

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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REFLECTIONS ON MEDITATION

THERE IS great deal of talk and discussion on the subject of meditation, but very little is really known of the subject. The strangest notions exist as to what meditation is all about, and what is the purpose to be achieved by meditation. Generally speaking, meditation and action are considered as being entirely different and opposing things, so that a man of meditation is supposed to be the very opposite of a man of action. A man of meditation is falsely described as a man of passive resignation and utmost inactivity, as an impractical person, a person not fit for any skillful performance of action in the realms of labour or business. But if it is true that there can be action without previous deliberate meditation, and sufficient brooding over and reflection—in fact, that is generally the type of action we indulge in, impulsive, sudden and without real thought at the basis—it is also true that real meditation invariably and always results in the performance of deeds of an altruistic and humanitarian nature, and that right action can only proceed from true meditation. It is a non-understanding of the relationship between these two expressions of human nature; meditation and action, which are complementary, and not inimical, that has brought about a separation between the two, and the following of the two extremes. Divorced from meditation, action is materialistic, selfish and superficial, and divorced from action meditation becomes passive, and degenerates into mediumship, with development of the psychic

at the expense of spirituality which is but another type of selfishness.

What is meditation? Meditation is a state or a condition of consciousness in which our mind is turned inward and maintained steady in that direction, seeking inspiration from the spiritual part of our being, engaging in reflection upon high ideas of universal and altruistic nature. It is a condition which necessitates the full exercise and control of concentrated and active attention as well as a change in the whole man. It is important to note that firstly, it concerns the state of the whole man, and hence, cannot be understood unless and until we understand something of man's true nature. Secondly, it is a condition in which *attention* plays an all important part. The subject is a complex and a difficult one and requires the understanding of certain preliminary ideas, such as the concept of attention.

Meditation is impossible without developing the faculty of attention. Likewise, study of any branch of knowledge also involves attention. We give the matter attentive consideration, again and again, until the subject considered becomes our permanent possession. This is attention of the mind. Study of an art necessitates the same faculty of attention, but extends to physiological plane. We have to perform certain actions repeatedly and attentively, until the organ of action involved in the production of that art begins to act automatically. In other words, to possess any knowledge or to develop any faculty, training through action becomes necessary. Attention, then, becomes the essential factor of true education for without it no true progress can be made in any field.

However, true concentration is not the concentration of brain-mind, on external things. True concentration is the concentration upon the Higher Self within. That is the Highest Yoga, says Mr. Crosbie. Shri S. N. Goenka teaches that even in the daily actions of ordinary life, concentration is required, but it is not necessarily the same as right concentration. "A person may be concentrating on satisfying a sensual desire or forestalling a fear. A cat waits with all its attention focused on a mouse hole, ready to pounce as soon as a mouse appears. A pick-pocket is intent on the victim's wallet, waiting for the

moment to remove it. None of these is right concentration, concentration that can be used for liberation. *Samadhi* must have as its focus an object that is free from all craving, all aversion, all illusion."

The word attention or concentration is used constantly by all of us and yet very little understood. We forget to ask the primary question, what in us becomes attentive? Attention is an attitude of our consciousness. It is the directing of the consciousness upon the subject to be studied or the thing to be done in such a way that we centre the whole consciousness on that one particular thing and keep it thus steadily and uninterruptedly centred. It is similar to the focusing of the rays of the sun through a lens upon one definite spot, so that the whole force of the rays operates on that one spot and no other. The operation of the rays is then intensified and strengthened in such a way as to produce results impossible of achievement when those same rays spread over a whole surface, instead of converging at a focal point. That is why the power of our consciousness becomes intensified if attention is maintained and sustained, and the longer we are able to keep our attention the greater will be our knowledge or our ability.

That the focusing of our faculties through attention increases the power of those faculties is well seen in cases of people who have lost the use of one or other of their senses. A blind person, for instance, will hear better, and sense through touch better. His sense of hearing and of touch will become intensified because the area of his activities has become smaller, and does not extend to sight experiences. This shows that multiplicity of actions result in a weakening of the attention. This too, is well known, we say, "give me your undivided attention—I want your whole attention." Because we realize instinctively that if we try to embrace too many things at a time we weaken the power of our consciousness. That is the error of modern education. It covers a multiplicity of subjects and inculcates haste and rush to pass from one thing to another, instead of developing concentrated attention. This is because it has to impart knowledge from without, by cramming information on

this, that and the other thing, instead of finding out the knowledge inherent within the consciousness.

True attention must be active, must result in creative work of one kind or another. And here we must differentiate between active and passive attention. There is passive attention when the attention is held through external attraction without the exercise of Will. In listening to a lecture, for example, we are attentive but our attention is passive. It merely consists in our willingness to let the lecturer hold our interest, but we are not engaged in any creative work necessitating both Will and Attention. Our attention will become active and bring Will into play, if after the lecture when we go home and begin to focus our consciousness on what was heard by us at the lecture, we then enter meditation. Meditation is the focusing of one's attention within one's own consciousness. It is the directing of the mental vision *within* to that which is at the back of the mind.

Specific meditation consists in turning within to consult the Soul at a particular time. Such an exercise is necessary and advisable. It constitutes excellent mental discipline as well as supplying a high note for all our activities. But we can easily see that we cannot direct our vision within, at will, unless we have mastered attention in all departments. We cannot become suddenly attentive, when we wish to meditate, unless we have learnt to be attentive to all duties and all tasks of daily life.

The technology writer for *The Atlantic*, Nicholas Carr, expressed his concern, a few years back, about the impact of Internet on us. Are we fast losing the capacity to think deeply, calmly and seriously? Have we all succumbed to Internet attention deficit disorder? It appears that Internet has subtly changed the way in which one thinks and writes and has accelerated information processing. There seems to be mental multitasking, where one simultaneously absorbs information from multiple sources. Yet, with all that we seem to have lost the ability for real reading, as the mind looks for quick ways of collecting information. What we may be losing is quietness and depth in our literary, intellectual and spiritual lives.

It is suggested that if we wish to derive maximum benefit from the spiritual teachings then we must give up the *superficial* and *inattentive* methods of thought, concentrating the mind on every statement. There is a need to cultivate the habit of careful and constant concentration of mind even while performing every duty and act in life. In the East, emphasis is laid on *shravan* (attentive listening or reading), *manana* (deep reflection) and then (*Nididhyasana*) constantly keeping the teachings at the back of one's mind so that they could be applied in one's daily life. In the article, "Much Reading and Little Thought," Mr. Judge writes that light reading and superficial habit of skimming is everywhere apparent. "A few books well read, well analyzed, and thoroughly digested are better than many books read over once." It is essential for a spiritual aspirant to acquire both the *breadth* and *depth* of mind. Necessity of mental discipline in way of serious reading and thinking, even though for a short time, if persisted in, will change gradually mental action. By setting apart a particular time for study and meditation a habit is formed, and as the time comes round, the mind will, after a while, become trained so that meditation at the particular time will become natural.

