

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### THE VAISHYA-DHARMA

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The performance of the duties of a man's own particular calling, although devoid of excellence, is better than doing the duty of another, however well performed; and he who fulfils the duties obligated by nature, does not incur sin. A man's own natural duty, even though stained with faults, ought not to be abandoned. For all human acts are involved in faults, as the fire is wrapped in smoke. The highest perfection of freedom from action is attained through renunciation by him who in all works has an unfettered mind and subdued heart.

— *The Bhagavad-Gita*

BUSINESS has been defined as "a lot of useless activities which we have created and now bow down to and worship." This might provoke the query: "Is business incompatible with the living of the higher life?"

The function of turning raw materials into finished products and serving as a link between the producer and the consumer (which covers "business" by and large) is surely a necessary one in any but the most primitive form of human society. And what is necessary cannot be wrong. But as things are at present, the complex which we call the business world is a vortex of selfishness, and the man who tries to lead the life of a businessman and practise Theosophical ethics in his vocation has a hard time. But this does not mean that it is impossible to do so; and, because the

businessman is essential to society, his function can and should be interpreted from a spiritual point of view. The application of Theosophy should not be confined to controlling and elevating the subjective processes of the *psyche* and bringing them under the influence of the *Nous*. Theosophy has to be made practical also by endeavouring to demonstrate the value of ethical and metaphysical principles in one's employment.

As in all reforms, the starting point is on the plane of motives. Things being as they are, the road to noticeable improvement in this field is a long one. But no harvest of physical effects can be expected unless seeds are sown and tended on the invisible planes of thought and feeling. Whatever one's vocation, it can be imbued with a sacramental quality if looked at from a new, a spiritual angle of vision. So, if his Karma has placed him in the industrial or the commercial world, the student of Theosophy may take heart and work steadily for the uplift of that particular aspect of human activity, convinced that every dealing in the workaday world has an archetypal origin.

Whatever be our job, we find that what we do almost always falls short of what we wanted to do. Semiconsciously or consciously all decent people sense that there is a right, an ideal way of doing things, a way that cannot be reached as yet but which there is a constant urge to strive after. The real Ideal is the archetype. Archetypes are the patterns behind the material embodiments which we see. Plato was the first to bring to the West the teaching that the whole Universe is built in terms of Divine Archetypal Ideas, and that all we see around us, both in Nature and in ourselves, are the endeavours of the Intelligences throughout Nature to copy those archetypal patterns, which, in right proportions and in relationship with one another, make the Whole a perfect picture.

No matter in what sphere of life we are—and those spheres were divided in Ancient India into four great types: the *Brahmana*, the *Kshatriya*, the *Vaishya* and the *Shudra*—there is the ideal pattern to follow. Great Spiritual Beings follow the pattern perfectly; the spheres of Nature below man, moved by the great Intelligence of Nature which we call instinct, do likewise. Between these two

stands man. He is the possessor of free will and is learning not only to sense the great pattern but also consciously to build his life and work on that pattern. To whichever of the four classes of men he belongs, it is incumbent on him to find out what is the pattern to be followed.

Great aid will be derived in this work, by one who finds himself in the business world, from an examination of the rules which the Hindu *Vaishya* of old was given to observe at a time when the caste system was not the dead shell that it is today but was based on qualities and characteristics and not on mere birth. The production of wealth in an honest manner—without robbing or destroying Nature or exploiting fellow men—and the proper distribution of wealth for the benefit of all and the proper functioning of the social order were designated the *Vaishyā-dharma*. Some of the rules that were incumbent on the *Vaishyas* in those days have been given in a short poem in the Tamil work, *Kumaresa Sathakam*:

When framing a price policy for the sale of their goods, the motto of the *Vaishyas* should be to secure a very small profit. In fact, they should be frank enough to give out the actual cost price and the margin they have kept. They must always use kind words to their customers. In their own household dealings they must be very economical, so that on no ground should they be driven to the necessity of drawing from the business capital to meet private expenses. If dishonest people apply for credit, even if costly things are mortgaged, they should not extend credit facilities. On the other hand, if honest people call for any article on credit through a third party, on the strength of their word every credit facility should be given. In their accounts they should be very strict to the last pie. Never should they waste money. On sound articles of merchandise, they should spend any amount, knowing the intrinsic value of the goods dealt in.

Business is a field in which certain qualities and faculties which are fundamental to the harmonious running of the world can be cultivated. Brotherliness and co-operation, honesty and accuracy,

service and sacrifice should be substituted for competition and rivalry, falsehood and fraud, ambition and greed. For the spiritualization of business the power of truth must prevail. The observance of moral and spiritual principles in business has become necessary in order to create fitter, worthier and better persons in society, in the nation and in the world. Business is a means to an end, not an end in itself. It allows of no compromise morally speaking. Man should not lose himself in business and degrade himself. Let him, on the contrary, raise himself by upholding and observing the ideal of service of the community.

Spiritual service of the race is related not to set programmes but to life itself—to the performance of *dharma* in the place in which Karma has placed us. Not by changing his vocation but by viewing it as a means to self-improvement and to the service of others does the businessman transform every transaction into a veritable sacrament and make drudgery divine. Trade and industry bring comforts and conveniences to hearths and homes—or ought to do so. Bodies have to be fed and clothed; minds have to be trained and educated; hearts have to be enlightened; homes have to be furnished and beautified. The shopkeeper and the merchant should trade not only as a means of livelihood and to amass wealth but also to serve their fellow men. No doubt a labourer is worthy of his hire, but not of much more than his hire; and this applies to the commercial magnate as well as to the drudge. Gandhiji went so far as to say:

If all men realized the obligation of service (as an eternal moral law), they would regard it as a sin to amass wealth; and then, there would be no inequalities of wealth and consequently no famine or starvation.

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JUSTICE, being violated, destroys; justice, being preserved, preserves; therefore justice must not be violated, lest violated justice destroy us.

—*The Laws of Manu*, viii, 15

## THE CHANGING AND THE CHANGELESS

IF there is a universal fact which most commonly strikes us, it is that Nature, through all her changes, yet endures and keeps on functioning silently. In the bowels of the earth, metals and minerals constantly form; on the surface, cities emerge where there had been jungles; and ruins of monuments in jungles, like those of Angkor, go to show where cities once existed. Constant change is taking place everywhere, without exception. We notice and know certain changes, like that of the growth and death of a plant, but we do not see other changes because not years but yugas are involved. In Brahmanical philosophy, the reign of *Kala*, Time, is extensive—Time which is change, for worlds and systems of worlds. Not for a single second is there cessation from change at a single point of space. There is change, change, change everywhere.

And yet there is permanence. Seasons change, but one season follows another and winter gives birth to spring, in endless succession. Theosophy teaches that this Earth is the reincarnation of a previous Earth, and when it dies, it will take another form once again. In the infinitudes of space, solar systems disintegrate, while other solar systems arise. Everywhere there is change, and yet everywhere there is permanence. One long, nay endless, continuity is easily perceived, and it is so very, very long that many people still believe that the whole of manifestation came into existence at some time all at once.

What is the fact about this change and permanence? What is the Law?

