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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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June 17, 2024

SATYAM, SHIVAM, SUNDARAM

WHAT is the true meaning of *Satyam*, *Shivam*, *Sundaram*? How did this concept evolve? *Satyam*, *Shivam*, *Sundaram* is a mystical trinity, which describes the nature of God and even that of Self or *Atman* in man because *Atman* is an inseparable ray of *Paramatma*, the Sun. Spiritual life and progress involves moving from the outer, gross world, of name and form, to the inner, subtle world, which ultimately leads to the centre of our being, or Higher Self. Literally translated, *Satyam* means Truth; *Shivam* means goodness, benevolence or blessedness, and *Sundaram* means beauty. These three are often looked upon as three doors that lead us to the Ultimate Reality. A philosopher, being a lover of Truth, seeks to know Reality in his search for Truth. The person who enters through the door called “goodness” is the one who seeks to be of noble character. The poet, the painter, the sculptor and the lovers of beauty enter through the door called “beauty.” In ancient Greece, the trinity of truth, goodness and beauty was the basic idea of life—physical, mental and moral.

What is Truth? Truth is that which is changeless and is the same for all people, at all times, in all places. God is Truth, SAT, which is the One Reality underlying all manifestation and is closely connected with goodness and beauty. It is Absolute Truth or that which always exists, unaffected by space and time, and the substratum of the whole existence. It is the Truth which cannot be conceptualized, but can be experienced. *Satyam* may be taken to refer to that mystical

experience in which an individual soul sees itself identical with the Universal Whole and bows in reverence to THAT. “Theosophy is synonymous with EVERLASTING TRUTH,” writes H.P.B. So it has always existed and will always exist, but one has to seek it behind the commonplace things of life, behind and within the material existence. “Men and parties, sects and schools are but the mere ephemera of the world’s day. Truth, high-seated upon its rock of adamant, is alone eternal and supreme.” (*Isis*, Preface, p. v)

Real goodness is compassion, harmonious relationship with all beings and with the whole of Nature. It is quite different from the sentimental goodness. Each day brings an opportunity to be gentle and truthful in our speech, and express *Metta* or loving kindness through our thoughts and actions. It is the application of truth in daily life. Each day affords us fresh opportunities to accept joys and sorrows with an equal mind and to learn the lessons they have to teach. There is a gradual progress from being good to better and then best, in an ever-expanding circle, till one reaches a state where he begins to regard with equal mind, “a Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and even an outcast who eats the flesh of dogs.” Thus, when truth is translated into action and expressed through every activity in life, it becomes *Shivam*, *i.e.*, auspicious. A person who exemplifies truth by living the life of oneness, harmony and reverence for Nature, becomes evidence for the existence of Truth.

Shivam is a mystic in action. Whatever activity is undertaken, it is done with the awareness that reality is at its deeper level, so that simple actions performed by this individual acquire a *beauty* of their own. It is the beauty of thought, word and deed manifested in the beauty of character, which is the result of living the life of high morals and divine virtues. The pure mind with noble ideas expresses itself in kind words and unselfish actions. Thus, *Sundaram* or beauty is probably that which arises out of one’s being and one’s actions, which are grounded in Truth or divinity.

In the *Symposium*—one of the dialogues—Socrates himself is being instructed by Diotima, a mystic. They agree that man advances

from, let us say, admiring the beauty of a handsome youth or a beautiful girl, to admiring the idea of a shape in the abstract, to admiring the beauty of conduct, to admiring the beauty of principles, until we approach the ultimate principle of all principles—BEAUTY. Thus, the Greek tradition had already thought what an English poet wrote many centuries later: “Euclid alone saw beauty bare,” *i.e.*, that the highest experience of beauty is mathematical. It is not a *particular* colour or a *particular* texture. Some people say that Bach is a great musician, and others think that Jazz is great music. How is one to determine? But Plato firmly expressed that there is an idea of beauty that exists on its own plane, quite apart from what anybody thinks.

If we take this concept a step further, we can say “beauty” is an aspect of One Reality. One who is grounded in Truth, moves away from the (personal) self and is able to dispassionately admire beauty all around him. Only an impersonal admirer of beauty is able to discern beauty in the whole of creation because he is able to see *inner* beauty. Swami Shri Savitanandji writes that we are mistaken when we look upon *Satyam*, *Shivam*, *Sundaram*, as three separate words. When we try to understand these words separate from each other, we are attracted to external beauty which we try to enjoy through the senses. However, when we consider these three words together, and are able to appreciate that they are complementary to each other, we begin to realize that the external beauty is the beauty of a person, object, surrounding or nature, and *that* beauty cannot be “*shiv*” or auspicious. *Shiv* means benevolent conscious energy that spontaneously brings about bliss. *Satyam* means SAT, which means unchanging, permanent and immortal. That beauty which is not permanent is not really speaking *Sundaram*. Such beauty, at best, is only an illusion produced by five senses and the mind. Swamiji gives an example of young beautiful girls who participate in, and win beauty contests. After forty or fifty years, someone who was elected the most beautiful woman in the whole world, is no longer judged beautiful, because the beauty that we admired was

not a *true* beauty, it was not the beauty referred to in the aphorism, “*Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram.*” It is the beauty which was appreciated through the senses, and that is why, even when she was elected the most beautiful woman of the world, not *all* participants, observers or selectors found her to be beautiful. Thus, the true beauty or *Sundaram* is that which is blissful, auspicious and permanent, that which does not diminish or disappear with time.

But every beautiful thing contains in it that element of true beauty for those who are able to perceive it. When we look at a beautiful flower, face or form, while we appreciate outer beauty, we should, at the same time, also try to see or imagine in them the reflection of the divine beauty. Then that beautiful thing or person will no longer remain an instrument of sense pleasure but will become a reminder of divine beauty. It is said that once some people, who were jealous of Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, tried to test him. They brought before him a young girl, who was extremely beautiful and scantily dressed. It is said that Ramakrishna Paramhansa first glanced at her, and then began to stare. People who had brought her there asked that girl to move a little to the side, and then some more, till she stood behind Ramakrishna Paramhansa. But to their amazement they found Ramakrishna Paramhansa continuing to stare at the same spot where she had stood before. In fact, he was not looking at the girl, but was in a trance. When asked, “What were you staring at?” he replied, “A little while ago a very beautiful young girl was standing before me. As soon as I glanced at her, I thought, ‘if this girl is so beautiful, how much more beautiful must be my Mother (goddess Kali) who has created her?’ With this thought I slipped into a trance, and I do not know what happened after that.” Swamiji says that we must also endeavour to cultivate such perception.

Adi Shankaracharya in his composition *Saundarya Lahiri* (Waves of Beauty), the famous literary work in Sanskrit, glorifies the incomparable beauty of the Divine Mother. According to some commentators, this work is not to be taken literally or in its gross form. When interpreted in its *subtler aspect*, it shows how Adi

Shankara describes in this composition, the beautiful journey from the gross to the subtle, the outer to the inner, the form to the formless, and the limited to the infinite, non-dual consciousness. A fragrant flower, a beautiful painting, a piece of music could elevate one's consciousness and help one to be lost in the formless divinity within.

Our civilization, it seems, is not only moving from the subtle to the gross, in the realm of art and beauty but with its increasing materialism, causing them to disappear. H.P.B. warns that we must wake up and do something, "otherwise, old arts and artistic creations, everything original and unique will very soon disappear. Already national dresses and time-honoured customs, and everything beautiful, artistic, and worth preservation is fast disappearing from view....Materialism and indifference to all save the selfish realization of wealth and power, and the over-feeding of national and personal vanity, have gradually led nations and men to the almost entire oblivion of spiritual ideals, of the love of nature to the correct appreciation of things."

