

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### MARA—THE TEMPTER

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The enemies which rise within the body,  
Hard to be overcome—the evil passions—  
Should manfully be fought; *who conquers these*  
*Is equal to the conqueror of worlds.*

—Kiratarjuniya of Bharavi

POPULAR beliefs, though often containing some truth, when distorted and corrupted become superstitions destructive to soul-life and, further, obscure the truth. One such soul-destroying concept is that of the Personal Devil.

In her article, "The Fall of Ideals," H.P.B. wrote:

The Churches tell the world that "man is born in sin," and John (1st Epist. iii. 8) adds that "He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Those who still believe in the rib-and-apple fable and in the rebellious angel "Satan," believe, as a matter of course, in a personal Devil—as a contrast in a dualistic religion—to a personal God. We, Theosophists of the Eastern school, believe in neither. Yet we go, perhaps, further still than the Biblical dead letter. For we say that while as *extra-cosmic* Entities there is neither god nor devil, that both exist, nevertheless. And we add that both dwell on earth in man, being in truth, *the very man himself*, who is, as a physical being, the devil, the true vehicle of *evil*, and as a spiritual entity—god, or *good*. Hence, to say to mankind, "thou

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hast the devil,” is to utter as metaphysical a truth as when saying to all its men, “Know ye not that god dwelleth in you?” Both statements are true. But, we are at the turning point of the great social cycle, and it is the former fact which has the upper hand at present. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No.27*, pp. 2-3)

The only Devil, therefore, which the Ancient Wisdom recognizes abides *within* man, not outside of him. The horned Devil of popular Christian belief is but a graphic symbol, a poetic personification of human evil and wickedness. So also the Mara of exoteric Buddhism. H.P.B. explains that Mara is “personified temptation through men's vices, and translated literally means ‘that which kills’ the Soul”; it is symbolized as a King in whose crown shines the jewel of fascination, blinding those who look at it. The power of evil, of human weaknesses and vices, lies in its temptations. To make more graphic the activities of these temptations spiritual teachers have had recourse to the device of personification. Thus the Devil, Mara, Ahriman, are personified; orthodox religions have personalized and carnalized them.

From the time man became a thinking entity, he has been, and is even now, the vehicle of a dual force—good and evil; and these are at eternal strife in him. The problem of this dual force so intimately touches our life that its solution becomes for us the starting point of the quest for truth and wisdom.

Though evil exists in all, as the opposing power to active goodness, and though at the present stage of evolution it seems to be gaining the upper hand owing to man's *ego*-ship or selfishness, yet many aspire to eschew evil and to do good. But Paul-like they give way to weaknesses and vicious tendencies against their well-formed intentions and resolves. Many are left bewildered as to how this comes about, for the meaning of Temptation is not really comprehended. Even students of Theosophy, who speak of “the nefarious influence of the Astral Light,” seldom understand the real import of these words.

The earnest and persevering aspirant must learn the art of resisting temptation, of overcoming the spell of fascination that

Mara, the Great Ensnarer, has cast over him. Ordinary evils of ordinary lives are a very different proposition from the precipitated evils in the life of Chelaship. Persistent treading of the Inner Path that leads to Adeptship ultimately brings one to that stage when the whole force of evil power is arrayed against the good end he has set before him. Mr. Judge has remarked that every real aspirant will some day, in some life, arouse the “Dweller on the Threshold,” of which there is more than one kind. The very act of trying to conquer the inner foe with the help of the Higher Self stirs up the slumbering *Tanhaic* elementals. These, sensing instinctively the danger to themselves, coalesce to become one composite entity and to overthrow if possible the would-be Adept of Light. The neophyte has to drive it out of his system and face it objectively as his own Elementary. Not till he destroys that Elementary by the power of the Inner Ego is he safe; for, if this “thing of darkness” is allowed to gather strength, it will eject the Ego, usurping its place, ultimately producing the phenomenon of the “Soulless” man. In Hindu Esotericism this human elemental in the devotee is named *Papa-Purusha*, the man of sin.

It is of this peculiar “personified temptation” that *The Voice of the Silence* speaks:

This light shines from the jewel of the Great Ensnarer (Mara). The senses it bewitches, blinds the mind, and leaves the unwary an abandoned wreck. (pp. 8-9)

Strive with thy thoughts unclean before they overpower thee. Use them as they will thee, for if thou sparest them and they take root and grow, know well, these thoughts will overpower and kill thee. Beware, Disciple, suffer not, e'en though it be their shadow, to approach. For it will grow, increase in size and power, and then this thing of darkness will absorb thy being before thou hast well realized the black foul monster's presence. (p. 13)

The ladder by which the candidate ascends is formed of rungs of suffering and pain; these can be silenced only by the voice of virtue....Woe unto him who dares pollute one rung with miry feet. The foul and viscous mud will dry, become

tenacious, then glue his feet unto the spot; and like a bird caught in the wily fowler's lime, he will be stayed from further progress. His vices will take shape and drag him down. His sins will raise their voices like as the jackal's laugh and sob after the sun goes down; his thoughts become an army, and bear him off a captive slave. (pp. 16-17)

Such a fearful and dangerous experience the beginner is not likely to encounter. In most men and women the force of evil circulates as an inchoate mass. It is the resolve to displace it, taken by the earnest and devoted practitioner of the Theosophic life, that awakens it to life. In the candidate for Adeptship, there rages an ever-strengthening struggle against the "man of sin" within. It is to this that *The Voice of the Silence* refers when it says: "The more thou dost advance, the more thy feet pitfalls will meet." The Great Ensnarer draws the aspirant to the three Gates of Hell—the domain of Mara, the Devil. *Kama, Krodha, Lobha*—Lust, Wrath, Greed—develop in him, colouring the mental consciousness to such an extent that time and again the would-be Adept forgets his mission; nay, more, allows the Inner Ego to be driven out. Therefore we are told: "Ere thou canst near the goal...thou must have mastered all the mental changes in thy Self and slain the army of the thought sensations that, subtle and insidious, creep unmasked within the Soul's bright shrine."

No devoted and persevering aspirant can escape special tests in the shape of subtle temptations. Each has to pass through the "portal of assembling" where "Maha Mara stands trying to blind the candidate by the radiance of his 'Jewel.'" To prepare himself for the future, the student-aspirant of today is called upon to get his "mental luggage" ready. For all those who know little of the depths of "human nature," H.P.B. wrote the article "Chelas and Lay Chelas" (reprinted in *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*). That memorable article contains everything in germ: the rules, regulations, difficulties, operations of and about Chelaship. A careful study of this article is a must for all those who would take the first step in fitting themselves for the noblest of all pursuits, the study of the

Science of Life and the Art of Living.

The beginner's duty to himself, to the race and to the Cause he has resolved to serve requires that he make it his first concern to fight Lust, Wrath and Greed in the small affairs of everyday life. His *present* efforts to purify himself will aid him later when he has to face the Great Tests. Let him control these forces now, at the very start, when they are isolated, even though very strong. Once they coalesce and become one, as sooner or later they will, the subduing of the Personified Temptation which kills the Soul will prove to be an infinitely more difficult undertaking. Forewarned is forearmed.

