

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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## THE THREE FUNDAMENTALS

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—EDS.]

I. Deity is a Boundless and Impersonal Principle, Eternal and Omnipresent.

II. The Law of Periodicity acts ceaselessly, in alternate manifestation and reabsorption of universes, in day and night, sleeping and waking, life and death.

III. All Souls are sparks of the Universal Over-soul, but each must achieve conscious immortality by individual efforts through many lives, reaping in each exactly that which he has sown.

IN the old-time melodrama it was considered sufficient for a character to put on a different garment to be unrecognized by the other personages. If the heroine wore pink in the first act, in the next she had only to assume a blue frock to be taken for an absolute stranger even by her own lover. That theatrical convention of obtuseness appears sometimes to be reproduced in actuality by students in relationship to the Three Fundamentals of Theosophy. They do not recognize them except in the particular dress and vocabulary in which they first met them.

The Three Fundamental Propositions are not just an object of study, they are the principles of study itself. They are not simply an assignment given to a student at a class, nor are they merely “the three fundamental propositions of *The Secret Doctrine*,” meaning thereby the book. They are the Fundamentals of Theosophy itself as the Divine Science of Life.

Let us expand those ideas. The Fundamentals are the principles of study, therefore we can apply them as a test to all the Theosophical writings—a test of our own knowledge as well, be it noted. A good

practice would be to summarize, to analyse the articles, pamphlets and books in terms of those Fundamentals. They will be found expressed or implicit as primary seed-ideas in every true Theosophical writing — if we *look* for them. This application gives also a greater power of retaining in the memory the essential contents of anything read, because the knowledge gathered is thus unified instead of being held in isolated fragments. Yet the conceptions are not to be used like labels on museum exhibits. For example, we often speak of Reincarnation as an aspect of the Second Fundamental. It really embodies all three. For reincarnation to take place there must be the unchanging spirit, unlimited, unaffected, the source of its reflection, the incarnating ray. There must be the power, the periodic motion by which that ray appears in incarnation. And lastly there must be the ray itself, unfolding the wisdom and power of its Father in Heaven, through the accumulated experiences of earth life. Whatever the subject considered — Poverty and Karma, Mind-Control, Rounds and Races, Spiritualism True and False, to name just a few at random — the selfsame triple basis will be found in them all.

It may be that one will find four conceptions, but the fourth will be the synthesis of the other three. God-Law-Evolution make up LIFE. The Philosophy of Theosophy is the synthesis of Religion, Science and Art. *Raja-Yoga* is not merely *Bhakti-Yoga*, *Gnana-Yoga* or *Karma-Yoga*, but all three in one.

It may be asked why Mme. Blavatsky gave those universal propositions in metaphysical form. The answer is that she presented them thus in *The Secret Doctrine*, but, since the Fundamentals are not the exclusive property of that particular book, she gave them in other ways elsewhere. The most obvious example is in *Isis Unveiled*, Vol. II, p. 124, taken from the religious and ethical point of view:

1. Everything existing, exists from natural causes.
2. Virtue brings its own reward, and vice and sin their own punishment.
3. The state of man in this world is probationary.

*The Secret Doctrine* was dedicated “to all true Theosophists . . . for they called it forth, and for them it was recorded.” That is, they had already developed the perception that demanded and could understand in some measure the more abstract presentation. But the manner suited for one purpose may be ill-fitting for another. The *needs* of the reader or hearer must be the deciding factor in the method used.

Finally, the Three Fundamentals are not just an assignment for platform work, because they are not simply the basis of study. To be fundamental they must be seen and felt in every phase of workaday life. He who does not see the Fundamentals as the basis of waking, eating, walking, reading, working, cleansing mind and body, meeting folk of all kinds, has not begun to grasp their fundamental nature. If he cannot see them in his own nature, can he see them correctly in great Nature? If he does not consider them practically, can he be sure that his metaphysical conception is sound? To know the Three Fundamentals in their fullness means that one knows the whole of Life, but that is the state of the Perfected Being alone. Our realization of them lies many lives ahead, but at least we can take a further step on our journey thither — today.

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IF AN ANT tried to explain to a brother ant the mental process of Newton, he would probably make rather a poor job of it; but an ant is millions of millions of times nearer to a man than is man to the One Reality. . . . While we may dimly sense the Absolute, we cannot apprehend, much less comprehend, it, and while we are forced to acknowledge it by the reason, any attempt to explain it involves us in hopeless self-contradictions. This is acknowledged in every philosophy, and is a hopeless difficulty, common to all, and lying in the very nature of things. As well said by Dean Mansel: "The Absolute cannot be conceived as conscious, neither can it be conceived as unconscious; it cannot be conceived as complex, neither can it be conceived as simple; it cannot be conceived by difference, neither can it be conceived by absence of difference; it cannot be identified with the universe, neither can it be distinguished from it." What is this but to say that "the Absolute" cannot be an object of thought at all, and that to attempt to reason about it is to become absurd?

—*Lucifer*, June 1890

## THE POPULAR IDEA OF SOUL-SURVIVAL

[The following article was first printed by H. P. Blavatsky in *The Theosophist* for December 1879 and was reprinted in THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT for June 1939.—EDS.]

AT what epoch the dawning intellect of man first accepted the idea of future life, none can tell. But we know that, from the very first, its roots struck so deeply, so entwined about human instincts, that the belief has endured through all generations, and is embedded in the consciousness of every nation and tribe, civilized, semi-civilized or savage. The greatest minds have speculated upon it; and the rudest savages, though having no name for the Deity, have yet believed in the existence of spirits and worshipped them. If, in Christian Russia, Wallachia, Bulgaria and Greece, the Oriental Church enjoins that upon All Saints' day offerings of rice and drink shall be placed upon the graves; and in "heathen" India, the same propitiatory gifts of rice are made to the departed; so, likewise, the poor savage of New Caledonia makes his sacrifice of food to the skulls of his beloved dead.

According to Herbert Spencer, the worship of souls and relics is to be attributed to "the primitive idea that any property characterizing an aggregate, inheres in all parts of it. . . . The soul, present in the body of the dead man preserved entire, is also present in the preserved parts of his body. Hence the faith in relics." This definition, though in logic equally applicable to the gold-enshrined and bejewelled relic of the cultured Roman Catholic devotee, and to the dusty, timeworn skull of the fetish-worshipper, might yet be objected to by the former, since he would say that he does not believe the soul to be present in either the whole cadaver, skeleton, or part, nor does he, strictly speaking, worship it. He but honours the relic as something which, having belonged to one whom he deems saintly, has by the contact acquired a sort of miraculous virtue. Mr. Spencer's definition, therefore, does not seem to cover the whole ground. So also Professor Max Müller, in his *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, after having shown to us, by citing numerous instances, that the human mind had, from the beginning, a "vague hope of a future life," explains no more than Herbert Spencer whence or how came originally such a hope, but merely points to an inherent faculty in *uncultivated* nations of changing the forces of nature into gods and demons. He closes his lecture upon the Turanian legends and the universality of this belief in ghosts and spirits by simply remark-

ing that "the worship of the spirits of the departed is *perhaps* the most widely spread form of natural *superstition* all over the world."

Thus, whichever way we turn for a philosophical solution of the mystery; whether we expect an answer from theology which is itself bound to believe in miracles and teach supernaturalism; or ask it from the now dominant schools of modern thought — the greatest opponents of the miraculous in nature; or, again, turn for an explanation to that philosophy of extreme positivism which, from the days of Epicurus down to the modern school of James Mill, adopting for its device the glaring sciolism "*nihil in intellectu, quod non ante fuerit in sensu,*" makes intellect subservient to matter — we receive a satisfactory reply from none!

If this article were intended merely for a simple collation of facts, authenticated by travellers on the spot, and concerning but "superstitions" born in the mind of the primitive man and now lingering only among the savage tribes of humanity, then the combined works of such philosophers as Herbert Spencer might solve our difficulties. We might remain content with his explanation that in the absence of hypothesis "foreign to thought in its earliest stage . . . primitive ideas arising out of various experiences derived from the inorganic world" — such as the actions of wind, the echo, and man's own shadow — proving to the uneducated mind that there was "an invisible form of existence which manifests power," were all sufficient to have created a like "inevitable belief" (see Spencer's *Genesis of Superstition*). But we are now concerned with something nearer to us and higher than the primitive man of the Stone Age; the man who totally ignored "those conceptions of physical causation which have arisen only as experiences, and have been slowly organized during civilization." We are now dealing with the beliefs of twenty millions of modern Spiritualists, our own fellow men, living in the full blaze of the enlightened 19th century. These men ignore none of the discoveries of modern science; nay, many among them are themselves ranked high among the highest of such scientific discoverers. Notwithstanding all this, are they any the less addicted to the same "form of superstition," if superstition it be, than the primitive man? At least their interpretations of the physical phenomena, whenever accompanied by those coincidences which carry to their minds the conviction of an intelligence behind the physical Force, are often precisely the same as those which presented themselves to the apprehension of the man of the early and undeveloped ages.

What is a shadow? asks Herbert Spencer. By a child and a savage

“a shadow is thought of as an entity.” Bastian says of the Benin negroes that “they regard men’s shadows as their souls” . . . thinking “that they . . . watch all their actions, and bear witness against them.” According to Crantz, among the Greenlanders a man’s shadow “is one of his two souls — the one which goes away from his body at night.” By the Fijians, the shadow is called “the dark spirit, as distinguished from another which each man possesses.” And the celebrated author of the *Principles of Psychology* explains that “the community of meaning, hereafter to be noted more fully, which various unallied languages betray between shade and spirit, shows us the same thing.”

