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The Living of the Higher Life**

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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THE PATH TO PROSPERITY

THE PATH to Prosperity is the Path of Progress referred to in the devotional book—*The Dhammapada*, verse 282: “From discipline of yoga springs Wisdom; from lack of it there is loss of Wisdom. Knowing this twofold path of progress and decline let a man bend his way to the Path of Progress.” Let us dwell on this verse and learn from it such lessons as would prove practically beneficial to us in our work from day to day.

The verse speaks of two paths—one leads to Prosperity, the other to adversity. Now this general premise no one denies: evil and good people, fools and wise men, all recognize that there are two great manifestations in the human world—Misery and Happiness; Prosperity and Adversity; Success and Failure; Inner contentment and Inner dissatisfaction. *The Bhagavad-Gita* lays down the same proposition: “Light and Darkness are the world’s eternal ways.” While all fully accept this first proposition, differences of opinion arise when we come to the second principle laid down in our verse.

What is the second proposition? Wisdom and Prosperity are paired; also, the decay of wisdom and adversity. The verse makes out that Wisdom is the Cause and Prosperity the effect; on the other hand, absence or lack of wisdom produces an effect—adversity. Many people, at first sight, shake their heads and say: “that is surely not so.” They may concede: It may be that prosperity comes with wisdom, but that lack of wisdom implies adversity—that cannot be accepted. For instance, we do come across foolish people, who are

materially and financially prosperous with crores of rupees. It is necessary to analyze and understand this. First factor—is economic prosperity real prosperity? Do we not know very rich men and women who are unhappy, restless, and discontented with the very things they buy with their money? Even that type of prosperity that comes with wealth depends upon the intelligence, knowledge and wisdom of the rich man. Wealth, which is the material symbol of prosperity, cannot be acquired without energy-*Virya* and without wisdom-*Jnana*. Laxmi is the goddess of prosperity, but even she cannot succeed in blessing her devotees unless Durga, the goddess of strength and energy, and Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom assist her. True prosperity, even of the physical kind or worldly kind, had to be acquired by work and labour which entails our energy, and a successful task or business implies intelligence and knowledge. So, we see that the sound proposition uttered by the Buddha holds true even in a worldly sense.

But there is a third proposition: “From Yoga springs Wisdom.” We might argue: “But prosperous men and women of the world never performed Yoga; and still, they are prosperous.” It is true that many persons attain worldly prosperity through their might or energy while they use their intelligence to exploit the weak, rob their neighbours, and so on. One of the most potent factors that gives birth to hatred in the hearts of the poor against the rich is this method by which many of the rich have acquired wealth. Not only are the rich people of the world unhappy in their own hearts, but they also suffer from the very force they have generated in acquiring their money. It is said that the tears of the weak shake the thrones of Kings. In that, there is a great deal of truth. Jesus is reported to have put this truth in another way. When a friend of Jesus drew a sword to strike a servant of the High Priest of the Jews, Jesus said (*Matthew: xxvi-52*): “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.” Similarly, the one who makes money with their terrifying strength is bound to get the Karmic reaction from it. Prosperity cannot last when it is acquired in ways

other than the right way—wisdom. Those who believe that “Might is Right,” soon find out that it is *not* true. The might of Alexander and Napoleon—where is it? A mere memory which is devoid of radiance or of fragrance! But the Wisdom of Gautama and Jesus is our life-giving force, which inspires, energizes and helps millions.

Can we say that all those who have made or are making money have come to possess the blessings of Laxmi? Of course not. How could Laxmi approve of misery and suffering visited upon thousands for gaining of that wealth? And those only who have her Blessings are truly prosperous. She gives her devotees wealth—the symbol of prosperity—only when they have made themselves fit to receive her boon and gift. When a person fully recognizes his debt to the whole of Nature and has prepared himself to act as the Trustee of all he receives from Nature, then only he becomes worthy of receiving the Benediction of Maha-Laxmi.

Thus, “from yoga springs wisdom,” and he who has wisdom can walk the way of prosperity. One meaning of yoga is contemplation. But it is more than that. Yoga is a method of living—the only right method of living. The *Gita* is a Book of Yoga; so are many of the Upanishads; so is the *Dhammapada*. People have a wrong conception of yoga. They connect yoga with queer practices—eating and breathing and what not! Also, the general belief is that the yogi does not possess anything except his matted hair and ashes with which he smears his body. For many centuries the most high and noble ideal of yogis has become debased. When the Buddha preached, there was already degradation of this ideal. What does he say to the Brahmana-yogi of his day?

“What avails thy matted hair, O fool? What avails thy deer skin? Outwardly you clean yourself, within you there is ravaging.” (Verse 394)

“But he who is tranquil and serene and calm and lives a tamed and restrained life of holiness and has ceased to injure living things, though richly attired, he is a Brahmana, an ascetic (Samana) and a monk (Bhikkhu).” (Verse 142)

So, the “matted hair” and “deer skin” avail not, if the inner attitude is absent. Lord Buddha tried to purify and exalt the method of yoga through the establishment of the Sangha. The Buddha did not hesitate in accepting gifts for that Sangha. In doing so, he demonstrated the principle of trusteeship.

It is said that sages of the court of King Suddhodana, the father of prince Siddhartha, predicted that either the prince would become a wandering mendicant and attain to Enlightenment or he would become a *chakravartin*—a mighty king, an ideal, universal, enlightened ruler, “such as rise to rule once in each thousand years.” Holding to the doctrine of Reincarnation and Karma, we might well ask, what is the relation between the fruit called *Buddhahood* and that called *Kingship*? Lord Buddha’s Karma was ripe to produce either of these two results. What connection or relation is there between them? That relation could be that of “real prosperity.” By persistent effort in the long past in many lives on earth, the great soul would have made himself ready to use the channel of Enlightenment or of Kingship, and both spring forth from the self-same causes. In that case, as a king or *chakravartin*, the Buddha would have served humanity, holding all his wealth and prosperity in Trust. The point one needs to grasp is this: Yoga, the Right Method of Living which brings Wisdom and prosperity is not confined to outer asceticism but is a matter of inner asceticism. Prosperity born of wisdom holds in trust whatever there is obtained.

Mother Nature is the most bountiful creator, and from the stars above to the dust under our feet we find the fructifying process at work, incessantly at work. Science in its own field, philosophy in its will tell you that even when there is what people call famine, Nature is at work, using that famine as a device for fresh and further creation. Dry deserts as well as stormy oceans are Nature’s agents for good creations. The sum total of prosperity in Nature is immense and yet Nature does not encounter problems that men and nations have brought about by creating on a large scale, all that we call “goods” for consumption. There is a most wise adjustment between

production and consumption in Nature and that which is not consumed is utilized for fresh and new kinds of production. In the human kingdom, we have produce and produce and produce, and then, so much of it is actually destroyed while thousands sorely need that which is destroyed.

The lesson to be learned from this function of Nature is that Prosperity does not consist in possessing and holding what is created, but in consuming it rightly. We all create—some by hands, others by brains; as a result of our creation, we become possessors of what we create; holding on to that possession is often considered prosperity, but *it is not*. Not what we possess but what we consume of our creations marks real prosperity.

All these may sound metaphysical, but it affords us the philosophical basis to live the life. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* it is pointed out that sacrificial action produces prosperity. Rain is the symbol of creative prosperity. Food, whether physical or mental, or spiritual, nourishes the body, the mind, or the heart. Each of the three members of our being does require to be fed, though most people are not aware and tend to starve their minds and their hearts! The food which sustains the body comes from rain—rain is the direct agent which makes the earth fructify. But *Gita* says that the rain itself is the result of sacrifice or *Yagna*. *Yagna* does not refer to any ritual or ceremony or animal sacrifice. It is a “sacrifice” performed by action, Karma.

