

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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ON MITIGATING KARMA

IN THE APHORISMS on Karma, Mr. Judge tells us that Karma can be mitigated or counteracted by the thoughts and acts of oneself or of another. How can the effects of our actions be mitigated or counteracted by ourselves or by another in a universe of Law? If we are responsible for them, then why should we be helped to escape the consequences? In what way is mitigation or counteraction different from forgiveness of sins?

“Mitigate” is a term defined in dictionaries as: “to make easier to bear”; “to render less severe or harsh”; “to alleviate, abate, relieve or diminish.” It is important to note that “mitigation” does not mean *obliteration*, or wiping away the consequences of one’s actions. While we can see that an individual can do this for himself, and mitigate, change and alter the Karma he has stored up for himself, it is difficult to understand how one can change or affect someone else’s Karma!

When Karma has ripened we can do nothing to mitigate it. With our limited capacities we cannot change “causes already set in motion,” causes whose effects are in the process of manifesting themselves. Can one stop an earthquake, or a tidal wave? No! But one can lift the child out of the way of an onrushing car. We can do nothing about the fact that we are in the male or female body, or born blind, or born mentally retarded. The effects are already being reaped and all that we can and should do is to face them with the right attitude. In such a situation, we should, let the ripple of effect run its course.

Here, we may notice that the extent to which we learn to accept people and situations that we are unable to change, without grumbling or complaining, accepting that “my own has come back to me,” and with the attitude of learning the lesson, we reduce the severity of the karmic consequences. Patient acceptance of what is due to us makes us take a further step in our development. It is opportunity at two levels: (1) On the lower level, it is an opportunity to pay off the Karmic debt. (2) On the higher level, it is an opportunity for the ego to learn to deal with such a situation. For instance, one person interested in classical music might rebel against being transferred to a place where he cannot go to the concerts. Another with similar interest may accept it as a good discipline and look upon it as an opportunity to cultivate some other interests. Once we have learnt to deal with a difficulty, the next time it ceases to be a difficulty. When the lesson is learnt the necessity ceases. The force of the situation weakens. Thus:

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. (Aphorism 27)

On the other hand, it appears that when we resort to any prayers or propitiatory ceremonies, or cause to deviate the course of the Law and dodge the karmic consequences, we can make our Karma more complex, and might add compound interest to the capital, *i.e.*, we may increase the severity of karmic backlash to be experienced in some future life. Often, in such cases, we only postpone the karmic settlement, so that the difficulty we tried to escape from may come back in the same life, or in some other. It may reappear in the same form or may take some other form. H.P.B. writes:

Not even the greatest of Yogis can divert the progress of Karma, or arrest the natural results of actions for more than a short period, and even in that case, these results will only

reassert themselves later with even tenfold force, for such is the occult law of Karma and the *Nidanas*. (H.P.B. *Series No. 32*, p. 34)

Hence, it appears that it is only that Karma which has not yet ripened that can be mitigated or counteracted. In our storehouse of unexpended Karma there are actions which can be mitigated by doing actions which are of the opposite nature. As we go through life we grow in knowledge and understanding, through our thoughts, feelings and actions, and begin a new line of Karma by setting up different causes. In fact, whether we recognize it or not, through our thoughts, feelings and actions, we are always, “altering” our own, or another’s or our family’s or nation’s Karma.

Mitigation of another’s Karma may also be in terms of sharing of another’s Karma—as a parent shares the Karma of the child while rearing it and training it, or a teacher shares that of a pupil, or an employer that of an employee. Let us turn to Mr. Judge’s *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* and note a principle for the understanding of this. We are born in the company of those with whom we have set up strong karmic affinity. Further,

In reassuming a body...other beings once known to the man arrive into incarnation at the same time, and bring into action affinities, attractions, and powers that can only act through them and him. Their influence cannot be calculated. It may be good or bad, and, just as he is swayed by them or as his sway the other being, so will work out the Karma of each....These effects, divergences and swayings are well known to occultists....This law is both an angel of mercy and a messenger of justice, for...it is also a means whereby nature saves men often from damnation. (pp. 67-68)

Mr. Judge explains: Suppose in some past life a person had established a deep and interior intimacy with a friend. Death separates them, and in subsequent lives he pursues pleasures while this friend seeks truth and wisdom. After many lives they meet again and the old intimacy asserts itself. Then the former friend has a strange power

to touch his inward life, and wakes him up to search for truth and his own soul. It is the unexpended affinity, and by its aid nature works his salvation.

When a person performs an act, not only does *he* get the reaction but the effects are felt in the environment surrounding him. No person acts in isolation and hence the consequences of his action are also shared by others. The Great Ones impress the atmosphere of our earth with Their Ideation and Imagination and thus shield erring humanity from “further and far greater misery and sorrow,” by building around it a “Wall of Protection.” Their benevolent thoughts and actions have a potency to mitigate or make less, the severity of karmic consequences of the wrong actions of humanity as a whole. However, these consequences are not obliterated—they are only made less severe. Those near us can make things easier for us by their kindness and understanding, and their strength and support. Even the mere presence of a sympathetic individual helps us for good. We are all united on the inner planes of being, and hence through our thoughts, feelings and actions, we constantly help or hinder another, making his Karma easier or more difficult to bear, and they do the same for us.

In the article, “Men, Karmic Agents,” Mr. Judge explains the special and technical sense in which the word “karmic agent” is used. He mentions that there are people who are concentrators of the forces, who become instrumental in sudden and quick precipitation of Karma. There are those who are gifted or cursed with this power, by virtue of the kind of life led in the past. Adepts, on the other hand, possess such power of concentrating the karmic forces by training. This is hinted at in Patanjali’s *Yoga Aphorisms* (Aphorism 36): “When veracity is complete the Yogi becomes the focus for the Karma resulting from all works, good and bad.” It is a well-known tradition in India that when someone meets and talks with an adept, his Karma begins to precipitate faster than usual. There are accounts of people who had met by chance Yogis in the forest and telling them about a friend or a dear one at home, who was critically ill, and then on returning home finding that the illness

had disappeared at the very time of the conversation. At other times, meeting with the adept would result in exhausting of a lot of unpleasant karma, once for all. The instance of this is to be found in the story of Centurion’s servant and Jesus of Nazareth. The story goes that when Jesus entered Capernaum, Centurion, a Roman officer met him and begged for help because his servant was sick in bed at home, unable to move and suffering terribly. Jesus offered to go to the officer’s house and heal the servant, but the officer said that he was not worthy of having Jesus enter his house. Instead he suggested that Jesus should only give the order and his servant would be well. He said that he was an officer himself and when he commanded his soldiers to do something it was done. Jesus was impressed by this Roman officer’s faith. He turned to the crowd and said, “I have not found anyone in Israel with a faith like this.” The Roman officer was told, “Go back home. As you have believed, so shall it be.” The Centurion returned home and found his servant completely healed.

