

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 74, No. 1

November 17, 2003

THE HIGHER SYMPATHY

[Reprinted from THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, November 1961.]

Thou hast to be prepared to answer Dharma, the stern law, whose voice will ask thee at thy first, at thy initial step:

“Hast thou complied with all the rules, O thou of lofty hopes?

“Hast thou attuned thy heart and mind to the great mind and heart of all mankind? For as the sacred River's roaring voice whereby all Nature-sounds are echoed back, so must the heart of him 'who in the stream would enter,' thrill in response to every sigh and thought of all that lives and breathes.”

—*The Voice of the Silence*

WITH this issue begins a new volume of this monthly devoted to the living of the higher life. For years it has tried to bring some knowledge and inspiration to its readers so that they may learn the art of better living for themselves and of spiritual service of their fellows.

Many are the men and women in the East as in the West who are desirous of changing and improving their own mode of living, of making progress in the higher or spiritual life. Ancient Philosophy teaches that human happiness and human progress are not dependent on social reform, or on religious institutions, any more than on political legislation. These cannot bring about the true inner reform and make a man noble and unselfish. The only true reform is that of the individual by himself, through his own efforts. The higher life begins with thought and ideation, and THE

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

THE HIGHER SYMPATHY	1
MIND—CREATIVE AND REACTIVE	5
REFLECTIONS ON KARMA	11
THE DISCIPLE'S MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE	14
SPIRITUAL BASIS FOR UNITY	19
BREAKING THE FETTERS	24
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	28

THEOSOPHY COMPANY (INDIA) PRIVATE LTD.

40 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020, India

THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT is dedicated to helping men to think nobly and to awaken those divine intuitions which form the unseen foundations of the human heart.

He who lives for himself stagnates, and so the essence of the higher life is devotion to the interests of others. The aspirant to the spiritual life is told to respond “to every sigh and thought of all that lives and breathes”; and yet he is required to remain cheerful under all circumstances. How this seemingly double role can be played has been a matter of confusion for some.

Ordinary personal sympathy for others' suffering is not true compassion. Compassion is the crown of the spiritual life and the mother of all the virtues. It can never be separated from soul-joy or *ananda*. Wrong teachings are sometimes given out in the name of Theosophy and these lead to wrong practices. One such practice is pulling “a long face,” which some fancy denotes their sympathy with suffering humanity. This has led to the belief that Theosophy envelops people in gloom and forbids joy! The real student has to learn to be cheerful and to radiate the active peace which is joy on all those he contacts. But this is not frivolous hilarity.

This does not mean that he is unresponsive to the cry of woe. The sympathy of the ordinary man is derived very often from the principle of Kama and is therefore emotional. His thrill in response to the suffering of humanity is but a feeling, temporary and short-lived. When it is aroused intensely it overpowers him. For example, great calamities, individual and collective, almost benumb him and imprison his mind to such an extent that he refuses to seek the *raison d'être* for the catastrophe or for his own mood. With his mental vision clouded and knowledge absent, the “sympathizer” is left without any intelligent means of rendering help.

This is not the kind of “sympathy” required of a student. True compassion is divine. It wells up like a spring fed by the Higher Self. It grows through a series of lives. It is strengthened by countless small acts of sacrifice and results finally in the Great Renunciation of the Perfected Soul. How can we develop this higher sympathy which is compassion?

Gaining some understanding of the laws of Nature, one recognizes that suffering has a purpose and appreciates what is said in *The Secret Doctrine*:

The Occultists...regard physical nature as a bundle of most varied illusions on the plane of deceptive perceptions... recognize in every pain and suffering but the necessary pangs of incessant procreation: a series of stages toward an ever-growing perfectibility, which is visible in the silent influence of never-erring Karma, or *abstract* nature....Woe to those who live without suffering. Stagnation and death is the future of all that vegetates without a change. And how can there be any change for the better without proportionate suffering during the preceding stage? Is it not those only who have learnt the deceptive value of earthly hopes and the illusive allurements of external nature who are destined to solve the great problems of life, pain, and death? (II, 475)

A comprehension of this teaching produces inner equipoise; if there is real heart comprehension, then sympathy with others' woes is deeply felt, but without the loss of that equipoise. These two, sympathy and equipoise, give birth to wisdom, to the power to judge how to act for the benefit of others. By the light of this wisdom and right judgement the Soul perceives the cause of any particular suffering and then its cure. When this is experienced by an earnest student-practitioner, his passive sympathy has become active and enlightened compassion—the higher feeling. The service prompted by the higher feeling is spiritual service, which is very different from ordinary social and other kinds of service though it may include practical, tangible help; and the joy experienced by the server is also different from and superior to the “high spirits” that people sometimes equate with joy.

Sympathy must therefore always be expressed and help rendered without emotionalism and with proper judgement. It needs to be recognized, for instance, that poverty in itself is not necessarily bad Karma. The want of money is not as great a cause of trouble as the desire for money is. We may help and sympathize with others

who have no money; but it should be on account of their failure to see that within themselves is the realization of happiness and that in fact they should not depend upon anything outside for true enjoyment.

The higher sympathy or compassion is also poles apart from namby-pamby toleration of everything in its holy name. Compassion is mistranslated as the wish to avoid giving pain under any circumstance. The surgeon's knife gives pain, but withholding it when needed may be cruelty.

It was not for nothing that H.P.B. stressed knowledge and wisdom, unbiased and clear judgement, side by side with selflessness, earnestness and devotion, as necessary to those on whom the guidance of the Movement would depend. For, the closer the adherence in motive and in conduct to impersonal justice, the nearer the approach to true compassion. One is not possible without the other. Service indiscriminately performed will not save the individual or the world; discriminative service, in the spirit of the compassion which is justice, may.

In rendering service we recognize that we are being served. This unfolds the virtue of gratitude, not only to those who sacrifice on our behalf, but also to those who give us the opportunity to make our own sacrifices. The student has also to learn the graciousness of receiving. Generously giving and graciously and gratefully receiving, he is full of enjoyment and satisfaction.

The spiritual servant of humanity does not *seek* happiness. Cheerfulness is the natural outcome of spiritual contentment “with whatever cometh to pass.” That contentment is not passive resignation to the ills of existence or personal enjoyment of the good things of life, but an active response to both. Thoughtful sympathy is a spiritualizing influence. The attitude of thoughtful sympathy begets insight and courage to cope with all things, including the ills of life, with a cheerful attitude. Rightly has it been said: “He who smiles achieves.”

MIND—CREATIVE AND REACTIVE

WHAT is it that distinguishes a man from an animal? It is self-consciousness and the power to think and choose. These arise from the mind. Ordinarily, the mind is considered to be immaterial. Or, it is taken to be the “name for the action of the brain in evolving thought.” Thus, it is believed that if there is no brain, there can be no mind. Supporters of the theory of “Artificial Intelligence” feel it probable that computers and computer-guided robots will eventually—with their superior intelligence—make human beings superfluous. They have arrived at this conclusion by comparing the electronic circuitry of computers with the human brain. But, the brain is only an instrument of the mind.

