

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

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LAWS OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESS

The reason you have had help is that in other lives you gave it to others. In every effort you made to lighten another mind and open it to Truth, you were helped yourself. Those pearls you found for another and gave to him, you really retained for yourself in the act of benevolence. For when one lives thus to help others, he is thereby putting in practice the rule to try and "kill out all sense of separateness," and thus gets little by little in possession of true light.

—*Letters That Have Helped Me*

EVERYTHING in the universe is governed by Law. We observe the working of this law in every department and kingdom of Nature. On the physical plane, we observe that when we sow corn, we reap corn, not strawberries or mangoes. If we eat rotten food it leads to indigestion. Similarly, in the psychic realm, we observe that watching obscene movies or reading trash books leaves an impression in our minds and the same surfaces in our unguarded moments and throws us off-balance. Why then should there not be laws governing the spiritual or inner life?

What are the characteristics of a "successful man" in the wordly sense? He is, generally, a man of great wealth, power, fame, self-will and one with the ability to survive in this competitive world. What characterizes spiritual success? Buddhism describes a spiritually advanced person as one possessed of *Maha-Prajna*—"great spiritual insight"—and *Maha-Karuna*—"great compassion." However, the description of the qualities of a true devotee in the *Gita* gives us a yardstick to measure spiritual success. In one sense, to be spiritually successful is to become a true

devotee. Thus:

My devotee who is free from enmity, well-disposed towards all creatures, merciful, wholly exempt from pride and selfishness, the same in pain and pleasure, patient of wrongs, content, constantly devout, self-governed, firm in resolves, and whose mind and heart are fixed on me alone is dear unto me.
(*Gita*, XII)

For most of us life just goes on, with humdrum passing of weeks into months and months into years. For a few others it may include the reading of the scriptures, fasting, going to the temple or church, doing some charity; and so we carry on—one day happy and another day sad—often frustrated with life and ourselves. But we carry on with a certain sense of complacency.

Hence the first law is the *law of Awareness*. If there is a gulf between a good man and a bad man, there is a greater gulf between a good man and a spiritual man, says *Light on the Path*. For instance, a person may decide to remain a celibate, but what is his state of mind? What is the reason for choosing celibacy? It may be simply because he is too busy with his academic activities or business career, or because he has not enough money to raise a family. He may indulge in mental gratification. As against this, a spiritual person chooses celibacy in order to save creative energy and observes chastity at all levels—physical, mental and moral.

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. It is said of the saint poet Akha Bhagat, that before becoming a saint, he was a goldsmith—an honest and good businessman. Once he was asked to make a gold necklace for his sister. However, his sister did not trust him, and asked another goldsmith to check the necklace for the purity of gold used. When Akha Bhagat came to know of this, he was pained, disillusioned and suddenly made aware of the hollowness of so-called “close relationships.” This incident proved to be a turning point in his life. Thus, *Light on the Path* suggests:

No man desires to see that light which illumines the spaceless soul until pain and sorrow and despair have driven him away from the life of ordinary humanity. First he wears out pleasure; then he wears out pain—till, at last, his eyes become incapable of tears. (p. 35)

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, waking us up to higher possibilities.

If we are sincere, and if this is not just the emotion of the moment, then we may want to know: what is spirituality? We may find that it involves complete overhauling of our mental and moral nature, in accordance with certain laws. Surprisingly, we may discover that *we* have to impose these laws on ourselves. The disciple has to put the bit into his own mouth, says *Light on the Path*. A “bit” is a metal mouthpiece used to control a horse, and is very painful for him. So also, the aspirant has to impose on himself certain painful restrictions.

The next important Law is the *law of Learning*. There is learning from one’s own experiences as also from those of the people around us. For some people, nothing is an experience till it happens to them. Learning from another’s experience calls for imagination and sympathy. For those who are attentive, an ordinary train journey may become an experience. But for the one lost in his cares, the journey may mean nothing. It is also true of life. When we look at the lives of other people and learn from their experiences, in one life we may have the advantage of having lived several lives. Learning is a continuous process for a spiritual aspirant. Every situation and every person becomes a teacher. “No man is your enemy: no man is your friend. All alike are your teachers. Your enemy becomes a mystery that must be solved, even though it take ages: for man must be understood. Your friend becomes a part of

yourself, an extension of yourself, a riddle hard to read” (*Light on the Path*, p. 24). It is said that when the lesson is learnt the necessity ceases.

Growth does not depend upon the *amount* of pain or pleasure that is endured, but upon *our attitude* of mind towards all that may meet us on life’s journey. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

In order to learn we must be willing to pass through “foul and clean places alike.” An ordinary man is likely to feel shocked when he encounters evil—unable to handle it. We regard with aversion, and would probably shun, a drunkard, a murderer or a prostitute. *Light on the Path* warns us against such an attitude: “Do not fancy you can stand aside from the bad man or the foolish man. They are yourself....The self-righteous man makes for himself a bed of mire.” Through our aversion we bind ourselves with that person or thing till we recognize that our soul cannot be separated from the evil in the world. We are not to hate vice, or love vice, but *understand* it, says Mr. Judge. When Buddha met Angulimala, a highway robber and killer, he was not shaken, and could deal with him effectively, bringing about an inner conversion. A spiritually advanced person knows more about evil than a sinful person, because the sinner sinks deep into his vice or sin, while a spiritual person is able to remain detached while observing it.

What is the good of virtue that is developed within the four walls of a monastery—protected from the wickedness, misery and temptations of life? A spiritual man exercises free will and is able to discriminate between good and evil. As Milton said: “Evil into the minds of men and gods may enter and leave no stain.”

Another important law is the *law of Detachment*. A certain amount of detachment is necessary to extract lessons out of our experiences. Our involvement with an event is like raw material and reflection upon it is like processing of raw material. We process it the best, when we are detached. The more detached we are, the less is the time gap between experiencing and analyzing. A time comes, when part of us remains detached and observes—making it possible to analyze and experience simultaneously. For instance,

we can experience pain with detached concern. Thus:

The thought pattern during the suffering hinges around I am unhappy. In the state of unhappiness what happens is that one’s personality gets totally identified with one’s emotional layer....The fact is that I can observe my body; I can also observe my emotions and my ideas. Now the exercise is to stand apart as a mere witness of the pain, if it is at the body level; of sorrow at the emotional level; and insult or non-acceptance of our ideas by others at the intellectual level. With a little continuation of this self-effort one dissociates the “I” from the unhappiness....How long will the thoughts remain unhappy without the co-operation of the “I”? It is the mind that suffers not “I”. The “I” has become a witness. (*The Times of India*, December 21, 1999)

“In sensation no permanent home can be found, because change is the law of this vibratory existence. It is useless to pause and weep for a scene in a kaleidoscope which has passed,” teaches the mystical book, *Light on the Path*. The ocean of life washes to our feet and away again, both things that are hard to lose and unpleasant to welcome. We are so dependent on outside things and people for our happiness that if any of them are missing we feel thoroughly miserable.