Day and night there is movement of foam on the Sea.
You see the foam, but not the Sea. Amazing!
We are dashing against each other like boats:
our eyes are darkened though we are in clear water.
O you who have gone to sleep in the body's boat,
you've seen the water, but look at the Water of the water.
The water has a Water that is driving it;
the spirit has a Spirit that is calling it.
Time is limited, and the abundant water is flowing away.
Drink, before you fall to pieces.
There is a famous conduit, full of the Water of Life:
draw the Water...from the river of the speech of the saints:
Come, O heedless thirsty man!
Even if you don't see the water, artfully, like the blind,
bring the jug to the river and dip it in.

—JALALUDDIN RUMI
"Spirit"

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
THE FINEST STORY IN THE WORLD

I

THE FINEST STORY IN THE WORLD, is a short story by Rudyard Kipling. This story was first published in the *Contemporary Review* of July 1891. It is about a narrator-writer who meets a young bank clerk, Charlie Mears, who aspires to be a writer and seeks his advice. When Charlie has trouble with a story he is attempting to write, the narrator offers to hear it. When the narrator reads a fragment of the story, he feels that it has been badly written. However, when Charlie tells him the story aloud, the narrator finds the “notion” behind the story to be quite fine. “I looked at him, wondering whether it was possible that he did not know the originality, the power of the notion that had come in his way?” Eventually, it becomes clear to the narrator that Charlie, who had never been at the sea, produced strangely powerful accounts of sea voyages in the ancient world, by a Viking adventurer on a voyage to America, and knew in astonishing detail about the daily life of an ancient Greek galley-slave. The narrator thinks that “it would be folly to allow his thought to remain in his own inept hands, when I could do so much with it.”

Charlie was aware that he was not good at expressing his ideas well, so he asked the narrator if those ideas would be of any use to him. The narrator offers him five Pounds for sharing his ideas, so that he could buy poetry-books that he wished to read. Charlie accepts the offer. The narrator is curious to know how Charlie came by his ideas. He was told that the ideas came by themselves. In the story about the Greek galley-slave he gives vivid description of a hero who went pirating. When he was asked to describe the ship, he said, “It was the kind rowed with oars, and the sea spurts through the oar-holes, and the men row sitting up to their knees in water. Then there’s a bench running down between the two lines of oars, and an overseer with a whip walks up and down the bench to make

the men work.” He describes how oarsmen are arranged on the upper, lower and lowest decks. It is quite dark on the lowest deck and all the men there go mad. When a man dies at his oar on that deck he is not thrown overboard, but cut up in his chains and stuffed through the oar-hole in little pieces...to save trouble and to frighten others.” Once the hero was punished for making fun of the overseer and was chained to his oar.

The narrator wonders how a bank clerk aged twenty, who had never been at the sea and had never read about galleys and galley-slaves could put into his hands the story of extravagant and bloodthirsty adventure, riot, piracy, and death in unnamed seas, in which the hero plans a revolt against the overseers and at last establishes a kingdom of his own, “somewhere in the sea.”

After having bought and read a lot of poetry books, when Charlie visited the narrator, he was profusely quoting from Longfellow. Charlie says that he was thinking over a story, and after a while he got out of bed and wrote down on a piece of paper something that men might scratch on their oars with their handcuffs. He hands over a paper to the narrator with a single line of scratches upon it. The narrator takes the piece of paper to the British museum to decipher the writing. He learns that it is an attempt to write extremely corrupt Greek on the part of an extremely illiterate person, which reads: “I have been—many times—overcome with weariness in this particular employment.”

The narrator becomes convinced that rather than creating these stories Charlie is remembering past lives, inspired by certain dreams, which were memories of former lives, and was thus able to go back to the vivid and brutal world of ancient Greece. He says, “The Fates that are so careful to shut the doors of each successive life behind us had, in this case, been neglectful.” He is sure that Charlie would supply him with the material to make a story, unaware of metempsychosis, while the world may regard it as a fiction, “I alone would know that it was absolutely and literally true. The narrator was encouraging him to give more details about the Greek galley-

slave, but Charlie was more interested in reciting fragments from English poets. After a while he shares some more details of the voyage and adds that he (the slave) had also rowed to the Long and Wonderful Beaches.”

Charlie had talked of some desperate adventure of the Vikings, of Thorfin Karlsefen’s sailing to Wineland, which is America, in the ninth or tenth century. He had described the battle in the harbour that he had witnessed and also his own death. “But this was a much more startling plunge into the past. Was it possible that he had skipped half a dozen lives, and was then dimly remembering some episode of a thousand years later? It was a maddening jumble....I might rewrite the Saga of Thorfin Karlsefne as it had never been written before, might tell the story of the first discovery of America, myself the discoverer. But I was entirely at Charlie’s mercy,” laments the narrator.

Once when the two of them paused to look at a steamer unloading slabs of white and brown marble, a barge—a long flat-bottomed boat—drifted under the steamer’s stern and the cow in that barge bellowed. Charlie’s face changed and laughing very loudly, he said, “When they heard *our* bulls bellow the Skroelings ran away!” However, he confessed that he knew nothing about the Skroelings. The narrator muses: “It is written in the Saga of Eric the Red or that of Thorfin Karlsefne, that nine hundred years ago when Karlsefne’s galleys came to Leif’s booths, which Leif had erected in the unknown land called Markland, which may or may not have been Rhode Island, the Skroelings...came to trade with the Vikings, and ran away because they were frightened at the bellowing of the cattle which Thorfin had brought with him in the ships. But what in the world could a Greek slave know of that affair? I wandered up and down among the streets trying to unravel the mystery, and the more I considered it the more baffling it grew. One thing only seemed certain, and that certainty took away my breath for the moment. If I came to full knowledge of anything at all, it would not be one life of the soul in Charlie Mears’s body, but half a dozen—half a dozen

several and separate existences spent on blue water in the morning of the world!”

The narrator longs for an opportunity wherein Charlie would speak uninterruptedly about his past lives and he would be able to write it all down. He envisages diverse reactions when he would make known to the world this doctrine of Metempsychosis. For instance, he could foresee that the preachers would work out a fresh conduct of life based on it, saying that they had lifted the fear of death from all mankind; Churches and religions would war over it and that the scuffles that would arise among half a dozen denominations all professing “the doctrine of the True Metempsychosis as applied to the world and the New Era.” He could see that men and women would garble the story and rival screeds would turn it upside down till at last, “the western world which clings to the dread of death more closely than the hope of life, would set it aside as an interesting superstition...” He also considers whether it would be wise to take Charlie to a professional mesmerist so that under his power he would speak of his past lives.

As he muses about the possibilities, he is accosted by a young Bengali law student he knows, named Grish Chunder. He tells the Hindu about Charlie’s case, knowing that Chunder will be familiar with the “remembering of past life experiences.” The first reaction of Chunder was that he had heard of this remembering of previous existences among the Hindus, but that it was *most* peculiar that such a thing should happen to an Englishman, an outcast. He cautions that if other people in the bank came to know that he could remember his past lives, he would be sacked, thinking he had lost his mind, and they would send him to a lunatic asylum. Chunder tells him that Charlie will soon begin to forget, especially once he meets a woman: “One kiss that he gives back again and remembers will cure all this nonsense.”

