

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 70, No. 2

December 1999

SACRIFICES AND SACRIFICE

[Reprinted from THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, June 1957.]

O hapless race of men, when that they charged the gods with such acts and coupled with them bitter wrath! What groanings did they then beget for themselves, what wounds for us, what tears for our children's children! No act is it of piety to be often seen with veiled head to turn to a stone and approach every altar and fall prostrate on the ground and spread out the palms before the statues of the gods and sprinkle the altars with much blood of beasts and link vow on to vow, but rather to be able to look on all things with a mind at peace.

—LUCRETIUS : *On the Nature of Things*, Book V

THE great text called the *Bhagavad-Gita* has a universal appeal to politician and poet, philosopher and mystic, aspirant and Adept. Mr. Judge has referred to it as the study of Adepts. To each mind the *Gita* has something to offer; and, what is more, its deeply profound teachings have their simple aspect which touches a person, however short-sighted or shallow-minded he may be. Among these teachings there is one about the oft-cited triad of *Dana-Tapas-Yagna*—Charity; effort at pure living and noble thinking, which is conveyed by the almost untranslatable term *Tapas*; and Sacrifice, which stands generally for *Yagna*, are reiterated and recommended for practice.

We want to consider the value and importance of *Yagna*—Sacrifice. The term has a hoary background and the original

concept forms a grandiose Mystery Teaching. Today sacrifice is much extolled, but what prevails is a materialistic view which misleads people. The social aspect of sacrifice with money (the *Dravya-Yagna* referred to in the *Gita*, IV, 28) is today more a veneer than a reality; the veneer strikes the eye of the populace but does not fool its heart. Sacrificing, out of one's abundance, a pittance of money, even with a good motive—though often it is coloured by selfishness and the desire for recognition and reward—is not true sacrifice. Similarly, the religious aspect of *Yagna* is today a superstition, and sometimes a gross, degenerated superstition; e.g., animal sacrifice, practised by the orthodox followers of several religions.

Great Teachers like Krishna and Buddha, Pythagoras and Plato, and others in East and West alike, have ever attempted to bring men and women back to a rational understanding of *Dana*, *Tapas* and *Yagna* and to their clean and correct practice. It is part of the mission of Theosophy to rescue the grand concept embodied in these terms; in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky much about them is offered for the consideration of students and for the exercise of aspirants and devotees.

The prevailing notion of sacrifice which is respected in our civilization is epitomized as service. Hospitals for the sick in body, asylums for minds diseased, rescue houses for prostitutes, orphanages, homes for the aged and the infirm, and such like, represent the services rendered by organized bodies sustained by donations which the wealthy take out of their purse, but which do not touch the quantity or the quality of their sumptuous breakfast, their well-stocked wardrobes or their many forms of pleasures.

Once a Master wrote to a good-hearted German lady:

You have offered yourself for the Red Cross; but, sister, there are sicknesses and wounds of the Soul that no Surgeon's art can cure. Shall you help us teach mankind that, that the soul-sick must heal themselves? Your action will be your response.

From one point of view such social service and sacrifice is superior to the degrading forms of religious sacrifices—from the

burning of candles at the Roman Catholic altars to the killing of goats, etc., at Hindu temples. Jews, Muslims and the followers of other sectarian creeds have similar superstitious "sacrificing," some more, some less objectionable in method.

The present-day degrading superstition of animal sacrifice was practised as a rite of magic in an earlier epoch. W. Q. Judge in his *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* refers to the sacrifices established for the Jews by Moses (p. 87), and also makes mention of the "peculiar explanation" that has been given of the same (p. 88). That blood has certain occult properties, and that it has the power of absorption and assimilation, was known, and so was made use of in certain magic rites.

"Atonement through blood," says *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 699), "has been too long in the way, and thus was universal truth sacrificed to the insane conceit of us little men."

The knowledge of the magic rite was forgotten, but the evil practice of killing doves and goats has persisted. Orthodox Jews may quote the example of Cain who brought to God "the fruit of the ground" as sacrifice, which did not please the deity; whereas Abel offered "the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect" (*Genesis*, IV, 4-5). To understand this teaching literally is wrong; for to accept it literally means favouring the vice of cruelty. The allegorical and mystical interpretation should be sought.

In India also the magic rites of blood offerings were known and practised; today the knowledge is gone but the practice continues—a degradation which brings home forcefully the teaching of Lucretius, from which an extract is quoted at the beginning of this article.

Theosophy cannot but condemn every species of animal sacrifice. The great Buddha, too, condemned such irreligious action. This was some 2,500 years ago, but even today India reeks with the blood of animals murdered for sacrifices or butchered for food. Cruelty is a sin against God and Nature, and of the many forms of this sin, the killing of beasts and birds is not difficult to stop. In the

name of sport also the sin flourishes, and states and churches connive at it.

But go further back in India's history. Let us see what Krishna has to say about *Yagna*—Sacrifice—in the *Gita*.

In the Third Chapter the instruction of Prajapati, the Lord of all peoples on earth, is quoted. The kinship of man to the other kingdoms, to the invisible forces and with spiritual intelligences, is stressed. According to what is said, most of us are "thieves," robbing Nature and hoping to go unpunished!

In the Fourth Chapter many kinds and modes of sacrifices are referred to. Born of action are all sacrifices; to gods and godlings, to archangels and angels, to *Ameshaspentas* and *Yazatas*, to the Supreme Spirit under different names, objects are offered as sacrifices. Senses and organs and vitality of body are sacrificed by one mode or another. But it is taught that all such actions purified of their blemishes culminate in Wisdom. Men and women offer their belongings and possessions; such offerings of objects are not enough, so some religious practitioners offer their senses and organs and even breathing; all such ultimately, in one life or through many lives, come to see the value of study, discipline and knowledge as objects of sacrifice; ultimately they come to realize the basic verity:

The sacrifice through spiritual knowledge is superior to sacrifice made with material things; every action without exception is comprehended in spiritual knowledge.

(*Gita*, IV, 33)

And then, the soul of all practices in spiritual living is proclaimed—that through enquiry and search, humility and service, the disciple is taught by the Seers and Knowers of the Essence of things.

This is the sublime goal, and everyone without exception is provided a chance to realize it by bountiful Nature and by the merciful Law.

In the Seventeenth Chapter sacrifices of three types are described, according to their characteristics, derived from the *gunas*, attributes

of matter. Motives and methods are involved in any act of sacrifice; Theosophy or the Wisdom-Religion reiterates the teaching offered by the Knowers of Karma. In verses 11 to 13 very definite words are used, and the aspirant to the Inner Life should perceive the superiority of *sattvic* sacrifices, in which both body and consciousness are involved. Dnyaneshwar points to this in his commentary on the verse.

Orthodox Hindus have for long limited the term *Yagna* to religious sacrifices, with *mantras* and *mudras* which have become mummerly and gestures. *Yagna* as a principle, as an institution to be used and applied in daily life to mental, moral, verbal and bodily acts, is completely forgotten. Krishna tried to restore its use by those who aspire to tread the Path which leads to the Temple of Initiation.

