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THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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The Living of the Higher Life

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सत्यत् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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ENVIRONMENT OF THE SOUL

ENVIRONMENT is generally taken to imply the surrounding of the organism, or all the influences and conditions which affect the development of an organism. Many behavioral psychologists believe that education and environment play an important role in molding a human being. Geneticists, on the other hand, emphasize the role of heredity. We observe that children of the same parents, brought up in the same environment, show striking differences in physical, mental and moral traits. Children who are brought up in an atmosphere where they are fed and clothed properly but not loved and fondled, are likely to have their mental and physical development retarded. We may say that we are a blend of heredity and environment. Even the most conducive environment cannot transform a weak and timid child into an audacious leader, because ultimately it depends upon the inherent character. For instance, adversity may make some throw up their hands in despair while in others it may evoke greater efforts, bringing to the surface hidden good qualities.

What science terms as inherent qualities, classed as “heredity,” Theosophy calls “inner environment” of the person. In fact, Theosophy speaks of two kinds of environment: Besides the external environment that is made up of one’s family, society, circumstances, etc., there is the Ego and its environment. There is the Self and that is surrounded by various *Kosams* or sheaths—from the most subtle and intangible down to the grossest which is the physical body. Thus, from the occult point of view,

"environment" is all that is other than the Self. There are seven sheaths of the soul, which include physical and astral bodies. The soul has constructed these sheaths for its own use during long ages in the past. Then, depending upon the course of action; thoughts and feelings indulged in by the person, one or the other of the sheaths is trained and developed. The atoms forming the sheaths in one incarnation are attracted back to the Ego in the next life to form the new environment or personality.

Both inner and outer environment is the result of Karma, and does not come to us arbitrarily. It is through them that we fulfill our Karma. It is under Karma that the Ego is born to certain parents, in a rich or poor family, in a male or female body, with kind or selfish nature, etc. Often, we find ourselves in a body or in surroundings that are not very pleasing. Life places us where we can best learn the necessary lessons in evolution. Often we hear a person say that if only his surroundings were more favorable; if he had a fair chance, then he would do better. But the fact that we are where we are shows that it must be necessary for us to pass through those identical trials and disadvantages to perfect ourselves. Hence it is better to learn to adapt ourselves to a given environment, if we are unable to change it, in spite of our best efforts.

Adaptation is very important for the survival as well as development of an organism. Animals adapt themselves to thirst and hunger. The cattle of Arizona deserts can go without water for four days because they adapt their tissues to store large quantities of water. We learn to adapt ourselves so that we can do with little sleep and food. Mental and emotional adaptation is even more important, as we often find ourselves in the company of people with differing temperaments and idiosyncrasies. Each of us has formed a mental groove by set ways of thinking, feeling and acting. The mental groove of one person is not willing to run in the mental groove of another person. But one desiring to earnestly walk the spiritual path must be able to accommodate his mind to other minds and natures. If we succeed in doing this, in one life we may have the benefit of many lives, as we observe and learn from the lives of others around us. This

presented to us.

This adaptive process requires strenuous efforts. What the world considers as advantages of life or favourable surroundings may not necessarily be advantageous from the soul's point of view. This is because the so-called advantages of opportunities, money, travel, teachers, music, satiating sight with beauty, eating the finest food, wearing the best clothes; all these begin and end in the brain and do not contribute to character-building. Here and there, an advanced soul can use the advantages of life to benefit others—not allowing them to weaken the character. However, more often than not, money alone is enough to corrupt the character by leading one to pamper the body and giving over to alcohol, drugs, smoking, gambling, and many other sensual pleasures. Spiritually advanced beings, like king Janaka, may remain unaffected by wealth and comfort. Having learnt in some prior lives the lessons of detachment, they are able to say, "We are trustees of our possessions." King Janaka was an adept-king, and set a fine example of what it is to be *in the world*, but not be *of the world*. Although being outwardly engaged in managing the affairs of the state, he could at the same time be an occultist.

Likewise it is possible to remain untainted by an adverse atmosphere. A rare soul, and these are not so few, can abstain from taking bribe or drinking alcohol, even when others around may indulge in it. We must not provide the chink in the armour, and this calls for constant vigilance. Unwholesome thoughts and desires may creep in insidiously, unasked, within the soul's bright shrine, if we are not mindful. Otherwise, as Buddha says, "He whose hand has no wound may touch poison."

Adversities of life, if met with properly, can build the character. "Struggle is needed for gaining strength; buffeting adverse eras is for the gaining of depth; meagre opportunities may be used for acquiring fortitude; poverty should breed generosity," says Mr. Judge. Living in poverty affords excellent opportunity to develop endurance and strength of character. It is through ages that great characters are made. A pure and powerful Ego may choose to be born in awful surroundings, remaining

good and pure all the time, setting an example and uplifting others. Great Beings are those who have triumphed over their environment. Buddha says:

From a heap of rubbish on the roadside, a lily blooms, fragrant and pleasing; from a mass of blinded mortals arises the disciple of the truly Wise One, shining with exceeding glory of his own Wisdom. (*The Dhammapada*, verses 15-16)

It is not suggested that we should never attempt to change our environment. In fact, H.P.B. points out that by altering the surroundings of the organism we can alter and improve the organism. Hence, each student of theosophy is advised to do his best to help every wise and well-considered social effort that aims to improve the condition of the poor. But even if we fail to change the *outer* environment, we are in full control of our *inner* environment. In that we must be patient, because it takes time to correct even a small habit. This is possible because man has free will. It is true that our choices are determined by external and internal conditions, at a given point in time. We bring with us the load of our past Karma and *skandhas* (tendencies)—some favourable and some inhibiting. Once we become aware of the conditioning forces, we may make concentrated efforts to break the chain of causality and take a totally different course. The longer we delay in making the inner change, the harder it becomes, till we reach a point where we feel that we are completely determined. A Master of Wisdom says:

The process of self-purification is not the work of a moment, nor of a few months but of years—nay, extending over a series of lives. The later a man begins the living of a higher life, the longer must be his period of probation for he has to undo the effects of a long number of years spent in objects diametrically opposed to the real goal. The more strenuous one's efforts and the brighter the result of his work, the nearer he comes to the threshold.

Our social frame, our material and mental background should be rebuilt. Each individual has the power to modify his way of life. He is capable of isolating himself in some measure, of imposing upon himself certain physiological and mental discipline. We have the power of refusing to go to certain movies, to read certain books, to watch certain television programmes and so on. "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate," said Jesus to his disciples.

A truly spiritual person builds his own environment. A disciple, preparing for practical occultism, is asked to live so to say, "in his own atmosphere, in order to individualize it for occult purposes.... While at one with all, in his *inner nature*, he must take care to separate his outer (external) body from every foreign influence... He must avoid bodily contact with human, as with animal being." We carry with us our inner environment, which may be beneficent or maleficent for others. It is said of the Great Ones that they people their currents in space with entities powerful for good alone. They can become protective shields for others around them. "If you choose, you may make your home one of the most important centres of spiritualizing influence in all the world," writes a Master of Wisdom.

