

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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### ON FORGIVENESS

WE ALL desire forgiveness when we have offended another. How grateful we are when someone forgives us? But we are ourselves slow in forgiving the offense. We may not *deserve* forgiveness, but we all *need* it. Our society would be impoverished if we do not learn mutual forgiveness. All the spiritual teachers without exception have emphasized “forgiveness.” Many Psychologists believe that forgiveness does more good to the person who forgives than the one forgiven. Forgiveness is seen to be the only effective way to let go of the deep-seated feelings of resentment, anger or the desire to avenge those who might have harmed us. We should willfully abandon the negative feelings by exercising empathy. There are those who have forgiven the worst of offenses. Gladys Staines, whose priest husband and two sons were murdered by youths in Orissa, said that she had forgiven the murderers, because forgiving brings healing, and liberates both the forgiver and the forgiven. Forgiving someone is not a sign of weakness, but that of strength.

To forgive is to cease to feel anger, hatred or resentment against another person for his real or apparent offense, mistake or injustice. We should endeavour to cultivate unconditional forgiveness, *i.e.*, without expecting the erring person to apologize. In Jainism, forgiveness is one of the main virtues that needs to be cultivated by the Jains. Jains celebrate the act of forgiveness once in a year, at the end of the festival of *Paryusan*. On the last day of *Paryushan*, they

perform *Pratikraman*. *Pratikraman* means turning back. It is a form of meditation, where one reflects on his spiritual journey and renews his faith. Jain literature indicates that *Pratikraman* ritual is meant for repenting and requesting forgiveness for one's past minor transgressions of the vows that may have occurred knowingly or unknowingly. One asks for forgiveness for all the mistakes done by mind, speech or action. Forgiveness is asked by telling "*Michchhami Dukkadam*" to each other. It means "If I have caused you offense in any way, knowingly or unknowingly, in thought word or deed, then I seek your forgiveness." To be forgiving is to live in the present and not cling to the past. Jains are encouraged to follow the ideal of *Kshamapana* or supreme forgiveness, and repeatedly seek forgiveness from various creatures—even from *ekindriyas* or single sensed beings like plants and micro-organisms that they may have harmed while eating and doing routine activities. They repeat the *Kshamapana Sutra* which says: "I ask pardon of all creatures, may all creatures pardon me. May I have friendship with all beings and enmity with none." No private quarrel or dispute may be carried beyond the last day of Jain festival of *paryusana* and hence each one asks forgiveness of their outstation friends and relatives through letters or telephone calls.

One's ability to forgive appears to be a good indicator of one's spiritual progress. There are people who can never forgive the insult or injury and carry the feeling of revenge or anger or bitterness with them till the end of their lives. They seem to say, "I will never ever forgive him/her." There are others who are able to forgive and forget with the lapse of time, say, in few years. There are those who do not carry the hurt for long, and are able to forgive and forget in few months or even few days. Then there are those rare few who forgive and forget almost immediately.

Why is it so difficult to forgive and forget? The society we live in has given us our ideas and false values as regards "human dignity" and "self-respect." When these are violated, man is outraged. It is much easier to forgive a loved one, but much more difficult to do so

when that other person happens to be someone we do not particularly like; happens to be our opponent and a competitor. No one can hurt us unless we give him the power to do so. Our mind is a free bird, which cannot be chained or hurt unless we consent. We think that unless we give back, hit back, make the other suffer as we have suffered, and make him pay, we cannot rest in peace—not realizing that the one against whom we feel hatred is our own erring brother; forgetting that the law of Karma works ceaselessly, justly and accurately. It is because, often we do not *see* the wrongdoer "pay" for his actions that we are tempted to take the law, as it were, in our own hands to mete out "justice" ourselves. We are not expected to supinely accept ill treatment or injustice, though according to the highest standard of spirituality, if the injustice is against oneself, one must let it go. We must point out the wrong, gently but firmly, wherever possible, and do our best to redress the wrong, but having done all in our power, we must resign.

We are asked to "forgive and largely forget." If we are able to forget, then the question of forgiving does not arise. One of the methods for forgetting is to allow the thoughts to pass without identifying with them. A French proverb says: "To understand is to forgive." If we have taken care to understand the experience with all its implications, *i.e.*, what caused it; what was the lesson to be learnt; what in our nature needs changing, etc., then there results conscious acceptance.

What is the lesson we can learn? Those particular incidents, which leave a deep impact or rather scar on our being, are indicators that we have not learnt to cope with problems in those areas—because all those traumatic experiences which *we* describe as unforgettable, and which we are unable to face without being shaken, others may be able to face without much perturbation. We are especially vulnerable in some parts of our psychological make-up, and that may well be the result of similar experiences in the past.

We need to cultivate detachment. The more impersonal we are the easier it is to forgive and forget. A lot depends upon our

understanding of who we are. When we associate “I” with the body, ideas or feelings, we tend to become most vulnerable. We have to be able to take objective position. We have to see that it is not the whole of me. Rape can leave lifetime trauma, but we know that we are not the body. We tend to wallow in self-pity instead of facing the facts. Now that it has happened, what can I do? As shown in a movie, a woman who was a victim of rape decided to give birth to the child and then groomed him to be a musician. Thus, we can use that very experience constructively to get over the trauma. “Forgetfulness of the personal self and sincere altruism,” is H.P.B.’s remedy for all woes. Participating in another’s joys and sorrows, we tend to forget ourselves and therefore it becomes easy to forgive people who are after all only instrumental in bringing Karmic misfortunes to us. There is a prayer: “Teach me to feel another’s woe, to hide the fault I see; The mercy I to others show, that mercy show to me.”

But no person is entirely impersonal or entirely free from the sense of separateness, and hence there comes a time, when even the one who has gone ahead on the spiritual path experiences a bitter pang of “sense of injustice,” through the knowing or unknowing acts of others, or through sheer precipitation of past Karma. The feeling of “injustice” arises because we have forgotten our actions of the past. The advice given is: “If our spiritual advance has been worth considering, we know that we can run away from no unpleasant circumstances; and that every inimical feeling toward any being must be uprooted and wiped out sometime; that the longer the delay, the harder the uprooting.” (*Theosophy*, April 1924)

We seek forgiveness or mercy of God or Law, and sometimes this request is accompanied by true feeling of repentance. Could *true* repentance wipe away our sin or lessen the effects of our wrongdoing or evil deeds? What happens when one person forgives another? Can forgiveness forfeit the sin? True forgiveness is Mercy; it is an opportunity to mend one’s ways and grow. Professor C. S. Lewis suggests in his essay “On Forgiveness” that “there is all the

difference in the world between *forgiving* and *excusing*.” He writes:

Forgiveness says “Yes, you have done this thing, but I accept your apology, I will never hold it against you and everything between us two will be exactly as it was before.” But excusing says “I see that you couldn’t help it or didn’t mean it, you weren’t really to blame.” If one was not really to blame then there is nothing to forgive. In that sense, forgiveness and excusing are almost opposites....What leads us into this mistake is the fact that there usually is some amount of excuse, some “extenuating circumstances.”

