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The Living of the Higher Life**

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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TRUE HUMILITY

HUMILITY may be considered a form of spiritual modesty which results when we understand our place in the order of things. It is an indispensable virtue for a spiritual aspirant. Sincere humility or not thinking of oneself or of one's personality, more highly than one ought to, is a beautiful quality, without which one cannot attain Wisdom, says *The Voice of the Silence*. Someone who wants to apprehend truth must be humble enough to lay aside his preconceptions. If he holds on to his preconceptions, he can never really acquire a new idea or a new point of view. Some people come to Theosophy, bringing with them their own background, and because they hold onto their own ideas, they are unable to grasp the philosophy of Theosophy.

Humility is a distinctive quality of a wise man, and hence the book says, “Be humbler still, when Wisdom thou hast mastered.” There is a distinction made between “Eye Doctrine and “Heart Doctrine,” or intellectual knowledge and Wisdom—the knowledge that has been applied and assimilated. Those who have attained to mere intellectual knowledge lack humility and proudly declare: “Behold I know,” whereas those who have attained to Wisdom “low confess: Thus have I heard.” This is in direct contrast to the modern cultural ideal of individualism.

The sixteenth chapter of the *Gita* lists out qualities that mark the godlike and the demoniacal natures. According to Swami Shri

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Savitatnandji, it is interesting to note that the list of qualities that mark godlike nature begins with “fearlessness,” and ends with “humility” rendered in Sanskrit as “*na-atimanita*,” or absence of much pride. The Sanskrit word for fearlessness is *Abhaya*, and not *Nirbhaya*. *Nirbhaya* is a human quality; it is applied to someone who was first afraid but now he is not afraid because of certain changes brought about in him, or because of certain experiences or acquiring certain knowledge. *Abhaya* is a spiritual quality, indicative of a person who *does not know fear*. The opposite of *atimanita* (much pride) is humility, which is the absence of pride and desire for name, fame, respect, etc. It is easy to see that without the quality of humility, all virtues are useless because whatever virtue one has developed can become the reason for pride. However, humility alone may imply weakness, fragility and meekness and such a humble person will be scared of everyone. For that matter, a meek person is incapable of practising and upholding any virtue. Likewise, fearlessness alone may mean aggressiveness, therefore, both the first and the last virtues combined are necessary. When humility is combined with fearlessness then it is *true* humility.

A truly humble person sees *Atman* in all. He does not consider himself to be higher or greater than others. There is a Sanskrit saying that as soon as there arises a “second,” there is fear. Philosophically, it means that when one removes from one’s mind the whole idea of the “other,” then fear disappears. The extent to which one identifies with fellow beings and feels one with them, one’s fear diminishes. When that feeling of oneness is complete, the fear also vanishes completely. That means when there is otherness or duality there is fear. The divine person is fearless because he is free from the sense of separateness, he has knowledge and compassion, and he is also selfless—ready to make sacrifices.

When one acts for and as the self of all creatures, one becomes truly great, and in such greatness lies true humility. “Whosoever is greatest among you, let him be your servant.” In whatever field men work for the benefit of others, based on the nature and extent

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of their labour they earn the distinction of greatness. Both humility and fearlessness are rooted in non-separateness. A humble individual is oriented towards others, and values the welfare of others, sometimes to the extent of forgetting himself. For Confucius, the Chinese philosopher, humility meant valuing the social good more highly than the satisfaction of one's personal aspirations and ambitions.

Steps towards the acquisition of true humility are described by Mr. Judge in *Letters That Have Helped Me*. In the section "On Occult Philosophy" we are enjoined to abstain from pushing ourselves forward in conversation, and also to try and recollect that each of us is "a very small affair in the world," and that those around us do not value us at all and grieve not when we are absent. In other words, let us try to realize that though each one of us makes his contribution, invaluable at times, none of us is indispensable and that the affairs of the world will carry on even in our absence. There is a very interesting incident in the *Ramayana*, in which Ravana abducts Lord Rama's wife, Sita, and brings her to his kingdom. At one point in time, angry Ravana advances towards Sita with an open sword to kill her. Hanuman, the great devotee of Lord Rama, feels that he should behead Ravana with his own sword before he can touch Sita. However, he finds that it was unnecessary because already Ravana's wife Mandodari has prevented Ravana from taking such a step. According to another version it is Ravana's minister who succeeds in dissuading him. It was an eye-opening incident even for Hanuman, who was thankful for what had happened. If he had himself prevented Ravana then perhaps all his life, he would have remained under the illusion that "if I were not there no one else could have averted this calamity." He realized that God (or Karma) uses each one of us as an instrument for the performance of various tasks. It is better to cultivate the humility that none of us is "the best" or of "special importance," but all of us are servants of the Almighty and of humanity.

The mystical book, *Light on the Path*, teaches that "that power

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which the disciple shall covet is that which shall make him appear as nothing in the eyes of men.” Is it easy? We may perhaps succeed in suppressing our Ego and exhibiting our achievements but if we catch ourselves feeling resentful when others, most obviously, hold us in slight esteem, let us ask ourselves, “How genuine is my humility?” To appear as “nothing” in others’ eyes seems to mean, among other things, not to make ourselves conspicuous or to draw attention to our personality by being pretentious in our manners, speech or dress. When we are identified with the body, ideas or feelings, we tend to become most vulnerable. It could also be the reverse. When we are praised and put on a pedestal, for our beauty, eloquence, intelligence or skill, our personal worth is immeasurably increased. There are experiences in life that open our eyes to the fact that our identity runs deeper than our appearance, our achievements, our ideas or our feelings. In this fiercely competitive world where one’s self-worth is equated with one’s achievements, it is extremely difficult to cultivate the virtue of humility and learn to accept that we are no better or worse than anyone else. No amount of success makes one more worthy than any other human being.

True humility springs from our endeavour to bring about the right relationship between the outer personality and the Higher Ego; between the animal and the God within. We have allowed the animal to usurp the place of the god, instead of allowing the god to rule the animal. How fully the Higher Ego can express itself depends upon the submission of the personality to its guidance. Mr. Judge puts it thus: “The great struggle must be to open up my outer self, that my higher being may shine through, for I know that in my heart the God sits patient, and that his pure rays are merely veiled from me by the many strivings and illusions that I bring on outwardly.”

We are asked to cultivate *higher patience*, which is a fine line between pride and humility. How shall we be proud, when we are so small? How dare we be humble when we are so great? In both, we blaspheme. But between these two extremes there is a spot, “neither too high nor too low,” and *there* we may stand calmly, not

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overshadowed by any man however great, because each of us contains potentialities of every other. That *special* skill, *special* virtue or *special* power that the other person possesses, “I” also possess. “I” am not a poor, miserable sinner, either. I have the *potential* for creation, preservation, destruction and regeneration. It is only when we have attained sufficient detachment that we are able to see ourselves dispassionately, and it is only then we know the spot or the place “neither too high nor too low.”

