

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

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THE MEANING OF IMPERSONALITY

Work unselfishly for humanity...while striving to get rid of
the strength of the personal idea.—W.Q. JUDGE

ROBERT Crosbie was one of the unknown soldiers in the great army of those who live to benefit mankind. He resuscitated the genuine teachings of Theosophy by founding the "United Lodge of Theosophists" [U.L.T.] in Los Angeles on 19 February 1909. He passed on the original teachings of H. P. Blavatsky and W. Q. Judge, without drawing attention to himself, always laying emphasis on the recorded teachings. In other words, he emphasized the importance of impersonality. Mr. Crosbie writes:

Our purpose is to draw attention to the Teachers and the Teaching, not to any others; hence it is conservation, safety, to maintain the impersonality of "U.L.T." Its aim, scope and purpose are shown in the Declaration, and besides, attention is called to the great underlying Movement which compels such alterations from time to time; so, as the declared policy is followed out and the Teaching is studied, the practical amplification will come of itself. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 368)

The object of Theosophical study and work is *not* individual development, but that each and all should become true helpers of Humanity. (*Ibid.*, pp. 370-1)

He has given us a charter known as "Declaration of U.L.T." which contains certain principles and ideas. It gives us a broad

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framework and policy to carry on the work of study, practice and promulgation of the teachings of Theosophy. Although personality is essential for the promulgation of the teachings, care must be taken to abstain from giving one's own opinion. Each one of us comes from a particular religious, educational and cultural background so that we tend to give a certain amount of personal colouring to the teachings. H.P.B. mentions the need for *unbiased* and *clear judgement* in the guidance of the society.

You must remember that all our members have been bred and born in some creed or religion...consequently...their judgement is but too likely to be warped and unconsciously biased by some or all of the influences. If, then, they cannot be freed from such inherent bias, or at least taught to recognize it instantly and so avoid being led away by it, the result can be that the Society will drift off on to some sandbank of thought or another, and there remain a stranded carcass to moulder and die. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 304)

To understand the true implication of impersonality one must know the difference between personality and impersonality. Man is a self-conscious being and "crown piece of evolution." Experiences gathered through the five senses gradually become a part of him. He does not look upon himself or others, even for a moment, in a detached manner, *i.e.*, apart from the experiences. Ultimately, it gives rise to the feeling of separateness that forms and feeds his personality. We derive our sense of "I" from this personality, which comprises our feelings, ideas, thoughts, or bundle of our experiences in life. But this bundle of experiences is not the real "I" or the Ego, which we call the Individuality.

The personality consists of the four lower principles forming the quaternary, which is evanescent and perishable, while the Individuality is the *Atma-Buddhi-Manasic* triad—the "Impersonal Eternal man."

One of the most difficult tasks for a student-aspirant is to get rid of the personal idea and its hold on himself. If he becomes a victim to its influence, it will ruin him. Hence, one has to try with

all one's power to overcome and erase its influence. Otherwise, the lower personal self will raise its ugly head in terms of vanity, pride and boastfulness, resulting in utter selfishness.

We find ourselves using the pronoun "I" several times in a day—what I said, did, felt, thought of my experiences, my habits, likes and dislikes, etc. Self-examination makes us aware of self-centredness. We must learn to think away from ourselves. So long as praise and blame of others disturb us, we are deeply rooted in personality. A plant growing in a dark room will slowly wither away without sunlight. Likewise, if the personality is not guided by the Higher Self, if the lower self does not take refuge and seek the help of its Divine Ego, it gets hardened. All aspects of selfishness and vice relate to the personal man. Hence, the sense of separateness that weans us from the rest has to be conquered.

How does one become impersonal? Impersonality has no room for petty, personal feelings. We should never seek praise for what we do or say, or worry about what others feel and think of us. Student-workers should try to study the philosophy and continually help in the work of the Lodge in whatever way they can—though nothing is *demand*ed of anyone.

Impersonality is necessary for the right performance of service to others—especially Theosophical service. Often we are unable to do our best because we get too self-conscious and experience a feeling of inadequacy. Let us prepare ourselves and do the best we can without thought of self. Let us remember that there is an "invisible escort" surrounding every devoted worker.

When we cease to worry about the results and are happy to do our best, we are on the path of Impersonality. The unerring law will take care of the results. Each aspirant must strive to become an impersonal and beneficent force in nature.

In every conceivable case he himself must be a centre of spiritual action, and from him and his own daily individual life must radiate those higher spiritual forces which alone can regenerate his fellow-men. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 233-4)

The impersonal man is the man of duty, whose actions are

regulated by moral fitness. He is essentially the man who is assiduous and controls his heart. The aspirant may find that overcoming the personal idea is not an easy task. But if one has faith in oneself, in the philosophy, and is willing to apply its principles in daily life, one can steadily and slowly overcome and conquer the personal idea through *Vairagya* (detachment) and *Abhyasa* (constant practice).

We can follow the example of our teacher H.P.B. She said: "Follow not me nor my path, follow the path I show, the Masters who are behind." "I am only a window through which the light shines." We should cultivate the attitude of the Great Ones who always say, "Thus have I heard."

Impersonal self-examination, before going to sleep, should include the underlying tone as well as words. Impersonality is like selflessness. It does not mean annihilation of self but is an attitude of impartiality towards all things and all beings. Impersonality does not mean ignoring, neglecting or disparaging the personality, but not identifying with it. It implies looking at things, objects, persons and events in their true perspective, and not according to one's own likes and dislikes.

The student-aspirant has to subdue, to some extent, his egotism and develop a catholic, cosmopolitan outlook. If our attention is all the time centred in our personality, we can never practise Universal Brotherhood. Unless our minds and hearts become impersonal, they cannot become cosmopolitan. We should rise above the distinctions of race, creed, colour, caste and sex in order to become impersonal, which is the first object of the Theosophical Society: "To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, colour or creed."

U.L.T. is a unique forum that offers us an opportunity to cultivate impersonality by earnestly working for it. Impersonality is necessary for the right performance of any service. H.P.B. says:

If every Fellow in the Society were content to be an impersonal force for good, careless of praise or blame so long as he subserved the purposes of the Brotherhood, the progress

made would astonish the World and place the Ark of the T.S. out of danger. (*Five Messages*, p. 29)

Further, regarding the application of charity H.P.B. writes:

The Theosophical ideas of charity mean *personal* exertion for others; *personal* mercy and kindness; *personal* interest in the welfare of those who suffer; *personal* sympathy, forethought and assistance in their troubles or needs. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 242)

Impersonality involves the practice of "Heart Doctrine," whereas personality deals only with the "Eye Doctrine." Heart Doctrine involves arousing the inner attitude of attention, that which is universal, impersonal and changeless, and development of humility and compassion. Hence, it is necessary to check our motives and capacities. Then, gradually, we will be able to see the difference between "*Shreyas* and *Preyas*"—the better and the pleasant. As *Katha Upanishad* says:

The better is one thing, the dearer is another thing; these two bind a man in opposite ways. Of these two, it is well for him who takes the better; he fails of his object, who chooses the dearer.

The better and the dearer approach a man; going round them, the sage discerns between them. The sage chooses the better rather than the dearer; the fool chooses the dearer, through lust of possession. (*Selections from the Upanishads*, pp. 37-38)

Impersonal compassion is not the clumsy counterfeit of emotionalism and sentimentality that is accepted by people as a way of life. It involves the realization of the oneness of humanity and therefore the service of humanity. Only impersonal compassion can fit a man to help others in the right way. An impersonal presentation of the principles of Theosophy will provide the student-learner with the right basis for work. Impersonality is indispensable to one whose aim it is to become, like H.P.B., only "a window through which the light shines." Only a clear glass transmits the radiance of the impersonal self without tainting it.