Our false concept of “merciful law” or “merciful God” is that they *excuse* our wrongdoing and allow us to go scot-free. A sin, crime or error disrupts the channel of communication with our divine nature. True repentance and forgiveness establishes back this ruptured communication so that we can receive the necessary guidance to correct ourselves. Pangs of conscience cause a sense of guilt when we go against the inner core of standards and values. The feeling of remorse helps us purify our moral nature, but it is important not to carry the feeling of self-accusation in the mind. When repentance takes the form of self-reproach or constant brooding over the wrong done, it leads to despair. For instance, Judas Iscariot hanged himself in self-hate when Jesus was crucified after his betrayal. He could not forgive himself, though Jesus, the divine lover, could never have cast him from his heart.

Our concept of merciful law is the law that *excuses* our wrongdoings and allows us to escape the ensuing consequences. The “mercy” or “forgiveness” aspect of the law of Karma is that unlike man-made law, it gives us innumerable opportunities to improve. Karma is justice. We may hide in the cave or at the bottom of the sea, but it is not possible to dodge Karma. However, often there are circumstances beyond our control. The law of Karma takes into account all the “extenuating circumstances.” Karma is action and reaction. However, this reaction is not mechanical but the Law takes into account the motive, the inner state of the person and the

weight of his past Karma. We do not incur very heavy debt, when we act wrongly *but with a good motive*, or because we were disturbed inwardly. Likewise, crimes committed in *Avidya* (ignorance), as by children, idiots, savages and people who know no better, involve physical but no moral responsibilities or Karma.

When we refuse to forgive another, we continue to carry feelings of hatred, dislike or revenge towards another. But instead, if we decide to forgive the person, and practice charity, kindness, and love, then these inimical tendencies will be one-third lessened in every life. It is like the case of Lord Buddha and his cousin Devadatta. Buddha was full of charity towards Devadatta, and yet Devadatta continued to be inimical to him. We have to remember that we can have no attachment for a thing or a person we do not think about. When mind loses interest and stops clinging to the object or the person, with affection or dislike, there will no longer be a karmic link between us and that person or the object. Forgiveness does not absolve the erring person of the blame, and his sin is not forfeited, but by forgiving him we no longer maintain a karmic link with that person and we accelerate the process of transformation.

By forgiving we can set a shining example. Is it not by example that we can bring about the inner conversion? In Victor Hugo's novel, "*Les Miserable*," Jean Valjean, after spending 19 years in the jail for stealing a loaf of bread, comes out of the prison almost a hardened criminal and not allowed any place in any of the inns, is finally given food and shelter by a kind bishop. That night Valjean runs away with Bishop's silver plates and caught by the police, when he is brought before the Bishop, the Bishop says that the silver plates were given as a gift to Valjean and offers him silver candlesticks as well, saying that those too were gifted to him, which he forgot to carry with him. The police had to release Valjean, whose life was transformed after that episode, and he kept the candlesticks as a token to remind him of Bishop's forgiveness, deciding to live the life of altruism.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT "THINK NOT LIGHTLY OF EVIL"

"FREDERICK, will you go on with the translation, please?"

Frederick Craig, tall and slim, got up less briskly than usual. It was evident from his first words that he had a heavy cold. "May I write it out, please?" he croaked.

"Certainly, Frederick," his Latin teacher answered sympathetically. She was a tall, angular spinster, but she took a warm, motherly interest in the well-being of every one of her pupils. "We will go on to the next sentence," she said to the class, "while Frederick writes out his translation of this one and brings it to me."

It took Frederick very short time indeed to write out the translation, so surprisingly short a time, for such a difficult passage, that his teacher, felt anxious. Frederick was a good student, but was he as good as that? She did not take up the paper he had laid on her desk until the class had emerged successful from their struggle with the next sentence. When she did pick it up and read the polished translation she looked stricken. She did not read the translation aloud. Instead, she exclaimed, "Why, Frederick!" in a voice that broke a little. She stood quite pale and still, her grey eyes fixed sadly on the boy. Frederick's face first flushed, then paled, but he did not take his eyes from her good, plain, troubled face. At last, ending the longest and tensest two minutes he or any of the class had ever experienced, Miss Stevenson spoke: "I will see you after the class, Frederick." And she asked Dorothy Ayers to attempt the sentence they had omitted, which she did, rather stumblingly.

The class, the last one of the day, ended and two unhappy people faced each other across the teacher's desk. "I could never have thought you would not play fair, Frederick," she said sadly. "Do you feel right about trying to pass off as your own work something you had copied out of a book?"

"No, I don't Miss Stevenson. I felt terrible when you looked at me like that—so sorry and disappointed in me! I will do anything

you say to make you feel all right again.”

“Was it the first time you had used a printed translation in the Latin class?”

“No,” Frederick admitted honestly, “but it was the first time I had copied it out. And it was the last time! I will *never* do it again. Please, does that make you feel all right?” His voice was anxious, pleading.

“Sit down, Frederick, and we will see together why I felt sad and still do feel so. Did you feel right when you did it, Frederick?”

“Today, ma’am? Not quite right, but it did not seem so very wrong.” A paroxysm of cough stopping him. His teacher waited for it to pass, but then she asked: “But when you did it the first time?”

“No, I felt then that I should not do it. But I had seen the book in the shop and used my pocket money for the week to get it. And it seemed more interesting when I read it in English than digging out the meaning of each word. And then I thought that the work had all been done; why should I have to dig it all out for myself?”

“Do you want to learn Latin? The boy nodded. “Do you think you ever would do it that way?” He shook his head.

But Miss Stevenson was not to be put off. “You say you felt the first time that you should not do it. Have you asked yourself why?”

“It was just that something inside seemed to be saying ‘Don’t.’ And afterward it was as if it kept saying, over and over again, ‘That was wrong!’ I remember it did not let me sleep right away that night. But then it got easier and easier to do it and I had almost forgotten it had ever looked so wrong to me.”

“My poor boy, do you know that means you heard your *voice of conscience* less and less as you got used to ignoring it? When a man sets an alarm clock for six o’clock and then turns over when it rings and goes to sleep again, and if he keeps on doing that day after day, will the alarm wake him up at all after a while?”

“No,” Frederick admitted. “He would stop hearing it.”

“Nobody can afford to ignore that warning voice, Frederick. It is the voice of all that we have learned, stored up in our

consciousness, warning us not to do wrong and get into trouble and make trouble for others. If we do not listen to it, more and more things that seem to us wrong now will look less and less wrong and we will slip into doing worse and worse things.”

“I feel so sorry I have disappointed you, Miss Stevenson.”

“Disappointing me is a small thing compared to disappointing your own Soul! And what about the bad example set to others?”

“It had come to look like such a little thing! But can you tell me how I can keep from slipping into mischief again in some other way?”

“Listen to that inner voice when it says ‘Don’t!’ and you will hear it more and more clearly. And there is a very strong and helpful warning about disobeying it that was given by Gautama the Buddha 2,500 years ago. I know it by heart but I will gladly copy it out and give it to you if you like, for you to think of when you are tempted to do a thing you think may be wrong. He said: ‘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.’ And the opposite is also true: ‘A wise man becomes full of goodness even if he gathers it little by little.’”

“Oh, I say, that is good! I will be very thankful to have it, and honestly I will try to think of it. And thank you very much, Miss Stevenson! They don’t have time to talk to me like that at home.”