Where did mind come from? Theosophy teaches that there was a point in the course of evolution, when man in form was devoid of mind. However, he had developed a brain that was of much *better* and *deeper* capacity than that of any other animal. Man was given the light of mind by Divine Beings—*Manasaputras*—in a manner comparable to one candle lighting many. As a result, man was endowed with self-consciousness and with the power to think and choose. There are three aspects of mind: (1) When involved in desires and passions, the mind is *reactive*, making man an animal-man. (2) When the mind functions on its own plane—thinking and reasoning—it is mind *per se*. (3) When the mind works in conjunction with the spiritual nature, it is *creative*—making man divine.

It is important to recognize that it is the *mind*, and not the senses, that leads us astray. As Shri Krishna tells Arjuna, “The senses, moving toward their appropriate objects, are producers of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, which come and go and are brief and changeable; these do thou endure...” (*Gita*, II). Senses and organs produce sensation, when they contact external objects. For instance, when you put ice-cream on the tip of your tongue, the tongue reports that it is cold and sweet, but it is the mind that intervenes and says, “I like it, I want more of it.” We are cautioned

in *The Voice of the Silence*: “Thou shalt not let thy senses make a playground of thy mind.” Our ordinary, everyday mind is reactive. The reactive mind does not really *act*, but it *reacts*. That is, it does not act *spontaneously*, but requires some stimulus to set it in motion. When we see an advertisement, where a beautiful girl in silk gown recommends buying soap or toothpaste of a particular brand, we are induced to buy it. Aldous Huxley observes that while watching such advertisements, children should be taught that there is no earthly connection between the merits of the toothpaste and the beautiful girl in the silk gown advertising it. So also when someone speaks angrily we hit back without a moment's thought. Thus, we have fixed responses to given stimuli. It is as if we are programmed.

In a reactive mind, there are fixed moulds of thinking, feeling and action. We have fixed ideas about people: a *Gujarati* person is always money-minded, a *Marwari* is always stingy, etc. Mr. Judge compares the human mind with the flanged wheel of an engine. He writes, “Each mind has a groove, and is not naturally willing to run in the natural groove of another mind. Hence often comes friction and wrangle.” He remarks that a flanged-wheel of an engine can run only on a track of particular size. If you take off the flange, and make the face of the wheel broader, then it can run on any track. The human mind, too, is generally a “one-track” mind. For instance, only those who share our views and opinions become our friends. We need to learn to adjust our mind to other minds. Instead of *reacting* angrily to criticism, bad behaviour or selfishness, we could always pause and reflect, “Why does he behave the way he does?” When criticized for being proud or stingy, we can always do some soul-searching. If the criticism applies, we must take steps to improve; if not, we may ignore it. Similarly, when we are up against a difficult situation or difficult persons, 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 Mme. Blavatsky suggests, we must learn to *act* from within and not just *react* to stimuli from without.

The creative mind *responds*, instead of reacting. The creative mind loves *unconditionally*. The creative mind is always willing to see the brighter side of life, which enables a person to say, “With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams it is still a beautiful world.” The creative mind makes for an emotionally positive person. As Hugh Downs observes, “A happy person is not a person in a certain set of circumstances but rather a person with a certain set of attitudes.”

At another level we have the creative mind as displayed by a musician, a writer or a philosopher. Madame Blavatsky observes:

The higher part of the mind is connected with the Spiritual soul or Buddhi, the lower with the animal soul, the Kama principle. There are persons who never think with the higher faculties of their mind at all; those who do so are the minority...and are...*beyond* the average human kind. These will think even upon ordinary matters on the *higher* plane. Certainly it [the habit of thinking on a higher plane] can be developed with great difficulty, a firm determination, and through much self-sacrifice. But it is comparatively easy for those who are born with the gift. Why is it that one person sees poetry in a cabbage or a pig with her little ones, while another perceives in the loftiest things only their lowest and most material aspect, will laugh at the “music of the spheres,” and ridicule the most sublime conceptions and philosophies? The difference depends simply on the innate power of the mind to think on the higher or on the lower plane. The person who is endowed with this faculty of thinking about even the most trifling things from the *higher* plane of thought has, by virtue of that gift which he possesses, a plastic power of formation, in his very imagination. Whatever such a person may think about, his thought will be so far more intense than the thought of an ordinary person, that by this very intensity it obtains the power of creation. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, 1973 ed., pp. 205-6)

How do we convert the reactive mind into the creative mind? By watching our thoughts. Often thoughts just *arise* in the mind and we are not even aware of them. Most of the time our thoughts

are random and confused—arising out of a chain of associations. For instance, mention of H. P. Blavatsky reminds us of Russia, which in turn reminds us of an airport, and that in turn of our last trip abroad, and so on and on. Before long we find ourselves thinking at a tangent.

The first step is to *become aware*. We have to become aware of our emotions and feelings—happy or sad, worried or angry. Practising awareness helps us control our emotions. All kinds of thoughts creep into our mind. When someone knocks at the door, we may open the door, but may or may not allow the person to enter. Similarly, we may choose not to allow the unwholesome thoughts to inhere in our mind. Mind is like water that takes the shape of the vessel it is poured into—it *becomes* that to which it is devoted. For instance, when we are planning a holiday abroad or planning to have a birthday party, we begin to picturize it so vividly that our mind is totally identified with the situation. We then say, “I can't help thinking about it.” Is this desirable? The mind may be compared to a horse. Would it be a good thing if the horse took the rider to his stable and not where the rider wanted to go?

We seldom think for ourselves. We merely *absorb* the ideas and opinions of people around us or from magazines and newspapers—sponge-like. It is seldom that we exercise the power of choice. We desire things that have the sanction and approval of the majority. For instance, a boy wants to become a doctor because it is considered prestigious. We are content to follow the beaten track.

So long as we wish to conform and are governed by the opinions of the people around, we cannot develop intuition. *Light on the Path* suggests, “Only he who is untameable, who cannot be dominated, who knows he has to play the lord over men, over facts, over all things save his own divinity, can arouse this faculty.” Mr. Crosbie remarks:

From our birth, we are surrounded by those who suggest certain ideas to us as true, and we follow the suggested ideas. There is very little *original* thought anywhere, and particularly

is this true...in politics, religion, science. Whatever system of thought is presented to us we adopt....This power of suggestion must still be used....If Truth exists and is possible to us—the Truth in religion, science and philosophy—it must first come to us by suggestion from Those who know....But when the true is suggested to us, there is always a means presented by which we may see and verify it. That means is not anyone's authority or endorsement, but in the fact that we can perceive it and test it for ourselves. *The final authority is the man himself.* (*Universal Theosophy*, pp. 108-111)

We are being influenced by a thousand voices. But the spiritual aspirant must follow only *his* sense of right and wrong. He must have the courage to defy, if required, the opinion of the society, community or even the religion he belongs to. He has to consult wise people, good books and above all his own inner nature. He may go wrong in his judgement, but it would eventually lead to *intuition with certainty*. We also need to withdraw our mind from too much involvement with *Kama*—passions and desires. Mme. Blavatsky writes:

This “Mind” is *manas*, or rather its lower reflection, which whenever it disconnects itself, for the time being, with *kama*, becomes the guide of the highest mental faculties, and is the organ of the free-will in physical man. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, 1973 ed., p. 64)

The Voice of the Silence compares mind to a mirror: “Mind is like a mirror; it gathers dust while it reflects....” Just as a mirror gathers dust in the process of reflection, so also the mind gathers the “dust of attachment,” “dust of illusion” and “dust of biases.” This prevents our arriving at proper judgements or conclusions. For instance, when there is the “dust of attachment,” *i.e.*, when our thinking is guided by emotions, we are not able to see things clearly. Often there is a compulsive drive to talk repeatedly about our problem to all the people we meet. We find that we are more interested in narrating the problem than having the solution.

