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THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

**A Magazine Devoted to
The Living of the Higher Life**

UNITY, STUDY, WORK	3
THE LAW OF CYCLES	9
STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA-THE THOUSANDS-I	12
ON SACRED ANIMALS-III	18
ON LIVING THE HIGHER LIFE	24
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	27
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	32

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- (a) To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour;
- (b) The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and
- (c) The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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UNITY, STUDY, WORK

We have but to keep continually in mind and heart the original lines laid by H.P.B. and W.Q.J., namely **UNITY** first, as a focus for spiritual growth and mutual strength; **STUDY**, that a knowledge of the Movement, its purpose, its Teachers and its Message, may be had; **WORK**, upon ourselves in the light of that study, and for others first, last, and all the time.

—*The Friendly Philosopher*

THE THEOSOPHICAL Movement was launched with a specific purpose and at a crucial moment in human history. In its broader aspect, its aim was to introduce into this age of transition certain seminal ideas, which can lead, ultimately, to nobler morality. Theosophical ideas seek to change the inner nature of man and have the power to transform animal man into human man, and human man into divine man. Right ideas and right philosophy is the dire need of our age. We are asked to study, practice and promulgate the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation, which give sure and logical basis for ethics. "Give this and you will confer happiness of mind on thousands," says the Master.

After decades of study and work the student can see for himself the radical change which has gradually taken place in his ideas, beliefs, motives, outlook and values—his whole nature, in short. It is like taking a new birth and entering a new life with an enthusiasm and energy to work for the realization among fellowmen of the life-

giving universal ideas which, he is convinced, alone can regenerate the world. Constant study and reflection on the fundamental axioms of Theosophy, and their application to all questions and in all relations, gradually frees our minds from the mistaken notions engendered by anthropomorphic conceptions and materialistic ideas and personal biases. These ideas clarify our perception and purify our minds. Intuitive recognition of the nature of the true Self and reality of Universal Brotherhood grow stronger, and increasingly become the basis for thinking and acting. The more true we are to the Teachings and the Teachers, which are one with our Higher Self, in fact, the less we are subject to self-deceptions of the personal self. The statement: "To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou can'st not then be false to any man," is seen to be the key to living the Higher Life. Thus, gradually, study and exemplification of the philosophy become one effort, despite our failure to wholly live up to the highest we perceive. As we understand more clearly the workings of the personal self, and bases of its actions, in the light of our True Self, our desire to work for a wider spread of the Theosophical ideas grows stronger, and becomes the one prime motive in life. Thus the three strands of Theosophical life—Unity, Study and Work—Work upon ourselves and for others—come to be woven into one, in the life of the student.

"Theosophy must be held out continually for all who will listen. That is our self-assumed work; we have our example in H.P.B. and W.Q.J.—as to means, method and manner: let us imitate them, and so do their work in their spirit" (*The Friendly Philosopher*, pp. 363-64). *Light on the Path* says: "Give your aid to the few strong hands that hold back the powers of darkness from obtaining complete victory." Those who have joined the U.L.T. (United Lodge of Theosophists) have accepted this challenge to become servants. It means being able to firmly say that it does not matter what I like or dislike, whether it hurts me or not, but I will establish a centre of consciousness within me, which will respond to my spiritual obligation. Each one of us has to decide what role he or she will

play in the progress of the whole race. The important thing is not *how much* we have learnt, but how willing are we to take up this obligation. In fact, we learn or study, with the intention of becoming "the better able to help and teach others."

In an allegory, the Master tells the pupil that it is our work to teach intellectual conceptions of truth, but it is also our work to make rifts in the clouds of human intellect, so that the truth reaches human *heart*—not just mind. For this, we have to so live the life as to touch the hearts of people. That in turn implies "work on ourselves," which involves maintaining a constant struggle against one's lower nature. We have in us the germs of all the evil tendencies of the race, hence, great moral stamina is needed to go beyond the ordinary level and overcome the defects in our nature. So, "working on ourselves," requires, as a preliminary step, accumulation of "all that we can of merit by unselfish acts, by kind thoughts, by detaching our minds from the allurements of the world." (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 71)

Study and *Unity* reciprocally affect each other. Human solidarity is a corollary to universal unity and causation. Study of the doctrines of Karma and reincarnation opens our eyes to the fact that karma of the individual is inextricably interwoven with the karma of the whole humanity. Our perceptions are coloured by our conceptions—the *fundamental* conceptions of Deity, Nature and Man. It is through study that we become aware of the interconnectedness on the inner plane. There is a realization, as Mr. Judge puts it, that "human evolution is universal and not particular; one man cannot go very far beyond his race before the time." Study and application bring about conviction of unity and induce us to work towards achieving it.

It is also true that "study and unity," reciprocally affect the "work." H.P.B. wrote in 1888 to Mr. Judge that those who would remain true to the Master's program and true to themselves, they will prevail against the opposition from within and without, in their theosophical work. To "remain true to ourselves," is to remain true to our Higher

Self and to the dictates of the conscience. In other words, we must study and then practice what we preach so that we could realize brotherhood among the few. "By our unity the smallest effort made by us will have tenfold the power of any obstacle before us or any opposition offered by the world," writes Mr. Judge.

Since, we are all united on inner planes of being, we are helped and we help others in working for theosophy, by our inner attitude, quite unknowingly. In the article, "Theosophical Study and Work," Mr. Judge writes that all men are spiritual beings who are indissolubly linked and united together in one grand whole. Hence, no branch or individual theosophist can be regarded as without significance or influence. No student should sulk that he is too obscure or too unprogressed, to be of any benefit to the Movement by explaining the fundamental doctrines or at least by doing away with the misconceptions. Not a single good example in theosophical life is lost. He observes that every branch, [and we may apply it to every U.L.T. Centre] is composed of atoms or individuals. That body will be made intelligent, vibrant, forceful or weak and wicked, just as it is made by its component parts. Each one of us affects not only the immediate associates but also projects into the great universal current an influence, which affects the whole race.

Study and *Work* influence each other reciprocally. When someone studies in order to promulgate the teachings for the benefit of others, he is helped on the inner plane by those who are fanning the flame of illumination and inspiration. He is then able to understand better, what he reads. On the other hand, if a student does not participate in the work of promulgation and remains a passive listener, then he forms around his mind, a hard reflecting surface, which throws out and away from his grasp the very truths he is trying to understand. Devotion and study must go hand in hand. If the person is only devoted to the interest of others, but has not studied, then the weakness and folly of the race to which he belongs will pull him down, over and over again. But those who combine devotion with

knowledge are not dragged down often, and they have true philosophy to guide their steps. Mr. Crosbie explains that study enables us to gain true knowledge. Good motive without knowledge makes sorry work sometimes. There may be good motive but power and zeal might be misused for want of knowledge. Good motive and wisdom must go hand in hand if our work has to bring the desired result.

Recognition of *unity* enables us to carry on the *work* by touching people on the inner planes. We are connected with others on the mental plane. If we *think* Theosophy and say to ourselves, earnestly and sincerely with the wish that just as I have benefited from Theosophy, let others too, benefit, then it would be like whispering into the ears of others who are in our vicinity, "Theosophy, help and hope for thee." Such an attitude combined with sincere efforts at promulgation can have a miraculous effect.