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When we find something bad in us, we must not justify, nor make excuses, or be lenient, saying, “Only this once, next time I will be careful.” We need to be firm and take measures. Lord Buddha says, “A man should hasten towards good; he should restrain his evil thoughts; if he is slack in doing good his mind inclines to delight in evil.” This verse might lead us to think that man is naturally *more* inclined to evil than good. But, as explained in magazine *Theosophy* for August 1956, it is easy to see that a person who makes no positive effort towards self-improvement will lose touch with the meaning

of the forward march of progress. While other fellow beings are at least making intermittent efforts to be good and are striving towards a wider perspective, this person makes no such effort and hence gradually he is separated from them. His will is set in opposition to the very idea of progress. He tends to become vindictive and revengeful. Yet, even a man of most evil ways can hope to become righteous, through right choices, just as a water-pot is filled by the constant falling of drops of water.

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### STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

#### THE MEASURE OF THE SOUL—II

FOUR CASTES and four stages should help us in the measurement of our own soul. It is in the understanding of what they really mean from the Soul's point of view, from the inner point of view, that we shall be able to determine for ourselves, what are the duties that make for right sacrifice in our own life. The two-fold question that each one must ask himself is what is the caste I belong to as a soul, and at this present period of my life what is the stage I belong to? For Krishna very definitely tells us that our own *Dharma* is to be found in the duties of our peculiar and particular caste and stage in life, that unless we perform our duties in terms of our own caste and stage, we fall into what is known as *kamic* action, the inclinations of our own personal or desire nature. To perform our duty then, it becomes necessary to perform it from the understanding of the castes from the spiritual point of view, and also of the four stages we may occupy in one life. Can we, at the present time, through outward signs and circumstances, through the present environment in which we find ourselves, determine with certitude what our caste is, and what our stage. The answer is we can. Unfortunately, in this age, in the black age of *Kali Yuga*, there has arisen a great confusion of castes, and therefore the outward signs are not there to help us in the recognition of our stage and caste, but from the inner point of view it is always possible for us to determine the caste and stage.

What do we mean by this confusion of castes? We mean that men who from the inner point of view, belong to one particular caste out of the four castes, have incarnated among people who are not occupying that position, who do not belong to the same caste, and then we have the physical body of that Soul belonging to one particular caste. Whereas the Soul itself, the astral or inner man, does not belong to his own physical environment, and does not belong to the same caste as his parents. We can imagine, for instance, a Soul who should really continue its lessons and experiences as a

*Kshatriya* coming into a family where a *sudra* caste exists, or a child who is really fitted to be a servant, going into a family of teachers or Brahmins. Of course, this creates innumerable difficulties in the path of each one of us. How can we then determine really this harmony that should exist between our own inner principle and the physical body? For, there is confusion when there is disharmony between the astral man and his environment. We can only do this by the understanding of the spiritual significance of the castes and the stages. But this confusion has become so great in our own lives that we are not only confused about the caste stage, and our duties, but even we have confusion about the great question of sacrificial action, and if we offer sacrifice in the wrong way we are not helping ourselves but making confusion worse confounded.

That is why at this point, Krishna begins to explain to us that there are many, many kinds of sacrifices and that some are wrong sacrifices, and only one type represents the right type of sacrifice. He distinguishes between the sacrifice with material things, and the sacrifice through spiritual knowledge and he has already sought to show that men who are dependent upon outward things have not been purified from the *kamic* principle, and that only those men who have detached themselves from material things can be called truly spiritual people, people who have become liberated. Sacrifices with material things bind the soul to the results that accrue from these sacrifices. Right sacrifice is that which brings understanding and illumination to the performer of the sacrifice. We may offer sacrifice and if our confusion and delusion persist, then we may be certain that we did not offer sacrifice in terms of spiritual knowledge. Yet, Krishna says all of these offerings have their beneficial result, as they slowly and gradually purify men from sin. You remember that he says: “All these different kinds of worshippers are by their sacrifices purified from their sins; but they who partake of the perfection of spiritual knowledge arising from such sacrifices, pass into the eternal Supreme Spirit.”

And then we get the great message in verse 38 where Krishna

says: “There is no purifier in this world to be compared to spiritual knowledge; and he who is perfected in devotion findeth spiritual knowledge springing up spontaneously in himself in the progress of time.” And Krishna has just said that even the greatest of all sinners if he can obtain the spiritual knowledge and begin to act in terms of that knowledge will become purified of all his sins. Now here, we are really puzzled because unless we offer sacrifices through spiritual knowledge, we cannot alter ourselves, and how can we offer these sacrifices in the right way unless we have spiritual knowledge? So it really seems a vicious circle, and we wonder what Krishna means, but it is here we must remember the great idea given in the opening verse of the Fourth Discourse, that there is an immortal Record of a complete System or Body of knowledge which is Spiritual Wisdom. Yet we are told that Spiritual Knowledge springs up spontaneously within our own hearts. The real understanding of this brings us to the division between the great masters who have preserved this eternal and immortal Record, and ourselves—all of us human beings who are striving to have this knowledge spring up spontaneously within our own heart. They preserve the Record. We merely rediscover it.

Now how do we discover? Through perfection in devotion: “He who is perfected in devotion findeth spiritual knowledge springing up spontaneously in himself in the progress of time.” The knowledge exists and is kept changeless, absolutely pure, and complete. What should be evolved, is the inner faculty which will allow us to rediscover that very same Spiritual Knowledge. In this discourse, Krishna says, “I have always taught this sacred eternal doctrine that I am teaching you today.” It has been handed down throughout the ages, from generation to generation:

This exhaustless doctrine of Yoga I formerly taught unto Vivaswat; Vivaswat communicated it to Manu, and Manu made it known unto Ikshwaku; and being thus transmitted from one unto another it was studied by the Rajarshees, until at length in the course of time the mighty art was lost,

O harasser of thy foes. It is even the same exhaustless, secret, eternal doctrine I have this day communicated unto thee because thou art my devotee and my friend.

So the reason why Arjuna has come to the position where he can receive this great inheritance of Spiritual knowledge from his own teacher, is simply because he has made himself the devotee (*bhakta*), and the friend (*sakha*) of that Teacher and of the Teaching itself. We should all have as our aim the becoming of a *Bhakta* and *Sakha* to Theosophy. Theosophy has always existed and it was known as *Brahma-Vidya*, and *Atma-Vidya*, knowledge of the Self. Theosophists should not say, “I believe” or “think” but should come to the position where they say “I know,” because they have rediscovered, proving for themselves all of these great Truths. It is when we have recognized that there is this Eternal Wisdom to be found, not only in the Ancient Records and among the preservers of the Records, but in our own heart. When we have come into the position of true listeners or *Shravakas*, when we have linked ourselves with the Records and with the Teacher, our own Higher Self, and can take possession of the personality, the Divine Incarnation takes place in each one of us. Every time we go within ourselves, we unite ourselves with Krishna and fusion takes place between our consciousness and the Spiritual Divine Spark in ourselves, and having thus joined ourselves over and over again there comes a time when the union will be achieved completely, when Krishna and Arjuna will be one, and Arjuna will be conscious that they are identical with one another, that their union and unity is complete and it is then that we have complete access to Spiritual Wisdom. We have become ready for the stage of the *Sannyasi*, the stage where we serve humanity, and we teach the Eternal Wisdom which is mentioned in this Discourse. The Fifth Discourse deals with the subject of true renunciation under the title of “Sacrifice and Sacrament.”