We need to make our mind porous and receptive to the guidance

from our divine nature. For this we must acquire breadth and depth of mind. *Breadth* of mind means, in one sense, a large scope for awareness. It also means acquiring *non-parochial* views. We must be able to welcome truth from whichever quarter it comes. We must not say, "How can I read the Bible, as I am a Hindu?" In olden days there were what were called wandering scholars, who used to move from city to city gathering knowledge. Today, this breadth of mind comes from reading. We must let our minds contact universal ideas through good books, scriptures, etc. We must spend some time every day reading some ennobling book. When we read we must be awake and discriminating. We learn the most from a book, when we do not agree with the author.

We must broaden our knowledge, but this does not mean knowing various unconnected things, like a boy participating in a quiz. *Depth* of mind comes from enthusiasm and commitment to go deeper into the subject, when we learn to relate a multiplicity of things to Universals. But this is intellectual depth. Depth of mind also results from nobility of character, *e.g.*, having kindly concern for one's opponent.

Besides developing both breadth and depth of mind we must cultivate the *heart quality* of mind. Mr. Judge advises:

Every impulse from above, every prompting of the Divine within, should meet at once with hearty welcome and response....If some pathetic story of suffering has moved you, act on the emotion while your cheeks are still wet with tears. In short, put yourself at once in line with Divine ways, in harmony with Divine laws. More light, more wisdom, more spirituality must necessarily come to one thus prepared, thus expectant. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 32)

WE have just enough religion to make us hate but not enough to make us love one another.

—JONATHAN SWIFT

REFLECTIONS ON KARMA

IMMEDIATELY we start to think deeply over the Aphorisms on Karma (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 21*) we find ourselves in difficulties. Aphorism No. 1 says: "There is no Karma unless there is a being to make it or feel its effects." This we can understand, for, if action ceases, *pralaya* sets in. As Krishna points out in the *Gita*, "If I did not perform actions these creatures would perish" (Chapter III). Yet we are told in *The Voice of the Silence* that *Shila* is "the key that counterbalances the cause and the effect, and leaves no further room for Karmic action." And we are supposed to learn how to practise this key.

How can we act so as to counterbalance the cause and the effect? How can we remain unattached to the results of action? Since the actor is bound by his action and therefore must receive the effect of it, how can he act so as to leave no room for Karmic action? We are familiar with the *Gita* teaching that we must perform all actions for Krishna alone, but how does this enable us not to feel the effects?

Perhaps an analogy will help. We are familiar with the example of a stone thrown into a pond; the ripples reach the limits of the pond and then return to the centre of disturbance. That is analogous to self-centred action, action whose repercussion comes back to the performer of the act. But if we could imagine the pond to have no limits, no beginning or end, like space, then we would see that the disturbance caused by the action would affect the Whole, without limits; *i.e.*, it would be universally diffused. Therefore actions performed in the name of Krishna, or the all-pervasive SELF, would affect the Whole. The actor would not be the only one benefited, but all would be benefited.

There is still need to pause and ponder, for Aphorisms 13 and 27 are difficult to understand:

The effects may be counteracted or mitigated by the thoughts and acts of oneself or of another, and then the resulting effects represent the combination and interaction of the whole

number of causes involved in producing the effects.

Measures taken by an Ego to repress tendency, eliminate defects, and to counteract by setting up different causes, will alter the sway of Karmic tendency and shorten its influence in accordance with the strength or weakness of the efforts expended in carrying out the measures adopted.

If effect follows cause without fail, and each man suffers the effects of his thoughts, feelings and deeds, how can any effect be mitigated, that is, be made easier to bear, be lessened in severity? To understand this difficulty we need to view the problem from two points of view—that of the person who performs the act and gets the reaction, and that of the larger area in which the effects are felt, that is, the environment in which they manifest.

We can see that since no man acts alone, the effects of his actions do not fall on him only. This is true not only of evil acts but also of good and ennobling ones. The Great Ones, we are told, shield erring humanity “from further and far greater misery and sorrow” by building around it a mighty “Wall of Protection.” Silently and invisibly, They impress the atmosphere of our earth with Their Ideation and Imagination. Their benevolent acts, having potency for good, can mitigate or make less, though not obliterate, the severity of the effects of our wrong-doings. Even in our immediate environment, we know that those near us can make things easier for us by their kindness and understanding, their strength and support. Even the mere presence of a sympathetic individual helps us for good.

So we have different kinds of effects manifesting together and affecting one another. This combination and interaction of effects goes on all the time because Humanity is one in reality and no one acts in isolation. In this sense, others help or hinder us, make our Karma easier or more difficult to bear, and we do the same to them.

There is also another factor to be taken into account. As we act and go through life we grow in knowledge and understanding and ourselves begin a new line of Karma by setting up different causes. We come to understand that effects have to be accepted and that all that comes to us is the result of our own thoughts, feelings and

deeds. In fact, though we do not recognize it, we are always, by our thought, feeling and action, “altering” our own, or another's, or even a nation's Karma. We have to take our share in fomenting wars, pestilences, etc.

Is all this preordained? Can the action of Karma be known by anyone? Aphorism 8 seems to imply so:

Its action may be known by calculation from cause to effect; and this calculation is possible because the effect is wrapped up in and is not succedent to the cause.

As the seventh of the Ten Items of *Isis Unveiled* states:

All things that ever were, that are, or that will be, having their record upon the astral light, or tablet of the unseen universe, the initiated adept, by using the vision of his own spirit, can know all that has been known or can be known.

It is “by calculation from cause to effect” that this is possible, provided that the “ultimate division of time in this Universe” is known. Karma is not subject to time, but depends only on the presence of an appropriate vehicle or instrument.

And until such appropriate instrument is found, that Karma related to it remains unexpended. (Aphorism 15)

The appropriateness of an instrument for the operation of Karma consists in the exact connection and relation of the Karma with the body, mind, intellectual and psychical nature acquired for use by the Ego in any life. (Aphorism 17)

In our human vanity we forget that *all* beings are subject to Karma. We are reminded that just as there are those less evolved than ourselves, so there are those who are much more evolved, who do not leave humanity alone to sink into greater and greater misery and sorrow. Humanity's Karma is being daily influenced by the collective efforts of generations of Adepts, Mahatmas and *Nirmanakayas*. If one good man could save a city from destruction as in the Bible story, so each individual sways the balance of Karma for the whole.

THE DISCIPLE'S MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

BEHIND all great achievements there are men or women of vision. All the great Saviours, such as Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, and many lesser incarnations in various spheres of life, have evinced unusual abilities which can only grow in the soil of experience whose fruit is Vision. A discoverer, an inventor, an engineer, a poet, a writer, a philosopher, if gifted with imaginative insight may be called "a man of vision." People who lack vision, therefore, are among the mediocre and the average of the race.