Likewise, when a few students are united on the basis of *aim, purpose and teaching*, they can attract other like-minded students and in time high spiritual influences would be directed towards them and the same would radiate from this nucleus, for the benefit of all. "The Masters can give but little assistance to a Body not thoroughly united in purpose and feeling." In this work natures are intensified and each student comes with his own peculiarities as also educational, cultural and religious background. It is only when we have the foundation of sympathy that we are ready to get out of the rut of our own thinking, by filling up old grooves of the mind.

Mr. Judge tells us that each person is a potency in himself. If he is allowed to work along the lines that suggest themselves to him, then he is able to give his best to the work. Each person is a tiny lever. We must be careful that our words do not obstruct any of these levers. It is through these levers, ramifying in all directions that greatest results are brought about. Only when there is unity, there comes the appreciation that "true method is the combination of all methods."

The "method" of work must be impersonal. It is up to each worker

to keep the instrument as pure as possible so that the world can get Theosophy pure and simple—uncontaminated by our opinions and biases. For this each student-worker needs to *work on himself*, so as to keep the personality in the background. To be impersonal is to become more plain, honest and simple; to develop child-heart; to expand in sympathy and to be ready to work for theosophy but not ask position as a reward.

While the basic principle of Theosophical study and work, as articulated in the Declaration of the U.L.T., is a constant factor, methods of study and dissemination varies not only from Lodge to Lodge but from time to time in each Lodge, due to unavoidable changing conditions and circumstances. Organizing attractive special programs with theosophical content for children during mid-term holidays and summer holidays may be attempted as an alternative to regular Theosophy School for children. Informal talks and discussions while seated round a table seems more appropriate than formal platform lectures at the present time with relatively smaller audience at the meetings than in earlier times. Reaching out to many who are interested but unable to come for the meetings through bulletins issued by the Lodge giving a resume of the subject of the talks and study classes is another exercise, which could keep in circulation theosophical ideas as widely as possible in the locality. Electronic media has enabled Theosophy pure and simple to be made accessible to millions, which was not possible before.

IT is peculiar to man to love even those who do wrong. And this happens, if when they do wrong it occurs to thee that they are kinsmen, and that they do wrong through ignorance and unintentionally, and that soon both of you will die; and above all, that the wrong-doer has done thee no harm, for he has not made thy ruling faculty worse than it was before.

—MARCUS AURELIUS

THE LAW OF CYCLES

THE LAW of cycles is the fundamental Law in Nature. Knowledge of that law alone can make possible correct calculation of time periods in terms of human calendars and also the practical use of its workings in our daily life. There has been much talk of calendar reform and much dispute about which calendar should be followed. Such disputes are useless because there is not sufficient knowledge in the modern world to enable true calculation in terms of the great cycles of Nature.

The ancient Rishis of India had such knowledge; so had the Hierophants of ancient Egypt; and a fragmentary echo of their teachings comes down to us from ancient Greece in the form of myths. But in our historical period people brush aside myths and give attention only to physical events, forgetting that all such happenings are but the reflection of spiritual realities.

From the most ancient times the circle has stood as the symbol of a cycle. The fundamental characteristic of all circles is a curved line starting from a point and returning to the same point. The periods of time in endless and eternal Duration are infinite in number, but a circle symbolizes each of them. The end of one period always meets the beginning of that period. A day begins when the sun rises and ends at sun-rise the next day. Each period in Nature is measured by the repetition of the same event. We have lunar cycles, solar cycles, etc., all within the all-embracing cycles of Kalpas and Yugas, up to the Day of Brahma, which the Hindus say contains billions of mortal years.

Each man and woman makes his or her own cycles. These may or may not run concurrently with natural cycles. Sunrise starts a general cycle for each locality, but not all observe it. Some are awake and ready to welcome the rising sun, while others are still sleeping. Each has his own cycles of how often he requires food and how much he needs, and how often and how long he must sleep; and similarly we make cycles of our feelings and our ideation.

We become sleepy because we awoke at a certain time; we awake in the morning because we went to sleep the night before. The ending of a cycle is already precipitated when the beginning is brought about. We begin to get sleepy when we awaken; we begin to get hungry when we stop eating; we begin to die when we are born.

If we knew the Law of Cycles we could not only observe its working on the physical plane but also trace back effects to causes in reference to subjective occurrences in our inner life, such as moods. We fancy moods are not regular and cyclic because they do not occur at exactly the same interval. A person who noted the hour of sunrise each day for a week might think the sun did not rise regularly, but if he kept the record over a long period he would perceive the method and rhythm in its apparent irregularity. The same applies to the arising of our own moods.

Relying on the regularity of our moods, which we can discover by self-examination, we become capable of modifying them in terms of our own choice. We need not worry because we cannot find out when the cycle of a particular mood started; our concern is with its present appearance. The present epitomizes the past for us. Moreover, the point where one circle or cycle ends is the point where another begins. The beginning of a circle is the cause; its return to the same point is the effect.

The incarnated Soul is the centre in which all cycles originate. Its instrument, the mind, is the radius upon which depends the circumference of the circle. There are petty circles and large ones. The mind can be moved in terms of mean and unclean thoughts or in terms of noble and pure ones. The type of thoughts generated determines the effect which will return to us when the cycle is finished. If we would carry over to another life our interest in spiritual teachings, we must make our thoughts impersonal and universal, to insure a large enough circle to bridge the gap between incarnations.

We are so accustomed by habit and so-called education to look outside of us at what happens that we fail to relate our own part in producing the dream of our own life. Now and here we are starting

new cycles by our own thoughts and feelings. And what forms the basis of our present thinking? Our attitude towards our environment and towards the events which are taking place there. But besides our attitude there is the factor of the use we make of our environment and of the events.

We should make good use of whatever comes to us. People do not use their experiences in the right way and therefore they do not learn. We shall improve our environment not by doing something to it, but by forming and holding the Right Attitude in our own minds about events taking place around us. Present attitude produces future environment. If we have the right attitude we shall very soon find out the right way to improve our circumstances.

The practical lesson is this: do not give all your attention to outer circumstances, but watch your thoughts and your moods and always remember that in the mind is the formation of the Attitude.

When we observe the rhythmic cycles in Nature and try to make our cycles come closer to them we are moving in the right direction. If we understand that man is the miniature copy of the whole of Nature, we shall willingly and joyously obey the Laws of Nature. Such obedience is the way to spiritual freedom and to the peace and bliss that will make us faithful reflectors of Mother Nature and co-operators in her great task.

FOR most of life nothing wonderful happens. If you do not enjoy getting up and working and finishing your work and sitting down to a meal with family or friends, then the chances are you are not going to be very happy. If someone bases his happiness or unhappiness on major events like a great new job, huge amounts of money, a flawlessly happy marriage or a trip to Paris, that person is not going to be happy much of the time. If, on the other hand, happiness depends on a good breakfast, flowers in the yard, a drink or a nap, then we are more likely to live with quite a bit of happiness.

-ANDY ROONEY

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

THE THOUSANDS—I

THE CHAPTER is called *Sahassavaggo* or The Thousands. All the verses in this canto clearly show the importance of quality over the quantity. In our age of discontent and never satiated thirst for pleasures, we desperately cling to life and endlessly seek pleasures. Our mode of living and thinking makes us think that bigger the better, and more the merrier. In this canto, Lord Buddha presents an entirely opposite, yet true basis of thinking and living by simple but axiomatic statements which need no debate.