As one advances on the spiritual path it is very important to learn to adapt oneself to the environment. Adaptability implies detachment, the capacity to be where one is required and to grapple with the new environment. While Karma gradually unfolds the quality of adaptability in ordinary people, a disciple or a chela hastens the process of mastering his environment. A chela may be and often is, called upon to go anywhere and do whatever is required of him. New physical surroundings raise obstacles, and without the virtue of adaptability failure and frustration result. In developing adaptability we acquire some knowledge of practical occultism as well as Higher Indifference or *Viraga*.

For an aspirant, adapting to the environment implies learning to work in harmony with co-workers and co-disciples, without allowing the likes and dislikes to influence his behaviour. We should be willing to serve wherever work calls us. Mr. Judge writes:

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No matter where we are, the same spirit pervades all and is accessible. What need, then, to change places? We do not change ourselves by moving the body to another *locus*. We only put it under a different influence. And in order to change we must have got to dislike the place we moved from. This is *attachment by opposites*, and that will produce detriment, as does all that disturbs the equilibrium of the soul.

Just as we create positive attachment when we like a person or a place, so also we create negative attachment through our dislike. What we need to cultivate is equanimity towards people, places and circumstances that come to us under Karma.

Mr. Crosbie points out that at times students feel that getting away alone somewhere, regularly, would help to keep one's psychic balance. If we give in to this desire and habit of depending upon the *externals*, our personality demands periodical changes, producing nervous tension that is corrosive and destructive. Our mind is occupied with fancied needs and that in turn reacts injuriously on the body. Further:

True strength lies *within* and can only be aroused and used by ceasing to think that anything in particular of an external nature is *necessary* for us, in the ordinary acceptance of the word. We have our place and our duty to fulfil and perform; externals are our temporary opportunities, and we shall be wise to use these rightly. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 125)

THE MISSION OF THEOSOPHY

EACH year when November 17 comes round, students of Theosophy the world over think of the Movement started by H. P. Blavatsky in 1875 to spread broadcast the Message of Theosophy. Today, we can ask ourselves again: What does this Message mean to us at present? How can it be made applicable to the conditions obtaining today? For whom is it meant? For us who call ourselves students of Theosophy, or for humanity in general, or for both? Where did what we call Theosophy come from, and why was a Society formed to spread it to the world?

If we are familiar with the history of the Theosophical Movement we know that it was launched because the time was ripe, cyclically, for the resuscitation of the Message of Theosophy. We are told that the great 14th-century Tibetan Adept, Tsong-kha-pa, conferred with other adepts and it was decided that at the close of each century an effort should be made to enlighten particularly the Western world, which was then beginning to come out of its "Dark Ages." And so, since then, during the last quarter of every century a resuscitation of the Ancient Wisdom has taken place, sometimes through a society or movement, and sometimes through and with individuals. The history of these cyclic attempts can be traced. In the last quarter of 1875, the Messenger to carry out this work was Madame H. P. Blavatsky. She, aided by H. S. Olcott and William Q. Judge, founded a Society in New York to study this age-old Wisdom. Since then, it has spread all over the world. Why was a Society founded? Because, in the words of one of the Great Ones, "The *Chiefs* want a 'Brotherhood of Humanity' a real Universal Fraternity started; an institution which would make itself known throughout the world and arrest the attention of the highest minds." How is this Brotherhood to be attained? It can only be attained when based on true knowledge. That is to say, we must understand great Nature and her laws, we must have knowledge of ourselves, knowledge of the goal and purpose of life. And where can we get this knowledge?

Here is one of the most important ideas students of Theosophy try to spread: knowledge of these facts already exists. How could it be otherwise

when the age of the world is being pushed back further and further and the findings of archaeology reveal that some of the most ancient nations had far superior knowledge to ours! Must we truly think that we are the only wise race? Ancient legends refer to Wise Men who received knowledge of the workings of Nature from those who knew, and tested it for themselves. A record was made and it exists today. It is from this record that Theosophy is derived. As pointed out in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, this knowledge has always existed and was handed down from one Sage to another, as Krishna was handing it on to his disciple Arjuna.

One point has to be noted: even though the return of the cycle brings back the same truths, they fall on different ground. The thought-environment of the times is different century by century. Therefore it is that only that portion of the Truth is presented which can be understood by the civilization of the time and is necessary for man's next step or advancement. Today, mental development is to the fore and we are beginning to find out what can be achieved by the mind of man. Science and technology have progressed enormously of late. The danger is that the knowledge gained by the mind can be applied with or without a moral basis. One can see the need for a Brotherhood of Humanity to prevent the use of discoveries for personal advancement at the expense of our neighbour. Through the advances made in various spheres, things formerly accepted as true are shown as incorrect. We are entering a new era of morals, good and bad, a new era of ideas. Not only in the realm of science, but also in that of religion we find that many ideas of bygone days are no longer accepted today. Man's sense of self-responsibility is growing. He is learning that he is the master of his fate, that he can compel Nature to obey him, that he himself is the final authority and none other. But we cannot break Nature's laws with impunity. Only for a time do we succeed, and then chaos or destruction ensues. But we learn too late.

Therefore, one of the main ideas that the Message of Theosophy stresses is—"Help Nature and work on with her." Man will in time learn all her laws as he has learnt some, and he can help her to greater success and growth.

Science, materialistic science, is today faced with a dilemma which can only be solved when it acknowledges and finds proof of the invisible side of Nature, the astral counterpart of the physical. When this is taken into consideration, the understanding of the mind in man can also be gained, and all the mysteries of so-called spiritualism, magic, etc., can be cleared up. Hence one of the objects of the Theosophical Society was to study the unknown laws of Nature and of man. Note the word *study*. Experiment should follow knowledge; experiment should be performed on a scientific basis and not only with a view to finding out what happens.

With regard to the purpose and goal of life, we must learn about Reincarnation and Karma. Only on those two pillars can any sure foundation be built. They are rooted in the concept of immortality of the Spirit and of man's evolution to the goal of perfection. This perfection can only be attained by changing our character. We have to understand that brotherly love means mutual tolerance and charity. Our minds must be thoroughly impregnated with these truths.

H.P.B. wrote in *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 133):

Supported on the one hand by that science which shows us progressive development and an internal cause for every external modification, as a law in Nature; and, on the other hand, by an implicit faith in the wisdom...of the universal traditions gathered and preserved by the Initiates, who have perfected them into an almost faultless system—thus supported, we venture to state the doctrine clearly.

Theosophy, therefore, has to fight for recognition, recognition of its teachings, of its antiquity, of its necessity. Our duty is to spread the Message as we have received it.

