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

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### THE SCRIPTURES OF THE SOUL

THERE ARE two kinds of books: (1) giving permanent soul-knowledge, (b) giving passing sense-knowledge. The first kind gives the universal truth that is applicable to all, in all places and in all eras. The second gives particular knowledge that changes according to time, place, and circumstances. The *Gita* is the first kind of book, but so are the Vedas, Upanishads, the books of the Arabic and Persian Sufis, the Avesta of the Parsis, Dialogues and Discourses of Plato, the “Sermon on the Mount” of Jesus, Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te King* and many others.

Among such books that give permanent soul-knowledge, there is further classification. There are “fragments” that can only be read by souls at a particular stage of evolution, high or low, and by no other. In the process of evolution, each soul passes through that stage—has passed, is passing, or will pass. Therefore, that fragment does not appeal to all, but only to a few. Take for example the Sermon on the Mount. How many can live according to its precepts? Very few, for the readiness and knowledge of a special kind is required. The teaching of Jesus is more observed in breach than in practice. Then there are compact and complete books in which the message is to be found for every style of human evolution. This class contains the *Gita*.

The superiority of the *Gita* lies in the fact that it has a message for all human souls, a message for each at his own stage of evolution. Further, it does not belong to that class of great permanent-knowledge

books that are written in parables or in paradoxes—like Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te King*. It is written in plain, straightforward language. But the greatest factor that establishes its superiority lies in the historical fact that Shri Krishna formulated it for the Kali Yuga, our dark age, with its peculiarities and difficulties.

Therefore, is the *Gita* for all souls who desire to tread the Path of the Soul. Those who desire to tread the Path of the senses will find instruction in a hundred volumes, each according to his temperament, but there is no volume that we know of that enables us to tread the Path of the Soul as the *Gita*. Do not consider it a Hindu book, or even an Indian book. The message of the *Gita* is, in proportion as we recognize the values, and virtues of others, our own values and virtues become visible; and as we note the values and virtues of other peoples and nations, we unite with them. To us, even from the political point of view there is no force so great and strong as that of the *Gita* that will unite the different communities and races into one single harmonious Indian Nation.

Our purpose is to learn the fundamental basic message of this book of Soul-Discipline and Soul-Development. It depicts the Drama of Soul Evolution. The principal characters in this Drama are: 1. Dhritarashtra, the blind parent who stands for the body of man. 2. Duryodhana, the wealth of wickedness, the chief enemy of Arjuna and Pandavas which represents the *Kama-Manas* in man. 3. Arjuna, the Human Soul, the Thinker, and a Pupil. 4. Krishna, the Divine Spirit and Teacher within each one of us. There are many more characters in the *Gita*, like Sanjaya, the Reporter and Recorder, but we will consider these four only.

Dhritarashtra, he whose kingdom is firmly established, is blind. The body does not see, for the real senses and Soul-organs are seated in the astral body or *Sukshma Sharira*, the subtle form, joined to the physical body of flesh and blood. Note well, Dhritarashtra is not the enemy of the Pandavas. All *Suras* and *Asuras* require a physical body to work in and to work through. It has to be disciplined, cared

for, and taught. We should not regard it as of no value, but learn that it has no power of itself to guide and instruct.

Duryodhana is our lower nature; it is strong, obstinate, and wealthy. He has two-fold power: the power of passion and of thoughts. He is our lower mind, strong, turbulent and even intelligent. Interestingly, its name in the Drama is “Duryo-dhan” or Wealth of Wickedness. It also means “someone who is difficult to fight.”

Coming to Arjuna, in the Virat-Parva of the *Mahabharata*, eleven other names of this hero are given. One of his names which gives the clue to his real character is “Nara”—“Man.” Why is he called “man”? Because he is that power or principle in us which is the Thinker, the Reasoner, Human Soul, Manas, who develops into Manu, *Manushya*. Then we know our moods which change and the mind which wanders, we know it because we are “Human Souls” which is beyond and superior to our *Kama*, passions, and our wandering sense-thoughts.

Krishna is the Mysterious Instructor, *Yogeshwara*—the lord of Yoga or union. Although in history, Krishna is the *Avatara* and a Man, in the Drama of the *Gita* he represents our own Divine and Higher intelligence, our own guru and Master. In describing his *Vibhutis* or Divine Excellences in the Tenth discourse to Arjuna, he says: “of the Pandavas, I am Arjuna!” He is Arjuna, the Divinity in *Nara*, in each man. In the same discourse, we read, “I am the Ego which is seated in the hearts of all beings”—not just in *Brahmanas*, or Hindus, or even Indians, but in *all* beings.

Kurukshetra, the battlefield, is the place where *Dharma* is enacted, and hence it is *Dharmakshetra*, the field of *Dharma* or Duty. Here emerges the primal universal message of the *Gita*. This message is of Duty—or performance of *Dharma*. We all know about the conflict of duties; who has not experienced it? But the *Gita* resolves all conflicts by saying: “Do your Duty”—whatever it be. That is why the unpleasant duty—unpleasant to Arjuna—is stressed from the very start. Our divine Voice says: “Do your duty, difficult

and unpleasant, whatever it may be.” While performing your duties you are able to recognize your defects, overcome them, and make progress. In doing so, the knowledge springs up spontaneously. The *Gita* says: “Perform the congenital duties with which you are born,” “perform your own duties,” remember “duties of another, however pleasant are full of danger.” Arjuna’s duty is to kill, which he finds unpleasant, and yet he is asked to perform his duty.

Now, Arjuna or “Nara,” the human Soul is a *Kshatriya*. All of us as “souls” are soldiers, *Kshatriyas*. It is easier to become the soldier of the body and kill other bodies. The *Gita* says: “Become soul-soldier and kill your own lower passionate nature.” Each human soul has this first, primary, fundamental, basic *Dharma* or Duty to his own lower nature, the Duryodhana within us—to subdue and conquer him. This is to be done by the performance of the duties with which we are born.

Now each human soul is born to perform two great Duties in altogether four stages. (1) Each soul must learn to build his own home so that he may teach what he has learnt. (2) Each soul must acquire “knowledge” through study and application so that he may serve the community, nation, and race—serving Humanity, “the great family.”

In the first stage, we are students—*Brahmacharis*, celibates, servants of *Brahman*. This stage of a holy life is *Brhmacharya*. It really means, conserving all our energies, with the objective always in view—the building of the Home. The advice is, do not indulge in things that are not necessary for the future home-building. We could never be good servants of the nation, as social or political reformers by neglecting this ideal of Home-Building. The Home builder is the real reformer, and all else. We must acquire knowledge so that we may earn our own livelihood honourably; and that is the sign that we are capable of rearing and maintaining a home. One is called upon to teach, to protect, and to sacrifice, in the home, and that prepares a person to be able to teach and lead a nation, to protect his people, and to sacrifice for the many. This is so important that

such code as given to us by Manu and Yagnavalkya may be said to have been compiled from the viewpoint of Home-Building. Political freedom, to learn to be Home-Builders is the first task. Here is the message of the *Gita* for Educational Reformer.

“To build a Home, as it should be built, is to precipitate on earth the Kingdom of the Gods” writes Shri B. P. Wadia. He quotes Confucius, who said that “Those who would order their national life must set about ordering their home life....When the individual families have learned kindness, then the whole nation has learned kindness. When the individual families have learned courtesy, then the whole nation has learned courtesy. That is why it is said that, ‘A single word may spoil an affair and a single man can set the country in order.’”

