

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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SELF-IMPROVEMENT—SOME REFLECTIONS	3
FOOD FOR THOUGHT RAIN	9
CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM	13
EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS STUDY, APPLICATION AND PROMULGATION—IX-A	19
ZODIAC—A LOST KEY—III	22
APHORISMS ON KARMA—SOME REFLECTIONS—IX	28
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	33

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SELF-IMPROVEMENT—SOME REFLECTIONS

WHO am I? You are not what you think you are, or identify yourself with, nor what others think you are. Yet, you are what you “think.” The general answer to the question is, “I am Mr. or Ms. ‘X,’ of certain height, weight, skin and hair colour, with certain academic background and emotional nature.” No one finds anything wrong with such a concept of “I.” But a deeper thinking shows that such sense of “I” is derived sense of identity, and constitutes our *personal self* or personality. We tend to derive our identity from what surrounds our true Self, the Spiritual “I.” We identify ourselves with our body, ideas, feelings, education, etc. We are identified the most with our body and therefore with our appearance.

Life is like a drama. The true Self, the Individuality or Reincarnating Ego is the *actor* who chooses the “stage” for performing specific role in the drama, before taking birth, that is to say that it is the Ego who chooses the family, the parents, the personality and the circumstances of life in which it will take birth. The word “personality” is derived from the Greek word “*persona*,” meaning a mask, which the actors used to wear. This mask carried the make-up of the role which the actor was going to play, so that behind the mask, the actor remained hidden and anonymous. The different roles played by the actor are our personalities. We are so absorbed in playing the role that we are seldom aware of our true Self.

The seeds of spiritual knowledge, arts, sciences, agriculture and

architecture exist in the Reincarnating Ego, burnt into that imperishable centre of man's consciousness, by the Divine Instructors, 18 million years ago. They exist as *innate* ideas. But then why do we not show forth this wisdom? We may understand it by the analogy of a lamp, in which the light is surrounded by a glass covering. For the light to shine forth we need to clean the soot on the glass. The light of wisdom is covered by layers or sheaths or vehicles, which need to be purified. For the light to shine forth we need to undertake divine discipline, which consists of training and improvement of the personal man, and recognizing it only to be an instrument of the true Self.

In our world today, we find the reverse. We seem to emphasize and exalt the personality. We are a generation of self-obsessed people. The "selfie" is self-taken picture, which many criticize as symbol of narcissism. It appears that the selfi-culture, or the culture of "I, me and mine," has become an integral part of our daily lives. Every day, millions of selfies are posted online. Certainly, we are more than our bodies and our images. Instead of feeding on the reactions of the people to our posted images, and wasting our energy in presenting ourselves as a far happier and more interesting people than what we really are, we must spend time in becoming aware of our thoughts, desires, likes and dislikes, virtues and vices, and try to create "a new, improved me."

The first step in self-improvement is that of awareness. We need to become aware that self-improvement does not mean enhancing the beauty of body, acquiring skill of communication, charm, grace of manner or diplomacy in speech, but something else; it calls for moral improvement. If there is a gulf between a good man and a bad man, there is a greater gulf between a good man and a spiritual man, says *Light on the Path*. Even a good person must feel the need to improve himself. This can happen in two ways, through criticism and evaluation of oneself by others, and through self-examination. When criticized for being proud or stingy, we can always do some soul-searching. If the criticism applies, we must take steps to improve;

if not, we may ignore it. As one genuinely takes up the task of improving oneself, he or she may find indicators in the casual remark of a friend or a colleague or in the changing circumstances of life. A person sincerely desiring spiritual improvement has to cultivate acute awareness that there are no meaningless or trifling circumstances in life, but that depending upon his ability to interpret and respond to them, he is taken a step forward or backward. Each person he meets, every word uttered by people around, may reveal what aspect of his life or personality, needs improvement.

The best way is to become aware of the defects ourselves, and it is possible through self-examination, which is examination of lower, personal self by the Higher and Impersonal Self. Every earnest student should examine his thoughts, feelings, deeds and words, every day. We must undertake self-examination at the end of the day, and review not only the events of every day, but also our thoughts, feelings, words and actions, without trying to explain away our mistakes and blunders. We must note our good points and weak points, and resolve to strengthen the good and eliminate the weaknesses. As the exercise of self-examination is continued day after day, it becomes important also to examine if we are making any genuine effort to deal with our weaknesses and faults. As Seneca puts it, "We should every night call ourselves to an account: What infirmity have I mastered today? What passion opposed? What temptation resisted? Our vices will abate of themselves if they be brought every day to the shrift."

In the article, "The Theosophical Mahatmas," H.P.B. writes, "As soon as one steps on the Path leading to the Ashram of the blessed Masters... his Karma, instead of having to be distributed throughout his long life, falls upon him in a block and crushes him with its whole weight." This applies to every earnest and devoted Soul who studies and practices the doctrines of Theosophy, under the direct influence and guidance of the Masters. As the Karma begins to precipitate, the psychical nature is stirred first. Our mental habits, our emotional outlook, our feelings and sentiments, our pride and

prejudices, our predilections and preconceptions are for the first time perceived by us as objective things, even if vaguely. We are, as it were, in the position of Arjuna, surveying the foes, with the help of the divine within. Before this point, we *were* our habits, outlooks, feelings, etc., but now all these are not *we*, but *our* outlook, feelings, etc., that need to be examined. There is a gradual transformation of the psychical nature, by the process of readjustment, which is, so to speak, resented by the lower self. Our own pet theories, favourite view-points, confirmed opinions, conventional habits and convictions begin to undergo change, giving rise to great conflict and commotion within. But these are the times when we are advised to lean back on the Higher Self, the divine within. There is continuous process of destruction and re-construction going on within us. The ocean of life will be seen to bring to our feet and also take away, both, things that are hard to lose and unpleasant to welcome.

Mahashivratri—which will be celebrated this year on February 21—means *the Vigil Night of Shiva*, which asks us to be ever vigilant of the activities of our lower nature. In fact, *Mahashivratri* signifies that the “Night of the Soul,” is the stage in the process of initiation, when the candidate is made to look deep into his consciousness, face the dark side of his nature, and purify it. It reminds us to practice divine discipline, which alone can unite us with Shiva within. *The great discipline is*, to realize that we are not our personalities. Shiva is therefore called the *dweller of Ghats*, *i.e.*, cremation grounds, where he is shown sitting in meditation with ashes smeared over his body. He has burnt (overcome) his personality. Shiva is concerned with spiritual progress which is achieved through the process of destruction and regeneration. There is a continuous or moment-to-moment destruction and regeneration going on not only in the physical body but even at the level of thoughts and feelings.

To die is to live. To live is to die. It is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. When life of personality ends, spiritual life begins. Imagery is given of chrysalis and butterfly. Chrysalis means cocoon.

A pupa after breaking the cocoon—which it has built by its own saliva—comes out as a completely transformed being, *i.e.*, a butterfly. So, we need to break the cocoon of personality, made of flesh and matter, of desires, of likes and dislikes. No one else can accomplish this for us. In the Preface to *Letters That Have Helped Me*, we read that as one advances in the spiritual life, with every new period and with every new step, he finds a new self rising before him. When he looks back over a group of weeks or months, he is amazed to find what kind of person he was then, and smiles a pitying smile. It requires a strong person to come out of the humdrum existence. Thus: “What our Eastern brothers call ‘the sheaths of the heart’ fall away one by one; when the last bursts open there is a silence, the silence of the mystic death. But ‘the dead shall arise,’ and from that death springs up the first tender growth of eternal life.”

