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The Living of the Higher Life**

LET US BECOME LISTENERS	3
“THY KINGDOM COME”—II	10
LEARNING TO COLOUR OUR DAY	14
EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS KARMA—II	17
SAINT EKNATH—LIFE AND TEACHINGS—IV	21
CHOICE AND EVOLUTION	28
HEART ENERGY IN OUR WORK	30
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	32

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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LET US BECOME LISTENERS

ATTENTIVE listening is a necessity in day-to-day life as much as in spiritual life. When we look around us, we find that more than the *physical* it is the mental, moral and emotional suffering, which need to be addressed. We do not have to search for the afflicted. We find them everywhere, if only our eyes are open. Very frequently, newspapers carry stories of people committing suicide. Was there no one that they could confide in? Everyone seems to have the need to be heard. There are bottled-up feelings, anxieties, anger, frustrations, but no one “close” enough to share it with. The first step in service, these days, consists in learning to be a patient and sympathetic listener—at home or office, in the train or bus journey. *The Voice of the Silence* asks us to attune our mind and heart to humanity’s great pain. Let us first learn to attune ourselves to the pain of family members and neighbours. How could there be a lonely, depressed or a needy person in our vicinity and we are not aware of it?

Human beings have an innate need to share their emotions, joy, sorrow, fear and anxieties, with someone. “Misery” is the short story by Anton Chekov which describes intense grief experienced by a Russian sledge-driver, an old man, for the loss of his son, who dies after a brief illness. The old man is desperate to share his grief and the memory of his son with someone, but no one has the patience to listen to him. We are able to appreciate this need in the old man, who is a widower, and his daughter is away from him. When he

tries to connect with his fellow men, he finds them wrapped up in their own lives. The callous and apathetic attitude of people can be seen from the way they respond to him. Ironically, it is an animal, his horse, with whom he is able to share his feelings, and not with a human being, who has the ability to understand his grief and sympathize.

The Voice of the Silence, a Mahayana Buddhist text, urges us to learn to be as soft as mango's pulp to other people's sorrow, and as hard as that mango's stone for our own sorrow. The yardstick for one's spiritual progress is one's willingness to participate in the sorrow of another and others. Thus: "When frightened at the sight of the hot tears of pain, when deafened by the cries of distress, thy soul withdraws like the shy turtle within the carapace of SELFHOOD, learn, O Disciple, of her Silent 'God,' thy Soul is an unworthy shrine." It goes further to tell us what we are expected to do when we encounter misery of another: "Let thy Soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun. Let not the fierce Sun dry one tear of pain before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye."

Listening with the "heart" is very important because often hidden behind the irritable or angry speech of another, are pain and helplessness. Only when we listen with heart would we be ready to consider another person's point of view. Many of us are too self-opinionated. Some are so used to hearing the echoes of their own opinions that they do not like the voice of dissent. They wish to impose only their own views upon others, but are careless about knowing their opinion. The tendency of not wanting to hear for long another person's views affects the acquiring of new ideas. "If you constantly tell others what you think, you are gaining nothing. For your experience and views are your own, well known to you. The repeated expression of them only serves to imprint them more strongly on your mind. You do not receive any of the new lights that other minds might cast upon your philosophy if you gave them the opportunity," writes Mr. Judge. (*W. Q. J. Series No. 11*, p. 22)

LET US BECOME LISTENERS

There are occasions which require listening impersonally, without bringing in emotions. When you are to be the judge in the matter, you need to listen to both the parties impersonally and attentively. Likewise, words of praise or blame directed against oneself must pass through the filter of impersonality. This is especially important when we are being criticized.

He who desires to learn must listen. The first step consists in learning to *listen* attentively to the spoken or written words by submitting our mind to the author and trying to contact the mind of the author. This patient and attentive hearing precedes practice or application. In the Pythagorean School, *Akoustikoi* or Hearers (*Shravakas*) were allowed after a period to become *Asketai* (*Shramanas*), Practitioners. In the Pythagorean School initially the person was not even allowed to ask questions, but only listen. We see the same at our Theosophical Meetings. Those who attend the meetings with earnestness, move on from being listeners to the stage where they now question. That is because the person sees the importance of questioning, not only the philosophy, but also his own basis of thought and does not mind their stability crumbling.

By being an attentive listener one can get behind the words and phrases and reach the underlying ideas. It is evident that only if we have been attentive in listening, would we be able to express the ideas accurately, clothed in our own words. In the early days of Humanity, Truths were taught orally, and here the great need of accuracy is seen because having heard, the teachings were studied and recorded. It was not the words that were recorded, but the ideas, and these were recorded using symbolic language. As one progresses, one realizes that teachings are not going to be given in so many unmistakable words, but only as hints. One has to listen carefully to catch the hints. A perfect listener catches the underlying spirit behind the spoken and written words, and is not a slave to words, the dead-letter form of scriptures.

In perfect listening there must be surrender of one's mind and heart. When only our mind is in attunement with the written or

spoken word, we get the meaning at the intellectual level. But when both our mind and heart are attuned to the speaker or the writer, we are able to go beyond the “letter,” and grasp the very spirit of the teaching. There seems to be invisible osmosis. Scriptures are instinct with a life of their own, so that those who approach them with devotion and reverence are able to osmose these pure vibrations, even if they might not fully comprehend the text.

We would do well to contemplate on the perfect *Shravaka*, the patient, humble and resolute Listener, Arjuna, in his attitude to catch the Wisdom of Krishna amidst the din of the battlefield. He was not distracted by the blowing of the conches, neighing of the horses or roaring of the elephants on the battlefield. “What Arjuna *saw* when his chariot stood between the two armies made him despondent; what he *heard* energized and inspired him to victory in the greatest of all wars,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia. Mr. Judge goes a step forward and asks us to listen carefully to our *own* words and be aware of our tone, whether it is pleasing or repellent. If our feelings are kind and charitable, they will be reflected in our tone.

In particular, we may ask, what is it that an aspirant to spiritual life has to listen to? The answer may come, “to the Voice of Wisdom.” One way to do this is by being attentive listeners at the Theosophical meetings wherein not only Fundamental Principles of Theosophy are given, but also guidance regarding their application to daily life. We get an opportunity to listen to the Voice of Wisdom during our individual study. Side by side with the study we must cultivate the habit of listening to the Inner Ego or God within. *Light on the Path* teaches that listening and speaking go hand in hand. As we learn to listen, we also learn to speak, *i.e.*, the Speech which enlightens and blesses is possible only when there is attentive listening. Once the Speech is purified our capacity to hear the “Voice of the Silence” increases.

The noises and sounds of the world exert a fascination on many of us. *The Voice of the Silence* gives guidance regarding the training of the ears, thus: “When he has ceased to hear the many, he may

discern the ONE—the inner sound which kills the outer...Before the Soul can hear, the image (man) has to become as deaf to roarings as to whispers, to cries of bellowing elephants as to the silvery buzzing of the golden fire-fly.” In *Light on the Path*, eyes are called the windows of the soul and “ears its gateways or doors. Through them comes the knowledge of the confusion of the world.” It goes on to say that the great ones who possess intuitive knowledge are not aroused or excited by the partial and erroneous fragments of information brought by others around them. To be able to acquire the intuitive knowledge the disciple is instructed, “Before the ear can hear, it must have lost its sensitiveness,” and to have ceased to hear the many. There are so many noises and voices in the world which distract us all the time. There are demands made by our family, friends and the society. We get lost in hearing and responding to the outside noises and tend to forget to listen to the “still small voice” of conscience and intuition.

