

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

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 4, No. 5

September 17, 2012

SEEKING UNIVERSAL ETHICS

THERE IS a close link between Theosophical Ethics and Metaphysics. It is this link which distinguishes Theosophical Ethics from the Ethics of other religions. However, Theosophy gives no *new* ethics, but only expounds and makes clear old ethics. As stated by Madam Blavatsky, Ethics of Theosophy are more important than any divulgement of psychic laws and facts, because the ethics sink into and take hold of the real man—the reincarnating Ego. It is something which the real man carries from life after life with him. Our present life is only a brief chapter in the whole story. It is necessary to have larger perspective of life, namely, that man is a Spiritual being, a pilgrim going from incarnation to incarnation, governed by the laws. We have to make provision therefore for the journey. We have to make this provision by conscious choices and conscious actions, for the after-death states. Ethics play pivotal role in making right choices.

Ethics are rooted in nature of man, in natural and universal laws.

Ethics are not commandments, imposed on us from the outside. They are aspects of Natural and Universal laws. All genuine moral injunctions may be considered as ethics, and there is nothing like Hindu ethics and Christian ethics. Ethics are the science of morals, and morals are application of ethics. The universal ethics or moral law is not subject to change. As against this, there are social morals that are necessary for the functioning and survival of specific kind

of society. For instance, courage and initiative become imperative virtues for warrior societies.

Though morals are judgement of values, it is not subjective judgement based on likes and dislikes. If morals were *subjective*, it would mean that truthfulness, honesty, etc. do not exist in their own right. We may believe them and practise them when it is convenient for us. However, moral values or universal ethics are *objective*, irrespective of time and place, just as 3 plus 2 is always 5 for all the people and at all times.

Professor C. S. Lewis, a Christian author, argues that no single religion can have exclusive claim to ethics. “Can we ever say that Christian ethics entered the world as novelty or a set of new commands? Then the questions naturally arises, “what was there before Christian ethics? Was there an ethical vacuum?” Those who feel that Christianity has given anything new are ignorant of Jewish and Pagan religions.

The ultimate ethical injunctions have always been premises, never conclusions. Kant said that the imperative is categorical. Unless the ethical is assumed from the outset, no argument will bring you to it. In other words, values are ultimate and desired for their own sake. We might say Quinine is good for fever, because it reduces fever. But why reduce fever? Because fever is a disease. But why not be diseased? Health is better than disease. Why is health better? At this point we may refuse to answer and say that “we just see” that health is better. Similarly, although we can give reasons for practice of ethics, they are more a question of intuition and of long experience. Hence, Mr. Judge says that the rules for higher conduct “are not made by some brain or mind, but flow from the laws of nature, of mind, and of soul. Hence, they are impossible of nullification. One may break them and seem to escape for a whole life or for more than a life; but the very breaking of them sets in motion at once other causes which begin to make effects, and most unerringly those effects at last react on the violator.” Laws of Karma and Re-birth provide sure and logical basis for the practice of ethics.

Ethics provide guiding principles for choosing between good and bad, right and wrong. The visible good and evil are relative because outward action has its own context. The law of Karma has two aspects: (1) Action and Reaction and (2) Ethical causation. The latter aspect takes into account not just the outward action, but also the motive and the inner state of the person. Though the outward action may be the same, the state of the inner man in two cases may be different. A Master of Wisdom says, “He who does the best he can and knows how, does enough for us.” When the action is performed with inner sincerity and integrity, even if performed with limited knowledge, to begin with, the person acquires more knowledge in the course of time. The question is do we put into practice at least what is possible and what we know to be good?

The incarnated mind must be made receptive to what comes from higher nature, and hence the importance of motive. We may do good for prestige or praise, which means we are still self-regarding. Our consciousness is not purified in spite of the outward good action. There must be commitment to the principle, independent of reward. Reward and punishment are very poor basis for ethics. The important thing is not where we are at the moment, but in which direction are we heading. Have we learnt to be a little more charitable, a little less irritable than we were a month ago?

Erich Fromm, a psycho-analyst, speaks of *authoritarian ethics*, in which an outside authority decides what is good, and lays down laws of conduct. Authoritarian ethics are not based on reason or knowledge, but on the awe of authority. Before a child learns to reason, his value judgement depends upon approval or disapproval from adults. A disapproving glance from the mother teaches a child that the thing is bad, and must be avoided. Unfortunately, even as we grow up we continue to base our value judgement on the approval or disapproval of the society or the majority. The need for approval from one’s fellow men seems to be almost exclusive motivation for ethical judgement. As against this *Light on the Path* says that a spiritual seeker must arouse his intuition, and that can be

aroused only by a person with indomitable will. He has to play the lord over men, over facts, over all things *save his own divinity*. We can see that in choosing right and wrong, we cannot be guided by our emotions, as they are instinctive and arise from the personality. We cannot go by so-called facts, which are found to constantly change. We have to play the lord over men, because our so-called well-wishers, our family members, our friends, our relatives, though well-meaning, sometimes tend to take us away from that which is intrinsically good. Instead we have to place our faith in our higher nature and turn to it for guidance. We begin by learning to listen to that “still small voice.” We adjust our mental attitude in order to be able to listen to it. It is just like receiving a long distance call. To hear things clearly we attune our ears carefully and ask people in the room to maintain perfect silence. So it is with the inner hearing.

If we turn to ethics as taught by various religions in the West, we come across ethics as given by the Hebrews, and the Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, and by Christianity. Christianity taught that for civilized life there are four cardinal virtues—Prudence, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude, and three theological virtues—Faith, Hope and Charity. The primary significance of justice is that it counteracts egoism and selfishness, the attitude of having everything for oneself irrespective of others. Justice demands equal treatment for all. Indirectly, it includes all those ethical injunctions such as, “Thou shalt not steal, commit murder, bear false witness and not covet what is not thine.” At the end of his book, *The Abolition of Man*, Professor Lewis gives a list of ethical virtues quoting injunctions from various religions in support of the practice of those virtues. Honesty forms part of the law of justice. Babylonian injunction speaks of dishonesty thus: “Has he drawn false boundaries?” and, “To wrong, to rob, to cause to be robbed.” There is the Greek injunction: “Choose loss rather than shameful gains.” Even Australian Aborigines seem to encourage honesty when they say, “If the native made a ‘find’ of any kind (*e.g.* a honey tree) and marked it, it was thereafter safe for him, as far as his own tribesmen

were concerned, no matter how long he left it.”

Prudence relates, according to Plato, to the highest part of the soul because he relates it to wisdom. It is taking trouble to think as to what one is doing and what are going to be its consequences. It means cultivating an evaluating attitude towards oneself and the circumstances of life. At its highest level it is wisdom and discrimination. Likewise, the *Gita* advises cultivation of *viveka* or spiritual discrimination. *The Voice of the Silence*, the Mahayana Buddhist text, asks the aspirant to discriminate, to learn to discern the real from the false, the ever-fleeting from the everlasting, even before he takes his first step on the spiritual path.

Temperance means not giving one’s self to excesses and cultivating a sense of proportion. It does not mean suppressing natural emotions and desires but transforming everything natural into higher and better. Likewise, there is the “golden mean” of Pythagoras. The *Gita* says that “the meditation which destroyeth pain is produced by him who is moderate in eating and in recreation, of moderate exertion in his actions, and regulated in sleeping and waking.” The “Middle Way” of the Buddha implies balance, which comes about when we are above the pairs of opposites. Lord Buddha asks us to maintain this balance in his teachings on the Noble Eightfold Path. For instance, “Right Action,” seems to suggest avoiding of the extremes—of being over-active or being completely inactive.