What enables us to focus our consciousness over one point? The faculty of Will. It is the Will which focuses the rays of our consciousness with all their inherent dynamic powers upon the particular area where work is required to be done. But behind Will stands desire. Therefore, long before any practice at concentration is entered upon we must eliminate all desires and emotions that are not in harmony with the main purpose of our life. If we make our highest aspiration our aim, and centre all our attention on that aim, then all that we do, all that we feel or think, will be underlined with the predominant motive which animates our being. It is necessary to control all the senses for attaining concentration, which includes overindulgence of the sense of taste. H.P.B. writes, "If there is one thing worse than another which paralyzes the will-power in man and thereby paves the way to physical and moral degradation it is intemperance in eating....A body clogged with overstuffing of food,

of whatever kind, is always crowned with a stupefied brain, and tired nature demands the repose of sleep.”

A person whose attention is habitually turned outward and who does not see the value and need of introspection is naturally drawn by the pairs of opposites and his mind oscillates between likes and dislikes. To gain control of the mind, Shri Krishna suggests giving up of desires (*vairagya*) and constant practice (*abhyasa*). Mr. Judge recommends fewer desires, pure, high and altruistic, for the strengthening of the Will.

The other *sine qua non* condition for success in the practice of concentration is that one must be at peace with oneself and with others around. Any feeling of unbrotherliness, immorality, ill-will or selfishness keeps the mind in a non-integrated state and proves hindrance to concentration. Those who rush into spiritual practices without first going through the purificatory processes will find that their efforts end in frustration, which in turn might lead to the temptation to give up all efforts. Patanjali emphasizes the value of goodness, thus: “Through the practising of Benevolence, Tenderness, Complacency, and Disregard for objects of happiness, grief, virtue, and vice, the mind becomes purified (Book I, aphorism 33). Mr. Judge adds in his note on this aphorism that the practice of these also brings about “cheerfulness of the mind, which tends to strength and steadiness.”

Genuine concentration and meditation, conscious and cautious, upon the lower self, in the light of the inner divine man and the *Paramatma* is an excellent thing. By persistency and by submitting daily thoughts each night to the judgement of our Higher Self, we will at last gain light. Progress would be gradual, as we are trying to change, through half hourly meditations, those wrong habits of thought which we have built over many lives. We must have patience like a Chinese craftsman. A Chinese craftsman thinks his life well spent if during his life he creates one perfect masterpiece. Always remember that no effort is wasted. So we must persevere.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT A CHELA'S DREAM

A FEELING, of swift motion. I am conscious of traversing a narrow defile on the summit of a range of high hills, the path circuitous and difficult.... It is just before day-dawn.... A conductor is by my side, but I cannot look up, because of the exceeding brightness of presence. A sharp turn in the path brings into sudden view a natural amphitheatre, to which the path just traversed is the only means to access. The whisper comes, “Mark well, and remember.” The area is a verdant plain, completely enclosed by the mountain-tops.... In the middle of the plain is a large building of simple but imposing architecture. It is a square with a round turret at each corner, and a still higher dome covers the centre.

I approach the building on the north side, in the middle of which is one door. A dim light burns in the vestibule. The lamp is of ancient Eastern form, suspended from the centre of the roof by a long chain.

A man stands guard at the entrance, dressed in a loose gown of a blue-grey material. On his head a peculiar hat, something like a college cap, with a square flat top. A belt of some metal, like a blue watch-spring (the symbolical colour of magnetism and its Force), is around his waist, from which hang in front two tassels. In his right hand he holds a black rod surmounted by a golden crown, and the other end finished off with a golden ball. In his left hand he swings a censer, from which escape the most over-powering fumes. I am conscious that no other guard than those fumes is necessary to bar my progress. Alone I could not advance a step further.

My conductor enables me to pass. I am hurried along a winding gallery. On the right hand a solid wall. At regular intervals are pilasters corresponding to high massive pillars on the left. Each pillar has a very simple moulding near the base, and thence ascends without ornament. In the space beyond the pillars sit cross-legged, Eastern fashion, a certain number of men, one man occupying the space between each pillar and the next.

The first man wears a black gown and black turban, with a black star upon it. Following him sit a certain number similarly attired, but without a star. And so on through nine groups, each group, being distinguished by a different dress and turban, the last number being clothed in yellow, and the first man having a golden star in his yellow turban. Between the pillars and in front of each priest, the light towards him, hangs a lamp, in shape something like a shallow sauce-boat (the Yoni-shaped *Argha*, the lamp of the phallic and exoteric, or dead-letter creeds. This is typical. [Ed.]). The lights opposite the black group are miserable and dim. The flames grow larger and the lights brighter, as the colour of the dresses become brighter, until the lights opposite the yellows are very large and bright.

At first it seemed as though the gallery returned to the entrance after making a complete circle, but presently it was evident that it took a spiral course, and by the time it had reached the door of the central chamber it had made seven valves.

The entrance to this Holy of Holies is also on the North side. A flood of bright light pours down from the centre of the dome. A light too dazzling to look at. In the centre of this sacred chamber is a square altar of blue-grey marble, a few veins of white are in the stone, but it is a rare specimen of the purest colour. A snow white cloth covers the altar, and on each side an equally white wool mat to kneel or stand upon. The necessary items for their communion celebration are set in order.

All along the gallery leading to this chamber the men were sitting down and had sandals, but here around the altar stand, bare-footed the same number as in the previous groups, venerable looking men, in snow white gowns and turbans; their long beards and hair also white. A golden star with golden rays upon each turban. In their hands golden dishes, upon which is broken bread (the broken fragments of the One TRUTH, which underlie each and every religion [Ed.]). Similar dishes, but of baser metal, were in the hands of all the men in the gallery.

I am led to the East side of the altar. On the wall in front of me is

a large golden 7 (seven). Also on the right; likewise on the left. Looking behind upon the east wall is again another 7. In all four sevens (The four septenaries of the moon, the Occult meaning of the division of the lunar month, which division contains the mystery of generation and birth. This “dream” shows that the “Chela” has entered the phase of practical instruction given so often in symbolical dreams. [Ed.]

The priests look down upon their sacramental bread as if in contemplation or prayer. Now they turn all with their faces to the wall. This moment my conductor touches some particular point in front of the altar and discloses a secret opening from which taking a large scroll, very yellow with age, and rolled upon staves or cylinders, whispers: “These contain the knowledge you covet!”

“Oh! let me look,” I say. But I am told, “Not now.”

The next moment the secret place is closed. It is impossible to distinguish the spot, the stone seems as solid in that part as any other. “Return to the door—stand a moment”—I hear a whisper. “They have lost the secret, and think all the knowledge of their Temple is in the book upon the altar.” It is a dark red book, superbly bound and plated with gold. A crucifixion is represented on its richly embossed cover. A large golden clasp holds the book closed.

The priests now turn towards the altar, which they encircle. Their appearance and mien are enough to inspire respect, and the solemnity of the whole scene fills my soul with reverence. “They are met for their communion and await the first ray of the rising sun, which is just about to strike the hill top. We must hasten away!”

The men in the long gallery are sitting in the same attitude of contemplation as when passed before. The door is reached. I awake! Has it only been a dream? Bright presence let me dream again!

X.

* * * * *

The “dream” would perhaps be more accurately described as a “vision” conveying truth under a symbolical form. The general interpretation is indicated with sufficient clearness in the account of

the dream itself; but a few remarks on some points of detail may be of service.

The dreamer is in search of that hidden knowledge which lies at the inmost heart of all religions. This can be *only gained through initiation*. The guardian of the gate is clad in grey-blue garb, the apparent colour of the visible “heavens”: the square flat top of his headgear symbolizing the four elements, or rather, the number “four,” which is so important a factor in symbolism.