(Concluded)

## AGNI—THE GOD OF FIRE

### IV

HISTORY of religions shows that in the beginning man sought to secure favours of invisible powers, either through prayer or through sacrifice or *Yajna*. The word “sacrifice” is derived from Latin *sacrificium*, meaning, “to make holy.” In a sacrifice, the *essence* of what is being sacrificed is considered to be consumed in the Divine World. Thus, sacrifice is an attempt to maintain a link with the intangible, unseen world. The Indo-Iranians of the old believed that the world was created and sustained by various gods and goddesses and these divinities must be pleased through offerings. “Beings are nourished by food, food is produced by rain, rain comes from sacrifice and sacrifice is performed by action” (*Gita*, III). In *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, Mr. Judge explains that it is not as if food will not be produced if sacrifice, according to Vedic ritual, is not performed, but that *right food*, leading to bodily conditions enabling man to live up to his highest possibilities, will not be produced. It is produced only in the age where the real sacrifices are properly performed. We may conclude that if the sacrifices that thus nourish the gods are omitted, these “gods” must die out and go to other spheres. An offering made to these gods is only a symbol that acknowledges the role of various powers and forces of nature, in maintaining the universe. Hence, when Shri Krishna says, “Those who dress their meat but for themselves eat the bread of sin, being themselves sin incarnate,” He speaks of Brotherhood or reciprocity.

Sacrifice is inseparable from the ancient Indian tradition. *Ashwamedha yajna* (horse-sacrifice) used to be performed for the fulfilment of desires, for obtaining victory over enemies and for all kinds of prosperity. *Putrakameshti yajna* was performed for obtaining a son. *Rajasuya yajna* was performed at the time of coronation.

*Yajna* or sacrificial ceremony requires the ritual fire—the divine *Agni*—into which oblations are poured, as everything that is offered into the fire is believed to reach the deity or deities. There is usually



one, or occasionally three fires lit in the center of the offering ground. In ancient, Vedic India three fires were employed, two were axial, being on the east and west directions, and one was lateral, being in southern direction. One of the axial fires was *garhapatya* fire, for the *grahapati* or “master of the house.” It was the principal fire from which other fires were lit, and it was round in shape. This domestic fire was expected to be constantly maintained and passed on from the father to the son. The other axial fire was quadrangular fire oriented to four directions, called *Ahvaniya* fire, or “fire of offerings,” the fire in which oblations are offered to the gods. The third, lateral fire was *Dakshinagni*, or “fire of the right or south” which was semicircular and it was meant to protect the other two fires from the evil. A person who maintains all these three fires is called *Agnihotri*. *Garhapatya*, *Ahvaniya* and *Dakshinagni* are collectively called the *tretagni*.

In the olden days, orthodox Hindus would tend all three sacred fires within the home, never allowing these fires to go out. A householder was expected to perform certain sacrifices every day, and other sacrifices, occasionally. When it is not possible to perform actual sacrificial ceremony, the same is performed mentally and symbolically. For those who were unable to perform sacrifices (*karmakanda*) enjoined in the vedas, there are the *Aranyakas* or forest-treatises, which were probably composed for old people retiring into forests. Since they would be unable to perform elaborate sacrifices in the forest, the actual sacrifices were replaced by various symbols. It is like mental worship wherein flowers, water, etc. are mentally offered to the deity.

*Prashna Upanishad* (Ch. IV, sloka 3) seems to suggest that when we sleep, the five *pranas*—*Prana*, *Apana*, *Samana*, *Udana* and *Vyana*—which are like fires, keep awake, and go on working as if one is performing *Agnihotra* sacrifice. As already seen, in this sacrifice three fires are needed: there is *Garhapatya* fire which never goes out, and from which is drawn *Ahvaniya* fire. The third fire is *Dakshinagni*, which is also drawn from *Garhapatya* fire, and is

placed on southern side of altar. Swami Sharvananda explains that the significance of comparing *Pranas* to the fires is not very clear. However, Shankaracharya says that as there is some similarity between *Agnis* and *Pranas*, the analogy is drawn. *Apana* remains active constantly in the lower part of the system, and as from it proceeds *Prana* in sleep, *Apana* is called *Garhapatya* fire. Since *Prana* proceeds from *Apana*, it is compared to *Ahvaniya* fire. *Vyana* works in the nerve on the *right* side of the heart, so it is compared to *Dakshinagni*.

In sloka 4 the exhaling and inhaling are compared to the *ahuti* or two oblations of *Agnihotra* sacrifice, and *Samana* is compared to the Priest or *Hotri*. As the priest in the *Agnihotra* sacrifice equally distributes the two oblations, so also *Samana* regulates breathing in and breathing out, and sees that they are in equal proportion, to maintain balance in the body. Further, mind is the sacrificer, and *Udana* is like the fruit or result of sacrifice. A person performs *Agnihotra* sacrifice to go to heaven, so also, every day in deep sleep, mind is busy bringing the senses and organs under control, and sets out for *Brahman*. If the *Agnihotra* sacrifice is successful the sacrificer goes to heaven, and so also, during deep sleep or *Shusupti* state, *Udana* becomes active, and leads the mind, the sacrificer, to *Brahman*, *i.e.*, to a state which is very near to *Brahman*. Hence, *Udana* takes the place of the “result of the sacrifice.”

In the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita* we are told that every activity can become a sacrifice (*yajna*), an oblation or offering into the fire of *Brahman* or Supreme Reality. In his commentary on this Chapter, Swami Parthasarthy explains that *Yajna* comprises of two essential factors: the *ahuti* (offering) and the kindling of the fire. The fire consumes *ahuti* and the flame shoots up, which symbolizes invocation of the Lord. He explains that in verse 26, sense-perception is a *yajna*, in which the stimuli entering the sense organs—sound entering the ears, colour and form for the eyes, smell for the nose, etc.—constitute the offering, and the resulting sense-perception is like the flames kindled. Thus, sound and other sense-objects sacrifice

themselves into the fire of sense-perception. Likewise, self-restraint is a *yajna*, in which the hearing, seeing, and other sense-perceptions are offered, which kindle the flame of self-restraint. The senses bring in the data which is perceived by the mind, but also, the mind lingers over the perception, forming attachment to pleasant sense-perceptions and aversion for unpleasant sense-perceptions. If each perception dies away after its completion, and no mental indulgence is allowed, then self-restraint for each perception is cultivated. Thus, sense-perceptions must be offered into the fire of self-restraint. In sacrificing the sense-perceptions, the mind is controlled and not allowed to become a playground of the senses.

Verse 27 describes yoga of self-control or movement towards union with the Supreme Self as a *yajna*. In this *yajna* the functions of organs of perception and organs of action are the offerings, *i.e.*, there is withdrawal of the mind from worldly activities and perceptions, kindling the fire of self-realization.

Verse 28 mentions four *yajnas*: *Dravya yajna* or offering of material wealth to kindle the fire of prosperity and material wealth of other human beings. *Tapo yajna* is a subtler sacrifice in which one offers physical, psychic and mental exertions or austerities to kindle the fire of benefit for others. *Yoga yajna* is the effort of the lower nature in man to purify and raise itself to the Divine. Yoga means union with the Divine or Spiritual development. Here, mental and emotional efforts are offered to kindle the fire of spiritual evolution of oneself and of others. Study and reflection on the scriptures is called *svadhyaya*, but so also, introspection or self-examination pursued in order to understand one's weaknesses is called *svadhyaya* or self-study. *Svadhyaya yajna* is the offering of ignorance and preconceptions in the fire of knowledge, which ultimately leads to the Knowledge of Self.

