

**Vol. 16**

**July 2024**

**Rs. 3/-**

**No. 3**

**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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Vol. 16, No. 3

July 17, 2024

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### THE PATH OF ACTION

THE PATH of Action is one of the three aspects of spiritual discipline in reaching the spiritual goal, the other two being the Path of Knowledge and Devotion. We do not regard these three paths as mutually exclusive. Thus, for instance, spiritual knowledge and a feeling of dedication or devotion are necessary for the perfect performance of action.

The *Gita* enters the discussion of action when Arjuna asks Krishna: if you speak of spiritual knowledge as the great thing, then why do you ask me to fight? Krishna answers that it is not a question of choosing between action and inaction in a literal way. Krishna also tells him that he himself is indefatigable in action. The divine principle in the very act of causing this universe to manifest sets forth action. In fact, it has been described as the only true perpetual motion. In ordinary science, perpetual motion is considered an impossibility. Whereas in occult science or in the spiritual tradition, there is a perpetual motion. It refers to the vibration which lasts from the very first stroke of a Manvantara through the whole process of involution that is manifestation or *pravritti*, followed by the dissolution of the universe into the One Reality again. For, the evolution of the visible from the invisible universe depends upon this resonance which the Aryans call *Nada Brahma* or divine resonance. And in this respect, science itself has seen the truth and put forward the Law of the Conservation of Energy, *i.e.*, no energy can vanish out of existence. All that happens is that units of energy change their forms or the direction in which they act. And this is why in the universe we have entities, things, beings and also laws and forces, and

ways of action. All of that is simply the play of the one energy, the one action. This is why it is wonderful that in Indian tradition, the word Dharma is used to discuss both action and its moral consequences because action is a kind of fundamental substratum of the universe itself. No action, no universe.

Then, what is a human being taught to do? Shri Krishna, representing the Divine, says that he has set in motion the Wheel of Sacrifice. There is nothing in the three worlds which he has not already obtained, or there is no unfulfilled duty that he must fulfill. It is an act of pure sacrifice or pure grace. This shows that the mere existence of the universe is an act of sacrifice or an act of grace on the part of the One Reality.

Krishna's advice to Arjuna and therefore to all men whom Arjuna represents is, do not forget to do your part in causing this wheel to continue revolving. Thus, the Prajapati, one of the lords of creation and son of Brahma, established the kind of worship, and as a result of that worship, we get so much from the gods, *i.e.*, from the great powers and intelligences which preside over the processes of nature. Our whole life depends on that. There is a way in which human beings can, in turn, help and nourish and cherish the gods, through their appropriate sacrifices, by their appropriate actions. The *Gita* says that he who enjoys what has been given unto him by the gods, the powers of nature, and offers it not a portion unto them is even as a thief. Man must offer back a portion of what he has received. And so, "those who dress their meat but for themselves, eat the bread of sin, being themselves sin incarnate." This is Shri Krishna's essential teaching about action, which proceeds from sacrifice, from compassion. And human beings are created within that pattern, and therefore, if they do not share this attitude of nourishing other beings, nourishing even the gods and certainly other weaker beings, then they falsify their own nature. They set up an internal contradiction that is sin, which is directly connected with selfishness and disruption of harmony with one's Higher Self or Atman.

There are three significant statements in the *Gita* connected with the moral law of Karma: "Do thou perform the proper actions: Action is superior to inaction." Second, "The journey of thy mortal frame cannot

be accomplished by inaction.” This is the metaphysical reason for the previous command, “Do thou perform thy proper actions.” Then, “All actions performed other than as sacrifice unto God make the actor bound by action. Abandon then, O son of Kunti, all selfish motives, and in action perform thy duty for him alone.”

When we perform any action certain consequences follow, which may not be in the same life. Then, in order to experience the result of our action another birth may have to be taken, so that one is entangled in the cycle of birth and death. How does one obtain release from this cycle of births and deaths? One view was that let us stop getting involved; let us withdraw as much as possible. Let us perform as few actions as possible, or only perform those actions which are specifically prescribed by the *shastras*, by scriptures, and by tradition, etc. In other words, these people were afraid of making their own choices and taking the consequences.

In India, especially, we find that a good religious man who wants to help people is afraid; he thinks that to help anyone or take anyone’s help is to get karmically involved and create a tie with that person, which in turn means having to be born again. Whereas he wants to be free from the chain of births and deaths. He is afraid that he might act out of personal desire or out of emotions which would prove binding and may obstruct his progress. So, *The Voice of the Silence* says, “To perish doomed is he, who out of fear of Mara refrains from helping man, lest he should act for Self,” *i.e.*, in being kind to another person, he feels that perhaps he is being tempted by *Mara*, described as personified temptation through men’s vices, or fascination exercised by vice. In the olden days when untouchability was prevalent, if a person of a higher caste saw a Harijan child crying on the roadside, he would be moved to pick up the child and find his mother, but he may feel that this kindness arising in him is itself a temptation which is making him do a thing which is not sanctioned by social laws. Thus, the person who refuses to enter into kindly relationship with others is trying to play safe and keeps calculating as to which way he would not be bound by karma. However, such a calculation does not work.

Such a misunderstanding arises because somewhere there is a feeling that action happens only at the level of the body. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the relationship between body, mind and feelings. Theosophy teaches that the mind or thought is the real plane of action because that is where action is conceived, that is where we really choose what is going to be done. It is also true that thought alone, or mere intention is not enough but must be translated into action. “Intentions...and kind words count for little with us. Deeds are what we want and demand,” writes a Master of Wisdom. Also, H.P.B. has quoted with great approval, Carlyle: “The end of man is an action and not a thought, though it were the noblest.” In addition to thought and action, we must also take into account the nature of the Will. Will is the force of Spirit in action.

We say, “Behind Will stands Desire.” Desire is the mover of the Will. We experience Will at two levels. There is the personal will, displayed markedly by a strong-willed or stubborn person. What we consider a strong-willed person is one with strong and intense desires, which move the will into action for bringing about the wished-for ends. Will is the divine power of the Spirit within—illimitable and exhaustless. We have limited that power by entertaining small, mean, and selfish desires. St. Paul says: “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do” (*Rom.*, vii, 18-19). A spiritual aspirant must endeavour to awaken Spiritual Will or Creative Will, by the cultivation of unselfishness and readiness to be assisted, guided, and instructed by divine nature. We need to surrender the personal Will to the Divine Will.

Now, ordinarily, if we were to only perform certain actions, such as have a bath, or say our prayers at a certain time, then very soon, this would be delegated to that automatic working of the Will in the cells of our body and the brain, and very little of the real mind would be involved. These actions would just be like any other outer habitual actions that have become stereotyped and fixed mechanical formulae, and therefore do not awaken anything within. Thus, on

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the one hand, if one is engaged in empty *karma kanda*, and ritualistic practices, it will not have any positive impact on one's consciousness. On the other hand, the actual absence of action is itself not final. We get that very stern warning that if somebody does not indulge in actual physical pleasures, but in his mind, in his heart, one ponders on images of those sensual pleasures, then he is "a false pietist of bewildered soul." One may have deprived oneself of external satisfaction or gratification but one has not inwardly given up. So, true action is that where the whole nature of man flows in proper unison, drawing upon the energy of the divine Creative Will which is there in the man, letting it flow unobstructed through his own mind and feelings so that finally it even directs his physical action.