All of us perform actions, good or bad, right or wrong, and that in turn influences nature. Adversity of all comes from our acting—selfish actions, thoughtless actions. Prosperity springs from actions performed as a sacrifice. In the olden days, sages taught and people learned how to perform magic rites which affected the march of the clouds, and the speed of the winds, but then people were not greedy. *Lobha*—devouring desire for wealth and possessions was not the first and principal characteristic of the trader, *Vaishya*; not even of Rajas and Maharajas who were true *Kshatriyas*. In this Kaliyuga, we have to learn for ourselves the wisdom of the sages. The mighty

confusion of prosperity and adversity will disappear if we see the drama of human progression and perfection from a true perspective.

We all aspire to be prosperous; why not then adopt the correct way to prosperity? The verse in the *Dhammapada* says: “Wisdom leads to prosperity.” The knowledge of how to live and the art of practising that knowledge will surely make us prosperous. As we live from day to day, we must give ourselves time to nourish our minds and to nourish our hearts. Self-examination nourishes our minds. How? When we examine ourselves, our deeds and words, our moods and morals, we are able to see that some of our actions and thoughts have been wrong and false; but we do not know how and why they are wrong or false. This inquiry leads us to the study of right psychology and right philosophy—there never lived in historical times a greater psychologist and philosopher than Gautama, the Buddha.

Through self-examination, we come to study the nature of consciousness and gain an understanding of the *skandhas*, karma, reincarnation, and examining and surrendering ourselves, by their light, we find Self-knowledge springing up in ourselves. It is essential to examine ourselves in the light of what we read and study, to attain wisdom or prosperity. Self-examination in the light of the great Paramitas, namely, *Dana*, *Shila*, *Kshanti*, *Viraga*, *Virya*, *Dhyana*, and *Prajna*, and the majestic unerring law of Karma leads us to real prosperity. But it will not be complete unless Heart Knowledge is added to it. What does heart nourishment consist of? By right prayer or inner communion, we feed and nourish our hearts. It is not sufficient to be only attentive to check errors and moods; moods will return and blunders follow them if we do not grow in the wisdom of the Peace of the Heart. Within us is the Supreme Spirit; the Self in the heart of everyone is Krishna, is Buddha. In most of us that spirit sits quietly, does not function. Every morning, we must make an effort to activate that Spirit and make the God within to manifest outwardly.

To obtain prosperity we must nourish our mind and heart, and

THE PATH TO PROSPERITY

learn to perform our actions as sacrifice or *yagna*. All through the day we perform hundreds of actions—mental actions, verbal actions, and bodily actions. For most of us, the basis of all we think, say, and do is self-interest, not sacrifice. We have to learn to change the focus and instead of self-interest, learn to look at everything from the point of view of Humanity as a unit. This is difficult but not impossible. Let us understand that sacrifice, acts of charity, and altruism are not special acts. Real prosperity comes from that attitude to perform all actions as a sacrifice. Whatever we do, let us remember others, not just ourselves. Thus, prosperity will be born.

If we were to follow in the footsteps of the Enlightened One, we would not find the way of sacrifice very difficult. He sacrificed his palace in going out to the city to see the disease and death—for he desired to find out the truth of things. He sacrificed His happiness as prince for the greater good to the human race. Finally, He sacrificed the Peace and Bliss of Nirvana to serve suffering humanity. Kings of this earth, possessors of wealth and power are not truly prosperous as is the Buddha. The only prosperous race is the race of Buddhas. Let us endeavour to become members of that deathless Race, as we pay our homage to Gautama, the Enlightened One, on the sacred day of *Buddha Purnima*, the day of Buddha's birth as prince Siddhartha, his Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Gaya, and also his death, when he discarded his mortal coil and proceeded to *Mahaparinirvana*, which falls this year on 23rd May.

ONLY a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.

The man who regards his own life and that of his fellow creatures as meaningless is not merely unhappy but hardly fit for life.

Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value.

We cannot despair of humanity, since we are ourselves human beings.

Everybody acts not only under external compulsion but also in accordance with inner necessity.

—ALBERT EINSTEIN

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
LETTER TO A CHILD NEVER BORN
II

IN this novel, the author dwells on the burning themes of abortion and the meaning of life. She asks if it is fair to impose life even if it means suffering. Would it not be better not to be born at all? According to some critics, the book explores the depths of a woman's psyche in the face of an unplanned pregnancy and challenges conventional perspectives on motherhood and choice. The author portrays the challenges and hurdles faced by a woman giving birth to another life.

The novel is written as a letter by a young professional woman, presumably the author herself, to the foetus she carries in her womb. Some of the points raised in the novel are worth exploring in the Theosophical light. Thus, for instance, initially, when she discovers that she is pregnant, some disturbing questions arise in her mind: If the child could choose, would he prefer to be born, to grow up, and to suffer, or would he wish to return to the joyful state from which he had come? Is it fair to impose life even if it means suffering? Would it be better not to be born at all? But, concludes that it is better to be born than return to nothingness. However, later, she felt that it was the child who took the initiative and that she merely gave her consent. Likewise, at the end of the book, the child says that he had not asked to be born, as he came from nothingness, and in nothingness, there is no will or choice. It was she who convinced him that to be born is to escape from nothingness.

It opens up a very interesting subject of “why we are born” and “who makes the decision as to where and when to take birth.” Theosophy teaches that our life on earth as also birth, death and rebirth could be explained on the basis of the twin doctrines of Karma and Rebirth. Death is not an end. Death is only a passage or bridge that takes us to the other side. Death is not dying, it is waking into another life, say the Upanishads. The *Gita* says, “Death is certain to

all beings and rebirth to all mortals.” “All that lives must one day die, passing from Nature to Eternity,” writes Shakespeare. Life is related to form, and form must die. Death of a physical form is a necessity. The permanent spiritual aspect in us—the soul or Ego—feels imprisoned during life. For the soul, “Death comes as a deliverer and a friend.” Our soul is rested in a state after death, called *swarga* (heaven) or *devachan*. In fact, it is said that if the average man returned at once to another body without passing through this restful and beneficial state, his soul would be completely tired out and also deprived of the needed opportunity for the development of the higher part of his nature. In fact, in *devachan*, there is an assimilation and expansion of all the nobler qualities—sympathy, love of beauty, art, and the abstract things of life—so that the soul comes back enriched.

As the *Gita* points out, when the stock of merit is exhausted, the Ego is forced to take birth once again on this earth. Just as at the moment of death, the dying man has a retrospective insight into the life just ended, so also, before rebirth, the Ego has a pre-view or prospective vision of the life that awaits him. “It sees for a moment all the causes that led it to *devachan* and back to the life it is about to begin, and knowing it to be all just, to be the result of its own past life, it repines not but takes up the cross again—and another soul has come back to earth.” (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 124)

We are compelled to take birth on account of unexhausted karma and unspent karmic affinities. “The Law of Affinity acts through the inherent Karmic impulse of the Ego, and governs its future existence,” writes a Master of Wisdom. Is our birth in a given family, race or nation, a mere chance? No. It is under Karma that the Ego is drawn to particular parents, family, race and nation, following the law of economy. “Whatever group of affinities is the strongest, those affinities will lead it to the point of manifestation at which there is the least opposition.” Among other things, an Ego seeking birth may be attracted to a family or parents because most of its predominant tendencies and character are similar to and in harmony with those of the family. *Or*, the circumstances obtainable in a

particular family may offer the best possible opportunity to the Ego for the gaining of such experiences as would strengthen its character and develop virtues and overcome vices. Not only when we love someone but also when we hate someone, we could be thrown into a closer relationship with that person in the next life, say, as a wife, husband, brother, son, etc. The evil child may be born to good parents, on account of past unspent affinity. It is then a chance for redemption for the child and the occasion for punishment for the parents.