It is said of the Masters that They cannot interfere with the Karma of even Their Chelas. They “interfere” or act when the whole of humanity is benefited. What is then implied in the idea of “taking upon oneself the Karma of others”? Aphorisms on Karma say that all beings, small and great make Karma. But each one can also become “agent” of Karma for those makers of Karma. H.P.B. took upon herself the Karma of the Theosophical Society. H.P.B. said that she was the mother of the Theosophical Society and also its lightning conductor. Beings like H.P.B. are identified with the whole of humanity and in that sense they are Universal Beings. We are learning to be Universal Beings, aspiring to serve Humanity without distinctions. Our “universe” at present is small, but the same principle becomes applicable. For instance, every chela learns to take upon himself the Karma of others. Likewise, students of Theosophy make a jump and a short cut, so to say, from personal Karma to universal Karma, taking in their stride family, community, national and race Karma, explains Shri B. P. Wadia. At our level, the extent to which one feels identified with another or others, to that extent one is able

to share or take upon himself the Karma of another or others.

Karma is a universal force, and to a greater or lesser extent we share one another's Karma. To the extent that we are unselfish, to that extent we assume some responsibility for others' Karma in helping them to bear with greater fortitude that which they have created for themselves and are now experiencing. Probably, the blessings given by a well-meaning elder or a spiritually advanced person falls in this category. In "*Forum*" *Answers*, Mr. Judge points out that Buddha and Jesus were two great teachers who performed cures. But in some cases they could not perform cure because the causes working on the sufferer were too strong for them.

Our false concept of "merciful law" is that it *excuses* our wrongdoing and allows us to escape the ensuing consequences. A sin, crime, or error disrupts the channel of communication with our divine nature, and true repentance establishes back this ruptured communication so that we can receive the necessary guidance to correct ourselves. True repentance also means humbly submitting ourselves to receive the just retribution from the all-merciful Law.

True repentance consists in resolving to mend the ways and acting in accordance with such resolve. If one has erred by lying, stealing or backbiting, one has to set into motion good causes by resolving and learning to abstain from repeating the same wrongs. True repentance must lead to inner transformation. We are then sowing new causes that can counteract or mitigate the bad effects generated by previous causes. What we experience is the resultant or sum total of the old, bad karma and new, good karma. According to the *doctrine of nullification of Karma* a person may have in his Karmic account a very unpleasant cause and at the same time a cause of opposite character. If these come together for expression at the same time they may so counteract each other as that neither will be apparent and the equilibrium is the equivalent of both. Such nullification can possibly take place, only when the lesson is learnt and not otherwise.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT DISCRIMINATION—DISCRETION

MASTER, I do not understand the difference between tolerance, discrimination and discretion, between anger, exasperation and the "I-could-not-care-less" attitude. At all times of the day we are faced with circumstances which need one or the other response from us. What are we to do?

Friend, look in a dictionary and try to understand the antonyms of the words you have used—intolerance as opposed to tolerance; indiscrimination as opposed to discrimination; indiscretion as opposed to discretion; calmness as opposed to anger; understanding as opposed to exasperation; compassion as opposed to "I-could-not-care-less" attitude. In this way we may find real meaning of the words.

Intolerance, we learn, may lead to "persecution" of another. Tolerance is the ability to "endure with patience," to allow another to go his way. Therefore, tolerance requires, first and foremost, patience. True patience gives us the time to listen carefully to others, to appreciate the position of others, to know that there is never just one way in which some goal may be achieved, but that each person has his own way based on his "nature," as the *Gita* points out.

Intolerance may arise because the personality of another seems to us disagreeable, or because his manners offend us, his methods are contrary to ours, and we feel discomfort in his presence; or we may feel that he is doing harm to others or to a cause. Putting our Teachings into practice, we have to learn to control these feelings and have to endeavour to find out whether it is better to oppose a person or a course of action that we believe to be wrong, or to keep ourselves aloof from the person or the method of work.

It is here that we must learn to discriminate. While we allow intolerance to lead to anger, we are in a condition which renders us incapable of discriminating between what are our personal views and inclinations and what is the truth in any matter. If ideas manifest

as actions and build character, then we must search for our own ideas as well as for those of others. It is our *own* ideas that we must examine first, distinguishing between those that have their root in our present personality or have been learnt from the civilization we have been born or educated into, and those ideas that are based on universal Truth. Then, and then only, can we begin to look for the ideas behind another's actions or character. Once we have found out, through study and reflection, which of our ideas are universal and harmonious with Truth, we are in a position to discriminate and to understand another's ideas and actions. We are then ready for the next stage.

The next stage is to understand discretion. Indiscretion, we learn, is "imprudent, injudicious action, a condition of rashness." It is the result of lack of thought, of pride in oneself and one's own ideas, of an over-emphasis on one's importance. On the other hand, the use of discretion implies that we think carefully before speaking or acting, and weigh the consequences by taking into consideration the nature of others and how they are likely to react to our words or actions. It means we must be capable of saying the right things at the right time and to the right person; of acting at the right time, at the right place and with the right purpose, keeping the goal in view.

As will be seen, true tolerance, true discrimination and discretion have to be attained by thought, by analysis, by meditation on one's own character, ideas and methods. We have then to turn away from our environment of feelings and desires, and think carefully and impersonally on the basis of all the knowledge we can gain on the subject. Therefore, anger and exasperation and the "I-could-not-care-less" attitude can have nothing to do with true tolerance, true discrimination or true discretion. We know that exasperation comes before *and* after anger, and gives us the impression that we are justified in being angry; but the effect on ourselves and on others is bad. In fact, exasperation which cloaks itself in this form is anger which has not yet exploded in time. It is rooted in emotions, just as anger is, and both thwart our efforts towards control of the animal

in us. The attitude of "I-could-not-care-less" is worse than anger—for oneself, for it destroys the germ of compassion in us. But it must be realized that taking our thought away from those things that are not our duty is not the same thing as saying, "I-could-not-care-less."

Master, if we are to become tolerant of everything, we surely shall lose discrimination and shall never know what is the opposite of right, truth, harmony. What, then, are we to do?

Friend, turn to *The Key to Theosophy* and find out what are the laws underlying all life. To take one example, read what is said on p. 252 and think over its implications: "True or false, no accusation against another person should ever be spread abroad." Note carefully the words: "accusation," "true," "false" and "spread abroad." Note also the reason why we are to remain silent: "If true, and the fault hurts no one but the sinner, then leave him to his Karma. If false, then you will have avoided adding to the injustice in the world." An accusation is more pointed than a mere reference to a fault in character or in action; it is a positive thing, and therefore, is strictly to be avoided. But suppose it is true and the offence committed does affect others—what, then, shall we do? If after exercising our discrimination as to whether it is true or false, we believe it to be true, then we can act in accordance with H.P.B.'s further injunction: "...if your discretion and silence are likely to hurt or endanger others, then I add: *Speak the truth at all costs*.... There are cases when one is forced to exclaim, 'Perish discretion, rather than allow it to interfere with duty.'"

Master, one feels like saying, as the *Key* goes on to say, that if we carry out these maxims we "are likely to reap a nice crop of troubles!"

Friend, it is right and good that one should take into account the environment, that is, the effect on others of our words and accusations, but H.P.B. gives us the correct attitude to adopt: "Consult duty and not events."

This brings up the question of what our duty is. Responsibility shows us where our duty lies. Duty is that which is ours by right of

birth, and concerns everything that has to do with life. We have a duty to ourselves because life has a purpose for us as souls; we have also a duty to our environment, family, nation, country, race, and the world. That is, we have responsibilities towards our parents, our teachers, the country that gave us birth, the very earth that supports us, and finally to humanity itself. We have a duty to Theosophy and to the Teachers of this great Knowledge which is food for our mind and soul. Just as we have to leave a man to his Karma when his correction is not our duty and his actions do not hurt others but injure only himself, so we do not need to seek other duties than those which come to us naturally. An attitude of awareness, calmness, patience and integrity will help more than rushing about wanting to cure this or that, punish this one or that person's ideas. We must let go of pride, for pride leads to intolerance. It is conceit that makes us feel justified in acting as we *please*, and not as we *should*.