To regenerate ourselves, we must follow the prescription given in *The Voice of the Silence*, of disciplining the body, mind and soul: (a) The body to be agitated. (b) The mind to be tranquil. (c) The Soul to be as limpid as a mountain lake. The body is agitated by craving produced by the sight, smell, taste and sound from outside. But the body can also be agitated or made active by our response to higher aspirations. The first kind of agitation is a hindrance to the living of the higher life and therefore the body must be made passive to outer stimuli but receptive to higher impulses. The mind must be cool or tranquil, and must be free from anxiety, likes and dislikes, and especially anger and irritation, only then it can become a channel of the Soul. The personal soul must become clear and translucent like the lake on a mountain, reflecting higher wisdom. The goal is to achieve self-conscious godhood while in the body, so that with this state of body, mind and soul, the aspirant will reflect the wisdom and sacrifice of the Divine within, through his deeds and words.

It appears that the year 2019, just ended, could easily have been described as the year of the self. We hear more and more of “self-care,” “self-love,” “self-kindness,” etc. From one point of view, this is justified, because with increasing challenges in life, one can build

resilience only through committed self-care. But interestingly, we are also told that the new approaches to lifestyle, from fashion, to beauty, to fitness, and life in general, were all about putting “self” before anything else. However, it is felt that one is being selfish only when one cares for one’s self at the cost of others, but it is claimed that the current trend is about finding the right balance. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India, December 29, 2019*)

Theosophically, altruism is an integral part of self-development. Therefore, ultimately, we must come to the stage of becoming better human beings, by improving our own natures, so as to become the better able to help in the development and progress of other selves or humanity. We have these inspiring words, quoted by H.P.B., written by a Philaletheian: “He who works for himself had better not work at all; rather let him work himself for others, for all. For every flower of love and charity he plants in his neighbour’s garden, a loathsome weed will disappear from his own, and so the garden of the gods—Humanity—shall blossom as a rose.” A little reflection shows that this seemingly simple injunction is the most difficult of application. Is it easy to love others, or even feel goodwill towards them, by overlooking their faults and weaknesses? But when we are determined to be kind and loving to another person, who, say, is greedy, or dishonest, or a liar, we are forced to make some inner adjustment and overcome in us the aversion for greed or dishonesty or lying. At a minor level, perhaps, we are applying the principle: “Don’t hate vice; don’t love vice, but understand it.” Thus, love for another helps us to get rid of “loathsome weed” of our own vices and weaknesses, thus leading to self-improvement!

WE NEED not to prohibit. We need to educate, and first of all, we need to educate ourselves....Let us retreat into the shrine of our own being. Let us be that Self, and act for and as that Self. Let us follow the lines of the law of our own being—compassion, love, helpfulness for all.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

FOOD FOR THOUGHT RAIN

RAIN is a short story by the British writer W. Somerset Maugham. The story is about a missionary’s determination to reform a prostitute, leading to tragedy. On the way to Apia, in the Pacific Ocean, a ship stops at Pago Pago because of an epidemic of infectious disease on the island. The passengers on ship include Dr. Macphail and his wife, and Mr. Davidson, a missionary, and his wife. Apart from them most other travellers are ordinary folks. The passengers find lodgings with a local trader named Horn. During most of their stay there is heavy rain, which they find oppressive. At the house, the two couples pass their time in conversation while other residents pursue smoking, gambling and dancing.

Mr. Davidson is a missionary from Pacific, who considers it to be his duty to bring, everyone he comes in contact with, to the right path. One of his greatest achievements is instilling a sense of sin in the natives, who he feels lead an immoral life, regularly breaking all of the Ten Commandments. His method of reform was through punishment. He says, “You see, they were so naturally depraved that they could not be brought to see their wickedness....I instituted fines. Obviously the only way to make people realise that an action is sinful is to punish them if they commit it. I fined them if they did not come to church, I fined them if they danced. I fined them if they were improperly dressed....And at last I made them understand.”

One of the other residents, Miss Sadie Thompson, is a younger woman with unrefined manners and over-stylish dress. One evening when the missionaries are having dinner with the doctor and his wife, they hear from her room the sound of a gramophone and men’s voices. They remember that she came on board at Honolulu, and presume that she must be from Iwelei, the red-light district there, and therefore must be a prostitute. It is assumed that she must be carrying on her trade here. Davidson is determined to stop her activities, and tries to get Horn to stop her having visitors.

Davidson meets the governor of the island and gets him to put

Miss Thompson on the next ship, which goes to San Francisco. The governor, being aware that the missionaries have influence, refuses to change his decision, when Dr. Macphail visits him. However, Miss Thompson tries to persuade Davidson to send her to any destination other than San Francisco. Davidson feels that Miss Thompson was reluctant to go to San Francisco because she may be facing a prison sentence in San Francisco. Thompson seems to confirm Davidson's belief and states that she faces a three-year prison term if she is returned to San Francisco.

Realizing that Davidson has mastered the situation and her fate, Miss Thompson begins a prolonged ordeal of weeping, praying, and reading Bible, assisted all the time by Davidson. Davidson says to the Macphails, "It is true rebirth. Her soul, which was black as night, is now pure and white....Her remorse for all her sins is beautiful...All day I pray with her."

A few days later Davidson's body is found on the beach; he has cut his throat with a razor. Dr. Macphail does not understand what happened until, returning to his lodgings, he finds that Sadie Thompson has changed suddenly back to "the flaunting quean they had known at first." When Mrs. Davidson rushes to the room of Miss Thomson, she laughs and spits at her. When Dr. Macphail confronts Miss Thompson to know what is happening, she tells him that all men are filthy pigs. Dr. Macphail realises that Miss Thomson's deliberately crafted behaviour has led to the seduction and subsequent suicide of the stern Davidson.

This story was inspired by an actual prostitute named Thompson that W. Somerset Maugham met aboard a ship sailing to Pago Pago in the year 1916. According to some critics, in this story sexual expression is pitted against sexual repression. The stern missionary, instead of succeeding in reforming and redeeming the prostitute, ends up unleashing his own repressed passions.

In one's struggle to overcome one's vices and weaknesses, the two last foes to overcome are *Ahankara* or egotism, and sex. Of these two the most difficult is the Ego. "The question of sex is not

the most difficult. The personal one is still harder. I mean the purely personal, that relating to 'me.' The sexual really relates only to a low plane gratification. If Nature can beat you there, then she need not try the other, and *vice versa*; if she fails on the personal she may attempt the other, but then with small chance of success" writes Mr. Judge. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 120)

In the spiritual discipline when we are able to overcome the *vasanas*, desires, and negative tendencies in their gross form, they lurk, unknown to the spiritual seeker, in their subtle form. One has to fight these tendencies till they are eradicated in their subtlest form. Just when a spiritual aspirant feels confident that he has overcome desires, and obliterated his tendencies, he experiences sudden coming to the surface of a latent tendency which was hiding in some corner of his being. He is taken by surprise. Such a person may experience sudden outburst of anger, an attack of jealousy or sexual attraction. There are examples of Rishis who fall, after reaching a high position. It is said that Rishi Visvamitra, after performing penance for 64,000 years, when he came across Menka, a beautiful *apsara*, he got attracted to her and fell for her beauty.

But the case of the missionary is not viewed as that of a genuine seeker, an aspirant who is struggling to overcome his carnal, animal nature. The story throws light on the hypocrisy of the self-righteous, who are full of un-tested virtues, and therefore believe in and judge others in terms of *categorical morality*, hard and fast demarcation between right and wrong. As mentioned in the *Preface* to the *Dhammapada*, we need to retain ethical awareness but reject *categorical morality* which then leads to self-righteousness. We need to dig deep and go to the base of apparent good and evil actions.