However, it does not apply only to the useless din of the world but also to all sensations, pleasant and unpleasant. Hence, the disciple is asked to become “as deaf to the roarings as to whispers.” The “cries of bellowing elephants” may be taken to refer to harsh criticism, condemnation and unpleasant things that one hears from others and which tend to depress or disturb him inwardly; while the “silvery buzzing of the golden fire-fly” is like accolade, praise, approval of others which is pleasant to one’s ears and which is likely to make one proud or complacent. *Light on the Path* says that the faculty of intuition can be developed only by one “who cannot be dominated, who knows he has to play the lord over men, over facts, over all things save his own divinity.” For this purpose, the disciple has to cease to hear the “many” voices and suggestions of the outside world, *i.e.*, learn to accept them only after examining thoughtfully, by applying both reason and intuition.

We have made our brains receptive and porous to outer influences, but not to influences from within. We are receptive to the suggestions of religious and political leaders; to the suggestions

LET US BECOME LISTENERS

of the society and people around us. Theosophy tries to train the students through enquiry. A student is called upon to resist impulsive and quick response to outer suggestions, and train himself to evaluate every suggestion calmly in the light of the philosophy of Theosophy. Mr. Judge asks us to put every proposition before our higher nature, and wait for the answer.

To make our brain-mind porous to the influences from *within* one needs to cultivate detachment and equanimity, or “higher indifference,” which is very difficult for an ordinary person to cultivate. We crave sensation. If all sensations that come through our senses are blocked, it would be difficult for us to live. If a person is made to sit in a pitch-dark room with absolute silence, he would be terrified. *Light on the Path* points out that “when the solitude of silence is reached the soul hungers so fiercely and passionately for some sensation on which to rest, that a painful one would be as keenly welcomed as a pleasant one.”

There is no use trying to keep sensations away because even if we succeed in doing that for what comes through the external senses, we can do nothing about the sensations aroused by the mind and those that reach us through astral senses. Therefore, it is important to learn to experience sensations and yet remain unmoved. To be able to attune the mind and heart to the Voice of the Inner Self, one should no longer be receptive to the sounds that affect the personal life. One needs to reach the stage where, “Laughter no longer lightens the heart, anger may no longer enrage it, tender words bring it no balm. For that within, to which the ears are as an outer gateway, is an unshaken place of peace in itself which no person can disturb.” It is well to note that before the ears can listen to the Voice of the Masters of Wisdom, they have to learn to attune themselves to the Voice of “thy *inner* God.”

To accomplish the long journey of becoming a listener who can hear the Voice of the Masters, the first step recommended is to spend some time every day for study and meditation wherein a conscious effort is made to listen to our own higher nature by surrendering the

LET US BECOME LISTENERS

lower, personal self. There is an *inner monitor*, call it conscience or intuition, which promptly guides our decision-making with an instant warning of propriety, for or against, a situation or behaviour. The voice of conscience warns against behaviour or thoughts which the individual has considered not proper through previous experience of learning, prejudice, traditional beliefs or brain-washing. The “voice of conscience” is generally understood to guide in terms of negatives such as “do not go there,” “do not do this,” rather than pointing to a clear-cut course to be followed. The more one pays attention to and acts in accordance with the conscience, the louder it speaks. Conversely, every time we turn a deaf ear to its voice, we still that voice which finally stops warning.

If there is genuine and persistent love of purity and integrity, the frequent promptings one gets are of a still higher nature, akin to the “still small voice” of *intuition* which directs one to a definite action or an idea, and which must be answered with a positive response in order to keep alive this higher faculty of perception. The latter is available to a student-aspirant who subordinates his personal needs to the general good and reflects on universal ethics. It keeps on developing if one strives for ethical and spiritual betterment of self and others. When there is attunement and readiness, intuition opens up and then we can remember what we had gained earlier in the evolutionary journey in the past, as did Arjuna in the eighteenth chapter of the *Gita*. His “delusion” was destroyed and he had regained his “memory.”

WE SHOULD never pretend to know what we don't know, we should not feel ashamed to ask and learn from people below, and we should listen carefully to the views of the cadres at the lowest levels. Be a pupil before you become a teacher; learn from the cadres at the lower levels before you issue orders.

—MAO TSE-TUNG

“THY KINGDOM COME”

II

AS CHANDRA walked once more aimlessly out into the wilderness, he was consumed by the inner turmoil that was now so great that the privations of his external condition were of no concern to him. He was numb to pleasure as to pain—the two symbiotic sensations that engender each other and sustain love of life. Before he was ready to die anytime, but now, he was already dead within. And yet, the subtler sensations that were now aroused in him, cried in agony. Every man he caused to be killed in battle now seemed to avenge on him with tenfold fury. Every pain he had inflicted on others, was now his own. The ignominy of being in dereliction of his duty, mocked him. Every lurid, hateful and selfish thought that ever crossed his mind, were now palpable monsters that possessed and tormented his very being. And among this raging turmoil there were piercing thoughts of vengeance against those that had betrayed him. This internal battle was so real to him that Chandra was hardly conscious of his external conditions. The only moments of peace were those following deep sleep when the soft rays of his waking consciousness illuminated the mental landscape before the warring fiends were aroused from their slumber. In the lucidity of these fleeting moments, there came a quiet whisper from the very light of consciousness that seemed to guide. But no sooner was Chandra fully awake, than the din of the reanimated battlefield drowned out all memory of this divine guidance.

Chandra found himself spending his days under a tree by the riverside that sustained his body with its benevolent shade and nourishing fruits. It was for him the tree of life under which he laboured to resolve his internal battle before it consumed his being. One afternoon, as Chandra awoke from a fitful stupor under the tree of life, he was startled with the awareness that the old man was standing next to him. Curiously, the old man did not seem to acknowledge his presence but was rather busy tending to the tree.

“THY KINGDOM COME”

He was casting every withered branch from the true vine and setting them to fire while pruning those that gave fruit so they may provide more. Chandra suddenly realized that this was the very plant which the old man was cultivating when he last saw him many summers ago. Now on his knees, Chandra beseeched the old man, “The words you last spoke unto me have been etched in my soul. The certainty my mind felt about discerning good from evil is now betrayed by the vulture of doubt gnawing at my heart—the vulture that sprung from your fateful words. Now, I know not right from wrong. Why have you thus deluded my mind? Where, oh where, should I look for solace?” Quoth the old man:

Harken! Harken to that voice though forlorn,
That echoes in thy mind at the crack of the morn.
Sing they of times of such felicity,
Bleedest thy heart of all duplicity.
Awake son of Aryavarta, open thy eyes,
Awaits new Albion to take to the skies!
Ash covered embers stir in anticipation,
Of what is to be a conflagration.

These verses slowly started to awaken in Chandra the memory of the still small voice and its sublime impetus to discard the false, and to remember and regain his true identity. But curiously enough, as this new entrant to the battlefield started to gain strength, all the other combatants that were previously at odds with each other, now arrayed themselves as one unified block against it. What was previously a chaotic melee, was now at war with decisive battle lines drawn between the still burgeoning aspiration for truth and the dark forces that revel in ignorance which are legion. It appeared to Chandra to be a hopeless battle until he realized there was yet one indomitable marshal spirit that had not taken sides in this war—and that was himself. Chandra assumed an erect posture under the tree of life, closed his eyes and fixed his whole attention on the distant rays of truth shining ever so feebly from behind the dark storm-

“THY KINGDOM COME”

clouds. A dauntless energy that he never suspected of possessing, leapt in his heart, fighting its way to the supernal truth. A pitched battle raged on for many moons under the tree of life.