THE MESSAGE OF THE GITA

WHAT is the *Bhagavad-Gita*? It is the crown and culmination of the *Mahabharata*. It is both *Brahmavidya* and *Yogashastra*, or, metaphysics and ethics. It teaches us the science of Reality and the art of achieving union with the One Reality. As it is the scripture of the soul, it has a universal appeal. The *Gita* is considered to be the fifth Veda, and forms along with *Brahmasutras* and *Upanishads*, *Prasthanatraya*—basis and foundation of the Vedantic philosophy. The *Gita* enshrines within 700 verses—sometimes between the lines and within the words—the esoteric knowledge, which is to be grasped intuitively. Mr. Judge advises us to "study the *Bhagavad-Gita* by the light of that spiritual lamp—be it small or great—which the Supreme Soul will feed and increase within us if we attend to its behests and diligently inquire after it." Further:

There is the highest authority for reading this poem between the lines. The Vedas themselves say that what we see of them is only "the disclosed Veda," and that one should strive to get above this *disclosed* word. It is here clearly implied that the undisclosed Vedas must be hidden or contained in that which is apparent to the outer senses. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 4-7)

Different people look upon Krishna in different ways and according to their understanding worship Him. According to H.P.B., Krishna represents the Logos. She explains the true meaning of the term thus:

The Logos, being no personality but the universal principle, is represented by all the divine Powers *born of its mind*—the pure Flames, or, as they are called in Occultism, the "Intellectual Breaths"—those angels who are said to have *made themselves independent, i.e.*, passed from the passive and quiescent, into the active state of Self-consciousness....As Krishna truly says—the same words being repeated later by another *vehicle* of the LOGOS—"I am the same to all beings...those who worship me (the 6th principle or the intellectual *divine* Soul, *Buddhi*, made conscious by its union

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with the higher faculties of *Manas*) are in me, and I am in them." (S.D., II, 318 fn.)

When this is recognized, the true meaning of Krishna becomes comprehensible. By studying the *Gita* one observes that Krishna represents: (1) Absolute Deity. (2) Unknowable rootless root of all that was, is and ever will be—pervades the entire universe as One Life. (3) Basis of soul in man and also source of *manasic* beings as we are all emanations of Mahat. (4) He is also the Guru and teacher of Arjuna and his Charioteer. (5) *Yogeshwara* or the Guru of Gurus. (6) Great *Avatara*. (7) It is that power of life and spirituality from which we have come, which sustains and energizes us and to which we shall return.

Krishna represents Absolute Deity or *Parabrahmam*, which is immanent and transcendent (*Gita*, X). According to T. Subba Rao, Krishna is intended to represent the Logos while Arjuna or *Nam* represents the human monads undergoing evolution. From this it is clear that we are souls ensheathed in physical bodies, come here to *learn* from the school of life.

In order to educate ourselves, we have to look within and seek the guidance of Sri Krishna. He should become our *Charioteer*. We have to understand the significance of Arjuna's Survey of the Armies. The very first verse in the *Gita* gives us the key. Dhritarashtra asks his minister to tell him what *his* army and Pandavas' army was doing. Thus:

Tell me, O Sanjaya, what the people of my own party and those of Pandu, who are assembled at Kurukshetra [the battlefield] resolved upon war, have been doing.

Dhritarashtra, representing the blind physical body, cannot get rid of the idea of *mine* and *thine*. But this body, obtained through our past Karma, has to be transformed into a *Dharmakshetra*—field of *Dharma* (duty). Unfortunately, the blind matter of the personality allows its lower *Kamic* Self, bound by a hundred chords of desire, represented by the evil-minded Duryodhana, to govern. The lower self *banished* the Higher Ego, represented by the Pandavas, into exile.

However, Arjuna, the *Nara* and warrior, was wise enough to choose Krishna as his charioteer, to fight out the battle between the living and the dead. Having prepared mentally to wage the battle against the Kauravas, he asks Krishna to place his chariot inbetween the two armies, assembled in the battlefield. Suddenly, he was overwhelmed with despondency on surveying the armies.

What became of Arjuna? When we resolve to become righteous and enter the Path of Discipleship, we have to face internal enemies represented by our family members, and external enemies represented by our friends and relatives. If we are able to overcome them, then we have to get rid of temptation, doubt, despair and suspicion. If we are able to conquer all these, then our base and evil tendencies, and those of our family, nation and race, take a gigantic form and shape. In the form of the "Dweller of the threshold," they prevent us from proceeding further, unless we take the help of Krishna within us to crush it. We have aroused the dark forces by our resolve to walk the spiritual path and therefore, only by dint of self-effort and self-purification can we conquer it.

Arjuna looked upon Krishna as his Guru and asked him to instruct him clearly as to what was his duty. Sri Krishna takes him through eighteen chapters, teaching him the highest metaphysics, philosophy and ethics. Finally, he tells him that if he does not fight out the field of duty, his own nature will compel him to fight.

When Arjuna realized that Krishan is the *Ishwara* seated in the hearts of all and that there is no separateness, he said that the delusion which clouded his mind was destroyed and he had regained his memory—that knowledge which was his in former births. Thus:

There dwelleth in the heart of every creature, O Arjuna, the Master—*Ishwara*—who by his magic power causeth all things and creatures to revolve mounted upon the universal wheel of time. Take sanctuary with him alone, O son of Bharata, with all thy soul; by his grace thou shalt obtain supreme happiness, the eternal place. (*Gita*, XVIII)

The *Bhagavad-Gita* impresses upon our minds two things: selflessness and action. It teaches the utmost self-purification through the right performance of action, without attachment to the fruit of action and without the thought of self. It asks us to seek this wisdom. Thus:

Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions, and by humility; the wise who see the truth will communicate it unto thee. (*Gita*, IV)

In the Seventh Chapter we are told that different classes of people worship Krishna. Thus:

Four classes of men who work righteousness worship me, O Arjuna; those who are afflicted, the searchers for truth, those who desire possessions, and the wise, O son of Bharata. Of these the best is the one possessed of spiritual knowledge, who is always devoted to me. I am extremely dear to the wise man, and he is dear unto me.

To the masses, He is the Beloved God of the *Bhagavat Purana*. To the intellectual, He is the Teacher—the Divine Instructor of Arjuna. But to how many of us is Krishna a living presence within? Yet, that is the central and most practical teaching and message of the *Gita*. Krishna says He is the *Atman* within each one of us. It is for us to remember that Krishna within, whose reality we must recognize and endeavour to realize by our persistent self-effort. Thus:

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....The wise gifted with spiritual wisdom worship me; their very hearts and minds are in me; enlightening one another and constantly speaking of me, they are full of enjoyment and satisfaction. To them thus always devoted to me, who worship me with love, I give that mental devotion by which they come to me. For them do I out of my compassion standing within their hearts, destroy the darkness which springs from ignorance by the brilliant lamp of spiritual

discernment. (*Gita*, X)

Krishna's compassion is universal. He says: "I am the same to all creatures; I know not hatred nor favor; but those who serve me with love dwell in me and I in them. Even if the man of most evil ways worship me with exclusive devotion, he is to be considered as righteous, for he hath judged aright." We should direct our hearts and minds to the only abiding Reality. Krishna in us is our Higher Self, the highest and truest friend. It is a grand concept to realize that our individual self is rooted in that Divine Self that is universal and eternal. When we recognize this Truth, Krishna is born in us.