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THE *Secret Doctrine* merely asserts that a system, known as the Wisdom Religion, the work of generations of adepts and seers, the sacred heirloom of pre-historic times—actually exists, though hitherto preserved in the greatest secrecy by the present Initiates; and it points to various corroborations of its existence to this very day, to be found in ancient and modern works. Giving a few fragments only, it there shows how these explain the religious dogmas of the present day, and how they might serve Western religions, philosophies and sciences, as sign-posts along the untrodden paths of discovery. The work is essentially fragmentary, giving statements of sundry facts taught in the esoteric schools—kept, so far, secret—by which the ancient symbolism of various nations is interpreted. It does not even give the *keys* to it, but merely opens a few of the hitherto secret drawers.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

## THE NEED OF THE HOUR

As a mother, even at the risk of her own life, protects her son, her only son, so let there be goodwill without measure among all beings. Let goodwill without measure prevail in the whole world, above, below, around, unstinted, unmixed with any feeling or differing or opposing interests. If a man remain steadfastly in this state of mind all the while he is awake, whether he be standing, walking, sitting, or lying down, then is come to pass the saying, “Even in this world holiness has been found!”

—*Metta Sutta*

With right knowledge, or at any rate with a confident conviction that our neighbours will no more work to hurt us than we would think of harming them, the two-thirds of the World's evil would vanish into thin air. Were no man to hurt his brother, Karma-Nemesis would have neither cause to work for, nor weapons to act through. It is the constant presence in our midst of every element of strife and opposition, and the division of races, nations, tribes, societies and individuals into Cains and Abels, wolves and lambs, that is the chief cause of the “ways of Providence.”

—H. P. BLAVATSKY: *The Secret Doctrine*

THERE is grave concern everywhere at the growing world tension. In all countries, however, the large majority looks to its government, its legislative assemblies and its security councils to find ways and means of reducing the tension of the world and thereby avoiding a global conflict. Within each country too there are conflicting currents and mounting tensions and the prevailing mood is one of fear and of distrust.

Men and women everywhere are anxious and they seek reassurance in varied ways, while blaming their leaders and the houses of parliament. They overlook that political parties and governments are after all only machineries run and directed by men and that the gift of safety, the greatest gift there is, must come

from man himself.

But we too, each one of us, are Man. Is there not something we can do to reduce tension? Thoughts, like television and radio waves, reach out in all directions. Can we not as individuals bring peace to our own minds and thereby contribute to the peace of our divided and tormented world? Modern psychology is rediscovering the fact that thought is a power and exerts its influence, directly and primarily upon the thinker himself and indirectly upon all who are touched by the thoughts the mind sends out into space. Thoughts of animosity and cruelty injure grievously those who harbour them. Acting like poison, they pervert the mind and blind it.

The Full Moon of the Hindu-Buddhist month of Vaishakh is sacred to the memory of Lord Buddha and marks the thrice glorious anniversary of His Birth, His Enlightenment, and His Parinirvana. It is known as Buddha Purnima and this year it falls on the 16th of May. A week earlier, on the 8th, Theosophists everywhere celebrated White Lotus Day, the anniversary of the passing away of H.P. Blavatsky. Sacred anniversary days are occasions for deep reflection and they afford golden opportunities to recall the words of the Great Spiritual Teachers whose memories are honoured.

Their wisdom has a message relevant to the present state of the world. They all affirm that hatred is our greatest enemy, that there is no ill like malice, and that we should give up all hostile feelings and cultivate loving-kindness. They tell us further that love—pure love, love untainted by lust, love untarnished by selfishness—is the greatest power on earth. Such love has its roots in eternity and is divine in essence; it can act as a strong protective shield, not limited by space or time.

The question then is—Can such love be cultivated? And the answer is in the affirmative. The divine potency of true love is enshrined in the human heart, and through meditation and self-discipline it can be unfolded. Lord Buddha, in the *Maha Rahulavada Sutta*, advises Rahula thus: “Cultivate, Rahula, the meditation on loving-kindness, for by cultivating loving-kindness ill-will is banished.”

What is this meditation on loving-kindness? “As we think, so we become.” The virtues can be cultivated through ideation and imagination. Meditation, as a spiritual exercise, is a most effective means of cleansing and stilling the mind, leading to direct perception, which flowers in deeds of generosity, benevolence, and wisdom. Lord Buddha enjoins certain forms of meditation for the cultivation of right attitudes and moods. They are part of a severe system of training based on a profound understanding of man. One such meditation is *Metta-Bhavana*.

The *Metta-Bhavana* is the first of the four *Brahma Viharas*, the four Illimitable Sublime Moods, which are ethical in character and have for their object the cultivation of the heart qualities, namely, friendliness or loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equal-mindedness.

How is *Metta-Bhavana* to be practised? After the usual necessary preparations which precede actual meditation, this *Bhavana* begins with oneself. For it is a principle of true psychology that one's attitude to oneself must be a wholesome one, blending harmoniously humility and self-confidence. The meditation on *Metta* starts therefore with oneself, thus: “May I be free from enmity; may I be free from ill-will; may I be rid of suffering; may I be at peace!”

The next stage is to direct the same thought and feeling towards a friend. When the thought of *Metta* has been directed to a friend, one is ready to apply it towards someone to whom one is indifferent, whom one neither likes nor dislikes, and finally towards someone who is hostile—a more difficult injunction, for the carrying out of which the Buddhist scriptures give detailed instructions.

Thus there are four stages: oneself, one's friend, a person towards whom one is neutral, an enemy. When this has been successfully achieved, the feeling of loving-kindness can be widened and extended. This is done in three stages, without limitation, with limitation, in all ten directions. In the *Patisambhidha* these three methods are outlined as: (1) limitless, to all beings and all creatures without distinctions, “May all be free from enmity and at peace”;

(2) with limitation, specifically directed to all women, all men, all holy ones, all ordinary people, all the *devas* or Gods, all human beings, all those in states of woe; (3) in all ten directions: East, West, North, South, North-East, North-West, South-West, South-East, above, and below.

There are variations given in different texts, but, according to all, the force of *Metta* is to be radiated deliberately and made to pervade one's whole sphere of influence.

The above is only a rough outline of this most potent Meditation. For a more detailed description we refer our readers to any authentic books on Buddhism and to the original texts of the Buddhist Canon, notably the *Suttas* dealing with *Metta*, such as the *Karaniya Metta Sutta*, which is usually read at the beginning and at the close of the *Metta Bhavana*.

True peace can only come to the world through minds purged of ill will and radiating the beneficent energy of *Metta*. No greater homage can be paid to the Blessed One than to practise *Metta-Bhavana*. In the words of H.P. Blavatsky:

...if the simple, humane and philosophical code of daily life left to us by the greatest Man-Reformer [the Buddha] ever known, should ever come to be adopted by mankind at large, then indeed an era of bliss and peace would dawn on Humanity.

May we contribute to hastening that Dawn!

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MUST the citizen, even for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first and subjects afterwards.

—THOREAU

## LIFE IN DEATH

THE subject of death is highly metaphysical and yet one of the most practical and helpful—practical in the sense that its implications come in useful in the daily improvement of our own selves. All of us need help in shaping our lives, in moulding our characters, and the subject of life in death and of death in life gives us that help. We live in the midst of death—that is not difficult to perceive; it is a little more complex to understand how there is perpetual, immortal, ever-surviving life in the midst of slow decay or the crash of death.