There is no question about not acting, but there is a question of tuning our individual actions to cosmic action or cosmic order. Does this mean there is no freedom? What about then karma, as a law of moral retribution, as a moral responsibility? In *The Lord of the Rings*, the sage Gandalf says in one place, "It is wisdom to recognize necessity." The cosmic order is there, you can't change it. In that sense, it is a necessity. But to realize it, to recognize it, and to consent willingly that one will adjust one's action to that cosmic order, that is wisdom. However, we are free to follow our own likes and dislikes, and prejudices, but the laws of nature will not change. If we eat too much then stomach-ache will follow. There are two levels at which we will get reactions for our actions: Firstly, at the material or external level, whether physical or astral and secondly, at the level of consciousness, *i.e.*, thought and feeling. On that level, it is much more a matter of motive than of what we do. It is possible to engage in a seemingly good action with a bad motive, and a seemingly bad action with a good motive.

We find that freedom really comes at the level of the mind. Therefore, it is said, "Thoughts are the seeds of karma." According to the thought behind the action, there is going to be a moral retribution. There is going to be a consequence because the moral quality of an action is part of the act, *i.e.*, whether the act was in tune with the higher nature or not. Therefore, if it is not in tune, the law of Karma adjusts;

it adjusts every effect to its cause and restores the disturbed equilibrium. In the process, we find that we are either enjoying or suffering the result.

Why does the reaction come to *us* in particular? Because at the moment of starting the cause, we were taking the position of a separate individual entity, the one who had the right to make a choice. On the other hand, sages do not take the position of a separate individual when they act. They are only taking the position that “This is what is needed in terms of the divine intention or the divine pattern of the cosmos. The energy which is at my disposal has come from that divine. I direct it to go ahead in terms of the divine plan.” Therefore, as it were, they are mere channels, transmitters through whom the Divine Will acts and there is no personal karma involved. But they have added something to the beneficial side of the collective karma of the universe, and in doing so, they have linked themselves with the collective humanity. Sometimes such things are simply the result of their taking some of the bad karma of collective mankind because they identify themselves with humanity.

The sacrificial action of divinity has started the wheel going. Individuals who understand spiritual teachings contribute to keeping the wheel revolving. *The Bhagavad-Gita* says that over and above one’s duty there are three kinds of actions one should never give up—*dana*, charity, *tapas*, self-discipline or mortification, and *yagna*, sacrifice. All actions performed other than as sacrifice unto God bind the man. What is performed as a sacrifice does not bind the person. It brings the whole idea of action back to the level of the heart quality, the motive, the sacrifice. Devotion becomes possible in the real sense where spiritual perception and real action come together. Philosophy teaches that they have thus come together, especially in the work of those who are called Bodhisattvas, Nirmanakayas.

These are the beings who have reached self-realization, and are capable of both spiritual knowledge and spiritual action and decide to exercise their knowledge and power of action on the higher planes in order to improve the general quality of the collective karma of mankind, in order to become part of what is called the Guardian Wall. Mankind

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would be in a much worse condition than it is now if it was left to itself. It is the gracious, sacrificial intervention of great sages and spiritually high beings that holds back, to some extent, the forces of darkness, and thus shields mankind invisibly from still worse evils.

It is the great sages, the Buddhas and Christs who are units in the Guardian Wall. It is in them that we truly see the perfection of both knowledge and action. It is not to be compared with the kind of achievement in knowledge on the part of a scholar or a learned man, or the kind of great skill in action which we think of as on the part of someone like Napoleon or Alexander. These are fragmentary things. The real combination of action and thought comes when the action proceeds from a spiritual source and therefore, takes the whole world along with itself, a step towards its own goal, which is also spiritual. Therefore, the culmination of all three paths, *Jnana*, *Karma*, and *Bhakti*, is the renunciation of one's own spiritual peace and bliss which is made by spiritual beings at the highest level.

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ONE man, when he has done a service to another, is ready to set it down to his account as a favour conferred. Another is not ready to do *this*, but still in his own mind he thinks of the man as his debtor, and he knows what he has done. A third in a manner does not even know what he has done, but he is like a vine which has produced grapes, and seeks for nothing more after it has once produced its proper fruit.

As a horse when he has run, a dog when he has tracked the game, a bee when it has made the honey, so a man when he has done a good act, does not call out for others to come and see, but he goes on to another act, as a vine goes on to produce again the grapes in season....

What more dost thou want when thou hast done a man a service? Art thou not content that thou hast done something comfortable to thy nature, and dost thou seek to be paid for it, just as if the eye demand a recompense for seeing, or the feet should demand a recompense for walking?

—MARCUS AURELIUS

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**  
**THE FINEST STORY IN THE WORLD**  
**II**

RUDYARD KIPLING was an English short-story writer, poet and novelist. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907. Short stories form the greater portion of Kipling's work and are of several distinct types, which include the stories of the supernatural, horror, man-woman relationship, and so on. "The Finest Story in the World," touches upon two important themes: the doctrine of Rebirth or Metempsychosis, and bringing back the memory of past lives. Some critics are of the view that since the story includes the narrator's discussion with the Bengali Grish Chunder about reincarnation, it appears that the concept of rebirth came from Hindu ideas, which Kipling would have encountered during his conversation with his father in Lahore. "The Finest Story in the World," has been deeply admired by some while some others have not rated it high solely because they consider reincarnation to be a dull idea. In the story, Charlie Mears, a young bank clerk, remembers two previous incarnations, one on a Greek galley and the other on a Viking ship that sailed to America.

The doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation are the fundamental teachings of Theosophy. Theosophy itself is based on the accumulated wisdom or *testimony* of the sages down the ages. It teaches that man is a threefold being—body, soul, and spirit. Body is the instrument of the soul. The soul is the thinker, who uses the body to contact the world and pass through the experiences of life to become perfect. But above these two is the Spirit, the source of all the forces and consciousness, unchanging and immortal. When the soul becomes of the nature of Spirit, universal and impersonal, it becomes immortal.

Dr. J. Paul Williams observes in his essay, "Belief in a Future Life," that the arguments regarding rebirth revolve around the fundamental question: What is man? There are three possibilities.

(1) Is man just a body? (2) Is he a body that has a soul? (3) Is he a soul that has [or uses] a body? Our everyday experience shows that man is not just a body. If we accept that man *is* a soul, then what is the relation between the soul and the body? William James pointed out that we can say that the body *produces* life [soul], *or*, that the body *reflects* life. He gives an analogy. Light is produced by a candle; if the candle is put out, its light disappears. But light is reflected by a mirror; if the mirror is taken away the light still continues. So also, we may suppose that the body reflects the soul, therefore it is rational to believe that the soul can exist apart from the body. There are innumerable instances of people who have had OBEs [Out-of-Body-Experiences]—in which they describe rushing out of the body, observing the body from a distance, and re-entering it—showing that the soul can exist independently of the body.

Do we have any first-hand experience or knowledge of our having lived before? No. For most of us, there is no direct experience which shows us unequivocally that we have lived before. Of course, now and then, we do come across cases of people who claim to remember their past life or lives. They are able to recognize places and people in the minutest and most intimate details, which show pretty conclusively that it is the same individual who had lived before as Mr. X or Mrs. Y, who is *now* Mr. Z. Hundreds of such cases have been scientifically investigated and authenticated by researchers. Many verified cases of past life memory have been recorded by researchers.