Krishna is enshrined in the hearts of all. In the familiar figure of the *Bhagavata Purana*, He is a handsome youth playing on His flute under the shade of the tree, while a cow licks His foot and entranced gopis admiringly look on. This is the Krishna, the flute-player, who plays the tune of the Infinite that can lure the heart of the true devotee or aspirant, from worldly cares and attachments. That tune is indeed the song of Life Eternal. The aspirant should attune his ears to listen to that Song of Life. Krishna, the Charioteer of Arjuna, expounded the exhaustless philosophy on the field of battle, Kurukshetra, which is *Dharmakshetra*, the field of duty.

There is also Krishna the *Avatara Purusha*—a Divine incarnation—one who descends. In one sense each one of us is an *avatara*, for we are all emanations from the Divine, on our return path thereto. The *Gita* teaches us about Deity, the Supreme Self, and man; and the relationship between the two for the two are one.

I DID not die, and did not remain alive: now think for thyself, if thou hast any grain of ingenuity, what I became, deprived of both death and life.

—DANTE

I

THOUGH gorillas are fearful of water and cannot swim, scientists produced some photographs, a couple of years back, to show a female gorilla getting into a deep pool of water, using a stick for support and for plumbing the depth of the pool. "It may only be the first step on a journey on which we humans have advanced a million miles," remarked Desmond Morris, the author of *The Naked Ape* and *The Human Zoo*. Some chimpanzees have been seen cracking nuts, using stones and pebbles. It is felt that they are taking their first steps towards tool-making and technology, and time will come when they will compare with human beings. "We may be the most remarkable animals on the planet, but we are still animals. We are risen apes, not fallen angels," observes Desmond Morris. But is that true?

A couple of years back, research involving grafting of human neural stem cells (brain cells) into the brains of foetal monkeys (or primates) sparked off controversy among researchers on moral grounds. They were worried that such grafting might endow non-human primates (the monkeys) with human-like cognitive capacities such as memory, judgment, process of knowing, perception, etc. It might even change mental capacities like the ability to feel pleasure and pain, language, rationality, richness of relationships. If the monkeys acquire these capacities, they come very near to being human and then they may have greater capacity to suffer. (*Science*, July 15, 2005)

Although great similarity in anatomical structure and behaviour had led scientists to think that man has descended from the apes, or that man and apes have common ancestors, the adepts say that man has neither descended from apes, nor has he risen from the apes. If so, how does one account for human-like intelligence possessed by the anthropoid apes? The adepts, standing on the immeasurable height where centuries lie under their glance, possess certain and definite knowledge regarding the evolution of man. Occult science teaches that at a certain point in evolution, man was mindless, *i.e.*, devoid of thinking and choosing

powers and lacking *self-consciousness*. These mindless men of the Third Race, millions of years ago, committed the sin of uniting with huge she-animals, producing man-like monsters. Such union was possible because man as well as animals were in semi-astral form. "Medical science records such cases of monsters bred from human and animal parents, even in our own day. The possibility is, therefore, one of *degree*, not of fact" (*S.D.*, II, 689). The apes produced through such union, in semi-astral form, consolidated into physical and later dwindled in size, producing the lower apes of the Miocene period. After this, man was endowed with mind, and hence with power to think and choose, and also with self-consciousness. But once again, men with mind belonging to the Atlantean Race, repeated the sin of the mindless, by uniting with the lower apes of the Miocene period, giving rise to the species of apes—orangoutang, gorilla and chimpanzee—now known as anthropoid apes (*S.D.*, II, 683 and 689). They are described as "human presentments," and are half descended from man—distorted copies of early humanity. They are the "dumb races," whose monads are already within the human stage. Thus:

The ape we know is not the product of natural evolution but an *accident*, a cross-breed between an animal being or form and man....The Ape is, indeed... "a transformation of species most directly connected with that of the human family—a *hybrid branch engrafted on their own stock before the final perfection of the latter*"—or man.... The latter [Apes] are truly "speechless men," and will become speaking animals (or men of a lower order) in the Fifth Round, while the adepts of a certain school hope that some of the Egos of the apes of a higher intelligence will reappear at the close of the Sixth Root-race. (*S.D.*, II, 262)

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. "Without this *quickening* spirit, or *human Mind* or soul, there would be no difference between man and beast" (*S.D.*, II, 513).

It is said that only when man had developed a brain that was of much *better* and *deeper* capacity than that of any other animal, he 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. Can an improved quality of *brain* endow an animal with humanlike consciousness and cognitive capacities, such as, the ability to feel pleasure and pain (like human beings), rationality and richness of relationships? It is mind that affects the quality of the brain and not *vice versa*. "The depth and variety of brain convolutions in man are caused by the presence of *Manas*, and are not the cause of mind," writes Mr. Judge.

Language implies speech, and Theosophy asserts that "a *human* brain is necessary for *human* speech." The brain-size of the ape is not even half the size of the brain of the new-born child. (*S.D.*, II, 661)

If the Darwinian theory is not true, *i.e.*, if it is not true that man and apes have descended from common ancestors, then how to explain: (1) The similarity of structure between man and apes; (2) the presence of *rudimentary organs* in man like the ear-muscles, gill clefts and rudimentary tail? H.R.B. writes:

Let us remember in this connection the estoeric teaching which tells us of Man having had in the Third Round a GIGANTIC APE-LIKE FORM on the astral plane. And similarly at the close of the Third Race in this Round. Thus it accounts for the *human* features of the apes, especially of the later anthropoids—apart from the fact that these latter preserve by *Heredity* a resemblance to their Atlanto-Lemurian sires. (*S.D.*, II, 688)

Charles Darwin identified some dozen anatomic traits, *viz.*, body superfluous features prove that man did not descend from "demigods" but from fur-insulated, plant-chewing animals with tails. Today science

has identified many more such useless body parts, wrote Jocelyn Selim (*Discover*, June 2004).

H.P.B. explains (*S.D.*, II, 683-85) that the "rudimentary" organs discovered by anatomists in the human form can be explained if we accept that all forms that we now see on our earth were derived by variations on the *basic types* originally thrown off by the MAN of the Third and Fourth Round, several millions of years ago. Anthropologists were puzzled as to how to account for the presence of gill-clefts and tail in certain human foetuses. "Human type is the repertory of all potential organic forms, and the central point from which these latter radiate." Human form was astral and ethereal in the far past and possessed these rudimentary organs, which became useful appendages for lower animals. In an attempt to build the present human form, these prototypes were *shed* in the course of astral development, and the same was preserved by Nature. The potentiality of every organ useful to animal life is locked up in Man. Before arriving at the present form, human evolution has involved various forms of reproduction, giving rise to a variety of forms. Thus:

The amphibia, birds, reptiles, fishes, etc., are the resultants of the Third Round, astral fossil forms stored up in the auric envelope of the Earth and projected into physical objectivity [later]...."Evolution" has to deal with the progressive modifications, which palaeontology shows to have affected the lower animal and vegetable kingdoms in the course of geological time. It does not and from the nature of things cannot, touch on the subject of the pre-physical types which served as the basis for future differentiation. (*S.D.*, II, 684)

We are told that through their thoughts, the adepts brought about changes in the master types or *basic types* that were in astral matter, and thus gradually brought about various forms in lower kingdoms. This was done in purely astral period. Occult philosophy teaches that both

earth and man were astral in nature for 300 million years. This was the period when the models or root-types for the animal and human bodies were being perfected. At the end of this long period the process of hardening began, and the form of man was the first to become solid. Both the oxen and the horses are hoofed, but one shows split hoof while the other shows a toe. Now, the "basic types" from which these have come about as a result of alterations and additions worked out by the adepts, could never be traced by science, as these basic types are astral—of matter that is very fine in its texture.

