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CONTENTS

Healing the Mistake **5**
Tim Boyd

Evolution of Matter from Consciousness
—Allegory in the *Mahabharatha* revealed by Masters—I **10**
Vanamala Deepak and Sridhar Melukote

Will and the Collective Wisdom **16**
Ananya Sri Ram

The Mayas—I **20**
Alice Dixon Le Plongeon

A Few Thoughts Along the Way **27**
David M. Grossman

Rights and Responsibilities—Restoring the Balance **31**
Tim Wyatt

Exploring Theosophy: The Path to Self-Realization **35**
Swami Pranavananda Puri

Nature's Behavior: Reflection of Our Mental Attitude **38**
S. Ramkumar

International Directory **40**

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Cover: "The Grand Pyramid of the Magician"/ "Temple of the Soothsayer", at Uxmal (an ancient Maya city of the Classic period), Yucatán, Mexico, is a historical landmark. Photographer: Sharon Hahn Darlin. (See p. 20 of this issue for a related article: 'The Mayas".

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths, and theosophists endeavour to live them. Everyone willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.

Healing the Mistake

TIM BOYD

THERE is a habit, suggested by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), which I have adopted. Whenever she would hear or read something that she felt was meaningful, she would write it down. She also would cut out newspaper articles, paste them in her scrapbooks, and comment in writing, even going so far as to add drawings elaborating her opinions. In the Adyar Archives there are 39 large, fascinating volumes of these collected scraps of thought. In 1890, a year before she died, HPB published a small book containing some of the quotes she had culled from a variety of sources. It was titled *Gems from the East: A Birthday Book of Precepts and Axioms*. It contained a brief quote for every day of the year, drawn chiefly from "Oriental" sources. Some examples of the pithy gems in the book are "A little hill in a low place thinks itself a great mountain", "One proof is better than ten arguments", and "The soul ripens in tears". It is a mix of profound and humorous instruction for living.

Over the years my own volume of collected quotes has grown. There is a short poem that I ran across many years ago, which was striking to me, mostly for its last line. It is from a poem called "Healing" by the English author, D. H. Lawrence.

> I am not a mechanism, an assembly of various sections.
> And it is not because the mechanism is working wrongly that I am ill.
> I am ill because of wounds deep to the soul, to the deep emotional self,
> and wounds to the soul take a long, long time, only time can help
> and patience, and a certain difficult repentance,
> long difficult repentance, realization of life's mistake, and the freeing oneself
> from the endless repetition of the mistake that mankind at large has chosen to sanctify.

Lawrence was not a member of the Theosophical Society (TS), so some of the terms that he used might have slightly different meanings than those accepted in theosophical parlance. For example, when he talks about the soul, he describes it as "the deep emotional self". For the theosophist "soul" has a different meaning, describing an entity which exceeds the emotions. However, it does not exclude the involvement of the "emotional self". Wounding experienced in the emotional self is communicated to the soul and shapes its unfoldment — "The soul ripens in tears". As with all great poetry it clothes an intuitive perception in language and images.

At the end of the book, *Light on the Path*, there is a short essay titled "Karma". We are told it was written by one of the Masters (the Venetian). It begins with the request to exercise our imagination: "Consider with me that the individual existence is a rope which stretches from the infinite to the infinite . . ." The rope is composed of "innumerable fine threads . . . perfect in their qualities of straightness, strength and levelness." Because this rope passes "through all places" it suffers "strange accidents". The illustration is intended to impress the idea of individual existence as an unbroken continuum. It is not merely one life or a series of unrelated lives. The incident in a particular life that causes one of the threads to be caught, even though it may be violently pulled from the rope, it does not break, but for a great time the thread and the rope are disordered. The same is true if the rope gets stained. The stain carries on for some time, discoloring the rope beyond the initial point of contact. What comes across from the analogy is that the "future is in unbroken continuity with the past". As in the poem "wounds to the soul take a long, long time".

The poem is also specific about other things, in particular the nature of the healing process. Time and patience are required to carry on, knowing that with patience, and given sufficient time, healing is possible. It is an expression of the familiar admonition that "This too shall pass." No matter how severe the wound, ultimately, we move on.

Lawrence then speaks about a "certain difficult repentance" required in the healing process. It is a curious expression. Repentance is one of those words that is normally confined to religious discussion. Most often it refers to the conscious process of moving away from "sin". Sin as a concept relates to behaviors, even states of mind that are in opposition to clarity, purity, understanding, or any of the necessary qualities that connect us to our truer nature. As a religious idea it involves behaving in ways that contradict religious laws attributed to God though often these behaviors are engaged in, out of ignorance. We fight, steal, kill, lie, take intoxicating substances because we do not know any better. With time and sufficient repetition of our ignorance we come to see the separating effects.

Until that point any genuine repentance is impossible. We could say prayers, make apologies, ask for forgiveness, but without true recognition it would just be words. Only once the nature of our behavior is recognized does this difficult repentance becomes a possibility. The difficulty results from our long engagement in the "sinful" behavior. Like so many things we do, we become accustomed. We come to regard it as an aspect of "who I am". So, this entire process of the recognition of our error, the acknowledgement, the determination to turn in another direction, and the will to persist, makes this repentance long and difficult.

Although there is a brilliance and profundity to the entire poem, the reason that I first included it in my little book

of quotes was for the last three lines:

> . . . the freeing oneself from the endless repetition of the mistake that mankind at large has chosen to sanctify.

The all-important point of the poet's vision of healing depends on our understanding of the mistake, a mistake so profound that it is not only endlessly repeated, but made holy — sanctified — by humanity. Like repentance, it is only when we see it that we can correct it. So, what is the mistake?

In Buddhism there is the idea that all of our "mistakes" are rooted in a fundamental condition of ignorance — *avidya*. Our normal way of thinking about ignorance is as a condition of "not knowing" — that we are somehow lacking information or knowledge. From the Buddhist, Vedanta, or Ageless Wisdom perspective our ignorance is something completely different. This fundamental ignorance is that we *do* know, but everything that we know, we know wrongly.

The classic example is of the person walking in the forest at evening who sees a snake on the road and becomes frightened. He prepares himself to fight or run. But then walking closer he sees that what he thought was a snake was really a root or a rope coiled on the road. What we see, correctly or wrongly, shapes our behaviors, our view of ourselves, and our view of the world. This is the fundamental ignorance that we fall prey to. Other traditions use the word *maya* to describe our misperception. There is this fundamental wrong seeing of ourselves and the world that makes us act in certain ways.

The main effect of our ignorance is the sense of ourselves as separate, independent beings, operating unconnected to the greater whole of humanity or the planet. In spiritual traditions this is the central mistake. H. P. Blavatsky puts her finger on it in *The Voice of the Silence*, where she names it "the heresy of separateness". Our heresy is the relationship between what we believe is real and what is real. In our heretical view we see ourselves as existing within a universe of isolated individual things — a universe of stars, galaxies, trees, plants, people, animals, cells, bacteria, *all* of them separate, somehow revolving around ourselves as the central focus.

There is a visual teaching device that was evolved to help in coming to grips with this cycle of expanding ignorance. It is called the *bhavachakra*. It is a circle containing three, sometimes four, concentric wheels. It is intended to depict the nature and causes of *samsāra*. At the circle's center are the "Three Poisons", identified as delusion, greed, and hatred; or stated differently, as ignorance, attachment and aversion. The next ring of images depicts the "Six Realms" of Buddhist cosmology — hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, lower gods, and higher gods — through which the *samsāra*-bound consciousness cycles.

To some these realms are viewed literally, as actual forms through which the consciousness migrates in life after life. For others the Six Realms represent psychological states to which our thoughts

and behavior consign us. Around the perimeter of the wheel the "twelve interdependent links" are graphically depicted. These are the *nidāna-s*, the psychological states that condition our consciousness and tie us to the "endless repetition", beginning with ignorance and ending in old age, sickness, and death.

A sense of separateness is inherent in the dual nature of the universe. Always there will be here and there, inner and outer, creation and destruction, myself and others. The structure of things gives an ongoing confirmation of the correctness of separation. It is only at the level of consciousness that the certainty of our separateness can dissolve. This is why there is such emphasis in some of the schools of Tibetan Buddhism on both Compassion and Wisdom. It is the nature of compassion at any level that the isolating walls of self-centered consciousness extend to include another.

In the case of the great compassion of a Buddha, Christ, or enlightened being, the boundaries and distinctions of self and other dissolve completely. Wisdom, simply stated, is the realization of a state of utter interdependence, not merely as a personal experience, but as the inherent nature of being. "Me" or "I" loses its meaning as an independent, separate entity in the same way that a drop of water falling into the ocean loses any separate identity.

The healing process addressed in the poem involves the same stages of unfoldment as the spiritual life — a movement from bondage, or wounding, to awareness; from awareness to intelligent effort; from effort to realization or freedom. For the person engaged in the process of revealing a long-hidden life and splendor first there is a necessary awakening. Until we awaken from the sleep of not knowing or wanting to know about our condition there can be no healing. "The disease that is hidden cannot be cured".

Opening our eyes requires us to take stock of ourselves, our potentials and limitations. Based on that seeing the "wounds" inflicted on the soul become apparent. The cause and the cure demand a deeper perception. Who or what has done this to me? becomes a vital question. In normal life when we encounter difficulties, we tend to look for someone to blame, or, failing that, something to blame. "It's his fault", or "It's the system". The last place we tend to look is inside, "It's me". In a sense the cause of our wounding is both outer and inner.

In our embrace of the universally accepted mistake, we harm ourselves. There can be no blame for our self-inflicted wounds. The fact is that until we can open our eyes and see more clearly, we live in the same world and share the same beliefs as everyone else — the world of our families, teachers, friends, and societies, all formed by their unshakeable conviction of separateness. The seeing of this state of affairs leads to the "long difficult repentance" and the possibility to heal.

Genuine healing is much more than easing pain or removing wounds. Healing by definition is the restoration of

wholeness. In spiritual traditions the idea is expressed as being in the world, but not of it. As human beings we live through a body in a world of people just like us, struggling to make their way. We do not have a choice. In this world we are continually navigating, responding as best we can to the challenges, setbacks, and obstacles of daily life. It is only in consciousness that we gain access to a "higher" view, a perspective whose wholeness does not separate us from others or from the world in which we live and labor. It is the seeing that allows for the freeing — freedom from our repetitive engagement in the wounding process. ✧

WELCOME

The **12th World Congress of the TS** will be held
at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Vancouver, Canada

from 23 to 27 July 2025

"*Towards Insight and Wholeness: Our Role in Shaping the Future*"

During this special occasion, we will celebrate

150 Years of the Theosophical Society and
100 Years of Theosophy in Canada

Last date to register: 16 June 2025

For more details see: <worldcongress.ts-adyar.org>

✧

After the Congress,
the 5th International Conference of the TOS
will follow from 27 to 29 July 2025

Evolution of Matter from Consciousness — Allegory in the *Mahabharatha* revealed by Masters — I

VANAMALA DEEPAK AND SRIDHAR MELUKOTE

Abstract

World-renowned Self-realized Masters like Paramahansa Yogananda, Swami Sri Yukteshwar Giri, and Lahiri Mahasaya have revealed many secrets encoded in the *Mahabharata*. These secrets are also called Vyasa Kootas. According to these sages, the characters in the *Mahabharata* story — kings, queens, and their descendants till the Pandavas and Kauravas symbolise the evolution of Matter from *Brahman*. The great Sage Vyasa not only narrated the history of ancient India, but also showed the hidden allegory woven by God/*Brahman* within the *Mahabharata* story. A story within which God/*Brahman* himself manifests as Bhagavan Krishna and plays a sublime role as the Guru guiding his disciples (Pandavas) towards establishing Dharma and achieving Liberation.

Introduction — Allegory in the *Mahabharata* and key to understanding scriptures

The cast of the *Mahabharata* story; the family tree from Shantanu till the Pandavas/Kauravas depicts the evolution of matter/creation from *Brahman*. All creation is known to have arisen from one fundamental singularity — *brahman*. *Brahman* projects intelligences from himself called Consciousness/*chaitanya* and Matter/*prakṛti*. *Prakṛti* is inert, but when the reflection of Consciousness falls on her; creation emerges out of her as 24 evolutes; which includes the five substances of creation — *tattva-s*, the *prāna-s*, sense organs, the organs of action, mind, intellect, ego consciousness, and emotion. These evolutes make up all that exist. The *Mahabharatha* story describes the descent of Consciousness into Creation/Nature using the characters as symbols.

The *Bhagavadgita*, a part of this story, teaches man, the path of reascending into *brahman* from *prakṛti*; of how to evolve into an immortal being of eternal bliss and consciousness. This state is also called *kaivalya*/*moksha* — mergence with the infinite *brahman*, while living in a human body or after.

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To understand scripture, one must first derive the Sanskrit root used to construct the name/word and then deduce the meaning of the Sanskrit root-word according to its accurate usage at the time of origin of that word; keeping in mind that meanings and usage of words change over time. Thus, understanding scripture requires intuition and scientific intelligence. Only then can one decode the hidden messages encoded in the Scriptures/*Gita*. This is a true new decipherment of some of the Vyasa Kootas — Sage Vyasa's secrets encoded in the verses/shlokas of the *Gita*/ the *Mahabharata*. Great Masters state that there is deep symbolism in them (illustrated in a diagram in this article).

Masters and the three meanings hidden in all Scriptures

Paramahansa Yogananda is a self-realised, world-revered Yogi; a great seer. Based on his exalted personal realizations of India's ancient science of Yoga, this Master uniquely interpreted scriptures; and so mystical are the new interpretations, that they are considered modern-day Upanishads for over 70 years now. Swami Sri Yukteshwar Giri, a sage of pre-independent India, was the guru of Paramahansa Yogananda. This article contains condensations from their mammoth volumes, *God Talks with Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* by Paramahansa Yogananda and *Srimad Bhagavad Gita: Spiritual Commentaries* by Yogiraj Sri Sri Shyama Charan Lahiri Mahasay and Swami Sri Yukteshwar Giri. From here, the essence related to the allegory of the Mahabharatha story has been presented.

Yogananda states: "All events and wisdom are permanently recorded in the super ether of omniscience, the Akashic (etheric) record. They can be directly contacted by any advanced sage in any clime and age."[1] Realized Masters can directly access knowledge, information, and events of the past/future from Akashic records. The Master accessed the Akashic records and through Sage Veda Vyasa, has gleaned the depth of the *Gita*/*Mahabharata*. Swami Sri Yukteshwar Giriji says: "Vedanta philosophy, which allays ignorance or illusion and reveals complete knowledge, absolutely needs scientific thinking."[2]

The Masters conclude that all scriptures contain three levels of meanings:

- *Ādhibhautika* (physical/material): Direct story as narrated; this may sometimes seem illogical or improbable unless the reader understands the deeper significance of the words and characters used. Material/physical meaning is direct and guides the physical and social duties/ wellbeing of man.
- *Ādhidaivika* (subtle/astral): Deeper meaning of the scripture based on the meanings of the words/names, their significance in relation to philosophy; gleaned via higher intellect. Astral/subtle/ *sookshma* meaning guides the moral, psychological-sensory and life-energy principles in man. These guide his habits, inclinations, and desires.
- *Ādhyatmika* (spiritual): Meaning of the scripture understood only by intuition; essentially by realised Masters. Spiritual meaning guides the divine nature and realization of the soul in Man.[3, 4]

The *Mahabharata* story in brief

Shantanu is a great king of ancient India; he meets the celestial river Ganga (a goddess) and takes her as his wife. Ganga's precondition for marriage is that the king should not question any of her actions; if he did, she would leave him that instant. Eight sons are born to Ganga. However, after every child is born, she drowns it in her flowing waters. Unable to bear this, Shantanu stops her from drowning her eighth child. Ganga lets the child live; however, according to her precondition, she herself returns to heaven. This eighth son was Devavrata/Bhishma.

Devavrata is crowned as prince. One day Shantanu meets a beautiful woman (Satyavati), who smells of lotus flowers, on the banks of Ganga and desires her. Satyavati's foster father (Das), a fisherman chief, asks Shantanu, as a precondition for marriage, to grant the kingdom to Satyavati's children/grandchildren instead of Devavrata. To fulfil her father's desire of marrying Satyavati, Devarata makes the supreme sacrifice. Devavrata takes a vow of lifelong celibacy. This gives him the epithet, Bhishma, "one with the fiery vow". True to his promise, Bhishma remains celibate all his life.

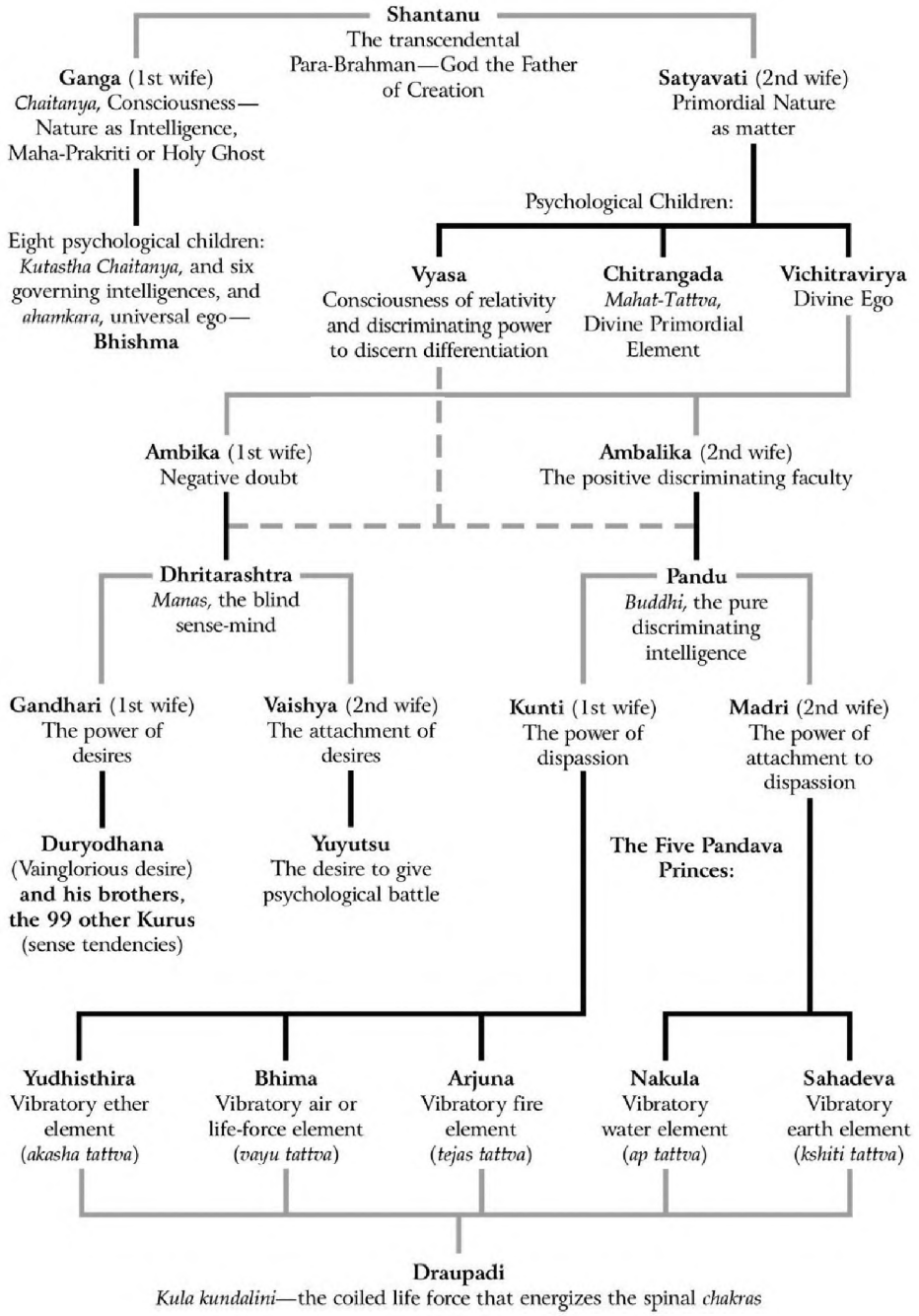
The children of Shantanu with Satyavati are Chitrangada and Vichitravirya. Chitrangada dies early. Vichitravirya becomes king and is married to two daughters of Kashiraja — Ambika and Ambalika. However, Vichitravirya dies immediately after marriage. The throne is heirless. Satyavati invokes her first son Vedavyaas (Satyavati's son from Rishi Parashara, sired before her marriage to Shantanu) to have children with the two queens, so that the throne has an heir. The child born to Ambika is Dhṛtarashtra (born blind). To Ambalika is born Pandu (pure and wise).

Pandu being pure and wise, is crowned king. But, Pandu's wives Kunti and Madri cannot beget children since Pandu is cursed to live a celibate. So, queen Kunti and Madri beget divine children by invoking celestial *deva-s*/gods. These divine children are Yudhishthira (the truthful), Bhima (the powerful), Arjuna (the intelligent and skilled), and Nakula and Sahadeva (twins with incomparable beauty and knowledge respectively). These five children are divine, powerful, loving and kind. Pandu dies when attracted to Madri and Madri too ends her life. Kunti, along with the five Pandavas goes to live in Dhritarashtra's palace.

Dhṛtarashtra marries Gandhari and begets 100 children from her. These 100 children are called Kauravas. They are vain, lack knowledge and are filled with pride. The Kauravas torture the powerful but patient Pandavas, until the Pandavas build their own kingdom. The Pandavas prosper due to their inherent goodness. Jealous of the fame and success of their good cousins, the Kauravas invite them for a game of dice, defeat them by deceit and exile them for thirteen years to the forest.

On completion of the exile period, (which makes the Pandavas even more powerful due to their penances and hardships) a great war (Kurukshetra) is waged between the two cousins. The

Chronology of Creation, Symbolized in Genealogy of the Kurus and Pandus



good Pandavas, with the help of their Guru Krishna, win the war and destroy the entire evil clan of the Kauravas.

The above story, according to Masters, has the complete knowledge of ancient Indian yogic philosophy in direct and symbolic forms.

Appended, is a chart of the lineage of Pandavas and Kauravas beginning from Shantanu. This chart is from: PY 1999, chapter 1–5.

Description of the Allegory chart

Shantanu is symbolic of *para-brahman* — God, also called cosmic consciousness, transcendental and beyond creation (Shantanu derivation: *samam-vikāraśunyam-tanuyarsya*). His two wives are Ganga and Satyavati. Symbolically, Ganga is Consciousness — *chaitanya* (derivation: *ganga brahmāndam gacchati iti*). Satyavati is Nature/Matter — *prakṛti* (derivation: *satyam chaitanyam vidyate adhitishthatiyasyam*).

This means, *Brahman*, the creator, has two energies: Consciousness/Universal Intelligence and Vibratory Energy/*aum/ mahā-prakṛti*.[5]

Consciousness/Ganga creates the Soul. Its other evolutes are silent (seven children are drowned). Nature/*Prakṛti*/ Satyavati creates progeny symbolising Nature/Matter constantly proliferating.

Children of Ganga

Consciousness/Ganga creates eight children; seven of them she immerses in her waters; only one survives, Devavrata. Symbolic meaning: When God's Consciousness differentiates itself, it becomes eight rays/intelligences. These rays/intelligences create everything; six intelligences sustain the macrocosmic (*samashti)* and microcosmic (*vyashti*) creation. These intelligences are *iśvara and prajña* (in Causal/ *kārana jagat*), *hiranyagarbha/vaiśvānara and tejas* (in Astral/*sookshma jagat*), *virāta and viśva* (in Physical/*bhautika jagat*). The two other intelligences are: *kutastha chaitanya and ābhāsa chaitanya/chidābhāsa.* These last two intelligences reveal the hidden (immersed) six intelligences. *Kutastha* and *chidābhāsa* reveal all creation to Man in *samādhi*.

Brahman thus remains in creation in seven forms of "hidden" intelligences. Only Ego Consciousness/*ābhāsa chaitanya* — the eighth child Bhishma, lives. In these eight intelligences, seven are hidden/not perceived symbolically, immersed in the waters of Ganga/immersed in consciousness. When, *kutastha chaitanya*, the seventh ray/intelligence falls upon all matter, it is reflected inside matter as consciousness and this reflection is called *ābhāsa chaitanya* which makes matter attain consciousness/life. The internal light of the *jiva*, is only a reflection of the Light of *kutastha chaitanya*.[6]

Thus, in creation/*māya*, Consciousness, is present in eight ways. Seven are invisible and cannot be experienced by Man. Only *ābhāsa chaitanya* is distinguishable because it works indirectly with the constructs of the world/mind. All matter attains consciousness only when *Abhasa Chaitanya* (reflected consciousness) falls upon it. When matter

becomes conscious of a separate existence, Ego consciousness/*aham* is born in the microcosm (*vyasti*).[7] On the arrival of *ābhasa* as Consciousness's/Ganga's eighth child, Ganga herself disappears, uniting with her own flow. This means, consciousness is knowable only as *ābhāsa chaitanya* in creation, and no other construct of consciousness can be experienced. This is now the mighty one in this kingdom. Symbolically, Devavrata/Bhishma was the sole heir to the entire kingdom. This reflected self-consciousness is called universal ego/*ahamkāra*/ — the Ego which gives life and causes the feeling of separateness in Matter.[8]

"Universal Ego is represented as Bhishma. He is called *kuruvriddha* (the aged Kuru), as he is the veteran old man who has existed since creation began. Without Ego and his coordinating presence, worldly ideas and activities cannot be accomplished. The whole created world is based on this individualistic force alone" (Sri Yukteshwar). Even though Bhishma works using the constructs of mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), and consciousness (*chitta*), he does not rule over nor is enmeshed in any enjoyments. Ego in Man (which is a reflection of God's Consciousness) lives in this world, but it does not involve itself deeply. (Bhishma never married, nor had children and also, renounced the throne). Ego can be good (soul-uplifting activities) or bad (sense-binding activities), depending on what it chooses to do (Bhishma loved Kurus and Pandus both).

With the presence of this ego/sense of separation from *brahman*/Bhishma/worldly knowledge of enjoyment, Satyavati/matter cannot unite with *brahman*/Shantanu. Thus, Devavrata/Bhishma renounces all worldly enjoyments to prevent the disruption of renunciation, and remains unmarried from all physical *śakti*. Thus, by renunciation, Bhishma turns Nature/Satyavati inwards and unites her with *brahman*/Shantanu.[9]

Two children are born to Shantanu and Satyavati. Consciousness in Matter produces-Mahatattva and Aishwarik Ahamkara-Chitrangadha and Vichitravirya.

(*To be continued*)

Endnotes

1. Paramahansa Yogananda, 1999, *God Talks with Arjuna, The Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 1-5, Yogoda Satsanga Society of India, Kolkata-76 (PY).

2. Swami Sri Yukteshwar Giri, 2018, *Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Spiritual Commentaries*, Yogiraj Sri Sri Shyama Charan Lahiri Mahasaya and Swami Sriyukteshvar Giri, iUniverse, Bloomington, IN, USA (SY).

3. SY, p. 288

4. PY, p. xxvi

5. SY, p. 298

6. SY., p. 299

7. SY, p. 298

8. SY, p. 298

9. PY, pp. Ibid. xxxvi, 82, 15

Will and the Collective Wisdom

ANANYA SRI RAM

SOME twenty years before Louis Pasteur or Joseph Lister made their name in the field of germ theory and antiseptic practices made its way into our lives, there was a Hungarian doctor from Vienna named Ignaz Semmelweis. Having graduated from Vienna Medical School in 1844, he became an assistant to Johann Klein, a professor of obstetrics at the same medical school. At the time, many mothers were still delivering their babies at home with midwives assisting them despite the new practice of mothers delivering in hospitals.

The hospitals, however, routinely reported that as many as 25% to 100% of the mothers delivering were dying due to "childbed fever", known today as postpartum infection. The number of mothers who died after delivering at home or at the hospital with a midwife was much lower. No one really understood why at the time, but there were many theories.

Semmelweis decided to research into why there was such a vast difference. It took him three years of painstaking work. In 1847, after losing his father, Semmelweis' professor, whom he was emotionally close to, suddenly got sick and died as well. In his grief, Semmelweis decided to find out why his mentor died. He discovered that his friend had cut himself while performing an autopsy. The wound never healed and the professor quickly died. Semmelweis realized that the rapid deterioration of his mentor was exactly how the postpartum mothers were dying.

He questioned whether the infection was coming from cadavers. At the time, it apparently was not uncommon for medical students and doctors to go from an anatomy class — which included autopsies on cadavers — to the delivery room, sometimes without even washing their hands. In contrast, midwives did not perform autopsies so infection was much less.

To test his theory, Semmelweis ordered doctors and students at the hospital to adopt a handwashing procedure that included using a chlorine solution before delivering any babies. The chlorine removed any smell of the cadavers and, Semmelweis thought, any invisible particles that students or doctors may be carrying. He was right. The number of mothers who died from childbed fever dropped significantly.

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Semmelweis unfortunately never developed a theoretical justification for the drop in deaths or why the hand washing proved valuable. He made a breakthrough discovery, but either never felt it necessary to "prove" his theory with more research or perhaps did not have the capacity to do so. This, despite the encouragement of other doctors and colleagues who offered to help him get his theory and research published. Within a year of his discovery, Semmelweis was dropped from his position as assistant to Dr Klein and the hospital stopped enforcing the handwashing technique. Over a span of twenty years, tens of thousands of women throughout Europe died due to postpartum infection.

There is more to the tale which would take too long to go into, but includes the rather self-destructive nature of Semmelweis due to his own inner battle of feeling like an outsider, never feeling smart enough, and projecting his anger and insecurities on others. These behaviors became worse as he got older. Biographers say he possibly suffered from Alzheimer's or perhaps syphilis. At the same time, as is the case in many places, there was a polarization between the older doctors and the new students, between "We have always done it this way" and "Why can't we try something new?"

The older professors felt threatened by the questioning young students who were ready to think beyond what they were taught. There is the possibility that Klein felt threatened by Semmelweis' findings especially when historical documents show Semmelweis, a blustery, difficult, and outspoken person, accused colleagues of sitting on their hands (dirty as they were) while mothers were dropping dead one after the other. Semmelweis did publish a book in 1861, but allegedly had a nervous breakdown in 1865 and was coaxed into visiting an asylum by a colleague where he was detained against his will. Sadly, he was beaten by the guards and died two weeks later after his injuries got infected.

This story came from a book called *The Power of Collective Wisdom and the Trap of Collective Folly*. It is used to demonstrate how Will, an extraordinary impersonal force, drives evolution and the manifestation of things. Yet, due to ego and a lack of wisdom, that same Will can lose its force and dissipate, leaving one without an anchor. Aside from just one individual losing steam, the example shows how the collective or whole — which includes the mothers who died, the mothers who would potentially die, the children born to them, the families, and all the members of the medical field — were all victims because of ego and lack of wisdom.

This is not to blame one person or persons but to see how what is called "collective folly" can have catastrophic effects. Collective folly is, according to the book: "Lacking good sense or normal prudence and foresight, a continuum of behaviors ranging from personally foolish to criminality, evil, and depravity."

There is the saying that we know what we know at the time we know it. But often

we can use such statements to defend our lack of good judgment or even a type of laziness that keeps us "protected" from feeling accountable in circumstances where we feel we have no power. Power, according to the authors of the book, can be described as "the ability, strength, and capacity to bring about change."

We can often become caught in a situation where we ourselves have a clear idea of where we are headed, but those around us are either headed in a different direction or do not have clarity. The lack of union, cohesiveness, or unity causes infighting and competitiveness, leading us astray. We lose direction and drive. We also feel like we have lost our power — our ability to know, our strength to stay with what we know and not question it. This "knowing" in a deeper sense of the term, is insight. It comes from a place beyond the everyday mind.

What is interesting about this story is that it is a snapshot of situations we experience every day and, on a larger scale, worldwide. According to HPB, Divine Will is connected to Divine Intelligence, or Divine Mind, no differently than how human will is connected to human intellect, we being the microcosm of the macrocosm. The difficulty we have with our own will is our personal ego when it decides it wants to "play God", so to speak. Our ego is what tells us that we know better than others or know what is best, that we do not have to follow procedure, or that others must. It is the very rigidity and fixed mindedness that causes something wonderful and beneficial for others to become mired in conflict. There is a fine line between human will and ego and when will is taken over by ego it becomes desire of the most personal kind. When we are connected to our true will, it is said we can overcome almost anything. There is a power that lies deep within us that stands calm and strong under the most trying circumstances. Will as a steady force is also where our creativity comes from.

Connected to the intelligent forces around us, creativity is what provides us the insight to put together moments that can provide a remarkable outcome — just like Semmelweis' insight connecting the death of his mentor to the cadavers, and then to the dying mothers. It is a beautiful example of Will and Grace coming together to provide a remarkable moment in the history of medicine. The Will of Semmelweis researching things for three years to find answers and the Divine Grace that eventually provided the insight shows how Will and Grace seem to work in a wonderous way.

Semmelweis' story also displays how difficult things can become when Will turns to desire. Aside from wanting to help people, life in research can become incredibly competitive instead of cooperative. It is sad that this happens even today when, as a humanity, we are all on the same side. As we all know in Theosophy, what we do for one helps the whole, as we are one existence. The research of Semmelweis not only helped the women who survived childbirth once handwashing was put into effect, but it allowed

Louis Pasteur and Joseph Lister to jump-start their own research. It was Pasteur who was able to prove the theory of Semmelweis. (Grace again makes its entrance.)

HPB states in *Isis Unveiled* that our Will is magic when used correctly. Many of us are strangers to our own abilities. Desire tends to rule our lives more than Will. We become blind to the whole process that is taking place around us, feel we are separate from it, and begin looking outside ourselves for something that is "closer than our own breath".

When we begin to work with Will, we may find things begin to fall into place. Will not only brings new opportunities and resources our way when we work with it, it introduces us to an extraordinary vibrancy that makes all things new. There is a sense of equanimity and love of a purer nature. The connection to our own Will moves us into a space where we see where things are going astray and our action comes not from ego, but from a harmony that brings harmony to the whole, the beginning of **Collective Wisdom**. ✧

In the eyes of the "Masters" no one is ever "utterly condemned". As the lost jewel may be recovered from the very depth of the tank's mud, so can the most abandoned snatch themselves from the mire of sin, if only the precious Gem of Gems, the sparkling germ of the Supreme Soul, is developed. We must do *that* for each one of us, each *can* if we but *will* and *persevere*.

Koot Hoomi
Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, First Series (5th ed.),
by C. Jinarājadāsa

The Mayas — I

ALICE DIXON LE PLONGEON

THIS occasion is especially gratifying to us, for besides the pleasure and honour of addressing you, we have the happy certainty of speaking to those who are accustomed to looking beneath the surface of things, to those who rejoice in acquiring knowledge, and who will easily grasp the many facts that we must crowd into this hour's reading. This evening we cannot have the satisfaction of illustrating our subject and thus making clearer our remarks, but if future occasions offer, we have several hundreds of lantern slides ready.

You are aware that Mexico, Central America, and parts of South America are rich in antiquities. The field is indeed so vast and neglected, comparatively speaking, that an army of workers is needed there. One of the most interesting spots is certainly that peninsula which the Spanish invaders named Yucatán — now one of the Mexican States, in olden times the seat of a great empire — whose territory seems to have extended northwest as far as the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and southeast as far as the Isthmus of Darien [now Panamá]. It is a most interesting fact that the sculptors, in making statues of their monarchs, gave them a posture, as far as the human body could be made to assume it, resembling the contour of that territory, as may be seen by comparing a map with the statue portrayed in Dr [Augustus Le] Plongeon's book, *Sacred Mysteries*.

We are frequently asked *why* we made up our minds to study the ruins of Yucatan. Well, it was, in fact, a continuation of archaeological studies begun by the Doctor as early as 1862 in Peru. There he had reached certain conclusions, and it was in search of further corroboration that he went to Central America, after having also made a close study of old Spanish Manuscripts in the British Museum.

Arrived in Yucatan, we found there was an immense amount of work to be done, the greater part of it in dangerous places. A few words will make this clear. History tells us that of all the Americans, none so determinedly resisted the Spaniards as those of Yucatan, the Mayas, whose ancestors seemed to have been the most civilized of old American nations. Even at the time of the conquest the natives were far more refined than the Spaniards,

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Alice Dixon Le Plongeon (1851–1910) was an English photographer, archeologist, and author. She was interested in Theosophy and was one of the first people to excavate and study the ancient Maya sites of Chichen Itza and Uxmal, which she related to Atlantis. From *The Theosophical Siftings*, vol. 3.

who only succeeded in reducing them to slavery after twenty-five years of heroic resistance to cavalry, coat of mail, and firearms. Nor would the Mayas then have succumbed, had not the Spaniards found allies in tribes living on the northern coast of the peninsula, and also in a powerful party of Nahualts, at that time likewise in the country. There is no history more heroic and tragic than that of the Maya people during the last thousand years. After having conquered by force, the Spaniards treated the unhappy people with shameful cruelty and tyranny.

In 1847, the latest great uprisal of natives occurred. After a long and fearful struggle a few thousand freed themselves completely from the white man's control, and built their stronghold in the south-west part of the Peninsula. Not only do they still maintain their liberty, but they are a terror to the white man, and those Indians yet in their service. Their war cry is "Death to the white monkey!" They have destroyed cities, towns, and villages, driving those under Mexican authority to the northern and most arid part of the land. Unfortunately, many of the ancient ruins are on the territory of these hostile Indians, though the danger is becoming less every year; not only owing to railroads being built, but because the Indians are now carrying on a less active war, and are also decreasing in numbers. They are the miserable vestige of a once noble race!

The ruins that we first visited were, at that time, very much exposed. We had to sleep dressed as by day, only removing our boots, and our rifles had to be always close at hand. I need hardly tell you that in those forests I adopted a more convenient apparel than skirts, and I must confess that when obliged to resume these I felt much hampered. It would be a waste of precious time to now talk of our dangers, hardships, illness, hunger, and so on, but a few words must be said about our work.

We were truly amazed at the perfection of sculptures found in the old city of Chichen Itza, or "City of the Sages", and we heartily wished that it were in our power, not only to save from further decay, but to rebuild the edifices crumbling before us. That being out of the question, what was the next best thing? Surely to obtain what would enable us to make a *facsimile* of their measurements, photographs, moulds. For that we toiled.

Our Indian labourers could not understand why we wanted to measure pyramids and terraces, stairs, doorways, and walls; and they could not be trusted to hold the end of the measuring tape exactly where we desired, so we two had to do all that work alone, and some of the terraces were hundreds of feet long, cumbered by felled trees and stones of all shapes, beneath which venomous vipers lurked, while the tropical heat made us dizzy, and tiny wood ticks worked their way into our skin. Taking photographs was not much easier; though well versed in that art, we made about ten plates for every perfect one obtained. True, we wanted them *very* perfect. Many of the sculptures had to be photographed from the top of a ladder supported only by sticks on the edge

of a very steep and broken up terrace or pyramid.

The longest task was probably the mould-making, because we would not content ourselves with mere squeezes. The result of our work is all that could be wished. We can now build in any part of the world a Maya palace or temple which might be converted into a museum of American antiquities. This is what we should like to see realize . . . . We could even place within the walls, besides beautiful sculptures, a few fresco paintings, *facsimiles*, which we were happy enough to rescue from oblivion. Of these there are two tableaux varying in length from one to four feet, the figures being from six to nine inches high. This collection is the only specimen of ancient American paintings. They portray certain events in the history of a family that reigned there many centuries ago.

But while at work we were haunted by one desire. On many exterior walls there were sculptured inscriptions. While these remained complete enigmas, we were very much in the condition of persons looking at pictures in a book, but unable to read the text. Great mystery! Could we not penetrate it? If we could begin, others might come after to finish. First, in what language were the inscriptions? We knew that the Maya people were, and are, excessively conservative, to such an extent that this, and their hatred of the Spaniard, has made it impossible for the white man to impose his speech on the vanquished. To this day masters must address their servants in the beautiful Maya tongue if they would have their orders executed. Was it not then possible that this same language, a most perfect one in its construction, should be the one hidden in the mural inscriptions? Time and study brought an affirmative answer to this query.

But first a few words about that language, yet spoken by the people, not only of Yucatan, but as far south as Guatemala and Tabasco. It is a very old form of speech, and it affords simple and natural etymologies for names of places and tribes in Asia and Africa, as well as for those of divinities worshipped by Egyptians, Chaldees, and other civilized nations of antiquity, even for the names of the various parts of the Indian cosmogonic diagram called Sri-Santara. The grammatical forms and syntaxes of the Maya and Egyptian tongues are almost identical, while it is well known that the Egyptian language has no cognates in Asia or Africa; and, moreover, Dr Le Plongeon's discoveries have proved that the hieratic alphabets of the learned men of Egypt and Mayax (as Yucatan was anciently called) are almost identical.

The very word Maya must be familiar to all of you, since in India it means illusion, for which reason the Brahmins call the earth *Maya*. We find this word scattered over a great portion of the globe in India, Chaldea, Greece, Egypt, and even in modern times in Central Asia, Afghanistan, in the interior parts of Africa, and in tropic America as far back as Sonora. In one place, it is the name of god or goddess; in another, of hero or heroine; elsewhere,

of a caste or tribe; in a fourth, that of place or country.

The Rig Veda teaches us that Maya is the goddess by whose union with Brahma all things were created. In Greece, Maya is daughter of Atlas, mother of Hermes, the good mother Kubĕli, mother of the gods, whose worship has survived to our day in Spain, France, England, Germany, in the feast of the Maya, or May Queen. Did time allow, it could be shown that the word Maya is scattered over a broad extent of the earth; and everywhere in connection with wisdom, superior knowledge, and power. In Tahiti and other islands of the Pacific, the banana-tree is sacred, and is called Maya.

Even the Greek Alphabet, *i.e.*, the names of the letters, form a poem in Maya language, which reads as follows:

FREE TRANSLATION

ALPHA. Heavily break — *the* — waters
BETA. extending — *over the* — plains.
GAMMA. *They* — cover — *the* — land
DELTA. in low places where
EPZILON. *there are* — obstructions, shores form, and whirlpools —
ZETA. strike — the — earth
ETA. with water.
THETA. The water spreads
IOTA. *on* — all that lives and moves —
KAPPA. sediments give way.
LAMBDA. Submerged is — *the* — land
MU. *of* — Mu
Nl. the peaks — *only*
XI. appear above — *the water.*
OMIKRON. Whirlwinds blow round
Pl. by little and little,
RHO. until comes
ZIGMA. cold air. Before
TAU. where — *existed* — valleys,
UPZILON. *now*, abysses, frozen tanks — In circular places
PHI. clay — is — formed.
CHI. A mouth
PSl. opens; vapours
OMEGA. *then* — come forth — *and* — volcanic sediments.

With these few words about the Maya language we must return to the point whence we diverged — namely, the decipherment of inscriptions carved on the old walls. It began by Dr Le Plongeon one day finding that certain signs were exactly like those of old Egypt, which led him to think that others might also be. Nor was he disappointed, and by giving them the same value, he found that they resulted in words in the Maya language. A key to those mysterious hieroglyphs was indeed found! Beside stone inscriptions, we also have Maya Manuscripts — because a few of the books in use among the inhabitants of Yucatan at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards were saved from destruction; how, or by whom, is not known. The Spanish priests burnt all they could lay hands on.

The volumes that were saved found their way to European libraries. The text and illustrations are in colours on

parchment prepared from deerskin. The Mayas also made paper from the bark of the mulberry tree, by a process similar to that used by the Egyptians in preparing papyrus. Strange to say, Bishop Lunda, who ordered the burning of the books, kept a copy, made by himself, of certain alphabetical and other signs, but these alone would not suffice to read the books, while on the walls only two or three of those signs can be traced, such inscriptions being graved in hieratic characters.

At the time of the Nahualt invasion, about the sixth century of the Christian era, owing to many political troubles, the use and knowledge of the hieratic or sacred characters were lost. Then only a few antiquaries knew the meaning of the mural inscriptions. In time, no one was able to read them; and they became a sealed book, which modern antiquaries have heretofore not succeeded in bursting asunder. At the Lowell Institute in Boston, last March, Dr Le Plongeon, having on the screen pictures of sculptured *façades*, read the stones to his audience. Though it is a strict law of the Lowell Institute that no lecture shall exceed one hour's duration, that lecture did, and even the President failed to remind the lecturer that his time was up.

Not having it in our power this evening to show you any of the carved inscriptions, I can only say a few words about the general character of such writings. The name *Can*, that of a dynasty of kings, is found in many forms; and most of the inscriptions are records of certain deeds, or panegyrics of members of that family. We also find accounts of national catastrophies and other events. Of these inscriptions we have made moulds, and hope to fully interpret them later on. Many of the ornaments are in themselves descriptive of cosmogonic and religious conceptions, prominent features being the serpent form, and a conventional representation of the mammoth's face, embodying certain letters, giving its name. The walls, covered with elaborate carving, and brilliantly coloured, as they originally were, must have been very grand in effect.

Passing now from stones to books we find that the historian Landa gives this description: "They wrote their books on long sheets that they folded so as to form pages (like a fan), enclosing them between two boards elaborately ornamented. They wrote in columns on both sides of the page. This paper was made from the roots of a tree, and coated with a white varnish, on which it was easy to write." Do not these books recall the papyri found in Egyptian tombs? Many of the volumes were illustrated with designs and colours. Some pages contained text only, others were illustrated.

Cogolluds, another historian, tells us: "In those books were recorded the dates, the wars, the inundations, hurricanes, famines, and other events." Those volumes, in fact, contained not only the history of the Maya people, but of nations of a very distinct cast of features and colour with whom they entertained friendly relations, or against whom they waged war; also a record of geological and meteorological phenomena, and the art of medicine,

archaeological studies. It was dreadful to burn such books, but the fanatical priests only followed the example of Paul, who, in Ephesus, instigated the Christians to burn books that were valued at fifty thousand pieces of silver.

The four Maya books which have reached our hands are written in the characters of an alphabet, which seems to have been formulated after the invasion of the Nahualts, in the early centuries of the Christian era. The volume called "Troano MS" has been closely studied by Dr Le Plongeon, who hopes to fully translate it. It contains something of geology, of mythology, and of history. We there find that the Mayas believed in *elementals* and personified the forces of Nature.

One chapter is a most interesting account of the submersion of a great island called *Mu* in the Atlantic Ocean. It seems to have been the same island known to us as Atlantis. Again we must regret the want of pictures here tonight. However, though not able to show you sentence by sentence, I can give Dr Le Plongeon's translation of the paragraph describing the last scene of the terrible cataclysm. It is as follows:

> In the year 6 Kan, on the 11th muluc, in the month Zac, there occurred terrible earthquakes, which continued without interruption until the 13th Chuen. The country of the hills of mud, the land of *Mu*, was sacrificed; being twice up-heaved, it suddenly disappeared during the night, the basin being continually shaken by volcanic forces. Being confined, these caused the land to sink and rise several times, and in various places. At last the surface gave way and ten countries were torn asunder and scattered helter skelter. Unable to withstand the force of the seis-mic convulsions, they sank, with their 64 millions of inhabitants, 8,060 years before the writing of this book."

This would seem to be an account of the greatest of all deluges, which, the Egyptian priests told Solon, was recorded in their temples, as in those of Chaldea and India. The author of another Maya book, now known as "Codex Cortesianus". also wrote a lengthy description of the same cataclysm, agreeing with that in the Troano, which I have just had the pleasure of reading to you.

We have reason to believe that if circumstances permitted, we could bring to light several Maya volumes which have lain concealed since the early part of the Christian era, when the wise men hid them in a certain building to save them from being destroyed by Nahualt invaders. Such books would doubtless illumine the dim past, and it is our sincere hope that if we are not able to bring them to light, some other explorer, in no distant future, may attempt the task, and have his efforts crowned with success.

Setting aside literary treasures, there are many beautiful objects of art hidden among the ruins, safe for the present from mischievous hands. We ourselves have unearthed many pieces of sculpture, and have again carefully buried them because it was not in our power to convey them to a place of safekeeping. Our first excavations were made at the tomb of a

certain individual, whose name — Coh, or Chaacmol, that is,, Leopard — has since become famous through his statue, which we unearthed. It may interest you to hear a brief account of this, because it will make known to you how the Mayas disposed of their dead.

A study of the fresco paintings which I have mentioned, and of certain carved inscriptions, led us to seek in one spot for the resting place of the remains of an individual who, many centuries ago, played an important *role* in the history of that country. The once beautiful mausoleum had become an almost shapeless pile. Happily the corner stones were yet in place, and stairs could still be counted, leading to the summit, on the four sides of the quadrangular structure. Even the largest ornamental stones were in place, four at each corner; two having macaws sculptured on them, and two leopards. These were the totems, or figure-names of a famous warrior prince and his sister and wife, Princess Mo. There were many sculptured stones scattered over the ground, some representing skulls, others gigantic snake heads; of these, a few were still in place at the foot of the stairs.

Among the *débris* we found a body, in the round, a reclining leopard, with three holes in the back as the leopard in bas-relief also had. It was headless, indicating spear wounds, the cause of death, inflicted by a jealous brother, but nearby we found a human head, with the features of a dying man. With a faint hope that it might belong to the leopard we brought them in contact, and were rejoiced to find that the broken parts fitted into each other.

Here, then, in Yucatan, we had a veritable sphinx! Its original place had been on the top of the monument, where we still found the oblong stone on which the sphinx had rested. ✧

. . . From diffferent lands and cultures we hail,
But in unity, we never fail.
For in our hearts, we all agree,
To live in peace and harmony. . . .

Let us hold hands and make a stand,
Against hate and bigotry in all our lands.
For we are one, and in our unity,
We shall build a world of prosperity. . . .

Oscar Auliq-Ice

A Few Thoughts Along the Way

DAVID M. GROSSMAN

THOMAS Paine

"These are the times that try men's souls" is the first sentence of the first pamphlet in the series of essays named "The American Crisis" by Thomas Paine, published in December 1776. These acted as a kind of spark and ongoing inspiration that rekindled not only the morale but the vision of George Washington and his troops to continue the fight against the British to achieve American independence in what were then the American colonies. This eventually led to the expansion and unfoldment of what is now the United States of America, which incidentally will have its two hundred fiftieth anniversary next year.

What is it that "tries men's souls?" In the case of the colonists it was living up to the ideal of freedom for all people and the opportunity to carve out their own future. Soul is a word we use to refer to our core nature, who and what we essentially are as thinking, choosing, self-directing beings; the real person, the "I am I" we know ourselves to be throughout our lives. Our bodies grow and change, our thoughts and feelings fluctuate, our circumstances alter; yet we hold on to our sense of being.

According to Theosophy, it is those circumstances and events of life, objective and subjective, individual and collective, and our reactions to them that "try" us. To a great degree, it is this process that forms our character. We begin to identify with our so-called "successes and failures" as if they define who and what we are. It is this misidentification that blocks our true nature and limits our evolutionary trajectory, by obscuring our essential purpose in life. We get attached to our part in the play and lose our sense of real identity as the actor capable of playing many parts.

One of the main lessons presented in that gem of spiritual literature, the *Bhagavadgitā*, has to do with the concept of nonattachment. For it is attachment to that which is temporary or transitory that causes much of the pain and suffering that we experience in life, for the obvious reason that it will eventually, sooner or later, be taken from us, or to put it another way, we will see its transitory nature. This is not to say we should not act and par-

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ticipate in life and do things fully, but at the same time, we should not identify our value or sense of identity with those things. This is a difficult and sometimes painful task when we have invested thought, emotion, time and commitment to various things or feel strong bonds with family and friends. As far as bonds of love and connection with others are concerned, these are in their purer expressions an echo of the "One Life", transcending the particular and temporary forms and circumstances.

Mabel Collins

In the teachings from *Light on the Path*, by Mabel Collins, the relationship between our "permanent Self" and our impermanent instrument, sometimes referred to as the personality, is revealed: Pressure on the divine part of man reacts upon the animal part. As the silent soul awakes it makes the ordinary life of the man more purposeful, more vital, more real and more responsible.

It is the theosophical view that life does have a purpose, which is the unfoldment and expanding expression of our true essence, spiritually, mentally, and physically, by refining our instruments, reflecting the oneness and unity of the spiritual realm here on the material plane of duality in brotherly cooperation with all peoples. To use the Hermetic expression: "As above, so below." This is accomplished through a long series of reincarnations during the life of a universe as it passes through the stages of creation, preservation, and dissolution.

The trials of our lives come about through the process of the higher mind taming, refining, and transforming the undirected tendencies of the senses and the "me"-oriented desires of the *kāmic* nature. Another way to put it is, we are *mānasic* (self-conscious) beings in animal bodies and must take control of our lives, rather than be controlled by the physical and irrational tendencies. If we more clearly perceived our interconnection and interdependence with all living beings, we would treat the earth, our sustainer, with the care and respect necessary for our continuance here.

The Hopi people teach their children, "We are the custodians of the earth." If we felt the responsibility of that custodianship individually and collectively and applied that awareness in science, technology, industry, and political vision, the earth and many social ills would be healed in short order. In truth, "We are our brother's keeper."

This vision has been continuously cultivated within the original Theosophical Society and all subsequent theosophical organizations, reflected in its first object: "To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color." In order to achieve this, we must first see past the surface of things and realize that every color of the rainbow is an expression of the same bright light, the living expression of the ONE LIFE.

Ideally, our bodies are "temples of the soul," that is, the vehicles that we incarnate into periodically over a vast period of time. These bodies become better

instruments for the growth and fuller expression of our active spiritual natures. Theosophy proposes that, essentially, we have two parallel bodies, if you will, the physical and then what is termed the astral or electromagnetic design body of the physical. Every physical form has its astral counterpart. It is not only the pattern but also the real seat of the senses.

Drawing once again on *Light on the Path*, a treatise on treading the conscious spiritual path, Mabel Collins points out:

> Everyone who is not a dullard, or a man stupefied by some predominant vice, has guessed, or even perhaps discovered with some certainty, that there are subtle senses lying within the physical senses; . . . everything which is perceptible to the ordinary sight, has something even more important than itself hidden within it. . . .
>
> The whole world is animated and lit, down to its most material shapes, by a world within it. This inner world is called Astral by some people, and it is as good a word as any other, though it merely means starry; but the stars, as Locke pointed out, are luminous bodies which give light of themselves.

We too, have a self-illuminating inner nature directed through what we sometimes call the *buddhic* principle. When the mind, (*manas*) is illuminated by *buddhi* it is termed the higher mind, which in turn becomes the lens to focus the primal ray of the unknown, (*ātman*) what people call God, or the Absolute, the indefinable; and so it is *ātma-buddhi-manas* that we call the Higher Triad or spiritual Ego — the real man. If we combine this with what is referred to as the lower quaternary, the physical man, made of (1) the physical body, (2) *prana*, the life force, (3) the design or astral body and (4) *kāma* the desire nature; together with the higher triad, we have the seven-fold man. The lower four disperse at death. HPB points out in *The Key to Theosophy*, chapter VI, "There is but one real man, enduring through the cycle of life and immortal in essence, if not in form, and this is Manas, the Mind-man or embodied Consciousness."

According to Theosophy we are in what Indian philosophy refers to as the Kali Yuga (Dark Cycle) in which the trials of life are most difficult in general, in this densest (heaviest) period of our evolution, where the polarization between spirit and matter is most apparent and intense.

Although spirit and matter are what we might call the primal ingredients of intelligent life and are coeval in essence, still there is a battle going on in human consciousness between the opposites rather than a reciprocity that supports the whole. This is the real living metaphor of our lives expressed in the battle of the *Bhagavadgitā*, the struggle within our own natures.

While we live in a time of great intellectual prowess with all sorts of scientific and technological breakthroughs, we seem to be eclipsed spiritually if the inhumanity within our species is to be any kind of measurement.

Through past action over lifetimes,

we are enmeshed in a kind of karmic matrix of causation that places each of us in a maze that we must navigate through and free ourselves from, and see clearly (become) our true selves. Then the collective ideals of humanity can unfold and be achieved, such as brotherhood and selfless action.

Looking once again into the writings of Thomas Paine, he expresses in *Rights of Man* a holistic view of life when he says, "The World is my country, all humankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion."

This vision can be a guiding light that helps us navigate in this fast-moving Kali Yuga age.

It does not matter how slowly you go
as long as you do not stop.
Confucius

"Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last — far off — at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

"So runs my dream: but what am I?
An infant crying in the night:
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry."

TENNYSON (*In Memoriam*)

Rights and Responsibilities — Restoring the Balance

TIM WYATT

FOR decades people have become more and more shrill in asserting their rights — their human rights, personal rights, sexual rights, minority rights. People's rights have become paramount and claiming them an unassailable right in itself.

This has produced a deeply unbalanced equation, because despite what many people seem to assert, rights do not exist in isolation. They are not hermetically sealed in a bottle. They come imbued with a range of responsibilities. Rights and responsibilities are intimately entwined. But this tends to be ignored or forgotten. The word "rights" is used a hundred times more frequently than the word "responsibilities".

Like other noble virtues such as truth, kindness, duty, and morality, responsibility has far less prominence today than it did in bygone eras. And in a great many cases these days it is no more than an optional add-on.

It has been vitally important that human beings have made great strides in improving human rights over the past few decades. But only for some. Given the horrific abuses we see daily all over the world, many would question how successful these endeavours have been. We still practice slavery and mass exploi-tation remains rife.

Perhaps this drive for human rights was kick-started by United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his famous "Four Freedoms" speech in January 1941, where he said "everyone in the world' ought to enjoy freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Truthfully, this remains more an aspiration than a reality. Rights are es-sential to human progress — but so are responsibilities.

Responsibility should be central to everyone's lives — and that is very much the case. But for a great many others, it has fled the scene entirely because ethical behaviour individually and collectively has been progressively diminished. Ethics is certainly not what it used to be. If the Greek philosophers who invented it two and a half millennia ago viewed the modern world, they would be scratch-ing

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their beards in puzzlement, asking themselves where it had gone.

Being responsible begins on a personal level. First and foremost, we're responsible for our own conduct and behaviour and how this impacts not only ourselves but especially those around us, those with whom we work, live, and interact. All relationships are based on trust which rapidly breaks down when those involved stop behaving responsibly.

Sometimes individuals are quite happy to behave responsibly towards their families, work colleagues, or modern versions of the tribal clan based on geography, religion, politics, or some other common interest — but to no one else. Others are ostracised because they are not in the same gang or closed cabal.

Corporations are anxious to assure us that their products are sourced, manufactured, and delivered responsibly but in many cases this is a meaningless mantra — nothing more than a marketing ploy or sales tactic. They say it because they are expected to.

There are countless accounts of the world's mega-businesses, which generate trillions of dollars in revenue, going to any lengths to improve profitability — at whatever cost, be it the rape of landscapes, employing child labour, or engaging in other nefarious practices. Being responsible is ultimately irrelevant to multi-national companies unless it improves the bottom line. If it does not, forget it.

All around the world politics is increasingly regarded as a corrupt and cynical business where law-makers dream up legislation to suit themselves and not the people they are supposed to service. Few would accuse the bulk of politicians of any notion of being responsible to the electorate who voted them into office. This is the stark and dangerous consequence of responsibility as a fundamental requirement departing from public life. The people and the politicians become alienated from one another — another unravelling of trust.

Responsibility is, of course, not confined to the material realms. It is an essential and central feature of anyone's spiritual life. Spiritual development is all about being responsible not only to ourselves but to all inhabitants in all departments of Nature. Without an abiding sense of responsibility for everything we do, say, feel, and think, there is little likelihood of significant spiritual progress.

And yet how many people have even a degree of control over their thoughts, words, and deeds? Obviously, we are talking about a very broad spectrum here. At one end there will be paragons of virtue who are highly advanced in these matters and can control what they say, do, and possibly even feel. On the other, we find entirely irresponsible individuals with savage and barbarous tendencies who refuse to be responsible to anyone about anything.

It is often a long and weary road to appreciate that anything and everything we do has consequences — rewards and repercussions. When and if we do begin to understand that there is a universal

guiding principle to correct the many flaws in human conduct — the mighty Law of Karma — we may eventually be able to start modifying the way we deal with people and situations in our everyday lives. Naturally, none of this happens overnight.

If we appreciate the all-encompassing and inescapable effects of this unavoidable law of cause and effect — in this and our next lives — we realise the simple truth that it is our duty and indeed destiny (as well as in our self-interest) to behave responsibly. If we refuse to do that, we effectively relinquish any control we may have gained over our own development. This universal principle will kick in whether we like it or not.

This harmonising law, designed to restore balance where it has been disrupted, shapes the world and its occupants. It provides an essential continuum for human evolution both individually and collectively.

We should appreciate that if we are having a difficult and demanding life then ultimately it is down to how we behaved during previous incarnations. Invariably, negative karma, or a necessary lesson, will be the direct result of lapses in responsibility in past lives. And vice versa.

It is also important that we realise that every action we take, every decision we make, every word we speak, and every thought and emotion we experience are effectively forming the bedrock of our next life. Of course, no one is perfect, otherwise they would still not be occupying the human kingdom, but be in some loftier realm somewhere. But there is no reason for us not to strive for higher standards for both ourselves and the wider world. When you choose to be in charge of your own destiny you are obliged to be responsible, because it is your own future you are creating.

However, the dismal truth is that responsibility has become another victim of an increasingly aggressive and assertive egocentric "me-me-me" culture where the interest of the individual is always paramount and only the self matters. This is a world largely devoid of spiritual aspirations because of a widespread ignorance of the existence of anything remotely spiritual in the first place.

Twenty centuries of Christianity's mantras urging people to "love thy neighbour" and "put others first" appear to have lost much of their resonance in those countries where it still predominates. The similar edicts of other religions to act responsibly to others also no longer have the same traction they once did. Like so many other virtues elaborated earlier, responsibility is increasingly regarded as a redundant relic of bygone ages.

Responsibility along with duty, morality, truth, and kindness were the building blocks of all civilizations worth their name. The history books teach us that whenever these values are abandoned or degraded, civilizations begin a short or long process of decay and dissolution. Therefore, responsibility is crucial for humanity's survival and future development. This is why we do our best to impart it as core

behaviour to young children. And if we don't we should. To what extent we succeed is arguable. We know it is vital to teach a child that it is not the centre of its own universe but a constituent part of a wider cosmos.

Arguably, over the past centuries, humanity has matured and grown up a little. Its intelligence and technical prowess have certainly increased momentously. Some argue that it has undergone a major spiritual uplift in recent times. Others deny this is the case and assert that if it does happen, it will be very far in the future.

Spiritual uplift or not, it is true to say that many members of the human race remain child-like in their attitudes and behaviour. More advanced individuals may have graduated to the level of boisterous teenagers. It may sound controversial but there are in fact very few adults on this planet at the moment.

Adults appreciate wisdom more than children. But the world remains a largely infantilised place run not by wise adults but by often arrogant and ignorant juveniles who have yet to wise up to notions of noble values — and a world beyond the lower self. ✧

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Let thy soul lend its ear to every cry of pain
like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun.
Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain
before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye.
But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart,
and there remain, nor ever brush it off,
until the pain that caused it is removed.
'Tis from the bud of renunciation of the self,
that springeth the sweet fruit of final liberation.

H. P. Blavatsky
The Voice of the Silence

Exploring Theosophy: The Path to Self-Realization

SWAMI PRANAVANANDA PURI

THEOSOPHY, with its profound insights and universal wisdom, offers an invitation to embark on an inner journey — a journey that seeks to answer the age-old question, "Who am I?" At its core, Theosophy is a quest for self-realization, an exploration of the spiritual dimensions of human existence, and an endeavour to uncover the divine essence within each individual.

The term Theosophy is derived from the Greek words "theos" (God) and "sophia" (wisdom), signifying a pursuit of divine wisdom. Unlike traditional religions, Theosophy is not confined to dogma or rigid doctrines. Instead, it draws upon the spiritual teachings of various religious traditions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and others, to form a comprehensive understanding of the mysteries of life and the universe.

Universal Brotherhood and Interconnectedness

One of the foundational principles of Theosophy is the idea of universal brotherhood. This principle asserts that all living beings are interconnected and that there exists a fundamental unity underlying all of creation. This interconnectedness implies that the well-being of one is intrinsically linked to the well-being of all, fostering a sense of compassion, empathy, and responsibility towards others.

Theosophists believe that by recognizing and embracing this interconnectedness, individuals can transcend the barriers of race, religion, nationality, and social status. This realization of universal brotherhood is not merely an intellectual exercise but a transformative experience that reshapes one's perception of self and others. It encourages individuals to act with kindness and contribute positively to the world.

The Quest for Self-Realization

Central to Theosophy is the quest for self-realization. This journey involves delving deep into one's consciousness to uncover the true nature of the self. Theosophy teaches that the self is not merely the physical body or the mind but an eternal, divine essence that transcends the material world. This essence, often

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referred to as the Higher Self or Ātman, is believed to be a spark of the Divine, connected to the ultimate reality, or Brahman.

The process of self-realization involves a gradual awakening to this inner divinity. Through meditation, contemplation, and self-inquiry, individuals can peel away the layers of ego, illusion, and ignorance that obscure their true nature. This awakening is not a sudden epiphany but a continuous, evolving process of inner growth and transformation.

Karma and Reincarnation

Theosophy also delves into the concepts of karma and reincarnation, offering a holistic view of the human experience. Karma, the law of cause and effect, suggests that every action, thought, and intention generates consequences that shape one's destiny. This law operates across lifetimes, implying that the present circumstances are influenced by past actions, and current actions will shape future experiences.

Reincarnation, the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, is viewed as a mechanism through which the soul evolves and learns. Each lifetime offers opportunities for growth, learning, and the resolution of karmic patterns. Theosophy teaches that through understanding and transcending karma, individuals can break free from the cycle of reincarnation and attain spiritual liberation.

Harmonizing Science, Religion, and Philosophy

One of the unique aspects of Theosophy is its endeavor to harmonize science, religion, and philosophy. Theosophists believe that these three domains, often seen as distinct or even conflicting, can be integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of reality. Theosophy encourages an open-minded exploration of scientific discoveries, religious teachings, and philosophical insights, recognizing that each offers valuable perspectives on the nature of existence.

This holistic approach appeals to individuals who seek a deeper understanding that goes beyond the materialistic worldview of modern science and the dogmatic interpretations of religious institutions. It invites seekers to explore the spiritual dimensions of life and to discover the underlying principles that govern both the seen and unseen aspects of reality.

The Role of H. P. Blavatsky

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, a key figure in the modern theosophical movement, co-founded the Theosophical Society in 1875. Blavatsky's writings, particularly *The Secret Doctrine* and *Isis Unveiled*, have been instrumental in shaping theosophical thought. Her teachings emphasize the existence of an ancient wisdom tradition that underlies all religions and the potential for individuals to access this wisdom through spiritual practice.

Blavatsky's work has inspired countless individuals on their spiritual journeys, offering a path that transcends conventional religious boundaries and encourages a direct, personal exploration of the divine. Her emphasis on self-transformation, the pursuit of truth, and

the cultivation of virtues such as compassion, wisdom, and selflessness continues to resonate with theosophists today.

Practical Applications of Theosophy

Theosophy is not merely a theoretical framework but a practical guide to living a meaningful and fulfilling life. It offers insights and practices that can be applied in daily life to foster personal growth and spiritual development. Here are a few practical applications of theosophical teachings:

1. Meditation and Contemplation: Regular meditation and contemplation are essential practices in Theosophy. These practices help individuals quiet the mind, deepen their awareness, and connect with their Higher Self. Meditation provides a space for introspection and self-inquiry, facilitating the process of self-realization.

2. Service and Compassion: The principle of universal brotherhood encourages theosophists to engage in acts of service and compassion. By helping others and contributing to the well-being of the community, individuals can manifest the interconnectedness of all life and create positive karma.

3. Ethical Living: Theosophy emphasizes the importance of ethical living and the cultivation of virtues such as honesty, kindness, and integrity. By aligning their actions with these principles, individuals can create harmony within themselves and in their interactions with others.

4. Study and Reflection: Theosophy encourages the study of spiritual texts, philosophical writings, and scientific discoveries. By reflecting on these teachings and integrating them into one's understanding, individuals can gain deeper insights into the nature of reality and the self.

5. Personal Transformation: Theosophy teaches that personal transformation is the key to spiritual growth. This transformation involves recognizing and transcending negative patterns, embracing positive qualities, and striving for self-improvement. Through this process, individuals can align themselves with their higher purpose and achieve self-realization.

Conclusion

Theosophy offers a profound and transformative path to self-realization. By exploring the interconnectedness of all life, understanding the laws of karma and reincarnation, and harmonizing science, religion, and philosophy, individuals can uncover the divine essence within themselves and attain spiritual enlightenment. Theosophy invites seekers to embark on a journey of inner discovery, to recognize their true nature, and to live in harmony with the divine and the natural world.

In essence, Theosophy is a journey of wisdom, compassion, and self-transformation. It encourages individuals to seek the truth, to embrace the unity of all life, and to realize their highest potential. By becoming a Theosophist, one can embark on a path of profound spiritual growth and contribute positively to the world. ✧

Nature's Behavior: Reflection of Our Mental Attitude

S. RAMKUMAR

THE world operates on the basis of cause and effect, simply termed as the Laws of Causation. They are:

1. An effect cannot be without a cause.
2. An effect is the cause itself in a different form.
3. From an effect, if the cause is removed, nothing remains.

If one could live in complete awareness of these laws, further learning could be stopped!

Man's technological advancement has done enormous good to humankind. Distances have shrunk by the invention of airplanes, automobiles, communication across time zones in an instant, the latest medicines that can cure anything from common cold to cancer, modern equipment in farming to improve efficiency, the world of computers, and many breakthroughs in science and technology. All these have improved the standard of living and life expectancy. However, in this competitive world the quality of life has deteriorated. Desires to possess the many things available in this world have increased, not because we need them but because of family, social and status pressures.

There are a lot of forces which we think we can control but there are a zillion forces that we are not aware of that are also acting based on the laws of causation. It is a universal law that when our behavior is perfect, Nature shall also behave perfectly. The recent El Niño, the devastating floods, the abnormal climate change, all are due to deforestation, soil erosion, constructing towns and villages on lakes and water bodies, and so on. The earth is hotter by two-degrees Fahrenheit since the late 1800s. Heat is trapped at the surface of the earth because of greenhouse gases, thereby making the earth hotter, and so on. All these are testimony to the aftermath of the actions of man's ego and selfish desires.

Man alone disobeys natural laws and he alone suffers in this world. There is no suffering for plants or animals or birds. They all implicitly obey the laws of instincts and impulses. Man alone does not obey; he asks, "Why should I obey the law?" As a result, he creates all the

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sorrows in the world. The human signature is there in all the sorrows of this world. They are all man-made. The disharmony is created because of our ego and selfish desires.

People start living on the instincts and impulses of the mind, desiring everything in the world outside, wanting to acquire, embrace, indulge, and enjoy. Individual control and moderation alone can bring peace on oneself and to the world. This is the conclusion arrived at by the great thinkers of the past in all scriptures, about the cause for the sorrows in the world outside. It is the imperfections or the disturbances of our own mind which causes disturbances in the world outside.

Mighty phenomenal forces are called Devas. They are different types of celestial beings. Some are called Varuna, the waters; Vayu, the air; Agni, the fire; Indra, the rains. Each is a phenomenal force. They have been given such names in the olden days and considered as gods. The puny human beings have no control over the Devas.

When we cherish the other people in the world with the spirit of cooperation and coordination, when we change the style of life, sinking our differences and together come and work in the world outside, then the Devas or the mighty phenomenal forces will cherish you. This is a Universal law told in the Scriptures. When our behavior is perfect, Nature shall behave perfectly. When we are crazy mad, Nature, which is nothing but our behavior's true reflection, also gets crazy mad!!

We complain that Nature is so erratic, it is getting hotter in summer, it is very cold in winter, rains occur during odd seasons, coastal areas are getting inundated, and the like, not knowing that we ourselves are the cause for these predicaments! If we change, the actions of the phenomenal forces will also change. Nature reflects man and his behavior. We can invoke Nature by living a beautiful, harmonious life — with love and kindness, sinking our differences, living with tolerance, compassion, mercy for others, and so on.

Nature will change its mood in reciprocation to our mental attitude. When we become a healthy person, our reflection in the mirror shows a healthy person. Nature's behavior is a reflection of our mental attitude throughout life. ✧

The world is you, and you are the world. Realizing that fundamentally, deeply, not romantically, not intellectually, but actually, then we see that our problem is a global problem. It is not my problem or your particular problem, it is a human problem. . . . In oneself lies the whole world and, if you know how to look and learn, the door is there and the key is in your hand. Nobody on earth can give you either the key or the door to open, except yourself.

Jiddu Krishnamurti

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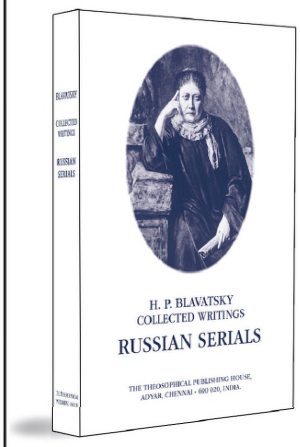
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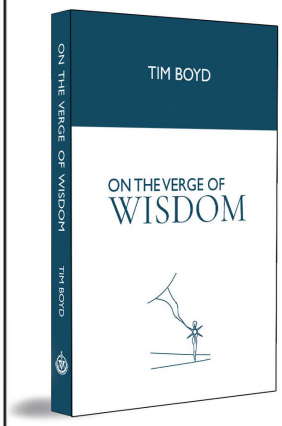
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