Charlie visits the narrator and reads an awful poem he has composed and is able to impart only a little bit more of his Viking adventures. When the narrator placed all his notes together, he

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

realized that unless Charlie gave him a full account, whatever he possessed was commonplace. “There was nothing that might not have been compiled at second-hand from other people’s books....The adventures of a Viking had been written many times before; the history of a Greek galley-slave was no new thing, and though I wrote both, who could challenge or confirm the accuracy of my details? I might as well tell a tale of two thousand years hence....I saw that the tale might indeed be written, but would be nothing more than a faked, false-varnished, sham-rusted piece of Wardour Street work in the end.”

As time passed, the narrator hardly cared to remind Charlie of galley but he alluded to it on almost every occasion, always as a story from which money could be made and that he deserved twenty-five per cent of it because he had supplied all the ideas. “This greediness for silver was a new side in his nature.”

On another occasion Charlie gives more details about his adventures with the “red-haired man” (Thorfin), rowing for three days among floating ice. But the next time Charlie visits, he has written a love poem and produces a photograph of a girl “with a curly head and a foolish slack mouth.” He was wrapped in the rosy mystery of first love. He spoke on and on, “while I, separated from him by thousands of years, was considering the beginnings of things. Now I understood why the Lords of Life and Death shut the doors so carefully behind us. It is that we may not remember our first and most beautiful wooings. Were this not so, our world would be without inhabitants in a hundred years.” The narrator concludes, “Grish Chunder was right. Charlie had tasted the love of a woman that kills remembrance, and the finest story in the world would never be written.”

(To be concluded)

You will fail least in your judgments, if you yourself fail
least in your life.

—EPICTETUS

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS MISCELLANEOUS—I

THE INDIVIDUAL is neglected by the State which considers itself important. Between the Welfare State and the Communist one there is only a little difference, but that little is vital. The power of the vote and free expression of views is possible in the former. This is a gain for the upholding of the ideal of the Individual. To change and transform that individual, self-education through discipline is necessary, and here the State falling prey to the force of the cycle begins to go wrong. Educating and disciplining the Kama-Manas is the duty of the State to the citizen. It is, alas! wrongly performed.

Of course present-day democracy is only mobocracy and Welfare State is for the State and not for the citizen. Totalitarianism may overtake poor India. Educating the individual in the *right* way is not done; that would require Theosophical perception in the education officers at New Delhi and elsewhere.

Economic and other conditions in the country, and especially in big cities like Bombay, are worsening. The astral light is bound to be affected and in turn to affect people. There will be an increase of unemployment among the youngsters and a great deal of discontent. You will have to keep very calm and steady in the midst of all this.

What you say about education having undergone a change is true, but the whole philosophy of living has considerably changed since the two wars—whether the change is for the better is another matter. It is certainly true that the present system of education has its drawbacks; the children, the parents, as well as the teachers are overburdened. Not only that, but wrong education has contributed a great deal to the confusion of thought and the turmoil that prevails in the world, and we very much need to change the present imperfect educational system with its competition basis, over-specialization and lack of synthesis. Pupils today are taught “subjects” instead of how to think for themselves and to handle the tools of learning, with the result that few of the graduates which our schools and

colleges turn out can be said to be truly educated. And this is because we do not pause to consider the aim of education, to which H.P.B. has pointed in *The Key to Theosophy*. The pressing need of our civilization is Theosophical education. In several U.L.T. Centres an important piece of work is carried on—educating the children, not so much teaching them the tenets of Theosophy as helping them to acquire a Theosophical attitude to the whole of life and enabling them to see that each one has the power to educate himself. It is better never to urge the young, but rather to encourage when they ask for help, and guide them when we see the opportunity without their knowing that we are acting.

Who cares in our real circle—Masters and chelas—about originality? “Thus, have I heard” is our programme, policy and also process. The more you “plagiarize,” the better. Listen to these words of Mahatma K.H.: “From the right point of view, if you will know, it is only the expression of another person’s *original* ideas, some independent sentence, a thought, which in its brief completeness is capable of being constructed into a wise motto or maxim that could be constituted into what is regarded as *plagiarism*—the pilfering of another person’s ‘brain property’. There is not a book but is the shadow of some other book, the concrete image, very often, of the *astral body* of it in some other work upon the same or approximate subject. I agree entirely with Dr. Cromwell when he says that ‘true talent will become original in the very act of engaging itself with the ideas of others’; nay will often *convert the* dross of previous authors into the golden ore that shines forth to the world as its own peculiar creation. ‘From a series of extravagant and weak Italian romances, Shakespeare took the plots, the characters, and the major part of the incidents of those dramatic works which have exalted his name, as an *original* writer, above that of every other in the annals of literature.’” So, there you have it.

In your articles for *The Theosophical Movement*, keep it in mind to combine both thought and aspiration. The *T.M.* is for the student and some substance for his mental teeth is necessary. Nobody ever

grew on the sweetness and light of good sentiment. A little of the latter to mellow the hard cold facts of reason and thought makes a fine chemical combination. And please distinguish between mechanical mixture and chemical combination! Try to aim at simplicity in Theosophical writing.

You should try to improve your writing by suitable study. Gathering of ideas and thoughts is one thing; developing of style, lucid, clear, economical, is another. For acquiring style, one should study different good styles. You will need to give some time to proper reading—I mean literature. I have often thought that Addison’s *Spectator* provides an excellent basis for the formation of style in writing. The Bible as literature, Shakespeare and such viable writings will prove valuable to you. Then, important, there is osmosis. As we saturate ourselves in reading our chosen model, we osmose his elementals and assimilation takes place. Your reading of good literature should be varied. Have you ever read Longinus’ “On the Sublime”? It is full of the art of real writing.

I know you are slow at writing, but speed is not all; in fact, is speed even desirable? What is needed is calmness within and steady pen-motion without. Compactness and frugality in words, grace of sentence, links between the paragraphs of an essay, all emerge when the mind is free of mundane affinities. For our work this mental state is necessary. Study-preparation, collection of points, etc., naturally come first and take time, but then the “blessed mood” must be evoked and undisturbed conditions must sustain it till we write to the end, or to a suitable breaking point. It will all come to you.

You need a calm interior whence emerge real thoughts and the grace of graciousness. We are aiming not at spasmodic calmness, now and then, such as intuitive poets have when they pour forth their verse and song. We are trying to get a condition for the Inspiration which comes from within because the body has become “agitated” by and in sensitiveness, and the mind a calm lake in which fall the unbroken images of *Akasha*.

(To be continued)

ON HEAVEN AND HELL

IV

HOW long does the Ego remain in *Devachan*? The Ego remains in *Devachan* for a time exactly proportionate to the psychic impulses generated during life. It depends on the degree of spirituality and the merit or demerit of the last incarnation. In *The Ocean of Theosophy*, Mr. Judge says that it being a matter which deals with the mathematics of the soul, no one but a Master can tell what the time would be for the average man of this century. The Master says that a person can be in *Devachan* for an average of 1500 years. We eat our meal in 15-20 minutes but it takes anywhere from ten hours to three days for the food to be fully digested. So too, the time needed for assimilation in *Devachan* is longer. However, the time of stay in *Devachan* varies from person to person. For instance, persons with materialistic bent of mind, who have not created the mental force to keep their higher principles in *Devachan*, are born quickly. The thirst for earthly life (*tanha*) draws them quickly back to earth. However, a selfish, wicked Egoist, who did not believe in soul, God, or in rebirth, and never shed a tear for anyone but himself, such a materialist will drop his personality for ever, at the threshold of death. There being no spiritual qualities that could be assimilated by the Ego, there is no *Devachan* for such a materialist, and the Ego reincarnates almost immediately.