Is man only a higher animal who has evolved from animals by a series of transformations? Theosophy posits triple lines of evolution, which are inextricably interwoven and interblended at every point. These are the Monadic (or spiritual), the intellectual and the physical evolutions. The Monadic or spiritual evolution is concerned with the growth and development into still higher phases of activity of the Monad. Monad is defined as *Atma*, the One Life, mirrored in *Buddhi*, its vehicle. This Monad cannot either progress or develop. It is the Great Spectator that has been observing the drama of evolution, unfolding from elemental, mineral, vegetable, animal to finally the human stage. It is the Eternal Pilgrim, *Atma-Buddhi-Manasic* triad, which is the experiencer, the sufferer, the enjoyer that has been learning and gaining experience in various kingdoms. Thus:

The Monad or Jiva....is, first of all, shot down by the law of Evolution into the lowest form of matter—the mineral. After a sevenfold gyration encased in the stone (or that which will become mineral and stone in the Fourth Round), it creeps out of it, say, as a lichen. Passing thence, through all the forms of vegetable matter, into what is termed animal matter, it has now reached the point in which it has become the germ, so to speak, of the animal, that will become the physical man. All this, up to the Third Round, is formless, as matter, and senseless, as consciousness. For the Monad or Jiva *per se* cannot be even called spirit: it is a ray, a breath

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of the ABSOLUTE, or the Absoluteness rather, and the Absolute Homogeneity, having no relations with the conditioned and relative finiteness, is unconscious on our plane. Therefore, besides the material which will be needed for its future human form, the monad requires (a) a spiritual mode, or prototype, for that material to shape itself into; and (b) an intelligent consciousness to guide its evolution and progress, neither of which is possessed by the homogeneous monad, or by senseless though living matter. (S.D., I, 246-47)

(To be continued)

“What do people get ‘ma’ about?” I think, generally, at something another has done, or failed to do; or at some fancied slight. We feel annoyed at the circumstances, really not the person; although we foolishly confuse the two. Now thing done, is done; no amount of irritation can change it. What is needed is a consideration of what led up to the doing; this should be taken up as calmly as any other proposition. If someone annoys you or irritates you by manner or action, it is to be assumed that he is not doing it on purpose to annoy. Try to understand his viewpoint; examine the man’s machinery, just as you would a machine. Some people have been known to get mad at a machine, and feel destruction in regard to it; but where is the fault? The machine cannot learn anything; the man can, and needs to. The main trouble, I think, is that most people consider it perfectly proper to make their likes and dislikes a basis for everything being judged from that basis. *We are not called upon for judgment, but for right action; to act rightly ourselves, and by precept and example induce it in others.*

---ROBERT CROSBIE

LEARNING FROM THEOSOPHY

When I was a child, my speech, my outlook, and my thoughts were all childish. When I grew up, I had finished with childish things. Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. My knowledge now is partial; then it will be whole....

--I Corinthians, XIII, 11-12

MAN goes on the paths of error because what he has chosen appears to him to be reasonable and has, moreover, its own special appeal to his nature. His reasoning may be faulty and his logic questionable; but, however great his error, he feels satisfied and at times holy. Fanaticism has its roots in such self-justification.

Life is not something static. It is a constant movement through environment and circumstance that present to the person ideas and images, some of which glamour him into ready acceptance while some come as warnings which of times are neither heard nor heeded. His associations, likes, loves, fascinations and revulsions that he brings as karmic heirlooms from preceding incarnations determine his present leanings towards one or another aspect of things, and this explains why vice has a fascination for certain natures. The reforming of oneself (it is certainly a re-forming and the instilling in the inner nature of a desire to tread the Path requires both enthusiasm and patience. The wrenching away of oneself from undesirable ideas, friends, relatives, teachers and companions is neither easy nor congenial. Unless the inner resources of strength and courage, of conviction and sincerity are fully exploited, there will always lurk the danger of a sliding back to the point from where one started. Such a failure may dampen resolve and ardor, but it gets confirmed as a total defeat only if it induces a falling away from the chosen path.

Entering upon a course of self-reformation is rendered doubly difficult if one has not developed the art of achieving a deliberate forgetfulness of man, ideas, emotions and contacts that are uncongenial to the new way of life. That which was previously learnt—wrong tenets from church and laboratory; wrong attachments to wealth and fame, to

Sights and sounds; wrong craving for the society of those who delight in overindulgence of sense pleasures; wrong ideas about food and drink and apparel; wrong craving for knowledge that defiles and oftentimes kills the Soul—all these have to be unlearned and thrown out of the system so that one's make-up stands purged of elements that bring ill-health to the body, the mind and the psychic nature. These several natures need wholesome food suited to their requirements of growth and well-being. That food has to be chosen with care lest it produce heady fumes that debilitate and bring on a premature senility. Wrong foods, even though productive of harm, titillate the senses and implant a craving for their regular and oftentimes excessive use. There are drugs that waste the body, the nerves and the brain faculty. There are others that work havoc with the mind and psychic nature, making these unfit to receive impressions from soul and spirit. The cravings, the malfunctionings and the idiosyncrasies that wrong intake of "food" generates would of course be there in inquirers into Theosophy. They already come burdened with false knowledge, harm-producing ways of living, undesirable cravings and a more or less rigid obstinacy against carrying out a drastic change in thought, action and habit. It becomes the responsibility of older students to befriend them and to give advice and instruction unobtrusively, waiting for time and karma to operate. In some cases it takes a long, long time for the newly planted seed to send its first shoots above the soil. The important thing is that a desire is planted and sustained in the inquirer to mould his life on the new-found rational basis of ideas. It is at this time precisely that he needs sympathy and help, for with the new orientation his immediate difficulties are bound to increase a hundredfold in intensity.

One of the chief difficulties in the practitioner's life is that consciously and even unconsciously he sees Theosophy through the eyes of his previous creeds. He tries to evaluate it by comparison with the knowledge, information and beliefs he has amassed from theology, science and the psychic claptrap that passes today for occultism. He may have purchased for valuable consideration the pseudo-occult teachings of this, that or the other guru, which teachings

he is loath to abandon because he has paid a fancy price for them. He has yet to learn that even if the teachings were genuine, they would become transformed into black magic as soon as they passed through the hands of him who would barter them for gold.