But there is another side to all this, for we have to bear in mind that to tolerate that which we know to be wrong, or to show intolerance when tolerance is needed, will lead to trouble. Our discrimination may not always be right, but we must use it or we shall lose the power to know right from wrong, good from bad. And with loss of discrimination comes "loss of all."

Master, the path is truly razor-edged!

Friend, read again the closing portion of the Third Chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, beginning with verse 33.

* * * * *

Tolerance is a widely used term with many meanings. Most people mean by tolerance not hurting the feelings of others, or maintaining peace at all costs. Basically, tolerance is thought to be the policy of "live and let live." Thus, a person holding different views, who points out any errors of statement or fact, is considered to be intolerant. The dictionary meaning of tolerance is, "liberality towards the opinions of others." This, however, does not call for

what Robert Crosbie terms, "indiscriminate acceptance of everything and everyone."

There is true and false tolerance. There is false, or passive tolerance involving emotions, which Mr. Crosbie describes as "the attitude of 'namby-pambyism' [which] is but a pseudo-tolerance." Further,

Carried to its legitimate conclusion, this false idea of "brotherhood" would signify that sin, sorrow, suffering, error, all religions and all philosophies are all right; that everyone is doing the best he can, and the best he knows how to do, and cannot do any different, and that all are steps of learning.

Someone who wants to grasp entire truth, from all its aspects, must be willing to cultivate both ethical and metaphysical viewpoint. Sooner or later, a true seeker of truth has to learn to deal with metaphysics, because ethics and metaphysics are like two wings of a bird. We may be more inclined towards ethics, and hence metaphysics feels irksome, but then let us become aware of our mental bias. Mr. Judge suggests that we must try to give up our own mental bias, and enter into the bias of another's mind to see his viewpoint.

It is extremely difficult and we need to train ourselves. Even in everyday affairs it would be a good practice to endeavour to see things from another person's view point. We not only need to listen, carefully and sympathetically to another person, but if need be, get into another's shoes. At times, we just refuse to consider the thoughts of another person because his personality is disagreeable to us. We are being impolite and uncharitable when we refuse to even listen to another person, and thus lose an opportunity to consider life as seen through the eyes of another.

HE WHO would live the life or find wisdom can only do so by continued effort.

—W. Q. JUDGE

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA ON INCARNATION—I

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

IN THE TENTH Discourse, Shri Krishna revealed to Arjuna certain splendours and glories of the Great Lodge of Perfected Men, that Arjuna might through quiet contemplation on these Divine Perfections, acquire an understanding of one aspect of that great collectivity of Masters that had not yet been revealed to us in the *Gita*. He said very definitely that through these divine perfections, we could arrive at the knowledge of that higher aspect of what the Lodge really is, and so we see how this path of discipleship, the path that Arjuna is treading in the *Gita* is one which is marked by several very definite steps. There are several degrees, among those aspiring towards the treading of the path, as there are several degrees of those who are already on the spiritual path of the Masters, and all of these steps must be gone through, one by one, in their successive order by every single aspirant to the Wisdom Religion. It is because Krishna, the Teacher, the Guru of Arjuna, who is then his disciple or Chela, leads Arjuna step by step that the *Gita* is so helpful to all students of Theosophy, for it reveals to us the whole process of what discipleship is.

To begin with, Krishna simply indicated to Arjuna what were the actions to be performed and the actions definitely to be avoided, so as to awaken in Arjuna, spiritual perception. This having been achieved, and the spiritual perception having been attained by Arjuna, Krishna proceeded to show him more of his own real nature, *i.e.*, he began to describe to Arjuna the Lodge and the Masters, and now Arjuna has come to the point where it is possible for Krishna to reveal to him the greatest of all mysteries, which is the origin of that Great Lodge. How the Lodge of Perfected Men came to be on this particular earth, in this field of evolution, is the great knowledge conveyed in this Eleventh Discourse, and from that point of view,

the Eleventh Discourse symbolises initiation. It is actually the Discourse of practical initiation. What is initiation? Initiation is the giving by the Teacher to the Pupil of something which changes the consciousness of that pupil. Krishna actually imparts something to Arjuna which enables Arjuna immediately to acquire the supreme vision, to obtain for himself the Divine I, the Dhyana Chohan as Sanskrit has it, and this Divine I immediately changes Arjuna from the position of an aspirant to that of discipleship, and then to that of an accepted chela. A disciple, once he has acquired the knowledge given at the final, the supreme initiation, is able to know the ultimate truth of the Universe. That is why he has through this divine I, Dyaan chohan the power to perceive Krishna in his own Universal Form, a terrifying vision for anyone who has not yet fully understood the spiritual ancestor of all mankind. But this divine vision of the whole of the Universe embodied in the person of the Teacher, Krishna, also shows to Arjuna what is his innermost nature, for all of us from the highest point of view, in the real depth of our own being are the whole of the Universe, and this Divine Form of the Lord is nothing else but the highest aspect of the Masters Themselves, of that Great Lodge of Perfected Beings.

The point that we should remember in connection with Initiation is that something is actually imparted by the teacher to the pupil; that however much we may struggle on alone to attain complete knowledge and understanding, it cannot be done unless we come to the position of receiving the actual help and assistance from a Master, from a Perfected Man, one who attained to the supreme knowledge that we have been aspiring towards in previous fields of evolution. Our highest aspirations, the best and the most noble of our intuitions, as well as the practice of the ethical precepts of the Great Wisdom Religion are not enough to convey to us the greatest mystery, but we must come to the position where the Teacher can give us that divine vision. What the Teacher gives is indeed a mystery. Initiation is a profound mystery, one of the secrets of occultism, but the fact remains that something is thus given by the

Teacher which immediately changes for the disciple the process of his own incarnations. At the present time we incarnate and we reincarnate but we are unconscious of the process, *i.e.*, we do not understand what actually takes place when we come into bodies of human flesh; because of this great vision, because of the change that takes place in our own consciousness, incarnation also is revealed, and knowing ourselves from the higher point of view we understand what incarnation really is, and so the mystery of initiation reveals to us the profound mystery of what incarnation is.

The existence of initiation, as well as the meaning of what initiation implies we find symbolised today in all great religions of the world, and although the actual spiritual significance of what it all really means is lost to the world, we still find the outer and the empty shells in the ceremonies of the temples and churches. We find initiation symbolised alike in the Hindu faith and the Zoroastrian worship, and even we find it in the Christian creeds of the modern world. When the Brahmin priest, for example, gives to the boy the sacred thread, or when the Zoroastrian does the same to the boy or girl who are following the worship of Fire, the Ancient religion of Zoroaster, or when today in our churches the boy and girl are first baptized and later on confirmed, those rituals, however, meaningless they are today, stand on a basis, for this truth of initiation symbolized in the Eleventh discourse.