The majestic power of death is a noble theme for study and contemplation. To engender in us humility, we need to ponder over the *power* of death. To engender in us a sense of equality with all men and women, we need to ponder over the *universality* of death. To engender in us hope and confidence, we need to ponder over the *release* that death brings. And unless we study the subject of perpetual death and contemplate on the processes of decay and disintegration, we shall not understand the greater mystery of life perpetual, of birth following birth in the ever lengthening chain of Immortality. Birth and death, disintegration ever leading to reintegration, should be studied together. There are sentimental people who shirk the task of studying and understanding the processes of decay and old age and their culmination—death. On the other hand, there are morbid people who pay extra attention to their own pain and tragedy. Both are wrong. Sentimental ostriches who bury their heads in sand are no exception and will be compelled to face the experience of death. On the other hand, the morbid who only see the force of destruction will be compelled to learn, sooner or later, that life encompasses both birth and death, and while forms of life change, Life Immortal ever presses forward.

In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, tabulating the qualities that constitute Wisdom-*Jnana*, Krishna puts forward “a meditation upon birth, death, decay, sickness and error.” He speaks of himself as immortality and death; nay more, as *Prabhava* and *Pralaya*—the

going forth of life and its obscuration or repose. Therefore we must study this subject of birth and death of all things, great and small, of all beings whatsoever their condition and their Karma. One effective way of doing it is to see how we who call ourselves living are in the midst of death, and how birth ever follows death as day follows night.

If we observe Nature we find that in every nook and corner change is taking place; continuous and eternal change is the order of Nature. The motion of the Universe is like our breath; in fact the Universal Life is called the Great Breath, and there is not a second of time when that motion or that breathing stops. In Hindu, as in Theosophic, philosophy, there is that continuous change which is known as constant dissolution—*Nitya Pralaya*. There are various types of dissolutions for the Universe, just as there are various types of death-changes in the different kingdoms of Nature. *Nitya Pralaya* is constant and continuous dissolution or death. To take an example: every hour, every minute of every hour, a change is taking place in the human body. The lives making up the body are replaced continuously by other lives.

Not only our body undergoes a continuous transformation; our feelings and emotions too change and their action on the body produces the bodily changes. We love a person when one kind of mood is upon us; when our mood changes we cool off towards that person, or our so-called love even turns to hate. Similarly, our ideas and thoughts undergo a change, and transformed ideation leaves its marks upon the body. Our brain has grooves made by our thoughts, and it undergoes a transformation as day by day we cerebrate or ideate.

Most of us do not take advantage of this mighty phenomenon in Nature. We do not contemplate on this *Nitya Pralaya*, this perpetual dissolution. We do not say to ourselves, “I am dying inch by inch, hour by hour.” It will do us good to remember this fact, for then we can get to the next important idea: we begin to ask ourselves, “But what is death? How does it take place?” By studying, as even modern science does, this perpetual

transformation in Nature, we come upon the great truth of perpetual birth. Unless we perceive that though living, we are in the midst of death, we shall not learn that surrounded by change, death and transformation, we are ever growing, ever becoming.

So not with a morbid view should we think about death, but with self-confidence should we observe that death is transformation and that in the process of death new life begins.

It is this mystery that the Christian festival of Easter symbolizes. Crucifixion brings the message of death in the midst of life; Resurrection brings the supplementing message of life more powerful than death, every death bringing to birth the glory of Life Immortal. Crucifixion is the tragedy of incompleteness, but Resurrection is the drama of Immortality.

To turn to the practical and ethical aspects of this subject: Each one of us is undergoing constant dissolution—*Nitya Pralaya*; our bodies, our minds, our hearts undergo constant change. Physical death or separation of the body from the Soul is a major change. Just as a rosebud opens gradually and becomes a full-blown flower, and then dies shedding its petals, so too with each one of us. We are constantly going towards death—we grow up to a point, and then we begin to decay till the moment comes when the great change takes place and we die.

It is within the power of every human being to use this changing, moving force that functions in Nature. The plant or the animal is not able to give direction to the processes of *Nitya Pralaya*, constant and perpetual dissolution; but human beings can. If we observe minor changes, learn about them and control them, in the course of time we can learn to control the major operation of death. Most people are conquered by death, that is, they do not have any say in the matter of their own dying. Sages conquer death; they leave their bodies knowingly, at will, whenever they determine to do so. With the aid of their wisdom, they have *gained* their immortality. We too can gain for ourselves our own immortality by obtaining knowledge. Then we conquer death and live on knowingly, perceiving that it is only the body that dies.

We do not die; but that certainly cannot apply to our bodies which do die. As Souls we are immortal, for the Soul never dies. Yet there *is* change taking place in the Soul, for it grows from life to life. Evolution would be meaningless if the Soul did not progress; the universe would be purposeless if the Soul did not grow with the passage of time. There are two kinds of changes or transformations—destruction is one, unfoldment is the other. Thus our body which belongs to the matter aspect of life is undergoing transformation during life, and it is destroyed at death. On the other hand our Soul, representative of the Spirit aspect of life, ever becomes better, nobler, more beautiful in and through the processes of unfoldment and transformation.

Between Soul and body there is our feeling-mind or *Kama-Manas*. Our feelings and our thoughts are so closely knit that they have become one unit. Fibre by fibre, feelings and thoughts are bound together. This feeling-mind is impressed by the bodily senses which contact the universe, as also impressed by the Soul from within. Therefore our feeling-mind or *Kama-Manas* has the dual experience of change. Something of *Kama-Manas* gets destroyed, the rest becomes transformed. The Soul uses the instrument of the feeling-mind dwelling in the body, its brain and senses, and thus gathers its nourishment of experience. But the feeling-mind is greatly swayed by the senses and the body of flesh and blood, and so evil feelings or vices arise, as also egotistic evil thoughts. These evil feelings and thoughts arise from the side of matter and meet with destruction; but in *Kama-Manas*, under the influence of the Soul, good and noble feelings, high and altruistic thoughts, also arise and these do not die. Becoming the very clothing of the Soul, they are transformed into greater beauty, greater nobility, greater power. The Soul is ever becoming more and more glorious and powerful through each transformation of the feeling-mind when the latter becomes amenable to the guidance of the Soul. But when that feeling-mind falls under the sway of the senses, it is preparing for destruction.

The lesson for each one of us is to choose the way of the Soul.

It implies that we should deliberately begin not to allow our feelings and our thoughts to be coloured by the senses; they should be coloured by the Soul. The method for this dual task of distancing oneself from the senses and getting closer to the Soul may be offered in a single aphorism: Impersonalize your feelings and universalize your thoughts.

What does that mean? Let each one look at his or her own feelings. Lust, anger, jealousy, avarice must die; but good emotions such as affection, patience, fortitude, sacrifice, have to be transformed. In our affection we are personal. We are patient with those we love; we are ready to sacrifice for them. But unless we impersonalize our desires, decay and death will overtake us in the whirligig of time. We must deliberately try to remove the personal factor from our good feelings of affection and attachment.