But just when victory appeared to be at hand and the golden gate within reach, there arose a mighty foe of gigantic proportions—the dweller of the threshold. Unlike the other foes, this menacing figure not only had arsenal from Chandra’s current life but also from his countless previous lives. Chandra realized that every selfish motive he had entertained in all his lives on earth, was as a weapon that he himself had wrought and placed in the enemy’s hands. This entire armamentarium was launched in cascading waves of irresistible force against Chandra. Every one of those weapons tore through Chandra, inflicting agony beyond words, his life force gushing out of his gaping wounds. And just when all seemed to be lost, Chandra, in one final expression of energy, brought to realization the simple truth that the more he bled, the cleaner he was being washed of his false identity. The mighty foe, now seen as his redeeming angel, diminished in size and assumed the form of Chandra himself. He saw standing before him his own self, with innocent looking eyes, full of promise and potential. He would save his people, nay save the whole world, if only he would show mercy upon himself. There would be no high philosophy he would not master, no benevolent act left undone and no virtue that he would not embody—if only he would live. Life, his own eyes seemed to be conveying to him, was better than annihilation. Yet, in one monumental final effort of will, Chandra lifted his mighty sword of knowledge and said, “But I am not you” as he slew himself in half.

Chandra jolted back to consciousness under the tree of life. He was drained of all energy and his throat felt like burning coal. He stumbled into the river, dropped on his hands and knees and drank the pure waters, cool and crystal. The waters washed over him as waves of elixir. The clouds that obscured his memory began to clear. The cloth that hitherto covered his face fell away and he saw his reflection in the water. His face was no longer maimed. Instead, he

“THY KINGDOM COME”

recognized in it the handsome face of the prince from the picture gallery of the palace. He was heir to the throne, Prince Sanath Kumara. His entire life flashed before his eyes. His childhood as a young prince, the tender love of his parents, his military training, his father’s death and his imminent coronation before which he swore to rid his people of the man-eating menace that tormented them. The failed quarry that ended with him losing his memory and with it, his self-identity. And the cruel twist of fate that occasioned his serving the usurpers of his own throne while militating against his true friends who he mistook for enemies.

But now, Sanath knew himself and was Chandra no more. He saw intently into the eyes, in his own reflection, and there recognized the eyes he once knew, the ineffably deep eyes of the old man. Sanath stood up and as he did, the waters around seemed to rise with him. All of nature was subdued and bent as though in submission to the determination which burned in his eyes. The tree of life on the river bank was now in full bloom and from the vibrancy of its flowers there arose a whisper which was echoed by all the sounds of nature and amplified by the four elements that thundered it forth to the seven worlds in the voice of the old man that quoth:

Shakes off the lion his perennial stupor,
At long last his tamer he shall devour.
Regaining the elephant in strength his trust,
Shall trample his Mahut into the dust.

Consuming its smoke shall leap this fire,
Rising to heaven from its earthly mire.
As became the elixir from oceans churned,
Proclaim ye! Proclaim all—
Thy king has returned.

(To be concluded)

LEARNING TO COLOUR OUR DAY

MAN has always created according to his lights. The boor and the idiot create, as does the poet or the sculptor, the philosopher or the statesman. This creation may be concentrated and complete, or limited in its scope and varying in its quality. Yet is it creation all the same. The Mahatmas create consciously, through the power of a purified will, and their benign influence reaches out to encompass all beings. The labourer in the field creates, but is ignorant that each hour of his humble life creates things of beauty or things of darkness. So in their respective spheres of endeavour all souls create. And, though we can piece together the pattern of their creation when their life-span closes, we know that the sum total of that creation comes from the cumulative effects of the efforts of each living day. The common run of mankind does not make a daily concerted attempt towards one determined goal. Men weave their way through disjointed ends. But, however wavering the mind, the creations of each have always tended to flow, imperceptibly yet surely, in the direction of the dominating desire. Destinies of men and nations are the outcome of the combined creations of individual men. They are made in no other way.

History testifies that the more one's life is concentrated towards its goal, the more powerful is its effect, not only on the man himself, but also on those who surround him. The Buddha and the Christ, Lao-tse and Plato, Paracelsus and Hillel, Gandhi and Lincoln, have by the force of their creations not only affected their own lives but also left their mark on thousands of their fellow men. The highest creators have been those who have, with the power born of Wisdom, each created harmoniously and according to a set pattern. They have thus been able to extend their day into a life and have consequently epitomized their life's work in the creations of each living day.

Can we, who are of diversified desires and petty wants, colour our day, albeit to a lesser extent, still in the same key as these great Masters of the art? That the humblest can by imitation succeed where

by his own initiative he may fail is known to all who have had children under their care. Hero-worship has changed many a young life and has given it purpose and enthusiasm. The student-server, too can profit by hero-worship. But *his* hero must have won his spurs in no lesser lists than those of spirit. We can therefore choose for our own hero-pattern the character, the poise and the calmness of a high soul that has reached immortality or of one who has spent his life in home strivings. Can we, with the image of their life and qualities, imitate them and copy their virtues line by line, colour by colour? Can we imagine how they would have coloured their day if they would have met with the same circumstances and people that we do? Can we, fixing this imagining in our mind, make the colours of our day harmonize with those colours so that our colours appear but as projections or even approximations of the ideal?

But before we proceed thus by imitation to copy our chosen pattern line by line, as do children their letters of the alphabet, let us assure ourselves that the pattern is the best possible and that we are not trying to copy that which is inimical to soul-life. Further, let us ask ourselves: How has our hero given objective expression to this or the other virtue? By what methods were the *Paramitas* made the substratum and the foundation of his efforts? The answer to these questions seldom come readily. They demand persistent effort, though the quest be long and arduous the task. But, even when this search continues, we can with the data readily available carry on our experiment of the colouring of our day.

The waking to a new day is itself an act of colouring. The saint does it in one way. The soldier, the tradesman, the sluggard and the drunkard do it according to their respective qualities. But, whatever be the colours of this waking, the moments that follow strike the keynote for the day. If the very act of waking does not find the Soul rested in the True, then the student has, by a deliberate effort of the will, to centre his consciousness upon the Spirit. This tranquil state attained, he has to project his vision on to the activities of the coming day. Acts of duty, of sacrifice, charity and austerity have to be

distributed throughout the hours. They have to be planned now—at the beginning of the day—so that there is no hesitation, no thinking back, when the moment of action comes. So, too, with the thorny problems of life. All fear has to be eschewed by picturing the worst and visualizing how even that worst can by patient, skilful acts be met and utilized for the glorification of the Highest. This prospective visualization over, the student is prepared to meet all eventualities. He has reduced the chances of being caught unawares in a difficult situation. The hours for transforming thought into action are now before him. The canvas is ready to the painter's hand.

So, the day begins with a sense of awareness. Before any major act is undertaken, there is the natural reference back to the plans already evolved during the moments of soul-equanimity. The balance of composition, the pleasing aspect, the warmth of tones, cannot be achieved overnight. And yet, these but follow the richer imagining, the fuller vision. All these must come in their own time as practice matures into a blossoming of selfless action. But always there must remain the model which is to be copied *in actu*. The principles of the philosophy, the metaphysics of the Scriptures, have first to be sought in their ideal expression in the life of the Master and then demonstrated in our own life. It is only thus that we can learn to colour our day, knowing that no effort is wasted and that each sincere endeavour wins its reward in time.