The easiest way to understand it is by the illustration of the sky at night. We see space full of celestial bodies of different magnitudes. With the normal vision of our eyes, we see a limited number of stars and planets; but when we look through a telescope, lo and behold! what we had not seen before becomes visible. For instance, we look at the well-formed constellation of Orion and we admire its brilliance. Then we focus our telescope and to our amazement we find that there is a giant Orion nebula—condensed starry, shiny substance from which suns and planets are still to be born.

Innumerable examples can be given to demonstrate with the aid of astronomy that the visible and the invisible jostle together in proximity in every inch of the sky.

But there is another phenomenon: astronomers with their telescopic photography are not only finding out the existence of otherwise invisible orbs, but are also experiencing something else. Indian philosophy teaches that each system is a Brahmanda—the egg of Brahma; but there are millions upon millions of such eggs. Each universe is finite, each sun and star is finite, each planet and its satellites are finite, but the space in which planets and satellites, suns, stars and millions of universes swim, is infinite. In one of the old texts, space is compared to an ocean and universes to fishes. There are as many world-systems in space as there are fishes in an ocean. Fishes come to birth and die, but the ocean continues. Systems and worlds come to birth and die, but space for ever and ever continues.

So there is a visible and an invisible aspect of Life, of the creative energy of Brahma; and there is a third aspect, *i.e.*, Living Space. Visible as well as invisible things change, decay and die, but the substratum, the foundation which is Space, is not only invisible but also changeless. Science admits that Matter is indestructible; all things will in the process of time change and ultimately decay and disintegrate, but the atoms which compose those things never die. Indestructibility of Matter and conservation of Energy are recognized by modern science; however, it has still to learn about the third factor, immortality of Spirit.

All this applies also to man, to each one of us, for man evolves out of the Universe. There are three aspects to each of us: a visible aspect, an invisible aspect, and an immortal aspect. There is the visible man; when we apply the telescope of knowledge we find that there is an invisible man; when we reflect upon the visible and the invisible man, we ultimately come to the wisdom of the Sages that there is an Immortal Man.

Take the example of Saturn; it is an apt example, for in this *Kali Yuga* the influence of Saturn is peculiar and its relation to the dark age of man is significant. We look at Saturn as we look at men and

women, our kin and neighbours. Then we look through the telescope and we see the rings which revolve around it in the plane of its equator; these rings represent the invisible man. When we inquire of the Wisdom-Religion or Theosophy as to the genesis of Saturn and the rings, it points us to the Space occupied by both—from which Space both emerged and into which both will once again merge, and which Space is endless and imperishable.

Man is matter, out of which his visible form is made, which form perishes and in due course a new one comes to birth, for matter is indestructible.

Man is energy, out of which his invisible powers and forces, of Will, of Thought, of Imagination, of Feeling, the Power to Create, and so on, are fashioned. These powers ever grow but never disappear, because of the law of conservation of energy.

Man is Spirit—birthless and deathless, the source of all *shaktis* or energies, the foundation and basis of all forms of matter. Forms change and bodies die, but the matter which composes those bodies and forms never perishes.

In each of us there are these three: a visible man—Body and its Personality; an invisible man—Soul and its Individuality; an immortal man—Spirit and its Universality.

Personality is the assemblage of a variety of elements and forces in and through which the soul functions and gathers knowledge and experience. It is the mortal part of our being. Personality is to the Individuality what the shadow is to the substance.

Let us understand by example: the lives making up our body change every seven years, but the same personality survives every change and continues to live from birth to death. It survives all the shocks of numerous changes—disease and sorrow, elation and joy. Similarly, the personality itself changes, but something in the personality survives. Through the many changes of the body, the personality remains; but it came into existence at the birth of the body and will go out of existence after the death of the body. The Incarnated Soul is to our many and various personalities what our ordinary "I-consciousness" is to our ever-changing body.

Personality is composed of body and astral body, *prana* or life-

principle, desires and thoughts, in all of which a ray of *Manas*, the Soul, functions. Individuality is composed of *Manas* joined to *Buddhi*. Universality, or the Spiritual Man, is composed of *Atma-Buddhi*.

Spirit—*Atma-Buddhi*—knows not its own nature, which is divine and universal. Soul—*Manas*—feels its universal aspect, one with all other *Manasas*, but knows not the how and the why of Individuality or Universality. Therefore it incarnates in matter or body, and thus one personality after another is formed. Personality, through the body, thinks of itself as separate, but is capable of merging itself with the Immortal and the Universal. How?

First, let us shift the centre of all our life-activities away from the body and the personality. Most people want everything to revolve round their own person. What *I* think, what *I* feel, what *I* say and do, what *I* want and do not want—it is "I" all the time. So first of all we must try to shift the centre of our own life from personality and egotism to an inner and deeper layer of consciousness. We must cease to look at everything from our own self-centred viewpoint. This of course is easier said than done. To succeed, study is necessary, for without adequate knowledge of metaphysical and abstract ideas, practice is not quite possible.

Next, let us make soul-growth the object of our life and the goal of our attainment. Unless we clear our own mind of all petty and ordinary objectives of life and seek to gain inner progress and enlightenment we must go round and round—from pleasure to pain, from health to disease, from disease to death, and to birth again. Thoughtful people, observing the transitory nature of the world and of the body, of circumstances and of personality, fix their minds and hearts on the spiritual side of life. To do this successfully we need that power of steadfastness spoken of in the Eighteenth Discourse of the *Gita*. Let us be steadfast in pursuing the goal and we shall succeed in reaching the changeless *Sat, Nirvana* supreme.

Men and women feel the Peace and Power of Nature from time to time. On a starlit night, as the moon rises or as the sun sets, in the fury of a storm or in the flow of sweet waters, we feel that peace and power. An angry man does not look at the grandeur of the sun in the

sky; a jealous woman does not enjoy the blossoming tree; a crying child fixed in its naughtiness cannot hear the music of the trees. The gambler, the drunkard, the wicked, the evil-doer, are examples of what people become when they are devoid of the Peace and Power of Nature. The altruist, the wide-awake, the virtuous, are examples, great and small, of that Peace and that Power. When the unclean in us dies, then only we begin to feel the touch of Nature and experience the feeling of kinship and oneness with all. Persisting in that exercise day by day, we come to recognize those Men of Supreme Peace and Power who are the Immortals.

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EVERY microscopic cell typifies and epitomizes man, as man is an epitome of the Universe....The "Eternal Pilgrim," the Alter-Ego in man, is a monad progressing through the ages. By right and by endowment the ego is king in the domain of man's bodily life. It descended into matter in the cosmic process till it reached the mineral plane, and then journeyed upward through the "three kingdoms" till it reached the human plane. The elements of its being, like the cells and molecules of man's body, are groupings of structures accessory or subordinate to it. The human monad or Ego is therefore akin to all below it and heir to all above it, linked by indissoluble bonds to spirit and matter, "god" and "Nature." The attributes that it gathers, and the faculties that it unfolds, are but the latent and dormant potentialities awaking to conscious life. The tissue cells constitute man's bodily structure, but the order in which they are arranged, the principle upon which they are grouped, constituting the human *form*, is not simply an evolved shape from the lower animal plane, but an *involved* principle from a higher plane, an older world, *viz.*, the "Lunar Pitris." "Hanuman the Monkey" antedates Darwin's "missing link" by thousands of millenniums.