We are reminded of John Milton's quote: "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather; that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is

contrary.” A virtue, for example, of celibacy, cannot be developed by remaining within four walls of a monastery, without facing any temptation or trial. A spiritually advanced person knows more about evil than a sinful person, because the sinner sinks deep into his vice or sin, while a spiritual person is able to remain detached while observing it, and has resisted evil in every phase of its manifestation.

In the Third Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna shows Arjuna the method of overcoming desire. “In the first place, restrain thy senses.” It is by means of outward senses and their inner counterparts that a great turmoil is set up first in the heart and then in the mind. But, simultaneously with the control of the senses, one must control the mind and heart, lest one becomes a “false pietist of bewildered soul.” At times, we give up the desire outwardly but within there is longing for sweets, cakes, alcohol, movies, etc.

Thus, only he can reform another who has made himself invulnerable to that vice, who neither hates vice nor loves vice, but understands it. “*He whose hand has no wound may touch poison. Poison harms not one who has no wound,*” teaches the Buddha. We see this in the story of Amrapali, a beautiful courtesan, who fell in love with a Buddhist monk, who at her request was allowed by the Buddha to stay with her for four months. At the end of that period Amrapali entered the Sangha as a Bhikkhuni (a nun). And she told the Buddha, “I could not seduce your young monk, but his spirituality seduced me to become like him.”

Though punishment works as a temporary deterrent and is inevitable at times, it is not the permanent solution to eradicate evil. We should aim at bringing about inner conversion or transformation in the evildoer. This was the case with the Japanese General Tojo, described as the Dictator of modern Japan, who was tried, found guilty and executed in 1948 along with his fellow-prisoners. A Buddhist monk, preached and discussed with them spiritual matters so that all of them went to their execution in serene submission. The monk, the follower of Buddha Way of Compassion, illustrated that the true helper of the heart must himself possess the light of peace to overcome darkness of might in warriors like General Tojo.

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

CRITICISM is the act of passing judgment on the merits of a thing. The objects of criticism are many and diverse. It may be personal or impersonal. Personal criticism is passing judgment on the character, conduct, acts or peculiarities of an individual person. The object of impersonal criticism may be an artistic creation, a scientific work, or any intellectual output. Also, studying historical texts, documents, reconstructing them with available pieces of evidence and archeological finds, analyzing the contents, style, discerning meaning and drawing conclusions, come under impersonal criticism. Journalistic criticism is to do with current events pertaining to social, national and international issues and events, editorials, reviews of books, of literary productions, and of performing arts for information and education of general public, with participation of citizenry.

Criticism is an important intellectual activity, which, if properly conducted with wisdom and responsibility, has educational and reformatory value, and promotes human progress. Such is constructive criticism. Criticism can also be destructive, if the critic has ulterior motives, especially when directed against individual persons, without regard to truth and moral principles. The latter have a basis in the fact of Universal Brotherhood and the Law of Karma. Reform is a two-way process. The first step is, after learning the principles of right action, to retract from the path of error, and then proceed on the right path of true progress. Therefore, in considering constructive criticism we have to understand, in the light of the laws of universal brotherhood, and of Karma and Reincarnation, what kind of criticism is destructive, and avoid it with conscious effort, and learn the art of constructive criticism.

Any criticism directed against a person is always injurious. It is a pervasive defect of human nature to indulge in criticizing the shortcomings of others or their acts of omission and commission. All great teachers and reformers have warned against it. Indulging in idle talk, especially about the private affairs of others, as is commonly seen in social gatherings, is a vice which defiles man.

Jesus warns, “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again” (*Matthew*, VII, 1-2). Here Jesus is speaking of the just law of retributive Karma. Every act of ours brings its reaction back on us. When we engage in unwarranted, uncharitable criticism of others we not only debase ourselves but lay ourselves open to similar treatment meted out to us by others at some time or the other. Universal Brotherhood is a fact of existence, because the whole human family has originated from, rooted in, and constituted of, one and the same universal, eternal, spiritual substance, and all are evolving under one immutable law towards a common destiny. Each nature, therefore, reacts on all others. Hence defects common to human nature are shared by each individual unit of the human family, and act of each one reacts on all, and every individual is constrained by the collective Karma of the race. Universal duty, therefore, devolving on everyone, in whatever station in life one is placed by Karma, and in whatever condition, is to so think, live and act as to help on the universal progression by eliminating defects of one’s nature, cultivate and strengthen virtues, and fit oneself for universal service. As each individual improves in character and virtue the whole human family improves, however imperceptibly. The contrary is also true. No one can sin, or suffer the effects of sin, without impeding the progress of all. This is because effects of individual Karma become distributed over the whole human family. By indulging in evil thinking and evil speaking, such as, dwelling upon defects, and speaking ill of others, we attract to ourselves the very same defects we pointed out in others, incur Karmic retribution for neglecting our own duty and in meddling in the affairs of others with which we have nothing to do, and suffer thereby defilement of our own nature and character. “It is better to do one’s own duty, even though it be devoid of excellence, than to perform another’s duty well. It is better to perish in the performance of one’s own duty; the duty of another is full of danger,” teaches the *Bhagavad-Gita* (III, 35). *Bhagavata Purana* also warns, “The lot

that falls to the wrong doer is also shared by the one who denounces him.” (*Skanda* 1, Ch. 17, verse 21)

The danger warned against by Teachers is not generally heeded. The golden rule is, criticize the act, if it is warranted as a duty, but never criticize the person concerned, and, in such a case, the intention should be to rectify the wrong, if possible, and help the wrong doer to make amends. To speak unfavourably or slanderously of a person who is not present is one of the worst of Karmic sins. Justice and compassion demand that if criticism is necessitated due to circumstances with regard to a questionable act of a person, the affected one ought to speak directly to the offender in the gentlest possible manner and in the spirit of utmost kindness and charity. It is an old adage that gentle speech turns away wrath. Hypocrisy implicit in pointing out others’ weaknesses and shortcomings is tellingly made explicit in the *Dhammapada*: “Easy it is to see the faults of others; difficult it is to see our own. One winnows others’ faults like chaff, but his own faults he hides even as a cheat hides a losing throw” (verse 252). Cant and hypocrisy are unpardonable sins, warn the Teachers.

Criticism is an indispensable factor in human progress provided it is carried out in the spirit of Truth and Brotherhood as duty for mutual benefit and in eradicating individual defects and social evils. Certain commonsense ethical rules are needed to be observed if criticism is to be resorted to as a matter of duty. No personal element should enter into the critical review one may have to undertake of the work of an author, artist, etc., except when some meritorious quality of the latter is needed to be mentioned in the review. One must be unbiassed and possessed of a thorough knowledge of the subject under criticism.

The critical comments must be factual and truthful. No statement of the one whose work is taken up for critical comment ought to be cited out of the context of the theme of the subject as a whole, nor any meaning not intended by the author should be imputed into it. As all human acts are involved in faults, as fire is wrapped in smoke,

as the *Bhagavad-Gita* says, errors or shortcomings of the work under review ought to be pointed out in an inoffensive and charitable manner, in a gentle tone, and as a friendly encouragement to the author to improve upon the work. As criticism in the field of journalism is an important means of public education and shaping of public opinion, a great responsibility devolves on the journalist and editors of magazines and news channels. Fraternity of journalists have to adhere to the code of ethical journalism, which includes the criteria of constructive criticism mentioned in the foregoing, if they are to be true to their calling in disseminating truthful and useful information, educating the members of public with critical analyses of events, reviews of books, works of art, scientific papers, editorial comments, etc. It must be truth and Universal Brotherhood which should ever be the beacon of responsible journalism which rises above narrow loyalties, sectarianism and partisan patriotism. The spirit of true journalism, and right standard of constructive criticism in any situation, is stated by H.P.B.:

A true theosophist must be a cosmopolitan in his heart. He must embrace mankind, the whole of humanity in his philanthropic feelings. It is higher and far nobler to be one of those who love their fellow men, without distinction of race, creed, caste, or colour, than to be merely a good patriot, or still less, a partizan. To mete one measure for all, is holier and more divine than to help one's country in its private ambition of aggrandizement, strife or bloody wars in the name of GREEDINESS and SELFISHNESS. (*H.P.B. Series No. 33*, p. 44)

This seminal principle ought to be applied by every individual as a responsible citizen in his duty towards his or her country. In certain circumstances criticism is a duty to Truth when one has to fight against social evils and public prejudices. Injustice meted out to millions of our fellowmen because of racial or artificial caste distinctions, the curse of untouchability; deceit and dissimulation practiced under the cloak of religious sanction and custom; thriving superstitious practices and false beliefs, which enslave soul and

darken the mind of man, under the patronage of religious establishments and priest-craft; corruption, selfishness and hypocrisy in society, especially in high places, etc., need to be addressed and reformed.