Why does the student want to acquire this power to colour his day according to his own deliberate choice? If he desires glory for himself or a precedence among men, he is sure to be disappointed. The desire to progress has to yield to the desire to benefit mankind. When the great truth of this is understood, the necessity to give the appropriate colours to the day takes on a perspective hitherto unnoticed. And, as the years roll by, in honest strivings, the little self draws closer and ever closer to the greater Self. The colours leave their earthly tints and become true. The life's picture and perspective conform in a larger measure to Universal Thought.

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

KARMA—II

MASTERS have said that They cannot interfere with the Karma of even Their chelas. Their purpose and method are to “help Nature and work on with her.” They will “interfere or act only when All and the Whole is benefitted. They cannot help individuals or even nations and races at the cost of others, be they individuals or nations. What then is implied in the idea of “taking upon oneself the Karma of others”? Take H.P.B.’s case: she was asked and she consented to take upon herself the burden of others’ Karma. Now, all beings, small and great, make Karma (Aphorism 1); but, further, each also may become the “agent” of Karma for those makers of Karma. So H.P.B. could take up the Karma of the entire humanity, but in doing whatever she had to do she had to encounter those “agents”—in her case, special individuals like Judge, Damodar, Olcott, Mrs. Besant, Sinnett, etc., and also groups like the Theosophical Society which she created. (As she said she was the Society’s mother and her magnetic fluid circulated in it.) Outside the T.S. and the Theosophical Movement she had other work and other agents of Karma. Of course this does not include her own family or national Karma; that she had to deal with independently so to speak. We are all learning to be Universal Beings, aspiring to serve Humanity without any distinctions. Now our “universe” is small, but the same principles are at work. Every accredited chela gets his share in learning to take upon himself the Karma of others. Theosophical students make a jump and short cut, so to say, from personal Karma to universal Karma, taking in their stride family, community, national and race Karma. There is the factor of self-surrender and Self-surrender also involved.

Karma is a difficult topic. Metaphysically speaking, Natural impulse Karma or Fohatic Will expression is primary and basic; then, man’s self-induced ways make his own Will Karma. A higher phase of that Will-full Karma is what you are looking into when

you refer to H.P.B.'s having made herself a scapegoat for the *Kali Yuga*. The essay on "Karma" in *Light on the Path* has some implications of it. Of course there is the melting pot of Karma and there is not your Karma and mine, but one Karma. How it all functions, works out, rewards and punishes—that remains a puzzle and a mystery. It may not be soluble by us at present, but some day—!

We know our Karma very definitely from the effect side: whether I am well or ill; what my character is; why my knowledge is what it is, limited or otherwise, and so on. These are effects and people always seek causes and give answers—God, heredity, the stars, etc. The cause in every case is ourselves—*our* Karma, *i.e.*, action. Therefore from the effect side I know my Karma. We get into wrong line of thought when in the present life, we meet agents of Karma through whom we fulfil Karma and pay our debts. That these *are* our agents of Karma there is no doubt. But there is unexpended Karma and there are other agents. Also in collective life half-a-dozen agents may be used for our effect-experience. The mystery of individual Karma as a part and an aspect of collective Karma is again the philosophic problem of the One in the many. People ask why they suffer, but accept wrong answers in nine cases out of ten. Even our students seeking full understanding through partial knowledge look in the wrong direction. Making applications to our own self in the field of Karma—that is indeed a difficult thing.

We repeat our errors. Even knowing the cause will not enable us to banish the error; a remedy has to be found. Take a very simple case—a headache; you may trace it to wrong eating as cause, but to remove the headache, you may have to take a pill! But that does not tell you why this food gives you a headache and this pill removes it. To go through an experience is one thing; to learn the lesson thereof, another. You have to trace the causal weakness; not what kind of food causes headache or indigestion but how and why. Otherwise we shall be lost in the process of links. Mind-feelings or feeling-thoughts are the root and we have to set that right; one cause will

remove several ill effects. That is where corporate Karma comes in. No, we do not learn from every Karma and we will not till we learn the remedy side of Karma—to stand up and fight the Great War. There is one Right Way for everything; patience, resignation and action based on and after study of the Sacred Science. You see, we cut across mundane webs to a Celestial Force.

About counteracting Karma and three lives [Aphorism on Karma, No. 26], as I understand it; though there are always agents of Karma (that is, others) we make Karma and feel its effects. But when the time comes and we feel within ourselves that a deliberate effort should be made to pay off Karma, we naturally turn to the *inner* environment of mind and heart, look at our weaknesses and powers and, with the aid of will, knowledge and aspirations, work; we succeed though the period of three lives witnesses the death of what we have been working at. Is there not fulfilment of past Karma by what and how we act now?

As to the effort made by man to overcome his Karma and obliterate the impressions of the past: We have a very important Aphorism given in *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 21*. Please see Aphorism No. 27, where we are told that measures can be taken by an ego to repress tendency, eliminate defects and to counteract by setting up opposite causes, thus weakening past Karma and transmuting it into real Karmic stamina for the benefit of the ego. Please also consult Aphorism No. 13. We never create a new force without the basis of an old impression, good or bad. Just as our new knowledge is but an extension of old knowledge, so also our new impressions are an extension of old impressions, whether they be Karmic or Buddhist. The transfer from the Karmic to the Buddhist impressions occurs because knowledge is acquired through study, and application is made of that knowledge. Our old impressions can be turned into good forces by the help of knowledge.

Karma always offers opportunities for eager longings; your wish will be fulfilled if your heart yearns that way.

National Karma is like personal Karma—we succumb or we

overcome. A nation is composed of persons, individuals, *i.e.*, two classes: those who live and act as personalities, and others as Individualities. The former are guided by the fate aspect of the Law; the latter are guided by knowledge which teaches the meaning and mystery of Free Will—the Will to be freed. This freeing of the Will is gradual. More and more we must act with responsibility by self-induction, by self-devised ways and means, and when our Karma checks us, find out how to checkmate the move of Karma.

(Concluded)

BY THE attitude of Reverence for Life, we enter a world-wide field of spiritual communications. All the tremendous efforts undertaken by philosophy, all the gigantic systems of ideas erected by thinkers have failed to put us in communication with the Absolute.

In fact, the abstract character of this Absolute itself renders all communication impossible. The privilege of worshipping the creative will as the source of all being, infinite and unfathomable as it is, by a clear realization of its essence and its intentions has been denied us. But we may enter into a spiritual relation with it by exposing ourselves to the mystery of life and by devoting ourselves to all living beings within the range of our help.

An ethical system which limits its moral commandments to the sphere of human beings and human society can never claim this general significance. In order to bring us into true contact with the universe and the everlasting will manifesting itself there, it must become universal itself and urge us to devote our love and attention to all living creatures without any exception.

It is Reverence for Life which makes us pious in an elemental, deep and vital way.

—ALBERT SCHWEITZER

SAINT EKNATH—LIFE AND TEACHINGS

IV

SHANKARACHARYA wrote commentary on the twelve verses uttered by Hastamalaka. Before beginning his commentary, he observes that all creatures in this world constantly endeavour to achieve happiness and freedom from pain. However, a rare human being comes to realize that since their happiness is based on sense-objects, it is ephemeral and is followed by pain. They begin to cultivate detachment towards all sense pleasures and ultimately realize that it is the ignorance of the Self (*Atman*) which is the root cause of all entanglements and can be overcome only by Self-knowledge.