However, as they stand today in actual practice, these symbols which people do not understand, are not only meaningless and inconsistent, but are very dangerous, for if anything is practised which has at the back of it a supreme spiritual significance, and is practised without understanding, then it becomes a dangerous weapon in the hands of all the followers of that practice and religion, and so these ceremonies in the churches and temples today are indeed dangerous practices. But the truth remains that there is a real initiation, and initiation being such a profound mystery, it is very difficult for us to understand the Eleventh Discourse of the *Gita*. Not only is it difficult to grasp its deeper significance, but it is indeed difficult to

try and convey the meaning of that discourse in words. The subject is one of the great secrets of occultism, and one which we cannot deal with without going into the realm of higher metaphysics. However, it has practical bearing on the discourses which immediately follow, and will show to us what the ethical practical application of this great vision is. We can say that the Eleventh discourse sums up the whole of the teaching of esoteric philosophy, and it shows to us the ultimate goal that we shall all in time reach and attain for ourselves, if we persevere in our efforts along the spiritual path.

A great clue is given to us about initiation in trying to convey to us in this discourse what the source and origin of the Great Masters is. This source, this origin of all Perfected Men of this evolution and of previous evolutions, H.P.B. refers to as the Supreme Being, the “Ever-living-human-Banyan,” the Supreme, the Great Sacrifice, which reminds us of *Adhiyajna*, the title of Krishna himself. We also refer to this supreme mystery as being the Planetary Being. We are also led to think of our position in reference to these Higher Beings, who attained their own self-conscious immortality ages before we started as human beings on this particular earth. Theosophy teaches that human evolution is dependent for its growth on Beings who evolved in fields of evolution prior to this earth, and we must understand this in reference to our own evolution. Evolution produces the form of man, but that man in form is not a man in consciousness; that man is simply a human form embodied or informed with the Higher Principles of man’s nature, called the Monad. But there being no connecting link between the human form and the higher spiritual principles, there is no self-consciousness, or no manhood.

(To be continued)

WEALTH AND WISDOM

I

HINDUS celebrate and worship the goddess of Wealth—Lakshmi, and the goddess of Wisdom—Sarasvati, during the festival of Dasara. All mythologies being symbolical, there are profound truths about man and universe hidden in them. We can profit by inquiring into the symbol and iconography of these two goddesses.

The word “Lakshmi” has two possible origins: The term *Laksh*, means “to perceive, observe, know or understand,” while the term *Laksha*, means “goal, aim, or objective.” It is said that *Prajapati*, the creator of the creatures of this earth, was engaged in intense meditation at the hour of creation, and that Lakshmi emerged as a result of his meditation. Ramayana, on the other hand, recalls the churning of the Ocean of Milk by the demons and the gods, helped on by Lord Vishnu, during which the goddess springs from the “foam of the Ocean,” along with other precious and auspicious things.

Atharva Veda introduces an intricate concept of Lakshmi. It describes a pluralistic manifestation of Lakshmi—“a hundred Lakshmis”—that are born with the body of a mortal. Some are called good, *punya* (meritorious) and auspicious, while others bad, *paapi* (evil) and unfortunate. The good ones are welcomed and the bad ones are “sent away.” Thus:

*One and a hundred Fortunes all together are at his birth
born with a mortal's body. Of these we send away the most
unlucky: keep lucky ones for us... ((Book 7, Chapter 15,
Hymns of the Atharva Veda, by Ralph T.H. Griffith)*

There are notable similarities between Lakshmi and the goddess of other traditions. Venus, for example, is also born from the foam of the sea. Babylonia had her Ishtar, whose images had an owl depicted next to her, so also Goddess Lakshmi is depicted with an owl beside her. Lakshmi stands on Lotus, and Sumerian goddess *Inanna* stands on 8-pointed star or a rosette. The Jewish *Lilith* was built after the pattern of Lakshmi. *Viracocha*—the Supreme Being in Peru—means, literally translated, “foam of the sea.”

The birth and life of *Viracocha* is the euphemerization of significant historical events in cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis. He arose in Lake Titicaca during the time of darkness to bring forth light. He made the sun, moon, and the stars. He breathed into stones, and thus mankind was created. His first creations were brainless giants, and they displeased him. So he destroyed them with a flood and made a new and better one from smaller stones. He eventually disappeared across the Pacific Ocean, and never returned. Disguised as a beggar, he roamed the earth, teaching his new creations the basics of civilization, as well as working numerous miracles. He wept when he saw the plight of the creatures he had created, and he is said to reappear in times of trouble.

Students of Theosophy can discern in this myth cosmic and anthropic genesis, *i.e.*, the origin of cosmos and man. The evolution of the universe from the Unknown; the early gigantic races of humanity in whom Mind (*Manas*) was not yet lit up—the “brainless giants”; the Atlantean race which misused sacred magical knowledge and fell into sorcery, thus “displeasing the Lord”; the subsequent deluge, or the Flood, which destroyed Atlantis; the birthing of the Aryan Root race humanity that was smaller in stature; and hints on Divine Dynasties which ruled the earth; and, the doctrine of Avatars—all these are hinted at in the legend.

Man has never been without a friend. A series of “Divine Kings”—advanced beings with divine Knowledge—have incarnated on earth periodically to instruct mankind. They have come as great sages, as the Titans, the Kabiri, the Rishis, and various other names given to these beings in the memory of ancient traditions. They sacrifice themselves and are reborn under various circumstances for the good of mankind, and for its salvation at certain critical periods. They gave the first impulse to civilizations, and directed human minds to the invention and perfection of all the arts and sciences, the invention of letters, of laws and legislature; of architecture, as of the various modes of “magic”; and of the medicinal use of plants. *Viracocha* teaching his new creations the basics of civilization has a reference to these beings.

In the story of Lakshmi, the scriptures mention that she had an elder sister by name *Alakshmi*. While the goddess of Fortune emerged along with Nectar (*Amrita*), the goddess of Misfortune—*Alakshmi*—emerged when Poison (*Halahala*) streamed forth from the Ocean. Being the goddess of misfortune, and associated with inauspicious places and sinners, sloth, poverty, sorrow and ugliness, *Alakshmi* was the very antithesis of her sister, Lakshmi, the goddess of good fortune. It is said that the owl which is sometimes depicted next to Lakshmi, is her sister *Alakshmi*. It is said to be a symbol of the blindness—greed, envy, arrogance—that accompanies wealth in the hands of the ignorant. Owl being a nocturnal bird which shuns daylight is an appropriate symbol of human ignorance—*Avidya*. In the *Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. compares a bigot, a narrow-minded person who is intolerant of creeds, opinions, races, etc., to an owl. “An Agnostic’s mind is ever opened to the truth; whereas the latter [Truth] blinds the bigot like the sun does an owl.” While the owl always accompanies Lakshmi—signifying the common experience that wealth and wisdom seldom go together—the only way to keep the blindness away, it is said, is to worship Sarasvati—the goddess of Wisdom. Therefore, Vishnu who has Sarasvati on his tongue drives away *Alakshmi*. These may appear to be mere stories for entertainment of children, but they actually contain hidden gems of truth for one who deciphers the symbols.

To understand the perspective of wealth in ancient civilizations, let us contrast it with current ideas of wealth. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, a theory quite popular among sociology research and psychology, is often quoted. It says that human motivations move in this pattern: physiological needs are to be first met; then comes needs of safety, belongingness and love. Esteem and self-actualization follow, and final need is self-transcendence. Nevertheless, studies have shown that the needs and their hierarchy are not firmly fixed—they vary based on many factors like age, etc. There are many examples in daily life which run contrary to this hypothetical pattern. Artists and painters who sacrifice their physical needs for pursuit of their arts; altruistic people, teachers who work

for a meagre pay to educate and work for the welfare of their students; self-sacrificial nature of many Sikh warriors in history, who would face death courageously but not deviate an inch from the path of righteousness, are some examples.