He bars the progress of the seeker with the paralyzing fumes of exoteric ritualism and ceremonial, under which the fire of truth does burn indeed, but invisibly. Furthermore, the “*four Sevens*” show this vision connected with occult (which is not to be confused with its modern imitation) masonry—*e.g.*, with the rite of the “Grand Elect” the knight of “the White and the Black Eagle” (30th degree). For, in this grade there are four apartments and it is in the fourth that the initiation is accomplished. They further symbolize the four seasons; so also the year culminates in the *fourth*.

The *Seven* mean an endless series of things. Thus the seven rungs of the ladder in a certain ancient Masonic rite remind one of the seven *pyroea*, or altars, whereon the ancient Persians burnt incense in honour of the seven planets. The passage of the Soul to the highest empyrean was symbolized by seven spheres in the Mithraic mysteries—just as in Revelation (an account, in fact, of one form of the Solar rite of Initiation, borrowed from the Egyptians)—the soul ascends through seven spheres typified by the Seven Churches, to its sea of crystal. To symbolize this tenet the primitive Gnostic Christians erected, in the “Hall of Initiation,” a ladder with seven ascending doors; the first door was of lead, the second of tin, the third of bronze, the fourth of iron, the fifth of copper, the sixth of silver, and the seventh of gold. These are the seven stages of preliminary initiation, after passing which the neophyte becomes a full adept, and enters upon a new cycle of still more awful initiations.

The nine groups of men or students in the seven coils of the outer gallery are, of course, typical of the nine degrees of increasing

knowledge, as also of initiation, the tenth and the highest being the central hall under the lighted dome. But the number ten, though it is that of the Sephiroth and the perfect number on the physical plane, is, itself, but a blind. For no Kabalist or Occultist can appreciate its full significance unless he analyses and takes it to pieces, studying all its factors and component numbers separately and in combination, *e.g.*, $2 \times 5 = 10$, $3 + 4 = 7$, etc. Ten is the number of Jehovah, the typical personal God. Therefore, the dreamer rightly hears it said that even the priests of the inner shrine have “lost the secret.”

Finally, it may be well to remark that it would be wrong to take the red book with golden clasp which lies on the altar, and in which the priests erroneously fancy all the knowledge of the temple is contained, to represent inclusively the Christian gospels because of the crucifixion embossed upon it. The “crucifixion” is a symbolical rite long antecedent to Christianity, and as it veils the secret of the final initiation, it is rightly seen upon the closed book of the innermost mysteries. Some most suggestive hints at the meaning and true nature of this ceremony will be found in the *Secret Doctrine*, [S.D., II, 558] to which the reader must be referred for further details.

AN “EX-CHELA.”

[Taken from *Lucifer*, Vol. III, December 1888.]

THE PRIMORDIAL system, the double glyph that underlies the idea of the Cross, is not “of human invention,” for Cosmic ideation and the Spiritual representation of the divine Ego-man are at its basis. Later, it expanded in the beautiful idea adopted by and represented in the Mysteries, that of regenerated man, the mortal, who, by crucifying the man of flesh and his passions on the Procrustean bed of torture, became reborn as an Immortal. Leaving the body, the animal-man, behind him, tied on the Cross of Initiation like an empty chrysalis, the Ego Soul became as free as a butterfly.

—*The Secret Doctrine* (II, 561-62)

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA THE AWAKENING OF FAITH—II

UNLESS THERE is in us something of the same nature as the Beings *we want to become worthy of relation with*, we cannot worship from the spiritual point of view. Hence, the *sattvic* beings try to contact the divine beings, the Shining Ones, because there is in them that quality of truth, light and goodness, which is embodied to its fullest extent in the Shining Ones. The *rajasic* beings worship the *Yakshas* and *Rakshasas*, who are of the very nature of desire and passion, because these beings, who are at the *rajasic* stage, have in themselves as the predominant quality, the quality of desire. The beings who are still in the lowest stage, the stage of *tamas* and ignorance are trying to worship the *pretas* and the *bhutas*, the elementaries and empty shells of dead men, because they partake of the same unconscious dull and stupid conditions. Then we have others, and their description gives us something of the tendencies and practices of the *asuric* beings. But we must note that they do not worship, any beings, simply because of the state of isolation that these beings have reached, which does not allow them to recognize any being or class of beings as superior to themselves. They are not trying to contact any hierarchy of divine beings outside of their own selves. Instead of worshipping, they simply practice certain gratifications which will give them the fulfilment and satisfaction of their own destructive desires. These beings are described in verses 5 and 6, thus:

Those who practice 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.

That is all we find in this discourse about this particular class of beings. Nothing has been mentioned about their other activities.

Krishna does not refer to them when he explains what the food and the sacrifices and the charity of the other classes of beings are, for these beings are entirely outside of human beings such as we know them, and therefore we cannot go into the detail of their peculiar gory austerities. Krishna then lays down the foundation to give us the complete understanding of faith and worship, and this illustrates most forcibly for us the truth that man is the microcosm of the macrocosm, the great universe, for in himself are to be found these beings who are spoken of here as *devas*, *yakshas*, *rakshasas*, elementaries and shells. Thus, man cognizes in himself all of these various beings, and his worship is to find the prototypes from which are derived the various principles of his own constitution.

Then Krishna continues by explaining to us that *four factors* must be stated in connection with *shraddha* or faith. He says you can tell to what particular class a man belongs to, and more importantly, you can determine for yourselves to what particular class you belong by understanding the various characteristics of food, sacrifices, mortifications or *tapas*, and of charity, *dana*. He takes them up one after the other, showing us their peculiar expressions for the men who belong to each of the three qualities. Our own tendency then, our own faith is going to show itself in these four things, and if this is true, it is also true that these four factors in their turn are going to nourish, sustain and maintain our own inner heart quality. In other words, in the food, in the sacrifice, in the mortification that we perform as well as in the charity that we give, we are going to find a particular energy or quality which is going to nourish us. That is why it is so important to understand thoroughly the correlation, and the relationship among those four factors.

First is taken up the question of food. From the occult point of view we can say that food can be taken as the symbol of all experience. In the Fifteenth discourse, four particular kinds of foods are mentioned, and it was seen that they simply meant the four types of experiences which can be had in our physical body. What is said

about the three classes of food can be applied to all experiences, but the actual question of food is also an important one to understand. It is important from the occult point of view to know what food is, and to understand that what we eat and how we eat has its own value and reaction upon ourselves. The principle laid down here is the attraction that is felt by people for certain peculiar types of food, whereby we find an indication in our taste, in the dishes and the peculiar foods that we happen to like, so that we can observe ourselves and determine what it indicates in our own nature. Krishna does not classify food by naming certain particular classes of food or dishes, and say you shall eat this and not the other thing; he does not say, "I only advocate a vegetarian diet, for example, and I absolutely forbid you to eat meat." He does not say "avoid starches and eat fruits"; he simply gives general description of the tendency and inherent forces which exist in food.

He wants us to understand that there is the first idea in connection with food. Food produces a certain reaction upon our disposition, it changes our minds, feelings and it has a particular magnetic effect on the very nature. That particular effect is not determined only by the magnetic and occult property of the food, when he eats the food, but when he digests the food, and finally when the food is assimilated and built into the fabric of his being. There is such a thing as *sattvic* food, *rajasic* and *tamasic* food, but the same food can be *sattvic* for one man, *rajasic* for another, and *tamasic* for a third. We must then take into account both the quality of the food and our own disposition, the energy of our own constitution. Let us take an example to make this point absolutely clear, for it is an important one in the spiritual life. Krishna describes *sattvic* food as that

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.

