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The Living of the Higher Life**

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- (b) The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and
- (c) The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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AMBITION AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

THE ENGLISH word ambition comes from the Latin root meaning "going around," and more often than not, ambition keeps us "going round," i.e., it further entangles us in worldly life. Ambition is the strong determination to achieve success or distinction in a chosen field. It is desire for *personal* achievement. Ambition is not always negative, but more often than not, the ambitious person is determined to achieve the goal at any cost. Many a times, there is willingness to compromise moral principles and override integrity. For instance, an ambitious sportsman may not have qualms about using drugs to boost his stamina, so as to win a medal. Throughout human history, many examples can be found of people who were extremely ambitious, for better and for worse. In 356 B.C. the notorious Greek young man, Herostratus, set fire to the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, in his quest for fame. In German, a *Hero strat* is a criminal who has thirst for glory.

A person without ambition is someone lukewarm and complacent. "Blow hot or blow cold, the lukewarms I spew out of my mouth," says the Lord in the Bible. "What is life, if not an aspiration to reach out to the next goal? It is that aspiration, no matter how unattainable the goal, which lifts us above our circumstances and helps better our livesThe problem is not with dreaming, but with making that dream an obsession; not with ambition, but with making that drive the be-all and end-all of your existence," writes Vinita Dwara

Nangia (*Times Life!*, September 11, 2010). It is clear that ambition is not wholly bad, firstly, because, often an unambitious person is not only complacent, but plain lethargic. Though ambition is generally associated with gain of worldly things—wealth, name, fame, position and power—it is a force or energy which needs to be channelized properly. "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" said Robert Browning. *Light on the Path* advises us to "kill out ambition," but also asks us to "work as those work who are ambitious." An ambitious person is characterized by zeal, enthusiasm, perseverance and commitment. All these qualities are essential in a spiritual aspirant. In pursuing worldly ambition, a person gets training in developing these qualities. These qualities would survive as mental tendencies, which could gradually be employed in right direction. Ambition is a great teacher, because when realized ambitions fail to give lasting happiness, the person is woken up to explore higher possibilities.

Like a person pursuing wealth, spiritual aspirant needs to make spiritual life the end-all and be-all, willing to give his very best, straining every nerve. A person with ambition to acquire spiritual knowledge must have ardent desire to obtain it. We are given the example of a boy who approached Socrates and expressed his desire to acquire knowledge. Socrates put him to a severe test by pushing him under the water for a few moments. When he surfaced, gasping for air, Socrates told him that when he desired knowledge as intensely as he needed air under water, he will gain it. It is intense desire which makes one overcome all the obstacles, and sacrifice one's comforts. There are instances of those who have studied under street lights, or walked one mile or more, every day, to reach school. Teachers like Jesus tested the aspirants for spiritual life, to see how genuine their aspiration was. When a certain young man was asked to leave behind his wealth, in order to follow Jesus, he backed out. A certain spiritual teacher asked the aspirant to cut the forelock of his hair that he was fond of, if he really desired to follow him; the young man was hesitant. He thought it was a big price to pay for

spiritual life!

A spiritual aspirant forges ahead of the rest of humanity, but never at the expense of others. In fact, it is only when a person realizes that his Karma is interwoven with Karma of others, and that his welfare is interwoven with the welfare of others, that he is able to make progress. When we aspire to go beyond the mundane level of the world, we experience opposition and a downward pull from the material forces. There is a danger in forcing one's way ahead of one's race. We are strongly influenced by the general race tendencies. To have the necessary vigour or stamina to charge ahead of the race, we must accumulate merit by unselfish acts, kind thoughts and by detaching our minds from allurements of the world. The very stamina to fight the evil of the race is derived from the unselfish labour for the betterment of humanity. But aspiration can become narrow ambition when knowledge and power are sought with selfish motive and not with the aim to benefit humanity. A Master of Wisdom writes: "In our view the highest aspirations for the welfare of humanity become tainted with selfishness if, in the mind of the philanthropist, there lurks the shadow of a desire for self-benefit or a tendency to do injustice, even when these exist unconsciously to himself."

Ambition can very easily deflect our attention from good works to the reward that it may bring. Ambition is very tricky, as you drive it out at one level, it reappears at a subtler level. It can appear at the level of wealth, fame, power or love. A person doing good deed may not look for material reward, but then he finds that he wants public acclaim, recognition or praise. If even fame is foregone then ambition lurks at the level of power, i.e., there is a desire to be consulted before any step is taken. If these three levels are surmounted, then there may still remain the desire to be loved for the good works done.

It is very difficult to kill out ambition, because of too much identification with the personality and a sense of separateness. As one begins to live the higher life, this ambition disappears in its

gross form to reappear in its subtle form in the heart of the aspirant. For instance, when a disciple in the group feels that he is more pleasing to the *guru* than others, it is a subtle form of ambition. Hence, *Light on the Path* says that sometimes the artist who works for the love of his work is more firmly planted on the right road than an occultist who has transferred his interest to larger span of life, but has not really given up interest in self. Even in spiritual development there should not be a feeling that I am making progress, and that I am different from or holier than other ordinary people. A spiritual aspirant must "grow as the flower grows, unconsciously, but eagerly anxious to open its soul to the air....It is the Eternal, which draws forth your strength and beauty and not desire of growth." (*Light on the Path*, p. 3)

There is a subtle difference between ambition and aspiration, though the dictionary meaning of both these words is very nearly the same. Aspiration is a form of lofty desire tempered by thoughtfulness, integrity and a self-interest that takes into account the interests of others. Unlike ambition, aspiration never loses sight of either the goal or the means used to attain it. A person who intensely aspires to live the higher life and especially when he aspires to become a chela or a disciple, or to be in the presence of the masters and ascetics, he generates some sort of "heat" about him. It is these aspirations which quicken the process of purification and growth, through quick precipitation of Karma. Other people coming in contact with him, such as his family members, progress more rapidly, as latent vices and weaknesses in their natures are also brought to the surface.

Aspirations that are not translated into action are stored as unspent psychic energies in the mind. Besides, rest for the soul, being one of the reasons for the Ego to be in a state of *devachan* (*swarga* or heaven), the other reason is that we are not able to exhaust psychic energies generated by each day's dreams and aspirations. During life, bonds are placed on mind by physical and astral encasement. But in a state of *devachan*, the Ego is clothed in an ethereal vesture or finer body which facilitates the expansion and development of

psychic energies engendered by unfulfilled aspirations during earth life. Thus, a person who aspired to be a musician, or an artist, or aspired to work for the poor, or teach the illiterate, but could not fulfil these aspirations during life, due to limitations of body, mind or circumstances, will create, after death, a subjective life in *devachan*, where he will find himself helping the poor, or pursuing music, or teaching the illiterate, and so on. The average stay of an Ego in *devachan* is between 1000 to 1500 years, but vast stores of unfulfilled aspirations may extend the stay even up to 10,000 years! When our aspiration to be good, truthful and honest, is not accompanied by efforts in the same direction, then often there is a reminder from our higher nature. In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Mr. Judge mentions that those who are striving to live the higher life and to develop their inner faculties, often have a dream, in which one is apparently attacked and pursued. It is symbolic of the struggle between one's higher and lower natures. Sometimes the person may wake up terrified, because it is almost like a nightmare, when lower tendencies seem to get upper hand. This dream will be repeated, so long as the aspiration towards a higher life is kept up, but a corresponding change in daily thoughts and acts does not take place. Such a dream is a reminder to the aspirant to act on his aspirations. This dream is repeated and ceases, only when the aspirant either gives up the fight against his lower nature and sinks back to living an ordinary life, or rises superior to, and determines to conquer his lower nature. (p. 149)