Among the cases of immediate rebirth, wherein the Ego skips *Devachan*, are still born babies, children who die before the age of seven, and congenital idiots. In *Isis* (I, 351-52) we read that in all these three cases, nature's original design to produce a perfect human being is interrupted or frustrated. It is the aim of nature to produce physically, intellectually, morally and spiritually perfect beings. However, in all the above cases the connection of the Higher Mind is not made with the personality. In such cases, reason has not developed far enough to be active and discriminative. Then, it is the same "astral monad" or the personality that is born again.

In the article, “Devachan,” Mr. Judge writes that in certain conditions it is possible for living men on earth to be in “living *Devachanic* state.” Thus: “In everyday life many illustrations can be found of the operation upon living men of the same force which puts disembodied men into *Devachan*. The artist, poet, musician, and day-dreamer constantly show it. When rapt in melody, composition, colour arrangement, and even foolish fancy, they are in a sort of living *Devachanic* state wherein they often lose consciousness of time and sense impressions. Their stay in that condition depends, as we well know, on the impulses toward it which they have amassed. If they were not subject to the body and its forces, they might remain years in their ‘dream.’” (*Path*, March 1893)

As for the spiritually advanced persons, they remain *conscious* after death of the body, and their Ego does not enter the state of *Kamaloka* or *Devachan*. In their case there are no impure desires that can form *Kamarupa*. Their ego does not require rest. In their case, the process of assimilation takes place while on earth. *Devachan* is an illusion, and since adepts and initiates have risen above illusions, they have no *Devachan*.

The question is often asked that if a sincere student of Theosophy intensely desires a quick rebirth in order to help humanity, is it possible for him to skip the rest and peace of *Devachan*? In this connection we have a definite statement by H. P. Blavatsky, who says that “all workers of the Lodge, no matter of what degree, are helped out of *Devachan*, if they themselves permit it.” However, we must not take this statement in isolation. In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, writing to a sincere student and co-worker, Mr. Judge says that death is inevitable and that no one knows when it will come. While it is good to be prepared for death, we must make the most of life, as also, of the time on hand. “Immediate rebirth is for those who are always working with their hearts on Master’s work and free from self-interest.” But as we live, we must strive to do our very best for the work. We may be assured that we will be helped out of *Devachan*, if we deserve and desire. But do we really belong

to that category? Mr. Judge points out that he (the sincere student and co-worker) was not yet at that stage where such extraordinary help could be given, and hence, in his case, it was very likely that he would die and remain in *Devachan* for a long time. His sage advice to the student is that all that can be done in the body must be done because life is a great cyclic opportunity which comes after many thousand years, and that nothing can be done in death. “Life is better than death, for death again disappoints the Self.”

In “Extracts from Unpublished Letters” (*The Theosophical Movement*, January 1963), we are told that H.P.B.’s words are apt to be taken lightly by all and sundry. There are conditions to be fulfilled by one aspiring to secure such extraordinary help. On the side of the Masters the condition for helping to skip *Devachan* or for being pulled out early from *Devachanic* rest is that one must be a worker for the Great Lodge of the Masters, and that one gives permission to the Masters to be helped out. What is it to be a *worker*? There must be in the person one-pointed devotion and aspiration to serve humanity, and work towards Universal Brotherhood. There must be faith in the Masters and willingness to labour strenuously. The phrase, “worker for the Lodge” is not to be taken lightly. One has to formulate the desire to serve the Masters, and to work for Humanity, while alive, and must also be willing to let go of the rest, joy and peace of *Devachan*. The feeling must arise, “I want to serve.”

One cannot renounce *Devachan* just by wishing. To be able to renounce, one should have cultivated the virtue of adaptability, which in turn depends upon cultivation of *vairagya* or detachment. Adaptability implies ability to adjust with all kinds of people and that is possible only when there is love that understands—love that expands and unfolds compassion. It is also the ability to work in any type of body and environment. Adaptability means one must be detached enough to work where one is required. Quick rebirth implies the same astral which has become accustomed to certain conditions; a new environment makes it not only uncomfortable but useless. Therefore, adaptability is most valuable and becomes necessary.

Doing without *Devachan* is a difficult thing, because one has to stay in self-consciousness till Masters use one's Karma to arrange the suitable environment. Besides rest and peace for the soul, it is in *Devachan* that there is exhaustion of unspent psychic energies and unfulfilled aspirations. Now, when we desire to skip *Devachan*, "unfulfilled aspirations" must be fulfilled in waking life by "self-induced and self-devised ways and means" of discipline and service. There is also the question of exhaustion, renovation and renewal of spiritual stamina. We have to so live the life that we can do without *Devachanic* rest. Motive, ideation and imagination change the quality of *Prana*; with right motive and ideation we may be able to make a superior quality of *Prana* to flow through us. Through devotion, we may keep renewing, day by day, our spiritual stamina, by right endeavour.

As already seen, the time period in *Devachan* depends on the proportion and strength of a person's noble and moral thoughts in his previous life. When the force created by the thoughts of the person is expended, the Law of Karma influences him to take birth once again. We have performed many actions (Karma) in the past life, hence, to get reward or punishment for them it is absolutely necessary to be reborn on the earth. However, the mental forces appropriate to *devachanic* condition act against the forces of our actions (Karmic Forces) and prevent an immediate birth of the Ego. But, as soon as this mental pressure or force of the previous birth is reduced, the cumulative effect of the actions of many previous births pushes out the Ego from *devachan* and it has to again take birth.

Thus, it is clearly stated by Krishna (*Gita*, IX) that "those enlightened in the Vedas," whose desire is for a personal enjoyment of heaven, they obtain and enjoy that heaven for a period of time proportionate to their merits, and when their stock of merit is exhausted, they sink back to mortal birth. We act in accordance with the ideas of life we hold. Thus, there are those who are not disposed to meditation or desirous of achieving union with the divine but are seduced by the words of the Vedas, and considering the

transient enjoyment of heaven as the highest good, they perform special ceremonies for the sake of obtaining heavenly joys. “The Christian looks for an eternal reward in heaven and knows nothing of reincarnation on earth, while the Hindu relies upon pleasure to be had in heaven—called *Svarga*—and a continuation of it upon earth by reason of a fortunate rebirth. They have special ceremonies, certain sorts of sacrifices, penances, prayers, and actions, the result of which is a rebirth on earth in a royal family, or with great riches, or in any other sort of pleasant circumstances; and also, a sure admittance to heaven. Some ceremonies procure entrance into a delightful state after death which will last for incalculable periods of time.”

Even when the heavenly pleasures last for aeons of time, it will come to an end, and then “the weary task of treading the world—whether this or some other one—has to be commenced.” There are those who are willing to take the risk of what may happen after the enjoyment for such a long period is ended. The most ordinary form of risk may be described in terms of “delayed karma and unspent affinities.” Such beings are continually deluded and never succeed in attaining to God. It is only by means of devotion that the freedom from the wheel of birth and death can be obtained. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 57-58 and pp. 65-67)

The eighth chapter of the *Gita* seems to suggest that the time of death determines the particular region or state to which the Ego goes. Shri Krishna says: “The Fire, the Flame, the day, the bright fortnight, six months of northward journey of the Sun (or *Uttarayana*), dying in these conditions, Yogis go to the Brahman, never to return. But those who depart in Smoke, Night, the dark fortnight, the six months of southward journey of the sun (or *Dakshinayana*), dying in these they go to the region of the moon and return.”