To sum up :

Impersonality isn't talking; it isn't silence; it isn't insinuation; it isn't repulsion; it isn't negation. Above all, it isn't a diplomacy, which masks *ambition*...

Impersonality means freedom from personality, but none of us are going to attain that, right away; we are doing well enough if we are persistently, albeit slowly, overcoming.

For practical purposes; if we are developing the child-heart; if we are learning to love things beautiful; if we are becoming more honest and plain and simple; if we are beginning to sense the sweet side of life; if we are getting to like our friends better and extending the circle; if we feel ourselves expanding in sympathy; if we love to work for Theosophy and do not ask position as a reward; if we are not bothering too much about whether we are personal or impersonal—this is travelling on the path of impersonality. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, pp. 127-128)

IN homely language, then, to be virtuous is to be good; to be wise is to possess knowledge. If the kingdom of God is the perfectness of evolution, then knowledge is what leads to it sooner than virtue. Of course these terms are used with the theosophical scheme of man and nature in view, and in that light it appears that in addition to virtue we must have knowledge, for a life of virtue leads to pleasures of devachan, with good karma for next life and thus through many lives; but knowledge added to virtue shows how to use virtue and its results in finding and treading the path leading to the Supreme which is all.

—W. Q. JUDGE

MYTHS AND SYMBOLISM OF TREES

II

ASHWATTHA is the mundane tree (or Tree of Life) of the Hindus. It is described as having its roots above and branches below. Its branches represent the external visible world of senses, or visible universe. The leaves are the Vedas or the universe in its intellectual or moral character. The roots represent the Spiritual World and Supreme Being, or First Cause, the Logos. But one has to go beyond the roots to unite oneself with Krishna, the *Brahman* who is greater than the First Cause and is indestructible. He who is able to cut down this tree with the strong axe of dispassion and go beyond the roots, will not have to incarnate during this “age” of *Brahma*. Thus, *Parabrahmam* is the seed, First Cause is the root, *Mahat* or Universal Soul is the trunk, while the branches are the great egoism. We are asked to cut the tree with an axe of knowledge or secret wisdom. (*S.D.*, I, 406 and 536)

Vishnu, in one of his incarnations, is shown resting under the Banyan tree and there he taught humanity the philosophy and the sciences. Under the shade of this Banyan tree the gurus teach their disciples lessons of immortality and initiate them into the mysteries of life and death. The Banyan tree is called both the “Tree of Knowledge” and the “Tree of Life” (*S.D.*, II, 215). *The Secret Doctrine* mentions “the ever-living-human-Banyan” which represents a “Wondrous Being” from whom all sages, rishis and hierophants have descended in antiquity. Further:

It is under the direct, silent guidance of this MAHA—(great)—GURU that all the other less divine Teachers and instructors of mankind became from the first awakening of human consciousness, the guides of early Humanity. (*S.D.*, I, 208)

Each man assimilates by self-effort, knowledge and experience, and grows. But as a free-willed being he grows either into a tree of life or a withering tree (black adept).

The symbol of the “Tree” standing for various Initiates was

almost universal. Jesus is called “the tree of life,” as also all the adepts of the good Law, while those of the *left* Path are referred to as the “withering trees.” (*S.D.*, II, 496)

A similar idea is symbolically represented in the *Gospel According to St. John* (ch. 15). Jesus says:

I am the *true* vine and my Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away....As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the Vine [*Christos*—ye are the branches. If a man abide not in me he is cast forth as a branch, and is *withered* and cast into the fire and burned. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 184)

H.P.B. explains that *Atma* is the “Husbandman,” *Buddhi* or Spiritual Ego is the Vine, while the animal or Vital Soul or Personality is the “branch.” When the branch or personality ceases to take guidance from the Divine nature, it is gradually annihilated.

Tree worship has been very old, writes James Frazer, in his book, *The Golden Bough*. In the beginning, trees were worshipped as animated things, so that each tree was regarded as a conscious and living thing. At that point, each tree was looked upon as the “body” of the tree-spirit. Later, the tree was regarded as a lifeless inert mass, but occupied and inhabited by a supernal being—and thus became the *abode* of the tree-spirit. The tree-spirit or god of a tree can leave that tree and from tree-soul he becomes a forest-god, or god of trees in general. Either as tree-soul or as forest-god these tree-spirits were considered to have powers—of making the rain to fall, the sun to shine, flocks and herds to multiply, and women to have smooth delivery. It is said that when some missionaries tried persuading Lithuanians to cut the trees, many women protested saying that the trees were the houses of gods, from which they were getting rain and sunshine. The Mundaris of Assam believe that if a tree were felled, the forest gods would display their wrath by withholding rain. Sacrifices were offered to the trees in the form of cattle, crops, fowls, etc. Similarly, among the Maoris of Africa, the power of making women fruitful is

ascribed to trees. The barren woman had to embrace the tree in order to get the child.

Myths are profound religious conceptions of ancient peoples and nations. There is hidden meaning in every religious and profane legend. No myth, no tradition has ever been pure fiction. “Mythology was primitive mode of thinking the early thought,” writes H.P.B.

From the remotest antiquity trees were treated with veneration and connected with gods and mystical forces in nature. Every nation had its sacred tree, with its peculiar characteristics and occult properties. One such tree of importance is the Oak tree, associated with the highest God or Deity of the particular pantheon—with Greeks it was Zeus, with Italians Jupiter, with the Norse Thor, etc. The Druids held Oak and mistletoe in high esteem. They performed none of their sacred rites without Oak leaves.

One such mythical figure or god in relation to mistletoe was the Norse god Baldur, the son of the great God Odin in the Scandinavian myth. Baldur, states H.P.B. is the well-beloved God of goodness, who alone is without sin. He is killed by the crafty Loki. Frigg, the mother of the gods, entreated all the animate and inanimate creatures not to kill the well-beloved. But, of course, she forgot to mention it to “the weak mistletoe bough,” and so Loki made a dart of this mistletoe and put it in the hands of blind Hodur who killed Baldur with that dart.

James Frazer mentions in *The Golden Bough* that mistletoe is worshipped by the Celtic Druid, who believe that anything that comes from Oak is sent from heaven. The mistletoe is not found easily, but when found, they gather it with solemn ceremony, on the sixth day of the waxing moon, which is supposed to be the day when the moon is full of vigour. A priest clad in white climbs the tree and cuts with golden sickle the mistletoe that is gathered in a white cloth. It is used as a remedy against all poisons. It was a cure for epilepsy, sterility in women, ulcers, etc. The mistletoe was a mystic plant in several ancient religions and mythologies. According to the myth, Baldur could not be killed by anything in

heaven or earth, save the mistletoe. As long as mistletoe remained on the Oak tree, Baldur was not only immortal, but also invulnerable. Now if we suppose Baldur was the Oak then we understand the meaning. The mistletoe was believed to be the seat of life of the Oak, and as long as mistletoe was intact, so was the Oak. The Oak is deciduous and in winter, when divine life has ceased to animate the branches, it survives in the mistletoe. If Oak is taken to represent the human being, the mistletoe would be his heart. The invulnerable Baldur is personification of the Oak, bearing mistletoe, explains Frazer.

Rudolf Steiner perceived the striking similarity and parallel between cancer growth and the life cycle of the mistletoe, and introduced the latter in cancer therapy in the 1920s. Unlike other plants and trees, the mistletoe does not obey the normal biological rhythm in nature and asserts its autonomy. It has an inherent tendency for indefinite growth and proliferation in its leaves, flowers, berries, and also has the capacity to overcome this tendency through regulated growth. It eats up tumour-like protuberances on the host-tree. This intuitive perception led to scientific research and mistletoe extracts are now used in cancer therapy.