Deep aspiration is an intense desire or that on which the heart is set. It is the *line of life's meditation*—a single thread of intention or desire running all through the life. For those of us who have no spiritual inclination and are given only to low plane gratification, the *line of life's meditation* could be acquiring money, comfort, luxury, name, fame, etc., so that we create a "centre of attraction" on that plane. One, who lives entirely on the plane of sense gratification, will draw from higher planes the energies required for the fulfilment of his desires and aspirations on the lower plane. The

fulfilment of lower desires and ambitions happen at the expense of higher development. That energy which should have gone in strengthening our morals and towards the fulfilment of higher aspirations is dragged down in satisfying lower desires. This will cause the past Karma to unfold itself on that plane.

On the other hand, in case of a person who has purer desires and who aspires towards higher ideals, fixes the "centre of attraction" on the higher plane, so that his past Karma will begin to unfold on the higher plane and aid him in spiritual pursuit. Thus, for instance, if we have generated good Karma by giving large donations in the past lives, and if our heart is set on making money in this life, we may find, money, comfort and luxury coming our way very easily. But if our heart is set in acquiring spiritual knowledge then the same good Karma of the past, on the physical plane, will unfold on the higher plane and we might find that we are aided, in terms of getting right kind of books, a quiet place for study and meditation, and so on. Thus, in a million different ways we are aided on physical, mental, moral and psychic planes. How does this happen? The law is that Karma manifests in harmony with the plane of desire. It is our attitude of mind that binds our soul with Karmic cords.

If we follow spiritual discipline, making it our *line of life's meditation*, setting our whole heart on it, then we are assured that we will be able to carry it to next life. A Master of Wisdom describes beautifully the process of self-purification with the promise that a sincere aspiration never fades away with death. Thus:

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....If *his aspiration is genuine—a settled conviction and not a sentimental flash of the moment—he transfers from one body to another the determination which finally leads him to the attainment of his desire.* [Italics ours]

IS RELIGION NECESSARY?

RELIGIONS as they exist today and have existed for centuries not only cannot unite humanity, but are actually forces that breed anarchy and cause strife and dissension. They are not even a unifying

force for their own followers. In India, bigotry, in the name of religion, has for centuries divided the children of the same soil, who should be living in brotherly relation and at peace. Christendom sends the same picture of hostility between sects, and so with other religions.

The forces which degrade religions are the same as those which degrade individuals. They are the three gates of hell spoken of in *Bhagavad-Gita—Kama, Krodha, Lobha*. *Kama*, which manifests in man as passion, shows itself in religions as psychic intoxication and religious prejudice. *Krodha*, anger, appears in religions as enmity and hatred against non-believers in that particular religion—prejudice developing as fanaticism. *Lobha*, ambition, squanders in the arrogant idea of proselytizing the world to belief in a given religion.

Since religions do not unite mankind, should they be done away with? But religion is, perhaps, the most potent factor in the lives of man's souls. There is beauty, virtue and truth in every religion, so to discard them all would be folly. As well throw away the wheat needed by the starving because it is mixed with chaff or has a thorn on it! Humanity needs some faith to guide its steps, and if one religion is destroyed, another comes to take its place. New Thought, scientific dogmatism, atheism—all of them are as narrow and egotistic as the old faiths. Each claims that it has the only truth and that the others must be discarded and fought against.

The second of the three objects of the Theosophical Movement emphasizes the necessity for a comparative study of religions, and this includes, as explained by H.P.B., the vindication of "the importance of old Asiatic literature, namely, of the Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Zoroastrian philosophies." Such a study can free us

from the arrogant modern notion that what is newest is best. The individual who takes up this comparative study in earnest finds the bonds of his own sectarianism weakening. He becomes capable of recognizing Truth wherever it may be found and of incorporating truths outside of his own creed in his daily practice—a great step in soul evolution. He will discover that underlying all religions are certain basic ethical teachings and he will ask, "Where did these religions originate?"

No great Teacher ever came to establish a religion *de novo*; he came always as a reformer of a religion which had become degraded. Having cleared the ground of blind belief, ritualism and dependence on others, a great one tries to reiterate the same eternal Truths, cosmic and universal principles and statements of moral law as were taught by his predecessors.

The Light of Asia describes the wrath of the Buddha's kingly father on seeing his son in mendicant's garb and with a begging-bowl, and on hearing his explanation that it was the custom of his race.

"Not of a mortal line," the Master said,

"I spake, but of descent invisible,

The Buddhas who have been and who shall be

Of these am I, and what they did I do."

Jesus declared: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (*Matt.*, v, 17-18). Yet Jesus went against the priests and ritualism; it was the true Law, the *Dharma* of the *Gita*, which he came to fulfil.

Krishna declared that whenever *Adharma*, lawlessness, flourished, he came again and again to establish *Dharma*, righteousness: "...and thus I incarnate from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of righteousness."

Zoroastrians, instead of priding themselves on an exclusive

religion, should be proud that Zoroastrianism is part of the Eternal Truth which is behind all religions. In Chapter II of the *Vendidad*, Zarathushtra asks: "To whom did you, O Ahura Mazda, teach this Good Law of your own before you imparted it to me?" And Ahura Mazda replies: "O Zarathushtra, I taught that religion of mine to the fair King Yama. He was the first mortal before thee to whom I taught this religion." King Yama was King Jamshed who, before Zarathushtra, propagated the religion of Mazda, the Wisdom-Religion that has been known in all ages and under all climes. In the *Gathas*, also, Zarathushtra asks what he can do to keep the Law pure and prevent its corruption, showing that he knew that religions always suffer corruption in the course of time.

This *Dharma* of Krishna, the *Din* of Zarathushtra, the Law of Jesus, is the one bond that can bring men together, by the practice of the universal precepts and the discarding of all that prevents the followers of one creed acting as brothers to those in other faiths. The Theosophical definition of religion is "a bond uniting men together—not a particular set of dogmas and beliefs." The definition is not new, any more than Theosophy is new. In the *Mahabharata*, we come across a similar definition.

The practice of this true Religion involves the living up to the truths in one's own creed and discarding everything in it that all men cannot share. Trying to practise the highest teachings of all religions makes the Theosophist a better Christian than the church-goer. Similarly, the *Durvand* who tries to practise good thoughts, good words and good deeds is a better Zoroastrian than one who ties and unties the sacred thread many times a day but will not practise good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

Practice of the Wisdom-Religion gives enlightenment to the mind and inspiration to the heart. The former alone results in materialism. The latter alone results in sentimental emotionalism. Together they show one how to better himself and express compassion and wisdom in the service of humanity.