In the article, “The Humility of Aspiration” we read that the one who has found this place, “neither too high nor too low” may be far from “perfect.” “He may, to all appearances, be afflicted by many more defects than some of his fellows; yet he, because he has taken the ‘first step’ toward Buddhahood, is able to exert a beneficent influence upon those others. The slow, sure process of regeneration has begun, although he will hardly think of it in these terms. His progress is defined by a change in natural inclination, by a loss of taste for what he once considered to be his highest pleasures. His interests reach out to wider fields, his life becomes more a life of the mind, and less a life of personal relationships and attachments. It has been his patience with all these things, while trying to understand them, and by understanding them, transcending them, that has brought about the change.” (*Theosophy*, February 1953)

The first steps towards Buddhahood call for humility to *accept* our vices, weaknesses and desires that we need to overcome. Humble people are ready to accept that they have flaws and are ready to take remedial steps. They are open to receiving feedback from others and regard it as an opportunity to learn and grow. As a result, when they are not in agreement with others’ opinions, they are able to set aside the temptation to be on the defensive. To be genuinely humble is to learn to cultivate empathy. It helps us to see things from another’s point of view, and also to become sensitive to the needs of others.

Humility is freedom from pride and arrogance. It is said that the two most potent enemies to fight in the spiritual battle and last to get conquered are sexual desire and Egotism. Between these two,

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egotism, pride or the sense of separateness is the most difficult to surmount. Egotism or pride has many strongholds. If it is conquered in its gross aspect, it reappears in its subtle aspect. There are many stories of sages and spiritually advanced beings who, even after making great progress, display pride or egotism. It may surface as a “holier than thou” attitude or as pride for one’s intellectual, psychic or spiritual achievements. Thus, a person who does not eat meat, lives simply and studies scriptures and philosophies but shows contempt for those who eat meat and do not read scriptures, who are not quick to understand abstruse matters, is uncharitable. He considers himself superior to others and such identification with one’s abilities is difficult to overcome. It is far easier to overcome fleshly appetites than overcome such subtle desires.

A person who is puffed up about his worldly accomplishments can be corrected with spiritual knowledge, but when a person feels proud about his spiritual achievements how is he to be helped? If something sticks in a person’s throat he can drink water to wash it down, but if water sticks in his throat, what can he be given? Hence Jesus said to his disciples, “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of men.” (*The Gospel according to St. Matthew*, Ch. 5)

Lao Tzu, a Chinese philosopher, considers “humility” to be an indispensable quality, especially for a leader or a ruler. He says that you can be a leader among men if you can avoid putting yourself before others. He who is great must make humility his base. “The Sage expects no recognition for what he does; he achieves merit but does not take to himself; he does not wish to display his worth.” Therefore “though he has his place before them, they do not feel it as an injury. Therefore, all mankind delight to exalt him, and weary of him not.” Once we realize that the SELF shines in all but does not shine forth equally in all, our egotism melts into nothingness.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE INFANT PRODIGY

THE INFANT PRODIGY is a short story by Thomas Mann, first published in the 1903 Christmas Day issue of *Neue Freie Presse*. The story is about Bibi Saccellaphylaccas, an eight-year-old pianist who entertains an audience in the palatial concert hall of a fashionable hotel. The story begins with the words: “The Infant Prodigy entered. The hall became quiet. It became quiet and then the audience began to clap, because somewhere at the side a leader of mobs, a born organizer, clapped first.” The audience is hypnotized by the awareness of the importance of this event, because of the advance publicity. Therefore, they applauded even before they heard anything. Bibi, the child prodigy, is a Greek boy, who is dressed in white silk. He sits at his piano and prepares to play a concert of his own compositions.

The author goes on to give a vivid description of what music meant for this child prodigy, who is aware that he has to entertain the audience, but more than that he is aware of “his own private enjoyment...an enjoyment which he could never convey to anybody.” Every time he sat at an open piano a secret shudder of bliss ran through him. “This was the realm of music that lay before him. It lay spread out like the inviting ocean, where he might plunge in and blissfully swim, where he might let himself be borne and carried away...yet keep the mystery: control, ordain...” The hall is full, and not a seat is unoccupied, as people are standing in the side aisles and at the back. The hall’s expensive front seats are occupied by the upper class, including an ageing princess, as well as by the impresario and Bibi’s mother, “for it was in the upper classes, of course, that the great enthusiasm was felt.”

As Bibi plays, it is clear that he knows how to work his audience. He flings his body with the music and bows slowly to prolong the applause. “Ah, the knowing little creature understood how to make people clap! He stopped behind the screen, they had to wait for

him; lingered a little on the steps of the platform...although actually such things bored him stiff by now.” Recognising that the members of the audience respond more to a show than to the aesthetics of the music, he thinks of them as idiots.

The author contrasts the thoughts of young prodigy from the height of his position in music and what others are thinking as “all sorts of things in their regular brains.” We are made to see how primitive the thoughts of the audience about him and his performance are. The contrast between the performer and the audience is brought about strikingly: “He sat and played...elect and alone, above that confused sea of faces, above the heavy, insensitive mass soul, upon which he was labouring to work with his individual, differentiated soul...Sitting there he sometimes had moments of oblivion and solitude.”

The listeners react to the performance in the context of their individual interests and experiences. An old gentleman regrets his own musical inability and exclaims: “Really, one ought to be ashamed.” However, he considers Bibi’s talent as a gift from God, which he grants to some and withholds from some, and hence there is no shame in being an ordinary person. One should not feel ashamed of falling short of Bibi’s accomplishment than in bowing before the Christ Child. A businessman considers art to be a mere pleasant diversion, “...it adds something cheerful to life...really he does not play so badly,” and calculates how much profit could be made from the concert. “Fully fifty seats, twelve marks apiece, that makes six hundred marks....”

A piano teacher is critical of Bibi’s lack of originality and the positioning of his hand. A young girl responds to the passion of the music but is confused that such passion is expressed by a child. If he kissed her, it would be like her little brother kissing her. Was there a passion all by itself, without any earthly object?

A military officer equates Bibi’s success with his own, thinking, “Yes, you are something and I am something, each in his own way,” and applauds in smug self-satisfaction. An elderly music critic reacts

disdainfully, seeing in Bibi both the falseness and the rapture of the artist, as he thought: “Look at him, this young beggar of a Bibi. As an individual, he has still to develop, but as a type he is already quite complete, the artist *par excellence*. He has in himself all the artist’s exaltation and his utter worthlessness.” Contemptuous of his own audience, the critic believes that he would have been an artist had he “not seen through the whole business so clearly.”

When the concert came to the end the wave of ecstasy of the crowd rose. “And then the storm became a hurricane. . . it went direct to people’s marrow and made them shiver down their backs. They were carried away by a helpless compulsion of sheer noise. Loud shouts mingled with hysterical clapping of hands.”

Bibi’s final number, a rhapsody, merges into the Greek national hymn, exciting the Greeks in the audience to shouts and applause. The critic is thinking: “Yes, the hymn had to come too. They have to exploit every vein—publicity cannot afford to neglect any means to its end. I think I will criticize that as inartistic. But perhaps I am wrong, perhaps that is the most artistic thing of all. What is the artist? A jack-in-the-box.” He leaves, reflecting that criticism is on a higher level than art.

When the concert ends, the audience forms two groups, “the one round the prodigy, the other round the princess, and you could actually not tell which of them was receiving more homage.” The princess meets Bibi and asks if music simply comes to him when he sits down. He responds that it does but thinks to himself that she is stupid.