Therefore we find that there is another teaching on the subject of sacrifice which the *Gita* puts forward in the Ninth Chapter which deals with the Secret Science of *Raja Yoga*, the Royal—*i.e.*, the Superior—Way of Living the Inner Life. The prescription offered for the performance of sacrifices is simple and forthright. It is the way for those who aspire to rise above the three *gunas*. The *Gita* recommends in more than one place that we should rise above the effects of the *gunas*, including *sattva guna*. This sacrifice of the Ninth Chapter, described in verses 26 to 28, follows a very telling piece of instruction in the preceding verse; it is the fruition of the different sacrifices previously mentioned:

Those who devote themselves to the gods (*Devas*) go to the gods; the worshippers of the pitris go to the pitris; those who worship the evil spirits (*Bhutas*) go to them, and my worshippers come to me. (IX, 25)

The highest kind of sacrifice is that offered to "Me," says Krishna. This "Me" has two recognized aspects—(a) man's own Higher Self, and (b) the real Guru, the embodiment of the Supreme Spirit, the Most High.

The *Adhi Yagna*, the Great Sacrifice, has a psychological or microcosmical aspect and also a Theogonic or Macrocosmical one;

both can be better comprehended by the metaphysical and the purely spiritual aspect.

As students and practitioners of the Secret Science, the life and labour of all aspirants should be dedicated to rising above the three qualities of matter, using the *Sattva* quality as a stepping-stone to the higher state.

What state of consciousness should one have to observe the simple-sounding but profound injunctions of Verses 26 to 28 of the Ninth Chapter?

The striver for Supreme Renunciation should offer every thought, word and deed to the Shining Self within. That Self is to receive, by the blessing of the Gracious Guru, the Light from "the star which is thy goal," says *The Voice of the Silence*; and H.P.B. explains in a footnote that "the star that burns overhead is 'the star of initiation.' " This initiation, it is said, reveals the Mystery of Compassion Absolute and its living expression in Those who are the Embodied Great Renouncers. Our one aspiration and only hope should be to attain to that vision by the Self of the True, the Real.

The effulgent end has a beginning. The first step is in front of us, to be taken with knowledge and daring now, today. Leaves of small and passing acts, flowers of beautiful acts and fruits of creative acts should become the offerings to the *Ishwara* in man. That Lord within is ever intent on purifying and elevating the many intelligences on whom he depends; they give him the opportunity to learn and to teach. All these living intelligences, the deities presiding over our own senses and organs, must be made pure by the baptismal water which transubstantiates the gross into the subtle, and makes each deed, each word, each thought, a vibrant sacrament.

Each aspirant has to perform daily actions in the natural course of his life, using his own free will and knowledge. He has to eat to build his body as a shrine of his soul; again, he has to sacrifice himself to fulfil his obligations to his inner life and self-discipline; further, he voluntarily gives of himself and his possessions as gifts—all these are acts of austerity, of mortification, resulting from his *tapas*-meditation, held out as silent, secret and sacred oblations to the Inner Ruler, and to the Guru to whose bidding he

has devoted his life and whose Hand is extended in protecting love over him.

By this process the secular life is made holy; the performance of this continuous *Yagna* or sacrifice is the means whereby the good and pious soul who has hitherto undergone human evolution on the Path of Forthgoing, *Pravritti Marga*, enters the *Nivritti Marga*, the Path of Return. No more need he propitiate the *Devas* by rites and ceremonies, following the precedent of Daksha, the Archetypal ritualist and procreator of the good but mortal man. He now comes under the regenerative power of the Egyptian Thoth, the "Thrice-great Hermes," Shiva-Mahadeva, the Maha Yogi, the Patron Saint of all Yogis, the Archetypal Renouncer, the Teacher *par excellence* of Immortality. He is called "the first divine physician," "for he cures the disease called mortality"; and so he is "the auspicious."

The highest aspect of *Yagna-Vidya* is described by H.P.B. in *Isis Unveiled* (I, xlv):

"The Yajna" exists as an invisible thing at all times; it is like the latent power of electricity in an electrifying machine, requiring only the operation of a suitable apparatus in order to be elicited. It is supposed to extend from the *Ahavaniya* or sacrificial fire to the heavens, forming a bridge or ladder by means of which the sacrificer can communicate with the world of gods and spirits, and even ascend when alive to their abodes.

The *Yajna* is again one of the forms of the Akasa, and the mystic word calling it into existence and pronounced mentally by the initiated Priest is the *Lost Word* receiving impulse through WILL-POWER.

But *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 169) gives warning:

Without the help of Atma-Vidya, the other three [*Yagna-Vidya*, *Maha-Vidya* and *Guhya-Vidya*] remain no better than *surface* sciences, geometrical magnitudes having length and breadth, but no thickness. They are like the soul, limbs, and mind of a sleeping man: capable of mechanical motions, chaotic dreams and even sleep-walking, of producing visible effects, but stimulated by instinctual not intellectual causes, least of all by fully conscious spiritual impulses. A good deal can be given

out and explained from the three first-named sciences. But unless the key to their teachings is furnished by Atma-Vidya, they will remain for ever like the fragments of a mangled text-book, like the adumbrations of great truths, dimly perceived by the most spiritual, but distorted out of all proportion by those who would nail every shadow to the wall.

The good man who lives the good life to the best of his ability and practises *sattvic* sacrifices must in course of time understand the occult significance of the *Yagna* of *Raja Yoga* taught in the Ninth Chapter of the *Gita*, and thus begin his return journey. Whither will he turn? To the heavenly home of Pure Bliss—Light, Peace or Nirvana? Or to the mysterious retreat of some Great Renouncer of Nirvana itself, there to acquire the Secret of secrets, how to render endless Service to Humanity through many *yugas*, many *kalpas*? There, too, he will learn the hidden meaning and power of *Yagna* and also the right and righteous use of it. The Secret of Service is supreme and is the continuous living out of the *Maha Yagna* allegorized in *The Voice of the Silence*:

Self-doomed to live through future Kalpas, unthanked and unperceived by men; wedged as a stone with countless other stones which form the "Guardian Wall," such is thy future if the seventh Gate thou passest. Built by the hands of many Masters of Compassion, raised by their tortures, by their blood cemented, it shields mankind, since man is man, protecting it from further and far greater misery and sorrow.

No civilization can grow unless fanaticism, bloodshed and brutality stop.

Civilization, true civilization, should mean the power of taking the animal-man out of his sense-life.

Civilization is the manifestation of the divinity in man.

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

THE SEASON FOR RESOLVES

WHATEVER their nationality or religion, all people make good resolutions on the occasion of their New Year. It is a universal custom, and that itself is an indication that at the back of it there must be a meaning, useful and practical. However, as H.P.B. has indicated, there is a connection between the phases through which the earth passes and the phases in a person's life, and any time between Christmas and Easter is good enough for making resolves—and fulfilling them.

In ancient days, the makers of calendars were Wise Men, divine Kings, Raja-Rishis, and they made very accurate calendars. Of these there were two main types—lunar calendars and solar calendars. Corruptions and deviations have taken place, but in each calendar, however disfigured, there still exists some basis of fact and truth.

One very practical custom the ancient makers of calendars introduced was the observance of certain festivals, certain days of religious observances, and so on, and through these they tried to impart knowledge of occult truths to the masses. New Year's Day, now arbitrarily fixed to be January 1, is neither strictly astronomical nor strictly astrological. The present calendar is a somewhat distorted and malformed copy of ancient calendars. Astronomically, both December 21—the Winter Solstice Day—and March 21—the Day of the Spring Equinox—have their own significance, and the one or the other was observed by the ancients as their New Year's Day.