The second object of the United Lodge of Theosophists is to undertake a comparative study of world religions and philosophies and select there from the Universal Ethics. It is the aim of Theosophy to reconcile various religious sects and nations under a common system of ethics by showing that all religions are based on one and the same truth. If we are looking for truth, we must look for points of similarity among different religions. Let us not look for these similarities in the realm of ceremonies and rituals, but in the realm of ethics. A true religion is bound to give Universal Ethics.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE LESSON OF THE KARMIC LOOM

IN A FINE house, in a fair city far away, a young man sat weaving from sunrise to sunset. This might seem a strange preoccupation for one who, to all appearance, was wealthy and must have had abundant resources and interests at his disposal, but it was a peculiarity in his ancient family, handed down from father to son. Each in turn felt this compulsion to weaving, and each in turn had the same ambition—to produce a more beautiful and perfect design than his predecessor.

The young man—let us call him Karta, which means “the doer”—had no very clear idea as yet of the design he wanted to create, but he believed that it would come to him. “And when it does,” he thought, “and when I have completed it, I know it will be the crowning achievement of my family. Granted, I owe much to those who went before me, for they have given me certain ideas. But the ultimate pattern, when once I evolve it, will be all my own.”

Now, Karta had two servants on whom he depended for assistance, one fair and one dark, and lucky it was that they differed so, for Karta had never troubled to give a name to either. The head of the house had always had two such servants. That, also, was a family tradition. And so far as Karta was aware, they had never been addressed otherwise than as “you.” So he kept up the custom by saying to the one “*You* will do this,” and “*You*,” to the other one, “will do that.”

What they had to do was to bring to him materials and ideas for weaving, the fair one saying, “See, my lord, I have found something that you always like greatly,” and the dark one, “See, my lord, nothing is here that you dislike,” and Karta would take what they offered and try to incorporate it in his pattern, but strange to say, the result was never good.

“It looks a mere jumble,” Karta would sigh. “Somehow, the pattern never seems to appear.” And this was the more peculiar since

all that the servants brought him was in accordance with his own likes and dislikes. But the result was certainly chaotic. Karta began to lose heart and to talk of giving up his weaving altogether. “I will destroy the web,” he said sometimes, “though if I do, it will mean that I have wasted all these years.”

He was sitting one day with idle hands, in deep despondency, when a venerable man who had known him from his birth and who, accordingly, took much interest in him, was ushered into the workroom. To him Karta unburdened himself, reiterating his intention of abandoning his task, “since, as you see,” he concluded bitterly, “a lifetime’s weaving has produced no pattern.”

“A short lifetime,” the old man said gently. “Come, Karta, my friend, have patience. Allow me to advise you, for I think I can help you. All may yet go well.”

“How so?” asked Karta gloomily.

“By no longer relying upon your two servants. It is foolish to let the choice of materials for your life-work rest with Attachment and Aversion.”

“Are those their names?” said Karta dully. “I never thought them worth knowing. Which is which? Not that it matters. I shall need neither of them if I stop weaving.”

“But you cannot stop,” the old man said sternly. “It is your Karma, the Karma of your race. What you *can* stop—and must—is your weak dependence upon Attachment and Aversion. It is the former who brings you what supposedly you like, the latter who does not bring much good serviceable and even necessary material through assuming that it would not be pleasing to you. They act haphazardly, with no concerted purpose. Is it to be wondered at that your work shows no emerging pattern?”

“I suppose not,” said Karta dolefully, “now that you put it so. I never thought of this before. But honoured sir, I cannot weave without assistance. Who would gather my materials if I dismissed Attachment and Aversion?”

“Foolish boy, you have forgotten Will, that good servant whom

you keep idle? He lives neglected, I understand, in a mean dwelling, sad at heart because of your indifference. His father served yours, and he and you are exactly of an age. Recall him and make use of him. He will choose the materials you need with forethought and wisdom.”

“To be sure,” said Karta, hanging his head guiltily, “I had forgotten about Will. Those others were always in the forefront, so pushing—and withal so inefficient,” and thanked his sagacious old friend for his advice. He dismissed Attachment and Aversion. Thereafter, Will accomplished all his business for him and the materials Will brought were carefully chosen and harmonious, so that Karta’s weaving soon began to reveal a pattern, and a very lovely one at that, for it showed the wondrous cycle of development whereby a seed becomes a fruit, and a fruit in turn brings forth a seed again, so that life is evermore renewed from the great Source of Being. It took Karta all his days to do it. But such was his Karma and he fulfilled it faithfully.

“Weaving” is a graphic symbol which depicts the way man weaves or creates his own Destiny. Every man weaves the web of his destiny, from birth to death, thread by thread, around himself, as a spider makes his cobweb. When the last strand is woven, man finds himself seemingly enwrapped in the network of his own doing, completely under the empire of his *self-made* destiny, writes H.P.B.

The *Moirai* are the Greek goddesses of fate, and they are known as Spinners, *Klothes*, although only the eldest of them is called Klotho. The second is called Lachesis, “the Apportioner”; and the third Atropos, “the Inevitable.” The three *Moirai* symbolize three groups of Karmic life-forces. “Atropos” signifies the higher-mind forces conjoined with Buddhi, which build up the Causal Body, *Karanopadhi* or Spiritual Soul, and together they form individuality. “Klotho” represents the “web” of psychic forces which build up the psychic body and provide a connecting link between the physical

man and the spiritual man. “Lachesis” signifies the forces of heredity and growth on the physical plane.

Man is a self-moving unit with the power to think and choose. He may think ten times before he makes his choice, but, once it is made, that choice becomes his destiny, by which he is bound down. Today’s destiny is made by each individual through his choices of the past, as today’s choices will weave his future destiny. In weaving our destiny it is necessary to remember at every step and at every turn to work in harmony with the Law. The Law works not only on the plane of action but also on the plane of thought and feeling, which is hidden. Destiny is woven in the minds of men, thread by thread. We rarely exercise our free will; most of the time we are driven by our likes and dislikes—Attachment and Aversion. So long as we seek to cling to the pleasant and avoid the unpleasant, we will remain caught up in the web of Karma. The more we dislike dominating, stingy, dishonest people, the more we encounter such people, till we have learnt to deal with them. Attachment and Aversion must be replaced by Acceptance.

Light on the Path mentions that ordinary human beings go through life waveringly, uncertain as to the goal they aim at. They are good and upright so long as they are not inconvenienced, but are ready to drop their discipline the moment they are put to the pinch. In their case Karma operates in a confused manner. It is only when a person is *determined* to live the spiritual life, that he is compelled to choose between right and wrong; good and evil. “No longer is he capable of the indecision of ignorance.” In such a case, where each step is taken willfully, knowingly and definitely, great Karmic results are produced. A “pattern” seems to emerge. Each individual, as he attempts to transform his thinking and acting, will build a better, nobler character and weave his destiny according to the archetypal pattern. The great power of the will is to be trained and directed along spiritual lines so that the threads of personal bondage may be loosened and divine destiny fulfilled.