1. *Better than a thousand-word speech of empty words is one pregnant sentence hearing which one feels peace. (100)*
2. *Better than a thousand-verse poem of empty sounds is one stanza hearing which one feels peace. (101)*
3. *Better than reciting a hundred verses of empty words is the repeating of a single stanza hearing which one feels peace. (102)*

In the Seventeenth chapter of the *Gita*, we are told about mortification of body, speech and mind. These are of three types—*Sattvic*, *Rajasic* and *Tamasic*. Speech that is of *Sattvic* nature is gentle and does not cause anxiety. It is truthful and friendly. Speech is a powerful mode of expression. We convey our ideas, thoughts and feelings through speech. At the present stage of our development, since we do not possess the power of thought transference and telepathy, we have to rely on speech to convey our thoughts and feelings as also to understand thoughts and feelings of another. But as we have not yet acquired the mastery in the art of verbal communication, we use a lot of words to make ourselves clear to another. But, words have many meanings and they get modified over a period. Further, they may be accentuated or played down by modulation of the tone and pitch, which may be mild or sharp, gentle

or harsh, soft or loud. Moreover, while the ancient language like Sanskrit is scientific in which every letter has a numerical value, with a corresponding sound and meaning and hence capable of expressing various shades of meanings; the present day languages are those of fighting and trading people, which lack proper terms to express anything beyond physical, writes Mr. Judge. He asks us to use words, the living messengers, with care.

Words are things ... Upon the lower plane of social intercourse they are things, but soulless and dead because that convention in which they have their birth has made abortions of them. But when we step away from that conventionality, words become alive in proportion to the reality and purity of the thought that is behind them. (*Letters That have Helped Me*, Book I, Letter VI)

Unfortunately, we have acquired the art of deception in our speech. We use these living messengers to hide our real intent and convey that which we do not mean. Fine talk, oratory and rhetoric have become the hallmark of modern and so-called cultured people. Ask them a simple question "How is your health?" and there is a good chance that you may hear a lot of irrelevant details without actually knowing the truth. Even a straight question requiring "yes" or "no" answer is likely to evoke an evasive answer that conveys nothing. Often, this is not due to lack of capacity of expression, but clever use of speech which is intended to conceal. Some people just enjoy using uncommon and high sounding words, to understand which one would require a dictionary. Marketing presentations often use a lot of technical and management jargons to impress and trap the unwary decision makers. But the rule for Right Speech says: "Let him say what is true. Let him say what is useful. Let him say what is pleasant. Let him utter no disagreeable truth. Let him utter no agreeable falsehood."

The greatest purpose for which one may use speech is to bring peace to another. The one who understands the heart of men and who has the knowledge would know what to say, when and to

whom. Few words spoken in right tone can at once bring peace to another. A crying child becomes quiet with few gentle words from its mother. A few caring words from the doctor can put his anxious patient in a relaxed mood. A few words of wisdom from a sage can not only bring immense peace, but also open our eyes to the greater possibilities of life or to great truths.

Some words are *mantramic*. In the article "Mantrams," Mr. Judge points out that a *mantram* is a collection of words which, when sounded in speech, induce certain vibrations not only in the air, but also in the finer ether, thereby producing certain effects. He points out that single, natural *mantrams* are such words as "wife." When it is spoken it brings up in the mind all that is implied by the word. There are also sentences applicable to certain individuals, the use of which involves knowledge of the character of those to whom we speak. When these are used, a peculiar and lasting vibration is set up in the mind of the person affected. Likewise, even masses of men may be acted on by expressions having *mantramic* quality, as observed in great social or other disturbances. A dominant idea is aroused that touches upon a want of the people or on an abuse which oppresses them, and the change and interchange in their brains between the idea and the form of words go on until the result is accomplished. To the occultist of powerful sight this is seen to be a "ringing" of the words coupled with the whole chain of feelings, interests, aspirations, and so forth, that grows faster and deeper as the time for the relief or change draws near. And the greater number of persons affected by the idea involved, the larger, deeper, and wider the result, says Mr. Judge.

Holy scriptures convey profound truths in few verses. The most insightful sermon of the holy ones consist of few stanzas or a few verses which, if followed faithfully, can transform the life of a man and lead him to the sublime peace. When uttered or recited by the one who has realized the truth contained therein, full of compassion for every living being, they have almost a magical influence on the listener. It is said that when Lord Buddha gave his sermons,

thousands attained the *Srottapati* (a stream-entrant, who has only seven more lives to reach *Nirvana*) stage, there and then. These verses teach us the first lesson in the discipline of "Right Speech."

4. *Better than a man who conquers in battles a thousand times a thousand men is he who conquers himself He indeed is the mightiest of warriors. (103)*

5-6. *Conquest of self is indeed better than the conquest of others. Neither a deva (god) nor a gandharva (celestial musician), neither Brahma nor Mara could turn into defeat the victory of one who always practices self-control. (104-105)*

Victory over one's own self is superior to any other victory. Defeat arouses hatred and a desire for revenge in the loser. Many a battle has been fought and won by great kings and warriors. What of it? Did that make them better human beings? Did they carry their riches to the heaven? No. They came into this world empty-handed and also went out of it empty-handed. The massacre witnessed in the conquest of Kalinga and the suffering that the war inflicted on the defeated people moved King Asoka to such remorse that he renounced armed conquests. It was at this time that he came in touch with Buddhism and adopted it. Under its influence, he resolved to live according to, and preach, the *dharma* and to serve his subjects and all humanity. He adopted a policy of "conquest by *dharma* (principles of right life)." By *dharma*, he meant the energetic practice of the socio-moral virtues of honesty, truthfulness, compassion, mercifulness, benevolence, nonviolence, considerate behaviour toward all, "little sin and many good deeds," non-extravagance, non-acquisitiveness, and non-injury to animals. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*)

Every conquest can be turned into defeat by another. Even Indra rules over his heavenly kingdom under a perpetual threat of being displaced. But the victory over oneself cannot be turned into defeat by another, be it a *deva* or a *Brahma* or the *Mara* himself. But it is not easy to win in this battle with one's own self. It is a battle with

one's own lower nature—the personal self—in which one has to fight and destroy fond habits, vices, passions and ways of the world; no matter how harmless, respectable or even legitimate they may be according to our worldly standards. It is like Arjuna facing his grandsire, gurus, cousins and friends in the *Mahabharata* war and feeling despondent. Opposite tendencies generated and strengthened over many lifetimes are bound to put up tremendous resistance which would be difficult to counteract. It is a fight to finish in which the very sense of personal "self" has to be destroyed. It requires a man of courage, strength and determination to undertake such a fight. It requires relentless efforts, watchfulness and mindfulness. *The Voice of the Silence* encourages the warrior to never give up. Thus:

The fearless warrior, his precious life-blood oozing from his wide and gaping wounds, will still attack the foe, drive him from out his stronghold, vanquish him, ere he himself expires. Act then, all ye who fail and suffer, act like him; and from the stronghold of your Soul, chase all your foes away—ambition, anger, hatred, e'en to the shadow of desire—when even you have failed. (p. 68)

In the poetic but terrible words of *Light on the Path*, we get further idea as to what this battle entails:

But this conquering of self implies a destruction of qualities, which most men regard as not only indestructible but desirable.... All weapons of defence and offence are given up; all weapons of mind and heart, and brain, and spirit. Never again can another man be regarded as a person who can be criticised or condemned; never again can the neophyte raise his voice in self-defence or excuse...After parting with the sense of individual rights, the disciple must part also with the sense of self-respect and of virtue...In fact, to have lost the power to wound, implies that the snake [of self] is not only scotched, but killed. (pp. 73-79)

Until the man reaches the *Samadana* state, when he becomes

constitutionally incapable of doing wrong, there is always a possibility of fall. Greater the height, greater is the fall. As the disciple advances on the spiritual path, he has not only to face the defects and vices of his own individual self but also that of the family, nation and the race to which he belongs. Dark forces array themselves to find a chink in his armour to destroy him. They try to deter him from his path and sow the seeds of despair, suspicion and temptation to take him away from the true path. *Puranas* are full of stories of Sages getting swayed by tempting *apsaras*—the celestial damsels; thereby losing the merit of thousands of years of spiritual discipline. Many seekers have got waylaid. Many have turned into the by-lanes of psychic world—seeking powers. Many have fallen into worship and propitiation of celestial gods or elemental beings for acquirement of powers; and many have, alas, become mediumistic, mistaking the spirits of the lower worlds and psychic phenomena for something spiritual. Therefore, we have to be vigilant. Moreover, we are not asked to fight this battle on our personal strength, but on the strength of the mighty warrior within, the Spirit, who is incapable of defeat.