—W. Q. JUDGE

## THEOSOPHY AS PHILOSOPHY

THEOSOPHY is a synthesis of science, religion and philosophy, but it is not a simple algebraic sum of these three. Science, religion and philosophy are the three aspects of Theosophy. Theosophy is not *a* religion, but is Wisdom-Religion, the source of all religions, and its teachings belong neither to Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity nor Zoroastrianism exclusively, but are the essence of all these. It is *Religion* itself, as it has the essential characteristics which are necessary to qualify as such. Theosophy is not dogmatic or sectarian; it "binds not only *all* MEN, but also *all* BEINGS and all *things* in the entire Universe into one grand whole."

So also it is not *a* science but *Science* itself. A science generally deals with a specific aspect of man or nature and leaves out the occult side, which is taken care of by Theosophy. In the same way it is not *a* philosophy but *Philosophy* itself. It is that Philosophy which is taught not just in any of the six schools of Indian philosophy, but pertains to their synthesis. H.P.B. points out that the Books of the *Vedanta* give out only the metaphysical aspect of the world-cosmogony, and to understand the *Upanishads* and get their full meaning one needs the master-key. So also to get the secret and mystic meaning of the Vedic texts we need to have a proper knowledge of the *Upanishads*.

Theosophy is philosophy itself, as it satisfies all the essential characteristics of philosophy. What is philosophy? In a broad sense, philosophy is love of knowledge. It has been called the queen of sciences.

Specifically, philosophy means and includes five fields of study and discourse: logic, aesthetics, ethics, politics and metaphysics....Science is analytical description, philosophy is synthetic interpretation. Science wishes to resolve the whole into parts, the organism into organs, the obscure into the known. It does not inquire into the values and ideal possibilities of things, nor into their total and final significance; it is content to show their present actuality and operation....But the philosopher is not content to describe the fact; he wishes to ascertain its

relation to experience in general, and thereby to get at its meaning and its worth. (Will Durant in *The Story of Philosophy*)

*Through the Gates of Gold* points out:

Every man has a philosophy of life of his own, except the true philosopher. The most ignorant boor has some conception of his object in living, and definite ideas as to the easiest and wisest way of attaining that object. The man of the world is often, unconsciously to himself, a philosopher of the first rank....The man of thought and imagination has less certainty, and finds himself continually unable to formulate his ideas on that subject most profoundly interesting to human nature—human life itself. The true philosopher is the one who would lay no claim to the name whatever, who has discovered that the mystery of life is unapproachable by ordinary thought. (p.1)

Again, in the Introduction to Aldous Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy* we are told:

Knowledge is a function of being. When there is a change in the being of the knower, there is a corresponding change in the nature and amount of knowing....Nor are changes in the knower's physiological or intellectual being the only ones to affect his knowledge. What we know depends also on what, as moral beings, we choose to make ourselves.

All of which is true of the philosophy of Theosophy. Theosophy is Divine Wisdom, *i.e.*, Wisdom that arises out of divine consciousness and not mere speculation. Theosophy is the accumulated Wisdom of the Ages. Countless generations of initiated sages and seers have recorded the soul of things by penetrating into the very kernel of matter. As H.P.B. points out, what *The Secret Doctrine* contains is by no means a revelation; all that she has attempted is to gather the oldest tenets together and to make them one harmonious and unbroken whole. She has not resorted to personal speculations and theories, for all that she has written is what she was taught by the Masters, supplemented in a few details only by the results of her own observation and study.

True philosophy is not just love of knowledge but it is love of

truth. The Alexandrian philosophers were called Philaletheians or lovers of truth. Love of truth leads one to divine wisdom. It is the function of true philosophy to disengage the soul from the bondage of the senses and raise it to the vision of eternal truth. So the six schools of Indian philosophy are called six *darshanas* or six different visions of truth.

Theosophical philosophy aims at inculcating this love of truth. As Robert Crosbie says, truth is not a man, or a book, or a statement. Truth always explains; when we have found that which explains, we have found the truth. Theosophy is the rational explanation of things.

In her article "What Is Truth?" (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 17*), H.P.B. points out that in every age there have been sages and seers who had mastered absolute truth, yet no one can give out this whole and final truth to another. Each one has to perceive it in himself. Absolute truth can only be perceived by one who paralyses his lower nature. This is difficult, and so people are satisfied with relative truth. In the same article H.P.B. writes:

To approach even terrestrial truths requires, first of all, *love of truth for its own sake*, for otherwise no recognition of it will follow. And who loves truth in this age for its own sake? How many of us are prepared to search for, accept, and carry it out, in the midst of a society in which anything that would achieve success *has to be built on appearances, not on reality, on self-assertion, not on intrinsic value?*

In the same article, writing about her magazine *Lucifer*, H.P.B. made it very clear that under no threat and under no condition would it be willing to perpetrate a lie, but would give out facts and hold on to the truth. There should be willingness to accept truth from whichever quarter it came. Hence this magazine excluded no philosophical or religious views from its pages. Every philosophy, however incomplete and unsatisfactory, is based on a truth and fact of some kind, so *Lucifer* offered its readers the opportunity to compare, analyse and choose from the several philosophies discussed therein. This was done with the view that at times even if the

conclusions and deductions of a writer might be false, his premises and statements of fact could be correct and some might profit from them. Thus there should be an attempt not to force anything upon the readers, but to give them a chance to judge for themselves what is true and what is false. The second object of the Theosophical Movement and of the U.L.T. is comparative study of world religions, sciences and philosophies and the demonstration of the importance of such study.

The most important feature of a true philosophy is rejection of authority. Every true philosophy advises us not to reach any definite conclusions based merely on tradition or even on the say-so of one's teacher. H.P.B., therefore, points out that to the mentally obtuse or lazy, Theosophy must remain a riddle. The philosophy of Theosophy aims at changing the *Manas* and *Buddhi* of the race. We find this rejection of authority even in Jaina philosophy, which teaches that different opinions could be true when considered from different perspectives.

Again, that philosophy is true which aims to diminish the sum of human misery. The philosophy of Theosophy aims at achieving this; so there is emphasis on study, practice and promulgation of its fundamental teachings. H.P.B. points out that two-thirds of the world's suffering and evil is the fruit of man's inhumanity to man and lack of right knowledge. The Three Fundamental Propositions of Theosophy try to show that there is no personal God outside of us who can punish or reward us, or who can be propitiated. God, according to Theosophy, is an omnipresent, immutable, omniscient Principle. "Humanity is an emanation from divinity on its return path thereto." Thus we are inherently perfect and not born in sin. We all have a common divine origin and so there is no such thing as separateness at the spiritual level.

The philosophy of Theosophy also speaks of Law which governs the Universe and which moves to righteousness. As we sow, so shall we reap. Where should a Theosophist look for help? The answer is: to his Karma and to his Higher Self. Theosophy advises us to replace prayer with meritorious deeds, for prayer kills self-reliance. The only prayer that is recommended is Will-prayer,

which is communion with one's Father in secret. The Third Fundamental Proposition of the Secret Doctrine teaches that the evolution of man is through self-devised and self-induced ways and means, checked by Karma.