Each life is an opportunity to learn and experience. In a given life we are not able to act out all our thoughts, feelings and aspirations. There is a limitation imposed by brain capacity, bodily handicaps, etc. Sometimes our efforts and achievements are only halfway through and we die. Many have felt dejected at the thought that with death, all their aspirations and achievements would vanish like a torch dipped into water. What happens if we are in the middle of learning the piano and we die? In the next or in some future life we pick up the thread from where we had left off in a prior life.

At one point in the novel, through four fairy tales, the woman expresses general views of the world and life and concludes that it is strange that the whole of mankind has nothing to look forward to after being born except for a definite and certain end. Almost at the end of the novel the child or rather the foetus in the womb says that while in the womb he knew that the purpose was to be born. But once born, the only purpose is to die and go back to nothingness. Then why should one emerge from nothingness? We may ask: Is that true? Can we say that life is full of repetitive tasks, a futile, hopeless labour? In other words, there is a feeling that life has no meaning or purpose.

Life is intrinsically meaningful, worthwhile and valuable, and it is left to each individual to realize and sense the value and meaning of life. The only alternative to life is “death,” and we then have to weigh the worth of living against the worth of dying. Mr. Judge says, “Life is better than death, for death again disappoints the Self”

(*Letters That Have Helped Me*, American ed., p. 34). So, we only need to ask, “What is the meaning of life”?

Is there a purpose to *human life*, in general? Do I exist to fulfil some purpose? Though these questions are interrelated, we are generally more worried about the latter, the personal aspect, *viz.*, does *my* life have any meaning? Theosophy says with sage Patanjali that the whole universe exists for the experience and emancipation of the soul. It is a long journey from being an ordinary human being to reaching the stage of a perfected being, a *Tathagata*, who goes out of this world with wisdom and yet returns to it out of compassion. The highest “meaning of life” is to attain the peace and bliss of *Nirvana* but to renounce it, in order to help the suffering humanity. Every life is meaningful, provided we change our attitude towards what life brings to us. The life of a teacher, a businessman or a sweeper could be meaningful, provided each lives his life with the aim of self-actualization and self-transcendence. No matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, if we regard it as an opportunity to learn from, then we grow. The purpose of life is to learn and it is all made up of learning. However, it is not as if there is always a *conscious learning*.

Life is a drama, a school and a pilgrimage—and man is an actor, a pupil and a pilgrim. But which “man”? It is the “Individuality,” the Ego, who is the actor, experiencer and also an Eternal Pilgrim. It is this Ego or actor who chooses the “stage” for performing the drama, before taking birth, *i.e.*, life’s circumstances, the role he is going to play as well as the co-actors. In other words, it is the Ego who chooses the family, the parents, the personality and the circumstances of life in which to be born, all of which is governed by his own past karma.

Life is also a school. There are certain archetypal experiences, like motherhood, poverty, etc., which each ego has to experience, in one life or the other. We are bound to come across those who play their roles so admirably that we are inspired. The process of learning is a never-ending process. Life is compared to a pilgrimage

and man or Ego is called an Eternal Pilgrim. Besides being a teacher, a mother, or a scientist, each of us is a pilgrim-soul on a pilgrimage. As a bee gathers honey from a flower, the Eternal Pilgrim gathers experience from every life.

The woman shares with her child her views concerning the inequality between male and female. Initially, she wished her child to be a woman, and then to be a man. In the end, she concludes that it is more important to be a human because it sets no limits for man or woman.

In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Mr. Judge writes that there is no sex at the level of Spirit. There, all men are women and all women are men, two coalesced into one. But in the psychic consciousness, there are still distinctions. Thus, the *essentially female* character is different from the *essentially male* character. Mr. Judge says that the general tendency of women is to keep things as they are and not to have change and hence generally (with few exceptions) women are not among the reformers. Hence, women always support established religions and are not ready to change their religion. The female character is *per se*, concrete, *i.e.*, its tendency in thought, speech and act is toward the concrete. Probably, concrete in thought may be taken to mean rigidity, thinking in grooves, having fixed views as well as a lesser ability to dwell on the abstract. The male character *per se* is *abstract*. Thus, if the Ego has evolved, with great effort, the female character through many lives, then that tendency will not get exhausted in one life. So, the Ego will go on as a woman, “so long as its deeper nature is of the same cut, fashion and tendency as the particular sex in general in which it incarnates.” (“*Forum*” *Answers*, pp. 43-45). Each human being prepares to move over from a male body to a female body, and *vice versa* in some subsequent life for gaining experience. All of us must have lived in the past incarnations many times in male as well as in female bodies by now. There are lessons to be learnt in both male and female bodies, and through masculine and feminine natures.

The inequality of men and women in society is because in the

course of time, the status of women in the society has been lowered. How many men are ready to recognize and practise the teaching of Manu: “Where women are honoured, there verily the Devas rejoice; where they are not honoured, there verily indeed all rites are fruitless.” In many stories, legends and allegories the woman is symbolized as inferior to man. These stories must not be taken literally but allegorically. Matter is symbolized by woman and the powers of Matter or *Shaktis* are personified by women. Just as Spirit and Matter are but two aspects of One Reality, so are man and woman. “When man, the Soul unites with Wisdom the woman, he attains Enlightenment. If without her he cannot rise, without him she is an impotent abstraction,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia. For a long time now, men have assumed the position of superiority and women that of inferiority, and the way out is not by woman asserting her independence or trying in her turn to exploit men, but by trying to awaken in men the sense of duty towards women. Both men and women must recognize their duties and their interdependence. It is good that a woman is capable of doing what a man does, but does she need to? Is the task of women inferior to that of men? A woman is not a machine for breeding children, nor need she be confined to the kitchen and care of the children, and yet in both these departments she has the most important functions to perform, writes Shri Wadia.

Some critics are of the opinion that the novel does not seem to support abortion openly. “It challenges the themes of motherhood, abortion and female subjectivity as it seeks to reconstruct a new concept of maternity conceived as a choice and responsibility, rather than as the natural destiny of women.” In the novel we find one of the doctors arguing that “the life of a person is a continuum from the moment it is conceived to the moment it dies.” He accuses the woman of causing the death of the child by not following the advice of taking bed rest, and in fact, choosing to travel for many hours. He says that it would not be right to argue that “by letting this child die she was exercising her right: the right to spare the community the burden of a sick and thus faulty individual. It is not for us to

decide *a priori* who is to be faulty and who not.” The second doctor argues that pregnancy is not a punishment, and “if it does not proceed in a normal way, you cannot ask a woman to lie flat on her back in a bed for months like a paralytic.” She argues that “this woman did not desire the death of the child, but rather she desired her life.” Thus, “if this woman unconsciously desired the death of her child, she did it in legitimate defence.”

We find similar issues raised in debate concerning abortion: Is it right to abort when the child is diagnosed at the embryo stage to have a defect that is sure to lead to lifelong suffering for both the child and parents? Again, is abortion justified in case a woman gets pregnant as a result of rape? Is it justified if the child’s birth is going to be fatal to the mother? The esoteric principle is that “as long as we cannot give life, we cannot take life.” There is no denying that there is life, right from the point of conception, else how does the foetus grow? But Theosophy does not demand of anyone blind adherence. *There are no “dos” and “don’ts” in Theosophy.* Each must decide for oneself what should be done in a given circumstance.