The science of Occultism looks upon the astronomical phenomena of the seasons and all others as but the visible and outer expressions of invisible and psychic events. The seasons, days and nights, lunar and solar months, etc., all have an invisible aspect. Real astrology, now not known outside the circle of Initiated Occultists, takes cognizance of the invisible aspects of visible astronomical events. The calendar-makers of old, possessing this inner knowledge, named certain festivals as fit occasions when resolutions could and should be made. Occultism teaches that

during the period of the year we are now in, the psychic, invisible life of the earth is more suitable for taking spiritual vows and making spiritual resolves. This is not mere fancy, and we should try to understand *how* and *why* it is so.

Two examples will make the *how* of it more clear—one from the science of botany-horticulture, the other from embryology-eugenics.

Everyone knows that for getting certain kinds of flowers or fruits we have to wait for the proper season. An experienced gardener knows when certain seeds should be sown, and how long it will take after the sowing to get the flowers or fruits. The wise makers of calendars, knowing the invisible psychic aspects of the seasons, were in a position to know that it is in this season, when the sun moves northwards, that seeds of good resolutions can be sown if we want a healthy crop out of those seeds. These are spiritual seeds, to be sown in the soil of our mind and heart, and if properly looked after, beneficent results are bound to accrue.

Take the second example: In the Laws of Manu and other ancient codes, young married couples are given precise instructions, based on the lunar calendar, in the matter of marital relationships. Those old Lawgivers were master-eugenists and they possessed the knowledge that our modern scientists are but beginning to seek. These ancient texts tell us how certain days in the lunar month are auspicious for conception to take place. As with bodily procreation, so also for spiritual and moral procreation there is a proper time, and the ancient calendar-makers knew of this.

Like the botanist and the gardener of today, like the eugenist of ancient times, the great calendar-makers, familiar with the psychic and spiritual aspects of the seasons, tell us that with the Winter Solstice, when the sun begins to move northwards, the thought-power, will-power and desire-power of men and women are more potent for beneficent action, and if these human powers are properly exerted along spiritual lines, fragrant flowers and sweet fruits have a better chance of growing.

Turning to the question of *why* this season is more suitable for making resolutions, we can once again use the analogy of physical bodily procreation. What is a resolve? How can it be made really

effective? Many people wonder why they are not able to keep resolves. It is because they are working in the dark, without knowledge, and failure needs must result. To take a vow, or to make a resolve, is an act of spiritual procreation. In the act of procreation, whether bodily, mental, or spiritual, there is first the conception, then the period of silent working out of what is conceived, and then only the result at the time of birth. Without conception, there can be no result. A novelist, for example, conceives a plot, then he works at it for a period of time, and then only a novel is produced. So, making a resolve is like conception. The Soul is the father and the Mind is the mother, and unless we recognize this, our resolve will not be correctly made and we will be disappointed. Unless the soul fecundates the mind, the child of resolution cannot be conceived, or aborts no sooner it is conceived.

Yoga-Vidya or Occultism teaches that in this season spiritual conception should take place. The condition of our Soul and of our Mind are favourable to each other and to the whole of Nature, and therefore spiritual conception is easy and most promising. To complete our analogy, if making a resolve is like conception, let us not expect to see the result of that conception all at once. Between conception and birth there is a gestation period; so also between the making of a resolve and its ultimate fulfilment there is a period of waiting. Just as the period of gestation for different species varies, so also our mind, allied to *Kama*, desires and passions, has varied periods of fecundation by the Soul. Further, the Soul in us, the Soul that we *are*, is often weak, while in others it is impotent. Knowledge of Theosophy makes the Soul potent, and practice of Theosophy makes the mind fruitful. Many minds are barren, and unless they are cleansed of vice and blemish, no spiritual progeny is possible.

So there are definite conditions to be fulfilled. All of us are potent Souls; also all of us have minds capable of being fecundated by the Soul. So all that is necessary for us is to recognize the fundamental facts and proceed on that sure basis. Let us make it quite clear to ourselves that the Soul is the father who makes the resolve by impressing the mind with that resolve, and it must be a clear-cut impression. And the mind is the soil where the seed must

take root and find its sustenance and nourishment.

It is a mistaken notion that mere wishing or desiring is all that is needed. Nor will it help in the least to pray to some outside God and say, "Oh Lord, do this or that for me!" Yet such notions do prevail and are the main cause of failure in the keeping and fulfilment of resolutions. It is not mere lip-professions, but evoking the will of the Soul that will help. Resolutions are acts of will, and will-power has to be exerted. Unless the Soul, *i.e.*, the Real Man, *wills*, there can be no result.

So the first act is to use our spiritual Will, *i.e.*, the Will belonging to our Soul. To do this, it is necessary to grasp that our desires, good or bad, are *not* the Soul; again, our thoughts and our mind are *not* the Soul; mind is the vehicle of the Soul; Soul uses the mind. Soul is other than and beyond the desires and the mind. It is that Soul that must act, that must exert itself. Next, if the Soul has to exert its own Will, then it must, at least at the time of resolving, free itself from feelings and desires, thoughts and mind. This implies that our desires and feelings, our wishes and longings, have to be subdued. However difficult it may be to keep the feelings and thoughts permanently quiet, it is not beyond us to subdue the feelings and to quiet the mind for a few minutes, during which the act of resolving is to take place. So let us free ourselves, free our Soul, from the bondage and influence of feelings and thoughts, and we shall have, for the time being at least, the help that this quiet hour brings, especially during this season.

Having attained that comparative quiet, what shall we do next? Instead of praying to an outside, non-existent God, let us invoke the blessings of our own Higher Self. In each of us the Soul is connected with its Parent—the Higher Self. In the depths of our own Soul, there resides a Divinity. Between the Incarnated Soul and its Parent, the Higher Self or Divine Ego, there is a subtle connection. Plunged in the affairs of mundane existence, pulled by desires and pushed by thoughts, the Soul fails to secure for itself the help and guidance of its own Divinity. But on an occasion like the taking of a vow or the making of a resolve, when feelings are quieted, when the wandering mind has been made steady, it is not at all difficult

to establish a communication between our two selves—the Soul in the body and the Higher Self whose ray that Soul is. So that is the second act—invoking the God within. The Soul united to its Parent—that is the only answer to our true prayer.

This brings us to the actual subject of resolution. What shall we resolve? The Soul and its Parent, the Divine Self, are not concerned with worldly wealth or worldly success. These two godlike aspects of our being are only concerned with the harmonious evolution of every part of our nature. The Soul and the Spirit want the body to be a worthy instrument, a temple for themselves, who are divine. The divine in us wants an open mind and a clear brain to acquire and to retain knowledge, a pure heart to gather in the Light of Compassion and to let it stream forth for the healing of the wounded hearts of our fellowmen. The Spirit and the Soul have their own powers inherent in them, and whatever is necessary for the evolution and growth of all our principles can be obtained by them.

People do not want the wisdom and love of the Spirit-Soul; they desire money and power. Wealth and fame and power and all else are but ways and means of evolution, and the Soul may need them or may not need them. Let us leave it to the Spirit and the Soul, and only resolve to do the right, to do it nobly; resolve to do our duty unconcerned with the results. The performance of duty is the highest religion. Some might say that this is not the gospel for worldly people. Indeed it is not; but then let us not grumble and complain if desiring to remain worldly we are affected by diseases of the body, by the limitations of the mind, and the sorrows of the heart. Great spiritual Teachers have ever recommended control and mortification. And if we desire peace and happiness and joy for ourselves in the coming year, then let us ask ourselves whether there can be any real happiness in the worldly life. We have to live in the world, but need we be *of* the world? We have to face the struggles of daily living, but need we be overpowered and defeated in those struggles? We will have to encounter enemies from without and foes within our own blood, but should we not acquire knowledge to conquer hatred by love, to overcome lust by purity? Should our resolutions be such as would be forgotten by us in a few

days at the longest? Should they be such that they cannot but bring us disappointment and regrets?

