

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### CONTENTMENT AND COMPLACENCY

CONTENTMENT means a state of happiness and satisfaction. Mr. Judge says that our age is a restless age. This restlessness is found to be reflected in human beings, on account of the conflict between good and evil and rapidity with which things come to pass in this age. To those who prefer a life of change, chance and adventure contentment appears to be a static condition, a dull kind of living. There is one kind of contentment which results when we abstain from sense pleasures and from attending to the demands of the lower, animal nature. When our happiness depends upon getting a new car or a new house, such happiness is necessarily short-lived. Basically, it is the happiness that arises from desire-satisfaction, and once that the desire has been satisfied, once that an ambition has been realized, it becomes a bore. We find ourselves again going in search for something new and exciting.

The greatest source of discontentment is our habit of comparing ourselves with others. Instead of counting our blessings and being grateful for many things in life which bring us happiness, we compare ourselves with our neighbours, colleagues, friends, and crave for wealth, position, power or fame that they enjoy. Whenever discontentment arises, we should look at those who are worse off than us in many ways, rather than looking at those who seem to have all the pleasures of the world. In one of his well-known works, *Gulistan* or *The Rose Garden*, Saadi, a Persian poet, gives many

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moralizing stories and personal anecdotes. In story 19 of Chapter III, entitled “On the Excellence of Contentment” Saadi writes: “I never lamented about the vicissitudes of time or complained of the turns of fortune except on the occasion when I was barefooted and unable to procure slippers. But when I entered the great mosque of Kufah with a sore heart and beheld a man without feet, I offered thanks to the bounty of God, consoled myself for my want of shoes and recited: “A roasted fowl is to the sight of a satiated man, Less valuable than a blade of fresh grass on the table; And to him who has no means nor power, A burnt turnip is a roasted fowl.”

Those who assume that wealth can bring long-lasting happiness are bound to be disillusioned sooner or later. There are plenty of people who can access all comforts and luxuries, and yet are unhappy. Wealth cannot guarantee happiness. Therefore, the Buddha says, “Contentment is the greatest wealth,” which implies that being content with what we have is more valuable than being wealthy. There is a humorous story in which a fisherman having caught a basketful of fish was resting at the shore. He was singing songs and enjoying a lovely breeze. A man who was passing by told him that he is wasting his time. He told him to go fishing and catch more fish so that he could earn more money. The fisherman asked him why he should earn more money. The man said: “So that you can enjoy life.” The fisherman cheerfully replied: “That is what I am doing.”

The opposite of contentment is greed and also ambition. In our world we see such craving for wealth, power, position and fame. There is the beautiful story by Leo Tolstoy, *How Much Land Does a Man Need?* It is about a man who had insatiable desire for possessing larger and larger areas of land. His greed leads him to a village where the elder tells him that as much land as he can cover by walking, from morning till sunset, will be his, with the condition that he should return to the original spot by sunset. The greedy man tries to cover a very large area, with the result that he is breathless by sunset and dies of exhaustion as he reaches the original spot. Ironically, the villagers bury him by digging a patch of land, just

long enough to hold his body, *i.e.*, seven feet! Seeing that the village elder exclaims, “How much land does a man need?” Some of the ambitious “achievers” of our day fall into the same category.

However rich a person, however large his bank balance, he has to leave everything behind at death. But the true inner contentment is a noble characteristic that becomes part and parcel of his being. True contentment arises from perfect reliance on the Law. “Rest content with fate” says the *Voice of the Silence*. Obviously, this does not imply a passive sort of contentment and acceptance of one’s lot without making any effort. Contentment does not mean passivity. To be content is to have learnt to reconcile with the situation and things as they are, *if we are not able to change them*. There is a need to practice acceptance daily and hourly. A lukewarm and passive individual is one who prefers to drift along life, just like a person who steps into a canoe and leaves the paddle on the shore. As he sits dreaming, the tide of the ocean begins to recede, and when he finally awakens, he finds that he has drifted far away from the shore, and that without paddle or oar, he is unable to go back to the shore. Those who choose to drift find themselves in a similar predicament. As the tide of life and fate begins to recede, they find that they have been carried far away, beyond any hope of attaining the goal of life—Self-Realization.

We are being asked to cultivate a cheerful attitude and accept what comes our way without complaining, murmuring, or getting bitter, because only then we are able to learn the necessary lessons and also able to turn the forces of evil into good. The Law of Karma always brings to us what we need, to improve morally and spiritually, and not what we want. True contentment is experienced when we are more awake towards our duties and responsibilities rather than craving for rights and privileges. “I have never found an insistence on my so-called rights at all necessary. They preserve themselves, and it must be true if the law of karma is the truth that no man offends against me unless I in the past have offended against him,” says Mr. Judge. In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, there is the story,

“The Turn of the Wheel,” which is about prince Rama of Rajpootana, from whom a rival king unjustly demanded all his possessions, and was given the same by Rama. The story goes on that in a subsequent life Karma brings them together again, and makes the unjust king settle the account by paying the karmic debt, quite unknowingly.

True contentment results when one is able to cultivate detached-attachment. We must live *in* the world, be ready to go through all the joys and sorrows of life, and yet not be *of* the world. True or higher contentment results from reliance on the higher or spiritual Self in us. It is possible to remain calm in adversity if we have realized, to some extent at least, that there is that centre in us, the Divine Self, which is beyond happiness, and which is not anxious as to this or that should or should not happen.

True contentment should not be confused with complacency. Self-complacency is a bar to the progress and growth of the Soul. A complacent person is a self-satisfied person, content with himself and his surroundings. Individuals, nations and civilizations have suffered from the ill effects of this trait of complacency. In a subtle way, complacency has been a major contributing factor in the downfall of a civilization. When an acme of civilization is reached, as in Egypt, Greece and Rome, with perfect development of intellectual, mental and material part of man’s nature, it is but an indication that the climax of sensuous perfection is reached. The purpose of civilization is to produce spiritual fruit (progress and perfection) but unfortunately after the civilization has flowered, in terms of technological and material advancement, the flower of civilization falls and dies, without producing spiritual fruit. Why do we struggle to roll the stone up the hill only to see it roll down again? Can we not see that beyond civilization, art, and mechanical perfection lie the realities of life? It is because of incredulity and indolence of humanity, arising out of self-satisfaction, which refuses to believe that peace and happiness can lie in the direction other than material advancement.

A complacent person, who is happy with his own particular way

of life, tends to discourage another from pursuing a different mode of life or exploring possibilities for improving the environment. When people are completely satisfied with their own religion, it may produce feeling of pride for one’s own religion, and intolerance for other people’s religions and religious ideas, and consequently they may engage in religious persecution of those who refuse to accept their religion. The complacent, firmly believing in their own way of life to be the best, demand conformity from others, thinking that they are conferring a benefit on others. Likewise, those satisfied with relative truth are prevented from searching for and reaching the Absolute Truth.