In the article, “Is Foeticide a Crime?” H.P.B. writes: “At no age and under no circumstance whatever is a murder justifiable!... When even successful and the mother does not die just then, *it still shortens her life on earth to prolong it with a dreary percentage in Kamaloka.*” Foeticide is a crime against nature and amounts to interference with the operations of nature—with Karma.

Quoting Patanjali, W. Q. Judge points out that each ego brings only certain “mental deposits” (out of the accumulated *karma*) which can come to fruition in the environment provided. This includes the family, and the ego’s physical, psychic, mental and moral nature. There is a definite *karmic* affinity between the child and its parents. Through this connection, both the parents and the child pass through certain experiences and fulfil their karmic debt towards each other. If it is denied, perhaps the egos involved will have to learn from similar experiences in a future life.

(Concluded)

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS
THE PARAMITAS—III

TO “practise the *Paramita* Path,” says *The Voice of the Silence*, “means to become a Yogi, with a view of becoming an ascetic.” To become a Yogi is to be united in and through love. Now how and where does this begin? It begins where we stand and are. We have love and charity—it is animal love and charity which have become *human* love and charity; but there are selfishness and crudities, lust and the passion to possess. Don’t you think that vast numbers of men and women of today are at this stage? How can they begin to walk consciously and deliberately the *Paramita* Path? We have to take hold of our love and charity. So that Path begins with *Vairagya-Detachment*, Dispassion, Desirelessness. Herein is asceticism. It is triple—of mind, psyche and sensorium. False asceticism tries to be without affection instead of without attachment, which is true asceticism. To love those we like may prove a hindrance unless we enlarge as well as deepen our love on the plane of *Vairagya-Detachment*. *Not* to love those we dislike is not to forgive and again we do not practise *Vairagya*. Therefore, this middle *Paramita* must be unfolded subjectively first, within one’s own soul. This builds *Antahkarana*, for mind becomes detached from aversions and attractions, dislikes and also likes.

The Yogi is united; the ascetic indicates his mode of unity—*e.g.*, how to be united to vessels of dishonour? How not to shudder to touch evil? etc. So union, partial and will-full, with the good, the noble etc., is the beginning. Then expansion begins; what can be ‘excluded’ from the good and the noble? What is evil and what is ignoble? It is not only seeing “a world in a grain of sand,” *i.e.*, Wisdom; it is also seeing good in things evil. Equal-mindedness is *Dhyanic*, but is not the *Dhyana Paramita*. What terrifies Arjuna when he sees in the Universal Form details ugly, ignoble, wicked? The absence of the full perception of *Shila*. Therefore the immediately succeeding lesson is the 12th chapter—the pairs of opposites. Read the closing portion.

A real Yogi—a united one—is of course an altruist. One cannot, in verity, exercise Divine Virtues without a prior living to benefit mankind.

The seven Divine Virtues are the stuff of which Masters' Personalities are made. Their great Detachment, Their profound Seclusion, Their grand Compassion (the mother of the seven *Paramitas*) all point to *Vairagya*. Men say: "Why do not the Masters do something? Why do They permit inequalities? etc." Well. They are Divine *Vairagis*.

The Ten Transcendental *Paramitas* include the three *corresponding* to the three planes beyond the seven principles; see the diagram on p. 200 of *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, and read what is said about the three higher planes beyond the Planetary Chain. Man in the Earth Chain is a seven-principled being, but in reality, he has to become a perfect number 10. The Three Hypostases of the First Fundamental are the metaphysical aspects of the three higher or Transcendental *Paramitas*.

The *Paramitas* are human, universal and divine—personal morality, egoic morality and Monadic morality. Consider this; herein is practical occultism.

Crosbie's classification of the *Paramitas* [*The Friendly Philosopher*, pp. 80-81] is a modified form of the fourfold discipline: (1) *Viveka*, (2) *Vairagya*, (3) the six qualities (*Dama, Sama; Uparati, Titiksha; Shraddha, Samadhan*) and (4) *Mumukshuta*. The six glorious virtues are *The Voice of the Silence Paramitas*. The Six and Ten *Paramitas* are exoteric and if my memory serves me right you will find them in *Suddharma Pundarika*. The seven *Paramitas* of *The Voice of the Silence* with their Mother, Compassion, spring from the Esoteric Philosophy.

(Concluded)

ON HEAVEN AND HELL

III

THERE is a commonly prevailing belief that the after-death condition depends on the thoughts or mental condition during the last moments. The quality of consciousness in *devachan* and the amount of time spent in *devachan* are dependent on a group of dominant thoughts at the time of death. Some believe that despite having spent our entire life in worldly pursuits, if we pronounce the name of God at the dying moment, we will experience rich and colourful *devachan*. Logically, it is understandable that during life, if we have thought only of money or materialistic gains, or harming others, then at the last moment we shall be unable to think good thoughts or remember God. It is clear that in order to improve our after-death condition, it is not enough to make efforts only in old age, “post-retirement,” but it is essential that during our entire life we engender noble thoughts and have high aspirations. The last thoughts are not likely to become spiritual if the person has spent his entire life in the opposite direction. It is a *line of life’s meditation* that will determine one’s last thoughts.

During life, we have many high aspirations, ideals and thoughts, but we are not able to live them all out, and hence these are stored as mental energy or force. Our physical body, astral body, and the brain do not permit the full development of this force. As a result, this energy remains latent and after death when the bondage of lower principles is absent, these thought-forces expand and develop. For instance, an artist who aspired to achieve and advance much in the field of art but could not achieve it during life, carries the force of his aspirations to *devachan*. In *devachan* it would fully blossom like a flower and also get assimilated with his higher nature (Ego). In *devachan* we do not get any *new* knowledge but there is an assimilation and expansion of all the nobler qualities—sympathy, love for beauty, art, and the abstract things of life, and whatever good we aspired to do, so that the Ego comes back enriched on earth.

H.P.B. says Death is sleep. Lord Byron said that death is the twin brother of sleep. In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. mentions three kinds of sleep: the dreamless, the chaotic, and the one with vivid dreams. After the dissolution of the body, the Ego is in one of these three states of consciousness in *devachan* or *swarga*. Thus, the stay in *devachan* may be conscious or unconscious. It depends on the belief or disbelief of the person in the existence of a soul or surviving consciousness beyond death. It is stated that a person who lived a morally pure life and believed in the existence of a soul or surviving consciousness—for him there will be *conscious devachan*. For such a person *devachan* is an idealized and subjective continuation of his earth life, where he feels himself to be the same person, Mr. X or Miss Y—but as an *ideal reflection* of the human being, he was when last on earth, devoid of all evil or pain. Hence, the process of *conscious* expansion, development, and assimilation is possible only for the person who has believed in the survival of the immortal soul after the death of the body. If we compare death to sleep, then the one who believes in the survival of the soul after death will be in a state of full consciousness—*like sleep full of vivid dreams*. On the other hand, “the materialist, disbelieving in everything that cannot be proven to him by his five senses, or by scientific reasoning, based exclusively on the data furnished by these senses despite their inadequacy, and rejecting every spiritual manifestation, accepts life as the only conscious existence. Therefore, according to their beliefs so will it be unto them,” writes H.P.B. A materialist who may be good, but has denied the existence of a soul or surviving consciousness, will not have *conscious devachan*. He will be plunged into a deep sleep without dreams, without consciousness, till he is born again. He is like a person who falls asleep during a long railway journey, missing many stations and then awakening without the slightest recollection of the stations he missed, and continuing his onward journey.