This philosophy also advocates practice of its fundamental teachings. As Thoreau puts it:

To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live, according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust.

In the words of a Master of Wisdom, which H.P.B. translates in her *Five Messages to the American Theosophists*, "... would you be partakers of Divine Wisdom or true Theosophists? Then do as the gods when incarnated do. Feel yourselves the vehicles of the whole humanity, mankind as part of yourselves, and act accordingly." That is, we might appear to be separate, but in our consciousness there should be concern for the whole race. We must feel the pain and sorrow of the whole of humanity. Theosophy aims at developing kindness, charity and goodwill. The philosophy also aims to change the animal-man into a human-man, and the human into a divine-man; "and when people have learned to think and feel as truly human beings should feel and think, they will act humanely, and works of charity, justice, and generosity will be done spontaneously by all."

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You are at war with none. It is peace you are seeking, therefore it is best that the good in everything is found. For this brings peace.

—W. Q. JUDGE

## WHY MANIFESTATION?

HOW often we ask ourselves the question: "What is the purpose of life?" And how often we get the answer: "The purpose of life is to learn," or, "The purpose of life is to serve"? Quite so, but is the implication of these answers always understood? The purpose of life is most difficult to understand without the background given by the philosophy of Theosophy, which is the synthesis of the ancient knowledge that lies behind all the great religions and philosophies of the ages. It is because our mental background is limited today to the short period of known history, or of our own family, or of our own life, that we are hindered in our understanding of the question. And it is because with the enormous vista which the ancient knowledge gives us we can begin to span space and time and understand at least something of the conception of the limitless, enduring expanse and the limitless and undivided eternal, that we are enabled to know a little more of the "why" of things.

One of the things that will help us is to start with what we *know*, but with the background mentioned above. How shall we understand eternity and immortality except by looking within? And if we ask ourselves, "Can I imagine myself non-existent, reduced to nothingness?" we shall have to admit that this is impossible. We can imagine ourselves without a body, but never as non-existent, for the very thought of being non-existent proves that we *still are!* From this conception we can pass to others—to the limitless number of universes, to the limited number in any particular manifestation, to *pralaya* and *manvantara*, comparable to life and death, sleeping and waking.

Faced with the concept of eternity, we again ask: "Why?" We cannot, of course, fully understand it with our finite minds, but we can know something by realizing that when we are experiencing terrible pain or are placed in tragic circumstances, when life does not seem worth-while and when we long for oblivion, even then we know that this phase will pass away. And when the conditions which caused pain and misery no longer exist, we shall again experience *tanha*, thirst for life. This thirst for life in form of some

kind is a reflection of that which causes all manifestation. It is rooted in the desire to know oneself. It is the very nature of the Eternal to manifest Itself from time to time to know Itself.

*The Secret Doctrine* gives us a wonderful picture to help us to understand this:

Just as milliards of bright sparks dance on the waters of an ocean above which one and the same moon is shining, so our evanescent personalities—the illusive envelopes of the immortal MONAD-EGO—twinkle and dance on the waves of Maya. (I, 237)

These myriads of sparks are also called "Pilgrims," and we have many references to these symbols which may help us to visualize the teaching. We read in the Stanzas of Dzyan:

The spark hangs from the flame by the finest thread of Fohat. It journeys through the Seven Worlds of Maya [the seven globes of the planetary chain and the seven rounds]. It stops in the first (*Kingdom*), and is a metal and a stone; it passes into the second (*Kingdom*), and behold—a plant; the plant whirls through seven forms and becomes a sacred animal (*the first shadow of the physical man*).

From the combined attributes of these, Manu (*man*), the Thinker, is formed. (I, 238)

The "Spark" which "hangs from the flame" is "JIVA, the MONAD in conjunction with MANAS, or rather its aroma—that which remains from each personality, when worthy, and hangs from Atma-Buddhi, the Flame, by the thread of life."

Then we learn:

Starting upon the long journey immaculate; descending more and more into sinful matter, and having connected himself with every atom in manifested *Space*—the *Pilgrim*, having struggled through and suffered in every form of life and being, is only at the bottom of the valley of matter, and half through his cycle, when he has identified himself with collective Humanity.... In order to progress upwards and homewards, the "God" has now to ascend the weary uphill Path of the Golgotha of Life. It is the martyrdom of self-conscious existence.... Like Visvakarman he

has to sacrifice *himself to himself* in order to redeem all creatures, to resurrect from the many into the *One Life*. Then he ascends to heaven indeed. (I, 268)

We see one aspect of the purpose of life in the following extract:

"The thread between the *silent watcher* and his *shadow* (man) becomes stronger"—with every reincarnation....The Watcher, or the divine prototype, is at the upper rung of the ladder of being; the shadow, at the lower. (I, 265)

We have, therefore, eternal progress, which is not difficult to conceive of when we think of the eternity as the duration of the ONE.

It is also not too difficult to imagine that, within that eternity, manifestations, Universes, come into being and go out of being, are reincarnated or re-embodied again and again, so that perfection in any period of manifestation is not the acme of perfection, but there is an endless series of struggles for greater and greater perfection.

It is when we remember this that we can realize the truth of the statement that Man has never been without a Friend. Every manifestation has had a gradation of beings, from the Perfected Ones of prior manifestations or periods of evolution to the beings just struggling towards self-reflective consciousness or self-consciousness. We are given the great idea of the "Solitary Watcher" and of all those other Spiritual Beings who, under His guidance, watch over, teach and protect mankind. We must not materialize this concept and think of a human being, immensely great, but keep in mind that It is rather an "Influence," in whatever kind of form we may imagine. *The Secret Doctrine* tells us that

it is under the direct, silent guidance of this MAHA—(great)—GURU that all the other less divine Teachers and instructors of mankind became, from the first awakening of human consciousness, the guides of early Humanity. It is through these "Sons of God" that infant humanity got its first notions of all the arts and sciences, as well as of spiritual knowledge....(I, 208)

Lest we materialize this concept let us remember that

the next great Manvantara will witness the men of our own life-cycle becoming the instructors and guides of a mankind whose

Monads may now yet be imprisoned—semi-conscious—in the most intellectual of the animal kingdom, while their lower principles will be animating, perhaps, the highest specimens of the Vegetable world. (I, 267)

Does not a meditation on these ideas enrich our understanding of the purpose of life? Does it not show us that this purpose is service, so that we may have this idea of the service of all embedded in us strongly enough to enable us to be the Helpers of the new infant Humanity in a succeeding cycle of manifestation? And does not this idea show us that the purpose of life is to learn *how* to serve?

We have to keep in mind that we are on the return journey towards the One Flame; we must begin to learn that we are not separate from any point in space, from the criminal or the saint, but are all bound together, mutually helping one another—those our peers, those below us and those above us, in their growth through evolution. Self-assertion, pride, selfishness, must give way to humility, not the "humility" of Uriah Heep, but that of one who knows, without pride, that he is but a passer-on, one among many giving expression to the One Life, a servant of Powers so much greater than he that it is in the spirit of reverence that he passes on Their Knowledge and Wisdom.