The danger of complacency is greater for a student of Theosophy who knows that he or she is in possession of the philosophy which is logical and consistent, providing eternal principles, and is a synthesis of science, religion and philosophy, because acquaintance with such a philosophy produces self-satisfaction. A little observation makes it clear that such satisfaction is misplaced, because probably, one has not yet completely understood what is given by the Teachers, and if grasped, one is far from complete application of the noble teachings. Every effort to live the higher life by applying the teachings brings about an inner awakening and a change for the better. However, there is no place for self-satisfaction, as the process of perfection is an ongoing process which is the result of a series of progressive awakenings. We should never be self-satisfied, but strive to satisfy the demands of the Self within, by listening to and obeying the “still small voice,” which guides us at every step. The stand to be taken by an earnest aspirant is beautifully summed up by Mr. Judge: “What is to learn, is to be content, or, rather, resigned to ourselves and our limitations even while striving to get above them....We cannot all at once live up to these high ideals as some others live up to theirs.” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 162)

When the acme of physical and mental perfection is reached, there is an inkling of the existence of something beyond the physical. It is indolence and incredulity that makes man cling to the familiar

things. A good man must recognize the need, and feel the urge to change. For those of us who are satisfied with our present state, spiritual life is irrelevant. Buddha said of such complacent, worldly persons: “Most people go their rounds on this shore only.” Spiritual aspirants long to cross over to the other shore. More often than not, what jolts us out of this complacency is some painful experience. For some, however, such a turning point can be brought about through extreme indulgence in pleasures. Generally, we feel that we can be happy if only we had a car, position, money, etc. When we have all these, we may try to get a better model of car, try for a higher post in the office, join a club, smoke most expensive cigarettes, and so on. Sooner or later, a point of satiation is reached, and divine discontent wakes us up to higher possibilities.

In fact, the very beginning of living the higher life is made out of discontentment of a very different nature. There is the highest kind of suffering which very few of us experience, and that is metaphysical suffering, which is often described as “divine discontent.” It is the pain arising out of the feeling that nothing that is conditioned and worldly can satisfy the unconditioned aspect in us. There comes a stage in a person’s life when he begins to find the world to be like a cage or a prison, all false and fleeting. He is dissatisfied with himself and with the world around. This is the point where treading of spiritual path begins, *i.e.*, he decides to seek, in this eternally changing and evanescent world, a real and permanent thing.

Only a few are brave enough to go beyond the material realm. In thought and in pleasure when we try to seek beyond the obvious and the material, we have the glimpses of the “Gates.” They are *Golden Gates* because they represent the layer of consciousness that is very near to spiritual consciousness. When at last, the lower animal nature becomes subservient to the Higher, Divine nature, one is no longer tortured by yearnings or disturbed by earthly joys and woes. The Buddha sums it up while explaining the cessation of sorrow: “This is Peace! To conquer love of self and lust of life....The old sad count is clear, the new is clean; Thus hath a man content.”

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE LITTLE PRINCE—II

REVIEWERS have brought out clearly the ambiguous nature of the book, which seems to fall neither exclusively into a children’s nor adult’s literature. British journalist Neil Clark, wrote that the book provided a “bird’s eye-view of humanity [and] contains some of the most profound observations on the human condition ever written” and that the book does not merely express the author’s contempt for selfishness and materialism, but shows how life should be lived. Besides being described as a book that was sure to capture the imagination of any child, it was seen as a work, which in its deeper aspects, influences the higher faculties of the child, that will be comprehended later, at an appropriate time.

It is very evident that the book, when read between the lines, is seen to draw contrast between the children and the adults, showing, now and then, that somewhere in the process of growing up and maturing, we have left behind some of the valuable qualities possessed by a child. Have we perhaps missed out on enquiring and understanding about the meaning and purpose of life, as we chase name, fame, power, position, losing our capacities for love, imagination and friendship? *The Little Prince* is an allegory, which means besides the story with its characters and surface meaning, there is a deeper or symbolic meaning which hints at the underlying philosophy. That explains why the book has been a great success with both children and adults.

The little prince in the story leaves his planet or home and he is on a philosophical quest. Some critics explain that his quest was both emotional and philosophical, because he was alone and happy on the planet till the flower appears. His nurturing of the plant is symbolic of his struggle to cultivate relationship with the flower. A relationship is much like a delicate and beautiful flower or plant, which must be cared for and cultivated. This cultivation of relationship has been described by the fox in the story as “taming,”

which may require enormous patience and hard work, but it is worth the effort because these relationships make our lives emotionally rich and meaningful. The fact that establishing ties or relationships often involves hard work has been symbolically depicted in the story by the way the prince “tames” the fox. The prince sits down on the grass at a little distance from the fox, and both remain silent, only looking at each other, because “words are the source of misunderstandings.” Every day they meet at the same place and time, and sitting a little closer to each other than before. Given the description of the flower, with her vanity and vulnerability, which she always likes to hide, the prince does not find it easy to understand or handle her. Understanding and accepting another human being, without wanting to change that person, requires enormous patience. It is precisely the time and effort bestowed in cultivating a relationship with another that makes the other person unique and special, and then we feel as the prince felt for her rose: “. . .because it is she that I have watered. . .because it is she that I have listened to when she grumbled, or boasted, or even sometimes when she said nothing. Because she is my rose.” It is only as a result of having passed through the process like the prince, that one realizes the “secret” which leads to meaningful relationships, namely, “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

The adults that the little prince comes across in the story are all on a “quest” for acquiring power or money or some other petty thing, which fails to bring satisfaction. Today, many young people want to be independent. They want to live on their own terms and cannot tolerate interference from their parents, who might object to their coming home late at night or to their way of dressing up, or to their erratic eating and sleeping habits. No doubt, staying alone makes one self-dependent to a certain extent. Also, there are different kinds of lessons to be learnt in the life of a single person. And yet, though initially one may enjoy such a life of independence, not all are equipped, emotionally and mentally, to live such a life. Those who

choose to move away from their families are still looking for companions and friends and some even indulge in a series of casual affairs. At times, a person asserting his independence is only running away from his responsibilities and obligations. If we were able to cope with life’s problems “all alone,” we would not have so many people experiencing depression, and other psychological disorders, or have so many turning to drugs and alcohol. We have substituted friends and companions with Blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and so on. Today, we increasingly suffer from strained relationships. A perfect relationship is based on deep love and understanding, and in it there is blending of opposing and complementary characteristics of two people involved.

The six people that the prince meets on the Earth symbolize various aspects of human nature. The King and the Conceited Man are embodiment of the quality of self-centredness. For the King, every other man that he meets is his subject, and if he cannot exercise obvious power, then he is happy even with the illusion of power. The King seeks to command and be obeyed by every other person, so too, the Conceited Man seeks admiration, and acknowledgement that he is the best in all ways. Each of them thinks that the world revolves around him, and which really does, as they live on their own little planets, in isolation. They do not realize what it means to see with the heart. Both pride and vanity are the most formidable enemies of a spiritual aspirant. Vanity is almost wholly *Tamogunam* or the quality of darkness, and represents in one aspect the illusion-power of Nature, writes Mr. Judge.

