

# THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

A Magazine Devoted to  
The Living of the Higher Life

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- (b) The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and
- (c) The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### OUR "OVERWHELMING VIRTUES"

[Reprinted from THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, September 1960.]

Evil is the exaggeration of good....Ambition, and a thousand other things we have to leave unmentioned, becomes the source and cause of evil whether in its abundance or through its absence.

— MAHATMA K.H.

IT is not always easy to recognize the truth that exaggerated virtues may be vices in disguise, especially when these exaggerated virtues are our own. What mother, serving her children and sacrificing for them to an extent that makes them lazy and self-centred, taking others' service as their right, can see her attitude as an exaggerated virtue that is really self-indulgence, positively harmful to those for whom she would cheerfully give her life?

*Light on the Path* gives the hopeful assurance that "the vices of men become steps in the ladder, one by one, as they are surmounted." But let us not rejoice prematurely that we have surmounted them! Especially has the aspirant to be on his guard, for he is warned that the "vices of the ordinary man pass through a subtle transformation and reappear with changed aspect in the heart of the disciple." The "giant weed" of self, which is the source of evil, until it has been killed beyond reanimation, "lives fruitfully in the heart of the devoted disciple as well as in the heart of the man of desire."

But especially have we to watch our "overwhelming virtues" lest they slip into something very different. Thus,

virtue and wisdom are sublime things; but if they create pride and a consciousness of separateness from the rest of humanity in the mind of a man, then they are only the snake of self reappearing in a finer form.

Virtue and righteousness are good, but pride in our virtues turns righteousness into self-righteousness and "goodness" of so narrow and sectarian a kind that in the eyes of the "unco guid" all others may be suspect.

Very many examples of qualities good in proper moderation, evil or at best objectionable in excess, will occur to any thoughtful reader.

Even exaggerated self-respect, feeling the need of being bolstered up, has led to a craving for fame and, worse still, to looking down on others, with its terrible culmination in race riots in some countries, untouchability in India, segregation, narrow sectarianism and many other evils. Is it surprising that the disciple is called upon to recognize fully "that the very thought of individual rights is only the outcome of the venomous quality in himself, that it is the hiss of the snake of self which poisons with its sting his own life and the lives of those about him"?

A great Master wrote early in the '80's of the last century:

Ambition, the desire of securing happiness and comfort for those we love, by obtaining honours and riches, are praiseworthy natural feelings, but when they transform man into an ambitious cruel tyrant, a miser, a selfish egotist, they bring untold misery on those around him; on nations as well as on individuals.

It is not necessary to pass in review here all the qualities that pass for virtues and then to show the other side of the coin in each case. We may, however, mention a few more that bear the stamp of respectability or even of high desirability and see the consequences of exaggerating each, bearing its correspondence to the tragic metamorphosis of Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde.

Thus, for example, while genuine humility is a noble quality, mock modesty recalls the loathsome "'umbleness" of Uriah Heep; thrift exaggerated becomes meanness or stinginess or makes the selfish miser; exaggerated independence rides roughshod over others' rights and feelings. How often, in the guise of friendly interest, does curiosity not pry into others' business which concerns the prier not at all?

Generosity unchecked by prudence and a sense of one's obligations may lead to prodigality; modesty may become prudishness; and equipoise, rigidity.

Ralph W. Emerson's essay on "Circles" contains the telling couplet,

Forgive his crimes, forgive his virtues too,  
Those smaller faults, half converts to the right.

How much the sadder when the former virtues are half perverts to the wrong! Is it surprising that *Light on the Path* bids us remember that the world's sin and shame are our own sin and shame? And that the soiled garment we shrink from touching may have been ours yesterday, may be ours tomorrow? But is it not folly, when we have gained a virtue, to let it slip back into a vice? Hence the great importance of frequent honest self-examination. Nowhere is Maya more dangerous than in evaluating our own qualities. Each must find out which virtues carried to excess are most dangerous for him.

Why dangerous? Because, however quick we may be to resist definitely evil impulses or promptings, the qualities which masquerade as virtues may deceive us. These offer chinks in our armour through which the ever-watchful enemies of Theosophy, always on the alert to take aspirants off their guard, may do us and, through us, the Movement, grievous hurt. Mr. Judge wrote in more than one letter of the efforts of the Movement's foes to bring on doubt and despair and to get up strife.

Madame Blavatsky specifically warned in her Fourth Message of April 15, 1891, to the American Theosophists, that in a crisis a lack of self-control and watchfulness might prove fatal. Especially

when honest self-examination reveals a personal wish to lead and wounded vanity dressed in the peacock's feathers of devotion and altruistic work, we must be ready at any cost to strip the borrowed feathers off and see ourselves exactly as we are. Tennyson called for "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control." The first requires to be accompanied by the second and the third.