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THERE are different roads by which this end may be reached: the love of beauty which exalts the poet; that devotion to the One and that ascent of science which make the ambition of the philosopher; and that love and those prayers by which some devout and ardent soul tends in its moral purity towards perfection. These are the great highways conducting to that height above the actual and the particular, where we stand in the immediate presence of the infinite who shine out as from the deeps of the soul.

—PLOTINUS

## THE LEGACY OF BOOKS

Books are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind, which are delivered down from generation to generation, as presents to the posterity of those who are yet unborn.

—ADDISON

There is no help like association with those who think as we do, or like the reading of good books. The best advice I ever saw was to read holy books or whatever books tend to elevate yourself, as you have found by experience. There must be some. Once I found some abstruse theological writings of Plotinus to have that effect on me—very ennobling, and also an explanation of the wanderings of Ulysses. Then there is the *Gita*. All these *are instinct with a life of their own* which changes the vibrations. Vibration is the key to it all.

—W.Q. JUDGE

ONE of the ill effects of the disease of greed from which our civilization is suffering is to be seen in the high place accorded to applied science, economics and technology, and the neglect of the humanities, the fine arts and literature. These days a mechanic earns more than a scholar or a poet, and the belief is growing that man lives by bread alone.

Thinking men have from time to time stressed the importance of the study of literature. Its mellowing influence is an important ingredient of real culture, which scientific and vocational training cannot provide. Modern science contributes very greatly to the realization of the true, but it cannot elevate human character to express the good and the beautiful as literature and the fine arts do.

What should be the task of students of Theosophy in the present cycle with reference to literature? In her article, "The Tidal Wave," H.P.B. has clearly indicated that they should not confine their work merely to the study and promulgation of "books concerning adepts and phenomena," or even of technical, authentic Theosophical publications (though this is no doubt a paramount duty), but should familiarize themselves with and encourage the popularizing of such literature as is "Theosophical" in a wider sense. Students of

Theosophy have to be on their guard against slipping into a narrow groove of thought and thinking that the Theosophical Movement is strictly confined to the teachings of H. P. Blavatsky. As one of the Masters of Wisdom wrote in 1882:

The sun of Theosophy must shine for all, and not for a part. There is more of this movement than you have yet had an inkling of, and the work of the T.S. is linked in with similar work that is secretly going on in all parts of the world.

There is, then, a wider aspect of the Theosophical Movement, and some intuitive poets and creative writers, whose writings reflect ideas which are truly Theosophical and "tend to promote that true brotherhood which it is the aim of Theosophy to bring about," can be said to have a place in the great Movement. Earnest students of Theosophy need to recognize the possibilities that literature of the right type holds for fostering the very ideals they live to serve. To assist in the spread of that type of literature which would awaken brotherly feeling among individuals and nations and activate the dormant intuitive perception of the reader is one of their duties.

On the role of literature and the moral responsibility of writers much can be said. Students of Theosophy should note the ideas implicit in H.P.B.'s article mentioned above, written towards the close of the last century when a "tidal wave" was overpowering a large portion of humanity and a spiritual change and awakening was taking place in the masses, especially in the West. The "Spirit in man," which had long lain crushed and stifled by crass materialism on the one hand and church dogmatism on the other, was asserting itself in the foremost representatives of thought and learning, in "the many brave and prolific authors and writers" who had arisen "to defend the rights of Spirit to reign over matter" and the many "honest, aspiring Souls" who were "raising themselves like a dead wall against the torrent of the muddy waters of Materialism."

H.P.B. called on the new race of authors that was then springing up to awaken to their great responsibility as "fearless apostles of the living Word of Truth, moral healers of the pustulous sores" of their

age; and condemned "those fogies of yore" who repeat "obstinately and parrot-like the old literary formula and hold desperately to publishers' traditions." What the world needs are writers who, "amidst the present wholesale dominion of the worship of matter, material interests and SELFISHNESS, will have bravely fought for human rights and *man's divine nature*"; it is they who will become, if they succeed, the teachers and benefactors of the masses in their own time and in subsequent centuries. Authors must not write for wealth or fame, but must arouse the moral sense of society. "What the European world now needs," wrote H.P.B., "is a dozen writers such as Dostoevsky, the Russian author....he spoke boldly and fearlessly the most unwelcome truths to the higher and *even to the official classes*." The silent influence of his pen awakened the true spirit in a society which had drifted away in a wrong direction and brought about many administrative reforms.

The awakening of the Spirit in man about which H.P.B. has written is still taking place, and what she says about the role of literature holds good even today. The root of evil lies at the present hour, as then, in a moral, not in a physical, cause; and if asked what it is that will help, the answer of Theosophy is the same today as given by H.P.B.: "Theosophical literature." Theosophical literature in the wider sense is that which stirs and uplifts the Spirit in man, literature which awakens the individual to real life and light, literature which expresses boldly and in a constructive manner the aspirations as well as the physical and spiritual needs of the rising generations and of the trampled-down masses, which exposes the plagues and sores of our age as well as its acts of heroism. Books which answer to this definition of literature can be said to belong to the ranks of great literature. Students of Theosophy would do well to familiarize themselves with such literature. It would make them better Theosophists and enable them to disseminate Theosophy and serve humanity in a better and more enlightened fashion.

The silent influence of literature is a mighty power in the world. Of course not all that passes under the name of literature is good literature. One has to be as careful of the books one reads as of the company one keeps, for one's mind will be as much influenced by

the former as by the latter. The books we read must be chosen with great care, that they may be, as an Egyptian king wrote over his library, "the medicines of the Soul." Bad books are neither medicine nor nourishment. All that they offer is a low type of entertainment which improperly excites the mind, debases the feelings, ruins the Soul. They foster passivity and weaken the creative power and independent judgment as well as intuition. When a book has an ennobling and uplifting effect on us, when it inspires us with good, beneficent and manly thoughts—that is the proof of its excellence. In the words of Emerson:

Books are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst. What is the right use? What is the one end which all means go to effect? They are for nothing but to inspire....The one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul. This every man is entitled to; this every man contains within him, although in almost all men obstructed, and as yet unborn. The soul active sees absolute truth and utters truth, or creates.

Thus one of the purposes good literature serves is to activate the Soul, to widen its horizon and deepen its perception, to make it feel about more things and also feel more about them, to enable it to see the deeper significance of everything in the universe. Creative and intuitive writers, "in whom Higher *Manas* now and then sheds a bright ray on the man below," as Mr. Judge has said, "appear to be one form of the many and diverse instrumentalities chosen to lift the souls of the race on to higher levels of thought, fitting them for the reception of more truth." Literature should awaken and keep alive in man his spiritual intuitions; it should enable the mind of the reader to transcend the personality and personal concerns and to awaken to the reality of something higher and deeper. Great literature alone, and not merely informative literature, can answer to this greater call, the call of the spiritual aspect of man's consciousness.

More specifically, literature can do a great deal to help the mind of the reader to rise above the barriers of nationality, the thorny fence of sectarianism (a brand of "sectarianism" prevails even

among students of Theosophy!), and to respond to the call of life, life inclusive of all aspects of the manifested universe and inclusive certainly of all human beings, irrespective of their condition and the characteristics of their personalities. At this hour the world needs the unifying influence of great literature. Human nature is essentially the same everywhere. Our problems, whether individual or social or national, are also the same everywhere, for they are fundamentally rooted in the soil of human nature. Idlers and liars exist everywhere; ambition activates men and women everywhere; kindness, unselfishness and charity are also to be found everywhere; men and women of every clime aspire to ascend to spiritual altitudes by purifying their minds and acquiring heart-wisdom. Literature makes us perceive all this, and gives us the vision of one world and one human family. Literature is a great pacific agency, which can help, as Galsworthy put it, "to restore to a bleak and starved world a friendly atmosphere." It has no frontiers, and so, as a builder of the International State, it is of priceless value.