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA EVIL CONDUCT—II

6. *Think not lightly of evil, saying, "it will not come unto me." Even a water-pot is filled by the constant falling of drops of water. A fool becomes full of evil if he gathers it little by little. (121)*

7. *Think not lightly of good, saying, "it will not come unto me." Even a water-pot is filled by the constant falling of drops of water. A wise man becomes full of goodness even if he gathers it little by little. (122)*

8. *As a merchant ill-attended and having much wealth avoids a dangerous way; as a man who loves to live on avoids poison; so should one shun evil. (123)*

9. *He whose hand has no wound may touch poison. Poison harms not one who has no wound. No evil is to him who does no evil. (124)*

THE FIRST verse holds out a warning to the complacent. Good and virtuous people sometimes make the mistake of thinking that no evil can touch them. Forgetting that no man knows his own moral strength until it is put to test. When you know that something is poisonous, you do not try to taste it to confirm the truth. Likewise, when you know something to be evil, it is better not to indulge in it. Young people, who take a trip into the world of "drugs," just for fun, often get drawn to it, again and again, and are ultimately ruined. Giving into temptations of any kind is dangerous. Therefore, we must shun evil with earnestness of the wealthy merchant who avoids the dangerous way, or as one who desires to live on, avoids poison. In Buddhism, one thing that is exempted from the discipline of *moderation* is "vigilance." You just cannot afford to be slack, making allowances and exceptions in avoiding evil. The germs of evil are there in us. They can be as fatal as the person with a wound in the hand touching the poison—the wound of anger, lust, covetousness, envy, pride and jealousy. One single vice can bring about one's downfall. Yudhishthira's love for the game of dice led to the

Mahabharata war. Until a man reaches the *Samadana* state, wherein he becomes constitutionally incapable of doing wrong, there is always the danger of falling. Those, who try to walk the spiritual path, know that when the disciple has successfully overcome the gross and obvious forms of evil in his nature, he needs to watch out for their reappearance in subtle form. The *Bhagavad-gita* warns:

He who attendeth to the inclinations of the senses, in them hath a concern; from this concern is created passion, from passion anger, from anger is produced delusion, from delusion a loss of the memory, from the loss of memory loss of discrimination, and from loss of discrimination loss of all!

The second verse holds out tremendous hope for the person who is trying to turn the corner. While the world may have labelled you as "good for nothing," while the people around condemn you and consider you to be the most wretched person, "do not lose hope," and "do not give up," is the message of the Buddha. There is hope, as long as you do not give up. Even Shri Krishna says:

Even if the man of most evil ways worships me with exclusive devotion, he is to be considered as righteous, for he hath judged aright. Such a man soon becometh of a righteous soul and obtaineth perpetual happiness. (*Gita*, IX)

In this, there is also a message for the society, which permits execution of criminals. The very fact that Nature allows the criminal to live, shows that she has not "given him up." By sending him to the gallows, we deprive him of a chance to reform. We know that no one becomes a hardened criminal overnight. It takes years of wrong living to bring about the transformation. And if evil can be accumulated to make him full of evil, why not good? If Valia, the robber, can become Valmiki *rishi*, why not others? It may be difficult, but not impossible.

10. *Whoever wrongs an innocent person, or a pure and*

sinless one, evil recoils on that fool, even as fine dust thrown against the wind recoils on the person throwing it. (125)

We know that evil action brings evil consequences, and good action brings happiness. We receive these effects through things and beings in the world, including forces of nature which are acting as its agents. But man has a free will and hence, it is possible for an innocent person or a pure and sinless one to suffer at the hands of another. In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. writes: "We say that man suffers so much unmerited misery during his life, through the fault of others with whom he is associated, or because of his environment, that he is surely entitled to perfect rest and quiet, if not bliss, before taking up again the burden of life" (p. 35). But the offence against the innocent, sinless and pure, particularly, when the other person is aware of the fact, is the most serious offence. It is an act of rebellion against the very law which works to righteousness. What happens then is that their innocence, purity and harmlessness, as it were, become the impenetrable and protecting shield from which the current of evil intent recoils and rebounds against the sender, and afflicts him. So well is this law understood that it has been preserved in many popular proverbs, such as the English one, "curses come home to roost," writes H.P.B. In the canto of "The Rod of Punishment," in the *Dhammapada*, we have: "He who offends the harmless and the innocent soon reaches one of these ten states: He will suffer (1) sharp pain, or (2) disease or (3) bodily decay or (4) grievous disaster or (5) loss of mind or (6) displeasure of the king or (7) calumny or (8) loss of relations or (9) loss of all his wealth or (10) destruction of his house by lightning or fire. At death, poor fool, he finds, rebirth in woe."

11. Some men return, entering the womb; evil doers experience hell; the good experience heaven; those who have freed themselves from worldly desires attain Nirvana. (126)

12. Not in the sky, nor in the depths of the sea, nor in mountain clefts is there a place on earth where a man can

be to escape the consequences of his evil deed. (127)

13. Not in the sky, nor in the depths of the sea, nor in mountain clefts is there a place on earth where a man can be and death cannot overcome him. (128)

"Death is certain to all things that are born and rebirth to all mortals," says Shri Krishna. While the former is self-evident, it requires reminding. Many of us live as if we are never going to die. From birth to death, we are so engrossed and entangled in worldly affairs that we have no time to reflect upon who we are, what is the purpose of life, what happens to man after death, why there is sorrow and suffering in the world, etc. If our thoughts and beliefs have never soared higher than the mundane existence, then the thought of death terrifies us. We are unprepared for the journey ahead. We cling to life desperately. We are advised by Shri Krishna to meditate upon birth, death, decay, sickness and error. But one must have the right philosophy or right knowledge to benefit from such meditation. H.P.B. writes:

Since history tells us that the masses adopted Buddhism with enthusiasm, while, as said before, the practical effect upon them of this philosophy of ethics is still shown by the smallness of the percentage of crime amongst Buddhist populations as compared with every other religion. The chief point is, to uproot that most fertile source of all crime and immorality—the belief that it is possible for them to escape the consequences of their own actions. Once teach them that greatest of all laws, *Karma* and *Reincarnation*, and besides feeling in themselves the true dignity of human nature, they will turn from evil and eschew it as they would a physical danger. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 245-46)

The whole philosophy of life is contained in these verses. It tells us how man's evolution is through many lives, which are governed by unerring and just law. It is the law which cannot be propitiated or deviated by any means. Even the after-death state of man is under its purview. Evil doers experience hell, *kamaloka* or purgatory. Those

who have earned merit through good deeds, noble aspirations, chaste and moral life, enjoy the heavenly bliss. However, these states are not everlasting. The duration of stay in heaven is proportionate to the merit acquired during last life. Once the stock of merit is exhausted, there is rebirth. Similarly, hell is also a state, having a beginning and an end. The note in the *Dhammapada* (p. 108) on "Hell" states:

The term Hell is differently understood—a place of eternal suffering, etc. The Buddhistic conception of Hell is that it is a self-made state of consciousness to which a man brings himself by his own evil propensities. It is well described as a state devoid of happiness or rest in whatever life, in whatever world, and, like all other states, changes and passes. *Buddhist Dictionary* by Nyanatiloka says: "*Niraya*, literally, the Downward Path, the nether or infernal world, mostly translated as 'Hell,' is one of the 4 lower courses of existence (*apaya*—[1] the animal world; [2] ghost world; [3] demon world; and [4] Hell). The Buddhists are well aware that on account of the universal sway of impermanence, even life in hell, just as in heaven, cannot last eternally, but will, after exhaustion of the wholesome or unwholesome Karma, of necessity be followed again by a new death, and a new rebirth, according to the stored up Karma."