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA ONE ESTABLISHED IN THE LAW—I

THE CHAPTER is called *Dhammatthavaggo* or “One Established in the Law.” “Dhammattho” means the one who is righteous, who is established in the Law. *Dhamma* or *Dharma* is the law—the law of harmony which stems from the unity of all beings in the universe. Just as everything else in the manifested world obeys its inherent *Dharma*, man needs to recognize and obey his *dharma*. The cosmic order of the universe needs to be upheld by man by righteous living, by recognizing the purpose of life, and living in accordance with the *dhamma*, which has been taught by the great beings like Buddha, down the ages.

The teachings contained in this chapter are of great importance to the disciple as well as to the general masses; because, we find a number of false prophets and false saints taking advantage of the ignorant masses. Even Jesus had to warn his disciples against them. He said: “If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For, there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (*Matthew*, XXIV: 23-24). This is because people in general go by the appearance. It does not enter their simple minds that someone can cheat others in the name of religion or be untrue to the truths they proclaim to the world. Buddha does not attack the “dead letter” followers of religion directly, but educates people by describing the characteristics of a true priest, a *pandit*, a monk, a *bhikkhu*, a *sadhu*, a *muni*, an ascetic and a saintly person, as also, the characteristics which would disqualify them from being considered as one. For the disciples there is a great lesson in this. It shows them that it is not enough to adhere to the law outwardly; there has to be willing obedience so that there is no dichotomy between what they profess and how they live their life.

1. *A man is not righteous who carries out his purpose by*

force and arbitrarily. He is wise who distinguishes both right and wrong. (256)

2. *He is wise and righteous who guides others not by force and violence but equitably. He is the guardian of the Law. (257)*

There is a difference between a good man and the wise man. A good man is not necessarily always wise. To be wise is to have the wisdom to distinguish between right and wrong, and to uphold that which is right. The wise one not only obeys the law himself but also strives to ensure that it is likewise honoured by the others. He is just and impartial. He does not use force or violence. His decisions are not arbitrary. He neither favours one nor discriminates against another. His dealings are fair, consistent and in accordance with the law. Above all, he is able to guide others. He may be called righteous, the one who is established in the law, not the one who uses force and violence to carry out his purpose without considering what is right and what is wrong. In the Second Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna tells Arjuna:

A man is said to be confirmed in spiritual knowledge when he forsaketh every desire which entereth into his heart, and of himself is happy and content in the Self through the Self. His mind is undisturbed in adversity; he is happy and contented in prosperity, and he is a stranger to anxiety, fear, and anger. Such a man is called a Muni. When in every condition he receives each event, whether favourable or unfavourable, with an equal mind which neither likes nor dislikes, his wisdom is established, and, having met good or evil, neither rejoiceth at the one nor is cast down by the other.

3. *A man is not a learned pandit simply because he talks much. He is a real pandit who is tranquil, free from hatred, free from fear. (258)*

4. *A man is not a pillar of the Law because he talks much. He who even though he has heard little of the Law but himself*

has discernment, who always considers the Law, he is the Pillar of the Law, he is established in the Law. (259)

In earlier days in India, the term “pandit” was used for one who was well-versed in *vedic* scriptures, Hindu rituals and Hindu religion. The term was typically used for a Brahmin whose duty it was to perform ceremonies, expound scriptures and explain the significance of rituals and ceremonies and guide people in religious matters. The term is also used for a scholar, a teacher, a master in religion, music or philosophy. A pandit in religion is honoured and listened to by the Hindu householders. But oratory alone is not enough to make him a true *pandit*. Tranquillity, freedom from hatred and fear are the marks of a real *pandit* according to the Buddha. In short, his great learning is not limited to his head but has brought about transformation of his nature so that great qualities are visible for all to see. For all those who blindly follow the advice of the *pandits*, *purohits* and priests, the verse is a reminder that it is our duty to differentiate between a mere orator and a real learned *pandit*.

Fearlessness comes from real knowledge. Fear comes from ignorance. There are also instinctual fears or phobias which are sometimes the result of experiences from prior life. If a person dies in a fire accident or is drowned, it creates a very deep impression on the soul. This impression then may manifest itself in next life as fear of fire or fear of water, and so on. How to overcome one’s fear? By acquiring knowledge and facing one’s fear squarely in the face. Some people resort to past life regression therapy to find out the cause of their unnatural fears. Fear is an instinct of self-preservation. It is ingrained into the nature of every living being. However, irrational fear has to be overcome. For this, we have to bring our rational mind into action and face the irrational impulse of fear. When Socrates was talking to a child, suddenly a man came running towards them with an open knife. While Socrates stood there, the child immediately ran away from fear. The man ran past Socrates apparently chasing someone. The child came back after a while

and asked Socrates why he did not run away. And Socrates asked the child that if the man had run a knife through the child’s tunic, would that have hurt his body? And the child said “no.” Socrates then asked him that even if the man had run the knife right through the child’s body, could he have hurt that part of him which does not die and is only harmed by doing wrong? He told him that the worst that the man could have done was to pluck away its garment from the soul. The child then understood why Socrates was not afraid of the man with the open knife. A real *Pandit* possesses real knowledge which makes him fearless.

Buddha then warns us against the one who professes to be *dhammadharo*—to be the custodian of Law. *Dhamma* means law, but it also means eternal truths such as four noble truths taught by the Buddha. So, the one who upholds the Law known to him, even if it be a little, the one who lives by the great truths he has discerned in life, by his body, by his mental powers and by his actions may be called the “pillar of the Law,” and not the one who talks much. It is not enough to talk very forcefully about observing the law; one should have courage, determination and tenacity to hold on to that which is true under heaviest trials. There are those who only talk and make a great show. Therefore, one must not judge another based on what they *say*, but should observe what they *do*.

5. *A man is not an elder simply because his hair is grey. His age is ripe but he is to be known as “Old-in-vain.” (260)*

6. *He is called an elder in whom dwell truth, virtue, non-violence, restraint, and control, and who is free from impurity and is wise. (261)*

In Pali, *Theras* mean “Elders” or senior monks of the Buddhist *Sangha*. However, it is not their age which makes them elders but their remaining firmly grounded in virtue, non-violence, restraint and control which makes them elders. Triumphant through every test and trial, overcoming temptations, they purify themselves and gain insight. This is what makes them truly wise. Elders are respected

and honoured because they are supposed to have learnt much through experiences of life—not only in worldly matters but the matters of the spiritual life. The newly joined monks would benefit from the guidance of the elders in the *Sangha*. Older disciples would thus become truly “elders.”

(To be concluded)

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THE PLANET VENUS

II

THE PLANET Venus is equally mysterious as described in the mythologies. In the article “A History of the Planet,” H.P.B. mentions that in the Theogony of Hesiod Venus was divided into two divine beings, or two brothers—Eosphoros (or Phosphoros) the morning star, and Hesperos, the evening star. As a morning star he is called Venus-Lucifer or light bringer. In the early morning, Phosphoros is shown to be moving with a torch in hand, and preceding the chariots of Aurora or Dawn. Dawn seems to carry him off but he appears again in the evening as Hesperos. Lucifer is the *pale* morning star. It shines timidly at dawn to gather forces and then shines brightly to dazzle the eye at the sunset as its own brother “Hesperos.” The lower mind or incarnated mind within the sheaths of astral light is unable to exhibit the bright radiance and powers of the Higher Mind and is also said to be the “alter Ego” through which the Higher mind works. As morning and evening star, we might perhaps understand Venus to correspond to the Lower and Higher minds in man.