An elegant and beautiful young woman and her two officer brothers go out into the street. A girl with untidy hair and swinging arms, accompanied by a gloomy-faced youth comes out next. “A child!” she thought. A charming child. But in there he was awe-inspiring prodigy.” Then she said aloud in a toneless voice: “We are all infant prodigies, we artists.”

Thomas Mann was a German novelist, social critic, philanthropist and essayist who won the 1929 Nobel Prize for literature. He has

written several highly symbolic and ironic epic novels which reveal his high insight into the psychology of the artist and the intellectual.

In the story, the child prodigy thinks, as he is playing, of all the normal people in the audience that are unable to really understand his true greatness, regarding it as entertainment and hence clapping. He feels that he is alone as he is unable to truly connect with anyone else. Each of what the author calls “regular people” evaluates Bibi from his own point of view. Almost none are able to recognize the true worth of the artist.

W. Somerset Maugham expresses it very well in one of his novels when he describes the qualities that we need to develop to truly appreciate the beauty and worth of a painting, which is equally applicable to all forms of art. He writes: “Why should you think that beauty, which is the most precious thing in the world, lies like a stone on the beach for the careless passer-by to pick up idly? Beauty is something wonderful and strange that the artist fashions out of the chaos of the world in the torment of his soul. And when he has made it, it is not given to all to know it. To recognize it you must repeat the adventure of the artist. It is a melody that he sings to you, and to hear it again in your own heart you want knowledge and sensitiveness and imagination.”

Although a creative mind is inspired and motivated from within, it can happen in two ways. Motivation and inspiration may be from psychic or *kama-manasic* nature. Many books, ideas, forms of dance, paintings, and poetry, though original, are mediocre in nature. The higher impulse or inspiration which enables an artist to create a masterpiece or a scientist to make a discovery, comes when our “everyday mind” temporarily disconnects itself from *kama*, it becomes receptive and porous to the influences from our higher nature. There is a temporary conjunction of *manas* with *buddhi*.

So long as we remain *kama-manasic* beings, we are likely to relate to and appreciate only the “art” inspired by the lower nature in man. We fail to raise the level of consciousness to that of the artist and may only discern flights of fancy in his imagination, as does

Theseus in Act V of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which he appears to denigrate the poet's imaginative faculty by comparing him with lovers and madmen. He says that a poet "gives to airy nothing, a local habitation and a name," a trick performed by strong imagination, thus reducing artistic talent to a little more than airy fantasy.

It appears that, to be able to create a sublime piece of art or even to appreciate it we need to develop higher aspects of mind. H.P.B. writes in *Raja-Yoga or Occultism* that there are people who never think with the higher faculties of their mind at all and there are those who think even upon ordinary matters from that higher plane. "The person who is endowed with this faculty of thinking about even the most trifling things from the higher plane of thought has, by virtue of that gift which he possesses, a plastic power of formation, so to say, in his very imagination." Whatever he thinks about, his thoughts will be more intense than the thoughts of an ordinary person, and by this very intensity, it obtains the *power of creation*. Such people will be able to write poetry when they look at a cabbage or a pig with her little ones. Those who have not cultivated the habit of thinking in the higher mind will "perceive in the loftiest things only their lowest and most material aspect, will laugh at the 'music of spheres' and ridicule the most sublime conceptions and philosophies."

In the story, an old gentleman regrets his own musical inability. He considers Bibi's talent as a *gift from God*, which He grants to some and withholds from some, and hence he feels that there is no shame in being an ordinary person. Can we regard a "talent" or "genius" to be a gift from God? Theosophy teaches that the seeds of spiritual knowledge, art, science, agriculture and architecture exist in the divine nature of man, burnt into the imperishable centre of his consciousness by the Divine Instructors, 18 million years ago. These exist as *innate* ideas. Just as for the light to shine forth we need to clean the soot on the glass covering by which it is surrounded so also, for the manifestation of these ideas, we need to purify the layers or sheaths or vehicles of the soul.

H.P.B. sums up the idea in the article, “Genius.” What is the difference between an ordinary man, an idiot and a genius? The Ego in each of these cases is of the same essence and substance. No Ego differs from another Ego, in its essential nature. That, which makes one person a great individual and another a silly person is the capability of the brain and body to transmit and give expression to the light of the *Inner man* within, writes H.P.B. The physical body is an instrument, while the Ego is the performing artist. She points out that even the great Violinist Paganini cannot bring out the melody if the violin is broken or if the strings are strung too loose or, too tight. The body and brain are the instruments of the Ego.

It is quite possible for a person to pursue only one field, one subject or develop only one particular faculty, in a given life. For example, if the pursuit of music or literature or computer science is kept up for many lives, we have a computer wizard, a mathematical genius, or a great musician. Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart were all child prodigies and geniuses. Rebirth explains the appearance of geniuses and even child prodigies. Can heredity explain it? If the Ego is not advanced, genius has nothing to do with heredity, explains Mr. Judge. Blind Tom, a Negro, displayed great musical ability and skill in playing the piano, although his parents had no knowledge of the piano.

This bringing back of knowledge is recollection, divisible into physical and mental memory. Our body is made up of atoms, and atoms are made up of “lives.” When “lives” in the body are repeatedly given certain kinds of impressions, day after day, we can train the “lives” of the body to perform certain tasks—for instance, typing, playing musical instruments, etc.

A person who has spent effort in learning a language and mastering it, or in learning piano or in learning mathematics, does not take with himself the knowledge of mathematics or languages or the skill of playing the piano. But during the process of acquiring a skill or knowledge, the *skandhas* are being formed. What survives after death is the “essence” of these *skandhas*. Thus, for instance,

when a person learns to play the piano, it is not the knowledge of playing the piano, but the skill or the ability to play similar musical instruments which survives.

The most important element in the creative process is believed to be originality or uniqueness. Humans were not considered to have the ability to create something new except as an expression of God's work. Most ancient cultures saw art as a form of discovery and not creation. Plato is asked in *The Republic*, "Will we say of the painter, that he makes something?" He answers, "Certainly not, he merely imitates."

In Book X of Plato's *The Republic*, Plato uses Socrates' metaphor of three beds to explain the concept of imitation. One bed is that which exists in nature, and is the work of God. In other words, it is Platonic ideal. Plato's theory of Forms or Ideas points out that non-physical forms or ideas represent the most accurate reality. The object was essentially or really the Form, and that the objects we see in the world, were mere shadows mimicking the Form. Thus, one bed is the archetypal Form or Idea of bed. The other bed is that made by the carpenter, in imitation of the archetypal idea. The third bed is that made by the artist in imitation of the carpenter's bed. Thus, the artist's bed is twice removed from the truth. The imitators can only touch on a small part of things as they really are, and not attain the truth of God's creation or "things-in-themselves."

Originality does not merely mean producing something new, because in one sense, as the wise Solomon said, "There is nothing new under the sun." Originality does not mean being different from other people. Originality could also mean producing something out of one's own inner resources. It does not matter whether it coincides with what somebody else produced fifty or a hundred or a thousand years ago. If we produce it from our own inner resources then it is spontaneous and it is original, writes Sanghrakshita, a Buddhist teacher.

WHAT SHE TAUGHT US

IF I were to write this short memoir simply as an imperfect expression of what H. P. B. was to me personally, and of the influence of her life and teachings upon my own life and aspirations, I should merely be adding one more testimony to that affection and reverence which she inspired in all who learnt to understand her in some degree.