(To be continued)

SOUND exists in four fundamental states, viz., (1) *Vaikhari* or dense, audible sound—sound in its maximum differentiation; (2) *Madhyama* or an inner, subtle, more ethereal state at which it is inaudible to physical ear; (3) *Pashyanti*, a still higher, inner, more ethereal state; (4) *Para* which represents *Ishwara-Sakti* and is the potential (*Karana*) state of the sound which is *Avyakta* or undifferentiated. The *Para* sound is not, like the *Vaikhari*, different in different languages. It is the unchanging primal substratum of them all, the source of the universe.

-SWAMI SIVANANDA

ON SACRED ANIMALS

IN THE article "Commentary on the Pistis Sophia," in a footnote, H.P.B. mentions that Logoi of all the nations are shown to crush out the head or heads of the serpent or a dragon, or transfixing it with their weapon. It is victory of Spirit over matter, or that the matter or material aspect has become subservient to the Divine Will of the Initiate by spiritual transmutation, where Matter is designated as "Old Serpent" or the "Great Deep." It also depicts victory of Asuras or "Dragons of Wisdom" over "Devas," which in turn means triumph of active *Manas* over passivity of pure spirit. Here, we may understand "pure spirit" to represent those divine beings who have not *acquired* their purity but are, so to speak, automatically pure. In an individual it may be taken to mean crushing of the animal, sensual nature and obtaining of divine wisdom. Several examples are given of such victory. Krishna crushes the head of Kaliya, Hercules cuts off the heads of Hydra or water-serpent, Horus pierces the head of dragon Apophis or Typhon, Apollo transfixes the Python, and Thor crushes the skull of the snake with a hammer. The seven-headed serpent also represents various planes of consciousness and corresponding planes of matter.

In India, the Rishis, Manus or "Sons of Brahma" are described as progenitors of some animal species and they are said to be the "father" of that animal species. Likewise, in Egypt a god was credited with the creation of certain animal that was sacred to him. Crocodile was sacred to Typhon and Sebak, who are supposed to be its creators. There are incalculable numbers of mummies of crocodile in Egypt. The crocodile is the Egyptian dragon. It was the dual symbol of Heaven and Earth, of Sun and Moon, and was made sacred to Osiris and Isis in consequence of its amphibious nature (S.D., I, 409). The crocodile is partly venerated and partly detested. The appearance of the crocodile in the Desert, far from the water, prognosticated the coming flood, and hence its adoration, but since he destroyed

thousands of human and animal beings yearly, he is also hated and persecuted. Moreover, Crocodile is sacred to Typhon, who is described as the material aspect of Osiris. Osiris represents the Higher Triad or the Divine Light while Typhon represents the lower four principles, the Quaternary or the personal man. According to the legend, Typhon deceitfully kills Osiris and cuts him up, metaphorically, into fourteen pieces, and thus separates himself from "god," and then he is hated. He becomes the evil God or the god of storm and hurricane. Osiris represents the ideal universe, while Typhon represents material portion of Siva, or destroying Siva.

The tenth sign of the Zodiac is called in Sanskrit, *Makara* or the Crocodile, which the Hindus consider to be the vehicle of Varuna, the water-god. However, H.P.B. points out that this constellation was never called Crocodile by the Western ancient astronomers who described it as a horned goat and called it *so*—*Capricornus*. In the article, "The Twelve Signs of the Zodiac," Mr. T. Subba Row points out that the letter *Ma* is equivalent to number 5, while *Kara* means hand or side. In Sanskrit *Tribhujam* or *karam* means three-sided or a triangle, and likewise, *Makaram* or *Panchkaram* means a Pentagon, or five-pointed star, and represents five limbs of man. H.P.B. points out that since *Manas* (mind) is the *fifth* principle, pentagon is the symbol of not only five-limbed man, but of *thinking, conscious Man*. In India and Egypt these Dhyanis of the fifth hierarchy of intelligent divine beings, were connected with the Crocodile, and their abode is in *Capricornus*. *Makara* is an anagram of *Kumara*, the "Mind-born Sons of Brahma," which are five in number, as two are secret. They are the Dhyanis concerned with lighting up of the mind of man. "The fifth group of the celestial Beings is supposed to contain in itself the dual attributes of both the spiritual and physical aspects of the Universe; the two poles, so to say, of Mahat, the Universal Intelligence, and the dual nature of man, the spiritual and the physical. Hence its number Five, multiplied and made into ten, connecting it with *Makara*, the 10th sign of Zodiac." (S.D., I, 221)

T. Subba Row points out that *Makara* represents man, the

microcosm, as well as the universe or Macrocosm. The tenth sign of the zodiac denotes the sides or faces of the universe, and indicates that the universe is bounded by *Pentagons*. Assuming that the universe is symmetrically constructed then the pentagons would be regular pentagons, and the figure of the universe will be a *Dodecahedron*. However, in the true esoteric sense of the word "Makara" does not mean "crocodile," because the animal depicted in the Hindu Zodiac has the head and the fore-legs of an antelope, and the body and tail of a fish, writes H.P.B. "The dolphin was the vehicle of Poseidon-Neptune with the Greeks, and one with him, esoterically; and this 'dolphin' is the 'sea-dragon' as much as the Crocodile of the Sacred Nile is the vehicle of Horus, and Horus himself." (S.D., II, 578)

Of the ten *avatars* or incarnations of Vishnu, the first is called *Matsya-Avatar* or *Fish-avatar* and it symbolizes the period when the earth was covered with water. According to the story in the *Mahabharata*, while *Vaivaswata Manu* (who in the *Bible* becomes Noah) was engaged in devotion on the riverbank, a fish appears and pleads to be saved from a bigger fish. He saves and places it in a jar, where growing larger and larger, he warns him of the forthcoming deluge. When the ship is ready, and *Vaivaswata* takes on the ship his family and *the seeds of plants and pairs of all animals*, and the rain begins to fall, a gigantic fish, armed with a horn, places itself at the head of the ark. The holy man, following its orders, attaches a cable to this horn, and the fish guides the ship safely through the raging elements. In the Hindu tradition the number of days during which the deluge lasted *agrees exactly with that of the Mosaic account*, writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, H, 425). According to another version of this story, Vishnu orders a ship to be built, in which Manu is said to be saved along with the seven Rishis. H.P.B. explains that the seven Rishis stand for *seven Races*, the seven principles and various other things. In one sense it refers to the Atlantean flood and *Vaivaswata*, the great sage on Earth, who saved our Fifth Root-race from being destroyed along with the remnants of the Fourth or

