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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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SAMADARSHI—ONE WITH EQUAL VISION

SAMADARSHI is the one who possesses an equal vision; a person who has an impartial, unbiased view and who analyses or assesses with an even mind. Shri Krishna speaks of “*samadarshi*” in the fifth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita* (sloka 18): An enlightened sage looks with an equal eye upon a Brahmin—endowed with spiritual knowledge and humility, a cow, an elephant, a dog and even an outcaste. Here, Shri Krishna gives examples of diametrically contrasting life forms and species. In Shri Shankaracharya’s commentary on the *Gita*, we read that the Brahmin endowed with wisdom and humility occupies the highest place, and is *sattvic* by nature. The cow, in comparison, is *rajasic* by nature and occupies the middle position. The elephant and others come last, being purely *tamasic*. Yet, those who are learned in spiritual lore, who are endowed with *insight* into the reality of things, see oneness everywhere.

Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, says that any knowledge or philosophy is a “*darsana*,” which means a view or vision or perspective. Physically, we speak of a person having a good sight or a bad sight. A person with bad sight is someone whose sight is weak, blinkered and distorted. Thus, a person with false learning is a person with a *wrong view*, his views or knowledge are distorted by his emotions, preconceptions, biases, etc., and hence he does not have enough insight into the true nature of things. Just the opposite can be said about the *right view*, which is the right

knowledge with deep insight into the true nature of things because it is the view backed by meditation; it is wide, deep and undistorted by any emotion or prejudice. But there is an even higher view which is a *perfect view*. It is the ultimate Wisdom or Knowledge possessed by the Enlightened One, limitless, transcending space and time.

An enlightened person is a self-realised person who has identified himself with the *Brahman* or *Atman* (divine essence) and therefore he is able to see *Atman* in all things and does not differentiate on the basis of name and form. All mud pots are the same from the stand point of the mud, *i.e.*, they are all made up of mud, the differences are at the level of form or shape. Likewise, all beings are *essentially* divine, the differences are at the level of form, nature of mind and subtlety of intellect. *Brahman* which is Life or Consciousness is the same everywhere and in everything, and yet, although the same SELF shines in all it does not shine forth equally in all.

However, *samadarshi* or the one with equal vision does not mean *samavarti* or one who behaves equally with all. At the mundane level, we can say that a Brahmin, an outcaste, a cow, a dog, and an elephant would all experience hunger. But it would be foolish to offer them all the same quantity of food or the same type of food. For instance, one may offer grass to the cow that comes at one's door, but one cannot offer grass to a dog, a Brahmin or an outcaste. Thus, it is essential to keep always in mind, *upadhi-bhed*, or the difference at the level of the body, and treat them accordingly. Likewise, quoting from *Gautama-Smriti*, Shri Shankaracharya says that "He commits sin who honours equals in different ways, or non-equals in the same way." If we give equal respect to a dog as we would to a Brahmin, or respect a Brahmin only as much as we would a dog then in both we err.

On the other hand, we show *Samadrishti* when we do not differentiate between our daughter and daughter-in-law, and try to show the same affection towards them and care equally for their needs, comfort and happiness. In one of his devotional songs, Saint Tukaram says that a truly spiritual person is one who bestows on

his man-servants and maid-servants the same affection he shows to his children. We can see that to reach such an exalted position we need to cultivate true love, which is compassion. It is an all-embracing universal love for all that lives and breathes. It aims at “Universal” good. It cannot make “B” happy at the expense of “A.” Compassion is that aspect of the law which desires growth of every being—even if it entails suffering. The ultimate aim of this law is that all creatures acquire perfection. According to M. Scott Peck, to love someone means to be helpful in his spiritual progress. Thus, in its highest sense, if we are equal-minded towards all then there would be something in our behaviour that would help the spiritual progress of that being.

If we wish to reach the goal of self-realisation, we need to cultivate equality in our treatment of others, as far as their spiritual progress is concerned. Each being must be seen as on his way to higher progress. In a sense, life of a mosquito, an ant, an elephant or a human being is equally important because they are all on their way to self-realisation, though at different levels of development. Hence, says the Buddha, “Kill not—for Pity’s sake—and lest ye slay the meanest thing upon its upward way.”

Swami Shri Savitanandji gives examples from day-to-day life to show how difficult it is to be a *samadarshi* which calls for development of discrimination. For instance, consider a person who returns from his trip to a place where apples grow in abundance. On returning home he brings fifty apples to distribute among his ten neighbours. First, he decides that he would give five apples to each family, to be fair. But he realizes that in some families there are only two members, while in others there are five, six or even seven members, so that it would be unfair to give five apples to each family. He should so distribute that every person in each family gets one apple. However, though *he* knows the basis for his “uneven” distribution, wherein he is being *samadarshi* in a true sense, others may think that he was being partial to certain families and hence gave more apples to them than what others received. A mother,

likewise, would be one with equal vision, if she serves food to members of the family, keeping in mind their capacity to digest.

In the light of the above we can consider how practical is the concept of socialism—the political idea that is based on the belief that all people are equal and that money and property should be equally divided, irrespective of their contribution. We should aim for equality in diversity, which is what we see in nature. Swami Savitanandji says that each tree or plant differs from the other in more ways than one. Some bear no fruit or flower while others do. Some are very tall while others are very short, and so on. It would be ridiculous to set a standard height to which every tree should grow. The similarity or equality lies only in that each tree has the *freedom and facility to grow and develop to its maximum capacity*. Theosophy does not hold that all men are born equal, nor that all men, here and now, can be made equal by a legal statute. The Brotherhood of Souls draws our attention to equality in the essential nature of man underlying the differences in the manifested nature. In the world of differentiation, we find that in the economic world all men can never be equal; there will always be some who are rich and others poor; some wise and others less so; some good and others bad; some who are born creative geniuses and others born congenital idiots. In the article, “The Higher Socialism,” we read: “But when we take a complete view of the world of manifestation in which a myriad differences leap to the eye, and when we see these differences in the light of Spiritual Wisdom, we find that there is an equality, for all men are rich and poor at the same time; for some are rich in some portion of their universe while they are poor in others. Higher Socialism tries to manifest the power of this Spiritual Brotherhood in which each man is apparently different from the other and yet both are identically the same with all.”

Theosophy may well be defined as the Philosophy of Exertion, for its pivotal doctrine is that each human soul progresses by self-devised effort, and therefore each soul must follow the religion of self-reliance and responsibility. The higher socialism is not merely

concerned with equal distribution of wealth; it is based on moral and spiritual laws rather than economic and political laws. It does not endeavour to level all by pulling down those who stand at the upper rungs of the ladder of progress but endeavours to raise all to as high a level of society as the highest among us have reached. The Higher Socialism is based on the law of Universal Brotherhood. We cannot make all people equal in mind and in bodies, but we can make all people equal by giving them equality of opportunity to make progress as souls. We believe in a kind of Spiritual Socialism that observes the fundamental law of love against hate, and that does not work according to the principles of the *rights* of man, but on the basis of the *Duties* of men. Higher Socialism deals with the poverty of many types. It stands for the removal of poverty not only of money but also of mind and of morals. (*Theosophy*, November 1922)

Gandhiji's view on equality in Socialism is: "Socialism is a beautiful word and, so far as I am aware, in socialism, all the members of society are equal—none low, none high. In the individual body, the head is not high because it is the top of the body, nor are the soles of the feet low because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. This is socialism. In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, and the employer and employee are all on the same level." Thus, one meaning of *samadarshi* means the one who does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, sex, riches, caste or social status.