H.P.B. explains that Krishna’s utterances are symbolic and esoteric. The devotees are divided into two classes: There are those who will reach *Nirvana* while on Earth like Buddha and others.

They may enter the *Nirvana*, taking the path of liberation or they may refuse to enter. In either case, they will not be born again in this *Maha-kalpa* or the age of *Brahama*. She comments that “Fire, Flame, bright fortnight, northward journey of the sun,” is symbolic of the Highest and Absolute Deity. Only the person who dies in absolute purity goes to *Brahman* and has the right to *Moksha* or *Nirvana*. “Smoke, night, dark fortnight” are symbolic of matter and darkness of ignorance. Thus, others dying in the state of incomplete purification, must necessarily be reborn. (*Transactions*, p. 139)

In *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* (pp. 151-52), Mr. Crosbie explains that Yogis are those who strive to obtain union with the Higher Self. Those who are striving will not achieve it in one life, and so long as they are still struggling, they are subjected to rebirth. The conditions described in the *sloka* do not apply to those who are still attached to material existence. In their case some other conditions apply. The ancient sages have pointed out that the Souls do not depart from the body in the same way. There are seven great *plexi* which govern seven minor *plexi*. These are the channels through which influences are given and received. Each channel is related to seven divisions of the system (which probably refers to Solar system). Thus, depending upon the predominant idea in life, what is called the “line of life’s meditation,” there would be departure from one of the seven channels, and the soul would be led to an appropriate region or realm of freedom or bondage. In order to reach the highest place, the person must be free from the desire for enjoying the merits of austerities, sacrifices and charity. To reach this highest place one must be a man of meditation, with the highest motive to benefit humanity in thought and action, which must be sustained through many lives.

The Hindu philosophy speaks of two paths, *Devayana* and *Pitriyana*. The former is the path of “no return.” The “Path of Return” is called the “Path of Ancestor,” *Pitriyana*, and is considered as presided over by the Moon, which represents the world of matter. Mr. Crosbie mentions that the seven *plexi* are related to seven regions

or realms to which the soul goes after death, depending upon what thoughts were predominant. One way of understanding this connection is by taking into account the association of each *chakra* or plexus with certain emotions and inner state. The Hindu philosophy speaks of 14 *Lokas* of which 7 are divine regions and 7 are infernal regions. *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 321) mentions that *Bhu, Bhuvan, Swara, Mahar, Jana, Tapo* and *Satya Loka* are various paradises, and they are to be attained by increasing religious merits. *Satya Loka* is the abode of the *Nirvanees*. Likewise, there are various degrees of Hell or *Kamaloka*. Mr. Judge points out that taking into account the variety of human character and nature, as also the last thoughts and life thoughts of people at death, and also the manner of death, *Kama Loka* is an infinitely varied sphere. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 107)

After the death of the body, the surviving entity passes through various states and it appears from the description of after-death states given in many religious traditions that the passage of soul is guided and presided over by intelligent powers. In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 132) H.P.B. mentions that according to *Visishtadwaita*, the one who reaches *Moksha* enjoys the bliss in a place called *Paramapadha*, which place is not material but made of *Suddasatwa*. There, the *Muktas* are never again subject to the qualities either of matter or Karma, But if they choose, *for the sake of doing good to the world*, they may incarnate on Earth. It further points out that the way to *Paramapadha* is called *Devayana*. It is described as the path in which the *Jiva* goes from the heart of the body, to the *Brahmarandra* in the crown of the head, traversing the *Sushumna*, a nerve which connects the heart with the *Brahamarandra*. Then, the *Jiva* breaks through *Brahmarandra* and goes to the region of the Sun (*Suryamandala*) through the solar Rays and ultimately reaches *Paramapadha*.

(Concluded)

THE THREE HALLS

THE DISCOURSE in the *Voice of the Silence* on the subject of the *three halls*, as students of Theosophy well know, has a profound philosophical and ethical meaning. It has practical value to devotees who aspire to live the Higher Life. Many are aspirants who long to tread the arduous path that leads to Enlightenment and Freedom but few realise the difficulties and dangers one has to face on the path, and are at a loss as to where and how a true Teacher is to be found. *The Voice of the Silence*, a mystic treatise which is related to the *Book of Dzyan* on which *The Secret Doctrine* is based, points out the true way to the highest and noblest ideal of human perfection.

It is evident that the three halls spoken of in the text are metaphorical expressions, referring to the three planes of cosmic Being and to the corresponding three states of human consciousness, the microcosm of the former. Study of these is absolutely essential on the part of one who aspires to acquire self-knowledge. An attempt is made *vide infra* to recount some of the meanings of the allegorical three halls and the practical bearing they have in the quest of self-knowledge.

Nature, or, the universe, has three aspects or planes: the spiritual, the material, and the intermediate plane linking the two, called the Astral Light; the higher aspect of which is akin to the spiritual, and the lower end partakes of, and is influenced by, the material plane, our physical world.

Similarly, man also has three aspects, corresponding to the three aspects of the macro-cosmos: the spiritual or the divine principle, and the material body or the physical man; and connecting the two is the Inner man, the Thinker, Mind or *Manas*, the human soul.

During incarnate life on earth the soul is generally conquered by the principle of *Kama* which is co-extensive with the body, the seat of animal desires and passions; yet, the human soul is endowed with reason, will, and conscience by the exercise of which man may control and conquer the former. The great aim of the human

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soul is to spiritualise the lower material principles, merge his self with the Higher Self, and raise up the lower kingdoms of nature to manhood and thence to divinity.

The three halls also represent the three states of human consciousness of the fourth, the one indivisible divine consciousness, called *Turya*. They are waking, dreaming and deep sleep states which we all experience every day and night.

One of the paradoxes of human life is that the three states alluded to should be the very nature of our being and existence which we experience every day and night throughout our lives, and yet we should pay so little attention to it. Study of the three states of human consciousness in ourselves and of the corresponding three planes of the Macrocosmos is an essential part of the discipline in the quest of the one striving for self-improvement and self-knowledge. The study reveals many psychological and spiritual mysteries. Upanishads contain valuable discourse on it, pre-eminently in the *Brihadaranyaka*, *Chandogya*, and *Mandukya* Upanishads.

The physical mental consciousness of the incarnated human soul is the waking state, *Jagrat*, which functions on the basis of, and limited to, perception of the five physical senses, and cogitations of the brain-mind. It is generally conquered by the principle of *Kama*—passions and desires—but which it can control and even conquer by exercise of the power of will. In the *Voice of the Silence* the waking state of the human soul is called the “Hall of Ignorance,” because, limited to the sense-perception, deluded by passions and insatiable desires, and rational thinking based on physical life alone to which it clings, man is ignorant of the reality and the nature of his true Self, thus mistaking right for wrong, good for evil, and real for unreal, and *vice versa*. “It is the Hall in which thou saw’st the light, in which thou livest and shalt die.”