That is actually *sattvic* food. Let us suppose it happens to be a vegetarian diet. There may be and there are beings who belong to

the quality of *rajas* and *tamas* who try a vegetarian regime, and find out that it does not agree with their health, and that they are not increasing the length of their days nor maintaining their health, what are they to do? Are they to persist in the vegetarian diet and never eat meat, though the body seems to need it? The answer that Krishna gives is the answer of Theosophy. The person who cannot do without meat ought to eat meat, in order to keep his health, in order to keep his physical instrument in the best possible condition.

Exactly the same principle and tenet and twofold classification is given by H.P.B. in *The Key to Theosophy*. First she shows that there is a particular principle inherent in all food. She takes the subject of meat and says that it has a magnetic quality which coarsens and animalizes the body of man, and that the one who assimilates the meat, by that very process partakes of the occult property of the meat, so that his brain becomes dull, less refined, and coarse. From that point of view, meat does retard our spiritual progress in some measure. On the other hand, Theosophy does not say all beings should stop eating meat. There are no hard and fast rules. The impersonal principle of nature is presented and each person is asked to decide for himself. On the question of health one must follow the best practical advice that one can get in the world using his own reasoning. Of course, this does not mean that we should continue to eat all types of food that we get. On this particular basis, we should make an attempt to understand what actually *sattvic* food is, for we are all working consciously or unconsciously to reach that particular stage. Children, for instance, can be helped by their parents, if they are not given meat. For when the body is young it does not require particular habits and if one is careful not to have the children taste the meat, they will probably keep good physical bodies without taking meat, for we are not meant to eat meat throughout the course of evolution. That is a particular stage we have reached and it is not a very high one. We are not to go to extremes.

(To be concluded)

THE MISSION OF H. P. BLAVATSKY

H. P. BLAVATSKY, the founder of the present Theosophical Movement, passed away on May 8th, 1891. This day is commemorated as White Lotus Day. H. P. B. is the latest link in the Golden Chain of selfless Philanthropists, members of the Great Academy of Perfected Sages, who century by century, try to spread the True Knowledge about Nature, physical and superphysical, with a view to awakening Man, the Individual, to a sense of his spiritual dignity and of his responsibility to his own kingdom.

In Asia, especially in India, this regular cyclic effort has been made by the Fraternity of Adepts for thousands of years. In the Occident that regular effort was made ever since the Mysteries which alone had the Key to the Secrets of Nature has been crushed out of existence in Europe by heathen and Christian conquerors. That work of enlightening the West gathered strength because of the work of Tsong-Kha-Pa. His Mission was to purify from priestly desecration the philosophy of his Illustrious Predecessor, Gautama Buddha. This Tibetan Reformer organized a successful spiritual revolution by a timely exile of some 40,000 sham monks and lamas, and then taught the True Doctrines, and founded the order of the Gelukpas, the Yellow Caps. The successful Mission of Tsong-Kha-Pa influenced the Work of the Eastern Adepts in the Occident and since then, *i.e.*, the fourteenth century, it has become more and more public in manifestation. Rosenkreuz and Paracelsus, Boehme and Borri, St. Germain and Mesmer, Paschalis and St. Martin and their companions all laboured century after century to bring Europe to a recognition of the Esoteric Philosophy of the Sages of the Orient. Their Work succeeded, in spite of opposition, especially the cruel organized opposition of the Roman Church, and made the cycle of the nineteenth century almost a unique one.

Several remarkable cycles came to a close at the end of the nineteenth century, among them the first period of 5,000 years of the Kali-Yuga, and the Messianic cycle of the Samaritan, of the Man connected with Pisces, lasting about 2,155 years. The effort of

the Great Lodge was aimed at achieving results which would make the time of the conjunction of these cycles beneficently fruitful. The hundred-year cycle coincided with these other cycles and made possible for the Great Philanthropists to make a public attempt at instructing the whole world. H.P.B.'s mission was not only to strike the note for the coming century and the Western world, but for an extensive period related to all the other cycles. Her Mission was not for one race or one continent but encompassed the four quarters of the globe—the whole of humanity.

In a sense, H.P.B.'s Mission is already fulfilled, inasmuch as the great fundamental ideas of Theosophy, which were rejected and pooh-poohed, scorned and attacked, when first presented, are largely accepted in intellectual world today. The false conception of religions—a personal anthropomorphic god and gods, and the claims of each to some form of uniqueness are shattered. What thinking man today believes in God on the other side of the sky running the world and its civilization? Or the foolish talk that Brahmanism is the Eternal Religion and no knowledge existed in pre-Vedic times.

Similarly, modern science with its proud claim to being exact and infallible received a wholesome checkmate from H.P.B.'s writings. And it is due to H.P.B.'s Mission that materialistic science has not succeeded in destroying the true concept of God and of Religion. Again, how the Western world laughed at the idea of Reincarnation in 1877, while the teaching was grossly misunderstood in India and other Asiatic countries. Today it is quite fashionable to believe in previous lives on earth. Similarly the teachings about Karma and Nemesis, about the Astral Body and the Astral Light, about Elementals or Nature Spirits and about a dozen other things, are fast being accepted. Of course H.P.B. is not credited for her pioneering labour, but what of that? Mental plagiarism of her ideas is a sign in itself of the victory of her Mission. Her ideas have penetrated the mind of the Race.

But while theoretical acceptance of these and other ideas of Theosophy has occurred, the practical application of the moral

principles resting on them has not taken place. The omnipresence of Deity is almost universally accepted but men and women do not act as unfolding gods and goddesses. People speak about man being the maker of his destiny, but act as if the Law of Karma did not exist; they are sowing without any practical application in thought about the reaping. Many speak of past lives but they act as if they were not returning to earth! Thought-force is recognized in theory but its wrong and debasing uses flourish. And—to top all—is there a person who does not prate about Universal Brotherhood? But to be brotherly in day to day living? Impractical!

Her Mission was ethical and moral. She tried to engender a new vision in the heart, and lead man to recognize his own divinity. Further, she had to convince him of his spiritual energy. Having done these things, she tried to make him utilize this energy and transform himself into a self-reformer before he tried to become the reformer of others.

It is hoped that that time is not far away when the Ethics of Theosophy founded upon the Three Fundamental Propositions of *The Secret Doctrine* and the Ten Items of Psychology of *Isis Unveiled* will be practised. The Mission of H.P.B. linked to the cycles other than the 100 year cycle remains to be fulfilled. If that Mission does not succeed at least in some measure, in the near future, then greater darkness will envelope humanity.

If the practical application of Theosophical ideas and principles has not taken place so far, the major share of blame rests on those of us who call ourselves students of Theosophy; for we have failed to purify and elevate our minds, to reject creedal and communal prides and prejudices, to give up social habits which do not square with the teachings of the Esoteric Philosophy. It is not, however, too late even today. A few courageous souls determined to live the Life, leaving alone the dead to bury their dead, can produce beneficence.

Shall we not make the 127th anniversary of the passing away of H. P. Blavatsky a memorable one for us by deepening our resolve to acquire greater knowledge of the Esoteric Philosophy, and to

apply, apply, apply at every turn what the knowledge imparts? Not for our own personal salvation only, but to earn our places in the growing band of sacred heroes who are altruistic Servants of the Race. To become real companions and to so grow into Chelaship that life after life we may serve the Grand Servants of Humanity—the Masters. Why did H.P.B. labour and suffer?