A resolution worth considering is: "I will live according to my *Sva-Dharma*, the Religion of my own Self." If we try to be true to our own Self, or Soul, then happiness is bound to result, for that Spirit-Soul will turn every force of evil into good. This word, *Sva-Dharma*, is a noble word. It is the word Sri Krishna uses to awaken Arjuna to a realization of his own duty, his own work. "Regard thy *Sva-Dharma*," he says, "obey thy own duty, and thou shalt not waver" (II, 31). Now this is the resolution we should make. It is the resolve of a warrior-soul ready to face the battle of life; it is the resolve of the man of courage, of the man of discrimination who grows from strength to strength.

The value of this resolve is that it is like a master-key that opens every door, that fits every lock. In all circumstances, in all difficulties, *Sva-Dharma*, Soul-Duty, not only saves us, it also energizes us, nay, brings us inspiration. But it is a resolution that needs to be remembered and repeated every day. The mind is the womb wherein the resolve must be fed and entertained.

How different would life be for us if we sought the message of duty day by day! What zest, what enthusiasm, what joy, come to us in the performance of the small plain duties of life, for each duty opens up new vistas, new visions, and life assumes new and beautiful meanings! *Sva-Dharma* cleanses the brain, purifies the heart, and enables us to breathe the air of spiritual freedom. May all of us obtain the joy that *Sva-Dharma* offers in the coming year! May all of us feel the power of soul-freedom, the peace of soul-vision in the year 2000! And we surely will secure that power and peace if we prepare ourselves, resolve rightly, and keep our mental ears ever alert and attentive to listen to the message of Krishna and act accordingly. Very near to us all is that Lord of Light and Splendour; very close to us is that Eternal Flute-Player; and if we follow Him, our own life will be a blessed song, enlightening to ourselves and comforting to others.

THE HIDDEN REALM

LOVE of mystery seems to be an inherent characteristic of man. It lies at the root of science and its efforts to solve the mysteries of Nature, in the heart of the *yogi* who wishes to probe the Mystery of the Universe and of his own nature, and at the core of the religious man's belief in miracles. It is reflected today in mystery novels, in the interest shown in the solving of murders, in science fiction. The ordinary man is evincing great interest in the occult, the hidden, in those things which are a mystery to him but understandable by the man who has attained to knowledge. Owing to the professions and practices of many pseudo-occultists, the word "occult" has become associated in the minds of many with hocus-pocus.

From the Theosophical point of view, however, the hidden and the occult refer to that which is behind or at the core of manifestation and which is unseen by us. We are told that there are no unsolvable mysteries anywhere, and therefore what to us is the unseen or hidden side of Nature can be seen by those who have developed the power required for seeing it.

H.P.B. tells us in her first book, *Isis Unveiled*, that there are no miracles. Law works everywhere in the Cosmos, and therefore it is only when we are not familiar with the workings of Law that we say that this or that is a miracle. She adds that the laws governing the so-called "miracles" were once known and will again become known in the future. It is the stress laid by Theosophy on the possibility of gaining knowledge through personal effort and merit that makes it a living, vital philosophy of life. And this is strongly pointed out in *Isis Unveiled*:

The trinity of nature is the lock of magic, the trinity of man the key that fits it....

Magic, as a science, is the knowledge of these principles, and of the way by which the omniscience and omnipotence of the spirit and its control over nature's forces may be acquired by the individual while still in the body. Magic, as an art, is the application of this knowledge in practice....

One common vital principle pervades all things, and this is

controllable by the perfected human will.

We also learn of the characteristics of Nature that are useful to man—magnetism and electricity; an intimate and practical knowledge of these is the corner-stone of magic. Man, in his search for full knowledge which gives control over Nature, has to know all the "qualities, correlations and potencies" of these two powers which are everywhere in Nature as also in man. What will enable us to gain this knowledge and to wield the power it gives? The Will. *Isis Unveiled* has this to say about will-power:

The great, Universal Idea willed, and the cosmos sprang into existence. I *will*, and my limbs obey. I *will*, and, my thought traversing space, which does not exist for it, envelops the body of another individual who is not a part of myself, penetrates through his pores, and, superseding his own faculties, if they are weaker, forces him to a predetermined action. (I, 144)

How does this will act in Nature?

The mysterious effects of attraction and repulsion are the *unconscious* agents of that will; fascination, such as we see exercised by some animals, by serpents over birds, for instance, is a *conscious* action of it, and the result of thought. Sealing-wax, glass, and amber, when rubbed...attract light bodies; they exercise unconsciously, *will*; for inorganic as well as organic matter possesses a particle of the *divine* essence in itself, however infinitesimally small it may be....Man, the most perfect of organized beings on earth, in whom matter and spirit—*i. e.*, *will*—are the most developed and powerful, is alone allowed to give a conscious impulse to that principle which emanates from him; and only he can impart to the magnetic fluid opposite and various impulses without limit as to the direction. "He wills," says Du Potet, "and *organized* matter obeys." (*Ibid.*)

The latent Deity, or latent force, at its first manifestation became Will and communicated the first impulse to the atoms, whose agglomeration is matter (*Isis*, I, 61). Just as the "Intelligent Idea," by directing its will power toward a centre of localized forces, causes objective forms to appear, so can man, the microcosm of the

great Macrocosm, do the same in proportion to the development of his will power. He shares this divine potency with every atom in the Universe, and exercises it throughout his life, consciously or unconsciously. In the former case, when he is in the full possession of his powers, he controls and guides the Universal Soul. In the case of animals, plants, minerals and the average of humanity, this "ethereal fluid," which pervades all things, finding no resistance and being left to itself, moves them as its impulse directs. (*Isis*, I, 213)

Is the will fluidic? There is no such thing, we learn, as empty space. Universal Mind is everywhere; the universal fluid is everywhere. In *Isis Unveiled* (I, 172-3) H.P.B. gives some propositions of Mesmer, and among them is this:

A fluid, universally diffused and continued, so as to admit no vacuum, whose subtlety is beyond all comparison, and which, from its nature, is capable of receiving, propagating, and communicating all the impressions of motion, is the medium of this influence [the mutual influence between the heavenly bodies, the earth, and living bodies].

One of the aims of *The Secret Doctrine*, we are told in the Preface, is "to show that the occult side of Nature has never been approached by the Science of modern civilization." And H.P.B. gives the key to science, if it will accept it, for making this approach: "Esoteric philosophy proves the necessity of an absolute Divine Principle in Nature."

Here we can go to the *Gita*. In Chapter VII Krishna says: "Enveloped by my magic illusion I am not visible to the world; therefore the world doth not recognize me, the unborn and exhaustless." And throughout the book we are constantly brought back to this Divine Principle acting in all.

