

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

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THE GREAT WAR

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The plan of quiet passive resistance, or rather, laying under the wind, is good and ought to work in all attacks. Retreat within your own heart and there keep firmly still. Resist without resisting. It is possible and should be attained.

—W. Q. JUDGE

IT is the paradox of our age that, though there is a growing body of opinion against war the world over, we seem unable to extricate ourselves from the war atmosphere. The world and the nations composing it have been passing through a succession of small and big crises.

The myth of the War in Heaven has a profound philosophical significance. That war stands for conflicts of different types, on different planes of being, but all rooted in the archetypal war between good and evil, the higher and the lower, the spiritual and the material in human nature. There is one single front on which the real war is raging—the individual front. Wars without are but shadowy replicas of that real war within. It is an occult truth that happenings in the material world, in the life of the individual or of humanity, have their roots in the invisible world of causes. What is visible is but the effect, in part or in full, of the activities of the minds of men.

The meaning and import of wars, small and great, will ever be

missed as long as the great truth is not perceived that the Great War of Kurukshetra is waged within every individual's heart. Nations are but collectivities of individuals. National strifes and international wars would not take place if man learned to live at peace with himself, if his mind did not war against his heart, nor his passions and pride against his principles, or one duty against another. It is well to remind ourselves in these days that no man ever kills his brother in this world, that no drop of blood is ever shed, that does not lay a weight of responsibility upon every rational human being. There never can be world peace or world improvement without individual peace and individual improvement. Unless selfishness, the root cause of all moral weakness, is curbed and the senses are trained and disciplined, man will remain more an animal and wars will continue. Only he who conquers himself really wins the war. That is the only real victory; all other victories are ephemeral. What waste of wealth and throwing away of human lives would be avoided through an adequate realization of the real, as against the illusory, nature of war!

All physical-plane wars have their invisible side, both psychical and spiritual. The future of the race, however greatly dependent on human agents—present-day national leaders—is not wholly in their hands, for the Wheel of Karma moves not only because of them but also in spite of them. Each individual, whatever his nationality, who purifies himself from lust and anger and greed is a creator of Peace, and through his efforts is building order for the morrow.

Many noble minds indeed see the waste, the folly, the indecisiveness of war. The boundaries fought over may be lost or won, but the real crux of the conflict is not the visible boundaries but the principles perceived by the mind-souls engaged. We ought to have progressed beyond indulgence in war, but our moral and spiritual evolution is delayed—and this is the Karma of the far past. Our mental evolution has outstripped our conscience. We have discovered vast energies and applied them destructively, imperilling the whole of humanity. Shall we not recognize our individual responsibility for this?

War breeds sorrow, despair, hate, envy; these are seed-causes which ripen, in another epoch, in further bloodshed and misery. There seems no end to the vicious cycle. The breaking out of war in the body politic is like the eruption of fever in the personal body. The cause of the fever has first to be found out, and, having found it, we have to attempt the cure. It is easy enough to see the cause of war or conflict in or between other countries—but how about our own? Are we free from pride, from greed, from suspicion, jealousy, selfishness? It is easy enough to be in full accord with those who think and feel and act as we do, but very difficult when our thoughts, feelings and actions are moving in a direction contrary to theirs. Yet we must get to the point where, no matter how others feel and think and act, we can recognize and treat them in our own thought, feeling and action as units of the one human family. The hard kamic shell in which many of us as Egos are encased may serve as a blockade and so isolate the mind that the nourishment of charity cannot reach it, and the dove of peace can find no place to rest its weary feet.

Most men probably would say that they wanted peace, but many either are not clear as to how it is to be brought about and made permanent, or are not ready to take the necessary steps within their power to secure it. There are two lines of peace effort—the way of war resistance, sometimes known as Pacifism, which is that of a number of peace organizations; and the way of effort to bring about the necessary conditions for a just and lasting peace. Any peace effort, however noble and self-sacrificing, that is directed against war without getting at the causes of war and overcoming them, is bound to fail in the long run. Selfish interests, individual or national, are incompatible with peace. To try to build a permanently peaceful world upon injustice, exploitation, unequal opportunities and unearned special consideration is to build upon the shifting sand. The work of the individual on himself and the cultivation of the attitude that love can settle disputes better than violence and warfare can, are factors indispensable to the success of any effort for lasting peace.

All-encompassing love is born in human consciousness only when personal affections-aversions are transcended. The power and potency of love for resolving conflicts have been proclaimed in all the great scriptures of the world. For instance:

He is esteemed among all who, whether amongst his friends and companions, in the midst of enemies or those who stand aloof or remain neutral, with those who love and those who hate, and in the company of sinners or the righteous, is of equal mind. (*The Bhagavad-Gita*)

In this world never is enmity appeased by hatred; enmity is ever appeased by Love. This is the Law Eternal. (*The Dhammapada*)

If a man attempts to do me wrong, I will return to him the protection of my ungrudging love; the more evil comes from him, the more good shall go from me. (*Buddhist Sutras*)

When the great armies go to war, sorrow is the sole winner.

To those who are good, I am good; and to those who are not good I am also good; and thus all get to be good. To those who are sincere with me I am sincere; and to those who are not sincere with me I am also sincere; and thus all get to be sincere. (*Tao Te King*)

Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*)

Education has a major part to play in the creation of the will to peace. If we wish war to cease, we must realize that our duty today is to train young boys and girls to control their feelings, thoughts and actions, lest they tend to breed war in the future.

We may have to fight, for, "being bound by all past Karma," we may come to the position of Arjuna and be forced "from necessity" to engage in battle; but we must learn to take the position of being "only the immediate agent," learn to be free from desire and anger, leaving no evil seeds to fructify in the future. There is much food for thought in the following passage from *Letters That Have Helped Me*:

Let me say one thing I KNOW: only the feeling of true

brotherhood, of true love towards humanity aroused in the soul of someone strong enough to stem this tide, can carry us through. For LOVE and TRUST are the only weapons that can overcome the REAL enemies against which the true theosophist must fight. If I, or you, go into this battle from pride, from self-will, from desire to hold our position in the face of the world, from anything but the purest motives, we shall fail. Let us search ourselves well and look at it as we never looked before: see if there is in us the reality of the brotherhood which we preach and which we are supposed to represent. (p. 109)

When the conduct of nations toward one another is governed not by policy but by principles—eternally right—then we shall see the dawn of a new era; each of us can contribute to the building of that future era here and now.

I AM quite willing to repeat what the Teachers whom I follow say: that the Absolute exists and cannot be discovered or known; that at the dawning of what is commonly called creation and evolution Spirit and Matter appear in space....It is further taught and seemingly with reason that, in all, seven cosmic differentiations take place, and from these the sevenfold constitution of man is derived. His gross body stands for the whole of gross matter, his astral body for another differentiation, his passions for the energy of the heterogeneous cosmos, his life copies another of the seven, and so on until all are complete. But if you postulate a God, you must put man either in him or outside; and if the latter then your God is not infinite, but has in his universe something that is not himself—for the Infinite must be all. It is much safer to construe these Bible verses in the old Theosophical way, which would in the present instance show that man is made in the image of God, who is his Higher Self.