Though genuine praise can work as an incentive for better performance, we must guard against the risk of addiction to praise and becoming “praise junkies.” A person who has been able to cultivate a certain amount of healthy self-esteem is not likely to be dependent on other people’s appreciation. We are asked to be careful about developing exaggerated self-esteem and self-image, thus: “Self-gratulation, O Disciple, is like unto a lofty tower, up which a haughty fool has climbed. Thereon he sits in prideful solitude and

unperceived by any but himself,” says the *Voice of the Silence*. The first step in overcoming praise-addiction is recognition that “I am not my body, mind, ideas, skills,” but the soul, the real man, that is in no need of praise. Thus, “Shun praise, O Devotee. Praise leads to self-delusion. Thy body is not Self, thy SELF is in itself without a body, and either praise or blame affects it not.” (*ibid.*)

The next adult that the prince meets is a businessman, who is constantly counting stars and believes that he owns them. The businessman is obsessed with counting stars, which is not really of any value, but he considers himself a very busy man, who should not be disturbed with trifles. He does not realize that he is missing out on the most essential and important things of life, which make for one’s happiness and well-being. The little prince describes him as someone who has never smelled a flower, or looked at a star, or loved anyone. All he is busy with is adding up figures. He is so greedy and insensitive to beauty that he is more concerned with the *number of stars* owned by him, than admiring their beauty.

There is a satire concerning the idea of “ownership,” when the author makes the businessman say: “When you discover an island that belongs to nobody, it is yours. When you get an idea before anyone else, you take out a patent on it: it is yours.” Those who recognize universal unity and interdependence would desist from claiming exclusiveness in matters of physical, mental or spiritual possessions. Modern man is ever eager to claim fame and glory for the ideas, inventions, discoveries and achievements that he sincerely considers to be the result of his own individual effort, and therefore hastens to take out a patent on these. But the truly great men recognize the truism that there is never any growth in isolation. The English poet and essayist, Matthew Arnold, says that the work of literary genius is the combination of the power of man and the power of the moment, *i.e.*, of a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere. Newton said: “I appear tall because I am standing on the shoulders of the giants.” Similarly, the Buddha drew inspiration and teachings from the Vedas and Upanishads and the writings of rishis, sages

and other perfected beings. Whatever may be our possessions—money, ideas, knowledge or powers—our attitude towards them must be that of *trusteeship* and not of ownership. The trustees are constrained to use the funds only for the purposes or objects for which the trust was set up. So also, we must use our possessions for higher purposes. The aspirant to the Higher Life has his own formula, “Desire possessions above all; but desire only those possessions which can be enjoyed by all pure souls equally.”

The prince meets lamplighter on a very tiny asteroid-planet where the full day lasts for one minute, which shows that if there are worlds or planets bigger than our earth with more advanced humanity on them, then similarly, there must be planets smaller than our earth, and some, even inferior to our earth. In contrast to all other individuals, the lamplighter is not self-centred. His lighting and extinguishing the lamp, every thirty seconds, which does not allow him to sleep, shows his conscientiousness towards his duty, but at the same time denotes fruitless labour and a useless sacrifice.

The next adult is the geographer who knows where the seas, the mountains, the cities, etc. are, but insists that he is not an explorer who wanders about to gather the information, and is therefore quite ignorant of the rivers and the mountains, on his own planet. He represents a specialist. The modern explosion of knowledge has led to an age of specialisation, and a specialist is humourously described as “someone who knows more and more about less and less.” We have today, a specialist for nose and a specialist for eyes, and we may, in future, have separate specialists for left and right eye! Specialisation does not allow one to get an integrated view of a person or a thing. In curing a disease, we should take into account man as a whole, physically, mentally and morally. In a spiritual quest for perfection, it is especially important to bear in mind that reaching the goal of perfection is necessarily a gradual process, because it involves achieving perfection in physical, mental, emotional, moral and spiritual nature. “Perfection is not achieved when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away,” says Saint-

Exupery. In the context of spiritual perfection, it is a profound statement because the process of perfection is from within, without, by eliminating the non-essentials.

The prince comes across a merchant who has invented a pill that eliminated the need to drink water for a week. He says that it will save people fifty-three minutes a week. The technological advancement has increased our efficiency, enabling us to save a lot of time. We seldom ask ourselves: how shall we utilize this surplus time? We seem to have become busier than ever, with little or no time left for the essentials. We should be able to make time for our family and friends, for reading good books and reflection, for spending a quiet hour in the company of our Higher Self. The point that the author makes is that by quenching our thirst by taking a pill we are depriving ourselves the simple pleasure of quenching the thirst by drinking a glass of cold water. The prince says, "If I had fifty-three minutes to spend as I liked, I should walk at my leisure toward a spring of fresh water," showing that it is more important to use time in a meaningful way than saving it.

The book brings out a sharp contrast between the children and the grown-ups. In the process of growing up we seem to lose curiosity, wonderment, innocence, open-mindedness, which we possessed as children. And yet, the child within us is not lost, but is lying latent, and gets resuscitated when we undergo an experience such as the author's meeting with the little prince. In a far deeper sense, *metaphysically and spiritually*, we must strive to regain the child-state we have lost. The qualities that are exhibited by a child, unconsciously and naturally, we seek to unfold knowingly and consciously, till they have been woven into the very fabric of our being, and show forth spontaneously. We have to be like a child, trusting, carefree, vulnerable, selfless and innocent. It is possible if we learn self-surrender. *Atma-nivedana* or complete surrender of the Self is the highest form of devotion or intense love. True love leads to self-denial, self-abnegation, self-effacement, self-transcendence.

(Concluded)

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## EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS SELF-EXAMINATION AND MEDITATION—II

TURNING to your problem about God and prayer: This is a point which many friends raise. When they read such a sentence as *The Key to Theosophy* contains: "Prayer kills self-reliance," they are confused. Prayer as ordinarily understood, as an appeal for favours to a Personal God, is one thing, and prayer as an inner communion with one's own Divinity in the heart is a different thing. H.P.B. has made that clear and a recent article in the May [1953] number of THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, "How Shall We Pray?" ought to satisfy any honest inquirer. We are not against the prayer which appeals for guidance and help to one's own Inner Divinity. Here a distinction has to be made between the person who prays, that is, the personality, and the intelligence to whom prayer is offered, namely, the individuality. Unless there is consubstantiality between the two intelligences, the personality and the individuality, there cannot be any real communion. Therefore, the implication is that the personality should purify itself and bring itself nearer and closer to the individuality if the personality's prayers have to be answered. This important idea is not understood.

That brings me to your next problem, that in Theosophy there is no scope or outlet for man's emotional nature as there is in prayer or worship. This also is not quite accurate, for the emotional nature has to be purified and elevated. Desires are of two kinds, and desires are the basis of all emotional activity. There are higher desires, which we may call aspirations, and the aspirations bring into play the right kind of emotions. The feeling of devotion, of enlightened faith, the intense longing to do the right, to tread the path, to come in contact with the Masters, are all proper channels for the expression of the higher emotions or aspirations. Anyway it is indeed good to know that though they may speak of the absence of emotional expression, at your meetings there is great fervour and enthusiasm. That itself shows that Theosophy is not devoid of the right type of aspirational expression.

We must evaluate our wrong actions through self-examination and then use the way of true repentance, including, “Look not behind or thou art lost.”

Self-examination is very necessary. It is of two sorts, a daily one and a periodic one. Two sources provide the correct check: (1) our own Higher Self and Inner Ego and (2) the Divine Philosophy and especially the Divine Paramitas. This is part of our discipline. Incidentally, it develops the much-needed virtue of intellectual honesty.