H.P.B. mentions a curious tale about the sacred tree of Kumbum (*The Theosophist*, March 1883). When two enthusiastic missionaries entered the interiors of Lhasa, to spread Christianity, they saw a wonderful tree—"Tree of Thousand Images," at a Lamasery of Kumbum. There goes a Tibetan legend that when Tsong-Kha-Pa, the renowned Buddhist reformer, devoted himself to religious life, according to custom, his mother cut off his hair and threw it away. A tree sprang up from it, bearing, on every one of its leaves, a Tibetan character. On each leaf there were well-formed Tibetan characters, all of green colour, some lighter and some darker than the leaf itself. These letters were part of the leaf itself and grew along with the leaves. The bark of the tree and branches were also covered with these characters. When one removes a piece of bark, the young bark under it displays different characters from those on the upper layer of the bark. The characters

were more perfect than typeset characters of the best type-foundries in the world. The missionaries also noticed "religious sentences" self-printed by nature in chlorophyll. Each lamina (layer), when lifted revealed distinct type. H.P.B. mentions that this is not an uncommon happening in nature. On the shells in the waters of the Red Sea some Hebrew alphabets were found. Upon certain locusts, English alphabets were found. On the wings of certain German butterflies numerals of the year 1881 were found to be marked. So also, we find animals mimicking vegetable growths and caterpillars looking like tree-barks, mosses, etc. Tiger's stripes are mimicry of the stalks of jungle grass. "All these separate instances go to form a case of probable fact as to the...story of the Kumbum tree, since they saw that it is possible for nature herself without miracle to produce vegetable growth in the form of legible characters." H.P.B. states that the letter-tree of Tibet is a fact and the inscriptions in its leaf-cells and fibres are in *Senzar*—a sacred language used by the adepts.

(Concluded)

EVERY inimical and uncharitable thought makes for disunion, and every opposite one for harmony....If we treat all men now with unflinching charity and love we are wiping off old scores clean and making no new sorrows; but if we will condemn, punish, resent, in short, consider ourselves Karmic agents without knowing the meaning of that term, we are sowing dragon's teeth, we only are planting cause for future sorrow.

—W. Q. JUDGE

TRUE ASCETICISM

WE live in the world of consumerism characterized by “devotion to the overwhelming plenty.” It all started with free enterprise where consumer was supposed to be the king and could dictate to the producers what he wanted. The myth of consumer’s sovereignty was, finally and firmly, exploded by John Kenneth Galbraith. In his book, *The New Industrial State*, he made it clear that the consumer was a slave rather than a king. Advertisements constantly bombard us to buy and buy more. The popular slogans are, “shop till you drop,” “neighbour’s envy, owner’s pride,” etc. Nobody seems to speak or think of austerities. However, when people flock to *gurus*, *ashrams* and retreat centres for peace of mind, they realize that it is impossible to *buy* truth, knowledge, wisdom or peace of mind.

While practising austerities we need to use discrimination and learn to distinguish between true and false asceticism. Practising austerities does not mean becoming puritanical. A puritan may practise all the cardinal virtues—prudence, fortitude, temperance and chastity—and yet remain a thoroughly bad man. Often practice of such virtues is accompanied by and causally connected with pride, envy, chronic anger and uncharitableness, leading to active cruelty. Religious persecutions were often a result of extreme puritanism. A puritan is only stoically austere, but he mistakes the means for the end. Real holiness is total denial of the separative self and abandonment to the Will of God. The extent to which there is attachment to “I,” there is lack of knowledge of the Divine. Austerity may actually not reduce self-will but increase it. A hedonist may do much less harm than a proud puritanical stoic. The hedonist may be ashamed of himself, while the stoic may have an untroubled conscience.

Originally, Gandhiji had put “humility” at the top of the list of qualities that the inmates of his *ashram* should cultivate, but seeing that this could lead to pride (people could be proud of being humble!) he wrote in his list that *all* virtues must be accompanied

by humility.

Asceticism could be of *sattvic*, *rajasic* or *tamasic* nature.

Austerity practised with supreme faith and by those who long not for a reward is of the *sattva* quality. Austerity which is practised with hypocrisy, for the sake of obtaining respect for oneself or for fame or favour, and which is uncertain and belonging wholly to this world, is of the quality of *rajasic*. Those austerities which are practised merely by wounding oneself or from a false judgment or for the hurting of another are of the quality of *tamas*. (*Gita*, XVII)

We need to practise asceticism at the level of body, speech and mind. Many people, especially in the East, think that the body should be tortured or at least disciplined in a harsh manner. In fact, we have ample chance of practising mortification as we live our ordinary everyday life. We need much patience and resignation, to carry our daily cross. That mortification is best which results in the elimination of self-will, self-interest, self-centred thinking, wishing and imagining. Every self-denial should be inconspicuous, non-competitive and non-injurious to health. People with a *rajasic* (or a *tamasic*) bent of mind or those who are ignorant, regard severe physical austerities as true and proper. There are numerous examples in history and mythology, and among those following *Hatha-Yoga*, of people standing on one foot or with one arm raised or even allowing their bodies to be eaten by worms. Shri Krishna condemns such mortifications in the *Gita*, thus:

Those who practise severe self-mortification not enjoined in the Scriptures are full of hypocrisy and pride, longing for what is past and desiring more to come. They, full of delusion, torture the powers and faculties which are in the body, and me also, who am in the recesses of the innermost heart; know that they are of an infernal tendency. (*Gita*, XVII)

Many such extreme austerities are practised for a specific gain or to fulfil some selfish desire. Women are no exception to this. In the *Mahabharata*, when Amba found that her former fiancé was unwilling to marry her, and Bhishma too refused her, she vowed to

take revenge on Bhishma. By practising severe austerities she transformed herself into Shikhandi, a male, and mortally wounded Bhishma in the war. Austerities practiced for the attainment of specific gain or for favour from some deity very often lead to pride, followed by inevitable downfall. Torturing the faculties of the body is not true penance, since the body by itself is incapable of action. Body is merely an organized aggregation of physical matter, to be used and controlled by the thinker. It is the thinker who needs to change his modes of thought and action. Although it sounds much simpler than standing on one foot, control and training of the mind is very difficult. It is very tough to change one mode of thought and replace it by another. It may be controlling the temper or changing the habit of overeating. At times we are unwilling to accept the fault in us, and even if we do accept, we try to explain it away or make excuses. The *Gita* describes true bodily austerity thus: "Honouring the gods, the Brahmans, the teachers and the wise; purity, rectitude, chastity and harmlessness are the mortification of the body."

Mortification of speech means refraining from saying anything uncharitable or merely frivolous and behaving calmly and cheerfully when external circumstances predispose us to anxiety or gloom or excessive elation. "Gentle speech which causes no anxiety, which is truthful and friendly, and diligence in the reading of the Scriptures, are said to be austerities of speech" (*Gita*, XVII). Practice of silence that is recommended as mortification of the mind, is mortification of speech as well. "Serenity of mind, mildness of temper, silence, self-restraint, absolute straightforwardness of conduct, are called mortification of the mind." (*Gita*, XVII). The necessary and unavoidable corollary to "Thy Kingdom come" is "my kingdom go." For, the more there is of the self, the less there is of the divine. We live on the borderline between two worlds—the temporal and the eternal. If we do not watch ourselves, we may lean too much towards the mundane and the physical world to gradual total exclusion of the divine. Austerities are simply for the purpose of making space for the divine, for giving us time for

the contemplation of the higher ideas and values. Austerities are means to an end and therefore should never be mistaken for the end nor undertaken for any other purpose. Mortification is the broom which removes the dross from the field, which if not cleared, would not be ready for the divine.