Thus literature helps the formation of national and international opinions. Thinking men everywhere are recognizing that there must be a change in the mental outlook of human beings if we would solve our problems and bring about reforms that would be beneficent and lasting. For doing this literature can be of immense help. But, unfortunately, literature is also being used to make the wrong sort of propaganda.

Among great and immortal creations we needs must include the great scriptures of the world. One of the errors of thought of our modern civilization has been not to look upon the words of the prophets as literature. The saying of Jesus, the sermons of Gautama, the philosophy of Krishna, are perfect specimens of immortal literature; their appeal is universal and will last as long as man lives. Even their translations into alien tongues convey the soul behind their original words. From them one can learn the best that has been thought in the world. But to get the best out of them one must read them as works of literature which fecundate the mind and not as tomes of creeds which compel belief and so deaden the intellect. Emerson wrote at the close of his essay on "Books":

... I might as well not have begun as to leave out a class of books which are the best: I mean the Bibles of the world, or the sacred books of each nation, which express for each the supreme result of their experience. After the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, which constitute the sacred books of Christendom, these are, the Desatir of the Persians, and the Zoroastrian Oracles; the Vedas and Laws of Manu; the Upanishads, the Vishnu Purana, the Bhagvat Geeta, of the Hindoos; the books of the Buddhists; the "Chinese Classic," of four books, containing the wisdom of Confucius and Mencius....

These are Scriptures which the missionary might well carry over prairie, desert and ocean, to Siberia, Japan, Timbuctoo. Yet he will find that the spirit which is in them journeys faster than he, and greets him on his arrival—was there already long before him....Is there any geography in these things?...

For students of Theosophy it is important to consider not only what they shall take from literature, but also what they shall give to it. What contribution are they going to make to bring into contemporary literature a beneficent current? The influence of Theosophical ideas on literature has been very great indeed; and this was in evidence even in the latter part of the last century. As stated in *The Theosophical Glossary*: "...the Theosophists of the current century [*i.e.*, the 19th] have already visibly impressed themselves on modern literature." In his article, "Theosophical Aspects of Contemporary Thought and Literature," written in 1889, Mr. Judge speaks of "the new realm for imaginative creation to be opened up to literary activity by Occultism." This surge of interest in Occultism and its expression in literature was in large measure due to the Theosophical ideas set in motion by H.P.B. and the Theosophists of the last century. What can students of Theosophy of the present generation do? To have great literary talents is rare indeed; yet, in the words of H.P.B.:

...even in the absence of such great gifts one may do good in a smaller and humbler way by taking note and exposing in impersonal narratives the crying vices and evils of the day, by word and deed, by publications and practical example. Let the

force of that example impress others to follow it; and then instead of deriding our doctrines and aspirations the men of the XXth, if not the XIXth century will see clearer, and judge with knowledge and according to facts instead of prejudging agreeably to rooted misconceptions. Then and not till then will the world find itself forced to acknowledge that it was wrong, and that Theosophy alone can gradually create a mankind as harmonious and as simple-souled as Kosmos itself; but to effect this theosophists have to act as such. Having helped to awaken the spirit in many a man—we say this boldly challenging contradiction—shall we now stop instead of swimming with the TIDAL WAVE?

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Let not soft slumber close your eyes,  
Before you've collected thrice  
The train of action through the day!  
Where have my feet chose out their way?  
What have I learnt, where'er I've been,  
From all I've heard, from all I've seen?  
What have I more that's worth the knowing?  
What have I done that's worth the doing?  
What have I sought that I should shun?  
What duty have I left undone,  
Or into what new follies run?  
These self-inquiries are the road  
That leads to virtue and to God.

—ISAAC WATTS

## JOYFULNESS ON THE SPIRITUAL PATH

SWAMI Vivekananda was once asked why he laughed so much and told jokes. To this he replied that true religious feeling should make us joyful, and if it does not, then there is something seriously wrong with our perception of that religion or philosophy. He wrote:

When by analysing his own mind, man comes face to face, as it were, with something that is never destroyed, something by its own nature eternally pure and perfect, he will no more be miserable, no more unhappy. All misery comes from fear, from unsatisfied desire. Man will find that he never dies, and then he will have no more fear of death. When he knows that he is perfect, he will have no more vain desires, and both these causes being absent, there will be no more misery—there will be perfect bliss, even while in this body.

It is only by cultivating cheerfulness and optimism that we can gradually accumulate the energy to take the many “knocks” that come our way in life. If we allow ourselves to become sad or despondent, then we will permit the countless negative thoughts that float around in the astral realm to affect us and to lessen the quality of our lives. We need to take the stance that Vivekananda mentions and think of ourselves as Eternal Beings, Children of Light, if we are to survive the onslaught of day-to-day existence. This is the truth and it can alter the whole perspective of our incarnation if we meditate deeply upon its implications. As said in *The Voice of the Silence*:

Have perseverance as one who doth for evermore endure. Thy shadows live and vanish; that which in thee shall live for ever, that which in thee *knows*, for it is knowledge, is not of fleeting life: it is the man that was, that is, and will be, for whom the hour shall never strike.

Again these few words contain in them the seeds for hours of deep meditation and reveal to us just *why* we should be bright and cheerful under all circumstances. They are not words to be passed by lightly; they say in essence that we are masters of our own

destiny. Krishna, symbolic of the Higher Self, says in the *Bhagavad-Gita* that the Path should be followed with determination and with a heart that refuses to be depressed. This refusal to be depressed is an essential part of living the Life and is something that we can bring about by our own positiveness of mind and a realization of the Divinity of all things. If we can meditate deeply upon our true state and come to realize the invulnerability of the permanent part of our nature, then we can begin to escape from the negative lines of thought that bring us so much misery and doubt. It is only then that we can at last begin to find the space to manoeuvre as we proceed on life's journey towards the Eternal Light. This is the genuine freedom that already exists, but we convince ourselves that it does not, and therefore paint a picture of life in darker colours than it deserves. The most important part of our quest is to become aware of the absolute reality of the Immortal Ego in us and in others. Unless we have this basis, we will find it difficult to truly comprehend the teachings and apply them correctly to our own situation.

Unless we develop intuition, we shall certainly be "lost." There is such a multiplicity of facts, many of them contradictory, concerning the Spiritual Path that if we try to exercise the reason we shall definitely become disillusioned and confused. There comes a time when the development of intuition becomes a necessity as we reach an "impasse" as regards intellectual facts. The same is true about personalities connected with spiritual movements. So many conflicting views are given regarding these individuals that it is impossible to draw any accurate conclusions. We have to let the teachings speak for themselves. Are they in tune with all the teachings of the Adepts throughout the ages, or are they some weird inventions? In the Theosophical Movement in general, we have had both, and we can see the vast difference between remaining true to the original impulse and trying to find something "new" and externally more exciting. True spirituality has nothing to do with garish descriptions of initiations and astral peregrinations, but with becoming "natural" and "sane" in the truest sense of the words.