In chapter after chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita* we see how Arjuna's insight unfolds, until, by the time we come to Chapter X, we see him experiencing a certain type of vision which *The Secret Doctrine* calls "initiation into perceptive mysteries." Arjuna, the disciple, comes to a point in the evolution of his soul when he is awakened from the long sleep of ignorance resulting from false beliefs, lower desires, materialistic thoughts, ambitions, etc., pursued through many lives. Krishna, the teacher, finding Arjuna in a more receptive and responsive condition, gently conveys to him further knowledge, which we may term the magical key, giving him a fuller understanding of the basic principle of all life. In the important statement, "I am the Ego which is seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all existing things," Krishna lays before Arjuna the fact of the ever-present Deity residing in each evolving being.

Arjuna, like other souls in evolution, disciples and students on the path of life, was faced with difficulties arising out of false and materialistic conceptions of life and of Deity. When the conception begins to blaze within his consciousness that he is inwardly divine, the shackles and bars which had obstructed his vision life after life begin to fall away and in their place arise hope, wonder, amazement. His limitations, his ambitions, melt in the very heat of the wonderful living power of knowledge. The great purification has begun, and within the consciousness of the disciple Arjuna arise true perception, right judgement, self-mastery,

patience, altruism, unselfishness.

This experience of Arjuna, symbolized by all religions but little understood, may be called the second birth, an awakening from aeons of ignorance, stupor, difficulty and suffering. At this particular stage, we find that there comes about a growing closeness of true soul understanding between the teacher, Krishna, representing the Higher Self, and the pupil, Arjuna. In Chapter IX, Krishna addresses Arjuna in these terms: "Unto thee who findeth no fault I will now make known this most mysterious knowledge, coupled with a realization of it, which having known thou shalt be delivered from evil."

In Chapter X, the growing closeness between the Higher and Lower Self, teacher and pupil, causes the teacher to enumerate the universal divine perfections, because, as he says to Arjuna, "I am anxious for thy welfare." Arjuna is showing now a burning desire for knowledge, is saturated with the feeling which comes only from a certain kind of heart unfoldment. It might be said in passing that the idea of vision is connected with the heart because it is only from the purified heart that there arises in due time, for any soul, the experience of vision.

It might be an interesting experience for students to go through the *Gita* and note the many, many references made to the heart. Modern psychology knows very little of the true mind, and practically nothing of the quality, purpose and use of the heart; it has no real knowledge, no textbooks, relating to this deep and scientific teaching of the heart. Eastern psychology, on the other hand, offers us a fund of information relating to the consciousness and the manifestations of the heart.

"I am the Ego seated in the hearts of all beings," states Krishna, and by Ego he means the Real Man, the Soul. Even physical life is based upon the action of the heart. When it stops, we say the man has died; when it beats, we say the man is alive. But there is much more than that. The Soul or Ego seated in the heart is the thinker, is the perceiver. Therefore, according to Eastern psychology, the heart thinks, and it is only through heart-thoughts that true wisdom

of the Soul can be gained.

Arjuna is now awake, burning with the desire to give all that he is to his Friend and Teacher, who is the Friend and Teacher of all Humanity. Krishna in other places indicates, however, that a mere emotional desire to help is not necessarily the higher desire. The goody-goody person, the altruistic sentimentalist, the one who prates of brotherhood and acts quite differently, has not unfolded the true quality of the heart. Mere emotionalism or sentimentalism is not the force or flow of the true heart but is simply a manifestation of the personal nature which may be all mixed up with pride, vanity, selfishness and other lower ebullitions. When the personal nature asserts itself, the heart cannot function—not according to the teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Just as the sensitized plate or film in a camera can be impressed with the image of an exterior object by a lens or lenses, when the opening permits light to enter, so with man himself. The whole objective world exists around him. He is receiving impressions constantly through the openings of his eyes, ears, etc. If a shadow falls across the lens we have a blurred picture, distorted, or no picture at all, and something like that takes place when, in endeavouring to receive true impressions and translate or transmute them into real knowledge, the shadow of the personality falls across the lens of our mind and the impression is either lost or completely distorted and blurred.

Krishna, in the teaching which he is now directing to the heart of his disciple, calls attention to the problem of the contrasts of life: pleasure and pain, prosperity and adversity, birth and death, danger and security, fear and equanimity, glory and ignominy, etc. Arjuna begins to realize that all his difficulties and sufferings, his actions in this present life, his thinking, are the result of that which he committed in the past, that these contrasts are for the purpose of learning, and until man arrives at a certain point in evolution, he has not acquired the ability of using the intellect to reason, to evaluate different courses of action, objects, conditions, subjects and so on. If our premises are wrong and based on ignorance, and the conclusions correspondingly so, we suffer, so says the teacher,

Krishna. If from that suffering we are inspired and stimulated to observe and experience and learn the lesson, the necessity for those experiences, for that suffering and for those difficulties entirely ceases.

Arjuna begins to see that the great pain and suffering of humanity are his pain and suffering. As Krishna so succinctly and so beautifully states, “Of those things which deceive I am the dice, and splendour itself among splendid things.” Krishna then takes Arjuna still further along the path of knowledge, and shows him that nothing exists outside of himself. Arjuna thus reaches a point which Eastern mystical psychology sums up in one word—Yoga—a much abused and misused term. Yoga means union, oneness with all life. Arjuna begins to realize that inasmuch as Krishna is in all and everything, he, Arjuna, is also united to the Whole.

Arjuna, the courageous warrior, is now facing himself. In the evil or the good, he sees reflected but his own acting, thinking and feeling self. At this stage of evolution the soul realizes that the only knowledge is self-knowledge. Until we can face the self, how can we attain to knowledge? Arjuna, therefore, attains to a certain degree of Yoga, and he begins to see that this ancient and secret knowledge which comes from the heart has been the object of search of all true and great seekers. The “philosopher's stone,” the “elixir of life,” the “holy grail,” are merely symbolic representations of the story of the soul's search for knowledge, its ever-growing ability to realize that self in the search.

Krishna proceeds in the chapter to state that “among the wise of secret knowledge I am their silence.” Arjuna now comes to a stage in evolution which may be called the stage of meditation. Many ideas, objects, viewpoints have been presented to him by the teacher. He sees that all exists within himself. The next step in his evolution, or in the evolution of any soul at this particular point of awakening intelligence, is to retire within—to become silent. Meditation, study, thoughts of a higher kind, begin and end in silence. As each of us is a spark of the one great deific flame, there is within each that secret and holy place which Krishna speaks of

as the unchanging Self, the mystic heart. Into that Arjuna retires, and he experiences the fuller realization which dwelling upon these ideas brings. There in the silence and quietness within himself he meditates upon eternal, universal and exhaustless conceptions.