A charming little story appeared in the American Magazine of 1915 written by a photographer in Minneapolis about her younger sister. She was also given to telling stories which contained bits of truth far beyond the imagination of a child. Her elder sister would note them down in a diary. Once when the child was angry for some reason, she threatened that she would go away. Her father asked whether she would go away to heaven from where she came. She replied that she did not come from heaven. She said that we all went to the moon first, which used to have people on it before it

became very hard. She said that she has been here [on earth] lots of times, sometimes as a man and sometimes as a woman. Once she went to Canada when she was a man by the name “Lishus Faber.” When asked what she did for a living, she said: “I was a soldier” and “I took the gates!” Her sister then studied all the histories of Canada and came across an old book in a library which contained a brief account of the taking of a little walled city by a small company of soldiers in which a young lieutenant with his small band “took the gates.” The name of the young lieutenant was Aloysius Le Fabre! It is interesting to note that her family neither believed nor knew anything of the doctrine of rebirth! (*Eternal Verities*, pp. 149-153)

However, not everyone is able to remember their past life. This is the main objection to the doctrine of reincarnation. We do not realize that much of what happened even in the present life is forgotten by us and yet we have no doubt that we have lived through our childhood, adolescence, and adult life to become what we are now. The fact that we do not *consciously* remember is not a very strong reason for rejecting the doctrine. Experiments in hypnotism throw up the memory of experiences of early age, including the pre-natal stage, in the minutest details to show that these experiences are not lost. The past life regression also brings forth memories of previous lives which indicate the existence of a continuing entity, a real Self within each and every one of us. Actually, we should be thankful that we do not remember our past lives. As it is, we find it difficult to handle the complexities of human relations of a single life; can we imagine our plight if we started remembering the good and bad incidents of our past lives? We would be lost in a maze. It is the wisdom of cosmic order that we do not remember.

The most common objection to belief in rebirth is that if we have lived before why do we not remember our past lives? This lapse of memory is the experience of everyday life. Of so many experiences from our childhood to youth, we are able to recall only a few and that too not in full detail. Memory is the record pertaining to a particular existence. At every new birth, there is a *new* body,

*new* brain and *new* memory. In a new birth, a new record pertaining to that existence is developed, which has no remembrance of past lives. However, our Higher Ego is omniscient and has the memory of all our past lives. Reminiscence is the memory of the soul or the Higher Ego.

Physical memory is to reminiscence what the elements of a mixture are to a compound. In physical memory, we have separate details, and an orderly sequence of relations. These belong to *time*. Physical memory is the record of passing events but is not the preserver of *experience*. Physical memory is but the outer husk of experience. Experience relates to feeling and consciousness; memory to time and sense. Hence, *memory* belongs to the personality, while *reminiscence* belongs to the permanent individual (*The Path*, Vol. IV). For soul-memory to become available during our waking consciousness, the brain must be made porous and receptive so that it can be impressed with this memory of the past. For this, it is essential to think and act along the right lines during waking consciousness. Spiritually advanced beings such as Buddhas and Initiates remember all their past incarnations.

At the solemn moment of death, even when the death is sudden, every man sees the whole of his life marshalled up before him, in its minutest detail. For one short instant, the personal ego becomes one with the Individual and *all-knowing* Ego.

At the time of physical death, all the impressions and memories of a lifetime are revived and focused or centred in the astral body (the model or design body for the physical), which survives the death of the physical body for a while. Then a process of sifting of the memories takes place. Those memories, which are consubstantial to the Higher Mind or Ego, in terms of moral quality, are absorbed by it and built into permanent memory. Those experiences that are of lower, personal, and selfish character remain in the astral body and gradually disperse as the astral body disintegrates—leaving behind *skandhas* or congeries of lives with certain impressions. These *skandhas* are of five types and some of these combine to form a

new personality, determining its limits and capacities in accordance with past karma. “The reincarnating Ego...retains during the Devachanic period merely the essence of the experience of its past earth-life or personality, the whole physical experience involving into a state of *in potentia*, or being, so to speak, translated into spiritual formulae,” writes H.P.B. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 130, *Indian Edition*)

But then how to account for the instances of individuals who remember certain incidents from their past lives, which are proved to be correct? Theosophy teaches that if a child dies very young before the Egoic consciousness has had the opportunity to acquire any food for assimilation in *Devachan*, then that Ego is born very early and often with the same *astral body*, on which the memories of the previous short life, just lived, were impressed. These memories may be transmitted to the waking brain consciousness of the new body while the person is still young. Such quick rebirth is also possible when a person dies an accidental death or is killed in war. In such cases, if the astral body of the previous life is still disintegrating—which carries clear impressions from that past life—the new brain consciousness may attract fragments of these impressions to itself. Hence, we have stray instances of some children being able to recall fragments of their last life.

There is an incident of a Buddhist person in Ceylon who hated the British, only to discover that his own son exhibited the qualities of Englishmen. He preferred bread to rice; he could handle a fork and spoon; he had an urge to hunt animals and drive cars. He had a vague memory that he was a British pilot during World War II and his plane had crashed near Ceylon. Many of his claims were verified and found to be true.

There are instances when people claim to remember what they think is *their* past life. These are *sensitives*, with the ability to see in the Astral Light of the earth, wherein are impressed the records of all actions, thoughts and feelings of whole humanity. As these sensitives are not fully trained to look into the astral light, their

glimpses are partial and indefinite, and at times what they *claim* to remember from their past life has no relation to *their own* past life.

Apart from the memory of past lives, Soul memory alone can explain dreams concerning past lives. We pass from waking to dreaming and then to the dreamless sleep state. Then once again we pass from deep sleep to dream state and to waking. There is that consciousness in us, called the Higher Mind or Ego, which is always awake and aware. When we go to sleep, it is the body that sleeps, not the Ego. Hence, this Ego moves between the waking and sleeping state. Our brain is not trained to retain the impressions of what happens during sleep, and therefore, we remember only sometimes, the fragments of our dreams.

There are retrospective dreams of events belonging to past incarnations. *Akasa* is said to be the tablet of memory of the spiritual Ego. During deep sleep, when the higher Ego functions on its own plane, it is able to witness actions based on causes generated by it in past lives, which in turn must produce certain results. We have an instance of it in the “Karmic Visions” which first appeared in *Lucifer* for June 1888, and was reprinted in the book “The Tell-Tale Picture Gallery.” King Fredrick III, while travelling in the train from Germany to Prussia, for his coronation, dreamt of his previous lives. He saw himself as King Clovis I, the cruel tyrant, who killed the prophetess for refusing to reveal to him the place where the treasure was hidden, and for prophesying his suffering in the future birth for all his evil deeds and cursing him. He killed her by piercing a spear through her throat; for which, in the present life he saw himself suffering from incurable throat cancer. He also saw his other lives, fighting wars and killing other men, with consequent suffering and loneliness in the present life. His brief reign of 99 days ended with his death. Thus, for the real Ego of Frederick, the causes sown in past life formed the basis of his experiences in deep sleep, which revealed to him the cause of his present suffering and what was to come.

(Concluded)

## EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS MISCELLANEOUS—II

AS TO JUDGE: There is the outer body and the outer personality of Irish descent, and then comes the change in him as a boy and there begins an inner process which attracts the *Nirmanakaya* to whom H.P.B. refers in one place. He is called “the greatest of the Exiles.” To us Judge represents, or should represent, the lay-chela, then the probationary chela, then the accepted chela walking upwards to Adeptship. The mystery of Judge is in the paper on the “Borrowed Body” [THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, March 1939]. For the sake of comparison also read “A Hindu Chela’s Diary” [THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, April and May 1940]. Judge’s articles are a clue and especially his letters.

Our civilization has developed the personal and the mental more and that at the cost of the spiritual. Kama rules the personal man in almost everyone and mind is used to support selfishness. The great “scientists” and “leaders” in other departments of life are fast approaching Atlantean pride and selfishness, and the *hoi polloi* become admiring followers. How many dream of a higher living and its reality? We are heading for a huge downfall. In that connection you must remember the very last aphorism on Karma. Collapse of civilization takes place on more than one plane and the worthy may be “called and warned.” So, be ever on the watch and do not miss a single warning word which may come to your conscience or to your consciousness.