Just as *Kamaloka* is divided into innumerable regions and sub-regions corresponding to the mental states of the persons at the time

of death so also there are states and states, and degrees and degrees of *Devachan* of which two have been mentioned—*Rupa loka* and *Arupa loka*. According to exoteric Buddhist philosophy, the disincarnate beings in *Rupa loka* retain vestiges of their old form, whereas those in *Arupa lokas* of the highest *Devachan* become formless, and all this depends on the degree of their spirituality and aspirations. The entities in *Arupa loka* are more ethereal than even *Mayavi Rupa*. However, “only very few reach there [*Arupa loka*] skipping the lower degrees.” Thus, for instance, we are given the case of those “men of highest moral calibre and goodness,” who had “an intense and purely spiritual passion for intellectual pursuit,” when on earth. These beings, because of their “sympathy for old intellectual researches and especially for unfinished mental work,” will remain in *Rupa loka* for centuries, “in strict Devachanic isolation.” We are given the example of Berzelius who was one of the founders of modern chemistry, especially noted for his determination of atomic weights, and development of modern chemical symbols, and his electro-chemical theory, among other things. We are told that his last thought was one of despair that his work should be interrupted by death. “This is *Tanha* (Hindu *Trishna*) or an unsatisfied yearning which must exhaust itself before the entity can move on to the purely *Arupa* condition. A provision is made for every case, and in each case, it is created by the dying man’s last, uppermost desire.” Such a scholar, who had lived to develop the highest physical intelligence, “kept absorbed in the mysteries of the material universe,” will remain in a state of *Devachan* in which he will be magnetically held by his attractions to scholars and their work, influencing and being influenced by them subjectively, until the energy of unsatisfied yearning exhausts itself. (“The Various States of Devachan,” *The Theosophist*, August 1883)

A Master of Wisdom writes about *Tribhuvana* or three worlds, namely, *Kama-Loka*, *Rupa-Loka*, and *Arupa-Loka*, and adds that these “are the three spheres of ascending spirituality in which the

several groups of subjective entities find their attractions.” As for *Arupa-loka* of *Devachan*, in the article, “Notes on Devachan” we read that “the reward provided by nature for men who are benevolent in a large, systematic way, and who have not focussed their affections on an individual or specialty, is that if pure they pass the quicker for that through the *Kama* and *Rupa lokas* into the higher sphere of *Tribhuvana* since it is one where the formulation of abstract ideas and the consideration of general principles fill the thought of its occupant” (*Path*, May 1890). It appears to include those who, while on earth, were more concerned with abstract or metaphysical ideas and principles, which could be in the field of philosophy, literature, or art, such as painting, music, or sculpting. We are reminded of H.P.B.’s remark in *Light on the Path*, “The days of literature and of art, when poets and sculptors saw the divine light, and put it into their own great language—these days lie buried in the long past with the ante-Phidian sculptors and the pre-Homeric poets.” Thus, we need to distinguish scholars like Berzelius who are concerned with the development of physical or *manasic* intelligence and hence would spend enormous time in *Rupa loka*, from those who seek to explore and understand the unseen and spiritual aspects of man and universe, which involves exercise of intuitive faculty and lead to *Buddhi-manasic* development.

For example, H.P.B. observes that occultism is concerned with knowing the soul and spirit of the Cosmic Space, while physical science is engaged in finding out the far away and unknown aspects of physical man and universe. However, Kepler, Kant, Herschel and Sir W. Oersted were concerned with the *Spiritual World* and that is why occultists who are concerned with occult cosmogony would attempt to understand the theories of these scientists and find out to what extent they come close to the true, spiritual concepts concerning the cosmos (*S.D.*, I, 589-90). For instance, Kepler intuitively grasped that planetary motion cannot be explained solely based on the natural forces, and hence spoke of Angels, or *Rectores* that give an original impulse and guide the movement of the planets.

H.P.B. says that the Angels of Kepler are identical with the *Genii* and the *Devas*.

It appears that just like metaphysics, even music, painting, and poetry, in their higher form, are concerned with the abstract. Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, while commenting on the poetry and paradox in the *Voice of the Silence*, a Mahayana Buddhist text, writes: “Images are perceptions of real correspondences. These correspondences, the true poet—not the mere versifier or wearer of poetic reach-me-downs—perceives intuitively. The intuitive perception of a correspondence through an image constitutes poetic truth. It is because they possess the power of perceiving correspondences...that the great poets of the world are...‘the hierophants of an un-apprehended mystery.’” He says that there is more Soul-wisdom “in the pages of the poets” than in the writings of the academic philosophers. The prophets and seers are poets, and they all made extensive use of metaphor and simile in their teachings. That may be because “images based on a system of correspondence are more easily able to arouse the imagination, to stimulate the intuition...than more rational methods.”

As regards *Buddhi-manasic* development, it is useful to reflect on Shri B. P. Wadia’s observations regarding the study of *The Secret Doctrine*: “The book is not to be read only by the lower mind which analyzes and understands. It is a book that brings the faculty of intuition into operation and although a student may not understand all the contents of the work, still he is helped...*The Secret Doctrine* nourishes that aspect of the soul, which is above the logical, analytical mind...While you are studying *The Secret Doctrine*, which enables the personal mind to reach up to the Higher Manas or the Ego, its full benefit will not come your way unless you add to your study *The Voice of the Silence*, *Light on the Path*, *The Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Dhammapada*. Metaphysics and ethics are the two wings we must use to soar upwards.” He adds that metaphysical and moral aspects of Theosophy are intimately connected and they correspond to Higher Manas and Buddhi respectively. They are like two wings

of a bird. The connecting link between them “is to be found in the writings of W. Q. Judge. His *Letters That Have Helped Me* and articles are priceless for our task. They sound simple and make easy reading. But you will find them illuminating many a passage in *Isis Unveiled* and in *The Secret Doctrine*. His simplification is for our lower Manas, but it has within it the power to link us up to Buddhi-Manas.”

It is often asked: Are those in *Devachan* able to see or communicate with those whom they have left behind on earth? The *devachanee* does not see those that are left behind on earth, though he surrounds himself subjectively and in imagination, with his near and dear ones, and sees them in an ideal condition. A mother who has left behind her drunkard son sees him in *Devachan* as one who is reformed. If they could see them as they really are then they cannot remain in the state of perfect happiness. If a mother who has died is able to see that her loving husband has married again and her dear children are being ill-treated or neglected by the stepmother, can she remain happy in *Devachan*?

H.P.B. points out that a mother’s Ego in *Devachan*, filled with love for imaginary children it sees near itself, that love will be felt by the children in flesh. “Love beyond the grave, illusion though you may call it, has a magic and divine potency which reacts on the living. It will manifest in their dreams.” Such love of the mother saves the child from dangers and difficulties, because “love is a strong shield and is not limited by space or time.”

To understand the power of such love we need to reflect upon what H.P.B. says about pure love. “For pure divine love is not merely the blossom of a human heart, but has its roots in eternity. Spiritual holy love is immortal, and Karma brings sooner or later all those who loved each other with such a spiritual affection to incarnate once more in the same family group. Again we say that love beyond the grave, illusion though you may call it, has a magic and divine potency which reacts on the living” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 146, *Indian Edition*).