What transpires? His suffering falls away. His cares and anxieties evaporate in this clear, cleaner air and atmosphere. To higher levels he passes from plane to plane of consciousness and thought, of spiritual desires and aspirations; he communicates with a numerous throng of great gods, of wise sages, of living seers and rishis. He hears the ancient song of sacred texts, and the message that the living sun, its bright shadow, the moon, and the stars of the high Akasic atmosphere impart to him. He is cooled, quieted, by the breezes from all the forests. He is strengthened with the power of the great and mighty oceans; the peace and sublimity, the absolute immovable fastnesses of the Himalayan ranges now become his protecting friends. All true poets, mystics, all great thinkers, seers, have travelled, night after night, into these supernal regions, returning laden with the fruit of their quest, which they have inscribed for Humanity in immortal words of verse, song and philosophy.

Such is the beautiful and mystical experience of Arjuna, instructed by Krishna in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion called the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

MOTIVES are vapours, as attenuated as the atmospheric moisture: and, as the latter develops its dynamic energy for man's use only when concentrated and applied as steam or hydraulic power, so the practical value of good motives is best seen when they take the form of deeds.

—MAHATMA K.H.

SPIRITUAL BASIS FOR UNITY

THE world in many respects has become one, owing to air travel and the rapid spread of news—the products of our modern civilization. When we probe deeper, however, we see that the divisions of class, caste, races, etc., still play a vital part in our society. This is true no matter where we look in the world; no one land, no one country can be held up as an example of unity or brotherhood, though it is implicit in the constitutions of many.

One of the earliest exponents in the Theosophical world advocating the elimination of these differences was Damodar K. Mavalankar. In the May 1880 issue of *The Theosophist* he published his article, or, as he termed it, his “statement of personal belief,” entitled “Castes in India.” It has since been reprinted in *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 4*. While it is addressed to Indians, and deals with the caste system as it exists in India, the article lays down for everyone the correct principles and basis for not only universal brotherhood, but also intelligent patriotism.

Damodar K. Mavalankar was born in a Brahmin family and educated in the tenets of his religion. It was not until he read H.P.B.'s *Isis Unveiled*, “A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology,” and joined the Theosophical Society, that he realized for the first time “what man and life are—the nature and powers of the one, the possibilities, duties, and joys of the other.” At the same time, he wrote, “I have learnt and heard of the ancient splendour and glory of my country—the highly esteemed land of Aryavarta,” and he saw how the observance of caste distinctions was leading to her degeneration. He saw, too, that any country that wanted to rise needed not only patriots, but also those who felt it their duty to do what they could to make the world better and happier. As the world was made up of different countries, each must, as Damodar expressed it, conceive a love for humanity, and not only love the whole, but also its parts, meaning thereby his fellow countrymen.

Damodar laboured long and hard to achieve this end, and as a

step in this direction gave up his own caste, thereby setting an example for all to follow. H.P.B. in her writings, and Mr. Judge in his, also laboured for the same end, namely, the elimination of all caste, class, and racial distinctions. In her Fourth Message to the American Theosophists H.P.B. said:

...every wish and thought I can utter are summed up in this one sentence, the never-dormant wish of my heart, "Be Theosophists, work for Theosophy!" Theosophy first, and Theosophy last; for its *practical* realization alone can save the Western world from that selfish and unbrotherly feeling that now divides race from race, one nation from the other; and from hatred of class and social considerations....

In the opening editorial of his magazine, *The Path*, Mr. Judge emphasized much the same idea:

The very first step in true mysticism and true occultism is to try to apprehend the meaning of Universal Brotherhood, without which the very highest progress in the practice of magic turns to ashes in the mouth.

These various statements, Damodar's in 1880, Mr. Judge's in 1886, and H.P.B.'s in 1891, all echo the same idea, an idea which is as difficult of achievement today as it was in those days.

Damodar mentions patriotism as being necessary for the achievement of brotherhood and the making of the world a better and happier place, and adds that single men have saved nations. What kind of patriotism is needed? If misunderstood, it can be one of the greatest stumbling-blocks to the achievement of universal brotherhood. Robert Crosbie defines "intelligent patriotism" thus:

A truly intelligent patriotism would consider the individual as an integral part of the nation to which he belonged; the nation as an integral part of the assemblage of nations which constitute humanity as a whole.

He adds further that while every individual is born in a particular body belonging to some family, race or nation, each birth offers him an opportunity to eradicate in himself the defects of the

family to which he comes, and through the family the defects of the nation, for national defects are the sum-total of all the individuals composing it. Therefore intelligent patriotism begins and ends with the individual, and consists in doing our whole duty where Karma has placed us. This includes our duty not only to our own family, but to humanity as a whole, composed of all individuals, families and nations, and we are to do it recognizing that all beings are the same in kind, differing only in degree of intelligence. "Family duties" and "national duties" do not mean false attachment to and pride in family or nation; they imply cultivating and elevating higher sentiments and emotions in the performance of our duties. Thus we shall not indulge in that narrow patriotism which is usually the result of an ignorance of the good in other countries, and a corresponding blindness to the faults we have become accustomed to in our own country.

It is true that there have been patriots who have saved their countries. If, however, we look into the writings and speeches of the truly great, for instance a Thomas Paine, or an Abraham Lincoln, or a Gandhi, we see that the principles for which they stood and fought were universal ones and were aimed at freedom and rights for all, not just for a particular group or section. These principles hold good for all nations and all times, though they may have special reference to the times in which those who enunciated them lived and died.

With all this as a background, we may consider why it is that brotherhood among races or nations is still difficult of achievement. Is it because we have tried to practise brotherhood without really knowing what it is? The Third Fundamental gives the spiritual basis for unity—"the fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul." We perhaps intuitively perceive this, but our intellectual understanding is coloured with our own opinions and preconceptions. We jump to the conclusion that everything and everyone must be equal, that by pulling down the true to the level of the false, the noble to the level of the ignoble, the pure to the level of the impure, wisdom to the level of folly, we have

achieved “brotherliness” because then all are the same. Theosophy shows, as seen above, that while all beings are the same in *kind*, they differ in the degree of intelligence they have attained. Therefore, while there is Spiritual Identity, there is also intellectual diversity, and this should not be lost sight of.

If we remember Mr. Judge's words that the very first step in Occultism is to try to “understand the meaning of Universal Brotherhood,” and that in Theosophy alone we find the true knowledge of the real constitution of man, his aim and purpose in life, then we shall realize that the knowledge we are seeking to learn and spread broadcast is meant for all, no matter what their caste, creed, race or sect.

We have to overcome the misconception that only those of a particular community or class will benefit by Theosophy. Inasmuch as the purpose of life is to learn, and the knowledge we are acquiring is meant for all, regardless of race or caste, it follows that we can learn from all without distinction, just as they can learn from us, provided there is the desire to learn. This enables us to take a first step towards apprehending the meaning of Universal Brotherhood. The U.L.T. Declaration emphasizes this in different words when it says that the “unassailable *Basis for Union*” is “*similarity of aim, purpose and teaching*,” and therefore all, regardless of race, creed, caste or condition, are welcome to join, provided they are willing to “fit themselves, by study and otherwise, to be the better able to help and teach others.”

Damodar K. Mavalankar left his caste because he felt that by remaining in it he could not regard all men as his brothers. He saw that a man should be judged by his qualities and attainments rather than by the caste or body of his present birth, as these outer circumstances are but temporary and change with each incarnation.