We could consider the Law of Karma as *samdarshi* in the sense that it would give a due reaction for every action, to all without exception. At a simple level, even if a child or an old person puts their finger into the fire it would be burnt. A person who cheats another, or loses his temper or is envious, will get due consequences under the law of Karma, irrespective of his age, caste, status, etc. But will the law *punish* or *reward* equally? Here again, we see that in its "treatment," *i.e.*, while meting out reward or punishment the

law differentiates by taking into account many factors.

The Law takes into account the motive behind the action, the inner state of the person, his state of knowledge or ignorance and the weight of his past Karma. We do not incur a very heavy debt when we act wrongly *but with a good motive*, or because we were disturbed inwardly. The inner state of a person in a given life is the sum total of all experiences and circumstances of a given life as well as those of earlier lives. A stingy and unkind person often has the background of a difficult childhood or exposure to severe poverty. So also, our mental, moral and psychic constitution is a result of Karma from previous lives. If we want to avoid incurring karmic debts we must learn to *respond* and not *react* to situations and people. Likewise, we incur heavier karmic debt when we engage in a wrong action *knowingly*. In fact, the more aware we are—of right and wrong—the heavier the debt incurred. On the other hand, crimes committed in *Avidya* (ignorance), as by children, idiots, savages and people who know no better, involve physical but no moral responsibilities or karma.

Samadarshi is one who is unprejudiced and impartial. “Before you can become an occultist you have to give up every prejudice, every earthly liking, every feeling of preference for one thing over another. . . . A deed of kindness done with partiality may become evil, *e.g.*, by stirring up animosity in the mind of others. It is necessary, when acting, to lose all sense of identity and to become an abstract power. Justice is the opposite of Partiality. There is good and evil in every point of the universe, and if one works, however indirectly, for one’s own partiality, one becomes, to that extent, a Black magician. Occultism demands perfect justice, absolute impartiality.” writes Mr. Judge. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 161)

MISFORTUNES occur only when a man is false....Events, circumstances etc., have their origin in ourselves. They spring from seeds which we have sown.

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE WITHERED ARM

THE WITHERED ARM is a short story by Thomas Hardy published in *Blackwood Magazine* in 1888 and in the collection, *Wessex Tales*, in the same year. *Wessex Tales* is a collection of tales, each of which takes place in a fictional region of Britain called “Wessex,” and involves local folklore, superstition and myth. *The Withered Arm* is often considered Hardy’s best short story. The plot of the story revolves around magic and superstition. The story is set in rural England on a milk farm owned by Mr. Lodge. The milkmaids working on the farm are chatting about Mr. Lodge returning back with his new bride, Gertrude Lodge. Rhoda Brook, a middle-aged woman, is a milkmaid who works for the farm owner, Mr. Lodge. Many years ago, there was a relationship between her and Mr. Lodge and she has a son by him, now 12 years old. She lives with her son in a dilapidated house. She is an *outcast* because people think she is a witch.

Rhoda is jealous of the new wife of Mr. Lodge and sends her son to go and look at her. Based on meagre information relayed by her son, Rhoda builds an imaginary picture of pretty, delicate Gertrude Lodge. She would intently contemplate the image of Gertrude every single day, so that “the figure which had occupied her so much during this and the previous days was not to be banished at night.” One night she has a dream in which Gertrude sits on her chest, flaunts her wedding ring, wearing a ghostly silk dress. She refers to the apparition of Gertrude as “the incubus,” and recalls how it tried to suffocate her in the dream. In desperation, Rhoda reaches out and grabs the spectre’s left arm and throws the spectre to the floor, after which it promptly vanishes. Rhoda wakes up and sitting on the edge of the bed says to herself that it was not a dream and that Gertrude had come as she could feel her arm within her grasp, almost the very flesh and bone of it.

One day, Gertrude comes to Rhoda’s house with new shoes for

the boy. Rhoda soon realises that she is good and kind. After a few days, Gertrude relates to Rhoda that she began to feel a pain in her left arm. “She uncovered her left hand and arm and their outline confronted Rhoda’s gaze as the exact original of the limb she had beheld and seized in her dream.” When asked how it happened, Gertrude said, “One night when I was sound asleep, dreaming I was away in some strange place, a pain suddenly shot into my arm there, and was so keen as to awaken me.” It was two weeks back. Rhoda realises that the problem started at the same time when she had seen Gertrude in her dream, so that “all the scenery of that ghastly night returned with double vividness to her mind.” When Gertrude left, Rhoda reflected: “Can it be that I exercise a malignant power over people against my own will?” She recalled that she was called a witch, but so far had not understood why that particular stigma had been attached to her. “Could this be the explanation, and had such things as this ever happened before?” It was as if “something in her own individuality seemed to convict Rhoda of crime,” that she began to avoid meeting Gertrude.

When the two women met again, Rhoda wished to see Gertrude’s arm. It was clear that the arm had a shrivelled look, “and the outline of the four fingers appeared more distinct than at the former time.” Gertrude said with a faint laugh that her husband had remarked, “It is as if some witch, or devil himself, had taken hold of me there and blasted the flesh.” Rhoda advises her to ignore such suggestions, to which Gertrude replies that she would do so but it appears that her withered arm, “makes my husband dislike me, no, love me less. Men think so much of personal appearance.”

When they meet next, Gertrude tells Rhoda that people were asking her to meet a certain “clever man, over in Egdon Heath” whose name she has forgotten, but who would be able to reveal the cause and cure of her malady and to ask Rhoda for his whereabouts. Rhoda guesses that perhaps the name is Conjuror Trendle, a Shaman, a person with supernatural powers. Though reluctant at first, saying she did not “believe in such men,” later Gertrude asks Rhoda to

take her to meet Conjuror Trendle. When they meet him, he examines Gertrude's arm and says, "Medicine cannot cure it. It is the work of an enemy." When Gertrude insists upon knowing who could possibly be the enemy, Trendle takes her inside a room, asking Rhoda to wait outside. He fills a glass tumbler with water, and pours into it only the white of an egg, "which he had prepared in some private way." He takes the tumbler to the window and they see "the opaline hue of the egg-fluid changing form as it sank in the water." The Conjuror asks Gertrude if she could catch the likeness of any face or figure." She makes some replies in a low voice. The image seen has not been described but after seeing that Gertrude begins to dislike Rhoda. Soon after this episode, Rhoda moves out of the area with her son.

The story returns to Gertrude two years later, relating that she is now a hostile and superstitious woman obsessed with curing her disease in a desperate attempt to regain the love of her husband. After having tried for several years, all kinds of medicines, ointment, herbs and charms she destroys her nostrums and charms, to try something else. She decides to revisit Trendle, who tells her that there is only one way that her arm could be cured and that is by touching the neck of a man immediately after his hanging.