Saint Eknath has written a commentary on *Hastamalaka Stotra* in Marathi language. Swami Purushottamanand has brought out the quintessence of that commentary in English. Hastamalaka clarifies how he calls himself, although in a body, the Self or Atman, by answering (verse 3) that the Self is of the nature of eternal Consciousness, which is the cause of the functioning of the mind, eye and all other organs, in the same way as the Sun is the cause of the activities of all beings on the earth. But when not associated with the limiting adjuncts (or *upadhis*) (in the form of the body, mind and sense-organs), “I, (Self) am like space.” Thus, Space represents the unconditioned nature of the Self. Space pervades everything and yet remains untouched by anything. Likewise, the Self pervades all organs of perception and action, but remains unconditioned by them. The example of the sun is given to show that just as the sun provides both light and energy for all actions, good or bad, and yet, sun itself cannot be held responsible for any action, because it is an unattached witness, so also, the *Atman* in man. Thus, the example of the Sun has been given to show that the eternal Self is an unconditioned witness, free from the sense of doership and enjoyership, explains Swami Purushottamananda.

A doubt may arise that if Atman is all-pervasive then it may be

attached to everything, and if it is not all-pervasive then it is limited by space. This doubt has been addressed in verse 13, thus: “The one Self pervades everything in this universe, but which nothing can taint. It is always pure like space, and of immaculate nature, I am of the nature of that ever-existing Atman.” Atman is immaculate, like space, though present throughout the manifestation, it remains untouched. Atman is untouched by the five elements: cannot be burnt by fire or dried by air or made wet by water. Likewise, It is the power behind the functioning of all organs of perception and action, but remains unaffected by all perceptions and actions. Space pervades all objects, but is never tainted by the impurities in those objects. So also, Atman, which is present in all living beings, is never tainted by the defects such as attachment, aversion, anger, greed, etc. in the minds of living beings.

In the first chapter of Kena Upanishad we read that the Self is the real agent, the substratum and basis for all actions. The nature of the agent is all-conditioning yet inscrutable. In the first verse of the first chapter the disciple asks the question: Impelled and directed by whom the mind soars forth? Impelled and directed by whom goes forth the first breath and men utter speech? What intelligent power directs the eye or the ear in the performance of natural functions? The answer given by the Master is, “It is the ear of the ear, mind of the mind, the speech of the speech, the breath of the breath, and the eye of the eye.”

Theosophy teaches that the real centres of sense organs for seeing, hearing, etc., are within the astral body. We might say the powers of seeing, tasting, smelling, hearing and the sense of touch are all in the astral body. But the *real* power to see, hear, smell, touch, etc., flows from the Spirit. This Spirit is a portion of the eternal Spirit or *Brahman*. This spirit experiences the objects of sense by presiding over the ear, the eye, the touch, the taste, and the smell, and also over the mind, as mentioned in the Fifteenth Chapter of the *Gita*. Whenever the Spirit withdraws itself the organs cannot be used, as it happens in the case of a sleep-walker who moves with his eyes open, which are normal and

uninjured, and yet he is unable to see the objects in front of his eyes.

Though *Brahman* or *Atman* is the agent or basis for all our actions, paradoxically, It is not involved in any of the cause-effect chains. In the article “Eternal Pilgrim” in *Studies in “The Secret Doctrine,”* it is said that there is a witness in us of the panorama of growth, who has watched in the beginningless past, as he is watching today, and as he will watch in the endless future. This is *Atman*, the One Life, mirrored in *Buddhi*, the unbreakable vehicle—the *Eternal Spectator*. *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*, the immortal triad is called *Eternal Pilgrim*, which is the experiencer, enjoyer, sufferer, who learnt in the mineral and grew in the vegetable, and moved in the animal, and acts, feels, thinks and wills in the human.

The *Gita*, which is considered to be one of the *upanishads*, expresses it thus: “Spirit when invested with matter or *prakriti* experiences the qualities which proceed from *prakriti*; its connection with these qualities is the cause of its rebirth in good and evil wombs.” The Self in the body is like the petrol in the car. Though we say that the driver drives or moves the car and not the petrol, it is also true that even the best driver cannot drive the car without petrol. The power to act, to perceive, to enjoy, to think and to choose comes from the Self, and yet the Self is unaffected by pain and pleasure or our choices and perceptions, though by lending the power it *seems* to participate in various actions, and *seems* to experience various feelings.

Hastamalaka says that the same Self dwells in all things. If that is so, then, when one person is happy all others should also be happy and when one is suffering all others should also suffer. But we see that when one is happy the other is not. The answer is given in verse 5: “The image of the face reflected in the mirror has no real existence apart from the face. So also, the Jiva (the individual Self) who is only the reflection of the Self or Pure Consciousness in the intellect or thoughts, has really no separate existence apart from the Self.” The *Atman* or Self is one without a second. However, when that Self is reflected in mind-intellect equipment, that reflection is

called Jiva. It is just like when a face is reflected in different types of mirrors, the images or reflections will differ but the face remains the same. For instance, in a convex mirror, the face is bloated but in the concave mirror, it is slim. If the mirror shakes, the image also shakes. If the mirror is not clean, the image will be hazy. The same face appears differently reflected in different mirrors, depending upon their quality. The Jiva is, in reality, Pure Consciousness, and hence eternal and infinite. It is because the Jiva identifies himself with the mind-body equipment in which he is reflected that he looks upon himself as a limited individual experiencing pleasure and pain; hunger and thirst and also old age and death.

This idea is further expanded in verse 12, which helps to understand why although Atman is everywhere, there are only a few self-realised beings. Verse 12 says: “Just as a very ignorant person whose vision is obstructed by a cloud thinks that the sun, covered by a cloud has lost its brilliance, so also to a person who is deluded by *Avidya* (ignorance) the Atman appears as bound, I am of the nature of that ever-existing Atman.”

Interestingly, when the sun seems to be hidden by the clouds, the fact that the clouds are seen goes to confirm the presence of the sun. It is only the person who has knowledge of the true nature of the sun can assert the presence of the sun even when it appears to be covered by the clouds, writes Swami Purushottamanand. In the same way, only the person who has true knowledge of the Self or Atman can remove the misconception that Atman is bound. A liberated person is the one who has a firm conviction that nothing else exists besides the Atman. Due to ignorance of one’s real nature, a person identifies himself with the body-mind complex and considers himself as a person in bondage having limited powers. A king who has been dreaming that he is a beggar has only to wake up to know that he is a king and not a beggar. The king was never a beggar, it was only his illusion. Likewise, all of us who consider ourselves bound and are suffering, are at all times, the ever-blissful *Atman* or *Brahman*. Hence, it is not as if one is initially in bondage

but becomes liberated when he realizes that he is Atman. It is only the ignorance of one's real nature that has to be removed. When one sees a snake in place of a rope, and then he is able to see the rope in bright light, it is not as if the snake has gone away and a rope has come in its place.

The illusion of a snake in a rope is due to our ignorance of what really is there behind the appearance, *i.e.*, ignorance of the substratum or the ground (*adhithana*), in this case, the rope. Further, the ignorance creating an illusion does not simply conceal from our view the real nature of the ground, the rope, but positively distorts it, *i.e.*, makes it appear as something else. Concealment (*avarana*) of reality and distortion (*vikshepa*) of it into something else in our mind are two functions of an illusion-producing ignorance. As a result, we see many objects in the One Reality or *Brahman* on account of our ignorance, which conceals the real *Brahman* from us and makes it appear as many objects.