What all this shows us the most clearly, however, is that, wrong and contradicting as the conclusions may be, yet the premises on which they are based are no fictions. A thing must be, before the human mind can think or conceive of it. The very capacity to imagine the existence of something usually invisible and intangible is itself evidence that it must have manifested itself at some time. Sketching in his usual artistic way the gradual development of the soul-idea, and pointing out at the same time how “*mythology* not only pervades the sphere of religion . . . but infects more or less the whole realm of thought,” Professor Müller in his turn tells us that, when man wished for the first time to express

a distinction between the body and something else within him distinct from the body . . . the name that suggested itself was *breath*, chosen to express at first the principle of life, as distinguished from the decaying body, afterwards the incorporeal . . . immortal part of man — his soul, his mind, his Self. . . . When a person dies, we, too, say that he has given up the ghost, and ghost, too, meant originally spirit, and spirit meant breath.

As instances of this, narratives by various missionaries and travellers are quoted. Questioned by Father F. de Bobadilla, soon after the Spanish conquest, as to their ideas concerning death, the Indians of Nicaragua told him that “when men die, there comes forth from their mouth something which resembles a person and is called *julio* (Aztec *yuli*, ‘to live’ — explains M. Müller). This being is like a person, but does not die and the corpse remains here.” In one of his numerous works, Andrew Jackson Davis, whilom considered the greatest American clairvoyant and known as the “Poughkeepsie Seer,” gives us what is a perfect illustration of the belief of the Nicaraguan Indians. This book (*Death and the After-Life*) contains an engraved frontispiece, representing the death-bed of an old woman. It is called the “Formation of the Spiritual Body.” Out of the head of the defunct, there issues a luminous appear-

ance — her own rejuvenated form.<sup>1</sup>

Among some Hindus the spirit is supposed to remain for ten days seated on the eaves of the house where it parted from the body. That it may bathe and drink, two plantain leaf-cups are placed on the eaves, one full of milk and the other of water. "On the first day the dead is supposed to get his head; on the second day his ears, eyes, and nose; on the third, his hands, breast, and neck; on the fourth, his middle parts; on the fifth, his legs and feet; on the sixth, his vitals; on the seventh, his bones, marrow, veins and arteries; on the eighth, his nails, hair, and teeth; on the ninth, all the remaining limbs, organs, and manly strength; and, on the tenth, hunger and thirst for the renewed body." ("The Pathari Prabhus," by Krishnanath Raghunathji; in the Government *Bombay Gazetteer*, 1879)

Mr. Davis' theory is accepted by all the Spiritualists, and, it is on this model that the clairvoyants now describe the separation of the "incorruptible from the corruptible." But here, Spiritualists and the Aztecs branch off into two paths; for, while the former maintain that the soul is in every case immortal and preserves its individuality throughout eternity, the Aztecs say that "when the deceased has lived well, the *julio* goes up on high with our gods; but when he has lived ill, the *julio* perishes with the body, and there is an end of it."

Some persons might perchance find the "primitive" Aztecs more consistent in their logic than our modern Spiritualists. The Lapponians and Finns also maintain that while the body decays, a *new* one is given to the dead, which the Shaman can alone see.

Though breath, or spirit, or ghost [says further on Professor Müller] are the most common names... we yet speak of the

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<sup>1</sup> "Suppose a person is dying," says the Poughkeepsie Seer. "The clairvoyant sees right over the head what may be called a magnetic halo—an ethereal emanation, in appearance golden, and throbbing as though conscious.... The person has ceased to breathe, the pulse is still, and the emanation is elongated *and fashioned in the outline of the human form!* Beneath it, is connected the brain.... Owing to the brain's momentum, I have seen a dying person, even at the last feeble pulse-beat, rouse impulsively and rise up in bed to converse, but the next instant he was gone—his brain being the last to yield up the life-principles. The golden emanation ... is connected with the brain by a very fine life-thread. When it ascends, there appears something *white* and *shining* like a human head; next, a faint outline of the face *divine*; then the *fair* neck and *beautiful* shoulders; then in rapid succession come all parts of the new body, down to the feet—a bright shining image, a little smaller than the physical body, but a perfect prototype in all except its disfigurements. The fine life-thread continues attached to the old brain. The next thing is the withdrawal of the electric principle. When this thread snaps, the spiritual body is free (!) and prepared to accompany its guardian to the Summer Land."

*shades* of the departed, which meant originally their shadows. . . . Those who first introduced this expression — and we find it in the most distant parts of the world — evidently took the shadow as the nearest approach to what they wished to express; something that should be incorporeal, yet closely connected with the body. The Greek *eidolon*, too, is not much more than the shadow . . . but the curious part is this . . . that people who speak of the life or soul as the shadow of the body, have brought themselves to believe that a dead body casts no shadow, because the shadow has departed from it; that it becomes, in fact, a kind of Peter Schlemihl. (*Introduction to the Science of Religion*)

Do the Amazulu and other tribes of South Africa only thus believe? By no means; it is a popular idea among Slavonian Christians. A corpse which is noticed to cast a shadow in the sun is deemed a sinful soul rejected by heaven itself. It is doomed henceforth to expiate its sins as an earth-bound spirit, till the Day of the Resurrection.

Both Lander and Catlin describe the savage Mandans as placing the skulls of their dead in a circle. "Each wife knows the skull of her former husband or child, and there seldom passes a day that she does not visit it, with a dish of the best cooked food. . . . There is scarcely an hour in a pleasant day, but more or less of these women may be seen sitting or lying by the skulls of their children or husbands — talking to them in the most endearing language that they can use (as they were wont to do in former days) 'and seemingly getting an answer back.'" (Quoted by Herbert Spencer in *Fetish-worship*)

What these poor, savage Mandan mothers and wives do, is performed daily by millions of civilized Spiritualists, and but the more proves the universality of the conviction that our dead hear and can answer us. From a theosophical, magnetic — hence in a certain sense a scientific — standpoint, the former have, moreover, far better reasons to offer than the latter. The skull of the departed person, so interrogated, has surely closer magnetical affinities and relations to the defunct than a table through the tippings of which the dead ones answer the living; a table, in most cases, which the spirit while embodied had never seen nor touched. But the Spiritualists are not the only ones to vie with the Mandans. In every part of Russia, whether mourning over the yet fresh corpse or accompanying it to the burying ground, or during the six weeks following the death, the peasant women as well as those of the rich mercantile classes go on the grave to shout, or in Biblical phraseology to "lift up their voices." Once there, they wail in rhythm,

addressing the defunct by name, asking of him questions, pausing as if for an answer.

Not only the ancient and idolatrous Egyptian and Peruvian had the curious notion either that the ghost or soul of the dead man was present in the mummy, or that the corpse was itself conscious, but there is a similar belief now among the orthodox Christians of the Greek and the Roman churches. We reproach the Egyptians with placing their embalmed dead at the table; and the heathen Peruvians with having carried around the fields the dried-up corpse of a parent, that it might see and judge of the state of the crops. But what of the Christian Mexican of today, who, under the guidance of his priest, dresses up his corpses in finery, bedecks them with flowers, and in case of the defunct happening to be a female — even paints its cheeks with rouge. Then seating the body in a chair placed on a large table, from which the ghastly carrion presides, as it were, over the mourners seated around the table, who eat and drink the whole night and play various games of cards and dice, they consult the defunct as to their chances. On the other hand, in Russia, it is a universal custom to crown the deceased person's brow with a long slip of gilt and ornamented paper, called *Ventchik* (the crown), upon which a prayer is printed in gaudy letters. This prayer is a kind of a letter of introduction with which the parish priest furnishes the corpse to his patron Saint, recommending the defunct to the Saint's protection.<sup>2</sup> The Roman Catholic Basques write letters to their deceased friends and relatives, addressing them to either Paradise, Purgatory or — Hell, according to the instructions given by the Father confessor of the late addressees — and, placing them in the coffins of the newly departed, ask the latter to safely deliver them in the other world, promising as a fee to the messenger, more or less masses for the repose of his soul.

At a recent *séance*, held by a well-known medium in America (see *Banner of Light*, Boston, June 14th, 1879),

... Mercedes, late Queen of Spain, announced herself, and came forth in full bridal array — a magnificent profusion of lace and jewels, and spoke in several different tongues with a linguist present. Her sister, the Princess Christina, came also just after in much plainer costume, and with a timid school-girl air.

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<sup>2</sup> It runs in this wise: "St. Nicholas (or St. Mary So-and-so), holy patron of — (follow defunct's full name and title), receive the soul of God's servant, and intercede for remission of his (or her) sins."

Thus, we see that the dead people can not only deliver letters, but, returning from their celestial homes, even bring back with them their "lace and jewels." As the ancient pagan Greek peopled his Olympian heaven with feasting and flirting deities; and the American Red Indian has his happy hunting-grounds where the spirits of brave chiefs bestride their ghostly steeds and chase their phantom game; and the Hindu his many superior *lokas*, where his numerous gods live in golden palaces, surrounded with all manner of sensual delights; and the Christian his New Jerusalem with streets of "pure gold, as it were transparent glass," and the foundations of the wall of the city "garnished . . . with precious stones," where bodiless chirping cherubs and the elect with golden harps sing praises to Jehovah; so the modern Spiritualist has his "Summer Land Zone within the Milky Way,"<sup>3</sup> though somewhat higher than the celestial territories of other people.<sup>4</sup> . . . There, amid cities and villages abounding in palaces, museums, villas, colleges and temples, an eternity is passed. The young are nurtured and taught, the undeveloped of the earth matured; the old rejuvenated, and every individual taste and desire gratified; spirits flirt, get married, and have families of children.<sup>5</sup>

Verily, verily we can exclaim with Paul, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Belief in the survival of the ancestors is the oldest and most time-honoured of all beliefs.