—W. Q. JUDGE

SPEECH—GOOD AND EVIL

PERHAPS with no other blemish is our civilization so much tarnished as with the sin of speech. Its potency, its creative aspect, is very little understood. The wastage of force and energy through bad words, false words, useless words and idle words, is immense. Not a sage-prophet but has warned and instructed people on the subject. “Not what goes into the mouth but what comes out of it” was regarded as of paramount importance. On the metaphysical side, in the *Gospel According to St. John*, Word, Verbum, was given as the designation of Deity itself: “the Word was God”; “the Word was with God”; “the Word become flesh.” In these and other similar phrases the potency of speech was taught.

We come across the same concept in Hindu Philosophy: the ancient teachers gave the concept of *Shabda-Brahman*. The Word, *Shabda*, is the primeval designation—the Attribute containing all other attributes by which the creative potency of God or Deity can be known. The knowledge of this creative aspect of the Word or of speech is absent from our school and college curricula and so the abuse and desecration of speech and its creative significance were stressed. Pythagoras insisted on his pupils learning the power of words, numbers, sounds.

Leaving metaphysics alone and coming to the subject of human evolution, we find that the birth of speech and the birth of mind were simultaneous. The dog barks, the cat mews, the ass brays, the horse neighs, the swallow chirps, but man alone speaks. There is sound, but not co-ordinated speech, till the human stage is reached. Self-consciousness is the power to distinguish our own self or soul from all others in the universe. Thought expresses itself in speech; mind and speech are aspects peculiar to the human kingdom. In the *Chandogya Upanishad* it is said:

If there were no speech, neither right nor wrong would be known; neither true nor false; neither good nor bad; neither pleasant nor unpleasant. Speech makes us understand all this. Meditate on speech. (vii, ii, 1)

Further, the human intellect can soar to lofty heights and convey to others the experience of celestial flights by the instrument of speech. Travellers’ tales, records of the past, the passing on of knowledge, are all peculiar to humans and make possible intercourse with other humans and with Nature. Therefore it is said in the *Aitareya-Aranyaka*:

Verily by speech the Vedas are composed. Friends unite through speech; all beings unite through speech. Therefore speech is everything here. (iii, i, 6, 13)

Many other texts could be quoted to show not only the importance of speech but its many and varied aspects, but it will suffice if we consider the injunction of the Upanishads wherein speech is given as a subject for meditation. It is said in the *Chandogya Upanishad*:

He who meditates on speech as Brahman, is, as it were, lord and master as far as speech reaches. (vii, ii, 2)

In passing, let us mention that in the *Bhagavad-Gita* the austerity of speech is taught. But let us pass on to the teachings of Lord Buddha on the subject.

Before we turn to the Buddhist Doctrine, the *Dhamma*, and the instructions offered us there, it will help us to pause for a moment and consider the example of the Teacher, the Buddha himself. As we ponder over the incidents in the life of the Master Gautama, we learn how he embodied within himself his own teachings. He practised what he preached. He never asked others to do what he himself had not already done. In the matter of speech too he set an example. Not only did he teach by the medium of speech, he also taught by his silence. His instructions, his sermons and his replies to questions put to him were magnificent in sweep and rich in illustration, but there were occasions when the Tathagata, urged to explain some point, remained silent. Silence is sometimes more eloquent than speech. Though words were not spoken, yet minds were touched by his peace, and hearts were flooded by his knowledge. When asked about God, Deity, Brahman, silence was his answer, for silence is the symbol of Deity in its transcendental,

absolute sense. His silence implied: "Measure not with words the Immeasurable."

On one occasion, when challenged by the wandering monk Vachhagota to say if man's soul was a real and permanent entity or not, he answered not. Later, he explained the reason for that silence to his disciple Ananda. Those silences were charged with radiant wisdom; those who had eyes saw the radiance, those who had ears heard the wisdom. If we meditate on those silences of the Buddha we will understand why silence is called golden.

Because on certain occasions the Buddha observed silence, it does not mean that He did not give teachings about Deity and Soul. His doctrines of *Nirvana* and *Nidanas* define what God is; his teachings about Reincarnation and *Skandhas* teach the reality of the human individuality and the transitoriness of the human personality. But what has the Enlightened One to say to us on the subject of speech?

For ordinary people he gave simple, self-evident truths on all subjects including that of speech. His teachings recorded in numerous *suttas*, verses, are not abstruse but look true in fact to everyone, however difficult the practice of their principles. The *Tevigga Sutta* mentions four types of speech that we are called upon to give up: (1) lying, (2) slander, (3) bitter words, (4) foolish talk. In the *Subhasita Sutta* of the *Mahavagga*, not only are we told what *not* to speak but further what kind of speech we should use. Again four maxims emerge: (1) truth, not falsehood; (2) well-spoken language, not ill-spoken; (3) pleasing speech, not unpleasing; (4) Right Doctrine (*Dhamma*), not false doctrine (*adhamma*).

This simple classification is profound. Let us combine the two and examine the four steps:

- (1) Lies to be avoided; truth, not falsehood, to be spoken.
- (2) Slander to be avoided; well-spoken words, not ill-spoken words.
- (3) Bitterness to be avoided; pleasing speech, not unpleasing speech.
- (4) Foolishness to be avoided; Right Doctrine, not false doctrine.

This way of examination of Buddhistic teachings prepares a kind of a staircase. The two classifications of the two *suttas* are not exactly the same; they mark an ascent, an evolution. Let us look at them a little more closely.

(1) *Lies to be avoided; truth, not falsehood, to be spoken.* It is not even necessary to expound on the weakness or wickedness of lies. All recognize it in principle, yet most err about it in practice. But there are two ideas we might note here. (a) We may desist from speaking falsehood, but on many an occasion we also desist from speaking the truth lest we offend somebody or get into trouble. (b) It does not mean, however, that on every occasion we have to speak. Let us ask ourselves every time we have to speak the truth if our duty calls upon us to interfere. If we begin to admonish and correct every small falsehood or white lie spoken by another, we will make many enemies. Speak no falsehood, avoid white lies as black lies, set an example of probity in speech, and the first rule will be observed.

(2) *Slander to be avoided; well-spoken, not ill-spoken words.* Many a time people say that "for the sake of truth" they have to speak harsh words and offer criticism of others. This second rule cuts the ground from under the feet of such self-righteous people. It does not stop at saying "lie not," but goes further and says, "slander not." A person may be at fault, he may be wrong and wicked, but that does not justify our reporting him or slandering him. Slander often implies speaking behind a person's back—though there is such a thing as public slander, as libel suits well bear out. Both types are to be avoided, for slander is slander, indulged in one way or another. While in the interests of truth it is often necessary that we speak, we are called upon to observe the third rule.

(3) *Bitterness to be avoided; pleasing not unpleasing speech.* Truth can and should be spoken pleasantly. People well know how to do this. The flatterer knows it; the social success knows it; the sycophant knows it; but their pleasing speech is not well-spoken, is not on the side of truth. In our civilization people are taught to be pleasing before they are taught to be truthful, and so we have

veiled ways of saying unpleasant things—innuendos, sarcasms, insinuations, etc., all hiding bitterness. Just as there are sugar-coated pills and we prefer them to avoid the bitter taste of drugs, so also in modern society sugar-coated bitterness is distributed very freely. All forms of bitter speech are to be avoided. Truth must be spoken; and it must be well spoken, *i.e.*, clearly, unequivocally, not hesitatingly but couched in a pleasant form. No one indulging in lies can avoid bitter speech. On the other hand, falsehood leads to slander, slander begets bitterness. The blunder of falsehood and slander produces personal animosities, personal rancours, personal rivalries; and bitterness is the natural outcome. But how does this personal talk arise? We get it in the fourth rule—from the practical point of view the most important, and in our civilization, the most neglected.