Venus is the symbol of divine and terrestrial light, *i.e.*, Astral light and *Akasa*. *Akasa* is the plane of ethereal matter, which is a storehouse of all the noble thoughts, feelings and actions. Astral light is the reservoir of all the lower, personal thoughts and actions of men on earth. *Akasa* in its higher aspect is Aether, and in its lower aspect it is Ether. Also, *Aether-Akasa* represents the sixth and the fifth principle of the body of Kosmos, and in man they represent his *Manas* and *Buddhi*. (*Transactions*, p. 125)

Lucifer is “the morning star,” a well known symbol in *Revelations*, and, as a planet, corresponds to the Ego. Lucifer (or the planet Venus) is the *Sukra-Usanas* of the Hindus; and *Usanas* is the *Daitya-guru*, *i.e.*, the spiritual guide and instructor of the *Danavas* and the *Daityas*. The *Daityas* are the giant demons in the Puranas, but in the esoteric interpretations, they are the symbol of the man of flesh, or physical

mankind. The *Daityas* can raise themselves, it is said, through knowledge, “austerities and devotion” to “the rank of the gods and of the ABSOLUTE,” writes H.P.B. *Sukra* is also the ruler and governor of planet Venus. *Daitya-guru Sukra* is said to have possessed *Sanjivani*, the power of raising the dead.

In the article, “A History of the Planet,” H.P.B. writes that the planet has become with the Latins, Venus, or Aphrodite-*Anadyomene*, the foam-born Goddess, the “Divine Mother,” and one with the Phoenician Astarte, or the Jewish Astaroth. Lakshmi, the passive or feminine counterpart of Vishnu, the creator and the preserver, is also called *Ada Maya*. She is the “Mother of the World,” the Venus Aphrodite of the Greeks, and also Isis and Eve. While Venus is born from the sea-foam, Lakshmi springs out from the water at the churning of the sea, writes H.P.B. In Hesiod’s Theogony we are told that *Gaia* (the earth) by herself gave birth to Uranos (the sky) so that he might surround her and cover her completely, and be a secure home for blessed gods forever. Later, she coupled with Uranos to produce the first divinities, which included twelve mighty Titans; three Cyclopes and three monsters. Uranos was appalled by his children and locked them in the bowels of the world. But in revenge *Gaia* persuaded the youngest Titan, Kronos (Saturn), to castrate his father and seize power. The blood from Uranos’ wound spawned giants and nymphs, while his severed genitals fell into the sea and turned to white foam, from which was born *Aphrodite*, the goddess of desire and sexuality.

To understand better the myth of *Gaia* and Ouranos (or Uranos), H.P.B. mentions in *The Secret Doctrine* that it is necessary to grasp the spirit of philosophy underlying the Greek Theogony. H.P.B. writes that Aphrodite was Nature personified. She is *divine* Nature in her entirety. We are told that *Gaia* represents Primordial Matter in the cosmogony of Hesiod. Ouranos is the whole expanse of Heaven, called the “Waters of Space.” H.P.B. points out that in the *Veda*, Varuna is the most ancient of the gods, and is the same as the Greek *Ouranos*, *i.e.*, a personification of celestial space and the

infinite sky, the creator and governor of heaven and earth, the King, the father and the Master of the world, of the gods and of men. The *Ouranos* of Hesiod is the *Zeus* of the Greeks. As is suggested in Homer’s *Iliad*, the Greeks believed that all things, gods included, owe their being to the Ocean and his wife Tethys. H.P.B. points out that Tethys is *Gaia* or primordial nature in the process of formation. Ocean is the immeasurable Space (Spirit in Chaos) which is the Deity. Ouranos is the Vedic Varuna, regarded as the chief *Aditya* among the seven planetary gods. She points that Ouranos though born from *Gaia* is not born from “primordial matter,” but from *prakriti*, materialized and localised.

In the magazine *Le Lotus* (December 1887), H.P.B. explains the meaning of mutilation of Ouranos by his son Kronos or Saturn. Saturn represents cyclic time. She refers to the myth of Prometheus, who stole sacred fire from the Gods and brought it to earth. This has reference to the point in evolution when humanity was mindless, *i.e.*, the mind of man was not yet lighted up or activated. The “sacred fire” brought by Prometheus is the flame of conscious intellect, the spark which animated the fifth principle, or *Manas*; it is also the generating and sexual flame. Once the mind of man was activated, *i.e.*, once endowed with the creative fire, the completely evolved mankind had no further need for the help of the Powers or creative Gods. *Men became creative Gods*, in their turn, able to give life to beings like themselves; whence the Greek allegory of Ouranos mutilated by Saturn-Kronos, who in turn finds himself mutilated by his son Jupiter; the allusion is perfectly transparent; since men had discovered, thanks to Prometheus, the *secret of the various methods of creation*, and were creating in their turn, what was the use of god-creators?

The above is made clearer in the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 765-66). H.P.B. writes that Uranos (Ouranos) reigned and ruled over the Second Race and their Continent (Hyperborea). Kronos or Saturn governed the Lemurians, or the third Race humanity. It is said that the first astronomical teacher of men was Uranos, because he is one

of the seven Dhyān Chohans [comparable to seven sons of Manu in the Hindu mythology] of that second period or Race. Uranos gave birth to the Titans of the Third Race, and it is they who (personified by Saturn-Kronos) mutilated him. It is stated that the Titans *fell into generation*, when “creation *by will* was superseded by physical procreation,” and then they needed Uranos no more. Elsewhere in the *Secret Doctrine*, we are told that in the later part of third race humanity, personified by Saturn-Kronos, there was separation of sexes into male and female, and procreation was not by *Kriyasakti* but by the union of the sexes. We are further told that mutilation of Ouranos is followed by casting of his genitals into the ocean, from which Venus-Aphrodite, goddess of love and sex, springs. Venus presides over Third Race humanity, which procreated through the union of the sexes.

In Greek mythology, Aphrodite is shown to have several lovers, besides her husband, the craftsman-god Hephaistos. Cupid or *Eros* is the son of Venus-Aphrodite. Exoterically, mythology makes of *Eros* the god of lustful, animal desire, whence the term *erotic*; esoterically, it is different. Hesiod makes of the god *Eros* the third personage of the Greek primordial Trinity composed of *Ouranos, Gaia and Eros*. *Eros* is the personified procreative Force in nature in its abstract sense, the propeller to “creation” and procreation. Hence Cupid, or Love in his primitive sense, is *Eros*, the Divine Will, or *Desire of manifesting itself through visible creation*. Thence Fohat, the prototype of *Eros*, becomes on Earth the great power “Life-electricity,” or the Spirit of “Life-giving,” writes H.P.B. *Eros* has been compared to *Kamadeva* of the Hindu Pantheon. In the note on *Kamadeva*, in the *Glossary*, we find that just as *Eros* or divine desire has been degraded into Cupid or lust, so also *Kamadeva* has been reduced to represent the power that gratified desire on the animal plane. “The earlier Vedic description of *Kama* alone gives the key-note to what he emblemizes. *Kama* is the first conscious, *all embracing desire* for universal good, love, and for all that lives and feels, needs help and kindness; the first feeling of

infinite tender compassion and mercy that arose in the Consciousness of the creative ONE FORCE, as soon as it came into life and being as a ray from the ABSOLUTE. Says the *Rig Veda*, ‘Desire first arose in IT, which was the primal germ of mind, and which Sages, searching with their intellect, have discovered in their heart to be the bond which connects Entity with non-Entity’, or *Manas* with pure *Atma-Buddhi*. There is no idea of *sexual* love in the conception. *Kama* is pre-eminently the divine desire of creating happiness and love.”