Ekhnath wrote *Ekhnathi Bhagavat*, being a commentary on the Eleventh Canto or volume of the Hindu religious text in Sanskrit language called *Bhagavatam* or *Bhagavat Purana*. The eleventh canto is also referred to as the “*Uddhava Gita*” or “*Hamsa Gita*.” This volume contains 1367 Sanskrit verses in the original text and consists of thirty-one chapters. This volume continues the dialogue between Sukadevaji and King Parikshit on the banks of river Ganga. It also includes dialogues between sage Narada and Krishna; Krishna and Uddhava, and *Hamsa avatar* of Krishna that taught the Vedas to *Brahma*. This volume explains in detail the concept of *mukti* or liberation, various spiritual paths and supreme spiritual path of devotion or *Bhakti*. According to Dr. Ramachandra Dekhane, *Ekhnathi Bhagavat* is a triple confluence of *Tattva-darshan* (Philosophy), *Jnana-darshan* (Supreme Knowledge) and *Bhava-darshan* (devotional or Spiritual attitude). The *Bhagavad-Gita* may be regarded as the essence or philosophy of the Vedas; *Jnaneshwari* may be regarded as treating *Jnana* or knowledge aspect of the *Gita*, then *Ekhnathi Bhagavat* may be considered as devotional aspect of

Jnaneshwari. Further, he observes that next to the *Upanishads*, it is the *Gita* and the *Bhagavatam* that may be regarded as having great influence on the spiritual life of the Indians.

Eknathi Bhagavat is a voluminous work with thirty-one chapters, containing Saint Eknath's commentary in Marathi. In the English rendition, titled, *Shri Eknathi Bhagavat*, being English prose Translation by Shri D. A. Ghaisas, we find that the subject-matter dealt with in the fourteenth chapter concerns Uddhava's query: How many paths are there to achieve liberation? Exponents of the Vedas say that there are many means. Are all the methods equally important or is one method superior to another? You (Krishna) have emphasized that only devotion is the right means to attain to liberation.

In this chapter Shri Krishna describes the state of yogic meditation and trance, together with devotion as the main among all the spiritual practices. Shri Krishna says that he communicated to Brahma the knowledge in which he described the path of reaching Him (Krishna) in all its proper details, and then Brahma communicated this knowledge (of the Vedas) to Manu, and he in turn gave to the great Rishis, and so on, till at last, "all the creatures received that knowledge and interpreted it variously according to their natures, viz., *Sattwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. They teach others this wisdom which they received through tradition, according to their own particular understanding....People interpret and understand the Vedas according to their own particular nature and they teach to their disciples in their peculiar fashion."

Thus, some declare that sexual enjoyment is the aim of life, some advocate mind-control, while others advocate renunciation and performance of Yajna (sacrifice), austerity and charity. Shri Krishna tells Uddhava that all these observances are of a temporary nature and "the regions in the other world which are attained through these paths are temporary, having a beginning and an end." Shri Krishna then describes the nature of the devotion of those who worship him with deep love. When one's mind is dissociated from all worldly objects and

does not turn towards other worlds, but one is in continuous rapport with Krishna then “there arises in his heart, gradually, love for me,” and then Krishna, who is always living in one’s heart, becomes manifest, “just as the sun who is covered up by clouds is seen when clouds are gone.” These devotees place their devotion to Krishna above all else, including Satyaloka, the seventh heaven where Brahma rules, as also, occult powers and all four types of liberation.

Shri Krishna then tells Uddhava that as the fire burns a pile of firewood to ashes, so does devotion, directed towards Him burn sins completely. But what is that devotion? The nature of that devotion is not easy to understand. It is not understood by ordinary human beings, and likewise it is not clearly understood even by the Upanishads and religious sciences. Unlike knowledge, devotion cannot be understood intellectually. “By devotion Love comes into being, which is pristine, pure, natural and not a calculated pattern of thought or action. This is difficult to realize!” Saint Eknath gives illustrations to explain the nature of this devotion. Just as a miser, no matter where he is, thinks of the cash kept securely in his house, so also, a devotee constantly remembers Krishna, even when he may be engaged in diverse activities. Another example is that of a barren woman who has been able to conceive, as if by some miracle, will take extreme care of her child in her womb, so the devotee always nurtures the memory of Krishna in his mind and heart. “This devotion is the only means to go beyond and be free of this world.”

This is further explained by saying that mere scholarly or intellectual knowledge by itself is not enough to obtain self-knowledge. True and intense devotion becomes necessary. The one who has even a little devotion, “this beginning brings about immediate purity in his aura, his consciousness.” When the mind becomes more and more devoted, it gradually leads to loosening the bondage of ignorance, and then the soul experiences self-knowledge. That devotee “realizes me in my pristine glory which is not recognized even by the Vedas and the Upanishads.”

(To be concluded)

CHOICE AND EVOLUTION

SELDOM does one associate the idea of liberty with evolution, yet there can be no true evolution without liberty and freedom of choice.

When we approach this subject of liberty or freedom to choose the types of thoughts we shall accept or generate, the types of feelings or emotions we shall encourage or engender, or the types of actions we shall perform, we must dissociate the ancient concept of true liberty from the modern one, which often fails to distinguish between liberty and licence.

The Theosophical idea of liberty is the same as the true ancient conceptions of that term, and implies evolution carried forward to its ultimate end, which is freedom from the bondage of matter through spiritual insight and determination. Such freedom comes about by the acquisition of discernment and discrimination, the natural concomitants to the deliberate choice of spiritual ideals and ideas as opposed to their material counterparts.

When the desire to know the truth arises in the mind-heart of man and the will to serve his brother-man flowers as a result of such desire, a crucial stage is reached, and according to the choices made will be the progress or retrogression of the “chooser.”

This idea that our choices lead either to progress or retrogression will make us perceive the necessity for right choice, and right choice implies the acquisition of the true knowledge and its application in the fields of our mind, emotions and physical nature.

The first step towards the acquisition of true knowledge is not just the desire and determination to acquire it, but rather the purification of the inner motive, or the reason why we desire such knowledge. As Mr. Judge states in *The Ocean of Theosophy*: “Even a Buddha or a Jesus had first to make a vow, which is a desire, in some life, that he would save the world or some part of it, and to persevere with the desire alive in his heart through countless lives.” With the right motive of helping or serving others, the next step that naturally follows is that of finding ways and means to serve. It is

here that the necessity is seen for the study of the Teachings, testing them by the process of application in daily life, in the light of service or help rendered to others. Not all types of “service” are helpful to others; so, as our knowledge increases through study and application, our ability to discriminate between the right and wrong service is also strengthened.

It will be seen that freedom of choice plays a most important part here; we are constantly choosing, every moment of the day, in one way or another, but choice with the motive of service behind it produces a more deliberate, discerning and discriminative attitude of mind, which in turn gives rise to actions more beneficial and helpful to the whole “stream of evolution” on our planet Earth.

Just as individual choice in the right direction is responsible for the progressive evolution of any one individual, so too, the collective choices of all result in the progressive advancement of all beings in the scheme of evolution. Here will be seen the responsibility of the individual in clearly setting before his mind’s eye the goal of service instead of that of liberation. *The Voice of the Silence* explains why the Path of Renunciation is superior to the Path of Liberation. It is the goal of renunciation that is kept in view by all true Theosophists who wish to follow in the footsteps of the Great Teachers of Humanity, who are also “the True Servants of Humanity.”

Evolution consists “in raising up to a higher state all the matter concerned in the chain of globes to which the earth belongs” (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 62). This is the work in which all individuals are engaged, whether they are consciously aware of it or not. To become conscious co-workers with Nature is the prerogative of all human beings, who alone have the liberty or freedom of self-choice; and upon this choice depends the harmonious progress of all the beings evolving with us on our planet Earth. Says *The Voice of the Silence*: “Help Nature and work on with her; and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance.”