But some people, who have lived the life of utter indifference, having no love or sympathy for others, having nothing ennobling to carry with them to heaven, are reborn almost immediately. Worldly or personal desires form the invisible magnetic links, which compel us to return to the world for their fulfilment. Only those who have managed to become free from worldly desires attain *Nirvana*. Thus, it is through the right understanding of the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation that man can work out his own salvation.

(Concluded)

II

VAIVASVATA Manu is the Hindu equivalent of Xisuthrus, Deukalion and Noah in other traditions. The Jewish Noah is identical with Chaldean *Nuah*. Noah or *Nuah*, floating on the waters, is the spirit vivifying *matter*. It is the fall of spirit into matter or *Chaos*, represented by waters of flood. Hence in *Genesis* we are told about Noah, who as soon as he descends on earth, plants a vineyard, and then drinking wine gets drunk on it. It simply means that pure spirit when it is finally imprisoned in matter becomes intoxicated (S.D., II, 145). The ship or the Ark or *navis* represents the female generative principle, which is typified by Moon in heavens, and on Earth by womb. They both bear seeds of life, which is vivified or fructified by the Sun or Vishnu. Thus, we might take Noah's deluge to represent First Cosmic and primordial Creation.

Noah, in his Cosmic character, is identical with the Hindu *Sishta* Manu or Seed Manu, the human seed left for peopling of the Earth, from a previous *Manvantara* or a period of manifestation. (S.D., II, 596)

But who or what is Manu? What are the "root" and "seed" Manus? What is a *Manvantara*? The word "Manu" is derived from "*Man*," which means "to think," and hence, "thinking man." Ancient philosophy regards humanity as cells in the body of a great being, called *Manu*. Manu is an Individual, in one sense. He is the aggregate or synthesis of human consciousness, just like the body of man is the aggregate of the consciousness of the cells of the body. Our body is composed of different cells, which are of different and varying consciousnesses, and yet man as a whole presents a single consciousness, which is the reflection of the thousands and millions of consciousnesses which man has absorbed. So it is true of Manu. The evolution of seven root races on every globe is governed by Manu. Thus, Vaivasvata Manu is the representative of our thinking humanity of the Fifth Root Race.

Theosophy teaches that earth is not a lump of gross matter, but is an entity, and like man, earth too, is sevenfold. Our earth has six other companion globes, and together, these seven globes form Earth Chain or Planetary Chain. These seven globes of earth's chain, while differing from one another in the substance of which they are made, are united together in a single mass. They are not seven separate balls and can be seen when we are in a different state of consciousness. For the sake of convenience, we may refer to these seven globes as A, B, C, D, E, F and G. We occupy globe D, the fourth in the chain. There are seven Root Races on each globe. When the evolution of the Egos in these seven Root Races has been completed on our earth, the stream of Egos passes from globe D to globe E for further evolution. It is stated that when evolution through seven root races is completed, that globe goes into *obscuration*, but is *not* destroyed. The *obscuration* is similar to the sleep of man's body, making a reawakening possible. However, on a globe, the end of one root race and the beginning of another root race, is accompanied by cataclysms, volcanic eruptions and shifting of the continents. Thus, *obscuration* of the globe is compared to the sleep of man's body, while cataclysms, or destruction by fire, at the end of every root race, is similar to the sickness and accidents that come to a man during a single lifetime.

To understand "destruction" of our earth, we must understand the concept of "Round." The course of evolution begins on globe A and proceeds through globes B, C, D, up to G, and these seven globes constitute *Earth Planetary Chain*. When the Egos have completed their evolution from A to G globes, that circling is termed one "Round." We are in the middle of the Fourth Round. It is only when the evolution of the egos through seven rounds is completed that one by one, each globe of the planetary chain is *destroyed*. This is called *pralaya* or rather planetary *pralaya*, which is similar to the actual death of the body of a man. We are in the fifth subrace, of the Fifth Root Race. Thus, the earth we occupy will go into *obscuration* only when Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Root Races are completed,

which will be millions of years later. Our earth will be "destroyed" only when evolution of the egos through seven Rounds is completed.

There is a Root Manu at the beginning of a Round and a Seed Manu at the end of a Round. Likewise, there is a Root Manu at the beginning of the human period on a globe, which is a period of seven root races on that globe. In other words, there is a Root Manu at the beginning of the first root race on a globe. There is a seed or *Sishta* Manu at the end of seventh Root Race on that globe. A *Manvantara* is *Manu-antara*, or the time between the appearances of two Manus. A Minor *Manvantara* is the period between root and seed manus on a globe, i.e., duration of the seven Root Races on the globe. A Major *Manvantara*, is the period between Root and Seed Manus of the planetary chain or period of one human Round along the earth planetary chain.

A *manvantara* is always followed by a *pralaya*—a period of dissolution. One of the meanings of Noah taking with him in the ship, every kind of animal and bird could be, his taking the seed or fruition of the previous period of manifestation that was coming to an end, in order to begin another period of manifestation. In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 308 fn.) H.P.B. mentions that in the annotations to "Noah's Ark Theory," appearing in Mr. Sinnett's "Esoteric Buddhism," there may be found an intuition and a presentiment of the *Sishtas* or the seed manus.

In his book, *Esoteric Buddhism*, while explaining the meaning of *obscuration* of a globe, Mr. Sinnett gives us some idea of a seed Manu. He explains that when a planet is in *obscuration*, a great bulk of humanity is driven from that globe to another, by cyclic impulse. However, that globe is not *completely* denuded of humanity. Every region of that globe is not made unfit for habitation by climatic and physical changes. In other words, even during *obscuration*, a small portion of humanity clings to each globe, and the monads associated with these small colonies of people follow different law of attraction. They go from globe to globe, following an inner round of evolution, and may be projected far ahead of the Race. He applies

this same theory of Inner Round to the doctrine of Deluge. He says that the portion of the globe, which remains habitable during the obscuration of a globe, is like Noah's Ark, which must be taken symbolically. In due time, when the obscured planet grows to receive full population of humanity, those occupying the once obscured globe (or ark) would be ready to commence the process of populating it afresh. Those occupying the habitable portion of the obscured globe are almost like the seed Manu.

Manvantara is the period of activity, while *pralaya* is the period of rest. *Pralaya* is dissolution of the visible into the invisible. It is the dissolution of the heterogeneous into the homogeneous. Occultism divides *pralayas* or periods of rest into several kinds. *The Bhagavad-Gita* mentions *Nitya pralaya*. It refers to constant dissolution. Everything in the universe is changing imperceptibly, from moment to moment. There is wear and tear of the body, so that all the atoms of the body are changed every seven years.