One of the most important laws is the *law of Application*, i.e., the law of living all the good things we believe in. Knowledge without application is like undigested food, it can only beget pride, conceit, a “holier than thou” attitude and make us armchair philosophers. The Buddha says of such people:

He who quotes the Sacred texts but is lazy and will not apply, he is like a cowherd counting the cows of others. He shares not the blessings of the Good Life. (*The Dhammapada*, verse 19)

The *law of Purification* involves purification at the level of body, speech and mind. Who is not aware of the importance of thoughts? Pure thoughts form the very foundation of spiritual life, being also the basis for pure speech and actions. Thus:

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: all that

we are is founded on our thoughts and formed of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness pursues him like his own shadow that never leaves him. (*The Dhammapada*, verse 2)

The *law of Love and Compassion* or Human Solidarity springs from the realization that in reality there is no such thing as separateness. Shri Krishna says, "I am the Ego which is seated in the hearts of all beings." And yet, we are unable to look beyond the body and the personality, when we meet people. All that we see is a person of certain height, complexion, temperament, emotions, educational background, drawbacks, etc. In a dialogue between the teacher and the pupil, the pupil admits that the light shining in his heart and in the hearts of his fellowmen is not in any way different. "It is in no way different, though the prisoner is held in bondage by Karma, and though its outer garments delude the ignorant into saying, 'Thy soul and My soul,'" (*S.D.*, I, 120). We are our "Brother's keeper." Little acts of kindness go a long way in helping us in our spiritual endeavours. Mr. Judge writes:

Act with a high motive; have kindly feeling towards all; do some little act of kindness every day and try to realize that the end of all this will be happiness and peace to all humanity. Then, a foretaste of that peace will enter your own heart. There is a bright side to life, and what makes the brightness is the love which each of us may have for humanity. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

Among other laws, the most important one is the *law of Least Effort*. Not only are we expected to continually strive towards our ideal and "work as those work who are ambitious," but also to learn to surrender our personal will to the Divine Will. When we surrender personal will, we offer minimum resistance and then much is accomplished with very little effort. Mr. Judge says, "Do you know what it is to resist without resistance? That means, among other things, that too great an expenditure of strength, of 'fortitude,' is not wise." He asks us to learn to lean back on the "great ocean of the Self which is never moved." Spiritual energy is needed not

only to start the discipline but also to maintain and sustain it in the face of all opposition and adversity. That energy flows from our divine nature, and it flows in great torrents for the one whose will is in line with the Divine Will.

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ACTING BROTHERLY

TODAY, we hear so much about Brotherhood, but rarely of the need to educate ourselves and the world in order to understand and practise Brotherhood. In fact, there are so many meanings of the word itself, so many attitudes towards the practice of it, that it is not surprising that it is still merely a word and not a vital part of life. We need, therefore, to begin to educate ourselves first, and then the world, in this subject.

Once we start examining this idea, we are forced back to the starting point of any understanding of life, namely, the Universe—the Whole—and the unit—that speck of consciousness which is a portion of the Whole—and the relationship of the units to the Whole and to each other. We have, therefore, three aspects to consider—the mental concept of Brotherhood, the actional aspect and the heart aspect.

Starting where we are, we must ask ourselves, “What do I mean by acting brotherly to my neighbour?” Meditating along this line, we see that, as a unit of consciousness, each man has a relationship to all other units, from the atom to the star and the sun, the criminal and the saint, the evil and the good. This conclusion cannot be escaped, and physical science is bringing to our notice today this interrelationship as a practical effect and cause.

In an occult Catechism quoted in *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 120), the Master asks his Chela:

...look around and into thyself. That light which burns inside thee, dost thou feel it different in anywise from the light that shines in thy Brother-men?

And the Chela answers:

It is in no way different, though the prisoner is held in bondage by Karma, and though its outer garments delude the ignorant into saying, “Thy Soul and My Soul.”

This is more expressly stated by H.P.B. in these terms:

The radical unity of the ultimate essence of each constituent

part of compounds in Nature—from Star to mineral Atom, from the highest Dhyān Chohan to the smallest infusoria, in the fullest acceptance of the term, and whether applied to the spiritual, intellectual, or physical worlds—this is the one fundamental law in Occult Science. (*Ibid.*)

Meditating on these extracts, we begin to see the simple truth that what hurts one hurts all. Also, that we cannot help ourselves without helping all.

The question arises, How shall we act towards the other units who are part and parcel of our own life? Unfortunately, in the struggle for life, other units struggling for their own life get in our way! A tussle begins, and herein lies the root of evil. If we are aiming at Brotherhood, how shall we act towards these other units that impinge on our freedom? In *The Secret Doctrine* we read that this state of unbrotherliness will last “until we begin acting from *within*, instead of ever following impulses from *without*; namely, those produced by our physical senses and gross selfish body.” (I, 644)

We learn that to act from within, instead of being urged by impulses from without, means thought before action, the pros and cons being reckoned and the consequent action based on certain principles. The basis of this thought has to be the idea of unity and harmony. H.P.B. tells us:

...unity in thought and action, and philosophical research into the mysteries of being, will always prevent some, while trying to comprehend that which has hitherto remained to them a riddle, from creating additional causes in a world already so full of woe and evil. (*Ibid.*)

Meditating on these ideas, we see that they are axiomatic, self-evident truths. All the great Teachers of Humanity have taught this in simple language—“Do unto others as you would they should do unto you”; “Love your enemy”; “Do good to them that hate you”; and there are many similar statements.

We need further help, for, though love may be the ensouling force in any action, still the action may be bad. Therefore, we are

told in *The Key to Theosophy* that we err “when there is the slightest invasion of another’s right—be that other a man or a nation; when there is any failure to show him the same justice, kindness, consideration or mercy which we desire for ourselves.” This is our duty to humanity, and Theosophy works to “make men feel and recognize in their innermost hearts what is their real, true duty to all men.” Then only “every old abuse of power, every iniquitous law in the national policy, based on human, social or political selfishness, will disappear of itself.” We must work at the causal level, for to alter one cause is to alter a long chain of effects.

But the fact still remains that in practice we meet with units with whose actions it is impossible to harmonize. Is it not here that the saying of St. Paul is applicable—“Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate”? And that of the Buddha: “There is no companionship with a fool”? (*The Dhammapada*, verse 330)

Let us look at any action. There are three ways to act which we find easily understandable when we think of war. Either we fight, or we do not, or we offer passive resistance.

We must remember that passive resistance is not an outward-flowing action; it is complete stability, imposing a steady front, but not giving in to the enemy or fighting him. A great force is liberated which is much more productive of good than even the winning of a battle or a war. It comes from the within, is made possible by the steady concentrated will-thought, with an outgoing to the enemy of heartfelt love as though to a mistaken brother.

If we decide to fight, then, as the *Gita* points out, we must be only “the immediate agent.” Not the doer, but the agent. If we run away, we may do so through fear or to live to fight again another day. Whether we run away and admit defeat because we are fearful of consequences, as Arjuna was, or plan to resume the battle later, we must decide after *full* thought and advice, not impulsively.