Mr. Lodge leaves town for business and Gertrude goes to Casterbridge to see a hanging. She arranges with the hangman to come to the jail immediately after the hanging. The man due to die is an 18-year-old convicted of arson, on very slight evidence. Gertrude arrives at the appointed time and the hangman lets her into the jail. A few minutes later, the corpse is brought in, Gertrude is afraid to touch it, but the hangman forces her arm onto the dead man's neck. She feels the life rush back into her arm, just as Trendle had predicted. She screams in terror. Another scream comes from behind her. It is Rhoda: and behind her is Mr. Lodge. The hanged man is their son, and they have come to take his body away. The condemned man is a victim of chance; the executioner says of him, "If ever a young fellow deserved to be let off, this one does."

Overcome with shock, Gertrude collapses. Three days later, she is dead.

Mr. Lodge sells his farm and lives as a recluse. He dies two years later, leaving money to a reformatory for boys and a small annuity to Rhoda, who comes back to her old house, but does not accept the money and carries on with her old job at the dairy.

Thomas Hardy was a famous author and poet. He lived from 1840 to 1928. It appears that Hardy got many ideas for his stories while he was growing up. An example of this was that he knew of a lady who had had her blood turned by a convict's corpse and he used this in this story "The Withered Arm." Two characters in the story attract our attention. One is Rhoda Brook, who was called a witch. The other is Conjuror Trendle, who helps Gertrude by showing the cause and cure of her malady.

Science and our so-called "enlightened" civilization have always derided magic and regarded it as a mere superstition. Normally, by magic is meant the popular superstitious belief in sorcery, witchcraft and ghosts, in general. Magic as a science is the knowledge of the hidden aspects of man and nature, by which omniscience and omnipotence of the spirit can be acquired while in the body, and by which one is able to have control over nature's forces. When this knowledge is used for beneficent purposes, it is White Magic, but when misused, it becomes sorcery or Black Magic.

H.P.B. defines black magic as an abuse or misuse of psychic powers, or of any *secret of nature, i.e.*, using them for selfish or evil purposes. When a person tries to bring undue personal psychological influence upon another, it becomes *unconscious black magic*. By our very act of living, we influence others around us, for good or ill.

Are "witches" real? Do they really exist? According to *Webster's Dictionary*, a witch is a person, especially a woman, who is credited with having, usually, malignant supernatural powers. Or, it refers to a woman who is believed to practice black magic, often with the aid of a devil or familiar spirits.

After the publication of this story, Hardy is reported as saying: “Since writing this story . . . some years ago I have been reminded by an aged friend who knew ‘Rhoda Brook’ that, in relating her dream, my forgetfulness has weakened the facts out of which the tale grew. In reality, it was while lying down on a hot afternoon that the incubus oppressed her and she flung it off, with the results on the body of the original described.” (John Wain, Introduction to ‘Thomas Hardy: Selected Stories,’ London: Papermac, 1966, xiii)

Keeping in mind the inaccuracies or omissions that may have taken place, we could still try to understand if there is an element of truth in all the “supernatural” occurrences. Theosophy explains that during sleep the astral body or *Linga Sarira*, the model or design body for the physical body, remains close to the sleeping form. While describing three kinds of astral bodies, in *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, H.P.B. speaks of *Linga Sarira* as the “Double” around which the physical body is formed. This double is born with man and dies with man and can never separate itself too far away from the body, in a normal person, other than a medium. H.P.B. points out that in black Magic the sorcerer may evoke the *Linga Sarira* of the sleeping person. However, when that is done the *Linga Sarira* could get forcibly separated from the physical, and then the person *may* die in sleep. *Linga Sarira* is connected to the physical form through a material cord. It is also important to keep in mind that a black magician or a person with powerful thoughts can implant a suggestion in the mind of a sleeping person because the will of the person is generally dormant or inactive during dreams. It is possible to give certain bent to the will of the sleeping person. (*Transactions*, p. 66 & pp. 76-77)

H.P.B. refers to the phenomenon of re-percussion, in which, when a blow is aimed at the astral double or phantom of a living person, that blow strikes or hurts the living person himself, at the same time, and in the very place at which the double was struck. Thus, the blow is re-percussed, as if rebounding from the image or double of the living person, and reaches the living person, wherever

he or she may be. (*Isis*, I, 360)

Likewise, it is possible for a person possessing occult knowledge concerning man and nature to help others by using that knowledge, especially if that person does not charge any money for the help given. In the story we read that Conjuror Trendle “would not take a farthing,” and whenever he was able to effect a miraculous cure, he would say “perhaps it is all chance” and immediately change the subject. The process by which he finds the cause and cure of Gertrude’s problem may perhaps be understood by the explanation of “divination” given by H.P.B.

In the article, “Universe in a Nutshell,” H.P.B. quotes Eliphas Levi regarding divinations, visions and prophetic dreams. Divination is the ability to see reflections of the Astral Light, an invisible register which carries impressions of past, present and future events. The paraphernalia and instruments of divination are simply the means for communication between the divinator and the one who consults him; they serve to fix and concentrate two Wills, bent in the same direction, upon the same sign or object that help to collect the reflections of the Astral fluid. Thus, one is enabled to see in the grounds of a coffee cup, or in the clouds, or in the white of an egg, the pictures from the astral light.

No doubt in the cure suggested by Trendle to Gertrude to put her withered arm on a hanged man’s neck, one notices the vagueness of the rationale for the treatment prescribed, as sometimes is the case with some of the alternative therapies of our day. It may be because the cures have been accidentally discovered without knowing the rationale which consists in knowing the hidden side of both man and nature. We may perhaps understand the cure suggested for the withered arm in the light of what H.P.B. says about the moon. She says that the moon is a dead yet a living body. She draws a parallel between the moon and its dual emanations and the graveyards on the earth. On the one hand, emanations from the graveyard or a corpse are unhealthy and destructive, but it is also true that there is great vital energy at work in the decaying corpse, and therefore,

“the grass and plants are nowhere more juicy and thriving than on the graves.” (*S.D.*, I, 156)

We must also take into account that the emotion underlying this entire tragedy is an intense feeling of envy on part of Rhoda Brook. The power of the “evil eye” is not a superstition but a reality. An “evil eye” is the destructive power of thought. Whenever we think, every thought coalesces itself with a unit of life-energy or an “elemental.” An elemental is a colourless force or energy without any quality, but when coalesced with thoughts, it acquires a quality or colour. Electricity is a colourless force, but when it is passed through a rod, the rod gets charged and anyone touching it will experience a shock. In the same way, the elementals carry bad thoughts to another person and cause him harm. Only when the person is pure—at the level of speech, body and mind—such bad thoughts are powerless. For instance, when people fix their thoughts in envy upon a person, who suddenly gets rich, he is adversely affected by them and may lose the money. So also, the envious glance of a person on a beautiful vase or car or any other object or person may result in damage or injury to the same. The elementals precipitate down the glance of the envious person. Envy is a powerful emotion. Envy is worse than jealousy because the feeling involved is that “If I cannot have then no other should have it.” In *Isis Unveiled* (I, 380), H.P.B. points out that certain persons possess the power of the evil eye—sometimes unconsciously. Thus: “There are persons who can kill toads by merely looking at them, and can even slay individuals. The malignance of their desire brings evil forces to a focus, and the death-dealing bolt is projected, as though it were a bullet from a rifle.”

