell silent. The Master, too, held his peace awhile, and then said, “listen to me. You have faults, as a garden has weeds. You uproot one and another takes its place. That also you destroy. This is not oft-repeated failure as you think. It is the very thing you long for—advancement. With every weed the less, or let us say with every fault you conquer, so much nearer comes the ultimate perfection, though as a gardener you know well that the process is but slow, only to be accomplished stage by stage. It was in no short time that you transformed a wilderness to a fruitful orchard! Now Nikhil, all this cheers you, does it not? Ah, but wait, for the best is yet to come. Bethink you that the process itself, the long, slow, often-painful process, is observance of the Law of Spiritual Advancement. When you feel the sting of self-dissatisfaction, you observe it. When your eyes are opened to fresh faults, you observe it. When your egoism seems so monstrous to you that you despair of overthrowing it and can bemoan its long tyranny and its many occasions of hurt to others, yes, even then you observe the Law, for only the Law itself can bring such things about. Ah, Nikhil, you crave perfection. But until you attain to it through the long Karmic stages—till the garden is crowned with the Ultimate Rose, till the wilderness is transformed to a fruitful orchard—till then be content, my son, to fulfil the Law patiently. Cleanse the soil, sow good seed—yes, ten thousand times, if necessary. The Law of Advancement will not fail you. A weed once gone, is gone forever. It is even as written here of the warrior”—the master took out a little book and read from it— ““The enemies he slew in the last battle will not return to life in the next birth that will be his.”” And with that he seemed to settle himself to study, hinting that the colloquy was ended.

When we are anxious we seem to assert, in a subtle way, our own will. Mr. Judge says, “By anxiety we exert the constrictive power of egoism, which densifies and perturbs our magnetic sphere, rendering us less permeable to the efflux from above” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 12). Patience and anxiety often go hand in hand. We are anxious, because we expect instant results. Some of us get anxious as to our progress in spiritual life. A good gardener does not dig out the plant by the roots to see how it is growing. We cannot force the growth of the soul-plant. It may not be large or strong enough to bear fruit when we wish it to, but some day it will, if only we are not anxious and nurture it well. “What is to learn, is to be content, or, rather, resigned to ourselves and our limitations even while striving to get above them.... We cannot all at once live up to these high ideals as some others live up to theirs.” (*Ibid.*, p. 162)

We may begin by conquering small enemies. As the Buddha says, “Far hath he gone, whose foot treads down one fond offence.” And H.P.B. writes, “For every flower of love and charity he plants in his neighbour’s garden, a loathsome weed will disappear from his own, and so this garden of the gods—Humanity—shall blossom as a rose.” Is it easy to love others, or even feel goodwill towards them, by overlooking their faults and weaknesses? But when we are determined to be kind and loving to another person, who is, say, greedy, or dishonest, or a liar, we are forced to make some inner adjustment and overcome in us the aversion for greed or dishonesty or lying. At a minor level, perhaps, we are applying the principle: “Don’t hate vice; don’t love vice, but understand it.” Thus, love for another helps us to get rid of “loathsome weed” of our own vices and weaknesses, leading thereby to morally good actions.

“It is in and through the incidents of daily life, in work well done, in duties thoroughly performed, that we today can most readily make progress in the higher life—slow progress, it may be, but at any rate sure,” writes Mr. Judge.

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

THE IMMORTAL I—I

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

IN THE FIRST Chapter of the *Gita* we saw that Arjuna was sitting in his chariot, having put aside his bow and arrows, his heart overwhelmed with deep affliction. We have to note the fact that he is situated between the two armies, the fight has begun, and the arrows have already started flying in both directions. Therefore, no retreat is possible. Arjuna now must fight, yet at this crucial point he feels that the sacrifice demanded is too great, and that he cannot go through with the terrific giving up of his own personal and human life, so that he may gain the Everlasting or Immortal Life. After Arjuna has sat down, and feels so terribly low in spirits, Krishna tells him how it is a shame that he should thus feel, and how he should begin to fight and not yield to any emotions. Having heard this reproach from the Higher Self, the mysterious Lord, Krishna, Arjuna asks the advice of that “still small voice” of God, and seeks the answer to the question, “What, then, should I do?”

The very first thing Krishna does is to affirm the Self, to show Arjuna that he must rely on his innermost Being, on the Spiritual, Divine Self, lying within his own heart. The explanation of this “Self” gives us the conception of God or Deity. In the Philosophy of Theosophy, the Self is a Universal, Eternal, Changeless Principle, a Principle of Life and Light, which is to be found in every single form of the manifested Universe, whether in the Lower or in the Human Kingdoms or in the Kingdoms above the Human, throughout the phenomenal world. It is this One self, the Essence of Everything, the root in which everything takes its own life, to which it returns. Yet the whole world appears to us as a vast panorama of differentiations. There are no two forms, no two material vehicles in the world which are exactly alike in appearance. In fact, from our point of view everything seems different from

everything else, but when we look within the form, when we try to see behind the phenomenal world, and try to see this plane of Absolute Reality underlying everything in the world, then we catch a glimpse of the noumenal world.