Here we touch upon the feeling aspect. While we move from without, we move in terms of sensations, feelings, desires, with selfishness and self-centredness. The false “I” is acting, and *ahankara* brings final defeat to us. It therefore becomes very

necessary to analyse our emotional action and reaction. For this reason we are urged to develop love to all. As all actions start in the mind, it is there we have to plant the seed of love, and visualize the reactions on the emotional environment, not merely in ourselves.

As has been seen, this subject needs much thought, and the realization that

Theosophy alone can gradually create a mankind as harmonious and as simple-souled as Kosmos itself; but to effect this theosophists have to act as such. (“The Tidal Wave,” *She Being Dead Yet Speaketh*, p. 25)

What is to be aimed for is:

Full and entire liberty of conscience allowed to all; fraternity reigning between the rich and the poor, equality recognized in theory and practice between the aristocrat and the plebeian....All this must come about naturally and voluntarily on both sides. (“Le Phare de l’Inconnu,” *She Being Dead Yet Speaketh*, p. 107)

What we need is to emphasize the keynote of life:

He who is thoroughly impressed with the philosophic truth that every Ego begins and ends by being the indivisible WHOLE, cannot love his neighbour less than he does himself. (*Ibid.*)

What does love here mean? Love is not grasping, love is not sentiment, love is not blind. Love is charity which is understanding. Love is willingness to help, willingness to learn how to help.

Though the environment in which we practise love is our home, our nation, etc., yet we learn *how* to love by concentrating on the idea of the WHOLE, on the Life Force which shows in so magnificent a manner through the sap of the plant, the energy of the animal, the living vitality of the man and the purity of the channel through which it flows from the perfected man to the WHOLE. As the tree shelters from the sun both the evil man and the good, so let us learn to shelter every man, the evil as well as the good, by understanding him and acting in terms of the best we know.

Education should start in the home and the school, in the factory

and the office, in the literature of the world and in the arts, so that the love of Truth and the love of Beauty, which is true proportion, can take the place of ugliness and disruption.

To understand life and our fellow beings we have to be impregnated with the idea given by H.P.B. in her article “Le Phare de l’Inconnu”:

The great reform must take place without any social shocks, without a drop of blood being spilled; which can happen in no other way than by the recognition of the axiomatic truth of Oriental Philosophy, which teaches us that the great diversity of fortune, of social rank and of intellect, is due but to the personal Karma of each human being. (*She Being Dead Yet Speaketh*, p. 107)

THERE is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fullness, and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect clear conception—which is truth.
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Binds it, and makes all error: and to KNOW
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without.

—ROBERT BROWNING

FAITH AND REASON

No genuine, no sincere searcher after truth can ever be found among the *blind* believers in the “Divine Word,” let the latter be claimed to come from Allah, Brahma, or Jehovah, or their respective Kuran, Purana and Bible. For, “*Faith is not reason’s labour, but repose.*” He who believes his own religion on faith, will regard that of every other man as a lie, and hate it on that same faith. Moreover, unless it fetters reason and entirely blinds our perceptions of anything outside our own particular faith, the latter is no faith at all, but a temporary belief, the delusion we labour under, at some particular time of life.

—U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 1, p. 2

WHAT is faith? Faith, trust, belief and devotion are all taken to be synonymous terms. In Sanskrit it is called *Shraddha*. All creatures inherently possess this quality—as seen, for example, in the implicit trust of the young one in its parent. The whole of natural world rests on faith and trust, though man often betrays it in every relation. Faith is that power in all of us, using which many marvellous results have been obtained.

Where does this quality of faith spring from? “The faith of each one...proceeds from the *sattva* quality; the embodied soul being gifted with faith” (*Gita*, XVII). The *sattva* quality inheres in the imperishable, inmost being, the spiritual Self of every man; hence man has deep within him, latently, the perfection and powers of the Spirit.

Faith is the creative power in man which, in ordinary life, he exercises unconsciously, sometimes producing extraordinary phenomena which are regarded as “miraculous.” For instance, the woman with a bloody issue is said in the Gospels to have been cured of her ailment when she touched the garment worn by Jesus, upon which he is said to have turned round and told her that it was her faith that had made her well. In all ages and climes, even today, we find extraordinary phenomena produced by faith. “There is a weird and formidable potency in human will and imagination,

whether exercised consciously or unconsciously. Faith is a quality endowed with most potent creative power” (*The Theosophical Glossary*). Adepts exercise the power consciously and intelligently with a premeditated end in view, while we unconsciously and blindly, mistakenly attribute results, if extraordinary, to some god or saint in whom we may have faith.

Faith is the power of the “Spirit in the body, the Great Lord.” It is the ideas and beliefs that we hold which give direction to the life-force we are continuously expending throughout our lives, and our desires and motives give it the moral quality or character. If they are inconsistent with truth and reality, which, therefore, cannot but be disruptive of the harmony of life, we invariably produce results that are harmful to ourselves and to the world at large.

Hence, Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, “The faith of mortals is of three kinds, and is born from their own disposition [*svabhava*]; it is of the quality of truth—*sattva*, action—*rajas*, and indifference—*tamas*.... Each man is of the same nature as that ideal on which his faith is fixed.” We mould and shape our character in the image of the ideas and ideals on which our faith is fixed. The character of each person, as much as that of a nation, therefore, is his or her *acquired nature* or *svabhava*, and not the result of accident or chance, nor determined by our “genes,” as is generally believed by those who have fixed their faith on the dicta of modern science. It is obvious then that each one of us is responsible for the good and evil conditions surrounding us individually and collectively. Hence the importance of examining the basis of our beliefs and ideas in the light of an understanding of a truer knowledge of life and its purpose can never be overemphasized. This is the basis of all true reform. Therefore, faith in itself cannot save us unless it is founded on the right knowledge of what is true and real.

Faith is blind when something is believed in without knowledge and accepted on the authority of an individual or Church or any establishment. There is another kind of faith that is based on knowledge and reason. Both these kinds of faith produce physical, mental and moral results of far-reaching consequences widely

different from each other—one tending to darkness and retrogression and the other to enlightenment and true progress. Organized religions, though in their origin based on knowledge of the great truths of life, have, in the course of centuries, mostly become crystallized into sets of beliefs and dogmas, resting on dead-letter interpretation, enforced by priestly authority, and blindly accepted and followed by the masses. The idea of God, for instance, has fallen from the grand philosophical conception of ubiquitous Absolute Deity and Law into anthropomorphic God of the churches and temples, who is to be feared and propitiated for obtaining personal favours or salvation or to save oneself from misfortunes. It can be easily shown that belief in such a personal god is a logical impossibility, that the moral effect of belief in such an outside god kills self-reliance in the believer, accentuates his selfishness and makes him morally irresponsible. Man thus strays far from truth, *viz.*, by the very law of his being man has to progress by self-induced and self-devised ways and means; to learn the lessons of life implicit in the good and evil experiences that come to him as effects produced by his own actions (Karma); through reliance on the power of his Higher Self.