HEART ENERGY IN OUR WORK

DO OUR routine tasks seem humdrum, dull, or boring? It is our own fault chiefly, for it is the spirit in which our duties are approached and carried out that lends its zest to their performance or makes them burdensome. The simplest action may be touched with grace. What hallows the common task is, in the words ascribed to the devout and humble Brother Lawrence, toiling steadily and tranquilly in the kitchen of his monastery nearly three centuries ago, “not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed.” “It is not what is done, but the spirit in which the least thing is done for Them who are all, that is counted,” says Mr. Judge.

What frees us from “the good and evil experiences which are the bonds of action” is acting without selfish interest in the results, committing whatever we do, eat, sacrifice or give, whatever mortification we perform, to the Lord in the heart—whether we call It Krishna or by any other name—or to the unseen Master of whose nearness some are conscious in high moments.

The only possible reward which the great Masters’ constant labours to benefit mankind can bring to Themselves was said by one of Them to be the consciousness that They were doing Their duty to humanity. Such a consciousness, in a degree commensurate with the development and earnestness of each and with the spirit and quality of his service, can be shared by every individual who has dedicated his life to Their service and to that of Their humanity on the lines laid down by Them.

Whatever be the task that under Karma lies before us, what matters is, first and foremost, our motive and, secondly, the way in which we do that which we have to do. We may feel confident that our motive is to help another, but if we lack heart sympathy, which finds its natural balm to the wounds which under Karma he has suffered and which we sought to heal.

The most brilliant intellectual work untouched by the heart quality may be a monument to the author’s industry and learning, may even be acclaimed as great, but its days will be numbered. It has been truly said that “only the mystic who can wield a pen can produce

immortal literature.”

Ideally, every action should meet the test of all-round rightness—being performed with the right motive, in the right place, at the right time and in the right way. This demands full concentration, whatever the duty before us is, but it does not rule out keeping in the background of our consciousness our ideal and our goal. On the contrary, holding the subtone of our thinking will in fact increase our power of concentration on whatever we are doing. Some have found helpful for this practice the phrase, “With the eye of the heart on the distant goal and the eye of the mind on the step ahead.”

A letter written, or even signed, with the Divine in view, carries an invisible blessing, breathes perhaps the message, “Theosophy” and “Help and hope for thee.” It is perhaps to action in this spirit that best applies the 17th-century George Herbert’s verse:

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and the action fine.

The habit of thinking on the higher plane can be developed, Madame Blavatsky has written, though with difficulty by those not born with the gift. She tells us that the thought of one who thinks about even the most trifling things from the higher plane of thought “will be so far more intense than the thought of an ordinary person, that by this very intensity it obtains the power of creation.

Will not, therefore, even a routine task—even those superciliously called menial—performed by one possessing this gift, carry a special potency for good? Such a task efficiently and cheerfully performed: a room well swept, a field ploughed in straight furrows, a column of figures dependably added, a meal prepared with the idea in the background of consciousness of supplying proper materials for building the living temples of human bodies—must not even such humble tasks, performed in the right spirit, contribute each its mite to the sweetening of human relations and the slow building of a better world?

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

According to Indian philosophy there are two kinds of truths: “*Shruti*,” that is eternal and universal, and “*Smriti*,” that is temporary and regional in expression. The Vedas and the Upanishads belong to *Shruti*, because they contain eternal truths that can be verified by anyone. They deal with the realm above the sensory level. They do not contain a set of dogmas or creeds. On the other hand, the *Smritis* are a set of dogmas and creeds. For instance, in *Manu Smriti*, we find eternal truths as well as some dogmas and Manu’s own beliefs and opinions. The *Smritis* provide a framework of rules and regulations to guide and discipline human life, created by a learned person, based on the Upanishads. The *Smritis* are to be obeyed and not verified. There are many *Smritis* because they are either modified or written afresh by a learned person to suit contemporary society, in keeping with the times.

Shruti, implies that which is passed on from one person to another, such as, from *Guru* to *Shishya*, and hence is called *Sanatana* (eternal) *dharma*. *Smriti* is called *Yuga dharma*, i.e., *dharma* for a particular age and people. We find that both *Sanatana dharma* and *Yuga dharma* exist side by side and in case of conflict between them, it is always *Shruti* that will take precedence over *Smriti*. In other words, “Truth alone shall prevail over everything else and not dogma....Truth makes us fearless. If we had only dogmas and creeds, we would not allow anyone to scrutinise them.” All the same, *Smritis* continue to be an important aspect of our belief system, writes Prof. T. S. Krishnamurthy. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, June 16, 2023)

Shruti means Revelation. In the western religions, Revelation connotes that which is revealed by God to his chosen Prophets. In Hinduism it does not mean that. “By purity of life, study, and meditation the human soul becomes capable of hearing the Song of Life which Mother Nature chants in the Voice of the Silence; such highly evolved souls repeat in the language of words what is heard; that repetition is *Shruti* or Revelation....This is not the work of one

or several isolated individuals, but is the great record of Truth made by checking, testing and verifying the work of each with that of all others and by centuries of experience.” The *shruti* is composed of the Four Vedas that were delivered by Primeval Sages on Lake Manasarovar, beyond Himalayas, tens of thousands of years ago. H.P.B. says, “They are the most ancient as well as the most sacred of the Sanskrit works.”

The Hymns of Rig Veda are highly philosophical and describe the processes of visible and invisible Nature. The Chants of Sama Veda are songs of peace and praise which unveil the Powers and Potencies of Nature. Yajur Veda is concerned with performance of all sacrifices and gives details of how, where, when and why these rituals should be performed. “The sacred incantations, formulas and aphorisms which cure all diseases, bodily, mental and moral, and also by which magical phenomena can be performed, are given in the fourth or Atharva Veda.”

Each Veda is divided into three parts: Mantras or Samhitas, Brahmanas and Aranyakas. The Brahmana portion of the Vedas contains ceremonies and prayers. “Aranyakas are books for forest dwellers—‘meditation in the forest.’ They were studied by holy hermits and sages endowed with great mystic powers.” (*Theosophy*, October 1931)

Smriti results from remembrance of what is heard, *i.e.*, *Shruti*. Thus, *Smritis* are traditions imparted orally. The word *Smriti* means memory. They are also known as *Dharma-Shastra* or Codes of Law. The *Smritis* are essential in statecraft and civic administration. The four great *Smritis* recognised are: (1) *Manu Smriti*; (2) *Yagnavalkya Smriti*; (3) *Shankh Likhita Smriti*; (4) *Parashara Smriti*. The most important of all is the *Manu Smriti* which is also known as *Manava Dharma Shastra*.