The best analogy to understand the nature of the Self as the Omnipresent and Changeless Principle of Life in all changing and different forms is to think of Light. We know how light reflecting itself on different surfaces appears to us as different, not because the Light is different, but because the surfaces mirror the light in various degrees and in different and manifold ways. Think, for instance, of the sun shining on a bright day on Central Park, we know it is the one sun, but the various rays falling on various objects, on the lake, on the grass, on the trees, seem different to us; the reflection of that light is different because of the difference in the objects on which sun is shining, but we know that all these rays are identical with one another and with the sun itself. We know that they have come from the same source, and that they will return to the same source, and it is only in the phenomenal world, while they are reflecting themselves that they seem separate and different, but we must go behind that appearance of the senses, and try to realize the unity of all things. There is no separation between the evolution in one kingdom and the evolution in another; throughout it is one evolution, because it is the One Self, the same Immortal I. We must not, therefore, think of each department or each group of objects in the manifested world as making up one separate unity, but we must always regard the various departments and kingdoms in nature as units in greater unity, a wider whole, and that whole is the Universal Self. If it is always the same life, the same essence showing Itself in different ways then there must be that universal form, a form which would include all other forms. And so we see how even from this form point of view, even from the point of view of the material vehicles occupied by the One Life throughout the course of evolution, we have the complete unity.

We are then the same, because the same Self is in all of us, and

we are the same, because if we begin to analyse the form side of the thing, and divide it up, and find the very root essence of this thing, then we find it is made up of the same homogeneous substance. Now the unity of this great evolution of the manifested world has been expressed in all philosophies and ancient religions, and which is expressed in the Kabalistic philosophy as, “A stone becomes a plant; a plant, a beast; the beast a man; a man a spirit; and the spirit a god.” And we have exactly the same Truth in the Aphorism of the Sufi: “I died as a mineral, and became a plant; I died as a plant and became an animal; I died as an animal and became a man; when did I ever grow less by dying?”

And so the same truth is insisted upon by all the great philosophies because as we shall see it is the absolute truth for the living of the Spiritual Life. Krishna, then, when viewed from this spiritual underlying Reality of the Universe, appears to us as the symbol of the Universal Form, including in himself all the non-human aspects of the One Life, as well as, all the human aspects joined together and combined in One Unity. In Man, in Arjuna, Krishna is simply the Higher Self, the Spiritual Divine Being. Arjuna, on the other hand, is only the gradually evolving and unfolding soul. Still, in his process of growth, the Soul, which has within itself all the characteristic powers and faculties of Krishna, the Self, lying latent or dormant, has not yet been able to show forth these characteristics of Krishna.

Krishna then is the symbol of the whole of the Universe, of both Nature and Mankind, and Arjuna is the small copy of that Universe, the small and faithful photograph of the Universal Self, Krishna. In Arjuna, we find all that we find in Krishna, because Arjuna represents and mirrors faithfully the whole of the Universe. But we find one great difference, and it is this, that though Arjuna manifests the Highest aspect of the One life as Krishna, as the Higher Self, he is also showing forth and manifesting the lower aspects of Life. And it is because of the manifestation of these lower aspects of life, lower because of the form, because of the

degree of growth and unfoldment in the material vehicles, lower principles of Arjuna, that we have the whole confusion and trouble. For, if Arjuna were able to subdue and control the various activities of the lower principles in himself, he would show forth exactly Krishna and all the characteristics and powers of that Higher Nature, unhampered by the Lower Self. Arjuna would be indeed in his own body in his own chariot, the faithful representation of Krishna.

Now this is the great central fact, the identity of Arjuna with the Universal Self that is the first step in the Living of the Spiritual Life, and it is because we forget that identity in regard to our own selves that we fall into confusion, into disaster, into sufferings of all kinds. Losing sight of the great factor that we are Krishna, that we are the Spirit, the Immortal Life, we become engaged in various activities of the lower self. The only holy fight there is, is the fight of the Higher against the lower. Now when we are centered in our lower nature, we think too much of our weaknesses, of our blemishes, and from that point of view we can see that the great evil in our own civilization is that we pay too much attention to the evil part in our nature, we speak more readily of our own defects and weaknesses, and we also see them in our fellowmen more readily, instead of first keeping in mind the great fact that we are all in our innermost essence Krishna, the Universal Self. Our education, our bringing up, and all that belongs to this civilization, emphasizes the fact that we are miserable human, mortal beings. Now as long as we think of ourselves as only human instead of divine, as mortal instead of immortal, then so long are we going to show forth the characteristics of the lower in us instead of being able to reflect the higher. Hence, Krishna begins by telling Arujna: "Never was there a time when I was not, nor thou, nor all the princes of the earth, nor will there ever be a time when we cease to be." It is this realization, that we are Krishna, that will help us to fight our lower nature.

(To be continued)

SANKARACHARYA'S LIFE AND TEACHINGS

IV

IN THE COMMENTARIES (*bhasyas*) written on the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Sankaracharya gradually leads the learner from the simple to more and more profound mysteries, ultimately leading to the heart of the mystery. There are other treatises of Sankara, viz., *Vivekachudamani* or "Crest-Jewel of Wisdom," *Atma Bodha* or "The Awakening to Self," *Tattva Bodha* or "The Awakening to Reality," etc. These treatises of Sankara teach the learner first steps on the path of Wisdom, as also, the qualities that are necessary to make those first steps useful. They are "the simple qualities of sterling honesty, of freedom from selfishness and sensuality—which have formed the basis of every moral code; the virtue so common and commonplace on the lips, but not quite common in the life and character," writes Mr. Judge. In these treatises Sankara speaks of the "Freedom from the bondage of the world"; but to achieve this freedom the teachings must be woven into the life and character of the learner.