It means, therefore, that the first step in Occultism, in the attainment of Universal Brotherhood, is to recognize that life is made up of learning and that all beings have their place in the evolutionary march, some ahead, some behind. All are important, and we should not assume that our place is superior to another's.

No race is superior, no race is inferior, any more than any one note in the musical scale is more important than another, or any colour in the rainbow more beautiful than another colour; all have their place in the whole.

Therefore it can be seen that:

A true conception of Universal Brotherhood will do away with hatreds, not distinctions; do away with sectarianism, not with religion; do away with dogmatisms, not convictions; do away with the inequities, not the inequalities of life; do away once and for all with the notion that Universal Brotherhood depends on some kind of a shifting of circumstances, some kind of a rearrangement of environment, some kind of impossible Utopia, physical or metaphysical, some kind of peace produced by violence of our own towards others or of others towards us. Rather it will be seen as a second step in its realization that the true meaning of Universal Brotherhood is the fulfilment of one's own duty in whatever class or caste one may find oneself.

Thus it will be seen that by doing our duty wherever we find ourselves, by keeping ever in mind that Krishna is seated in the hearts of *all* beings, by learning wherever we are, we shall be on the way to apprehending the meaning of Universal Brotherhood; we shall also make possible the *practical* realization of Theosophy, which alone can lead to the eradication of caste, class and racial discriminations.

A STEADY outpouring of the eternal ideas will attract and hold those who need them....You try to serve all and give them of your best; no one can do more. Every spiritual effort is a good action.

—ROBER CROSBIE

BREAKING THE FETTERS

EVERYWHERE, in one form or another, we come upon the force of conservatism. Custom and tradition envelop us on every side—in the home, in the office, in social life, in the political sphere. There is bigotry in science and orthodoxy in religion. But the heterodoxy of the irreligious smart set is also not free from its taboos. Who has built these walls of convention surrounding us on all sides?

There is another queer phenomenon. We have Hindus who chafe against the colour bar in South Africa and elsewhere, but observe caste rules in India. We have Radicals in politics who are orthodox in religion. We have one class or community fancying itself superior to another class or community, but railing against the same conceit in others who consider it inferior to themselves. If we observe we find that in each one of us the Liberal and the Conservative, the Reformer and the Orthodox are present. Most human beings are not integrated units. Conflicting forces work in them and produce confusion of thought and of duties, leading to struggle and to unhappiness.

Every national or racial struggle has its counterpart in the life of the individual, and the way to happiness lies in a harmonious blending of the two opposing forces of reform and of convention. He who wants to reform himself is up against the wall of his own habits, of communal customs, of national prejudices, of racial pride. Each one of us is called upon to distinguish between the forces of love and of lust, of liberty and of licence, of reform and of orthodoxy, which are struggling in our own consciousness. Our habits and customs which ordinarily are acquired by heredity and through early education are sometimes seen by us to need change and reform. When we attempt to modify them we encounter opposition from two sides—first from outside, from our relatives and friends who also have the same habits and observe the same customs, and who do not relish the criticism implied by our efforts at self-improvement; secondly, from inside, for when we brush

their objections aside gently or brusquely, and endeavour to institute the change, we come upon obstacles from within ourselves and which are inherent in us. We desire to effect a reform, but circumstances wipe out whatever has been begun. Why is this?

A clever businessman does not attempt reform in his establishment without ascertaining the causes of existing defects and without deliberately planning what should be substituted. But in introducing change in our own individual lives we do not seek the roots of causes. We do not ask: “Will the change I am contemplating effect a reform, or the reverse?” There is no basis for rational action. We feel a change to be desirable and without any further thought we act.

Many young people of today, surfeited with the religious orthodoxy of their elders, try to break “the fetters the priest has imposed upon us.” That there is great force and truth in their contention none can deny—not even their elders, if they be but logical and think for themselves. But the young reformers do not know the technique of breaking the fetters of conventional habits born of conventional thinking. In their zeal for progress they make so great a haste that they throw away the baby with the bath water; the prophet goes along with the priest; *Smriti* goes, but along with it *Shruti*; theology goes, but along with it philosophy; old customs go, but also good manners. Chafing against restraints, such young people start a life of what they call emancipation—and to most of them emancipation translates itself into an exaggerated sense-life. In addition, these young people, who are under the illusion that they are happy, are in reality making a sorry mess of their lives. This must not be taken as a sweeping statement applicable to each and all. There are exceptions, but a fair number of the youth of today in the so-called civilized lands are centred in sense-life and sex-ideation, and think that they are emancipated.

Now, in India, of all countries, the spirit of reform is necessary. By temperament, because of past mistakes leading to present vicissitudes, our people centuries ago became ultra-conservative. Tradition has acquired so strong a hold on the masses that the

breaking of conventions has become a duty for those who want to renovate the life manifesting on our ancient soil. But in what way should we proceed? Shall we throw away conventions and risk a lower standard of thought and of morals? Or shall we, in breaking the fetters, rise to a higher attitude in culture and in good manners which are “not idle, but the fruit of loyal nature and of noble mind”?

Everyone will answer: “Of course, in emancipating ourselves we must ascend. In bodily health more sensitive and strong, in morals more chaste and humane, in manners more dignified and courteous, in mind more polished and cultured, in public life more urbane and cosmopolitan.” The ideal to be realized agreed upon, there remains the method to be adopted.

Every type and system of education proceeds by precept and by example. What the mother or nurse says and then what she does; what the father or teacher advises and then how he acts; what the author writes and then how he lives his personal life—this dual influence constantly affects us. One of the difficulties in reforming ourselves lies in the disparity we see between the advice given to us and the action performed by the one who advises. We find and are apt to excuse within ourselves this disparity between preaching and practice. But as we scan history and study the scale of human leadership we come upon spiritual figures like Krishna and Buddha, Jesus and Zoroaster, in whom we discern a harmonious blending between instruction and action. They fully practised what They preached. All others only attempt to square their actions with their ideas.

We find another phenomenon in the lives of such great spiritual reformers: They all taught the highest form of morality—purity of mind and chastity of body; detachment in consciousness, yet due performance of actions in the world of men; breaking of fetters, be they of iron or of gold, but always with the motive of bringing ourselves and the world to duty and to sacrifice. Ever condemning sin, They never cast the sinner out of Their heart.

In these two facts about the spiritual Instructors—Their example and Their integrated attitude to the whole of life, through

the rhythm established between preaching and practice, and through Their high ethical precepts—we find the necessary clue to right reform, to the correct method of breaking conventions, which recognizes the place and the value of conventions, of restraint, of conservatism. The need of the individual today is for a proper blending between his thoughts and his actions, which will engender peace within himself and enable him to live in self-respect. Slavery to conventions is disturbing to conscience and to reason; but slavery to a thoughtless unconventionalism is injurious to conscience and contrary to reason. Peace of mind and self-respect in conscience do not emerge from either conventional orthodoxy or unconventional rejection of standards and proprieties.