One need only read *The Friendly Philosopher* by Robert Crosbie to witness the fruits of a well-balanced and truly lucid mind.

Joyfulness is something that grows naturally in us, like a flower; it comes from the gradual dawning of the fact that in our inmost centre we are immortal and that nothing can touch us, and from our self-directed efforts to communicate that idea to others who are in sore need of some kind of guidance. If we go about with a gloomy face, what can we give that is precious to our fellow human beings? If we are students of Theosophy, let us show that the teachings that we follow make us cheerful and contented. Christians are happy in their religion, so are Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims; so why should we not be so when we have something so much deeper than all religions put together? We should be happier than anyone to have discovered the truth about life, death and the Universe! Yet we allow life to get to us and we lose sight of our real nature, so that we become disillusioned and sad. We should not let our past mistakes and failures hold us back, but should go ever forward, lit by the light of the original teachings. Remember what *The Voice of the Silence* says: "Kill in thyself all memory of past experiences. Look not behind or thou art lost." We can easily see the wisdom of that advice. What happened in our life in the past, or in the lives of others, is over and done with, and we must get on. Allowing our mind to be tainted by the past reduces the quality of the work that we are doing and eventually becomes a millstone around our neck.

Joyfulness comes from accepting the many trials and circumstances of life and making the best of them. If we are not convinced intuitively of the immortality of our true nature, we may at times find it hard to be cheerful, but even intellectual awareness of our divine nature can help and we need to learn to focus on it. The whole of the *Bhagavad-Gita* is about developing this inner concentration and learning to find permanence in a world of change. It is instability that causes doubts and makes us fearful at times. Modern society is very much based on incongruity and this manifests in its members as countless diseases and malaise on all levels of being, physical, mental and moral. If we step out into the city streets we are met with jarring, disharmonious sounds, which is symptomatic of the materialistic lower-mind thinking that is encouraged by contemporary education systems. When we talk to people we find

that they are full of worries and fears for the future, they are discontented with their present situation, they are depressed by past failures. It is then incumbent on all those who realize the true beauty and dignity of human life to go out into those streets and cry out mentally, as W.Q. Judge has advised, "Theosophy—help and hope for thee!"

In other words, it is the positive, optimistic elements of our nature that are needed in a world that is rapidly changing on the surface. An identification with that change causes problems. We need instead to identify with those things that do not change; then we will be able to see clearly and go about our lives with purpose and with true lightness of heart. Certainly, reading theosophical and spiritual literature, meditating upon its meaning and putting it into practice in our day-to-day lives to the best of our ability is a service to humanity and will help in many ways, as we are all One inwardly and therefore "our brother's keepers" in the truest sense. Let us then be cheerful always and know that "Theosophy well understood" can only make us joyful in the final analysis.

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IN the work which we have undertaken together, it matters not whether "we" fail or succeed: Our purpose has been and will be that the Work shall go on. We can throw—each one of us—our best into the effort; the rest is in other and stronger hands. Our "best" may not be great, but if the motive is there, even to hold our ground is victory in some contingencies....It is, then, to the Teachings that attention has to be called—not to ourselves who are only handing them on as best we can....Theosophy pure and simple is the standard by which efforts may be applied and errors combated, so it must always be kept in evidence as the source of all right effort.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Far from being a unifying force, religion has been one of the most bitterly divisive forces over the centuries. This must be so while religion remains a matter of blind faith and outer observances. In recent times, serious religious tensions have surfaced in dozens of countries around the world. The answer of many governments has been the systematic persecution of millions of people for their beliefs. One expert has described this century as the worst—and bloodiest—in human history for its religious persecutions.

A Special Report in *The World and I* for December 1998 focuses on "The Global Reality of Religious Persecution." Under the title "A Worldwide Phenomenon," Nina Shea of the Center for Religious Freedom describes religious persecution around the world. The persecution varies widely from simple house arrest to state-sponsored terrorism.

David Aikman of the Ethics and Public Policy Center addresses the importance of religious freedom in the 20th century. The reality is that developed as well as developing nations practise persecution. Consequently, reports Aikman, more and more members of all faiths are demanding that official action be taken at the national and international levels to protect one of the most basic of human rights—religious freedom.

Other parts of the Special Report dwell in sometimes horrifying detail on the exact nature of religious persecution today. Men and women are still being slaughtered and oppressed on an unprecedented scale as religious and ethnic hatreds rage around the globe.

Freedom of conscience is fundamental, states Aikman:

There can be no serious freedom in any society without freedom of conscience. The logical corollary is that freedom of conscience inherently implies freedom to propagate one's individual faith—without coercion, manipulation, or deceit of any kind—but freedom to propagate nonetheless....

As we move into the twenty-first century and the new millennium, those who truly value freedom of conscience must extend to others the freedom to propagate their own faith, however

distasteful the beliefs of that faith may sometimes seem.

Everyone but the hopeless bigot recognizes the desirability of freedom to follow whatever religion may commend itself to one, but the privilege carries with it the obligation to respect the sincere beliefs of others. The Buddhist injunction "Respect the religions of other men and remain true to your own," is quoted by H.P.B. with obvious approval in *The Key to Theosophy*. The spirit in which the second object of the Theosophical Movement is to be carried out is expressed thus by H.P.B.:

...it is only by studying the various great religions and philosophies of humanity, by comparing them dispassionately and with an unbiased mind, that men can hope to arrive at the truth. It is especially by finding out and noting their various points of agreement that we may achieve this result. For no sooner do we arrive—either by study, or by being taught by someone who knows—at their inner meaning, than we find, almost in every case, that it expresses some great truth in Nature.

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A feature in *Life* magazine examines the reasons behind "the strange allure of disasters." Is it just empathy or something deeper? One explanation is that by reliving the events—such as the sinking of the *Titanic*—we see how disaster affects the lives of real people and we thus gain a deeper understanding of their sorrow, their pain, their courage. George Howe Colt writes in *Life*:

We have immortalized disasters in ballads, folktales, lithographs, songs, paintings, pageants and plays. After the ruins of Pompeii were discovered in the late 18th century, Europeans flocked to the scene, making it one of the first great tourist attractions....

These days there is something of a disaster boom. To begin with, there are more of them, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. In the past five years, there have been nearly twice as many as in the previous five. There are also more fictional ones, if the proliferation of disaster-themed books, movies, calendars, Web sites and CD-ROMs is any

indication....

"People are attracted to disaster because it can be an expression of their deepest fears, but it is also a form of transcendence," says psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton. "One can see death before one, and match up against death and try to survive it—experiences that are ordinarily denied. This transports us beyond the boredom or routine of ordinary life. Disaster helps us break out of what I call psychic numbing, a state of diminished capacity to feel, which many of us experience much of the time."...