There is *individual pralaya*, when each globe undergoes dissolution (or obscuration). At the end of each Round, all the seven globes undergo dissolution (or obscuration) and re-awake to start another Round. It is called *minor pralaya*. When seven Rounds, or circling round seven globes for seven times, is completed then it is called *Planetary pralaya*. After the planetary *pralaya* the evolution of monads or egos commences on a new planet. For instance, after the planetary *pralaya*, the moon chain of globes went into dissolution, and the energies of these globes were transferred into *laya* centre. Then from *laya* centre they were sent out into space to form our Earth chain of globes. The monads or egos from the moon chain continue their evolution on Earth-chain. Planetary *pralaya* for our earth is called the Night of Brahma. The "Day of Brahma" consists of fourteen *Manvantaras*, or a thousand *Mahayugas*. Each *Mahayuga* consists of four *yugas*—*Satya Yuga*, *Treta Yuga*, *Dwapara Yuga* and *Kali Yuga*. It is thought of as period during which, Brahma having emerged out of his golden egg (*Hiranyagarbha*), creates and fashions the material world. Regarding

planetary *pralaya* or Night of Brahma we are told in *Vishnu Purana* that at the end of a thousand *Mahayugas* the earth is almost exhausted. Then Vishnu assumes the character of Rudra, and enters the seven rays of the sun and drinks up the waters of the globe, thus causing the drying of the earth. The seven solar rays become seven suns, by dilation, and set the world on fire. In the Hindu books, Brahma's Night is called *Naimittika pralaya*. It marks destruction of all the creatures and forms, but not of the substance.

There is *Solar Pralaya*, when the whole Solar System comes to an end. There is also the Universal *Maha pralaya* or *Brahma Pralaya*, which occurs at the close of the Age of Brahma. This is also termed *Prakritika Pralaya*, when there is not only destruction of forms, but also the substance is resolved into primordial or homogeneous state. Every thing is reabsorbed into its original ONE Element—the "Gods themselves, Brahma and the rest" are said to die and disappear during that long NIGHT. (S.D., I, 373 fn.)

Atyantika is the *pralaya*, which concerns the individuality of certain persons who reach *Nirvana* and choose to enjoy the peace and bliss of *Nirvana*. For them there is no more rebirth till the end of the *Maha Pralaya*. The duration of this *Maha Pralaya* is 311,040,000, 000,000 years, which is equal to Age of Brahma.

H.P.B. differentiates between the state of ordinary people and that of self-realized and perfected beings during the *Mahapralaya* by means of an analogy. An iron ball placed under the scorching sun will get heated but it cannot feel or *appreciate* the warmth of the sun, while a man is able to. Similarly, for the ordinary human beings, the period of *Mahapralaya* is the period of rest in the bosom of *Parabrahm* or Absolute, but it is *unconscious* existence—like a drop merging into the ocean. Whereas, those who are self-realized and have overcome the illusion of personality during life and have accumulated the merit by helping humanity for countless ages, retain their self-consciousness during *Mahapralaya* and experience bliss, even after merging into and becoming one with the Absolute (S.D., I, 54-55). This state is described as *Paranirvana*, or the state of

absolute *Non-Being*, which is equivalent to absolute *Being* or "Be-ness." Perhaps, this *continuity of consciousness* during the great period of rest is hinted at in the fourteenth chapter of the *Gita*. Shri Krishna says that those perfected beings who take sanctuary in the spiritual wisdom, "and having attained to my state they are not born again even at the new evolution, *nor are they disturbed at the time of general destruction.*"

(Concluded)

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EDUCATION FOR LIFE

A proper and sane system of education should produce the most vigorous and liberal mind, strictly trained in logical and accurate thought, and not in blind faith.... Children should above all be taught self-reliance, love for all men, altruism, mutual charity, and more than anything else, to think and reason for themselves....We should aim at creating *free* men and women, free intellectually, free morally, unprejudiced in all respects, and above all things, *unselfish*.

—*The Key to Theosophy*

WHILE declaring great ideals of Education, in above words, H.P.B., with high optimism for humanity, always said that it is possible, nay, *necessary*, for humanity to move upward and develop integrally, because such is the ultimate destiny of man. This becomes acceptable if we refer to a fundamental doctrine that the universe is governed by an intelligent power with a purpose, and is guided by Law inherent in the very nature of things. The Law of human evolution, for instance, forms an aspect of the supreme Law of Life. The mighty civilizations of old testify to the possibilities of the development of superior races of men. It is not an empty dream if we aspire to a much higher degree of all-round human development.

Man has in him a silent urge for personal development and for an improvement of his environment. Even cavemen had an impulse for artistic expression and to decorate their uncouth dwelling and their domestic animals.

For a much-developed modern man, some formal education, i.e., guidance by professionals is indispensable, right from early childhood, to train their physical and mental faculties, and to guide their psychical and moral natures. Ultimately, education has to aim at the production of more efficient citizens, truly enlightened and dedicated educators, and understanding parents. Much depends on the latter two for creating awareness of the real *needs* of the human society, and of the nature's well-being. Admittedly, a superior form

of civilization is represented by men of advanced culture, and high sense of justice, intelligence, peace, integrity, etc.

Above all, the most important fact to recognize is that human beings are endowed with a *Superior Mind*, which is the direct instrument of the immortal *Real Man* within. Therefore, the real need of the inner man and his grand possibilities of advancement are far greater than just the civilized behaviour, economic prosperity, and intellectual brilliance. But the former is precisely the function of education, to take care of our Soul's need. To achieve this purpose we must be very clear regarding the nature, scope and objects of "Education" in the truest sense of the word.

In recent centuries organized societies have devised well-established institutions of learning. All institutionally qualified "graduates" are expected to become smart, i.e., calculating and worldly-wise! Do these schools and colleges, the so-called "temples of learning," even remotely subscribe to the "higher purposes of existence" as one of the objectives of their ever-increasing curricula? Those are the "ideals" left to the domain and function of the priests and the *pundits*, and are not for our prestigious Universities !

Almost the same situation existed 120 years ago when H.P.B. wrote, in 1888: "As to any real, sound cultivation of the thinking and reasoning power, it is simply impossible while everything has to be judged by the results as tested by competitive examinations" (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 264). She points out that education has produced vast population able to read, but unable to distinguish between what is worth reading and what is not. Are we in any way better off in the "advanced" 21st Century, pompously called the "Age of Information"?

Is there any scope in the awesome chambers of learning for the advancement of the truly scholastic and valuable abilities such as the joyful appreciation of world literature and creative application of the scientific facts of nature? Much of the text-book stuff that is impressed on their over-worked brains is of no consequence, or of use later in life, when "it is life which tries man's mettle," when

emotional and spiritual "maturity" is needed in day to day choice and strife.

The fact is that we need the most valuable faculties during life and living, such as that of discrimination, value judgment and independent critical thinking. Since opportunities for their proper unfoldment are hardly provided during the impressionable growing years, these mental and moral qualities are left to be later cultivated, if at all, through the hard "school of life" by the struggling individual himself. In fact, the *real* education starts after one leaves academic institution, as one faces the challenges of life against which his schools have left him hopelessly unprepared. Robert Browning rightly said: "I count life just the stuff to try the soul's strength on." Therefore, what we really need is that system of Education, which is geared to serve the double objects—of formal education, as well as, of the life of man as a whole.

How many schools and colleges provide opportunities for the growing mind, in the crowded class-rooms (the so-called chambers of learning) for the enthusiasm of knowledge-seeking, the awakening and fine-tuning of their aesthetic and moral senses, and for the joy of learning and growing up? Such unfoldment of healthy minds seems to be outside the scope of rigid school and college curricula!