Travellers tell us that all the Mongolian, Tartar, Finnish, and Tungusic tribes, besides the spirits of nature, deify also their ancestral spirits. The Chinese historians, treating of the Turanians, the Huns and the *Tukui* — the forefathers of the modern Turks — show them as worshipping "the spirits of the sky, of the earth, and the spirits of

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<sup>3</sup> See *Stellar Key to the Summer Land*, by Andrew Jackson Davis.

<sup>4</sup> In the same author's work, *The Spiritual Congress*, Galen says through the clairvoyant seer: "Between the Spirit Home and the earth, there are, strewn along the intervening distance . . . more than *four hundred thousand* planets, and *fifteen thousand* solar bodies of lesser magnitude."

<sup>5</sup> The latest intelligence from America is that of the marriage of a spirit daughter of Colonel Eaton, of Leavenworth, Kansas, a prominent member of the National Democratic Committee. This daughter, who died at the age of three weeks, grew in some twenty-odd years in the Summer-Land to be a fine young lady, and now is wedded to the spirit son of Franklin Pierce, late President of the U.S. The wedding, witnessed by a famous clairvoyant of New York, was gorgeous. The "spirit bride" was "arrayed in a dress of mild green." A wedding supper was spread by the spirit's order, with lights and bouquets, and plates placed for the happy couple. The guests assembled, and the wedded ghosts fully "materialized" themselves and sat at table with them. (*New York Times*, June 29th, 1879)

the departed." Medhurst enumerates the various classes of the Chinese spirits thus: The principal are the celestial spirits (*tien shin*), the terrestrial (*ti-ki*), and the ancestral or wandering spirits (*jin kwei*). Among these, the spirits of the late Emperors, great philosophers and sages are revered the most. They are the public property of the whole nation, and are a part of the state religion, "while each family has, besides this, its own *manes*, which are treated with great regard; incense is burned before their relics, and many superstitious rites performed."

But, if all nations equally believe in, and many worship, their dead, their views as to the desirability of a direct intercourse with these late citizens differ widely. In fact, among the educated, only the modern Spiritualists seek to communicate constantly with them. We will take a few instances from the most widely separated peoples. The Hindus, as a rule, hold that no pure spirit of a man who died reconciled to his fate will ever come back bodily to trouble mortals. They maintain that it is only the *bhutas* — the souls of those who depart this life unsatisfied and having their terrestrial desires unquenched — in short, bad, sinful men and women — who become "earth-bound." Unable to ascend at once to Moksha, they have to linger upon earth until either their next transmigration or complete annihilation, and thus take every opportunity to obsess people, especially weak women. So undesirable is to them the return or apparition of such ghosts, that they use every means to prevent it. Even in the case of the most holy feeling — the mother's love for her infant — they adopt measures to prevent her return to it. There is a belief among some of them that whenever a woman dies in childbirth, she will return to see and watch over her child. Therefore, on their way back from the *ghaut*, after the burning of the body, the mourners thickly strew mustard seeds all along the road leading from the funeral pile to the defunct's home. For some inconceivable reasons they think that the ghost will feel obliged to pick up, on its way back, every one of these seeds. And, as the labour is slow and tedious, the poor mother can never reach her home before the cock crows, when she is obliged — in accordance with the ghostly laws — to vanish, till the following night, dropping back all her harvest. Among the Tchuvashes, a tribe inhabiting Russian domains, (Castren's *Finnische Mythologie*, p. 122), a son, whenever offering sacrifice to the spirit of his father, uses the following exorcism: "We honour thee with a feast; look, here is bread for thee, and various kinds of food; thou hast all thou canst desire: but do not trouble us, do not come back near us." Among the Lapps and Finns, those departed spirits which

make their presence visible and tangible are supposed to be very mischievous and "the most mischievous are the spirits of the priests." Everything is done to keep them away from the living. The agreement we find between this blind popular instinct and the wise conclusions of some of the greatest philosophers, and even modern specialists, is very remarkable. "Respect the spirits and — keep them at a distance" — said Confucius, sixth century B.C. Nine centuries later, Porphyry, the famous anti-theurgist, writing upon the nature of various spirits, expressed his opinion upon the spirits of the departed by saying that *he knew of no evil* which these pestilent demons would not be ready to do. And, in our own century, a kabalist, the greatest magnetizer living, Baron Du Potet, in his *Magie Dévoilée*, warns the spiritists not to trouble the rest of the dead. For "the evoked shadow can *fasten itself* upon, follow, and for ever afterwards influence you; and we can appease it but through a pact which will bind us to it — till death!"

But all this is a matter of individual opinion; what we are concerned with now is merely to learn how the basic fact of belief in soul-survival could have so engrafted itself upon every succeeding age — despite the extravagances woven into it — if it be but a shadowy and unreal intellectual conception originating with "primitive man." Of all modern men of science, although he does his best in the body of the work to present the belief alluded to as a mere "superstition," the only satisfactory answer is given by Professor Max Müller in his *Introduction to the Science of Religion*. And by his solution we have to abide for want of a better one. He can only do it, however, by overstepping the boundaries of comparative philology, and boldly invading the domain of pure metaphysics; by following, in short, a path forbidden by exact science. At one blow he cuts the Gordian knot which Herbert Spencer and his school have tied under the chariot of the "Unknowable." He shows us that "there is a philosophical discipline which examines into the conditions of rational or conceptual knowledge"; and then defines for us a third faculty,

the faculty of apprehending the Infinite, not only in religion but in all things; a power independent of sense and reason, a power in a certain sense contradicted by sense and reason, but yet a very real power, which has held its own from the beginning of the world, neither sense nor reason being able to overcome it, while it alone is able to overcome both reason and sense.

The faculty of *Intuition* — that which lies entirely beyond the scope

of our modern biologists — could hardly be better defined. And yet, when closing his lecture upon the superstitious rites of the Chinese and their temples devoted to the worship of the departed ancestors, our great philologist remarks: “All this takes place by slow degrees; it begins with placing a flower on the tomb; it ends with worshipping the spirits. . . .”

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THE PROCESS and course of the reincarnations of an individuality may be symbolized by a string of beads, each new personality being the formation of a new bead, and adding it to the series. Each bead *seems* to have an individual consciousness which, however, in reality is the consciousness of the whole. The circumstances of the physical life are what obscure the knowledge of this fact, a knowledge which is attained by clearing away the clouds that dim the light which is always there. On reaching this state, the consciousness becomes transferred from that of the single bead to that of the whole, but its continuity is not thereby interrupted, any more than an interruption is necessitated by becoming familiar with all the rooms in a house after leaving some particular room in which one's infancy has been spent, or by passing out of the house into the open air. The knowledge of the greater includes that of the less; the less is by no means lost — it has been indispensable, but after its lesson has been learned its relative importance is diminished. It would be well for us to strive to bear in mind that all our past personalities really exist today as much as they ever did, and that they now are as much ourselves as is this particular present personality which we call ourselves.

—*The Path*, July 1887

# FOR EVER FRESH, THOSE VERNAL BLOOMS!

## LETTER 4

DEAR VIJAY,

That was excellent news in your last! My apologies for delay in replying. I have had some unexpected visitors. They were students of Theosophy and as we talked together I wished greatly that you had been with us. So be sure I rejoice to know that you have discovered some kindred souls in your own circle. Evidently you acted unawares on some advice from Mr. Judge! — namely, that conversation can easily enough be led into the proper channels. Not that he would have any of us hold forth aggressively like over-zealous preachers. “Tell the truth, but do not force it,” is his policy. So doing, we cannot alienate — should not, at least, if our hearers are but reasonable. And with this proviso you will often find that “a few words and, more important still, a proper attitude of mind” are sufficient, as W.Q.J. observes with his habitual wise moderation.

You did well to say what you did! And it could not have been altogether easy in such circumstances, when (as he would have been the first to acknowledge) “the usual worldly custom is to bring up for conversation unimportant matters, often in regard to persons, not infrequently to their detriment, or in regard to transient events, and to discuss these without relating them to permanent and basic principles.” But see your reward for having had the courage to do the opposite! You have found others who share your hopes and endeavours. I am particularly pleased to know that it was your mention of W.Q.J. that led to this. Now you and your few associates can feel that you have a teacher and friend in common!

Actually, there is nothing surprising about it. I have no doubt whatsoever that it is more in the nature of a reunion than a first meeting for all of you. Remember that quotation in one of my earlier letters? “Karmic tendency is an unswerving law. It compels us to go on in this movement of thought and doctrine; it will bring back to reincarnation all in it now.”

To work earnestly for “this movement” is your ultimate purpose, isn't it? Like Mr. Judge you are always practical. You won't be satisfied to “take up” Theosophy merely as a mental interest, however fascinating — a mental hobby, I almost wrote, for that is how some people do often regard the 'ologies and 'isms. A few even make a hobby of their

religion! Very different is the sincere student's attitude. Naturally so — his purpose is so different. "Our destiny," wrote Mr. Judge when the movement was but sixteen years old and beset by ridicule and hostility, "is to continue the wide work of the past in affecting literature and thought throughout the world, while our ranks see many changing quantities but always holding those who remain true to the programme and refuse to become dogmatic or to give up commonsense in Theosophy. Thus will we wait for the new messenger, striving to keep the organization alive that he may use it and have the great opportunity H.P.B. outlines when she says, 'Think how much one, to whom such an opportunity is given, could accomplish.'"