One of the gods of the Holy-trinity of Neo-classical mainstream economics is “utility maximization,” which in real life translates to greed. Man is seen as nothing more than the physical body, which in turn is an animal production. This makes greed and avarice intrinsic to his nature. He is nothing more than *homo-economicus*—a “consistently rational and narrowly self-interested agent who usually pursues his subjectively-defined ends optimally.” This is the view of man in modern economics. Inculcating this perspective and building a society based on greed has brought its own problems. There is growing poverty and inequality, and the increasing gap between haves and have-nots. The fine balance of ecology is constantly interfered with, resulting in ecological crises. Then there are the socio-economic problems brought about by financial crisis. By encouraging greed and hedonism, and making man nothing more than a calculating animal, and nature as the field of exploitation to satisfy unlimited human greed, humanity is not gathering real wealth, nor is it gaining wisdom. The wise ones who fashioned the symbolism of *Lakshmi* and *Alakshmi* would probably look at our civilization and say that we are pursuing and embracing *Alakshmi*, all the while thinking that we are the devotees of *Lakshmi*.

Nevertheless, the collective suffering and pain brought about by wrong ideals is not without its positive impact on human mind. There are new brands of economic thinking which, though considered heterodox by the mainstream schools, are questioning the assumptions and values of economics which places the product and goods above the human being. A case in point is Ecological Economics, a school of thought which suggests replacing the holy-trinity of “rationality, greed, and supply-demand equilibrium” with “purposeful behaviour, enlightened self-interest, and sustainability.” While mainstream economics attempts to become a value-free “hard science,” the new school of thought argues that value-free economics

is generally not realistic.

Ancient civilizations had a deeper view of Man, and hence a nonviolent perspective on generation and utilization of wealth. Man, they said, is neither hardwired to maximize profit, nor is he a *homo-economicus*. On the contrary, Man is a “free-agent” who acts according to his desires. His desires are based on the ideas he holds and his understanding about himself and the world around him. If this understanding is faulty and not based on correct apprehension of reality, then the most powerful generator of energy in the world, the human mind, is misdirected. Since his actions follow his thoughts and ideas, he brings about sorrow and suffering on himself and on others around him, all the while imagining that he is on the high road to happiness and prosperity. Thus, his mind becomes his greatest enemy. “Whatever an enemy may do to an enemy, whatever a hater may do to a hater, a wrongly directed mind will do to us greater harm” (*The Dhammapada*, verse 42). On the other hand, show the man the right path and instil in his mind right ideas, and he has the power to create heaven on earth. “Not a mother, not a father, not any kindred can do much; a well-directed mind does us greater service.” (*The Dhammapada*, verse 43)

Coming into possession of wealth, like our faculties and talents, is an opportunity. How we use them determines the effects it produces. In itself wealth is neither good nor evil. It mostly turns out to be detrimental to one’s peace and health due to our ignorance and selfishness. Jesus says, “Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (*The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, 19:23-24). This is because of the temptation and lure of luxury, which may transform into indifference to the suffering of others, as also, arrogance and pride. Nevertheless, when responsibly used, wealth can become an aid to true progress and happiness of all.

(To be concluded)

CULTURE AND GLOBALIZATION

THE TERM globalization is much in the news today. It has reference to the great advance made by the modern world in social and economic development on a scale encompassing practically all the countries on the globe, through integration of national economies, regulated by a global market system and international monetary institutions. It is acclaimed and lauded on all hands as the highpoint of economic development and material prosperity of the modern civilization, aided by rapid progress of Western nations in scientific discoveries and technological innovations. Fast means of mechanized travel and transportation, and revolution in electronic communication, have virtually overcome the barriers of time and space, and have brought far flung countries, peoples and cultures closer to each other in time. Rapid communication system has so integrated the economies of nations scattered far and wide on the globe that production, assembling, processing and marketing of one and the same product by a single enterprise takes place in different countries, and marketed worldwide. Multi-lateral free trade agreements between nations facilitate free movement of capital, labour, industries and technologies across national borders. This is called globalization.

In days of old, for thousands of years, international trade and commerce, interaction and cultural exchanges between distant nations, used to take place by means of slow moving caravans over months and years through network of trade routes, called silk route, and by ships along sea lanes. These are now superceded in less than a century by technology driven global economy that has transformed the world into a “global village.”

Modern historians only chronicle events in the affairs of nations, of war and peace, and of the rise and fall of civilizations as just happenstances without our even so much as suspecting that there may be a hidden pattern of moral law which underlies world events and governs destinies of nations. Unless the latter truism is admitted,

studied and understood we can learn little from the historical and the contemporary events, and are doomed to repeat the errors of the past.

How then do we account for such a rapid prodigious progress of the modern Western civilization and what is the intrinsic value of it? Looking at these vital questions from the Theosophical perspective, as we can glean little from modern thought, we are able to obtain some insights into the workings of the Karmic and cyclic laws which govern the world's progress. We must remember that these cycles do not merely mark time nor do they operate independently of human life but are caused by the collective actions of individuals and nations by means of the law of ethical causation, called Karma, which guides humanity on the path of higher evolution. Each cycle, revolving co-ordinately with the revolution of the spheres in the celestial vault, has a distinct effect on the psycho-physiological constitution of man and the earth.

Two causative factors may be discerned in the rapid rise of world-conquering Western thought and civilization. One of which is the convergence of several minor cycles towards the end of the nineteenth century which coincided with the rising of the 100 years cycle of the Theosophical Movement. One of them is the ending of the first five thousand years of Kali Yuga in 1897. About the same time a minor cycle, called messianic cycle, of 2155 years duration ended as the equinox in its precession through the zodiac transited from the sign of Pisces and entered that of Aquarius. Western nations were under the influence of another minor cycle, called the historical cycle, of 250 years, at the same time. Of the last, H.P.B., commenting on the ingenious research of the historian, Dr. E. Zasse on historical cycles, adverted to above, writes: "Beginning with the middle of the past century [1750 A.D], Europe is living over an epoch of revolutions and reforms," and she quotes the prophetic words of the Researcher: "If it is permissible to prophesize, then, about the year 2,000, Western Europe will have lived one of those periods of culture and progress so rare in history." (*H.P.B. Series No. 1*, p. 41)

We can recognize what he said of this particular cycle in the revival in the sixteenth century in Europe of classical scholarship and values of ancient Greece and Rome followed by a spate of scientific discoveries and innovations, aiding global expansion of commercial enterprise based on private capital and banking, trade and commerce, which has now culminated in the end of twentieth century, as prognosticated by Dr. Zasse, in a glittering material civilization "so rare in history." Contemporary world scenario bears out the validity of the conclusions he arrived at from his study of historical cycles of two and a half centuries—oscillating across nations from East to West and back again—based on collection, collation and analysis of historical data along statistical lines.