In the hope of training a few individuals to carry on our work for humanity by its original programme when the Founders are dead and gone. They have already found a few such noble and devoted souls to replace them. The coming generations, thanks to these few, will find the path to peace a little less thorny, and the way a little widened, and thus, all this suffering will have produced good results, and their self-sacrifice will not have been in vain.

Are we one of these? Do we wish to become one of these? What greater ideal can there be than this—To be a creator of the New World in which Peace and Progress rooted in the Wisdom of the Great Brotherhood shall shine and shed their love and luster in the infinitudes of space?

It is evident from the existing conditions in religion, science and philosophy that the Mission of H.P.B. has not been fulfilled. We realize that unless a sufficient number of men and women, of different races and religions, rise above sectarianism of creed and colour, of caste and class, there is no salvation for the race of mortals. Our work is with the individual Souls, our appeal is to individual minds and hearts. Our appeal to the mind is—free your mind by study, by calm examination of the principles of life and conduct. Our appeal to the heart is—develop the spirit of love and charity not for next of kin only, not for your own community and country only, but for all that lives and breathes. To obtain knowledge is to set the mind free, to practise Theosophy is to set the heart free. And it is the free mind and the free heart that can full serve the orphan humanity. That is the Mission and the Message of H. P. Blavatsky.

FAITH AND REASON

THE TERM faith is generally understood to be trust or confidence, or belief in the efficacy, or credibility of a thing, a person, an idea, or a system, or a doctrine. Though, not infrequently, people experience bitterness of betrayal of trust they had reposed in others, or in something, yet faith is a significant factor which is plainly seen in all aspects of human relationships and social life, which makes living possible. Each one of us has implicit confidence and trust in a large measure not only in things in our immediate surroundings and relations but in the unseen countless fellowmen as well, on whose labours fulfilment of needs and happiness of our lives depend.

Faith is generally associated with religion, though evidence of its strong presence is also seen in people who do not subscribe to any religion. On close examination it is seen that the claims of some agnostics and scientists that they are free from faith is not true. A Scientist has firm faith in the scientific method and mathematical logic that they will never fail to yield positive results in his investigations. Science would never have made so much progress had scientists lacked faith in the efficacy of the philosophy and method of science.

Another aspect of faith is devotion. We are devoted to a thing or an ideal in which we have faith. Devotion and faith are implicit in human life. The two are twin aspects of one quality. Trust, love and devotion between young children and parents is holy. Even in the animal world the play of the power of faith and the quality of devotion can be observed. Every creature has implicit faith in its power to find and feed on prey, to defend itself in, or escape from, danger. Trust of the young of the animal in its mother's protection and care, and almost human-like devotion of the latter to its newborn are remarkable phenomena in nature.

What exactly are these two powerful factors in our life, and whence, are the questions, answers to which it is vain to look for in the books of modern psychology. We have to turn to ancient spiritual

psychology and philosophy to understand the source and the power of faith. It is called *Shraddha* in Sanskrit. In the XVIIth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita*, entitled, *Devotion as regards three kinds of faith*, it is said, "The faith of each one, O son of Bharata, proceeds from the *Sattva* quality." *Sattva* is the quality of Truth, *Sat*. Teachers say it is the power to understand—*Buddhi*—in man, the faculty of apprehending truth in all things directly. It is the power of the Spirit. In animals it is seen in their unerring instinct, and in man as intuition or spiritual perception, and the power of will. But human beings put limitations on that power by their various dispositions which arise from qualities of truth, *Sattva*; passion, *Rajas*; or indifference and inertia, *Tamas*. Faith of one in whom *Sattva* quality predominates, being based on knowledge and reason, is nearer truth, and productive of good; while that of the one in whom desires and passions rule, or indifference and inertia are prominent, is of the nature of darkness, productive of pain and obscurity. Faith in itself, essentially, is supreme power in everyone. "The truth is that faith is a great engine, an enormous power, which in fact can accomplish all things. For it is the covenant or engagement between man's divine part and his lesser self." (*Light on the Path*, p. 50)

Faith, even if blind—meaning, not based on knowledge and reason—if strong and unshakable, is productive of prodigious results, especially in the cure of diseases. "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed," says Jesus, "ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (*Matthew*, 17:20). The woman with a bloody issue was instantaneously cured and made well when she pressed forward in the throng surrounding Jesus and touched his garment from behind; and Jesus feeling the power flowing from him looked back and said to her that it was her faith which made her well. This is an instance of unconscious exercise of the power of faith of a person, in another, in whom he has implicit faith. An Adept, who has mastery over himself and all the inferior potencies of Nature, by the sole power of his sovereign Will, can direct the all-pervading

life principle to cure any disease, besides producing other marvellous phenomena. In such a case, it is not blind exercise of power of divinity latent in all but conscious action of man in unison with the divine principle in himself. But “faith cures” are different.

Instances of such faith cures are countless in every part of the world, and they are termed miraculous. “With expectancy supplemented by faith, one can cure himself of almost any morbid condition,” writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, I, 216). The source of the power of healing, in such cases, is generally attributed by devotees to a holy object or a saint—living or dead—a talisman, a nostrum, etc., on which their faith is fixed, whereas, in fact, the cures are solely due to the power of faith in the individuals themselves. This is the secret of “miracles” devotees experience when praying in temples, churches or at *darghas*. “In thousands of instances, the doctor, the priest, or the relic has had credit for healings that were solely and simply due to the patient’s unconscious will....The influence of mind over the body is so powerful that it has effected miracles at all ages” (*Ibid.*). The phenomenon of stigmata also is accounted for by the same principle.

Devotional book, *Light on the Path*, says that faith is the covenant or engagement between man’s divine part and his lesser self. This is a very important statement of the relation between man on earth and his immortal divine Self, which should be understood. As said in *The Key to Theosophy*, mankind is an emanation from divinity and is on its return path thereto. It means man is essentially divine, but now sojourning on earth in human form in a series of rebirths for a great purpose. The end and aim of human existence is realization of the true nature of Self, and that is the power to perceive itself pure and simple, independent of and transcending things perceived or perceptions on all and every plane of being; and that true Self is the Self of All—eternal, universal, boundless. Earthly personality is the mask which veils the truth of our true self and nature. Therefore, we are led astray by wrong ideas and beliefs or partial truths which we imbibe from education and social environment, which is our

Karmic inheritance. It is through this maze that we have to work our way from the illusion of separate self to the realization of the reality of the all-pervading, all-inclusive One Self, without a second. It is the same as Universal Brotherhood. This is the path mankind is compelled to, at last, tread by the very law of its being, though it has to wander for ages along many devious paths, fixed on false faiths, due to mistaking of appearances for reality.