If there is any one Principle concerning education that can surely bring us any closer to the above-mentioned beneficent results, we may find it in the Latin word "*educere*," which means, "to elicit," "to extract an essence." It also means, in practice, to unfold whatever essential faculties are already lying *latent* in the inner (*higher*) layers of the mind, by the *process of induction*.

It is to this mystery of the Mind-layers that our attention is drawn by the great educationists, poets and mystics. The professor of psychology at Harvard, Dr. William James (1842-1910), was one of them. Social Psychologists, such as, Dr. Erich Fromm, and Motivation psychologists like Dr. Abraham Maslow, found during their investigation with the educated youthful minds, an evidence

of the distinctly higher limits of mental, and particularly, emotive and moral capacities, in a few individuals who may be termed "self-actualized." These youths had matured beyond their biological age (early twenties) with a little help from the outside. Theirs is the deep fulfilment—a reward with which no earthly joy can compare!

Here is one fact of the *uplifting education*, hardly recognized or achieved within the walls of the conventional institutions, but known and nurtured in every age within *gurukul* system of the East, and other sacred institutions such as the "Mystery Schools" of Egypt, Greece, Samothrace, etc.

It is with these true temples of learning that the student of Theosophy would identify and aspire for. In such a "school" each beloved "ward," under the guardianship of a trustworthy guide (a father-figure) is allowed to unfold, at his own pace, the latent talents, ideas, aspirations, etc. All such student-aspirants are exposed to classical literature, ancient scriptures, creative arts, sciences and Mathematics, and even martial arts, if required, along with the hands-on demonstration of the theories learnt. This way, the learning situation is accompanied with the arousal (by what may be called "induction") of the latent faculties, such as intuition, the habits of rational thinking, attentiveness, etc., in each learner, appropriate to his individual constitution and sensitivity. The process is similar to the "Magnetic induction" in physics; but in the human learner-teacher relationship, the process is much more subtle than simple magnetism, and which needs further understanding as we consider processes of learning later on. It is also like the initial sprouting of seeds, which may be further cultivated under the patient and loving guidance of the revered *guru*.

Some educationists do admit that in practice such idealism (branded as "exotic" ideas) is not practicable in the present academic set-up, which is hard-bound to subscribe to altogether different goals and methods. Modern Universities, with their conventional model of Education and monolith institutions, are organized upon certain in-built policy. In such arrangement there can be no scope for intimate

learning relationships, necessary for the true process of "unfolding" and cultivation of the faculties, which are the objects of true Education.

However, even in large class-rooms some bright students are known to prefer free inter-action and individual tutelage and encouragement, from an open-minded and understanding tutor. After all, someone can imbibe some learning through, what may be described as "osmosis," from an enthusiastic teacher. This mode of learning by "osmosis" needs closer contact between the teacher and pupil. This needs further elucidation as one more method of education. An inspired teacher can transmit his enthusiasm and love of knowledge and wisdom, without sermonizing. His personal magnetism is enough to arouse those within his circle and around him. Such was the teacher W. Q. Judge, as admitted by almost all students who had the good fortune to contact him.

YOU are in the world of things that came to be, and yet you seek to be at rest. But how can anything be at rest in the world of things that came to be? A boat, as long as it floats on the water, cannot be still or at rest; or if at any moment it is still, it is so only by chance, and forthwith the water begins again to shake and toss the things which float upon its surface. Then only is the boat at rest, when it is taken out of the water, and drawn up on the land, which is the place of the boat's origin, and is on par with the boat in density and weight; then but not till then, is the boat truly at rest. And even so, the soul, as long as it is involved in the processes of the physical world, cannot be still, nor be at rest, nor get any respite; but if it returns to its source and root, then it is still and is at rest, and reposes from the misery and debasement of its wandering in a foreign land.

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: Theosophical literature speaks of hierarchy of Adepts, who are said to be scattered all over the earth, but they meet at certain times in a year and their meetings are presided over by higher Adepts. What determines the degree of an Adept? When and where do these Adepts meet? Are there any signs by which they are recognized? Are Adepts the same as Mahatmas?

Answer: Being an "adept" in a particular field of knowledge or skill means, having thorough proficiency in that field or skill. Thus, at a simple level, an Adept is someone who is proficient in one or more fields of knowledge, but may not be so in *all*. In the spiritual journey leading to perfection, one reaches the stage of being a chela or a disciple. However, there are disciples of many grades. There are those who have devoted themselves to the service of humanity, but do not possess much knowledge. They are humble and yet ignorant. Then, there are those who have so much knowledge and power that they may appear to us as Adepts. These beings who possess so much knowledge and powers are yet not *Mahatmas*. H. P. Blavatsky was a disciple of the Masters, but she was an Adept, as compared to us, writes Mr. Judge. *Mahatmas* are Rishis and sages of the past, being physically, intellectually, psychically and spiritually perfect. They are described as possessing power over space, time, mind and matter.

There is a hierarchy of Adepts, some being greater than the others—just as Moses appeared to be greater than Pharaoh's magicians. Adepts are classified by the number of principles they have under their perfect control (*Transactions*, p. 67). High Adepts

are the *Jivanmuktas*, they are liberated beings, who take up a body, as and when it is necessary to do so. When an Adept becomes a *Jivanmukta*, he can unite all his "principles" into one—he is no longer of this earth. He becomes a *Nirvanee*.

Adepts are living men using bodies similar to ours. They live in secluded spots of the earth and meet at certain times of the year. Their meetings are presided over by some among them who are more advanced in knowledge and power. The meetings of these higher Adepts are presided over by the highest Adept. Only these highest Adepts are in communication with the Dhyān Chohans or celestial beings. It is only these highest Adepts, who take part in the governance or guidance of nature and mankind.

There are well guarded and secluded places on earth, which are the dwelling and meeting places of Adepts. In the article, "A Hindu Chela's Diary," we have an account of a chela, who is desirous of meeting an Adept. The article points out that there are Adepts in India and also in other countries of the world. In India, the Adepts meet every year in a certain place near Badrinath, in Northern part of India. (*The Path*, June to September 1886)

Theosophical literature speaks of the Sacred Island that once existed. But now there is Gobi desert where the island was. However, it survives now as a fertile, fairy-like land, called Shamballah, the "happy land," which is an oasis of incomparable beauty. It is said that every *seventh year*, the Great Teachers of the snowy range, i.e., the *Mahatmas* or great Adepts, assemble in Shamballah, which according to general belief is situated in the northwest of Tibet. However, such sacred places are guarded by elemental forces of nature, making them inaccessible to those who are not yet ready, or to those who wish to go there out of curiosity. There are various accounts of curious travellers or unprepared disciples losing their way because of sudden thunderstorm or fog. Unless one is developed inwardly, it is not possible for a person to recognize an Adept, even if he may be in the same room. However, we are also told that places of pilgrimage are centres of spiritual

force and that at most of the famous places of pilgrimage there is an Adept, who is ready to give a certain amount of spiritual insight and assistance to those of pure heart who may go there.