About self-examination: Of course there is a reflex action in self-righteousness. “Regret nothing,” says Judge. “Look not behind,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. This ingredient in our attitude balances and also does brighten up the dreary side of this business. Nothing, self-examination included, is perfect. All human actions are enveloped by ills, says *The Bhagavad-Gita*. We have to go onwards calmly and patiently. Detachment and resignation unfold gradually and we have to be prudent and observant to be deliberate.

Memory and loss of memory is the central psychological problem of every aspirant. Fixed times of meditation and self-examination help all daily processes; and the latter deepen the special acts. Unity all the time, everywhere. Resignation and activity also are unified; so are frustration and successes. So must emerge “calmness ever present.”

The words of Paul about mind-control are an experience which every aspirant on the Path of Chelaship passes through. They parallel the closing part of the Third Chapter of *The Bhagavad-Gita*.

Theosophy has practical guidance to give on the subject of what is ordinarily and loosely called meditation. The general idea is well given in *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 12*, which reprints the articles of Damodar [Mavlankar] and Mr. Judge. Our Hindu brothers get all tangled up with the words without making a proper distinction between the terms they use. The term generally used is “Yoga,” as in the Sixth Chapter of *The Bhagavad-Gita*, and it is related to the subject of meditation. The important point made there is that two

qualities are necessary—*Abhyasa*, which involves practice according to knowledge, and *Vairagya*, which means dispassion. These two are considered essential for the practice of meditation. But the important point must not be overlooked: Krishna recommends that every time the wandering mind goes away from the subject under consideration it should be brought back and put upon the Spirit. People do not understand this. If I am engaged in, let us say, a mundane matter, connected with my routine life, I am supposed to be concentrated there. My mind wanders. I am called upon to bring it back, not to the work from which it wandered, but to the Spirit. Unless the real significance of this is understood, confusion results. There is a spiritual basis or aspect of every mundane activity and the general direction is that you should find that spiritual aspect, for it is on the basis of the spiritual aspect that concentration or meditation or contemplation can be practiced. People want to have a spiritual experience in special meditation of half an hour or an hour and they fail, simply because the real power of their periodic meditation is not utilized. I will never be able to bring my wandering mind under my control if I devote only an hour to keep it from wandering, when during the rest of the period it wanders.

But *The Bhagavad-Gita* does not go further into the details about the exercise. The next book that people use is Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* and there again they begin to use terms without understanding their proper meaning and significance. There are four terms used: *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi*. There is a fascination that people have for *Dhyana* and *Samadhi* without a realization that in the absence of the first step of *Pratyahara* and *Dharana*, *Dhyana* is not possible, much less *Samadhi*. It is necessary, therefore, to understand the principles which are contained in these terms.

*Pratyahara* deals with the power of the mind which must try to gain one-pointedness in reference to whatever it is doing, and this is a worldly exercise. It is not necessarily recommended that special objects of meditation shall be taken up. But the highest in each

aspect has to be sought out. This is the same as what is said in the Sixth Chapter of *The Bhagavad-Gita*.

Then comes the subject of concentration; the next is contemplation and then realization. Take the analogy of a military army. A regiment is concentrated, is brought to a point; all the soldiers come together. Then the general contemplates the object to be attacked—a city or a fort or a hill, or what not. Then he gives orders for the regiment to make its attack and that city or fort or hill is taken possession of. This is a good imagery. We must come to a central point, must concentrate. The very word indicates coming together to a centre. Now look up the root of the word “contemplation.” It is the consideration of that which has come together. Then *Samadhi* is the possession of the object contemplated upon, becoming one with that object. As a matter of fact, every wandering mind, without meaning to do so, goes through all these three stages. Mr. Judge tries to explain this in his *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*. So you see, it is a complex subject and it is necessary for us to get hold of the primary principle.

The other difficulty that you will find is that no concentration is possible unless the nature of the Higher or Spiritual Self is understood, at least in some measure. At one stage it is the lower self in its concentrated position that contemplates on the Higher Self and becomes one with that Higher Self. Then the next position is that, having become one with the Higher Self, once again he descends into his lower nature as a superior controller than when he left his ground previously.

You will find that if our Indian students will turn to *The Voice of the Silence* and take up certain verses, they will be more successful in their meditation than by going through the difficult things which are written in *Sutra* style in the Patanjali book. A *Sutra* itself requires deciphering. An aphorism is not an easy thing and so such sentences in *The Voice of the Silence* as pertain to the subject of mind will prove beneficial. Take for example: “The Mind is the great Slayer of the Real,” or the verses about withholding the mind from external objects and internal images, or the verse that refers to the mind as a mirror and to the dust to be brushed away from it; then there is this

verse: “Thyself and mind like twins upon a line, the star which is thy goal burns overhead.” And there are other verses. If any student is really interested, he can cull from *The Voice of the Silence* these verses and arrange them in a particular order. I did that many years ago and found it worked admirably in more than one direction.

(Concluded)

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## SUICIDE—SOME REFLECTIONS

### I

SUICIDE is the act of taking one's own life. After accident, suicide is the second leading cause of death, these days. According to a study, every year, around 8,00,000 people are dying by committing suicide, of which ninety per cent are those with mental health problems. However, there are those that commit suicide to escape pain or suffering. A person may kill himself in a fit of temporary insanity. According to World Health Organisation many suicides happen impulsively in moments of crisis when one feels incapable of dealing with stress caused by financial problems, relationship break-up or chronic illness. A popular hypothesis is that mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety develop as a result of chemical imbalance in the brain. A chemical imbalance in the brain results when there is either too much or too little of certain neurotransmitters, which are chemicals responsible for passing information between nerve cells. Serotonin, dopamine are the neurotransmitters that regulate emotions and mood. However, many believe that mental health being a complex issue, chemical imbalance may be regarded as one of the many factors affecting it, rather than its direct cause.

It is true that there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of people committing suicide and some of them for trifling reasons. Children of age ten or twelve committing suicide by hanging themselves, was something unheard of until recently. Many of them choose to commit suicide because parents refuse to give into their demands, which could be permission to participate in some television show, to buy a motorbike or any other expensive gadget, or failure in some examination. Materialism, consumerism and glamour also seem to be responsible for suicides in a marked way. No matter how much a person earns, his income is just not enough because from food to clothes to gadgets there is a wide variety to choose from and we want to try them all. We seem to have forgotten what

it is to live within one's means. "Easy loans," lure people to borrow money from the banks, which they soon find they are incapable of paying off. There are plenty of examples of parents committing suicides after killing their children, because they were unable to pay the debts. Often it is exploitation or emotional or psychological torture of one human being by another, which is the cause of committing suicide. The remedy lies in learning to be content, learning to live a simple life, and setting an example to younger members of the family, as also, for other families, even at the risk of becoming isolated. True and lasting happiness is not dependent on money, amenities and luxuries of life, is the lesson generally learnt the hard way. Weakening family bonds and deteriorating human relationships and insensitivity to the needs and sorrows of another human being, are also to be blamed for increasing number of suicides.

Somewhere there is a false idea that killing oneself is going to end all troubles. And hence, some people seek to justify suicide in specific situations. In his article, "Suicide is Not Death," Mr. Judge refers to Col. Robert G. Ingersoll's views on suicide, expressed in a reply to his critics, which were originally published in the New York Evening Telegram of 1892. Col. Ingersoll affirms that there are many circumstances in which a person has a right to kill himself and dismisses religious arguments to the contrary. He gives the example of a person suffering from cancer and says that his suffering is intense, and he is dying slowly. He is of no use to himself and to his family members or to his friends or to society. He is daily becoming numb and unconscious by the drugs he is given. If there is a good and compassionate God how can he take pleasure in sufferings of men. He should lessen the evils of life. Therefore, he insists that a person suffering from cancer has right to end his life.