Therefore, we have to learn to distinguish between blind faith in a dogmatic belief system or on authority of a church or a sect, on the one hand, and faith based on knowledge of proven truth and reason, on the other. For instance, that man is born in original sin, and that his salvation is only through his accepting the dogma that the Saviour suffered martyrdom for redemption of man is a belief system which has been enforced on Christendom, and millions accept the same on blind faith. The unreasonableness and injustice of this belief is plainly evident. Such false belief systems which defy reason and common sense are to be found in all sectarian religious establishments, which are ruinous to man’s moral nature, and subversive of his true progress. Much of the evils which afflict mankind are due to such false faiths. False beliefs are not confined to religions alone. Equally pernicious beliefs are accepted by educated populace on the authority of scientific establishment. Belief that the law of *Struggle for life and survival of the fittest*, for instance, a dictum of modern science, is tacitly held to apply to human society also, and thought and action on that basis, has been a prolific parent of terrible woes and sorrows, and all crimes, in the modern world. The Great Master warns that imprisoning the mind in the narrow grooves of bigotry and superstition will lead to utter deformation of intellectual principle, on the one hand, and that unrestrained indulgence in animal propensities, which logically follow materialistic theories of science, will lead to utter degradation of man, on the other hand.

Drawing a clear line of distinction between faith and knowledge, H.P.B. teaches in *The Key to Theosophy* that blind faith is a mental

disease, and that real faith is “*belief based on knowledge*, whether supplied by the evidence of physical or *spiritual* senses....One is human credulity and *superstition*, the other human belief and intuition” (pp. 217-18). Theosophy is that archaic Wisdom-Science which underlies and is the eternal fount of all religions and philosophies. Of the ancient source of Theosophy and the rigorous scientific character of it is shown by H.P.B. to be the testimony of endless series of perfect Seers:

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. (*ibid.*, p. 85)

This is not faith but proven knowledge gained from observation and experience over thousands of years. A systematic study of Theosophy, therefore, enables the student to intuitively apprehend the truth of the reality of eternal, boundless SELF which contains and includes all. Such is faith based on reason and knowledge.

It is an ancient truism, to which Mr. Judge refers to, in his *Notes on the Bhagavad-gita* (p. 141): “Man, made of thought, occupant only of many bodies from time to time, is eternally thinking. His chains are through thought, his release due to nothing else.” Reliance placed on external things, mistaking not-self to be the self, such as the many objects of pleasure which we think gives us happiness, cannot fail to bring about detrimental karmic results. It is the mind and thought which needs the right direction to reach the Truth, and that is possible only through acquisition of the right knowledge of, and action for the Self of all in every thought, word and act. This is faith based on knowledge, higher reason and intuition.

H.P.B. finally gives us a clearest idea of the distinction between

blind faith in false ideas and true faith based on intuitive perception. Speaking of the MAHATMAS, she says that they have identified themselves with the Supreme Self, and that he who would receive their attention must raise his consciousness to an intuitive apprehension of the unity of Self:

The highest interest of humanity, as a whole, is their special concern, for they have identified themselves with that Universal Soul which runs through Humanity, and he, who would draw their attention, must do so through that Soul which pervades everywhere. This perception of the *Manas* may be called “faith” which should not be confounded with *blind belief*. “Blind faith” is an expression sometimes used to indicate belief without perception or understanding; while the true perception of the *Manas* is that enlightened belief, which is the real meaning of the word “faith.” This belief should at the same time be accompanied by *knowledge*, *i.e.*, experience, for “true knowledge brings with it faith.” Faith is the perception of the *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. (*H.P.B. Series No. 27*, p. 11)

THERE IS That in every human being to be trusted—That which stands behind his human nature, the Witness, the Spectator, the Knower, the Judge, the Avenger of every thought and deed—noble or ignoble, pure or vile. *That* may be trusted. In *That* all Faith resides and comes to rest. It is the power which is exhaustless and eternal, the Power at any time to take a better course, when the old is exhausted, when the old has brought defeat, disgrace. However much my friend may betray me, I can have faith that some day, somewhere, he will repair the evil done to me and to all beings, however long ago....That God, that Self, is to be trusted—not the human nature which ever seeks to lure and blind.

—From the *Book of Confidences*

BRAIN AND MIND

I

IT IS IMPORTANT to understand correctly the Brain-Mind equation. How do materialists explain the appearance of mind? Materialistic schools of thought seek to explain that mind is derived from matter, assuming that matter is the only reality. According to one approach mind was regarded as epiphenomenon, *i.e.*, by-product of brain activity. In the philosophy of mind, epiphenomenalism is the view that mental phenomena are epiphenomena, *i.e.*, they can be caused by physical phenomena, but they cannot cause physical phenomena. In other words, as Mr. Judge puts it, ordinarily, the mind is considered to be immaterial. It is a name for the action of the brain in evolving thought. That in turn implies that if there is no brain, there can be no mind. In the article, “Psychology, the Science of the Soul,” H.P.B. points out that according to *materialism*, the mental changes are caused by the molecular changes in the brain substance. According to the believers in a mind or soul, the molecular changes in the brain substance are caused by mental changes.

The sense of “self” may just be an illusion created by 100 billion neurons at work, writes Johnston professor of Psychology at Harvard, Steven Pinker. Our brain is the seat of the mind, thoughts and also the sense of our existence. Neuroscientists locate our consciousness in the brain and not in the soul, saying that sensations, thoughts, joy and pain are the result of physiological activities in the brain tissues. Consciousness can be manipulated by physical means. During surgery, electrical stimulation of the brain can induce hallucinations that approximate the real. We think, feel and see differently when the brain is affected by chemicals, such as caffeine, LSD, alcohol or Prozac (*Sunday Times of India*, February 11, 2007, courtesy *Time Magazine*). Thus, science seems to locate the sense of “self,” and the sense of “I” in the brain—making “mind” redundant.

More especially, there is an attempt to locate various emotions,

such as fear, love, etc. in brain and brain chemicals. “Like all emotions, love originates in the brain,” writes Steven Johnson, and links it with the hormone called Oxytocin. However, this feeling is not attributed solely to Oxytocin, but to complex interplay of brain chemicals, which trigger activity in specific regions of the brain, and Oxytocin is critical to that interplay.

Likewise, scientists have been wondering whether human beings have an innate moral faculty. Harvard evolutionary biologist and cognitive neuroscientist, Marc Hauser argues that millions of years of natural selection have moulded a “universal *moral* grammar,” within our brains that enables us to make rapid decisions about ethical dilemmas. Thus, it is believed that there are “innate ideas” hard-wired into our brains. That may be the reason why scientists are working towards finding the method of tapping the hidden potential, but the method recently suggested by science seems artificial, leading to only temporary results. The “thinking cap,” devised by the Australian scientists, is a hairnet-like cap, which uses magnetic pulses to change the way brain works and has led to improved artistic and mathematical ability. In this technique certain sections of the brain are switched off, so that it could help to unlock hidden potential in some other section of the brain. Professor Allan Snyder at Sydney University believes that each one of us has within, *non-conscious machinery* with extraordinary artistic and mathematical ability. We may be able to access these skills if we could shut off *conscious* part of the brain. (*The Times of India*, October 2, 2008)

With the emergence of neuroscience in last two decades the brain has replaced the mind, and addiction is seen to be a brain disease and not a moral failing. Neurobiologists have identified brain circuitry that underlies addiction and craving. It is believed that Dopamine and other neurochemicals tend to fuel addiction. As a result, more research has been done in the direction of discovering medications and vaccines rather than in the direction of behavioural therapies. However, experiments and research have shown that

behavioural treatments for addiction to cocaine, marijuana, and other drugs has been far more efficacious than medication, showing thereby that addiction is a *behavioural disorder* with social and psychological causes.