There were those who were attracted to her by the magnetism of her personal influence, by her extraordinary intellect, by her conversational powers, and even by her militant unconventionality. But I was not one of these. It was her message that attracted me; it was as a teacher that I learnt to know and love her. Apart from her teachings I might have looked upon H. P. B. as an interesting and unique character, but I do not think I should have been attracted to her, had not her message spoken at once right home to my heart. It was through that message that I came to know H. P. B., not as a mere personal friend, but as something infinitely more.

Let me dwell therefore upon H. P. B. as a teacher, let me endeavour to express what it was that she set before me, and before so many others, the acceptance of which united us by ties which death cannot sever.

First, and above all else, she showed us the *purpose of life*.

And when I say this I mean much more than might be commonly understood by this phrase. I mean much more than that she gave us an interest and a motive in this present life, and a belief or faith with regard to the next. Those who have learnt the lesson of the illusory nature of that which most men call *life*, whether here or hereafter, need to draw their inspiration from a deeper source than is available in the external world of forms. But to the born Mystic there is often a long period of waiting and seeking before that source is found. Many years are spent in testing and rejecting first one system, then another, until it seems perchance as if life could be naught but a hopeless problem. And perhaps just when all seemed darkest and most hopeless, when it even appeared best to abandon the quest, to

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take up the position, “we do not know, and we cannot know,” just then it has been that the light has dawned, the teacher has been sent, the word has been spoken, which has recalled the lost memory of that hidden source of truth for which we have been seeking; and we have taken up once more, at the point at which we dropped it in a previous life-time, that great task which we have set ourselves to accomplish.

And thus she did something more than teach us a new system of philosophy. She drew together the threads of our life, those threads which run back into the past, and forward into the future, but which we had been unable to trace, and showed us the pattern we had been weaving, and the purpose of our work.

She taught us *Theosophy*—not as a mere form of doctrine, not as a religion, or a philosophy, or a creed, or a working hypothesis, but as *a living power in our lives*.

It is inevitable that the term *Theosophy* should come to be associated with a certain set of doctrines. In order that the message may be given to the world it must be presented in a definite and systematic form. But in doing this it becomes *exoteric*, and nothing that is *exoteric* can be permanent, for it belongs to the world of form. She led us to look beneath the surface, behind the form; to make the *principle* the real motive power of our life and conduct. To her the term *Theosophy* meant something infinitely more than could be set before the world in any *Key to Theosophy*, or *Secret Doctrine*. The nearest approach to it in any of her published works is in *The Voice of the Silence*; yet even that conveys but imperfectly what she would—had the world been able to receive it—have taught and included in the term *Theosophy*.

The keynote of her teachings, the keynote of her life, was—*Self-sacrifice*.

“But stay, Disciple... Yet one word. Canst thou destroy divine COMPASSION? 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. . . Now bend thy head and listen well, O Bodhisattva— Compassion speaks and saith: ‘Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?’” And thus though doctrinal Theosophy speaks of *Devachan* and *Nirvana*: of rest for the weary storm-tossed pilgrim of life; of a final goal of bliss past all thought and conceiving; yet, to those who are able to receive it, it says that there is something higher and nobler still, that though thrice great is he who has “crossed and won the “Aryahata Path,” he is greater still, who having won the prize can put it aside, and “remain unselfish till the endless end.”

And so H.P.B. often pointed out to us those men and women who were true Theosophists, though they stood outside of the Theosophical movement, and even appeared antagonistic to it. Already in the world, a *Theosophist* has come to mean someone who believes in reincarnation and Karma, or some other distinctive doctrine. But the term was never so limited in its application by the great founder of the Theosophical Society. She taught these doctrines in order that men might dissociate themselves from *all forms* of doctrine, and reach “Alaya’s Self,” There is no older doctrine than this of Divine Compassion, of Universal Brotherhood. It is the essence of all the teachings of all the Buddhas and Christs the world has ever known. It is above all doctrines, all creeds, all formulas; it is the essence of all religion. Yet men ever miss it, miss the one principle which alone can save the world, and take refuge instead in the selfish desires of their lower nature.

Individualism is the keynote of modern civilization; competition and survival of the fittest, the practical basis of our morality. Our modern philosophers and scientific teachers do all that is possible to reduce man to the level of an animal, to show his parentage, his ancestry and his genius as belonging to brute creation, and conditioned by brutal laws of blind force and dead matter. What wonder then that one who believed so ardently in the divine nature of man, in the divine law of love, should oppose with scornful contempt the teachings of both religion and science which thus degrade humanity.

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And she paid the inevitable penalty. Misunderstood, slandered, and vilified to the last degree, she lived a hero's life, and died a martyr's death. Only those who were her intimate friends knew how she suffered, mentally and bodily. The man who dies with his face to the foe, fighting to the last though covered with wounds, is accounted a hero. But in the heat of battle there is oblivion of pain, there is a superhuman strength of madness and frenzy. How much more should be accounted a hero who could hold on to life, and work as no other woman has worked, through years of physical and mental torture.

Some few years ago she was at death's door. Humanly speaking, she ought to have died then. She was given up by the doctors; she herself knew she was dying, and rejoiced greatly. But the Master came to her, showed her the work that must still be done, and have her choice—the bliss of dying or the cross of living.

She chose the cross. And thus, not merely did she teach us the meaning of Theosophy by precept, but also by example. She was herself the greatest of the Theosophists, not merely because she founded the movement, and restored to the world the treasures of ancient wisdom, but because she herself had made the "*Great Renunciation*."

WILLIAM KINGSLAND, F.T.S.

(Reprinted from "In Memory of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky" by Some of her Pupils, Death Centenary Edition, 1991.)

No man should ever say behind a Brother's back what he would not say openly to his face. Insinuations against one's neighbour are often productive of more evil consequences than gross slander. Every Theosophist has to fight and battle against evil—but he must have the courage of his words and actions, and what he does must be done openly and honestly before all.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS BODY AND HEALTH—I

YOU raise a very ticklish question—the health of the body. This is not as simple and straightforward as it seems. Health is wholeness, not only of the body but of the whole being. Medical science *has* made progress but on a wrong foundation—the body everything; human consciousness born of the body is secondary. Beginning in this fashion, they have gone on till the professionals find themselves in a maze. Does one disease-cure beget other diseases? Even psychosomatic medicine proceeds on a false premise. Psyche affects soma—body; how is understood a bit, though there is confusion. But why? Why does not the body affect its child, the psyche? You *are* right—every new generation suffers in bodily health more than the preceding one. One sees it in one’s own experience. I am afraid bodies will deteriorate with the progress of *Kali Yuga*. Remedy? Step out of *Kali Yuga*. It can be done and should be done. This is where our Theosophical *application* comes in. Our wrong customs, habits and conventions have to be discarded. That is where “asceticism” comes in. Food, exercise, dress, sleep, these are to be changed. Rules of magnetic cleanliness have to be practised.