(4) Foolishness to be avoided; Right Doctrine (*Dhamma*), not false doctrine, must be promulgated. We find all around us that people are not wicked as much as they are foolish. The wicked are few, but the foolish are many. Foolishness leads to wickedness. Bitterness arises in social circles by foolish talk. Gossip and slander are rooted in foolishness. To make things lively at a social gathering, to add zest and make that gathering a “success,” people indulge in exaggeration, in talk about the personal lives of others, and in a short time this foolishness, which looks harmless, begets bitterness and slander and falsehood. It is a curse of modern civilization that when people meet they feel that they must talk something, anything. A social success is one who talks glibly, engagingly—has subjects of talk ready at the lip! This is a form of hypocrisy. To talk for the sake of talking is wrong, and here the law of necessity needs consideration. This fourth rule teaches us to avoid foolish talk. But note the supplementing phrases: Right Doctrine, not false doctrine, should be the subject of talk. When the necessary formalities and exchange of greetings are over, the talk must proceed on the basis of principles, not personalities. Current events and happenings, even proceedings of police courts and the like, have some underlying principles; good or bad examples of people mutually known also spring from certain principles, and our fourth

rule is indicative of that. People would avoid foolishness in conversation if they had Right Doctrine at hand. Let them know Right Doctrine or *Dhamma* and they are safe on the path of speech. By knowledge of *Dhamma* we avoid foolishness; avoiding foolishness we avoid bitterness; avoiding bitterness we avoid slander and gossip; avoiding slander we stay away from falsehood. That is the negative half. Note now the positive aspect: By *Dhamma*, Right Doctrine, we learn how to have pleasing speech, how to speak well, and how to utter truth efficaciously and without causing hurt.

Therefore if we desire to practise the *Shila* virtue, the precept which says, “lie not,” and which culminates in the truth of Right Doctrine or *Dhamma*, we must see the connection between mind and speech, between thoughts and words. If we begin to analyse the pitiable condition of most men and women of our modern civilization, not their wickedness but their foolishness is seen as widely prevailing, and we find that it springs mainly from a disconnection between thoughts and words. People speak thoughtlessly; say at once whatever comes to their lips. The wagging tongue wags on and not all our retractions can alter what it has already spoken. Sharp words are like arrows which cannot be retraced. The harm they do is immense. “A harsh word uttered in past lives is not destroyed but ever comes again.”

We need to begin with the mind and see the connection between thought and word, mind and speech. It is here that the last or the fourth of our rules reveals its profound truth. “Foolishness to be avoided”—how? By Right *Dhamma*. By mental effort we must learn to distinguish between false and correct *Dhamma*—right and wrong Doctrine. A daily study of the *Dhamma* purifies both mind and speech; further, such study illuminates the mind and brings to our awareness the right words to be expressed all through the day. People read newspapers the first thing in the morning when they should be reading texts like the *Gita*, the *Dhammapada*, *The Voice of the Silence*. These books give us guidance in the struggles of the day. They offer aid to the housewife in her home, to the man in the office, to the lawyer in court, to the doctor on his rounds.

But mere study without the remembrance that purification of speech should be undertaken will not help. One other aid may be suggested: there are many moments in the day when there is a lull in work and people immediately begin to indulge in foolish talk. That is a slip. Let us keep with us the thoughts we have gathered in the morning study, memorize them, and repeat them; and thus keep intact the current of peace and enlightenment all through the day.

Speech and silence are a pair, like day and night, waking and sleeping. Therefore let us not talk, talk, talk all the time. Let us remain silent, at least for a while, and give Nature and our own Soul within us a chance to influence us, to speak to us. Then we will notice that foolishness is wedded to self-esteem; people talk about themselves—till others are bored or tired or fatigued or exasperated. Subjects of impersonal conversation are plenty and evil speech will vanish and pure speech will arise, as we remember Right Doctrine—teachings of the *Dhamma*.

SELFISHNESS is the chief prompter of our age; *Chacun pour soi, Dieu pour tout le monde*, its watchword. Where then is the truth, and what practical good has it done that light brought to mankind by the “Light of the World,” as claimed by every Christian? Of the “Light of Asia” Europe speaks with scorn, nor would it recognize in Ahura Mazda a *divine* light. And yet even a *minor* light (if such) when practically applied for the good of suffering mankind, is a thousand times more beneficent than even infinite Light, when confined to the realm of abstract theories. In our days the latter Light has only succeeded in raising the pride of Christian nations to its acme, in developing their self-adulation, and fostering hard-heartedness under the name of all-binding law. The “personality” of both nation and individual has thrown deep roots into the soil of selfish motives; and of all the flowers of modern culture those that blossom the most luxuriously are the flowers of polite Falsehood, Vanity, and Self-exaltation.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

THE DUAL ASTRAL POWERS

Mediumship is the opposite of adeptship; the medium is the passive instrument of foreign influences, the adept actively controls himself and all inferior potencies.

—*Isis Unveiled*, II, 588

FROM the above quotation we see immediately that mediumship and adeptship are as opposed as the poles. The medium, to be a success as a medium, must be passive; the more passive he is, the more successful he is as a medium. The moment he begins to exercise any control, that moment he ceases to be a medium. The Adept, on the other hand, actively controls not only himself but “all inferior potencies.”

A medium has no will power; he is only a passive agent in the hands of spirits and intelligences of a lower order. These manifest through the medium’s own astral spirit and make their presence known by various kinds of phenomena. He can neither *command* their presence, nor *will* their absence; can neither compel the performance of any special act nor direct its nature. This is one of the reasons why mediumship is so dangerous. In *Isis Unveiled*, H.P.Blavatsky tells us that when the medium is perfectly passive “his own astral spirit may be benumbed, and even crowded out of his body, which is then occupied by an elemental, or, what is worse, by a human fiend of the eighth sphere, who proceeds to use it as his own.” Too often, she says, the cause of the most celebrated crimes is to be sought in such possessions.

Ill health is another resultant of mediumship; the abnormal tension to which the medium’s nervous system is subjected naturally reacts on the physical body. What is worse, mediums are also inclined to vices of various kinds. The moral condition of the medium determines the type of spirits he attracts, and he is reciprocally influenced by them intellectually, physically and morally.

In her article, “Psychic and Noetic Action,” H.P.B. gives a rather technical but excellent description of mediumship:

A medium is simply one in whose personal Ego, or terrestrial mind (psuche), the percentage of “astral” light so preponderates as to impregnate with it their whole physical constitution. Every organ and cell thereby is attuned, so as to speak, and subjected to an enormous and abnormal tension.

From this we see that the medium has opened the doors of his inner being to the influences of the Astral Light whose “*soul* is divine, but whose body—the light waves on the lower planes, infernal.” It is this “infernal” body to which the medium is attracted, and with whose influence he has allowed every organ and cell in his body to become impregnated.

Theosophy teaches that there can be no communication with the dead once the separation between the lower and higher natures has taken place; therefore what the medium contacts are not the souls of the “dear departed” but the “pale soulless corpses moving in the trackless fields of ‘Kama loka.’” So, while Spiritualists may regard mediumship as a privilege and a blessing, Theosophy teaches that it is the very reverse. If the medium knew the true nature of the “beings” he contacts, it would, says H.P.B., strike his heart “cold with horror.”

Thus we see that while on the one hand the medium has no control over inferior potencies and is simply a “passive instrument,” on the other hand the Adept, who is a pure Magician, an active Mediator, is in complete control over himself and the denizens of the invisible spheres.