That responsibility, that trust, devolves now upon *us*. I always felt sure that you, Vijay, were one who would sooner or later become aware of it. The whole trend of your thought was thitherward. But the ripening of Karma, we know, cannot be hurried. There is, in my view, no *chance*, but rather a wise provision that "mutually assisting and encouraging one another, we may learn how to put Theosophy into practice so as to be able to teach and enforce it by example before others. We will then each and all be members of that Universal Lodge of Free and Independent Theosophists which embraces every friend of the human race."

You may ask how best to play your part in this. That can be answered only in the guarded words of Mr. Judge, namely, that it is impossible to prescribe any one method, since "each man is a potency in himself." Through deepening self-knowledge you (and your friends) will find the way, so be you are humble, sincere and patient. Naturally, you will study the books available. But direct study is not everything — there is also the process of osmosis. Keep much in company with H.P.B. and her great disciple W.Q.J. through their writings. So, over and above knowledge, may you assimilate something of their spiritual qualities. For not only must the mind be guided but the heart awakened, that wisdom and compassion may go hand in hand, since we subserve "the principle of Universal Brotherhood upon which alone all true theosophical work is based."

I fancy, however, that you will be thinking in shorter terms meantime. You want something to do immediately — as a Theosophist. You want to feel yourself of use, even of benefit, to others. Well, I touched on this, you will remember, in my last, and there is little I can find to add to it at the moment. For the present let your main task be

assimilation and ever fuller understanding of the teachings, that and the practice of altruism, as opportunity may be given you. Regarding the first, Mr. Judge urges "intense and ever-present thought upon the subject, coupled with a constant watch over all faults of mind and speech, that in time an actual change may be produced in the material person, as well as in the immaterial one within who is the mediator or way between the purely corporal lower man and his Higher divine self." And the second, he shows us, is to be practised not only in the more obvious ways but through a specific use of our faculties for the sake of the common good. "What we most need," he writes, "is such a Theosophical education as will give us the ability to expound Theosophy in a way to be understood by the ordinary person. This practical, clear exposition is entirely possible. That it is of the highest importance there can be no doubt whatever. It relates to and affects ethics, everyday life, every thought, and consequently every act. . . . It is pre-eminently our duty to be thus practical in exposition as often as possible. . . . Let us, then, acquire the art of practical exposition of ethics based on our theories and enforced by the fact of Universal Brotherhood."

Always, you see, Brotherhood! And this, Vijay, you will find you begin to practise (in degree) merely by associating *theosophically* with others, who, as much as you, will be full of good intentions and high purposes, standing in the same relationship to the Founders and as eager as you to put their teachings into practice. Only — beware of the little pitfalls! Note Mr. Judge's sagacious warning not to "mistake self-assertion in yourself for the strength of your theories." Note his injunction that "we should deny no man and interfere with none; for our duty is to discover what we ourselves can do, without criticizing the actions of another." Heed also his advice that "if any member proposes to spread the doctrines of Theosophy in a way that seems wise to him, wish him success even if his method be one that would not commend itself to you for your own guidance." And remember above all that we are not in this movement for the sake of self-expression, self-satisfaction, or, least of all, self-glory, but for "the moral betterment of each member of the great family" — the orphan, Humanity.

Now do you see what I mean when I say that in association, rather than in striving singly, you have a twofold gain? You will be able to *practise* what you might otherwise merely study theoretically — tolerance, regard for the rights of others, impersonality, wise discernment, harmony. And when he warns us against "criticizing the actions of another" Mr. Judge brings us back to that supreme virtue, charity.

“This is of the highest importance,” he says, “to the earnest Theosophist who may be making the mistake of obtaining intellectual benefits but remains uncharitable.... Is any Theosophist who reflects on this so foolish as to continue now, if he has the power to alter himself, a course that will breed a crop of thorns for his next life’s reaping?”

You are not one such. Don’t I know it! Your only danger, if I may presume to point it out, lies in your own immediate response to noble doctrines and the very readiness with which your heart accepts them, as though rejoicing to have found its natural way of life. But, says Mr. Judge, “if our doctrines are of any such use as to command the efforts of sages in helping on to their promulgation, then it must be that those sages — our Masters — desire the doctrines to be placed before as many of the mass as we can reach. This our Theosophical scholars and metaphysicians can do by a little effort. It is indeed a little difficult, because slightly disagreeable, for a member who is naturally metaphysical to come down to the ordinary level of human minds in general, but it can be done. And when one does do this, the reward is great from the evident relief and satisfaction of the inquirer.”

Well, I think — I sincerely hope — that we have garnered abundance of vernal blooms today, and I feel I should close now, for I remember how, at college, you would grow restive when even the most vital points were pressed home too persistently. Only one more small quotation, beginning with the words of H.P.B. that we must “remain true to ourselves.” Mr. Judge comments, “This means true to our better selves and the dictates of conscience. We cannot promulgate the doctrines and the rules of life found in Theosophy and at the same time ourselves not live up to them as far as possible. We must practise what we preach, and make as far as we can a small brotherhood within the Theosophical Society.”

Isn’t this just what you, Vijay, are hoping to do?

My own poor blessing on your efforts!

Your friend and fellow-student,

NARAHARI

FEEBLE souls content themselves with wishes; great ones have *wills*.

—TEACHING OF THE MASTER

## PRASNOTTARAMALA

[The following was reprinted in *Lucifer* for April 1891 from the *Sanskrit Critical Journal, Vidyodaya*.—EDS.]

PRASNOTTARAMALA, or a garland of questions and answers by Sri San-  
karacharya, the famous Saiva reformer, is a little work of thirty-two stan-  
zas treating of the highest morality in the form of question and answer.

Q. I am drowning down in the endless ocean of this world, O generous  
preceptor (*Guru*); kindly say where is a refuge for me?

A. The lotus feet of the lord of the universe, which will thus serve  
as a capacious boat (there is a refuge for thee).

Q. What is the real bond of man?

A. Desire for worldly pleasures.

Q. What can be said to be true freedom?

A. The total renunciation of all worldly enjoyments.

Q. What is the most dreadful hell?

A. One's own body.

Q. And what may be called heaven itself?

A. Contentment.

Q. What roots out worldly attractions?

A. Knowledge of one's own spirit (*Atma-bodh*) from the study of the  
holy scriptures (the Vedas).

Q. What is known as the cause of salvation?

A. The same.

Q. What is the door of hell?

A. The woman.<sup>1</sup>

Q. And what guides man to heaven?

A. *Ahinsa*, doing injury to no living beings.

Q. Who is in happy sleep?

A. He whose mind is confined in contemplation of the true nature of  
his own spirit (*Samadhi*).

Q. Who is awake?

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<sup>1</sup> Tertullian also said that woman was the gateway of the devil. Is this allegorical, for may not woman equally say that man is the "door of hell" from the same point of view? In the phraseology of Occultism, the lower Quaternary (the four lower "principles") is considered *male*, while of the three higher Principles Atma and Manas are held to be sexless and Buddhi (Soul), female.—EDS. [*Lucifer*]

- A. He who is conscious of real as well as of unreal things.
- Q. Who are the great enemies of man?
- A. His own senses.
- Q. And who are his true friends?
- A. When these are brought under his own command.
- Q. Who is poor?
- A. He whose desires are not satisfied by anything.
- Q. Who is rich?
- A. He who is contented with everything.
- Q. Who is dead though being alive?
- A. One who is without energy.
- Q. What in a man never ceases?
- A. Covetousness, which ever entices his mind to false happiness.
- Q. What is a real snare for a man?
- A. Self-sufficiency.
- Q. Who is the blindest of the blind?
- A. One in love.
- Q. What is virtually death?
- A. One's own infamy.
- Q. Who is a true preceptor?
- A. He who teaches to do good only.
- Q. Who may be called a true follower?
- A. One who is absolutely faithful to his preceptor.
- Q. What is the long disease?
- A. The world itself.
- Q. And what is the best medicine for it?
- A. A thorough comprehension of its nature.
- Q. What is a man's best ornament?
- A. A good disposition.
- Q. What is the most holy shrine?
- A. Purity of mind.
- Q. What is to be always followed?
- A. The words of the preceptor and the Vedas.
- Q. What are the means of knowing Brahma (the Supreme Spirit)?
- A. The company of good men, charity, reason and contentment.

- Q. And who may be called good men?  
A. Those who have given up all worldly desire, who have overcome ignorance, and devoted themselves to the contemplation of the Supreme Spirit.
- Q. What is the real fever among men?  
A. Anxiety.
- Q. Who is a fool?  
A. One devoid of discrimination.
- Q. What is the principal duty?  
A. To be pious to one's own God.
- Q. And what is real life?  
A. Life without corruption.
- Q. What is learning?  
A. That by which the Supreme Spirit is known.
- Q. What is true wisdom?  
A. Acquaintance with the nature of the Supreme Spirit.
- Q. Who has conquered the whole world?  
A. He who has subdued his own mind.
- Q. Who is the hero of heroes?  
A. One not affected by the arrows of *Kama*.
- Q. What is the poison of poisons?  
A. All worldly enjoyments.
- Q. Who feels himself always afflicted?  
A. He who is fond of worldly enjoyments.
- Q. Who is to be thanked?  
A. He who does good for others.
- Q. And who is to be worshipped?  
A. He who is well acquainted with the nature of the world.
- Q. What should not be yielded to in any circumstance?  
A. Love and sin.
- Q. And what should be performed by a learned man with all efforts?  
A. Study and virtue.
- Q. What is the cause of this world?  
A. Ignorance.
-

## ARE RELIGIONS NECESSARY?

IN THE PARK where we had been walking as the shadows of the evening lengthened, we had come upon a group of people circled around a speaker. As we passed, some of the speaker's words fell upon our ears, and this served as the starting point for our group discussion later on.