We need to cultivate goodwill towards all. Inward purity is considered to be the greatest protection against the power of an “evil eye” or any other Black Art. Clear conscience and the desire to benefit humanity would act as a protecting shield. From a philosophical point of view, there can be nothing outside of our *karma*, although we may not know the causes. If an individual becomes a victim to an evil-eyed person, could it not be due to some karmic affinity between the victim and the malignant person?

A TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM Q. JUDGE

(Reprinted from Letters That Have Helped Me, pp. 291-92 & p. 296)

A FRIEND of old time and of the future—as such does William Q. Judge appear to me, as doubtless he does to many others in this and other lands. The first Theosophical treatise that I read was his Epitome of Theosophy; my first meeting with him changed the whole current of my life. I trusted him then, as I trust him now, and all those whom he trusted; to me it seems that “trust” is the bond that binds, that makes the strength of the Movement, for it is of the heart. And this trust he called forth was not allowed to remain a blind trust, for as time went on, as the energy, steadfastness and devotion of the student became more marked, the “real W. Q. J.” was more and more revealed, until the power that radiated through him became in each an ever-present help in the work. As such it remains to-day, a living centre in each heart that trusted him, a focus for the Rays of the coming “great messenger.”

Having been engaged in active T. S. [Theosophical Society] work in Boston for over seven years, it has been my Karma to be brought in touch with him under many different circumstances, the various crises, local and general, through which the Society has safely passed. In all these, his was the voice that encouraged or admonished, his the hand that guided matters to a harmonious issue. Of his extraordinary power of organization, his marvellous insight into the character and capacity of individuals, his ability of turning seeming evils into powers for good, I have had many proofs.

That he was a “great occultist” many know by individual experience, but none have fathomed the depths of his power and knowledge. The future will reveal much in regard to him that is now hidden, will show the real scope of his life-work. We know that to us that life-work has been an inestimable boon, and that through us it must be bestowed on others. The lines have been laid down for us by H. P. B., W. Q. J., and Masters, and we can take again our watchword, that which he gave us at the passing of

A TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM Q. JUDGE

H. P. B., “Work, watch and wait.” We will not have long to wait.

Speaking of Mr. Judge as anybody might have known him—as a human being like ourselves—he was humble, unassuming, modest, strong, patient, meek, courageous, an organizer beyond comparison, with powers similar to those possessed by H. P. B., and never using them in any way but to smooth the path for those who desired to follow the road to knowledge. He was kind and patient, as we do not often find with tremendous forcefulness; he had extraordinary powers of organization, with a perception that could look into the very motives and minds of others, could see traitors around him, could read the hearts of those desirous of injuring him, and yet in all his intercourse with them, paving the way for them, remaining ever kind. For the one who most injured him, he had only this to say when friends about him spoke their denunciations: “Never mind what others do. Put no one out of your heart. Go on with the work you see. Work will tell in time, and all these follies of others—follies of ignorance—will fall to nothing. Then, when the time comes, we will all have gained strength; when those who have fallen away for a while come back, there we will be with open arms, as strong brothers, to help them find the path and smooth out the effects of errors that they have created through ignorance.”

—ROBERT CROSBIE

It is necessary that just those souls in whom we have felt most of reality should disappear from us into the darkness, in order that we may learn that not seeing, but inwardly touching, is the true proof that our friend is there; in order that we may learn that the vanishing and dissipation of the outward, visible part, is no impairing or detriment to the real part which is invisible. This knowledge, and the realizing of it in our wills, are gained with the utmost difficulty, at a cost not less than the loss of the best of our friends....

—CHARLES JOHNSTON

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS INDIA

AS TO India and spirituality: It may have been comparatively easier for the Asiatic to get at and apply spiritual verities, but Asia is hardly Asia. It has become Europeanized. You see, we have to take into account three Indias—the physical and geographical, the psychic, and the third, moral or spiritual. Religious India (Hindu, Muslim, Parsi or Jewish) is psychic and so sectarian, contrary to Universal Brotherhood. The root of separative creeds is spoken of in *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, as Black Magic. Note what is said: “Results proceeding from erroneous but sincere beliefs.” Now there *is* a spiritual India—very, very difficult to touch. You need quietly to ponder over the distinction between religion and spirituality, between the good in man and the spiritual in him.

Indian civilization is said to endure because the old seeds of Wisdom still live in India’s astral atmosphere. A few fragments exist. The ideal of soul life persists as a real thing.

Indian civilization forces, like a great family tradition, endure when Indian people or the present-day descendants have become unworthy. Who sustain the Vedic and the Avesta culture? Who popularize Sufi teachings? The few minds and hearts of the West. Sanskrit got nearly drowned till the phonetics and grammar search of the Sanskritists revived it. What is true of words is equally true of ideas. A person if he happens to be a *real* Indian is more capable of osmosing Theosophy, but how many are cosmopolitan Indians, not afflicted with caste, etc.?

India is bound to rise when the nadir point is reached, and that will be soon. Only H.P.B.’s Theosophy and the work of Judge would have spared India the saddening experience of Western vulgarization. But Hindu orthodoxy and Adyar Neo-theosophy made India lose her opportunities.

Our India is going West, in more than one sense. Gandhiji and his philosophy are not the guiding powers at New Delhi. India’s

Karma as the Mother-Root of this Fifth Root-Race is strong but most peculiar. Whether America will dominate her or she succeed in inspiring the West—that is the question. It remains to be seen. Our masses as also our youths and children are wrongly taught. Not the best of the West but the worst is copied; of the ancient native lore there is the shell of superstition and falsities and no soul. Our Aryan culture survives in this sense: the innate ideas of the old Philosophy live at least as germs—belief in Reincarnation and Karma and therefore in soul and another world along more rational lines than in the Occident still prevails. We have to work to keep these divine intuitions alive in the masses and not only in the classes. For this purpose India needs a *class* of student-servers and that particular mission our U.L.T. Movement must fulfil.

India is copying the West—the ugly and not the noble and beautiful West. India has to be served, not because we have been born on its soil but because it is “the Motherland of my MASTER” as H.P.B. put it, and there is more to the words than ordinarily appears.

No doubt the condition of the country since freedom has been attained has gradually deteriorated. In one way it is natural. All slaves who suddenly attain freedom go wild for a time. That is happening with us who have experienced slavery for a couple of centuries, and now think that we are free. As a matter of fact we have less freedom today than we had under the British. Efficiency of Government has deteriorated and the moral principles of the people have been cast to the winds, but all the same we are making headway. We are also paying for the breach of faith that people in great numbers evinced even during the lifetime of Gandhiji. They took his philosophy as an expedient to gain freedom, though he warned them that the freedom gained that way would not be real freedom. That also we have seen. But I repeat, for all that the country is making headway.

Do not allow yourself to be dejected by all that you see around you of corruption, selfishness and inefficiency. They are the karmic outcome for people who for years and years have spoken of

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

themselves as followers of Gandhiji and have preached his doctrines without making any application of them to themselves. Even now many of them continually preach Gandhiji's doctrines while in their own lives they not only do not practise his ideas but actually go in a contrary direction. This is bound to produce for the country dire and calamitous results. It is at such times that our Theosophy shows its great power to help us to go on with our own effort at study, application and promulgation. Mr. Judge has given for us his message—"hold grimly on." The country has drifted into this chaotic condition, but it is only a passing phase and presently the balance will be reached. It is very clear from what is happening that it is not going to be condition of truth and non-violence that Gandhiji imagined, but it is also not going to be a country of black-markets and exploitation. It will have to find its own balance if the important problems facing it are to be on their way to solution.