He gives another case of a person who has been captured by the savages of Central Africa, and he knows and sees them make preparations to torture him, and after that they will burn him. If he has poison, should he not take it and end his life? He is only

preponing his death by a few minutes. In short, he seems to be saying that the path from cradle to the grave consists of a few steps, and the person who takes his life, is shortening his journey and skipping some steps because he cannot bear the pain. The clergymen, writers, and others have attacked this view saying that life is a gift of God and we have no right to end the same. Hence, Mr. Judge says that neither of these views is either satisfactory or scientific, and by recommending suicide Col. Ingersoll may appear to save a person from responsibility and pain, but actually, there is no escape from responsibility or even pain.

To an “inquirer” who felt that in some cases suicide “is not only justifiable, but also morally desirable,” H.P.B. answered that both murder and suicide are never justifiable, from the occult point of view. No man has a right to put an end to his existence simply because it is useless. She mentions that there is a law among the savage tribes of the South Sea Islanders, to put to death, with war-like honours, their old men and women. They do so out of ignorance. She differentiates between a person who *takes away* his life out of sheer disgust, out of the feeling that he cannot and will not be able to do any good, or out of despair of ever being useful to anyone, or he thinks he is a burden to others or source of injury to others, and the other who *offers his life in sacrifice* to save other lives or to fulfil his duty. There is a reward when life was *sacrificed* for other lives, when there is no other alternative for it. The examples of the second type, who are described as martyrs, are: The captain of a sinking ship, who saves others and goes down with the ship. The nurse who remains by the side of a patient with contagious disease and dies of contracting the same. The mother who leaps before a lion or a tiger to save her child. The man of science who wastes his life in rigorous brain-work with the hope of discovering something which might help mankind. All these *are not suicides*. In fact, it is a noble impulse which helps them to override the deep-seated instinct for self-preservation. Interestingly, even in such cases the person will have to pass the time in *Kama-loka* till the hour of normal death approaches. (H.P.B. Series No. 15, pp. 33-35)

In the article “The Elixir of Life,” we are told that we only die when our will ceases to be strong enough to make us live. So, for most of us, death comes when for some reason, for one single instant, our “clutch on life” or the tenacity of the will to exist, is weakened. It can happen that temporarily, the feeling of disgust, or fear of not being able to cope up with the situation, may be so strong that it can override the instinct of self-preservation and the thirst for life. When our hold on this “thirst for life” is slackened, we die, as is often the case of those losing their near and dear ones, or those facing the shock of sudden financial loss or loss of reputation, etc. In such cases the person simply passes away.

In the article, “Two Suicides and the Theosophical Student,” (*The Theosophical Movement*, March 1934) we read that a young man committing suicide after the Christmas time is over, leaves behind a note, in which he states that all that he has, the body, the mind, the thoughts and the capacity to love has been given by God. Also, if his time to die had not come, he would not have succeeded in his attempt to end his life, and if he has succeeded that means God has permitted him to find rest. He says, “We are far from being our own masters. That is for fools.” Thus, those believing in a Personal God, tend to become dependent on Him, and tend to pass on the responsibility of good and bad actions on that same God. Such a person, when he is overwhelmed by life, finds himself powerless to change it himself. The work of changing the outlook and giving an understanding of life and its laws can lessen the number of suicides.

Those approving suicide do so because they do not know that man is more than his body. They are ignorant of the purpose of life, and man’s state after death. We can justify suicide only on the ground that man is just his body and nothing more, and if that is so, we can also justify the killing of the old, the insane and the vicious people. Ultimately, what we need is the right philosophy which can open our eyes that when we commit suicide, we are actually trying to dodge the law of Karma. The fact is that even the most unbearable and painful situation we are placed in has come to us under Karma

and only we are responsible for it. All we need to do is to try and learn the necessary lesson, if we are unable to change the situation. By ending our life, we are trying to run away from a person or a situation in which we are placed under Karma, in a given life. We may seem to succeed in escaping, but not forever. In any of our next births we will be once again placed into similar situation from which we tried to escape by committing suicide, till we have learnt to handle that situation and also learnt the lesson. Hence the advice is, “Accept the woes of birth.”

The philosophy of Theosophy can help people who find their life meaningless and worthless, by showing that man is a pilgrim soul, and that life is a drama and a school, in which the immortal soul of man plays different roles and learns many lessons. The purpose of life is to learn and that it is all made up of learning. We can give meaning to life by careful and cheerful performance of our own duties, big or small, and by giving best response to the circumstances of life, without complaining or wanting to run away, and thus make another and better life possible. That is because “as you sow, so shall you reap.”

“Suicide, like any other murder is a sin because it is a sudden disturbance of the harmony of the world. It is a sin because it defeats nature. Nature exists for the sake of the soul and for no other reason, it has the design, so to say, of giving the soul experience and self-consciousness. These can only be had by means of a body through which the soul comes in contact with nature, and to violently sever the connection before the natural time defeats the aim of nature,” writes Mr. Judge.

*(To be concluded)*

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THAT which does not kill me makes me stronger.

—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

## INTELLIGENT PATRIOTISM

NATIONAL pride, the feeling of love for and devotion to one’s homeland is natural to the human heart. This sentiment is called “patriotism.” The English term was coined sometime in the late sixteenth century in the Western hemisphere. It is derived from another term, *compatriot*, which means fellow-countryman. It connotes the emotional quality of sympathetic tie with one’s countrymen. The etymological root of the word however is traced to the Greek and Latin root words: *Patriot*, one’s father; *Patris*, Fatherland; and to the Latin word, *Pater*, meaning Father.

Patriotic feeling for one’s country has many aspects. Patriotic feeling, for instance, may be specific to the reverential feeling and aesthetic appeal which the geographical features and the landscape of one’s country arouse in the person, or may embrace many other aspects also, such as, country’s unique culture, history, literature, language, arts, customs, traditions, religion, philosophy, and so on. In a country like India consisting of many provinces with distinctive characteristics in terms of regional language, literature, history, art forms, landscape, it is but natural for local people to develop regional identity and affinity. Regional cultures being distinctive expressions of the intellectual and spiritual values of the country as a whole which underlie them all, regional patriotism extends as an inalienable part of the national culture as a whole. Thus, we find this exemplified in poets personifying their respective regional cultures as the progeny of the National culture as the Mother. Rabindranath Tagore in his immortal literary works saw in the light of universalism of ancient Indian cultural heritage his reverence for his mother country extending to embrace the whole of humanity and all life.