"Why did he say that all those who did not believe in the religion revealed by that prophet would be damned?" mused one of our friends. We had eaten our supper together and were seated in front of a friendly fire; the autumn evenings were chill this year, earlier than usual. "Does 'damned' mean punished and hurt? And if so, why would belief one way or the other make any difference?" retorted someone. "Many of us," added another, "come from different religious backgrounds; but we do not seem to have emphasized those differences, nor does our friendliness depend on threatening or cajoling one another into some form of acquiescence in our own special ideas." "I simply cannot understand such a mentality. It is so isolated, so restricted, and yet so frighteningly sure of itself that one could visualize violence and force being used if words failed," said a fourth one among us.

"Now," I said, "I think you have put your finger on one of the great tragedies of such people. Do you think they have thought out that which they say? The speaker that evening seemed anxious enough about the welfare of his listeners, and because he believed that a dismal future lay in store for them, he seemed to want to spare them such a fate." "But at what cost?" interjected my friend on the left. "I say," he added, "at the cost of thinking things out independently and making a decision on clear-cut and generally well seen and accepted principles." These are challenging words in our group, and he was overwhelmed immediately from several sides with: "Explain that!" "What is the basis for a general principle?" "What principles?" "How do you know that there are such principles?" "How can anyone be 'independent,' or be able to think anything out 'independently'?"

Now we have a rule in our group that all challenges are to be met squarely, and while the one challenged has to do his best to defend himself or to explain his statement, all the rest try to participate in the discussion that follows so that we arrive at a general understanding that is of value to all. In other words, we try to get at the truth of the matter. Long back when we first started meeting, a definition of "truth" was arrived at which seemed a fair one for us to use: "A truth is self-evident; all can understand it, so that it is *universal* in terms

of place, time and persons.” To this, at later times certain supplementary definitions had been added, like: “Truth is impartial, impersonal, timeless, all-inclusive. It is the expression of the laws of Nature. It includes the observer, the subject observed and that subtle relation between them both which one might call perception.” But these are only a few of them, and we added continually to those definitions as we went along. The interesting thing about our friendship was not that there were so many diverse views, but rather that, in spite of many viewpoints, on basic matters we all tended to confirm one another’s vision of fact and truth (or the way in which we could individually describe a fact).

So our friend stood up and, when silence was restored, bent his head in thought for a moment, raised it, looked around at all of us and slowly began to speak.

“I guess I let myself in for this,” he said. “So I had better try to lay some good foundations on which to build — or rather to try to tell you of what I have been thinking.” Encouraging cries of “Good,” “Go on,” were heard. So he continued: “Let us think of all the religions we know of or have heard of, and to which some of us belong or do not belong. Do they not have one main object in common — the defining of rules of life which may be followed by all? The ‘golden rule’ — do unto others as you would have them do unto you; the *panchashila* of the Buddhists; the great and inspiring statements of Jesus in the *Sermon on the Mount*; Sri Krishna’s philosophy of renunciation of the fruits of action, while being intensely active as required by the responsibilities of our natural position in life; the mysteriously inspiring statements of Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te King*; statements made by Mohammed, the prophet of Islam, at various times — in fact, if one looks at Pythagoras, Plato, Confucius, Guru Nanak, the fragments that have come to us of the ‘gospel’ of the ancient Americans, and so many others — all, all show a common basis, a respect for the individual. Simultaneously, of course, they show that the individual has to recognize the equal rights and duties and responsibilities of others: in his family, his community, his nation, and finally the whole world of people is involved in the concept — just as the air which brings us life passes everywhere in space and knows no barriers.” (“Hear, hear,” muttered someone across the circle. “Poetic, what?” another was heard to murmur.) “No, I do not mean to be tritely poetic,” exclaimed our friend. “These ideas are not mine but those of great reformers and prophets, and how can one such help himself from being an artist, a poet, a user of words of power?”

“Why do you say that? What power do you mean?” asked someone.

“I mean the power of fact, the power of truth,” simply stated our friend. “I mean that if all the great religions sprang from statements in one form or another of great laws of life, then, regardless of time, place, or persons, those statements constitute a reform movement, an attempt to awaken the minds of those who listen and to start them thinking again about what really matters in life.” Several nodded their heads in agreement and encouragement.

“Are you trying to say,” asked one of the newer members of the group, “that all the religions are the same in essence, and that all the prophets are only reformers?”

“Exactly,” stated our friend. “That is one of the conclusions I, and I believe that several of us, have come to; but it has taken a lot of reading and studying of the writings attributed to these great men. And, in the process, we had to look into their history, and the history of the ‘religion’ that was later built up around their lives and doings and teachings.”

“I think that the speaker we passed out there in the park would challenge you very seriously on that,” said one of the girls on the right. “He sounded as though he was thoroughly convinced that his religion was the sole plank of salvation for all. He used the word ‘damned’ several times, and seemed to imply that dire punishment would follow anyone who did not agree with his religion and its goals and ways of life. He seemed to think his religion and its dogmas and rituals were the only ones worth while. How do you know that your conclusions are any better than his? How can any one of us here be convinced of the truth of what you say?”

“Well, I never tried to convince anyone of anything,” stated our witness. “All anyone can do is present ideas to others for their consideration. Don’t we do it all the time? No one really can ever force anything on anyone. We but offer evidence, and there are different ways of doing this. Have you ever been to a court room, or watched a court room drama enacted on the stage or the screen? If you remember, the several advocates for prosecution and defence use two means of approach: one purely intellectual — their reasoned arguments; and the second a more subtle one, the stirring of the emotions of their listeners, not only by what they say but also by the tone of their voices. Haven’t you seen some who had a weak case try to defend the very weakness by intense and clever appeal to emotion? I’m sure we’ve all seen this, but may not

have been aware of the difference between the two approaches. Now, the speaker in the park was appealing to emotion, especially by playing upon the fear that many have of the future. He spoke as though he were trying to stimulate their dormant voice of conscience to speak and to remind them subtly of the several events in their own past of which they were secretly ashamed. So fear of the consequences, and doubt of one's own ability and power are the weapons used."

"I had not seen that before," said a lad sitting to my left. "Just think of the cleverness of it: fear and doubt — why, if we fear then we don't *know*! If we don't know then we can't discriminate or make correct choices — so we come to doubt. I can see that someone either very helpful or very clever could come along at this point and relieve the poor fearful doubter of his problem by offering to take on the burden of responsibility."

"Just so," exclaimed an excited voice from across the room. "That is how priestcraft begins. First comes the reformer, and he is rarely honoured during his lifetime save by a few. The power of his statement of truth touches some, then spreads; those who follow try to substitute the inner inspiration which is theirs — as it is that of all men — with rules and regulations and interpretations of the words and doings of the prophet they endeavour to honour. Yes, I can just see it now — a whole new religion starts." He got up and gestured excitedly at us. "Isn't it so? Can't you all see it? It's like the story of the tying of the cat." Two voices were heard to say, "What's that story?" Our excited friend smiled sheepishly and said, "The story is a good one and won't take long."

"A holy man gathered a small band of followers around him, and during the cold months of the year they took refuge in a large cavern. One of the observances of the group was the spending of a set hour of the morning in quiet meditation. One time a cat joined the group, and as is the custom of hospitality, it was fed and looked after. Soon it was noticed that during the meditation period it disturbed the brothers by rubbing against first one and then another. Advice was sought of the guru who suggested that from then on the cat be gently but firmly tied to a post outside the cavern before the hour of meditation, and later it could be released again. So it was done accordingly. In course of time the holy man died and his disciples, determined to follow his precepts, became eventually one of the many small religious clans. Several hundred years passed and the religion that grew up around the guru's teachings attracted many. It was distinguished by the special and mysteriously

important ceremony of the tying of the cat which, as you may all guess by now, had become one of its most important rituals." Our small assembly broke its seriousness in hearty laughter, and our young friend sat down with an emphatic nod, as one satisfied that he had made a point.

"But let us go back to the serious part of our talk," reminded one of the girls. "I want to know if all the great religions have principles that are common. Are they the same as those we feel are right to use even now, no matter where we go, or whom we meet or live with?" Another added: "I'd also like to know about this punishment business. Are we really punished if we do wrong? Suppose we are ignorant of a thing, or do something in error, can't we expiate or pay off in some way? Do we have to suffer?"

It was time for others to join the discussion. "Let us try another approach," suggested one. "Let me ask you to put this question to yourself in another manner. What are you ignorant of? Are you ignorant of the laws of life? What laws do you know of? Can you state or define them? Which do you think are applicable to all of us in the world? We can understand ignorance of facts, or of events we have not heard of nor witnessed, but are we denied the power to ask, to seek advice on any point? Is it not in us a desire to be expedient that curtails our search for right answers that would truly satisfy our inner urge to do and know the right, the useful and the necessary? Don't you see we are all innately aware of the main 'do's' and 'don'ts' of the several world religions?"

"I see where you are going," one of our friends exclaimed. "You are going to say that most men would admit that the great virtues can be practised by all. Even the wicked often make a pretence of innocence and virtue—thus giving lip service to that which they deliberately subvert in secret action or through the power of their influence on others. Ah, now I see ever further—those whose moral character is not strong fall a prey to these maleficent ones, and they compound the offence by bringing woe to others—what a terrifying prospect!"