WHEN you come to a good book, you must ask yourself, "Am I inclined to work as an Australian miner would? Are my pickaxes and shovels in good order, and am I in good trim myself, my sleeves well up to the elbow, and my breath good, and my temper?" And, keeping the figure a little longer, even at cost of tiresomeness, for it is thoroughly useful one, the metal you are in search of being the author's mind or meaning, his words are as the rock which you have to crush and smelt in order to get at it. And your pickaxes are your own care, wit, and learning; your smelting furnace is your own thoughtful soul. Do not hope to get at any good author's meaning without those tools and that fire; often you will need sharpest, finest chiselling, and patientest fusing, before you can gather one grain of the metal.

—JOHN RUSKIN

METAPHYSICS—SOME REFLECTIONS

V

LOOKING deep into the geological strata, our explorers are finding, now and then, the remains of animals, birds and reptiles in the strata, but no human skeletons are found, indicating that these animals must have existed in far earlier ages than man. We doubt if man existed side by side with the dinosaurs and other huge reptiles because no fossil pertaining to the *genus homo* (man) is discovered in the same stratum. The *Secondary Age* with its three subdivisions—Triassic, Jurassic and Chalk or Cretaceous periods, is considered to be the age of Reptiles, such as Megalosauri, Ichthyosauri, Plesiosauri, etc. Science denies the presence of man in that period. But if a man did not exist side by side with these monsters, how did man come to know of their existence? The old records of China, India and Egypt are full of accounts of these huge animals. Science admits the appearance of man only at the close of the *Tertiary Age*, comprising the Eocene, Miocene and Pliocene periods.

Esoteric Philosophy teaches that for a vast period of time, about 300 million years, our earth, man and all the kingdoms of nature, were in an astral stage. Before man and animals developed physical bodies, they had astral or ethereal forms. During the astral period, nature was proceeding with the task of preparing the prototypes on the astral plane. At the time of huge antediluvian animals, in the *Secondary Age*, animals absorbed so much of the total quantity of gross matter available that the astral man remained without a physical frame, *i.e.*, without the “coat of skin.” However, this “gross matter” was not such as we now know. Yet, it is not claimed that the period of the Plesiosaurus was the period of the man of the astral body—completely devoid of a *material one*. However, it appears that animals then were in a comparatively grosser form than man—though both man and animals did not have corporeal frames. The astral man could therefore survive in the same place with huge reptiles and birds without being afraid of them and there was no lessening of his sustenance by their consumption of food. Since his

body was of a very ethereal nature, he left no impression upon the mud, soft lava or volcanic dust, the death of one astral body after another left no fossils to be discovered by us along with those of the huge beasts and birds which were his companions. At the end of 300 million years, the process of hardening began, and the form of man was the first to become solid. This process of condensation was gradual. Man was throwing off one astral form after another, to acquire density and to clothe himself with a dense frame. As man thickened, drawing more and more the gross matter, the animals felt the draught, and they grew smaller in size. This process of solidification went on for a long time, but it was not until man had acquired sufficient solidity, that he made a mark or impression on any strata of the earth. “Physical man, we say, existed before the first bed of the Cretaceous rocks was deposited” (*S.D.*, II, 679), indicating thereby that the body of man hardened in the latter part of the *Secondary Age*.

When man’s frame hardened his fossils were formed and later discovered. When the form of man became solid, some of the astral prototypes of the animals from preceding periods (rounds) were also involved in the process of solidification. These fossils, so to say, solidified out of date. And thus man now finds, as tangible fossils, what were once the ethereal frames of the lower kingdoms. This is the reason why the fossil remains of man could be traced back to a few million years, whereas the fossil remains of flora and fauna go back to hundreds of millions of years. (*S.D.*, II, 68 fn.)

Thus we have fossil remains of creatures which never lived in our matter. When these fossils were discovered, it was argued that those huge creatures co-existed with the gross physical body of man. But when they failed to find the fossils of man, they concluded that man did not exist at that time. Science would have to first admit the existence of the astral body and astral senses and then develop these inner senses to discover the links in the astral plane. However, the fossils, which so to say, solidified out of date, form an exception to the impossibility of finding any missing links. In other words, had

the *astral prototypes* of these earlier animals not hardened when man's frame solidified, science would not be in possession of any missing links. "The Theosophic adepts insist that there are still in the earth bony remains of man, which carry his first appearance in a dense body many millions of years farther back than have yet been admitted, and these remains will be discovered by us before much time shall have rolled away," writes Mr. Judge.

On the questions of the origin of man and differentiation of species, science is still groping in the dark, encountering gaps and "missing links." Science has been searching for the "missing links" between the "Root-types" and the present living species or the fossils, and also the links that would show man having descended from the animals. Science has been unable to discover both classes of "missing links" with her present methods and apparatus because these links exist in the astral plane and are invisible to the physical eye.

The second type of "missing link," which science has been unable to discover, pertains to the *basic* or *Root-types* from which various species have differentiated. How to put existing organic forms in a continuous line of descent? This point is discussed in *the Secret Doctrine* with reference to ungulate mammals or hoofed animals. We see that both the horses and oxen are hoofed animals, but, while horses have a split hoof, the oxen have but one toe. The farthest science could go (but has not been able to) in tracing the root of the modern horse and oxen, are the families in the Eocene period (early Tertiary period). Thus, oxen could be traced to the family called, *Anoplotheridae*, while the modern horse seems to be derived from the family *Paleotheridae* in the Eocene period. *The Secret Doctrine* points out that in the above example, the differentiation and separation of the species from these two families in the Eocene period, leading to modern horse and oxen, may be partly ascribed to climactic influences, "natural selection," and other physical causes. But what is the "root" to which these two families could be traced back? "The root to which these two families lead back to is

UNKNOWN,” *i.e.*, unknown to science. The above two families belong to what is termed, the “midway point of evolution.” The “midway point of evolution” is that stage where the astral prototypes begin to pass into the physical and become subject to differentiation by intelligent forces of nature.

The *Root-type* which produced the above families after differentiation, from which the modern horse and oxen are derived, existed in the astral period. In the process of evolution during the astral period, an intelligent aid and intervention was provided by the great souls, high and holy men of immense power, knowledge and wisdom, known as *Dhyanis*. It is stated that these *Dhyanis* began evolution by alteration and additions in the Root-types in purely astral period. The impulses thus given carry themselves forward through the succeeding times. When the midway point of evolution is reached the species emerge on to the present stage without showing to man their evolution during the astral period. Hence, in the case of oxen and horses, science is unable to go back and trace the ultimate Root-type, which must belong to the astral region. That “root” according to occultism is “one of the *Seven* primeval physico-astral and bisexual root-types of the Mammalian Kingdom (animal). These were contemporaries of the early Lemurian races—the “UNKNOWN ROOTS” of Science. The period of astral races of early Lemurian age is the *Jurassic age* of Geology (*S.D.*, II, 734-736). Thus, it appears that the astral root-types could be traced back to mid-Tertiary period or *Jurassic age*.