What shall we do with this knowledge? Meditation upon it will bring home to us the truth of the brotherhood that exists between all creatures, between the earth and the stars and the planets, between the tiny grain of sand and the vast universe. It should help us to realize that every action, conscious or unconscious, affects the

whole of Nature. Those who impress Nature deliberately with evil are gradually led into sorcery; those who consciously impress it with good become in time White Magicians. Once we learn the laws of life, we can and should use this knowledge consciously, will-fully, so that we make of Nature our ally, pupil and servant. We have not to "control" Nature for destructive purposes, but to work on with her. Only by working with Nature can Nature work in harmony with us, but if we use her for our own purposes she will in time destroy us.

All the virtues we can develop, all the ethical teachings that lie at the heart of all religions and philosophies, are ways of using occult powers rightly. And it should be borne in mind that every virtue has its corresponding vice; every step taken on the path of light arouses the corresponding forces of darkness.

MAN is but a link in an endless chain of being; a sequence of a past eternity of causes and processes; a potentiality born into time, but spanning two eternities, his past and his future, and in his consciousness these are all one, *Duration*, the *ever-present*....

Occultism teaches that the Ego both precedes and survives the physical body. The phenomena of man's life and the process of his thought can be apprehended and explained on no other theory. Modern physiology teaches in detail certain facts regarding the life of man. It, moreover, groups these facts and deduces certain so-called principles and laws, but such a thing as a synthesis of the *whole man* is seldom even attempted. "Psychology" is mere empiricism, represented by disjointed facts, and these, of course, but little understood, and more often misinterpreted.

—W. Q. JUDGE

THE ONE IN THE MANY

H.P.B. tells us that *The Secret Doctrine* is the synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy. As we study the book we are taught the art of synthesizing—if we recognize it! We are given the hint that the law of analogy and correspondence is the key to the understanding of everything in Nature. It enables us to link up the knowledge gained through the use of the seven keys, each of which has to be turned seven times, for each turn gives us but one interpretation of the facts of Nature and makes us see but one aspect or plane of thought. H.P.B. warns us that an interpretation which is true from one angle may not be true when looked at from another plane of thought. Therefore we see that if we wish to find the synthesis of all knowledge we must see the interrelationship that exists between all kinds of partial knowledge. All partial knowledge, in the sense in which the term is used here, relates to but one of the seven aspects of Nature and results from the turning of *one key once only*. Unless we can link up all the knowledge yielded by the seven keys and the forty-nine interpretations, we cannot know the whole.

Only Occult Science possesses the seven keys. In *The Secret Doctrine* we are shown the oneness of all ancient systems, and the intuitive will find in it the key to the ancient universal mystery language. H.P.B. takes us into the realm of numbers and forms first, for these are necessary starting points for us.

Starting with mathematics or numbers, we see that from the one Infinite come numberless divisions and correlations, ever changing, ever separating and reuniting, to be finally drawn back into the One. This is manifestation and non-manifestation. Taking this conception from the geometrical aspect, we have the point, and the infinite number of forms, which come from it, only to return to it at the end of a period of manifestation. Seeing the "One in many" and the multitude in One, is the art of synthesizing.

Just as the first stage towards the infinite divisions is the number two or duality, so the first stage towards the infinite forms is the joining of the two or the line. From the two we get the three, and the joining of the three makes the first form or triangle; and from the

triangle proceed all forms. Says *The Secret Doctrine*:

The Monad—only the emanation and reflection of the Point (Logos) in the phenomenal World—becomes, as the *apex* of the manifested equilateral triangle, the "Father." The left side or line is the *Duad*, the "Mother," regarded as the evil, counteracting principle...the right side represents the Son...at the basic line is the Universal plane of productive Nature, unifying on the phenomenal plane Father-Mother-Son, as these were unified in the *apex*, in the supersensuous World. By mystic transmutation they became the Quaternary—the triangle became the TETRAKTIS. (I, 614)

This "transcendental application of geometry to Cosmic and divine theogony" H.P.B. calls "the Alpha and Omega of mystical conception."

Let us turn to two other aspects of Nature with which we are a little familiar, colour and sound. There are three fundamental colours and all others are the result of a blending of these three, derived from the one, the white (no colour) light. Sound can also be understood along these lines, for the world, it is said, was called forth out of Chaos by Sound or Harmony and constructed according to the principles of musical proportion.

From the three come the seven, the keynote of our manifestation. The highest number we can think of is but the continuation of the one; the most complicated geometrical form is but the continuation of the one point; the most perfect of colours is only the continuation of the one colour or white light. All in time will be withdrawn into the primal source.

We can use this knowledge with regard to other aspects of Nature. Applying it to theogony, we get the idea of the triune Godhead—the three in One. We must search for the trinity, which we find in all religions; and from it proceed the seven hierarchies, and from them the multitudinous "forms." Astronomically, we have the seven chief planets and the Sun, itself but one of many Suns belonging to the central solar system. Says *The Secret Doctrine*:

In the ancient Cosmogonies, the visible and the invisible

worlds are the double links of one and the same chain. As the invisible *Logos*, with its seven hierarchies (represented or personified each by its chief angel or rector), form one POWER, the inner and the invisible; so, in the world of Forms, the Sun and the seven chief Planets constitute the visible and active potency; the latter "Hierarchy" being, so to speak, the visible and objective *Logos* of the invisible and (except in the lowest grades) ever-subjective angels. (II, 23)

This is why the Secret Doctrine establishes Three Fundamental Propositions, each of which has again three aspects, rooted in the One. The First Fundamental postulates the One, the Absolute, beyond the range and reach of thought, but forming the background for the manifestation of the duality of Spirit and Matter, which cannot function in the manifested Universe without the third factor, Fohat, or the link between Mind and Matter. So, in all life we have Spirit, Matter and the connecting link or Fohat. In the Second Fundamental we have the idea of the Eternity of the Universe *in toto*, of numberless Universes manifesting and disappearing within that boundless plane, and of the law of periodicity as it manifests in the manifold departments of Nature. In the Third Fundamental we are told of the Unknown Root, of the Universal Over-Soul which is an aspect of the former, and of its many sparks or Pilgrim-Souls passing through the Cycle of Incarnation or "Necessity."

And so we may go on synthesizing all the information given to us, until we gain from it knowledge which is self-energizing.

If history reveals anything it is that dissolution and growth have been aspects of the same phenomenon. Growth has not occurred anywhere without involving dissolution. Every major cultural change throughout history has involved this twofold process of death and emergence.

—BERNARD EUGENE MELAND

THE CURE OF DISEASE

THERE is no longer any doubt as to the effect of mind upon body in matters of disease. "Wrong thinking" is the current phrase that points to mind as a major causative factor. In prescribing remedies, however, we find that diagnosis is predicated on philosophy. Although philosophy cannot "bake bread," as our Socialist friends used to proclaim, it is certainly the deciding factor in directing and/or failing to direct efforts in the attempted solution of crucial health problems that derive from mind-body relations. To clarify this proposition let us consider two representative approaches and then the Theosophical viewpoint.

The metaphysics of Christian Science are contained in Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health*, from which the following excerpts are taken:

(1) ...the fact is that Spirit is good and real and matter is Spirit's opposite...Matter is an error of statement...matter examined in the light of...metaphysics, disappears.

(2) Mind is All and matter is naught as the leading factor in Mind-science....This great fact...is demonstrated by healing the sick and thus proved absolute and divine. This proof once seen, no other conclusion can be reached.