We must formulate for ourselves a noble aim and mortification should be made subservient to that aim. For instance, people like Gandhiji and Maharshi Karve, first made resolve to alleviate the suffering of the poor in India, of widowed women, etc. In order to fulfil this aim they had to undertake austerities. The giving up of western clothes by Gandhiji was not important in itself. The hardships in terms of losing his job and living on very little income were not the desired things, but when they came upon Maharshi Karve, there was no regret for the path chosen. Deeds of mortification became a way of life. Prince Siddhartha gave up his kingdom and went into the forest and hardly felt that he was undertaking austerities. It was merely what was necessary to do in order to try to achieve what he had wanted to achieve. But later he gave up the very carefully modulated fast he had undertaken because he realized that it was not the way to *Sambodhi*.

True austerity or mortification is not physical deprivation like total fasting, torturing one's body, etc. Severe mortification of *Hatha-Yoga* may help in acquiring some psychic powers. But spiritual teachers have warned of the dangers of attaining such powers. Without real spiritual knowledge such psychic powers are like a weapon in skilled hands that are guided by unskilful and usually selfish minds. Sooner or later, the person possessing such powers is tempted to misuse them.

Lord Krishna says:

Deeds of sacrifice, of mortification, and of charity are not to be abandoned, for they are proper to be performed, and are the purifiers of the wise. But even those works are to be performed after having renounced all selfish interest in them and in their fruits. (*Gita*, XVIII)

TIRUKKURAL—THIRUVALLUVAR'S LIFE AND TEACHINGS

II

PASSING through the corridors of Time, turning the pages of human history with a discerning eye and an open mind, one comes across Great Minds in all climes and in all eras. All these have lived, moved and had their being amidst humanity, always with a sincere desire to live to benefit others, and proclaiming the ancient, ageless, Universal Truths, now in one form and now in another, helping and guiding humanity in its onward march to peace and progress. Some have been Sages, some Raja-rishis, some Poets, some Philosophers, but all Men among men. These belong to the "Deathless Race" and live in their teachings. They have risen above the common distinctions of caste, creed, nationality and even space and time, and thus belong to the whole of humanity which is one and indivisible. Therefore, it is said that humanity has never been without a friend. They are ever in the world, rendering gentle service to all that lives.

The most important contribution of Valluvar (Thiruvalluvar) is his picturing to us the value, dignity and sacredness of the *Grihastha Ashrama*—the stage of the home-builder, which has unfortunately been very much misunderstood and lowered by modern man. The author of "Living the Higher Life" writes:

To my mind, no ascetics, no teachers of mankind, however eminent and full of the highest knowledge, are really such good and practical benefactors of humanity as Valluvar, of ancient times, who incarnated on earth for the express purpose, among others, of setting an example of an ideal household life to mortals who were prematurely and madly rushing against the rocks of renunciation, and of proving the possibility of leading such a life in any age however degenerated; or as Rama, who, even after having become an *avatar-purusha*, came down amidst mortals and led a household life. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No.34*, p. 5)

India, the ancient land of *Aryavarta*, has been the birthplace of many a poet, philosopher, saint and sage of universal repute. H.P.B.

calls this land "the Motherland of my MASTER" (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*). Though these Great Beings lived and moved in the far past, yet today we can contact them through their Teachings, in the hearts and minds of the holy *Tathagatas*. One such noble soul, who incarnated in South India, is known to us today as "Valluvar."

It is strange that the poet and his work are both without a name. The author himself is commonly known as *Thiruvalluva-nayanar* (literally, "the sacred devotee"). Since most of the facts concerning his life are vague, where they are not controversial, tradition is our main source of information. It is said that he was a weaver by profession and that he belonged to the *Valluva* caste, whose profession it was in the ancient days to announce the commands of kings by beating of drums. He was born in Madura and lived in Mylapore, a suburb of what is known today as Chennai.

He was undoubtedly one of the great geniuses; but his fame belongs chiefly to South India and the readers of Tamil—an ancient, living language. He is truly a genius in the Theosophical sense.

Great genius...if true and innate, and not merely an abnormal expansion of our human intellect—can never copy or condescend to imitate, but will ever be original, *sui generis* in its creative impulses and realizations.... True genius is a synonym of self-existent and infinite mind. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No.13*, pp. 5 and 8)

The period in which this universal bard of Mylapore lived, is controversial. There are no data whatsoever, which may enable us to fix with precision the period at which the poet flourished. It is, however, generally accepted as between the first century B.C. and second century A.D., or roughly 2000 years ago. He had an intimate friend, a rich merchant and captain of a small vessel called *Elela Singan* ("Lion of the Surf")—a descendant of a Chola king. Since it is said that the *Kural (Tirukkural)* was taken to the great Tamil *Sangham* at Madura in the reign of the Pandhya King Uggeraperuvazhudhi in 125 A.D., we may take the above date as nearly correct.

Some say that Valluvar was a Jain. It is true that he has used

several of the Jain technical terms. However, we are quite warranted in imagining Valluvar as a true cosmopolitan and friend of all religions, the thoughtful poet, the eclectic, to whom the teachings of the Jains were as familiar as those of the Hindus. He seems to be one who was not hindered by any caste prejudices from familiar intercourse with foreigners and whose one thought was to gather knowledge from every source. Shri C. Rajagopalachari writes in his translation of Thiruvalluvar's *Kural*:

He was one of those great and rare men whose catholic spirit rose above all denominations and whose vision was not clouded by dogma or prejudice of any kind.

There is one couplet, the fourth, in Chapter III, which is destructive of the idea that he was a Jain. There is, in fact, no trace in the *Kural* of many systems, doctrines, and practices, current in South India at different periods, because perhaps, they had been eliminated from the sage's own eclectic system of faith and practice, and also because his work is didactic and not controversial.

It will not be out of place to mention one or two anecdotes about Valluvar's family life. Tradition says that the life of the poet in Mylapore with his wife Vasuki was in perfect accordance with the Chapters in the *Kural* on the householder's life.

In Thiruvalluvar's youth, Vasuki's father Markasakyan, struck with his virtues, offered him his daughter in marriage. He was inclined to marry, recognizing domestic virtue as the highest, yet resolved first to try the maiden's temper and gifts. He replied: "If she will take this sand and make it into rice for me, I will take her as my wife."

Vasuki meekly took the basket of sand and feeling sure that what the holy man had ordained was possible and right, proceeded to boil it; and as the virtuous woman is said to have had power with the gods, so it came to pass with her (verse 55); she brought him the rice for which he had asked. She became his wife, faithful and obedient.

In after years, when the poet's fame had spread through all the Tamil country, a noble stranger came one day to the weaver's

cottage and asked the question—much discussed in those days—"Which is greater—domestic life, or a life of asceticism?" The sage, while courteously entertaining the stranger, gave no reply in words to the query. The inquirer was left to see domestic life in its perfect grace and to judge for himself. What he saw was this. One day when Vasuki was drawing water from the well the sage suddenly called her and the obedient wife instantly came to attend to his wishes, leaving the bucket hanging midway down the well. When she went back she found the bucket hanging in mid-air just as she had left it.

Another day when the good wife served her husband his morning meal of cold rice, he complained that it was too hot. She unquestioningly began to fan it. It is said that steam rose from the rice. Another day, at noon, when glaring light was everywhere, the sage who was at work at his loom, let fall his shuttle and called for light to see his work. Vasuki lit a lamp and brought it to him with unquestioning obedience. The inquirer had learnt his lesson: "Where such a wife is found, domestic life is the best. Where such a wife is not, the life of the ascetic is to be preferred."

So the poet and his wife Vasuki, this Griselda of olden Tamil days, lived till the time she had to leave him. The dying wife looked wistfully at her husband.

"What is it?" he asked.