Next is the “Hall of Learning.” It is the Astral plane in macrocosmic perspective, and, in the perspective of Microcosm—the embodied soul (terrestrial man)—it is the dream state as one of the three states of human consciousness. The two, the Astral plane

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of the earth and the dream state of man, correspond and exercise mutual influence on each other. It is called the “Hall of Learning” because, in the course of spiritual development of the disciple, the psychic senses, which are dormant in ordinary man, open up as he evolves his Astral Body, separates it from the physical, and begins to live and function in the former, to learn the hidden mysteries of the inner life on the occult plane and to control and master the forces and potencies pertaining to that plane. At this stage the disciple is warned against the danger of succumbing to the allurements of the wonders of psychic powers which, if not conquered, leads him astray to moral ruin and spiritual death.

The confusion of the Astral Plane and the danger to which one who seeks to reach it without preparatory self-purification process through regular initiations in the sacred Mysteries lies in the following fact: Situated as it is between the World of Truth or Spirit and the material earth plane, the eternal truths of the spiritual plane—the plane of Reality—are reflected in it reversed, so to speak, on the one hand, and is contaminated by the impure magnetic emanations of ignorant masses and their wicked thoughts and deeds on earth, besides causing lateral inversion of the objects of the physical plane in it, on the other. Hence it is that reports of the visions of clairvoyants, who can see in the Astral Light, are not reliable but often distinctly erroneous, or, at best, partially true, in the absence of knowledge of the whole Truth. Speaking of the Astral plane, which must be learned by the disciples in their spiritual progress, Mr. Judge teaches (*Letters That Have Helped me*, American edition, p. 11):

“It is a most confusing plane, and generally speaking, we may say that those students are more fortunate who make a marked degree of progress in spiritual things without having any conscious experience of the astral plane. For then they can later on learn it *from above*, instead of from below, and with far less danger to themselves. The whole must be known...”

The Voice of the Silence, therefore, teaches the seeker to find his

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true Teacher and Guide in the *Hall of Wisdom*—“the Hall which lies beyond, wherein all shadows are unknown, and where the light of truth shines with unfading glory” (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 8). It is the abode or plane of our immortal Divine Ego which corresponds to the deep-sleep state, the third of the three states of human consciousness, beyond the dream state, called *Sushupti*, into which we enter every night but fail to bring back the memory of that state when we come back to waking state. Once the purified lower self-consciousness merges into its divine prototype through Initiation, he can then learn the mysteries of the occult nature, *prakriti*, from the higher divine plane; to control, conquer and master the mind, the physical and astral senses, and lower powers and potencies of the Astral Light by the power of the awakened spiritual will and in the clear light of *Buddhi*.

Who is a Guru and how to find him? It is a question about which many aspirants are puzzled. There need be no doubt or confusion on this issue, as it has been proclaimed in unequivocal terms in the ancient sacred literature still extant, such as, the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, *Viveka Chudamani* of Sri Shankaracharya, and in the ancient Theosophical Teachings recorded by Madam H. P. Blavatsky and Mr. W. Q. Judge for the modern world.

“None who has not ceased from doing evil, or who is not calm, or not concentrated in his being and not of tranquil mind can realise the Self” (*Katha Upanishad*, 2-24). The first requisite is to master philosophical knowledge of the nature of the true Self and of universal brotherhood; learn Self-reliance, develop unselfish devotion to humanity, and control and conquer tendencies of the lower self, unaided, at least partially. This study and discipline reveal to the student the relative unimportance of body and personality, and develop in him a strong conviction of the true self to be his Higher Self—the Self of All. A part of this discipline and devotion is to learn from a study of the three states of human consciousness, that there is but *one* Consciousness pervading all the planes of Being and the corresponding states of human consciousness, which is the

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Witness and the Knower, and preserves the memory of all. It is a question of attuning our waking consciousness with the One. Teachers suggest that through such study and devotion one must keep one's waking life concentrated and calm, which in turn renders dream consciousness likewise calm and elevated, so that the divine afflatus from the state of *Sushupti* is not lost when returning to waking life through the door of the dream state, but realised in waking life at least to some extent, even if fragmentarily.

When the devotee has accomplished self-control, and has developed strong dispassion for objects of sense and mind, unaided, through self-study and self-effort with an unselfish devotion, the Guru will come to him. "When the materials are ready the Architect will appear." *Mundaka* Upanishad teaches that the Self unveils Itself to him whom the Self chooses (II-3). All that one has to do is to prepare oneself for it.

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards
perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country
awake.

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE

"Where the Mind is Without Fear"

WHAT OUGHT I TO DO?

BEFORE WE take up any topic for deliberation, we first need to convince ourselves that the topic is important and impactful enough to justify such an investment of time and effort. In this regard, the reader is invited to formulate in their mind any problem that is currently vexing them. In all likelihood, the reader would have formulated a description of the problem such as, “bad traffic on the way to work” or “my mother-in-law moved in with us” etc. By framing a problem in descriptive ways, we externalize it. We think of it as an objective environmental feature that is subjectively bothersome. As such, we implicitly paint ourselves as hapless victims of circumstances beyond our immediate control. Such a framing engenders feelings of bitterness, resentment and victimhood. So, it is clear that the way in which we have framed our problem, we have started off on the wrong foot. Rather, the reader is now invited to reframe their problem as a normative question. Instead of stating our problem as “bad traffic on the way to work,” we could restate it as “what ought I to do about the bad traffic on the way to work”? Just by reformulating a descriptive problem as a normative question, we immediately and explicitly gain agency. We have moved the problem from the domain of stimulus to that of response. As such, we have internalized the problem and brought it completely into our circle of control. There is a profound gap between stimulus and response within which volition enters. We cannot control environmental stimuli but we can fully control our response to them. Thus, the real problem that anyone faces is actually in their choice of response rather than in the stimuli, which means that *all* problems can and must be restated as the question, “what ought I to do?”

Furthermore, for a topic to be worthy of deliberation, it should not just be important but also difficult to solve. For example, hydration is an important problem but has a simple solution—drink water. So, we find that the topic of dehydration is not engaging enough for deliberation. But for any important and difficult question we find

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people generally patronizing one of the two usual purveyors of answers, Religion or Science. And given that Science is based on empirically verifiable facts, unassailable logic and intellectual rigour, Theosophists usually find that it is harder to contend with Scientific rather than Religious answers for most questions. However, for our normative meta-problem, we surprisingly find that Science has to respectfully bow out of contention altogether. This is because of the profound distinction between facts and values. Science solely occupies itself with facts and it is impossible to derive values out of bare facts. Because facts are the description of what *is* while values are a statement of what *ought* to be. As Hume stated, you cannot derive an “ought” from an “is.” This is because what “is,” is unitary and hence cannot provide directionality. For there to be values, there needs to be a current state and an aspirational state. Values are like the compass which only works so long as your current state is any location other than the magnetic North Pole. At the magnetic North Pole, the compass would simply swivel around and point to nowhere in particular. Ergo, to derive values from facts, one needs to admit two realities—the current *de facto* reality and an antecedent, noumenal, truer reality. The difference between these two facts would be the basis for a value system.

At this point one may raise an objection that we are making a value presupposition in positing that truer reality is *better* than *de facto* reality. To this we answer with an illustration. The question is similar to asking, why should I value waking-reality over dream state. Now, even if you value the dream state more, in the realization that the dream state is a passive effect of the waking reality, you are compelled to value the waking-state more. Because it is only from the waking-reality that you can affect the dream state. However, Modern Science distinguishes itself as *nânyadastîti vâdinah* (*Gita*, II, 42) or those that deny any reality other than this. And as such succumb to the tyranny of unitary truth from which values can never be derived. For Science, the current *de facto* reality is the only reality.