Atlantean Race (S.D., I, 139-40). But *Vaivaswata Manu* is also shown as saving mankind or the portion of it (that would constitute the Fourth Race), when the Third Continent, Lemuria, perished 700,000 years before the commencement of Tertiary (Eocene) age, by Deluge (S.D., II, 313). Explaining the symbology of Fish, H.P.B. writes:

The "fish" and the sea, or *water*, are the most archaic emblems of the Messiah, or incarnations of divine wisdom, among all the ancient people. Fishes play prominently a figure on old Christian medals; and in the catacombs of Rome the "Mystic Cross" or "Anchor" stands between two fishes as supporters. "Daghdæ," the name of Zarathushtra's mother, means the "Divine Fish" or Holy Wisdom. (H.P.B. *Series No. 2*, p. 13)

The "disciple for hierophantship" or a "neophyte on trial," or *ideal* Jesus, was called by the Gnostics, *Ichthus*, the "fish." The symbol of Fish has been frequently used to refer to Jesus, the Christ. Some of his early disciples were fishermen. Jesus used to say, "I will make you fishers of men." The Christian female recluse is a Nun, which is a Chaldean word for Fish. "The Messiah is very often designated as 'DAG,' or the Fish. This is an inheritance from the Chaldees, and relates—as the very name indicates—to the Babylonian Dagon, the man-fish, who was the instructor and interpreter of the people, to whom he appeared." The sign of a coming Messiah is the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the sign of Pisces. In *Hari-Purana* and several other books, god Vishnu is shown as having assumed the form of a fish with a human head, in order to reclaim the Vedas lost during the deluge. In that form of half-man and half-fish, he taught the weak and ignorant humanity to build houses, cultivate land and to build temples. He used to return to ocean every night. (*Isis*, II, 256)

Astronomical cycles find their place in the sacred books. They are mentioned in the Hindu *Puranas* and the Christian Bible. Bible has the story of Jonah, which has been interpreted in several ways. Jonah was the prophet who was told by God to go to Nineveh, the

capital of the great empire of Assyria with his message. But Jonah did not want to go there with God's message, because he was convinced that God would not carry out his threat to destroy the city. In order to get away from God, Jonah set out in the opposite direction to Joppa where he boarded a ship going to Spain. But God sent out strong winds that threatened to break up the ship. Jonah suggested to sailors that he should be thrown into the sea to calm the sea and wind. When nothing else worked, the sailors threw him into the sea as per his suggestion. At God's command, a large fish (whale) swallowed Jonah and he was inside the whale for three days and nights. Realizing his mistake, Jonah prays to God from inside the belly of the whale and promises to offer sacrifice and obey the Lord. God then ordered the whale to spew Jonah on the beach, and it obeyed.

Swallowing of Jonah by the great whale represents a point in time when the sun was in the constellation of Cetus, which after expiration of the period enters into the constellation on the opposite side of the zodiacal circle. Thus, Jonah who was in the belly of the fish (or the center of Cetus) is now thrown out on the other side—on the shore. This refers to man and earth passing through the belt of various signs of the Zodiac.

Similarly as the same point moves thus through the Zodiac it is brought by opposition into the different constellations that are exactly opposite from century to century while it moves along. During these progresses changes take place among men and on earth exactly signified by the constellations when those are read according to the right rules of symbology. (*The Ocean Of Theosophy*, p. 130)

Jonah spending three days and nights in the belly of the whale also points to a spiritual cycle. It represents the cycle of initiation through which the whole mankind must pass in order to reach the stage of initiation. As a part of the process of initiation, the disciple's descent into Hades represents his coming face to face with his own

lower nature, remaining in the underground crypt or cave for three days and nights, meditating over the highest mysteries to finally remerge as an initiate.

Varaha or Boar is the third of the ten incarnations of Vishnu. In the Hindu Puranas, two great creations are mentioned, the *Padma* and the *Varaha*. During the latter creation the Earth was lifted out of the water by Brahma, in the shape of a boar, or "Varaha Avatara," writes H.P.B. We are also told that the last *Kalpa* was the *Padma*, the present one is *Varaha*. This has an allusion to the period when our globe was covered with water, when physical nature, unaided by the divine intelligences, failed to create man. After this, the "Creators" are displeased and dry the earth, and hence began the period of incrustation (S.D., II, 52-53). In Indian tradition, the boar is believed to dig up the earth before the monsoon begins. He digs or ploughs the earth and teaches mankind to plough, till and fertilize the land. Thus, Lord Vishnu incarnated as boar and taught humanity agriculture.

In the exoteric and allegorical biography of Gautama Buddha, he is shown to have died of indigestion after eating *rice and pork*. Now, Buddha established the most rigorous vegetarianism and respect for animal life, and hence if this piece of biography is taken literally, it would be the most absurd contradiction. Hence, it must be regarded allegorically. This refers to Buddha's having been born in *Varaha-Kalpa*, when Brahma assumed the shape of a boar and raised the earth out of the "Waters of Space." Further, since Brahmins are identified with and shown to descend directly from Brahma, and since they were enemies of Buddha and Buddhism, there is a curious allegorical hint in this piece of biography. "Brahminism (of the Boar, *Varaha Kalpa*) has slaughtered the religion of Buddha in India, swept it away from its face; therefore, Buddha, identified with his philosophy, is said to have died from the effects of eating of the flesh of a wild hog." (S.D., I, 368-69 fn.)

(*To be concluded*)

ON LIVING THE HIGHER LIFE

THE WORLD has been prone to measure the stature of man by varying yardsticks. Its norms shift and alter in proportion to the limitations that matter imposes on both sight and insight. Thus, the orthodox and the fanatic, the materialist and he of the superstitious mind, as also the poet, the peasant, the scientist and the philosopher have each a differing standard by which to evaluate the performance of others. Each imprisons himself in narrow grooves and thinks the other to be misguided and on the dangerous path of error.

Excellence in human living cannot be confined to one department of life. Viewing one's progress in one field of endeavour while turning a blind eye to one's lapses in other directions is a dangerous practice. Lop-sided development produces its lop-sided result. This is one of the early lessons that life has to teach. It is therefore incumbent on the man that he organize himself and formulate a plan whereby he can distribute his effort over all aspects of his being. He is a poor general who plans his strategy on one front, leaving himself vulnerable to the enemy on the others. It is a truism this that a chain is as strong as its weakest link. The only invincible are those that are the truly synthesized.

To the very many, it must be self-evident fact that divinity is all-pervasive. Divinity and the temple in which it is to be enthroned are distinct and separate. Invocation to the Deity to come alive and reside in the temple is possible of results only if the temple on its own plane and in its own right is made fit to reflect divinity. No illumination, however intense the light, can break through dense opacity.

It is the material aspects of the man that bend the power of his intellection to their own uses. Many a man lives and dies in no way wiser to universality than when he was born. He could not ascend because for him there was not even a glimpse of a possibility to ascend. It never entered his mind nor bothered his self-assessment. The mission of Theosophy is to remedy this and each mission needs

a volunteer missionary who is prepared to go forth, out of cloistered seclusion, out of modern-day monasteries, to heal and to minister. The man who thinks that after fifty years or so of effort he can sit back and relax—mistakes. The mission can end only at death.