Verse 29 mentions that all the activities of perception, action and reaction are sustained by sacrifice of *prana* and *apana* or inhalation and exhalation. Only when inhalation is completed, can there be exhalation, and only when exhalation is completed can there be

inhalation. Thus, inhalation offers itself to kindle the fire of exhalation, and likewise, exhalation offers itself to kindle the fire of inhalation. When *prana* and *apana* are properly regulated they lead to breath-control to kindle the fire of inner strength.

Verse 30 mentions that the inner strength thus gained is offered to kindle the fire of various activities. One is fettered by one's perceptions, feelings, actions, thoughts and ideas. But when all the life activities are performed as sacrifice, *i.e.*, when every action is viewed objectively, being an offering to the Supreme Deity, they tend to purify the sins or *vasanas* of the person.

These various practices set up certain tendencies and bring about certain purification of mind, heart and astral body. All these bring about longer stay in *Devachan*. It is only through spiritual knowledge or *Jnana-yajna* that a person is able to burn to ashes all actions. That is because, it is ignorance which causes desires, and desires cause bondage and attachment. When there is knowledge, one is able to perform actions without attachment to results and by renouncing *kartabhav* or the feeling of doership. That person is able to realize that the personal man is not the actor, as the power to do anything at all comes from the Higher nature.

*Panchagni Vidya* means meditation on the five fires. This *vidya* or knowledge appears in the Fifth Chapter of the *Chhandogya* Upanishad, wherein the whole universal activity of creation is conceived as a kind of *Yajna* (sacrifice) where everything is connected. Events first take place in the highest heaven, and then their presence is felt gradually in greater density as they come down to gross material level. For every event that takes place in the material world a subtle activity takes place in higher worlds. The symbolic *agni* (fire) is the object of meditation and has five important aspects—the three worlds (the heaven, earth and intermediate space), woman and man. This *vidya* was taught by the royal sage, Pravahana Jaivali to Shvetaketu. The sage held that the Universe exhibits at every stage the principle of sacrifice. The most insignificant thing in the world is controlled by factors which are transcendent, and to know

them we have to reach the levels which are imperceptible and unthinkable, explains Swami Krishnananda.

Thus, Shvetaketu learns that the cosmos is made up of five great sacrificial fires in which gods make offerings. Heaven by itself is a great altar, and the gods offer faith or *Shraddha* in celestial fire (*ahvaniya*), in which the Sun is burning as the fuel, and produces Soma or Moon. Then, Moon is offered as sacrifice in the *parjanya* fire to produce Rain. The whole world is an altar in which burns *garhapatya* fire, and in which Rain is offered as sacrifice to produce Food. Man himself is the great altar, and in the human fire is offered Food to produce Seed or Semen. Finally woman herself is a great altar in which Seed being offered as an oblation, rises Man. This is the “Doctrine of the Five Fires”—the *Panchagni vidya*.

In a sense, *Panchagni vidya* talks about five fires which are the five stages through which a *jiva* (soul) passes in order to assume a fresh body after death, namely, heaven, cloud, earth, father’s body and mother’s body. Likewise *Mundaka Upanishad* also says: “From Him comes the fire that burns in the Sun; from the sky lit by the sun and moon comes rain; from rain comes food, from food the sexual seed.”

Esoterically interpreted, the above reflects a more subtle and psychological process. The Sky seems to be the far and tenuous region where the soul rests and awaits its next birth, which is the region of Soma, the own Home of Bliss. In Theosophy we may compare it with *Devachan*. When the time comes for it to take birth, the soul stirs and journeys down, and that is Rain. “Next it enters the earth atmosphere and clothes itself with the earth consciousness. Then it waits and calls for the formation of the material body, first by the contribution of the father and then by that of the mother; when these two unite and the material body is formed, the soul incarnates.”

(Concluded)

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND CONSCIOUSNESS

### III

COMPUTER scientists conceive of the human mind as nature’s computer, as, in their conception, the basic features and functions of both, the mind and the computer, are analogous. They point out that the input and output devices, and the the central processing unit (CPU), of the computer system are, respectively, analogous to the sensory and motor functions of the neuro-physiology, and ratiocinative processes of the human brain. Study of the human mind in this way has come to be called Information processing psychology.

Working on the information processing model of the human mind scientists have encountered the mystery of the human memory which they admit cannot be explained by the analogy of the computer model. The memory device in the computer consists of memory cells where programs and data are stored. The data processing takes place inside the CPU at a microscopic level inside the chips containing many thousands of transistors. All actions take place inside the processing unit using the program stored in the memory chips, and results of information processing are again stored in the same memory chips. Whole computing process takes place one at a time in one CPU, which, they say, is unlike the human brain wherein billions of neurons are working at once carrying out multiple tasks all the time. To imitate the neural network of the human brain the more closely, a method of parallel processing involving a network of many CPUs are being tried out.

Human memory is conceived of by neuroscientists as an information storing system which gathers information of the world and stores it inside the mind, at three levels: very short-term, short-term and long-term. They claim that it has been confirmed by experimental demonstration that very short-term memory of sensory impressions lasts up to a quarter of a second, and those of short-term memory up to 20 seconds. Long-term memory is said to last anywhere from half a minute to the life-time of the person. The

long-term memory is considered as the autobiographical memory, the sum of acquired knowledge, motives, habits, and so forth, of the person. Long-term memory system is classified by psychologists under two heads: memory of events, on the one hand, and all the knowledge the person has acquired from experience, on the other. Memory system of the human mind is looked upon in the sense of an independent mechanical storage structure, like warehouse or a bank, in the human brain. Another memory theory states that there are not different memory storage systems but only different levels of processing the memory material. Yet another one is the theory of constructive memory in that the material in memory is constantly being changed and reconstructed to harmonize with the changing knowledge, motives and experience of the person.

Where is the actual seat of memory in the human being? Scientists say that they have not been able to conclusively resolve this question. It is believed that the area in the human brain, called hippocampus, consisting of billions of cells, is the organ of short-term memory for recalling immediate actions, such as, vocabulary in speaking, reading or writing, etc., analogous to Random Access Memory (RAM) in computers. But it is not known how exactly it works. It is hypothesized that memory content in the hippocampus is transferred to another area in the brain for long-term storage, analogous to Hard Drive (HD) in the computer, which is a permanent memory storage device, as distinguished from RAM which is short-term storage and volatile. Human long-term memory is believed to be located somewhere in the brain cortex, but the why and the how of it is a matter of intense debate among neurologists and it still remains an open question. Scientists in general hold to the theory that brain is the chief organ of memory, besides its other numerous functions.

The scientists who held a dialogue with His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, sought the Buddhist view of the question. The Dalai Lama was emphatic in his reply : “Memory is definitely not brain; it is really different” (*Gentle Bridges, Shambala publications, 1992, p. 156*). What then is memory, where is it stored and what is the function

of the brain in recalling memory? He said:

When all this knowledge is stored, it is stored in the form of some kind of imprint. Only when the imprints are activated and result in actions does this work via the brain. Therefore, since human beings employ consciousness through the brain, because the consciousness is filtered through the human brain, then it is human mental activity, but the consciousness itself is not human. (*ibid.*, p. 157)

Students of Theosophy will readily recognize in the terse statement of His Holiness the profound truths of Theosophy, which throw brilliant light on the mystery of mind, consciousness and memory.