Europe consists of a plurality of states with distinct national and linguistic identities with a common cultural and spiritual heritage derived from Greco-Roman antiquity, Christianity, Renaissance, and its humanism. Enlightenment thinkers, strongly critical of the Christian theological ideal of individual salvation, argued for the

inculcation of love of their homeland among the populace, as a desirable civic virtue that works for social betterment. As long as patriotic feeling for one's country is based on shared cultural values and historicity which does not assume an antagonistic stance against other nations and peoples, it serves as a harmless civic virtue for social good. If, however, patriotic sentiment is lacking in the broadening vision and inspiration of universal values it often degenerates into a narrow exclusive nationalistic sentiment in which lie latent the seeds of rivalry and war. Napoleonic war, aggressive German nationalism which led to genocide, and world wars are historical examples of the danger of the baser kind of patriotism. So many wars have been fought motivated by nationalistic pride and ambition at the cost of thousands of lives and human misery that Enlightenment thinkers have questioned the very idea of patriotism as a national virtue. "It is lamentable," said Rousseau, the French Enlightenment thinker, "that to be a good patriot one must become an enemy of mankind." Samuel Johnson, the eighteenth-century British thinker, according to his biographer, James Boswell, was vociferous in his criticism of the tendency among nations to invoke patriotism to serve their political ends at the expense of the interests of other nations, and even to the detriment of a section of the people of the same country.

The German philosopher, Schopenhauer, argues that the cheapest kind of pride is national pride because only such individuals who have no qualities of which they can be proud adopt pride in their nation, and remain blind to its weaknesses and defects, and even defend its faults and shortcomings; and that, on the contrary, the one who is endowed with important personal qualities which enable him to see in what respects his nation falls short, will be aware of its defects and failings. Herein lies the explanation of the psychology of the two kinds of patriotism; one, narrow and base for want of broadening influence of right education, regressive and destructive; the other, broader and nobler, and tends to be progressive, reformative, constructive and unifying.

Right education opens the minds and hearts of people to an appreciation of the value of the universal principles of the essential unity and interdependence of humanity, of all life, and a realization of individual obligation and responsibility towards the well-being of the whole. It is the saga of the evolution of the human soul in which the individual gradually, through right education and emulation, feels his self-identity expanding to include in an ever-broadening circle his larger family, neighborhood, community, nation, mankind as a whole, and all life. A true patriot labours for the good of his nation which he considers to be an integral part of the international community, and, therefore, serves the best interests of the world as a whole while labouring for good of his nation. Gandhiji clearly articulated and exemplified patriotism of the nobler kind. He showed that it is not nationalism that is evil but that it is narrowness, selfishness, exclusiveness which is the bane of modern nations which is evil. "I do want to think of the whole world," wrote Gandhiji. "My patriotism," he said, "includes the good of mankind in general. Therefore, my service to India includes the service of humanity.... The whole scheme for the liberation of India is based upon the development of internal strength. It is a plan of self-purification." (*The Mind of the Mahatma*, Navjeevan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1967 edition, p. 436). Thus, Gandhiji strikes the key-note of Intelligent Patriotism.

Gandhiji rightly says that one cannot serve humanity in the true sense without working for elevating and broadening the sentiment and outlook of the nation to which one belongs and that the latter can only be brought about, even in a small measure, through the effort for one's own self-improvement. "It is a plan for self-purification." As Manu, Confucius, and other Wise men and Teachers have shown that it is by means of the building of the home on the foundation of the Laws of Virtue, beginning with individual self-improvement that one renders the greatest service to one's nation. This indeed is the object of Theosophical education. It is an intelligent application of the principle of human solidarity, the law of universal

causation through cyclic and karmic law. National defects are shared by the people of the nation as a whole, and, at the same time, they are heir to the highest spiritual and intellectual culture of the nation. The fact of individual Karma not being confined to the individual alone, but becoming the Karma of the nation, entails individual responsibility. Mindful of the individual responsibility and duty every effort made to rid oneself of defects of the character of the nation one in fact improves the national character to that extent. As individuals acquire virtues of charity, forgiveness, brotherliness, gratitude, etc., and make them part of their being, the character of the nation as a whole, in the same measure, is improved and elevated.

Theosophical education raises our awareness of the fact of the universal experience of humanity that preoccupation with and work for personal self alone is to work for disappointment. The true happiness is found only in the true Self, which is the Self of All. The suffering and misery of the world are due to ignorance of this Truth of truths. What greater service can one render to his fellowmen in all nations with different national identities than work towards raising the consciousness and understanding of the race to the reality of Universal Brotherhood which alone can heal the wounds mankind constantly inflicts on itself in ignorance. As the awareness of true Self and Universal Brotherhood grows in mankind, nations begin to work in union and harmony, as opposed to disunion and strife as at present in ignorance. Then two-thirds of the world's misery will vanish into thin air, and humanity will make speedy progress towards the consummation of its higher destiny which is human perfection. "Intelligent patriotism would therefore consist in doing our whole duty in that station where our karma has placed us, to our family, and to humanity as being made up of individuals, families and nations, while recognizing all as being the same in kind and differing only in degree. If our family duties are well and wisely performed, our duties to the nation and to humanity would to a great extent take care of themselves." (*Answers to Questions on The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 137)

## THE BHAGAVAD-GITA FOR ALL

THE BHAGAVAD-GITA is believed to have been delivered by Sri Krishna to the mentally confused Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra on the eleventh day (*Ekadasi*) of the bright half of the month of *Margasirsh* according to the Hindu almanac. Therefore, that day is regarded as the birthday of the *Gita*—*Gita-Jayanti*.

The *Gita* is an epitome of the essentials of the whole Upanishadic teaching. It is a many-sided approach to the practical life of man, and its teaching, it is said, leads to the realization of all human aspirations. That its doctrines can emancipate the human Soul and enlighten it with Wisdom and Peace is a well-recognized fact. The question that interests some lovers of India is—Can its message be utilized in the service of the country as a whole, as a unit? Are its teachings such that men and women who are not Hindus by birth, and who belong to and follow their own religious creeds, can use them without doing any violence to their own conscience and mind? For, if that be so, then the *Gita* is a scripture for Everyman.

The message of the *Gita* has a universal appeal. Its teachings are fundamentally psychological and practical; they are addressed to man, the thinker, from whom no blind belief in them is demanded, but whose reason is kindled into conviction. The *Gita* is a drama; its characters are human passions and principles in Nature—personified. Its historical background and martial atmosphere have misled some, but more and more is it being recognized that the *Gita* symbolizes the eternal struggle between the material and the spiritual in every human being. Any thinking individual is capable of recognizing that the story of the *Gita* is the story of life: it deals with the problems of good and evil, of delusions and illusions, of rights and duties, of the demoniac and the divine, of emancipation from falsehood and ugliness, and of the enlightenment of truth and beauty. The *Gita* is understood by each thinking soul in his own way, according to his own stage in evolution. To each the *Gita* offers the solution of his own problems. Thus, any deluded person of any community using the lessons taught can become enlightened.

The *Gita* may be regarded as the Book of Democracy: it teaches that Spirit is the seed of all, and that in the hearts of all beings it is rooted. Even those the world looks down upon, Krishna says, can tread the highest path and attain the loftiest state. Not only the virtuous and the wise can receive its aid, but the deluded and the ignoble also can cross over all sins in the bark of its spiritual knowledge.