There are astral signs by which the Adepts recognize each other and also ascertain the progress of their disciples. There are ineffaceable marks in the aura of the Adept for those (clairvoyants) who are able to see them, showing his advancement on the Path. Likewise, an Adept can see how far progressed a particular person is, by looking at his aura. If a person has progressed only three steps on the Path then, there will be three marks in his aura. It is no use pretending that he has progressed four steps, because if he had indeed advanced to the higher step there would be a corresponding mark in his aura, as these grow with the person's development. Hence, it is impossible to fool an Adept and extract from him occult information or secrets pertaining to higher degree of initiation by obtaining signs and passwords out of a book. (*Echoes From the Orient*, p. 37). Moreover, in case of an Adept, this aura is compact and concentrated, and the same is depicted in the pictures of the Mahatmas, such as Buddha, as pyramidal crown upon their heads. (*The Theosophist*, August 1884)

The article, "A Hindu Chela's Diary," mentions how the person desirous of meeting an Adept was led, by following a subterranean passage under a mountain range, to a building that appeared to be thousands of years old, where disciples were initiated. When he reached the place, there were already Adepts present there. He mentions that the highest of the Adepts had above his head three golden triangles, while of the remaining Adepts, some had two and some only one golden triangle above their heads.

Question: Can we say that the fall of any civilization is the combined result of "natural cycle" as also the decline in morality of the people in that civilization?

Answer: One of the fundamental propositions of Theosophy is that the law of cycles or periodicity prevails in all departments of life, in

all the kingdoms below man as well as in those above man. Cycle means return of that which was before. The law of cycles is the law of re-birth. In the cycle of rebirth, man lives a life of certain number of years and then dies. The Adepts point out that after a period of rest he again enters life, after an average period of 1,500 years. The history of the world shows that a civilization repeats itself every 1,500 years. If we could go back 1,500 years in the past, we would find that the philosophers, thinkers and inventors of 1,500 years ago, are coming back in the present. Thus, Egyptian civilization with its enormous pyramids, wonderful knowledge and inventions, declined, and after a period of rest, the egos that made Egyptian civilization are reincarnated in America. Many egos taking birth in America are bringing back the knowledge and ideas which the Egyptians held. Thus, the body dies, but the Ego inhabiting that body continues its evolution in another body. So also, Egyptian civilization or the Egyptians as a material race is wiped out in accordance with the law of cycles, but their souls could not go out of existence. The souls, who made the ancient civilizations, be it Egyptian, Assyrian or Babylonian, come back and bring the old civilization with them, in terms of ideas and essence. Thus, fall of civilization or dying out of races happen cyclically, when the Egos have finished having experience in a particular race body. Often, disappearance of races is attributed to vices of civilization, but the fact is that when the Egos inhabiting any race have reached the limit of experience possible in it, they begin to leave that race environment, and seek better bodies and environment.

But the economy of nature will not allow the race body used and left behind by higher Egos to suddenly fade away. Hence, we find less progressed egos occupying those refined race bodies. Thus, a glorious race or civilization degenerates into savagery. We find that the Red Indians, the Egyptians, the Hottentots, the Easter Islanders and others are examples of races deserted by high Egos, and the less-progressed egos use these race bodies. However, these less-developed Egos are not mature and experienced enough to use the

body and the brain of superior quality to its highest capacity. Hence, gradually, because of this disparity, the females of that race begin to become sterile, and then the number of deaths exceeds the births. "Great civilizations like those of Egypt and Babylon have gone because the souls who made them have long ago incarnated in the great conquering nations of Europe and the present American continents." (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 91)

However, fall of Roman and Atlantean civilizations was due to selfishness and immorality of the people. The Atlanteans perished in the cataclysm brought about by their extreme materiality and sin. They worshipped form and matter, which later degenerated into self-worship, and still later into phallic worship. Though Atlantis, the continent of the Atlanteans, submerged thousands of years ago, the Egos that formed the Atlantean race are reborn forming the mighty Egyptian civilization, and later, on the American continent.

Regarding decline of civilization, we have:

The downfall of every civilization is caused by the weak morals of those who live in and by it. False knowledge or misuse of knowledge generally accompanies weakened morals. An unbalanced relation between knowledge and ethics brings about a critical stage, which if not promptly attended to, results in death. Historical examples—the Roman Empire for one—will occur to any reader. War plays a part in the destruction and reconstruction of civilizations. From the days of Mahabharata down to our own times we come upon the phenomenon of unbalance between mental capacity and moral responsibility, competition leading to war and wars, then destruction. (*Studies in "The Voice of the Silence,"* p. 1)

THE most powerful prayer, one wellnigh omnipotent, and the worthiest work of all is the outcome of the quiet mind.

-ECKHART

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Does intelligent life exist elsewhere in the universe? Stephen Hawking, the world's greatest living theoretical physicist and Roger Penrose, the leading mathematical physicist, say, it probably does. The philosophical and religious implications of discovering intelligent life on another planet are huge. Scientific research has shown that universe is teeming with life and some of it may be, technologically and spatially, so advanced that it could be unrecognizable, were we to encounter it. However, question arises that if intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe, perhaps with highly sophisticated communications and transportation technology, why has not intelligent life from other planets made contact with us? The answer lies in enormous distances separating solar systems and galaxies. For instance, our nearest solar system is Alpha Centauri. Travelling at the speed of light, we can get there in 4.3 years, while travelling at the speed of world's fastest experimental spacecraft, Helios II, would take us more than 12,000 years. Other solar systems are even further off. NASA's Kepler space telescope recently confirmed that some of the 350 million solar systems contained in our Milky Way galaxy have planets like our earth—with water, moderate temperature and life-supporting oxygen. However, the galaxy closest to us, is the Andromeda galaxy, with 1000 million solar systems, which is 2.70 million light years away from us. Hence, electromagnetic radiations originating in a planet in this galaxy, 2.70 million years ago, would have barely reached us this year. Likewise, radio signals sent by modern man, a mere 122 years ago, would have scarcely reached the edge of our solar system. But one day we may hope to make contact with other planetary life, writes Minhaz Merchant, an author and a chairman of the media group. However, all of human intelligence and wisdom—from Aristotle and Aryabhata to the Vedas and Einstein—do not have an answer to the third key question: why does the universe exist at all? Even scientists concede wryly, God alone

knows, writes Merchant. (*The Times of India*, August 20, 2010)

"The refusal to admit in the whole Solar system of any other reasonable and intellectual beings on the human plane, than ourselves, is the greatest conceit of our age. ...It cannot deny point-blank the possibility of there being worlds within worlds, under totally different conditions to those that constitute the nature of our world; nor can it deny that there may be a certain limited communication between some of those worlds and our own," writes H. P.B. (S.D., I, 133). Ancient philosophy postulates existence of seven worlds, or seven planes of matter and consciousness. The purely divine spirits belonging to the highest world may be out of reach and range of human beings on earth, but those divine intelligent beings in the lower six worlds "can occasionally be seen and heard by men, and who do communicate with their progeny of the Earth." Each human being is indissolubly linked with them, because it is these divine beings who have furnished us with our principles. Some of these beings are so immeasurably high that they must appear to us as Gods, and collectively as GOD, writes H.P.B. We need to develop our inner senses to receive communication from them.