There is Love as emotion and Love as a virtue. There is emotional

love, which is connected with the human heart. The seat of emotional love is *Kama*, and in such love, there is a sense of separateness. However, there is a gradual refinement of love. In fact, a Master of Wisdom hints at a ladder of love. So first, he says, “he who loves lives.” *He who loves another, lives on earth.* In loving another, we have broken the shell or wall of selfhood, wherein we are able to put aside our own happiness and without any hesitation are able to think about the happiness of someone else. This is still personal affection, which must give place to higher or spiritual affection. But even this is a good beginning because in loving another we are able to accept that person as he or she is, along with all those things in that person that are not lovable or acceptable. Thus, for instance, a mother or a wife does not wait for her child or husband to change. She begins to learn to be tolerant, to be forgiving, and checks herself from getting angry or frustrated or getting into arguments, and this is possible because she has begun to become impersonal. She begins to efface herself. Such love can have magic power, which increases as one learns to expand the circle of love, and ultimately culminates into Compassion, which is universal love. It is intelligent and dispassionate love, which arises when our head and heart work in harmony. It arises from the *Buddhi* principle, which is a principle of Spiritual consciousness. Detachment is the key to developing compassion. Shri B. P. Wadia describes Compassion as *understanding feeling* and *understanding helpfulness*. When feeling-feeling decreases, understanding-feeling grows.

Moreover, H.P.B. says that every night, during dreamless sleep state (*Sushupti*), the Ego of the person on earth is able to rise to the plane of consciousness of *Devachanee* and holds “free intercourse, during the sleep of his body, with those whom it loved and lost, yet, on account of the positiveness and non-receptivity of its physical envelope and brain, no recollection, or a very dim, dream-like remembrance, lingers in the memory of the person once awake.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 30)

(*To be concluded*)

DISTRIBUTIVE KARMA

THE DOCTRINE of Karma is familiar worldwide owing to the general spread of Theosophical influence since the inception of the Theosophical Movement nearly a century and half ago. This doctrine and its twin, Reincarnation, is a cardinal belief in India among Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs for centuries. Yet it is much misunderstood and misapplied. Evils of life we suffer from are the invariable outcome of the ideas and beliefs we hold, which form the basis of our thoughts and actions, which are not in accord with truth. Wrong beliefs which prevail among people for centuries in regard to the doctrine of Karma is the cause of India's degeneracy. For instance, belief in Karma has degenerated into fatalism in the sense that one's lot in life, miserable as it may be, is accepted with passive resignation as ordained by a destiny against which nothing can be done, giving rise to a tendency to stagnation, apathy, and indifference. Another misconception which largely prevails among people is that it is possible for one to escape from the ill-effects of one's bad Karma by resorting to prayers or by performing religious rituals, and so on, forgetting that it is impersonal, implacable law of universal justice which cannot be made to deviate from its course. The very idea and the desire to escape from the consequences of one's actions is cowardice, which makes man immoral and irresponsible. Further, one who understands the rationale and absolute justice of the Law of Retribution and Compensation will never seek to avenge any injury done to him by another but ever forgives the offender, and, instead, does some good to him in turn.

“As Karma is sure to punish the man who wronged him, by seeking to inflict an additional punishment on his enemy, he, who instead of leaving that punishment to the great Law adds to it his own mite, only begets thereby a cause for the future reward of his own enemy and a future punishment for himself” (*The Key to Theosophy, Indian Edition*, p. 198). This aspect of the Law is almost wholly forgotten, which is the principal cause of the prevalence of much disharmony and apparent injustice in society.

DISTRIBUTIVE KARMA

Yet another wrong idea people labour under is that the lot of the unfortunate section of society languishing in inhuman conditions without opportunities for their betterment is the just fruit of their bad Karma; those who have the means thus absolving themselves of any responsibility to do their mite to ameliorate their condition; forgetting that “inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in deadly sin.” How can any reform of the nation be brought about so long as wrong ideas prevail? Basis of all true reform is a diffusion of the truth of universal brotherhood, reciprocal interdependence of all life, of human solidarity, and of the laws of Karma and Reincarnation.

Karma is the undeviating unerring tendency in the universe to restore disturbed harmony, caused by the action of an individual, or of individuals in collectivity, during which the individuals through whom the adjustment is effected in the course of such restoration feel pain or pleasure, depending on whether the causative action of theirs was in consonance with the progressive harmonious order of the universe or contrary to it. While it is true that there is not a misfortune or accident in our lives which cannot be traced to our own doing either in this life or in a previous one, yet it is equally true that adverse conditions of every individual is not strictly due to Karma of the individual alone but is the result of distributive effect of the collective Karma of the nation and of mankind as a whole. Just as every cell in our body, for instance, has its own Karma, so to say, has its own specific function, yet is subject to the general physiological laws of the body as a whole of which it is an integral portion, so are the individual human units; besides their own individual Karma, they are affected by the distributive effect of the collective Karma of the nation to which they belong as well as that of mankind as a whole, and *vice versa*, due to the fact of essential unity of all life and interdependence of humanity.

Theosophy teaches that impoverished condition of millions of people, often stunted in their physical and mental growth—such as are seen in the great slums of our metropolises, and victims of

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centuries of oppression and exploitation as lower castes and “untouchables” by higher castes, so called, as has been prevalent in India for centuries, is not so much due to individual Karma of the sufferers alone as the distributive effect of the collective Karma of the nation. The terrible spectre of millions in the thrall of malnutrition, starvation—of body, mind and soul—conflict of interests between capital and labour, gender injustice, child abuse, and brutality are well known. The cause of this imbalance is plain: “The neglect of social duty on the one side is most closely connected with the stunted and arrested development on the other.” (*ibid.*, p. 232)

They are sought to be remedied by the state by legislation, economic and social reforms, and so on, but ineffectual in the end because the root moral cause of the malady remains untouched.

“It is held as a truth among Theosophists that the interdependence of Humanity is the cause of what is called Distributive Karma, and it is this law which affords the solution to the great question of collective suffering and its relief.” (*ibid.*, pp. 200-201)

It is only through a general diffusion of the truths of universal Brotherhood, of essential unity of all life, of interdependence of humanity which is the cause of Distributive Karma that real and lasting reform can come. In that higher perspective, every individual will see that an individual cannot separate himself from the Race and *vice versa*, that individual wellbeing and progress is interwoven with the wellbeing and progress of all. In that enlightened belief he/she labours for the good of all, deeming himself or herself as the Trustee of his talents and possessions to be used for the benefit of the less fortunate of his fellowmen and for the good of all humanity. Every individual action has a profound effect for good or ill on the whole of humanity, and has an influence on the destiny of the race.

“It is an occult law, moreover, that no man can rise superior to his individual failings, without lifting, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part. In the same way, no one can sin, nor suffer the effects of sin, alone. In reality, there is no such thing as ‘Separateness’; and the nearest approach to that selfish state,

which the laws of life permit, is in the intent or motive.” (*ibid.*, p. 201)

This is the “Revolution of the wheel of duty” spoken of by Sri Krishna in the third chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which every individual is duty-bound to keep revolving by performance of duties of life without attachment to the results of action but with a view to benefit humanity. Individual interest and progress naturally follow from such action that enriches the whole of Nature and benefits mankind. “In every conceivable case he himself must be a centre of spiritual action, and from him and his own daily individual life must radiate those higher spiritual forces which alone can regenerate his fellowmen” (*ibid.*, pp. 233-34). This is the same as the exhortation of Sri Krishna to Arjuna: “If the good of mankind only is considered by thee, the performance of thy duty will be plain; for whatever is practised by the most excellent men, that is also practiced by others. The world follows whatever example they set.” (*Gita*, III)

Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land
 Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
 Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
 Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
 And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
 The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
 And on the pedestal these words appear—
 “My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
 Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!”
 Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
 Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.