The second stage is to enquire, how to build the Home? Let us not think that we will do the right performance of *Dharma* by neglecting Home. The *Gita* indicates how duty is to be performed towards superiors, equals, and inferiors. The Home is the training ground, the very heart of training grounds for the life of the soul, which means the life of service—*Seva* and Sacrifice—*Yagna*. Our ancient joint family system was devised on that basis. Each member learned the lesson of honouring the elders, helping the equals, and protecting the youngsters. Each virtue necessary in public life is to be acquired first in the Home. The greatest School of the Soul is the Home.

In the third stage, in the Home, as we grow in the performance of duties, as we know how to sacrifice as souls, we have reached the forest-dweller stage. It does not mean leaving the family; it means detachment from the family because through the performance of duties of the home, we come to see the larger family of the race. If one is cliquey in the family, they will learn how to be a good party-politician, or a good member of a particular social service group. But if one performs duties as they should be performed, without personal consideration, they will see the family expanding not only into the city, community or country, but the world. The family is not

a symbol of communal, civil, or national life, but the life of the whole of humanity. This is what the soul has to learn in the third stage—forest-dwelling—dwelling in the forest of his own thoughts, and rooting out the weeds, felling timber and working diligently he transforms the wilderness into a veritable garden.

In the fourth stage, one is ready to serve all—all peoples, all groups, all creeds, all communities. One becomes a cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world. The Home makes him that and the world becomes his home.

The lesson that is to be learned is whatever one's vocation and profession, one needs to be a Home-builder which teaches one to love and serve the great human family, by the performance of every duty. If the property or dharma of the fire is to burn; that of a human being is to give warmth and comfort to others, to make himself worthy to be the fire on which soul food is cooked for other souls. It is not *what* we do but *how* we do it that counts, according to the *Gita*. A scavenger who performs his duty in his hovel is superior to a rich lawyer or doctor who is poor family-man, negligent of his home, and careless of the lessons that the school of home imparts. The caste is not of the body but of the soul.

Let us be Arjunas and listen to the voice of our own Divine Self, Krishna within us. Let us not be despondent and throw down our bows and arrows as Arjuna did at the start of the Drama. Krishna, the teacher, the great soul is the instructor in the art of service or *Dharma*. Our Divinity teaches us how to shape our character, and how to direct our destiny. To Him, the Divine Mahatma, our Homage!

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THERE is nothing we like to see so much as the gleam of pleasure in a person's eye when he feels that we have sympathized with him, understood him, interested ourself in his welfare. At these moments something fine and spiritual passes between two friends. These moments are the moments worth living.

—DON MARQUIS

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**  
**THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE**  
**II**

IN THE NOVEL, it is important to note that Dr. Jekyll sought to separate out his evil side with the help of medication, through scientific studies, and that served to speed up his self-destruction. Each day he was able to see more clearly “that man is not truly one, but truly two.” In his own person, he recognized dual natures, engaged in a sort of perennial war. Dr. Jekyll realized that even if he was identified with either a good or a bad personality, he was *both*, as these were two aspects of himself. As time passed, he was more and more troubled by these dual personalities. It was evident that the intellectual side of the personality does not restrict a person, while the moral side of the individual limits freedom, guided by morality, norms, and rules, thus dividing good from evil. He wondered if only each personality could be housed separately! In that case, “the unjust might go his way delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil.”

Dr. Jekyll succeeded, by a drug mixture, in objectifying his other “self” as Mr. Hyde. This is the moment when for the first time Dr. Jekyll transforms into Mr. Hyde, and that is when evil starts taking over him. The feeling experienced was that he would rather be Mr. Hyde than “good” Dr. Jekyll. It is interesting to note that moral degradation brings about a reduction in his stature. Thus, “I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine....I was suddenly aware that I had lost in stature....And hence, I think, it came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller, slighter, and younger than Henry Jekyll. Even as good shone upon the countenance of the



one, evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other.” After every such transformation as Mr. Hyde—which was a welcome outlet for Jekyll’s lower impulses and passions, and during which his “conscience slept”—when he was transformed back as Dr. Jekyll, he woke again to his good qualities seemingly impaired. He would even make haste to undo the evil done by Hyde. “It was Hyde, after all, and Hyde alone, that was guilty.” But can Dr. Jekyll thus justify the wrong done? It is he who brings Hyde into being and is therefore responsible for the evil acts of Hyde. But clearly, it is Hyde, evil personified, who has the upper hand.

But the day came when Hyde, nourished by exercise, threatened to overthrow permanently the balance of Jekyll’s nature. In his final confession, the doomed doctor wrote: “I was slowly losing hold of my original and better self, and becoming incorporated with my second and worse....Between these two I now felt I had to choose...that it fell out with me, as it falls with so vast a majority of my fellows, that I chose the better part and was found wanting in the strength to keep it.”

The story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde draws our attention to the dual nature of man. Each one of us is a mixture of good and evil. In the story, Dr. Jekyll seeks to separate out evil from good by means of a potion. In the course of spiritual progress, such separation is the result of sustained aspiration and efforts to live the spiritual life. In an ordinary person, the good and bad tendencies exist as complex collective forces, but when one decides to achieve some spiritual goal, and resolves to allow his higher nature to govern him in his life, then these tendencies begin to separate into two opposing forces of good and bad tendencies—represented in the *Gita* as *Kaurava* and *Pandava* armies. Arjuna represents an individual who has resolved to develop his better nature. Like Arjuna, in the *Gita*, every individual who resolves to develop his better nature faces opposition from the lower tendencies and faculties, “which have their camp and base of action upon the Astral and other hidden planes.” The threshold has to be crossed before entering a room or a house. It is

as if someone sitting at the threshold of the house or a room prevents you from going inside the house or a room. Likewise, in moving from the familiar, personal, and often base nature, to the unfamiliar and spiritual nature, we have to face and conquer, at the threshold, the evil in our own nature, in the family, race, etc. Mr. Judge tells us that the “Dweller is the combined evil influence that is the result of the wicked thoughts and acts of the age in which anyone may live.” H.P.B. mentions that the chela is not only called upon to face all latent evil propensities of his own nature but also the evil tendencies accumulated by the community and nation to which he belongs.

Each one of us is forming our individual Dweller. At first, our selfish, personal, and unkind thoughts, feelings and actions do not seem to produce any effect on us. We produce thoughts, feelings, or actions and then forget them. Although we forget them, these have not disappeared but remain in the invisible astral sphere or zone that surrounds us. Coalescing with other thoughts, feelings and actions, in time, a form is built, which is magnetically linked to us. At first, it will not reveal itself as a shape but may infuse in the aspirant a sense of horror, or a feeling of fear. Later, it takes a definite shape.

Our Dweller is about us all the time. Everything that conflicts with good is an operation of that Dweller. We are in *Kali-yuga*, the dark age, which is characterized by selfishness, competitiveness, and declining moral values. We are influenced by the thoughts and feelings of our fellow men. Their thoughts and acts tend to reinforce our Dweller. “The greatest Dweller we have is doubt, suspicion, fear, lack of faith. These are outward exhibitions of the Dweller....These Dwellers have to be conquered. We must have absolute faith; absolute faith in our power to learn, and an unbounded confidence in that which is being taught us,” writes Mr. Crosbie. In fact, every duty left undone, every moment of sloth, every feeling of fear, anger, and envy, goes to form the Dweller.