Hermes coupled with Aphrodite and their son was Hermaphrodite. In Greek mythology we are told that he was loved by Salmacis, a water nymph. He tried to avoid her, but when he dived into the spring in which she lived, she embraced him until they became fused. He prayed as he died that all who entered the spring should also acquire both male and female attributes: hence the English word “hermaphrodite.” However, there is a philosophical meaning to the union of Hermes and Aphrodite producing Hermaphrodite. Mind caught up in lower desires is called *Kama-manas*. When desire-nature is purified or, when mind is made free from the grasp of lower desires, it is able to reflect the light of *Buddhi* or Divine Soul. When there is temporary conjunction of *Manas* with *Buddhi* there are flashes of intuition. However in a spiritually perfect man, in whom the individual consciousness is turned inward, there is *permanent* conjunction of *Buddhi* with *Manas*. Hermes is the God of Wisdom just like Ganesa, and both are related to *Buddhi*. Aphrodite or Venus is related to Mind, and hence spiritually perfect man in whom there is conjunction of *Buddhi* with *Manas* is called hermaphrodite or Hermes-Aphrodite.

Lastly, “Isis, Astarte, and Venus-Aphrodite, all of whom were goddesses of the generative powers of nature, or of matter—hence representing symbolically the Ark containing the germs of all living things.” (*Isis*, II, 444)

(Concluded)

THE IDEAL OF PROGRESS

THE IDEALS of mankind change in accordance with the intellectual progress that nations, in their collectivity, attain from time to time such that the ideals and attainments of one epoch appear anomalous and become subject of critical study for the next, from its contemporary standpoint. We find an illustration of this law of cyclic change in a comparative study of the ideals of antiquity and that of the modern world. The phenomenon of shifting ideals can be discerned even in shorter historical cycles within a given epoch.

The modern idea is fundamentally different from the ancient idea of progress and a wide gulf separates the two world-views. The modern is the intellectual fruit of a reactionary popular upsurge of renescent Europe in the Eighteenth century against the centuries of oppressive ecclesiastical excesses. It was a rejection of the supernatural and the miraculous, of the theological dogma of “God’s plan for mankind’s deliverance” according to “God’s inscrutable will,” and a counter-cultural affirmation of faith in the power of the individual to shape his own destiny, without the need of any supposed providential intervention, by the exercise of the innate human reason, innovation and scientific exploration. The brilliant efflorescence of the post-Enlightenment European scientific and industrial civilization, and its cherished values and goals, soon spread all over the world to become the icon of modernity and progress, to whose resistless march the older traditional societies yielded ground.

The main theme of the modern idea of progress is economic progress through scientific innovation and industrialization, and a social and political development consistent with it. It is to create material wealth through exploration and exploitation of nature’s bounties as grist for industrial production of consumer goods and services on an ever increasing scale, and distribution of the fruits thereof by the mechanism of the free market economy. Glittering progress made in science, technology, industry, communication, higher living standards in terms of acquisition of ever more objects

of luxury and enjoyment, greater access to health, education, information, travel, universal suffrage only confirmed faith in and strengthened the resolve to maintain the high trajectory of progress at any cost. In short, ever-increasing scale of production and consumption is considered the hall-mark and the index of progress.

The pursuit of this ideology has not been without its catastrophic consequences. Devastating wars, social unrest, reactionary religious fundamentalism, ecological disasters often made irreversible, displacement and forced migrations of hundreds of millions of rural and indigenous people, their impoverishment through destruction of their traditional means of livelihood and of their access to nature’s free gifts, concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few and ever-widening gulf between the rich and the poor, psychological problems due to the stress of the rapid giddy pace of the competitive life, dehumanizing effects of mechanized and artificial life-styles, disaffection, discontent and conflicts which social inequities necessarily generate are some of the portentous symptoms of the pursuit of the idea of progress, which has for it no higher ideal than selfish pursuit of wealth, power and material luxury. Insatiable greed is its driving force. It has therefore necessarily in it the seeds of its own ignominious end.

H.P.B. in her severe indictment of modern civilization graphically describes how, bereft of a true spiritual ideal, it becomes a genius of destruction and human debasement. Merely seeking union of nations on material plane for economic gain is not only self-defeating but ruinous of humanistic culture. How prophetic has been her far-seeing words of wisdom is plainly evident in the terrible crisis in which the Western nations find themselves today. She wrote in her article, *Civilization, The Death of Art and Beauty*:

“It is this universal tendency, which by propelling humanity through its ambition and selfish greed, to an incessant chase after wealth and obtaining *at any price* of the supposed blessings of this life, causes it to aspire or rather gravitate to one level, the lowest of all—the plane of empty appearance. Materialism and indifference to all

save the selfish realization of wealth and power, and the over-feeding of national and personal vanity, have gradually led nations and men to almost entire oblivion of spiritual ideals, of the love of nature, to the correct appreciation of things. Like a hideous leprosy our Western civilization has eaten its way through all the quarters of the globe and hardened the human heart. ‘Soul-saving’ is its deceitful, lying pretext; greed for additional revenue through opium, rum, and the inoculation of European vices—the real aim.” (*She Being Dead Yet Speaketh*, pp. 29-30)

It is the lack of soul perception—“soul-blindness and spiritual drought”—says she, which “had infected almost all classes of Society, settling down as a chronic disease called Scepticism and the denial of all but matter” (*H.P.B. Series No. 6*, p. 3). It is the inner character which fashions the outer environment. The lethal effect of spiritual bankruptcy leads to destruction of all that is natural, beautiful and noble, and becomes an instrument of tyranny. Nothing could be more apt and prophetically accurate than her warning as to what this will lead to :

“Owing to the triumphant march and the invasion of civilization, Nature, as well as man and ethics, is sacrificed, and is fast becoming artificial. Climates are changing, and the face of the whole world will soon be altered. Under the murderous hand of the pioneers of civilization, the destruction of whole primeval forests is leading to the drying up of the rivers....Almost tropical countries are now becoming cold and rainy, and fertile lands threaten to be soon transformed into sandy deserts. A few years more and there will not remain within a radius of fifty miles around our large cities one single rural spot inviolate from vulgar speculation.” (*She Being Dead Yet Speaketh*, pp. 31-32)

Such indeed is the global scenario today, so clearly foreseen and forewarned by H.P.B. a hundred and thirty years ago. Global warming, melting of glaciers, contamination of earth, water and air with deadly poisonous chemicals affecting health of man and beast, climate change, desertification and their catastrophic consequences

are plainly evident, warned against by scientists, protested against by grass-root level mass movements, but governments and powerful commercial interests are unwilling to change. She goes on to show how age-old traditional artistic beauty, creativity and the picturesque have been substituted by the levelling hand of the all-destroying civilization with the grotesque, artificial mimicries, accompanied by corresponding gain in hypocrisy and loose morals. Finally, she winds up her essay, *Civilization, Death of Art and Beauty*, with a hint that it is to the forgotten and misunderstood ancestors who reared loftier civilizations, whose grandeur we cannot even dream of, that we have to look forward to for inspiration for a higher ideal and nobler goal, if this civilization is not to go out in engulfing ruin.