We agree with Prof. Huxley, in his assertion that there must be beings in the universe whose intelligence is as much beyond ours as ours exceeds that of the black beetle. Even the planets in our solar system and the inhabitants of those planets are far superior and spiritually advanced than our earth and its humanity. On brighter planets, such as Venus, live more progressed entities, who were once as low as ourselves, "but now raised up to a pitch of glory incomprehensible for our intellect," writes Mr. Judge (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, pp. 2-3). There is a suggestion that planets like Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury and Venus are superior to the Earth and that they are in astral and psychic communication with the Earth. They are the Guides and Watchers of the Earth, morally and physically. The physical orbs furnish the humanity on Earth with its inner and outer characteristics, while the spiritual rulers of these planets, called *Regents* or *Rectors*, are concerned with our spiritual faculties and

spiritual progress (S. D., I, 575). H.P.B. points out that Mercury, as an astrological planet, is still more occult and mysterious than Venus and men of *Budha* (Mercury) are metaphorically *immortal*, through their wisdom.

Why does the universe exist at all? The universe exists for the experience and emancipation of the soul, says Sage Patanjali in one of his Yoga aphorisms.

Life comes to us like bullets from a gun, without any hint of what the next moment contains. For many people, such as farmers and fishermen, uncertainty is the warp and weft of life. It is essential to realize that life is unpredictable. There is no guarantee that we will draw the next breath or our loved ones will live beyond the moment. The routine activities of life keep us engaged and help us to ignore this fact. We seek to overcome uncertainty through planning and organization, by anticipating and making provision for every possible contingency. Instead of trying to control everything around us, so as to leave nothing to chance, we could cultivate endurance and determination to cope with whatever life sends our way. When we have realized that we get only what we deserve under Karma, it would become easier to bear with uncertainty. "As our needs for status, recognition, possessions and love dissolve, our dependence on the outside world recedes. We become stronger and less fearful of the future," writes Suma Varughese. The final vanquisher of the uncertainty of life is the discovery of our real Self. Knowing who we really are, we are able to remain unaffected by sudden loss of reputation, family, property, and so on. One of the lessons taught by uncertainty is, never to take anything or any person for granted, and to enjoy what you have, when you have it. Then we learn to live in the moment, neither peering behind at the past, nor craning forward to the future, writes Varughese. (*Life Positive*, June 2010)

Fear, anxiety and pain, caused by uncertainty, could be overcome by cultivation of perfect vision or spiritual insight—the first step in the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path. To acquire spiritual insight one must begin to understand and realize the three characteristics of the conditioned existence: All conditioned existence is *Dukkha* or suffering. All Conditioned existence is impermanent. All conditioned existence is devoid of true selfhood. Everything in the manifested universe is in constant flux. When surrounded by comforts and happiness, or by pain and adversities, it is good to remind ourselves, "This too, shall pass away."

If life brings unexpected calamities and pain, it also brings unexpected joys. We need only to build the capacity to maintain our inner poise and equilibrium. Uncertainty of life is interwoven with free will in man, using which he can change the future. Life would be meaningless if everything was fixed and certain, leaving no scope for progress.

The uncertainty of life mainly arises from inscrutable ways of Karma. There is no uncertainty as regards the *consequences* brought by Karma, but only as regards the time of precipitation, because most of us are not aware of the exact moment of precipitation of our past Karma. However, those who are spiritually advanced, who know ultimate divisions of time, can predict a future event with perfect certainty.

Nada Yoga is the Yoga of music. It is union with the divine through intonation of sound. There is an attempt to bring about inner transformation by meditating on sound vibrations. There are several subtly different practices that deal with meditation on sound as a path to spiritual growth. When mind gets absorbed in sound vibrations, like cotton soaked in water, there arises in it a feeling of inner bliss. *Nada Yoga* distinguishes between two sources of sounds: *ahata* or the struck sounds, which have their origin in outside

organisms or instruments, and *anahata*, or the unstruck sound, which emanates from within, as one advances in his or her meditation on sound. The first form of sound is gross, while the latter is subtle, and believed to arise inwardly from the subtle pranic energy moving through energy channels in the body. Listening and appreciating "gross" sounds does not require much practice, but listening and appreciating internal sounds demands *tapas* (penance) and perseverance on the part of aspirant.

Modern music therapy involves concentration on external or "struck" sounds, which are selected by a music therapist. In case of internal sound experience, it is the aspirant himself, who manages and controls emanations of *anahata*. Some of these internal sounds have been compared with the sounds of bells, gongs and flutes and some of them reflect sounds in the human body, such as, sound of breathing, blood flow, etc. However, there are internal sounds that are never audible and hence are difficult to explain and experience. A beginner can practice *Nada Yoga* by meditating on sound vibrations from soothing and harmonious music from some external source. Gradually, one develops the ability to hear subtle sounds. Such meditation is good for those who suffer from lack of concern and love, as also for those who are mentally upset with injustice, inequality and unreasonableness, writes T. V. Sairam. (*Bhavan's Journal*, September 15, 2010)

The title of the *Mahayana* Buddhist text, *The Voice of the Silence*, is translated in Sanskrit or a vernacular language as, *Anahata Nada*, meaning literally, "Soundless Sound" or "Soundless Voice." Now and then, we do receive "communication"—guidance and illumination—from the inner planes of being, which is described as, "voice of conscience," "whisperings of *Buddhi* to *Manas*," etc. But apart from this, in a state of deep meditation, there are experiences like seeing spots of light and hearing of distant fairy-like bells. To someone having such an experience, Mr. Judge advises: "Do not look for the *voice* of the bells, but regard the *ideas*," which accompany the sound of bells. The very first fragment of *The Voice*

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of the Silence points out that there comes a definite stage in the life of an aspirant, when he will hear the voice of the *inner* God, or Higher Self in seven manners. It will be first heard as Nightingale's sweet voice, next it will be like the silver cymbal of the Dhyanis, which will then be heard as the voice of ocean-spirit imprisoned in shell. It will then change into sound of Vina, bamboo-flute and trumpet blast. The last will vibrate like the dull rumbling of a thundercloud. The seventh sound swallows all the other sounds—it is the "Voice of the Silence." This must happen in the high state of *Samadhi*, when one loses all sense of individuality and becomes the ALL. The fragment also points out the pre-requisites for hearing the Voice of one's Higher Self, such as, silencing one's thoughts, withdrawing one's mind from the external sounds and sights and fixing one's whole attention on the Master. The aspirant is asked to beware of the dangers of the lower, psychic powers and acquaint himself with the nature of *Dharana* or concentration.

Nada Brahma or the Divine Resonance (AuM) is the homogeneous sound or vibrations pervading the whole universe. It acts as a vivifying power, which stirs up and animates the particles of universe. It is responsible for the evolution and dissolution of man, animals and of the solar systems.

H.P.B. writes in *Isis Unveiled* about the power of music over human beings and animals. "Certain kinds of music throw us into frenzy; some exalt the soul to religious aspirations. In fine, there is scarcely a human creation which does not respond to certain vibrations of the atmosphere" (*Isis*, I, 275). She affirms that the philosophers of antiquity knew about the singular power of music over certain nervous diseases. Music or sound vibrations have helped to cure diseases like epilepsy, impotence, insanity, lameness, dropsy, etc., believed to be incurable. "The sound has an attractive property; it draws out disease, which streams out to encounter the musical wave, and the two blending together, disappear in space." (*Isis*, I, 215)

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