Though researchers have succeeded in identifying regions in the brain associated with various emotions, attempts to locate emotions and morality in the brain are bound to be misleading, precisely because brain is an instrument of the mind, and any changes in the brain are likely to affect the expression or manifestation of mind-consciousness. Sir Francis Walshe, one of the distinguished neurologists, in a lecture delivered in the year 1953 expressed that it is important to recognize that for the soul to function as an essential element in a human being, it needs sense data, and brain is the collecting, integrating and distributing mechanism of that data. “Yet it would be quite childish to identify the instrument with its user, even though the user may be dependent upon the instrument for operating.” Dr. Walshe is not the only one to come to such a conclusion. As far back as the 1930s, at the end of extensive research, Wilder Penfield, a Canadian-American neurosurgeon, had this to say: “It seems to me certain that it will always be quite impossible to explain the mind on the basis of neuronal action within the brain, and because it seems to me that the mind develops and matures independently throughout an individual’s life as though it were a continuing element, and because a computer (which the brain is) must be programmed and operated by an agency capable of independent understanding, I am forced to choose the proposition that our being is to be explained on the basis of two fundamental elements....” (*The Mystery of the Mind*)

The human brain is the most complex phenomenon. Intelligence in animals is related to brain weight in relation to body weight, as also, to brain size relative to body size. It is believed that human beings of great intellectual powers always possessed larger brains. Comparing the brain size of man with that of apes, H.P.B. writes:

But let not Evolutionists speak so lightly of the

comparative size of the brains of man and the ape, for this is very *unscientific*, especially when they pretend to see no difference between the two, or very little at any rate. For Vogt himself showed that, while the highest of the Apes, the gorilla, has a brain of only 30 to 51 cubic inches, the brain of the lowest of the Australian aborigines amounts to 99.35 cubic inches. The former is thus “not half of the size of the brain of a new-born babe,” says Pfaff. (*S.D.*, II, 193fn.)

There are many views concerning relation between brain-size and intelligence as also, concerning the origin of brain convolutions and its relation to intelligence. Human brains have wrinkly, walnut shape. The outer surface of the brain called cerebral cortex is very wrinkled, convoluted, or folded. As a result of this folding, maximum amount of grey matter or brain neurons can fit inside the skull. The convolutions consist of grooves called *sulci*, and raised ridges in between, called *gyri*. Just as more clothes can be fitted in small space when they are folded, so also, more neurons can be packed in small space of the cranium due to convolution, and which in turn implies greater processing power.

The process of forming characteristic folds of the cerebral cortex is called gyrification. Human brains are more folded or convoluted than brains of any other animal. It is thought that having more gyrification is a measure of intelligence. There are animals who have relatively smooth brains. Small mammals generally have smooth brains, and large mammals, *e.g.*, whale, elephant, dolphin, have highly convoluted ones. Animals with smooth brain surfaces are called *lissencephalic* and the condition is termed *lissencephaly*.

In humans, *lissencephaly* is a rare developmental disorder. During the third trimester of fetal life, the brain develops from a relatively smooth, *lissencephalic* structure to a brain that more or less closely resembles the morphology of the adult brain. In other words, as the baby develops in the mother’s womb, the brain surface is relatively smooth until six months, and it is only between weeks 24 and 38, or between seventh and the ninth month, of gestation that development

of convolutions begins.

It is interesting to note that “the Monad overshadows the foetus only in the seventh month, and enters fully the child after he reaches consciousness. The Devachanic entity envelops, so to speak, the new entity, lights it up, but begins its process of assimilation only after the first ray of consciousness, say at seven or eight months” (*The Secret Doctrine Commentaries*, p. 575). It appears from the foregoing that from the moment of conception till the end of the seventh month, the Ego, which is referred to as *Devachanic entity*, only keeps a definite connection with the growing foetus, but does not *ensoul* it. Only after the completion of seventh month, the personal part of the Ego (lower mind) connects itself with the new body, thereby showing a definite relation between brain convolutions and mind. Theosophy teaches that brain is not the cause of mind. In fact, the depth and variety of brain convolutions are caused by the presence of the mind.

Children with *lissencephaly* generally have significant developmental delays, and often die within several months of birth. “Knowing how the brain develops into its folded shape could help scientists to better explain what happens in people with congenital conditions such as *polymicrogyria* (a condition characterised by excessive number of folds), *pachygyria* (a condition with unusually thick folds) and *lissencephalia* (a smooth brain condition, without folds),” writes Bahar Gholipour, a science journalist.

Mind or mental activities affect the brain and brain substance. H.P.B. points out that “the brain is the instrument of waking consciousness, and every conscious mental picture formed means change and destruction of the atoms of the brain. Ordinary intellectual activity moves on well-beaten paths in the brain, and does not compel sudden adjustments and destructions in its substance. But...[any] new kind of mental effort calls for something very different—the carving out of new ‘brain paths’”

(*To be concluded*)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What if the future was revealed? “If we knew what the future holds, we would either take steps to fight against it, or become lax and give up all effort,” writes Vinita Nangia, and goes on to cite several examples. Often marriages break over extra-marital affairs, and then it is too late when the guilty party, husband or wife, knows what they stand to lose as a result, and feel that had they known the consequences, perhaps they would never have entered into the affair. Can we change the future by taking action to counter it in the present? Is there an advantage in knowing what the future holds? If we know what lies ahead, we are forced to acknowledge and take action. Unaware of the future, we are absolved of the consequences too. Those who believe in it find succour in blaming destiny for problems in their lives.

If we knew in advance how things are going to end up, could we change the destiny? For instance, a person who knows that he or she will be killed in a car accident on a particular day may decide not to step out that day. A couple who knows that their marriage will end in two years may not tie the knot at all. Life would be one long preparation and we humans would never let the future play out as it is meant to. On the other hand, those who expect a happy future may become lax. Then, again, when a man and a woman in an affair know that they will not get caught, might be encouraged to take greater risks. Since they have changed the variables, or the parameters of the situation, would they get caught, or not?

Knowing the future might take away the thrill and fun. What is the fun of adventure sports if one knows that one faces no danger from it? What is the fun of reading a book or watching a movie when one knows how it is going to conclude? Is it not best to move along with blinkers on, as far as the future is concerned, hoping for the best but prepared for the worst?, asks Vinita Dawra Nangia. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, March 18, 2018)

Is it good to know what the future holds? Knowing that the future

holds happiness can certainly help to relieve a person from anxiety. “Anxiety is one of man’s greatest and most insidious foes. It fetters his energy and defeats his ends. If astrology will relieve one at any crisis from anxiety, is it not well to foster its pursuit and spread its fame?” writes Mr. Judge. It is true that knowing of unhappy future can keep a person in a state of fear and anxiety, besides making preparations to avert or deal with the future as the case may be. For, not every future event in a person’s life is fixed irrevocably. What we know as fate is karma so strong and overpowering that its action cannot be counteracted by other Karma. Destiny or Fate is the Karma that has ripened, so that its expression cannot be averted or postponed. It is the destiny that one will fulfill no matter how hard one strives against it. But it is also true that often by relying too much on the astrological predictions, we attract a calamity which may not have happened, but for our thought. Mr. Judge gives an example of a person for whom the future prediction was that he was going to have his leg broken. Knowing this he remained at home. Almost at the end of the day, he climbed a ladder to hang curtains; but the ladder gave way, he fell and broke his leg. Mr. Judge says that no doubt the planetary conjunction may have very bad influence, but what precipitated that influence was the attitude of this person.