In the *Gita* and the *Gathas*, in the Sermons of the Buddha and the Sayings of Jesus, we find knowledge about emancipation which elevates. It is only when the bondage of lust and of licence is broken that Love and Liberty manifest themselves. Krishna, Buddha and Jesus were not conventional. They were Free Men—Men who had freed Themselves from religious orthodoxy without becoming irreligious; from social cant and hypocrisy without becoming selfish, irreverent or sophisticated; from political conservatism without becoming Machiavellian. Their precepts and Their example can also free us if we study and apply the former and, using discernment, humbly copy the latter. We should aim at living the religion of the Higher Mind, which ennobles our social being, deepens our insight, and on every occasion and at every turn teaches what conventions to break and how to rise higher, thus enabling others to do likewise. If the society in which we live is not improved by our freeing ourselves from conventions, we have erred.

To break conventions without knowledge and perception is risky; to acquire proper instruction to free ourselves from conventions is a duty; but how many really desire such instruction?

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Do human souls survive after death? In his book *The Afterlife Experiments*, Dr. Gary E. Schwartz, a professor of psychology, medicine, neurology and psychiatry at the University of Arizona, chronicles the experiments conducted with some well-known mediums to verify their claims of contact with the deceased. The “messages” from the deceased, which were recorded and videotaped, are said to have displayed an accuracy of between 77 to 95 per cent. Several questions arise:

But is this proof of contact with consciousness that exists after death? Or are the mediums just good guessers? Similar experiments were conducted with students, who have no claim to psychic abilities...and they were able to achieve only 36 per cent accuracy. So are the mediums just better at it, or are they experts at doing “cold readings,” as the skeptics suggest, taking clues from the sitters' voice inflections and body language?

To eliminate this possibility, Schwartz and [his research partner] Dr. Linda G. Russek's experiments became more and more stringent, to the point where the mediums were not allowed to see or even directly hear the sitters....Even with the tightest controls, the mediums' accuracy was above 90 per cent....

Are the mediums reading the sitters' minds? (This might be discounted because the mediums were sometimes able to relay information that was unknown to the sitter at that time, but was later confirmed through research.) Are the mediums tapping into the collective unconscious? Or are they contacting the dead? Even the mediums say they don't know how it works....(*Purity*, August 2003)

All these intriguing questions could be answered once we accept the existence of the astral body in man and the astral light in nature. Astral light—tablet of the unseen universe—is the repository of “all things that ever were, that are, or that will be.” Death is not the end. But these experiments are not conclusive proofs that the human soul survives death. The claims of the mediums to hold communion with the *spirits* of the dead is baseless.

Mr. Judge observes:

The mass of communications alleged as made day after day through mediums are from the astral unintelligent remains of men, or in many cases entirely the production of, invention, compilation, discovery and collocation by the loosely attached astral body of the living medium....The astral man...has that which seems like an animal or automatic consciousness...Its purely astral portion contains and carries the record of all that ever passed before the person when living, for one of the qualities of the astral substance is to absorb all scenes and pictures and the impressions of all thoughts, to keep them, and to throw them forth by reflection when the conditions permit. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, pp. 156-57 and pp. 109-10)

Modern man suffers from two great maladies—loneliness and depression. It appears that we have lost the art of being alone. Ruby Lilaowala has this to say (*Afternoon Despatch & Courier*, August 14):

Our finest hours are not in the hustle-bustle of our family, nor the noise and excitement of friends, but in solitude. When we're alone we enter into an intimate union with wisdom, peace and happiness. At times, during the “doing nothing” meditation, we touch divinity, so that we function later, with a heightened sense of perception.

...It's sheer bliss to be oblivious to the attributes of human nature that have caused us suffering—like gross selfishness, inevitable misunderstandings, unworthy hatreds and jealousies.

...We may spend an entire evening socialising with, say, 150 people at a party and yet feel “lonely,” because while bodies come near each other with “air-kissing” and “hello darlings,” the hearts and minds may be so distant....

We've lost the art of being alone, and don't know what to do with ourselves in solitude. We don't know how to make ourselves happy with our inner resources. So, we switch on the radio...the

TV...go to a movie or phone a friend, because we crave companionship.

However, if, by daily practice, we “learn” to be meditative while being alone, we can have peace and joy and wisdom within ourselves.

When we are other-dependent for our happiness it leaves us craving for more. To experience lasting peace and happiness, it is necessary to turn within—every day, for a few minutes. We may find this practice difficult at first, but if kept up, it would yield positive results. It is not enough to be alone, but when alone we must learn to “think away from ourselves.” We have very encouraging words in *Light on the Path*:

Listen to the song of life....Look for it and listen to it first in your own heart. At first you may say, It is not there; when I search I find only discord. Look deeper. If again you are disappointed, pause and look deeper again. There is a natural melody, an obscure fount in every human heart. It may be hidden over and utterly concealed and silenced—but it is there. At the very base of your nature you will find faith, hope and love. (pp. 10, 23)

Although science has been able to locate various centres of mental activity in the cerebrum, mystery surrounds the exact function of the cerebellum. “Long thought to be solely the brain's coordinator of body movement, the cerebellum is known to be active during a wide variety of cognitive and perceptual activities,” write James Bower and Lawrence Parsons in *Scientific American* (August 2003). They observe:

The cerebellum clearly has an important job, because it has persisted—and become larger—during the course of evolution....

...the cerebellum is more involved in sensory than pure motor function and in particular...it is highly active during the

process of acquiring sensory data....

As the number of conditions that involve changes in cerebellar activity has grown, researchers have attributed more *and* more functions to the cerebellum....

Motor coordination studies suggest that people with cerebellar damage slow down and simplify their movements.... An interesting and important extension of this idea is that the continued operation of a faulty cerebellum would have more serious consequences than its complete removal. Although other brain structures can compensate for the outright lack of sensory data control, ongoing faulty control would be expected to cause continuing dysfunction in other brain regions attempting to use bad data. This type of effect might explain the recent implications for cerebellar involvement in disorders such as autism, in which patients fail to respond to incoming sensory data....

It is clear that how we think about this brain structure—and therefore how we conceive of the brain as a whole—is about to change.

In *Transactions*, Madame Blavatsky observes that the human brain is a complex structure. She compares the nature and function of cerebrum and cerebellum thus:

The brain is such a complex thing, both physically and metaphysically, that it is like a tree whose bark you can remove layer by layer, each layer being different from all others, and each having its own special work, function, and properties. (p. 64)

Cerebellum is the organ of instinctual animal functions, which reflect themselves in, or produce, dreams which for the most part are chaotic and inconsequent. (p. 32)

With man during sleep the functions of the cerebrum cease, and the cerebellum carries him on to the Astral plane, a still more unreal state than even the waking plane of illusion....(p. 27)

The function of the cerebrum is to polish, perfect, or co-ordinate ideas, whereas that of the cerebellum produces conscious desires....(p. 34)

For a long time now, the oracle of Delphi was considered to be a myth by scholars and scientists. In the light of recent scientific research, this view has changed. John Hale writes (*Scientific American*, August 2003):

Tradition attributed the prophetic inspiration of the powerful oracle to geographic phenomena: a chasm in the earth, a vapor that rose from it, and a spring....

For the past century, scholars have discounted as myth the traditional explanation that vapors rising out of the earth intoxicated, and inspired, the prophesying priestesses at Delphi.