In the *Oriental Department Paper* for January 1895 issued by Mr. Judge, he mentions that the later part of Sankara's *Crest-Jewel of Wisdom* becomes technical, and to understand which it becomes necessary to have precise definition of certain words. "Happily Sankara has left us a Key in his own work, the 'Awakening to Reality,' where nearly every special word of his philosophy is exactly defined." In the explanatory notes to the "Awakening to Reality," he mentions that the real Self of every man is Eternal. This Self is inwardly beginningless, endless and immortal. But outwardly it becomes manifest as three selves, each with its own vesture, its own world. The lowest self is the physical self, described as the "Pervading," with its physical vesture, in the Waking world. Next, is the emotional self, described as the "Radiant," with its emotional vesture, in the Dreaming world. The highest is the Causal self, called the "Intuition" with its causal Vesture, in the Dreamless

world. The Causal self has existence apart from the Eternal, owing only to thin veil of illusion, which hides the identity of the One with the All. Sankara teaches that these three Vestures are made up of five veils: the food-formed; the Life-formed; the Emotion-formed; the Knowledge-formed and the Bliss-formed. These Five Veils and Vestures are possessions, and they are not the Self, which is the Possessor, just like a bracelet, a necklace, a house, are separated from one's self, and are recognized as possessions. What, then, is the Self? The own-nature (*sva-rupa*) of the Self is Being, Consciousness, Bliss (*Sat-Chit-Ananda*), teaches Sankara.

In the *Oriental Department Paper* for March 1895, Mr. Judge explains that development takes place by the gradual raising of the self through these vestures and veils; so that having begun as the physical self in pure animal life, it gradually becomes the emotional and intellectual self of human life, then the intuitional self of life that is something more than human, and at last realizes itself as the eternal Self which is one with the Eternal.

We do not realize the real Self because of two errors or illusions, which make up the double "heresy of separateness." The first error is the error of our separateness from the Eternal. The second error is the error of our separateness from each other. The removal of these two errors constitutes "our duty towards God" and "our duty towards our neighbour." Sankara calls the first error glamour, and the second error, un-wisdom.

In this treatise, *Tattva Bodha*, Sankara mentions three kinds of "deeds" or Karma. The pure and impure deeds that are done by the body of the wise, after wisdom is won, are called "deeds to come." The deeds that are waiting to be done, sprung from seeds sown in many lifetimes, are called "deeds accumulated." The deeds that give joy and sorrow here in the world, in this vesture, are "deeds entered on." When we have experienced them, they reach cessation. The "deeds accumulated" and "deeds to come" reach cessation through wisdom. Mr. Judge compares "accumulated deeds" to capital; "deeds entered on," to interest; and "deeds to come," to

the earnings of an unselfish man for the good of others. Each of these three kinds of deeds has a debit as well as a credit side. He writes that the value of this little treatise, *Tattva Bodha*, is that it provides a key and outline of longer and more complicated works.

The *Vivekachudamani* describes developing *Viveka*—discrimination—as the central task in the spiritual life, and calls it the crown jewel among the essentials for *Moksha* (liberation). The title *Vivekachudamani* is translated as "Crest Jewel of Discrimination." The *Vivekachudamani* describes the characteristics of an enlightened human being (*Jivanmukta*) and of a person established in wisdom (*sthitaprajna*).

In *Viveka Chudamani* Sankara says that foolish is the man who does not strive after freedom from bondage—after obtaining, at last, a human birth. He adds that any amount of knowledge of the Vedas, performing sacrifices, doing good works and worshipping the gods cannot free one from bondage even after a period of a hundred *Brahma-yugas* without the knowledge of union with the Self or Spirit.

Therefore let the wise one strive after Freedom giving up all longing for sensual self-indulgence; approaching the good, great Teacher (the Higher Self) with soul intent on the object of the teaching. (Verse 8)

Sankara says that Faith (*Sraddha*) and penance (*tapas*) are parts of meditation and these must be inherent in the disciple. The seeker should possess discernment (*viveka*), dispassion (*vairagya*), control of the mind, the six virtues (*Shat-sampad*), and an intense desire to obtain emancipation (*Mumukshutva*), for these are *four preparatory steps of training*. Discernment means to know that the Eternal is the only reality, *i.e.*, learning "to discern the real from the false, the ever-fleeting from the everlasting." This is followed by Dispassion resulting in renunciation of fruits of action, whether in this world or in the next. Dispassion is aversion to all sensory pleasures of sight, sound, etc.—all that are derived from

transitory objects of enjoyment—what the *Upanishads* call *Preyas*—pleasures of little worth. After pondering over their temporary, evanescent nature, one should avoid them.

Then, Sankara delineates the third of the four achievements, *viz.*, the six Graces, Treasures or Virtues which the disciple should try to cultivate. These are:

(1) “Sama” or control of the mind. *Sama* means that steady state of mind through which one can concentrate on the ultimate goal or reality.

(2) The second of the six Graces is “Dama”—the control of the senses. Sankara says that it consists in the withdrawal of two types of sense organs—*Jnanendriyas* (organs of sensation) and *Karmendriyas* (organs of action) from their objects. There is a story narrated by sage Yajnavalkya in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. The threefold offspring of Prajapati—Gods, Men and Demons—lived as students of sacred knowledge with their father. When their learning was completed they all asked him for practical instruction. “Tell us, *Gurudeva*, our duty.” Prajapati said to each of them, “Da, Da, Da.” Then he asked the Gods, Men and Demons their understanding of “Da.” The Gods understood “Da” to mean *Damyata*, control of oneself. Men understood “Da” to mean *Datta*, “to give.” For Demons the word implied *Dayadhvam* or compassion. In other words, “Da, Da, Da” means the practice of self-control, charity, and compassion.

(3) The third of the Graces is *Uparati*, which means turning away from objects of sense—which is the true withdrawal. (4) The fourth is *Titiksha*—endurance of all pain and sorrow—patience and tolerance, without a thought of dejection, lamentation or retaliation. It is also explained as cessation of desire and a constant readiness to part with everything in the world. (5) The fifth is *Shraddha* or faith, which is implicit confidence on the part of the pupil in his Master’s power to teach, *and his own power to learn*. (6) The last of the Graces is *Samadana*, which means right meditation, or fixing the mind on the pure eternal Spirit, without

being deluded by worldly objects. It renders the student constitutionally incapable of deviating from the right path.