Just how complete his control is, is shown in “Psychic and Neotic Action,” where H.P.B. says that the Adept can “paralyse at will the *memory* and the instinctual, independent action of all the material organs and even cells in the body of flesh.” Unlike the medium, the Adept is able to maintain perfect mental and physical health, and keep his body, soul and spirit conscious and in perfect harmony.

Thus we see how far apart the medium and the Adept are, for the latter, instead of being controlled, controls all forces with an iron will. He has, in truth, made Nature his “ally, pupil and servant.”

Between the two poles of mediumship and adeptship, where do we find ourselves? Neither a medium nor an Adept becomes such

in a single incarnation; both have come to be as they are through a long series of incarnations involving many choices.

In “Are Chelas Mediums?” (reprinted in *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 13*), we are told that “Every man has his little ‘weaknesses,’ and every man has his little ‘mediumship’; that is to say, some vulnerable point, by which he may be taken unawares.” Herein lies our danger. We must be constantly alert and aware of what we are doing, and must overcome our weaknesses instead of giving way to them. Ideas influence us, but those very ideas can be either of love, mercy, generosity, etc., or of greediness, hate, jealousy, or some other passion, and their influence on us can be as powerful as any influence a medium is subjected to.

There are, however, two kinds of influences at work on us, the lower and the higher, the psychic and the noetic—the first leading in lives to come to mediumship; the latter, to chelaship and adeptship. The chela also has put himself under the influence of another being, but that “other being” is one of those exalted men called Mahatmas. It would be an error to call a chela a medium because, rather than being a passive instrument, he is learning to control himself and all “inferior potencies.” His is a voluntary and conscious choice.

The choice, therefore, lies with us—whether we shall do as the Adept has done and gravitate towards the “soul” of the Astral Light, or shall fall under the influence of its “infernal body.” Alertness and awareness are needed to attain the former and avoid the latter. While we are not as yet in a position to control the Astral Light, we can acquire a theoretical knowledge of it, to begin with, and then when the time comes, know the practical art of dealing with it. In the words of H.P.B.:

Blessed is he who has acquainted himself with the dual powers at work in the ASTRAL Light; thrice blessed he who has learned to discern the *Noetic* from the *Psychic* action of the “Double-Faced” God in him, and who knows the potency of his own Spirit—or “Soul Dynamics.”

THE SWEEP OF EVOLUTION

TO a superficial reader, *The Secret Doctrine* may well seem lacking in any logical sequence, or in any precise definitions of terms, such as would make it more readily understood by the average reader. Turning to the first Part of Volume I as an example, it is true enough that there is a rough chronological sequence as it comments on the various Stanzas from the *Book of Dzyan*: universal *Pralaya*; the prologue to evolution; the emergence of the “Monads”; the appearance of the septenary hierarchy of conscious Divine Powers, who are ultimately the creators of the manifested universe; the formation of a nebula, a Solar Universe, a planetary system, our earth; and, finally, the development of life on our earth, down to the present time. Nevertheless, not only could any page return to almost any subject, but often in different places the author seems to be using different terms to describe the same thing; but one can never feel certain of synonymy.

We suggest that the unity of the work lies, primarily, not in the method of presentation, but in the ability of the author to comprehend the sweep and the detail of evolution in terms of the Three Fundamental Propositions given on pages 14-18 of Volume I. H.P.B.’s position is not unlike that of the artist who tries to convey the unity of his picture or sculpture in words to a listener. Inevitably these must direct his attention to detail, and it is only through the depth and breadth of his own experience that he can find his way to that unity. The kind of knowledge of *The Secret Doctrine* that is required is that described by Krishna in the words: “By this knowledge thou shalt see all things and creatures whatsoever in thyself and then in me” (*Gita*, IV, 35), and can be achieved only by the kind of search advised by him.

In the hope that some who still find themselves bewildered by *The Secret Doctrine* may be assisted, we shall attempt to show, using only Volume I, Part I, that it does in fact centre round the Fundamental Propositions mentioned; but what we have to say must necessarily be inadequate and incomplete.

It describes, this first Part, the great cycle of Incarnation or “Necessity” which begins with the vibration of the unmanifested Logos, outside of space and time, sweeping through infinity and stirring to life the universe which slumbers in that infinitude. It ends with the onset of Pralayaic sleep when all things are gathered into one again as are the separate globules of quicksilver on a plate gathered into one mass. Thus universes disappear in space as, say, sugar disappears when dissolved in water, but reappear as does the sugar when it is made to crystallize again. These cycles repeat themselves endlessly, but not in meaningless succession, as a stream of events. Out of each cycle matures a perfection, and out of that perfection grows the perfection of a succeeding cycle as the perfect flower gives way to the perfect fruit.

The nature of the perfection to be achieved in the cycle of necessity for our earth can be understood only in terms of the threefold line of evolution defined on page 181. There is a Monadic line concerned with the growth and development of the Monad, in conjunction with the Intellectual, represented by the Manasa-Dhyanis who give intelligence and consciousness to man; and the Physical, represented by the Chhayas of the Lunar Pitris, round which Nature has concentered the present physical body. “This body serves as the vehicle for the ‘growth’ (to use a misleading word) and the transformations through Manas and—owing to the accumulation of experiences—of the finite into the INFINITE, of the transient into the Eternal and Absolute.” The downward and the upward arcs of the Great Cycle are implicit in these definitions. In the first, the work of preparation, described by W. Q. Judge in Chapter II of *The Ocean of Theosophy* as the building of the Temple, goes forward. At the turning-point of the cycle, Man enters the Temple and begins the worship and sacrifice which constitute the second half of the cycle and which not only sanctify the Temple but make of him a Lord of Compassion-Wisdom.

In describing the birth of the cosmos, frequent use is made of the symbol of the egg—in the Stanzas themselves, for example: “‘Darkness’ radiates light, and light drops one solitary ray into the waters, into the mother-deep. The ray shoots through the virgin-

egg; the ray causes the eternal egg to thrill, and drop the non-eternal (periodical) germ, which condenses into the world egg" (*S.D.*, I, 64). In the commentary, the eternal egg is also defined as being, in one sense, egg-ness or the power of becoming developed through fecundation. That which emerges from and returns to it, the periodical egg, contains, when it emerges, "the promise and potency" of all the Universe. One has only to read any standard description of the outwardly invisible development of the chick within the egg, the amazingly complex organism out of the seemingly simple contents, to appreciate how apt is the symbol. One might be forgiven for believing the whole process to be directed by an intelligence behind the scenes.

The substance of the matrix of the universe bears no relation to ordinary conceptions of matter which have been influenced considerably by scientific ideas of preceding centuries. Probably most of us think subconsciously of matter as something impenetrable and inert pushed and pulled by outside forces. Only by prolonged study and reflection on what may seem at first contradictory statements of the nature of substance will we eradicate these erroneous notions and obtain some kind of unified understanding.

We note here two vital considerations: substance is dual in its potentiality and atomic in its nature. The duality is symbolized in many places by "Father-Mother"; for example, on page 283, where H. P. Blavatsky quotes from Paracelsus to the effect that it manifests both as vital activity, as incomprehensible and indescribable power, and as vital matter, of which the substance of all living beings consists. Its atomic nature is also expressed by the symbol of the egg or germ, for we have to consider that each atom has infinite capacity to unfold and in its unfoldment embraces all other atoms. The real atom of Occultism is the highest principle of a body while the physical atom of science is the lowest. It has within itself the potentiality of self-consciousness.