The second most important factor which characterizes the Western civilization is, what may be called, the material basis of Western thought, the foundational assumption being that Matter is the cause and the basis of all phenomena, and objective physical world is the only reality, and, therefore, nothing that cannot be demonstrated on empirical evidence is admissible. Teachers point out that the strong materialistic trend of the Western thought is the natural reaction from centuries of religious dogmatism and bigotry to which it was subjected. This attitude, says H.P.B., is called "Materialism," by which, says H.P.B.:

...is meant not only an anti-philosophical negation of pure spirit, and, even more, materialism in conduct and action—brutality, hypocrisy, and, above all, selfishness—but also the fruits of a disbelief in all but material things, a disbelief which has increased enormously during the last century, and which has led many, after a denial of all existence other than in matter, into a blind belief in the *materialization of Spirit*. (*Five Messages*, p. 6)

Soul-blind materialism, then, is the bedrock on which the socio-political economy of the modern civilization is reared. The natural trend of the human mind in the Kali Age is towards such materialism, and intellectual development takes place at the expense

of spiritual perception. Teachers point out that mere material advancement is not true progress but it has the seeds of its own undoing, signs of which are evident everywhere—as seen in the moral, mental and physical unrest, and ecological disasters. Writing on “The Signs of This Cycle,” Mr. Judge paints the picture of actual condition of the material civilization 130 years ago, and it is found to be true today:

We have very great progress to note in conquests of nature, in mechanical arts, in the ability to pander to love of luxury, in immense advancements with wonderful precision and power in the weapons made for destroying life. But side by side with these we have wretchedness, squalor, discontent, and crime; very great wealth in the hands of the few, and very grinding poverty overcoming the many. (*W.Q.J. Series No. 7, p. 26*)

Rising tide of Western thought, like a great irresistible tidal wave, has overspread the world, and the older Eastern nations, who still preserve in their traditions vestiges of the Wisdom of the bygone ages, are also engulfed in it. On the other hand, the West is equally, though subtly but surely, affected by the ancient Oriental ideas and ideals which have a bearing on higher evolution of both the East and the West.

It is the influence of Eastern metaphysics upon the Western mind. This higher cycle had been revolving for many years among the Orientals before we [Western people] came within its power. Our falling under it is due to a physical cycle as a means. That one which is represented in the progress of trade, of science, of means for transportation. In this way the philosophical system of India and Tibet has begun to affect us, and no man can calculate its course. (*W.Q.J. Series No. 7, pp. 38-39*)

Foresight and wisdom of the Adept Fraternity in instituting many centuries ago the 100 years cycle of the Theosophical Movement may be glimpsed by us in our study of the Karmic and cyclic laws.

The cycle of the Theosophical Movement, aided by the convergence of other minor cycles, adverted to in the foregoing, is spawning seed ideas of Eternal Verities and spreading spiritual influence on the plane of the mind through incessant labours of Companions. Mr. Judge suggests that the fact that many aspirants in the West are deeply affected by, and are attracted to, these spiritual ideas is an indication that they themselves had played a role in formulating the philosophical system in the distant past in the Eastern lands, and are now aiding their dissemination in the West in Western bodies. As the seminal ideas of Unity of Self, of Karma and Reincarnation, of intellectual, moral and spiritual evolution of humanity leaven the Western mind, the growing spiritual perception which necessarily follows will compel change in the whole social and economic order in the Western land to accord with the nobler conceptions so formulated, and the perceived Ideal of the Universal Brotherhood of humanity. Mr. Judge writes:

They [Masters] desired...the new and the growing West to take from all the East whatever philosophy and metaphysics were needed; to assimilate them, to put them into practice; to change the whole social and economic order; and then react back, compulsorily, upon the East for its good and uplifting. (*W.Q.J. Series No. 26, p. 42*)

Such are the noble possibilities which lie in the womb of the present, and the great Teachers say that it is the duty of the earnest and unselfish Companions to keep the cycle of the Theosophical Movement revolving for the good of humanity.

Is it not conceded by all philanthropists that unselfish labours for humanity can alone relieve us from the ocean of rebirth, develop our highest potentialities and help us to alchemise our human weakness?

—W. Q. JUDGE

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: Sometimes in life there is a *sudden* or *unexpected* change, for better or worse. How to explain this in the light of Karma and otherwise?

Answer: Karma is the law of action and reaction. Karma is considered to be of three kinds: *Sanchita*, *Agami* and *Prarabdha*. *Sanchita* Karma is that which is stored up and not in operation now, because there is not the appropriate environment or condition for bringing it into action. It is like the vapour held in suspension in the atmosphere, which will fall as rain upon earth, when conditions are ripe. *Agami* is Karma we are making in the present life and will be felt by us in future. *Prarabdha* Karma is the portion or aspect of Karma with which one is born, and for whose precipitation the field is ready. Patanjali describes the “stored-up karma” as mental deposits. We feel the effect of mental deposits created by our thoughts, actions and feelings in this or in previous lives, only when we have obtained just the right kind of bodily or mental frame, constitution and environment, necessary to bring them to play. Thus, for instance, so long as one is in a male body, he cannot have the experience of motherhood.

However, it is also true that when one set of causes have been worked out, new karma or that which is unexpended, must begin. Mr. Judge suggests that under this may be included cases where men experience sudden reverses of fortune or changes. For instance, sometimes the karma of the child is only strong enough to draw it to particular parents and family, living in poverty. When the force of that karma is exhausted, the child gets adopted by rich parents, because another set of Karma is now able to operate. Mr. Judge gives example of the great French engineer, Ferdinand de Lesseps,

who was raised to high pitch of glory for many years of his life, with the building of the Suez Canal, but he fell into disrepute, whether innocent or guilty, through Panama Canal scandal. His name was connected with a national enterprise all besmirched with bribery and corruption that involved high officials. Thus, as soon as, karma governing previous years of his life were exhausted, another set of karma began to operate. Another example given is that of Napoleon, who rose to fame and glory, and then suddenly fell and died in exile and disgrace.

We might understand it also in terms of Aphorism 19: Changes may occur in the instrument during one life so as to make it appropriate for a new class of Karma, and this may occur due to intensity of thought and the power of a vow. The one who is earnest and determined to live the higher life, opens up the aperture, as it were, for the quicker and stronger precipitation of Karma. His aspiration works as heat, which affects even others around him. “And not for him alone: other lives coming in contact with his feel this fierce energy; they develop more rapidly, and, if they have a false or weak place in their nature, it is soon discovered and overthrows them for a time,” writes Mr. Judge (*Letter That Have Helped Me*, p. 50). This quick and strong karmic precipitation may be seen on one of the three planes: physical, mental, psychic or moral. As a result, there may be sudden financial loss, or sudden loss of reputation, or sudden deterioration of bodily or mental health.

There is one more reason for such sudden reverses of fortune. In the article, “Men, Karmic Agents,” Mr. Judge explains the special and technical sense in which the word “karmic agent” is used. He mentions that there are people who are concentrators of the forces, who become instrumental in sudden and quick precipitation of Karma. There are those who are gifted or cursed with this power, by virtue of the kind of life led in the past. There are also those ordinary people, who have brought from their past lives, the power of concentrating Karma, and they continually bring to other people *sudden* good or bad effects, which would have otherwise spread over many days or years, surfacing in small events of life rather than in one big event. Mr. Judge points out that this should also

explain the power of the evil eye, or destructive power of thought. A person with the evil eye, is a Karmic agent, who brings about destruction or harm to a person or a thing by merely looking at them.