Finally, the last of the four qualifications or preparations is *Mumukshutva*. It is the desire to be liberated from delusive thoughts, selfishness and sensuality by cultivating true discernment and knowing one’s true self. Initially, our desire to free ourselves from bondage may be slight. But by cultivating control of the mind through dispassion and other graces like faith, meditation and patience, and with the grace of the Guru, we can certainly master the four perfections. In *Vivekachudamani*, Shankara says:

Therefore mind is the cause of man’s bondage, and in turn of his liberation; when darkened by the powers of passion it is the cause of bondage, and when pure of passion and darkness it is the cause of liberation. (verse 175)

Where discernment and dispassion are dominant, gaining purity, the mind makes for liberation; therefore let the wise man who seeks liberation strengthen these two in himself as the first step. (verse 176)

Sickness is not cured by saying “Medicine,” but by drinking it. So a man is not set free by the name of the Eternal without discerning the Eternal. (verse 64)

Elsewhere Sankara says:

There is no known comparison in all the three worlds for the venerable teacher who bestows knowledge. Among all means of liberation, devotion verily is the most potent. The fixing of the attention on the true Master, the Divine Self, is declared to be devotion.

When we realize that we are the very Brahman, our delusion will be destroyed and we will carry out the will of Krishna—the Supreme Master of Devotion, residing in us, while in a body. “I salute the lineage of Teachers, beginning with Siva, the Lord (linked by) Sankaracharya in the middle; and extending down to my own teacher.” (Sloka on *Guruparampara*)

(Concluded)

BELIEF IN REBIRTH OF MAN IN ANIMALS

II

OUR KARMA is indissolubly bound up with the Karma of the World. We cannot escape common destiny but are under inescapable Karmic Necessity to practice virtues and to live to benefit mankind. Following the dictates of divine Conscience and observing the laws of Virtue we give the lives of our bodies a higher impress. These emanating from our bodies remain in the human realm, enter into fellow humans, engendering in them good thoughts and finer feelings and nobler impulse, and we, in turn, draw to ourselves lives of similar character by affinity of kindred natures, and are benefited. Whole Nature is thus raised up to finer and more harmonious vibrations, and takes on a benevolent aspect for the good of all. In the scriptures there are numerous accounts of great Sages around whose hermitages wild beasts lived in perfect peace, hurting no one, and no one hurting them. Of such men of righteous lives is spoken in the *Book of Job* (chapter 5, verses 22 and 23) :

Neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth.
For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field;
and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.

If, on the contrary, we live by the dictates of lower passions and selfishness, we give the lives in our charge a brutal impulse. These, flying from us to our fellowmen, carrying our impress, induce in them like passions and ignoble tendencies, impelling them to acts of vice and wickedness; and the atoms are also condemned to go into animal or vegetable bodies, hindering their evolutionary progress. Thus, we bear Karmic responsibility for impeding nature in its progressive march to higher life and for the sins and crimes committed by our fellowmen which may have been induced by our own thoughts and acts. We reap the ill effects of it in pain, sorrow and more ignorance. Mr. Judge, giving out the ancient Persian doctrine of rebirth of man in animal bodies, dispels the wrong ideas and beliefs with regard to it, and explains the true

significance and meaning of it, thus:

Those atoms fly from all of us at every instant. They seek their appropriate center; that which is similar to the character of him who evolves them. We absorb from our fellows whatever is like unto us. It is thus that man reincarnates in the lower kingdoms. He is the lord of nature, the key, the focus, the highest concentrator of nature's laboratory. And the atoms he condemns to fall thus to beasts will return to him in some future life for his detriment or sorrow. But he, as immortal man, cannot fall. That which falls is the lower, the personal, the atomic. He is the brother and teacher of all below him. See that you do not hinder and delay all nature by your failure in virtue. (*Heart Doctrine*, p. 145)

It had been mentioned in the earlier article which appeared in the previous issue that three fundamental truths underlie the popular belief among peoples of ancient cultures that man could be reborn in animal bodies. One of them was outlined in it. An explanation of the other two is now attempted.

The second reason for the belief lies in the fact that man's life-time thoughts, besides affecting the atoms of his body, have also a profound effect on the fate of his Astral Body during his life, as also, after his death. If a man has been during life selfish, uncharitable, maleficent, of unrestrained passions and desires, his Astral Body takes the shape of the beast which resembles that character. It may be that of a ferocious animal or a reptile. To the outer appearance such a man or a woman may present a normal, or even a beautiful, bodily appearance; but his or her astral form, invisible to the physical sight, but well apprehended by clairvoyants, may have taken the shape of such of the animal forms, or assumed some grotesque shape, according to the character of the person, as a result of his own thoughts and actions.

When a man dies, the physical body is disintegrated on the physical plane, and the atoms of his body, bearing the impress of his tendencies and qualities, go through cycles of transmigrations

in the great kingdoms of nature; while the sum of the nobler thoughts and aspirations of the thinking self gravitate by affinity to the higher divine Ego, and, clinging to it, enters into a sublime spiritual state of consciousness, called *Devachan*, *Swarga*, *heaven world*, etc. But his *Kama*, coalesces with the Astral Body and remains in the realm of Astral World, called *Kama Loka*, wholly devoid of conscience and mind. The Astral remains left behind in *Kama Loka* is then a mindless astral corpse, called *Bhut*, *pisach*, *Kama-rupa*, etc. If a man, during life, was good in thoughts and deeds his *Kama rupa* dissipates soon in that realm; but if sensual, wicked and material, his astral form assumes the shape of one or the other of animal forms, or may be deformed, or misshapen, precisely answering to the character of the person. Such Astral remains, as the last, having become gross and dense, linger on in *Kama Loka* for long number of years. These cannot but produce ill-effects, adversely affecting the whole nature, for which the man to whom it belonged is Karmically responsible and accountable.