The last sentence of the second quotation gives a clue to the attitude of mind that so easily accepts such childlike reasoning as "health at any cost," even the cost of not caring about the "reason" behind the "cure." As to the first grouping, the venerable doctrine of *Maya* in Indian Philosophy may well look with dismay upon this mutilated reflection of itself.

What, then, performs the cure, for in many cases there are assuredly cures? Concentration upon an idea with a sufficiency of faith. The rationale is simple—any thought that removes attention from the body provides an opportunity for the body to heal itself. Attention fraught with the pressures of anxiety and fear keeps the healing powers of the body at bay. H. P. Blavatsky wrote: "Half, if not two-thirds of our ailings and diseases are the fruit of our imagination and fears. Destroy the latter and give another bent to

the former, and nature will do the rest." And recently a medical specialist said: "In my long professional experience I have been impressed with the truly wonderful recuperative powers in the human body."

But there are "karmic" diseases. In mental healing, these are pushed back to the mind plane. Far from having disappeared, they gather intensity, awaiting the opportunity to manifest again. And when they do, the self-same practices are helpless before them; often, too, insanity results.

Returning for a moment to the thinking of Christian Scientists, a curious contradiction shows itself after a little investigation. The first grouping of the above quotations establishes the basic belief that matter does not really exist. The physical body, however, is tacitly accepted, since the whole aim of the system is good health of the body. Holding to the body, and yet ruling Matter as a false belief, creates a basic contradiction in thought continuity. An attempt to reconcile these two paralyzes the reasoning power. The only conclusion one can draw about those who believe in this system is that they are constantly self-hypnotized.

Now let us turn to the growing field of psychotherapy. It is well established therein that negative emotions cause mental disturbance (psychiatry) and physical lesions (psychosomatic medicine). The inference for cure is quite obvious—discontinue the negative emotions! But how? A prevalent viewpoint among the doctors seems to be that, once the patient is made aware of the particular emotional pattern that is responsible for his disturbance, he will discard the feelings in question. This is based, we presume, on their assumption that, while original impressions are received in childhood, an adult mind is now reviewing them. A professional worker in the field of psychotherapy writes: "A psychotherapeutic effort equal to that of making the patient aware of the emotional pattern, *i.e.*, responses to environment out of which developed the negative emotions, is re-education. This is a major stumbling-block because questions arise—education for what, and what kind of education?"

To a Theosophist it is clear that the psychotherapists are

actually working toward a form of detachment, without, however, the requisite philosophy to make this procedure operative. Detachment means a separation of the mind-entity from situations in which it has been involved. The therapists are trying to accomplish this, and yet holding generally to a concept of mind which renders it a mere instrument, responding automatically to instinctual demands. They ignore the question—how *can* such a machine initiate an impulse that will radically change the attitude of the whole consciousness? Whatever success they achieve seems to be brought about in spite of their professed beliefs. This conclusion holds true, we believe, even for those few therapists who would have the patients gain strength by resisting the corrosive effects of anxiety. But, again, who or what is resisting? Materialism remains the barrier that inhibits a truer perspective.

Another phase of their incomplete diagnosis becomes apparent when we discuss the Theosophic approach. According to the Ancient Wisdom, man represents two entities conjoined into the appearance of one, for the duration of a lifetime. And because they are two, mind and body are separable. Again, because of this, the mind-entity may with perfect reasonableness adopt a position of detachment from the life of the body, as well as freedom from dependence on circumstances and situations outside itself.

If we now re-examine, from this point of view, the negative emotions discussed in relation to psychotherapy, we find it possible to take an additional diagnostic step. A little thought will demonstrate that anxiety, fear, anger, are all associated with desire. For example, I have saved and scraped and finally acquired an automobile, which brings me intense pleasure and joy. One night it is missing from the garage. I am filled with anxiety. As the hours lengthen, and there is no report of its recovery, my anxiety gives way to fear and then anger at the thief. Peace of mind is gone; I am prey to the torments of these emotions.

Diagnosis for cure? Give up *dependence* on the automobile for pleasure and joy. Will this prescription work? Try it. This is the advice of the Buddha and Krishna, too. Theosophy helps to produce a real detachment from negative emotions by demonstrating that

the real cause of the difficulty lies in the wrong position assumed by the mind-entity in regard to objects outside itself.

Anyone who has compared the Theosophic approach, so definite and result-producing, with the tentative and groping endeavours of the psychotherapists, cannot but groan at the restrictions their materialism has placed upon themselves. If only they would assume, even as a working hypothesis, that mind *is* basically distinct from body, what good they might accomplish, how people would be helped!

Returning for a moment to the experience of the followers of mental healing, we may discover a significant fact, about which the serious, conscientious student of Theosophy is probably unaware. We noted that whatever benefits were enjoyed by the former were because of the power of concentration on abstract subjects, which resulted in a turning of the attention away from the body and its worrying conditions. While the purposes of the Theosophic students are far removed from the objective of the followers of mental healing, he nevertheless does achieve these same healing benefits as a by-product of his own intense concentration and meditation on the Higher Self.

However, when confronted with karmic diseases which do not respond to lawful treatment such as medicine, diet or surgery, the Theosophist knows how to develop the higher mental qualities, through his own right attitude, while permitting the disease to work its way down and out of the system completely and finally.

Physician, heal thyself! is the ancient admonition. Growth in self-knowledge brings awareness of the powers of Self, together with a clearer realization that misuse of such powers through ignorance or wilful indifference is the main cause of our troubles. Acceptance of our responsibilities and willingness to make honourable restitution are the marks of the awakened Soul and the indication of that attitude, most practical and most modern, which will cure the nations.

MANIFOLD ASPECTS OF DIVINITY

READERS of *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* may have wondered why Mr. Judge gives at the close of Chapter III the various names of Vishnu in his different powers and appearances, to be remembered by us in our everyday life. We give below a brief explanation of these names.

We are advised:

When taking medicine, to think of Vishnu, he who is All-pervasive (from the root *vish*, "to pervade"), the second person of the Hindu Trimurti, Brahma and Shiva being the first and the third. Being all-pervading, he is the preserver of the universe and of the individual and sustains the body of man. We need the body in order to function here and gain experience, and at the time of illness we should invoke him to restore the body to wholeness. It might be added that many illnesses have their roots in the emotions and the lower mind, and thought of Vishnu would help to bring about a different frame of mind, to give a different colouring to the emotions, thus restoring harmony in the pranic currents and improving the health of the body. We are apt, when ill, to think of our illness to the exclusion of all else. So this is good advice!

When taking food, to meditate upon Janardana, the All-Giver. Janardana controls the vital forces in living beings, and as such is present in the food we take, whether for the body or for the mind or for the soul. Are we not also told that food comes to us as a sacrifice? Therefore it will not nourish us unless we give thanks to the sacrificers, the lives that compose the food, the great architects and builders who have produced the food.

When going to bed, to repeat the name Padmanabha. We are given the picture of the great Lord Vishnu resting on the primeval waters; out of his navel rises a lotus; from the lotus issues forth the creator, Brahma, and from him, the universe. Day and night are the world's eternal ways, under the law of cycles. Daytime is for work; at night we rest, but even then work goes on. Thought on this aspect of Vishnu before retiring to bed makes the period of rest more fruitful.

When marrying, to think of the Lord of Creation, Prajapati. Prajapati is the name given to the givers of life to all in this Universe. Man the creator is also an aspect of Prajapati. Without the urge to create, humanity would cease to be; and to think, while marrying, of Prajapati brings a spiritual realization of man's relationship to the Universe.

