

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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ON PURSUIT OF CALMNESS

CALMNESS is the mental state characterised by freedom from agitation, excitement, anxiety or disturbance. It is state of being serene and tranquil. In a day, we find many occasions to get perturbed, agitated and disturbed. We are disturbed by the unexpected. Trifling things, such as, getting up in the morning and finding no water in the tap, or that the milkman has not delivered the milk, or that we have misplaced our wallet and are not able to find it, tend to unsettle us. All of these would mean delay which can lead to missing the usual train or bus and reaching the office late. A disturbed mind is not able to think clearly or focus, and often tends to compound the adversity. A disturbed or agitated mind *reacts*, and at times gives an exaggerated reaction to the person or a situation. When someone speaks angrily, we hit back without a moment's thought. We have fixed responses to given stimuli. It is as if we are programmed.

Initiation may be described as a trial or a test, which every earnest spiritual aspirant has to pass through and which helps to determine if the aspirant is ready to take the next step on the Path. There are levels and levels of initiation, wherein the aspirant is subjected to progressively difficult trials. Each aspirant has to learn to face “daily initiations,” which come from moment to moment. They are met in our relation with our fellows, and in the way we react to all circumstances of life. “Let us remember that it is the unexpected that always happens in the way of trials to the novice....When we

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have learnt to encounter every vexation absolutely without complaint, either internally or externally—if it disturbs us in the slightest degree within, it is just as bad as if we expressed it in words or action—then, and not till then, can we expect to be given the opportunity to take a decided step forwards. For the secret of advancement is the development of the will through its union with the Divine Will. By meeting the ordinary ills of life with unvexed soul we educate and strengthen our will, fitting us for further advancement.” writes Mr. Judge.

A calm mind *responds* instead of reacting to a situation. Instead of *reacting* angrily to criticism, bad behaviour or selfishness, it allows us to pause and reflect, “why does he behave the way he does?” When criticized for being proud or stingy, with calm mind we can always do some soul-searching. Similarly, when we are up against a difficult situation or a difficult person, instead of our usual reaction of frustration and despair we could always ask, “Why is it that no one else but *I* am put into this situation? Do I perhaps have to learn something from this?” This is the mark of a creative mind. As H.P.B. suggests, we must learn to *act* from within and not just *react* to stimuli from without.

There is the Buddhist parable of “The Angry Man and The Gift,” in which the Buddha reaches a town and begins to preach. All were listening attentively, except a young man, who began to abuse the Buddha, called him stupid and fake. However, the Buddha continued to speak calmly. When people began to react angrily, the Buddha told them that it was not always necessary to counter aggression by aggression. He turned to the young man and asked, “If you bought a gift for someone, but that person refused to accept your gift, then to whom does the gift belong?” The young man answered, “The gift would belong to me.” The Buddha said that in the same way “If I do not feel insulted and refuse to accept your hostility, the anger falls back on you. You are the only one who becomes unhappy.” The young man understood and bowed to the Buddha. The Buddha said, “As mirror reflects an object, as a still lake reflects the sky,

take care that what you speak or act is for good. For goodness will always cast back goodness, and harm will always cast back harm.” It also shows that the force generated by calm mind and heart has tremendous transformative power.

Let us remember that if we find ourselves feeling “hurt,” “misunderstood,” “unfairly treated,” then we may be sure that our consciousness is for the time being centred in “the personal, the transitory, the evanescent and the perishable.” “The branches of the tree are shaken by the wind; the trunk remains unmoved,” says *The Voice of the Silence*, and reminds us that the “trunk” is a symbol of our own real nature, which sits high unaffected by the pairs of opposites and the vicissitudes of life. Let us identify ourselves with it. As soon as we find the first feeling of resentment and grievance arising in us, we should remember Mr. Crosbie’s words: “We have to cultivate calmness under all circumstances. Calmness is like a rock; waves of irritation may dash at it, but cannot affect it; it can be attained by seeing the necessity for it, and by endeavour which is constant. It comes from ‘resting in the Real,’ which is never moved, but moves all things, sees all without being involved” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 53). To identify ourselves with the “Real Self” we must cultivate *sakshibhav*, or an attitude of being a witness in all situations. An aspect of our mind is involved in the wholesome or unwholesome emotions, but another aspect becomes a mere witness to everything that is happening. This aspect of our mind looks at things from the stand of a third party. When we look at our reactions to the stimulus from the outside, as a third-party observer, the reactions would slowly begin to get modified, so that instead of “reacting,” we find ourselves, learning to “respond.” The more *impersonal* we are the more we are able to remain calm in all kinds of circumstances of life.

When one is “inactive” or calm on the inner planes, one is able to accomplish more. *The Voice of the Silence* says, “Thy body agitated, thy mind tranquil, thy soul as limpid as the mountain lake.” A mother is seen to be active physically, giving breakfast to the

child, then running around to find her husband's towel and also taking care of the milk on the stove, and answering the doorbell, and so on. Though outwardly "agitated," she is calm within and hence able to perform so many tasks at once.

But this has been explained a little differently in the article "Let Us Regenerate Ourselves" in *Living the Life*. The body is agitated by craving produced by the sight, smell, taste and sound from outside. But the body can also be agitated or made active by our response to aspirations. The first kind of agitation is a hindrance to the living of the higher life and therefore elsewhere in the *Voice of the Silence*, we are advised to make our flesh passive or to make our body inactive to outer stimuli but receptive to higher impulses. But when we are asked to make the body agitated it is by becoming active in responding to our aspirations. The mind must be cool or tranquil, and must be free from anxiety, likes and dislikes, and especially anger and irritation, only then it can become a channel of the Soul. A tranquil mind is concentrated and receptive to the influences and impressions of the Inner Ruler, the divine within. "Calmness is the one thing necessary for the spirit to be heard," writes Mr. Judge. The personal soul becomes clear and translucent like the lake on mountain, where mountain symbolizes far-sightedness. The goal is to achieve self-conscious godhood while in the body, so that with this state of body, mind and soul, instead of reflecting the illusion and delusion through his deeds and words, the disciple will reflect the wisdom and sacrifice of the Divine within.

Anxiety is opposite of calmness. Modern man lives in a state of perpetual anxiety. It has become an inseparable part of our existence. We are anxious about trivialities. Very often, we are anxious about things that have not yet happened. Why cross the bridge even before we have arrived at it? We worry about the circumstances, which are beyond our control. Having consulted the doctor, the mother worries no end about her sick child. Having prepared for the examination, the student worries: "Will I pass the examination or not?" Mr. Judge observes that our anxiety works as an occult obstacle, hindering the course of action under Karma. His advice is to trust the law and

accept the results—favourable or unfavourable. When we are anxious, we seem to assert, in a subtle way, our own will. We want things to happen as *we* desired. 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). In other words, by being anxious, we mar our chances of receiving help from our divine nature. Instead, if we learn to accept that whatever happens is for the best, we will never have any need to be anxious. Sometimes, apparently adverse looking circumstances or happenings work to our advantage or at least prove educative for the soul.