“People will not look forward to posterity, who never look back to their ancestors,” said Edmund Burke. It is to the ancestors that we have to look up to for ideals of life worthier than mere material advancement for reform and reconstruction. The ancient Indian ideal had ever been the attainment of sublime human perfection and enlightenment through realization of man’s oneness with the Supreme, and the bringing of individual and community life to harmoniously accord with the Moral Order of the Universe (*Dharma*)—the Law of man’s real being—in which alone lie the highest happiness and the sole means of final emancipation of all. For Pythagoras and Plato the highest ideal was attainment of perfect knowledge of the Really Existing as opposed to the mere seeing, of the Supreme Idea, of the First Principle of all things from which all things derive their existence, of all the order, harmony, beauty, excellency, goodness, which pervade the universe—the Supreme Good, “the God over all” (*Isis*, I, xii). The Institution of Mysteries of ancient Greece and Egypt, headed by great Hierophants, was the custodian of the sacred Science of human perfectibility, portion of which only was held out in public teaching in symbols and allegories as a stimulus to virtue and duty, whereas, the awful mysteries of Sacred Science in its completeness were reserved for those alone who were found fit to be initiated into it, and to them only was

revealed the hidden meaning of exoteric or public religious teachings and practices. Such was the idea of progress of antiquity. Says H.P.B., in the article, “Progress and Culture”:

Real culture is spiritual. It proceeds from within outwards, and unless a person is naturally noble-minded and strives to progress on the spiritual before he does so on the physical or outward plane, such culture and civilization will be no better than whitened sepulchres full of dead men’s bones and decay. (*H.P.B. Series No. 2*, p. 36)

Only such of the sum of the thoughts, aspirations and strivings in the life of individuals, as much as in those of a nation or a civilization, which have as their source and inspiration the ideals of the Higher Life allied to man’s Divine Self, can never perish when the physical life ends, but become assimilated to his Divine Ego as so much progress added on to the sum of its progress in Eternity towards its final transformation and perfection. If man’s life produced no such spiritual fruit nothing survives his death. Such a life, though apparently full of material glory and intellectual achievements, has been lived in vain, as they all perish with his mortal frame. So is the case with every nation and civilization, which Egos acting together build and rebuild cycle after cycle. It must produce a spiritual fruit which alone survives to enrich the world and hasten the advancement of humanity to the next higher sphere of being and onward therefrom to its final perfection. That is the purpose of civilization.

Teachers say that the present civilization is at the cross-roads. Its moment of choice has come. Spiritual aspiration of man is reasserting itself. The signs of it are evident everywhere. Enormity of social injustice and environmental destruction, and that deep disaffection with mere material advancement which leaves the wants of the soul of man starving, have stirred the voice of conscience to awaken in the masses to protest against, and question the assumptions of, the modern socio-economic philosophy and progress. Search for alternative paradigm of human progress which is inclusive, based

on compassion, equity, justice, in consonance with, and not in violation of, Nature’s cycles, is being vigorously pursued, and experimented with, by people from all walks of life in all parts of the globe. Interdependence and interconnectedness of all life on earth forming a web of which man is an integral part is increasingly being recognized, and popularly called the philosophy of “Deep Ecology.” That ancient civilizations regarded Nature as divine and lived in perfect harmony with the Natural order is recognized and appreciated.

The trend and the genre of the revolutionary change which is taking place in human psyche at the present time is clearly ethical and philosophical. But it is not without challenges in terms of opposition to it from the powerful vested interest who would have the *status quo* maintained at any cost. All this was clearly foreseen by the great Founders of the Theosophical Movement who caused once more, breaking the silence of the centuries, to give out in large installments the ancient all-embracing philosophy of Wisdom Religion, which alone can make possible establishing of a world order based on compassion and absolute justice in which each will live for all and all for each in mutual co-operation and brotherly love. It depends on a change in the mind and heart of the race through wide diffusion of theosophic ideas, especially, the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation. Says H.P.B.: “For real Theosophy is ALTRUISM, and we cannot repeat it too often. It is brotherly love, mutual help, unswerving devotion to Truth. If once men do but realize that in these alone can true happiness be found, and never in wealth, possessions, or any selfish gratification, then the dark clouds will roll away, and a new humanity will be born upon earth. Then, the GOLDEN AGE will be there, indeed.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 17*, p. ii)

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: What is the theosophical perspective on the Biblical verse: “Charity covereth a multitude of sins.”

Answer: The complete verse reads: “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity covereth a multitude of sins” (1 Peter, 4:8). At a simple level, the verse can be interpreted in more than one way, depending upon the meaning given to the word “charity.” If we take “charity” to mean mere alms-giving or material charity, the above verse would have the wrong connotation of *atonement* or *expiation* of our sins and offences by mere sharing of surplus of our wealth. But it appears that in the Bible the word “charity” is used in a much wider sense, and it generally means “love.” It could mean being charitable in thoughts, feelings, words and actions. It means being charitable towards the imperfections of others, and accepting them for what they are. Charity or love, in this sense, is of inestimable value. In a sense, such charity or love is unconditional love. What H.P.B. writes in *The Key to Theosophy* seems perfectly applicable: “For every flower of love and charity he plants in his neighbour’s garden, a loathsome weed will disappear from his own, and so this garden of the gods—Humanity—shall blossom as a rose.” A little reflection shows that this seemingly simple injunction is most difficult of application. Is it easy to love others, or even feel goodwill towards them, by overlooking their faults and weaknesses? But when we are determined to be kind and loving to another person, who, say, is greedy, or dishonest, or a liar, we are forced to make some inner adjustment and overcome in us the aversion for greed or dishonesty or lying. At a minor level, perhaps,

we are applying the principle: “Don’t hate vice; don’t love vice, but understand it.” Thus, love for another helps us to get rid of “loathsome weed” of our own vices and weaknesses, leading thereby to morally good and even sacrificial actions. Karma does not operate on the principle of one cause producing one effect; several causes precipitate at the same time. There is the law of parallelogram of forces, wherein the good and the bad cause may either partially or completely counterbalance each other’s effect, and then what we experience is the resultant. Thus, acts of love could, to some extent, mitigate the severity of karmic consequences.

Mr. Judge explains the above verse on the basis of the *doctrine of nullification of Karma*. According to the well-known law in physics, two equal forces opposing each other, lead to equilibrium. “Thus, a person may have in his Karmic account a very unpleasant cause and at the same time a cause of opposite character. If these come together for expression at the same time they may so counteract each other as that neither will be apparent and the equilibrium is the equivalent of both,” explains Mr. Judge. He further states that it is not necessary that we should feel every minute portion of Karma in the same detail as when it was produced, because several sorts of Karma may precipitate together at a point in life, and their combined effect produces a result which, while, as a whole, accurately represents all the elements in it, is still a different Karma from each single component part.

In understanding the nullification of Karma we must remember that just as pounds could not be added to rupees or, rupees to dollars, so also, in counteracting bad karma with good karma it is essential that both the kinds of karma must be compatible. Thus, it appears that the results of acts done primarily on *mental plane* cannot be mitigated or obliterated by actions done on *physical plane*. For instance, a person who spent many years of his life in mentally torturing another human being cannot hope to nullify that act by giving large sums of money to the poor. Charity done out of the surplus, without any particular concern for the poor, or still worse,

only with the intention of earning merit (*punya*), cannot bring about refinement of moral character.