One of the beliefs spread by the Christian Church is that one is pardoned of all one’s sins if one declares, even at the last moment of his sinful life, his belief in the dogma that the “Saviour” shed his blood on the cross to vicariously expiate the sins of mankind. In India, a no less pernicious belief is current among the Hindus—as a result of misunderstanding of original truths—that one can wash away one’s sins by taking a holy dip in the Ganges or by making offerings to gods in the temples. The illogical, not to speak of unjust, basis of such beliefs is plainly evident, as the universe is governed by Law, which is Absolute Justice.

Modern science, no less than religion, is subject to false faith, strange as the statement may seem. For instance, official science denies *a priori* any vital principle and mind independent of material forms, declaring that both are merely temporary effects produced by molecular action, and that evolution is a blind, random process

which has neither design nor intelligent purpose, much less any moral basis. Such arbitrary conclusions are made, based on only one aspect of Nature, which falls within the range of physical senses, and are passed on as the whole truth, in the face of a mass of undeniable evidence to the contrary, as admitted by the intuitive and keenest minds among the great scientists themselves. Yet the public is taught to accept, unquestioningly, such arbitrary conclusions as final truths. This has bred the materialism of the day with all its negative effects, as Theosophy shows that materialism is “an anti-philosophical negation of pure spirit...a disbelief in all but material things,” which directly breeds “materialism in conduct and action—brutality, hypocrisy, and, above all, selfishness” (*Five Messages*, p. 6). The materialism of the times is the outgrowth of false faiths.

Encompassing spirit, soul and matter, the ancient science of life regards Nature as one complete whole, the universe an embodied consciousness. Thus bridging the gulf between mind and matter it finds no gaps or missing links, and no unsolvable riddles or problems of life. Faith resting on such all-inclusive knowledge is referred to in the *Bhagavad-Gita* as the faith that is of the nature of Truth—*sattva*.

The Wisdom-Religion, now called Theosophy, is thus the accumulated wisdom of countless ages of evolution of beings, “the aggregate of the knowledge and wisdom that underlie the Universe—the homogeneity of eternal GOOD” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 56). The great body of Wisdom-Science has been, and is, continuously tested and verified by high Initiates and their disciples. It is more rigorous in its methods than those of modern science. How was this done?

Their spiritual visions, real explorations by, and through, physical and spiritual senses untrammelled by blind flesh, were systematically checked and compared one with the other, and their nature sifted. All that was not corroborated by unanimous and collective experience was rejected, while that only was recorded as established truth which, in various ages, under

different climes, and throughout an untold series of incessant observations, was found to agree and receive constantly further corroboration. The methods used by our scholars and students of the psycho-spiritual sciences do not differ from those of students of the natural and physical sciences...Only our fields of research are on two different planes, and our instruments are made by no human hands, for which reason perchance they are only the more reliable. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 85)

Though it is beyond the capacity of a neophyte to test this knowledge, he can comprehend intellectually the whole philosophy of it as given by the Great Ones from time to time, and ascertain for himself the reasonableness, logical coherence, applicability and universality of its basic propositions. Besides, he has the first-hand testimony of absolutely trustworthy witnesses to Truth—the great body of living Sages—which serves as the touchstone, as it were, to ascertain the validity of any proposition presented to him and to test all experiences. He knows it to be the great universal solvent that dissolves and cleanses all religions and creeds of the dross of the ages, and makes them all merge back to that universal eternal fount of wisdom from which they originally sprang. He has supreme faith in this wisdom of the ages, that he himself can personally verify by first-hand experience, by fulfilling requisite conditions laid down for such knowing.

Faith is the perception of *Manas* (the fifth principle), while knowledge, in the true sense of the term, is the capacity of the Intellect, *i.e.*, it is spiritual perception. In short, the higher individuality of man, composed of his higher *Manas*, the sixth and the seventh principles [*Buddhi* and *Atma*], should work as a unity, and then only can it obtain “divine wisdom,” for divine things can be sensed only by divine faculties. (*H.P.B. Series*, No. 27, p. 11)

Do not judge in anger, for though the anger passes the judgment remains.

—W. Q. JUDGE

TIRUKKURAL—THIRUVALLUVAR'S LIFE AND TEACHINGS

IV

VALLUVAR takes up a most important subject of family life in Chapters 5 to 24. A noble tribute has been paid to Valluvar, for this part of his work, in some theosophical writings. Generally asceticism is exalted at the expense of family life. But Thiruvalluvar, who set an example of an ideal household life to mortals, heartily praises and exhibits in the most attractive light every human and social virtue. At the outset he points to the fact that the householder is the prop of the other three orders of life, *viz.*, *Brahmacharya*, *Vanaprastha*, and *Sannyas*. He helps them by giving food, medicine, etc., to enable them to follow their Path without any worry. We are told:

Family duty consists not in sensuality or pleasure hunting, but in cultivating and in elevating the emotional nature (the fourth principle), of ourselves and of our family; in being equally “kind,” not only to the members of the family, but also to all creatures, and in enjoying all such pleasures of the family life as are consistent with the acquirement of “wealth” (all the means necessary for the performance of Dharma or whole duty) according to the teachings of Valluvar, and in utilizing such pleasures and means for the performance of our duty to our nation. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 34*, p. 4)

Valluvar's laws of the householder are based on the ancient *Smriti* and the *Manava Dharma Shastra*, as he points out his duty to his forefathers, to gods, guests, relatives, etc. What makes a family happy? Love and Virtue, says Valluvar. He founded his system on Love—the fountain of all virtues. He even goes so far as to say that the life of a perfect householder is far greater than the Path of the ascetics, because he keeps others on the right path and himself does not swerve from his duties. Valluvar hints at the notorious hypocrisy of many professed ascetics who call themselves Yogis, Fakirs, and *sannyasis* but whose morality is questionable. He says: “There is no greater and nobler life than the one free from

reproach.”

After pointing out the importance and greatness of the householder's life, he refers in the next chapter to the “Lady of the house.” She is the true partner in life who possesses the wifely virtues and adapts her expenditure to her husband's income. She is the glory of the house. He emphasizes Chastity, Prudence, Faithfulness to her husband and the performance of her duties as the necessary qualities of a virtuous wife. Such a dutiful wife, our poet says, inherits heaven with all its glory and even the gods obey her. Her virtue is the grace of a home, her children its adornment.

The next chapter is devoted to “sons.” In India, among all classes of men there is a very powerful sentiment that a man, who dies without a son to perform the ceremonies for the departed, must suffer in hell. Therefore even if he had not one, he adopts one to maintain the household fire, to discharge the duties of hospitality and to perform the ceremonies for the dead. The poet says that intelligent offspring are the greatest asset; they are a man's riches. There is no greater joy to parents, be they rich or poor, black or white, than when they hear the sweet lispings of their child.