Calmness is a quality that can be cultivated by constant practice. We can train our minds to remain calm in the face of different kinds of stimulations and distractions, especially emotional ones. The negative emotions are a great challenge to someone who is trying to cultivate a calm mind. Certain Buddhist meditation practices can help to cultivate calmness. Buddhist meditations are divided into two major categories—*Samatha* and *Vipassana*. *Samatha* refers to any meditation practice, which aims at development of higher states of consciousness by cultivating mental integration, which manifests as concentration and calmness of mind. Mindfulness of breathing and *Metta Bhavana* meditation are both *samatha* practices.

The Mindfulness of Breathing practice helps us to cultivate concentration of mind and in calming the mind. The method consists in giving continuous attention to the flow of breath, coming in and going out. Whenever we find our attention wavering, we must bring it back and put it back on the breath. *Metta* or loving kindness is a powerful positive emotion. We are asked to develop loving kindness towards all living beings. There must be overwhelming desire and wish, "May *all* the beings be happy." Each human being has some redeeming quality. One should try to dwell on good quality of one's enemy, and if possible, even try to bring that out in one's conversation with other people.

Mr. Judge's last words were: "There should be calmness, hold fast,

go slow.” The qualities of calmness, tenacity and patience were exhibited by him, the Victorious Disciple, during his life. He said that calmness comes from firm reliance on the Law and one’s Higher Self. Every sincere student is bound to come to a stage in his spiritual endeavours when he experiences loneliness and despair. He might even develop positive aversion to everything to do with Theosophy. It must be treated as a temporary phase. The feeling of despair is like not seeing the road because of the fog. “I would simply sit down and wait; I would not allow the fog to make me think no road was there, and that I was not to pass it. The fogs must lift.” When a sincere student-aspirant resolves to live the higher life, he begins to experience an inner conflict. “Living the higher life” means waging a war not only against our *vices*, but also against our habits, beliefs, pet theories and our likes and dislikes. Each spiritual aspirant has “at the first step to take himself steadily in hand and put the bit into his own mouth; no one else can do it for him.” When we attempt to do this, there is an opposition on the inner planes from our own tendencies. There is a gradual transformation of one’s psychical nature and the process lasts for several years. It is a stormy period of greatest turmoil, during which it is difficult to keep one’s calmness, and the only way to achieve it is by leaning on the divine within, which is the Centre of Peace and Strength, a centre in the whirlwind.

We have these encouraging words from Shri B. P. Wadia: “But it will not take lives for you to be centred in the Divine Discipline. In a few years you will find substantial improvement. Keep the company of the Inner Ruler, now and again. Lean on great ideas every time you finish one job and take up another. A couple of minutes of remembering and repeating a single verse of the *Voice of the Silence* or the *Bhagavad-Gita* strengthens and renovates the whole constitution. . . .Emotionalism is not spirituality: rest, repose, calmness, silence, softness and sweetness, these are the marks of spirituality. . . .Are you at all calm? Even for two or three hours a day? I do not mean happy, I mean calm. Keep your mind and heart calm and affectionate and your work for the day will go as it should.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE AIRMEN WHO WOULD NOT DIE—I

“THE AIRMEN WHO WOULD NOT DIE” is a book by the American author John G. Fuller. It is the story of three tragic air disasters in England in the late 1920s. First, it is Captain Raymond Hinchliffe, the World War I, master-pilot, who disappears over the Atlantic Ocean, while crossing the same with Elsie Mackay, heiress and celebrity, as a co-pilot, who wanted to be the first woman to cross the Atlantic. Then there is Alfred Lowenstein, a Belgian pilot and financier, who leaps to his death from his private plane over the English Channel. Thirdly, there is crashing of Britain’s largest airship, R-101, on its way to India, killing nearly everyone on board. These are three separate stories of men who died and came back to tell their stories, providing a strong evidence for survival after death.

In the “Author’s Note” we read that all the events in the story are true. They have been verified through extensive interviews, records, and documents of the British Air Ministry, the British Museum archives, etc. In the “Note to the Reader,” Charles H. Gibbs-Smith, formerly Lindberg Professor of Aerospace History, National Air and Space Museum (Smithsonian Institution) writes: “This book has to be written. . . .It will become a prime source for evidence of human survival after death.”

Captain Raymond Hinchliffe was the most seasoned pilot of his time, who had received the Distinguished Flying Cross for having shot down seven German planes during World War I. Elsie Mackay was a wealthy and well-known British actress and a pilot, who nurtured the ambition of being the first woman to cross the Atlantic. She approached Captain Hinchliffe, and offered to send him to America to buy a plane. “She guaranteed him all prize money, and she would insure his life for 10,000 Pounds.” It was a big sum in those days. Hinchliffe needed money to support his wife Emilie and two daughters. He thought that if the worst happened then there was insurance money which can support them.

Captain Hinchliffe and Elsie Mackay left from Lincolnshire in winter of 1928, after that no communication was received from them, except that his Royal Air Force friend, Colonel Henderson, who was on a ship, reported that Hinchliffe had appeared before him and said that he was lost, and did not know what to do, and then simply disappeared. He had seen Hinchliffe's apparition. Three days later there was news that Captain Hinchliffe was missing. After waiting for some news from her husband, Captain Hinchliffe's wife was convinced that he would not return. She decided to visit their family solicitors to claim insurance amount. Miss Mackay had issued the cheque but there were no funds in her bank as her estate was frozen by her father, Lord Inchcape.

Mrs. Earl had psychic ability and occasionally communicated with her dead son. At the end of March 1928, during one such communication she received a message from some unknown person who sought her help saying that he had drowned with Elsie Mackay. He told her to convey to his wife that he was in great distress and wished to speak to her. This communication was from Captain Hinchliffe. So Mrs. Earl wrote a letter to his wife saying that she had received communication from her husband. Mrs. Earl did not hear from the wife and decided to contact Eileen Garrett, who was a medium.

Once when Garrett fell into a deep trance, a distinct personality came through and spoke through her. "It purported to be a man reflecting ancient wisdom and intelligence, who identified himself as an Oriental. He gave the name 'Uvani'... During the trance, he stated that his purpose was to prove beyond doubt that human personality continued after death as a free and conscious entity." This was the time when Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was exploring the psychic world and some of the scientists, philosophers and psychologists were convinced of the survival after death.

Finally, Mrs. Earl had a session with Garrett, in which "Uvani" spoke through her and answered the enquiry regarding Captain Hinchliffe, saying that the captain had been trying to send messages,

he had taken the monoplane far out of his course, to the South, and that he was anxious about his wife. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle the writer of Sherlock Holmes detective stories, was present at that session. At first, he was sceptical about spiritualism and had looked upon it as a "vulgar delusion of the uneducated." But his search for rational religion rested on verifiable evidence. When he studied the observations of scientists like Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Crookes, Flammarion, Richet and others, he changed his views. He and some of these persons had been taken in by false claims but "he was also aware of the preponderance of evidence that was verified."

Sir Arthur Doyle then wrote a letter to Mrs. Hinchliffe in which he stated that he had reasons to believe Mrs. Earl, and that a second medium had corroborated the message. The letter from Sir Doyle removed any hesitation on part of Emilie, and she wrote to Mrs. Earl on the day she received the letter from Sir Doyle.

Mrs. Earl fixed up a session with the medium Eileen Garrett, and took Emilie with her. Garrett explained that like all mediums she had a "guide" or "control" and when she went into trance state, "the guide would temporarily take over the sleeping medium, including the voice organs. The medium then became only a channel, with little or no consciousness of what was being said." So, when the session began "Uvani" spoke through Eileen Garrett, and intermittently it appeared as if Captain Hinchliffe was communicating. All through the session Emilie felt that her husband was trying to reassure her that it was he who was giving the information.

Emilie attended second session with Garrett. She was told that her husband was confident that she would get the insurance money. In the next session he guided his wife to contact someone at the *Daily Express*, and narrate the story of how it was Elsie Mackay who had approached her husband for the trans-Atlantic flight, etc. and that might induce the father of this heiress to consider giving the insurance money.

The author points out that according to studies of the British Society for Psychical Research, apparitions and detailed

communications from the dead persons were most intense “when there was critical unfinished business to attend to, as well as the unfinished work the deceased felt should be done.” That was true about Captain Hinchliffe who was concerned about his wife’s financial security.

Meanwhile, Emilie spoke to a reporter from *Daily Express* and told him that her husband had not received his salary or any of the expenses during the last six weeks before the flight. She stated that she only wanted that Elsie’s father must honour all the commitments that were covered in the business agreement with her husband. In subsequent sessions Captain Hinchliffe had assured his wife that at the last moment when everything seemed lost, help will come and that Elsie’s father, Lord Inchcape will be moved to give the money in an indirect manner, influenced by public opinion, and it may prolong to the last day in July, but it will be in July. He told her that he was communicating with her only to assist her but that he cautioned her not to get carried away or take undue interest in this psychic subject.

Lord Inchcape had given away his daughter’s fortune to British government to be used for the purpose of reducing national debt. But on July 31 at 8.00 p.m. Emilie learnt that she was going to receive 10,000 Pounds as per the announcement made by the government official that Lord Inchcape had given a further sum of 10,000 Pounds from his own property “to meet any complaint in such manner as the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his absolute discretion may think fit,” and this sum was handed over to the Public Trustees. In the next session Emilie heard from her husband that he was very happy and overjoyed, and that she should invest the money wisely. In another communication Hinchliffe expressed his concern over the new airship R-101 which was being made ready for flight from London to India. According to him some of the wires used did not look strong enough, and he expressed his concern over new type of engine that was being used, which he felt will not be a success. The case of Hinchliffe proves that “life is continuous, and

dying was merely going through another door, that it was transition rather than a final curtain.”

Despite every attempt to warn, the airship R-101 crashed in a field in France during a rain storm. All but six aboard were killed. There are several reasons why such warnings would not be paid heed to, as false messages could also come through, just as much as accurate and true ones. There could be “interference of the conscious mind of the medium, inability of the transcriber to record the words accurately,” and such dozen other mitigating factors.

Interestingly, we read Eileen Garrett, the medium, saying that “not everything that came through her as a channel could be totally accurate. She was not even sure she was getting communications from the deceased. . . . She was only vaguely conscious of what was going on during a trance.” Though people coming to her were astounded at the accuracy of information that came through her, she could not take credit for the same.

Two days after the crash, through a séance, the dead commander of the airship recounted in horrible detail the anguished end of the R-101 and its crew. A series of séances followed, with several more crew members desperate to tell their stories, as to why the airship went down. The information received through the medium was often highly technical, which could not have been known to the medium herself but must have come from those who were involved in the project of building airship R-101.

A young professor of logic at Oxford University, H. H. Price was coming to the conclusion that after death of the physical body there is some other body which allows one to continue to have the sense of “I.” There could be a non-material body like one has in dreams. It could be compared to dream state when we see things, places and people, and also communicate with them, and consider them all real till we wake up and compare the dream world with the real world, on waking up. He claimed that perhaps life after death would only mean change of consciousness and not change of place.

(To be concluded)

ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

IN the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus advises us to ask, seek and knock, and assures us of receiving what is asked for, of finding what is sought, and of the opening of the portals to the secret chamber when we knock in the right manner. It does not mean asking and seeking and knocking for material things and possessions of a fleeting nature, but rather implies true effort along spiritual lines to unveil the mysteries of the inner world. It is the true yearning of the heart to rise above mundane existence that will enable one to do so. Preliminary preparation in the form of purity of motive, of mind and heart, assuming a firm position with full confidence in the justice of the great Law, and true realization of one's seek and knock at the very source of our being, our Divine Parent, the Father in Heaven, all-seeing and almighty. We cannot ask or seek for anything less than divine, anything which is not worth asking, seeking and knocking for.

Who is it that asks and seeks and knocks? The awakened human soul, the self-conscious thinker in us, the reincarnating ego. When it is free from all attachments and allurements of physical existence, all illusions and delusions, all taints of a lower nature, then only can it ask its Divine Parent, the Higher Self. What can it ask? It can ask for the light of clear understanding, the right perception of existing things, the knowledge of the non-existent. Each one of us is a perceiver, and as such it is necessary to understand what we observe around us in the objective, visible universe, as also what lies in the hidden aspects of nature and of man; to distinguish between what is real and everlasting and what is fleeting and perishable; to learn to evaluate things correctly. It is also necessary to ask for patient submission to the Law, bearing the burden of life cheerfully, accepting all the tests and trials smilingly, conforming to the pleasure and disposition of the Divine Will.

What shall we seek? True knowledge, at the same time rendering gentle service to all that lives. We are not to wait for opportunities,

but rather to put forth the effort to find out the needs of others, helping them to walk the narrow path. Service is to be rendered not only to our fellow beings but also to the kingdoms below us as well as to the Elder Brothers of humanity who need companions to carry on their work in the world. We are expected to serve on all planes, physical, moral, mental, through deeds, words and thought; to keep always in touch with the needs and sufferings of others. Service is one of the means of gaining Wisdom, as Sri Krishna points out in the Fourth Discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. True service is spiritual service which seeks to elevate the minds and hearts of the people, helping them to change their mode of thinking and living so that peace and harmony may reign supreme in the world. Jesus says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." How can we seek the Kingdom of God before we have become pure and chaste and childlike? Sustained effort at self-purification is required till the endless end.

Where shall we knock? At the door of the heart. There is a fount within us which will give us strength and guidance because it is the Knower and also the Knowledge itself.

Light on the Path states: "Inquire of the earth, the air, and the water, of the secrets they hold for you. The development of your inner senses will enable you to do this." The lessons learnt from nature are the true lessons and take us to a higher level. The earth teaches us humility and generosity. It cheerfully bears the burden of all that exists on it. It nourishes all the plants and trees and grass and shrubs with its own life-energy. It produces food for all beings, and gives in abundance without thinking of a reward. So, the secret of the earth is both humility and generosity. The air is the greatest purifier. The air breathed in keeps us alive; without it we would perish. We need the gentle breezes of Soul-Wisdom to brush away the dust of our illusions. Whether we shall survive or perish depends on the choice made by each of us and on the extent to which we let the gentle breezes of Soul-Wisdom blow around us. Theosophy is

in the world to enable human beings to make the right choice to reach the goal contemplated, that of human perfection. The waters of life keep ever moving, flowing. If not, they stagnate. So also, the goddess Saraswati needs channels through which wisdom can flow from one to another so as to keep alive in man his divine intuitions, and to quench the thirst for wisdom of those who ask and seek and knock.

Next, we are advised in the same book to inquire of the holy ones of the earth of the secrets they hold for us, but only after complete self-purification, otherwise there will be no response. They have given us their secret wisdom time and again, but human nature is so frail that what is given is soon forgotten, and so it needs to be replenished. Their inner world is full of peace and harmony, and they want that peace and harmony to prevail in the outer world too. Thus, it becomes necessary to disseminate their great ideas to remove the darkness of ignorance from this world and let light and happiness prevail in it.

And lastly, we are asked to inquire of the inmost, the One, of the final secret it holds for us. It will always guide us to tread in the footsteps of our holy predecessors, following the path of renunciation. The voice of compassion speaks and says, can there be bliss when all that lives continues to remain ignorant and to suffer? How can one remain at peace within oneself when the world is groaning and moaning with all kinds of ills on all planes? So the inmost is more than eager to help us; it is the human in us that has to stretch towards the divine.

The three elements of earth, air, water are wonderful expression of the divine life. They are universal and impersonal and show forth their strength and power in their own ways. They are within us and outside us and need to be taken care of. They are not to be corrupted in any way. The Sermon on the Mount warns us: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS LETTERS OF PERSONAL COUNSEL—VII

I SHOULD like you to perceive that the first task is becoming, and doing should be for that supreme purpose of becoming. Beness, Becoming, Being, is the metaphysical triad. In the human kingdom the Soul grows by deliberate undertakings. Our mind so far has been exploited by desires both bad and good, selfish and unselfish; but in both aspects it is personal—this is the most important point. Your effort in an increasing measure should be to impersonalize your feelings, *i.e.*, to use our Teachings to purify and elevate the feelings. Crosbie’s *The Friendly Philosopher* gives the best prescription that I know of. Study that.

Do not be anxious and worried or concerned. Within you is the Great Steady Fire and it is bound to blaze now, and then lessen, to blaze again. The Wisdom-Light and the Compassion-Warmth of the Fire will dispel all defects, all doubts, all hesitations. Live within yourself. Problems and difficulties are bound to arise, but with calmness ever present you *will* feel the Power of the Fire. Its upward-going flame will meet the descending tongue of the Higher Manasic Fire; so let your Fire ascend high, steadily and steadfastly.

Courage in one’s own trouble as kindness towards others when they are in trouble—that is always a good line. But courage should ever be accompanied by calmness. Again remember the words of *The Bhagavad-Gita*—“With calmness ever present.” Now what does calmness imply? That the Ego is in some kind of control and the way of the Ego is always deliberate, rooted in Knowledge.

I do not quite understand about being sober and joyful, etc. to which you make reference. I am very happy, though busy, and also joyous. Am pressed for time, for there is so much to be done and people want their personal problems solved and their personal difficulties removed, and in all that time is gone. For the next two years it is to be work—efficiency; strenuous execution of duty; a positive, courageous, non-sentimental attitude; self-confidence and

humility; principles alone, minus all personality—these are some of the things. Don't you hear the cry of the world? It rends one's heart and one has to be so patient and loving to the wounded and the afflicted in spirit that every single and even slight manifestation of egotism and I-ness comes to me like a deadly sear. It spoils my work and I have no time either to explain or to persuade. Do, or to depart and leave people who can do alone the work—that is my attitude. But I am very happy. I think I have to write a book—How to be Happy Though Busy!

We are all men in a state of self-consciousness, which state we do not uniformly sustain. We lose it, being heedless; most of our acts are instinctive and impulsive. Only now and again we become thought-full and will-full. Men lose their manhood ever so often, Even today most members of the human race are either good or evil by instinct and by impulse, respectively, When knowledge of Theosophy represented by the nine Powers, *Shaktis* or *Muses* is practised because man has become wedded to knowledge, then chelaship begins—the practice of *sva-dharma* which requires righteous war, the *Dharma-yuddh* of the second chapter.

Devotion grows by degrees and there are different kinds of devotion, There is not only mind-concentration but also heart-concentration, You must cultivate the heart, impersonalize affections and all emotions. Try to be with your own *Manas-Taijasi*; deepen your effort to find *Buddhi* both as an active power and as the casket of *Atma*. Consider a diamond's power to shine. There is substance—carbon in the main—and the light which the diamond-substance reflects. “Knowest thou of Self the powers?” Consider your own soul-nature and soul-powers. That requires going away from the personal, the mundane, the *Ahankaric*. The Great Ones are the Hidden Watchers who both test and protect. They do not want us to fail but to pass the examination. So you need not be in the least fearful. Be confident in the heart and keep your mind humble, and it cannot help becoming humble in the presence of the Ocean of Knowledge—the spiritual counterpart of the Ocean of *Samsara*.

Emotionalism is not real Devotion. But Devotion *is* a feeling; it is a Divine Intuition; one of those Innate Ideas which cannot be destroyed. In each one of us it is covered over and at present in ordinary manifestation it cannot show its true colour because of personal selfishness, As the Twelfth chapter of *The Bhagavad-Gita* shows, the true devotion is balance in love and helpfulness and is active in all virtues. Remember Shelley's lines: “The desire of the moth for the star, of the night for the morrow; the devotion to something afar from the sphere of our sorrow.” They are beautiful lines. Also do read that *Secret Doctrine* passage on the birth of Devotion and note the words of Carlyle which H.P.B. quotes. It is a fine passage.

(Concluded)

THOSE inward blessings of the spiritual life...are so many spurs, motives and incitements to live wholly unto God; yet they may, instead of that, fill us with self-satisfaction and self-esteem and prompt us to despise others that want them, as in a poor, mean and reprobate state; who yet may be higher advanced and stand in a nearer degree of union with God, by humility, faith, resignation and pure love, in their inward poverty and emptiness than we who live high upon spiritual satisfactions and can talk of nothing but our feasts of fat things.

All that I would say of these inward delights and enjoyments is only this—they are not holiness, they are not piety, they are not perfection, but they are God's gracious allurements and calls to seek after holiness and spiritual perfection. They are not to be sought for their own sakes, but to be received as cordials that suppose us to be sick, faint and languishing, and ought rather to convince us that we are as yet but babes than that we are really men of God.

—WILLIAM LAW

CAUSE AND EFFECT

I

CAUSALITY, also known as causation or cause and effect, is influence by which one state, process or object, as a cause, contributes to the production of another state, process or object, as an effect, in which the cause is partly responsible for the effect, and the effect is partly dependent on the cause. An effect can be produced by many causes, also referred to as causal factors. An effect can be, in turn, a cause of one or many effects. We live in the world of causes and effects. We, as we find ourselves today, are effects produced by and from causes. Everything that we see around us is an effect, for which there is a cause or causes. Likewise, every event that happens is the effect of some cause or causes. From the religious standpoint, the cause of all things—the world and all in the world—is some God sitting up there, and all that happens in the world is the effect caused by that God. Others rely on Astrology and the Stars. According to them the Stars in heaven determine their individual lives and many happenings in the world. Science seeks cause of all things on material, physical plane. For them a human being, with a particular physical, mental and psychic constitution, is the result of heredity.

Cause and effect are related to Law. There are physical, mental, psychical, spiritual and metaphysical causes and their effects. Some people believe that there are fixed laws governing the universe, but these laws are framed by a personal God. There are many events in life, which we are unable to explain, and then we attribute “chance” as their cause. Those who believe in a personal God account for this “chance” as the conscious exercise of the will of God for the good of his creatures. An instance is quoted to support this view. A certain person was sleeping in a room, as always, he had kept by his side, a lantern and a stick. In the middle of the night, he woke up on his own, lighted the lantern and leaped out of his bed, with the stick in his hand. He looked up and saw a snake just above his bed.

Just then the snake dropped down on the floor, which he threw out with the stick. This is considered to be *extraordinary phenomenon*, indicating the “protecting hand of God.” The person narrating this incident questioned that it is true that there are fixed laws of nature reigning in this universe, but these gaps called accidents, must be filled before we can accept the theory of an “Impersonal God.”

H.P.B. comments that considering that the incident happened in India, which is a country full of snakes, and given the understanding that people do wake up unconsciously and at the slightest noise, there is nothing extraordinary about this incident. It is absurd to say that it is the result of the will of the personal God. Instead of acting as body-guard to every man, woman and child, she argues that this personal God could have by a simple exercise of his will, either kept the snake away, or still better, not to have created snakes at all!

Chance, says H.P.B., is most certainly impossible. There is no “chance” in Nature, wherein everything is mathematically co-ordinate and mutually related in its units. “Chance” says Coleridge, “is but the pseudonym of God (or Nature), for those particular cases which He does not choose to subscribe openly with His sign manual.” Replace the word “God” by that of *Karma* and it will become an Eastern axiom (*S.D.*, I, 653). In other words, we might say that everything happens under the law. However, occurrences for which we are not able to discover some obvious cause, we try to explain them away as “chance.”

Chicken or the egg is a causality dilemma, expressed as a question, which came first: the chicken or the egg? It simply shows that all that exists has come from something pre-existing. All chickens hatch from eggs and all chicken eggs are laid by chickens (hens). The first chicken came from the egg and the egg came from the chicken. Again, the chicken came from the egg, and that again came from chicken, and so on and on. We get into infinite regression. In the chicken or the egg problem, we are not able to tell which one is the cause and which one is the effect, as each depends on the other. Whenever there is an infinite chain of causes, we seek for the first

or foundational cause. We may apply this chicken-egg problem to find the origin or cause of the world or the Universe. For theologians and philosophers like Thomas Aquinas, that first cause was God. But we may ask what caused that first cause to come into being.

Science traces back the origin of the universe to “Big Bang” theory. Paul Sutter, an astrophysicist remarks that the Big Bang theory is a model of the history of the universe, which traces the evolution of the cosmos to its very earliest moments. However, “The Big Bang theory is fantastic at describing everything *after* that [the Big Bang] but before it, we are a bit lost. Get this: At small enough scales, we do not even know if the word ‘before’ even makes sense!” There is a realization that “the foundational cause” of the universe is somewhere beyond the Big Bang theory of science.

It is impossible to conceive of anything without a cause, and an attempt to do so makes our mind go blank. In the manifested universe, we find that everything exists as a result of some preceding cause. But, if we try to trace the chain of causation, we get stuck. We say that rain comes from clouds, and clouds are formed because of evaporation of water, the water evaporates by the heat of the Sun’s rays. But what is the source of the Sun? We might explain the origin of the Sun on the basis of nebular theory. The source and cause of a Nebula may be traced back to the Milky Way, and so on. When we try to trace back the chain of cause and effect, we come to a point, beyond which we are unable to go. H.P.B. says that both science and religion reach this position much more quickly because they ignore the metaphysical abstractions. Behind the physical, material causes there are abstractions, which as we descend from plane to plane, are concretized. Thus, material causes are concretizations of abstract causes, producing the phenomenal universe, just as vapour is condensed into water and then frozen into ice.

The Secret Doctrine teaches that the “Causes of Existence” include not only physical causes, but also *metaphysical causes*. The most important metaphysical cause being the “desire to exist,” or “desire for sentient existence.” The desire for sentient existence is in

everything in the manifestation, from the atom to the sun. The “desire to exist” is the divine desire that the Universe should exist, which we see as Law. The reflection of this divine desire in man, is *tanha* or desire for sentient existence. The real cause of existence remains forever hidden and its first emanations are abstractions, which are causes of material universe, and which are intelligences that govern the universe and are the powers of Nature, which we have anthropomorphized as various gods.

The “foundational” or real cause of the universe and of existence is that which is not the part of cause-effect chain, but is the *noumenon* of all *noumena*. It is the Causeless Cause, which is outside Space and Time, and is without any relation to the manifested finite beings. It is designated as God, Absolute, One Reality or *Parabrahm*. It is the Ideal Cause. In Indian Philosophy, causes or “*karanas*,” as regards creation of the universe, are divided into two categories: *nimitta* or efficient or Intelligent cause and *upadana* or material cause. To create a pot, clay is the material cause, and the potter shaping the pot according to the “image” or “idea” in his mind, is the efficient cause. This shows that normally the raw material is different from the maker. But when it comes to creation or evolution of the universe, according to *Mundaka Upanishad*, the Causeless Cause or One Reality is both the Intelligent Cause and the Material Cause, as there is nothing outside of IT. We are given the analogy of a spider. The spider designs its web, and hence it is the intelligent cause of the web. Raw material for the web is also produced by the spider itself, which is therefore, both the intelligent as well as the material cause. “*Parabrahm* is not the cause, but the causality, or the propelling but not volitional power, in every manifesting Cause....Neither is there any cause that can compel it to emanate or create.” (*Transactions*, p. 41)

That which is called “First Cause” is something which is “first brought forth” or which manifests first, or which is first in space and time. Thus, it is necessarily finite and conditioned. The “First Cause” is the *Saguna Brahman* or *Ishwara*, considered the creative

power, or Creative Logos and variously designated as *Brahma*, *Ahura Mazda*, *Adam Kadmon*, *Verbum* and the Third or Manifested Logos. H.P.B. describes the Logos as a collective “Creator” of the Universe, comparable to an architect of a building. An architect provides a plan or blueprint for a building, but is not himself involved in the construction work of the building. In fact, based on the abstract diagram in the blueprint, a model of cardboard or wood is prepared, which in turn is followed by construction of the house with sand, cement, etc. Likewise, there is the “Archetypal World.” The expression “Archetypal World” is from Platonic Philosophy and it means, “the world as it existed in the mind of the Deity.” The Deity conceives in Its mind a world by reflecting Itself therein. The world in the mind of the Deity is cosmic substance, which is energized by cosmic ideation, and that is the world of *noumena*, and in which lives the world of phenomena.

In the Archetypal World of Plato, there exist abstract ideas of things to be. We can say that on that plane, there is idea of “triangularity,” based on which different types of triangles—right-angle triangle, equilateral triangle, etc., may be formed subsequently. The Creative Logos or *Demiurgos* has to first perceive the plan and the ideal forms, which lie concealed within Eternal Ideation, and then “Builders” build the model world based on these ideal forms. It is then that the Elementals or Nature Spirits work on those models to build the physical forms. The first model is improved upon by the worlds which succeed it physically, each of which is grosser than the one on the higher plane, and in that sense less pure. These are astral prototypes which are like developed pictures. We can understand this by an analogy: The drawing or blue-print of a house prepared by an architect represents spiritual prototypes or models, while the miniature model made of wood or cardboard represents the astral models, based on which actual house is built.

The “First Cause” or the Creative Logos is an aggregate of Intelligent Powers and Forces, designated as gods or Angels in different philosophies. These celestial beings on various planes

interpret and execute the plan, at various levels, performing function appropriate to the plane, in bringing into existence the phenomenal world. Alternatively, we might say that there are three aspects of the Universe: the *Ever-existing* from which evolves the *Pre-existing*, and the third aspect is *Phenomenal* which is the reflection or shadow of the last (*S.D.*, I, 278). We might look upon “Ever-existing” Universe to represent *noumenal* or archetypal world or *Akasa*. The “prototypes or ideas of things exist first on the plane of Divine eternal Consciousness (*Akasa*) and these become reversed in the Astral Light.” (*Transactions*, p. 96)

We may perhaps compare this with the idea or image producing effect on the physical body, through the astral body. For instance, the causes of psychosomatic diseases such as, diabetes, cancer, etc., are anxiety, fear, anger, jealousy. These are all unseen, mental and emotional causes. How do these causes produce effect on the physical? The explanation is that there is an *invisible* side to man and nature. One of the constituents of invisible man is the astral body—*sukshma sarira*—which forms a sort of model for the physical body. It is electro-magnetic in nature and enmeshed in the physical body like the fibres of the mango in the mango-pulp. Science has now been able to photograph it through Kirlian photography. Our emotions and thoughts first affect the astral body, and through it produce effect on the physical body. A stimulus may be sent from within to the without or outside. Thus, we have cases of extreme grief, which lead to hair turning grey in a night.

(To be concluded)

THE GREATER part of our lives is spent in dreaming over the morrow, and when it comes, it, too, is consumed in the anticipation of a brighter morrow, and so the cheat is prolonged, even to the grave.

—MARK RUTHERFORD

THE STRUGGLES OF THE SOUL

WHEN the words are very conveniently used, they are often misused and no definition of them exists in the minds of the people. Such a word is Soul. There are other such words. People generally talk about god, but in their minds there is no definition of what god is. They talk of Spirit: Spirit in man and Spirit of a thing, but they are not clear as to what these are. We cannot speak of what the disposition of the enemies of the Soul may be unless and until we define in our minds nature and character of Soul itself. We may say that there are three views of Soul: First, what we may call material or scientific view, second, theological or religious view, and third, true Theosophical view. Let us examine them before we take up practical point which Soul encounters in its struggle towards Light not only day by day but hour by hour.

First view, the scientific view of Soul may be illustrated by the example of a clock. Many different parts of the clock put together make clock work. This working of the clock, its power to show hour of the day is considered to be like Soul in man—purely material or pathological view, namely, nature puts together heart, brain, senses, organs; once put together the body runs its race—puts forth its work and this work man calls Soul. Hence when body separates itself into its constituent parts or disintegrates, nothing remains, just exactly as when we take pieces of clock apart, clock ceases to function. Spiritualism, psychic research, many heresies of religious and mystic experiences, not to mention common sense and logic are indicative of the falsehood of this theory.

Second view, which we call religious, may be illustrated by the example of a lighted candle. Theologians say that god's nature makes a candle with its wick and all other constituents, and from outside god lights the candle. In other words, "flame" is the "soul" which comes to body as a gift of god. It is explained by many religions that when flame burns up candle, death results and what becomes of the flame is generally a mystery, because ways of god are

mysterious. This also is a false view. How an all powerful as well as loving father of man produce small candles and big ones, beautiful and ugly ones, and why a just father should bestow on each according to his whim and fancy different souls is not explained, or as a matter of fact cannot be explained.

The third view, the spiritual or theosophical view of Soul has been universally held by great philosophers and mystics down the ages. We may illustrate this view by an example of a bulb of electric light. Each human body with its feelings and mind may be compared to a bulb. The whole ocean of electricity may be compared to deity, god or universal mind or core consciousness. By a particular process that we call evolution or emanation, the pressing of button may be compared to individual soul incarnating into human body or light coming into bulb. Thus, when through continuous use bulb cannot be lighted up we say death results but it does not mean that electricity has ceased to exist or that its power to manifest in another bulb has been destroyed. It is important to note that first, as every time, we press the button, light comes into bulb and then light is shut off every time we press the button again. So also, in human personal organism that we call man, light of the Soul comes and goes according to effort of the man in terms of his will, thought, feelings, speech and action.

Let us examine ourselves as that "Soul" with its powers and functions, and then as the body with its powers and function. We should recognize that in spiritual nature we are universal and impersonal. The Christ in us—the Buddha in us—the Krishna in us is a universal principle. Therefore, god is described as an omnipresent reality that is a light present everywhere. Hence, Krishna says: "I am the Ego which is seated in the hearts of all beings." That is why in Zoroastrian scriptures Ahura Mazda says: "My name is Omnipresence." For the same reason Christian scriptures speak of god as light "that lighteth every man who cometh into the world." In our innermost essence we are all spiritual and divine. This is indivisible, One Self, of which the *Gita* says that it is

like the sunlight. “As a single sun illuminateth the whole world, even so doth the One Spirit illumine every body, O son of Bharata.” There is not your Spirit and my Spirit but impersonal Spirit. Each human Soul is like a ray of the Sun and as there are many rays from one Sun so there are many Souls from the ONE SPIRIT.

This metaphysical point of view is somewhat difficult to understand but perhaps an example will make it clearer. Just as each human body, composed of flesh and blood, in final analysis, comes from the ocean of matter, but is not that ocean of matter, so it is with Spirit and Soul. Each human body which comes to birth perishes. When the body is disintegrated, its matter returns to the ocean of matter. Thus, the ocean of matter may be compared to “Spirit,” and each human body may be compared to “Soul.” Out of matter is produced body, and so also, out of Spirit comes Soul. An individual body is related to the ocean of matter, from and in which it is formed. Likewise, Soul is related to the ocean of Spirit from and in which it comes to birth. “In IT we live and move and have our being.” Thus, in our innermost essence we are spiritual—the human Soul is a ray of the Spirit incarnated into human body.

All of us are different in temperament, disposition, character and ability. To understand the reason for these differences, it is necessary for us to divide man and understand his principles. Man is composed of his body, feelings, thoughts, and the Soul. Over-brooding all these is the universal spirit. Body is like a clock, and it does produce its effect on feelings and thoughts as well as on the Soul. It is a well-known fact that with ill-health of the body, thoughts and feelings undergo change; wrong kinds of food and nourishments weaken the body. On the other hand, the purely outside events also influence feelings. Likewise, our thoughts, feelings and ideas also affect body on one hand and soul on other. When we feel very angry or moody or lethargic, our saliva and perspiration show the mark thereof. Experiments have been carried out to prove this. Thus, a man in heat, rage of anger, when put into a tub of cold water leaves through his perspiration a kind of poison.

The feelings and thoughts make up the personal soul. What we call man or ourselves, is a mixture of many forces—when we say Mr. So-and-So or Mrs. So-and-So, we imply a combination of bodily, mental and feeling forces which all affect and envelope the Soul and which are only rarely affected by Soul in a direct way. That which we call personality is not Soul, though it is often mistaken for Soul. The very word “personality” shows that it is but a mask, and a mask that hides real individual soul. So, it is necessary for us to understand the difference between personality and individuality, between ordinary personal nature and real immortal Soul. One is the instrument and the mask. The other is the Ruler.

Let us look at different types of human beings. We find that there are certain classes of beings who are so engrossed in their personal comforts or conveniences that they are not even aware of the existence of Soul in themselves. Therefore, we often say that there are thousands of “Soul-less” men and women in every city, like this. It does not necessarily mean that there is no Soul in these thousands, but that they are so engrossed in personal concerns that they have made themselves impervious to the influence of the Soul—of their higher nature. Then, suffering, poverty, pain make men and women sit up and take notice of the position in which they find themselves. Thus, there is a second class of beings, those who are desirous of overcoming their difficulty and have therefore become enquirers. There is no remedy for those who will not enquire and ask. On the other hand, nature is compassionate and merciful and for every question she has an answer, for every demand man makes she has a supply to offer.

Now in this all, because of economic competition, because of prevalence of nervous disorder and diseases, because of moral depravity to be seen on all sides, east and west alike, people have begun to enquire and among those who so enquire and ask, some have taken a line of despair that truth cannot be known; these have taken other line of defiance saying there is nothing else but matter, so “Eat, drink and be merry, till we die.” Only third class have taken

the line of patient transformation of themselves according to knowledge, whether speculative or practical. Among this third class, there are those who may go astray looking for short-cuts relying on outside help till further suffering, further mental and moral torture, bring them to a realization that man is a maker of his own destiny, that he and no one else is responsible for his own condition and no one but himself can change or better it.

The first foe of man's Soul is his ignorance, mental laziness, moral lethargy, his attitude that there is nothing else for him to do but sit down and suffer. India suffers today from the false doctrine of fate and *kismet*, and unless her sons and daughters recognize that Karma and not *Kismet* is true, that exertion and not destiny is the method, India will not be able to take her place as of old. Then there is the second foe of man, arrogance—because we have not found out facts and truths therefore nobody else has or can. We consider ourselves to be the most evolved civilization and ignore the wisdom of the ancients. But when we study Theosophy, the *Gita*, the *Dhammapada*, the *Gathas*, the Sermon on the Mount, we find that the first great foe of man is his lower nature, selfishness, egotism or *ahankara*, the tendency which produces the feeling of separateness.

When we have conquered in some measure ignorance and arrogance, when we have begun to seek and learn, we find that the enemies of man are not outside, but within his own being. All of them are rooted in selfishness. The *Gita* enumerates these foes in a scientific way. It says that the gates of hell are three—Krishna and the Buddha teach that this earth and our human sentient existence make the worst of hells. We do not suffer for our deeds and sins after death but pay the price during life. The *Gita* teaches that human souls are hurled into wombs of pain and suffering over and over again. The three gates of hell are: *Kama*—lust or passion, *Krodha*—irritation and anger, *Lobha*—greed and avarice.

We have to conquer these three great foes which reside in our own being. All great teachers have taught the self-same way. Lust or passion does not refer to only flagrant immoralities, but also include all subtle

and hidden immoralities. Thought is the soul of speech, and speech is the soul of action. Wrong thought impulses are of the nature of lust, many abominations rampant today under the name of free love, contract marriage, co-habitation, etc., all come under this category. We have to conquer this lust of thought, speech and bodily action through self-control. There is anger which has to be remedied by virtue of reticence—all nervous disorders, hasty speech, impulsive activities, a hundred and one thoughtless activities spring from the power of irritability or *Krodha*. Serenity, or not getting ruffled by things, to be able to view world with patience produces a wonderful change even when acquired in a small measure. The antidote to greed and avarice is contentment, which springs from the knowledge that power of wealth and possessions does not lie in money or objects, but in our power to use them. To know that these foes exist in us, even in subtle form, is the first step towards their destruction.

Therefore, theosophy teaches the doctrine of self-examination. If great foes of the soul are our own personal weaknesses, the next great enemies are those near and dear ones who will not fight their battle, and who look upon our fight with an unfavourable view. Each aspirant therefore has to make up his mind that in the sacred task of purifying himself so that he may become spiritually a strong potency, he will encounter opposition from the members of his or her own household, club and office. Thus, our work of self-conquest becomes more and more difficult and there are many who become despondent or wish to run away from the field of battle. The Path of Spiritual Life is the Path of Warrior Soul. We are engaged in a holy war, a true “jihad” not against somebody else but against eternal enemy of man—his own lower self. The remedy to this despondency lies in knowledge that there are human beings now living who having waged the war have emerged triumphant. These are the Adepts, the Mahatmas, who speak through their philosophy which can help us pass from the condition of struggle and strife to the condition of being helpers of others, who are trying to wage that war. It is a privilege of each and every human soul to follow the voice of his own conscience within.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What does “surrender” mean in the context of spiritual life? It implies expansion and openness by surrendering narrow and limiting views concerning one’s self or identity, to be able to embrace a wider view of who one is. Surrender involves acceptance and adaptability. When one learns to accept what is, letting go of the memories of the past and expectations of the future, living in the present, one is able to experience the joy of being guided by a power greater than one’s individual will. At one level, one surrenders to the law of Karma, accepting that whatever happens is for the best, though one may not know the reason for the present situation. With the conviction that the Universe is governed by the unfathomable and infallible Law of Karma one can emerge victorious from any circumstance.

In spiritual life, we are actually surrendering to that invincible power that creates and governs the universe, known as God or *Brahman*, and which is also one’s inner Self, the *Atman*, that silent inner voice which guides and inspires. “The process of surrendering is like the process of a wave melting into the rhythmic rise and fall of the ocean. One surrenders to the flow of life, the dance in which the dance and dancer become one.” The Mother of Sri Aurobindo ashram expresses it thus: “True surrender enlarges you, it increases your capacity... It is as if when a drop of water falls into the sea; if it still kept there its separate identity, it would remain a little drop crushed by all the immensity around, because it has not surrendered. But, surrendering, it unites with the sea and participates in the nature and power and vastness of the whole sea.”

Surrender involves surrendering of the individual ego to the Cosmic Ego, which can happen during meditation, and then one experiences peace. It is surrendering to the source of all that is good, true and beautiful in the Universe. It enables one to adapt to many unforeseen circumstances, to acquire a state of inner peace, and to become a seeker on the path of Self-knowledge. One accelerates the process of evolution by surrendering the little ego to the divine

within. “The last surrender is the state of total liberation, the state of enlightenment, the attainment of oneness with the wholeness of life,” writes Barbara Ann Briggs. (*Life Positive*, January 2021)

To practise virtues, to meditate, to practise forbearance or patience, we need energy. We have unlimited energy but it gets dissipated in useless activities. We need spiritual energy in effecting the transition from being good people to spiritual people. Energy is not only needed to *start* new things, but is also required for *sustaining* what we have started. In spiritual discipline, we have to be prepared to try again even when we fail because otherwise advance cannot be made.

Virya is Divine Will. We do not have to manufacture this energy. Spiritual Courage is not really so much of muscle power, as it is the simple surrender of personal will to the Divine Will. Mortal man can gain courage only from his Immortal Spirit. For the Divine Will to manifest one needs to surrender the personal self. Only he can hope to possess Spiritual Courage who is willing to be guided and assisted by the Higher Self, and is determined to “suffer or enjoy whatever the Higher Self has in store for one by way of discipline and experience.” The attitude of mind to be cultivated is, “Thy Will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.” It is Will Prayer, in which for a brief space of time the mind is unfettered and becomes one with the divine and hence it is as if the potentialities and powers of the divine nature, in terms of will power become available, and we find our thoughts and desires being translated into action. It is then no longer a prayer but a command. *Atma-nivedana* or complete surrender of the self is the highest form of devotion, which is misunderstood to imply surrender of responsibilities, whereas it is acceptance of whatever that comes your way, as your just desert. In *Light on the Path* the disciple is advised, “Stand aside in the coming battle, and though thou fightest be not thou the warrior.”

We should resign to what the Law of Karma brings, in case we are unable to change the situation. With an attitude of supreme surrender, we will not resort to any prayers or propitiatory ceremonies, to cause to deviate the course of the Law and dodge

the karmic consequences. It is total acceptance that “my own comes back to me.”

Mobocracy would lead to destruction. In this article, condensed from Rabindranath Tagore’s book, *Creative Unity*, a collection of Essays, we are told that crowd psychology is a blind force. Like any other physical force, it can be used for creating a tremendous amount of power. Rulers have always tried to train and exploit this crowd psychology to serve their own purposes, by instilling in the popular mind an unreasoning pride for their own race and hatred for other races. They have made use of the medium of books, newspapers and religion to achieve this end. Those who dare to oppose this blind and impious cult are punished and even ostracised. This blind force is productive of enormous strength, achieved by suppressing higher humanity or higher values in the crowd. As individuals, we reason out our feelings, however, when an individual “feels with the crowd, he does not reason at all. His moral sense becomes blurred.” When a large number of people are trained for a narrow ideal, which gets hold of their minds, it ultimately results in moral degeneracy and intellectual blindness. This must necessarily be a temporary phase in civilisation, as this attitude cannot co-exist with true spirit of freedom.

In spite of our recognition and faith in moral laws and our training in self-control, evil has always persisted in human nature, producing the dichotomy of those who suffer and those others who inflicted suffering. The conquest of evil will never be a fully accomplished fact. We have witnessed that evil in few individuals trying to rob people of their human rights, is not always productive of disastrous results. “But when this idea...which has met with universal acceptance in the present day, tries to pass off the cult of collective selfishness as a moral duty, simply because that selfishness is gigantic in stature...it attacks the very vitals of humanity. It unconsciously generates in people’s minds an attitude of defiance against moral

law.”

A society in which people are seized by the spirit of selfishness, display violence in thought, speech and action, which impairs the natural restorative power of that body. But the spirit of self-sacrifice, together with the moral faculty of sympathy and co-operation is the guiding spirit of social vitality. When moral laws are not applied universally but only within the bounds of a narrow sphere, it leads to mental aberration. For instance, a narrow idea of “patriotism” is passing off as a highly moral influence. “I put my faith in the individuals all over the world who think clearly, feel nobly, and act rightly, thus becoming the channels of moral truth.” Our moral ideas spread far and wide like the roots and branches of a tree. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, January 31, 2021)

We have free will, or the power to think and choose, but we are using it to choose that which has approval of the majority. We follow herd-mentality. Mobocracy is an extreme example of believing in ideas and suggestions without questioning. Our strong opinions, faith and beliefs are seldom the result of independent, deep thinking. “It is rare that men regard a thing in either its true or false light, accepting the conclusion by the free action of their own judgment. Quite the reverse. The conclusion is more commonly reached by blindly adopting the opinion current at the hour among those with whom they associate.” writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, I, 39)

We may consider degenerate form of “public opinion” to be a milder version of crowd psychology. The English author William A. Mackinnon distinguishes between public opinion and “popular clamour,” which he described as “that sort of feeling arising from the passions of a multitude acting without consideration; or an excitement created amongst the uneducated; or amongst those who do not reflect, or do not exercise their judgment on the point in question.”

Public opinion or the views of the majority must be examined critically and impartially rather than obeyed blindly. Very few people dare to express and follow their convictions, defying public opinion.

We are afraid to be ourselves because of the fear of being judged, criticized, ostracized and isolated. Yet, to uphold the true moral principles, we must, as Jesus said, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate.” One has to learn to be a non-conformist, and have the courage to hold on to moral principles even in the face of opposition.

We need to guard against narrow patriotism, in which we care about the welfare of our own country, often at the expense of other countries. There is *inclusive* patriotism, which binds us together, and *exclusive* patriotism that keeps others out. True patriotism is along the lines of universal brotherhood. A Master of Wisdom says, “In learning to love one’s country one learns to love humanity the more.”

How ethical are we? The author, Najib Shah, discusses ethics in the light of the story of Gyges mentioned in philosopher Plato’s *Republic*.

In brief we can say that the Ring of Gyges is a mythical magical ring which when worn, gives the person wearing it, the power to become invisible at will. Gyges of Lydia was a historical king. A shepherd serving this king came to possess this ring and discovered that the ring gave him power to become invisible. He used this power to become invisible to commit several unjust acts, such as seduce the queen and ultimately take over the kingdom. Plato suggests that it is doubtful if even a virtuous man would resist the temptation of killing, robbing, raping, or generally doing injustice, if he could do all that without the fear of detection.

The author says that ethics set forth laws or principles such as, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Ethics help us answer the question, “what should I do?” independent of any expectation of reward or punishment. Morality is an application of ethics, when we act and make an individual choice. Though Religion provides universal moral values, they are not taken as guiding

principles for behaviour. People are good out of fear of hell and hope of heaven or the fear of consequences of bad karma.

Truly ethical behaviour stems from genuine appreciation of ethical values so that one is determined to be honest and truthful knowing that it is the right thing to do, even if “unobserved by either gods or men,” as Plato puts it. “Ethics is about character, and character is, as said, the sum of who we are,” writes Najib Shah (*The Speaking Tree*, December 13, 2020)

Ethics are rooted in nature of man, in natural and universal laws. Ethics are not commandments, imposed on us from the outside. They are aspects of Natural and Universal laws. Though morals are judgement of values, it is not subjective judgement based on likes and dislikes. Moral values or universal ethics are *objective*, irrespective of time and place, just as three plus two is always five, for all the people and at all times.

We may do good for prestige or praise, which means we are still self-regarding. Our consciousness is not purified in spite of the outward good action. The *outer* is nothing without the *inner*. For instance, is there a difference between a person who tries to be good and do good out of fear of karmic punishment, and the one who is determined to follow the moral principles, anyway? The one, who follows morally good behaviour out of fear of karmic punishment, may drop it, if he is convinced that there will be no karmic punishment. On the other hand, in the person who appreciates moral values, there is an internal recognition of values, and he will keep his face turned in the right direction, under every condition. In the first case, the person develops the tendency or *skandhas* in the direction of good, moral behaviour, while in the second case, the spontaneous discipline of ethical living would purify his character and will become part of the Ego.

Ethical laws are impossible of nullification. One may break them and seem to escape for a whole life or for more than a life; but its consequences at last react on the violator. Laws of Karma and Re-birth provide sure and logical basis for the practice of ethics.

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