The Astral Body is made up of the Astral matter, which the mortal man shares in common with the animal world, has a natural affinity to the animal kingdom. The Astral remains of the dead person, therefore, gradually gravitate towards, and are absorbed in, the astral plane of animals. But this does not mean that the man himself goes into an animal form. It is in this light that we have to understand the episode of the ascetic, Jada Bharata, given in *Vishnu Purana*. He is said to have died and reborn as a deer, consequent to his developing strong attachment for a deer when alive, and having thought only of it to the last moment of his life. This is perfectly reasonable, as it is taught in the *Bhagavad-Gita*: “whosoever in consequence of constant meditation on any particular form thinketh upon it when quitting his mortal frame, even to that doth he go.” (VIII, verse 6)

Consequently, his Astral Body would necessarily have assumed the shape of the deer even during his life because of his strong emotional attachment for the animal; and, after his death, it would

have lingered on in *Kama Loka*, to be finally reabsorbed in the animal world. It was thus that he is said to have entered the body of the deer. There is no punishment involved in it, either to the man or to the Ego, but just an effect produced by man himself, by the dynamic power of human thought.

There is still another recondite Karmic law which forms the basis for the popular belief in the possibility of man taking birth in animal and vegetable bodies. It relates to the re-entry of the Reincarnating Ego into another physical body, after dying out of the body in its previous incarnation, and after enjoying bliss and rest in *Devachan*. It is a well known fact that a body, whether of a human being or that of an animal, can only be formed by the union of the sexes, and that the germs of reproduction of physical bodies are locked up in the male and female reproductive system. As the life of the physical body and its reproduction is dependent on food which is eaten, the birth seeking Ego has to enter the germinal cell of a man through the food the man eats, in order to obtain a new body, which is formed in the womb, when the germinal cell fructifies the egg of a woman. Therefore, the only road for the reincarnation of the Ego, which is disembodied, is through certain food, and by no other means. The process is not much explained by Theosophical Teachers because of the sensitiveness and obscurity of the subject. Only a few hints are, therefore, thrown by them. The way the Ego, at the end of its term in *Devachan*, re-enters the seed of man through food is described in chapter 5 and section 10 of *Chhandogya Upanishad*. Thus:

There [the “sphere of the moon”—*Devachan*] they stay as long as there remains a residue of their piety. When it gets exhausted, they return again by the same path they went—first to this sphere, from space to air. Having become air, one turns into smoke, having turned into smoke one turns into wandering cloud. Having become the wandering cloud, he turns into the cloud thick with rain. Having become thick cloud, he falls down as rain. As paddy and barely are they born here, and as herbs

and trees, as sesame and beans. Exceedingly hard is the release from thence. For whosoever eats the food and sprinkles the seed, like unto him is born the fallen man. (verses 5 and 6)

The phraseologies and metaphors used in the above verses make little sense if taken literally. They are a part of the universal language of symbolism. Students must try to get at the inner meaning of the symbols used. The fallen man refers to the Reincarnating Ego, who is born in a body which is like unto him who fathers it. The Ego is said to become entangled in plants and food grains, thence it may pass on into various animal bodies, which may eat them. The Upanishad teaches, and Sri Shankaracharya affirms in his commentary, that it is very difficult for the Ego, so caught up in various vegetable and animal bodies to enter the human body of a male capable of fathering a child. “Exceedingly hard is it for them to escape from this their state.” Upanishad teaches that it is the virtues or the vices of man, his character and morality, which determines the fate of the Ego. Thus: “Among them, those of good conduct here shall soon attain a good birth—of a learned and wise teacher, of a hero, of a man of wealth. But the ignoble conduct shall soon find an ignoble birth—of a dog, of a pig, of a Chandala, an outcaste.” (verse 7)

It is indicated that, in case of those who are given to evil thoughts, crooked ways and vicious indulgences, the Ego may be caught up in various animal and plant bodies during the transition from unembodied to embodied state for considerable time, proportionate to its demerit, before finding a human body, appropriate to its past Karma. But such a passage of the unembodied Ego through lower forms of life for another incarnation, is only temporary transitional stage of more or less duration, strictly according to its Karma.

The Karmic punishment of the Ego in its passage from unembodied state to another human body through the forms of the elemental nature, as described in the Upanishad, consists in the more or less delay in obtaining proper human body. A quick passage

of the Ego to a new body is the result of its good Karma. Delay in the process means the Ego has to remain in the transitional unembodied state for so much longer, with consequent loss of opportunities to reap experience and evolve, which is possible only when incarnated in human body.

It is in this sense that the verses in *Manu Smriti*, which describe transmigration of man into various mineral, plant and animal bodies as a result of various offences he commits with his body, mind and speech, are to be understood. A careful consideration of these vital laws of life show us the scientific foundation of ethics and morality by which every man and woman is duty-bound to live for the good of the world and for one’s own individual happiness. Paramount duty—*Dharma*—of man is to so think and live as to bring about the great purpose of the soul, which is progress, emancipation and perfection of all beings.