What is the duty of the father to the son? Valluvar says: “The good which a father can do to his son is to make him occupy the first rank in the assembly.” What a world of ideas in a short couplet! A wise son is not only the proud support of his parents but the delight of the world. What about the mother? She is more happy when she hears of her son's greatness than when she gave birth to him, says the *Kural*.

Has the child any duty to the parents? Certainly. Valluvar says: “The service that a child can pay to the parents is to make people exclaim, ‘What a fortunate parent, the fruit of his good deeds is this child!’” Therefore Mr. Judge says: “A householder contributes a service to humanity, who leaves children to take his place after his death, and to reproduce his true and altruistic life.” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

What has Theosophy to say on Marriage? Theosophy, the philosophy of common sense and the quintessence of duty, does

not preach against marriage for the common man.

Says Mr. Judge: "It is perfectly proper that when a suitable mate is found a man should marry and settle down as a householder, bringing up a family with right views and high purposes" (*Letters That Have Helped Me*). Says H.P.B.: "Surely you cannot believe us so absurd and fanatical as to preach against marriage altogether. On the contrary, save in a few exceptional cases of Practical Occultism, marriage is the only remedy against immorality." (*The Key to Theosophy*)

If thou art told that to gain liberation thou hast to hate thy mother and disregard thy son; to disavow thy father and call him "householder"; for man and beast all pity to renounce—tell them their tongue is false. (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 31)

The Brahmin was a *grihastha*, a family man, till a certain period of his life, when, after begetting a son, he broke with married life and became a chaste yogi. (*S.D.*, II, 411)

If family duties are taken due care of, our duties to the nation and to humanity would, to a great extent, take care of themselves unimpeded. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 34*, p. 4)

Having given us the Dharma of the members of the household, Valluvar next treats of the qualities or virtues to be possessed and developed by the householder. First comes *Sympathy*—loving kindness—Compassion—the mother of all virtues. There is no bolt to fasten one's love. One teardrop in the eye of one whom we love, must draw a flood of tears from ours; that is true love, says Valluvar.

Light on the Path calls tears "the moisture of life." Mr. Judge calls Love "the master of life" in *The Ocean of Theosophy*. Says *The Voice of the Silence*:

Compassion is no attribute. It is the Law of LAWS—eternal Harmony, Alaya's SELF; a shoreless universal essence, the light of everlasting right, and fitness of all things, the law of Love eternal. (pp. 75-76)

Let thy Soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun. (p. 14)

Let not the fierce Sun dry one tear of pain before thyself

hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye. (p. 14)

But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain; nor ever brush it off, until the pain that caused it is removed. (p. 14)

No wonder then that Valluvar mentions this quality as the first one for a true householder. The joy of heaven is but the fruit of a righteous life rooted in love. "Of what use are one's outward features if one's heart is devoid of love?" He says that, that body alone is the seat of life wherein love dwells; all others are simply bone overlaid with skin.

The joys of domestic life are given to man only to minister to the guests, and this is possible only if both the husband and wife are in harmony, says the poet in his chapter on "Hospitality." Fortune smiles on the house of one who entertains the guests with cheerful face. The field of one who partakes of what remains after entertaining the guests will ever flourish. In olden days the householder used to take his meals only after giving food to a stranger.

Shri Krishna says that those who eat not but what is left of the offerings shall be purified of all their transgressions. The merits of hospitality cannot be measured; it is not the amount of aid but the necessity and motive that judge the merit.

The poet closes this chapter with a beautiful simile: "As a sweet flower withers when smelt, so the guest under a displeased look."

Courtesy or affability is necessary for hospitality and so the next chapter treats of this quality. "Speak with a pleasant and cheerful look though you may not give bounty. This is within the reach of even the lowly. Humility and loving words are the only true ornaments. Sweet words that bring cheer to others will light up the path of virtue and yield happiness both here and hereafter."

Lord Krishna mentions under the austerities of speech, gentle speech, which causes no anxiety and is truthful and friendly. (*Gita*, XVII)

The poet says, "Why should one use harsh words knowing the sweetness of courteous speech? To avoid sweet words and indulge

in offensive ones is like preferring the unripe fruit to a ripe fruit. Kind and gentle words give comfort and hope to the distressed and troubled.”

Mr. Judge calls words “living messengers” and asks us to use them carefully.

Next comes the quality of “gratitude.” All the great Teachers of the World have with one voice said: “Forget no benefit conferred.” Ingratitude is one of the worst sins and prevents one’s progress on the spiritual path. A Master of wisdom said: “Ingratitude is not among our vices.” Valluvar wants us to forget then and there the injury done by another, but never, never to forget the benefit received; there is salvation for those guilty of any other sin, but no redemption for the sin of ingratitude. The Good, he says, remember with gratitude all through seven births the friendship of those who have helped them in their suffering. He exhorts us neither to give up nor to forget those who have stood by us in the hour of sorrow. Timely help is of infinite value and hence the saying that “a friend in need is a friend indeed.”

(To be concluded)

SOME people confuse acceptance with apathy, but there’s all the difference in the world. Apathy fails to distinguish between what can and what cannot be helped; acceptance makes that distinction. Apathy paralyzes the will-to-action; acceptance frees it by relieving it of impossible burdens.

—ARTHUR GORDON

THE BINDING POWER OF LIFE

WHY is it that our daily life so often does not reflect our beliefs or our faith? We know, for instance, that reincarnation is true, that karma is an immutable law—that what we are getting, whether pleasant or unpleasant, is the consequence of our own thoughts, feelings and acts in the past, whether of this life or a preceding one; but, in spite of knowing all this, why do we not *act* in the present on the basis of reincarnation and karma? We put aside all thought of the consequences of our present doings that we will have to face in future lives, and act, think and feel as if this life were all that mattered.

We need to synthesize all aspects of life and knowledge into one whole, and the link that binds them together is none other than the perfect motive for living—“to benefit mankind.”

If we take H. P. Blavatsky, or W. Q. Judge, or Robert Crosbie as our models, we shall find that the motive behind all they did was “to benefit mankind.” And in order that we may be helped, and in turn may help others, they taught us the science of life—of matter or form, visible or invisible, and of that which lies beyond form and matter. They gave us the idea of the Absolute as a background, as an axiomatic truth in any case, and lead us step by step to perceive that all matter, all spirit, all forces, have their seat in that background and that therefore all is one WHOLE.

We can see the multitudinous details of the workings of these three, matter, force, spirit, on one another, and this gives us the science of matter, visible and invisible. We can understand the Universe, cause and effect, cycles, matter, form. We can watch consciousness unfolding itself through all forms, from the very highest to the lowest; from the greatest of archangels, or the Logos itself, to the insignificant worm. By the law of analogy we can see that everything on the material plane follows the same pattern as on the universal plane. We see that miracles are an impossibility and that immutable LAW reigns supreme.