When fighting, either in the physical or the figurative sense, to think of Chakradhara. *Chakra* is the discus; Chakradhara, the wielder of the discus. This weapon never fails and returns to the sender only after performing its task, which is that of cutting off the head of the one towards whom it is directed. There is the story of King Ambarisha, a devotee of Vishnu, who finished his sacrifice before he had given the customary water to the sage Durvasa, who was notoriously quick-tempered. Naturally, Durvasa was angry and cursed that the King would die at the hands of a spirit of evil. Ambarisha thought of Chakradhara and with concentrated devotion repeated the holy name. In response, Vishnu sent his discus, which destroyed the evil spirit and then chased Durvasa through the worlds to kill him too. Durvasa could find none to help him. Vishnu told him that he too was powerless to alter the movement of the *chakra*, unless the devotee Ambarisha would forgive the sage. When Ambarisha was told of this, he forgave Durvasa and the discus went back to Vishnu.

When in another country, to think of Trivikrama, meaning Vishnu who covered the whole universe in three strides. The first step he took on earth, in the form of Agni, the god of fire; the second, in the atmosphere, in the form of Vayu, the god of air; and the third, in the sky, in the shape of Surya, the sun. He pervades all the worlds; therefore there is no spot where he is not.

When dying, to think of Narayana, he who moves on the "Waters of Space," that is to say, through all manifestation. In esoteric symbology, this represents the primeval manifestation of the life-principle, spreading in infinite Space. To think of this aspect of Vishnu at the time of death is to blend with him.

When reuniting with friends, to think of Sridhara, *i.e.*, of Vishnu as the consort of Lakshmi or Sri—the bearer of fortune. This has

reference to the sacredness of the marriage tie and the meaning of real union, to procreation and the continuity of the human race. Hearts must be united, as are the hearts of Vishnu and of his consort, Lakshmi.

When dreaming bad dreams, to think of Govinda, he who protects the innocent. He is the shepherd or guard of the cows and other animals, and also the spiritual shepherd who guards his worshippers. Therefore he is to be invoked when we wake up after a bad dream. Remembering that we have a guard and a shepherd, we are comforted.

When in difficulties, to remember Madhusudana, the killer of the great giant Madhu, who was causing trouble even to the God Brahma by continually asking him to fight with him. Both Madhu and Kaitabha, another giant, had become very powerful. To help Brahma, Vishnu clouded their minds with illusion and forced them to *will* their own deaths. Therefore, when in trouble, we are asked to invoke this destroyer of trouble-making elements to come to our aid.

In the midst of a forest, whether a forest of trees or the forest which is life, to think of Narasimha, the man-lion incarnation of Vishnu, who rules the forest. Nothing, not even the giant Hiranyakasipu who was slain by Narasimha, can harm us if we think of this aspect of Vishnu.

When fire threatens, to think of Jalasai, the one lying on the water. Water quenches fire and is cool to the touch.

When we are caught in deep waters, to remember Varaha, the Boar incarnation of Vishnu, for this was the form he had assumed to raise the Earth, with his huge tusks, out of the "Waters of Space," rescuing it from the demon Hiranyaksha, the ruler of the nether world, who was holding it down.

When climbing mountains, to think of Raghunandana, the incarnation of Vishnu as Rama, for he can lead us over the mountains and valleys of *samsara*, this continuous circle of births and deaths.

When going, to think of Varuna, the Lord of the "Waters of Space"—*Akasha* in one sense—the great superintendent of the

Moral Order. Nothing is hidden from him; he knows and sees all in heaven and on earth and beyond them, and chastises transgressors. He witnesses men's truth and falsehood. He who moves and acts keeping him in view, does not violate the moral order and cannot come to grief.

In all acts, of Madhava, the Lord of Knowledge. He is the husband of Madhavi, or Lakshmi, the giver of riches, physical and spiritual. Actions performed when remembering him will, therefore, at all times bring us all forms of help, including spiritual help.

Vishnu has a thousand names, based on his qualities, and above have been explained only a few of these to suggest thought on the manifold aspects of Divinity. He who remembers daily these names "which drive away sin and fear," says Bhishma in the *Mahabharata*, "shall encounter nothing untoward in the here or in the hereafter...he overcomes all unhappiness....In the blessed who are devoted to the Supreme Lord, there will be no anger, no jealousy, no avarice, no evil thought."

IF there is a still greater absurdity than to speak of a cruel God, it is to admit that God, the *Great, Absolute Whole*, could ever interfere in terrestrial or human affairs. The infinite cannot associate with the finite; the unconditioned ignores the conditioned and the limited. The absolute "Intelligence-Wisdom" cannot act in the restricted space of a small globe. It is omnipresent and latent in the Kosmos, infinite as itself. We find its only truly active manifestation in *humanity as a whole*, composed as it is of stray sparks, finite in their objective duration, eternal in their essence, issuing from that Hearth without beginning or end. Therefore, the only God whom we should serve is Humanity, and our only cult should be the love of our fellow man. Doing evil towards him, we wound God and make him suffer. When we deny our brotherly duties and refuse to consider a pagan as well as a European as our brother, we deny God. This is our religion and our dogma.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What we all need as we approach the new millennium is an enhanced sense of universal responsibility, says the Dalai Lama in his essay on "Spirituality for a Better World" (*Asiaweek*, August 20-27). "Self-interest lies in considering the interests of others." To achieve true success, material progress needs to be balanced with the sense of responsibility that comes of education and inner development. The more we pursue profit and material improvement, ignoring the contentment that comes of inner growth, values will disappear from our communities.

As the new millennium approaches [states the Dalai Lama], our world requires us to accept the oneness of humanity. In the past, isolated communities could afford to think of themselves as fundamentally separate. But nowadays, whatever happens in one region eventually affects many other areas....

Many of the world's problems and conflicts arise because we have lost sight of the humanity that binds us together as one family. We forget that despite the diversity of race, religion and ideology, people share a basic wish for peace and happiness. These will not be achieved, however, by talking or thinking about them, nor by waiting for someone else to act. We each have to take responsibility as best we can within our own sphere of activity, using our unique intelligence to try to understand ourselves and our world....

In my own experience I have found that the more we care for the happiness of others, the greater is our own sense of well-being. Cultivating a warmhearted feeling for others automatically puts the mind at ease. It helps remove fears or insecurities and gives us the strength to cope with obstacles. As we are not solely material creatures, it is a mistake to place all our hopes for happiness on external development. The key is to develop inner peace.

We need to embark on the difficult task of developing love and compassion within ourselves. By nature peaceful and gentle, compassion is also very powerful. Some may dismiss this as impractical and unrealistic, but I believe its practice is the true source of success—a sign of inner strength. To achieve

compassion we do not need to become religious or ideological. We need only develop our basic human qualities....

The quality of our actions depends on our motivation. From my Buddhist viewpoint all things originate in the mind. A real sense of appreciation of humanity, compassion and love are the key. Once we develop a good, altruistic heart—whether in science, agriculture or politics—the result will be more beneficial.

By focusing on wealth creation we are failing to protect what we have, says John Gray, professor of marine biology at the University of Oslo, Norway. Politicians pay lip service to environmental problems at international conferences. The agreements reached do little to slow global climate change and lead merely to endless discussions rather than action to save the world's biodiversity. Writing in *New Scientist*, Gray stresses that looking after what we already have—wealth protection—should be a key goal.