—PERCY SHELLEY

ON MUNDANE DUTIES

IT is a well-known fact that our present actions mould our future character as well as our environment. The performance of duty, day by day, has also its immediate recompense. A Master of Wisdom writes: “Ah! If your eyes were opened, you might see such a vista of potential blessings to *yourselves* and the mankind lying in the germ of the present hour’s effort, as would fire with joy and zeal your souls!” The small, plain duties of life hourly call upon us to acquire skill in action as well as concentration of mind. Many have a discontented attitude to mundane tasks; others are bored at peeling potatoes or writing accounts. To be of good cheer during such occupations at home or at office is very necessary.

But the Master also says that “the continual performance of duty,” should be “under the guidance of a well-developed intuition.” This may well be called a “tall order.” People are swayed by desires in small as in important affairs; most of the time they fail to make use of their rational faculty. To expect them to be guided by a “well-developed intuition” is, so to speak, asking for the impossible.

People often inquire: How can Theosophy help the common man to live a noble life? Here is one answer: What is going to help is not the doing of the works forced upon him by his destiny, with a long face, a wandering mind and a heavy heart, but a cheerful acquiescence in the accurate and punctual doing of what has to be done. The Law of Necessity provides the first help; for, it requires that that which is not necessary to be done is not a duty. The mundane ways, customs and conventions involved in the performance of duties take their toll from the earnest student, and he is compelled to seek the guidance from the doctrines of the Esoteric Philosophy. Our perception and evaluation of the routine duties of life undergo a fundamental change when we examine them in the light of Theosophy. But the Master advocates not a well-developed rationality but a well-developed Intuition. Intuitive knowledge depends not on logic and reason; the faculty related to Buddhi, the abode of intuitions,

is the faculty of co-ordinating the mundane and the material to the celestial and spiritual. This means learning the science of the laws of analogy and correspondence. The study of logic is considered necessary for the correct use of the mind. The development of the intuition demands a study of the law of analogy and correspondence, so that we perceive the “world in a grain of sand” and comprehend the profound and mysterious knowledge enshrined in such a formula—“Oh! the Jewel in the Lotus.”

In the present hour are hidden great potentialities. Can it be that the right, hourly performance of duties would bring us the vision which would prove a blessing to ourselves and to mankind? Can it be that in the “germ of the present hour’s effort” there are possibilities of progress undreamt of by us? The words of the Master certainly point to such an idea. Are our souls fired with joy and zeal during the doing of the small plain duties of life? One such duty for the Theosophical student is regular attendance at all U.L.T. meetings, once again not with discontent and bored feelings but with a cheerful mind charged with zeal and enthusiasm. Among our numerous small, plain duties there are those which might be compared to the body; others, to the principle of *Prana*; others to the mind; and then there are duties which form the soul aspect of them all. Regular, punctual attendance at U.L.T. meetings is the soul of mundane duties, most helpful in revealing to us the celestial aspect of all events and happenings. But intelligent preparation for such attendance at U.L.T. meetings has to be made. Especially it seems that the Master refers to this Theosophical duty when He speaks of the “vista of potential blessings to *yourselves* and mankind lying in the germ of the present hour’s effort.”

Further, the Master adds: “. . .it is unselfishness alone that throws open all the doors and windows of the inner Tabernacle and leaves them unshut.” In and through the small, plain duties, intuitively performed, we must strive to catch the vision of the Light. If we try to cultivate unselfishness, then the doors and windows of the “inner Tabernacle” are thrown open, to begin with, when we attend the U.L.T. meetings with a prepared heart.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Venki Ramakrishnan, a Nobel Prize-winning molecular biologist, examines the possibility of increasing the lifespan of human beings, in his new book, “Why We Die: The New Science of Ageing and the Quest for Immortality.” He said in an interview that although we are better able to understand the causes of ageing and death at a biological level, we are far from a major breakthrough. Today, a large sum of money is being invested by certain billionaires, and many others have been self-experimenting with supplements and therapies to halt ageing. “There are now 700 companies, start-up companies, which tackle different kinds of longevity research.” Human beings have always wondered about causes of death and what limits our lifespan. There are people who want to extend lifespan.

The reason why the common man as well as science has been showing a lot of interest in the field of ageing, in the last thirty or forty years, is that the developed world is facing an ageing population. In the developed countries, one finds that people live longer and as fertility rates go down, there is a larger number of people that are ageing. “If they’re not healthy, it will impose huge burdens on the rest of society because there’ll be an increasing fraction of society that needs care.” Hence, even governments have been investing in ageing research. “My work on protein synthesis is related to one of the central causes of ageing,” says Venki Ramakrishnan.

If we had cures for heart diseases, for Alzheimer’s disease and cancer, which are the top three causes of age-related morbidity and mortality, would that ensure a long and healthy life where you suddenly drop dead one day? His reply was that in his book he has quoted the scientist S. Jay Olshansky, “who calculated that even if you eliminate all the chronic diseases of old age, you would only gain maybe 15 years, on average, of life. This has to do with the fact that there are natural biological processes that break down and

eventually hit against our natural limit of 120. So, to tackle those, you have to tackle the fundamental causes of ageing itself rather than these diseases.” There may be other problems like frailty, gradual deterioration of the immune system and muscles. However, there are a few who have led “a very, very healthy life for most of their lives and then rapidly decline before they die,” but how to make it generally possible for all is an unsolved problem.

Would it be desirable if all lived to the natural limit of 120 years? Here we are assuming that our brains would stay sharp and aware, and that may not necessarily happen as we have not solved the problem of more and more people suffering from dementia. Hence, in his opinion, since regenerating the brain is not possible now, living with cognitive impairment is not desirable and this will impact the kind of societies we live in, reports Jacob Koshy. (*The Hindu*, April 19, 2024)

Mr. Judge explains in *The Ocean of Theosophy* that microbes, bacilli and bacteria are not the ultimate units of life, but they in turn are composed of still more minute “lives.” Each cell is made up of these infinitesimal “lives.” “One of the mysteries of physical life is hidden among these ‘lives.’ Their action forced forward by the Life Energy—called *Prana* or *Jiva*—will explain active existence and physical death.” These lives are divided into two classes: destroyers and preservers. They war with each other from birth until the destroyers win. “In this struggle the Life Energy itself ends the contest because it is life that kills.” (pp. 38-39)

H.P.B. says that every physiological change and every change in the tissues of the body, which allow the life to act, are produced by the *creators* and *destroyers*. On p. 262 (*S.D.*, I,) she explains that there are “fiery lives” on the seventh and the highest subdivision of the plane of matter, which are erroneously identified with microbes. The destruction and preservation of the physical body of man is due to the alternate function of the “fiery lives” as “builders” and “destroyers.” They are “builders” when they sacrifice themselves in the form of vitality to restrain the destructive influence

of the microbes, as they supply to these microbes with vital constructive energy and compel them to build up the material body and its cells. They become “destroyers” or “devourers” when they stop supplying to the microbes the vital constructive energy, and allow them to run riot as destructive agents. Thus, for the first *five* periods of seven years each, or thirty-five years, the human body is built, then for the next thirty-five years, the age of retrogression begins, and the “fiery lives” begin the work of destruction.