"When you married me, on that day I stood and spread the rice for you, and you gave me a commandment to always place with your meals, a cup of water and needle. I know not why it was."

"It was," he replied, "so that if a grain of rice were spilt, I might pick it up and purify it."

Satisfied, she closed her eyes forever. Also it is clear that no grain of rice had ever been spilt! For the 20th-century man these may seem mere fancies, or fairytales; their significance is that in Vasuki, Valluvar had a wife who conformed to the ideals of wifehood that he set forth in the *Kural*. As a result, his home life was one of concord and great felicity, the importance of which he so much emphasizes in the chapters on "The Householder's Life."

The *Tirukkural* is the precious gem of universal Ethics. What the *Bhagavad-Gita* is to the Hindus and the Bible to the Christians, the *Kural* is to the lovers of Tamil.

It may be mentioned that the eminent critic, Professor Winslow, is of the opinion that no language is better suited for poetic expression than ancient Greek and Tamil. The Rev. G. U. Pope has written of Tamil that it is not a dialect of *Sanskrit* but an independent language with a copious and original vocabulary, having a very clear and philosophical grammatical system, very highly cultivated and in every respect equals *Sanskrit* itself. It is the mother of the south Indian languages.

The *Tirukkural* is the Tamil Veda. M. Ariel, in a letter to Burnouf, published in the *Journal Asiatique* (Nov.-Dec. 1848), speaks of this great work as

the masterpiece of Tamil literature—one of the highest and purest expressions of human thought. That which above all is wonderful in the *Kural* is the fact that its author addresses himself, without regard to castes, peoples or beliefs, to the whole community of mankind; the fact that he formulates sovereign morality and absolute reason; that he proclaims in their very essence, in their eternal abstractedness, virtue and truth; that he represents as it were, in one group the highest laws of domestic and social life; that he is equally perfect in thought, in language and in poetry, in the austere metaphysical contemplation of the great mysteries of the Divine Nature, as in the easy and graceful analysis of the tenderest emotions of the heart.

(To be continued)

THOU must overcome the need of remorse, the pain of penitence, the labour of confession, the love of the world, temptation of the devil, pride of the body, and annihilation of self-will which drags so many souls back that they never come to real love.

—MECHTHILD OF MAGDEBURG

HEALTHY MIND IN HEALTHY BODY

IN the *Dhammapada*, in the chapter on Happiness, Lord Buddha refers to health as “the greatest acquisition.” An Indian proverb states: “Good health is equal to a thousand boons.” It is a priceless boon, indeed, for both the poor and the rich, the young and the old. In our artificial civilization it is common to find even the young having health problems. Our hospitals are overcrowded with people suffering from all kinds of diseases, and it is pathetic to see them in terrible anguish and agony.

The very first idea that occurs on reflecting upon Lord Buddha’s wonderful statement is that health is not a gift from “providence” or parents, but is an acquisition, which means something earned through right efforts in the right direction. It is under the law of Karma that one enjoys good health and has his instruments of body, mind and heart in order. “A sound mind in a sound body” is an ancient adage, and very few can claim that privilege today. Mind and body are very closely related and affect each other for weal or woe. Each one, as an old soul in a new body, brings with him at birth, under the law of Karma, traits and tendencies pertaining to his physical, mental and moral nature, acquired in previous incarnations, and therefore is responsible for whatever is his or her due on all planes. Each one is free to act rightly or wrongly in the present incarnation, that is, to work in harmony with Nature and Nature’s laws, or go against them, depending on his choices. In order to preserve good health, or to restore it if one doesn’t have it, one has to understand the principles of life, and live accordingly. A sunny temperament and a cheerful disposition are the outcome of good health.

The words “heal” and “health” are closely related, and disease or lack of ease is the reverse. The dictionary defines “disease” as “bodily disorder or derangement of health.” The human body is a living organism with vital centres which should function harmoniously together as a unit. Disorder at once sets in whenever that harmony is disturbed. Prevention is better than cure, and so it

is the duty of every single individual to keep his body free from any kind of ailment.

Theosophically, the physical body is the visible aspect and only one-seventh of the whole man; the remaining six constituents are invisible, but working in and through the physical, visible body. It is only the outer encasement of the inner six principles. As they are all interdependent and interrelated, the derangement or disorder of any one of the principles will affect the whole man, and thus diseases spring up in the physical body. It is important to observe rules of health, physical, mental and moral, so that the inner man, and particularly the self-conscious thinker, the reincarnating ego, can carry on its activities without obstruction. Physicians generally prescribe medicines according to the visible symptoms, without taking into account the inner principles and the causal aspect of the disease. The creative, preservative and destructive-regenerative forces and energies are within man, but physicians and patients alike generally attach greater importance to the taking of medicines than to giving Mother Nature a chance to restore the disturbed equilibrium. The result is only a temporary relief from the pain and, in many cases, undesirable after-effects and fresh diseases crop up. Where is the medical practitioner with an all-round knowledge of man in his relationship with the whole universe? In the words of Paracelsus:

Man is himself a cosmos. A physician who knows nothing about Cosmology will know little about disease. He should know what exists in heaven and upon the earth, what lives in the four elements and how they act upon man; in short, he should know what man is, his origin and his constitution; he should know the whole man, and not merely his external body. If man were in possession of a perfect knowledge of self he would not need to be sick at all.

In the sixth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Sri Krishna instructs Arjuna: “This divine discipline, Arjuna, is not to be attained by the man who eateth more than enough or too little, nor by him who hath a habit of sleeping much, nor by him who is given to

overwatching. The meditation which destroyeth pain is produced in him who is moderate in eating and in recreation, of moderate exertion in his actions, and regulated in sleeping and waking.” Thus, moderation in all the activities of daily life is an important rule of health. Fresh air and exercise, pure, wholesome food, and regular hours of sleep will always help to build a good constitution. *Sattvic* food is described by Sri Krishna in the 17th chapter of the *Gita*: “The food which increases the length of days, vigour and strength, which keeps one free from sickness, of tranquil mind, and contented, and which is savoury, nourishing, of permanent benefit and congenial to the body, is that which is attractive to those in whom the *sattva* quality prevaieth.” These right principles of diet each one can observe for himself. “Vigour and strength” are mentioned, but they are not of the type needed by an athlete, or a fighter, or a mountaineer, for the work of the spiritual aspirant is along quite another line. He has to become a proper channel with receptivity of mind and brain and a clean healthy body, for the carrying on of the work of the great Masters of Theosophy.

As given in *Raja-Yoga or Occultism* (p. 2), the first of the seven qualifications for Chelaship is: “Perfect physical health.” It is modified to some extent for the candidates of our present era. The chief aim and object of the aspirant being the service of others, his one duty is to live to the best of his ability according to the teachings of Theosophy and spread the Message by example and precept. If the body is not in a healthy condition, he becomes unfit for the great work and his aim is frustrated. If through past mistakes his physical and mental stamina is not what it should be, he must endeavour to regain it in the present through steadfast efforts.

There are so many different systems of cure—Allopathy, Homeopathy, Nature Cure, Water Cure, Ayurveda, Unani, Mental Science, Christian Science, etc. Theosophy stresses the importance of throwing out the disease of the body, not pushing it in, as the latter would have its own repercussions in the future. It also discourages the mental attitude of denying a disease when it does crop up. It is always best to live according to Nature’s laws,

observing punctuality in time and unity and harmony with all its departments, thus deriving the utmost benefit from all. The starry firmament above and the earth beneath our feet have to be looked upon with gratitude and respect. The light of the sun, the colours of the rainbow, the sweet melodies of the birds, the fragrance of the flowers and the trees, the high mountains and the deep valleys, all need our grateful admiration. We obtain so much from Nature, and only through our love and adoration can it be enriched. Some of the healing cults use the power of sound or music for effecting cures; others use colours for the same purpose. They may bring about partial results, and different temperaments are affected differently. Both sounds and colours are produced by different rates of vibration, and each individual has his own rate in terms of which he responds. All these are not permanent remedies; they but help in producing soothing effects.