To unfold love for all, for the mass of mankind, and to free ourselves from the feeling of our own small personality, is the task that sooner or later has to be undertaken. It does not mean that we love our friends and kin less, but that we love them intelligently, and are not swayed by the sense of favouritism. So the first axiom is—Impersonalize your feelings. Similarly, in study, in thinking, we must rise to the plane of universality. We must learn to take a universal view of the problems that belong to our family and community, our nation and race. All of us are bound to die as men or women, as Hindus or Muslims, as Asiatics or Europeans, but Man as Man will not die; he only gets transformed, resurrected, becoming immortal. There are those who are so impersonal in their compassion that they cannot be called persons; they are impersonal forces who flood the earth with their radiant love. They are universal beings whose ideation is cosmic. Such beings are the Buddhas and Christs of the race. They are the Immortal Ones who never die, and they remain with Orphan Humanity to teach it the lesson of Life Everlasting.

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## FROM BLIND BELIEF TO REASONED FAITH

PROBABLY one of the most elusive yet prevalent innate ideas possessed by all human beings is that unfathomable, unknowable and ever unreachable idea we call faith.

Faith can express itself in three ways: mentally, according to the ideas that we hold; psychically, according to the emotions we feel and express; and physically, according to the actions that we perform.

Faith is either expanded or dwarfed by the early training we receive from our parents, teachers and friends, because one expression of faith is the truth and confidence we place on others.

Faith finds its fullest expansion when our trust or confidence is placed on and reciprocated by one who has developed the Wisdom of Compassion, which arises from a search after Truth, through the service of others. Fortunate indeed are we when we contact the teachings of such a one, for then our faith is elevated from a purely emotional basis to an ideative impersonal one.

From belief to knowledge is a gradual growth quickened by the disciple's faith, trust and confidence in the Teacher, and therefore in his willingness to check, test and verify his own observations and experiences in the light of the Teachings studied and applied. Such testings and verifications take place in the mind, feelings and physical nature of the sincere student, slowly freeing his or her faith from dependence on fixed moulds of thought, feeling or action, and gradually directing it towards the objectives of Truth and Service.

From dependence to independence is a step on the Path to Self-enlightenment, and this is the Path of Transformation from blind faith to reasoned faith based upon knowledge of the true. (See *The Key to Theosophy*, Indian ed., pp. 215-220). The further step from independence to interdependence takes the disciple through the "Hall of Learning," called in *The Voice of the Silence* "the psychical world of super-sensuous perceptions," where the passions and desires clothe themselves in their most alluring forms; but each

such form has a serpent coiled underneath. This is a testing period for the disciple, one in which his faith is fully tried. What will stand him in good stead is his steadfastness and implicit trust and confidence in the Teacher whom yet he does not see, but whose Teachings he is taught to use independently, yet with an increasing sense of that type of dependence which has at its basis the idea of Universal Brotherhood, and which grows into Interdependence.

From the Hall of Learning we come to the Hall of Wisdom; from the Teachings, to the Teachers. Where are the Teachers to be found? This is the question that all sincere seekers after Truth ask at some time or other. The answer is available for those who want it, provided they are intuitive enough to accept the advice given to them by Mr. Judge in his article “Yours Till Death and After, H.P.B.,” and by Mr. Crosbie in “A Friend of Old Time and of the Future.” The following extracts from these two articles need to be pondered over:

[From “Yours Till Death and After, H.P.B.”] Such has been the manner in which our beloved teacher and friend always concluded her letters to me. And now, though we are all of us committing to paper some account of that departed friend and teacher, I feel ever near and ever potent the magic of that resistless power, as of a mighty rushing river, which those who wholly trusted her always came to understand. Fortunate indeed is that Karma which, for all the years since I first met her, in 1875, has kept me faithful to the friend who, masquerading under the outer *mortal* garment known as H. P. Blavatsky, was ever faithful to me, ever kind, ever the teacher and the guide. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 3)

[From “A Friend of Old Time and of the Future”] As such does William Q. Judge appear to me, as doubtless he does to many others in this and other lands.

The first Theosophical treatise that I read was his *Epitome of Theosophy*; my first meeting with him changed the whole current of my life. I trusted him then, as I trust him now and all those whom he trusted; to me it seems that “trust” is the bond that binds, that makes the strength of the Movement, for it is of

the heart. And this trust he called forth was not allowed to remain a blind trust, for as time went on, as the energy, steadfastness and devotion of the student became more marked, the “real W.Q.J.” was more and more revealed, until the power that radiated through him became in each an ever present help in the work. As such it remains today, a living centre in each heart that trusted him, a focus for the Rays of the coming “great messenger.” (*Vernal Blooms*, p.1)

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THE divine conscience acts in all struggles for betterment, but clouded more or less in each by reason of education and habit of thought; hence it varies in brightness. It is not possible to make a hard-and-fast fixed rule for finding out what is the animating motive. If we are trying to get into a better state, it is for us to decide if that be simply and wholly selfish. All actions are surrounded by desire as the rust is round the polished metal or the smoke round the fire, but we must try. So if we fix for ourselves the rule that we will try to do the very best we can for others, we will generally be led right. If we rely on the higher self and aspire to be guided by it, we will be led to the right even if the road goes through pain, for sorrow and pain are necessary for purification of the soul. But if we wish to run away from an environment because we do not like it and without trying to live in it while not of it, we are not altering ourselves but simply altering the circumstances, and may not always thereby gain anything.

—W. Q. JUDGE

## THE INNER MALAISE

FOR the average person, pain is something to be shunned, an unpleasant experience that has to be cured or suppressed by any means which, for our day, are analogous to the pills and potions, drugs and tranquillizers of modern science. The medical man sees in pain a warning, a bell which incessantly rings the alarm and continues to do so till the necessity ceases. However, since he but scratches at the surface of the causal world, he is content to push back the pain for a period long or short; or worse still, he paralyses some one portion of his patient's mind or body, thus cutting off the sound of the alarm bell from his consciousness. In such case, the bell may continue to give its message of warning which, however, is prevented from penetrating to the person's waking consciousness. There is a similar warning bell for the inner malaise, and since there are hardly any doctors for the maladies of the soul, people are known to drown their pain by intoxicants, a surfeit of pleasures and an overindulgence in desires. They will go to any length to forget the mental torture of unsatisfied turbulent emotions.

The Occultist views pain differently.

*The Voice of the Silence* sees in pain and suffering steps towards a higher elevation. It says: "The ladder by which the candidate ascends is formed of rungs of suffering and pain; these can be silenced only by the voice of virtue." The truth of this statement has to burn itself deep into the consciousness of the candidate long before he can take the first steps to mount the ladder. He cannot ask for, nor expect, any help from his Guru or Master for the assuaging of his pain. He has to learn to do so unaided by applying to his wounds and sores the balm of virtue; and till he has developed in himself the strength to do so, he is in no fit condition to offer his services to the cause of Masters and to their altruistic plans. It is a well-established truism that in any field of human endeavour learning must precede practice and action.