It is in the response we give to *sudden* changes in life that we are tested. The general tendency is to complain, to fret and fume, instead of accepting and adjusting. Some are thrown off-balance while others lose their faith in God or in the justice of the Law of Karma. We are mistaken if we look for some special difficult test or trial through which we can show our moral strength. Mr. Judge writes:

Let us remember that it is the unexpected that always happens in the way of trials to the novice. The devil never sends a herald to announce his coming....When we have learnt to encounter every vexation absolutely without complaint, either internally or externally...then, and not till then, can we expect to be given the opportunity to take a decided step forwards....By meeting the ordinary ills of life with unvexed soul we educate and strengthen our will.

Question: Mr. Judge in his article “Friends or Enemies in the Future” writes: “Contrasted with charity, which is love of our fellows, are all the possible virtues and acquirements. These are all nothing if charity be absent.” Why?

Answer: In the same article, Mr. Judge also gives us the reason why all other virtues and acquirements are of no value, if the person lacks charity. He explains that they [the other virtues] die with the death of the uncharitable person; their value is naught and that person is reborn without friend and without capacity. The statement is astonishing. How can absence of charity make practice of all the other virtues worthless? To understand this, we need to understand the meaning of charity. Charity is defined as “love of our fellows” and not the gift of money or even gift of all our possessions.

It is not the practice of virtue *per se* but the motive behind its practice which is important. If virtues, such as patience, tolerance, truthfulness, faith, honesty, frugality, punctuality, chastity, generosity etc. are practised to appear as spiritual in the eyes of other people, or for earning name and fame, or for earning merit or *punya* for the

longer stay in the heaven world, then the motive is purely personal or spiritually selfish.

Even those who follow the ethical injunctions in one’s daily life, with a sincere desire to walk the spiritual path are in a danger of drifting away from the right path if they think that practice of virtues is an end in itself. Such a practice is called “ethical voluptuary” in the book *Through the Gates of Gold*, because, without knowing it, this person too, is pursuing pleasure just as a sensual man pursues sense pleasures. He practises virtues because it gives him happiness to make others happy; he lives the life of abstinence and self-denial because it gives him satisfaction and joy. But, pure living and high thinking are not enough. They are likely to lead him to stagnation, making him think that he has indeed reached a high state. Before long, this person will find himself repeating and intensifying his efforts to derive happiness from practice of virtues. He then finds himself in that “dreary place where good is done perforce and the deed of virtue is without the love that should shine through it.” When virtue is practised without love, it drops at the threshold of death. “He has no power to carry virtue, which is of the material life with him. By the practice of virtue he will fetter himself into one groove.” Practice of virtue, at times, even becomes an obsession. He gets upset if compelling circumstances come in the way of his high living. He would rather be “punctual” than stop to help a needy person, lest he gets late and violates his sacred rule! He has become rigid and less sensitive to the cry for help. Hence, *Light on the Path* has to remind us: “The virtues of man are steps indeed, necessary—not by any means to be dispensed with. Yet, though they create a fair atmosphere and a happy future, they are useless if they stand alone.”

Also, the one who practises virtues against all difficulties begins to develop subtle pride. He feels that he has become spiritual, while the lesser mortals struggle to keep in check grosser desires and wild passions. He has acquired a sense of superiority and feels contempt for their inability to deal with their weaknesses. He wants to move on, leaving these foolish people to deal with their problems which he feels are of little value in the spiritual life. For such a person,

Light on the Path has some strong words to offer:

He who thinks himself holier than another, he who has any pride in his own exemption from vice or folly, he who believes himself wise, or in any way superior to his fellow men, is incapable of discipleship....Virtue and wisdom are sublime things; but if they create pride and a consciousness of separateness from the rest of humanity in the mind of a man, then they are only the snake of self reappearing in a finer form. (p. 78)

What would be the fate of one who thus pursues spirituality for one's self and not for the love of fellow creatures? Such a person may acquire a lot of knowledge and also develop powers, but he is likely to use them for his own ends. *Light on the Path* warns us that "when a man begins to live for self he narrows his horizon steadily till at last the fierce driving inwards leaves him but the space of a pin's head to dwell in...A man who becomes selfish isolates himself, grows less interesting and less agreeable to others. The sight is an awful one, and people shrink from a very selfish person at last, as from a beast of prey."

It is not surprising therefore that when he is reborn, he is without friends and without capacity. No doubt, his good acts which may have helped others will bring their reward, but that in itself is not going to cultivate in him the spiritual qualities of love, kindness, compassion. His apparently kind acts fail to touch the hearts of recipients or arouse a feeling of gratitude and kinship.

It is said: "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." It is through mental charity for the faults and weaknesses of others, and being watchful of one's own failures and weaknesses that one is able to understand and accept people as they are. He makes an effort to understand why other people act in the way they do. Putting oneself in the place of another, a man learns not to criticize others for their follies. When he does that, he strengthens his own character and widens his nature with deeper understanding of human nature to embrace all men, helping them to overcome their vices.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What are the Akashic Records? The Akashic Records are the documentation of everything that has happened so far and could possibly happen, not only to human and living beings, but also to non-living objects. It is a storehouse of all our thoughts, emotions, feelings, actions, including spoken word, karma, latent impressions, desires, viewpoints, and possible futures—*possible* futures because future is not always predetermined. We have a power of choice through which we can determine the course of our life. The Akashic records are the history of our souls. They are said to be maintained by beings of light, called the Record Keepers, who safeguard and keep the integrity of the records. The term Akashic Records comes from the Sanskrit word Akasha, which means, the sky, space or ether, the primary substance from which all things are formed. It is said that these records have existed since the creation of the universe. The Akashic Records have been designated in the Bible as "The Book of Life," in Torah as "The Book of Remembrance," and in the Hindu scriptures as "The Book of Karma."

Ranjini Banerjee, an energy worker from Kolkata describes the Akashic Records as the Internet. It is thought to be the celestial equivalent of our very own Google. All one needs to do is to enter the correct keyword to access the information required. She observes that all our thoughts and feelings are vibrations, and all the information exists in a particular vibrational frequency, and it can be accessed by tuning into that frequency. She explains that our present life is the result of our past thoughts and actions, so the Akashic Records help us to reach the root cause of our present problems.

There are healers and mediums who can help the clients, by accessing the records pertaining to the client. They state the name of that person, and request the record keepers to provide the information. The healer receives the information in the form of visions, or he just knows what the client wants to know. Sometimes the information is of the nature which shows a literal connection

between the past and the present. The healers say that the record keepers also show the remedy for the situation in the present.

It is felt that everyone can access their own records, becoming a medium by practising spiritual disciplines such as praying, meditation, visualizing and *pranayama*. “The Akashic Records are not just about the past, they are also about spiritual lessons and possible futures. The Akashic Record reading can be likened to past-life regression, wherein the therapist helps us to travel back in time to the source of the problem,” writes Nivedita Gogia. (*Life Positive*, September 2016)

In order to understand “*Akasic* records” we must understand what *Akasa* is. *Akasa*, here, does not mean the blue sky. Theosophy teaches that *Akasa* is a form of extremely ethereal and luminous matter. *Mula-prakriti*, as the name suggests, is the root of all matter which undergoes differentiation to give rise to various grades of matter—from the most subtle to the most dense and gross matter we see on our plane. Hindu Philosophy mentions seven planes of *prakriti* comparable to seven planes of matter, of which higher planes of matter are described as *Akasa* or Divine Astral. The lower layers of matter are called Astral light, which is gross as compared to *Akasa*, but is very subtle and ethereal as compared to gross matter of our earth. *Akasa* is the plane of eternal divine consciousness. Just as every word or action on our plane is preceded by a thought or idea, so also, it is said that before any idea or object can come into existence on our plane it first exists as a model or prototype in the *Akasa*. Our universe is a universe of phenomena, illusion, *maya* and of relativity. The *Akasic* world is the Archetypal world of *noumena*, or of things-in-themselves. *Ideas* are the *archetypes* or *models* of which particular objects, properties and relations are copies.