We have to rise above sattva, but how are we to jump from rajas to beyond sattva? If we could make a list, let us say of all that *The Bhagavad-Gita* puts forward of sattvic tendencies—food, steadfastness, buddhi, charity, tapas, sacrifice, death, etc.—we would get an idea of how to get through these to higher state. As Judge says, from *rajasika* region we must rise to touch the hem of the garment of sattva. We *have* some sattva, but we are immersed in rajas; we have to get sattvic where we are not. I may eat sattvic

food, but I may not be using my food-sattva to develop sattva in steadfastness or in sacrifice.

In answer to the very important point raised in your letter about moral refinement in the human act: What is given by Master in the letter to Mr. Hume, reprinted as *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 29*, contains very explicit statements. You speak of transmuting gross energy; that you cannot do. You can transmute your thoughts and feelings, attracting to them a refined energy or vitality. The kind of vitality which energizes our thoughts and feelings depends upon the latter. To take an example: Your tailor cannot fit on you the clothes of a boy of five! He would have to make appropriate clothes of that size. The clothes are like Prana; the man himself, like thoughts and feelings. Of course it is true that your thought-feelings not only produce thoughts clothed in refined Prana but also act directly or indirectly on the matter or lives making up your body. Hope this is clear to you.

Sensitivity is both for Adept and medium lines. It is conscious receptivity in the case of the former and unconscious passivity in the medium. Receptivity is from two sides: from within—to the influence and working of Manas-Buddhi; secondly, via the astral, Nature's influences penetrate from without inwards. Now, in almost everyone this dual action takes place, so to speak, automatically. When we come across psychic-spiritual knowledge the process of medium-adept influences begins. All of us are in some measure mediumistic, *i.e.*, passive, prone to fantasy which, as the *Key to Theosophy* footnote points out, is the enemy of meditation, *i.e.*, conscious, deliberate positivity. Our Esoteric Philosophy teaches us to control brain-mind action, to be deliberate, to reflect upon the nature of the Inner Monad and to unfold receptivity of both types. On the Adept line we develop into Mediators; on the other, into mediums. This distinction is also made and explained in *Isis Unveiled*.

About moods and cyclic impressions and return: Judge's pamphlet is definite. Cycles of moods are apt to become smaller and there is a great deal of overlapping. Of course conditions bring about moods,

but what brings about conditions? Let us say a person gets depressed every evening after sunset and before real darkness descends. In this instance it is not so very difficult to get over the depressed mood, for the cause of the depression happens to be a natural psychic phenomenon—the change of magnetism of the Earth, *i.e.*, of the Earth's surface in relation to the sun's radiation. Solar-earth magnetism affects our human magnetism, called Animal Magnetism (see *The Theosophical Glossary*). Having acquired the knowledge, one is able to handle the situation and apply the remedy. But often both conditions and moods are manufactured by us and that causes confusion. Elementals or nature spirits are so intimate a part of our being that we take their actions as our own, which, Egoically speaking, is not so. Automatism is a factor to be taken into our calculation. The invisible affects us and in the brain we do not know it.

The overlapping of moods mixes us up. Judge has laid down the principles in his article on the return of Cyclic Impressions. If we accept them we will act to prevent and cure will follow. We need not bother about calculating now and here when a particular mood is due; we know it is bound to come; let us be ready to meet it, prepared not to fall prey to it. To keep engaged in study and service in the spirit of sacrifice is the best protection and ready at hand is the remedy—always and ever.

In Jagrat the best preparation for sleep is made. The Supreme Spirit and Its ray in each of us have to be brought as close as possible in the brain and the heart by right metaphysical study joined to ethics and of course application; then, by the knowledge about Masters and the Great Lodge—Their Nature and Powers. They become our bridge to the Supreme Spirit.

Don't regret your longish sleep hours. Sleep nourishes the body and gives the consciousness an opportunity to be free from attending to the senses and the organs. Do not worry about not dreaming; you are; you are not remembering, but is that truly important? You may think and feel you are blank on waking up; but do you feel fresh,

well energized, awake to the joys of birth—a new day, not only for the body but for the whole personality?

The subject of food and population is naturally uppermost in the minds of many people because they are confusing the issues. It is not overpopulation that causes the food problem; the food problem is independent and is the cause of overpopulation. This is the thesis that is advanced more and more, but India is always years behind the findings of the highest and best authorities in the Western world. Our Theosophical views on the subject of population are very clear. The Theosophical attitude is more towards what Gandhiji has put forward in his two volumes on self-control and self-restraint.

How is your work among your children—the poor? Love them with a wise love and help them with understanding. Try to remove the *causes* of evil and do not only work with effects in a superficial manner.

*(To be continued)*

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MEN seek retreats for themselves—in the country, by the sea, in the hills—and you yourself are particularly prone to this yearning.

But all this is quite unphilosophic, when it is open to you, at any time you want, to retreat into yourself.

No retreat offers someone more quiet and relaxation than that into his own mind, especially if he can dip into thoughts there which put him at immediate and complete ease: and by ease I simply mean a well-ordered life.

So constantly give yourself this retreat, and renew yourself. The doctrines you will visit there should be few and fundamental, sufficient at one meeting to wash away all your pain and send you back free of resentment at what you must rejoin.

—MARCUS AURELIUS

## SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

### I

THE TERM, “Survival of the Fittest,” was coined by the British philosopher Herbert Spencer, after reading Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*. Darwin used Spencer’s phrase “survival of the fittest,” as a synonym for Natural Selection. “Survival of the fittest” is a simple way of describing how evolution works. It can be understood as the idea that those organisms that are best adapted to their environment are more likely to survive and reproduce, passing on those advantageous traits to future generations, than others who are not so adapted. Darwin’s theory of evolution postulates that various types of animals and plants have their origin in other pre-existing types or common ancestors. Although individuals belonging to a certain species may appear to be alike there are certain characteristics which make each one of them slightly different from the other. These differences were inherited from the parents and then these organisms in turn would pass on these differences to their own offspring.

Darwin argued that since each individual of the species was different from the others, certain individuals possessed particular traits or characteristics that favoured them over others. For example, a pair of rabbits would produce six litters of rabbits in a year, *i.e.*, approximately 30 to 48 baby rabbits a year. If we take into account progeny from various species of rabbits and if all of them survived, perhaps there would not be enough resources to keep them all alive. “Darwin argued that there being only a limited amount of resources, each individual would have to compete with others in order to stay alive, grow and reproduce. Darwin explained that it is the environment or nature itself that ‘selects’ which individuals are best adapted to it or are best ‘fit.’ Depending on the environment, it may not always be the fastest rabbit that survives. Instead, it could be the one with a certain coat of colour that allows it to be easily camouflaged that has the ‘fit’ advantage.” Thus “fitness” implies those individuals

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of a group whose characteristics helped them to be best adapted to their environment. Hence, “Natural Selection” is also referred to as “survival of the fittest.” “Natural selection is a process that results in the adaptation of an organism to its environment by means of selectively reproducing changes in its genotype or genetic constitution. In Natural selection, those variations in the genotype that increase an organism’s chances of survival and procreation are preserved and multiplied from generation to generation at the expense of less advantageous ones.” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

“Natural Selection” is a process by which the “fit” survive, while the “unfit” are eliminated in the “struggle for existence,” as there is a continuous struggle or battle involved in trying to obtain enough to eat, to escape from being eaten and in facing challenging environmental conditions. Under the law of Natural Selection, changes or modifications that were found useful for survival are genetically passed on from one generation to the next and a progressive improvement is effected.