Vice is the great enemy of one having aspirations. It has the power to glamour, tempt, subjugate and enslave his mind. It has to

be eschewed, not because of the suffering which inevitably dogs its footsteps, but because it will always be an obstacle and an unsurmountable bar to progress upwards. It is a characteristic of vice that it cannot stand in juxtaposition with virtue. It must vanish and be eclipsed, as is darkness at the approach of light. Vice, which has many a pleasing face, has to be recognized in all its forms. One thing must, however, be very clearly understood, namely, that vice invariably prevails where the person loosens his hold on the spirit and abandons himself gladly to the heady fumes that matter is wont to emanate. In such moments of intoxication, he displays selfishness in one or the other of its myriad forms and his acts become a negation of the laws of Brotherhood. It is a most degrading form of vice this, that man schemes against man and seeks possession by force or stealth of that which is not his own.

It is one of the properties of matter that it lends itself to separative forms. Because of this, the consciousness that inhabits any one form has the tendency to view itself as something separate from other forms, a unit that must fight other units for its ease and survival. When a human consciousness which is still allied to matter tries to understand spirit, it endows spirit with the very attributes it has found in matter and only multiplies them in degree. Being thus unable to find the omniscient and immortal spirit, the ordinary man comes to deny its existence.

So, too, with virtue. It cannot be translated in terms of material applications. It can be known and realized only when the hold of matter is loosened and its clogging, clinging, dragging pull neutralized. The feet will still have to walk the earth, but they have to be made immune to the soiling properties of matter by cleaning and bathing them in waters of renunciation. To shed vice, renunciation is the only, the surest panacea. It implies the giving up of all rewards, the surrender of all attachments to things, ideas, impressions and memories that arouse the thirst and craving for existence. It is from among those in whom self-interest prevails that vice and sin find their recruits to evil. The touch of matter not only defiles and makes one unclean; its harm reaches deeper, for it

bewitches the senses, blinds the mind, and makes of the unwary an abandoned wreck.

So long as the person continues to live in and enjoy the sensations of the oscillations he calls life, he remains a prey to suffering and pain. This must be so because he lives and moves and has his being in matter. He inherits the divisive tendencies of matter and acquires the natural combativeness of the animal. Viewing himself as a thing apart by reason of caste, creed, nationality or organization, he cannot live in any one of such divisions without breaking the fundamental laws of Brotherhood. When violations are piled on violations, the consequences may be dire in the extreme. Those who call themselves Theosophists yet cling to their own sect or brand of philosophy and look down their noses upon others who are not of their own organization, are as violative of the law as anyone else and will in time find themselves accountable. Brotherhood is not only a fact in supernature. It is a law from which branch out all the other laws of harmony. The one who craves and thirsts, the one who seeks to fill his own special granary at the expense of and to the exclusion of others, is a cheat, a violator of nature's laws and an offender against humanity. His life becomes a series of infringements of the Law, and since the personal effort of himself or even of a group or nation is pitted against the vast onward movement of what the scriptures term the wheel of the Good Law, pain and suffering follow upon the divagations. It is the measure of his folly that he seeks to continue in his wrongdoing and tries to find out ways and means to avoid the suffering that must follow.

Could the individual but take an impersonal and detached view, he would realize that pain is a pointer and indication that he had violated some one or the other of nature's laws. Seen from this viewpoint, pain is necessary, is in fact a valuable teacher and a sure guide to progress. *Light on the Path* stresses this aspect in its own great language: "No man desires to see that light which illumines the spaceless soul until pain and sorrow and despair have driven him away from the life of ordinary humanity." Joy and

pleasure and ease do not afford the opportunity that pain and suffering give. It is in this sense that the latter constitute rungs in the ladder as soon as they are surmounted. Pain and suffering can be stilled by one agency only, namely, the voice of virtue. But this voice which cures all and integrates all is not that of the so-called morality of the day. Virtue in its fullest sense is the over-spreading influence of the one law of Universal Brotherhood on all planes of thought and action. The diversifications of that law are many and wide and wherever it abides and becomes a living power in life, there virtue sits enthroned and peace and plenty bless the land. So potent is its presence that a thousand serpents are kept away from the candidate's path if only he acknowledges its omniscient and omnipresent sway.

Rarely can one who has tasted vice and acquired its taint and stigma abandon it at the initial resolve or even after a long visitation of pain. He delays his own advancement because he does not know how to use suffering as a step in the ladder by means of which he can raise himself. He has to learn through bitter experience that all his efforts at checking vice by fighting it must come to naught. Frustration and failure lie that way. There is one method and one method only by which he can achieve a turning away from vice, and that is by fixing his whole attention on the Inner Ruler whom he has not seen but whom he has felt during rare moments of introspection. *Light on the Path* has valuable instructions to offer on the subject in the essay on Karma:

It is useless for the disciple to strive to learn by means of checking himself. The soul must be unfettered, the desires free. But until they are fixed only on that state wherein there is neither reward nor punishment, good nor evil, it is in vain that he endeavours. He may seem to make great progress, but some day he will come face to face with his own soul, and will recognize that when he came to the tree of knowledge he chose the bitter fruit and not the sweet; and then the veil will fall utterly, and he will give up his freedom and become a slave of desire. Therefore be warned, you who are but turning towards the life of occultism. *Learn now that there is no cure for desire,*

*no cure for the love of reward, no cure for the misery of longing,  
save in the fixing of the sight and hearing upon that which is  
invisible and soundless.*

But the invisible and soundless is impersonal, altruistic and of quite another nature than the perishable. It is the embodiment and exemplar of brotherhood. The laws of brotherhood have their greatest strength on the inner and hidden planes of being from where their projections descend the staircase of manifested existence. They have therefore to be understood, not in isolation but as the containers and roots of other laws. To realize Brotherhood *in actu* and as a corrective to vice and sin, its laws have to be studied in all aspects of the complex relationship that exists between man and nature and between man and man. When brotherhood is thus sensed in its vastness, it becomes evident that none can stand aside from the bad man or the foolish man. If he does, suffering that may at times border upon agony may be his. Wars have proved this beyond doubt. The bad man is still a link in the chain of brotherhood and he who foolishly shrinks away from him may find that the mantle of the bad man is thrown across his shoulders by nature herself; and the more his abhorrence, the more prolonged will be its presence round his shoulders. In all aspects of life, it will be found that self-righteousness destroys itself. It is one of the many forms of unbrotherliness. It takes one away from virtue and throws him wide open for the entry of vice.

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IN its positive form, *ahimsa* means the largest love, greatest charity. If I am a follower of *ahimsa*, I *must love* my enemy. I must apply the same rules to the wrong-doer who is my enemy or a stranger to me, as I would to my wrong-doing father or son. This active *ahimsa* necessarily includes truth and fearlessness.

—M. K. GANDHI

## ENTANGLEMENTS OF LUST

IF, as the *Gita* has it, man's salvation lies in his performing all acts without aiming for a longed-for reward, why does he go ahead and do the exact opposite? Recognizing the truth behind the injunction, he still ignores it, and seemingly against his will he goes on doing that which he knows he should not do. Can he by some means within his reach break the hold of the terrifying power which shakes his grasp of the nobler aspirations and forces him to revel in that which to his own saner view must appear reprehensible? All true scriptures give the assurance that the individual can free himself from all enslavement if he follows the time-honoured Rules that have been formulated by the Wise to help him guide his own walk in life. The Rules have to be observed and the life set on a spiritual course. But this is easier said than done, for, it is well-nigh impossible to adopt the Rules unless the money-changers (those who barter one type of desire for another) are driven out of the temple.