"How do you think wars are started?" excitedly asked another of us from across the room. "Have you ever thought of the harm that can be caused by a single evilly-inclined person who finds himself in a position of power? Do you think it is the common people of a country who join to conspire against other common people in other countries? Let me ask further: Have you ever considered the cumulative impact

of the news we hear over the radio or the TV, or read in the newspapers? A good part of it deals with strife and suffering, death and extortion. We are plunged into a world-wide morass of pain and suffering and killing, until we begin to think that there is nothing more to life than just this." The speaker looked around the group and added: "Can't you see how the 'one-life philosophy' has created the attitude of 'eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die,' and 'Devil take the hindmost'?"

"I don't see what's wrong with that as an idea," answered one of our latest arrivals. "Have you or anyone any evidence to offer that anyone came back after his body died?"

This shift in the direction of our discussion illustrates the kind of broad thinking that we encourage, a passing from one subject to another and the finding of a common ground, so that, while appearing to cover a wide field, we are actually bringing evidence to bear on the subject we started with, possibly proving again that Nature and her laws are indeed universal and that we cannot study any of her departments without finding some analogy or correspondence to a correlated department. It is like going in a circle and coming back to the starting point, not exactly on the same level but a little further on, perhaps, with all the added thought.

Our friend who had been challenged earlier offered the suggestion that most religious systems merely try to say that nature is so exquisitely balanced (as the science of ecology demonstrates) that any force brought to bear anywhere will be felt, however minutely or at a distance in time and space, by all other beings; and this apparent movement from a centre of disturbance (ourselves) to an infinite periphery (the space around us) will ultimately converge at the centre of original force—but I got the impression that the metaphysics of his reasoning escaped some. Another pointed out that there have been recorded cases of individuals in various countries and at various times who have testified to having lived before—and these are well documented and known to psychological science, though great credence is not given to them. Finally, one of us said: "As I understand it, we agree that we live in a universe of law. Could we not then define the 'bad' as that which disturbs the freedom and infringes on the rights, liberties and prerogatives of others? Nature's progress is disturbed. Nature's laws being impersonal, react on the person or persons who were the source of trouble. And similarly for that which we call the 'right.' But the 'just' is another thing, and probably the advice Krishna gives in the *Gita* about the performance

of *necessary* action, disinterestedly, is a good one, but this implies attention and concentration and the development of wisdom and discrimination at all times — in fact very serious and arduous effort.”

“That sounds like the Indian view of Karma,” said one. And another added: “If you add reincarnation to Karma you get a complete system. Nature offers us the opportunity to learn and grow and become wise. You have to learn her laws. Our life should be one of co-operation with her and her projects, and thus we ourselves could develop to the fullest extent and become universal men, natural men. If we break her laws then the law of moral retribution (Karma) teaches us, through pain and suffering, first to look for the cause of sorrow, then its cure, and then the steps of right livelihood. (“There speaks a Buddhist in disguise,” I heard another friend murmur quietly to himself.) If at the end of our life we have not balanced our accounts, then the balance is held over by Nature until we come back as old souls into new bodies to get the exact result of our previous lives.”

“I challenge that,” exclaimed our newcomer again. “Well, let us see,” was the answer. “Are you exactly the same as anyone else here, or anyone you have ever met?” “No,” was the slow but thoughtful reply. “Then, what makes you different?” A pause, and then slowly: “I feel myself to be, well, myself, separate, unique — I look out on the world, I remember things that have happened in the past. I make decisions now and I try to guide my future life on that basis, for my own good. I sometimes fear and doubt that future and try to defend myself. Yes, I can see how I make mistakes and distrust others. I am not even very honest with myself at times. You know,” he added, even more slowly, “I think I had better do some serious thinking about myself.” “Well, then,” our friend rejoined, “you are going to do what we all do to some extent. Isn’t it interesting what we can develop in an hour of friendly discussion?” He turned our way and added: “I think our characters and our capacities, our talents and our dislikes and disabilities are an index of what we must have made of ourselves in our previous lives — anyway, it is something to think about. And we are making our future, even now, by our present decisions.”

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TRUTH is as impossible to be soiled by any outward touch as the sunbeam.

—MILTON

## BEYOND LIBERTY AND DESPOTISM

H.P.B. wrote in 1877, in *Isis Unveiled* (I. xlv): "Our voice is raised for spiritual freedom, and our plea made for enfranchisement from all tyranny, whether of SCIENCE or THEOLOGY." Ought we not to add, today, also of the STATE?

Unfortunately, human nature likes to rely on authority when the latter does not clash with the desires of the personality, for this relieves it of the feeling of personal responsibility. That authority may be the dicta of Theology, the theories of Science, the laws of the State, or even the say-so of the head of a business or of a family.

Today, however, there is a definite movement among the young for freedom from restraint of whatever kind. This is leading to chaos and disruption: but, it is to be hoped — and there are signs — that it may lead finally to full acceptance of one's own responsibility for what one does, as well as to the formulation of some code of conduct by each one in his contact with his fellow men and with Nature. This will have to be based, not on Science or Theology or the laws of the State, but on thought and ideas. Man may revert for a time to the animal condition of freedom, or, by accepting his responsibility and using his reason, lift himself up far beyond the present condition of life.

We are going through the cyclic period when, under the law of evolution, men are beginning to think for themselves and are loath to accept anything blindly. What appeals to reason alone is accepted. Therefore we need a new keynote or norm of life to replace the old. The perennial question "Who am I?" should more than ever be asked today, for the idea of a personal God or Creator is fading into oblivion and man is beginning to know the mighty powers he himself possesses. Freedom to act and live as one chooses is showing us that our powers are indeed very great. Therefore it is that each unit, man, free and independent of all others, thinks that he is isolated from all the rest, and conflict arises as each goes his own way. As we are forced to live together we must evolve some common basis for living, some code of laws, ideas, and actions which will make life harmonious and, at the same time, free within limits. It must begin to strike us that our own freedom often means that the freedom of another has been taken away from him; or, maybe, *his* demand for freedom impedes our own freedom!

A little deeper thought shows us that we are never free. We are bound under the laws of Nature to be born and to die, to sleep and to

wake, to give and to take. We are bound to act, and we are bound to learn what kind of action brings the result we seek. In other words, we must learn the laws of Nature and then we shall get the results we desire. At the same time we learn that we must accept the results, whatever they be, if we have not fulfilled the law. Our freedom lies in the *lines* of action we choose to take, not in the results. This is because we are not isolated units living isolated lives, but all units combine to make the One Totality, each bound with all others and with the realm of Nature which has its own laws. Instead of "fighting" on the basis of our own desires and inclinations so that we have "Man *versus* Man," "Man *versus* the State," "Man *versus* Nature," "Man *versus* Religion," we must think in terms of "Man in relationship to his fellow units," "Man in relationship to the State," "Man in relationship to Nature," and so on.

We can begin to see that while the "unit" looks at life from his own point of view he is fighting a losing battle. What is needed is the universal standpoint. We shall then ask the question, What is the world in which we live? What is its nature? Only then shall we learn how we can use Nature and work on with Her.

We can view this question of our bondage or freedom from another point of view. The *Gita* tells us that there are three great qualities (*Gunas*) that are born from nature and bind the imperishable soul to the body. As explained in that mystery allegory, *The Dream of Ravan*, these are

the three radical, shall we say prismatic, qualities, into which the primordial and eternal unity divides itself, when reflected in time, through the prism of Maya, into the multitudinous universe; and of which every soul, while in this estranged state, partakes in greater or less degree. These qualities, *Tamas*, *Rajas*, and *Satva*, have been translated generally, the first, Darkness: the second, Passion or Foulness (Turbidness?); the third, Truth or Goodness.

If we understand that every soul partakes of these qualities we have a key to knowing ourselves. All three serve a purpose, for *Tamas* is stability as well as darkness, *Rajas* is the awakening of life in that stability, and *Satva* is goodness, rightness. When pure *Satva* permeates *Rajas* and *Tamas*, one functions as a good man, for knowledge, goodness, pervades all his actions. But goodness is not spirituality, we learn, though spirituality is in the real sense goodness.

Turning our attention to the higher aspect of life, we learn that the

Self of which we are an aspect has three qualities — *Sat*, *Chit*, *Ananda*. *Sat* is Being, the fact of existence; *Chit* is the awareness of this through faith in the fact that we exist, and *Ananda* is the result of the working together of *Sat* and *Chit*, producing Bliss. When these three qualities of the Self permeate *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, we have the spiritual man who is described in the *Gita*.

*The Dream of Ravan* tells us further:

Still beyond the isolated *Satva* quality is a sphere called the *pure Satva*, which must be considered to denote *essentia pura*, pure being, pure truth, pure goodness — viewed as one simple essence. This seems attained only when all isolation is renounced; when the *Satva*, re-entering predominant into the *Rajas* and *Tamas*, and penetrating them with its influence, all three isolated prismatic rays coalesce into pure universal light, and a consciousness of divine reunion... “when man becomes God,” or... when the plastic, and the emotional, and the ideal, become absolutely one, and there is, properly speaking, neither matter, nor soul, nor spirit, but something which is all and yet none of these. . . .

This is the state of the spiritual man who is described in the *Gita*. He has broken all bonds, for he has surpassed the three qualities.

It is when we are free from hate or longing that we can see things as they truly are. When we remain undisturbed by the three qualities and become equal-minded, then we can become the embodiment of energy, *Atma* in action, for we possess the knowledge of truth. We become wise and confident, letting the universal energy act through us. In passion and desire is the power or energy of action, and the *tamasic* aspect of nature, rigidity, contains the energy or power of holding together, so that it is possible to build and work out ideas and further the evolution of matter.