But there are also weapons to fight the Dweller. Every time we foster good aspirations, every time we use our will to overcome

sloth, every time we are able to overcome fear, superstition, and blind belief, every time we respond to insult, anger or ill-will with kindness, charity, and forgiveness, we are building the weapons to fight the foes in the final battle. Every time we listen to our conscience, we are using one of our most potent weapons for the fight but most of the time we tend to ignore the message which comes from the Inner Ruler. We would do well to nip in the bud our weaknesses. We must watch for the occasions when, however small a degree, we let sloth overcome will.

Regular self-examination is necessary to become aware of the weak and strong points in our character. One day we may become aware of our tendency to have uncharitable thoughts. We know that it is not good, but we also know how terribly hard the fight will be before we can overcome this tendency. We know that we have to fight hard to be able to stick to our aspirations, or even to our resolutions, and not let them fade away through lack of will-power. Sometimes we may discover that we have begun to consider ourselves so important or good that we are all the time criticizing others. We might be so occupied with criticism of others that we have no time left to look at our own weaknesses. Often, this creates the delusion that we are always right and others are all wrong. Thus, we build the most harmful of all Dwellers—pride, or the perverted sense of “I,” or the exaggerated self-importance, which is the most difficult foe to fight.

As we progress on the spiritual path with greater aspiration and strong determination, more marked is the separation of the good from evil in our nature. Our faults and weaknesses begin to assemble and take shape, and when the process is completed, it becomes *Papa-Purusha*, the evil Dweller, of which Mr. Hyde in the story may be regarded as a faint shadow. But our aspirations and our effort to lead a higher life also begin to take shape creating *Punya-Purusha*. “Then by the help and strength of the latter we eject the former from within ourselves. Next, it torments us from without; this is the real Dweller. There are some grim mysteries connected with the

subject. A clear conscience, purity of magnetism and cleanliness of the body are the very best protection. You are bound to get over difficulties as you persist in attention-devotion,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

In the article, “Death” by Eliphas Levi, we read, “To be immortal in good, one must identify oneself with God; to be immortal in evil, with Satan. These are the two poles of the world of souls...” (*The Theosophist*, October 1881). The good and the pure strive to reach *Nirvana* or the state of *absolute* existence and *absolute* consciousness. The evil and the wicked are caught in the wheel of birth and death preferring evil over good.

Theosophy teaches that at every rebirth, the Higher Manas sends out a Ray to function through the body and this ray may be called the “incarnated mind.” The incarnated mind, functioning through the body, is in essence, identical with the Higher, Divine Mind, but when it incarnates it forgets its divine origin and becomes of dual nature. The incarnated mind or manas is the personal ego, from which arises the feeling of personal “I” or personal Identity, of being Mr. X or Miss. Y. This incarnated mind can choose to turn towards the higher, divine aspect or gravitate towards *Kama* or passions and desires. That aspect of the mind that clings to *Kama* is dissipated with it in *Kama-Loka* after death. We lose a portion of the incarnated Manas at the end of every life. However, that aspect of the mind which seeks guidance from the divine nature and listens to the “Voice of Conscience,” becomes part of the divine or the Higher Ego. It is called the “aroma” of the personality, which gets assimilated by the Higher Ego and becomes immortal. In every incarnation, a fresh ray of the manas is launched. In every birth, a portion of the incarnated mind that was engaged in something noble and spiritual is assimilated in the Divine Ego. The aspect of the mind that gets entangled in worldly, personal affairs, desires and weaknesses, as also downright evil and wickedness, is cast away. At the end of every incarnation, a portion of the incarnated mind or soul is lost. In rare cases, the *entire* incarnated mind or personality can be lost,

when a person persists in choosing the life of evil and wickedness. Such beings are called “lost souls,” who may be said to have become immortal in evil. The loss of soul can occur in extremely depraved and wicked people, or in crass materialists. H.P.B. speaks of *spiritually dead* people whose only delight is in material and intellectual pleasures without any care for humanity. It is equally rare that the entire incarnated mind or personality is so pure as to get merged with and assimilated by the Higher, Divine Ego, and these may be said to have become immortal in good.

H.P.B. sums up by explaining it in clearer terms: “The preservation of personal identity beyond death...is accomplished only by adepts and sorcerers—the one class having acquired the supreme secret of knowledge by holy methods; and with benevolent motives; the other having acquired it by unholy methods and for base motives” (*The Theosophist*, November 1882). It is useful to turn to the passage in *Light on the Path* which says that masses of men go through life waveringly, not having definite goals and hence their Karma operates in a confused manner. But those who wish to walk the path of occultism are brought to the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Good and Evil. One has to make a choice. No longer is he capable of the indecision of ignorance. Knowingly we take steps on the right or wrong path and every step produces great karmic results. Hence, the portion of humanity that has not decided to walk the path of occultism and therefore make a definite choice between good and evil is the lay majority. But those who knowingly choose good, life after life, walk the Right-hand Path to reach Adeptship, while those who knowingly choose evil walk the Left-hand Path and become sorcerers.

“Reflection shows that, rather than being a modern story, the tale of Jekyll versus Hyde is a timeless parable of the higher and lower nature. Like the universal allegories of old it has varied, potent applications for those who have eyes to see them.” (*Theosophy*, November 1952, p. 13)

(Concluded)

## EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

### SEX

IT IS, in this curve of the Great Cycle of Necessity, necessary to understand that we as souls learn through bodies of both types—male and female. Sex does not inhere in spirit but its roots are in the psychic nature. Judge's *Letters That Have Helped Me*, and if I am not mistaken *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* contain several points. Before man rebecomes a one-sexed being he will progress through what is called the hermaphrodite stage; not homosexuality but a proper and proportionate development of the Buddhi (Hermes) and Manas (Aphrodite). In the fifth sub-race of the Third Root Race separation of the sexes took place and what begins must end, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II especially, explains when and how. In every incarnation, sex of the body is determined by certain psychic tendencies inhering in us and our personal development demands and Nature responds by building a male or a female form for us.

The problem of the origin and development of the two sexes is connected with the sin of the mindless. It is an obscured study inasmuch as only hints are given, and these few in number. Dignity and purity of sex life will take us, one by one, to the plane where reverence for the opposite sex (and not only attraction) will be born. One hint—between the prevailing and growing homosexuality and the development of the hermaphrodite the difference is as between black and white magic.

Please remember that there are affinities and affinities. For one like you there cannot be an ordinary kind of marriage without spiritual affinity, for otherwise you will find your inner life made a hundredfold more difficult. Love also is of two kinds, represented by the blind Cupid and the all-seeing Eros. So my advice to you would be: Hold on to Theosophy; live the life as best you see it at the moment, and let Karma decide. Do not force the issue, and please remember that there is always time for consideration and reflection before any decision is taken.

It is perfectly proper that when a *suitable* mate is found a man should marry and settle down as a householder, bringing up a family with right views and high purposes. But decide nothing hastily. *Brahmacharya*, the way of true celibacy, is not for all. It is in some ways and at a certain stage superior to, but much, much more difficult than, the *Grihastha* way, or the householder's life described by Mr. Judge in his article "Living the Higher Life" (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 34*). But remember also this: there are marriages and marriages. The ideal of the householder is high and sacred, and some of its esoteric aspects are brought out in this pamphlet, which you will do well to read carefully. You speak of killing out the desire for sexual gratification. It is possible to do this, not by a single effort which tries to kill and to uproot in a moment, but by gradual training in self-control, making the lower nature yield to the higher and training it day by day until it is absolutely subject to the will. When the animal instincts are simply suppressed or crushed out, man is in a very different condition from that in which these same gross elements are refined, elevated, purified and preserved. Of course, you can develop before marriage that right attitude to sex by dwelling on the idea that the creative power in man is a divine gift and we abuse that power and desecrate that gift when we use it merely for animal gratification. That selfishness is the real root of unhappy marriages or marriages which are failures, and that the association of man and woman when really inspired by altruism is a very different thing indeed, lying as it does at the very foundation of a very happy home, is not generally admitted because such relations are seldom seen.