Here the great Teachers have marked out the right and the most effective means of undertaking such reforms through constructive criticism to students of Theosophy and workers for the Theosophical Cause. A Master of Wisdom has cautioned against rash and indiscriminate action which will bring on more harm than good. Says the Master:

Theosophy has to fight intolerance, prejudice, ignorance, and selfishness, hidden under the mantle of hypocrisy. It has to throw all the light it can from the torch of Truth, with which its servants are entrusted. It must do this without fear or hesitation, dreading neither reproof nor condemnation. Theosophy, through its mouthpiece, the Society, has to tell the TRUTH to the very face of LIE; to beard the tiger in its den, without thought or fear of evil consequences, and set at defiance calumny and threats. *As an Association*, it has not only the right, but the duty to uncloak vice and do its best to redress wrongs, whether through the voice of its chosen lecturers or the printed word of its journals and publications—making its accusations, however, as impersonal as possible. But its Fellows, or Members have *individually*, no such right. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 22*, p.12)

Wisdom and justice of the course laid down by the Master is evident. None of us, individually, have right to denounce questionable conduct of others—whether individuals or organizations—when we ourselves are not entirely guiltless of the lack of like ethics. Says the Master:

Its followers have, first of all, to set the example of a firmly outlined and firmly applied morality, before they obtain the right to point out, even in a spirit of kindness, the absence of like ethic unity and singleness of purpose in other associations or individuals. (*ibid.*)

Our first duty, as students, is to strive ourselves to live the Higher Life to fit ourselves to help and teach others, and to apply to ourselves the criticism we have for others in the spirit of the parable of the beam and the speck. Evils of the times indeed are to be addressed but absolutely impersonally through printed/electronic media and public lectures by throwing the light of Theosophy on vexed questions of the times, enabling thus the members of public to discern and discriminate for themselves truth from error, and leave them free to choose for themselves. Truth hurts because it unveils errors of long cherished beliefs, and of deep-rooted customs and traditions to which they have given birth. For instance, painful indeed it is to give up the deeply imbedded superstition of false caste system, perversion of the spirit of the *Dharma Shastras* by the ignorant and selfish priesthood, idolatry and anthropomorphic conceptions, and many other superstitions. Likewise, demonstration of the falsity of such Church dogmas of Christianity as vicarious atonement, of illogicality of the eternal heaven and hell of theological fancy, exposition of the esoteric character of the Gospels which brings to question historicity of Jesus as depicted in the Bible, may be painful to the faithful. Any change from the long-cherished habits of thought and action based on erroneous conceptions which have given rise to ills that hamper human progress and happiness, is indeed painful. But pain is a necessary concomitant of change, and without change for the better there can be no progress. As Mr. Judge says, “There can be nothing but good result from the change from an untrue and illogical, and therefore debasing, creed, if a system that is complete and reasonable be furnished in its place....That ‘great orphan humanity,’ now grown up, no longer needs the toys of a thousand years ago, but requires, and with a voice like the rush of mighty waters demands, that every veil shall be lifted, every lie unveiled, and every light be lighted that can shed a ray upon the remainder of its toilsome road.” (*Vernal Blooms*, pp. 20-21)

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS STUDY, APPLICATION AND PROMULGATION—IX-A

IF you will study carefully and think over it calmly you will perceive that under our Declaration every U.L.T. is an independent and autonomous body. Each is the creation of self-energized students of Theosophy, who have been self-induced to undertake the responsibility of establishing it and maintain it by self-devised ways and means. It is founded on sacrifice, sustained by sacrifice and commendable offerings in time, money and work have been made. The faith that is in some of us, founded on knowledge and buttressed by reason, that the world is in dire need of the saving grace of H.P.B.’s Message has prompted us to do what we have done.

If there is to be orthodoxy in any Theosophical organization let there be the orthodoxy of H.P.B. and of those whose teachings are in conformity with her Message. The U.L.T. stands for no orthodoxy save the orthodoxy of Truth. We preach, practise and promulgate teachings not because they have been put forward by H.P.B. and Mr. Judge, but because they are true and for which reason show the position of their original advocates and servants.

Truth is not hindered by the passage of time, for truth is not a changing or an evolving factor—its consistency and changelessness are its main features. The Theosophy of H.P.B. is a philosophy consistent in all its parts. Any student who has carefully looked into the matter will know that her books, from first to last, from *Isis Unveiled* to *The Voice of the Silence*, do not militate against one another. The whole philosophy which she put forward is, I repeat, a consistent philosophy, consistent in all its parts, and it is a consistent whole. Further, the value of that consistency is greatly enhanced when the careful student finds that her philosophy is harmonious and consistent also with the teachings of all great philosophers from ancient China to the time of the Gnostics.

A careful study of the books of certain later writers brings the unmistakable knowledge of the evolution of thoughts in their own books, thereby proving their status from the occult point of view,

namely, that they are not giving out an immemorial message, but are trying to interpret the general body of knowledge from the point of view of their evolving soul consciousness. This is the first great difference. This is not to cast a slur on them. For anyone who tries to follow such a line the result would be similar to what they have shown.

The second fact to be noted in studying their books is certainly the difference in many important fundamentals. Their philosophy is very different from that of H.P.B., and anyone who reads their books as against hers will find this out for himself. This difference must be accepted. Of course a student is free to accept those writers and reject H.P.B., but in all honesty and intellectual straightforwardness he cannot possibly accept both.

The third point that emerges in the study of these later-day books is that the corroborative testimony that emerges from early philosophies and schools of occultism, and which H.P.B. always quoted and made use of, is conspicuous by its absence. There is nothing in the writings of H.P.B. for which she did not give the necessary, convincing and inspiring testimony of those who preceded her in the line of spiritual teachership. This is a marked feature of H.P.B.'s writings, which is absent in later-day books. Further, any student who has carefully read the letters from the Masters gets a very clear clue as to the nature of the writings of H.P.B. and the source from which they come.

From the way in which you are writing about this subject, I am afraid you yourself have not carefully studied in a comparative fashion the philosophy of Theosophy as taught by H.P.B. It requires, not any occult powers, but a careful comparison of the teachings contained in the various books, to come to the conclusion that they are different, and all that I can ask you, as a friend, is to read over very carefully Item I of the Summing Up on page 272 of *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, Old Edition, and tell me how “the uninterrupted record covering thousands of generations of Seers” can be improved upon. I could ask you here a dozen questions about differences in

the teachings, but what good would that do? There is as great a divergence between the teachings of H.P.B. and those of some later writers as there is between the teachings of Bergson and of Dr. Steiner. I know that any intelligent man, willing to devote time, can find this out for himself if he so chooses. If you want definite items for such an examination, I am perfectly willing to propound to you a dozen.