The practice of religion implies the practice of devotion, and

devotion comes from the recognition that there are those who have risen by their own efforts to sublime heights and have made the supreme sacrifice of their own well-earned peace and bliss in order to help mankind to rise to the same heights. We have been told about the Lords of Light, those great souls whose efforts hold back from humanity much of the heavy Karma which would otherwise swamp it. In trouble and sorrow we do, in fact, “lift up our heads,” or turn to “something afar from the sphere of sorrow.” This recognition of something greater than we are now, of a blissful condition which we can perhaps faintly glimpse, causes hymns of praise and of gratitude to rise from the heart, as a beautiful sunset awakes in us feelings of joy and wondrous beauty. We must turn our eyes to the sun, to the stars, to the Cosmos itself that is so mysteriously pushed on its way to the perfection of form and matter until the latter equals the intelligence or power that ensouls it.

We have been shown the philosophy of life, the reason why certain moral laws are part of great Nature’s laws. Judge’s *Letters* are priceless aids in living the life. So are Robert Crosbie’s letters in *The Friendly Philosopher*. *The Voice of the Silence* goes further and deeper and is the basis for the practices outlined in the writings of Judge and Crosbie.

With all this wealth of information given to us, why do we fail? Is it not because we do not synthesize the teaching in the First Fundamental Proposition—that our consciousness comes from Spirit itself and that the matter we use has its root in the highest state of matter—with the recognition that if this is so, and Fohat is the intelligence and power waking all to life, then the whole world we move in is holy? We look for spirit outside this world we live in, whereas it must be in the earth we tread on and which provides nourishment for our bodies, in the air we breathe and in the water which pours down from the skies to water the earth and make it fruitful, and is then taken up again into the skies to form the wonderful clouds we see. This attitude would make atmospheric pollution, for instance, an impossible nightmare. We would sense God in the spider’s web, universal life in the venom of the snake as

well as in the mother’s milk. Nothing can be left out; interaction is sure and permanent; what affects one affects all.

We do not link the idea that the Absolute, the background of all, is unthinkable because our mind cannot grasp the infinite, with the necessity for us to look always beyond the separative forms of life into the Darkness which is full LIGHT. We do not link up the vision of Arjuna with the idea that all is Spirit-matter. We do not envisage the glory of the Universe and its workings as the playground and the school and university of life inhabiting the forms.

We do not link up the idea of one LAW with all planes, but limit it to the plane of matter. Science has found that Law works in physical matter; the Great Teachers of Humanity have learnt and taught that Law works also on other planes, and happiness and growth only come as man obeys those laws. They are not “god-given,” but Nature’s own reactions which produce due effects, and if we would follow the Plan of Life we must follow these laws.

We do not link up the Third Fundamental with its idea of “no privileges or special gifts in man” save those won by his own “self-induced and self-devised efforts” with the method of the scientist who is searching for facts and trying to understand what he finds. We must prove these statements for ourselves since there is no one else who can accept *our* responsibility to the WHOLE.

Life, therefore, must become a scientific experiment of the laws of Nature outside and inside ourselves, an ideal to follow and an effort to let the god in us create on all planes in terms of law which is beauty and truth. While man is man, his life itself and every act, thought and feeling must have at its root the synthesis of science, religion and philosophy. Life must be lived as a personality, as an individuality and as a divinity. At present these are not synthesized. When synthesized, the three become one, the personality merging with the individuality, the individuality becoming the vehicle of the divine.

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: Many of us are sensitive to public opinion about our dress, behaviour and other personal choices in life. Is it a valid feeling to care for other people's reaction?

Answer: The question is of great importance. It is necessary to ask, "What constitutes public opinion?" Generally, it is not made up of the views of spiritually enlightened people. Often, it does not have any moral basis but only reflects customs and traditions. Hence H.P.B. writes:

In our day, *vox populi* [voice of the people, or public opinion]...is no longer *vox dei* [voice of God], but ever that of prejudice, of selfish motives, and often simply that of unpopularity. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 239)

Can we follow the norms? Can we adopt the dress code, the life-style, the values of the "free society" we live in today? Where would it lead us? It was equally useless to live by the suffocating, narrow views of the old society. Yet, then as now, a person not following the norms runs the risk of being singled out. Today, a teenager who refuses to wear trendy clothes, to have boyfriend/girlfriend, to have a cell-phone, to go to nightclubs, movies, etc., would be labelled as "backward." Equally great was the risk of being ostracized and isolated if one dared to go against the orthodox views of the society of earlier times. It is this difficulty of having to swim against the stream and being ridiculed or persecuted as an odd one that prompts most of us to conform to public opinion, without rationalizing. But, as Buddha suggests, the multitude is always inclined to criticize. Thus:

This is an old saying, O Atula; it is not of this day only.

"They blame him who sits silent, they blame him who talks much, they blame him who speaks moderately in measured terms." There is not anyone in the world who is not blamed. (*The Dhammapada*, verse 227)

But on the other hand we are not advised to be self-opinionated. The attitude to be adopted—whether it is dress, behaviour or any life style involving moral principles—is very well described by a Master of Wisdom:

Do not despise the opinion of the world, nor provoke it uselessly to unjust criticism. Remain rather as indifferent to the abuse as to the praise of those who can never know you as you really are, and who ought, therefore, to find you unmoved by either, and ever placing the approval or condemnation of your own *Inner Self* higher than that of the multitudes. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 22*, pp. 10-11)

Whether it is choice of clothes, books or career, there is an innate desire for approval and sanction for the choices we make. We are free-willed beings and yet we use our free will to choose those things which have the sanction of our society, community, religion or family. But, a little reflection shows that there is a need to think for ourselves, to discriminate and sometimes to oppose. There is need to differentiate between spiritual and moral principles on the one hand and mere customs and traditions on the other. We must follow certain norms of good behaviour, using our own judgement, and always be prepared to take the consequences.

Jesus said, "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate." A certain amount of moral courage is required to go against the society and at times even against religious authority. In his essay on "Self-reliance," Emerson writes:

It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude....A man is to carry himself in the presence of all opposition as if everything were titular and ephemeral but he. I am ashamed to think how easily we capitulate

to badges and names, to large societies and dead institutions.

Light on the Path suggests that the disciple must learn to pay attention to his own inner voice. It is pointed out that “Only he who is untameable, who cannot be dominated, who knows he has to play the lord over men, over facts, over all things save his own divinity, can arouse this faculty [of intuition]” (p. 49). In other words, it matters not if we make mistakes or even contradict our previous behaviour; so long as we learn to be self-reliant and learn to discriminate. Often, it may happen that we are being guided by our lower [kamic] nature instead of our higher nature. But we can slowly learn to distinguish and finally arrive at a stage when our intuition can guide us, unerringly, to choose the right course of action. We are asked to develop intuition through exercise and by following it through mistakes. Most thinkers and philosophers have condemned blind following of public opinion calling it “herd-instinct.”

Question: Is it interference with another’s Karma, if we attempt to help him to solve his problems?