If the person were to assess himself honestly, he would come to the conclusion—startling and often disquieting to himself—that he lives his life and plans his behaviour round his beliefs about god, justice, mercy and progress. If he has picked up erroneous notions on any of these, he will distort his life and contaminate that of others. Here, there is one more snag to overcome. He may profess acceptance of a truth, but that may not go much further than his lips. His actions may belie that profession and the only inference open in such cases is that his inner and subtle convictions lie in a direction different from that which his intellect has accepted as true. He may thus see and recognize good, and yet his hands and feet may turn to mischief. There is a long, long trail to self-integration.

The gap between the god concept of orthodox theology and the impersonal god-principle of Theosophy is great as is that between the rigid justice of Karma and the sentimental forgiveness of sins promised from church and pulpit. The idea that any one religion leads to salvation, and this despite the wrongdoings of its laity, is pernicious. The old ideas of privileges exclusive to the adherents of a particular religion may and do get modified by a mental realization of the logical necessity of an omnipresent, impersonal force. However, for long periods, the false faith is not abandoned in its many implications. The Saviour image of the Christ—as presented by the orthodox clergy—still is hugged to the breast because it soothes the pangs of a biting conscience that revolts at evil. The chanting of Vedic hymns surrounded by all the paraphernalia of rituals persists because there still exists the superstitious hope that mantras and spells can turn weeds into roses. The belief that sin and waywardness can be erased by a simple declaration of faith or by the performance of rites and ceremonies is an opiate taken by many to deaden the dread knowledge that the exact retribution has to be made though Karma may tarry long in the process.

Can we by some process unlearn the false and deceptive knowledge we have accepted and stored in the inner recesses of brain, mind and heart? Can we like a wet duster swept across a blackboard erase the wrong philosophies and mistaken ideas that we have imbibed and treasured? Or, can the mischievous doctrines treasured through a long past be considered harmless and allowed to rub shoulders and coexist with the theorems of the true dispensation? The time for fooling oneself is over. When we grow up, it is time that we finish with childish things. Can anger coexist with love, sacrifice with cunning, honesty with the ambition to raise oneself over the wrecks of countless victims? How then should unlearning start?

The first step in such an exercise would be to make sure that we know definitely what aspects of knowledge gathered by us have to be rejected and thrown out of the system. *The Voice of the Silence* tells us that "false learning is rejected by the Wise, and scattered to the Winds by the Good Law." The search of false learning becomes fruitful only when we gauge it by the fixed norms of truth. There are some basic truths that are so transparent that they cannot be denied. These truths can be used as standard gauges by which we can segregate falsehood from fact. For instance, any person with some claim to intellect will admit that God, if omnipresent, must fill all Space and each object in it must be permeated and soaked through and through with its radiance. Given this truth as axiomatic, one cannot but draw the inference that in all men this radiation must reside though in all it may not shine forth with the same intensity. The oneness of the Spiritual Essence becomes the basis from which the Laws of Brotherhood emerge. Infinitude transcends all shapes and forms and therefore the form of the infinite Deity must assume the aspect of a metaphysical circle whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere. By the very nature of infinitude is the Deity invested with an impersonality and thus all cosmic agencies that mete out justice and equity must necessarily reflect that impersonality. Prayers for divine intervention in men's affairs; frantic appeals for mercy and

forgiveness against the dreaded retribution which must follow upon violation of the rights of others; the craving for boons; the purchase of pardons and immunities from popes and high priests, *acharyas* and *swamis*—are all devices put forward by a mercenary clergy to fool people into a false sense of security against a painful punishment all too possible in the prospect.

Unbrotherliness not only with humans but with any aspect of the Cosmos fails to recognize the oneness of the Soul essence and its infinitude. It poisons consciousness, and any knowledge gathered for unbrotherly purposes constitutes a crime against nature and becomes an engine of sacrilege. Poison develops in that knowledge, a rot sets in, and from the state of a creator such knowledge turns into a destroyer. Selfishness is the active agent that produces unbrotherliness because the separative self seeks its own felicity vis-a-vis the whole. It is in this sense that *Light on the Path* characterizes ambition as the first curse. Any knowledge that is not allowed to remain sweet running waters by allowing it to irrigate all lands through which the waters run becomes a stagnant pond. Soul-wisdom if not poured forth into another bed gets transformed into mere head-learning. It cannot be locked up but must be used continually to help humanity in the mass. Such action is but the natural outcome of the laws of Brotherhood.

Knowledge which is sold or bartered, be it even of the higher aspects of man and nature, gets stagnant because the hands through which it passes become sullied by the mire of pelf. Can one purchase the eternal by paying for it in mortal values? The idea is reprehensible and, worse still, dangerous, for no one can defile the spiritual with impunity. The present tendency in the West, and shamefully in the East, which should know better, is to sell what these purveyors miscall "spiritual and arcane knowledge." This is a complete reversal of the injunction which the Christ gave to his twelve disciples before he sent them out to preach and to heal: "... freely ye have received, freely give." Referring to her endeavour to give the esoteric teachings to those who deserved it, H.R.B. said: "The Esoteric Section is

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not of the earth, earthy; it...takes no stock in *external Theosophy*.... Finally, it requires neither subscription fees nor money, for 'as I have not so received it, I *shall* not so impart it,' and that I would starve in the gutter than take one penny for my teaching the sacred truths..."

Let us erase from our thinking any idea that we can obtain the hidden knowledge, the true Raja Yoga, by attending lectures and purchasing books at fancy prices. The "money-changers" are once again carrying on a lucrative business in church and temple and ashram.

WITHDRAW into yourself and look. And if you do not find yourself beautiful yet, act as does the creator of a statue that is to be made beautiful; he cuts away here, he smooths there, he makes this line lighter, this other purer, until a lovely face has grown upon his work. So do you also; cut away all that is excessive, straighten all that is crooked, bring light to all that is overcast, labour to make all one glow of beauty and never cease chiselling your statue, until there shall shine out on you from it the godlike splendour of virtue, until you shall see the perfect goodness surely established in the stainless shrine.

—PLOTINUS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[In this section we seek to answer frequently asked questions, at U.L.T. meetings or during private conversations and discussions with people who seek the answers in the light of Theosophy. Answers given in this section are by no means final. Only a line of thought is being offered by applying general principles of Theosophy.]

Question: Why should we revere the ancients when modern advancements in the right direction are valid and extremely valuable for social development and human progress? **Answer:** We must acknowledge every attempt at enhancing Truth, Goodness and Beauty, whether in the past or in the present; whether in the East or in the West. If this is our attitude to life and the yardstick to measure human progress, then the above question does not arise. Both the ancients and the moderns have contributed to the welfare of humanity, to a larger or smaller extent.

However, each era in human evolutionary growth has had its high and low reaches in material and spiritual developments, and the two do not always coincide or balance. Therefore, our present era seems to be ascending on the crest-wave of scientific, technological and intellectual progress which do add up to some valid social benefits which we must admire. Here, we may not dwell too much on the social and psychological hazards of present material developments.