When the mind is filled to capacity with sense-heavy images, the thinking faculty gets energized to search avenues for gratification. In saner moments of relative calm, the reasoning faculty may display the keenness of its efficiency; but this notwithstanding, it still remains at the beck and call of the dominant desire, ready on the instant to abandon its preoccupation of the moment to engage instantly in exploiting any situation that can be turned to gratify that desire.

There are blind spots in the mind just as there are in vision and it is more the rule than the exception that a person's reasoning faculty at best puts up a tame resistance to the undesirable and then gives itself up entirely to the stronger pull that desire exerts. It thus comes about that he portrays in himself the play of two contrary forces, or to put it in clearer terms he uses the same force for either spiritual or devilish ends so that when one antagonistic side is strengthened, the other is by that very fact debilitated. A mind that is swamped by desire will refuse to accept any instruction

that demands its own abdication, and later its self-immolation.

It should be abundantly clear to most that from early childhood each person inherits a set of likes and dislikes. His attraction for the company of certain types of people and his inexplicable dislike for others seem to be a heritage which strangely does not appear to descend from his parents. It rather points to a more remote linkage, a gathering of threads from previous lives, a balance—debit or credit—drawn down from the accounts of lives recorded in ledgers probably of centuries past. The attraction so inherited may sometimes be strong and almost overpowering, and exist for forbidden pleasures and sinful pursuits, and has to be acknowledged and recognized. Such undesirable tendencies which like searing winds blow into this life from matrices formed in other lives appear as mental deformities or as malaise of the soul. They cry for remedial treatment and, like physical ailments, require an active and enthusiastic participation by the patient for their cure.

The sympathies and antipathies that appear in life at early or advanced ages of a person are not something new and strange. All the lower kingdoms show marked sympathies and antipathies. These two forces can be traced in plant and mineral as of course markedly in animals. In fact all evolving life can be classified according to the degree of likes and dislikes which it exhibits. These two predilections are inherent in matter, are a product of its long evolutionary pilgrimage, and are inseparable from it in its manifold gyrations. They find their culmination in the matter which goes to make up the several material sheaths that the soul of man has to use for its sojourn upon earth. They are his by previous association and karmic affinity and unless he puts them under the guidance and governance of the divine within him, they will, like stampeding horses, carry him far from his destination, or worse still, throw him off altogether. In the Third Chapter of the *Gita*, Sri Krishna says that it is lust which instigates one to commit offences seemingly against his will and as if constrained by some secret force (III, 36-37). It is passion sprung from the quality of *Rajas* (turbulence) which is insatiable and full of sin. It is in fact a ravaging

hunger for things to be clasped or shunned, and because this desire-passion is a property of matter itself, it remains beyond the control of one's material aspects. The desire of the lust-ridden person becomes sin the instant that it forces its will upon the incarnated self and makes it intoxicated and obsessed by the idea that his felicity lies in its attainment.

Lust is not something that one picks up or catches from the wayside. It is there within the matter that one uses and is an intimate part of it. "As the flame is surrounded by smoke, and a mirror by rust, and as the womb envelops the foetus, so is the universe surrounded by this passion. By this...is discriminative knowledge surrounded" (III, 38-39). It is thus "lust" which becomes the constant enemy of the wise man, the more so as it forces him to do actions with a self-centred motive. The more one gets involved in things of matter, the more closely does he establish a contact with the turbulent element (*Rajas*) of matter, opening himself wide to the entanglements of lust. By constant association with this turbulent property of matter, the person loosens his hold upon the spiritual.

"Lust" has its empire and dominion over the senses and organs, the thinking faculty and even the discriminating part of the individual. It has therefore the power to force him away from the path of meditation; turn him from altruism and justice and inject into his decisions the taint of an unquenchable longing for rewards. Lust finds a ready inlet into his citadel through his senses and organs and rebels most vehemently against his efforts to liberate these from its domain. Since knowledge and spiritual discernment are impossible to the person in the presence of "lust," his preliminary efforts have to be directed towards its removal from hitherto entrenched positions. This, no instrumentation fabricated of matter will be able to achieve. As in the case of Arjuna, the Mahabharata war has to be fought with celestial weapons. The dominating force and the harnessing endeavour must arise from that part of the person which is unaffected by matter and things of matter.

"Lust" alone is described in the *Gita* as "this sin which is the destroyer of knowledge and of spiritual discernment" (III, 41). It is

said to have dominion over the senses, the thinking principle and even the discriminating faculty. It has the means to cloud discrimination and delude the Lord of the body. It therefore follows that though resistance can be offered at each of these points, the force to scotch and then to kill it must come from the immortal and unchanging aspect of the person. No mortal aspect of matter has the power to resist and overpower the force of spirit. Therefore says the *Gita* (III, 42):

The senses and organs are esteemed great, but the thinking self is greater than they. The discriminating principle (*Buddhi*) is greater than the thinking self, and that which is greater than the discriminating principle is He (the Supreme Spirit, the true Ego).

Herein lies an instruction which is not often taken to heart. It in effect lays down the line of control. The senses must submit their data to the reasoning faculty which in turn must bring its findings for the higher scrutiny that discrimination can bring to bear upon the information. The result of study through these various instruments must then be brought before the Real Self that overbroods the whole. The directive received from It has then to travel down the same stairways until it reaches the senses and the organs, which on receiving the divine guidance have the duty to act in obedience to its behests. In this ascending and descending pathway, there can be no place or relevance for human intention (VI, 2). To one who has not reached beyond intellection to *Buddhi* (Discrimination), the living existence of the Self remains only an exercise of a mental imaging, the product of a belief rooted in faith. But this faith is not blind. There exists the testimony of the Wise in all ages. This Self must have a voice, this Self must have the omniscience that can give one unerring answer to any problem and can therefore repel lust and its progeny ignorance in the same manner that light eradicates darkness.

That its voice is not heard by the many or that the Self is rarely referred to in the pronouncements of those whom the age calls learned is no proof of its non-existence. In this age, the thinking

self is so extolled, its powers so coveted, that even the discriminating faculty finds but few votaries. There are very few persons—hardly any in public life—who have the power to discern the true from the false, the ever-fleeting from the everlasting. With this faculty dulled and even atrophied, the dividing line between the gold of life and the tinsel glitter of things is barely perceived. Vice is condoned (the modern term is “permissive”) and is oftentimes hailed as a virtue and a necessity. The abomination behind vivisection is not seen and the wanton slaughter of animals and even of men is glossed over under the name of “sport,” “war” and “scientific experiment.” The modern man gives such false values to asceticism, truthfulness, poverty (not insolvency) and obedience that public assessment of merit in human endeavour is no longer correct.