In this long, long process we cannot immediately rise above pain and pleasure and equate desirelessness with fulfilment, or, indeed, get above the qualities save by degrees. While we have a physical body we cannot avoid pain, while we have feelings we cannot avoid worries and anguish, but we can *begin* the process of injecting the qualities of the higher into the lower, recognizing pain and pleasure and other pairs of opposites as the world's eternal ways, and remaining unaffected in the mind.

All this may seem far removed from our bid for freedom, but it is not so. It is only in this way that we can become free, and the begin-

ning is in the immediate environment in which we live our daily life here and now.

We need to have an appreciation of the goal towards which we are striving. We might take the idea of learning to "work on with Nature" to become the pure channels of life. Let us ask ourselves, "Am I acting, feeling, thinking, on a personal basis, or as the Self? As one bound, or one free from desires and passions?" Let us begin to live as far as we can the life of the Ego within us; to see the divine in all because it is seated in our own heart. If we do not find it in our own heart we shall never find it in others, and, conversely, if we do not find it in others we shall never find it in ourselves.

So, one might say, the first step to freedom is to recognize that one is bound. It is important for us to know whether it is the puny self that binds us, or whether we are acting on the basis of the limitless SELF.

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At a late meeting the question of being charitable to the weaknesses of others came up for discussion, and brought out quite a lengthy talk on why that attitude is absolutely necessary, from the standpoint of the spiritual Ego, for right development in the mind of spiritual perception and knowledge. It was pointed out that all the errors of any life result in reality from a diseased — if not insane, at least, un-sane mentality. An imperfection is an imperfection, the difference in kind not being anything that anyone should pride himself upon. Our duty is not to rid our neighbours of their imperfections, but ourselves of our own. The pride that results from fancied virtue was spoken of; judgment in anger — that the anger passes but the judgment remains as a bias in the mind, and a hindrance to the one judged; the danger of thus standing in the way of another, to say nothing of the reactionary effect on ourselves. The talk came up because of the tendency of minds in general to pride themselves upon not having the defects that others have, while at the same time they may exhibit defects, which, while not so obvious — as generally classed by the world — are yet worse, because of being deeper seated and harder to eradicate, as well as being more widely injurious.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

## NATURE-WORSHIP

[In an article under the above title published in *The Theosophist* for January 1880, the author, who signs himself "H.H.D. — B.A.," traces "the birth and growth of the idea among the Aryans of India, as viewed from Rig-Vedic poetry, etc., and a further transition to science, as observed historically." In an editorial note, H.P.B. made the following comment on the article.

—Eds.]

WE have not been willing to interrupt the rhythmic flow of our correspondent's language with any commentaries of our own, but must add a word of supplement. The outward phase of the idea of nature-worship he has succinctly and eloquently traced. But he, in common with most modern scholars, completely ignores one chief factor. We allude to the experience, once so common among men, now so comparatively rare, of a world of real beings, whose abode is in the four elements, beings with probable though as yet ill-defined powers, and a perceptible existence. We are sorry for those who will pity us for making this admission; but fact is fact, science or no science. The realization of this inner world of the *Elementals* dates back to the beginning of our race, and has been embalmed in the verse of poets and preserved in the religious and historical records of the world. Granted that the perception of phenomena developed nature-worship, yet, unless our materialistic friends admit that the range of these phenomena included experiences with the spirits of the elements and the higher and noble realities of Psychology, it would trouble them to account for the universality of belief in the various races of the Unseen Universe.

Why should but one of the elements, namely, earth, be so densely populated, and fire, water, air, etc., be deemed empty voids, uninhabited by their own beings — the "viewless races," as the great Bulwer-Lytton called them? Is this partiality of nature a logical hypothesis of science? Who that observes the marvellous adaptations of the organs of sense and the natures of beings to their environment, dares say that these elementals do not exist, until he is well assured that the perceptive faculties of our bodies are capable of apprehending all the secret things of this and other worlds? Why may not the spirits of the kingdoms of earth, air, fire and water be non-existent to us — and we to them — only because neither has the organs to see or feel the other? Another aspect of this subject was treated in our December issue.

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## THE MESSAGE OF MAHASHIVARATRI

MAHASHIVARATRI, which falls this year on February 23, is one of the great religious festivals which keep alive certain eternal truths. Such festivals have a universal message. This great Vigil Night of Shiva, the Pure, of Mahadeva, the Mighty, held in great sacredness by all yogis and ascetics, brings to us a message of the Heart Doctrine.

Shiva is not merely the Destroyer, as ordinarily understood, but is the Regenerative Power in Nature. The death of the physical body implies the liberation of the Soul, to whom death always comes as a deliverer and friend. So the destruction of Shiva is the destruction of our lower inclinations and selfish tendencies — *Kama*-passion, *Krodha*-anger, and *Lobha*-greed. Shiva not only destroys these, but enables us to unfold mercy and compassion united with a true sense of justice, wisdom about ourselves and about Nature, and the power to sacrifice. Shiva is the patron of Yogis and Sannyasis from the truly spiritual point of view, because by destroying the *ahankaric* or selfish aspect in them he enables them to create their *Atmic* or spiritual aspect. The personal and selfish life must be given up if we are to know the spiritual life of peace and power, wisdom and sacrifice.

Mahashivaratri is a night festival, for it is from the night of selfishness and impurity that humanity must awaken. Are we truly living in terms of the Spirit? Men and women who live wholly in their senses and are enslaved by them are virtually the living dead. They are sleeping souls who must awaken, for that is the first step to resurrection and regeneration.

The first awakening comes when a man begins to inquire, to face his honest doubts, to ask the meaning and significance of religious and social customs and habits. When all is pleasant man may forget his spiritual essence and identify himself with his lower nature. Awakening comes sometimes as the result of one's own suffering, sometimes because one sees the suffering of others and begins to question. It is when men and women become inquirers that they become true students in the school of life.

The moment of first awakening corresponds with conception of the physical body. The interval between conception and birth is fixed in the case of the body, but the length of the interval after the man begins to inquire and before he becomes truly awakened depends upon himself. It may be comparatively short if the inquirer perseveres in a life of

purity, seeking to learn and to apply the Wisdom of the Spirit. As he learns to purify his mind the faculty of intuition begins to unfold. Reason involves laborious analysis and synthesis; intuition, the direct perception of the Soul, is like a flood of light illuminating a dark room so that we can see everything in it. At first it comes and goes, but, ultimately, by purifying his reason and using intuition when it comes, man can make it a permanent possession.

It is through the faculty of intuition that the man of enlightened heart and compassionate mind may end his vigil of Mahashivaratri with a vision of his spiritual and higher Divine Self and its link with his own Spiritual Guru whose blessing makes that vision possible. From that time on the man who has that inner awakening consecrates everything, including himself, to the service of the human family, without distinctions. He is the true "Twice-Born."

As stated earlier, Shiva is the patron of Sannyasis and Yogis. These terms are often misunderstood. The true Sannyasi is one who renounces passion, anger, greed, pride and egotism to dedicate himself to the service of the whole race. True Yoga is union with the world — because the Yogi loves the world — not separation from it. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* Krishna says that the man who is not unfriendly to the world and to whom the world is not unfriendly is dear unto Him. The Divine Yogi is the friend of all creatures, full of compassion for all beings and full of the desire to help men to overcome their weaknesses.

The symbols of Shiva as Nataraja, dancing on the burning ground, and of Krishna's *Lila* as He dances with the *Gopis*, are related. Some have aspersed the story of Krishna's *Lila*, but the joy it expressed comes only through spiritual purity and nobility of life, and the *Gopis'* love for Krishna sprang from their recognition of His spiritual greatness. Similarly, Shiva-Mahadeva dances out of sheer joy. The burning ground symbolizes destruction; the vices are all burned past resurrection. Shiva dances alone, as each of us must at first rejoice at the overcoming of the lower nature. Then we must go out and try to convey our joy and peace to others who are ready, which is the meaning of Krishna coming on earth as *Avatara*, and His dance of *Ananda*.

Any man can become as one newly born if he is sincere and understands the method. Courage and persevering labour are needed. The fundamentals of right living as given in Theosophy are the apotheosis of common sense; Theosophy condemns both blind asceticism and sense indulgence.

If men aspire to the life of the Soul they recognize that they must obey the Buddha's injunction: "Shun evil; follow good." The sensuous man who aspires to higher things knows he must conquer his lust; the irritable woman, that she must become patient; the timid boy, that he must become fearless; the shy young girl, that she must gain poise.

"The fight is in the mind," we have been told. We should begin by preparing for this fight, this holy warfare. A gun in the hands of an inexperienced man may be more dangerous to himself than to the enemy. Unless we know the laws of human evolution we may strengthen our weaknesses instead of overcoming them. Unwise attack may arouse the resentment of the personality and increase its weaknesses. We must resist weaknesses whenever they show themselves, but not take the offensive against them until we know how.

When we centre high universal and impersonal ideas in our mind, when it holds great thoughts which are not concerned with the petty affairs of everyday life, our weaknesses fall away from us. Therefore we must take to regular study of great philosophical truths every day.

It is the learning of such great ideas that awakens in us the heart. Large numbers of people live by the Eye-Doctrine or Head-Learning; but the awakening of the Soul enables us to learn and to teach the Heart Doctrine. Touched by it, the student goes to his books and his examinations with a new motive — preparation, not only for earning his own livelihood, but for the service of all human souls; the business man — the big industrialist or the petty clerk — thinks about his duty to the community at large, not only for his own profit or pay, but to serve the community by his work; the woman in the home endeavours for a nobler purpose than merely making her dear ones happy; she wants her home to become a centre of Purity and Beauty where the grace of hospitality, the charm of friendship, radiate Light for all. Such is the power of the Doctrine of the Heart.