A lasting cure can only result with the knowledge of the real inner man, the man of mind and emotions, the currents of which circulate in the foundational astral body, more subtle in substance, but more elastic, impressionable, magnetic, with inner organs of action and sensation which are constantly affected by our thoughts and feelings. As Madame Blavatsky has stated:

Half, if not two-thirds of our ailings and diseases are the fruit of our imagination and fears. Destroy the latter and give another bent to the former, and nature will do the rest.

So, control of the mind and the desire nature is essential to keep the body in good condition. We are further told:

Physician, heal thyself: Diet, fasting, purgation, repose, exercise. The virtues are medicines, self-sacrifice is a purgation, calmness a prescription, patience a sovereign remedy, altruism the Great Physician. The mind and moral nature thus fed and exercised, *natural* physical means will restore the body. (*The Laws of Healing*)

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: Is it not better to start working for upliftment of humanity rather than spend much time on studying and spreading knowledge?

Answer: Mme. Blavatsky writes in *Five Messages*: “Theosophists are of necessity the friends of all those movements in the world, whether intellectual or simply practical, for the amelioration of the condition of mankind” (p. 8). But in doing so, we must not lose sight of the fact that man is not just his body, nor just his mind, but something more. Instead of laying emphasis on mere material charity—providing food, clothing and shelter or curing diseases—more importance must be given to alleviating mental and moral suffering. Mr. Judge observes that the physical woes of the race are only skin-deep, the real woes or the cause is mental and moral suffering.

Today, the majority of people going to a psychiatrist are not “sick” in a conventional sense. According to Dr. Erich Fromm, “They complain of being depressed, having insomnia, being unhappy in their marriage, not enjoying their work, and any number of similar problems.” What they really suffer from, says Dr. Fromm, “is an inner deadness. They live in the midst of plenty and are joyless.” Another psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl, writes: “The truth is that as the struggle for survival has subsided, the question has emerged: survival for what? Ever more people today have the means to live, but no meaning to live for.”

H.P.B. observes that “true evolution teaches us that by altering the surroundings of the organism, we can alter and improve the organism;” but this is not the complete solution. In *Let Every Man Prove His Own Work*, she shows that philanthropists who sought

to make men happy by bettering their physical conditions or external environment—by building homes, starting soup kitchens, etc.—were ultimately disappointed. Those who had spent their lives in doing such works confessed that, “as a matter of fact, misery cannot be relieved. It is a vital element in human nature, and is as necessary to some lives as pleasure is to others...that misery is not just endurable, but agreeable to many who endure it.” For instance, a woman who worked all her life for the amelioration of prostitutes, confessed in the end that it was not possible to better the conditions of those girls, because they seemed to “love the very state which wealthy people may call misery.” Even today, we find that when blankets are given to the poor during winter, they sometimes sell them off. At times proper houses are built for them and they sell those and go back to living in their huts. We are asked to exercise discrimination even in helping others. H.P.B. writes:

It takes a very wise man to do good works without the danger of doing incalculable harm. A highly developed adept in life may grasp the nettle, and by his great intuitive powers, know whom to relieve from pain and whom to leave in the mire that is their best teacher...Kindness and gentle treatment will sometimes bring out the worst qualities of man or woman who has led a fairly presentable life when kept down by pain and despair. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No.31*, p. 10)

We, not having such intuitive power, will do well to follow the advice of Mr. Judge: “If some pathetic story of suffering has moved you, act on the emotion while your cheeks are still wet with tears.” However, Theosophy puts human suffering in a much wider perspective. Pain has a definite and important place in man’s life. When we learn to see pain in the right perspective, we would not want to shun it. Often people are driven to commit suicide for trifling reasons like inability to pass an exam, unrequited love, etc. We should not grumble, fret and fume, but regard every unfavourable situation as an opportunity to learn and grow. Growth involves change, and every change is accompanied by pain.

Unless people’s minds and hearts are charitable, physical charity

will be of little help. Thus, if people lack integrity at higher as well as lower levels, if they feel that it is right for them to cheat and prosper—no matter how much others suffer—mere physical acts of charity are not enough to bring about peace and happiness.

This also implies that it is not enough to impose laws, in order to improve any social, economic or political system. It has been noticed, for instance, that so long as men are dishonest, bullies and twisters, they always find out some new way of cheating and evading tax. However stringent the laws are made, people succeed in finding loopholes. We cannot have good society without good men, and we cannot have good men, merely by imposing laws. The emphasis must be on individual morality.

Why is there such obvious disparity in society? Why are the rich becoming richer and the poor, poorer? It is because of neglect of social duty on the part of the rich towards the poor. It is because we do not realize that we are pilgrim souls. What each one of us needs to do, has been suggested in *The Voice of the Silence*: “Give light and comfort to the toiling pilgrim.” It shows that we must not only give comfort—physical and mental relief—but also give “light,” *i.e.*, “right knowledge” or the “bread of wisdom,” to the distressed. We must look upon every human being as a “toiling pilgrim.” This at once changes the whole attitude of mind. Every ordinary man is really a toiling pilgrim. Besides being a businessman, a sweeper, a teacher, each one is a pilgrim in the ultimate analysis, as one side of his nature is toiling towards human evolution.

Laws of Karma and Reincarnation are doctrines of responsibility and hope. H.P.B. observes that the percentage of crime is less in Buddhist countries where doctrines of Karma and Rebirth are taught. When people are taught that they cannot escape the consequences of their actions, then, “besides feeling in themselves the true dignity of human nature, they will turn from evil and eschew it as they would a physical danger” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 245). When people feel that this life is the only life, they struggle to keep body and soul together at any cost. It is summed up by a

Master of Wisdom in a few pregnant words:

You should even as a simple member...learn that you may teach, acquire spiritual knowledge and strength that the weak may lean upon you, and the sorrowing victims of ignorance learn from you the cause and remedy of their pain. If you choose, you may make your home one of the most important centres of spiritualizing influence in all the world.

Question: How does one cultivate compassion? It seems so difficult in today's times when each one works for himself.

Answer: There are some presumed ideas in the question raised. Is it so "difficult" to behave like a truly human being? Are "today's times" so hopelessly bad that there is no place for compassion? Are we all working for ourselves alone, ignoring others all the time?

Indeed, there is some grain of truth that in this imperfect world, human beings sometimes behave like beasts. But all of us are not always selfish. If that were the case, the world would be in a chaos! "There is something good in the worst of us and something bad in the best of us." Man is a combination of truth and error, good and evil, greatness and meanness, depending on which part of his nature is exercised at the moment.

Mr. Crosbie writes: "Let us follow the lines of the law of our own being—compassion, love, helpfulness for all—and then we shall be able to understand ourselves and the nature of others" (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 309). So, to understand others is to forgive.

The practical solution for "man's inhumanity to man" is, we must be human first, no matter what others are doing, and keep our sanity when others are losing theirs. It also means using discrimination, common sense, discretion and gentle damage-control measures, while at the back of it all, our true humanity is kept alive in us functioning in the interest of all.

We blame others for not being able to exercise goodness, sweetness and light—qualities *inherent* in man. We must firmly believe in man's superior nature and keep affirming our faith

whenever we feel the difficulty about cultivating our compassionate nature which is always there. Given the chance by us, it will flower forth, both in us, and in the people we are dealing with. We must always assert the dignity of man, because there is a "hero" hidden in every one of us. We must give it a chance to come out in front. We must be the first to be heroic in accepting others as they are and meanwhile hoping that goodness will ultimately prevail. Bitterness should never be allowed entry in our heart.