What is memory? “Memory is not letting go of an object that one has been aware of” (*Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali, Book 1, verse 11*). Mr. Judge explains that it means “Similarity of vibration, recognized upon being repeated and then producing a picture” (*Letter that Have Helped Me, p. 6*). It is recalling an old impression, in the form of a particular vibration, which appears as a picture in the brain-mind, and recognizing it as that which one had been aware of before.

If so, then the power to recognize the vibration as the same as before is separate from the matter which vibrates. And how is it possible for the power to inhere in the brain cells, when we know they are constantly being changed? (*ibid.*)

Thus the logic of the axiom that brain is not the organ of memory is evident. It can also be demonstrated by a number of psychophysiological phenomena. One of them is again explained by Mr. Judge: The brain of a deceased person is gone. But the *Kama Rupa* which he leaves behind lingers on in the Astral World for a more or less time, and which when evoked in séance, gives out through the presiding medium all the incidents of the life of man when alive. This is one among the numerous other proofs that the brain is not the seat of memory. Where then is the seat of Memory?

The solution to the mystery is to be sought in the dual nature of Mind. What we call mind and intellect in men is a pale shadow of its parent immortal entity, “Divine Mind” (Nous). They are distinguished as *Kama-Manas*, the rational, but earthly or physical intellect of man, which is bound up almost indistinguishably with the brain substance and moved by the principle of passions and desires, on the one hand, and the Higher *Manas* (Mind or Ego), which is a part of the essence of the Universal Mind, immortal, independent of body and brain, on the other. The latter is the Real Man, the immortal reincarnating Ego that over-shadows the mortal man in every life.

Therefore, there are two sources of memory in these two principles. Memory of personal life of the mortal man has its seat in the earthly personality alone. Memory of the Reincarnating Ego, on the other hand, consists of the sum of the noblest and the most spiritual of the thoughts, aspirations, actions and experiences it has gathered from its numerous incarnations, its earthly personalities, and assimilated to *Atma-Buddhi*, the divine Spirit. Where then are the seats of the two sources of memory—of the lower psychic and of the higher Noetic or spiritual?

Theosophy teaches that memory of the lower personal mind has no seat, or any special organ of its own, in the human brain, but it has seats in every organ of the human body.

Nor has it [the mind] any direct dealings on this physical plane with either our brain or our heart—for these two are the organs of a power higher than *personality*—but only with our passional organs, such as the liver, the stomach, the spleen, etc. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, p. 74)

Every cell, as also every organ, in the human body is likewise a dual faced entity, and has two different seats of memory—lower molecular which preserves the memory imprints of the purely personal physical life of man, on the one hand, and the Noetic or Atomic, corresponding to spiritual Consciousness of Higher Manas, on the other. Each cell and organ has its own consciousness, its

own brain and mind, endowed with a degree of discriminating intelligence and free-will on its own plane.

It is only when man has conquered his animal nature and subjugated the animal to the divine will of higher Manasic or spiritual consciousness that the Noetic or spiritual elements of the organs of his body thrill in response to the spiritual ideations of his Higher Mind, which are then filtered through the brain and reach the lower mind-consciousness and illuminate it with divine inspiration. In ordinary cases, only the lower psychic or *Kamic* principle of the molecules and cells of his bodily organs correlate and respond to sensuous and selfish thoughts and activities of the lower personal mind-entity—the animal soul.

It is the function of the physical, lower mind to act on the physical organs and their cells; but, it is the higher mind *alone* which can influence the atoms interacting in those cells, which interaction is alone capable of exciting the brain, *via the spinal “centre” cord*, to a mental representation of spiritual ideas far beyond any objects on this material plane. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, p. 74)

Theosophy teaches that the heart is the organ of spiritual consciousness, the seat of the Divine Mind, and brain is the direct recipient of the impressions of the heart. Brain is the servant of the heart. Brain merely transmits or reflects the impressions stored in the cells and organs of the body, when they are activated.

Memory of events and experiences of the lower personal self have first to be awakened in the respective organs and their cells in the body by association of ideas and mutual interaction between mind-entity and organs. For example, a hungry stomach evokes the vision of a past banquet, memory of which is retained in that organ, and then only it is reflected and repeated in the field of the lower mind-entity *via* the brain. So is the case with all the organs of the body.

Personal memory is a fiction of the physiologist. There are cells in our brain that receive and convey sensations

and impressions, but this once done, their mission is accomplished. These cells of the supposed “organ of memory” [the brain] are *receivers* and *conveyers* of all the pictures and impressions of the past, not their *retainers*. (*Lucifer*, October 1891)

Loss of memory or forgetfulness does not mean that the memory imprints have weakened or vanished, but only that our memory cells of the physical organs are enfeebled or destroyed. Not a single thought, a feeling or an act of creatures is ever lost but makes an indelible impression in the waves of the all-pervading Astral Light—the imperishable Book of Life.

And these mental pictures, images and sounds, pass from these waves *via* the *consciousness of the personal Ego* or Mind (the lower *Manas*) whose grosser essence is astral, into the “*cerebral reflectors*,” so to say, our brain, whence they are delivered by the psychic to the *sensuous* consciousness. This at every moment of the day, and even during sleep. (*Lucifer*, 1891)

Thus brain is not only the reflector of purely physical memory imprints in bodily organs but also the channel between the material plane and the psycho-spiritual plane of Higher Manasic or spiritual consciousness through which abstract and metaphysical ideas filter into the lower human consciousness.

(*Concluded*)

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MEMORY—the despair of the materialist, the enigma of the psychologist, the sphinx of science—is to the student of old philosophies merely a name to express that power which man unconsciously exerts, and shares with many of the inferior animals—to look with inner sight into the astral light, and there behold the images of past sensations and incidents.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

## 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:** To the earnest spiritual aspirant the ordinary events and duties of life become bothersome and fatiguing. Why? How could such feeling be overcome?

**Answer:** There are various reasons why the earnest spiritual aspirant begins to regard worldly duties and events as bothersome and harassing. It may be because genuine seeker begins to feel that fulfilling of worldly duties leads to compromise of spiritual practices, spiritual work and duties. We can see that some of the spiritual exercises such as repetition of sacred name or performance of some rituals are only preparatory and only stepping stones to a higher form of spiritual life. If there is sincerity and devotion, it is found that circumstances arrange themselves in such a way as to facilitate the performance of the spiritual practice. Often, distractions to such practices come as tests and challenges, and if met without irritation or grumbling, lead to greater progress than the practices themselves.

Mr. Crosbie observes that the ordinary events of life and duties become harassing and fatiguing to the earnest student-aspirant by the very nature of the change of attitude and plane of action, and because of the changes going in the body itself (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 140). The change of attitude may be that we now consider our duty to our Higher Self more important and worthwhile than our mundane duties. Since we give more importance to the duty to our Higher Self, which is to control and conquer the lower self, we tend to live more on the mental plane or thought plane. What the sincere aspirant needs is re-adjustment, and that is usually troublesome and slow. Shri B. P. Wadia explains that we can resolve

the conflict between mundane and spiritual duties if we apply to our myriad duties, the Law of Necessity. That which is necessary to be done is alone to be regarded as duty. No doubt, such criterion may, at times, estrange us from friends and family, “but if we live truly according to Esoteric Principles the bonds and bondage of Karma fall away.” It may also happen that we may begin to pass off duties prompted by mere inclinations and desires as necessities.