I am very sorry to hear about _____’s ill health. Modern medicine is not an unmixed blessing and if she is stuffed with injections and potions she might find life more difficult. The philosophy of medical science is wrong; and modern psychology is not only unhelpful but is positively misleading. When one conjectures why the Masters in giving Their Message began insistently with the sevenfold constitution of Man one cannot help deducing that it must have been, among other reasons, to point out to the student world in its entirety the importance of the astral body, the vehicle of *Prana* and the very basis of the Personal Man. Electric and magnetic matter, its nature and properties and the purpose and place of animal magnetism should be the very soul of medical science. It is all topsy-turvy.

The higher state of the inner consciousness does affect the health

of the body, but our Karma and race Karma and *Kali Yuga* produce an imbalance in the body. If you look at the seven qualifications given in “Chelas and Lay Chelas” you will find that the first demand is perfect physical health. But what does “perfect” health mean? This is the big question. Ailments caused by inner ill health and those by outer circumstances form one factor; then there is the racial factor; unselfish service of the race causes absorption of humanity’s Karma. Most people are human elementals on their way to becoming human Gods. As the former we are compound beings and so divisible; as the latter we are unitary and indivisible. Out of the two a third arises—the Superior Man. Please see the 15th chapter of *The Bhagavad-Gita*—an important classification.

Blind acceptance of medical science is rooted in ignorance; people are so intent on making money or chasing other shadows that they do not care to spend time and give attention to their own body and learn something about it. We have in Theosophy numerous hints and much knowledge indirectly applicable to bodily well-being, but our students do not take the trouble to understand, and when they do, they do not care to apply because procrastination comes in! Magnetism, elementals, etc., but above all the implications of Reincarnation and Karma, should bring them not only solace and comfort but some zest for practice, causing the birth of devotion, of silence, of secrecy.

More and more it is becoming clear even to the doctors that the effects of thought and feeling upon the body are the real cause of hundreds of ailments. We have to work to make it clear to all who will listen that ill health, save in Karmic cases, can be handled properly by the inner balance and calm. When the will works harmoniously, as Mr. Judge pointed out in his article, the body responds to it in a very correct way. Even now the body can respond to the spiritual impulses more quickly and better than to kamic impulses. Even now it costs a person some effort to live a sensuous life, and he does not know that in the long run he loses more than he would benefit himself by taking the right course. Even from the

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

selfish and personal point of view there is greater belief and zest in the enjoyment of spiritual things without gaining bodily ill health than in the enjoyment of sensuous things on the kamic and material planes. Read in this line Mr. Judge's article in *Vernal Blooms*, "Advantages and Disadvantages in Life."

Such experiences as you are having, connected with suffering and anguish, are soul-purifiers. H.P.B. says in *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 475: "Woe to those who live without suffering"; and so also in the seventh chapter of *The Bhagavad-Gita* the "afflicted" are dear to Shri Krishna. Let me assure you that much more of spiritual sustenance is to be got out of bodily illness than is ordinarily conceived. It all depends on our Centre in the shrine of the body. Be calm, therefore, as much as you can; and try, as best as is possible under existing circumstances, to remind yourself that above the pairs of opposites are Peace and Bliss.

As to *Prana* and health: Animal Magnetism (see *The Theosophical Glossary*) holds the key. Judge speaks of an "invisible perspiration." See the article on "Universal Brotherhood a Fact in Nature" in *The Heart Doctrine*. Physical bodily and hygienic rules have a deeper aspect—like food, bathing, clothes, etc. This is a vast subject.

(To be continued)

NORMAL day, let me be aware of the treasure you are. Let me learn from you, love you, bless you before you depart. Let me not pass you by in quest of some rare and perfect tomorrow. Let me hold you while I may, for it may not always be so. One day I shall dig my nails into the earth, or bury my face in the pillow, or stretch myself taut, or raise my hands to the sky and want, more than all the world, your return.

—MARY JEAN IRON

METAPHYSICS—SOME REFLECTIONS

VI

WHY does Theosophy lay so much stress on the study of philosophical, abstract and metaphysical concepts, instead of something useful and practical? Is it not enough that a person should lead a pure, honest and unselfish life? To become actively good and virtuous one needs a pure mind and enlightened heart, and knowledge of Theosophical principles has the power to bring that about. The greatest of occult truths are metaphysical. Many of our struggles arise because we fail to recognize the practical importance of the study of philosophy for day-to-day living in the world, and also because we divorce philosophy and metaphysics from morality and ethics. It is like separating the head from the heart. The study of great philosophical and metaphysical ideas trains the mind to free itself from petty, personal, mundane thoughts and to dwell more on lofty, universal and impersonal ideas, thus making the mind porous and receptive to the higher influences.

“We must guard against the tendency of neglecting metaphysics.... Psychic and Spiritual teachings are not more fully understood because their metaphysical basis is not contemplated upon. Is it to be wondered at, then, that the fundamentals of esoteric science are metaphysical in character, and that the books of H.P.B. abound in lengthy and many-sided considerations of metaphysical propositions?” For that very reason, *The Secret Doctrine* is full of metaphysical ideas and philosophical principles, and so also are the Vedas and the Upanishads, as also the six Indian Schools of Philosophy. When we dissociate metaphysics from science, we run the risk of degrading the Omnipresent and Omniscient Principle or God into a personal god and likewise degrading the Wisdom-Religion into a religious creed. (*Studies in the Secret Doctrine*, p. 75)

When we take the teachings of our religion on blind faith, sooner or later we are disillusioned. When those who accepted the Personal

God idea find that it fails to answer many questions, they drop that concept and then move from the one extreme of blind belief in the Personal God to the other extreme of blind disbelief in god. That is because people are not aware that there is that department of knowledge where the existence and nature of God are clearly explained. As a reaction they follow science, which deals with concrete facts, which can be observed, classified and rationalized. They look upon science as practical, and philosophy which is abstract and speculative is regarded as unpractical, failing to appreciate that it is the very metaphysical knowledge which throws a clear light on the true concept of God and helps to cultivate true and superior faith and devotion, as is evident from the study of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the book of devotion, *par excellence*. Those *emotionally* attached to a particular form of God, rituals, ceremonies, worship and prayers consider other gods and religions as inferior.

Similarly, when our actions are based on personal feelings and desires, we are likely to go wrong. Even when we desire to do something good, we must have the necessary knowledge. “What is needed in the world is knowledge. Good motive may save the moral character, but it does not ensure those thoughts and deeds which make for the highest good of humanity. Good motive without knowledge makes sorry work sometimes. All down the ages there is a record of good motive, but power and zeal misused, for want of knowledge. Theosophy is the path of knowledge. It was given out in order, among other things, that good motive and wisdom might go hand in hand,” writes Mr. Crosbie. Knowledge purifies the mind and unfolds that superior devotion that encompasses *viveka* (discrimination), *vairagya* (dispassion) and *karuna* (compassion), so that the right performance of action becomes possible. Therefore, the study of metaphysics is recommended by Theosophy. “Metaphysics (not metaphysical jargon) are capable of evolving a true international outlook in the mind of the politician; of elevating to cosmic heights the intuitions of the poet; of infusing wisdom and a sense of proportion in the love of the saint,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

We need both Wisdom and Spiritual discrimination even if we want to help humanity. Today, a large number of men and women are aspiring to help and serve their fellow men. They possess the necessary goodness of heart but have no real basis of knowledge and with a result, they lack the necessary inspiration and work mechanically. It is very necessary to study and understand and deepen our perception of the principles underlying the work we are trying to do.