*Brahmacharya* is truly the service of Brahma. Conservation of energy, of time, of speech, of thought, feeling, etc., is related to it. This is a most difficult topic. Conservation of *Prana*, rooted in and emanating from *Jiva* on different planes of being, is involved in the process of *Brahmacharya*. Not only the body but our other constituents also have their own *seminal principle*. That *creative* power has to be conserved and then concentrated, only after which true creative acts by body, mind or heart should take place.

We cannot let this confusion in the mind of the questioner pass about marriage in the East and marriage in the West. Marriage in the East is no more predestined than marriage in the West. And marriage in the West is not all free choice and free will without the basis of Karma. Go away for the moment from the question of marriage and please note that a man cannot exert his free will save and except by the recognition of his weakness as well as his merit. It is custom and not nature's law which functions both in the East and in the West. Marriage in the East is not regarded in the real sense as predestined. We have our affinities and there are affinities now in existence with those we contact. These affinities may work out as in the Western world through what is called free will, but there are other circumstances which surround that free will. Here in India also though horoscopes are consulted there are innumerable factors which go into the determination of the marriage question. The whole problem needs to be looked at Theosophically, for both ways that are called Eastern and Western there are grave defects which make marriage a lottery, as H.P.B. puts it. It is well to draw the questioner's attention to what is said by her in *The Key to Theosophy*, as also the pamphlet "Living the Higher Life."

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In modern civilization individuals whose conduct is inspired by a moral ideal are very seldom encountered. However, such individuals still exist. We cannot help noticing their aspect when we meet them. Moral beauty is an exceptional and very striking phenomenon. He who has contemplated it but once never forgets its aspect, This form of beauty is far more impressive than the beauty of nature and of science. It gives to those who possess its divine gifts, a strange, an inexplicable power. It increases the strength of intellect. It establishes peace among men. Much more than science, art and religious rites, moral beauty is the basis of civilization.

—ALEXIS CARREL



## WATER AND ITS SYMBOLOGY

### III

THE FIRST three Avatars of Vishnu are connected with water. The first is Matsya Avatar, as a fish, the second is Kurma Avatar, as a tortoise, and the third is Varaha Avatar, as a boar. In a sense, various avatars depict the gradual evolution and transformation of all species, beginning with Azoic time, corresponding to the *ilus* in which Brahma implants the creative germ. Then we pass through Palaeozoic and Mesozoic times, covered by the first and second incarnations as the fish and tortoise. Next is the Cenozoic period, covered by the third and fourth incarnations in the animal and semi-human forms of the boar and man-lion. (*Isis*, II, 275)

Matsya-Avatar symbolizes the period when the earth was covered with water. According to the story in the “Mahabharata,” while Vaivaswata Manu was engaged in devotion on the riverbank, a fish appears and pleads to be saved from a bigger fish. He saves it and places it in a jar, where growing larger and larger, he tells him of the forthcoming deluge. H.P.B. observes that it is the well-known “Matsya Avatar,” the first Avatar of Vishnu, and many other things besides. 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 and water, 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.” (*H.P.B. Series No. 2*, p. 13)

In the article, “Lamas and Druses,” H.P.B. writes that “Dagon” is the Chaldean word which means Holy Wisdom, and that is incarnated in their messenger called Oannes, the Man-fish. Just like Vishnu, Oannes, or Man-fish, rose out of the waters several times, and taught the Chaldeans useful arts and everything else. In the *Theosophical Glossary*, under the term “Oannes,” we are given the explanation of dual existence on land and water. “This Being (Oannes) was accustomed to pass the day among men, teaching; and when the Sun had set, he retired again into the sea, passing the night in the deep, “*for he was amphibious*,” *i.e.*, he belonged to two planes: the spiritual and the physical. For the Greek word *amphibios* means simply “life on two planes,” from *amphi*, “on both sides,” and *bios*, “life.” The word was often applied in antiquity to those men who, though still wearing a human form, had made themselves almost divine: through knowledge, and lived as much in the spiritual supersensuous regions as on earth. We are reminded of what H.P.B. tells us about many spiritual entities who have incarnated in men “without abandoning their status and functions in the supersensuous regions.” (*S.D.*, I, 233)

Fish and water are connected with transformation or spiritual regeneration. “The whole of the *New Testament* is an allegorical representation of the Cycle of Initiation, *i.e.*, the natural birth of man in *sin* or flesh, and of his second or spiritual birth as an Initiate followed by his resurrection after three days of trance,” writes H.P.B. Jesus himself came to river Jordan and was baptized by John. H.P.B. explains that the name of Jordan, according to Hebrew scholars, is derived from the Hebrew *Jar-ed*, to flow down or descend. If we add the letter *n* (in Hebrew *nun*) to Jared, it becomes Jar-Dan or fish-river. *Jar* means flowing river and Dan the name of the tribe of Dan. Jar-Dan means “river of Dan,” or Judgement. Jesus, the *man*, and the neophyte, is born of Mary, *Mar*, and the waters, like every other man, and it is his first birth. Water symbolizes matter and also purification. At his second birth, he enters and stands in the river of Dan, which means Jesus, the *man*, entering the water (the type of

the spiritual womb of his second birth) and enters Jar-Dan, the river of Dan. Emerging from it, he became Christos, the glorified Initiate. (*Notes on the Gospel According to John*)

In Kurma Avatar, Vishnu is associated with the myth of the churning of the ocean. Lord Vishnu suggested that the *Devas* and *Asuras* should jointly churn the ocean for obtaining *Amrita* or the nectar of immortality. In the process of churning, mount Mandara was used as the churning tool, and Vasuki, the king of serpents, as the churning rope. The gods holding the tail of the serpent, and the demons holding its head, pulled on it alternately, causing the mountain to rotate, which in turn churned the ocean. However, during the churning process, the mountain began to sink. In the *Matsya Purana*, Vishnu states that “the World Turtle” Kurma, or Cosmic Turtle (or tortoise) which supports all the worlds on his back (which is one of the forms assumed by Vishnu) must be requested by the gods to aid in the churning of the ocean. Then Kurma is placed in Patala as the base of Mount Mandara.

H.P.B. observes that India has connected *Saptarishis* with the time or revolutions of the Yugas. They are intimately connected with Kali Yuga or the Dark Age. She goes on to say that the Hindus have placed on the great Circle of Time, a Tortoise, which represents the Kurma (or Sisumara) Avatar of Vishnu, and on its back is placed a cross by nature, which tends to divide and localize, stars, planets and constellations. Thus, for instance, in *Bhagavat Purana*, we read that Dhruva (the ex-pole star) is placed at the extremity of the tail of this tortoise and its head is directed towards the South, and the body of the animal is in the shape of a ring or Circle. It is along the tail of the animal that there are Prajapati, Agni, Indra, Dharma, etc., and *across its loins* are the Seven Rishis. The Circle on which the Tortoise rests is the Eternal Circle of Boundless Time, and there is a cross on the body of this Tortoise. This is the earliest symbology of Cross and Circle, formed by the Deity, which is Vishnu or Narayana. If the Circle is boundless Time, we may take Cross on the back of the tortoise to represent Spirit-Matter or manifestation within space and

time, within which are shown lying all the gods, creatures, and creations. (*S.D.*, II, 549)

Just as Vishnu, in the form of Kurma or Tortoise, holds on his back the mountain Mandara, one who wants to establish himself in spiritual knowledge, must be able to draw in all his senses, and restrain them from moving towards their accustomed objects. *The Voice of the Silence* advises the seeker: “Thou shalt not let thy senses make a playground of thy mind.”