Moreover, very often student-aspirant is called upon to perform *Naimitika Karma* or occasional duties, such as, baptism, marriage or death ceremony. He may find that customs and conventions involved in the performance of such duties take their toll of him, and then he is compelled to seek guidance from the doctrines of Esoteric Philosophy. A choice is required to be made between duty and inclination, and that in turn makes it necessary to develop discrimination. As one advances, the performance of duties should be under the guidance of well-developed intuition, rather than from the plane of desire. We are generally guided and swayed by desires and not by intuition. When the daily chores and events seem bothersome, the earnest seeker has to overcome the feeling of boredom by reminding himself that the daily duties teach us patience and steadfastness, skill in action and concentration of mind. Our duties or actions must be such that they give warmth and comfort to others, but at the same time consume and destroy the personal ties and possessions of our own lower nature. As we develop discrimination, we are able to determine which duty is to be given preference, explains Shri B. P. Wadia.

The feeling of irksomeness towards mundane life and events may also be because of the changes in the body, which might refer to changes in both the astral and physical bodies. As the student dwells on higher themes, there is purification of thoughts and desires, which in turn brings about purification of *prana*, astral and physical bodies. In the article, “The ‘Elixir of Life’” we are told that as the various bodies of the Adept begin to etherealize, there grows in him, *pari passu* with it, so to speak, “contempt” for the things of

our ordinary mundane existence. The same article points out that intake of alcohol and meat causes an inrush of life energy and that in turn causes stress which can be sustained by very dull, gross and dense elements which are drawn from the atmosphere, which make the body gross. On the other hand, when these are eliminated and attention is paid to quality and quantity of food eaten, combined with refinement of thoughts and feelings engendered, the “lives” or particles drawn to both the astral and physical bodies are refined and both these are etherealized. It is no longer a robust body but a sensitive and ethereal body, which is not suited for a lot of hard, mechanical work. It appears that when psychic and physical bodies become sensitive and ethereal, the earnest aspirant is likely to seek more refined form of mental, psychic and physical activities.

**Question:** “Kill in thyself all memory of past experiences,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. Why? Mr. Crosbie suggests that the way out is reliance on the Self and inculcating the feeling “That Thou Art.” How can such attitude help us when some bitter memories of the past experiences arise and fill our mind?

**Answer:** When we are asked to kill out the memory of past experiences, the suggestion is to forget the emotional experiences attached to the past events that tend to take control of our mind, and colour the present and the future. Once we have extracted the lesson from an event, we must let it pass without brooding over it. Our capacity to do good in the present is adversely affected when we dwell over the past, which drags us down from our present level of consciousness. H.P.B. writes: “The past is a torrent madly rushing by, that we face incessantly, without one second of interval...It depends on us to make every such event non-existent to ourselves by obliterating it from our memory; or else to create of our past sorrows Promethean Vultures.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 28*, p. 4)

When we recall the past and live in those memories we rejuvenate them, *i.e.*, provide fresh energy to those thoughts. Thoughts are energy and so every time we think we lend energy. Mr. Crosbie suggests that in case of student-aspirants who dwell on high and

noble ideas, this power of thought increases. H.P.B. points out that people who think upon even trifling things from higher plane of thought, their thoughts have intensity, more than the thoughts of ordinary man. Due to this intensity their thoughts acquire creative power.

Instead of dwelling on the past experiences, it is suggested that we should dwell on the Higher Self, day in and day out, and try to realize, “I am THAT.” Mr. Judge advises, “Every day and as often as you can, and on going to sleep and as you wake—think, think, think, on the truth that you are not body, brain or astral man, but that you are THAT, and ‘THAT’ is the Supreme Soul.” Then, naturally our desire and will turn in that direction. It is not said that by dwelling on the Higher Self, the bitter or painful memories will not arise. Evil and personal desires can enter the mind of an angel or saint but as they take the position of a spectator or witness, these thoughts and desires leave no stain. Desires enter the heart of a sage like rivers entering unswelling, passive ocean, says the *Gita. Light on the Path* points out that a person is able to maintain his balance while he is standing or walking because the perpendicular from the centre of gravity of his body falls within the base of support—between his feet. When we bend forward or backward too much, the perpendicular from the centre of gravity no longer falls within the base of support. Our psychological base of support is our higher nature, which gives us a true sense of “I am I.” When there is a sudden surge of emotion, such that it is all centred in one feeling, then our awareness of “I am I” goes awry and falls, so to speak, outside the base of support, as it happens in too much grief or sudden happiness. When in mind and heart we have begun to identify with our Higher Self, we are able to dissociate from all that concerns the personal self. When waves of bitter emotions enter the mind we can dissociate the “I” from it and take the position of an observer. We may not allow the “I” to get identified with the emotional layer of bitterness, but think that “I am THAT.”

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Is it good to be an imposter? Research has shown that the way you act influences the thoughts you think. If you sit so as to imitate the posture of a depressed person, you will eventually start to feel depressed. On the other hand, when you are feeling down, if you smile and laugh and stand upright, you may begin to feel much better. It appears that you should start to “fake it till you make it.” You can pretend to be the kind of person you wish to be. It is believed that by consistently acting as a highly enthusiastic person or truly confident person, you will eventually cultivate these attributes.

“Act like that which you most wish to become.” The power of this technique was demonstrated by a study at Stanford University in which a group of emotionally secure college students were selected by a team of psychologists, and were randomly separated into two groups. In a simulated prison setting, one group was instructed to act like prison guards, and the other group to act like inmates. The psychologists were forced to end the experiment after only six days, as the behaviour of the group members was deeply affected by this experiment. The “inmates” had become severely depressed, hysterical and suffered from crying bouts, while the “guards” behaved cruelly and uncaringly. “As this study confirms, the ‘acting as if’ technique is a highly effective way to modify your behaviour and transform yourself into the person you plan to be,” writes Robin Sharma, the author of *Who Will Cry When You Die?*

One of the applications of this technique could be doing all those things which is conducive to bringing family members closer together. He mentions the wonderful family tradition followed by his mother of having a family meal every day. All the family members were duty bound to come home for dinner where they could all reconnect and share their experiences of the day. His father would ask each member of the family to share one new thing he had learned. The tradition of daily family meals tends to bring family members closer. “The important thing is that you find some time every day to ‘break bread’ with those you love most and consistently work at



building richer, more meaningful family life,” writes Sharma. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India, September 13, 2015*)

“As you think, so you become,” is the accepted fact. All reform is from within without. It is the inner which must guide the outer else, one becomes a “false pietist of bewildered soul.” At times, we give up the desire outwardly but within there is longing for sweets, cakes, alcohol, movies, etc., and as a result, we may indulge in mental gratification by fantasizing. Or, we may become hypocrites, appearing to be courteous and kind on the outside while carrying dislike and hatred inside.

However, it is also said that if we want to be good then we must act as goodness requires us to act. In other words, do not wait for arising of the emotions and inward response, which will gradually add, provided we are vigilant all the time of not slipping into hypocrisy. Thus, for instance, we may not feel kindly and affectionate towards another but by acting so, we can gradually develop the feeling. We may try to be like the “Happy Hypocrite,” who was mean and cruel, but wore the mask which portrayed the feelings of kindness and benevolence. He continued to act kindly, but he was all the time aware that he was being a hypocrite and needed to genuinely change, and discovered in the end that he had actually become a kind person, as portrayed by the mask.