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WHAT is the purpose of every effort I make? It is that I may discharge the debt which I owe to other creatures, that I may make them happy in the world, and that they may gain heaven in the next.

—ROCK INSCRIPTION OF ASOKA

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Dr. Homer A. Jack's article in the January *Sarvodaya* gives a brief account of the World Conference on Religion and Peace held at Kyoto, Japan, in October 1970. It was convened to foster mutual understanding of each other's religions and to find ways whereby religion may play a role in bringing about peace and, through it, the development of all peoples of the world. Delegates from 39 countries representing the world's living religions who attended the Conference studied the tough problems of disarmament, development, and human rights, and voted to constitute a continuing organization before they adjourned.

The Conference Message affirmed that "the things which unite us are more important than the things which divide us." It mentioned especially the fundamental unity of the human family; that human power is not self-sufficient and absolute; and a sense of obligation to stand on the side of the oppressed as against the oppressors. The Message affirmed that "we live or die together; we can continue to drift towards a common doom or we can engage together in the struggle for peace." The Conference, therefore, acknowledged the "duty transcending sectarian limits to co-operate with those outside the historic religions who share our desire for peace."

The three Workshop or Commission reports tried to grapple with the problems of violence and social change. The Disarmament Commission strongly supported "non-violent efforts to replace the unjust structures which marginalize the disinherited," and at the same time "warned those who refuse to permit the reform of these unjust structures which support their privileges that their resistance to change will make violence inevitable and that the burden of responsibility will rest with them."

The Development Commission asked the religious organizations to reform themselves as they try to change society: "Religion, no less than society, is in need of renewal and purification; unless it renews itself and helps to modernize society, it will indeed have become, as the angry young charge, irrelevant." The Commission asked: "Are these religious institutions designed to preserve the status quo or do they point the way towards the future? Is worship used as an escape from or as a means of relating men to reality?"

The Human Rights Commission suggested that "to restore credence in the moral and ethical authority of religion, the religious leaders of the world will have to take much more active and positive leadership

in a continuous effort for creating effective awareness of human rights and their promotion at all levels." The Conference confessed that "religions in their historical manifestations have not always been respectful of human rights themselves and have on some occasions purported to justify violations of human rights on religious grounds."

The religionists voted to constitute a continuing organization before they adjourned. Over a longer period the World Conference hopes to establish an interreligious presence at U.N. Headquarters, to make an impact on U.N. debates through official, if non-governmental, status in that world body.

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In its efforts to find an effective bomb detector to counter the current wave of attacks on aircraft, the U.S. Department of Transportation recently advertised for proposals to develop a device that would quickly identify "dynamite and other explosive vapours diffusing out of closed baggage." The request has been aimed principally at specialists in chromatography and olfactronics, but, as *New Scientist* for August 13, 1970, suggests, "it is also to be hoped that in their scientific zeal they won't entirely overlook the detective capabilities of the human nose."

Our sense of smell has been described as the most mysterious of our five senses. Experts aver that the human nose is more effective than any smelling machine that technology has so far been able to conceive. As *New Scientist* states:

Our nasal organ can sometimes analyse smells better than any form of analytical equipment. . . . Skilled medical practitioners are said to be able to diagnose over 30 diseases, including certain mental ailments and forms of poisoning, by savouring the aroma of their patients. Experienced fungologists can identify fungi from their odours and this faculty must have saved many of them from getting done in by death cap when gathering common mushrooms in the dark. An electrician is on aromatic record who detects which fuse has blown by scenting the trail along the porcelain plugs. And the Russians have at Tashkent a woman agent with a superb olfactory sense who smells out passengers carrying hashish.

Mediaeval theologians claimed that their reverent nostrils could detect a future saint as he shuffled off his mortal coil by the sweet and delightful odour of sanctity which his body exhaled in the process. While Saint Jerome earlier recorded that his

hermit colleague, Saint Hilarion, had the gift of being able to tell just what sins anyone had committed or what wickedness he was contemplating, just by taking a quick sniff at the person or his garments.

Though science has begun to tap the possibilities of sound, the mystery of scent is a mystery still, as far as science is concerned. That all beings, including men, animals and plants, have a specific odour is a well-recognized fact, but how it is produced or why it should be so are questions not easily answerable by science. Scent is correlated with sound and colour and all are in terms of vibration as far as their immediate cause is concerned. In *The Secret Doctrine* (I. 565), Madame Blavatsky quoted with approval a statement regarding the extreme tenuity of odour, and a note in *The Theosophist* for July 1883 (IV. 251) suggested that the odoriferous element inherent in the protoplasm or vital substance is "one of the links which connects the life principle with the physical body." That seems to be borne out by the resistance of distinctive bodily odour to the most scrupulous physical cleanliness. A strong and unpleasant personal scent that thus defies bodily hygiene points to magnetic impurity; for scent is an expression from within without, which one cannot alter save by an inner reform.

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In these days of changing values, there is noticeable everywhere a surge of pessimism. Commenting on this, an editorial in *The Times of India* of January 7 states:

...to fear doom itself, the final annihilation of the species, is to ignore the first characteristic of life: the instinct of survival, the profoundest urge of all living things... Consider the life urge even in micro-organisms... Tiny bacteria, blue-green algae and mosses have been found in the frozen wastes of the Antarctic. This month an American expedition is planning to dig and test the soil 250 kilometres off the South Pole, in a search for signs of life. They may well find them. Seeds several million years old have sprouted on contact with water; fierce forest fires and prolonged droughts have left some insects unharmed. The discovery of several kinds of molecules in space, the synthesis of genetic matter and the work on gas mixtures by Dr. Ponnampereuma all point to the near-certainty that life flourishes regardless of the hostility of the environment, originating spontaneously when the right conditions appear and possibly being propagated through spores along stellar routes. This immanence of life — or

at least the beautiful concept of it — should help to remind all pessimists that the present gloom is but a “local effect” and the night will pass. The poet said, “Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass, Stains the white radiance of eternity”.... That unique staining process, it must be remembered, is also eternal.

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A study of the ways in which man can change the natural climate around him for the worse has just been completed by scientists at the University of Maryland. It has long been known that the clearing of forests to bring new land under cultivation can often lead to the creation of dust-bowls and that the building of dams and artificial lakes can change the pattern of rainfall. The interest of the Maryland project lies in its investigating the changes in climate produced by the growth of cities.

There are many old-timers in Delhi, for instance, who feel that the city today is much hotter than it used to be in the 1930's. The explanation that the new built-up areas first store and then release heat is only part of the answer. Another factor is the heat generated by the transport systems and industrial plants. This creates a “heat island” which is strong enough to divert the natural local airflow around and above the city.

For this very reason, the wind speed at the top of the Eiffel tower in Paris is now 10 per cent. less than it was 50 years ago. This is not all. The study shows that the amount of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere has risen by 15 per cent. in the last 100 years. If this process continues unchecked till the amount is doubled, the earth's temperature as a whole may rise by two degrees centigrade. (*The Times of India*, January 7)

Climate, like the other conditions of life on this globe, has undergone, and will undergo, countless variations. A relation between changes in climate and cycles of race evolution is suggested in *The Secret Doctrine* (II. 262-63):

Species and genera of the flora, fauna, and the highest animal, its crown — man, change and vary according to the environments and climatic variations, not only with every Round, but every Root-Race likewise, as well as after every geological cataclysm that puts an end to, or produces a turning point in the latter.

Significant also is the proposition that weather responds to mass

thought. In fact, it has been suggested that to predict successfully the state of the weather 12 months in advance, "we must penetrate into the recesses of the human mind."

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New evidence linking the Indus valley civilization with ancient Mesopotamia has been brought to light by a joint team of Iranian and American archaeologists working on the ruins of a previously unknown settlement in south-east Asia. The site, known as Tepe Yahya, is situated in the Soghun valley and is said to date back to 3,500 B.C. Archaeologists working in the area have excavated an administrative building containing writing tablets recording financial transactions, seals, pottery and other artifacts. On the basis of the evidence available so far, they think that the civilization existed for about a thousand years and that the transition from nomadic life to a developed city culture there had been completed by about 2,900 B.C. (*The Times of India*, December 30)

What has stimulated widespread interest in the site among archaeologists throughout the world is the recent discovery of a steatite mine near Tepe Yahya. Steatite is a soft, easily carved soapstone that was widely used for pottery in both Mesopotamia and the Indus valley. As neither Mesopotamia nor the Indus valley centres had extensive steatite mines of their own, the obvious surmise is that Tepe Yahya was probably the main source for both. Archaeologists are now engaged in gathering evidence to establish that there were definite trade links between the Indus valley and ancient Mesopotamia via the Soghun valley.

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It was noted in "In the Light of Theosophy" for December 1970 that, in view of the risks involved in blood transfusions, other comparatively safe alternatives were presently being experimented with. According to an A.P. dispatch from Boston, dated January 4, the Massachusetts General Hospital has announced the approval of a blood-freezing process that allows a person to store up to six pints of his blood with a hospital for his own possible future use. It was the first licence of such a procedure issued by the U.S. Government, the hospital said. It cleared the way for demonstrating the safety and effectiveness of frozen blood so other centres could obtain similar licences.

Under the current procedures, blood can be stored for a maximum of 21 days. By the freezing process, it will be possible to store it for a much longer period.

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