Probably, it is in the above context that we should understand the statement by Mr. Judge that the above Biblical verse refers to the palliative effect of charitable deeds as opposed to deeds of wickedness. He says that this also gives us reason for the medieval knight devoting some of the years of his life to almsgiving. We are told that becoming a knight was a part of the feudal agreement. It was terribly expensive to be a knight. The war horse alone could cost the equivalent of a small airplane. Armour, shields, and weapons were also very expensive. It is said that these knights often fought more for pillaging than for army wages. When they captured a city, they were allowed to ransack it, stealing goods and valuables. Probably, alms-giving taken up later in life might compensate the acts of robbing and plundering, and not the act of killing.

Lastly, we may think about ordering of Karma. What determines that a pleasant cause must precipitate at the same time when an unpleasant cause comes into operation? Probably, the explanation of the term “Karmic Stamina” might help. What we call as karmic stamina is the effect or fruit of past unselfish good Karma that has ripened. The ripening of the past good Karma depends upon stock of unselfish good thoughts in the present life. Thus, a spiritually advanced person might have an immense quantity of past unselfish good Karma stored up. Yet, if during the crisis there is not sufficient number of present unselfish good thoughts to ripen the past good karma, then he may find himself destitute of necessary stamina. “Few are they who have already laid up a good quantity of unselfish good Karma; and fewer still are they who have the requisite degree of unselfish and spiritual nature during the period of trial.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 34*, p. 13)

Question: Sometimes we find that for some people the circumstances of life prove to be so overpowering that they go insane. Why? What happens to the bad karma committed by them in the state of insanity? What happens to their unexpended unfavourable Karma?

Answer: Insanity is the most mysterious of all mental ailments—the nature, cause and cure of which are almost beyond modern psychology. When there is sudden and intense joy or pain, we begin to identify ourselves with that pain or pleasure so that our sense of “I” is centred in one feeling and this may lead to insanity—the loss of identity.

We may define insanity as the condition in which the Ego loses all control over the psycho-physiological side of his body without losing the body itself. Mr. Judge explains that total disarrangement of physical and astral forces result in total inability to correlate the soul and the body, and that is called insanity. Our mind is connected to the body through certain electric and magnetic channels. Just as water leaks out of the tank which has cracks, so also our hold on the body could become weak and we are not able to remain in possession of these channels. Then we leave the body for some time and other entities or intelligences—good or bad—may take over. There could be temporary intervals of insanity, or it could be permanent, *i.e.*, incurable insanity.

In case of incurable insanity, the connection of the lower and higher mind is destroyed forever and the lower mind functions on *the astral plane*, and hence is not connected with the physical body. Elsewhere, H.P.B. explains that unlike the case of temporary insanity where the principle of intelligence is *paralyzed*, in case of incurable insanity, the principle of intelligence deserts the tabernacle forever, and the link between the animal and the divine essence is broken.

Though it is stated that nothing befalls a man, which he was not fitted by nature to endure, sometimes pain or unfavourable circumstances may prove to be overpowering for the *personality*. Probably, there is not enough determination on the part of such a person to fight the situation, allowing the best in oneself to surface. At times, remaining in close communion with one’s divine nature could also prevent insanity. Sometimes insanity is looked upon as a blessing as it tends to prevent further damage, and could even avert the drastic step of committing suicide. To an extent, we might

compare it to fainting. There are cases when people of delicate emotional constitution faint when they are face to face with, what appears to them, unbearable calamity or news.

As for the actions done by an insane person, we may remember the rule that acts committed in *avidya* or ignorance, such as by a child, a savage, an idiot, and we might add, by an insane person, may bear physical consequences, but not moral effects. In case of an insane person the wicked act was either done while in the state of “possession” by some evil entity, or in a state where there is no connection with the divine, guiding principle.

Even during insanity some lessons are learnt by the Ego, if it has not completely deserted the body, because, as they say, the Ego does not go insane. As for the unexhausted karma, the Ego of that person will pick up the thread in some subsequent life, from where it was left off in this life. The extent to which the lesson was learnt from the situation, or the extent to which the person endeavoured to deal with that situation, to that extent the severity of the circumstances or pain will be less when it precipitates in the next or any other subsequent life. When the lesson is learnt the necessity ceases. Probably, insanity brings for the existing personality, unable to cope with the situation, a sort of relief. In every new birth the Ego is born with new personality, and hopefully, with better combination of *skandhas*, which include physical, mental, psychic and moral constitution, making it possible to deal with the situation it was unable to cope with in the previous birth. Nothing is explicitly stated in our literature to enable us to give any definite answer.

IF NATURE has made you a giver, your hands are born open and so, is your heart. And though there may be times, when your hands are empty, your heart is always full, and you can give things out of that.

—FRANCIS HODGSON BURNETT

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

While cultivating the right brain increases our spiritual quotient, for those with dominant right brain it is equally imperative to cultivate the left brain, for only that will enable us to mature into taking care of the world, writes Suma Varughese, the editor of the magazine *Life Positive*. Mary and Martha of the gospels, two sisters particularly close to Jesus Christ, of which Mary listened attentively to the gospels of Jesus, while Martha was weighed down by the task of looking after a guest, represent two modes of being—the contemplative; and the practical-minded thinker and doer, or the right brain and the left brain. For some spiritual seekers it becomes extremely important to develop their inadequate left brain and bring it on par with their right brain. The left brain is the seat of order, logic, analysis, while the right brain is the seat of creativity, spirituality, aesthetics, and intuition. Those with dominant right brain could begin their journey by learning to move from being taken care of, to taking care.

The journey towards taking care is intimately related to the level of one’s self-esteem, which is related to maturity and responsibility. We can develop self-esteem by learning to recognize ourselves and others as parts of God and therefore Divine, which makes us all equally wonderful. To learn to take care is to be responsible for life. “It means to nurture and nourish all that is entrusted to you whether it is a life, a home, a business, a relationship or one’s possessions. It means being an agent of God and joining Him in the sacred task of world maintenance....It takes maturity to take care, and you earn maturity by taking care. In that sense taking care is probably our ultimate role of life....It means consistently going beyond your own needs and desires, and prioritizing the needs of others; it means having a vast reserve of love and generosity that enables you to give whatever is needed,” writes Varughese. But the caregiver Martha needs to learn about the higher truths, the purpose of life and how to get there from wise Mary. “Many of the great world teachers and

caregivers who have ceaselessly devoted themselves to the welfare of the world have merged the Mary and Martha within them, deriving inspiration from the inner Mary and putting it into action through the office of their outer Martha. . . . It is only when Mary and Martha merge that we can consider ourselves equipped to serve the world,” writes Varughese. (*Life Positive*, August 2012)

A person with intellectual knowledge and appreciation for the spiritual dimension of life often ends up becoming an arm-chair philosopher. Then there are those who apply the knowledge but it is still with the view to achieving individual progress and salvation. The *sine qua non* condition for spiritual progress is sincere altruism. *The Voice of the Silence*, the Mahayana Buddhist text, puts altruism even higher than the practise of virtues, saying, “To live to benefit mankind is the first step. To practise the six glorious virtues is the second.”