The transformation of the Egg or Matrix of the cosmos into objective differentiated matter is described. In the words of Stanza III, *Shloka* 4, the Radiant Essence of the Luminous Egg "becomes

seven inside, seven outside," *i.e.*, seven principles on the plane of the manifested and seven on that of the unmanifested. The Radiant Essence then "curdles and spreads in milk-white curds" throughout the depths of Space. This is the Milky Way, the world stuff, or primordial matter in its first form. It is the storehouse of the materials from which the stars, planets and other celestial bodies are produced. It is, of course, matter in quite a different state from that which we know on our earth and must pass through many states of differentiation or inform itself through various planes.

At this point we recall what is said of Fohat on page 16 of Volume I, that "it is the 'bridge' by which the 'Ideas' existing in the 'Divine Thought' are impressed on Cosmic Substance as the 'laws of Nature,' " that it is "the 'Thought Divine' transmitted and made manifest through the Dhyan Chohans, the Architects of the visible World." The Atoms of the Radiant Essence spread through space are able to follow magnetically their directing thought as minute particles of iron scattered near a magnet are able to follow the invisible influence of the magnet.

Stanza IV describes the appearance of those Divine Powers, called collectively the "Army of the Voice," by which the Divine Thought comes into action. They are like an army in that each group within the latter has its own responsibilities and freedom of action, has its own kind of individuality which is contained within a larger individuality and contains lesser individualities within itself. The highest group in the "Army of the Voice," the Primordial Seven, "produce in their turn from their holy circumgyrating Breaths the Fiery Whirlwind," which is the first stage in the formation of a nebula. They make of Fohat "the messenger of their will.... He is the steed and the Thought is the rider. He passes like lightning through the fiery clouds....He lifts his voice, and calls the innumerable sparks (atoms) and joins them together." (*S.D.*, I, 107-8)

Thus begins a universal process of growth round a central nucleus of rotating radiant substance which ultimately will produce such bodies as our sun and its planetary system. It is a process

guided at every stage by Fohat, *i.e.*, impersonal Divine Thought made active by intelligent beings. Fohat is indeed “present in the constructive power that carries out, in the formation of things—from the planetary system down to the glow-worm and simple daisy—the plan in the mind of nature, or in the Divine Thought, with regard to the development and growth of that special thing” (I, 111). In considering this process, it is vital to remember that, in accordance with the basic principle that contrast is essential to manifestation, each degree of substance is as much a degree of intelligence through which the Monad journeys.

A particular order of beings are those known as the Planetary Spirits, who guide the development of the seven so-called Sacred Planets and at the same time are concerned with the destinies of men on our earth; they are Karmic agencies.

Subsequent to page 151, *The Secret Doctrine* is concerned mainly with the development of our earth during the first four Rounds; the development of the basic elements of fire, air, water and earth out of which have developed the different elements or forms of matter we know today; and the work of the Lunar Pitris in preparing the astral form of future man. Concurrently with the development of the different forms of matter went the evolution of the senses capable of experiencing these new forms in these centres of consciousness destined to become the self-conscious men of the future. This brings us down to the turning-point of the Cycle in Round IV on our physical earth, when the three lines of evolution converge in sevenfold Man.

This convergence is described in a long passage beginning on page 247, from which we quote the following:

The Occult doctrine teaches that while the monad is cycling on downward into matter, these very Elohim—or Pitris, the lower Dhyan-Chohans—are evolving *pari passu* with it on a higher and more spiritual plane, descending also relatively into matter on their own plane of consciousness, when, after having reached a certain point, they will meet the incarnating senseless monad, encased in the lowest matter, and blending the two potencies, Spirit and Matter, the union will produce that

terrestrial symbol of the “Heavenly Man” in space—PERFECT MAN.

The cycle, instead of being a passage of the impersonal Monad through various forms of matter, endowed at best with instinct and consciousness on a different plane, now becomes a journey of the “pilgrim-soul” through various states of not only matter but Self-consciousness. The pilgrim has descended into matter and identified himself with collective humanity, which he has made in his own image, and now has to struggle upwards again through the martyrdom of self-conscious existence, back to the source. In the words of *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 17), the acquirement of individuality is no longer by natural impulse but by self-induced and self-devised efforts, checked by Karma.

Manas gains mastery over man’s mind and the other lower instruments by the power of Will and the faculty of intelligent discernment. Will is the energy of Atma, and Manas is like the flame which, fed by this energy, performs the sacrificial action of consuming dust to make it shine in splendour. The culmination of this work is a Self-Conscious Pure-Buddhi-Being—Wisdom-Incarnate, Lord of Contemplation.

As is to be expected in *The Secret Doctrine*, however, the goal of the cycle of incarnation is restated many times in different terms. For example, Madame Blavatsky reiterates the theme that the soul must rid itself of Maya, or the perceptive faculty that leads it to consider itself a unit separate from, and independent of, the One infinite and eternal Reality, by assimilating the merit of manifold existences devoted to the whole living and sentient Universe. Then, again, on page 280 of the *Summing Up* she writes that “man ought to be ever striving to help the divine evolution of *Ideas*, by becoming to the best of his ability a *co-worker with nature* in the cyclic task.” Study closely such statements as these before turning to *The Voice of the Silence*, and the common origin of the two books will at once be recognized.

We shall consider just one more feature of the first part of the book. The essence of things as opposed to their appearance, or the

world of noumena as opposed to that of phenomena, is likened to the atoms of gold dispersed through the quartz. They are invisible to the eyes of ordinary mortals, yet they alone give the quartz its value. "Alone the Initiate, rich with the lore acquired by numberless generations of his predecessors, directs the 'Eye of Dangma' towards the essence of things in which no Maya can have any influence" (I, 45). Much of the book is devoted to the existence of the "predecessors" and their vital lore, and we end by quoting from a passage on page 208 which describes the "Root-Base" from which all Initiates may claim spiritual descent.

He is *the* "Initiator," called the "GREAT SACRIFICE." For, sitting at the threshold of LIGHT, he looks into it from within the circle of Darkness, which he will not cross; nor will he quit his post till the last day of this life-cycle. Why does the solitary Watcher remain at his self-chosen post? Why does he sit by the fountain of primeval Wisdom, of which he drinks no longer, as he has naught to learn which he does not know—aye, neither on this Earth, nor in its heaven? Because the lonely sore-footed pilgrims on their way back to their *home* are never sure to the last moment of not losing their way in this limitless desert of illusion and matter called Earth-Life. Because he would fain show the way to that region of freedom and light, from which he is a voluntary exile himself, to every prisoner who has succeeded in liberating himself from the bonds of flesh and illusion. Because, in short, he has sacrificed himself for the sake of mankind, though but a few Elect may profit by the GREAT SACRIFICE.

THE body is cleansed by water, the internal organ is purified by truthfulness, the individual soul by sacred learning and austerities, the intellect by true knowledge.

—*Laws of Manu*

HEAD-KNOWLEDGE OR HEART-AWARENESS?

HOW shall we view H.P.B.'s works in these days of change? Are they antiquated? Do they need re-editing to bring the thought and the language up-to-date with present-day thought and language, just as the Christian Bible has been brought "up-to-date"? Have they lost their appeal?