H.P.B. gives the “true basis” for social work in *The Key to Theosophy* thus: For the efforts towards social amelioration to be fruitful, they must be based on four principles: “Universal Unity and Causation; Human Solidarity; the Law of Karma, and Reincarnation. These are the four links of the golden chain which should bind humanity into one family, one Universal Brotherhood.” Why there is such an obvious disparity in society? Why are the rich becoming richer and the poor, poorer? It is due to neglect of social duty on the part of the rich toward the poor. It is because we do not realize that we are pilgrim-souls. This at once changes the whole attitude of the mind. Every ordinary man is really a toiling pilgrim—because, a man, besides being a businessman, a sweeper, or a teacher, is a pilgrim in the ultimate analysis, as an aspect of his nature is toiling towards human evolution.

The laws of Karma and Reincarnation are the doctrines of responsibility and hope. Madame Blavatsky observes that the percentage of crime is small in Buddhist countries where these doctrines 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)

There are deeply philosophical and psychological aspects which must be taken into consideration even in helping others. In the article, “Let Every Man Prove His Own Work,” H.P.B. shows that the philanthropists who sought to make people happy by improving

their physical conditions or external environment—by building homes, starting soup kitchens, etc.—were ultimately disappointed. Those who had spent their lives 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 condition of these 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 sell them. At times proper houses are built for them, yet they sell those and go back to living in their huts. H. P. B. advises the use of discretion even in helping others. She 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 a 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)

H. P. B. writes, “*Outside* of metaphysics no occult philosophy, no esotericism is possible.” When we explain to others the nature of man, the cosmos, life, death, various spiritual powers, etc. we must use the base of metaphysics, or else it would be a superficial explanation. Ultimately, the physical is moved by astral, and that in turn is moved by occult or spiritual machinery. At the same time, it is metaphysics which gives detachment to the mind, which, after the experience of the detachment, when brought in contact with concrete problems of the world, is able to deal with them in a real spiritual way.

Metaphysics and ethics must go hand in hand. Metaphysics gives a rational basis for the practice of ethics. For instance, when we are asked not to judge or criticize others, what is the metaphysical basis?

When we criticize another person, even mentally, the elementals, described as “centres of force” or “points of energy,” get coalesced with that thought, creating an entity. By condemning, we create a focus in ourselves such that the elementals will carry that very fault to us. After a while, we would find ourselves doing that very thing for which we had criticized another person. For instance, when a person has committed violence, we hear people say that he should be beaten, he should be whipped publicly, etc. In condemning violence, we are ourselves on the edge of becoming violent. Hence Mr. Judge writes: “If you fix your thoughts upon a person in anger, or in critical, uncharitable judgment, you attract to yourself a number of those elementals that belong to, generate and are generated by this particular fault or failing, and they precipitate themselves upon you. Hence, through the injustice of your merely human condemnation, which cannot know the source and causes of the action of another, you at once become a sharer of his fault or failing by your own act, and the spirit expelled returns ‘with seven devils worse than himself.’”

Moreover, unless student-aspirants are ready to grapple with metaphysics they will not be able to grasp the instructions given in *The Secret Doctrine*. Shri B. P. Wadia advises that this book is not to be read only by the lower mind which analyzes and understands. It is a book which brings the faculty of intuition into operation and although a student may not understand all the contents of the work, still he is helped. *The Secret Doctrine* nourishes that aspect of the soul which is above the logical, analytical mind. “While you are studying *The Secret Doctrine*, which enables the personal mind to reach up to the Higher Manas or the Ego, its full benefit will not come your way unless you add to your study *The Voice of the Silence*, *Light on the Path*, *The Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Dhammapada*. Metaphysics and ethics are the two wings we must use to soar upwards.”

(Concluded)

FOOD FOR THE BODY AND SOUL

FOOD, called *anna* in Sanskrit, has a much deeper meaning than the one by which it is ordinarily understood. That the living body needs food for sustenance, growth, and strength is common knowledge. It is a well-known fact that a balanced diet containing the basic nutrients taken at regular intervals and in the right amount coupled with other health-promoting habits, such as, moderation in exercise and exertion, rest and activity, cheerful and a happy disposition promotes soundness of body and mind. Mind and body are closely knit together and react on one another, and, therefore, have to be considered together.

In the seventeenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita* (verses 7 to 10), titled “Devotion by means of Discrimination between Three Qualities,” it is shown that people prefer certain kinds of food according to the predominance in them of one or the other of the three qualities, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*: “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. The food which is liked by those of the *rajas* quality is over bitter, too acid, excessively salt, hot, pungent, dry and burning, and causeth unpleasantness, pain, and disease. Whatever food is such as was dressed the day before, that is tasteless or rotting, that is impure, is that which is preferred by those in whom predominates the quality of *tamas* or indifference.”

It is seen from the foregoing that the character and qualities of our personalities are vital factors in the health of our body and mind. A healthy mind in a healthy body is a well-known axiom, as old as the world, but the full significance of it is not generally known because of a lack of right knowledge of the whole of man—body, soul, and spirit. Sri Krishna teaches in the thirteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita* that only that knowledge is whole and perfect “which

through the soul is a realization of both the known and knower” — body and soul—and that that alone is esteemed by Him as Wisdom. It is evident, therefore, that a truly healthy mind and body can come to pass only in one whose nature and disposition are so refined by acquisition and application of the knowledge of the whole of man, and the principles of his threefold nature are in harmonious order and fitted to best serve the purpose of the soul.

Therefore, mere attention to food and observances relating to the body alone, prescribed by specialists in that art, for the health and general well-being of persons is insufficient. Moreover, the kind of food which is preferred by one is in accordance with one’s character and disposition. As one raises himself in moral character and refinement of tastes, a corresponding change occurs in the nature of such a person, and he seeks the kind of food congenial to the changed disposition. It is a change brought about from within through change in thought and feeling. The body absorbs from the food eaten only such essence as best serves the needs of one’s acquired nature. Therefore, it is useless to resort to what is perceived as *sattvic* food, and expect to grow in spirituality, while thoughts, speech and actions are passionate or indifferent and indolent.

It is necessary that we must realize that we are really souls dwelling in this body, endowed with a mind, intellect, and psychic nature, with their qualities, capacities, and tendencies, whether good or bad, which are acquired by us by our past Karma.

Thought and desire are the bases of action, and intent and motive colour the quality of action and its outcome. Each one, therefore, is what one has made of oneself, in character and qualities, by one’s own thoughts and actions. It is in the heart thoughts, desires and motives are conceived, and, therefore, it is imperative that we must pay close attention to them at the source and try to raise them to a higher plane if we aspire to live a life of true happiness and a higher purpose. The soul’s needs cannot be met by caring for the body alone; the soul is also to be attended to. As the body needs food for sustenance, the soul too needs to be nourished by food, and food for the soul is thought.

As the principle of desire-Kama is fully developed and perfected in us in the stage of evolution in which we generally are, the tenor of our thoughts and intentions are naturally influenced more by desire and selfish motives of our personal self than by the impersonal nobler promptings of our divine nature. It is the incessant contest going on in our lives between the self of matter and the self of spirit. As we choose and act one way or the other, so do we make our destiny and shape our character.