A nation that forgets its past glory and refuses to learn from the past knowledge as well as mistakes, is in danger of the downward drift. There are certain truths and values that are eternally valid and relevant for all times. In fact, Theosophy is here to present this Ancient Wisdom for the all-round benefit of modern man. However, the ancients were more concerned with their timeless values while the material progress was considered incidental. If we can gratefully preserve these valuable legacies from the past, and allow ourselves

to be guided by these eternal principles, the development will be all-round and symmetrical and not lopsided. Here, we are likely to lose our directions and the true goal of human development. This is the most important danger arising from making material achievements the sole criteria of progress and happiness.

In the article, "The Babel of Modern Thought," H.P.B. points out that "most of our modern inventions for which we claim such glory, are, after all, things people were acquainted with three or four thousand years back. Lost to us through wars, floods and fire, their very existence became obliterated from the memory of man. And now modern thinkers begin to *rediscover* them once more." Many of our distinguished scientists have derived honour by merely dressing up the ideas of those ancient philosophers, without giving them due credit.

While admiring the modern developments in all directions we must never lose sight of the *higher purposes of human existence*: Exact experimental science must have at its foundation morality, virtue, philanthropy, writes a Master of Wisdom. Most civilizations have collapsed when there was imbalance between material prosperity and moral fibres required for coping with it. This imbalance is always reflected in the social and economic inequalities and finally in brutal atrocities. The latter state has always called for Nature's intervention (to restore the balance), such as by an advent of a Saviour, a Teacher, or an Avatara, or by natural catastrophes.

The glorious past had its decline because of loss of balance between the physical and moral natures, and the psychic and spiritual natures. One day, the present humanity too may have to face its moment of ultimate choice to either maintain its own inner equilibrium and that of great Nature itself, or face the same downfall which the past great civilizations have met.

Question: Is dogmatism in religions a barrier to the seekers of Truth? How?

Answer: What is dogmatism? Dogma meant originally tenet or

doctrine, but its meaning has now degenerated into an "arrogant declaration of opinion," without foundation of proof. It is assertion of a doctrine which others are expected to accept without proof or questioning, *i.e.*, on blind faith or belief. Dogmatic character of a tenet does not depend on the tenet itself, but on the mode of its exposition and acceptance. Thus, two people may present the same truth; in one case it will appear dogmatic, in the other not so. Similarly, two people may hear the same truth and to the one it will appear dogmatic and to the other not. When a person has accepted the teachings in blind faith, he is likely to be dogmatic in his presentation of truth, and will be found to resent an attack on *his* principles. Every religion without exception is true at the base but covered over with the cobwebs of rituals, ceremonies and dogmas, perpetrated by the religious authorities, priests, *pandits and purohits*, down the ages. There is distortion of truth and perpetration of dogmas, to hold sway over the laity. For instance, in Christianity there is the theological dogma that for every newborn baby, God creates a new Soul. H.P.B. points out that this dogma is untenable, because it is difficult to reconcile it with claims made for mercy, justice, equity and omniscience of God. How is it that the merciful and just God has created some souls to be born in diseased bodies or in poverty, misery and unfavourable circumstances, while others to be born in favourable surroundings? If this is done arbitrarily, at the whim and fancy of that God, then such a God ceases to be just and merciful. H.P.B. mentions another pernicious dogma, *viz.*, the doctrine of vicarious atonement, which states that no matter how enormous our crimes against the laws of God and of man, we have but to believe in the self-sacrifice of Jesus for the salvation of mankind, and his blood will wash out every sin. To accept this dogma is to believe that the spilling of one person's blood washes out the other blood spilt, and that is preposterous. Can the *results* of a crime be obliterated even though the crime itself be pardoned?

Pursuit of truth needs reasoned or intuitive faith but not blind belief. We are asked to reason out and question things. When we

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take "truth" in its highest sense, it is Absolute Truth (*Paramartha Satya*) as against Relative Truth (*Samvritti Satya*). A different mode of spiritual experience is necessary to grasp the full truth. There has to be direct intuitive apprehension of Spiritual facts. Hence, Mr. Crosbie says, "Truth is not a man, nor a book, nor a statement." Scriptures and teachers are only pointers—means of reaching the truth. There are many facets of truth and hence the quest for truth must be an ongoing quest. "Truth.. always explains. When we have the explanation, we have found the truth." There must be love of truth for its own sake and willingness to reason. We must be prepared to reject or lay aside a piece of knowledge that does not appeal to reason. Also, at times, there is heart response. We have the intuitive feeling from within that *this is true*. Dogmatism stifles reason and intuition. A dogmatic person asserts that *his* idea of God or Law, etc., is the only true idea, forgetting that Truth is above forms and formulations. The attitude of a seeker of truth must be as described by Mr. Judge:

We are to examine thoughtfully all that comes from such [great souls] persons, and 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.

When one is convinced of the truth, one may speak with conviction, but without demanding acceptance of it. There is no religion higher than Truth. Mr. Crosbie writes:

As in an authoritative claim that a certain metal is gold, the test does not lie in the authority, but in the test of the metal. One who has gold and has proved it to be so, has a right to say so, but he does not exact belief in his authority; he presents his gold for testing. This is the kind of authority you will find in Theosophy. (*The Friendh Philosopher*, p. 91)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Clear understanding of fear could provide us with a key to some of the most intricate questions that concern the whole of humanity. Is the fearful accumulation of military force more conducive to peace than the accumulation of understanding and goodwill? Is punishment more effective than prevention or rehabilitation in reducing criminal behaviour? Why are so many troubled children neglected, ignored, demonised and punished rather than listened to and cared for? Fear in the societies and in the world around us is the projection of individual fears. Very few dare to express and follow their convictions, defying public opinion. We are afraid to be ourselves because of the fear of being judged and criticized. Fear is innate in humans, and reasonable fears can protect us from real dangers. However, we seem to absorb a lot of unnecessary fears, such as, existential fear, organised and institutionalized fear, fear of the future, fear of being fully and freely alive, etc., from our culture and our surroundings. Fear prevents us from living a full life, impedes healthy human development and leads easily to mistrust. When people cling for security to the familiar, which includes dogmatic beliefs, it leads to conflicts. The fear of questioning one's beliefs makes it impossible to reach any compromise. Fearful people and societies are highly intolerant of questioning, which in turn gives rise to bigotry, persecution, prejudice and xenophobia.

What should we do to reduce the role of fear in our society? We can ask ourselves whether our fears serve us well. As individuals we may spend less time worrying and fearing the future or regretting the past, and instead learn to enjoy the present. We may be more loving and trusting. We could reduce the role of fear in education by inspiring creativity and getting rid of excessive discipline, competition or examination pressure. We could consciously seek political leaders and manifestos that are not influenced by fear and challenge political decisions that are guided by fear, writes James Sainsbury (*Resurgence*, July/August 2007). Further:

At the root of fear is the idea that we are fully independent beings. The more we become aware of the

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

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

"Fear...kills the will and stays all action," says *The Voice of the Silence*. Even when we are aware of the right course of action, we are incapacitated from taking right steps because of fear. "Fear eclipses reason and understanding."