The third type of “missing link” is the link that would help to trace back man and apes to a common ancestor. In the first place, there is no “common ancestor” of man and apes. The present-day apes have descended from the anthropoid apes produced through an unnatural union between the mindless man and the huge female animals. In those early periods, man and mammals had semi-astral form and the mammalian root-types were not far enough removed from the human types, and hence the union was invariably fertile. Further: “As time rolled on and the still semi-astral forms

consolidated into the physical, the descendants of these creatures were modified by external conditions until the breed, dwindling in size, culminated in the lower Apes of the Miocene period. With these the later Atlanteans renewed the sin of the ‘Mindless’—this time with full responsibility. The resultants of their crime were the species now known as Anthropoids.” (*S.D.*, II, 689)

Health and disease are concerned with the physical body, astral body, *prana* or life energy and mind. Some diseases are the result of wrong habits, lack of exercise, wrong diet and failure to observe ordinary laws of hygiene. Today, doctors increasingly recognize that virtually all disorders are psychosomatic, *i.e.*, they involve the continuous interplay of mind and body. A person’s psychological state is not only relevant in the generation of illness but it is crucial even in the process of healing. Mind is the container of the causes, of the seeds which sprout again and again as physical diseases or purely mental disorders. For example, stress manifests itself in the form of muscle tension, indigestion, ulcers, heart attack, etc. In the Shamanistic concept of illness, the causes of disease may be competition, jealousy, greed, wrongdoing or one of the several ways in which a person may have failed to keep the moral order. Mr. Judge writes: “A sound body is not expected, because our race is unsound everywhere.... A correct mental and moral position will at last bring a sound body, but the process may, and does involve sickness.” Hence sickness opens up the mental and moral nature, and discharges the inner sickness of the inner man into the physical plane, writes Mr. Judge. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 120)

“All illnesses, diseases, and abnormalities of the body come from astral planes,” writes Mr. Judge. (*ibid.*, p. 162). Mental disposition, which harbours anger, hatred, ill-feeling, criticism, envy, pride, jealousy or fear is an unhealthy state and must bring ruin if the tendencies are not corrected, because such thoughts seriously affect the astral body on which the physical body depends. The vital airs or the astral currents circulate in the astral body just as blood circulates through the physical body. Our thoughts affect the astral

body and the astral currents. For instance, anger produces violent shaking which forms cracks in the astral; envy makes it cloudy; fear shrivels it up, and sustained vanity has an explosive effect on the astral body—breaking it up into pieces. The physical body, following the master plan of its astral counterpart, exhibits the effects in terms of health or ill-health, disease and various kinds of disorders. Mr. Judge explains the relationship between the astral body and the physical one, thus: “The inner currents emanate from their own centres and are constantly in motion. They are affected by thoughts and the reflection of the body in its physiological changes. They each act upon the other incessantly....It is by means of these subtle currents—called vital airs when translated from the Sanskrit—that impressions are conveyed to the mind above.”

“The seeds of disease being located primarily in the mind, they begin to exhaust themselves through the agency of the inner currents that carry the appropriate vibrations down upon the physical plane. If left to themselves—aside from palliations and aids in throwing off—they pass out into the great crucible of nature and one is free from them forever. Therefore, pain is said to be a kind friend who relieves the real man of a load of sin.” (*W. Q. J. Series No. 22*, p. 18)

The practices of mind-cure or metaphysical healing interfere with *pranic* currents. The disease which is working itself out from the mind to the physical body, by the agency of these currents is interfered with. These practices reverse the direction of these downward vibrations, so that they carry back the cause of the disease to the mind, where it is replanted with the addition of the purely selfish desire of the healer. Thus, replanted in the mind, it waits there until an opportunity occurs to manifest either in this life or in the next birth. Thus, we only delay the day of settling. This returning back the downward vibrations to the mind sometimes is so great and sudden that insanity results and in some cases diseases with violent character sets in.

(To be continued)

INCIDENTS—HYPNOTISM

THOUGH the evening hum of the city had reached its regular pitch, yet an inexplicable quietness enveloped the precincts of Govinda Shastri's house. Nature herself, it appeared, had provisioned for places of quietness, even in the midst of man-made din and busyness. Some of his students—informal admirers of his thoughts and life, mostly—ascribed this strange peace to the spiritual influences radiating from the occupant of the house.

Vibhatsu, one such student-admirer, entered the house with a spring in his steps, eager to share the strange things he had seen in a hypnotic session. The mist of the incense from evening *puja* had begun to fade, but the lingering aroma greeted him. Govinda had just placed his worn-out copy of *Bhagavad Gita* on the bookshelf, and Vibhatsu felt that this time too, the teacher had anticipated the student's unplanned arrival. "How does he come to know in advance things that are to happen to people who are to visit him, every time!", Vibhatsu wondered.

Govinda's *puja* was not to be mistaken for ritualistic worship of any outside deity, though. It involved no external props or prayers but was an inner communion. It was, as Plato remarks, "the ardent turning of the soul toward the divine; not to ask for any particular good, as in the common meaning of prayer, but for good itself—for the universal Supreme Good." Imbued with the light of the *Gita* which shines in the sincere practitioner—and not merely a reciter—he perceived the *Vasudeva* seated in the heart of all. Thus, his "*puja*" was neither physical nor verbal, nor was it tinged with personal elements, but was a theurgic pursuit for the supreme Good of All.

Vibhatsu said, "Govindji, have you ever seen a hypnotist perform? I wonder how they do it!" Govinda gazed into the eyes of the disciple, and though he knew without being told, he asked, "Hope you didn't offer yourself as a subject for the experiment?"

"I wish I had! Strangely, something or the other conspired and I was prevented."

“Ah, providential, I must say.”

“Providential? Why I wish I could experience it!”

Govinda turned his attention to the flower vase on the window latch. The green tinge of the glass was darkened by soot. That anything must be out of order in *his* house was surprising to Vibhatsu, but he also knew that the very thing in the vicinity of Govinda was symbolic.

Vibhatsu said, “My friend offered herself as a subject though. In trance, she was told that she would forget her name upon waking up. I didn’t believe it would work, but it actually happened! It was only when the suggestion was removed in the next trance that she could recollect her name. Imagine the control the operator had over her! On the way home I asked how she felt in trance, and she said that though she remembered her name internally, she couldn’t get herself to *express it*. Same with other ‘tricks’ she was subjected to. For example, she knew that mistaking me for her favourite celebrity was foolish, yet she could *not help but implicitly obey* the suggestion made in trance.”

Examining the vase, Govinda started wiping the soot. “In hypnosis, the *thinker*, who is the sovereign entity of your friend’s body, was forcefully suppressed or paralyzed. This is not something anybody should desire for oneself, right? The *Rajah* of the senses was stupefied and severed from his legitimate possessions—the senses, the various faculties and the body. In this state of passive reception, any suggestion can be planted, and the poor subject helplessly obeys whatever is suggested.”

“So... being in hypnosis weakens our thinking capacity and will?”

“Think about it. Once self-choice and will is suppressed, what remains? Great are the troublesome *Karma* accruing to both the hypnotist and the hypnotised.”

“I never thought about this,” said Vibhatsu, “I feel sorry for my friend! We would have avoided it if we knew the dangers.”

“Dear child, no evil comes from outside oneself. In this limitless

Universe, the only power which can harm man comes from within himself.