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 Avatar,” writes H.P.B. We are also told that the last Kalpa was the Padma, the present one is Varaha. This refers to the period when our globe was covered with water, and the physical nature, unaided by the divine intelligences, failed to create man. After this, the “Creators” are displeased and dry the earth, and thus began the period of incrustation. It refers to the first inclination of the axis of the earth. After rotating for 300 million years, there was a deluge as a result of the inclination of the axis, and there were several such, and at that time, monsters, half-human, half-animal, were generated. There is a reference to this in the *Book of the Dead* and also in the Chaldean account of creation in Cutha tablets. (*S.D.*, II, 52-53)

Water nourishes and sustains life, but water also plays a major role in destruction. Since Vaivasvata Manu’s humanity appeared on this Earth, there have been four axial disturbances, sweeping away the old continents, (second, third, and fourth continents), except the first one, being submerged in the oceans, and new lands appearing in their place. Further, the sub-races and family races are subject to the same cleansing process. One is able to observe the rise and fall of nations with the beginning and end of the sidereal cycles. (*S.D.*, II, 330)

There are various kinds of *pralaya*, cataclysms, or deluges. There is the *individual pralaya* of each Globe, as humanity and life pass on to the next; seven minor Pralayas in each Round. When seven

Rounds or circling around seven globes for seven times is completed then it is called *Planetary pralaya*. After the planetary *pralaya*, the evolution of monads or egos commences on a new planet, formed from the energy and spiritual principles of the one that died—just as the moon chain of globes gave birth to the earth chain of globes. The monads or egos from the moon chain continue their evolution on the earth-chain. The planetary *pralaya* for our earth is called the Night of Brahma. In the Hindu books, Brahma's Night is called *Naimittika pralaya*. It marks the destruction of all the creatures and forms, but not of the substance. It occurs at the end of the Day of Brahma, or the end of fourteen Manvantaras, or 1000 Mahayugas. *Vishnu Purana* gives an allegorical description of the process of dissolution. Thus, *Avyaya*, or eternal life symbolized by Vishnu, enters the Seven Rays of the Sun drinks up all the water of the Earth and makes it dry. Having absorbed all moisture, the Seven Rays become seven Suns by dilation and set the world on fire. Hari as *Kalagni* consumes the earth and Rudra as *Janardana* sends clouds and rain. This appears to refer to the destruction by Fire and Water.

There is *Solar Pralaya* when the whole Solar System comes to an end. There is also the Universal *Maha Pralaya* or *Brahma Pralaya* or *Prakritika Pralaya* which occurs at the close of the Age of Brahma, which is a period of 311 trillion years, when there is not only destruction of forms, but also the substance is resolved into primordial or homogeneous state. Everything is reabsorbed into its original ONE Element—the “Gods themselves, Brahma and the rest” is said to die and disappear during that long NIGHT. (*S.D.*, I, 373, fn.)

The Mind is often compared to water. Just as water takes the shape of the vessel it is poured into, and appears rounded when poured into a round vessel or squared when poured into a square vessel, so does the mind become that to which it is devoted. Mind is the most important factor in the pursuit of concentration, and therefore it is important to first grasp that the mind is “modified” by any object or subject brought before it, or to which it is directed. It is by means

of the five senses that the mind goes out to an object or subject. “Hence by means of hearing it shapes itself into the form of the idea which may be given in speech, or by means of the eye in reading, it is moulded into the form of that which is read; again, sensations such as heat and cold modify it directly and indirectly by association and by recollection, and similarly in the case of all senses and sensations” (*The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, p. xii). However, Sage Patanjali says that it is possible to control the mind and bring it to a state of absolute calmness. “Concentration, or Yoga is the hindering of the modifications of the thinking principle (mind).” Concentration is the correcting of a tendency to diffuseness, and obtaining of “one-pointedness.”

The symbology of the flowing and the stagnant water is spiritually significant. The river water is an example of flowing water, which makes the surroundings productive. The river water continues to flow, overcoming natural obstacles, till it reaches its destination. In fact, the running water of a river carries with it all the waste and impurities and is therefore associated with the process of cleansing, renewal, and purification. It may be compared to an open and receptive mind, which is deliberative and reflecting, ready to discard misconceptions and preconceptions, and ready to accept the right ideas. The flowing water represents progress which results from accepting and applying spiritual ideas as against materialistic and dogmatic ideas.

The water in the lake, pond or a well is stagnant and often contains harmful bacteria and microorganisms. The stagnant water represents narrow-mindedness, obstructive to spiritual progress. For true spiritual progress, the spiritual aspirant is required to develop breadth and depth of mind. In the Sanskrit language, a narrow-minded and short-sighted person is called “*kupmanduk*,” or a “frog in a well,” who foolishly imagines the limits of his knowledge to form the limit of all human knowledge. The story of a *kupmanduk* tells us about a frog who lived in a well, and therefore his whole world was up to the edge of the well. When a sea turtle came to that well he started talking about a huge sea.

The frog jumped from one end to the other end of the water in the well and said that your sea might be this big. The turtle said it was bigger, and the frog said that he was lying, because there cannot be a sea bigger than the well! A narrow-minded person, who has never seen a Mahatma, a spiritually perfect being, would scoff at the notion, or imagine him to be a little higher in knowledge and powers than an average human being. It is like trying to measure with a foot rule the depth of a sea.

*The Voice of the Silence* uses the imagery of “flowing water” and “stagnant water” to differentiate between a person who chooses *moksha* or the Path of Liberation, by entering Nirvana, to enjoy peace and bliss, and the person who renounces peace and bliss of Nirvana to remain behind and help the suffering humanity by imparting spiritual knowledge, and guiding it in the spiritual progress. The one who has reached perfection is addressed thus: “If thou would’st have that stream of hard-earned knowledge, of Wisdom heaven-born, remain sweet running waters, thou should’st not leave it to become a stagnant pond....Know that the stream of superhuman knowledge and the Deva-Wisdom thou hast won, must, from thyself, the channel of Alaya, be poured forth into another bed. Know, O Narjol, thou of the Secret Path, its pure fresh waters must be used to sweeter make the Ocean’s bitter waves—that mighty sea of sorrow formed of the tears of men.”

A sloka from Vedic literature, “*Akashat patitam toyam yatha gacchati sagaram, sarvadeva namaskarah Keshavam prati gacchati*,” (“All the water falling from the sky ultimately goes to the sea, through various channels, so also, worship of any of the many gods, ultimately reaches Lord Keshava.”) teaches Advaita concept of One God, *Paramatma* or Supreme Being. Like the water or raindrops falling from the sky are ultimately on their way back to the sea, “theosophy considers humanity as an emanation from divinity on its return path thereto. At an advanced point upon the path, Adeptship is reached by those who have devoted several incarnations to its achievement,” says H.P.B.

(Concluded)



## SELF-CONTROL AND SELF-INDULGENCE

PROMINENT among deeds of mortification or *tapas* is control of the bodily lusts and appetites. Lust has a wider field than sexual desire, and one who is slave to his palate, to his body's hurt, should bear in mind the warning in *The Voice of the Silence*: "Do not believe that lust can ever be killed out if gratified or satiated, for this is an abomination inspired by Mara. It is by feeding vice that it expands and waxes strong, like the worm that fattens on the blossom's heart."