It would seem that one point students should bear in mind is that H.P.B. gave out knowledge *per se*, not altering it to suit or appeal to her contemporaries or to the people of any particular period. Throughout *The Secret Doctrine* one finds references to other ancient works, showing that such works are still a source of knowledge and guidance to the people of today who wish to learn, just as *The Secret Doctrine* itself will be of value to people hundreds of years hence. The section "Before the Veil" in *Isis Unveiled* (I, ix-xlv), for example, with its emphasis on the Platonic and Neo-Platonic traditions, seems to indicate the continuing importance of this influence for our era. Perhaps we should remember what H.P.B. points out, namely, that *The Secret Doctrine* is to be judged by "humanity and the future generations" (I, viii). Therefore the book must be as suitable for study by future generations as it was by H.P.B.'s contemporaries.

We are taught that the intuition of Buddhi unfolds on the basis of the understanding that Manas builds up. Manas cannot reach further of itself, yet its efforts are a preliminary necessity, since Buddhi remains latent, un-self-conscious, without them. By analogy, the present phase of our Movement is Manasic. Will the intuition of Buddhi unfold at a later stage? This would be an unfolding of the heart, not a mere change in intellectual approach.

All presentations of the Truth must be "symbolic" in some sense, since it can never be fully expressed; but words themselves can be symbols through which intuition perceives in a deeper measure.

Anyone in touch with the world of books or with other media of communication must be struck by the wide spread of general, as well as scholarly, interest in symbolism, allegory, myth, legend, folklore and fairy tales. One becomes almost satiated with the

“symbols” in fiction, in drama, in literary and art criticism; and though quite often they may go no higher than a dubious kama-manasic level, yet the power of the symbol to “communicate” more completely and satisfyingly is increasingly recognized.

It is surprising how often modern books on these subjects bring up points on which *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine* and H.P.B.’s other writings have something pertinent to say. There has also been interesting scholarly research into symbolism, especially into the twisted strands of Hermetic, Platonic, Gnostic and Kabbalistic traditions. Generally the attitude taken is that of outside observers and the interpretation is not always correct.

But the present attitude towards symbolism may itself be a danger. In this period which revives the religious cosmopolitanism of the Alexandrian civilization, will the error made then repeat itself? Will the present attitude of tolerance and the tendency towards unification result in simply another amalgam of exoteric, ritualistic religions, instead of a recognition of the Wisdom-Religion as the source of all faiths? This would mean simply a new orthodoxy resulting from the remains of the older ones, and finally destroying its predecessors as Churchianity did. Whether the desire for union between faiths is good or bad depends on the basis for union.

A union, under the pressure of the cycle and of public opinion, between those with only a superficial knowledge of the inner meaning of Theosophy and those who are ignorant exotericists can only produce another dangerous “half-truth” faith. Theosophists who have the head-knowledge of the philosophy but not enough heart-awareness of the nature of the Theosophical Movement may in all good faith become involved in mixed outer groups, hoping thereby to forward the cause of Theosophy. Whatever the resulting synthetic mixture may call itself, it will not be in the true line of inheritance of the Theosophical Movement. The teaching H.P.B. brought will be needed as much in the future as now, to provide an acid test for the “gold” of Truth, that is, to separate the materialized interpretation of the symbols from the real inner meaning.

SHIVA

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WHO is Shiva, the destroyer-god, who with Brahma, the creator, and Vishnu, the preserver, forms the Hindu Trimurti? What relationship exists between this god and humanity? Is he to be prayed to, to be worshipped, to be feared, to be appeased? He is said to be Rudra, the terrible, the destroyer, the regenerator, the frequenter of the burning-ground, the Cosmic dancer, the eternal Contemplator, the Mahayogi, the patron of all the yogis. Is he entirely a Hindu concept? Or do we find him as Phtah, Typhon and Set in the Egyptian, as Saturn-Kronos in the Greek, as Jehovah in the Jewish, as Baal in the Chaldean teachings? Does not his vehicle, Nandi, the Bull, have its counterpart in Apis, the Egyptian sacred bull? And is not his symbol, the *lingam*, that of every creative god in every nation?

The fundamental idea needs to be grasped that Shiva is a great god in Nature, a power in the Cosmos, the Sound, the Word, or *Vach*, that stirs all into activity. It is his drum that is the origin of Sanskrit, the language of the gods, Panini says. It is Nature’s call, the rhythm of the Universe, the Song of Life, the sound of the waves, the rumbling of the thunderclap, the vast sounds emitted by every aspect of Nature, from the bursting of the bud to the earthquake, the “silvery buzzing of the golden fire-fly” to the trumpeting of the elephant. Shiva is Motion, which is positive and negative, present eternally in every atom during this Manvantara. He is within every atom; every atom is part of him; he is within every man and every man is part of him. There is that aspect of Shiva which we do not yet perceive, for it is without the sphere of our consciousness, and that aspect which is in us and which we are dimly beginning to recognize as the perceiver through sorrow and joy. Evolution is the process of becoming one with the eternal perceiver-contemplator. Briefly put, Shiva is the All. He is the universal spiritual essence of Nature. We degrade him by our anthropomorphic conceptions of him. Nature alone can incarnate

the spirit of limitless contemplation.

In individual human life, Shiva is eternal change and the eternal Watcher of the change. He is the destroyer of our passions and of the delusions which the illusions of Nature produce in us. It is because destruction is necessary for all change and progress that man fears him and he has become the dreaded god of the burning-ground. Unfortunately for us, his regenerative aspect has been lost sight of. But, when this is seen, then destruction is welcomed, for it is only through destruction resulting in regeneration that we progress. This recognition marks a stage in human awakening and brings to mind H.P.B.'s statement: "Woe to those who live without suffering."

Not all decay and destruction need to be feared. The seed dies to live as a plant; the passions and sensuous thoughts of man must die to live as a conscious entity in Eternity. Once this is recognized, all destruction is seen not merely as inevitable, but as beautiful, for it reveals the sacrificial aspect of life, unconscious in the lower kingdoms, to be consciously recognized and used by the human being.

Shiva is the patron of all the yogis. His drum rhythmically sounds through the cycle of decay and rebirth. As Krishna's flute calls on all men to see the beauty in life, the harmony of all Nature with the divine, so Shiva's drum calls the one who sees beneath the beauty the agony of destruction. As the Buddha first saw the beauty of life and later saw that each species lived on the other, that nothing came to birth save by suffering and struggle, and began to search for the unifying factor in life, finally reaching the glorious vision of the rhythmic movement of the stars, of the cyclic motion of the waters, and of the link between the milk of the mother and the poison of the snake—so a knowledge of Shiva brings us, in however small a degree, nearer this understanding. In time we, too, can see that there is "a Power divine which moves to good."

How shall we learn to look for Shiva in the battle of life? Even if he is the power in Nature that causes decay, he is the regenerator, the deliverer, the healer, the ever-auspicious, the friend of all beings. Did he not, at the "churning of the ocean of milk," drink up, with

overflowing compassion, the terrible poison called *Halahala*, that was threatening all living creatures with extinction, so that nectar could be secured from the ocean and the world could be saved? The poison could not harm him but left a blue stain on his throat; hence his name Nilakantha. This story from the *Bhagavata Purana* is a reminder to us, not only of what Shiva has done, but of what we have to do with the poison around us.

There is also the allegory of Shiva transforming lumps of flesh into boys, and calling them Maruts, to show the transformation of senseless men into rational beings; the Maruts, in esoteric teachings, are identical with some of the Agnishwatta Pitris, the human intelligent Egos.