In answer to your question as to how I know—by studying the philosophy of Theosophy and the history of the Movement. You can do it yourself, if you care to. The very fact that you mention that the phrase “Original Impulse” is curious, shows that you have not studied. “Original Impulse” is not my phrase, but H.P.B.'s. You will find it in the closing chapter on “The Future of the Theosophical Society” in H.P.B.'s book, *The Key to Theosophy*.

By all means try to do what you can for what you regard as truth. We are not seeking followers, but colleagues and co-workers who are willing to sacrifice for and serve the recorded message of the Masters, recorded in black on white, and for which none of us need depend on somebody else's clairvoyant readings of the Akashic records.

(To be continued)

THERE is never any need to worry. The good law looks out for all things, and all we have to do is our duty as it comes along from day to day. Nothing is gained by worrying about matters and about the way people do not respond. In the first place, you do not alter people, and in the second, by being anxious as to things, you put an occult obstacle in the way of what you want done. It is better to acquire a lot of what is called carelessness by the world, but is in reality a calm reliance on the law, and a doing of one's own duty, satisfied that the results must be right, no matter what they may be.

—W. Q. JUDGE

ZODIAC—A LOST KEY

III

THE FIFTH sign is Leo or *Simha*. The word *Simha* contains a world of occult meaning within itself. The two terms synonymous to *Simha* are *Panchasyama* and *Hari*. The second synonym “Hari” shows it to represent *Jivatma*. This sign represents *Jivatma* as the son of *Paramatma*. In man it represents the real Christ, the anointed pure Spirit. Thus, *Jivatma* may well represent *Atman*, the ray of *Paramatma*. H.P.B. comments that in the lower kingdoms, namely, vegetable and animal kingdoms, *Jivatma* represents life-principle. At cosmic level, it is “Purusha manifesting himself as Brahma of the ‘golden egg’ and becoming Viraj—the universe.”

The sixth sign is Virgo or *Kanya* and it represents *Sakti* or *Mahamaya*. Being the sixth sign, it indicates that there are six primary forces in Nature, namely (1) *Para Sakti* or Supreme power, (2) *Jnanasakti* or the power of real wisdom, (3) *Ichhasakti* or the Power of Will, (4) *Kriyasakti* or the mysterious power of thought, (5) *Kundalinisakti* or electro-spiritual force which moves in a serpentine or curved path, (6) *Mantrikasakti* or the power of letters or speech or music. The synthesis of these six forces is represented by *Astral Light*. *Kanya* means Virgin. The Kabalists and the Hermetic philosophers call the Astral Light the “heavenly or celestial Virgin,” writes H.P.B. *Akasa* is the divine astral light. “The *Akasa* is the indispensable agent of every *Kriya* (magical performance) religious or profane.” (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

The seventh sign is Libra or *Tula*. When the numerical values are assigned to the letters composing this word, according to the methods given in ancient Tantrika works then it gives number 36. This sign is intended to represent 36 *Tattwas* or forces. Thus, the difference between *Jivatma* and *Paramatma* or between the Finite and the Infinite is that the former is bound or is encased within these 36 *Tattwas*, while the latter is free.

The Eighth sign is Scorpio or *Vrischika*. The ancient philosophers point out that when the sun was located in this sign, it is called by

the name of *Vishnu*. Hence, this sign is intended to represent Vishnu. Vishnu means that which is expanded as the Universe. It indicates universe in thought or universe in divine conception. It is supposed to represent universe in ideal state, before coming into existence as physical, material world.

The ninth sign Sagittarius (*Dhanus*) is equivalent to number 9 and corresponds to nine *Prajapatis* (or Sephiroth)—assistants to Demiurgos (Brahma, the manifested Logos) and involved in the construction of the material universe.

The tenth sign of the Zodiac is Capricornus or *Makaram*. It may be taken to represent both Microcosm and Macrocosm. Subba Row explains that *Ma* means five and *kara* means hands or sides, in Sanskrit. Hence *Makara* means five-sided figure or Pentagon. *Makaram* is the tenth sign, and the term “Dasadisa” is used by Sanskrit writers to denote faces or sides of the universe. This sign is intended to represent the faces of the universe, and indicates that the universe is bounded by *Pentagons*. “If we take the pentagons as regular pentagons... the figure of the material universe will, of course, be a *Dodecahedron*, the geometrical model imitated by the Demiurgos [creative Logos] in constructing the material universe,” writes T. Subba Row. On p. 344 (*S.D.*, I) we read that the concrete or physical or phenomenal world is constructed based on the geometrical figure of dodecahedron, as given in Plato’s *Timaeus*. Dodecahedron means twelve-sided figure, or made up of twelve regular pentagons.

The Sun enters the sign of Capricornus or *Makara* around December 21st, the time of winter solstice. However, except the initiated, no one knows the real mystic connection that exists between the names *Makara* and *Kumara*. *Makara* is an anagram of *Kumara*. In the article, “On the New Year” H.P.B. writes that it is January the 4th which ought to be selected by the Theosophists as their New Year. “For ages the 4th of January has been sacred to Mercury-Buddha or Thoth Hermes,” the God of wisdom. The *Kumaras*, it is stated, incarnated in mankind under the 10th sign of

Zodiac. This refers to what happened in course of human evolution. Theosophy teaches that there was a time in the course of evolution, when man in form was devoid of mind. However, he had developed a brain that was of much *better* and *deeper* capacity than that of any other animal. Man was given the light of mind by Divine Beings—*Manasaputras* or *Kumaras*—in a manner comparable to one candle lighting many. As a result, man was endowed with self-consciousness and with the power to think and choose. This “lighting up of Manas” is connected with the month of January, which is under the sign of Capricornus or *Makara*, and with the *Kumaras*. H.P.B. sums it up thus:

So *Makaram* or *Panchakaram* means a Pentagon—the five-pointed star or pentagon representing the five limbs of man....What is the meaning and the reason of this figure? Because, *Manas* is the *fifth* principle, and because the pentagon is the symbol of Man—not only of the five-limbed, but rather of the *thinking, conscious* MAN. (*S.D.*, II, 576 & fn.)

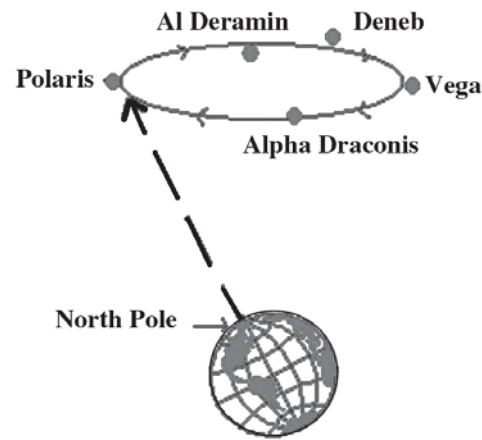
Interestingly, the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 213) points out that there are twelve great orders of Creative Powers, of which seven are esoteric. It is the fifth group or hierarchy of beings that is connected with the five-pointed star, which represents man with mind. These beings are connected with Crocodile and their abode is in Capricornus, the tenth sign of the Zodiac or *Makara*. In its esoteric sense, the term *Makara* does not mean crocodile, and this can be seen if we compare it with the animal associated with the tenth sign of the Zodiac. It is the animal depicted as having the head and forelegs of antelope and a tail of fish. Hence, the tenth sign of zodiac is taken to mean a Shark, a dolphin, etc. This sign is taken to be a vehicle of god *Varuna*. The dolphin, or “sea-dragon” was the vehicle of Neptune and also one with that God. Likewise, in Egypt, Crocodile is the vehicle of Horus and also one with him. With the Greeks the tenth sign of the Zodiac is Capricornus or the goat, with his hind part being that of a dolphin. (*S.D.*, II, 576-78)