Answer: The doctrine of Karma is abstruse and often there is warped understanding of it. In India, especially, some people mistakenly believe that to help anyone or take another’s help is to get involved and create a tie with that person, which in turn means having to be born again, instead of freedom from the round of births and deaths. Such people are afraid that they might act out of personal desire or out of emotions which would prove binding and obstruct their progress. One who refuses to enter into kindly relationship with others is compared in *The Voice of the Silence* to a pilgrim who—after walking in the heat of the day—is afraid of plunging into the river for fear of being swept away. Such a person is in danger of dying of heat. One who keeps calculating as to which way he would not be bound by *Karma*, may be called “a false pietist of bewildered soul.” “Inaction based on selfish fear can bear but evil fruit,” says *The Voice of the Silence*.

So in the *Gita* we are advised to perform our duty. As *The Voice of the Silence* suggests, “The man who does not go through his

appointed work in life has lived in vain. Follow the wheel of life; follow the wheel of duty to race and kin, to friend and foe.” It is our duty to help the person who comes our way, under Karma. Our assumption that helping another amounts to interfering with Karma, is a misconception. Mr. Judge writes:

If karma were something about each man which we could plainly see, as, for instance, if each one of us had written upon him what was his karma and what punishments or rewards should or should not be meted out to him, then it would be easy for one to say in any particular case what one should do in the premises. But such a state of things does not prevail. (“*Forum*” *Answers*, p. 28)

Mr. Judge goes on to explain that Karma includes both action and reaction. When a person decides to help another, he does not interfere with Karma, as his act of helping is also a part of Karma. In other words, we must realize that we are continually affecting one another through our thoughts, feelings and actions. Hence, it is difficult to say what portion of another’s karma is *strictly of his own making*. As Mr. Judge suggests, “The indissoluble unity of the race demands that we should consider every man’s troubles as partly due to ourselves, because we have been always units in the race and helped to make the conditions which cause suffering” (“*Forum*” *Answers*, p. 55). As *Light on the Path* says, no man acts in isolation. We must understand that Karma is not fatalism. When it is said, “accept the woes of birth,” we are not expected to *passively* accept the karmic consequences. We must do our best to change the situation and in the process we may need the help of another. To ignore the suffering of another by saying, “it is his karma!” is gross misunderstanding of the doctrine of Karma. If a person meets with an accident and we are the only one present at the scene, then under karma, it is our duty to help him get suitable medical aid. If a person comes to us asking for money, or seeking solace, or to solve a legal or moral problem, he acts *under karma*, and we *must help to the best of our ability*.

One of the aphorisms on Karma says, “The [karmic] effects

may be counteracted or mitigated by the thoughts and acts of oneself *or of another* [Italics ours].” In fact, to refuse to help a person would be an act of omission. “Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin,” says *The Voice of the Silence* (p. 33). Mr. Judge observes that if we refrain from helping out of fear of “interfering” with another’s karma [*i.e.*, if we fear that by helping we are not allowing that other person to experience the share of punishment due to him under karma] “we not only lay up wrath against ourselves, but at the same time set the germs in our own character which will sprout in selfishness and pain. We need not fear that karma will not do justice. It often does it by offering to us a chance to help another, and, if we stand aside, it will at another day give us the punishment for our selfishness and arrogance” (“*Forum*” *Answers*, p. 29). H. P. Blavatsky writes:

In helping on the development of others, the Theosophist believes that he is not only helping them to fulfil their Karma, but that he is also, in the strictest sense, fulfilling his own. It is the development of humanity, of which both he and they are integral parts, that he has always in view, and he knows that any failure on his part to respond to the highest within him retards not only himself but all, in their progressive march. By his actions, he can make it either more difficult or more easy for humanity to attain the next higher plane of being. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 234)

If we help impersonally, without expecting any return or reward, we are not setting up the karmic focus where the results can return. So also, we must help in such a way as to enable the person to take the consequences of his actions in a right manner and to extract the necessary lesson. We should not end up doing his “homework” for him, or make him dependent on us.

Even Masters help humanity, as they “people their currents in space with entities powerful for good alone.” Their very presence charges the atmosphere with beneficent influence and They are said to alleviate collective suffering of humanity, “protecting it from further and far greater misery and sorrow.”

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Does the capacity to enter into a state of suspended animation already exist within us? In nature, several organisms display the capacity to reversibly arrest their life processes—at times, for several years. For instance, embryos of a species of brine shrimp, popularly known as sea monkeys, can live for more than five years without any food, water or oxygen by entering into a seedlike state called quiescence, in which cellular activity is almost at a standstill. Many adult animals can radically reduce their need for food and air during long periods of hibernation, when their heart rate and breathing become almost imperceptible; their body temperature drops to near freezing, and cellular activity is considerably slowed down. Quiescence, hibernation, torpor, etc., represent different degrees of suspended animation, displaying drastic reduction in both metabolism (energy production) and cellular activity (energy consumption). It has been observed that “organisms in this state enjoy extraordinary resistance to environmental stress, such as temperature extremes, oxygen deprivation and even physical injury,” write Mark B. Roth and Todd Nystul. (*Scientific American*, June 2005)

In human beings, when tissues are deprived of blood and therefore, oxygen, it leads to tissue damage and death, caused by blood loss, heart attacks, strokes, etc. It has also been observed that organs removed from the donor’s body, before being transplanted into the receiver’s body stand a chance of tissue damage, in the absence of blood and oxygen supply, even for a very short period. Scientists believe that “an ability to put the human body on hold could safeguard the critically injured or preserve the donor organs for transplant.” Research on mice has shown that hydrogen sulfide, a chemical produced naturally by human bodies, blocks cells from using oxygen and triggers suspended animation in mice. Can it do the same in humans? Are humans capable of entering into suspended animation? Several cases bear witness to the fact that human beings are capable of resuscitation, even after

several hours of oxygen deprivation and even when core body temperature dips to as low as 14 degrees centigrade and the person is pronounced clinically dead.

In *Isis Unveiled* H.P.B. cites several examples of suspended animation in human beings, as also of revival and resuscitation from that state. According to many modern witnesses, fakirs, by a long course of preparation, have been able to bring their bodies into a condition that enabled them to be buried six feet under ground for an indefinite period. In such cases, after six weeks, the body showed no heat or pulsation in the heart, the temples, or the arm. There was, however, *a heat about the region of the brain*. The process of resuscitation involved bathing with hot water, friction, rubbing of the eyelids with ghee and clarified butter, and applying hot wheaten cake, about an inch thick, “to the top of the head” (I, 477-478). She also cites cases of apparent death and revival. She writes:

What they [medical men] call “suspended animation,” is that state from which the patient spontaneously recovers...In these cases, the astral body has not parted from the physical body; its external functions are simply suspended; the subject is in a state of torpor.