But it would be foolish to rush out to help others without the adequate knowledge. Says Mr. Crosbie: “Good motive without knowledge makes sorry work sometimes. All down the ages there is a record of good motive, but power and zeal misused for want of knowledge.” Wisdom is essential in helping another effectively else we might end up doing incalculable harm instead of good. For the true spiritual progress of oneself or of others, it is very important to view human life in a larger perspective. H.P.B. describes Universal Unity and Causation, Human Solidarity, the Laws of Karma and Reincarnation as the four links in the golden chain, which must be made the basis by the one who works for the upliftment of humanity. Man is a pilgrim soul and a learner from the school of life. The great sphinx as a symbol has the body of the beast and the head of man, where the beast signifies strength and man signifies wisdom. “For strength when destitute of the ruling aid of wisdom, is overcome by stupid astonishment confusing all things together; and for the purpose of action the intellect is useless when it is deprived of strength,” writes Mr. Judge.

It appears that meditation is a way to expand the capacities of our minds to control our bodies in a non-invasive way. In 1973 anthropologist and ethnologist Lyall Watson wrote in his book, *Supernature: A Natural History of the Supernatural*, about the initiation ceremony conducted by the Tibetan Buddhist monks, in which a novice had to pass the last test of Tum-mo meditation, in order to become a full-fledged monk. During the ceremony the student was stripped naked and allowed to meditate outdoors in the sub-zero temperature at night. Then, a large sheet of cloth soaked in freezing river water would be wrapped around his body, which normally would lead to hypothermia, as the person would rapidly begin to lose body heat. However, an Adept who has mastered Tum-mo meditation is expected to raise his skin temperature by at least 15 to 20 degrees and dry the sheet. The process was repeated three times in succession. Mainstream scientists have been skeptical about such accounts from Eastern Mysticism. Today, with the advance in the study of bio-feedback it is increasingly evident that bodily processes such as internal heat regulation, which is not under the brain’s voluntary control could be mediated through conscious thought alone.

Later, Herbert Benson, an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School felt that the study of advanced form of meditation could uncover capacities that will help us better treat stress-related illnesses. In the years following 1979, with the help of Dalai Lama, Benson and his team visited several remote Himalayan monasteries, and scientifically monitored meditating monks in winter, and established that during Tum-mo meditation the monks were able to raise the body temperature by as much as 17 degrees Celsius.

In the last forty years bio-feedback researchers have found that even non-meditating people can apparently be taught to control things like muscle tone, blood pressure, heart-beat, digestion, brain-wave activity, oxygen consumption and the skin’s electrical resistance, and have been able to treat conditions of migraine,

hypertension, epilepsy, etc. The mechanism is simple. When we stick a thermometer into our mouths during fever, we get “feed back” in terms of centigrades, and then we take remedial steps, such as, drinking a lot of water. “In the same way, if we are fed with ongoing information about our internal body states, we can...by as simple a method as trial and error, effectively change such states,” writes Mukul Sharma. (*The Speaking Tree* [*Sunday Times of India*], August 26, 2012)

Psychosomatic diseases have established beyond doubt that diseases could be caused and even cured by the influence of mind over the physical body, working through the subtle body (*Sukshma Sarira*) or astral body. Eastern mysticism and occult philosophy mentions that “A Yogi generally performs his wonders by means of *Itchasakti* and *Kriyasakti*.” *Itchasakti* is the *power of the Will*. Its most ordinary manifestation is the generation of certain nerve currents which set in motion such muscles as are required for the accomplishment of the desired object. *Kriyasakti* is the mysterious power of thought which enables it to produce external, perceptible, phenomenal results by its own inherent energy. The ancients held that *any idea will manifest itself externally if one’s attention is deeply concentrated upon it*. Similarly *an intense volition will be followed by the desired result* (*S.D.*, I, 296-97). The action of the Will may be discerned at three levels: It is that which causes voluntary physical functions such as, digestion, heart-beat, blush, etc. It causes action depending upon strong thoughts and desires. There is Will developed by Yoga practices.

In *Vibhuti Pada* or the chapter describing attainments, in *The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, we have a list of wonderful phenomena brought about through practice of *Sanyama*, or concentration, contemplation and meditation practiced with respect to one object. One of them being, “By concentrating his mind upon the nerve centre in the pit of the throat, the ascetic is able to overcome hunger and thirst.” (Book III, *Aphorism 30*)

Are we hard-wired to be the people we become *or* are we entirely the result of our upbringing? Nature versus Nurture debate has been going on for centuries. In the year 1690, English philosopher John Locke argued that every human is born a “blank slate” and acquires characteristics through life experience. In the year 1875, English polymath Francis Galton published the first study of twins and, finding many similarities between such twins throughout their lives, Galton believed that nature clearly prevailed over nurture, and hence selective breeding was the way forward for the society. Galton later coined the term, “eugenics,” which implied the systematic improvement of the human race through selective breeding, leading to compulsory sterilization of the “feeble-minded.” Within months of the Nazis coming to power in 1933, there was sterilization of thousands with traits like schizophrenia, as also, the promotion of the idea of Aryan master race through Hitler Youth programme. In the year 1958, the results of American psychologist Harry Harlow’s experiments with young monkeys showed that behaviour was shaped by more than just the environment. The monkeys had an in-built instinct for what to expect from a nurturing parent and sought it out. By the mid-1990s, both the academic world and the general public had come to the conclusion that human behaviour is a mix of nature, nurture and simple happenstance. Increasingly, studies reveal that it is not merely the existence of gene that matters, but how it is expressed—and that is open to a host of influences. “It has taken well over a century, but the nature versus nurture debate may finally be recognized for what it really appears to be: a false dichotomy,” writes Robert Matthews, a science journalist (*BBC Knowledge*, April 2012). Steven Pinker, a Canadian-American psychologist is of the view that there are several conceptually distinct nature-nurture questions whose answers are independent, such as, what makes humans different from animals; or men different from women; or one individual different from another?

We need to take into account the intellectual and spiritual evolution, as also, the existence of the pilgrim soul. Till then neither

genes and heredity nor environment or both put together can satisfactorily explain human traits and behaviour. If we believe that every human being is a new creation, a new soul passing through life's journey, then how could he be held responsible for his vices, weaknesses and sins, which are transmitted to him hereditarily? Thus, once we accept that our character is transmitted to us hereditarily we cannot attach responsibility or punish people for murder, robbery, prostitution, etc.

We might say both Heredity and Atavism are handmaidens of Karma and Reincarnation. Transmission of traits and tendency by means of parent and body is exactly the mode selected by nature for providing the incarnating Ego with the proper tenement in which to carry on its work. Heredity counts for nothing if the Ego does not bring those traits, as is shown by idiots or vicious children born to parents who are good, pure, or highly intellectual, and *vice versa*. As for the nurture or environment, H.P.B. says, "true evolution teaches that by altering the surroundings of the organism we can alter and improve the organism," but that does not mean that good surrounding will surely produce good men. We might say that we are a blend of heredity and environment. Even the most conducive environment cannot transform a weak and timid child into an audacious leader, because ultimately it depends upon how best we *use* the environment, and that in turn depends upon the inherent character. For instance, adversity may make some throw up their hands in despair while in others it may evoke greater efforts, bringing to the surface hidden good qualities.

EACH man takes care that his neighbour shall not cheat him.
But a day comes, when he begins to care that he does not
cheat his neighbour. Then all goes well. He has changed
his market-cart into a chariot of the sun.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON