

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### THE ENIGMA OF H.P.B.

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Martyrdom is pleasant to look at and criticize, but harder to suffer. There never was a woman more unjustly abused than H.B.

—MAHATMA M.

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

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THOUGH years have gone by since the passing of H.P.B. on May 8, 1891, her appeal to the thoughtful portion of the world is still strong—in spite of her enemies and detractors. The reason for this appeal lies in no small measure in the synthetic nature of her philosophy. There are no gaps in her Message, no flaws or inconsistencies, no sweeping, unsubstantiated statements. Her Teaching has withstood the searching analysis and the critical probing of some of the best minds of the last century and of ours, and the open-minded and dispassionate cannot but admit that it is above censure. Attacks on the Theosophical Movement that H.P.B. launched have generally if not always centred round personalities, including her own, rarely round her Teaching. Each one who contacts that Teaching inevitably judges it from the standpoint of his own knowledge, experience and consciousness, based on what he has already learnt; for the intuitive, those who have cultivated the faculty of reading not only between the lines but within the words, all parts of the Philosophy, when put into place, as in a jigsaw puzzle, go to make a perfect Whole. There is nothing left out.

Her mission it was to demonstrate the synthesis of religion, science and philosophy. Her Message was for all. To the religiously inclined she brought the tidings of freedom of thought and offered the light of knowledge to dispel the lurking doubts begotten of blind ignorance and blind opinion, and to reveal the pettiness of separative creeds and the grandeur of true Religion. To men of science she offered new vistas of knowledge and pointed out that matter was not divorced from spirit and that man, the microcosm, and God, the Macrocosm, were indissolubly linked. Just as she divested religion of superstition, so she denied to science the right to dogmatize. She told the arrogant scientists of the 19th century that greater knowledge than theirs had built mightier civilizations in ages gone by, of which they knew nought. And to philosophers she showed that the ancient philosophies of Asia offered better solutions to humanity's problems, individual or collective, than modern Western ones could offer, and that philosophy was not merely a speculative and intellectual system of knowledge but also had its practical and ethical aspects. Practical ethics and ethical practice was her message to the philosophers of our era.

Many have speculated on the source of her knowledge and inspiration. What made her able to discourse illuminatingly and to write voluminous works on subjects that stagger the imagination by their vastness and profundity? The years prior to the launching of her Movement in 1875 contain the clue. She travelled all over the world for 20 long years, when modern means of rapid transport were unknown—not sightseeing, but acquiring knowledge. It was a veritable Pilgrimage in quest of knowledge of the World Invisible. They were years of preparation during which observations were made and material was gathered for the books she was to write. She saw both the dark and the light sides of Nature, with discernment noted the evils of black and the beneficence of White Magic, and learnt, sitting at the feet of Those she called Masters, how to serve the cause of human brotherhood by the right method of changing the Manas and the Buddhi of the race.

Given below are a few selected extracts from her writings, which

convey some idea of the source of her Occult Knowledge:

“When, years ago, we first travelled over the East, exploring the penetralia of its deserted sanctuaries, two saddening and ever-recurring questions oppressed our thoughts: *Where, WHO, WHAT is GOD? Who ever saw the IMMORTAL SPIRIT of man, so as to be able to assure himself of man's immortality?*

“It was while most anxious to solve these perplexing problems that we came into contact with certain men, endowed with such mysterious powers and such profound knowledge that we may truly designate them as the sages of the Orient. To their instructions we lent a ready ear. They showed us that by combining science with religion, the existence of God and the immortality of man's spirit may be demonstrated like a problem of Euclid....In our studies, mysteries were shown to be no mysteries. Names and places that to the Western mind have only a significance derived from Eastern fable, were shown to be realities. Reverently we stepped in spirit within the temple of Isis; to lift aside the veil of ‘the one that is and was and shall be’ at Saïs; to look through the rent curtain of the Sanctum Sanctorum at Jerusalem; and even to interrogate within the crypts which once existed beneath the sacred edifice, the mysterious Bath-Kol. The *Filia Vocis*—the daughter of the divine voice—responded from the mercy-seat within the veil, and science, theology, every human hypothesis and conception born of imperfect knowledge, lost forever their authoritative character in our sight. The one living God had spoken through His oracle—man, and we were satisfied. Such knowledge is priceless; and it has been hidden only from those who overlooked it, derided it, or denied its existence.” (*Isis Unveiled*, I, vi-vii)

“Many years of wandering among ‘heathen’ and ‘Christian’ magicians, occultists, mesmerizers and the *tutti quanti* of white and black art, ought to be sufficient, we think, to give us a certain right to feel competent to take a practical view of this doubted and very complicated question. We have associated with the fakirs, the

holy men of India, and seen them when in intercourse with the *Pitris*. We have watched the proceedings and *modus operandi* of the howling and dancing dervishes; held friendly communications with the marabouts of European and Asiatic Turkey; and the serpent-charmers of Damascus and Benares have but few secrets that we have not had the fortune to study. Therefore, when scientists who have never had an opportunity of living among these oriental jugglers and can judge at the best but superficially, tell us that there is naught in their performances but mere tricks of prestidigitation, we cannot help feeling a profound regret for such hasty conclusions. That such pretentious claims should be made to a thorough analysis of the powers of nature, and at the same time such unpardonable neglect displayed of questions of purely physiological and psychological character, and astounding phenomena rejected without either examination or appeal, is an exhibition of inconsistency, strongly savouring of timidity, if not of moral obliquity." (*Ibid.*, I, 42-43)

"What we have said in the introductory chapter and elsewhere, of mediums and the tendency of their mediumship, is not based upon conjecture, but upon actual experience and observation. There is scarcely one phase of mediumship, of either kind, that we have not seen exemplified during the past twenty-five years, in various countries. India, Thibet, Borneo, Siam, Egypt, Asia Minor, America (North and South) and other parts of the world, have each displayed to us its peculiar phase of mediumistic phenomena and magical power. Our varied experience has taught us two important truths, *viz.*: that for the exercise of the latter, personal purity and the exercise of a trained and indomitable will-power are indispensable; and that spiritualists can never assure themselves of the genuineness of mediumistic manifestations, unless they occur in the light and under such reasonable test conditions as would make an attempted fraud instantly noticed." (*Ibid.*, I, 320)

"Tell me, dear one," Madame Blavatsky asked her aunt, Madame

Fadéef, in a letter written about 1875 or 1876, when she was writing *Isis Unveiled*, "do you take any interest in physiologico-psychological mysteries? Here is one for you which is well qualified to astonish any physiologist: in our Society there are a few exceedingly learned members—for instance, Professor Wilder, one of the first archaeologists and Orientalists in the United States, and all these people come to me to be taught, and swear that I know all kinds of Eastern languages and sciences, positive as well as abstract, much better than themselves. That's a fact! And it's as bad to run up against a fact as against a pitchfork. So then tell me: how could it have happened that I, whose learning was so awfully lame up to the age of forty, have suddenly become a phenomenon of learning in the eyes of people who are really learned? This fact is an impenetrable mystery of Nature. I—a psychological problem, an enigma for future generations, a Sphinx! Just fancy that I, who have never in my life studied anything and possess nothing but the most superficial smattering of general information; I, who never had the slightest idea about physics or chemistry or zoology, or anything else—have now suddenly become able to write whole dissertations about them. I enter into discussions with men of science, into disputes out of which I often emerge triumphant. . . . It's not a joke; I am perfectly serious; I am really frightened because I do not understand how it all happens. It is true that for nearly three years past I have been studying night and day, reading and thinking. But whatever I happen to read, it all seems familiar to me. . . . I find mistakes in the most learned articles, and in lectures by Tyndall, Herbert Spencer, Huxley, and others. If some archaeologist happens to call on me, on taking leave he is certain to assure me that I have made clear to him the meaning of various monuments, and pointed out things to him of which he had never dreamed. All the symbols of antiquity, and their secret meaning, come into my head and stand there before my eyes as soon as the conversation touches on them." (*The Path*, December 1894)

And in a letter to her sister, Madame Vera Jelihovsky, she wrote:

“Just about this time I have begun to feel a very strange duality. Several times a day I feel that besides me there is someone else, quite separable from me, present in my body. I never lose the consciousness of my own personality; what I feel is as if I were keeping silent and the other one—the lodger who is in me—were speaking with my tongue. For instance, I know that I have never been in the places which are described by my ‘other me,’ but this other one—the second me—does not lie when he tells about places and things unknown to me, because he has actually seen them and knows them well. I have given it up; let my fate conduct me at its own sweet will; and besides, what am I to do? It would be perfectly ridiculous if I were to deny the possession of knowledge avowed by my No.2, giving occasion to the people around me to imagine that I keep them in the dark for modesty's sake. In the night, when I am alone in my bed, the whole life of my No.2 passes before my eyes, and I do not see myself at all, but quite a different person—different in race and different in feelings. But what's the use of talking about it? It's enough to drive one mad. I try to throw myself into the part and to forget the strangeness of my situation. This is no mediumship, and by no means an impure power; for that, it has too strong an ascendancy over us all, leading us into better ways. No devil would act like that. ‘Spirits,’ maybe? But if it comes to that, my ancient ‘spooks’ dare not approach me any more. It's enough for me to enter the room where a séance is being held to stop all kinds of phenomena at once, especially materializations. Ah no, this is altogether of a higher order! But phenomena of another sort take place more and more frequently under the direction of my No.2.” (*The Path*, December 1894)

In another letter to her sister she wrote:

“Well, Vera, whether you believe me or not, something miraculous is happening to me. You cannot imagine in what a charmed world of pictures and visions I live. I am writing *Isis*; not writing, rather copying out and drawing that which She personally shows to me. Upon my word, sometimes it seems to me that the

ancient Goddess of Beauty in person leads me through all the countries of past centuries which I have to describe. I sit with my eyes open and to all appearances see and hear everything real and actual around me, and yet at the same time I see and hear that which I write. I feel short of breath; I am afraid to make the slightest movement for fear the spell might be broken. Slowly century after century, image after image, float out of the distance and pass before me as if in a magic panorama; and meanwhile I put them together in my mind, fitting in epochs and dates, and know *for sure* that there can be *no mistake*. Races and nations, countries and cities, which have for long disappeared in the darkness of the prehistoric past, emerge and then vanish, giving place to others; and then I am told the consecutive dates. Hoary antiquity makes way for historical periods; myths are explained to me with events and people who have really existed, and every event which is at all remarkable, every newly-turned page of this many-coloured book of life, impresses itself on my brain with photographic exactitude. My own reckonings and calculations appear to me later on as separate coloured pieces of different shapes in the game which is called *casse-tête* (puzzles). I gather them together and try to match them one after the other, and at the end there always comes out a geometrical whole....Most assuredly it is not I who do it all, but my Ego, the highest principle which lives in me. And even this with the help of my Guru and teacher who helps me in everything. If I happen to forget something I have just to address him, or another of the same kind, in my thought, and what I have forgotten rises once more before my eyes—sometimes whole tables of numbers passing before me, long inventories of events. They remember everything. They know everything. Without them, from whence could I gather my knowledge?” (*The Path*, January 1895)

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ALTRUISM is like a muscle, it must be used or it atrophies.

—NORMAN COUSINS

## THE ART OF SACRIFICE

ANCIENT mystical philosophies speak of the manifestation of the Universe as an act of sacrifice. The incarnated existence of a human being is also said to be an act of sacrifice. But the word *yajna* or sacrifice is now misconstrued. Originally, sacrifice was a joyous, creative act, and its performance was undertaken by all when the throb of the heart was pure and spiritual. Divine Wisdom, Theo-Sophia, was known to and practised by large numbers of people in ancient times, when *Deva-Rishis*, Divine Sages, walked the earth and all followed the Religion of Life. The great sacrifices were acts of pure magic and there was no loss of life, no spilling of blood, in those ancient days. Later, when knowledge weakened and passion obscured the spiritual vision, and the “third eye” which was once in function disappeared, the rites of sacrifice became outer rites of religion instead of inner creative processes.

Time was when people sacrificed the animals within themselves—the bull of passion, the lamb of ignorance, etc. Later, when knowledge was disappearing, dramas of sacrifice were instituted by the Sages, but in them too there was no blood-spilling. These dramas were symbolic representations. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, for instance, the drama of horse-sacrifice, *Ashva-medha*, is given as a story of Creation; but we shall not get the real meaning, nor the spiritual atmosphere, from the unimpressive translations of Western Orientalists. Still later, priests took advantage of the credulity of the people and symbolic dramas and poetic personifications were taken as concrete, material facts, and animal, and even human, sacrifices came to be practised. Lord Krishna tried to restore the purity of sacrifice; in the *Gita*, he speaks of *yajna*, *tapas* and *dana*—sacrifice, austerity and charity; there is no mention of animal-killing. What sacrifices does Krishna advocate?—a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water to be given with a pure heart.

Again, the great Buddha fought the ghastly religious rite of animal sacrifice. Since his day, however, India continues to be

disfigured and polluted by animal-sacrifices. Human sacrifice prevailed when Muhammed, the Prophet of Arabia, was preaching, and it was one of the glorious acts of his life that he succeeded in abolishing it.

The word sacrifice was thus degraded and came to mean making an offering to propitiate cruel, angry and unrighteous gods or god. Our civilization has inherited the implications of that word. Even today, when we use the word “sacrifice” we mean giving up something for the sake of someone, and it always implies a loss to the sacrificer. There is both self-righteousness and regret implied when a person says, “I had to make that sacrifice.” Theosophy holds forth the old concept and endeavours to revive the real significance of the words “sacrifice” and “service,” which made the ancient civilizations both spiritual and glorious.

Theosophy regards the life of sacrifice and service as of supreme importance. Through its practical moral philosophy we learn the real meaning of what sacrifice and service imply. Sacrifice means, according to Theosophy, an acknowledgement, and therefore an observance, of the great law of interdependence in Nature. The whole of Nature is bound together; the distant stars are bound to our tiny earth by rays of light; the infinitesimal particles of matter, protons, electrons, etc., are bound together by the action of the centripetal and centrifugal forces. Likewise, human beings are bound together by blood, by patriotism, by philanthropy. Again, the human kingdom is dependent on the other kingdoms; and in turn animals, vegetables, minerals need humans and are bound to them. Still further, the visible universe is linked up to the invisible universe. This interdependence which binds the atom to the cosmos makes the great rhythm of life. In this harmony or rhythm, man plays a very important role. What is sacrifice, then? It is that expression of the law of interdependence by which one unit, one atom, one cell, one man, maintains the harmony by serving all other atoms and cells and men. Expression of sacrifice is everywhere visible. The vegetable kingdom offers itself as a sacrifice to the human. Everywhere in Nature one form of life

sustains and maintains other forms of life. When we contemplate on this stupendous giving and receiving that is taking place everywhere, our hearts are awakened, though our heads fail to comprehend and to understand. Often when the reasoning mind of the philosopher fails, the intuitive heart of the poet succeeds and perceives.

Theosophy teaches that while the whole universe is sustained by sacrifices, this action is mechanical and automatic till we come to the human stage. This is a living universe; there is no dead matter and Spirit is present everywhere. Divine Mind, called in the Upanishads *Mahat*, works in all the kingdoms of Nature; consciousness and intelligence are everywhere, but in the human kingdom that consciousness is aware of itself, is self-conscious. The human intelligence has a power which other intelligences in Nature do not possess. Therefore the aspect of sacrifice belonging to the great law of interdependence that functions in the human kingdom is different; it may be called a superior aspect, inasmuch as man wielding the law of sacrifice can create in innumerable ways, and help Nature also in innumerable ways.

On the other hand, because man is a self-conscious intelligence he possesses free-will; his will is free to move in whatever direction he himself determines. This is a terrific and terrifying power, because it is through this power of free-will that man can and does go wrong, make mistakes and commit sins. Man can and does disturb the great rhythm of life. He violates the law of interdependence in two ways: first, by his acts of commission, by his separative, egotistic and selfish ways; second, by his acts of omission, by not performing acts of sacrifice, by being inactive in upholding the purity and integrity of the rhythm of life. When a person is selfish, proud, angry, lustful, greedy, he spoils the rhythm of life and we say he has blundered, he has sinned. Also, when he is not actively engaged in creative love and compassion, charity for the poor, help for the dependent, reverence for those on whom he depends, he is omitting to perform his duties. He who does not perform sacrifices so that through the law of interdependence the

rhythm and harmony of life is maintained, is called a “thief” in the *Gita*, because he robs the universe of many things without due acknowledgement. And because he will not recognize his own debts to Mother Nature, he goes down further and, developing evil tendencies, commits offences.

This is an important doctrine. *The Voice of the Silence* says: “Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin.” If we do not show mercy, we are apt to become unmerciful. If we are not actively good, we shall move, very soon, in the direction of evil. As Ruskin said: “He who is not *actively* kind is cruel.” It is not sufficient to desist from cruelty; not to be cruel is a negative state; Nature ever demands for her success a positive state. One must be *actively* kind—do kindness, speak kindness, and above all think kindness. Man cannot remain a passive creature; when he does not proceed towards good, he recedes and goes towards evil. Therefore we are taught to be ever active in good. The sacrifices we make are duties to be performed. We are not obliging anyone in sacrificing our wealth or offering our knowledge. Sacrifice is a duty. Acts of sacrifice are acts of duty.

The *Gita* names many kinds of sacrifices, but it regards the sacrifice of knowledge, *i.e.*, knowledge offered as sacrifice, as the highest. Krishna says: “O harasser of thy foes, the sacrifice through spiritual knowledge (*Jnana-Yagna*) is superior to sacrifice made with material things” (IV, 33). All wealth, and all that wealth can buy, offered as sacrifice is recognized, but sacrifice of spiritual knowledge is regarded as superior. In the seventh chapter Krishna says that the afflicted, the searchers for truth, those who desire possessions, and the wise worship him, but the one who possesses spiritual knowledge is especially dear to him. This is why Theosophy, recognizing and understanding the real meaning of sacrifice, prefers the spreading of spiritual ideas and ideals, the dissemination of soul-science, and the promulgation of thoughts which point out the right way of life. We shall understand better why sacrifice of knowledge is the highest of sacrifices when we see that without spiritual knowledge people go wrong; even good

men and women commit errors.

The Theosophical interpretation of the law of sacrifice as an important aspect of the law of interdependence gives us an intelligent basis for the ritual of life. Life is a sacred rite, a holy ritual. From birth to death, human existence is a drama full of meaning, and every act and every scene of that drama is a sacramental rite. This conception no longer exists. Today, men and women influenced by materialistic science look upon the universe as devoid of spirit and are inclined to live a sense-existence which makes a human lower than a beast. And how can we blame them? Nowadays religion means ceremonies performed at the temple or the church by the priests! But in the remnants of old religions—in scripture-texts as in ceremonial fragments—there are profound messages for all of us. Because Theosophy recognizes that in spite of corruption and superstitions there is enough wisdom in the old Aryan philosophies and religions to set the men and women of today thinking, it promotes a comparative study of all of them. Some of these religious rites are fragmentary remnants from days of old when true knowledge was prevalent—not thousands but millions of years ago. To take an example, such a fragment is the *Yasna* of the Zoroastrians. It was once a ritual or a drama of the law of sacrifice operating in Nature; today it is overlaid with false notions, yet its study reveals that it contains numerous important facts. To understand it, however, one requires thorough knowledge about Nature and the laws of Nature, and this knowledge Theosophy makes available.

Let us turn now to the practical application of the propositions outlined above and see what Theosophy teaches about beginning to live a life of sacrifice, through which alone real service of our fellows can be rendered.

The very first principle which Theosophy lays down is that Nature is living and that everything in Nature is imbued with the presence of Spirit. There are powers, *shaktis*, forces of different kinds. Man too has a variety of powers or *shaktis* belonging to the spiritual soul in him. He has the thinking power (*Jnana Shakti*), he

has will-power (*Ichcha Shakti*), he has creative power (*Kriya Shakti*) and so on. Man, the spiritual soul, is the performer of sacrifices and his powers of hands, of head, of heart, are the weapons and instruments by which his acts of sacrifice are performed.

The second principle which Theosophy puts forward is that as man himself is the performer of sacrifices, he must regard himself as a priest. He needs no other person to act as priest. This principle is important because the institution of salaried priests makes us forget the spiritual truth that each one of us is a priest and should act as one. Therefore ceremonies and sacrifices ordered to be performed by hired or salaried priests are no sacrifices and produce no beneficent results.

The third principle which Theosophy advances is that every act of ours must be looked upon as a sacrifice. Constituted as we are, our environment being what it is in this *Kali Yuga*, we have to learn to make sacrifices with our deeds and our words. We need the Religion of Life, not of mere belief, and there is this method by which we can *live* religion day by day. This third principle implies that we must not make a division and look upon certain special acts as deeds of sacrifice or of service, and the rest as ordinary non-sacrificial deeds. Even when thoughtful people give up orthodox priest-ridden religious practices, they substitute social service or some other kind of work as their religion, and so the division continues. All our deeds and words, our every thought and every feeling, affect others, nay, affect the whole of Nature, and so we have to learn to remember that we have to perform sacrifices not through some special acts only but through our waking and sleeping, walking and resting, thinking and speaking.

These three principles reveal to us the highest meaning of service. When a person lives hour by hour in purity and in peace, thinking high thoughts, feeling noble feelings, speaking inspiring words, doing kindly acts, he is serving the whole of humanity, nay, the whole of Nature. It is this attitude of mind and heart, this habit of action in the daily round and the common task, which Theosophy teaches us to cultivate. Of course, it is difficult to create

and to sustain this attitude and habit; but an attempt has to be made. How to make it?

Each one of us is a soul and possesses *shaktis* or powers which show themselves as our capacities and faculties. With these we labour to earn our livelihood and to enjoy the fruits of labour. Next, we use something more. Just as to maintain the vital strength of our body we take food, so to sustain our mental and moral faculties we take outside help. Each one has two kinds of help—one's own faculties, and the tools of one's trade. Thus a schoolboy has his books, a farmer his plough, a cook his pots and pans, an office worker his desk and computer, and so on. The science of sacrifice lays down the principle that each one should look upon his own faculties and the particular implements of his own profession as channels of sacrifice. To use these two for sustaining the rhythm of life is to render beneficent service to all. Thus a worker in any field performs sacrifices day by day if he uses his hands and brain, his heart and aspirations, properly, in the company of the implements of his profession. If he has the right attitude and the right habit, he is serving not only his employers who give him his pay, but also his city and country, humanity and the whole of Nature. He is helping Nature by keeping his mind alert, his heart pure, his fingers mobile, his tools clean, his work tidy. Such a worker is a philanthropist, a right performer of the duties of his calling.

The root of light is sacrifice, and sacrifice alone can produce service. Real service is the silent performance of duties, but those duties must be transformed into sacrifices. Our duties look irksome to us, but when we have changed our attitude and recognize ourselves as priests of the Religion of Life, when we have cultivated the habit of looking upon every thought and every feeling of ours, every word we speak and every deed we do, as acts of sacrifice, then comes joy and peace and strength that nothing can shake. The light of sacrifice lights up the whole universe for us, and in that light we see the glorious figures of the Lords of Sacrifice, those Great Servants of Humanity who labour hour by hour for *Yugas* and *Kalpas* so that we may learn the art of Divine Magic and at

long last learn to say: "Adhiyajna [the Great Sacrifice] is myself in this body." Beginning with small sacrifices, performed day by day, we shall learn the art of performing great magical sacrifices from those Divine Magicians who throw the Light of Wisdom on our path and teach us to pass on that Light to others.

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WE should not lose sight of the fact that despite all the seemingly miraculous advances of modern medicine, the study of the patient is still more important than the study of his disease. And this is true not only of better known psychosomatic disorders, but of all conditions, from the common cold to the fell disease cancer. For, the human being is not only the human body—his temporary tabernacle—but also the human mind, and the spirit that dwells within....

Since health is not just absence of disease, but a state of harmony among all the facets of our being, we must learn something about the plane of our being—the triumverate being—which is variously named the spirit, the soul, or the true self. In reality, this true self of ours is the one most neglected by us, though success in fathoming it, is the only way to lasting peace in times of strife, stress and strain.

Just as, at the bottom of the ocean there is always total calm, though violent storms may be raging on the surface, so also this centre within us is always tranquil, however much the body or mind be in agony or turmoil. A sage has compared this centre to a room within us, which, he suggests, we should make a practice of entering from time to time. It may also be called the inner space. Man has made great advances exploring the outer space; it is high time he explored the inner space.

—DR. M.M. BHAMGARA

## PSEUDO-TOLERANCE AND REAL TOLERANCE

TOLERANCE is a widely used but generally misunderstood word, believed by most people to mean simply not hurting the feelings of others, maintaining the peace at all costs, the policy of “live and let live,” etc. Some think a person intolerant when he points out to others holding different views any errors of statement or fact. Quite often it is not what is said, but the tone and feeling behind what is said, that arouses antagonism. If we look at the dictionary meaning of tolerance, we find it described as “liberality towards the opinions of others.” This, however, does not call for what Robert Crosbie terms “indiscriminate acceptance of everything and everyone.”

We have to distinguish between two types of tolerance. The first is the false and passive tolerance involving the emotions, described by Robert Crosbie as

the attitude of “namby-pambyism” [which] is but a pseudo-tolerance. Carried to its legitimate conclusion, this false idea of “brotherhood” would signify that sin, sorrow, suffering, error, all religions and all philosophies are all right; that everyone is doing the best he can, and the best he knows how to do, and cannot do any different, and that all are steps of learning.

The other type of tolerance is the active tolerance based on knowledge and does not call for a surrender of our convictions or an indiscriminate acceptance of everything. It means simply that no one is to be condemned because of his opinions. “This tolerance does not mean ‘fraternizing’ with everything and everyone that demands it,” as Robert Crosbie points out.

H.P.B. in her *Key to Theosophy* describes what this real tolerance is, saying that we should “*speak the truth at all costs*,” if a wrong act is going to injure or endanger others; but if it only hurts the one who commits it, then it is best to remain silent and leave the erring person to his Karma. She put this principle into action when she “*spoke the truth at all costs*” in 1888, 13 years after the founding of the Theosophical Society, by calling it a “dead failure” and a “sham” so far as devotion to its objects and the attainment of

brotherhood were concerned. Would we term this “unbrotherly” or “intolerant”? There are times when facts have to be pointed out, however unpleasant they may be. H.P.B. was not unbrotherly in the moral or spiritual sense because she recognized the fact and declared it. If we view this from the emotional standpoint it would be called intolerant, but that which is true cannot be either uncharitable or intolerant.

H.P.B. further expands this idea and offers us lines of action by pointing out that there is a difference between condemning in words, which is uncharitable, and withdrawing in silent pity from the erring person, thus punishing him, but all the same giving him a chance to repent of his ways. It does not mean refusal of assistance when asked for.

There is a wide difference between speaking the truth with the right feeling, and condemnation. The truth may be spoken when we have perceived the principle involved, based on knowledge, as the correct basis of action, but this does not mean that we can sit in judgment on another. Rather, after having pointed out the truth, having judged the act and not the actor, we must leave the person to see the error of his ways. If, however, he refuses, then we have no choice but to “withdraw in silent pity,” leaving him to his Karma.

Mr. Judge enlarges upon the idea of tolerance by showing that it involves both mind and heart. He explains the concept of “withdrawing” by showing that while we must practise detachment so far as our thoughts are concerned—“forgive, forgive and largely forget”—yet it does not mean that we can cast out of our heart those we have withdrawn from; it implies rather that head and heart must work together, the head becoming compassionate and not condemning, and the heart wise and not emotional. Mr. Judge aptly points out that “men are not made into steel by comfort.”

We must, therefore, re-evaluate our ideas on tolerance. We have for too long accepted false ideas without seriously questioning what is involved. The practice of real tolerance goes to the root of our conduct and our relationship with others. To understand the difference between real tolerance and pseudo-tolerance is to have grasped the distinction between the impersonal and the personal.

There is also a wider aspect to this question that we need to look into. In the world today, especially in the field of modern medicine, many practices are followed, such as blood transfusion, the injection of foreign material into the body, family planning, etc., as also alcohol drinking and addiction to one thing or another, against all of which Theosophy takes a definite stand, for definite reasons. Are we afraid of being considered intolerant if we speak the truth in these matters? Robert Crosbie had the following to say on this very important subject:

It is the duty of esoteric students to unmask error and hypocrisy; to face lie with truth; not as *personal* criticisms but as *facts against mis-statements*....Theosophy is in the world for that purpose. We are not to be self-assertive nor flabby; knowing the truth, we speak it and care only for it and that it be as widely known as possible.

H.P.B. waged a constant war against orthodoxy in religion, against materialism and bigotry in modern science, against injurious medical practices, etc. Did she stop pointing to the truth when others did not agree with her, when they ridiculed and maligned her and her Theosophical ideas? No. Had hers been an emotional and personal reaction, a pseudo-tolerant one, would she have spoken as fearlessly and forcefully as she did? Mr. Judge, too, did not stop working when troubles arose around him, but ever pointed to the correct Theosophical principles of action and went on with the work. Robert Crosbie did the same. We also must follow their example, bearing in mind that

Truth agrees only with Truth. So if we firmly believe, and are convinced by fact and reason, that we are in possession of Truth, it would be a false tolerance which would withhold it in the face of error. Truth exists in the world for the purpose of destroying error. Error is dogmatic and does not court close investigation. Truth courts all and every possible investigation, and, calm in its certitude, examines everything upon its merits...tests it by the standard of Truth.

## UNITY, THE LAW OF LIFE

The selfish devotee lives to no purpose. The man who does not go through his appointed work in life—has lived in vain.

Follow the wheel of life; follow the wheel of duty to race and kin, to friend and foe, and close thy mind to pleasures as to pain. Exhaust the law of Karmic retribution. Gain Siddhis for thy future birth....

Thou hast to saturate thyself with pure Alaya, become as one with Nature's Soul-Thought. At one with it thou art invincible; in separation thou becomest the playground of Samvritti, origin of all the world's delusions.

—*The Voice of the Silence*

THE dream of Man down the ages is that of one humanity living in peace in one world, a world where men and women recognize the bond that unites them all into one great family where all live together in concord and amity.

This dream is deeply rooted in the spiritual memory of humanity and so in spite of long millennia of strife and warfare it can never die. It lives eternally and is part of our divine heritage, inherent in our spiritual consciousness, and it reflects itself in our highest aspirations. Nothing can do away with it. No dogmatic faith or materialistic science can ever uproot it. And thus it reappears again and again, now in one form, now in another. Its origin goes back to the earliest childhood of humanity on this earth, when Divine Teachers walked among mortals. In those ancient days Man felt the presence of the Divine Spirit within and therefore recognized his kinship with all men and all living beings. And this enabled him to live in perfect harmony with Mother Nature. This was indeed a Golden Age, when the whole earth enjoyed a period of fertility and when fraternal sympathy prevailed between man and the gods or divine elements.

One of the earliest records of this covenant between the Supreme Self and man is found in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, thus:

When in ancient times the lord of creatures had formed

mankind, and at the same time appointed his worship, he spoke and said: “With this worship, pray for increase, and let it be for you Kamaduk, the cow of plenty, on which ye shall depend for the accomplishment of all your wishes. With this nourish the Gods, that the Gods may nourish you; thus mutually nourishing ye shall obtain the highest felicity. The Gods being nourished by worship with sacrifice, will grant you the enjoyment of your wishes.” (III, 10-12)

Indeed *yajna* or sacrifice is at the basis of all manifestation, is the fundamental law of life. Sacrifice created this world, sacrifice sustains it, sacrifice regenerates it. Man, an emanation from the Divine, has also the power to create, to sustain, and to regenerate; but if that power is to be used beneficently, for the good of humanity, in harmony with the Supreme Spirit, then it must be used in and through sacrifice. All that we are, we have received from an act of sacrifice. The Law of our own being, the Moral Law within, demands that we too learn to give, to share, to sacrifice. He who violates the Law of Sacrifice, is like unto a thief and “eats the bread of sin”: “Those who dress their meat but for themselves eat the bread of sin, being themselves sin incarnate” (*Bhagavad-Gita*, III, 13). The Universal Wheel of Life was set in motion by Sacrifice, is kept revolving by sacrificial service, and the man or woman who does not live in harmony with its divine motion has lived in vain. Krishna says:

He who, sinfully delighting in the gratification of his passions, doth not cause this wheel thus already set in motion to continue revolving, liveth in vain. (*Bhagavad-Gita*, III, 16)

Since the Law of Life is that of Unity and Sacrifice, there is no separateness, nor any “independence” in the absolute sense, but only solidarity and interdependence. Man and Nature depend on each other. There is between man and all other kingdoms of Nature a ceaseless give and take, a constant interchange. Man, a free agent, must deliberately regulate all his actions on this principle of reciprocity. Therein will be found contentment for the individual and true progress for humanity.

The first step is the performance of every duty in a spirit of unselfishness, as an act of service, for the good of humanity, for the maintenance of the world. Krishna says: “Even if the good of mankind only is considered by thee, the performance of thy duty will be plain” (*Bhagavad-Gita*, III, 20). The Sanskrit word in the original text is *lokasamgraha*, “world-maintenance.” It stands for unity; it means oneness of all life, the solidarity and interdependence of society. This is the grand concept that has inspired all efforts to bring about peace and good will to men on earth. This is the vision splendid that has given birth to all movements to promote brotherhood.

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WHERE shall we find the true foundation for a changed civilization that all men and women can see and stand on? It is not philosophies nor religions nor political panaceas that are needed; but Knowledge, and a wider scope of vision than the vicissitudes of one short physical life. The knowledge that is greater than all the forms of religion ever invented is the knowledge of the very nature of man himself, for himself and in himself. For we are not here as things apart; we are here because of one great sustaining Cause—infinite and omnipresent, nor separate from us, nor from any other being. It is the same in all beings above the human and in all beings below the human—the very root of our natures, the very man himself. It is the source of all powers and of all actions, whether good or evil. Then, everything that is done by beings affects all beings, and all that is has been caused by beings, each one affected according to his share in the cause. What the past has been, we are experiencing now—our lives now being but repetitions of lives that preceded them. What the future will be, we are making now.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

## THE DHYANA GATE

WE are coming towards the end of the struggle to master the *Paramita* virtues. Recognizing that all the virtues are interdependent and have to be practised simultaneously, we are now nearing the fruition of that attempt to concentrate without which no progress would so far have been made. On this *Paramita* Path, the further we go the harder the effort that is needed; and we are warned that the full cultivation of *Dhyana* needs the greatest effort on our part.

This *Paramita* comes after the development of “dauntless energy,” for we come to a struggle so difficult that we need in full measure courage and energy, active and rigidly defensive. We can perhaps sense the difficulty if we realize here and now that the hardest thing we have to control is our mind and thoughts, and *Dhyana* has to do with the control of thoughts. Our thoughts pertain sometimes to the lower self and sometimes to the higher Self. But there is a SELF which is greater still, for it is the Universal SELF. Contemplation on this SELF carries the ascetic who practises it far above this plane of sensuous perception and out of the world of matter. To attain to *Dhyana*, we are told, is to become like a transparent alabaster vase through which shines forth the flame of *Prajna* that burns within. It is the flame of Wisdom-Compassion that radiates from Atma, the SELF, the Supreme Spirit.

We are asked to become “ALL-THOUGHT” and yet exile all thoughts from out our Soul. That is our difficulty. How can we retain our individuality and at the same time feel ourselves “ALL-THOUGHT”?

Just as we struggled while passing through the *Dana* gate to feel the unity of all life in ourselves, so here we are trying to perform the same feat with regard to thoughts. We are trying to reach *Paramartha*—“self-evident or self-analysing reflection.” The whole question of self-reflective consciousness which we read about in the First Fundamental Proposition is hard to understand. Ordinary concentration-contemplation-meditation should help us to see that

here we have a focal point of attention which reflects those conditions of the higher world that are beyond our ken. We fail when we try to put our experience on that plane into words of this plane, that is, words which embody our own personal experience rather than the actual experience undergone at the higher stage. By effort, repeated effort, we have the assurance of Krishna that we shall reach that stage.

We need to distinguish between ordinary knowledge and pure knowledge or knowledge in itself, things as they are and not as they appear. No fraction of our own ideas should be allowed to interfere with the reflection or shining outward of the pure light within. Therefore we are told to make hard our soul “against the snares of *Self*.”

The words “ceaseless contemplation” are mantram when thought about. They remind us of Shiva, “the Spirit of limitless contemplation,” “the Universal Spiritual Essence of Nature.” “The adept sees and feels and lives in the very source of all fundamental truths,” which is the Spirit of Shiva, the Great Contemplator, the Patron of all Yogis.

“Absorbed in the absolute self-unconsciousness of *physical Self*, plunged in the depths of true Being, which is no being but eternal, universal Life, his whole form as immovable and white as the eternal summits of snow in Kailasa where he sits, above care, above sorrow, above sin and worldliness, a mendicant, a sage, a healer, the King of Kings, the Yogi of Yogis,” such is the ideal Shiva of *Yoga Shastras*, the culmination of *Spiritual Wisdom*.

This reminds us of the Solitary Watcher as described in *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 207-8).

The alabaster vase which we are, and which was created by us through countless births, must be pure in order that the glorious light within may shine outwardly. Any taint or blemish, any personal thought, feeling or act, affects the whiteness and transparency of that vase. But the vase must be able to withstand the force of ALL-THOUGHT, must be porous to it. The idea of strength-energy comes

in here, the dauntless energy that preserves the stability of the vase. To change the analogy, the Divine Wisdom we have attained must, like a stream, be poured forth into another bed, must be used for the service of others, and not be kept for oneself. This is the porous quality of the vase and it is only possible to achieve it when *Dana* is practised in full measure throughout the Path.

We are now at the very beginning of what will blossom countless ages hence into such a condition.

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SINCE truth is a multifaced jewel, the facets of which it is impossible to perceive all at once; and since, again, no two men, however anxious to discern truth, can see even one of those facets alike, what can be done to help them to perceive it? As physical man, limited and trammelled from every side by illusions, cannot reach truth by the light of his terrestrial perceptions, we say—develop in you the *inner* knowledge. From the time when the Delphic oracle said to the enquirer “Man, know thyself,” no greater or more important truth was ever taught. Without such perception, man will remain ever blind to even many a relative, let alone absolute, truth. Man has to *know himself*, *i.e.*, acquire the *inner* perceptions which never deceive, before he can master any absolute truth. Absolute truth is the *symbol of Eternity*, and no *finite* mind can ever grasp the eternal, hence, no truth in its fulness can ever dawn upon it. To reach the state during which man sees and senses it, we have to paralyze the senses of the external man of clay. This is a difficult task, we may be told, and most people will, at this rate, prefer to remain satisfied with relative truths, no doubt. But to approach even terrestrial truths requires, first of all, *love of truth for its own sake*, for otherwise no recognition of it will follow.

—H.P.B.

## THEOSOPHICAL STUDY

IN his article, “Theosophical Study and Work,” Mr. Judge gives many important hints and ideas that are as applicable to the students of today as they were in 1890 when the article was written. It has been reprinted in *The Heart Doctrine*. Two other articles on the same subject, reprinted in *Vernal Blooms*, also provide much food for thought; these two are: “Of Studying Theosophy” and “Much Reading, Little Thought.” Inasmuch as a study of Theosophy, as also its application and promulgation, is the duty of present-day students, if H.P.B.’s injunction in the closing portion of her *Key to Theosophy* is to be carried out, it is as well that we pause and think just what the study of Theosophy implies.

The very first step, perhaps, is to see the necessity for such study. Just as food is a necessity to keep our physical body functioning, so also our inner nature needs food. The right kind of food is important in both cases. Therefore, the study of Theosophy, or of any particular aspect of it, must become a matter of necessity, and not merely of convenience. Often people say they will take up the study of Theosophy, or engage themselves in living a better life, when they have the time for it, and for them that time seldom comes.

Seeing the necessity for study is, therefore, the first important consideration. Next is our attitude of mind. Are we approaching the study as seekers after knowledge, as inquirers and students, or are we approaching it with a view to finding our own opinions confirmed or because we want something new to believe in? If the latter, then we might as well give up at the outset.

Enthusiasm, zeal and perseverance are necessary for study, but these will not be present if we keep our minds closed, or if we accept anything and everything that Theosophy teaches, without any thought on our part. That is why in his article, “Of Studying Theosophy,” Mr. Judge gives us at the very outset a series of “don’ts,” which should “first engage the student’s attention.”

The actual study of the teaching comes next. Students often think that, because they are able to repeat exactly what has been

written, they have understood and know all that is to be known on the subject. All down the ages people have blindly repeated sacred texts word for word, with no understanding, and they are no wiser as a result. We must first understand the words themselves, and then get behind the words to the ideas. What is the idea that the teacher or writer is trying to convey? It is only when we have understood the ideas that we are able to give expression to them, to promulgate them, and side by side with this comes application of what is studied. We must be able to express our ideas in clear and simple language which the most ordinary mind can understand and grasp. This cannot be done unless we have assimilated the subject ourselves. Take the idea of Reincarnation as an example. Are we able to answer satisfactorily to ourselves all the objections against this doctrine that are commonly raised? Are we able to apply it in our own daily life? Unless we can do this, our power of expression or promulgation will be limited and others will not benefit by our efforts. Therefore, it is not merely studying words, but getting behind them to the ideas, that is important.

Getting to the “seed” ideas is a still further step. It is the assimilation of one or two important ideas, rather than a mass of undigested ideas, that is needed. In any book that we take up for study—for instance, *The Ocean of Theosophy*—either from the table of contents, or chapter by chapter, we should pick out what we feel are one or two or three seed ideas, and see how they are developed in subsequent chapters throughout the book. In doing this, our knowledge on any particular subject will grow. A plant or a tree grows from a tiny seed, and so does our knowledge of Theosophy.

Often, when giving a talk or a lecture, students have so many ideas to offer on a subject that there is not time to develop them or carry them to their logical conclusion. It is far better to limit oneself to a few seed ideas, and develop them, because thus our own assimilation of a subject will be helped.

Assimilation is, therefore, another important aspect of Theosophical study. Theosophy is the accumulated Wisdom of the Ages, as the First Item of *The Secret Doctrine* points out; it is “the

uninterrupted record covering thousands of generations of Seers whose respective experiences were made to test and to verify the traditions passed orally by one early race to another, of the teachings of higher and exalted beings.” We are further told that the Wise Men of the Fifth Race passed their lives “*in learning, not teaching.*” This was done “by checking, testing, and verifying in every department of nature the traditions of old by the independent visions of great adepts.” Theosophy, therefore, is not an evolving philosophy, as so many modern-day philosophies are, and we need not hesitate putting its well-tested teachings into practice. Theosophical ideas must, therefore, become, as Mr. Judge points out in “Much Reading, Little Thought,” an “integral part” of our “constant thought.” To take again the idea of Reincarnation: Do we live our day-to-day life as if we believed in Reincarnation? Do we live to “eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die”? Or do we act as souls, preparing our mental luggage for a future incarnation? Are we making friends or enemies for the future? This is all part of the assimilation and application of our study.

There is also a wider aspect of Theosophical study. All that we have considered so far applies to individual study. In the U.L.T. we have collective or group study carried out by means of study classes and other meetings. By the exchange of ideas with other students, our knowledge is broadened. Collective or group study will be exactly what each makes it. Mr. Judge, in “Theosophical Study and Work,” points out that if a Branch as a whole is weak in study and application, this “affects not only the immediate associates but also projects into the great universal current an influence that has its weight in the destiny of the race.” A U.L.T., or a study group, has a sphere of influence which embraces the immediate neighbourhood in which it is. If the members are weak in their study, and as a consequence poor in application, then the influence emanating from the lodge or group will also be weak. If Theosophical ideas are eventually to change the minds and hearts of people, they must be injected into the thought atmosphere of the race. With so much of destructive thinking going on today, the world is in need of constructive thought. This can and must come

from a group of students intent on the study of Theosophy.

There is another way of looking at this wider aspect of Theosophical study. A weak student will weaken the Lodge or study group he is in; a weakened Lodge or study group will weaken the whole U.L.T. movement. We are thus, in Mr. Judge's words, "theosophically speaking, keepers and helpers of each other....Each Branch is separately responsible for its own actions, and yet everyone is helped or injured by every other. These reciprocating influences work on the real though unseen plane where every man is dynamically united to every fellow man."

If collective study is to be effective, then each should come to the meeting prepared. This cannot be done ten minutes before the meeting begins, by a hasty reading of the portion assigned the week before. The preparation for the next meeting should continue throughout the week, if we are to contribute anything to the group study, which requires a sharing of our knowledge. If, therefore, we go unprepared, it means we are benefiting by the results of the study of others, but are giving nothing in return.

The attitude of mind with which we attend a meeting is also important. Inasmuch as the object of our study, individual or collective, is that Theosophical ideas may gradually permeate the thought atmosphere, and others may benefit from them, our own inner attitude must be such that others will be attracted. They will not be so attracted unless we are able to hold these ideas as a continuous attitude, unless we manifest them in all that we do. Therefore, while the correct study of Theosophy is important, equally important is the attitude of mind with which we approach the teachings, and what we expect to obtain from them.

We should "never delude ourselves into believing that we can accomplish in a single lifetime what has taken avatars innumerable existences to achieve." We can, though, get our mental luggage ready for another incarnation, and as a beginning has to be made, the proper study of Theosophy is the first step.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

The age of the universe is a subject of perennial interest to scientists, and with changing theories, the figures also keep altering. According to a Reuter's report from Washington, scientists using a robotic NASA probe have determined the age of the universe to be 13.7 billion years, and have figured out when the stars appeared. NASA researchers claim that a spacecraft about a million miles from Earth was able to "look back to nearly the dawn of time" to find the answers. (*The Times of India*, February 13)

Students of Theosophy will find it of interest to compare the figures arrived at by present-day researchers with those given in *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 68-70) from an old Brahmanical calendar, which H.P.B. calls "the best and most complete of all such calendars." According to this ancient chronology, 1,955,884,687 years have elapsed "from the beginning of cosmic evolution, up to the Hindu year *Tarana* (or 1887)." A footnote explains: "The esoteric doctrine says that this 'cosmic evolution' refers only to our solar system." As for the whole Universal System, or "Brahma's age," it requires 15 figures to express its duration. It is perhaps futile to talk of the "age" of that which is eternal, for though numberless universes manifest and disappear, the "boundless plane" where all this is enacted, ever remains.

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Interest in Indian psychology in the West was evident at a conference on "Yoga and Indian Approaches to Psychology," held at Pondicherry. It drew delegates from different universities and institutes from India and abroad, and over 80 papers were presented. Dr. Matthijs Cornelissen from the Netherlands, one of the main organizers of the conference sponsored by the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology, the Indian Council of Philosophical Research and the Infinity Foundation of U.S.A., stated that there is a big demand for Indian psychology in the West.

A report of the conference prepared by Maria Wirth of Germany

appears in *Life Positive*. The report states in part:

In his keynote address, Prof. Ramakrishna Rao, president of the Institute of Human Science in Vishakhapatnam and former vice-chancellor of Andhra University, said: “Isn't it ironical that there is no Indian psychology in any of our great universities?” He asked why psychology was in such a pitiful state and answered the question himself: “Because psychology as it is taught now appears irrelevant in the Indian condition.”...

Psychology in India is completely ignoring the Indian tradition in spite of the great treasures hidden in its ancient scriptures. The textbooks here are written by Western authors and many teachers are trained abroad....

The Indian tradition, according to Prof. Anand Prakash from Delhi University, is a powerful, robust and all-encompassing system with its emphasis on consciousness as the primary reality. It offers invaluable tools for psychotherapy, education, management and social work. Prof. Rao stressed that it has global relevance and can reduce the glaring and unhealthy asymmetry between outer and inner science....

Now what is Indian psychology? Indian psychology encompasses the vast body of India's wisdom that concerns the human being. Indian philosophy and Indian psychology share a framework and believe the human has enormous potential hidden in its being. Indian psychology also has the “technology” to raise the consciousness of a human being. It is “sophisticated, rich and practical,” Prof. Rao pointed out, and deals with the most basic human questions, for example: Who or what *is* a human being? What is the purpose and goal of life? Who is an ideal human being? How can one live a happy and peaceful life? What is the cause of suffering? What is death? Has every person his own “battery” or is he or she connected with an all-pervading power? Is there free will?

The Indian tradition gives profound and intuitive insight into the human condition. It also gives practical methods to find peace, joy and love, which, it claims, are inside everyone. These qualities are aspects of one's true self—of pure consciousness. In the Indian tradition, a person is not a separate fragment but on a deeper level one with all—a claim that is in tune with the

findings of modern physics. To find one's true Self, and thereby disidentify from the ego, which one mistook for one's self, is the goal of life.

At the conference, papers mainly discussed the view of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. However, there is much more. For example, Buddhist and Sufi texts also give extraordinary insights. It is high time Indian psychology was given its rightful place in the colleges and universities. It is “a living force for the future,” Dr. Cornelissen predicted.

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Many scientists the world over are disturbed about recent experiments in the medical field. With the ostensible motive to end aging, disease and pain, researchers are using means which are far from ethical and which are an affront to human integrity. *Reader's Digest* (February 2003, Indian ed.) publishes a special report on what goes on behind lab doors and raises the question: Are we changing what it means to be human? J. Alex Tarquinio gives us a glimpse:

Pigs cloned to produce transplant organs to save the dying. Computer chips implanted in the brain to conquer paralysis. Human embryos manufactured and destroyed for their genetic building blocks. It's the stuff of science fiction—yet startling advances like these are unfolding in research laboratories right now.

A 62-year-old French woman gave birth to her own nephew in 2001, after undergoing in-vitro fertilization with an embryo from her brother's sperm and a donated egg. That's unsettling enough. But consider this: US scientists have now grown pig and goat sperm in mice using testicular tissue from newborn pigs and goats. The idea is to use mice as “bio-incubators” for the sperm of endangered species. Why not incubate human sperm in the future? Imagine a grieving mother giving birth to the child of her dead baby boy. Possibilities like this reinforce fears that can chill legitimate research....

Scientists are almost giddy about stem cell research....The

more potent embryonic stem cells have triggered a furious debate....“Today, it's just the embryo. What if it turns out a two-month-old foetus is more valuable for body parts? We'll find a way to desensitize ourselves,” says Leon Kass, chairman of the US President's Council on Bioethics. Pro-life groups worry about a slippery slope that could lead to an increase in abortions....

Science at the speed of light. Even as we embrace new treatments and cures, we will need to wrestle with ethical questions, and quickly. To some, experimenting with animals for human benefit is troubling enough. But to many others, the real moral issue is whether we should be tinkering with our fundamental human nature. “Our very concept of human rights stems from the fact that we have a natural human essence, says political scientist Francis Fukuyama, author of *Our Posthumous Future*. “If we modify people to the point that this essence begins to change, that raises questions as to what kind of rights they have and whether their rights are equal to that of a normal human being.”

Scientists foresee further experiments and breakthroughs in the years ahead. Others who are worried about the long-term consequences are asking: “Will we wind up abusing science, experimenting with the human body not because we should, but because we can?” What, after all, does it mean to be human? This is the broader question that needs to be answered.

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Several scientists, including some Nobel laureates, have taken issue with the retiring majority leader of the US House of Representatives, Dick Armey's view that “occupations of the brain in fields like engineering, science and economics” are better than “occupations of the heart.” “Armey is completely wrong,” says Nobel physicist Steven Weinberg of the University of Texas at Austin; and Nobel chemist Ronald Hoffman of Cornell calls the assumption “crazy.” “For solving human problems, we need both the brain and heart,” says Hoffman. (*Popular Science*, December 2002)

In another article, “The Art of Science” (*New Scientist*, 21/28 December 2002), Alan Lightman, a physicist and Adjunct Professor of Humanities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, writes:

It has been my good fortune to have worked both as a physicist and as a novelist. And I have found that the “creative moment” feels the same in both professions. Indeed this particular sensation, one of the deepest and most beautiful of human experiences, provides the basis for a powerful understanding between the scientist and the artist....

I am not sure why scientists have been more reluctant than artists to write about their creative moments. But I believe that a major factor must be the understanding of objectivity in science. What is most important in science is the final, dispassionate, impersonal result: the experiment that can be duplicated in any laboratory in the world....Somehow, this understanding of science has spawned the more dubious notion that any sign of personal struggle or emotionality in the individual scientist will compromise the whole enterprise....

It is certainly true that scientists, with the exception of behavioural scientists, study objects that reside outside the emotions while for artists the emotional life lies at the centre. But the process of doing science is human. Individual scientists have all the passions, the prejudices and biases, the psychological hills and valleys of other creative people. Acknowledging the passions and struggles and creative moments of individual scientists will not diminish the discipline at all. Instead, it will help strengthen the understanding between scientists and others.

As chemist Michael Polanyi so forcefully describes in his book *Personal Knowledge*, these personal emotions are perhaps essential for the success of science. The scientific and the philosophical, the physical and the mystical, cannot be separated into watertight compartments, but mix and mingle. *Scientists Are Human* is the telling title of a book by David Lindsay Watson. In it he writes:

The recent return of philosophy to a reputable status in the minds of scientists is a sign that the next oscillation has begun,

and the extroverts are losing their grip. There are always jobs to be done in science with which only the introvert personality can hope to grapple successfully.

It is my belief that the science of the future will more and more turn away from its present mechanistic devices towards the use of the intuitive discernment of similarity—as the foundation on which its whole structure rests.

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The mere threat of bioterrorism is likely to kill at least some people in the coming months. President George Bush announced in December that a million Americans would be vaccinated against smallpox by early this year, and 10 million more a little later. But the “precaution,” if such it is, will be costly, warns *New Scientist* (21/28 December 2002): “the contagious vaccine will sicken and almost certainly kill a few people.” Those who submit to vaccination need to know the price they might have to pay:

The vaccine consists of live vaccinia virus. In some people it can cause inflammation of the brain, death of the skin around the vaccination site or a severe form of eczema. And vaccinated people can infect others for up to three weeks afterwards.

Two studies in the 1960s found that there were “life-threatening” reactions in between 14 and 52 people per million vaccinated, and one or two per million died. The side effects now will almost certainly be more severe....

Another cause for concern is that there are now many people with suppressed immunity, due to HIV or therapy for cancer or transplants....The danger is that these high-risk groups could catch vaccinia from those vaccinated.

In brief, the benefits of vaccination against smallpox are suspect, and its adverse effects far too many to be overlooked. The case against other vaccines and serums is equally strong. They have little impact on the incidence of the disease they are supposed to control, and are far from harmless.

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Hellenic philosophers found divine music in the movement of celestial bodies. Harmony in the heavens was called by the Greeks the “music of the spheres.” Now genome scientists have stumbled upon musical scores inside our bodies. Spanish researchers have recently come out with an audio version of the human genome, called *Genoma Music*, and it is being held up as a novel way of bringing science and music closer together. Collaborating with the scientists, a French composer is helping them translate snippets of DNA's chemical alphabets into regular sheet music, generating a rudimentary melody for each DNA type—what could be described as an individual's genetic “signature tune.” *The Times of India* (January 29) comments editorially:

It's a nice feeling, that we have music within us, a melody that denotes the very composition of life. We could well be carrying the resonance of that primordial, all-encompassing sound of life, the beginningless, endless AUM that saturated the cosmos when Creation happened. This could be a reason why music has been found to be so effective in mind and body healing.

It is believed by some that underlying all the sounds and signals of Nature there is “a continual music.” Dr. Lewis Thomas, an eminent biologist, wrote many years ago in one of his essays, “The Music of *This Sphere*”:

If, as I believe, the urge to make a kind of music is as much a characteristic of biology as our other fundamental functions, there ought to be an explanation for it. Having none at hand, I am free to make one up. The rhythmic sounds might be the recapitulation of something else—an earliest memory, a score for the transformation of inanimate, random matter in chaos into the improbable, ordered dance of living forms.

All this perhaps links up with what the sages and mystics have been trying to tell us for millennia about the nature of the universe. W. Q. Judge in his article “AUM” has this to say:

Now we may consider that there is pervading the whole universe a single homogeneous resonance, sound, or tone, which

acts, so to speak, as the awakener or vivifying power, stirring all the molecules into action....This is creation, for without this resonance or motion among the quiescent particles, there would be no visible universe. That is to say, upon sound, or, as the Aryans called it, *Nada Brahma* (divine resonance), depends the evolution of the visible from the invisible....

Just as the *tone* of manners, of morals, of painting, of music, means the real character of each, in the same way the tones of the various creatures, including man himself, mean or express the real character; and all together joined in the deep murmur of nature, go to swell the *Nada Brahma*, or Divine Resonance, which at last is heard as the music of the spheres.

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MAN is invincible if his spirit asserts itself. He has endurance and capacity for compassion. He can stand up and say, "I will not bow down to circumstances; I am more powerful than the material forces which confront us." Man is higher than the forces which overwhelm him. If this principle of the inward presence of the spirit is taken by us as an assertion of human dignity, we will realize the interwovenness of human life. If one man suffers, the whole of humanity suffers, for all humanity has become one today. It is that concept to which we must make a great contribution. We are passing through trying times, our civilization is being tested; it may be destroyed or renewed. What will happen to it depends on ourselves, not on our stars, nor upon the impersonal forces which surround us. It depends on the spirit of man, on the will of man to take these things seriously.

—DR. S. RADHAKRISHNAN