Knowing what is likely to happen in the future gives one opportunity to prepare. “It is similar to keeping an umbrella ready if the forecast of the rain is made by the meteorological department. If it rains, it will surely be useful and if it does not, then there is no harm,” says Bhavikk Sangghvi, an astrologer and a numerologist. We all know that too much smoking may lead to lung cancer, or spicy and pungent food may lead to ulcers, and yet for some of us it becomes unavoidable destiny and we are drawn to that end because of our past tendencies, *vasanas* or *samskaras*. What puts limitation on our exertion is our past karma and past choices. H.P.B. points out that man is a free agent during his stay on earth, but “there are *external and internal conditions* which affect the determination of our

will upon our actions.” In other words, the exercise of free will is conditioned or limited by the *external* circumstance, as well as, the *inner* capacities and conditions—both being the result of past Karma.

A study of 229 workers in United States and Canada found that allowing employees to stab voodoo dolls of their boss could help them feel less resentful and improve the quality of their work. It was found that engaging in “symbolic retaliation” lowered feelings of injustice by one-third. The study highlights the benefits of retaliation from the victim’s perspective. “We found a simple and harmless symbolic act of retaliation can make people feel like they are getting even and restoring their sense of fairness...It may not have to be a voodoo doll per se: theoretically anything that serves as a symbolic act of retaliation like throwing darts at a picture of your boss, might work,” said Lindie Liang, from University in Ontario in Canada, quoted by *The Telegraph*.

Symbolic retaliation helps employees psychologically by allowing them to restore their sense of justice. “The participants in the study used an online voodoo doll programme, which allows the users to name the effigy after their boss, sticking it with pins, burning it with a candle, and pinching it with pliers. (*The Times of India*, March 9, 2018)

We may look upon “symbolic retaliation” as a form of catharsis, or purging of the emotions or relieving of emotional tension. In a given case, it seems to help employees relieve the feeling of injustice and resentment. The method, though looks to be harmless, has its roots in a far more dangerous magical practice.

A Black Magician could bring about harm to the person by means of his picture or figure. This is because the photograph retains the magnetism of the person. H.P.B. narrates an incident from Salem Witchcraft, wherein a group of young girls had become developed as mediums, by sitting with a West Indian Negro woman, a practitioner of sorcery. They began to suffer all kinds of physical torture, such as pinching, having pins stuck in them, and marks of

bruises and teeth on different parts of their bodies. They were hurt by specters of different persons. Such harm was brought about by pricking pins into puppets made with rags, wax and other materials. In another case, a person confessed that under the guidance of an evil spirit, the images of these girls were made of wood in their likeness, and when thorns were pricked into these images, these girls were hurt and they cried out in pain. (*Isis*, I, 361)

In the article, “Animated Statues” H.P.B. writes, “the *likeness of any person*, in whatever form and mode, of whatever material, *may be turned into a deadly weapon against the original by a really learned practitioner of the black art*. Legal authorities during the Middle Ages, and even some of 200 years ago, were not wrong in putting to death those in whose possession small wax figures of their enemies were found, for it was *murder contemplated*, pure and simple.” She observes that the astral body of a living person, may be forced (by an expert in magic) to animate, *and then fixed within* any object, that is made in his likeness, a portrait, a statue, a little figure in wax, etc. And as whatever hits or affects the astral reacts by repercussion on the physical body, it becomes logical that by stabbing the likeness in its vital parts—the heart, for instance—the original may be sympathetically killed, without anyone being able to detect the cause of it.

A very useful form of catharsis is talking things over with a sympathetic person, which not only helps to relieve a person of the negative emotion of anger, hatred, frustration, etc., but also gives an insight into the situation. The purpose of such form of catharsis is to bring about some form of positive change in an individual’s life.

On March 20 this year everyone celebrated the International Day of Happiness. As we celebrate the importance of happiness, it is worth finding out the cost of happiness. How much money do we need to be happy? Many of us equate happiness with money, and are convinced that money is directly responsible for happiness. Yet, there is a section of people who believe that happiness is not

dependent on money but on one’s inner peace of mind. When every country in the world was trying to measure its success by its GDP (Gross Domestic Product) it was Bhutan, a tiny Asian country, who started GNH, Gross National Happiness, which measures country’s progress by social, spiritual and physical health of its people.

There is no denying that ours is a society that runs on money. Money cannot buy happiness but it is felt to be the means to find happiness. Though some people may be satisfied with what they have, we need more money to get more from life. Some are of the view that everything depends on your bank balance, and without money one is constantly under stress. It is a crime to be poor in this world, because everything, from getting basic necessities of life, to healthcare to legal justice, depends on money.

But is it so simple to conclude that the more money one has the more likely he is to be happy? Our idea of better life is based on the things that are material in nature: A lovely house, a luxurious car and a vacation abroad. Moreover, not many of us stop to contemplate if we are truly happy or not. It is presumed that rich people are happy, but that is not always true. Relationships in life depend on love and trust, and not on money. Dipika Rao, who heads an international school in Bengaluru, believes that the basic human instinct is to find happiness and that money can get material things, which can make one temporarily happy. But if one is seeking true and permanent happiness, one can only find it inside. Money may be regarded as the oxygen we breathe in, and that oxygen does not necessarily make us happy. “We need to find reasons that make us happy. But we still need to breathe in, don’t we?” asks Sounak Mukhopadhyay. (*Weekend, The Free Press Journal*, March 25, 2018)

The International Day of Happiness was conceptualized and founded by philanthropist, and prominent United Nations special advisor, Jayme Illien, to mobilize and advance the global happiness movement. Interestingly, thirty two years before founding the International Day of Happiness, Jayme Illien was an orphan rescued from the streets of Calcutta, India, by Mother Teresa’s International

Mission of Hope charities, and later adopted by a single white American woman, named Anna Illien.

Money becomes essential to happiness, because for most of us happiness results when in addition to needs, even our wants are satisfied. Happiness is an attitude of mind. The one who is always looking at those with greater possessions, luxuries and comforts of life, remains largely unhappy. On the other hand, a contented person, focused on his needs, may admire good clothes, cars and palatial buildings, but without wanting to *possess* them. The key to happiness seems to lie in detachment. Spiritually advanced beings, like King Janaka, may remain unaffected by wealth and comfort. They are able to say, “We are trustees of our possessions,” and set a fine example of what it is to be *in the world*, but not be *of the world*.

There is the concept of “other side of happiness,” in which people have experienced happiness by accepting and dealing with sufferings arising out of sickness, poverty, bodily and mental handicaps, loss of loved ones and loss of reputation, etc. Money, comforts and luxuries give us happiness which comes and goes. True and permanent happiness does not lie in that direction. To experience true happiness, we must begin to understand and realize, as the Buddhists teach, that all conditioned existence is *Dukkha* or suffering, and is impermanent. It means that at the bottom of even pleasant experiences, there is pain. There is concealed suffering. Something may be a source of pleasure but it may be tied up with anxiety, as we are afraid of losing it. It could be a person, a thing, or position or power. Something may be a source of joy, at a given moment, but sooner or later, we may have to give it up.

It is because of indolence and incredulity that we refuse to believe that peace and happiness can lie in the direction other than material realm. When we are ready to seek beyond the obvious and the material, and are ready to turn within, we now and then touch the layer of divine consciousness, and are able to experience lasting happiness.