That there is a purpose to evolution cannot be denied. That man has an important part to play in it is evident. It is not so evident to most that this destined part has been delineated for him in the archetype of which men are but types. Civilizations high in development have flourished and died, for it is axiomatic that night follows upon the end of day. It is a failing of humanity that, living in darkness and becoming familiar with its shadows, it calls the night the day. If man believes himself full of light, it but follows that he will not exert himself to go in its search, and thus we have the singular phenomenon of long processions of the blind led by one who exults in his own blindness. The teachings of the Wise are brushed aside as not appropriate to the age, and so the orthodoxy of science and the superstitious fanaticism of religion sit enthroned in the seats of power. Only the very few have the courage to break away and to declare that this is not day but night, dark and still and starless, where each shadow comes to mock our cowardice.

For those who can no longer endure the stifling atmosphere of ignorance and illusion, there is always a way that can lead them from darkness to light. The martyrs of even the darkest centuries have held aloft the torch of truth long enough for discerning eyes to discriminate dawn from dusk. Yet, there have been in all ages, as there are now, those who would see the pure white light through coloured glasses and call it progress. There are others who, under the pressures of personal desires, encircle the light in soiled reflectors and justify their actions by propounding bizarre theories and mischievous codes of conduct. There are still others for whom the light becomes embarrassing as it reveals their rottenness, and they with their follower sulk in caves and hollows where the light follows them not. Owls and bats are not infrequent in humankind. Those who would go in search of the true have to be wary of traps that are

set for them by the unenlightened, for these, too, are ever on the lookout for new recruits to their fold. The aspirant has to fashion his armour from such material as will not buckle under the blows of falsehood. The fabricating of this armour and the building up of an inner immunity is an important step towards the knowledge that shall help in living the higher life.

Since each human being has the one true light shining within himself, ready on the instant to shine forth the moment the encasing envelope is made transparent, the effort centres itself exclusively on the cleansing of the enveloping media. Each medium through which the light has to pass is sensitive and alive and constantly reacts to the ennobling or the degrading ideations of the man. It is thus in his power to shift his future up or down, high or low. It is significant that it is only from the ranks of the pure and noble that the seers and sages of the world have arisen. A leaning towards the material aspect of things has been known always to quench spirituality. The undesirable has its own energy and its own adhesive strength, and loosening that force is not easy.

Any idea, any goal that is not in conformity with the laws of Brotherhood, any selfish motive harboured in the subjective thinking of the man makes him head towards a fall, and that fall is greater for those who take delight in riding the high horse. Vanity, hatred, fear, anger, covetousness are the great corrodors of spirituality, as are hypocrisy, doubt and love for one's household, possessions and positions. As the aspirant succumbs to each, his light is to that extent diminished. Yet, his efforts and struggles towards that light do not go unrecognized. So long as he wends his laboured way to the goal, he is the future hope of mankind.

It is an occult law that when a man rises superior to his individual failings, he lifts, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[In this section we seek to answer frequently asked questions, at U.L.T. meetings or during private conversations and discussions with people who seek the answers in the light of Theosophy. Answers given in this section are by no means final. Only a line of thought is being offered by applying general principles of Theosophy.]

Question: How is it that increasing number of self-styled godmen, *swamis* and *babas* are able to dupe and misguide people, including the educated class, by posing as spiritual gurus and using their powers to make money? What kind of karmic consequences will they face in the future?

Answer: There have always been counterfeits for the genuine. Jesus warned people to beware of false prophets. In the last quarter of nineteenth century there were a number of pseudo-occultists claiming to possess occult knowledge and spiritual powers. There were so-called secret societies and "lodges of magic" which claimed to give occult knowledge and powers to people and even initiate them for a fee. They used some of the esoteric terms and symbols to give appearance of genuine teachings to the trash they gave out to the gullible. There were promises of helping people to reach Adeptship in few weeks or months! People fail to recognize that true knowledge comes slowly and is not easily acquired. Those who longed to acquire magic powers lacked enough patience to build a sure foundation through metaphysical and theoretical study. They were weary of what appeared to be a very slow progress in spiritual life. These were hooked by the so-called occultists with the promise of quick results and grand achievements. In the article, "Claiming to be Jesus" Mr. Judge writes about certain individuals who claimed to be Jesus, gathered believers and induced wealthy people to give much money. A certain individual did not take money but cured people of their diseases, saying that his cures constituted the proof that he was indeed Jesus. In some cases it is vanity on part of these

claimants who do not want to appear anything less than God. They were able to cheat because people were gullible and superstitious.

Wherever there are greedy people, there the deceivers thrive. Even at a simple, material level, we have plenty of examples of the cunning taking advantage of the greed in people. We hear of people going from door to door offering to shine gold ornaments, at very little cost. In nine cases out of ten they succeed in running away with the ornaments. Despite several cases being reported, women continue to trust such people. Spiritual field is no exception. Today, the success of so-called godmen and miracle men is partly because of gullibility of people and partly owing to the desire for quick and easy solution to every problem in life. Most people do not want to think for themselves and are happy to have others do the thinking and give definite answers as to what course to follow. People are prepared to pay any "price," monetary or otherwise. Even educated people become blind believers when it comes to getting quick relief from a calamity or problem. "Why is the educated middle-class rushing to the *tantrik* or *Baba* to solve problems that belong to the temporal, not the spiritual world? Psychologists say the rise of godmen can basically be blamed on the paucity of mental healthcare professionals," writes Shobhan Saxena (*Sunday Times of India*, May 2, 2010). He points out how people run to such godmen to have solution to every New Age problem. Want a job, bank loan, foreign travel? Go to the *baba* best known for his area of expertise. People go to them seeking answers to the problems such as marriage or failure in love. They visit them for getting a break in the films or getting modelling assignment. Urban Indians are increasingly turning to these "spiritual service-providers" that seem to take care of everything, except the soul, writes Saxena. Once that a godman has solved the problem, or cured you of a disease, or helped you reach the desired goal or to obtain the coveted object, your faith in him is firmly established. You recommend his name to others and soon hundreds of people begin to visit him. If he combines preaching with miracle-working then his teachings are accepted as gospel truth,

without any need for rationalizing. Everything is taken on blind faith and the godman is accepted as infallible. Only successes get reported, not the failures. Sexual and monetary exploitation is the price one is willing to pay for "problem solving." At times, it is fear of loss of reputation that prevents the exploited from speaking out.

But, are god-men alone to be blamed? Are people genuinely searching for true, long-term solutions to their problems? No. They are looking for a short-cut that would give them immediate relief. In many cases, the answer to the problem would be, "accept the woes of birth." We get the spiritual gurus we deserve. There is a demand, and so there is a supply. As for the karmic consequences, it is not easy for us to predict the consequences for such karma. Except for the spiritually advanced person, the ways of karma are inscrutable. However, we are told that the degree of karmic responsibility and the severity of karmic backlash are in proportion to the degree of knowledge and degree of development of the individual. It is a well-known fact that the powers and knowledge are not to be used for making money. Those who charge fees may lose these powers, eventually. However, those who go *seeking* such godmen, also become karmically responsible. They seem to be dragging down the spiritual and transcendental to their level rather than raising their consciousness to the higher level for obtaining solutions to their problems. Often, it is the case of blind leading the blind. There is dead-letter interpretation of scriptures and hence some of these gurus and godmen sincerely believe that the way to god is through sex. The metaphorical union between *Siva* and *Sakti* is taken literally to mean union between male and female.

However, when a godman *knowingly* leads the masses astray, karmic consequences are bound to be far more severe, as he himself strays away from the true path. It is said that "the path is narrow and wanderings of a day may cause us years of effort to find the road again." It shows that for such a person contacting right philosophy again, in future, would be extremely difficult. But a genuinely sincere person who was led astray is sure to come in contact with the right

philosophy, sooner or later.