Increasingly I am coming to believe that protecting the environmental riches we already have is, in economic terms, far more important than seeking growth and creating industries. Sadly, preserving what we have seems to be unfashionable....

For governments at least it seems that finding out more about the world we live in is worth doing only if it generates wealth. But wealth creation has to be seen in the context of globalization of the economy, and the globalization process pays scant regard to the environment.... An eminent Oxford political scientist says of environmental consequences of the globalization process: "More and more of the Earth will become less and less habitable."...

Decision makers should be trying to protect the environmental riches that we have rather than just stressing wealth creation.

One side effect of the infotech and communications revolution is the rapid disappearance of minority languages around the world,

since only a few majority languages are viable in a globalized, information-based economy. Many linguists predict that at least half of the world's 6,000 or so languages now spoken will be dead or dying by the year 2050. In the August-September *Futurist*, Rosemarie Ostler, a linguistic specialist, explores the factors producing language death and the dangers of losing linguistic diversity:

Languages are becoming extinct at twice the rate of endangered mammals and four times the rate of endangered birds. If this trend continues, the world of the future could be dominated by a dozen or fewer languages....

Language diversity is as important in its way as biological diversity....Andrew Woodfield, director of the Centre for Theories of Language and Learning in Bristol, England, suggested in a 1995 seminar on language conservation that people do not yet know all the ways in which linguistic diversity is important. "The fact is, no one knows exactly what riches are hidden inside the less-studied languages," he says.

Woodfield compares the argument for conserving unstudied endangered plants—that they may be medically valuable—with the argument for conserving endangered languages. "We have inductive evidence based on past studies of well-known languages that there will be riches, even though we do not know what they will be. It seems paradoxical but it's true. By allowing languages to die out, the human race is destroying things it doesn't understand," he argues....

Language extinction is accelerated today for some of the same reasons as species extinction. These include population pressures and the spread of industrialization.

The World Future Society is exploring the implications of the disappearance of languages around the world. These are some of the possible effects its staff has identified:

As languages fade, the cultures that nourished them decline. Ethnic legacies of music, history, literature, and folklore may be lost. Social scientists—anthropologists, sociologists, etc. —

will have fewer cultures through which to study human behaviour....

Speakers of the languages will gradually lose their connections to ancestral customs because their history and rituals cannot easily continue when the languages that contain them die. Succeeding generations may never learn the full story of their heritage unless extraordinary efforts are made to recruit young apprentice speakers.

From their sickbeds, people in all cultures may face diminished prospects: The medicinal value of uncounted native plant species may remain beyond the reach of scientists if the aboriginal people who use plant cures pass away before communicating their knowledge.

The death of a language is an irretrievable cultural loss for the world. However, just as certain animal as well as human forms now extinct will return again in their own cycle, so also "certain human languages now known as dead will be in use once more at their appointed cyclic hour." (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p.129)

"Automatic writing," or the production of written matter without the conscious volition or direction of the writer, has often been claimed to be a communication from the "spirit world," or "astral plane," or "other dimensions" or whatever. The mechanism, it is said, is essentially the same as a traditional séance, except that the person who was formerly known as the medium is now called a channel. Mukul Sharma examines what New Agers have to say on the subject (*Life Positive*, September 1999):

Mediums implicitly believed that all the communications received were coming from discarnate spirits. New Agers, on the other hand, say that while a lot of the material could be the product of the writer's unconscious mind, there are also a number of examples that, they maintain, transcend the mental and literary abilities of those who have produced them, or incorporate information that could not have been known to them by normal means....

So, if automatic writing cannot automatically be credited to

spirits, what is it? How can just holding a pencil and concentrating produce reams of writing—some of which is not only coherent but appears to be beyond the capabilities of the writer?

The answer lies in a little known aspect of cognitive psychology called "automatism." Automatism is defined as "a state in which the individual performs simple or complex actions in a skilled or relatively uncoordinated manner without having full awareness of what he or she is doing." It includes well-developed skills such as playing a musical instrument, where the individual can carry out highly complex movements without detailed awareness of what is being done.

In *Lucifer* for December 1888, H.P.B. published "The Dirge for the Dead in Life," and remarked in an editorial note:

The fragments that we publish below form one of the most remarkable instances of so-called automatic writing when the medium, without any previous knowledge of the subject, is impelled to set down upon the paper that which is not in the brain. The medium here is a young lady who knows nothing about this dirge, but we know that it is a portion of the chant which was sung over the entranced body of the neophyte who was about to become an initiate....Spiritualists may say it is something from the "spirits," but we hold the view that it is a reminiscence from past incarnations of the one who wrote. These recollections are not so rare as is supposed, and while frequently they are not recognized as such, they nevertheless account for many strange things heard at séances with mediums and psychographic writers.

In *The Harvard Mental Health Letter*, Dr. Robert A. Hahn explains what is known as the "nocebo effect":

Derived from the Latin ("I will harm"), a nocebo is the opposite of the placebo ("I will please"). While the placebo relieves symptoms of illness by creating expectations of improvement, a nocebo does harm by creating the opposite expectation. The harm may be subjectively or objectively

measurable, transient or chronic. It can even be fatal—for example, surgical patients are reported to die on the operating table because they expect to die.

Experts concede that the placebo/nocebo phenomenon is one of medicine's "thornier problems." The power of "suggestion" or "expectation" has, however, been revealed substantively in several psychological experiments. In one study, says Dr. Hahn, investigators found that those who expected a heart attack were 3.7 times more likely to die from a coronary condition than those who did not expect one—independently of other known risk factors.

Ultimately, researchers say, the extent and manifestation of the nocebo effect differs from culture to culture.

That a patient's psychological make-up will greatly influence how he or she is affected by disease is well known. Extreme examples are cases of voodoo death. In one instance, after having eaten some fruit, a Maori woman found that it was from a tabooed place; she was dead within 18 hours. A young African bushman was deceived into eating a wild hen, absolutely forbidden to his tribe. When he learned the truth later, he was dead within 24 hours.

The helpful effects of placebos are not unrelated to effects such as voodoo death. Both are instances of the subtle links between expectation and reality.

William B. Carey, director of Behavioural Pediatrics at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, brings important research to the public in his book *Understanding Your Child's Temperament*. Unlike many approaches to parenting that view children in relation to just one particular trait or behaviour, the book offers a way to look at the child in his or her totality, as combination of nine inborn temperamental traits: activity, regularity, initial reaction, adaptability, intensity, mood, distractibility, sensitivity, persistence and attention span. Temperament is an individual's unique way of reacting to people, things, and situations—at home, at school, and in social life.

Carey contends that a child's temperament is partly inborn and not something caused by "good" or "bad" parenting. Genetics only plays a partial role. Parents, he says, can learn to work with the child's temperament to prevent and reduce problems.

It is even more important for parents and child behavior specialists to learn the role that reincarnation plays in determining a child's temperament. Children are old souls in young bodies and bring their dispositions and characters from a prior life to this one. But disposition and character can, now and here, be changed—for better or for worse—by the child's own efforts, helped by his or her parents, teachers and other understanding elders.

Charles Swindoll's thoughts on "Attitude" (*The Saturday Evening Post*, September-October 1999) have a message for all of us:

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, a home. The remarkable thing is, we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past...we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it.

And so it is with you...we are in charge of our attitudes.