In the Egyptian religious system *Sekhem* or *Se-khen* is residence of god Khem or Horus-Osiris, and that is *Devachan*. The defunct or dead person is transformed into crocodile who is called *Sebakh* or *Sevek, Sebek*, or “Seventh.” Gerald Massey shows that the crocodile was the Seventh Soul, and seems to refer to *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*. In other words, the defunct being transformed into crocodile in *Devachan*, refers to the most spiritual part of the essence of the fifth principle, *Manas*, being absorbed by and merged into *Atma-Buddhi* during the process of assimilation in *Devachan*, so that the Ego comes back to earth enriched, in the subsequent life. (*S.D.*, I, 219-20)

The eleventh sign is Aquarius (*Kumbha*); when represented by numbers, it is equivalent to 14 and represents 14 *lokas*. The last sign Pisces (*Meenam*) is equivalent to 5, and represents five elements. We can see that the first six signs represent the spiritual world, while the last six represent the process of manifestation up to the most material level. T. Subba Row writes, “The veil that was dexterously thrown over certain portion of the mystery connected with the (Zodiacal) signs by the ancient philosophers, *will never be fully lifted up for the amusement or edification of the uninitiated public.*”

Earth is not a perfect sphere. It bulges at equator. The combined gravitational effects of the sun, moon, and planets on the earth’s equatorial bulge cause the Earth’s axis to sway clockwise in a slow circle, like a wobbly motion of a spinning top which is running down before it comes to stop. Earth’s axis sweeps out a cone of angular radius of about 23½ degree around the perpendicular to the plane of the earth’s orbit in around 25,868 years. Because of this effect—termed as precession—the position of the celestial poles changes. As a result, several bright stars by turn become the “North Pole Star” of our earth.

At the time when the Egyptians were building pyramids, the North Pole star was Alpha Draconis (Thuban) in the constellation of Draco. Today, our pole star is Polaris in the constellation of Ursa Minor. The next North Pole star will be Al Deramin and then the bright star Vega in the constellation of Lyrae in 14000 A.D.



Thus we are taught that the great Pyramids were built under their direct supervision, “when *Dhruva* (the then Pole-star) was at his lowest culmination, and the Krittika (Pleiades) looked over his head (were on the same meridian but above) to watch the work of the giants.” Thus, as the first Pyramids were built at the beginning of a Sidereal year, under *Dhruva* (Alpha Polaris), it must have been over 31,000 years (31,105) ago....” (*S.D.*, I, 435)

As a result of precession of equinoxes, the sun, on a vernal equinox appears to go back all the way around the celestial equator or Zodiac and cross at the same point again in about 25,868 years. This is also known as the great Sidereal year. In other words, every year the Sun appears to cross the Celestial equator at a new point. As a result, if the equinotical point, to begin with, is the first degree of Aries or Ram, then due to precession of equinoxes, every 72 years (appx.) this equinotical point moves by one degree on the Zodiacal belt. Each sign occupies 30 degrees on Zodiacal belt, and hence, it takes the equinotical point ($72 \times 30 = 2160$) 2155 years to traverse one Zodiac Sign. After that the Equinotical point moves from Aries to Pisces (going backward) and takes another 2155 years to traverse that sign, and then enters the sign of Aquarius. This entering of the

sign of Aquarius happened in the year 1898. The cycle of 2155 years is called Messianical cycle of the Samaritan and also Kabalistic Jews.

We are being told that in the year 2410 B.C. the equinox or equinotical point entered the first degree of Aries. Then 2155 years later, *i.e.*, in the year 255 B.C. it entered the sign of Pisces. After 2155 years, *i.e.*, in the year 1898 it entered the sign of Aquarius, ushering in the Aquarian Age. H.P.B. tells us that when the equinotical point enters “the sign of Aquarius, psychologists will have some extra work to do, and the psychic idiosyncrasies of humanity will enter on a great change” (*The Esoteric Character of the Gospels*). Mr. Crosbie suggests that the change in idiosyncrasies of people mainly refers to *susceptibility to suggestion*, good, bad and indifferent. He seems to say that mankind has become suggestible, so that without using their own reason or intuition people seem to follow the suggestions of the so-called modern-day Messiahs (Spiritual Teachers and Saviours). This is the time, when more than ever, we should be using our thinking faculty and discriminate the good from the bad or the right from the wrong (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 151). We may also understand it in terms of growing interest in so-called “psychic” subjects. We hear of variety of psychological maladies that were not known before. So also, the field of alternative therapies is widening with a variety of cures, which include aura-reading and aura-cleansing, chakra-balancing, hypnotism, etc. The vast unexplored area of supernormal psychological powers resident in man is receiving the attention of orthodox scientific investigators. In short, we are witnessing a cycle of psychism.

“It is said that the last sidereal year ended about 9,868 years ago, at which time there must have been on this earth a violent convulsion or series of such, as well as distribution of nations. The completion of this grand period brings the earth into newer spaces of the cosmos,” writes Mr. Judge. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 129)

(To be continued)

APHORISMS ON KARMA—SOME REFLECTIONS
IX

[Preface to the *Aphorisms on Karma* by Mr. Wm. Q. Judge (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 21*) reads: “The following, among others not yet used, were given to me by teachers, among them being H. P. Blavatsky. Some were written, others communicated in other ways. To me they were declared to be from manuscripts not now accessible to the general public. Each one was submitted for my judgement and reason; and just as they, aside from any authority, approved themselves to my reason after serious consideration of them, so I hope they will gain the approval of those my fellow workers to whom I now publish them.”]

IN THIS article we continue to explore various implications of Aphorism No. 13. Mr. Judge says, “The effect of affinities upon our acts and thoughts is enormous and wide. It anon saves us, and anon damns. For we may meet in our lives a person who has a remarkable effect either for good or ill, because of the affinities engendered in past lives” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 4). He illustrates it thus: “So if we turn in horror from the bad (we may feel charitable and sad though), in future life we feel that horror and develop it by reaction into a reincarnation in a body and place where we must in material life go through the very thing we now hate,” and are thus compelled to swallow the bitter pill, as it were. If attachment to anything binds the soul to it, so does the feeling of aversion or dislike, as aversion for anything is attachment by the opposite. We often see individuals, living a fairly good life falling into evil ways, when they come under the influence of someone having such an effect on them. This is not an accident but the effect of the past Karmic affinity mutually engendered in the past by them. It is equally true that a great change for the better has taken place in the lives of people after coming in contact with someone who had benevolent influence on them. It is again due to past affinities of a nobler sort generated in the past between the two. Thus, changes

take place in one’s life by one’s own thoughts and acts as well those of another.

Life is a school in which we are learning. The lesson that life is teaching us is that we must, situated as we are in this life of duality or pairs of opposites, practice equal mindedness, in pleasure and pain, heat and cold, pleasant or unpleasant circumstances, in good and evil report, with friends and well-wishers or with enemies and detractors. “Teach to eschew all causes,” teaches the *Voice of the Silence*, “the ripple of effect, as the great tidal wave, thou shalt let run its course.” Even while experiencing the ceaseless oscillations of opposite sensations in life, we must learn to remain calm, unaffected by them; that is, practising detachment with knowledge and discrimination, neither to be attached to the good and the pleasant, nor shrink in disgust or dislike from the evil and the unpleasant, while experiencing them, looking upon the opposites as part of the great whole of which we are an inalienable part, we would thus stop creating Karmic causes that would have led us to bondage in the future life. We mitigate the past Karma by experiencing them with a detached mental state, creating no new causes, through discriminative detachment.