Coming to Religion, the modern atheists make a cogent argument

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to show that even a child of today can vastly improve upon the ethics of Abrahamic religions although each of them claim to possess the ultimate word of God. For example, all of the Abrahamic religions tacitly condone slavery and none condemn it, when even a child of today knows it to be unethical. And *Manu Smriti*, for all its subtleties, does not explicitly preclude hereditary caste-system, which is itself a form of slavery, when taken literally. Some will argue that the texts have been corrupted or that truth is metaphorically represented and has to be extracted from the text. In either case, we would be imputing modern, secular values to the text but not sourcing any from it. Furthermore, students of Theosophy know that without the key of the higher mysteries, all religious texts are simply dead-letter.

But even if we had the perfect list of injunctions in our possession, it would still not solve any salient ethical problem of our day because as Aristotle rightly claimed, any non-trivial ethical problem is never a choice between good and evil but rather between two competing virtues. Consider the example of border policy which is a raging debate in all western countries today. Compassion dictates that those fleeing abject economic conditions to provide a better life for their children should not be stopped at an imaginary line drawn on a map. While Justice demands that those that have worked to create a prosperous nation and paid into its social security should be the undiluted recipients of state services in their old age. Hence, the debate between open versus closed borders is reflective of the tension between the virtues of Compassion and Justice. We can also take the example of abortion when cast along the lines of Pro-Choice versus Pro-Life. It is essentially the tension between competing virtues of Liberty and Nonviolence.

So, what ought I to do? This question has an implicit assumption of “I” (the self) being an actor endowed with volition. At our stage of development, this assumption cannot be denied because that is how we identify ourselves. In this condition, we are beleaguered with choices at every moment with no firm basis on which to decide. Like despondent Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-Gita* we are *dharma*

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sammuda cetah (*Gita*, II, 7), he who is deluded as to right conduct. For such a one, who is elevated enough to be moved by moral compunctions, yet independent enough to reject all dogmas, Theosophy alone can provide a logical recourse. While it agrees with Advaita Vedanta in rejecting all manifested existence as mere illusion, it still “draws a practical distinction between collective illusion, *Mahamaya*, from the purely metaphysical stand-point, and the objective relations in it between various conscious *Egos* so long as this illusion lasts” (*S.D.*, I, 631). Meaning, Theosophy alone delineates all rungs in the ladder of reality from this separative, conditioned existence to the unconditioned absolute unity of *Paranirvana*. It recognizes that “the upward progress of the Ego is a series of progressive awakenings” (*S.D.*, I, 40), each awakening bringing it to a truer realization of reality. In this ladder, Advaita Vedanta only admits the reality of the highest rung while Science only admits the reality of the lowest. But to practically climb the ladder, every rung is needed and not one can be skipped over.

With this, the decision-making process becomes clear. Accept the current *de facto* reality. Study and acquire *Vijnana* or analytical knowledge of the noumenal, antecedent, truer reality—this is *Shravana*. Meditate on this noumenal reality and its ethical implications—this is *Manana*. Let the preponderance of your thoughts in any condition be occupied with and dwell in this constant meditation—this is *Nididhyasana*. As you gain more conviction in the truer reality, the difference between it and the current *de facto* reality will become the scientific basis for deriving values. This distinction gives you directionality for action where the underlying motive of all action would be to move closer to this truer reality. And since truer reality tends more towards unity and further away from heterogeneity, the motive for all actions naturally becomes more selfless and more firmly established in the ideal of Universal Brotherhood.

But just because we know what is true, does not mean we will always act in accordance with it. So, perform the little duties that

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your current situation in life demands of you and check if the motive is for the fruits of that action. Practise *Nishkama Karma* or selflessness in everyday action—this is *Abhyasa*. Through practice, we slowly recreate our nature or *Svabhava* in conformance with our ideals and to that degree, right action effortlessly flows from us. Life becomes graceful.

Then comes the realization that just as there is a noumenal, antecedent, truer, *objective* reality, there is similarly a truer, *subjective* reality. Our current *de facto* self is of the physical, thinking and acting nature but our truer Self is of the witnessing, non-acting and spiritual nature. For Plato, his forms or “ideas” are prior to any instance of an object with a given form and hence *Being* is more “real” than *Becoming* which may only be an “illusion.” By analogy, in Platonic terms, our nature on this plane of existence is that of *Becoming*, while our true nature is that of *Being*. Becoming is simply an expression of Being. When Being or Self is centered in Truth or *Satyam*, all our motives will be selfless and pure or *Shivam* and all action flowing therefrom will be right and beautiful or *Sundaram*. This is *Buddhi-Yoga* where the self is yoked in Divine Wisdom and all actions flowing therefrom is simply an expression of that state of Being. In this condition, one would be a *Gatasandehah* (*Gita*, XVIII, 73), one without doubt as to right conduct. So, the question is not as much “what I ought to do” as it is “who I ought to be” or more correctly “who I really am.” Truly, the Delphic maxim answers every riddle put forward by the Sphinx of Life—“Man, Know Thyself.”

TO BE, or not to be, that is the question: whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them?

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Can an organ transplant really change someone's personality? Ever since the transplants began there have been several cases in which changes in personality have been noted following a heart transplant. In one case a person who hated classical music, after receiving a musician's heart, developed a passion for it, and died holding a violin case. In another case, a 45-year-old man receiving the heart of a 17-year-old boy found that he loved to put on headphones and listen to loud music, which he had never done before the transplant. However, a recent study suggests that such changes in personality are not restricted merely to heart transplants, but can occur following the transplantation of any organ. Perhaps this could be looked upon as a placebo effect wherein the person acquires a happier disposition as a result of great joy of receiving a new lease of life. However, the cases of transplant where a recipient suffers from guilt and bouts of depression as well as other psychological issues might also be seen as personality changes.

Such changes are not merely psychological but may also be biological, because it is suggested that the cells of the transplanted organs, besides performing their expected function—such as kidney cells will filter—will also play a role elsewhere in the body. Thus, for instance, the chambers of the heart “release peptide hormones, including ‘atrial natriuretic peptide’ and ‘brain natriuretic peptide,’ which help regulate the balance of fluid in the body by affecting the kidneys. They also play a role in electrolyte balance and inhibiting the activity of the part of our nervous system responsible for the fight-or-flight response. So, the donor organ, which may have a different base level of hormones and peptide production from the original organ, could change the recipient's mood and personality through the substances it releases.”

Moreover, “the donor DNA is seen in the recipient's body two years after the transplant...it stimulates immune responses. These immune responses may be enough to trigger personality changes as

long-term, low-level inflammation is known to be able to change personality traits, such as extroversion and conscientiousness.” Further investigation in this area of research is necessary to enable us to clearly understand the physical and psychological changes that could occur after the organ transplant, writes Adam Taylor, Professor and Director of the Clinical Anatomy Learning Centre, Lancaster University. (*The Conversation*, May 3, 2024)

In the October 1981 issue of *The Theosophical Movement*, we read an extract from the article by Peter Kimber who refers to personality changes after the transplant and questions: “Who is the person who emerges from the operating theatre?” An elderly man was faced with the problem of identity after the heart of a 26-year-old man was transplanted into his body. The author remarks: “If personality is a function of everything we are, is it possible to replace bits of ourselves without, in some measure, changing our personalities?”