Man is not dead when he is cold, stiff, pulseless, breathless, and even showing signs of decomposition; he is not dead when buried, nor afterward, until a certain point is reached. That point is, *when the vital organs have become so decomposed, that if reanimated, they could not perform their customary functions...* Until that point is reached, the astral body may be caused, without miracle, to reenter its former tabernacle, either by an effort of its own will, or under the resistless impulse of the will of one who knows the potencies of nature and how to direct them. (*Ibid.*, I, 483-84)

How does nature build a planet? Various theories and models notwithstanding, scientists have been unable to explain the process of planet-formation. One of the simplest theories suggests that

planets are formed from the leftover material in the process of star formation. The theory posits a moving cloud of cold gas and dust that collapses under its own weight. As a result, the bulk of the material falls to the centre, giving rise to a proto-star. Due to condensation, the cloud spins faster, forming a round disk of gas and dust around the star, which spirals inward towards the natal star. The planets begin to form in the plane of the disk from the leftover scraps. The process of planet formation may be quick, when the disk of gas and dust is cold and dense, or when the disk becomes gravitationally unstable and collapses on itself. It can be slow and may take tens of millions of years, when bits of dust collide and become pebbles, which collide to become boulders, which collide to become asteroids, and so on, until a rocky planetary core develops, which attracts gases, etc. A new NASA space telescope, Spitzer, is being used to provide details of the dusty disks surrounding the stars that can help in understanding the process of planet-formation. However, “Spitzer results did not fit well with any existing theory of how planets form. The new data and our new calculations were forcing us to rethink our assumptions....Spitzer is exposing how much astronomers don’t yet know about the new worlds forming out there—and about the old worlds, possibly even habitable ones, that are still undetected,” writes Adam Frank (*Discover*, July 2005)

The Secret Doctrine explains that the worlds and planets are formed from the most ethereal, radiant and homogeneous, primordial matter called *Mulaprakriti*. At the first reawakening of the cosmic motion, or at the first differentiation, this matter is scattered through space, in clusters and lumps, like curds in thin milk. It is this cosmic matter which is the origin of the “Milky Way,” which in turn is the storehouse of the materials from which the stars, planets and other celestial bodies are produced. We are also told that this matter undergoes many stages of differentiation—from its Milky Way condition—before reaching the planets (*Transactions*, pp. 113-14). The matter in the Milky Way forms “knots” and passes through sun-stage, the cometary and planetary

stages (*Ibid.*, pp. 122-23). “The matter, for instance, within the Solar system is in an entirely different state from that which is outside or beyond the system.” Moreover, regarding scientific observations, a Master of Wisdom points out that since the light by which all the objects are seen is a *reflected light*, and taking into account the optical illusion caused by the atmosphere, etc., “it entirely alters the observations of the matter of which the celestial bodies are composed, as it is liable to impose upon us a constitution similar to that of the earth.” (*Ibid.*, p. 114)

Regarding the formation of the seven planets and the sun. *The Secret Doctrine* explains: Allegorically, from the body of Aditi (*Mulaprakriti*), eight sons are said to have been born. Cosmically and astronomically, (the seven Adityas) these are the seven planets, the eighth son being our sun (*S.D.*, I, 99). The Occult Doctrine rejects the hypothesis that the seven great planets have evolved from the Sun’s central mass, “the Sun and the planets are only co-uterine brothers, having had the same nebular origin, only in a different mode from that postulated by modern astronomy” (*S.D.*, I, 589). Further:

Having evolved from Cosmic Space, and before the final formation of the primaries and the annulation of the planetary nebula, the Sun...drew into the depths of its mass all the Cosmic vitality he could, threatening to engulf his weaker “brothers” before the law of attraction and repulsion was finally adjusted; after which he began feeding on...those portions of Ether...of the existence and constitution of which science is as yet absolutely ignorant. (*S.D.*, I, 102)

Is building a better human being the world’s most dangerous idea? asks Alyssa Ford (*Utne Reader*, May-June, 2005). With new drugs and medical advances making it possible to alter our bodies and minds—manipulating at cell and atom level—many are concerned as to where the modern mania for self-improvement will take us. Is it not better to cling to imperfections? The

transhumanists speak of a “posthuman” era comprising *transhumans*, short for *transitional humans*, which refers to the day when our species will be a blend of biology and machine. It is believed that public demand for longer lives, prettier children, and better moods will override efforts to stop them and that now it is time to use powerful new technologies to transform the world along progressive lines. James Hughes, the executive director of World Transhumanist Association (WTA) argues that there is no objection when lives are radically transformed through yoga and organic gardening, then why oppose the use of technology to end disease, death, poverty, pain, etc.? “Ultimately we are working to create a world where people have control over their own bodies and minds,” says Hughes. Others argue that to be human is to aspire to reach the unreachable. The counter argument is:

What makes us unique is that we can restrain ourselves. We can decide not to do something that we are able to do. We can set limits on our desires. We can say “Enough.”

Authors like Jeremy Rifkin strongly disagree and fear that under the guise of progress the public will be seduced by a new technology whose destructive power far exceeds its benefits. Francis Fukuyama, a conservative scholar, argues that if we do not learn to respect human nature, “we may unwittingly invite the transhumanists to deface humanity with their genetic bulldozers and psychotropic shopping malls.” Rifkin, who opposes embryonic cloning in all forms, including “therapeutic” cloning that can be used to generate stem cells, says:

The new divide...falls between those who believe life has “intrinsic” value and those who see it in purely utilitarian terms as “reducible to material for manipulation.”

What we can all agree on, whether we are pro-life or pro-choice, is that embryos are potential unique human beings at the early stages of development. To my mind, the idea that we would propose legislation in the U.S. Congress to clone embryos specifically for the purpose of experimentation, or as research models, or to harvest spare parts and then destroy them, opens

the door to a commercial eugenics era.

Many questions arise. How do we balance individual desire and freedom against the needs of the others? Will we control our technologies, or will they control us?

Does human perfection consist in achieving technological advancement, and through it, acquiring healthy physical bodies? Can technology help us to acquire better control over our bodies and minds? With all good intentions, when we resort to cloning, nanotechnology, genetic engineering, etc., to improve human life, we are still dealing with the effectual side. To effect real cure for disease, death, pain, etc., we must be able to identify and deal with the *causal* side. Mr. Judge observes that sickness and disease tend to open up man's mental and moral nature. Sickness must be regarded as surfacing on the bodily plane, inner sickness of the inner being. The physical woes of humanity are only "skin deep." "The deep darkness of the soul and the mind of the race are more important than their outer miseries." (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

What could "posthuman" era be like—with great technological power but without commensurate moral development? It could be a race of healthy, beautiful and perhaps, most intelligent, but morally irresponsible individuals. "The downfall of every civilization is caused by the weak morals of those who live in and by it. False knowledge or misuse of knowledge generally accompanies weakened morals. An unbalanced relation between knowledge and ethics brings about a critical stage which, if not promptly attended to, results in death." (*Studies in "The Voice of the Silence,"* p. 1)

Material progress or scientific pursuits do not make for happiness. Individual and collective happiness rests on the realization of interdependence and a strong feeling of love and compassion for humanity in the heart of every individual. In caring for the body, we are forgetting the most important and permanent aspect of man, *i.e.*, his soul. True progress and real perfection must take into account all aspects of the human being—physical, mental, psychic and spiritual.