Our occupation plays an important role in influencing our mind in certain direction. If you do something for seven or eight hours a day, five days a week, fifty two weeks a year, and if you do this for twenty, thirty, or forty years, it is not surprising that it leaves a mark on you. In the olden days people could recognize the followers of certain trades by physical effects. The dyer always had his hands deeply stained with dye, while a tailor would have a hump back. But there is an even greater effect on mind, writes Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher. Certain professions make one predisposed to viewing everything rationally and logically, while others make one inclined to view things emotionally.

All of us are equal but some of us are more equal than others, is the credo of those who suffer from an “entitlement complex.” Many of us would have experienced male of the family being given preferential treatment, so that growing up in the patriarchal age gives one vivid exposure to the entitlement complex. Psychologically, the entitlement complex is an unrealistic, unmerited or inappropriate expectation of favourable living conditions and/or favourable treatment at the hands of others. Since most of our desires are self-centred, fulfilling of these desires gives rise to a sense of entitlement. Hitesh Vashisht, soul coach and HR consultant, observes that almost all children pass through a stage in their early development when they feel that everything is “theirs,” and that he or she comes first in the priority list. This can easily develop into entitlement complex in the adult life, unless parents make them see that while he or she is important, others are equally important. Often, parents themselves give boost to entitlement complex in their children by fulfilling every whim and fancy.

Another reason behind developing entitlement complex is by “excessive giving” in some department and expecting a lot more in return. A girl who looked after and brought up her siblings on death of their parents developed a sense of entitlement on their lives. For the sacrifices she had made for them, she felt that they should consult her, and that their lives should revolve around her. Often, one imagines that one is entitled to love, affection and attention of friends and relatives, and the weight of expectations crushes the sublime tenderness of relationships. People with an entitlement complex think only about receiving and give only a little. Such attitude disturbs the balance and sinks the “ship” of a relationship.

The easiest way to drop an entitlement is by taking up the position of an observer, and impartially evaluating the situation. These needs are just our mind’s illusions adding drama to our lives. “If you want to go all the way, give up the sense that you have any rights in life. Have no rights at all for anything. Then everything is a gift. Experience what remains. A great space will open inside your heart.

Huge humility, acceptance, love, wisdom and freedom as you experience integration with the cosmic being,” says Advaita sage, Mooji. Ultimately, life itself is enough to whittle out this sense of entitlement, as life gives no guarantees, and over a period of time, when we experience bout after bout of disappointed expectations, the truth dawns, writes Punya Srivastava. (*Life Positive*, September 2015)

We are all more aware of our rights than our responsibilities. *Light on the Path* points out that “the ordinary man expects, not to take equal fortunes with the rest of the world, but in some points, about which he cares, to fare better than the others.” The whole concept of personal rights, privileges and preferential treatment arises out of the sense of separateness. The very thought of individual rights is the hiss of the snake of lower self, which regards itself different from others. “When a man is able to regard his own life as part of the whole,” wherein like a grain of sand on the seashore, he is washed hither and thither, sometimes getting what he desires and sometimes being denied every wish, then he learns not to struggle, “to obtain anything for himself.”

To become more aware of our responsibilities and duties towards others and not of our entitlements, there must be constant watchfulness. The emphasis on entitlements is a direct assertion of personality. Though we may willfully control the assertion of personality in the world outside, often, we tend to give full play to its disposition in home life. We consider it our entitlement to burden our friends and loved ones with our problems, anxieties, fears—real or imagined, as also by expectation of sympathy. We should endeavour to be as self-effacing as we can, ready to give without expectation of return. Mr. Crosbie writes: “Here are some good maxims to apply: ‘Never ask another to do for you what you can do for yourself;’ ‘Know where your things are and get them for yourself when you need them;’ ‘Do for others all you can in a nice way, but don’t expect others to do for you;’ ‘You are valuable only when you are helpful, not when you require help.’”

Why has God endowed man with greater power for evil than for good? The power that humans wield is ubiquitous as it spares none in its attack. Man rages against man, against his personal and professional environment and above all, against Nature. Unlike God, who has the power to create and the power to destroy, man seems intent on only exhibiting his power to destroy. The question naturally arises: Is God powerless to frighten man into submission to His warning about evil or is He merely a silent spectator of the ruthless power unleashed by man? Why has God given man the power to reason and discriminate and then withheld it by giving him greater choice (or a choiceless choice) to follow evil and suffer consequences thereof? The believers in the doctrine of Karma argue that good and evildoers are rewarded and punished, respectively, for their Karma in the subsequent lives. The escalation of evil in the world today makes one wonder if Karma theory has any validity.

In the various mythological stories we see that evil is allowed to work for a long time, because it is known that good ultimately triumphs over evil. But this delayed entry of the Lord in the form of an *Avatara* to destroy evil reminds us of the truism: “Justice delayed is justice denied.” The power given to man to discriminate is a choiceless choice, as man makes evil his preferred choice. It seems man has not fulfilled his responsibility to sustain the creation. “Having experimented with evil and the disaster it has unleashed... why not experiment with good and see if the tide of violence can be reversed? Realizing that “I am Brahman” in my essential nature, instead of waiting for God to arrive and save us and the planet, we can become the Lord Himself, cultivating the “Will to Good,” that can counter the forces which “Will to Evil,” and endeavour to protect the environment, and cultivate love, peace, respect and appreciation towards people of diverse origins and religions, writes Hema Raghavan. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, September 15, 2015)

In Ancient Philosophy the birth of the Kosmos is attributed to ONE becoming the many, or homogeneity becoming heterogeneity, creating the contrasts. The creation of contrasts or “pairs of

opposites” has given rise to evil, *i.e.*, free will through choice created evil. Moreover, one-third of evil is inherent in manifestation. Evil is not immanent in matter but in the illusions created by it, which includes the illusion of separateness. To be free from evil one must recognize that matter and material things are continually changing and are ephemeral. Yet, it is only when spirit (or soul) passes through envelopes of matter and learns to discern between good and evil or light and darkness that it can reach experience and knowledge.

Why does it appear that man has no free will, or that man is predisposed to choose evil? The fact is that we are conditioned, to an extent, by our previous right or wrong actions, so that our present choices are, as it were, determined or influenced by the past. Hence, H.P.B. points out that man is a free agent during his stay on earth, but “there are *external and internal conditions* which affect the determination of our will upon our actions.” In other words, the exercise of free will is conditioned or limited by the *external* circumstance, as well as, the *inner* capacities and conditions—both being the result of past Karma. Every time that the mind disconnects itself from the influence of personal desires, it becomes an organ of free will in man, and also the channel for manifesting noble qualities.

We intuitively know what is good and what is evil. What is needed is to allow only good tendencies to become part of our nature. If we happen to slip and do evil, we must make a note of it and dismiss it from mind, because by brooding over evil, we make it strong. Instead, we must displace evil thoughts by good. At the end of every day, we can sit down and take stock of day’s events to dispassionately note our good and evil actions and resolve to become more vigilant so as to respond when a good thought comes to our mind and reject what we consider to be evil by turning our attention at once to something worthwhile, something ennobling or good. It is a conscious and deliberate exercise by which we train and tame our mind as we would an animal. As Mr. Crosbie suggests, we must not want to *be* good but *do* good, then we *are* good.