Each man has a duty not only to himself but also to the atoms in use. He is the great, the highest educator of them. Being each instant in possession of some, and likewise ever throwing them off, he should so live that they gain a fresh impulse to the higher life of man as compared with the brute. This impress and the impulse given by us either confer an affinity for human bodies and brains, or for that which, corresponding to brutal lives and base passions, belong to the lower kingdoms....So from...these true tenets the people might at last come to believe in transmigration as being a convenient and easy way of formulating the problem and of indicating a rule of conduct. (*Heart Doctrine*, pp. 131-32)

(Concluded)

You are not here, merely to make a living. You are here to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself, if you forget the errand.

—WOODROW WILSON

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: There are geniuses in the great artistic skills and other talents, as also, brilliant scientists and mathematicians, but at close quarters we find that in other areas of their personality, especially in their interpersonal relationships, they do not exhibit refinement, expected admirable traits like goodness or attractive behaviour. Why, then, these people are chosen to be gifted by God with such creative proficiency?

Answer: The word “genius,” loosely used in the above context, refers simply to some remarkable “talents” in different fields. But according to the dictionary definition, we must distinguish between “talent” and true “genius.” Originally, “genius” (Latin) or “genii” was supposed to be a “tutelary” deity or a guardian spirit over a person or a place. Hence, as an endowment, the genius truly represents the original gift of *creative* power of the nature of spontaneous (effortless) inspirational act or an intuitive guide behind the true genius. This is different from the laboriously cultivated “talent,” and the latter is defined as, “simply an ability short of genius,” and which “works by ‘rule and line’ using the facilities of intellect and imagination.”

There may be many talented people wrongly passed off as “geniuses,” whereas the scarcely found true “genius” is endowed with remarkable gifts which need no special intellectual exercise or long efforts at cultivation, being spontaneous, like intuition. This will also explain the above question on the difference in the moral character and other noble qualities of the intuitive poets, true mystics and geniuses. The great originality and creativity of a true

genius is known to exist effortlessly from the early years of life, being the inherent “soul power” arising in a responsible individual who never exhibits or sells his gifts for the asking.

Speaking about the gift or the “act of creation” in general, we must note that the power to create is inborn and latent in every “living” unit of life. Hence, the creative genius is latent in all men, necessary to fulfil the purpose of existence. In this process, namely, the unfolding of some of the latent potentialities and character traits (creative or not), each one of us has an opportunity to display what are the best or worst qualities and tendencies one has hitherto nurtured in this or past lives. Nature, too, gives us the opportunity, destined under the law of Karma, to unfold the inherent talents and other qualities of the mind and soul.

Man is born with two kinds of “creative urge,” *viz.*, (a) as the creative faculties (artistic gifts and skills), and (b) the inherent will, inclination or impulse towards self-transformation and for the spiritual progress. The latter too may be considered as the “creative” drive, for what the psychologists in the field of “Behavioural Science” would call “productive orientation” or power (as against acquisitive orientation). A spiritually regenerated sage may be considered a true genius, for as an “Act of Creation” he has created or transformed himself anew in the image of the Divine.

It is a common belief that creativity is a special gift of god, given to some chosen few. But nothing, in this universe of just law, is a *free gift*, and which is not earned by the deserving recipient. For, as the Buddha said, all that we are (and have) is the result of what we have thought, in a particular line or direction. Genius, too, is the end-product of the soul’s incessant attempt at noble labour and aspiration in the past and the present.

H.P.B. sums up the idea in the article, “Genius.” What is the difference between the ordinary man, an idiot and a genius? The Ego in each of these cases is of the same essence and substance. No Ego differs from another Ego, in its essential nature. That, which makes one person a great individual and another a silly person is

the capability of the brain and body to transmit and give expression to the light of the *Inner man*, or Ego, writes H.P.B. The physical body and the brain are the instruments, while the Ego is the performing artist. Even the great Violinist Paganini cannot bring out the melody if the violin is broken or if the strings are strung too loose or, too tight.

All talents and gifts are in the first place, latent as seeds in all of us, awaiting an opportunity of the right soil and nurture to fructify under Karma. The seeds of noble character traits too are awaiting to unfold, for a propitious opportunity. True genius and goodness are rightly seen to rise together. Hence, down the history of mankind, they are adored and remembered by all men, both for their great genius and character.

Question: What is the meaning of *Sat-chit-ananda*?

Answer: Advaita Vedanta reminds us that our true nature is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. The Supreme Reality or Brahman cannot be described, and the most one can say of it is that it is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. *Sat* means existence or Being, pure and absolute. *Chit* means knowledge, or consciousness, pure and absolute. *Ananda* means bliss, pure and absolute. Our true nature is pure existence, knowledge and bliss. According to Vedanta, everything in the external world, animate or inanimate, consists of five things, namely, it exists (*Asti*), it is revealed (*Bhati*), it is pleasing (*Priya*), and it has a name (*Nama*) and form (*Rupa*). Once we eliminate name and form, which is the external layer, we will realize that we are all made of the same stuff—pure consciousness; we can realize the substratum, *i.e.*, *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. The difference between us is just of name and form. Each one of us is potentially divine, and the goal of evolution is to manifest the divinity within.

We try to get happiness by fulfilling our desires. We try to overcome desires by satisfying them, through contact with the outside world. What we call the world is the network of name and form, or name-form complex. There is in us the urge to realize *asti-bhati-priya*. We want perpetual existence and do not want to

die. This is the sense of *astitva*, or being or *sat* in us. There is an urge for knowledge, wisdom, illumination, understanding, which is the urge for *bhatitva* or *chit*, or consciousness. The urge for delight, satisfaction, pleasure is the urge of that infinite delight of existence-consciousness, *priya* or *ananda*. Thus, *asti-bhati-priya* is existence, consciousness, bliss or *sat-chit-ananda*. In our contact with things, or name and forms, we seek *asti-bhati-priya*, and thus seek *sat-chit-ananda* through *nama-rupa*; we seek Reality in appearances, explains Swami Krishnananda.