If we open our eyes we can see so much of good happening in the world. Even in the worst of times, nobility in man does come to the surface. H.P.B. writes:

Selfishness, indifference, and brutality can never be the normal state of the race—to believe so would be to despair of humanity—and that no Theosophist can do. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 233)

To despair of man's great possibilities is to lose faith in the very law of our being—the law of Wisdom and Compassion. *The Voice of the Silence* defines compassion thus:

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)

IN all things success depends on previous preparation, and without such previous preparation there is sure to be failure. If what is to be spoken be previously determined, there will be no stumbling. If affairs be previously determined, there will be no difficulty with them. If one's actions have been previously determined, there will be no sorrow in connection with them. If principles of conduct have been previously determined, the practice of them will be inexhaustible.

—Confucius

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

“There are no victims in the world, and no villains. And neither are you a victim of the choices of others. At some level you have all created that which you say you detest, and having created it you have chosen it,” writes Neale Donald Walsch (*Sunday Times of India*, April 24, 2005). It is easier to change oneself rather than another. It is only when we accept the responsibility of our actions that we find the power to change. Often, we disown “bad” things/actions that are of our own making, because in calling them bad we are calling ourselves bad. It is this intellectual and spiritual dishonesty which makes the world what it is today. To change the condition of the world, everyone must accept or even feel a deep inner sense of responsibility for the world. Further,

The world’s natural calamities and disasters, its tornadoes and hurricanes, volcanoes and floods, its physical turmoils are not created by you specifically. What is created by you is the degree to which these events touch your life....

These events are created by the combined consciousness of man. All of the world, co-creating together, produces these experiences. What each of you do, individually, is move through them, deciding what, if anything, they mean to you, and Who and What You Are in relationship to them....You cannot change the outer event (...you are not grown enough in your consciousness to alter individually that which has been created collectively), so you must change the inner experience....Judge not, and neither condemn, for you know not why a thing occurs, nor to what end.

Rather, seek to change those things or support others who are changing those things which no longer reflect your highest sense of Who You Are.

World-reform must begin with self-reform. The good and bad conditions in the world are the result of collective Karma. We have had a hand in making the total situation. Today, if we find people to be selfish and cruel, we are partly responsible for it, under the law of Karma. Action of each individual has a far-reaching effect

on the whole of mankind as well as on all the lower kingdoms of nature—for good or ill. This makes each one morally, and inescapably, responsible and accountable for his thoughts and actions. Human thoughts have dynamic power. The cumulative force of evil thoughts is responsible for the calamities of nature. *Light on the Path* teaches: “Remember that the sin and shame of the world, are your sin and shame; for you are a part of it; your Karma is inextricably interwoven with the great karma” (p.16). Thus, instead of condemning a person for his weaknesses we must learn to look upon him as a fellow pilgrim whose boots have become too heavy with mud, and stretch out a helping hand. The panacea is suggested by H.P.B.:

If the action of one reacts on the lives of all, and this is the true scientific idea, then it is only by all men becoming brothers and all women sisters, and by all practising in their daily lives true brotherhood and true sisterhood, that the real human solidarity, which lies at the root of the elevation of the race, can ever be attained. It is this action and interaction, this true brotherhood and sisterhood, in which each shall live for all and all for each, which is one of the fundamental Theosophical principles that every Theosophist should be found not only to teach, but to carry out in his or her individual life. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 232)

Progress can be attained and only attained, by the development of the nobler qualities....In every conceivable case he himself must be a centre of spiritual action, and from him and his own daily individual life must radiate those higher spiritual forces which alone can regenerate his fellow-men. (*Ibid.*, pp. 233-34)

Until just over a century ago, most physicists believed that ether filled all of space. The reasoning was that just like sound waves, light waves, too, needed some medium to move through. Albert Michelson and Edward Morley reasoned that if ether filled all of

space, then all celestial bodies must display motion relative to it. Anyone standing on Earth and facing in the direction of earth's motion through space must experience an "ether wind" rushing past his/her face. Since the Earth is travelling at 30 kilometres per second around the sun, Michelson and Morley reasoned that the ether wind should reduce the speed of light travelling in the same direction as the Earth (and hence against the ether wind) by 30 kilometres per second. However, as the Michelson-Morley experiment in 1887, and similar experiments conducted since then, failed to prove the existence of ether, the accepted conclusion was that there is no ether. Hence it was established that light always travels through space at the same speed. Einstein based his special theory of relativity on this conclusion. Subsequently, however, when Dayton Miller repeated the Michelson-Morley experiment, the results supported the existence of an ether wind blowing over the Earth at 8 kilometres per second.

Once again search is on for ether. Recently, Maurizio Consoli of the Italian National Institute of Nuclear Physics in Catania, Sicily, proposed to carry out an ether-detecting experiment. The existence of ether will change many conclusions in physics. Taking ether as an absolute frame of reference, signalling at speeds faster than light would be possible—something forbidden in special theory of relativity.

A Master of Wisdom observes that for modern science, ether has been a *purely hypothetical medium*, "the existence of which is so far only a convenient hypothesis to serve the ends of her undulatory theory." However, there are those "who regard ether as reality, and who know that...it pervades the densest solids as readily as water does a sponge" (*The Theosophist*, September, 1882). Dr. D.W. Richardson, F.R.S., mentioned the existence of sun-force or imponderable and invisible agency, being the material substance flowing from the Sun through Space, filling the voids between the particles of solid bodies (*S.D.*, II, 524). H.P.B. observes:

Not only "through space," but filling every point of our solar system, for it is the physical residue, so to say, of Ether, its

lining on our plane; Ether having to serve other cosmic and terrestrial purposes besides being the "agent" for transmitting light. It is the astral fluid or "Light" of the Kabalists. (*S.D.*, II, 524 fn.)

Further, H.P.B. explains the nature of ether, thus:

In its lowest strata, where it merges with the astral light, it may be called molecular on its own plane; but not for us. But the ether of which science has a suspicion, is the grossest manifestation of Akasa, though on our plane, for us mortals, it is the seventh principle of the astral light, and three degrees higher than "radiant matter." When it penetrates, or informs something, it may be molecular because it takes on the form of the latter, and its atoms inform the particles of that "something." We may perhaps call it "crystallized ether." (*Transactions*, p. 108)

Aether-Akasa is the fifth and sixth principles of the body of Kosmos—thus corresponding to Buddhi-Manas, in Man; Ether is its Kosmic sediment mingling with the highest layer of the Astral Light. Beginning with the fifth root-race, it will develop fully only at the beginning of the fifth round. (*Transactions*, p. 108)

Does low self-esteem lie at the root of individual and societal problems and dysfunctions? Efforts are on in the U.S.A. to raise people's sense of self-worth and self-esteem with the hope of reducing crime, teen pregnancy, drug abuse, school underachievement and pollution. "Yet surprisingly, research shows that such efforts are of little value in fostering academic progress or preventing undesirable behaviour," write Roy F. Baumeister, Jennifer D. Campbell, Joachim I. Krueger and Kathleen D. Vohs. (*Scientific American*, January 2005). Most investigators ask people what they think of themselves, and that seems to be an inadequate method to judge self-esteem. In most analyses, people with a healthy sense of self-respect are clubbed with those who are narcissistic or those who feign high self-esteem. It is crucial to

determine the causality, *i.e.*, if there exists only a *correlation* between self-esteem and certain positive outcomes, or does high self-esteem *bring about* positive outcomes? Often, positive self-image is a *result* of success or good behaviour. For instance, the strong correlation between self-esteem and happiness is just that—a correlation. “It is plausible that occupational, academic or interpersonal successes cause both happiness and high self-esteem and that corresponding failures cause both unhappiness and low self-esteem. It is even possible that happiness, in the sense of a temperament or disposition to feel good, induces high self-esteem.” Researchers conclude that high self-esteem does not lessen a tendency toward violence or deter adolescents from turning to alcohol, tobacco, drugs and sex and that it fails to improve academic or job performance.