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WE appeal...to all who wish to raise themselves and their fellow creatures—man and beast—out of the thoughtless jogtrot of selfish everyday life. It is not thought that Utopia can be established in a day; but through the spreading of the idea of Universal Brotherhood, the truth in all things may be discovered. Certainly, if we all say that it is useless, that such highly-strung, sentimental notions cannot obtain currency, nothing will ever be done. A beginning must be made, and it has been by the Theosophical Society. Although philanthropic institutions and schemes are constantly being brought forward by good and noble men and women, vice, selfishness, brutality, and the resulting misery, seem to grow no less. Riches are accumulating in the hands of the few, while the poor are ground harder every day as they increase in number. Prisons, asylums for the outcast and the magdalen, can be filled much faster than it is possible to erect them. All this points unerringly to the existence of a vital error somewhere. It shows that merely healing the outside by hanging a murderer or providing asylums and prisons will never reduce the number of criminals. What is wanted is true knowledge of the spiritual condition of man, his aim and destiny. This is offered to a reasonable certainty in the Aryan literature, and those who must begin the reform are those who are so fortunate as to be placed in the world where they can see and think out the problems all are endeavouring to solve, even if they know that the great day may not come until after their death. Such a study leads us to accept the utterance of Prajapati to his sons: "Be restrained, be liberal, be merciful"; it is the death of selfishness.

—W. Q. JUDGE

## THE SEEDS OF RESOLVE

Let no one imagine that it is a mere fancy, the attaching of importance to the birth of the year. The earth passes through its definite phases and man with it; and as a day can be coloured so can a year. The astral life of the earth is young and strong between Christmas and Easter. Those who form their wishes now will have added strength to fulfil them consistently.

— H. P. B.

THE field, the tilling of the field, sowing and reaping, are common religious and mystical symbols. The *Gita* (Chapter XIII) calls the body the field; and the soul, the knower of the field. The *Vendidad*, too, uses the symbol of the field, which one must "till with the left hand and with the right, on one side and on the other." In one of the sermons of the Buddha in *Sutta-Nipata*, this simile is again used. In the *New Testament* also the metaphor is utilized.

All this is no mere coincidence or chance. It is one of the basic spiritual symbols, used in different ways, like other great symbols—such as the Lotus, the Serpent, etc.

The processes of birth, growth, decay and death as seen in rhythmic cycles in the kingdoms of Nature, are reflection of spiritual verities, and *correspond* to similar processes in the Great Universe, the Macrocosm, and in the small universe—man, the microcosm.

We are going to examine here only an aspect of the whole subject—a simple but practical aspect.

What is a seed?

The first fact about a seed is that it is a thing of life—the source, the origin, the beginning of anything. Seeds fructify and become integrated forms of life. There is life in the corpse as well, but bury a corpse and it will not grow into something coherent; it disperses as it disintegrates. But put a seed in the soil, tend it well, and it grows.

The second fact about seeds : They carry within them the future plan. The whole life of the oak is in the acorn; the seed of the lotus

contains in miniature the whole lotus plant; and so on. Not only is the seed a living thing; it carries within it the plan of its entire life to come. Examining a seed, a botanist possessing accurate knowledge is able to tell what will grow out of it.

The third fact about the seed : Unless it has a soil or earth to rest in, unless sun and rain do their work, the seed does not fructify. Soil or earth is necessary, and so is rain or water; air is necessary immediately the seed sprouts, and it equally needs heat or sun. The four elements—earth, water, air and fire—are needed for the seed to sprout, for the sprout to grow and bear flowers and fruits, which in turn contain new seeds of life.

The fourth fact : From seed to seed is a cycle; we sow the seed, it sprouts, grows, yields other seeds. The acorn after becoming an oak yields new acorns, and so on; but though it is the same type of seed, its quality undergoes a change. When a plant or a tree is carefully tended and properly nourished, the seeds it yields are superior to those of another plant of the same type which has not been adequately looked after.

The fifth fact is that, while in and through the process of growth, from seed to seed, its quality may improve or deteriorate, its kind or type never changes. We cannot make a lotus seed grow into an oak, or vice versa. Once a lotus, always a lotus, poor-looking or beautiful, but still a lotus.

With these five points in mind, let us turn to the second word in our title—Resolve.

Theosophy teaches that the power to resolve is an aspect of the power to choose, and is related to human free will. A tree cannot resolve to become what it likes; the lotus seed cannot say, "I want to become an oak." A dog cannot say, "I want to be a better dog, or this or that type of a dog." It has no power of choice, and therefore no power to make resolutions. But man can and does say, "I want to change and improve my lot, or to become like so-and-so." Evolution, according to Theosophy, is a single process in the lower kingdoms of Nature, natural impulse being the guiding force; but it is a dual process in the human kingdom—natural impulse plus self-determination. The faculty of resolve is related to this self-

determination or self-choice.