At the end of the life of every individual the sum of thoughts of the lifetime separates into grosser and material kind, on the one hand, and the essence of the humanistic, moral, unselfish, nobler sort, on the other, analogous to the cultivator, after gathering his harvest, winnows chaff from the grain. As the chaff is rejected and the grain is processed and made into food for the body, so are the two kinds of thoughts we gather at the end of our lives. The grosser sort is relinquished after bodily death as so much chaff which becomes Kama Rupa to disintegrate and disappear in course of time, and the idealized experiences of life attach to the divine Ego and form the basis of the bliss of Devachanic reverie, to be finally assimilated to Buddhi. Gathering and assimilating the quintessence of experiences of many lives, like the bee gathers honey from many flowers, the Ego, at last, evolves into a Dhyan Chohan as the grub after gestation in the cocoon emerges from it as a butterfly. As the body is nourished by the food one eats, so the Buddhi-Manas, the Real Man, is nourished by the food it gathers from the essence of the thoughts and experiences of many earthly personalities it over-shadows in every incarnation, and metaphorically speaking, kneads them into "bread of Wisdom."

Thus we see that if the thoughts, desires, and intent of a lifetime predominantly centre round and feed the animal nature of our personality, the higher aspect of mind, called in Theosophical parlance as *Antahkarana*, the bridge between the mortal personality and the immortal divine Mind, the path of salvation of man, falls into disuse; and atrophies entirely, if persisted in the downward

course. The material nature of man, in such cases, fed with sensual and selfish thoughts and desires, is strengthened, and the spiritual nature is, so to speak, starved of the spiritual pabulum. At death, nothing of the lower mind survives but is dissipated. The life-atoms of the principles of the personal man, carrying the impressions of the very desires and tendencies of his, are scattered at death, and go to the lower kingdoms of nature similar in character. They are the *skandhas*—attributes of the personal earthly man—which regroup again to form a new body for the Ego in his next rebirth. Thus man, life after life comes to inherit character and destiny, raised or lowered, by the choices he himself makes in his actions in each life under the inexorable Law of Absolute Justice—Karma. Feeding the insatiable appetites of lower personal nature with indulgences, and grosser thoughts and feelings, born of ignorance of our true nature and self, we would be, as graphically said in *The Voice of The Silence*, kneading husks of life with Maya’s dew to create food for the perpetuation of self of matter, called “the birds of birth, decay, and sorrow.”

Though the force of the tendency of past lives exercises powerful influences on the choices we make, yet we have the Will and the Soul-freedom to curb undesirable tendencies, and deliberately think and act in ways of the opposite kind that would counteract and weaken the wrong tendency, and, at the same time, cultivate and strengthen virtuous thought and action that makes for self-improvement, refinement, and higher progress. By making such a wise choice and Will-effort in our lives we would be, as the devotional book says, “kneading flour with Amrita’s clear waters,” and create “bread of Wisdom” that feeds the Soul, tending to higher progress, and ending at last in perfection.

To forgive is the highest, most beautiful form of love. In return, you will receive untold peace and happiness.

—ROBERT MULLER

THOUGHTS ON KARMA

THE INCARNATED mind is not the whole mind. Only a part of Manas incarnates in the body-brain. The remaining part, conjoined with Buddhi and Atma, broods over the man, “above and outside,” indicating a different plane of consciousness. The storehouse of karma needs must be vast. No incarnated “soul” can deal with the whole storehouse of his karma in one life, and only a portion meets him, in the form of the *skandhas*, at the threshold of *Devachan*, on his return journey into a fresh life.

The *skandhas* are our past *tendencies* (trained and used by us) and our *affinities*. These have been the active agents of our karma in the past, and once again become agents of our present karma, determining the character of our personalities. The exhaustion of past karma would proceed apace but for our ignorance, under the influence of which we generate new karma which leads us away from our self-chosen path, and so we get entangled once again in a widening and deepening web of our own making. How may we break these fetters and free ourselves? This freedom is attained only by knowledge and devotion. Devotion to *Dharma*—natural duty—a stern law which confronts each one who wills to take his destiny under his own conscious direction. The devotional books speak of this. With lofty hopes one may vow to *try*, but one has to learn to practise the great law of universal brotherhood. Metaphysically, that law demonstrates the One Universal, Divine Presence in all beings; and morally, therefore, it demands compassion, pity and friendly consideration for all.

The devotee need not worry or trouble himself about his past storehouse of karma; but it is suggested that at every moment of choice he turn within, consult his ideals and aspirations, seek to hold dialogue with Krishna, the Higher Self within, and thus find out what opportunity the hour holds for him. At every turn he should ask himself: “What is my *dharma*-duty now?” This prepares one for the path of discipleship and for the inner life that leads surely to the realization of ideals.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What is the significance of the shaving of the head or the *mundan* ceremony? Could the cutting of hair or shaving of the head have something to do with their behavioural change? “Indic scriptures indicate that the hair is always tied to our past *samskaras* [*skandhas* or tendencies], and when hair is shaved off, or perhaps even cut short drastically, we could feel lighter and become immensely happy,” writes Surakshit Goswami. It helps to clean up our past tendencies.

We are connected with Nature through our breath and likewise we are connected to *Brahman*, the Supreme Reality through *Brahmandra*. Shaving our head makes it easy for us to enter the state of meditation and also to connect with *Brahman*. “At a physical level, the resolve to lead a new life, manifests by way of cutting your hair, a sign of renewal.” There are many ways to cut oneself off from the past. It can be done with the help of a guru, or through Sannyasa (renunciation) which signifies a new birth. It implies detaching ourselves from our past thoughts, preconceptions, beliefs, memories and results of our past actions. It also involves recasting the heart and mind, by overcoming family attachments and connecting with the Divine. A Sannyasi wears ochre-coloured clothes reflecting the rays of the rising sun and the sacrificial fire....Ochre colour keeps reminding you that the fire of *jnana* [knowledge] can destroy all impurities within,” explains Surakshit Goswami. (*The Times of India, The Speaking Tree*, March 6, 2023)

Mundaka Upanishad teaches the highest knowledge, the knowledge of the *Brahman*, and points out that such knowledge cannot be obtained by worship, sacrifices, by offerings to the Gods, penances, breath control exercises or by development of psychic senses. However, these practices are undertaken by some people as stepping-stones to a higher life. But in the performance of such works errors take place. *Mundaka*, means “shaving,” which cuts off the errors of the mind and other non-essentials, like a razor. It is the

razor of knowledge that cuts the knot of ignorance. Having withdrawn the mind and senses from the external objects and concentrating them on the mark (target), we are asked to hit the mark—the *Brahman*.

Some of these ceremonies are only pale shadows of the initiation ceremonies that were enacted inside the pyramids and the temples in ancient time. For instance, the *Mundan* ceremony is the shadow of the initiation ceremony for the candidate for “new birth.” In the Puranic allegory, Viswakarman’s daughter Sanjana (spiritual consciousness), the wife of Surya, the sun, complained to her father of the too great effulgence of her husband. Viswakarman, the divine carpenter, crucified the sun on his lathe and cut away a portion of his rays (representing passions)—creating around him a dark aureole. After that, Surya looked as though he had been crowned with dark thorns, and he became “Vikartana,” the one who was shorn of his effulgence. Vikartana is the type of the initiated neophyte. The candidate for initiation personifies the sun, who has to kill all his fiery passions and wear a crown of thorns, before he can rise into the new life and be reborn.