Should parents, teachers and therapists seek to boost self-esteem wherever possible? Although high self-esteem seems to be a valuable attribute, a heightened sense of self-worth may prompt some people to demand preferential treatment or to exploit their fellows. “Such tendencies would entail considerable social costs.”

We seem to derive our sense of identity from what we are not. What we call “I” or self—the personality—is only an instrument of the true, spiritual Self. The real worth of this self does not lie in intellectual achievements, physical beauty, wealth, status, fame, etc. H.P.B. explains this by an analogy. The atoms of gold are scattered through the substance of quartz and although the miner is not able to see the gold atoms through his naked eye he knows that it is the presence of gold atoms, which makes his quartz valuable. So also the real value or worth of every individual is derived from the presence of the divinity within. Self-esteem or self-worth based on personality or any other externals can sooner or later make a man self-centred and selfish, leading to a sense of separateness. Mr. Judge writes:

Try to recollect that you are a very small affair in the world, and that the people around do not value you at all and grieve not when you are absent. Your only true greatness lies in your

inner true self and it is not desirous of obtaining the applause of others. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

Light on the Path suggests that for progress on the spiritual path it becomes necessary to conquer the self. “And that power which the disciple shall covet is that which shall make him appear as nothing in the eyes of men” (p. 4). “All weapons of offence and defence are given up; all weapons of mind and heart, and brain and spirit...Never again can the neophyte raise his voice in self-defence or excuse” (pp. 77-78). When a man is able to regard his own life as part of the whole—like a grain of sand on the seashore, among innumerable other grains of sand, which now and then get sunrays—he will no longer struggle in order to obtain anything for himself and that is the surrendering of personal rights. (p. 76)

Scientists are exploring the possibilities of establishing a future human colony at the moon’s north pole. They have identified a section along the rim of a 73-km-wide crater called Peary which appears to be constantly lighted and fit for a human colony, says a report in *Nature*, quoted in *New Scientist*. Scientists say that though the moon’s environment is harsh with temperature varying from minus-100 degrees centigrade to 100 degrees centigrade, such extreme temperatures do not exist at the poles. Since poles of the moon never experience a sunset, this, “scientists believe, will provide a stable temperature of about minus-50 degrees centigrade and a steady source of energy, both considered crucial for the establishment of any future lunar base.” (*The Times of India*, April 15, 2005).

What has Theosophy to say about the relationship between moon and earth? Mr. Judge writes:

The moon was once a large and vital body full of beings. It lived its life, went through its cycles, and at last having lived its life, after vast ages had passed away, came to the moment when it had to die.... (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 24*, p. 7)

It is then that the moon threw out into space all her energies, leaving nothing but the physical vehicle, which energies condensed and formed our earth. Then gradually the beings from moon migrated to earth. The moon then began disintegrating while still revolving around the child, our earth. Further, “It is likely that before our sixth round is ended, it being the round relating to *Buddhi* as the vehicle of spirit, the body of the moon, which was the vehicle for *prana* and astral body, will have disappeared.”

To imagine that we are here by chance, that there is no law, that there are accidents, that we are not responsible for ourselves being impinged upon while others are gratified of their desires—is an error. We have brought ourselves into the present condition by doing similar things before. We have in other lives pursued a course that shut us out from a knowledge of our own nature. We have so acted through the inherent power within ourselves as to bring about a closure between our high perception and our lives in the body; we have affected others in a similar way, and they in their turn come back to affect us and keep us on that plane of thought and action. For it can be seen that our thoughts are action more than the acts themselves. It is the way we think that produces action, and others are *permeable* to those thoughts of ours, be they good or bad.

—ROBERT CROSSBIE

As we are told to look for the cause behind every effect, we must seek the cause of anger. The dictionary tells us that it may be prompted by a sense of wrong, and a growing resentment or indignation. So we see that anger has many causes and that there are other poisons related to it.

The opposite virtues or qualities to be cultivated include *Kshanti*-patience which will prevent us from falling prey to irritability; *Dara*-love which keeps us from hurting another; *Skila*-harmony which puts an end to disharmony in word and act. *Light on the Path* tells us that our voice must lose the power to wound. What causes the desire to wound? Delusion, based on many thoughts and sensations, on the pride of self and the greed to possess.

What is greed? In *The Dream of Ravan* it is called an insatiable craving. *Through the Gates of Gold* gives good descriptions of this craving and where it leads to. The greed to possess, to hold, to take from another, to demand more and more, works on all planes. Sensuality is one form, ambition is another, envy yet another, but all are rooted in the love of self and the feeling of insecurity. All these lead to such a disturbed condition that no progress is possible. Jealousy arises, envy takes hold of us, and we want what others have and take what does not belong to us. We centre our consciousness on possessions. Greed also produces lust, passion, which is never satisfied. It leads to putrefaction, decomposition, death.

If we can find the cause of this insatiable craving of greed we can start to destroy it by practising the opposite virtue—dispassion which keeps us from desiring more and more possessions. The possessions which come to us in the natural course are lawful; those that we snatch from others or from Nature herself are unlawful, for perfect balance must reign throughout. So it is said that the "spoiler robs, to render." Nothing that we possess is our, for everything belongs to all. Hence the idea that we are only the trustees of whatever possessions, physical, moral or mental, we have. Karma brings us our own; selfishness makes us take more; unselfishness alone will ride us of this craving.

Looking at the offsprings of greed, we find such vices as envy, resentment, vanity, pride and fear. We fear to lose what we have, and fear shrivels up the newly-forming permanent astral body which coagulates and contracts. Have we not here a picture of the miser?

What is delusion? It is that which we see through our defective sense-organs, sensations, preconceptions and prejudices. It leads to unbelief. It comes from slothfulness which will not let us examine and prove anything, but makes us take the attitude that we alone are correct. One who is obsessed by a sense of his own importance is like the fool who sits high up in a tower, unperceived by any but himself. He has to come down to appreciate his real position, and be ready to learn, to seek advice, to be humble. Pride makes us mad; vanity destroys the newly-forming astral because it draws to our sphere elementals which fracture it as with an explosion. This, by repercussion, changes the whole nature, and may result in insanity and excesses of one kind or another.

To get rid of our delusion, we need to control our ideas, thoughts, sensations. We certainly need *Viraga* as also *Virya* to have sufficient energy to "fight our way to the supernal Truth" out of the mire of falsehoods and delusions. The fight against delusion has to continue throughout every aspect of life. The reason for living and the inner motive behind everything must be to live to benefit others. That is the central position to be maintained. When that is the motive for living, all our vices will fade away, except perhaps one—pride. "A sense of pride would mar the work." To avoid this, we have to make ourselves one with Nature's Soul-Thought. Any lurking idea of separateness will disturb the balance of Nature. Today we are only conscious of our separateness from others. The very idea of our identity with others makes us feel lost. But in reality we are lost only when we are separate, for separateness implies that our puny self is pitted against great nature's forces. To go outward and draw all into ourselves to feel at one with Nature in all her forms, is to lose our sense of "I" while becoming the greater "I" of the Universe. We must open our doors of self to let in all creatures, even the ill and the wicked. We need strength to help the wicked if

we would not fall prey to them, at the same time struggling to recognize their brotherhood with us.

It is said that Universe has its centre everywhere and circumference nowhere. Each individual life is the centre, and all are comprehended in the ever-receding circumference which knows no bounds.