Many instances are known in India for ages that in the presence of a high Soul one experiences a rapid precipitation of his past Karma. Mr. Judge narrates such incidents in the life of people in his article, “Men Karmic Agents.” These karmic agents are concentrators of forces, who bring to others sudden good or bad effects which otherwise would have come about slowly, spread over many days or years, through a number of small events rather than precipitating as a single good or bad event.

There are two classes of these karmic agents. There are those who are born with the power of an “evil” eye, as a result of their past karma. An “evil eye” is the destructive power of thoughts. When we think, our thought coalesces itself with a unit of life-energy or “elemental.” An elemental is a colourless force or energy without any attributes, but when coalesced with our thought, it acquires

quality or colour. Electricity is a colourless force, but when it is passed through a rod, the rod gets charged and anyone touching it will experience shock. Just like a charged rod, these elementals carry bad thoughts to another person and cause him harm. Only when the person is pure—at the level of body, mind and speech—such bad thoughts are powerless. For instance, when people fix their thoughts in envy upon a person, who suddenly gets rich, he is adversely affected by them and may lose the money. So also, the envious glance of a person on a beautiful vase or a car or any other object or a person may result in damage or injury to the same. The elementals precipitate down the glance of the envious and evil-eyed person. Envy is a powerful emotion. Envy is worse than jealousy, because the feeling involved is, “If I cannot have then no other should have it.” Here, the person with “evil” eye becomes an agent in concentration and rapid precipitation of the past bad karma of the person who becomes the victim of the evil eye.

On the other hand, there are those adepts and Yogis who by the past training have acquired the power to concentrate karmic forces. Thus, we hear of a person unexpectedly meeting a Yogi in the forest, and telling him of a friend of his who was very sick. Upon returning home he finds his friend wholly cured of the disease at the very moment he was talking to the holy man. Mr. Judge also narrates incidents of such meeting with holy men bringing on opposite effect of accentuation of his troubles. This is well stated in the *Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*: “When veracity is complete the Yogi becomes the focus for the Karma resulting from all works, good or bad” (Verse 36, Book II). In both the cases so much bad Karma is dissipated once and for all, and the subsequent Karma the individual experiences will be through a balancing of several sorts of the remaining unspent affinities from the store of held-over Karma. Mr. Judge teaches that often the high liberated Souls deliberately take up bodies among common people in poor and challenging circumstances in order to aid them. With his superior knowledge, wisdom, and power of Will he mitigates so much of the Karma of

the family by experiencing them himself, and gives a higher impulse to the natures of the family members and the family hereditary line.

The Masters and Nirmanakayas who “do not, will not and must not interfere with Karma; that is, however *apparently* deserving of help an individual may be, they will not extend it in the manner desired if his Karma does not permit it.” They “people their currents in space,” with entities powerful for good alone. They can help to improve the quality of collective karma of humanity, because by reason of Their knowledge of when, where, and how to act, they enable humanity to avert disasters, if it is likely to result in better progress of all. Having knowledge and control of the invisible forces of nature, They may use them to obstruct a wrong course on the part of a person or group of persons, or assist their progress in the right direction. “Brothers of Radiance,” or *Nirmanakayas* of Good, who form the Guardian Wall, so to say, form a wall of protection around mankind, which wall shields mankind invisibly from still worse evils. These wonderful beings have swayed and are shaping even today the destiny of nations through their human agents, such as, pillars of peace and makers of war such as Bismarck, or saviours of nations such as Washington, Lincoln and Grant.

For instance, Napoleon Buonaparte’s foolhardy march to Moscow and his sudden and disastrous retreat was a turning point in the history of France, as the period after that marked the downfall, exile and death of Napoleon. The story goes that just when Napoleon was hesitating to proceed to Moscow, he was encouraged by a red letter delivered to him by a Red Man. This turning point was engineered by the *Nirmanakayas*, who swerved him from a path that would have plunged the world into depths of woe. “What he could have done had he remained in France, no present historian is competent to say,” writes Mr. Judge. On the other hand, the Indian mutiny of 1857 was a crucial event in the freedom movement of India, the success of which could have paved the way to end British rule in India. But during the great uprising in India that threatened the British rule, the *Nirmanakayas*, who work for man’s best and

highest good, saw to it that the mutiny failed, “so that England at last remained master, even though many a patriotic native desired another result.” They could see that had the British been driven away from India, some other western nation would have managed to rule over India, taking advantage of internal conflicts, and they would not have hesitated in destroying the books and palm-leaf records of India. “The cycles must run their rounds. Periods of mental and moral light and darkness succeed each other as day does night. The major and minor yugas must be accomplished according to the established order of things. And we, borne along on the mighty tide, can only modify and direct some of its minor currents,” writes a Master of Wisdom.

There is also something like taking upon oneself the karma of others. The great beings have often asked for the karma of the whole humanity to fall on them, and it is possible for them to take upon themselves some of the collective karma of humanity because they identify themselves completely with humanity. “H.P.B. was asked and she consented to take upon herself the burden of others’ Karma....We are all learning to be Universal Beings, aspiring to serve Humanity without any distinctions....Every accredited chela gets his share in learning to take upon himself the Karma of others. Theosophical students make a jump and a shortcut, so to say, from personal Karma to universal Karma, taking in their stride family, community, national and race Karma,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

The vital importance of a general diffusion of the knowledge of truisms of the Karmic Law as set forth in this series of aphorisms on Karma is seen in the fact that in it alone is found a rationale and scientific basis for right thought and right action for building character, and take control of one’s own destiny and guide it to higher end towards emancipation of not only one’s self but, by the power of distributive Karma, of our nation and of humanity also.

(To be continued)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

How can we achieve right kind of fearlessness? As children we were constantly encouraged to not feel afraid of the unknown or the scary. But when children grow up to be fearless and daredevils, the parents try to check their daredevilry. We all want our children to be fearless but also, we wish to temper the quality of fearlessness with maturity and intelligence, so that we learn to walk the fine line between fear and fearlessness. It makes sense to be afraid of wild beasts, or to have fear of fire or of jumping off heights. However, the fear of dealing with certain situations and people, or the fears which make us withdraw from life or become aggressive or defensive, may be regarded as bad fears. Often withdrawal and defensiveness results from our refusal to examine or face a situation and choosing to back out prematurely. It is absolutely necessary to cultivate the quality of fearlessness, in order to live life fully, to ensure that justice is done to oneself and to others, to be able to speak the truth in the face of all opposition and danger. Even in matters of trust and love, fearlessness is an essential quality. “Fearlessness does not mean lack of fear. It means that you are able to conquer that fear and rise above it,” writes Vinita Nangia.

“Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers but to be fearless when facing them,” writes Rabindranath Tagore. But, how can we distinguish between the right and wrong kind of fearlessness? One indicator of being truly fearless is when we are afraid of doing wrong and we also do not allow others to do that which we know to be wrong, as was seen in the case of Gandhiji. Likewise, true kind of fearlessness comes into play when we are ready to uphold a moral principle in the face of all opposition. When faced with the situation that arouses fear, one way is to think of the worst that can happen if you give in to the fear, as also, the best that can happen if you do not give in. It is important to be able to decide whether accosting the fear is worth the trouble, whether it is going to benefit others, and is not merely an act of daredevilry, writes Vinita Nangia. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, January 19, 2020)

We live in a culture of fear. Each one of us has a fear of something or the other. We experience fear right from our childhood. There are irrational fears, such as, fear of ghosts, devil, boogey man, which are instilled from the childhood. There is fear of being different or going against the accepted norms, what is generally termed as fear of public opinion. We are afraid to be ourselves because of the fear of being judged and criticized. We seem to suffer from what Dr. Erich Fromm calls, *the fear of freedom*. We are afraid to choose and be different because we are afraid of being isolated. It is easier to swim in the direction of the stream. There is a fear of failure, fear of rejection and fear of losing what one has achieved. The Buddha, the greatest psychologist of all time, says, from indulgence, affection, desire and craving, arise grief and fear.