Shiva is portrayed as the wielder of the thunderbolt and the possessor of hundreds of bows and arrows. He protects the worthy with drawn bow, is the Lord of those that fight against wickedness, and makes the evil-doers suffer. There is no place where Shiva is not. A story tells us of Brahma and Vishnu discussing who was the greater of the two, when they suddenly saw before them a column of light, seemingly without beginning or end, which came through the earth and proceeded upwards to the sky. They decided to go, the one upwards to the end and the other downwards to the beginning and meet again in the middle to tell each other of what they had found. They went and returned, but had found neither beginning nor end. Then they saw Shiva before them and he told them that all three—creation, preservation, destruction—regeneration—were equally important.

But Shiva is most commonly depicted as the contemplator and the dancer. As the eternal contemplator he sits in meditation in his abode on Mount Kailasa, surrounded by the eternal snows. Around him is peace and happiness. At times his third eye roves over the world to see where there may be the shining light of a devotee. But he himself sits in motionless, withdrawn, divine contemplation.

There are times when this contemplation is disturbed, and two stories show us what disturbs it. In the one he is shown carrying the dead body of his wife Sati over his shoulder and stamping through the world in such an agony of grief that all life begins to

wither and desolation begins to reign over all. At last Vishnu, in order to preserve what remained of life, had to destroy the dead body so that Shiva, no longer encumbered, might return to Kailasa to resume his contemplation. In another story it was playfulness, action without knowledge of results, that brought near-tragedy. One day Parvati with her attendants came up to the Lord Shiva when he was deep in contemplation. She was in a gay mood. All around were *devas* and *rishis* filled with ecstasy in the wonderful presence of the Divine Contemplator. All Nature herself was at peace. Parvati, slipping behind him, placed her hands over his eyes. At once the light of the world went out and fire began to destroy all life. Filled with fear, Parvati begged him to return to his contemplation, and once again peace was restored. Trouble comes to the world through foolish actions as much as by wrong actions!

The picture of Shiva as the divine dancer of three different dances symbolizes different aspects of him. First we have the Cosmic dance. He danced before the gods and the heavenly dwellers in the beginning, and it was the sound of his drum that changed chaos into cosmos and made rhythm pulsate throughout the world. The other gods also helped, forming the chorus and playing the various instruments.

In the second dance, the *Tandava*, he dances in the burning-ground, a terrible place of death and decay feared by all. This dance symbolizes the destruction of evil, of our bad desires and emotions, our wrong thoughts and actions. Our lower nature which harbours the evil tendencies becomes the burning-ground, and if we would dance with the Dancer then we will see the relationship between the eternal and unchanging and that which changes. Our Karma is heavy and unpleasant because of our evil deeds and desires, and Shiva's rhythmic dance helps us to learn how to handle ourselves so as to purify our nature more quickly.

The third dance, the *Nadanta*, the dance of Nataraja, shows him as the centre of the universe. He has four arms; in one right hand he holds the drum, standing for creative sound; with the other he makes the sign, "Do not fear"; one left hand holds fire, the fire of destruction or change, and the other points to his triumph over the

dwarf. Around him is the circle of fire. It is Shiva's eternal dance of creation, maintenance, destruction and deliverance. The macrocosmic dance on the vast stage of the firmament has its counterpart in the microcosm, in the heart of the individual.

During the Vigil Night of Shiva, Mahashivaratri, we are brought to the moment of interval between destruction and regeneration; it symbolizes the night when we must contemplate on that which watches the growth out of the decay. Just as the mediaeval European knight spent the night before his investiture in the Church alone with his sword, so during Mahashivaratri we have to be alone with our sword, the Shiva in us. We have to look behind and before, to see what evil needs eradicating from our heart, what growth of virtue we need to encourage. Such a dark night of the soul comes to all of us; it is a time when desolation lies before and behind us, and in the burning-ground of the heart there seems no life. No one escapes this dark night. Even the Christ suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane. To keep before us the memory of Shiva's dance will save us from despair and give us the courage to pass on.

Shiva is not only outside of us but within us. He is the creator and the saviour of spiritual man, as he is the good gardener of Nature. He weeds out the plants, human and cosmic, and kills the passions of the physical to call to life the perceptions of the spiritual man. To unite ourselves with the One Self is to recognize the Shiva in us.

How can we do this? By austerities. Only by austerities can his powers be attained, as many stories point out. Nothing is given; all must be fought for and won. Beauty of form will not win him: Uma with all the perfection of form and character was unable to make him notice her. But when she began her austerities, her body covered with the customary ashes, her hair unkempt, then did he notice her. Austerities must be thought of not as physical postures but as efforts towards the destruction of all evil in us through devotion and contemplation.

To endeavour to see Shiva in our heart is to practise his contemplation and to perform his dance; seeing joy in suffering, freeing ourselves from limitations, will in time make us sense the

Universe in us, the Shiva in us, the Motion in us, and make us see ourselves as part of Nature's sound. Life is a song, *Light on the Path* tells us. "Learn from it the lesson of harmony."

Further, if we can "personify" without "materializing" the concept of Shiva, we gain some thought-provoking knowledge. We are told that Rudra-Shiva, the great Yogi, is the forefather of all the Adepts. And, connecting this with the wonderful description given in *The Secret Doctrine* of those spiritual Beings who helped in the initial stage of human evolution, we learn that in Esotericism Shiva is one of the greatest Kings of the Divine Dynasties. He is the Patron of the Third, Fourth and Fifth Root-Races.

As recorded by one of the Great Masters:

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

RARE indeed is this human birth. The human body is like a boat, the first and foremost use of which is to carry us across the ocean of life and death to the shore of immortality. The Guru is the skilful helmsman; divine grace is the favourable wind. If with such means as these man does not strive to cross the ocean of life and death, he is indeed spiritually dead.

—*Srimad Bhagavatam*

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

The environmental issue of global warming is proving to be a great moral crisis of our time, argues Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature* and *Long Distance*. Overindustrialization, increasing vehicular traffic and other human influences on the environment are wreaking havoc on our planet and the air we breathe. Writing in the news magazine *In These Times*, McKibben paints a gloomy picture of things to come:

In temperate latitudes, climate change will creep up on us. Severe storms already have grown more frequent and more damaging. The progression of seasons is less steady. Some agriculture is less reliable. Most of us live lives so divorced from the natural world that we hardly notice the changes. By the time the magnitude of the change is truly in our faces, it will be too late to do much about it: There's such a lag time to increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that we need to be making the switch to solar and wind and hydrogen power right now to prevent disaster decades away.

So maybe we should think of global warming in a different way—as the great moral crisis of our time. Why a moral question? In the first place, no one's ever figured out a more effective way to screw the marginalized and poor of this planet than climate change. Having taken their dignity, their resources, and their freedom under a variety of other schemes, we now are taking the very physical stability on which their already difficult lives depend....

And global warming is a moral crisis, too, if you place any value on the rest of creation. Intricate ecosystems are also spectacularly vulnerable. All in all, the 21st century seems poised to see extinctions at a rate not observed since the last big asteroid slammed into the planet. But this time the asteroid is us.

It's a moral question, finally, if you think we owe any debt to the future. No generation yet to come will ever forget us—we are the ones present at the moment when the temperature starts to spike, and so far we have not reacted....