Each yielding makes the final conquest harder. In an "Editor's Note" in *The Theosophist*, Vol. IV, p. 88, Madam Blavatsky tells us that "if there is one thing more than another which paralyzes the will-power in man and thereby paves the way to physical and moral degradation it is intemperance in eating."

There is food for thought also in the Master's statement that "one who becomes a slave to any physical weakness never becomes the master of even the lower powers of nature." Sometimes our nearest and dearest are unconsciously in league with the enemy, desiring as they do to give us pleasure and little realizing the price of self-indulgence to ourselves in lost self-confidence and weakened will. But the responsibility of overcoming temptation or the guilt of weakly yielding to it is our own. A verse of a Christian hymn with little claim to poetry conveys sound advice: "Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin. Each victory will help you, some other to win."

What is indulgence of the sense of taste against one's better judgment but a low-plane gratification which yields the sceptre to the body which ought to be the real man's obedient servant? We are told in *Through the Gates of Gold*: "...let the king resolve to...forcibly evict the animal from the chair of state, restoring the god to the place of divinity."

The subjugation of the lower to the higher nature sometimes takes much longer than it need or should. A clean break with a bad habit or one injurious to the body is quicker, surer and, in the long run far less painful, though requiring moral stamina. It is the only way,



apparently, for a compulsive drinker to break the chains of alcohol addiction. And, in the case of any earnest student of Theosophy who knows that even a small quantity of a particular food is poisonous to his body, giving it up ought surely to be a matter of one deliberate and irrevocable decision. The greater the effort the more glorious the victory! The opposite course is no more sensible than it would be, in the name of sparing suffering, to make a necessary amputation inch by inch instead of once for all.

Very different from the moral weakness of one who submits to the rule of his palate is the case described by H.P.B. in the “Editor’s Notes” (*The Theosophist*, November 1882) of one who *offers* his life in sacrifice to philanthropy and to his duty. He will have to live in *kama loka* his appointed life term, even “the man of science who wastes his life in brain-work and fatigue and *knows* he is so wasting it and yet is offering it day after day and night after night in order to discover some great law of the universe, the discovery of which may bring in its results some great boon to mankind.” But he dies honoured and admired by all. On the other hand, we find in *The Ocean of Theosophy*, gluttons named as one of the classes, including executed individuals, drunkards and black magicians living in the astral world, who “hold the field of physical mediumship and are liable to invade the sphere of any medium...”

One whose family responsibilities demand that he preserve, as fully and as long as possible, his life in health and strength, and especially one whose contact with Theosophy has aroused in him enthusiasm and a keen sense of obligation to serve his fellow men by helping spread its teachings, what excuse can he offer to the Masters or to the Higher Self for shortening by self-indulgence the life of his physical body? “My palate tempted me and I did eat”?

There is no need for dejection if we have tried and failed, though there is a great need for strengthening our resolution, looking for strength to overcome our weakness to our Higher Self, the Divine Spirit, or the God in us, and to our Karma.

## PSYCHOLOGY—ANCIENT AND MODERN

### II

EVOLUTION has a purpose, an object, an origin, and all these powers of Soul exist in every being. The being may be conscious of the fact or not, may have aroused part of them or all of them, may be using them or be utterly unaware of what they are. The kingdoms below man are very clearly those which can exercise only the lower or earliest developed of the powers of Soul. There are higher powers. We know that we can think; we know that we can will; we know that we occasionally have flashes of what we call intuition; we know that occasionally we can meditate without going to sleep; we know that occasionally we can concentrate upon some single thought, or idea, to the exclusion of all else; we know perfectly well that an animal cannot do that because it has not yet reached that stage in Soul evolution we have reached. But by the same token there are beings above us who exercise all the powers of the kingdoms below us, all the Soul powers man possesses, and the Soul powers we at our stage only dream or speculate about—and exercise them at all times in full consciousness. This means that before they do anything they know what the result of doing it will be. Such beings cannot make a mistake any more than law can make a mistake; in fact, such beings *are* law to themselves.

From these twelve divisions of the powers of all Souls there have arisen, in the course of time, twelve great orders of beings. There are kingdoms of Souls above man as there are below him. Yet all these classes originate from one class—not the class representing any one or any number of these powers, but that class which is the consummation of all powers, which has passed beyond the need of the exercise of any power. In other words, all forms of conditioned or manifested existence arise from unconditioned and unmanifested Life.

There are orders of beings, as we saw, above man. The highest of these are those who are universally self-conscious. Then there

are those whose self-consciousness is that of a hierarchy. The next order is ourselves—those who are self-conscious individually, whether in a body or out of a body. We may say that our self-consciousness represents Soul, pure and simple. Our powers are all of the twelve powers of the Soul. We have not yet fully organized these powers because we do not understand them. Our attempts to exercise the higher powers of Soul, to develop and co-ordinate them, are continually interfered with by the activity of the lower or earlier developed, more firmly coherent powers of Soul while in the body. Our self-consciousness has not yet reached the status of the self-consciousness of a Christ or of a Krishna, because we, on account of the imperfections of our mind, limit our conception of self-consciousness to this body, or to this mind, whereas in truth self-consciousness represents a *state* of Life, not a form; it is that condition of Life which lies precisely at the midway point, between unmanifested Life and manifested Life.

The statement is made that the Spirit in the body experiences the qualities which proceed from the body, and we know what those qualities are. Are we not subject to habit? Are we not subject to instinct? Are we not subject to impulse? Are we not subject to desires? So terribly subject to them are we that when we see, whether by concentration, by meditation, by intuition, or by thought, will and feeling—when we see that such-and-such a desire, instinct, or a habit ought to be overcome, there is a terrible struggle, and usually these very powers of Soul which have their culmination in the kingdoms below us are so strong that they overcome our higher powers. Who among us can order his own thoughts? Yet that is a power which appertains not to the kingdoms below man but to man and the kingdoms above. Who can set his will and constantly keep the continuity of a fixed attitude? Yet that is a self-conscious power of the Soul, when properly understood, exercised, developed, organized. Who among us can command intuition? We occasionally have intuitions, but we do not know how they come. Sometimes we confuse intuition with impulse, but there is scarcely a person

living who does not have, now and again, what he calls “a hunch.”

Then there is meditation—that power of the Soul by which we can still instantly every other power, by which we can stop habit, stop instinct, stop impulse, stop desire, stop thought, will, feeling, intuition, memory and imagination, as if they never had an existence. We hear of reducing oneself to the position of Spectator, pure and simple, without any spectacle at all, where self-consciousness alone occupies the field. That is meditation; that is a power of the Soul, and there is the borderline between Spirit and Matter.

Then beyond meditation is the true power of concentration. One of the most ancient of psychologists expressed it this way: that, after all the acquired powers had been reduced to order and control, then the man could step from intuition to meditation, then he could “intend his will”; he could become the law of Nature. That is concentration.

The main work of H.P. Blavatsky was psychological. It was an attempt to encourage men to believe in Soul, in the possibility that *we* are Soul: in the possibility that *all* is Soul and Spirit; to encourage men to begin to study Soul powers as manifested in themselves; then to begin to study Theosophy and its teachings as a science of the Soul.