But, the law of “Natural selection” will perpetuate “useful variations” *once they are produced*, and the “survival of the fittest” can take place only after *useful variations have sprung up*, together with improved organisms, says H.P.B. The question is: What caused such “useful variations” in the first place? The causes may be physical, climatic, dietary, etc., grouped under sexual selection, natural selection, isolation, etc. However, these are only *secondary* causes. What is the CAUSE of the *secondary* causes themselves? From where comes the intelligence in working of the law of Natural Selection and other secondary causes? Certainly, it is not the work of blind forces of nature.

When science speaks of evolution she takes into consideration only half of the process, and teaches that evolution is physiologically a mode of generation in which the germ that develops the foetus pre-exists already in the parent, and then naturally develops into a final form. Occult philosophy teaches that nothing can be evolved, unless it has first been involved, indicating that life is from the spiritual

potency and that the process of unfoldment is guided by intelligent forces under the immutable Law. This is known as the *doctrine of emanation*. Thus, there is first, involution—involvement or descent of spirit into matter—and then evolution, which consists in expression or actualization of what is potential, through the perfection of forms. H.P.B. explains it thus:

“The whole order of nature evinces a progressive march towards a *higher life*. There is design in the action of the seemingly blindest forces. The whole process of evolution with its endless adaptations is a proof of this. The immutable laws that weed out the weak and feeble species, make room for the strong, and ensure the ‘survival of the fittest,’ though so cruel in their immediate action—all are working toward the grand end. The very *fact* that adaptations *do* occur, that the fittest *do* survive in the struggle for existence, shows that what is called ‘unconscious Nature’ is in reality an aggregate of forces manipulated by semi-intelligent beings (Elementals) guided by High Planetary Spirits, (Dhyan Chohans).” (*S.D.*, I, 277-278)

It is the “Dhyan Chohanian Impulse” or “Divine Intelligence” which lies behind all secondary causes or minor agencies giving birth to various SPECIES, says H.P.B. Dhyan Chohanian or *Fohatic* impulse is the impulse given to congeries of lives or units of life energy.

As against “natural” selection there is artificial selection, known also as selective breeding, which is an evolutionary process in which humans consciously select for or against particular features in organisms. For example, humans use animal breeding to selectively develop particular characteristics by choosing which animal, males and females, will sexually reproduce and have offspring together. Humans have been modifying the traits of plant and animal species through selective breeding for thousands of years.

The logic of survival of the fittest and natural selection was thought to be transferable to humanity. In the nineteenth century, a perspective arose that the more intelligent would rule the less intelligent, or those who were less fit. Thinking along these lines Francis Galton coined

the term “eugenics” which literally means “well-born.” Galton believed that desirable human qualities were hereditary. He along with many others among the educated classes hoped to actively discourage the overbreeding of the less fit. Eugenics may be looked upon as an attempt to improve humanity by controlling who can produce children and pass on their genes.

Many types of eugenic practices have existed for thousands of years. However, the contemporary history of eugenics began in the late nineteenth century. Many countries adopted eugenic policies which included positive measures, such as encouraging individuals deemed particularly “fit” to reproduce, and negative measures, such as marriage prohibitions and forced sterilization of those deemed unfit for reproduction, which also included people with mental or physical disabilities. The idea was to ensure that only “good” genes are passed onto future generations, while “bad” genes are eliminated. Thus, for instance, after Hitler seized power in 1933 there was a Law passed to prevent Genetically Diseased Offspring, requiring sterilization of people with schizophrenia, deafness, blindness, epilepsy, etc., which were seen to be genetic. Also, the Nazis used eugenics in support of the persecution of Jewish people and other minorities which led to concentration camps.

By the mid-1990s, both the academic world and the general public had concluded that human behaviour is a mix of nature and nurture. Increasingly, studies reveal that it is not merely the existence of a gene that matters, but how it is expressed—and that is open to a host of influences. “While genes influence behaviour, they do not govern nor determine it,” says Deborah Denno, director of the Fordham University Neuroscience and Law Center.

We observe that children of the same parents brought up in the same environment, show striking differences in physical, mental and moral traits. Children who are brought up in an atmosphere where they are fed and clothed properly but not loved and fondled, are likely to have their mental and physical development retarded. We may say that we are a blend of heredity and environment. Even

the most conducive environment cannot transform a weak and timid child into an audacious leader, because ultimately it depends upon how best we *use* the environment, and that in turn depends upon the inherent character.

Heredity provides the Ego with an appropriate body and environment. Mr. Judge explains in *The Ocean of Theosophy* that genes or heredity—transmission of trait and tendency by means of parent and body—is the *mode* selected by nature to provide the Ego with the appropriate tenement. The environment, the personality and the limitations imposed on the Ego are exact consequences of that Ego’s actions in prior lives. Can we hold genes responsible for certain mental traits, peculiarities and leanings, which we may have inherited from the father or even great-grandfather? Is heredity the cause of crime or virtue? “It is not a cause but only the means or instrument for the production of the effect, the cause being hidden deeper. . . . Heredity is a puzzle and will always remain one so long as the laws of Karma and Reincarnation are not admitted and taken into account” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 9*). Man is a free agent during his stay on earth and can take measures to reverse the tendencies.

However, “today there are concerns that eugenics could return in new forms, such as through genetic testing of unborn embryos and even genetic modification of ‘designer babies.’ Pregnant women are routinely offered a test to see if their unborn child has Down’s syndrome, and many opt for an abortion if the test is positive,” writes Michael Marshall in *New Scientist*. Many legal, ethical and philosophical questions arise concerning the creation of “designer” babies, genetically programmed to be intellectually and physically superior to normal human beings. The question is: Is it genetic matter or consciousness which determines the intelligence and intuition of a genius or an artist?

Theosophy teaches that the physical evolves from the spiritual, the mental and the psychic. Heredity is but a mode of the evolutionary process by which the conscious Force within matter strives for fuller self-expression and self-realization. Heredity is determined by the

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arrangement of genes within the bodies of the germ cells that are called chromosomes, but that arrangement is not mechanical. It is instrumental rather than causal. Human heredity is enormously more complicated as compared to heredity in lower kingdoms because human evolution is not by natural impulse but by self-conscious choices. The human germ plasm is dominated by the spiritual plasm, which is a spiritual potency in the Ego itself. In the case of human beings, heredity is subservient to individual and racial Karma. Really speaking, inborn mental and moral characteristics are not inherited from parents and ancestors but are brought over by the individual from his own past lives.

Heredity and Atavism are handmaidens of Karma and Reincarnation. The form in which we take birth is not determined by our ancestors, but by our *rupa skandhas* pertaining to the form, which determines the stature, colour, and shape of the body, with all the diseases inherent in it. Likewise, other *skandhas* or attributes determine a person's emotional and intellectual nature with all his likes and dislikes and so on. The Ego gets attracted to a particular family stream which can provide it with the necessary tenement.

In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 202), H.P.B. points out that there are several modern works, especially in German language, on struggles for life in the sidereal world. In two volumes of *Isis Unveiled* she has treated "the idea of Darwinian-like evolution, of struggle for life and supremacy, and of the 'survival of the fittest' among the Hosts above as the Hosts below. . . . Even the Puranic writers have ingeniously interwoven allegories with Cosmic facts and human events. . . . the 'struggles,' also in the Egyptian legend between Osiris and Typhon, and even those in the Scandinavian legends, all refer to the same subject. . . . The 'Struggle for Existence' and the 'Survival of the Fittest' reigned supreme from the moment that Kosmos manifested into being, and could hardly escape the observant eye of the ancient Sages."