Mr. Judge says that there is only one consciousness, and it is not waking consciousness as different from sleeping consciousness, but consciousness itself. That consciousness is Being. He says that *Sat* or *Being* is itself both *Chit* (Mind or Consciousness) and *Ananda*. The appearing together in full harmony of Being and Consciousness is Bliss or *Ananda*. This One consciousness of each person is the Witness or Spectator of the actions and experiences we pass through. “Thus in waking life, *Sat* experiences fully and knows. In dream state, *Sat* again knows and sees what goes on there....In *Sushupti*—beyond dream, and yet on indefinitely, *Sat* still knows all that is done, heard or seen.”

The appearing together of *sat* and *chit* perhaps may be understood in terms of the description of *Nirbij Samadhi* in Patanjali’s yoga sutras. The *vishayakara-vritti* is the mental state in which the mind moves externally towards an object. As opposed to this there is *brahmakara-vritti*, in which there is universal expansion of mind. But when even *brahmakara-vritti* ceases, there is no longer a necessity to move towards an object for the purpose of acquiring knowledge, but instead the subject enters into the being of the object. There is no consciousness even of the universe as an object any more, and what is known by consciousness is its own Self. The knowing process becomes part of the Being, and this seems to be the meaning of the term “*sat-chit-ananda*,” explains Swami Krishnananda.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Every time we open our mouths we make deliberate choice. Every day we are faced with the important decision of what to say, what not to say, or how we choose to say what we say. We need to be aware that our words have the power to create or destroy, to encourage peace and harmony or foster hatred and strife. At the time of election we witness misuse of speech by political parties, making accusations and counter accusations, without feeling the need to substantiate them. But when we, who might claim to be on a spiritual journey, turn the searchlight inward, we find similar toxic thoughts and words within ourselves. Having noticed them, we need to cleanse ourselves of our own thoughts and words.

There is the story which gives us valuable guidance in the art of speaking. In times, when people were more caring about each other and had not descended to the depths they have today, it was a rule that the words of responsible persons must pass through three gates, before being spoken out. The guard at the first gate asked, “Are you needed?” If they were not, then they (the words) were politely turned back. If the words did get past the first gate, the guard at the second gate asked, “Are you sure you are true?” If not, then they were not allowed to pass on. However, assuming that they answered truthfully, if they did pass on, then at the third gate, they were asked, “Will you end up doing any harm?” Unless the answer was a definite “no,” they were turned back.

Sara Esther Crispe writes that in the Jewish tradition humans are characterized by their ability to speak rather than their ability to think, and are called *medaber*, i.e., a speaker. In the story of creation, the phrase *nephesh chayah* or “living soul” is taken as synonymous with “a speaking spirit.” However, the word *chayah* refers to the level of the soul, and is equivalent to the Hebrew word for “animal.” This implies that the moment we misuse the power of speech we would cease to merit the status of human being and revert to a lower state of being.

If a person cannot abstain from liquor for 24 hours he is seen as being addicted to alcohol; someone who cannot do without cigarettes for 24 hours is said to be addicted to cigarettes, and likewise, if we cannot go for 24 hours without saying unkind words about others, we must admit that we have lost control over our tongues. In Jewish teachings tongue is compared to an arrow, because the words like arrows shot from the bow cannot be recalled. Drawing upon the Jewish teaching in *Talmud*, Rabbi Telushkin advises us to first become *aware* of gossip, lying and angry words, as he sees self-awareness to be the initial step toward transformation, writes Marguerite Theophil. (*The Speaking Tree*, *Sunday Times of India*, February 22, 2015)

One of the evils by which modern society is debased is constant misuse of the power of speech. Idle talk easily degenerates into gossip and backbiting. Only a few, if any, are aware of the “creative power” latent in speech, because this power can manifest only through *right* speech. Speech may be defined as “the faculty of expressing thoughts and emotions in spoken words.” Only human beings are endowed with articulate speech; animals communicate through sounds. It is said that early humanity (first three and a half races) did not possess articulate speech. Theosophy asserts that “a *human* brain is necessary for *human* speech.” Speech is also connected with mind. The First Race of humanity was mindless and therefore speechless. When human beings separated into sexes and *Manas* (mind) was “lit-up,” in the middle of the Fourth Race, speech developed gradually. Thus, Speech is one of the greatest privileges acquired by human beings in the course of evolution. We long for powers, overlooking the responsibility that goes with the use of those powers. One of the Masters writes, “Each man is personally responsible to the Law of Karma for every word of his voluntary production.”

Thomas Carlyle says, “Speak not, I passionately entreat thee, till thy thought hath silently matured itself, till thou hast other than mad and mad-making noises to emit: *hold thy tongue* till some

meaning lie behind to set it wagging. Consider the significance of SILENCE....” There must be deliberation before we speak, for as the Turkish Proverb says, “Thy word unspoken, thou can at any day speak, but thy spoken word, never again unsay.” We must bear in mind some subtle precepts of speech given in the *Laws of Manu*: “Let him say what is true. Let him say what is pleasing. Let him utter no disagreeable truth. Let him utter no agreeable falsehood.”