Even if the thinking be flawless and the discrimination true, the individual reaches no high estate until he makes his obeisance to the sovereign Lord within. This SELF has its own programme for the incarnated ray. The lessons and the experiences for this life have all been planned during the grand prospective review that precedes birth. Deviation from these is obstructive of the spiritual effort, a departure from the discipline set for the incarnation. The Supreme alone has to be recognized as the asylum and the friend. The importance given to the programme set for the incarnation can be judged from the statement: “It is better to do one's own duty, even though it be devoid of excellence, than to perform another's duty well. It is better to perish in the performance of one's own duty; the duty of another is full of danger.” (III, 35)

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YOU think that good is hating what is bad. What is bad is the hating mind itself.

—BON KAI (Buddhist monk)

## THE LOFTY TOP

THE last of the Paramitas mentioned in *The Voice of the Silence*, or rather the culmination of the previous six, is *Prajna*. For those desirous of further advancement, those who wish to become the teachers of men, there are four additional Paramita-Perfections. These are: (1) *Upaya-kaushalya*, or the skilful means of helping others; (2) *Prani-dhana*, or Vow—to destroy evil and pain, to learn the Truth, to save all beings and lead them to Brotherhood; (3) *Bala*, the gaining of strength or power, and (4) *Jnana*, the gaining of Knowledge.

*Prajna*, we are told, “makes of a man a God, creating him a Bodhisattva.” In *The Secret Doctrine* we learn that *Prajna* is the “capacity of perception” and that it exists in seven different aspects corresponding to the seven conditions of matter. We can therefore see that this *Paramita* leads us to the highest stage, the stage of full perception—perception of things as they *are* and not as they *appear*—unaffected by any worldly experience of our own.

Perhaps a glimpse of what this stage is like can be had by reading *The Light of Asia's* description of the Buddha's Enlightenment in “the middle watch,” when he attained “the 'fourth' degree of *Dhyana* (the seventh in esoteric teachings).”

What differentiates the *Dhyana* Path and the *Aryahata* Path (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 75) is that the former does not go beyond the cessation of individual life, whereas he who treads the latter is able to hear the voice of Divine Compassion which speaks of “everlasting right, and fitness of all things, the law of Love eternal.”

The terrible tragedy of the Path of Liberation seems to be this. All the suffering undergone to reach the *Dhyana* haven only brings partial success. The whole fruition of the suffering brings selfish bliss. On the other hand, one who strives along the *Aryahata* Path suffers *for* others; he travails on the Path because of his wish to live to benefit mankind, and every step is permeated through and through with Love Immortal, *Dana*. It is this that enables him, in his hour of triumph, when he has reached the goal, to hear the

voice of his suffering fellow men. The cry of pain that he has heard throughout has pierced his heart, and therefore at the moment of triumph the thought comes uppermost, “Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?”

At this stage the victor visualizes his past lives of suffering and knows that they were worth while; but he faces now the fact that if he lets the voice of the world's suffering overcome the urge for Bliss, he will have to “wed woe.” He sees the truth that through future *Kalpas* he will remain “wedged as a stone with countless other stones which form the 'Guardian Wall,’” the Wall which shields mankind. All that he has gained must be used for others; he can use nothing for himself. All he can do is to invite suffering on himself by shielding others. It is because of the undercurrent of love working in him all through, that when he accomplishes the final Renunciation the whole of Nature responds with a thrill of joyous awe.

This is a wonderful idea. We hear of the Unity of all manifestation, the inseparableness of every tiny atom of life from the Whole, since all are manifestations of the one Golden Light. Hence the success of one must be felt by all, however low in the scale. Speaking of this from another angle, a writer has said that “a ray of wisdom may enlighten the universe and glow into remotest centuries.”

If we could realize more the Enlightenment of the Buddha or the vision Arjuna had of the true nature of Krishna, we might be enabled to build into our consciousness now and here some of the feeling of the unity that underlies all.

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THE fountain of all knowledge is in every one of us.

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Did climatic upheavals, such as scorching droughts, bring about the collapse of civilizations in the past, or was it cultural factors? Recent studies have revived this old debate. Daniel Grossman writes in *Scientific American* (December 2002) :

For decades, the dominant view has been that cultural factors—war, religion, trade, palace intrigue—explain civilizations' ups and downs. According to this view, if the climate changes, humans adapt. "People cope with remarkable tenacity," explains Karl W. Butzer, an archaeologist and geographer at the University of Texas at Austin.

Now the pendulum is swinging back to an earlier view that emphasizes geophysical factors. The shift is fueled in part by discoveries about the climate since the end of the last ice age, a period known as the Holocene....The discoveries encouraged researchers to seek detailed regional climate information by drilling sea and lake sediment and glacier cores around the world. Archaeologists began matching up important transitions in civilizations with these climate records.... But many researchers are unwilling to cast climate in a starring role again.

There is more to the decline of civilizations than just climatic and other physical factors. Cyclic laws are ever at work, and what Mr. Judge says about the dying out of races is equally true of the collapse of civilizations. In his article "Why Races Die Out" (reprinted from *The Path* for October 1891 in THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT for September 1968, he wrote :

The theory outlined by H. P. Blavatsky is that when the Egos inhabiting any race have reached the limit of experience possible in it, they begin to desert that race environment and seek for another, which, in the sure processes of nature's evolution, is certain to be in existence elsewhere on the globe. The Egos then having left the old families, the latter begin to die out through sterility attacking the females, so that fewer and fewer bodies are made for inhabitancy. This goes on from century to century *pari passu* with mental decay....

At the time when the first steps toward old age and decrepitude are taken by such a race, the eternal cyclic laws that always bring about a universal correspondence between the affairs of man and the operations of cosmos cause cataclysms to happen, and even in the seeming height of a nation's power great numbers of bodies are destroyed....After the lapse of more years the natural cataclysms will increase in violence and extent, engulfing more and more millions of bodies and preparing for other cycles....

Hence I conclude that, like families, Races disappear when they are of no further use in the gaining of experience by the great pilgrim soul.

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Nature renders service to humans in innumerable ways. There are powerful economic reasons for protecting the natural environment; but, argues Edward O. Wilson, evaluating individual species solely by their known practical value is "business accounting in the service of barbarism" (*Wilson Quarterly*, Winter 2002). There are deeper moral reasons as well which should compel us to take responsibility for the natural world, says the writer, who is Pellegrino University Research Professor and Honorary Curator in Entomology at Harvard University's Museum of Comparative Zoology:

Over the past half-billion years, the planet lost perhaps one species per million species each year, including everything from mammals to plants. Today, the annual rate of extinction is 1,000 to 10,000 times faster. If nothing more is done, one-fifth of all the plant and animal species now on earth could be gone or on the road to extinction by 2030. Being distracted and self-absorbed, as is our nature, we have not yet fully understood what we are doing. But future generations, with endless time to reflect, will understand it all, and in painful detail. As awareness grows, so will their sense of loss....

A much greater dependence on artificial means—in other words, environmental prostheses—puts at risk not just the

biosphere but humanity itself. Most environmental scientists believe that the shift has already been taken too far, lending credit to the folk injunction “Don't mess with Mother Nature.” The lady is our mother all right, and a mighty dispensational force as well. Ancient and vulnerable, she will not tolerate the undisciplined appetite of her gargantuan infant much longer...