The long white garment which Jesus is always represented as wearing, was the dress adopted by the Nazarene Priests and the Pythagorean and Buddhist Essenes. The term “Nazaraiois” means “separation, alienation from other men” (*Isis*, II, 128). Jesus is pictured as having long hair and it is recorded that “the *nazars*—or set apart—as we see in the Jewish Scriptures, had to cut their hair which they wore long, and which ‘no razor touched’ at any other time, and sacrifice it on the altar of initiation.” (*Isis*, II, 90)

H.P.B. mentions that cutting seven locks of Samson deprived him of his physical strength, *i.e.*, it killed the material man, leaving only the spiritual. “To this day the High Lamas cut off during public consecrations a lock of hair of the candidate for the religious life, repeating a formula to the effect that the six others will follow, when the ‘upasaka’ is READY. The lock of hair or tonsure of the Roman Catholic priests is a relic of the same mystery-idea.” The seven locks

are symbolical of the seven cardinal sins to be overcome and the seven cardinal virtues to be gained by the aspirant for spiritual rebirth, and those could be attained only through severe trial and suffering. (*H.P.B. Series No. 20*, p. 41)

Most of us would agree that man should not become a slave to a machine but must triumph over it. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is already running most of the world's routine activities. In November 2022 we heard about the arrival of ChatGPT, the very human robot that can "write impeccable prose, poetry, and put together masterful essays, stories, reports and books...in a matter of seconds. Already universities across the world are recreating their curriculum to make sure that students do not simply subcontract their assignments to an all-powerful machine" writes Varughese. It is certainly going to revolutionise the world and in future we may expect even more advanced robots. "We are deifying machines whose only overpowering advantage is knowledge and intelligence." These cannot be the highest attributes known to mankind. We must admit that capacity for love and compassion, for wisdom and intuition, for conscience and values, for generosity and selflessness, for self-mastery and self-transformation, for creativity and beauty, are the qualities that make us quintessentially human. Intelligence alone is incapable of arriving at holistic decisions. Can our goal of attaining enlightenment be achieved if robots do all the work?

Eckhart Tolle, the author of "The Power of Now" says that we are here to grow and become conscious, using every situation and circumstance. We are here to realize our highest potential; and that cannot be achieved by watching television serials and WhatsApp messages. We can reach our goal by making sure that we never become slaves to machines. We must endeavour to develop powers lying latent within us, such as the power to travel astrally, power of ESP (Extra-sensory Perception), power of concentration, telepathy and controlling our body temperature as done by the Yogis living in

cold places. We must “withdraw our fascination with machines and pursue our own far more enormous potential” writes Suma Varughese. (*Life Positive*, March 2023)

Technological advancement is not an indicator of moral or spiritual progress. The wise use of technology depends greatly on the ethical awareness of people. What is it that distinguishes a man from an animal? It is self-consciousness and the power to think and choose. These arise from the mind. Ordinarily, the mind is considered to be immaterial. Or, it is taken to be the “name for the action of the brain in evolving thought.” The supporters of the theory of “Artificial Intelligence” feel it probable that computers and computer-guided robots will eventually—with their superior intelligence—make human beings superfluous. They have arrived at this conclusion by comparing the electronic circuitry of computers with the human brain. But the fact is that the brain is only an instrument of the mind. There are three aspects of the mind: (1) When involved in desires and passions, the mind is reactive, making man an animal-man. (2) When the mind functions on its own plane—thinking and reasoning—it is mind *per se*. (3) When the mind works in conjunction with the spiritual nature, it is creative—making man divine.

The subject of “computer intelligence” is of importance to the students of Theosophy as there are many misconceptions prevalent about mind and matter. A good “thinking” machine can remember, classify, choose between alternatives on the basis of logic, and can even correct itself by learning; but the activity of any one machine is strictly limited to the instructions with which it is fed. In spite of its speed, precision, infallibility, the most “intelligent” computer *cannot* correlate dissociated ideas and events spread out in time and space, or present an original thought, or answer an unexpected query. Truly creative thought must forever remain in the province of the human mind. We have these thought-provoking lines from Shakespeare describing man: “What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving, how

express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!”

The question of superiority or inferiority of man and woman comes up only when people are completely identified with the physical body. We should look at ourselves as human beings. The identification as a man or woman is a sexual identification, identifying oneself with a few limited body parts. Each of us needs to be a man or a woman only at certain moments to play a certain role. The man-woman divide exists, partly because women have been looked down upon. Somewhere deep down inside the man's psyche there is a feeling that if he just buys a gift for his wife, everything will be okay. A human being who aspires for trinkets is looked down upon. The religion, culture and social situations, it appears, have been moulding women only for trinkets, and not for anything higher. Thus, women will not get respect by fighting, but by evolving. Acquiring freedom without respect will be unnatural.

Both men and women must stop identifying themselves with their bodies. In ancient times, man and woman lived as absolute equals in spiritual aspects of life. The understanding was that when either a man or a woman gets a spiritual urge and starts seeking the highest, he or she could dissolve the family and must be given all freedom. We see it in the story of sage Yagnavalkya and his wife Maitreyi. At one point in time, when Yagnavalkya decided to seek the highest he told his wife that he would give her all that he possessed because he was going to seek the highest; his wife replied that she too will seek the highest and not settle for the trinkets of his property or house. When a woman is seeking for the highest then the question of fighting for freedom does not arise, though socially some fight is needed. However, a woman should not identify herself as a woman, but as a human being. The whole spiritual process and Yogic science is there to help one to experience the self beyond the limitations of

the physical body. “It is not by becoming sexually free that somebody will become free. If you become free from your sexes (go beyond the identity of gender) only then you are free,” writes Sadhguru, a mystic, a yogi, and a visionary. (*Sunday Free Press Journal*, March 5, 2023)

In the course of time the status of the woman in society has been lowered. How many men are ready to recognize and practise the teaching of Manu: “Where women are honoured, there verily the Devas rejoice; where they are not honoured, there verily indeed all rites are fruitless.” For a long time now, men have assumed the position of superiority and women that of inferiority, and the way out is not by woman asserting her independence or trying in her turn to exploit men, but by trying to awaken in men the sense of duty towards women.

In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Mr. Judge writes that there is no sex at the level of Spirit. There, all men are women and all women are men; the two are coalesced into one. But in psychic consciousness there are still distinctions. Each human being prepares to move over from a male body to the female body, and *vice versa* in some subsequent life for gaining experience. All of us must have lived in the past incarnations many times in male as well as in female bodies by now. There are lessons to be learnt in both male and female bodies, and through masculine and feminine natures.

“The more perfect the sympathy—in its best sense, of sharing another’s life and penetrating it with filaments of love—the more clearly the truth is apprehended...*that masquerading under very different appearances, the soul of man and the soul of woman are the same.*” It is through the love between the two sexes that life teaches the lessons of sympathy and unity, writes Charles Johnston (*The Path*, February 1888). In the married life of a *Grihasta*, man and woman must try to realize that true union is the contact of mind with mind, of heart with heart, of soul with soul—where both help each other to tread the Path of Nobility.