Recent scientific findings show that this description was, in fact, extraordinarily accurate.

In particular, the authors have identified two geologic faults that intersect precisely under the site of the oracle.

Furthermore, the petrochemical-rich layers in the limestone formations of the region most likely produced ethylene, a gas that induces a trancelike state and that could have risen through fissures created by the faults.

Could we attribute the prophecies to ethylene alone? H.P. Blavatsky observes that the prophesying priestess was called PYTHIA or Pythoness and describes her as half *medium* and half *magician*. She writes:

A Pythia, upon the authority of Plutarch, Iamblichus, Lamprias, and others, was a nervous sensitive; she was chosen from among the poorest class, young and pure. Attached to the temple, within whose precincts she had a room, secluded from every other...she had no communications with the outside world, and her life was more strict and ascetic than that of a Catholic nun. Sitting on a tripod of brass placed over a fissure in the ground, through which arose intoxicating vapours, these subterranean exhalations penetrating her whole system produced the prophetic mania. (*Isis Unveiled*, pp. xxxviii-ix)

Scientists have begun to question the validity of the data

resulting from brain-damaged animals. Researchers who study the behaviour of rodents, at the University of Zurich, feel that the living conditions of mice affect their performance in experiments. “In a typical animal research lab, most rodents' lives are spent in shoebox-size enclosures containing food, water, bedding, and nothing else, all stacked from the floor to ceiling on uniform steel racks,” writes Barry Yeoman (*Discover*, July 2003). Hanno Wurble, the young animal behaviourist, discovered that mice living in such barren housing often develop bizarre behaviour. When observed in the night, after the experiments, they resembled patients in a psychiatric hospital. They were seen to perform useless tasks repeatedly, for example, performing the backflips, one per second, for up to 30 minutes at a time.

Mark Rosenzweig, a biological psychologist at the University of California at Berkeley, found that an animal's living environment does affect the development of its brain. Hanno Wurbel has launched a crusade to improve the housing conditions for mice, arguing that scientists risk their data when they use such brain-damaged animals. He says, “I have this vision that there will be a time when we will have natural-like, although heavily managed, populations of rats or mice, maybe in big enclosures, representing whole populations. Depending on the needs of study, we can then choose our study population, as we do in human trials...it's an interesting vision to keep in mind...If we get to the stage where we think that we need to treat the animals this way, experimenting on them will probably become impossible—because that would mean they would almost achieve the same status that we have.”

It is heartening to see scientists taking a humane view regarding the animals used for research. Why do we consider animals as inferior? At the root of animal experiments is, perhaps, the belief that man being the crown-piece of evolution and superior to animals, his life is more important. It is largely accepted that animals do not have souls. Theosophy teaches that animals are endowed with intelligence and souls. The kingdoms below man look up to him for their progress and evolution. Let us hope with Mme.

Blavatsky that the day is not far off when man will recognize his responsibility towards dumb creatures. She writes in “Have Animals Souls?”:

For verily when the world feels convinced—and it cannot avoid coming one day to such a conviction—that animals are creatures as eternal as we ourselves, vivisection and other permanent tortures, daily inflicted on poor brutes, will, after calling forth an outburst of malediction and threats from society generally, force all Governments to put an end to those barbarous and shameful practices.

As we live our humdrum existence, we often wonder, Does life have a purpose? What is my place in the scheme of things? “Each one of us has a unique purpose in life, and in its realization lies our happiness, growth and success,” writes Anil Bhatnagar (*Life Positive*, June 2003):

No human is born without the potential to grow and achieve extraordinary accomplishments. Yet very few are lucky enough to identify and find the right soil, conditions and nurturing to transform this potential into a reality....If we follow the inner voice and sustain the urge for unfoldment, we can surely fulfil our life's purpose....

The deeper inner purpose of life, as we all know, is to rediscover our oneness with the unity consciousness that is—and be with it. The more sincerely we adhere to the timeless principles that are the very nature of Nature, by virtue of which God puts this universe together, the more our own nature becomes one with that of Nature. And we cannot follow these timeless principles of Nature in vacuum—we need a context or a “field of action.” Therefore, interwoven with that deeper inner purpose is an external purpose allocated specifically for this current incarnation, which provides us with a context or “field of action.” You become aware of the inner purpose when you become aware of the outer one. You take a quantum leap and

begin moving faster towards the inner, when you discover and dedicate your “current life” to the outer, against all odds.

How do you find your life's purpose? The author quotes from *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*: “*You are what your deep, driving desire is. As your desire is, so is your will. As your will is, so is your deed. As your deed is, so is your destiny.*” He adds: “Your ability to fulfil your life's purpose depends on having a dream that harmonizes with your endowments and the contribution you make to society and the world.”

We are all here for a purpose. “If it is remembered that the purpose of life is to learn and that it is all made up of learning, the ordinary duties of everyday existence are seen to be the means by which we learn many things....Does not the whole of life's purpose point to a *realization* of Unity in Diversity; seeing all things at once and as One, instead of separately and in detail?” asks Robert Crosbie (*The Friendly Philosopher*, pp. 4 and 55).

How can we describe modern city life, always in a rush for achievement and survival in an aggressively competitive world? Medical professionals—conventional or belonging to alternative therapies—are equally busy. Their hands are too full to cope with their patients' problem of “stress.” The causes are easily identifiable: frustrated high expectations, artificial living, incessant striving to keep up the tempo of production and achievement. It all begins, according to Ayesha Chawla (*Indian Express*, July 11), with our anxiety to admit our children into top-class nursery schools, and does not end with admission into elite professional colleges. She writes:

Look around you, it is everywhere—the search for a deeper meaning to life; the search for solace amidst the hectic pace of everyday life; a vent for frustration and anxiety, perhaps even anger; a thirst for spirituality with a gusto not seen before....

Alternative forms of healing such as pranic healing and

reiki...yoga and meditation, are all geared towards making the individual feel in touch with his or her real self, unobstructed by the stresses and strains of daily living....

The world has become a very stressful place. One no longer has the time to meet friends and kin, to eat a decent meal at one's workplace, to spend time with children. Yet the demands made on us keep increasing, our limits are constantly stretched. In this environment it is normal to seek solace and strength in something. We need to heal our minds as much as our bodies, and if we seek that peace in “new religious movements,” alternative forms of healing, meditation, dance, music or art, then so be it. Let no one judge us for the paths we choose, for we are products of the society we have created.

Can turning to outside agents—however well meaning and competent—supply “spirituality” in a package? Can there not be forces other than frustration and breakdown of health that make people turn to exotic remedies and “new spirituality”? Madame Blavatsky wrote in 1887: “In a few years the psychic idiosyncrasies of humanity will enter on a great change....Psychologists will have some extra work to do.” Her prediction in 1887 about a definite cycle of psychic upsurge is demonstrated by the fact of rapid “transition” at all levels which is now upon us. Observers will witness unusual “sensitivity,” increased interest in non-conventional remedies, mushrooming counselling centres, workshops on self-development, daily religious discourses by pundits, swamis and babas from platforms and T.V. channels, as the global phenomena.

Two things indicate weakness—to be silent when it is proper to speak, and to speak when it is proper to be silent.

—PERSIAN PROVERB