Who among our theologians, among our scientists, or our professors of any and every kind, knows anything about the psychology of evil, of good, of happiness, and of pain? Who knows anything about the psychology of the waking consciousness, of the dream state, of deep sleep, of death, of birth, and of the disembodied states? Where is the man who knows anything about the psychology of entrance in a body or withdrawal at will? Who know anything of that psychology by which we may instantly know the entire nature of any other being—his whole past, present and future—so far as the factors now in action predicate it? Yet there always have been men who possessed those powers. Our psychologists are divided even in regard to mind and its states. Some of them think mind has no existence whatever apart from matter; but not one of them *knows* a thing about mind functioning as mind, not in connection with

matter at all, but directly in connection with other minds. Not one of them knows a thing about the so-called astral nature.

What are the barriers for us to concentration? The hardest of all to overcome is memory. We do not know anything about a memory at will, and forgetfulness at will, and yet that is one of the Soul powers, and it is a form of that very power we exercise right along. All of us know a lot of things by heart. How is it that we can recall them when we want them? They do not crowd our mind all the time. Whatever we do that we know is wrong, we cannot forget. Whatever other people do to us, we cannot forget. Only the slow lapse of time and an overlay of thousands of succeeding impressions can blot it out for the time being. That is one of the hardest barriers—memory.

When anybody gets past memory, gets past the tendency to go to sleep, gets past imagination, then he comes in contact with one of the worst enemies of man—half-baked ideas, a mixture of true and false, all taken to be true; in other words, misconceptions, prejudices. Now, it is not the other fellow's false ideas, prejudices and misconceptions that we need to worry over; it is our own. Neither the religionists nor the scientists understand anything of true psychology. What stands in the way is misconceptions, prejudices, preconceptions in regard to what they admit they know nothing of.

The worst thing about a man who gets hold of the truth about anything is that he thinks he is infallible; he believes he knows it *all*. Many, many a man has had true intuitions, has had the fruits of a moment's meditation, has had a glimpse which comes from true concentration, has acquired the enlightenment which comes from the unification of thought, will and feeling, and having obtained a glimpse of true psychology, has fancied he had it all. The moment he thinks he knows it all, it shuts him off absolutely from all that is known and from all that is knowable, except the little he knows.

So, a man has to go back to the true teachings of psychology in order to overcome these very powers we have already acquired, but which turn against us when we try to turn them from their wonted use. We have to go back to fundamentals; we have to remember

that all is Life; that all manifested Life, from the highest to the lowest, is evolving, that the very greatest being in the universe *becomes* so, and is not made; that the very lowest being in the universe will some day attain the status of the highest, and that evolution is from within outward, because it is the evolution of Soul. We then have to begin to study the powers of Soul as manifested in us; we have to study their operation in us, then our use of them in relation to others, and we will begin to understand the real meaning of Universal Brotherhood.

Universal Brotherhood means the psychology of Soul relations. That puts a scientific meaning on the whole of life and brings it within our power to undertake the noblest of all noble pursuits—the study of Self, the study of Soul, the study of immortal Life, which we *are*, and not of mere mortal forms. “Man know thyself,” we are told. What theologian or scientist, or one of these most progressed men from the human standpoint can say, “I know myself, I know what Soul is, I know what Soul powers are, I know the laws of Soul evolution”? Yet the same assiduity that our theologians devote to their dogmas, their churches and ritual, the same assiduity that physical science devotes to the study of mere form and actions of matter, the same assiduity we devote to sleeping and waking, playing, fighting, suffering, enjoying—the same energy and assiduity turned to the study of Soul would make it possible for us to attain to the state of such beings as Christ, as Buddha, as Krishna. “Let us conquer self, and thus turn the inward insidious enemy and deceiver into the friend and constant guide,” writes Mr. Judge.

(*Concluded*)

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TO MAKE a man happy, fill his hands with work, his heart with affection, his mind with purpose, his memory with useful knowledge, his future with hope, and his stomach with food.

—FREDERICK E. CRANE

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Albert Camus, a French Existentialist, said that “the need to be right is the sign of a vulgar mind.” It can be applied to all the circumstances and situations of life. A person who insists upon being right all the time tends to become rigid, whereas a person who learns to accept that there are more times when he could be wrong rather than right, during his lifetime, becomes a thoughtful human being. We must remember that life is complex and also fair, which gives our opponents the chance to be right at times. Accepting that others also could be right is important for a healthy relationship and enables one to acquire a wider perspective. “Your insistence that you are right, embittered our relationship. One cannot be right all the time. Let the other person be right sometimes. When we let others be right, we accept and validate different and new perspectives,” writes Urdu poetess Parveen Shakir.

There was an animated and acrimonious discussion between Shankara and Mandan Misra, and they decided to make the wife of Mandan Misra the judge. Shankara was young enough to be Mandan Mishra’s son. When Shankara won the debate and Mandan Mishra was reluctant to accept his defeat, his wife admonished him that the delusion that he could never be wrong had made him reluctant to accept that Shankara was right.

One’s insistence upon being right all the time, does not make him upright and ethical. A genuine rebel or revolutionary accepts his opponents to be right at times because only then he can fight without being ruffled and also hope to succeed, writes Albert Camus in his book *The Rebel*. To accept that one is not right at certain times is as important as adopting the strategy of retreat in warfare because it allows one to assess the weaknesses and strengths of others. A true rebel is never judgmental and hence allows others to be right occasionally, and accepts himself to be wrong, which is a sign of a healthy mind and broad outlook. “Giving equal opportunities even to the foes and then fighting is a sign of a rebel.

A rebel thrives in dissensions. He's a man of principles. So, he doesn't insist on being right each and every time. To be a rebel is to be ethical," writes Camus.

According to Vidura, the Mahabharata war could have been averted if either of Kauravas or Pandavas were ready to admit that they were not "right" every time, and accept their weaknesses and wrongs, writes Sumit Paul. (*The Speaking Tree, The Times of India*, January 5, 2024)

None of us is infallible. A narrow-minded person insists on being right and loses the opportunity to expand his horizon by being open to different perspectives and embracing ambiguity. All of us have an inherent tendency to defend our beliefs and opinions. We feel that we are always right because we lack humility to accept that our knowledge is always partial and imperfect. We should be humble enough to accept that each one of us has limited capacity for understanding, and some of the limitations of human cognition are biases, attachment, aversion, limited attention span, limited information, limited experience, etc.

The Jaina theory of Judgement says that every object has innumerable aspects or characters. A person who is omniscient can have direct knowledge of various aspects of an object at one go, but it is not so for an ordinary person, and hence the understanding of an ordinary human being is partial, and therefore valid only from a particular point of view. This is called *nayavada*, which points out that in daily life our judgements regarding objects are conditional because they are true only from a certain standpoint and as regards certain aspects considered. From this arises the theory of *Syadvada*. We must realize that an individual can never present complete knowledge of an object because of limited understanding, imperfection of speech, etc. Therefore, the Jaina logic insists that every judgement (*naya*) should be qualified by the word (*syat*), i.e., "somehow" or "in a way," to emphasize its conditional or relative character. Therefore, it is important that we are ready to consider the viewpoint of our opponents. The depth of mind comes from



sympathy and kindly concern for the viewpoints of others.

It is true that we should not insist upon being right, and be open to other viewpoints, but that does not mean that we abandon our beliefs or be ready to compromise our values, just because the majority of people do not share our views. There are certain traditions and superstitions which should not be subscribed to even though the majority of people adhere to them. Emerson says, “It is easy in the world to live after the world’s opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.” Moreover, life is complex and reduces things where it is not possible to reduce things to right and wrong or black and white, as everything has nuances.