But the pure democratic doctrines of the *Gita* do not advocate any process of levelling down all human beings to an equality in material things; they advocate the realization of an existing unity in Spirit which manifests as harmony of diversities. The socialism of the *Gita* is founded on the maxim of *noblesse oblige* and the method of attaining it is by the unfoldment of nobility at every stage and in every station of life. The social philosophy of the *Gita* recognizes the divisions and differences of the human kingdom and it does not attempt the impossible task of doing away with or ignoring them; it teaches their meaning and purpose, and reveals that they are but the result of the natural processes of evolution. Thus, for example, the *Gita* does not say that castes and classes are useless and should be destroyed; it explains *varnas* or castes from the point of view of the Soul; they are expressions of the varying qualities of the evolving human consciousness. Therefore, any Muslim who is pure, learned and selfless is, according to the *Gita*, a *Brahmana*; any Parsi who has valour, resourcefulness and majesty is a *Kshatriya*; any Christian who trades is a *Vaishya*; any Jain or Jew who serves is a *Shudra*; and so on. Similarly, the wicked in any community are the untouchables; likewise, there are Muslims who are *kafirs*, and Zoroastrians who are *durvands*, and *Brahmanas* who are *mlechchas*, and Christians who are heathens. By merit and merit alone is a person of high or low caste, of upper or lower class; birth, family, religion or wealth do not determine the Soul's station in life; its own qualities bespeak its stage of evolution. By self-control and self-effort any sinner can become pure, any untouchable attain membership in the highest caste.

The inspiration of the *Gita* produces a series of progressive

awakenings, but all of them result in Reliance on the Self within, which is perceived as the Inner Ruler. No prophet, no priest, can save that Self; no king, no emperor can have power over it. It is its own saviour and holds sway over its own kingdom of the mind, its own empire of the heart. Thus, the *Gita* destroys priest-made orthodoxy and sectarianism, but does not leave the person barren and lonely, for it brings to him the companionship of the Sage and Prophet. It illuminates for the Muslim his *Koran*, for the Parsi his *Avesta*, for the Christian his *Bible*. These are to be regarded not as infallible books but as avenues leading to the understanding and appreciation of their great recorders. For example, the teaching about *Shraddha* will purify and deepen the faith of the Muslim; the austerities and mortifications of body, speech and mind will make the Zoroastrian more enlightened about the triad of good deeds, good words and good thoughts which he reveres; the Sikh's martial ardour, the Jain's gentleness, will become more elevated qualities; the Christian will learn why ordinarily he is not able to live up to the Sermon on the Mount, and by what stages he can reach the position where he will be able to do so; and so on. That which is the force of evil in every religion will weaken, and the unifying spirit of true religion will become more and more manifest.

The principle of democracy in which each grade of intelligence has its duties to discharge contributes substantially in the unfoldment of the quality of self-reliance. The philosophy of the *Gita* is the philosophy of responsibility to neighbour and stranger, to country and race, to the whole of Nature, visible and invisible; its practice resolves itself into the Religion of Duty. The performance of duties requires a discernment of what are not our duties; otherwise, like Arjuna, we shall want to run away from our real duty, thinking that it consists in giving way to the enemy within and making peace with the wrongdoer in the world. The *Gita* has a unifying force; that power can bind men and women of different religions into a single whole; for, he who practices self-control, who attempts purification of his own thoughts, words and deeds, who endeavours

to live his days and years in an enlightened manner, comes in unison and harmony, unconsciously to himself, with all others who are engaged in the same task.

We must restore the *Gita* to its original position, from which it has fallen to assume a sectarian character. It is not religious code but a spiritual poem: its teachings, both metaphysical and ethical, have naught to do with religious rites, priests or temples; it is not other-worldly—it deals with the problems of life in this world. It is a book for all. It is complete in itself. Any man, any woman, in the East as in the West, can find his own place in its scheme, can see the very next step to be taken by him, the way to take that step, and the way to keep on progressing.

The main difficulty in according the *Gita* its real place as a book for all humanity is raised by those Hindus who proclaim it as only a Hindu religious text. Anyone experienced in human psychology will understand that men and women of other communities are in a better position to understand the message of the *Gita* as they are more likely to bring to the book a mind and a heart free from the bias of inherited religious traditional beliefs. The right approach to the *Gita* consists in having our mind fresh to penetrate its verses. The effect is magical. The following quotation proves the point; it is from the pen of one who approached the *Gita* with a fresh mind. If an occidental of old could be uplifted by the power and inspiration of the *Gita*, surely it is easily possible for any oriental, though he be not a Hindu, to be benefitted in a similar manner. Here are the words of A. W. von Schlegel, the German poet and critic who rendered the *Gita* into Latin in 1823: “By the Brahmins, reverence of masters is considered the most sacred of duties. Thee, therefore, first, most holy prophet, interpreter of the Deity, by whatever name thou wast called among mortals, the author of this poem, by whose oracles the mind is rapt with ineffable delight to doctrines lofty, eternal and divine—thee first, I say, I hail, and shall always worship at thy feet.”

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

We need to combine Western psychology with Eastern philosophy because they complement each other. Western psychology has reduced human tendencies and traits into personality types, such as, cerebrotonic, viscerotonic and somatotonic. It may appear that Western psychology is concerned with mere labelling. However, no-thingness of Eastern philosophy can be understood in the light of Western psychology’s personality labelling. Once the personality type has been labelled based on one’s behaviour and thought patterns, it becomes an entity. The metaphysical self which we may describe as the witness, the observer or the no-thing, can remain away from the drama of this entity, if we learn to accept it but not identify with it. However, the western paradigm of psychology can help you escape responsibility for your actions, because disidentification can lead one to deny ownership of their behaviour but blame it all on the disidentified part, and so one says, “it was not me, it was my anger, my hunger, my hurt, my personality, my past experiences, etc. which made me do it.” We need to differentiate between disidentification and dissociation. In disidentification there is complete acceptance, in dissociation there is repression and resistance to “problematic” parts.

On the other hand, Eastern philosophy says that by recognizing that the “doer,” *i.e.*, the murderer or the rapist, is not the essence, one can escape the responsibility for, and also, the consequences of one’s actions. There is a need to integrate Eastern therapeutic techniques with the Western psychology. While Western psychology can explain every thought and every behaviour by tracing it back to some traumatic event or early life experience, Eastern philosophy traces back the trauma, the struggle and all suffering to “ego,” and recommends that to overcome suffering we must stop identifying ourselves with these situations and stop all role-based identification, as for instance, when we say that first and foremost one is a mother, then a woman.

The Eastern philosophy seems to throw away the baby out with

the bath water, when it rejects the traits and behavioural patterns that are observed by western psychologists to diagnose people. The reason being, our attachment patterns are crucial in understanding what kind of people we get attracted to, and “the mere understanding of these patterns not only helps one to make better choices and understand one’s blind spots but also relieves one, of the feeling of undesirability, shame and rejection, that comes with shared experience in intimate relationships.” Eastern philosophy reduces it all to our desire to be loved in a certain way, and the tendency to feel complete when so loved. Instead of rooting in any one system, or denying our needs to belong, taken care of and loved in a certain way, we can do something about them. “And it is...possible that our obsessive needs and the denial of it by someone, society, system, is our only portal to freedom,” writes Somi Das. (*Sunday Free Press Journal*, August 1, 2021)

The Eastern philosophy recognizes two selves in man, called the personality and the individuality, whereas the Western psychology recognizes and deals with only the personality. The two selves in man are described in the *Mundaka Upanishad*, thus: “Two birds, inseparable companions, perch on the same tree. Of these two, one eats the fruit (suffers and enjoys); the other looks on without eating.” The first bird is our personal self, feeding on pleasures and pains of this world, the other is the Individual or Universal Self, silently witnessing all.