(To be continued)

## CHARITABLE CRITICISM

CRITICISM is basically a judgmental comment that one may make on the actions or behaviour or work of another; an expression of one's disapproval of it. It is an essential part of the mental life and intellectual activity in the social life of the human being. As every human thought and action is subject to the Karmic Law, this too is productive of good or evil results. It may be beneficial or detrimental alike to the one who engages in criticism and to the one who is subjected to it. It goes to the very root of our character, and it has the potential, either to elevate and ennoble, or degrade us in our soul life and evolution. Hence, all great Teachers of humanity, and sacred books of ancient peoples, warn us against engaging in unwarranted criticism, and show us the guiding principles of wise and responsible use of it that tends to beneficial ends. Hence the importance of understanding the Karmic potential of criticism.

The subject of criticism can be considered, firstly, in the context of our relation to community, or society, which brings in the question of our social responsibility; and secondly, in that of our relationship with our fellowmen at individual level. Criticism is a vital intellectual activity in all fields of human endeavour—interpersonal, social, political, art, literature, science, religion, and so on. Criticism can be progressive, reformative, or regressive, depending on whether it is constructive, instructive, or destructive. Constructive criticism plays a vital role in all reform movements, social improvement, and individual betterment. For criticisms to play such a beneficial role, freedom of thought, of expression, of conscience, and a spirit of tolerance ought to be prevalent in the socio-political culture of the times, on the one hand, and intellectual integrity, honesty, adherence to facts, and love of truth, on the part of the critic, on the other. If these are lacking, the criticism becomes destructive. Criteria of constructive and charitable criticism is practically demonstrated by H.P.B. in her editorial policy of the periodical, *Lucifer*, which she edited and published. Lamenting on the disappearance of ancient honest standards of right criticism in her time, which, undoubtedly is true today also as then, H.P.B. pronounces the Golden Rule of right

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criticism in her article, *Le Phare de L'inconnu (The Beacon-Light of the Unknown)*:

“But criticism, inaugurated by Aristotle, has fallen away from its primitive standard. The ancient philosophers, those sublime ignoramuses as regards modern civilization, when they criticised a system or a work, did so with impartiality, and with the sole object of amending and improving that with which they found fault. First, they studied the subject, and then they analyzed it. It was a service rendered, and was recognized and accepted as such by both parties.” (*H.P.B. Series No. 36*, p. 12)

Such is the highest and noblest standard of right criticism that may be termed as charitable criticism. Theosophical ethics, having its scientific basis in universal brotherhood, and in the laws of Karma and Reincarnation, imparts to students a knowledge of the right use of criticism in their relation with fellowmen, and particularly among fellow-students, and in their relation with the world at large, for mutual benefit. Absence of this knowledge and want of practical application of it invariably lead one to uncharitable thoughts, unfair criticism of others and fault-finding, which degrades the character of the person and vitiates socio-cultural environment.

In the ninth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Krishna imparts to Arjuna “the Kingly Knowledge and the Kingly Mystery,” as he was qualified to receive divine knowledge as he had overcome the defect of character of finding fault with circumstances of life, having learnt to place complete reliance on the absolute justice of the Law of Karma. This is an indispensable prerequisite virtue one must have developed and perfected if one is to make progress in spiritual life. “Judge not, that ye be not judged,” warns Jesus; “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again.” (*Matthew*, Ch. 7:1-3). Blaming others, carrying tales or spreading gossip are listed in the Ordinances of Manu (7: 47-49) as some among ten vices that arise from Kama-desire, and eight from anger and covetousness, as afflictions of human nature. Cant and hypocrisy, says H.P.B., are

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the loathsome of all vices. These dark qualities take deep root in one who is given to the habit of pointing out weaknesses and defects of others, and sitting in judgment over their acts of omission and commission, forgetting the presence of the very same faults in himself. Hypocrisy, implicit in uncharitable criticism is highlighted in *The Dhammapadam*: “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). Evil Karma that accrues to the one who engages in uncharitable criticism is pointed out in the verse that follows the above: “He who is given to finding faults in others and is ever censorious increases his own weaknesses. Far indeed is he from their destruction.” (verse 253)

Theosophy teaches that our mind has the power of reflecting, and absorbing, the qualities of any subject or object on which we allow it to dwell. Hence faults and weaknesses we see in others, from which we are by no means exempt, are indeed the mirror-reflection of our own, which we are prone to overlook. Therefore, by critically speaking of others’ defects we unconsciously accentuate those very vices in our own nature. Hence the admonition of Jesus to be mindful of the beam in our own eyes, which he commends us to endeavour to remove, instead of pointing out the speck in others’ eyes. The opposite of it is also equally true. He is wise, who, while exercising mindfulness of the defects in himself as reflections of those he sees in others, which he tries to eliminate from himself, he appreciates the good qualities in others and tries to emulate them, benefitting thereby.

Practical hints are to be found in the teachings of Theosophy that help us overcome the common defect of uncharitable criticism of others, and to learn the right and constructive use of it for mutual benefit and social good. Consideration of one’s duty is the basic principle that should guide us in deciding whether to criticize, or warn about, an act of another that seems to us to be wrong, or refrain from it. Mr. Judge tells us that in such a situation, we should ask ourselves two questions: “Am I the judge in this matter who is entitled

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to try this person?” and, “Am I any better in my way? Do I or do I not offend in some other way just as much as they do in this?” There really ought to be no difficulty in honestly applying these criteria in the matter of criticism. H.P.B. says that if the action of the offender is against the whole that hurts many, we ought to consider what is to be done, and do it, as a matter of duty; and that if it is against only us, personally, we ought to let it go. The fact that the wrongdoer at a given point of time is not judged by Karma is a weighty factor that should dissuade us from criticizing such, when it is not our duty, lest we should ourselves offend against absolute justice of Karmic Law. “The truth about the actual state of the inner man can only be known to Karma, and can be dealt with justly by that all-seeing LAW alone.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 22*, p. 13)

When criticism is warranted by consideration of duty, a few ethical principles must be borne in mind. It is the wrong act that needs to be criticized but never the person who committed the act. “One should denounce and fight against the *root* of evil and not expend one’s fury by knocking down the irresponsible blossoms of its plant” (*H.P.B. Series No. 33*, p. 44). To speak ill of, or slander a fellowman in his absence—backbiting, as they call it—is considered a crime. “Condemn no man in his absence.” In her article, *The Tidal Wave*, H.P.B. points out that Theosophists have a duty towards mitigating vices and evils of the day by exposing them in impersonal narratives by word and deed, by publications, etc., and, most importantly, “*to effect this, theosophists have to act as such.*”

Sage advice by a Master of Wisdom ought ever to be borne in mind and constantly endeavoured to live up to, thus: “No Theosophist should blame a brother, whether within or outside of the association; neither may he throw a slur upon another’s actions or denounce him, lest he himself lose the right to be considered a Theosophist. For, as such, he has to turn his gaze from the imperfections of his neighbour, and centre rather his attention upon his own shortcomings, in order to correct them and become wiser.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 22*, pp. 12-13)

## GURUS—TRUE AND FALSE

GURU PURNIMA is celebrated on the full moon day in the lunar month of *Ashadha* (July-August). It is traditionally celebrated by the Hindus, Jains and the Buddhists to pay their respects and express their gratitude to their academic and spiritual gurus. Today, there are “gurus” at every street corner, self-deceived, no doubt, in some cases; in others exploiting their followers’ ideals. There are false gurus, those who teach for money, those who boast of their powers, and those who claim to lead people. Among thousands of *sadhus* and fakirs, there are only a few who possess knowledge. The credulous and the gullible fall prey to false gurus, who are not only ignorant men, but are often frauds and charlatans. Beware of the person who proclaims himself to be a guru, asserting proudly, “Behold I know,” or who asks to be followed blindly. Today, we find an increasing tendency in people to look *outside* for support.