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When we make our New Year’s resolutions it is important that we avoid setting for ourselves ambitious goals, such as, learning a language or writing a novel, etc. Then we fail to keep these resolutions because our focus is too wide. We think of the reward at the end of the journey, but do not consider little steps that we need to take to reach the goal, and hence end up feeling dejected and defeated when we have failed to make the desired progress.

Anna Schaffner mentions in her book, *Exhausted*, the Japanese concept of kaizen, which means “change for the better.” It is a philosophy of continuous and incremental improvement. It recommends concentrating “on the small wins that will slowly add up to bigger successes, rather than hoping for a sudden transformation that almost never works. Schaffner argues that this emphasis on gradual change prevents our good intentions from adding more stress to our lives, while still leading us to our goals,” writes David Robson. He compares kaizen with the concept of “strategic mindset,” which includes looking for tiny improvements in one’s methods and finding better and better ways of doing things. In the absence of a strategic mindset people put

in a lot of effort which sap their energy without bringing much progress.

In 2023 the author had resolved to become more fluent in Spanish and for that purpose he listened to many podcasts in that language but that did not work well. Instead, if he had practised kaizen, he would have listened to fewer podcasts and spent more time revisiting previous lessons. It may not have resulted in noticeable change in a few weeks, but “over the year, this one small change to my methods would have paid huge dividends for my fluency.”

“If we want to change our working patterns, we can commence by identifying one small habit that is not serving us and concentrate our efforts on that,” writes Schaffner. One can apply the principle of kaizen to whatever area of life one seeks to improve, writes David Robson, an award-winning science writer. (*New Scientist*, December 30, 2023)

Some of us make small and realizable resolutions. Some make earth-shattering resolutions and work proportionately hard to make them come true. There is a need to persist and to sustain the resolution because when we make a resolve, there is an opposition on the inner planes. In the face of this resistance, we must be vigilant and refrain from taking a liberal attitude. A resolve is a promise made to oneself, and Mr. Judge says that the promises he made to himself, he considered to be as important as the promises he made to other people.

One of the reasons for not being able to keep our resolutions is that we make negative resolutions. “Our first mistake is to make *negative* resolutions. We say, I will *not* drink; I will *not* lie; I will *not* do this; I will *not* do that. Whereas the proper resolve to make is that—I *will* do this, the opposite of what we are now doing. In this case, we make a direct affirmation of the Will, while the other form of resolution puts us in a purely negative position.” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, pp. 310-11)

When we undertake self-discipline, we first make an ideal plan or *Sankalpa* and then execute it. *Kalpa* means, “to form an idea or

image.” Thus, *Sankalpa* is to think and imagine so thoroughly that the thing thought about gets translated into action. Our resolves are no better than mere intellectual formulations, unless backed by intense desire or emotion. When the desire is intense, “will” comes into action. Mr. Crosbie points out that we contract the divine power of Spirit within us to the pin-holes of personal desires and selfishness. We are not able to call forth the Spiritual Will because our ideas are small, mean and selfish. Spiritual Will can be developed by true unselfishness, by being prepared to be guided and assisted by our Higher Self.

The making of these resolutions at the time of the New Year has a greater relevance. We may begin by making small resolutions like “I will not take a second helping of ice-cream,” or “I will cut down on smoking,” etc. But every year we have a chance to make more difficult resolves, which lead to purification of our personal nature.

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Sometimes we are compelled by life to face the reality and abandon all hopes, writes Suma Varughese from her own personal experience. She was working with a family member on a joint project and at a certain point she could feel that the relationship was crumbling. It was very difficult for her to accept the reality when she received a WhatsApp message from her relative, regretting her inability to continue with the joint project. Initially, she experienced reactive and angry thoughts but tried to expel them. However, when the decisive moment came, she told herself that she was going to be in moment to moment contact with what-was. “I was done with living in the mind, with wanting certainty and permanence. I was going to give up hope.” The moment that decision was made, she felt much lighter, free of expectations and hopes. She accepted it as something desired by God, and acknowledged that all that had happened in her life so far, big and small, had strengthened her and made her what she was. She no longer wanted things to go her way, and was calm enough to write a note to her relative, accepting

her decision, and they parted peacefully.

In the advanced stages of spiritual quest, one is called upon to give up hope, especially the hope that insecurity and pain can be eliminated. The author says that we keep hoping that things will change for the better and that stops us from fully accepting the present moment. Giving up hope compels us to take responsibility for the situation in the present moment, and come to terms with reality. “‘Abandon hope, all ye who enter here’ . . . It is only in surrendering hope that we move into the region of the unknown where alone our true Self lies in waiting,” writes Suma Varughese. (*Life Positive*, January 2024)

Hope is a simple word with many meanings. To be hopeful about something is to look at the future positively, to anticipate the desired thing or outcome. When we hope for something which is never likely to happen, it becomes fantasy, wishful thinking or even false hope. We begin the New Year with hope, looking forward to pleasure and happiness. Our capacity to do good in the present is adversely affected when we dwell over the past, or look to the future with anticipation; it drags us down from our present level of consciousness. “Accept the woes of birth,” says the *Voice of the Silence*. After having made legitimate efforts to bring the desired outcome we must be ready to accept the result without complaining or grumbling. What we call fate or destiny is only the working of certain powerful causes, so that no action of ours or any other karma can avert or modify the result. For such Karma we can say, “what cannot be cured, must be endured.” With such an attitude, we will not resort to any prayers or propitiatory ceremonies to cause to deviate the course of the Law and dodge the karmic consequences. It is total acceptance that “my own comes back to me.”

In Dante’s *Divine Comedy* we read that Dante passes through the gate of Hell, which bears an inscription ending with the phrase “Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.” It is meant for the souls of people who in life took no sides; the opportunists who were for neither good nor evil, but, instead, were merely concerned with

themselves. By defining Hell in terms of lack of hope, Dante, a Christian writer, shows that those in Hell are permanently denied entry to Heaven and the presence of God. This banishment from heaven and the hopeless state it generates is the paramount punishment for sin. Theosophically, however, what may appear to us as a thoroughly selfish, wicked, brutal and indifferent person, may not be a “hopeless” case, in the eyes of the merciful law of Karma, which is ready to give one more chance to him, as long as there is some goodness, or even the potentiality of the same. That potentiality of good thought or action is not lost so long as one’s connection with the divine nature is not completely severed. “It is not so easy to go to hell as preachers declare it to be,” says *Through the Gates of Gold*. A Master of Wisdom explains that even a person, who may be a monster of wickedness, sensuality, ambition, avarice, pride, deceit, etc., has still in him the spark of divinity “smouldering under a heap of dirt,” and has therefore not yet become a *soulless brute*. He is then punished in *Avitchi*, “uninterrupted hell,” which could well be a state or place on our earth, “where the culprits, *die and are reborn without interruption—yet not without hope of final redemption.*” (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

But when the lower mind repeatedly ignores the guidance of the Higher Self, one gradually stops hearing the voice of conscience. Then after several lifetimes, after being given chance after chance by nature to turn the corner, if a person deliberately chooses evil and continues to do so, finally, the lower mind breaks its connection with the divine Self. Only such people are “beyond hope of redemption.” But such “hopeless” cases are rare, and that is why H.P.B. says that no student of Theosophy should despair of humanity, but aid in the development of the nobler qualities. “Even if the man of most evil ways worship me with exclusive devotion, he is to be considered as righteous, for he hath judged aright. Such a man soon becometh of a righteous soul and obtaineth perpetual happiness.” (*Gita*, IX)