Question: Theosophical literature mentions "Sacred Island" and also the "Imperishable Sacred Land." Do they really exist? Are they the same?

Answer: In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 6), H.P.B. mentions five continents corresponding to five races. "The Imperishable Sacred Land," is the First Continent, which is the cradle of the First Race and will also be the dwelling place of the divine mortal of the last or the Seventh Race. The reason being, unlike the other continents, this continent will not be disturbed by cataclysms, volcanic eruptions or the shifting of the continents. It will last from the beginning to the end of the *Manvantara*, throughout each Round. Its location is the North Pole. Likewise, the Second Continent is called the *Hyperborean*, which is the cradle of the Second Race; the Third Continent being *Lemuria*, the cradle of the Third Race; the Fourth being "Atlantis," the cradle of the Fourth Race and the Fifth Continent was America.

The "Sacred Island" is not the same as the "Imperishable Sacred Land." Both the Hindus and the Buddhists believe in the existence of the "Sacred Island," though it is described as mythical by the geographers and orientalist. From Lao-tze down to Hiouen-Thsang their literature is filled with allusions and references to that island. We are told that long before the days of Adam and Eve, i.e., before the separation of the sexes (beginning of Third Race), there existed a vast sea to the north of present Himalayas. An island in that area was the dwelling place of the remnants of the Fourth Race, i.e., of the handful of Adepts that were saved from the cataclysm. Later, it was converted to a desert. At one time *Lemuria*, the dwelling of the Third Race, (which began from the foot of the Himalayas) was separated from that sea by the Himalayan range. The elect of the Third Race who were saved from the cataclysm took shelter on the Sacred Island which is now called *Shambhala*, the "Happy Land," existing as the oasis in Gobi desert. What is claimed is that the

Wisdom imparted by the "Sons of Will and Yoga" born through *Kriyasakti*, of the early Third Race, was passed on to the Adepts of the Fourth Race and this wisdom survives in its pristine purity in certain Brotherhood inhabiting the Sacred Island. It is claimed that it is not possible to reach the fair island by sea but only through *subterranean passages* and these are known to the hierophants of sacerdotal colleges. There might have been such *subterranean passages* connecting El ephanta, Ellora and Ajanta to this island.

We are told that the fair island is no more, but the country where it once bloomed remains there still. What exists now is only an oasis in the desert. What is now Gobi desert was once a sea, then a fertile land, and then the land turned into a desert. What is now a desert was once the seat of richest empire in the world. Beneath the surface are said to lie such wealth, in gold, jewels, arms, utensils, and all that indicates civilization. The Gobi sand moves regularly from east to west, and occasionally some of the hidden treasures are uncovered, but not a native dare touch them for the whole district is under the ban of a mighty spell. The district of the Gobi wilderness and in fact the whole area of Independent Tartary and Tibet is jealously guarded against foreign intrusion. Those who are permitted to traverse it are under the particular care and pilotage of certain agents of the chief authority, and are in duty bound to convey no intelligence respecting places and persons to the outside world. (*Theosophy*, January 1954)

"Every *seventh* year these Teachers are believed to assemble in SCHAM-BHA-LA, the 'Happy Land.' According to the general belief it is situated in the north-west of Tibet. Some place it within the unexplored central regions, inaccessible to even the fearless nomadic tribesOthers still place it between Namur Nur and the Kuen-Lun Mountains, but one and all firmly believe in Scham-bha-la, and speak of it as a fertile, fairy-like land, *once an island*, now an oasis of incomparable beauty, the place of meeting of the inheritors of the esoteric wisdom." (*Five Years of Theosophy*, p. 181)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

An article, "Far From Heaven," appeared in *Newsweek* for April 12, 2010, adapted from the forthcoming book *Heaven: Our Enduring Fascination With the Afterlife* by Lisa Miller, focuses on the credibility of Easter story. The festival of Easter celebrates resurrection of Jesus Christ, when Jesus rose from his tomb in his body, three days after he was crucified, to reside with God in heaven. The Gospels insist on the veracity of this supernatural event. Jesus died and rose again so that all his followers could, eventually, do the same. This story is unbelievable. Did Resurrection *really happen* or is it just a metaphor? Paradoxically, resurrection may be unbelievable, but belief in traditional heaven requires it. The author argues that in most of our popular conceptions of heaven, we have bodies in heaven. For instance, people yearn for reunions with friends and relatives and even with their pets. Some people imagine heaven to be a place where their most material yearnings are fulfilled. The crux of the matter is, if you do not have a body, then what kind of heaven are you hoping for? The number of Americans who say they believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ has dropped from 80 per cent since 2003 to 70 per cent, according to the most recent Harris poll. Reincarnation and resurrection have, traditionally been mutually exclusive. Cremation was once viewed as an insult to God who makes resurrection possible. However, today, a third of Americans are cremated and not buried, because many of them find it fantastic and irrational that we could have a body in heaven. Only 26 per cent Americans believe that they will have bodies in heaven because of increasing belief in the doctrine of reincarnation.

On the other hand, immortality of the soul is easier to accept than resurrection. But there is a flaw in this belief. How can a disembodied soul going to heaven, enjoy food, music or sex, without sight or hearing, taste or touch? Many have accepted resurrection as a metaphor but there are also those who believe that Jesus *actually* rose from the dead. When the author asked a Jewish scholar to explain

how God put bodies burned into fire or pulverized in war, back together? His answer was that resurrection is a supernatural event and it is a special act of grace or of kindness on God's part.

The Bible says, "Jesus rose from the dead." Theosophy explains that he rose in his finer body or *Mayavi rupa*. Resurrection conveys that everything does not end with the death of the physical body and that there is no such thing as death for the Soul—it always is. Resurrection symbolizes *Spiritual Rebirth* through initiation. Crucifixion and resurrection reflect the initiation ceremonies practiced by the ancient Egyptians and other early civilizations. "He who strives to resurrect the Spirit *crucified in him by his own terrestrial passions*, and buried deep in the 'sepulchre' of his sinful flesh...he has the risen Christ in him," writes H.P.B.

We can understand states after death by understanding sleep. During sleep, there remains only an animated form of clay, whose powers of independent thinking are utterly paralyzed. Hence, during the sleep of the body, the Ego acts independently of the body, on its own plane. Whatever happens during dream state is subjective to our waking consciousness, but to the dreamer or the Ego on that plane, things of that plane are as objective as things on this plane are to us. Beyond dream state there is Dreamless Sleep State or *Sushupti*. In all these different states of consciousness, the Ego functions in most ethereal bodies, using the senses appropriate to that plane. Corresponding to seven states of consciousness there are seven states of matter. Thus, Occult philosophy teaches that even though physical man is one, the thinking man is septenary, thinking, acting, feeling, and living on seven different states of being or planes of consciousness, and that for all these states and planes our Soul or Ego has a distinct set of senses. (*Transactions*, p. 73)

Analogously, after death, the soul goes to heaven (*Devachan*) clothed in ethereal and fine body called *Karana Sarira* or *Causal body*. Just as dream state is an illusion, so is heaven an illusion. It is a subjective state, though to the entity in heaven, i.e., to the *devachanee*, all that he experiences is perfectly objective. Heaven

or *devachan* is a condition or a state of mental bliss and not a locality. Philosophically, it is a mental condition analogous to, but far more vivid and real than the most vivid dream, writes H.P.B. It is an idealized and subjective continuation of the earth life. We live out our unfulfilled aspirations and thoughts and create an ideal world in keeping with our beliefs during the earth life. H.P.B. calls it a perfect fool's paradise of each man's creation and making.