The very fact that there are false or misguided gurus points to the fact that there are also true ones. But the aspirant must use discrimination. When an ardent young Hindu fell at her feet and called her “Guru,” H.P.B. said, “I am not guru. They are not of this world. I am but a poor window through which a little of the Light of the true Gurus comes.”

That being the attitude of H.P.B. Theosophical pupil-teachers should be very careful and never pose themselves as gurus. What his attitude should be towards allowing himself to be regarded as a guru is well expressed by Mr. Crosbie while writing to one correspondent: “I would not have you look on me in the light of a spiritual Guru. Think of me as kindly as you will, but do not place me on any pedestal; let me be a pilot who will be most glad to help with any charts and guidance” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 6). And he added: “In reality the Masters are Those to whom we should turn our thoughts in meditation.”

The existence of such true Gurus and Their accessibility to the deserving aspirant are among the most precious and inspiring teachings of Theosophy. The journey from being a disciple to

becoming an Adept or an occultist is impossible without the help of a true Guru. H.P.B. goes so far as to say that there are 10,000 chances against 1, that even “a man of well-balanced mind and singleness of purpose, one, say, of indomitable energy and perseverance” could, working alone, become an Adept or even an Occultist. “He who has not an Initiate for a master had better leave the dangerous study alone.”

The following significant sentences appear in a letter which H.P.B. wrote to a student in 1885-86 and which was published after her death in *The Path*, Vol X, p. 367, for March 1896: “I am enough of an occultist to know that before we find the Master within our own hearts and seventh principle—we need an outside Master. As the Chinese Alchemist says, speaking of the necessity of a living teacher: ‘Every one seeks long life (spiritual), but the secret is not easy to find....One word from a wise Master and you possess a draught of the golden water.’ He is a Saviour, he who leads you to finding the Master within yourself.”

The “grace of a Guru” is no fiction, but she tells us that one “need never expect the most distant approach to the ‘favour’ of one of our Mahatmas, or any other Mahatmas in the world should the latter consent to become known—that has not been fully earned by personal merit. The *Mahatmas are the servants, not the arbiters of the Law of Karma.*” (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, p. 5)

Respect and gratitude are due to all who have helped us to clearer understanding but not slavish adulation or personality worship, which may be as harmful to their object as to him who indulges in them. The proper attitude towards one advanced on the Path, though still treading it, if the aspirant is so fortunate as to find one such, is well defined by Shri K. G. Mashruwala, a devotee of Gandhiji for many years. In his article “The Guru Cult” (*Aryan Path*, December 1950), he writes that discipleship consists in “attentively and intelligently listening to the Guru’s teachings, demonstrating a relentless quest of truth, obeying meticulously the Guru’s instructions and commands [which in case of a true Guru would never be such as to go against the chela’s conscience], getting clarification of one’s

doubts, rendering such personal service to him as, for instance, a dutiful son would render to his father, and, if the Guru has a mission, taking a full part therein as his assistant.”

But for the aspirant to hold in his heart the ideal of the Self-realised Ones, who have renounced *Nirvana* for the sake of suffering humanity, is not idolatry; it is in no way objectionable but, on the contrary, most desirable. Mr. Judge writes: “Fix your thoughts again on Those Elder Brothers, work for Them, serve Them, and They will help through the right appropriate means and no other. To meditate on the Higher Self is difficult. Seek, then, the bridge—the Masters.” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 112)

We have the assurance of the Masters that every step made by one in Their direction will force Them to take one towards him. A Master of Wisdom writes that whoever works unselfishly for the spiritual enlightenment of his fellow-men “necessarily puts himself in magnetic communication with our chelas and ourselves.”

A true guru seeks to make his pupil self-dependent, by helping him to turn within and awaken the inner guru. The best method is to go from the teachings to the teacher. Adi Shankara says that a true guru possesses tranquillity, self-control, compassion and desire to help others, and he is versed in the Vedas and Upanishads; he is unattached to pleasures. He is devoid of weaknesses such as, ostentation, pride, deceit, egotism and attachment. H.P.B. describes the “true Guru,” thus: “The real Guru is always an Adept in the Occult Science. A man of profound knowledge, exoteric and esoteric, especially the latter; and one who has brought his carnal nature under subjection of the WILL; who has developed in himself both the power (*Siddhi*) to control the forces of nature, and the capacity to probe her secrets by the help of the formerly latent but now active powers of his being—this is the real Guru.” (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, p. 1)

Unless our inward eyes open, it is vain to go in search of a Guru. Many false prophets and teachers have led astray people, who are glamourized by the charisma and handsome exterior of the so-called spiritual teachers.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

The Gayatri Mantra is a profound invocation to the divine cosmic energy, symbolised by the Sun. The chanting of the Gayatri Mantra is like welcoming the dawn of spiritual illumination. Explaining the origin and significance of the Gayatri Mantra, late Swami Veda Bharati says that when the *devas* or demigods desired to learn the secrets of the Universe, they were asked by Prajapati to study the three Vedas—Rig, Sama and Yajur. However, it was difficult even for the *devas* to learn all the laws concerning light and sound, and those concerning creation, preservation and destruction of the universe. The Gayatri Mantra is written as follows: *Om bhur bhuvah svah, tat savitur varenyam, bhargo devasya dhimahi, dhiyo yo nah prachodayat*. Prajapati taught the *devas*, the essence of the three Vedas in terms of three segments of the Gayatri Mantra. The first segment, *tat savitur varenyam* as the essence of Rig Veda. The second segment *bhargo devasya dhimahi*, as the essence of Yajur Veda. The third segment, *dhiyo yo nah prachodayat*, as the essence of Sama Veda. The essence of these three segments is contained in first three words, namely, *Bhur* means earth, *Bhuvah* means sky and *Svah* means heavens. These three are called three great sounds and they represent all possible trinities, such as, past, present, future; Brahma, Vishnu, Siva; waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep. Swamiji describes it as a purificatory mantra that leads to Self-Knowledge. He adds that “it is a mantra that often hastens the karmic process for those who do it intensely.”

The word “*Gayatri*” has many meanings, two of which are, “She who protects the *pranas*,” and “She who protects the one who sings it.” In a nutshell, the Gayatri Mantra translates to: “Oh, creator of the universe. We meditate upon thy supreme splendour. May thy radiant power illuminate our intellects, destroy our ignorance and guide us in the direction of enlightenment by purifying our inner hearts.” According to Swamiji when it is chanted with sincerity and devotion, it acts as a key that unlocks inner wisdom and bestows peace and spiritual grace,

and in the process, the things that need to be weeded out of one's personality are brought to the surface. Next to Om, the Gayatri Mantra has been regarded as the most powerful mantra in the entire tradition, writes Navni Chawla. (*Life Positive*, May 2024)

The Gayatri Mantra consists of twenty-four syllables—three lines of eight syllables each. In the Tenth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, while describing his *vibhūtis* or universal divine perfections, shri Krishna says that “Among the metres, I am the Gayatri.” H.P.B. explains that the Gayatri metre consists of *thrice eight* syllables, and is considered the most sacred of metres. It is the metre of Agni, the fire-god, and becomes at times the emblem of Brahma himself, the chief creator, and “fashioner of man” in his own image. (*Isis*, II, 410)

The power of sacred speech depends upon the form that is given to the mantra by the officiating priest. The form consists of the numbers and syllables of the sacred metre. The effect of the *mantram* is also determined by the rhythm. If pronounced slowly and in a certain rhythm, one effect is produced; if quickly and in another rhythm, there is a different result. The great significance of the metrical speech is derived from the number of syllables of which it consists. (*Isis*, II, 409-10)

*Bhur, Bhuvah, Svah* are three of the seven (or even fourteen) lokas or spheres. These lokas or spheres form the extent of the whole *Brahmanda* or World. These lokas also represent planes of consciousness on this earth. In the first part of Gayatri mantra, the Divine is praised; in the second part, there is a determination to meditate upon the Divine; in the third part, an appeal is made to the Divine, to awaken and strengthen the intellect, the discriminative faculty of man.