Self-consciousness belongs to man alone and proceeds from the higher Manas (Mind). Hence, unless western psychology admits the existence of lower (animal) and higher (divine) mind in man, free will and higher manifestations of mind will remain a riddle to it. It is the higher mind which enables us to say “I am I” and in conjunction with *Atma-Buddhi*, becomes the Individuality or true Self. We tend to derive our identity from what surrounds our true Self, *i.e.*, our body, ideas, feelings, education, etc. This derived sense of self could be extremely fragile, requiring continual maintenance, nurturing and defending. To bolster the sense of identity we gather

possessions. We fear physical death because it implies separation from everything that we depend upon for a sense of self. “Not only is man more than an animal because there is a god in him, but he is more than a god because there is the animal in him.” Spiritual progress depends upon right relation of these two forces—animal and divine. We have allowed the animal to usurp the place of the god. Once we allow the god to rule the animal, we will be in possession of great force and power hitherto unknown to us, says *Through the Gates of Gold*. For that purpose, we are asked to think, every day and as often as we can, that “we” are not the body, mind, emotions, praise or blame, but we are THAT.

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Since things change at a fast pace in our world, it is very difficult to anticipate good and bad effects of new technologies, and that calls for greater effort on our part to remain alert to the consequences of technological innovation. Some express the view that the scientists and engineers are not morally responsible, individually and collectively, for the uses to which the products of their work are put, and that the responsibility for the consequences lies with those who put their products to use. Happily, there are those who do not share this view. The author, Don A. Howard, argues that those possessing special technical expertise have special obligation to act, to be involved in policy making and to take part in public debate about the uses to which the products of their innovation are put. The author gives an example of activist scientists who pursued the goal of public education that led to establishing of the civilian-led Atomic Energy Commission and prevented control of nuclear energy being given to the military, in the United States, in 1946.

The question whether those with technical expertise are obliged to act or not has been examined within the Civic Virtue Framework, which shows that civic virtues and vices are manifested by both individuals and the group in the form of collective habits of action. Another important point that needs to be emphasized is that one is

always a member of multiple communities, and that applies also to scientists and engineers. Every human being on the planet is a member of the global community, which means that when conflict arises, we try to find common ground, or find those things that unite us, and from there move forward in spite of our differences. Moreover, “deep knowledge and a lifetime of experience equip technical experts with a kind of insight that cannot be developed from a technical briefing.” The obligation to act could be an individual or a collective responsibility. We have an example of 4,000 Google employees, including senior engineers, who signed a letter to Google’s chief executive officer, in April 2018, objecting to a contract under which Google would develop for the Pentagon artificial intelligence tools for identifying objects in video that would improve targeting in drone strikes. Six weeks later, Google announced cancellation of the contract. Likewise, the public responsibility of engineers has been stressed in its code of ethics, by most of the major engineering professional associations. “Many have voiced the opinion that both individual scientists and engineers and the institutions through which they work are obligated to act in the public interest. . . . Let us work together to design new and better structures for achieving that worthy end,” writes Howard. (*American Scientist*, July-August 2021)

Since we are interconnected on the inner planes of being, we affect others through our thoughts, words and actions, and are responsible for the same. Knowledge and powers are double-edged weapons and could be used for the good of others or to their detriment. Our responsibility in this direction seems to be enormous. According to Bill Joy, a co-founder of Sun Micro-Systems, modern technologies—robotics, genetic engineering and nanotechnology—appear to be within reach of individuals, as they “do not require large facilities and rare materials. Knowledge alone will enable their use.” In our desire for new discoveries and innovations, we seem to have overlooked the ensuing consequences. We need to proceed with caution. He argues that a bomb is blown up only once, “but

one altered gene can become many, and quickly get out of control.” It is also felt that scientists, technologists and engineers should adopt a strong code of ethical conduct that would ensure that they will desist from creating or developing any knowledge-enabled technologies of mass destruction.

In an Editor’s Note to the article, “From Theosophy to Shakespeare” (*The Theosophist*, July 1883), H.P.B. expresses the view that certain scientific discoveries should never be made public. Thus: “Some of the discoveries of certain sciences—such as chemistry and physical science—ought to have been kept ‘occult’ at any rate. It is very questionable whether the secrets of gunpowder, nitro-glycerine, dynamite and the like, have more benefited than wronged humanity; at least they ought to have been withheld from the knowledge of the ignorant and unprincipled portions of mankind. Such, at least, was the opinion of Faraday, and some other great men of science. And this may explain, perhaps, why the occultists *will not* give out their even more perilous secrets promiscuously.”

Ludwig Wittgenstein, considered to be one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century, said: “Where of one cannot speak, there of one must be silent. The limits of my language mean the limits of my word.” Does that mean that we should maintain silence regarding the transcendent and limitless world that is beyond our world and also beyond words? Similar sentiments are expressed in Taoism, which says, “The Tao that can be spoken is not the Tao.” Likewise, the Zen Buddhist, metaphysical riddle, which transcends logic of language, says, “You know the sound of two hands clapping. But what is the sound of one hand clapping?” Yet, can we say that the universal truth that lies beyond the sphere of transient appearance can never be put into words? “The ancient Greeks identified two modes of perception, that of Logos or rationality, which governs language,” and that of Mythos, which allows the expression of the mystical experiences that need to be interpreted intuitively. The philosophers, sages and poets sought to translate Logos into Mythos

to gain oblique glimpses of what is said to lie beyond words. We are given the example of a poem written by a philosopher-poet, Gopi Warriar, to commemorate the death of his close friend, which has lines: “Beyond dark energy...Beyond the Big Bang...Breathing in Universe, God becoming one pulsating Nothingness.” Through the fusion of Vedic thought and modern physics he conveys the transience of earthly life and the everlastingness of the cosmos, writes Jug Suraiya. (*The Speaking Tree*, August 4, 2021)

A language is used by an individual to express his emotions, hopes, ideas, aspirations and experiences. At times, language is inadequate to express certain experiences. For instance, how do we convey to another the taste of Alphonso mango? We might say it is sweet like sugar, or sweet like honey, but we know that it does not convey the real taste of that mango. In fact, no sensation can be accurately defined or described to anyone who has not personally experienced it. Our Soul or Ego has a language of its own, and that language is one of colour, sound and symbol. Likewise, in order to convey his spiritual experiences, a mystic uses metaphors, allegories, symbols and paradoxes, and hence while reading such works, it is necessary to look for the inner, hidden meaning and avoid dead-letter form of interpretation.

There is universal language of symbols. Myths make use of the language of symbols. A myth is not just any story, but a fabulous story containing some important truth. Prof. C. S. Lewis comments on the nature of human mind and the nature of myth. He observes that human intellect is abstract, and the realities we experience are concrete. While we are bearing pain or enjoying pleasure or loving a person, we are not intellectually apprehending Pain, Pleasure or Love. The moment we try to capture a concrete experience in words, it disappears. Myth becomes a bridge, which connects abstract with the concrete. All the scriptures of the world make use of universal language of symbols, and therefore must be studied *intuitively*, so as to grasp the real meaning of sacred books.