Ye suffer from yourselves.
 None else compels,
 None other holds you that ye live and die,
 And whirl upon the wheel, and hug and kiss
 Its spokes of agony...

“As the great Tataghata said, ‘He whose hand has no wound may touch poison. Poison harms not one who has no wound. No evil is to him who does no evil.’

“How exactly is hypnosis dangerous? Can you explain more?” asked Vibhatsu.

“In ordinary life, every organ and every cell receives and throws out impressions perpetually. The thinker—lower *mind*, you may say—perceives it and is modified by it.” Pointing to the vase, he said, “You think you see this vase? No, it is the *idea* of the vase you see, constructed through the impressions received by the eyes, and deeply tainted by your biases and conceptions. We are constantly presented with these incessantly changing impressions, and thus we perpetually lose sight of the changeless Self—the only Reality.”

“And during hypnosis?” asked Vibhatsu, watching Govinda clean the vase dexterously.

“In hypnosis, the power of the subject’s body to throw impressions is temporarily paralyzed, thus allowing the *impressions of the astral body* to manifest. Thus we find subjects describing things which are abnormal and otherwise inexplicable. But, do not mistake these impressions to be any Real than the illusions of physical life. None of these point to Truth, which is to be sought only in the unchanging Intelligence which perceives all changes.”

“How, then, did my friend mistake me to be a celebrity upon waking, and how did she forget her name?”

“The sovereignty of the thinking mind can be violated through the power of the operator’s will. The mind can be made *numb*, and

a suggestion planted in the trance, which will be faithfully and blindly carried out upon waking. This is why your friend could *sense* the foolishness of mistaking you for a celebrity, and why she *knew* her name, and yet could not pronounce it. Some subjects feel this inner dichotomy, and others don't. Many crimes have been committed by such induced ideas; human law punishes the helpless and irresponsible medium of crime, while the real culprit—that is, the hypnotist—escapes."

However, he added that those who teach Divine Wisdom emphasise: "By means of this power, one who has it and uses it on his fellowmen, paralyzes that channel in the brain of his subject through which the subject, as Ego, operates and controls his brain. This action prevents the subject from receiving any other impressions than those suggested by the operator, in ordinary cases....In this state the subject may be impressed to perform any kind of action at some subsequent time, and will do so" (*Answers to Questions on The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 32). "The absolute surrender of will and self-consciousness to the hypnotiser being the characteristic feature of the hypnotic state." (*Lucifer*, Vol. I, October 1887)

"So... will this leave any lasting impact on my friend's mind? How can I help her?"

Govinda placed the vase on the ledge. "The magnetic connection once forged between the operator and the subject goes on till the death of the operator. Until then, the ideas and moral character of the hypnotist influence her. Apart from struggling with one's own lower moral tendencies, she has an additional influence now to deal with. She exposes herself to influences *other than the operator*, too. In the seemingly void space around us, there are "millions of beings, *not literally spiritual*, for they have all, like the animalculæ unseen by the naked eye, certain forms of matter, though matter so delicate, air-drawn, and subtile, that it is, as it were, but a film, a gossamer, that clothes the spirit....Yet, in truth, these races differ most widely....*some of surpassing wisdom, some of horrible*

malignity; some hostile as fiends to men, others gentle as messengers between earth and heaven. (Bulwer-Lytton, *Zanoni*)

“Like attracts like. Given the general character of the masses, one can attract from the astral only entities from the lower spheres. And, contact with these entities is not good for man.

“How can she be helped? How can she overcome this?”

“She can help herself by *becoming active*, by deliberately overcoming every tendency to passivity. She has to be vigilant of her mental condition, and intentionally make herself active, and assert her right to make moral choices. She must arouse her will-power. As a Teacher once said, “Every indication that the bad influence was still working within him should be taken as a challenge to control his thoughts and compel them to dwell upon pure, elevating, spiritual things, at every hazard and with a determination to suffer anything rather than give way.” (*The Theosophist*, May 1880)

“Thus, she may regain control over herself.”

The silence in the room itself seemed to be expectant of more words of wisdom from the Teacher. The rays of the evening sun shone on the vase casting the shadow on the opposite wall. Vibhatsu read the shadow of the engraving: “यान्ति मयाजि नोऽपि माम्”—those who worship Me, come unto Me. (*Gita*, IX: 25)

He was determined to know more so that he can be the better able to help and teach others.

I HAVE never met a person, I do not care what his condition, in whom I could not see possibilities. I do not care how much a man may consider himself a failure, I believe in him, for he can change the thing that is wrong in his life anytime he is prepared and ready to do it. Whenever he develops the desire, he can take away from his life the thing that is defeating it. The capacity for reformation and change lies within.

—PRESTON BRADLEY

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

In an article that appeared in *American Scientist* magazine, excerpted and adapted from the book *As If by Design: How Creative Behaviours Really Evolve* by Edward A. Wasserman, we read that we do not fully understand how creative behaviours originate and evolve. For instance, it may appear that the “butterfly stroke” used by swimmers, which is suitable for specific situations, has been foresightedly designed. However, when we go deeper into the history of such innovations, we discover that “an action that might seem natural or obvious was in fact developed by many people through trial and error.” There is a need to understand how creative behaviours originate and evolve.

A simple law of behaviour called the *law of effect* is at work in the creative process, which “mechanically strengthens the actions that have succeeded in the past over actions that have either failed or been maladaptive.” This law “debunks the myth of creative genius” and is closely similar to and as controversial as Charles Darwin’s theory of natural selection as it asserts that creative forces lie outside rather than inside of us. We do not deliberately, foresightedly and intelligently design our own behaviour, but that it is shaped by our own past history and by the unique circumstances. Although it is a trial-and-error process, it can generate many innovations that can advance the human condition and are erroneously attributed to flashes of creative insight or foresightful design. The law of effect that drives one towards retaining successful actions and eliminating unsuccessful ones, seems to be our best means of surviving in this uncertain world. “It operates in all realms of human endeavour: sports, the arts, politics, science, medicine, and technology.”

Often “ground-breaking innovations appear to be strokes of genius, but they are most often the product of context, consequences, and coincidence,” writes Wasserman. Context refers to things happening at a particular time and in a particular place. In a larger

sense, context may be a particular period in history determined by ideas and beliefs of that period. For the individuals, context refers to the circumstances surrounding them and their own personal experiences. Normally, people prefer to follow routine behaviour. It is only during uncommon circumstances that novel actions emerge. Only a good outcome will reinforce a novel action or behaviour. The third factor is coincidence. Sometimes chance brings people and possibilities together, and good fortune results from taking full advantage of those possibilities. Thus, “The insightful or eureka moment is a myth: an altogether naïve and fanciful account of human progress. Innovations actually arise from an intricate web of historical, circumstantial, and adventitious influences,” writes Edward A. Wasserman. (*American Scientist*, January-February 2023)

Creativity may be regarded as a quality. It is not a mysterious quality possessed only by a few. This quality, one can bring to bear upon any activity. Anyone who is ready to go beyond the routine, ready to explore new possibilities, or ready to adopt a new approach to a familiar problem may be regarded as creative. Creativity is the manifestation or expression of latent skills, potentialities or ideas from within, without. The fact that creativity is a combination of effort, experience and inspiration was very well conveyed by Thomas Edison who said, “Creativity is one per cent inspiration and ninety-nine per cent perspiration.” A scientist gets a flash of insight or intuition after having worked in the laboratory, or after solving some equations and making some observations. The ground-work or a series of experiences prepares the mind and makes it receptive to the ideas which flow from our inner, divine nature. A creative person is willing to try many different approaches, even if they fail. “Both instinct and intuition have been gained in no other way than through observation and experience,” writes Mr. Crosbie. He describes intuition as the sum total of all our past experiences.

Flashes of intuition do not come from a deep thought; it comes *after* we have indulged in deep thought. Deep thought is like a camera. The intuition does not come from the camera but from the

direction in which the camera is pointed. If we turn in deep thought, to the causal source from which these effects flow, *i.e.*, to the divine world, we get pictures, impressions, ideas, or flashes from that world.

The most common form of intuition is gut feeling, based on experiences in one's own field of work. Thus, for instance, the old family doctor could diagnose typhoid fever "by the smell" because of his vast experience with the disease; so also, the observant psychiatrist learns to judge many things about his patients "by intuition." He makes a shrewd guess by observing the patient. Any professional can become "intuitive" about his own business, writes Dr. Berne.

Do we have the right to believe whatever we want to believe? Sometimes what is considered to be right is something that is accepted by "the wilfully ignorant" person who is cornered by evidence and mounting opinion. Such a person may maintain that climate change is hoax no matter what others say and that they have a right to believe it. But belief is not knowledge. It would be absurd to say, "It is raining, but I do not believe that it is raining." Beliefs can be false without the support of evidence or reason.

"Some beliefs, such as personal values, are not deliberately chosen; they are 'inherited' from parents and 'acquired' from peers," inadvertently, or assumed from hearsay. This shows that the problem is not always with accepting any belief but rather with the sustaining of such beliefs and refusing to discard those which may be ethically wrong. A belief that is morally wrong is also thought to be false. There are beliefs that are acquired and retained in an irresponsible way by ignoring the evidence; accepting gossip, rumour, or testimony from unreliable sources, even when it does not go well with one's other beliefs.

It is true that we should not try to justify our belief based on blind faith or sentiment. Yet, "in any complex society, one has to rely on the testimony of reliable sources, expert judgment and the

best available evidence.” Moreover, according to the psychologist William James, “right to believe” can establish a climate of religious tolerance. We know that certain religious creeds have engaged in repression, torture and countless wars against non-believers, “that can cease only with the recognition of a mutual ‘right to believe.’” However, it must be remembered that rights have limits and carry responsibilities. When people insist on believing that earth is flat and many such things that are contrary to facts, we might say that their mind is closed, “not open for learning. They might be ‘true believers,’ but they are not believers in the truth.”

No doubt, every individual is free to believe certain things, but we must also remember that “beliefs shape attitudes and motives, guide choices and actions,” and they affect community or society. Let us remember that “some beliefs are also dangerous. And to those, we have no right,” writes Daniel DeNicolais, professor and chair of philosophy at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania and the author of *Understanding Ignorance: The Surprising Impact of What We Don’t Know* (2017).

Belief is not knowledge. Yet, a lot of our “knowledge” is only belief. We are continually influenced by the ideas of the people around us. When we are asked about a certain political situation, or burning moral issues like conversion, or conducting nuclear tests, etc., we would repeat what we have read in the newspapers and magazines. Mr. Crosbie says that in the fields of religion, science and politics we tend to follow the suggestion given, without trying to verify its truth or falsehood or reach the basis for the same. The foundation upon which the suggestion rests is taken for granted even in the most important things in life.

This is especially true of religious beliefs. Religion is a matter of beliefs and emotions in which there is no scope or need for enquiry, questions, seeking of explanation. It is out of moral cowardice, out of fear of public opinion that we are afraid to step out of the circle of the wrong religious ideas, and continue to follow the beaten track.

Paradoxically, we have a right and a duty to believe whatever

we want to believe but only after application of reason or intuition. Mr. Crosbie says that Truth always explains. When we have the explanation, we have the truth. Each has to make his own verification of the truth. We do not need to accept the teachings on anyone else's authority or endorsement. "We are to examine thoughtfully all that comes to us from...any source wearing the aspect of truth, and try faithfully to see wherein it may be true, laying it aside, if we fail, as fruit not ripe for us yet. We are not to yield up our intuitions to any being, while we may largely doubt our judgment at all times," advises Mr. Judge. We need to consult wise people, good books and above all our own inner nature. We may go wrong in our judgment, but the important thing is to learn self-reliance and self-rule. From the moral point of view, H.P.B.'s advise is, "You have no right to believe in evil [of another person, religion, community, etc.] until you get undeniable proof of the correctness of the statement."

Optimists are considered to be those who always look at the bright side of life. Optimism and pessimism is based on our response to successes and failures. It is evident that the past few years would have been challenging even for a hardcore optimist. Even the current year may be looked upon as challenging for an optimist having to face after-effects of pandemic and worsening climate-crisis. If ever there was a time to be pessimistic about optimists, it would seem to be right now. But we may keep before us the example of Dr. Martin Seligman who was a committed pessimist during youth, in the 1960s, as he had to face several adversities, such as, his father becoming paralyzed and depressed after a series of strokes, from which he never recovered. Seligman was denied promotions and prizes despite being at the top of his high-school class. Yet, he went on to become the founder of the field known as Positive Psychology. He put forward the phenomenon of 'learned helplessness': "The idea, internalised by some of us that nothing we do matters and so there is no point in trying," which is the opposite of optimism.

Saligman's research shows that optimism can offer some protection against the onset of post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD. According to him pessimism also is useful, as seeing the worst-case scenario can be an advantage under the right circumstances. "On the whole, optimism is good for us. Optimists tend to live longer, be more successful professionally and be less likely to experience depression and other illnesses." (*The Economic Times*, February 22, 2023, Courtesy *The New York Times*)

Optimism or hope is misinterpreted to mean wishful thinking. True hope is never a fool's blind optimism, but as Christopher Lasch expresses it, "Hope implies a deep-seated trust in life....[which] would not be worth much if it had not survived disappointments in the past, while knowledge that the future holds further disappointments demonstrates the continuing need for hope." Thus, it appears that true optimism is inseparable from healthy pessimism and *vice versa*, and it is best expressed by the idiom, "to hope for the best, but prepare for the worst." It means to be optimistic, and yet, be ready for adversity; to expect the best result but being ready with options in case it is the worst.

Healthy pessimism can take the form of deliberately *imagining* the very worst that could happen, and thus preparing oneself. It involves *living out* the future anxieties and fears, as was done by Mr. Crosbie. He writes: "I used to look calmly and dispassionately at the very worst picture I could conjure up as happening to myself, and found it helpful in getting rid of 'fear of consequences.' I mentally took account of the very worst, saw myself in it with all that it entailed, went through it in all its parts leaving myself alone, dishonoured, stripped of everything. Those very things have happened to me, but I knew them, and went on undismayed. Had I not done it, I would not be where I am to-day." (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 85)

Positive thoughts and feelings call forth, the best efforts; so that the thing that seemed impossible moves into the area of the possible. When we make a positive formulation, *it is a direct affirmation of the will.*

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(Sd.) DAKSHA S. PARAJIA
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