Why ethics and rites of a particular description should be practised is demonstrated by the fact that these rest on, and have their origin in, philosophical and metaphysical truth. It lays the foundation for human conduct. It advises all men to learn the Sacred Law which is

fully known to the Enlightened Ones, so that those who practise it become exempt from hatred and inordinate affection. Since not a single act performed by mortals on earth is free from desire, the Code attempts to teach how to perform congenital duties. How shall a man know what his duty is? By following the instruction imparted in the Codes, where different stages of evolution, each with its appropriate qualities and attributes are described. One needs to study two principal teachings about Caste (*Varna*) and State (*Ashrama*). These castes are universal and the Code of Manu applies to the entire human kingdom. Further, there is division of a single life into four compartments for which the Codes of duty lay down the guidelines for progress. Each human being should pass through: (1) studentship, (2) family life, (3) non-worldly contemplation, (4) service of his fellow men. In today's world where *Dharma*, the Law of Duty, is not understood well, these ancient ideals could prove to be of great value. However, when we consult the Code of Manu, we must guard against interpolations by those with vested interests. (*Theosophy*, September 1931)

Intellectual Humility (IH), a subdiscipline of psychology, with roots in almost every major philosophical and religious tradition, is emerging at the moment when we globally witness a rise in Intellectual arrogance, wherein we refuse to entertain competing viewpoints. “Whomever you meet, it’s a good idea to assume there is something to be learned from them,” says Psychologist Daryl Van Tongeren. In Intellectual arrogance we find that collaborative inquiry has been abandoned for the brute force of unilateral persuasion. “Intellectual humility, instead, courts the kind of nuances that’s often found in the middle ground.” Moreover, there is enough respect for another individual so as to say, “together we commit to search for truth.” It is a generous impulse when we engage in conversation with another not expecting to persuade them, but in fact are open to being persuaded; “when we come to crave other

people’s wisdom—wisdom we ourselves don’t have,” says philosopher Agnes Callard. Since no one has a full claim on the truth, “the more diverse perspectives we entertain, the smaller our blind spots and the wiser our decision-making will generally be.”

What comes in the way of fostering Intellectual Humility is the overconfidence bias—the tendency to overestimate our abilities, knowledge, and beliefs.” Unjustifiable confidence can be dangerous. Secondly, the road to intellectual humility is paved with curiosity. Certainty is about being right, whereas curiosity is about exploration. It is also necessary that we learn to listen to each other. When one is genuinely curious it is harder to be judgmental. Though it is normal and healthy to be intellectually humble about some topics but dogmatic about others, we should be vigilant and see to it that there are fewer topics about which we are dogmatic.

Intellectual humility may be seen as a tool to bridge conflict. However, it is good to remember that conflict is not undesirable. “People should disagree.... This is about how we disagree and learn to disagree well.” It is good to remember that people arrive at truth collaboratively. “The more we know, the more we realize how much we don’t know. We peer from the crater rim of the known unknown into the vast caldera of the unknown unknowns,” writes Bruce Grierson, a writer in Vancouver. (*Psychology Today*, July 2023)

Intellectual humility is an essential quality not only for one who wishes to master the knowledge of any field, but especially for one seeking spiritual knowledge. There must be an ongoing quest for truth. The attitude necessary has been beautifully summed up by H.P.B. when she says that Absolute Truth has been mastered only by sages and seers. The rest of us must strive for relative truths. But to approach even relative truth, there has to be love of truth for its own sake. There must be willingness to accept truth, from whichever quarter it came. She believed that every philosophy is based on truth and by giving them a place in her magazine *Lucifer*, readers were given a chance to compare, analyze for themselves and segregate the true from the false. “However small the particle of

gold lost in a ton of rubbish, it is the noble metal still, and worthy of being dug out even at the price of some extra trouble...It is often as useful to know what a thing *is not*, as to learn what *it is*" (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 17*, p. 9). According to her, it is diversity of opinion, within certain limits that keeps a religious or philosophical system, a living and a healthy body.

Mr. Judge advises that someone who wants to apprehend truth must be able to lay aside his preconception; in apprehending the truth what comes in the way are limitations of our race heredity and our education. It is extremely difficult to become aware of our own mental leaning, and even more difficult to give it up and adopt the mental leaning of another. The first step consists in learning to *listen* attentively. In case, the ideas of esoteric philosophy do not coincide with our preconceived ideas, we must be prepared to lay them aside for a while. John Middleton Murray defines "negative capability," which he calls the mark of a genius, as that in which there is no irritable reaching after facts, but preparedness to remain in doubt and uncertainty till the true meaning dawns on you.

Intellectual humility should imply unbiased evaluation of ideas received from other sources by applying reason and intuition. "Do not adopt any conclusions merely because they are uttered by one in whom you have confidence, but adopt them when they coincide with your intuition...We are not to yield up our intuitions to any being, while we may largely doubt our judgment at all times." writes Mr. Judge.

Anekantvada, one of the most important and fundamental doctrines of Jainism, teaches that truth and reality are perceived differently from diverse points of view, and that no single point of view is the complete truth. We must realize that an individual can never present complete knowledge of an object because of limited understanding, imperfection of speech, etc. Hence there is a theory of *Syadvada*. The Jaina logic insists that every judgement (*naya*) should be qualified by the word (*syat*), *i.e.*, "somehow" or "in a way;" to emphasize its conditional or relative character.

Gossip is defined by some as “Any talk about people who are not present.” It appears that not all gossip is bad, though we may have been taught from childhood that “If you do not have anything nice to say, do not say anything.” It can be positive, neutral or negative and we should try to quash the mean-spirited gossip. For some of us hearing and telling scandalous stories might mean guilty pleasure but “gossip is by no means a black-and-white affair. We have a natural need for human connection, and gossip feeds that, for good and ill. Much depends upon the motivation of the gossiper: are they aiming to warn people about a bad actor, or are they enjoying the malicious pleasure of spreading a harmful story?” writes Katherine Ashenburg.

Those who indulge in gossip do so to improve their social bonding, even though temporarily, or to experience the feeling of superiority. It is important to learn the difference between the benign and the bad gossip. In organizations, communities and neighbourhoods, gossip can perform the function of providing information. Psychologists and sociologists are of the view that even mean-spirited gossip can help in bonding and social education, as for instance, criticism of those who have transgressed social norms could encourage good conduct and act as a deterrent to bad behaviour. “If permission is given, sharing sensitive information may provide an opportunity for compassion.” If the information about a couple planning to take divorce is passed on, some listeners may “respond by reaching out in kindness to one or both members of the couple to assure them of support.”

How can we break the habit of gossiping? When people regularly come to you with gossip you may refuse to engage in that kind of talk. Alternatively, when someone starts talking ill of another, one can remind them of good traits in that individual’s character or about the difficulties they may have in their life, writes Katherine Ashenburg. (*Reader’s Digest*, May 2023)

One of the evils by which modern society is debased is constant misuse of the power of speech. When two or more people come

together, they indulge in idle talk or small talk. Idle talk easily degenerates into gossip and backbiting. It is quite a challenge to be part of a group and yet not be party to gossip and slander. It is only with some effort that now and then, one succeeds in diverting the conversation to discussing weather or some social or political issue. Mr. Judge almost laments at this folly of humanity, saying: “What a petty lot of matter we spend time on, when so much is transitory. After a hundred years what will be the use of all this?”

Speech is one of the greatest privileges acquired by human beings in the course of evolution. We long for powers, overlooking the responsibility that goes with the use of those powers. One of the Masters writes, “Each man is personally responsible to the Law of Karma for every word of his voluntary production.” A very few, if any, are aware of the “*creative power*” latent in speech, because this power can manifest only through *right* speech.

It is a human tendency to readily believe in the evil of another. In the *Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. gives us clear principles. We must not believe in evil of another until we have an undeniable proof of the correctness of the statement. And even when we have such a proof, we are asked to exercise pity and charity towards the sinning brethren, knowing the shortcomings and infirmities of human nature. She says that if the accusation against another person is true, and the fault hurts no one but the sinner, then leave him to his Karma. But if by remaining silent, it is likely to bring harm to the innocent, then it is our duty “*to speak the truth at all costs.*” At such times, one must consult his duty and do what his conscience and higher nature suggests to him; but only after mature deliberation. For instance, if we know our maid-servant to be dishonest, it becomes our duty to warn our neighbour, with whom she works. We should try to protest against derogatory statements and if we are unable to do that, we should register an expression of no enthusiasm, and seeing that there is no response, or no demand, the supply will naturally cease.