What happens when you leave home for a movie, as your brother is playing a piece from Bach and in the theatre the same melody is played as the film's background score? Probably, you would brush it aside, calling it a *curious coincidence*. We have all witnessed such coincidences in life, at some time or other. The psychologist Carl Jung called it "synchronicity" and defined it as "a coincidence in time of two or more causally unrelated events, which have the same or a similar meaning." Is synchronicity mere chance, or is there a spiritual or cosmic explanation to the phenomena? Many psychologists, philosophers and mathematicians have offered explanations for it. One of the explanations is in terms of the Law of Large Numbers. For instance, if one of your thousand-plus Facebook friends posts a status message about being stuck in a traffic jam, just as you do the same for yourself, it could be explained on the basis of probability. Considering the large number of Facebook friends in the same city and also the large number of traffic jams that occur in a city, someone is bound to be as frustrated as you are and also be inclined to post the message. However, Law of Large Numbers cannot explain the coincidence of your dreaming about the death of your loved one the night before it happens.

The second explanation is in terms of "hidden cause." If you have received a leaflet carrying advertisement of a restaurant and that same day you are invited by your date to the same restaurant,

then it may be because your date also received that leaflet and chose to invite you there for dinner. The third explanation is a psychological one. For instance, you dream of a big, shaggy dog and that evening you are invited to your aunt's place, where you are greeted by a dog, very similar to the one you dreamt about. It could be because on some earlier occasion when you phoned your aunt, you heard some dog's barking in the background, and that may have remained in your subconscious. "Every time I am hit by synchronous event, I try to reason backwardsOften, I am unable to think of any possible causeDoes it have a spiritual or cosmic explanation, I wonder?" writes Himani Dalmia. (*The Speaking Tree [Sunday Times of India]*, May 2, 2010)

Our universe is an orderly universe governed by Law. However, we are not always able to understand the working of this Law. When we are unable to find any rational explanation or cause, we call it a *chance*. H.P.B. puts it thus:

Most certainly chance is *impossible*. There is no "chance" in Nature, wherein everything is mathematically co-ordinate and mutually related in its units. "Chance," says Coleridge, "is but the pseudonym of God (or Nature), for those particular cases which He does not choose to subscribe openly with His sign manual." Replace the word "God" by that of *Karma* and it will become an Eastern axiom. (S.D., I, 653)

Many of the coincidences could be explained on the basis of premonitions when one becomes aware of the future event. It could be through Warning dreams or Prophetic dreams. For instance, a person dreaming of the death of a loved one, only a day before it happens, or dreaming of a dog, which he sees later in his aunt's house, could be explained on the basis of Warning or Prophetic dreams. Our Ego is omniscient on its own plane and sometimes succeeds in impressing our brains with the pictures of the future event during sleep.

Certain other seeming "coincidences" could be explained on the

basis of telepathy or thought-transference. It is a common experience that another person speaks of a matter about which we are thinking. We may be thinking or speaking of another, and just then he appears unexpectedly. We write or may think of writing to someone and his or her letter arrives. Such occurrences are so frequent and common that we could not brush them aside as mere "coincidences."

There are cases when two scientists, thinking along similar lines on the same subject, write about and make same discovery at the same time. Theosophy posits the existence of invisible register called Astral Light, on which all the thoughts, feelings and events of past, present and future are impressed. It is like a sensitive photographic plate. Hence, it acts as the repository of the ideas, the philosophy, the arts and sciences of long buried civilizations. The pictures from the astral light are continually being projected in the brains of the living men. "This gives meaning not only to the oft-recurring 'coincidences' of two or more inventors or scientists hitting upon the same ideas or inventions at about the same time and independently of each other, but also to other events and curious happenings," writes Mr. Judge. (*Echoes from the Orient*, p. 62)

In an excerpt from the book, *Rapt: Attention and the Focused Life*, by Winifred Gallagher, appeared in the magazine *Utne Reader* for March-April 2010, we are told that we allow our mind to dwell on whatever comes our way. We do not appreciate our own ability to use "attention" in a creative way. John Milton might have been thinking of the power of focus when he wrote: "The mind is its own place, and in itself, can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." "Your life—who you are, what you think, feel, and do, what you love—is the sum of what you focus on," writes Gallagher. We can selectively focus our attention on certain objects and subjects. We can shape our life differently by focusing on right things, and then

our life will become a work of art and not a series of accidents. The author became aware of the importance of focusing one's attention on right things when he suffered from an advanced kind of cancer. He was determined that he will not allow the disease to monopolize his attention, but instead, as much as possible, he would focus on his life. All through many months of chemotherapy, surgery, and daily radiation, he could stay focused on matters that were important and made him feel good, such as, family and friends, spiritual life, movies, walks, and spent very little time and energy on unimportant and negative things. Whenever possible, he looked toward whatever seemed meaningful, productive or energizing and away from the destructive and dispiriting.

His experiment with locus illustrated: You cannot always be happy, but you can almost always be focused, which is the next best thing. Hence, staying focused in a goal, may not guarantee that you will achieve the goal but it is a crucial step in that direction. We are continually bombarded with various stimuli vying for our attention. The method of selectively focusing the attention becomes very useful. Gallagher writes:

Along with performing the Apollonian task of organizing your world, attention enables you to have the kind of Dionysian experience beautifully described by the old-fashioned term rapt—completely absorbed, engrossed, fascinated, perhaps even "carried away"—that underlies life's deepest pleasures, from the scholar's study to the carpenter's craft to the lover's obsession. Some individuals slip into it more readily, but research shows that with some reflection, experimentation, and practice, all of us can cultivate this profoundly attentive state and experience it more often.

It should not take a crisis to show you that your life is the sum of what you focus on.

While attention plays important role in our lives, selective attention is what we need to practice. Two statements from Mr. Crosbie's

writings drive home this point: "You can have no attachment for a thing you do not think about; neither can you have any dislike for a thing you do not think about." "Realization comes from dwelling upon the thing to be realized." When unwholesome thoughts enter our mind, we can observe them as an outside invasion and not be identified with them or brood over them. By brooding over them we give them power that they do not ordinarily have. Thus, we must choose not to focus on negative thoughts, but instead focus on thoughts arising from the wholesome state of mind. We may choose to focus on thoughts of sympathetic joy and share joy of others instead of dwelling on envious thoughts. Lord Buddha says that those who focus their attention on thoughts of revenge tie their mind with the intention of retaliation and in them hatred never ceases.

There is the meditation practised at a set time, and there is the meditation of an entire lifetime. Our meditation undertaken at a fixed time can be aided when we have the *line of life's meditation*—a single thread of intention or desire running all through the life. In other words, our practice of concentration at a fixed time is going to be influenced by the subjects or objects on which we focus our deepest attention throughout life. Unfortunately, most of us are focused on acquiring money, comfort, luxury, name, fame and such low plane gratification. When our attention, desire and feelings are focused on lower plane of sense gratifications, we set up "centre of attraction" on that plane and draw energies from higher planes for the fulfilment of desires and aspirations on the lower planes. That energy which should have gone in strengthening our morals and fulfilling our higher aspirations is dragged down in satisfying lower desires.

Learning to pay rapt attention to an object or a subject is the first step in the process of meditation. We should be able to hold our attention on a point of a needle, for as long as we desire. When we are successful, we can go to the next step of contemplation.