Moreover, we have grosser physical bodies as compared to the earlier races, with closer association of atoms in the physical frame, which is affected by the force of the mind and the emotions. Thus, “It is well known that as man increases his brain use and power and the play of his emotions, he is able to affect his physical frame thereby. Today many hold that the American people are becoming too nervously organized. This reacts upon the atoms in the body, and must make the average age less than those ancient races when the mental and emotional natures did not have such sway over the human being.” (*W. Q. J. Series No. 22*, p. 22)

The Theosophical Movement magazine, Vol. XI (May 1941, p. 111) mentions an article that appeared in *Harper's Magazine* for February 1941 on “The Mystery of Ageing,” which brings scientific confirmation as to why calmness is necessary. We read that Dr. Raymond Pearl of the John Hopkins University in the U.S.A., in a study of more than two thousand nonagenarians (between ninety and ninety-nine years old) and centenarians (those who were a hundred or more years old) found that emotional stability was their predominant trait. “A vast majority of these extremely longevous folk were of a placid temperament, not given to worry. They had taken life at an even, unhurried pace.”

Dr. Pearl gives the scientific rationale: “Intense feelings release potent chemicals into the blood, thereby altering its homeostatic balance and over-exciting the responsive tissues. The effect is to pour extra cargoes of fuel into the circulation, quicken the heartbeat, constrict the muscular walls of arterioles, heighten the blood pressure,

concentrate the blood in certain areas, and by these and other means to speed up the pace of living. Such reactions, oft repeated, may inflict irreparable injuries.”

Our present humanity belongs to the Fifth Root-race, and the race that will follow ours will be the Sixth Root-Race. Interestingly, in the article, “Premature and Phenomenal Growths,” (*The Theosophist*, Vol. V), H.P.B. draws our attention to a prophecy that appeared in certain Asiatic old books, which states that “the sixth and seventh *Manushya* (men) will be born adults; and will know of no old age, though their years will be many....In the next (the 6th Race) (the natural age of man) will be (gradually increased) 200, then 300 and 400 (in the two last yugas)” of that Race. In other words, the Sixth Race humanity will experience a shortened period of infancy and old age, with gradually increasing life-span.

Is it good to fear God? Fear is usually considered to be a negative emotion. We look up to God or Deity as we would to a kind and loving parent. So how could there be fear of God? Yet, preachers, through their sermons, try to instil fear of God in the laity. However, if we think deeply, we find that there is a positive aspect of fear, which goes hand in hand with love, respect and awe, which is reflected in the parent-child relationship, teaching the child what should or should not be done. A trace of it remains as the child grows and bonds with her siblings, friends, teachers, co-workers and so on, which is the fear of being hurt.

In our relationship with God, the positive aspect of fear keeps us aware of our responsibilities as human beings. We are blessed because we receive universal benediction of the Almighty. Therefore, we should say our prayers, read the scriptures, purify our souls so that we carry forward God’s work. In the *Gita*, when Krishna bestows on Arjuna “divine eye” and reveals his glorious celestial form at Arjuna’s request, the latter is awestruck, but at the same time he is afraid and begs Krishan to revert to his human form,

writes Prithwis Datta. (*The Speaking Tree, The Economic Times*, March 27, 2024)

Fear does serve short-term purpose, working as a deterrent. In the absence of enough time and energy to persuade the wrongdoer, to make him see right from wrong, individuals, society and state resort to threats of punishment, fines, imprisonment, etc. Then again, since some people could be fearless in a wrong sense, being *rashly bold*, they could be held in check by the fear of severe consequences of their thoughtless or downright wicked acts. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction,” is a Proverb of the wise Solomon.

Religion has always made use of fear to make people blindly accept dogmas. No lasting reform can be achieved by instilling fear. Many of our fears are rooted in ignorance. They can be removed by knowledge, especially the knowledge of the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation. Fearlessness stems from spiritual integrity. A spiritual person has to learn to rely on judgement based on his own “inner voice” or intuition.

God is Law. *Vajra*, the thunderbolt is the celestial weapon possessed by Indra. Among other things, it represents a punitive and reformative aspect of the Law of Karma. Shri B. P. Wadia explains that when “free, independent and fearless” people obstinately disregard the Law that works to Righteousness, they are broken by the Divine *Vajra*. When people rashly assert independence and disturb the harmony of the universe, they suffer a severe karmic backlash, which at last, teaches them the lesson of interdependence. Thus: “Increasing obstinacy weakens the Will of such persons; pitting themselves against the Law they are tossed hither and thither, are bruised and maimed by the *Vajra*, till at length they learn to fear the Law that pardons only through punishment. Fear leads to search through knowledge; then ‘independence’ is given up, interdependence is recognized and inspiration comes—inspiration enshrined in the mantram phrase—‘Work with the Law.’ When the Lesson is learnt the necessity for punishment

ceases and the protective aspect of *Vajra* is active. *Vajra* defends the oppressed while it strikes the tyrant.” (*Thus Have I Heard*, p. 183)

Only a person who has cultivated complete harmlessness in him, is able to be truly fearless. Fearlessness is a godlike quality. A spiritual man is fearless; he is not afraid of any one and also *no one is afraid of him*. Each one of us can give the gift of “fearlessness,” to others by sharing our confidence with other people, and by creating a feeling of security among those around us, by our very presence.

Which is true, reason or faith? “Reason is of the intellect, the mind; faith is of the heart, the soul. Reason perceives through the intellect, faith through intuition....Reason is limited to the world we see and perceive. Faith extends to worlds beyond human ken and physical perception.” writes R. K. Dalal. However, if reason alone dominates then one is guided merely by dictates of logic. On the other hand, when faith alone has sway, it may degenerate into credulity and laziness of thought, and one is in the condition of being a rudderless boat on a vast ocean, drifting along the currents. Thus, blind faith is as bad as pure reason founded on mere logic.

What should be the proper approach? We witness discoveries made in the present times which clearly indicate that there are hidden and potent forces operating in this Universe which are beyond the grasp of man’s mind, because they are beyond the range of intellectual process of reasoning. These supernatural forces require us to accept some living principle, a life force, at once omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. It is advisable to cultivate faith and be guided by heart and its intuition, without discarding reason. “You must cultivate the faith that actions motivated by sincerity, trust and goodness must eventually fructify into nothing but good and true.” No matter how rough and stormy the sea of life may be, in the end, there will be peace and silence, writes R. K. Dalal. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, November 16-30, 2023)

Faith is inherent in every human being. It is due to lack of faith

that knowledge of things divine eludes modern man. True religion must seek to replace blind belief by reasoned faith, and then by intuitive faith. Blind faith is based on human authority or hero-worship. Credulity and unquestioned cynicism are forms of mental laziness which avoid critical thinking. Questioning is the middle path between gullibility and cynicism, and that is the steep path of an honest skeptic. “There lives more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds,” says Alfred Tennyson. Healthy skepticism or honest doubt leads one to an ongoing quest for truth.

Prof. C. S. Lewis gives several examples to show that often faith based on reason begins to sway due to emotions and imagination. For instance, a boy who is learning to swim knows through reason that an unsupported human body does not necessarily sink in water, and in fact, he has seen many people float and swim. And yet, when his instructor takes away his hand and leaves him unsupported, his belief is shaken, his fear grips him and he goes down. Thus, faith is an art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing mood. For example, having decided to live the life according to spiritual principles, there should be no turning back. The opinions of the people around—in family, society or office—should not influence our well-considered decision.

“Faith,” says *Light on the Path*, “is a great engine, an enormous power, which in fact can accomplish all things. For it is a covenant or engagement between man’s divine part and his lesser self.” A covenant is a pact or agreement. The covenant between man’s lower and higher nature is analogous to the agreement between a child and his parents. It is based on trust. A child knows that even though he is scolded, reprimanded by his parents, or denied certain pleasures, it is all for his good. Likewise, the man of *true* faith who knows that the universe is governed by a just and impartial Law, is able to maintain his faith in the divine nature, even as he passes through painful experiences.