Besides the archetypal ideas, the ideations and words of Great Beings are impressed on *Akasa*. All our noble thoughts, feelings and actions are impressed on *Akasa*. On the other hand, our lower, sensual, personal and mundane thoughts, feelings and actions get recorded in the astral light. The astral light acts as a photographer’s

sensitive plate. Our unwholesome or evil thoughts of revenge, hatred, jealousy, etc., do not vanish but get impressed on the astral light, and the same could be attracted by another person having similar thoughts, and give him an added impulse in that direction. Likewise, we can attract higher thoughts and ideations from the *Akasic* plane, if we attune our mind to that plane. It is similar to attuning the radio, in order to hear a particular program broadcast from the radio station. While writing an article, if the student becomes concentrated, then the currents of his thought could become consubstantial with what the Masters and the Great Ones have ideated upon [which are impressed in the *Akasa*], and he may catch the benign influence even without being consciously aware of it, writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

Chitra-gupta or *Lipikas*, are the Divine Beings, connected with Karma, for they are the Recorders or Scribes. They impress on the “invisible tablets of the Astral Light, a faithful record of every act, and even thought, of man, of all that was, is, or ever will be, in the phenomenal Universe. The Hindu *Chitra-Gupta*, reads out the account of every soul’s life from his register, called *Agra-sandhini*, which refers to Astral records. Astral light in nature corresponds to astral body in man. It is possible to see past, present and future, impressed in the astral light, by using the inner or astral senses.

How can one earn respect? Respect of others is a critical measure of the significance of your own life. As we grow older, the only things that seem important are love and a healthy regard by those who matter to us. Respect is a measure of life well-spent, a life that was useful to others. In earlier times, a man being the king in his own home, regardless of his position outside, his wife and children created a respectable aura around him. The older women such as Grandmothers, always took care to create a respectful aura around the man of the house, and he revelled in that feeling of regard. These men earned that respect merely by being the providers and protectors. As roles diffused, man had to earn that respect by other means,

which was easier to accept by some than others.

Respect has ripple effect, as we tend to respect a person who is respected by others. One earns respect by sheer dint of his position or by virtue of one's relationship to the person. "But far more precious is the regards you earn through who you are, how you conduct yourself, and how you interact with others. The first step towards gaining respect of others is to be able to respect your own self. The confidence and aura that a healthy self-respect gives is unmatched. It serves as a magnet that attracts the regard of others." In order to respect yourself you have to be clear about your values and then live a sincere and honest life as per those values. Curiously, you witness a golden circle: self-respect arouses respect for you in others, and other people's respect for your qualities and contribution, in turn, tends to enhance your self-respect, writes Vinita Dawra Nangia.

The second rule to earn respect is to learn to respect others. Respecting another means to treat all as equals and making time for them and appreciating them, making them feel that they are important to you. We must cultivate humility, which is an attractive, respected quality. People appreciate dependability. Say what you mean, and do what you say. Sticking to the truth and always doing what is right can earn you lasting respect. Respect is the outcome of integrity and generosity of spirit in personal as well as public life, writes Vinita Nangia. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, August 14, 2016)

It is true that we must deserve before we desire respect of others. In India, however, traditionally, it is recommended that one must never fail to show respect towards one's parents and one's teachers. "From the earliest times, among all but modern western people, the teacher was given great reverence by the pupil, and the latter was taught from youth to look upon his preceptor as second only to his father and mother in dignity. It was among these people a great sin, a thing that did one actual harm in his moral being, to be disrespectful to his teacher even in thought," writes Mr. Judge.

Each human being is infinitely precious and divine in his essential nature. Each one of us is a potential Buddha or a potential Christ. It

is, as though, we are carrying a weight of glory. Professor C. S. Lewis suggests that daily, one should try to carry the weight or burden of his neighbour's glory, by being humble, regarding him as a potential god. "It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature, which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship...It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities...that we should conduct all our dealings with one another," writes Professor Lewis. It is good to always remember who we really are, because our self-worth is generally measured by others, and also ourselves, on the basis of derived "self," or personality. At times, the personal "I" gets thoroughly degraded, but can regain the lost ground by its connection with the Spiritual Self.

Organised religious orders and several self-appointed and charlatan spiritual masters have emasculated the human mind to tow a particular mindset. On account of intellectual policing by the pontiffs and the papal authorities, what ought to have been a seamless relationship between the devotee and the Divine, has got ruptured. In this wired world all gizmos are connected to the internet through a Wi-Fi. Let us for a split second assume that human beings are like computers, smartphones or other electronic devices. Let us also imagine that the almighty God is an internet possessing the repository of knowledge with the faculty of creation and destruction. And we are wired with this internet through a Wi-Fi. "The Wi-Fi is symbolic of a direct connection with the divine. There are no intermediaries needed to facilitate an audience with the originator. The devout or seeker does not require a special queue to have his *darshan* [glimpse of God] or reach the *sanctum sanctorum*....There is no need to perform rituals, consult tarot card holders, visit places of worship out of fear, beseeching for mercy or boons. The sterling soul realizes God through righteous living, by upholding Dharma, helping fellow humans and listening to the inner voice or our conscience," writes

Ravi Valluri. Physical exercises are for the health of the body, meditation is for fortifying and protecting our minds. But our inner self pines for nourishment, for perpetual communion with the God within. Evolved souls like Radha and Meera, Buddha and Jesus, remained in perpetual propinquity with the Divine within, through their unwavering surrender and belief. We too can emulate them, writes Valluri. (*Weekend, The Free Press Journal*, October 16, 2016)

Today, spirituality and religiosity are equated with ritualistic worship—careful performance of rituals and ceremonies as per the scriptural injunctions. The priest class of every religion encourages the gullible devotees to perform austerities, sacrifices and ceremonies, to go on pilgrimages or to undertake fasts, promising in exchange the heavenly or other-worldly rewards. Once the Teacher retired from the scene, the priests and purohits, instead of being true interpreters of the scriptures, misinterpreted and interpolated the original teachings. God, instead of being the Omnipresent, Omniscient and Impersonal Principle, came to be regarded as a person, who must be propitiated and worshipped and from whom favours could be asked. To appease God and Gods, rites and rituals had to be performed through the agency of priests.

God is within every human heart. “The Kingdom of Heaven” and of God “*is within us*” says Jesus, not *outside*. In an inspiring passage in the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 280), H.P.B. writes: “...the incognizable *Karana* alone, the *Causeless* Cause of all causes, should have its shrine and altar on the holy and ever untrodden ground of our heart....Those who worship before it, ought to do so in the silence and the sanctified solitude of their Souls; making their spirit the sole mediator between them and the *Universal Spirit*, their good actions the only priests, and their sinful intentions the only visible and objective sacrificial victims to the *Presence*.” Jesus also advised, “When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are...but enter into *thine inner chamber and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.*” (*Matthew*, VI)