Theosophy teaches that behind the physical sun is the True Sun or Central Spiritual Sun. The Sun symbolizes the very Atman in man, the divine presence latent within the hearts of men and may be looked upon as the Seventh Kosmic principle. Mr. Judge comments that the whole verse is an aspiration in the highest sense. “Unveil” is the cry of the man who is determined to know the truth; the cry is

made to the Higher Self. Just as the True Sun is hidden behind the physical sun, so also, the Higher Self is hidden by the passions and desires, the personal self and the thirst for life. The sun we see is not the true sun, and so also the light of intellect is not the true sun of our moral being. “So long as desire and the personality remain strong, just so long will the light be blurred, so long will we mistake words for knowledge and knowledge for the thing we wish to know and realize.”

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It appears that excessive positivity is bad for one’s health and mental well-being. It is beneficial to have a positive mindset, but the idea that we should always look on the bright side has gone too far. People struggling with low self-esteem are being asked these days to repeat self-affirmations such as, “I am a lovable person,” which could boost a person’s moods and feelings of worth. Psychologists studying self-affirmations found that as the participants feeling low did not believe in what they were saying, they ended up feeling worse. It has been termed “toxic positivity.” It is “the idea that a forced optimistic interpretation of our experiences alongside the suppression of the negative emotions can do real damage.”

What may be regarded as toxic positivity? In Western societies people have developed strategies to avoid negative emotions because of longstanding rules about how one should display one’s emotions. Later there was a positive psychology movement which shifted focus towards the things people needed to flourish, but was criticised for assuming that certain emotions are inherently good for us and others inherently bad, and for overlooking the role played by negative emotions in our overall psychological well-being. Then there were those who asked to “focus on the good things,” and preached the pseudo-scientific idea that one could “manifest” material comfort and health through thought alone, which is known as the “law of attraction.”

There is no denying that an optimistic outlook on life does have benefits. “The state of your mind undoubtedly affects the state of

your body, and vice versa.” However, it is becoming more apparent that positivity has its limitations. Research and studies demonstrate that “ignoring negative emotions can be harmful to our mental well-being.” Brock Bastian at the University of Melbourne in Australia, says that “with an overemphasis on positivity, we are more likely to perceive normal emotions, such as sadness and anxiety, as signs of a mental health condition needing treatment.”

Ultimately, various studies and research show that the so-called negative emotions are an inevitable part of the human experience and are unavoidable. Resilience and growth are attained when we fight through difficult situations. However, we should not throw out positivity altogether. The right amount of it in the right place and at the right time can work wonders, writes Conor Feehly. (*New Scientist*, June 8, 2024)

When a person denies the actual reality but affirms something which they wish to achieve or experience, such positivity is not desirable. For instance, the mind cure practices are based on affirmations and denials. The person suffering from a disease is made to repeat statements like, “There is no sickness. I deny that there ever was any sickness.” Also, “There is no evil, but that all is good,” etc. In these assertions one is denying the reality of the pairs of opposites in the world. The seeds of disease are located in the mind, and they are carried to the physical plane through the astral currents. But the moment the person indulges in these affirmations and denials, these vibrations are thrown up and they carry the cause or the seed of disease back to the mind. As a result, there is a temporary cure, but the disease will return either in the same or some other life.

However, there is another kind of positivity, which is at the level of beliefs mentioned by Noell Nelson, a clinical psychologist. “Winners’ beliefs imply a future full of positive possibilities and support their ability to go into the unknown with confidence and hope.... No matter how grim your present seems, be willing to accept the belief that the future holds positive possibilities. The wonderful thing about possibilities is that they can be turned into probabilities and from there into actuality.” Positive thoughts and feelings call

forth best efforts. When we make a positive formulation, *it is a direct affirmation of the will*. Once we take the positive mental position saying, “I can do it,” or “it can happen,” the whole of the emotional nature must be brought in perfect harmony with this. *When the desire is intense, the will comes into action*.

We may equate positivity with taking mentally firm position. Often, when there is a lapse in the discipline, we say that in future we will not waver *so much*. But that shows that we expect to waver at least a little. If we *expect* to waver, we *will* waver. It would be better to expect to hit the mark, instead of expecting to miss it. The reason, explains Mr. Crosbie, is that the psychological position taken and the quality of energy aroused in these two cases would be different. “We should cease doubting our power to accomplish. If we doubt, it will be like trying to shoot an arrow with a loose bow-string—no force, and no certainty of direction.” When the bow-string is pulled taut, and then let go, the arrow goes where pointed.

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“Forgiveness is the fragrance that violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it,” wrote Mark Twain. Cuurio, a non-profit tech platform, says that when we are hurt, we sometimes instinctively want to retaliate. When we are wronged and do not let go of the past we may lose our health, our contentment and even meaning and purpose of life, whereas the act of forgiving brings freedom and life to the forgiver and the forgiven. Tyler J. VanderWeele, a professor of Epidemiology in the U.S. defines forgiveness as the replacement of ill feelings towards an offender with good will. Forgiveness is distinct from excusing or condoning the action and is distinct from reconciliation. It does not require foregoing justice. The power of real forgiveness however is intimately connected to the power of love. Martin Luther King Jr. said: “We must maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power of love”.

When Jesus was crucified, he prayed for those who executed him,

saying: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” In Lord’s Prayer he says, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” In our present times of senseless violence, peace can result only from mutual forgiveness. “Otherwise, revenge and retribution will only lead to a burning up of our lives and the world” writes Janina Gomes. (*The Speaking Tree, The Times of India*, June 22, 2024)

In an article on “Forgiveness” (*Theosophy*, April 1924) we read that since none of us are as yet completely impersonal and free from the sense of separateness, none of us know the ways of Karma, and therefore none of us are likely to be free from the peculiarly bitter pang known as “a sense of injustice.” However, we must strive to move in the direction which enables us to become impersonal and help us get a better understanding of the working of the Law of Karma. Let us remember that “Karma is that which makes us feel as we have made others feel, and the idea of ‘injustice’ is based only on states of forgetfulness.”

What should we do? We know that we cannot run away from any unpleasant circumstances. “Every inimical feeling toward any being must be uprooted and wiped out sometime: that the longer the delay the harder the uprooting.” Though the task seems impossible, let us try to kill bitterness and to return good for evil, remembering that there are a few who have accomplished it.

No one can hurt you unless you give him power to do so. The best course is to forget first and then forgive, and leave the rest to Karma which is sure to bring just results, sooner or later. If we stop dwelling on the hurt, though it may take many years, “time indeed is the great healer.” Moreover, the bad vibrations have tendency to appear life after life for at least three lifetimes, if we hold onto ill-feeling. A deliberate attempt has to be made to replace such memories by positive and energizing thoughts.

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POWER and skill are never good unless he who used them is good.

—A GREEK SAYING