Two-thirds if not all our diseases are the result of wrong imagination and fear. The common fear of the future is a great demoralizing obstacle to sane and creative living. A person's constant state of insecure feeling usually arises from the abnormal "instinct of self-preservation" or what the ancients called "*Trishna*" or thirst for continuing one's vital existence.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Controversy has flared up as regards the Sethusamudram Shipping Canal Project that seeks to construct a navigation channel connecting the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay. The channel cuts through Ram Setu (named Adam's Bridge in 1804). At present the steamers going between the east and west coasts of India have to go around Sri Lanka, thus travelling a long distance. The construction of this channel is expected to reduce the distance travelled by the steamers and avert their going around Sri Lanka. As the Project involves breaking a portion of the bridge (Ram Setu), it met with great resistance from devotees of Rama who contend that the Ram Setu was built during Lord Rama's time and is said to have transported His army to Lanka. Environmentalists oppose the project on the ground that the Bridge is a natural defence against storms and tsunamis. The great force to battle with is the sentiments of the devotees. According to marine experts, Ram Setu is a natural marine structure and was not man-made during the Ramayana era. It is argued that while *Ramayana* goes back to 5000 B.C., isotopic dating indicates that Setu is sedimentation which is only one lakh years old, writes Rajiv Mani (*The Times of India*, September 14, 2007). The most important question to be settled is: Did Rama exist as a person? Historians say that Rama was only a mythical figure and not historical, as there is no evidence—either historical or archaeological—to prove it either way, writes Atul Sethi (*The Times of India*, September 14, 2007). "Myths have to be carefully interpreted to find the grain of truth," says S. Settar, former chief of the Indian Council of Historical Research. History requires concrete evidence in the form of coins, inscriptions, etc., to prove the existence of a character. And yet, Rama has been part of our collective consciousness for long, says R. P. Tripathi, professor of ancient history at Allahabad University. However, Pushkar Bhatnagar, the author of *Dating the Era of Lord Rama*, says, "The time has come to wonder if one can be confined to only these kind of evidences [historical or archaeological] to prove the antiquity of an event and to construct history. If the masons failed to construct buildings which could survive seven millennia, an inference should not be drawn that the country had no inhabitants or that Rama is

a myth." Most myths are stories about things that happened a long time ago. "There is 'history' in most of the allegories and 'myths' of India, and events, real actual events, are concealed under them" (S.D., I, 304 fn.).

H.P.B. points out that "*Ramayana* is the mystic narrative in epic form of the struggle between Rama—the first king of the divine dynasty of the early Aryans [Fifth Race]—and Ravana, the symbolical personation of the Atlantean (Lanka) race [Fourth Race]. The former were the incarnations of the Solar Gods, the latter of the lunar Devas " (S.D., II, 495)

Poetry and history combined is one of the numerous devices employed by the Great Instructors of humanity to convey great truths. The *Ramayana*, called *Itihasa* or history, tells us of the gods and goddesses who descended from heaven and incarnated in bodies of flesh and blood for definite purpose. They always descend to help the race in its next step forward.

Rama belonged to the Solar and Krishna to the Lunar Race. H.P.B. mentions a work called VAMSAVALI, meaning genealogy of the Solar and Lunar races, from which source the *Puranas*, the *Bhagavata*, the *Skanda*, the *Agni* and the *Bhavishya-Purana* have drawn their divine, human and dynastic genealogies. A copy of this work is found in the royal library of the *Maharajas* of Udaipur. Further:

Rama is a *historical* personage. The ruins of cities built by him and buried under several successive strata of other cities, more recent but still *prehistoric*, still exist in India; they are known as well as the ancient coins with his effigy and name. (*Le Lotus*, April 1888)

Long dismissed as magical or beneath the dignity of science, psychology now tries to explain intuition as mental matching game based on experience. In this, the brain takes in the situation and quickly

searches through and compares with the stored knowledge and memories, and then arrives at a decision. We cannot separate intuition from emotion, says Cognitive scientist Alexandre Linhares at the Brazilian School of Business and Public Administration. Experience is stored in our brain as a blend of facts and feelings. A new experience calls up stored knowledge as well as emotional state of mind and predisposition to respond in a certain way. The more experience you have in a particular domain, the more reliable your intuition, because they arise out of the richest array of collected patterns of experience. Gut feelings arise out of internalized experiences. It is felt that it is time to end the battle between gut and mind and explore how gut feelings interact with deliberate calculations of the conscious mind.

Maureen O'Sullivan, professor of psychology at the University of San Francisco, who has spent many years studying people with exceptional ability to detect lies, points out that some of them put themselves into the skin of the other person, while others judge by observing nonverbal cues and voice tones and put all of those together in a meaningful way. Astute judges of character are usually those who have an intense interest in people and a broad range of experience.

"Most people actually determine whether an action is right or wrong automatically," writes Jonathan Haidt, associate professor of psychology at the University of Virginia. Moral intuition is comparable to aesthetic judgments. We instantly know whether we think something is beautiful, but we do not necessarily know why. The rational mind churns out reasons for our intuitive moral decisions, and justifies our action.

Some couples say that they intuitively knew at the first meeting that they would share a long-term relationship. The heart has reasons which reason does not know, said the philosopher Blaise Pascal. It may be that "heart" is governed by the unconscious emotional pattern matching that produces intuition, writes Carlin Flora. (*Psychology Today*, May-June 2007)

Human mind is capable of two kinds of knowledge or two states of

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Human mind is capable of two kinds of knowledge or two states of consciousness—rational and intuitive. Reasoning is a slow process and belongs to the lower aspect of *Manas* (Mind). In the exercise of reason or intellect, *Manas* has to depend on the brain. Intuition is the direct cognition of truth in all things. It is the faculty of the Soul. There is a temporary conjunction of *Manas* with *Buddhi* when one gets a flash of intuition. This is because *Buddhi* is the storehouse of all our experiences from the Monadic stage. *Buddhi* is the all-knowing Spiritual Soul, so that when *Manas* is conjoined with *Buddhi*, man becomes omniscient.

Though many people doubt the existence of intuition in themselves, it is a common heritage of man and needs only unselfish effort to develop it. It is as if we had within us a series of wires, which will vibrate only by those words, and propositions that are true. Mr. Judge observes that one can develop intuition by giving it exercise and by following it through mistakes. We must constantly refer mentally all propositions to it and give it an opportunity for growth, so that in time it will speak with no uncertain tones. The brain must be given larger views of life, by study of the scriptures and the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation.

When the mind is not completely receptive, then one would experience what is known as a *hunch*, which is partial receptivity on the part of *Manas*. Another variation of intuition is the "voice of conscience." It may be defined as the moral sense of right and wrong. It is an ever-developing inner warning "voice," and what it says to us depends upon the extent to which we have assimilated our prior experiences. This "voice" is not always reliable, as it gets coloured by the ideas prevalent in the society and by its norms. Intuition can guide this "voice," so that if a moral problem has to be settled, we have the right help from within us in deciding the final course of action.