Perhaps it is enough to argue that the preservation of the living world is necessary to our long-term material prosperity and health. But there is another, and in some ways deeper, reason not to let the natural world slip away. It has to do with the defining qualities and self-image of the human species. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that new species can one day be engineered and stable ecosystems built from them. With that distant prospect in mind, should we go ahead and, for short-term gain, allow the original species and ecosystems to be lost? Yes? Erase Earth's living history? Then also burn the art galleries, make cordwood of the musical instruments, pulp the musical scores, erase Shakespeare, Beethoven, and Goethe, because all these, or at least fairly good substitutes, can be re-created.

The issue, like all great decisions, is moral. Science and technology are what we can do; morality is what we agree we should or should not do. The ethic from which moral decisions spring is a norm or standard of behaviour in support of a value, and value in turn depends on purpose. Purpose, whether personal or global, whether urged by conscience or graven in sacred script, expresses the image we hold of ourselves and our society. A conservation ethic is that which aims to pass on to future generations the best part of the nonhuman world. To know this world is to gain a proprietary attachment to it. To know it well is to love and take responsibility for it.

It is in man's own interest to become a co-worker with nature instead of ever trying to exploit it.

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In the coming years, NASA and other space agencies are

expected to intensify the search for life on Mars and elsewhere in the solar system. But the search is complicated by the fundamental question: What is life? (*National Geographic*, January 2003)

NASA has been using the definition: “Life is a self-sustained chemical system capable of undergoing Darwinian evolution.” Other scientists have circulated their own definitions, such as, “Life is a chemical system able to replicate itself through autocatalysis and to make mistakes that gradually increase the efficiency of the autocatalysis.” Still others say that life tends to elude capture by any single definition. They are of the view that “we will never have a good definition of life as long as we have only one example, Earth life.”

The idea of universality of life is now gaining increasing acceptance among scientists. At the same time it is admitted that life on other stars cannot be judged by the standard of terrestrial life. What then is life? Is it just a chemical system? Says an Occult Commentary: “*From the ONE LIFE, formless and Uncreate, proceeds the Universe of lives*” (*The Secret Doctrine*, I, 250). “LIFE...radiates from the summits of the Unreachable, to become a universally diffused Essence on the manifested planes of Existence” (*S.D.*, I, 59). H.P.B. wrote in an Editor's Note in *The Theosophist* for August 1883, under the title “Transmigration of the Life Atoms”:

Life, the occultist says, is the eternal uncreated energy, and it alone represents in the infinite universe, that which the physicists have agreed to name, the principle, or the law of continuity, though they apply it only to the endless development of the conditioned. But since modern science admits through her most learned professors that “energy has as much claim to be regarded as an objective reality as matter itself” and that life, according to the occult doctrine, is the *one* energy acting Proteus-like under the most varied forms, the occultists have a certain right to use such a phraseology. Life is ever present in the atom of matter, whether organic or inorganic, conditioned or unconditioned—a difference that the occultists do not accept. Their doctrine is that life is as much present in the inorganic as

in the organic matter: when life-energy is active in the atom, that atom is organic; when dormant or latent, then the atom is inorganic. Therefore, the expression “life atom” though apt in one sense to mislead the reader, is not incorrect after all, since occultists do not recognize that anything in nature can be inorganic and know of no “dead atoms,” whatever meaning science may give to the adjective. The alleged *law* of Biogenesis is the result of the ignorance of the man of science of *occult* physics. It is accepted because the man of science was hitherto unable to find the necessary means to awaken into activity dormant life in what he terms an inorganic atom: hence the fallacy that a living thing can only be produced from a living thing, as though there ever was such a thing as *dead* matter in Nature! (*She Being Dead Yet Speaketh*, pp. 134-35)

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The love of freedom is innate in man, but conceptions of freedom differ. We need to enlarge our conception of its nature and functions, says Manoj Das (*The Times of India*, February 18):

The 20th century has been one of the most memorable periods in history. Imperialism, colonialism and feudalism folded up and monarchy died a natural death, showing that however powerful a tradition may be, it becomes redundant once its role in social evolution is over. The driving force and the foremost objective of that process is greater freedom for mankind.

If the time-spirit introduced democracy and socialism in several nations, others imbibed them spontaneously. Science and technology made difficult tasks easy, allowing us more time. Feminism paved the way for half of mankind's emancipation from ancient taboos and prohibitions. What the 20th century clearly established is, in fact, the essence of a bio-psychological need inherent in humanity.

The struggle for freedom begins in infancy. The urge behind the child striving to walk is an urge for freedom of movement; behind its efforts at articulation is the urge for freedom of

expression. As we grow, we also realize that much of what we understand as freedom is a state of mind.

Freedom, therefore, is a relative experience. Freedom at the physical plane is far less significant than freedom at subtler planes....Freedom without the right kind of knowledge can be ridiculous as well as dangerous....

True freedom is liberation from ego, and not its licentious demonstration. It cannot be tasted unless one transcends one's ego, or at least becomes conscious of the inevitability of this process.

Sooner or later one has to achieve this transcendence. For most of us it is a long and painful process. For some, nature accelerates the process through disenchantment with one's ego....

Most values we live by today can be different if we achieve freedom from ego and ignorance. The 20th century blessed us with freedom external. Should there be a collective aspiration, the current century could well reveal to us freedom internal, which alone can render the former meaningful.

Individual freedom grows out of individual self-control. Liberty is different from licence. There could not be any real freedom except through self-mastery. Says *The Voice of the Silence*: “The way to final freedom is within thy SELF. That way begins and ends outside of Self.”

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It is hoped that the ban on human cloning in the U.S. will encourage other nations to do the same. A news report reads:

After a lengthy debate on science and human life, a bill endorsed by President George W. Bush has been passed banning human cloning and sentencing violators to prison and fines as high as US\$ one million. US legislators decided to ban all cloning even as some urged for an exception so researchers can continue to work towards cures for diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and diabetes.

Lawmakers in the House maintained that all human cloning

research must be banned because a cloned embryo is a human even before implantation in a womb, and to destroy it for research would be immoral.

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In a previous book, *Rattling the Cage*, Steven Wise argued the case for giving animals legal rights. His follow-up, *Drawing the Line: Science and the Case for Animal Rights*, is an answer to the questions often asked him about which animals would qualify.

Wise draws a parallel between the fight for animal rights and the formidable obstacles that faced the opponents of human slavery. Slavery is not a term applied to animals, but they are considered property and that is enough for Wise to remark that, “non-human animals are enslaved by everyone.” His thesis seems to be that the more intelligent an animal, the more it is entitled to rights.

But even where less intelligent animals are concerned, can there be any justification for cruelty? The laws framed to prevent or minimize the cruelties meted out to animals have many loopholes and man's viciousness continues unabated. The apathetic attitude of people towards this problem is shocking. Even pet owners often ill-treat their pets. Animals trained for circuses are also subjected to much cruelty. However, international co-operation and support has resulted in many successes against the animal circus industry, reports *Animal Defender* (No. 28).

Cruelty is always bad, under whatever attempted justification, and in every case among the injured is the perpetrator himself of the cruel act. H.P.B. pointed out in *Lucifer* for May 1888, answering a question as to why animals suffer, “Every philosophical Eastern system...inculcates kindness and protection to every living creature.”

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