The more faith we have in the law of Karma, more fearless we are able to become. We must gradually learn to prepare ourselves to face the worst, knowing that we are always greater than the situation, no matter how grave or dreadful it may appear initially. We can overcome fear by developing calmness and detachment. One who has acquired and to an extent realized the “universal ideas” is able to shed all fears.

Only a person who has cultivated complete harmlessness in him, is able to be truly fearless. Fearlessness is a godlike quality. A spiritual man is fearless; he is not afraid of any one and also *no one is afraid of him*. An important kind of giving, that is mentioned in Buddhism is the giving of *fearlessness* or *abhaya*. Each one of us can give the gift of “fearlessness,” to others by sharing our confidence with other people, and by creating a feeling of security among those around us, by our very presence. Fearlessness stems from spiritual integrity. A spiritual person has to learn to rely on the judgement based on his own “inner voice” or intuition. This intuition could be developed only by him “who is untameable, who cannot be dominated, who knows he has to play the lord over men, over facts, over all things save his own divinity.” Fear of god is the beginning of wisdom. We must replace the word “god” by Law. It is good to refrain from

doing wrong out of the fear of the consequences that the unerring law of karma is sure to bring.

Does consciousness depend on language? The contemporary western view is that only a few animals, might, perhaps, possibly share the gift of conscious experience with humans. The Buddhist philosophy defines consciousness as the ability to sense, to experience and to act. According to the Buddhist teachings, consciousness is accorded to all animals, large and small, and all of them experience suffering. Contrasted with this view which inculcates reverence for all life, is the historic view in the West, according to which animals have drives, motivations and can act intelligently, but they do not have an immortal soul. This view is subscribed to by many even today. Christof Koch, the President and chief scientist of Allen Institute for Brain Science in Seattle, tries to show that though man is a crown-piece of evolution the belief that only humans experience anything and not the animals, is preposterous. The assumption that we share the experience of life with all mammals is far more reasonable and compatible with all known facts. He says that even as a child, he intuitively felt that “either we all have souls, whatever that means, or none of us do.”

Thus, for instance, we see that all the mammals are closely related, evolutionarily speaking. There is great similarity in the architecture of the nervous system of lower and higher mammals. Most importantly, the behaviour of mammals is kindred to that of people. He says that his dog displays certain signs of pleasure on receiving her favourite food, and likewise, when she yelps, limps, and then comes to him, seeking aid, he infers that she is in pain, because “under similar conditions I act similarly.” However, that does not mean that dog-pain is identical to people-pain; it is not. But all the mammals experience pain.

It is true that language is a privilege of man and distinguishes him from animals. Some scholars believe that language use either directly enables consciousness or is one of the behaviour traits directly

associated with consciousness. Euan Macphail, a psychologist, claims that language and sense of self are necessary for consciousness, and therefore animals and young children, do not experience anything as they are unable to speak and have no sense of self.

Experiments have shown that people suffering speech loss perceived the world in images, and communicated using gestures. Likewise, the children who grew up with dogs or monkeys never learnt to speak but nonetheless experienced the world in their own way. We might say, “Language contributes massively to the way we experience the world.... But our basic experience of the world does not depend on it,” writes Christof Koch in his book *The Feeling of Life Itself: Why Consciousness Is Widespread but Can't be Computed*, the excerpts from which appeared in *Nautilus* magazine for September 2019.

“Everything in the Universe, throughout all its kingdoms, is CONSCIOUS, *i.e.*, endowed with a consciousness of its own kind and on its own plane of perception,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 274). This consciousness expresses itself differently through different forms, and its expression differs in accordance with the degree of progress. A stone or a crystal has psychic intelligence. Crystals have their own sympathies and antipathies, their own attractions. In plant this consciousness expresses itself as power of sensation; in animals as instinct, and in man as reasoning and intuition. Psychic intelligence is non-self-conscious use of mind principle.

The Third Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine* points out that in lower kingdoms, there are consciousness, intelligence, instinct and even rudiments of the power of choice. However, since the mind of man was lighted up or activated, he has *self-consciousness*, and the power to think and of *moral* choice. The choice exercised by the animal is not self-conscious, self-decided choice with knowledge. Since man has more developed mind and brain and nervous system, man suffers more intensely than an animal. Animals have souls and they do suffer, and that is why

fishing, hunting, shooting and even vivisection is objectionable from the standpoint of occult philosophy, which asks men to treat animals as their “younger brothers.”

H.P.B. explains that animals are “soulless” not because even the lowest as also the highest animal is without a soul, but only in the sense that they do not have “a conscious surviving Ego-soul,” *i.e.*, the Re-incarnating Ego (*Atma-Buddhi-Manas*) as in man, which survives the death of one body and takes on another. These principles are latent in animals, and therefore after the death of the physical body, the astral body of the animal survives for a short period, and the Monad or the divine spark of consciousness, reincarnates in a higher species.

It appears that Smartphones have not been able to shrink the world. The smartphone decade started with the year 2010, and at its beginning the tech pundits had predicted that smartphones will bring people closer, but it seems we are more alienated than ever. Sherry Turkle, professor of social psychology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in an interview with Paula Span, shares her views as to why this happened. Firstly, smartphones let you be somewhere else all the time. For instance, while attending a conference, you can be at a match through smartphone, and likewise, you may be commenting on your friends’ holiday videos while at a funeral. As a result, we do not know the people around us. “We have come to expect more from our devices and less from one another,” says Turkle. This lack of person-to-person contact tends to kill empathy, the capacity of putting one’s self in somebody else’s place. “You may watch virtual reality videos of a refugee camp, but it is not the same as wading through muck and swatting flies in food line.” Lack of empathy has killed conversation. The young are willing to connect but not converse because in a conversation you cannot control what you are going to say. On the other hand, in case of “Email, texting, Snapchat, Facebook, you are able to edit yourself. The thing about conversation is: I say it and then I have

said it. And that becomes terrifying.” However, we are unable to relate to another over text, because we cannot express our emotions, even using emoticons, as well as we do in a conversation, and likewise, we cannot know the effect of our apology or gratitude on another, without meeting face to face. She points out that children today do not know how to do apologies. Generally, by not engaging in conversation we are missing out on the ability of reading faces and body language, says Sherry Turkle. (*Sunday Times of India*, January 26, 2020)

Good human relations have the power to alter the world. Hours of watching television or surfing of the Internet cannot take the place of heart to heart conversation with a friend, wife or son. Then there is the need to *share* our frustrations, disappointments and achievements; and communications through electrical gadgets, mobiles and e-mails, cannot give the same joy that we experience in a person-to-person contact. A perfect relationship is based on deep love and understanding, and in it there is blending of opposing and complementary characteristics of two people involved.

Excerpts from the book, *The Lonely American: Drifting apart in the 21st Century*, by Jacqueline Olds and Richard S. Schwartz, professors of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, reprinted in *Utne Reader* (March-April 2009), provide an insight into cause and cure of loneliness experienced by 21st century Americans. The book shows that we feel increasingly alone even with the technologies devoted to staying connected. “Small daily choices—whether to go to a local store or order off the Internet, whether to pick up a ringing telephone or let it go to voice mail, whether to get together with a friend or pop in a DVD—end up defining one’s social world. These little decisions are cumulative. You step back a little from others. They step back a little from you. You feel a little left out.”

THE PROMISES I made to myself are just as binding as any others.

—W. Q. JUDGE