You can't really get angry at carbon dioxide, and the people responsible for its production are, well, us. We emit so much more carbon dioxide now than we did a decade ago.... There are huge companies with a lot to lose, and many people so tied in to their current ways of life that advocating change smacks of subversion. But this has to become a political issue—and fast. The only way that may happen, short of a hideous drought or monster flood, is if it becomes a personal issue first.

Trying to launch a moral campaign is no easy task. It is the sum total of individual actions that can bring about a shift of habits and change of lifestyle in the collective whole—enough to pressure governments to pass laws that would reduce the levels of carbon dioxide and other lethal gases pouring into our atmosphere.

It is rare to find men of science, or those belonging to the medical fraternity, who view science, spirituality and service as the three sides of a triangle. The three merge with one another at the deeper level, says Dr. K. P. Misra, senior cardiologist at Apollo Hospital, Chennai. He writes in *Tattvaloka* (December 2001):

Science is an inquiry in the world outside. Spiritualism is an inquiry into the world within. Both are complementary to each other.... If we wish to know man in all his dimensions and facets and also if we wish to study the entire world in which we live, science and spirituality have to grow together so that the total knowledge becomes comprehensive and integrated....

Service of mankind is actually, as Mother Teresa says, love in action. There cannot be love without service, nor can anyone serve without love. In fact, service is an appreciation of the unity of creation....

This is the view of modern science also with the GUT theory (Grand Union Theory) wherein the scientists postulate that the entire universe is created and sustained by one form of energy alone. The more we understand this aspect of life, the more we get attracted towards service, because by serving others we are

only helping ourselves.

The entire creation is interdependent. Nothing can survive without the help and support of the other parts of creation.... This is the law of nature. Every flora and fauna in the world is interdependent for survival on others. The beauty of life is in realizing this and giving abundantly to others.

A society or a nation that takes more than it gives perishes in no time, whereas a society that gives more than it takes flourishes and nourishes others. The story of all civilizations is reflected in this eternal truth....

We have received all our lives many things in many ways, without which we could not be what we are today. Isn't it our duty to pay it back? Therefore, service is not a luxury, a hobby or a fashion but an unavoidable obligation and a sacred duty towards society....

To give is to live and to keep is to die.... Service makes us appreciate the unity in creation and the love for fellow human beings.

While books and writings and other works of men often fade away and are no more for subsequent ages, the great symbols do not disappear. Hence “the religious and esoteric history of every nation was embedded in symbols” (*The Secret Doctrine*, I, 307), and thus preserved for posterity. The science of true symbols and the art of interpreting them is little understood today. Dr. S. A. Sarma is among the few who recognizes the value of ancient symbols. In his book *Kena Upanishad* he writes:

The science of symbols constitutes a fascinating study in itself. It is by means of this science of symbols that the Unknown becomes the Known, the occult the obvious. Symbols enter into almost every phase of human endeavour and pursuits: in mathematics, mysticism and music, in art and architecture, in the diverse rituals and ceremonials of the esoteric religious systems and their practices, in alchemy and in astrology, in the traditions of esoteric teachings, from the most “primitive”

mind's early perceptions to the most modern artistic apperceptions, and in the intricate dialectics, in every field it is this science of symbols that so ensures the satisfactory transmission and appreciation of the essential "intent" of what is thus taught....

A symbol is a visible sign of some thought, emotion, or experience seeking to translate what can really be grasped by the mind and imagination only by something that enters the field of observation. "The Hindu Faith had at its service the language of the utmost delicacy and flexibility with a vigorous and fertile growth and an almost unlimited vocabulary. Thus, it came to be so profuse in type and symbol."

Clear distinction between symbol and sign is essential: symbols are less obvious than mere signs, require convention, are not only abstract, but metaphysical in their content and meaning, and often need explanation for history, religion and customs. They do not depict but suggest subjects, do not speak directly through the eye to the intelligence, but presuppose in the mind the knowledge of any event or fact that they so recall.

H.P.B. defines a symbol as "an embodied idea, combining the conception of the Divine Invisible with the earthly visible." Every object, every event, every being is an embodied idea. Each human mind reading these millions upon millions of embodied ideas interprets them in its own way. Each human mind is an evolving, expanding, unfolding entity; therefore there are superficial interpretations, partial interpretations, false interpretations, as well as profound, complete and true interpretations of all the embodied ideas. According to the bent of the human mind are the millions of embodied ideas evaluated.

One of the reasons for the misunderstanding of ancient truths enshrined in holy symbols and myths is the rejection of the invisible and with it of the spiritual. The false reasoning that all is matter, and that integration and disintegration of forms of matter is the whole of the process of evolution, has brought about degradation in knowledge and consequent degradation in ordinary life.

....without the help of symbology (with its seven

departments, of which the moderns know nothing) no ancient Scripture can ever be correctly understood. Symbology must be studied from every one of its aspects, for each nation had its own peculiar methods of expression. In short, no Egyptian papyrus, no Indian olla, no Assyrian tile, or Hebrew scroll, should be read and accepted *literally*. (*The Secret Doctrine*, I, 305)

Tools from northern China were crafted 1.36 million years ago, making them a solid evidence of people living there at that time, say the researchers. In 1980, more than 3000 stone flakes were discovered in the Nihewan Basin. But only now has accurate dating of the tools been possible. A team led by Rixiang Zhu of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing dated them from the pattern of magnetic fields in sediments where they were found. Reversals of the Earth's magnetic field, whose timing is known, are recorded in these patterns. (*Nature*, Vol. 413, p.413)

The tools are the oldest so far found in that part of Asia. At this time, says the report, the region suffered periods of drought, which suggests that those who made the tools coped well with the hardships of uncertain climates after emerging from the tropics.

The Chinese are not only one of the oldest nations of our Fifth Race (*The Secret Doctrine*, II, 364), but going further back the early Chinese are said to have been remnants of the Fourth or Atlantean Race. (II, 603)

Quoting a Master of Wisdom, H.P.B. wrote in *The Secret Doctrine* in 1888:

"What would you say to our affirmation that the Chinese—I speak of the inland, the true Chinaman, not of the hybrid mixture between the Fourth and Fifth Races now occupying the throne, the aborigines who belong in their unallied nationality wholly to the highest and last branch of the Fourth Race—reached their highest civilization when the Fifth had hardly appeared in Asia." And this handful of the inland Chinese

are all of a very high stature. Could the ancient MSS. in the Lolo language (that of the aborigines of China) be got at and translated correctly, many a priceless piece of evidence would be found. But they are as rare as their language is unintelligible. (II, 280 fn.)

Failed marriages and broken homes are affecting children in many ways. Studies suggest that children whose parents had divorced are at increased risk for later problems in their own marriages. This may be because their parents' divorce undermines their thoughts and feelings about the permanence of marriage. Children who grow up with divorced parents tend to reach adulthood with a relatively weak commitment to the norm of lifelong marriage, according to study author Dr. Paul Amato of Pennsylvania State University. And, it seems, when their own marriages become troubled, they tend to leave the relationship rather than stick it out.

Overall, divorces are also common among children whose parents had remained married but had a high level of discord in the relationship, the report indicates. It seems that if there is a long period of chronic, overt discord, children learn that divorce is a reasonable solution to an unhappy marriage, and that marriage is an unpredictable relationship. Love and commitment, they come to believe, are often here today and gone tomorrow.

Children constitute that segment of the population least able to protect itself against psychological damage, and the trauma of a broken home can go a long way. In the present state of the fall of ideals in regard to family life, homes are no longer centres from which influences radiate, giving dignity and grace to life, exemplifying marital fidelity and parental protection.