Is there a limit to the human population on Earth? In 2002, Harvard University socio-biologist Edward Wilson estimated that the amount of available land in the world would be enough to feed a maximum of 10 billion people, assuming that they were all vegetarians. However, if everyone on earth has the same eating habits as the average American, then there would need to be four Earths to support them. Drinking water may be more of a constraint since only 3 per cent of the Earth’s water is fresh water. But such concern arises due to assumption that our species will multiply indefinitely. But that is not evident in the current trends. According to United Nations Population Division, the rate of growth of the human population has been falling since 1963. By 2050, the population is predicted to stabilize at between 8 and 10.5 billion. The limit to human population may be our own desire to reproduce, rather than the Earth’s capacity to support us, writes Luis Villazon. (*BBC Knowledge*, February 2015)

Dr. Ian Stevenson engaged in reincarnation researches points out that we have only rough estimates of the number of human beings who have lived on earth since the origin of man. Mr. Judge points out that although the number of Egos belonging to our earth is definite, no one knows what that quantity is, or what is the total capacity of the earth in sustaining them. We are unable to say how many people were on the earth, at some prior period, when our earth was inhabited in all the parts. Therefore, we do not know the number of Egos waiting to be born. A Master of Wisdom says that since the total number of Egos is vast, although the number that

die may be small, there would be sufficient number of egos waiting to be born. We are given the analogy of a hall in the town. At any given time the number of people in the hall is finite, but people are added from the greater population of the town outside. Hence, the number of people in the hall fluctuates, as there is constant supply of people from the town. We may compare our earth to the hall in the town, and the state after death, which is called *Swarga* or paradise or *devachan* to the town.

We are told that the time for which each ego remains in *devachan* is different. The Egos in *devachan* do not take birth at the same time or at the same interval of time. It is stated that whenever there is great number of deaths caused by wars, pestilence, famine or earthquakes, it is followed by “baby boom,” *i.e.*, there is rush of souls to incarnation, either in the same place or in some other place or race. It is also stated that the “intermission” between two lives was very much longer in the earlier days than it is now. Hence, in earlier times, there would be greater number of souls in *devachan* waiting to be born than on earth. In the recent centuries the case is reversed, hence greater number of egos take birth with only few egos remaining in *devachan*. Plato affirms in *The Phaedo* that the interval between two births was very long in the earlier days. Likewise, Shri Krishna mentions the *Gita*, an “immensity of years” between lives. We need not worry about “population explosion,” because there seems to be some intelligent regulatory factor in the birth of human beings preventing extraordinary excesses. It has been observed in case of the fruit flies that their population shot up at an exponential rate, but then levelled off. Dr. Stevenson points out that often, after a war, more male babies are born than female. It may be taken to be the capacity of the Nature to compensate for the increased number of men dying during wars.

What is success? Success, as we are taught to define it by society, takes no notice of the kind of person we are, and is deeply

impoverished, writes S. Roshan. From childhood through teenage years we fantasized about what we wanted to “become.” Parents, elders and friends defined what we wanted to “become” as our “ambition in life,” and the career we dreamt of pursuing. You and what you did for a living were virtually synonymous, and thus you were defined entirely by your profession. The quality of being, the sort of people we wanted to be, found no place in that definition. What sort of person you were—kind or mean, polite or rude, friendly or brash, spiritual or hedonistic, socially concerned or aggressively individualistic—did not count at all. Maximizing the titillation of the five senses is taught to be the purpose of life.

The fundamental aspect of human life is the quality of a person’s being. The author mentions that even though he earned hefty salary, got to travel across the world, wrote many books, and was awarded many fellowships, and which the world would call “success,” but “I was really quite hollow inside.” After several years he began to ponder, “what was the use of all the many markers of ‘success’ that I had earned if they had done nothing at all to make me a better human being....Despite making it ‘big’ in my career, I still harboured enormous negativity. I was irritable, impatient, judgemental, and often self-righteous. I revelled in gossiping about other people’s faults and failings, real and imaginary. I pontificated endlessly about changing the world but made no effort to change the only person I could have—myself.” It is good to remind ourselves that when we leave this world, we will depart as empty-handed as when we arrived here. At that moment what will count and will make all the difference for our eternity is not the jobs we held and the wealth, degree, fame and glamour that we earned, but rather, the quality of our beings: the sort of persons we were, and at that moment perhaps we might more truly appreciate the hollowness of many of our conventional notions of “success,” writes S. Roshan. (*Life Positive*, January 2015)

We live in the civilization and society in which anything that would achieve success *has to be built on appearances, not on*

reality, on self-assertion, not on intrinsic value. In our century man allows himself to be drifted down from cradle to grave, nailed to the Procrustean bed of custom and conventionality, and conventionality is “*simulation* of feelings according to a received standard,” writes H.P.B. In his book, *The Fear of Freedom*, Dr. Erich 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*.

In our age, people and things are judged by outward appearance and achievements, and hence, we and others, often tend to measure our identity in terms of houses, cars, television sets, furniture, paintings, name, fame and position. To bolster the sense of identity we gather possessions, and acquire name and fame. Our self-worth is generally measured by others, and also ourselves, on the basis of this derived “self.” There are experiences in life that open our eyes to the fact that our identity runs deeper than our appearance, our achievements, our ideas or feelings. Even if a thousand rupee note, was crumpled, stained, or folded into innumerable folds, in spite of the spoiled outer appearance, the *value* of the currency note does not diminish. So also, our true worth is derived from the real “I,” which is the true Ego that is above forms and conditions which are continually changing.

Name, fame and wealth, which we might have achieved through great effort, will not be carried by the Ego to *Swarga* or *Devachan*, after death. The Ego carries with it to *Devachan*, the *ideal* efflorescence of all the abstract, undying, eternal qualities, such as, the love of the good, the true and the beautiful. When there is pursuit of abstract and ideal things, such as, music, painting or poetry, that faculty is carried by the Ego to *Devachan* and is developed further. As we pursue materialistic goals in life, we should ask ourselves, “Is this what I will take with me to *Devachan*?”

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(*Sd.*) DAKSHA S PARAJIA
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