In the January 1970 issue of *The Theosophical Movement* we read about the futility of transplants of major organs. We read about a case of heart transplant wherein the very disease which necessitated the transplant eventually destroyed the new heart, after 19 months, though the donor’s heart was free from that disease. Why was the disease transferred to the new heart? Theosophy teaches that in the mind are located all seeds of disease with self-reproductive power inherent in them.

In an article in *Hindustan Times* (May 23, 2024) we read that “BrainBridge, a neuroscience and biomedical engineering start up from the US has claimed that they are developing the world’s first head transplant system....The animated video shows two surgical robots operating on two bodies at the same time. From one body, they remove the head and place it on the other body....Several people reacted to the clip expressing how they found it unsettling.”

Our medical men know very little of the real nature of the organs which go to make up a man’s body. In fact, they know very little of the real nature of man as a whole. Hence, they are taken up by the

technical challenge of transplants, ignoring some vital issues, such as, our organs are not merely physical, but have a psychic-spiritual counterpart. Theosophy teaches that every organ and cell in the body is a *seat* of memory. Thus, “The whole human body is...a vast sounding board, in which each cell bears a long record of impressions connected with its parent organ, and each cell has a memory and a consciousness of its kind, or call it instinct if you will.” (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

The memory of purely personal activities is related to certain *Kamic* or passional organs, such as, spleen, liver, stomach, etc., so that the memory of personal activities is first awakened in these organs. On the other hand, higher forms of mental experiences correlate with cerebral and cardiac centres, *i.e.*, brain and heart. “Occultism teaches that the liver and spleen-cells are the most subservient to the action of our ‘personal’ mind, the heart being the organ *par excellence* through which the Higher Ego acts—through the Lower Self.”

Another important aspect is that if science persists in organ transplantation, the transplanted “organs” should be those of morally “good” men, and willingly given. We are continuously imparting good and bad psychic impulses to our bodily organs through our thoughts and feelings. So also, “every organ in our body has its own memory...every cell must of necessity have also a memory of its own kind” (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*). The engrafted organs can affect their new owner with thoughts and feelings he had never before experienced. There have been cases where the recipient’s body rejects the transplanted organ. “According to a Stanford University psychiatric team, some heart transplant patients become psychotic. They suggest that an anti-rejection drug called ‘prednisone’ may cause psychotic behaviour such as delusions, insomnia accompanied by fear of a murder plot.” (*Science Digest*, July 1969)

Modern surgeons and physicians, who are apt to view bodily organs purely anatomically, would do well to consider their interrelationships. The modern system of medicine loses much by

not recognizing the astral counterpart of man's body. In the larger perspective, *how* a person lives is of far greater consequence than *how long* he lives.

Amateur archaeologists found a mysterious 12-sided object from the Roman Empire which the experts are unable to explain. Amateur archaeologists with the Norton Disney History and Archaeology Group have been excavating for the last few years, the remains of Roman Villa, which stood 100 miles north of London, about 2000 to 1700 years ago. Richard Parker, the group's secretary, told *Business Insider* that the archaeologists had mostly been finding masonry, some animal bones, and pottery. However, last year, while digging up a field about half a mile from the villa, one of the volunteers found "a small metal object, about the size of a softball, with holes in each of its 12-sides and covered with small knobs." One of the members of the group recognized "the hollow, rounded object as a Roman dodecahedron....Only around 130 dodecahedrons have ever been found. The first known one was discovered in 1739 in Hertfordshire, England." Frances McIntosh, an archaeologist who specializes in Roman artifacts, told *Business Insider* that since many of these dodecahedrons were found before scientific excavation started in the twentieth century, it hinders their understanding.

According to McIntosh, it is regionality that adds to the mystery of dodecahedrons, as they have been found in the north-western provinces of the Roman Empire, in present-day Belgium, Croatia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, but have not been found in Italy, Spain, Africa or Turkey. It is difficult to ascertain their obvious function since they are found in all sorts of places, such as military camps, temple, a theatre and a tomb. Is it a tool, a toy or a religious relic? Some scholars suggest that dodecahedrons may have religious significance or may have played a role in rituals. "The group plans

to return to the site this year to look for more objects and possibly new clues to the dodecahedron's significance," writes Jenny McGrath. (*Business Insider*, May 8, 2024)

Dodecahedron means twelve-sided figure, or made up of 12 regular pentagons. Pythagoras considered number 12 to be a very sacred number. Dodecahedron is a perfect number (*S.D.*, I, 649). Plato, the ardent disciple of Pythagoras, maintained that the Dodecahedron was the geometrical figure employed by the *Demiurgus* in constructing the universe. (*Isis*, I, 8)

T. Subba Row gives an illuminating explanation in the article, "The Twelve Signs of the Zodiac." He points out that the Zodiac represents various stages in the evolution of the universe from the Unknown to the physical, objective universe made up of *panchamahabhutas* or five elements. He writes that *Makaram* (Capricorn) is the tenth sign and the term "*Dasadisa*" is generally used by Sanskrit writers to denote the faces or sides of the universe. "The sign in question is intended to represent the faces of the universe, and indicates that the figure of the universe is bounded by *Pentagons*. If we take the pentagons as regular pentagons...the figure of the material universe will, of course, be a *Dodecahedron*, the geometrical model imitated by the *Demiurgos* in constructing the material universe." (*Five Years of Theosophy*, p. 114)

What is Ramarajya according to Gandhiji? He says that for him Ramarajya is a Divine Raj, the Kingdom of God. "Whether the Rama of my imagination ever lived or not on this earth, the ancient ideal of Ramarajya is undoubtedly one of true democracy in which the meanest citizen could be sure of swift justice." For him political independence is Ramarajya, *i.e.*, sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority. Likewise, true independence for him is also Ramarajya, *i.e.*, Kingdom of God on earth. He compares *nirvana* to Ramarajya or the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. "There can be no Ramarajya in the present state of iniquitous inequalities

in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat.” He says that the secret of Ramarajya lies in having respect for all religions. “If you want to see God in the form of Ramarajya, the first requisite is self-introspection. You have to magnify your own faults a thousandfold and shut your eyes to the faults of your neighbours. That is the only way to real progress,” says Gandhiji. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, April 16-30, 2024)

The “Kingdom of heaven” refers to the divinity within. “Kingdom of Heaven” is the state of spiritual bliss and perfection. It is that peace and bliss which leaves no desire for any worldly thing. It is that knowledge, knowing which, nothing else remains to be known. Our real Self finds a channel of expression through our thoughts. Hence, it is at the *thought level* that we must first seek the Divine. There must be first determination at the thought level to leave behind the mundane life and search for the truth.

We witness today, a large number of people suffering from misery, poverty and disease, and many persons on the opposite end of the social scale leading lives of luxury, careless indifference and selfish indulgence, which is partly because of the neglect of social duty on the part of the rich. The only remedy lies in each human being becoming aware of the fact of Universal Brotherhood wherein the action of one reacts on the lives of all so that it is only by “all practising in their daily lives true brotherhood and true sisterhood, that the real human solidarity, which lies at the root of the elevation of the race, can ever be attained,” writes H. P. Blavatsky.

Rama belonged to the Solar and Krishna to the Lunar Race. H. P. Blavatsky mentions a work called VAMSAVALI, meaning genealogy of the Solar and Lunar races, a copy of which is found in the royal library of the *Maharajas* of Udaipur. Further, “Rama is a *historical* personage. The ruins of cities built by him *and buried under several successive strata of other cities*, more recent but still *prehistoric*, still exist in India; they are known as well as the ancient coins with his effigy and name.” (*Le Lotus*, April 1888)