Disasters also bring us together, uniting us against a common enemy. "When a disaster occurs, we abandon the individual goals that underlie most of our behaviour, and we identify with the community as a whole," says sociologist Dennis Mileti. "People give to each other in disasters. Strangers work for three days and nights without sleeping, trying to rescue strangers." That altruism, he says, also applies to those who watch from afar. "People who are drawn to their TVs after disasters are not gore-mongers. Their empathy is kicking in. What we're observing is the fundamental social mechanism that has enabled our species to survive: When the chips are down, we come together."

Replaying disaster scenes may be therapeutic. "When people witness others going through disasters, they confront their own vulnerability, and they themselves have a traumatic experience," says Michael Blumenfield of the American Psychiatric Association's Committee on the Psychiatric Dimensions of Disaster. "Disaster films offer us a way to work through anxieties. We live through them and come out O.K."

Disasters form a vast field of study for one who would begin to understand the mysteries of Karma. Nothing good or ill ever happens by chance, or without a corresponding cause; everything that happens is the result of Law—eternal, immutable, ever active.

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Astronomers are learning more about the vastness of the universe as they discover galaxies that had till lately remained in hiding. A couple of years ago they trained the Hubble Space

Telescope on a seemingly empty patch of sky and left it there for 10 days, trying to catch whatever images it could. The result was the Hubble Deep Field, a series of images that doubled astronomers' estimate of the number of galaxies in the universe to at least 50 billion.

Now researchers in Hawaii have done something similar. Using a new instrument that can peer through the dust that obscures many galaxies, Amy Barger and her colleagues at the University of Hawaii built up images of small parts of the sky over the course of two weeks. They have uncovered evidence of a population of never-before-seen galaxies—so many, in fact, that taken together they shine as brightly as all the rest of the known galaxies in the universe. (*Discover*, November 1998)

The vastness of the universe both baffles and fascinates the human mind. The Earth that the ancients took to be the centre of the universe becomes ever more marginal. Nothing could more profoundly shake man's sense of unique destiny than the realization that we are not alone.

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Child prodigies remain an unanswerable enigma to those who reject the explanation that reincarnation offers. What but aptitudes cultivated in previous lives can explain the case, reported recently by Indian newspapers, of a mathematical wizard, Tathagat Avatar Tulsi? At the age of 11 years and two months, he has found a place in the *Guinness Book of World Records* by passing his Bachelor of Science (Physics) examination from Science College of Patna University, securing over 70 per cent marks.

Tathagat is at present busy reading books by the likes of Stephen Hawkins, Robert Penrose and Sir Arthur Eddington. He hopes to clear his M.Sc. this year, before moving ahead. His future plans include "developing fundamental concepts in general relativity and cosmology."

There is a great difference, however, between such child prodigies and what Theosophy would call real genius. Real genius is not an overdevelopment in one direction, but the expression of the

Divine which everyone *is* at the centre of his being, an expression which depends upon the purification and disciplining of the outer personality. H.P.B. says in her article, "Genius" (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 13*), that great genius is not merely an abnormal expansion of our human intellect; it is creative and original. In most cases, the child has not created anything. Several seem merely to have had exceptional memories and intellectual precocity.

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The Health Awareness Centre in Mumbai encourages the development of natural immunity in children, rather than a reliance on vaccines, for prevention of diseases. Recent research has proved the vital role that nutrition plays in strengthening the body's immune system and keeping at bay many diseases, including AIDS, tuberculosis and cancer. An appreciation of this age-old truth is now evident in a growing body of research literature which is receiving attention in several countries. (*The Times of India*, December 30)

From ancient times, Indian experts have emphasized a holistic approach. Nutrition is not just about food for the body, but encompasses the nutrition of the mind and spirit as well. "In dealing with the causes of immune suppression in a person, you look at the total person—the physiology, sociology and psychology," says an expert, Vijaya Venkat. To have a strong immune system, she maintains, one of the first things that needs to be tackled is the issue of fear. This drives all our social programmes, and influences the actions of individuals. Even the mother, for whom delivering a baby should be a natural process, is treated like a patient and fear is introduced into her psyche. This is immune suppression, Ms. Venkat asserts.

According to her, immunization as practised today amounts to the introduction of foreign substances, and in time accelerates the degenerative disease process in the body. A clean and healthy outer environment, as well as the taking of steps to strengthen the child's internal system, is a better protection against diseases.

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The "epidemic of popularity" of transfusion of blood from a donor is on the wane. A growing number of people about to undergo surgery are opting for autologous blood transfusions. Said to be the safest source of blood, autologous transfusions require patients to give their own blood for their operations. Many patients are not yet aware of the concept, nor have all doctors developed the confidence or experience for it. "In autologous, the chances of picking up AIDS or any other infection from another donor are eliminated," declares Dr. N.B. Jaju of St. George Hospital blood bank in Mumbai. "It also prevents sensitization against foreign antigens," says Dr. Manisha Khare of the Nair Hospital blood bank. "Often, when blood is transfused from one person to another, the recipient becomes sensitized to the antigens in the blood, thus producing antibodies and causing a transfusion reaction." (*The Times of India*, December 29)

If the patient requires only a pint of blood, as in a small operation, the blood may be taken from three to seven days prior to the surgery. However, if several pints are required, it is staggered over a period of two to four weeks to allow the patient's blood to be replenished.

Study of the part played by blood in the human economy, as found in Theosophical teachings, will convince the open-minded of the undesirability and danger of an artificial linking of two personalities when blood is transfused from one person to another. Blood has occult properties, and the Karmic consequences may be dire indeed. "The blood is the life" is as true as it is ancient, and not a tenth of the real significance of the quality of the blood is known to medical science. The intuitional, however, can work out for themselves some of the possibilities of the random interchange of blood.

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In the economy of nature, there is nothing that is useless. Even the lowliest of organisms has its place and function in the scheme of things. Despite their simplicity and seeming primitiveness, a special group of fungi, known as the saprophytic fungi, play a

fundamental role in the world, and that role is predominantly beneficial. They recycle nature by breaking down the huge masses of discarded remains of dead plants and animals, in the process releasing nutrients that are so necessary for new life.

In *The World and I* for November 1998, Dwight G. Smith describes some of their functions:

Every leaf, twig, tree, or wild-flower that dies is colonized and ultimately decomposed by a whole succession of these fungi. Mushrooms, toadstools, and puffballs are the most common and familiar examples of saprophytic fungi, but the saprophytes also include many thousands of minute fungal species that permeate virtually every natural landscape and habitat.

These fungi play a vital role, far out of proportion to their size and variety. Through decomposing carbohydrates and other carbon-containing compounds in organic debris, the saprophytic fungi replenish the atmospheric supply of carbon dioxide, which is essential for the photosynthetic activity of plants. The fragmentation process also liberates vast quantities of nitrogen, phosphorus, calcium, iron, and other minerals, which can then be incorporated into plant tissue for eventual transfer up the food chain to animals. In fact, if it were not for the decomposition activities of saprophytic fungi and bacteria, the minerals and other building blocks of life would soon be tied up in the bodies of dead plants and animals, and ecosystems would shut down within a few generations.

The benefits of these fungi far outweigh their destructive and disease-causing abilities. Many species are indispensable in the production of medicines and industrial products, and many are sources of food....

A familiar biblical passage declares that the meek shall inherit the earth. If we may modify it for the saprophytic fungi, we could say that these meek and inconspicuous organisms restore and replenish the earth.

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