Human soul-growth takes place entirely by self-induced and self-devised ways and means, no doubt checked by Karma, but this Karma we ourselves wilfully generated. We might even say that human evolution implies the bringing under control of all natural impulses, so that all human actions, on whatever plane, are guided by the soul's power of self-determination. The Perfect Man *knows* all the processes of natural impulse, and, further, knows how to manipulate those processes.

One of the fundamental teachings of Theosophy is also the most encouraging: By his self-effort alone the individual progresses towards perfection. Theosophy does not just say that he grows by self-effort; it goes further and says that he cannot grow in any other way. Any system of thought or any religion which teaches otherwise does a disservice to humanity.

This is the season for making right resolves. Not only should the resolve be right but it must be made rightly. When, between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox, Mother Earth passes through a definite phase in relation to the sun, and her astral life is young and strong, she gives us, her children, opportunities to resolve and gain the fulfilment of our resolves.

Great Spiritual Teachers have compared the seed to the human soul. Let us do likewise and apply the five facts regarding the seed, mentioned above, to the soul, remembering that, unlike the seed in the vegetable kingdom, the human soul-seed has the power to resolve to become whatever it likes. By self-determination and by carrying out what one has determined to do or to be, one can become divine—or demoniacal.

(1) The human soul is living and immortal.

(2) Within it is the plan of its grand progress—what it will be when mind and character are perfected. Just as an infant body contains in potency what it will be like when it grows, so with the soul.

(3) The human body is made out of the four elements—earth, water, air and fire. Theosophy, like the *Gita*, looks upon the body as a highly composite entity, and the soul-seed lives in a fourfold

body or soil.

(4-5) The soul grows in the body; personality is the sprout, the bush and the tree, and out of personal experiences the soul-seed becomes better or deteriorates. From birth to death, the human incarnated soul gains or loses. But "once a man, always a man." A good man may turn bad, or a bad man, good; the strong may become weak, or the weak, strong; but man remains man. That is the principle of evolution. The man-seed contains the power to progress and become a god, but god is only man become great, Atma become Mahatma. Man is a universe in miniature, and can become one with the Universal Whole. Self-consciousness merges with the Universal Self-Consciousness.

How soon and how successfully we can progress, depends upon our resolve, the method of resolve, and the carrying out of the resolve.

People ought to be living according to their resolves, yet they do not. They determine their course of action, from day to day, by mere impulses which are not always natural. Most of the time they are unnatural, *i.e.*, contrary to nature. These unnatural impulses result from our likes-dislikes, attractions-aversions. Man is expected to be Prometheus—acting according to wisdom and vision; but most of the time he is Epimetheus—wise after the event, and that too not always. For, even when things go wrong, people do not look for causes within themselves, and so do not learn.

Let us determine our course of action, as often as possible, not by impulses of likes-dislikes, but according to plan. Where is the plan? In the seed or soul is the plan for each to live by. The soul-architect creates the plan in *Devachan*, out of his last life's experiences, and we should carry it out here in bodily life.

But how to know what the plan is? Let us look for it every day. To consult the soul we need knowledge, and this knowledge Theosophy provides. If *before* acting we were to say, "Let me consult the soul," we would have taken the preliminary step.

Here is the first topic for resolve : Let us resolve to consult the Soul—the Ego, the *Dehi*, the Incarnated Being.

This Incarnated Being is *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*—not the whole

of it, but only a ray, and in that ray *Manas* predominates and *Atma* and *Buddhi* are dormant. The *Manasic* aspect is capable of acting out the plan of the soul, but very early in its incarnated existence it becomes the recipient of innumerable sense-impresses. These sense-impresses enlivened by *Kamic* elementals invade the mind, which thus loses its power to develop from within the pictures of the Soul, or the Soul's plan. Therefore we need to help the mind to free itself from these sense-impresses of likes-dislikes.

To understand our own personal plan of life, we need to possess some knowledge of the general scheme of human evolution. Just as an architect applies his general knowledge of architecture to construct a specific building, so with us. We must possess general knowledge of human evolution, for each of us grows according to that general scheme.

We can see from this that those who make resolutions without proper knowledge, often fail almost immediately. To resolve without a basis of knowledge is not only erroneous but sometimes even dangerous.

The general fact to note is that all of us have to face the Karma we have ourselves made—our capacities, character, bodily sensitivity, etc. We carry within ourselves that Karmic plan, which is part of the general scheme of human evolution. That knowledge which would help us personally is part of the great Wisdom, Theosophy, and once we have assimilated at least *some* of it, we shall know not only *what* to do but also how to do it. Only then does the seed of the soul grow into a healthy and beautiful full-blown plant.

Those who have become Immortal Trees—the Living Human Banyan—having reached full growth through matter-experience, provide heavenly shade and sustenance to mortals. In the human kingdom there are Banyan Trees, or rather the one Banyan with many shoots, which form bowers. Taking protection in that shade, we gain the strength of repose.

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## SLEEP AND DREAMS

ALMOST one-third of our life is spent in sleeping. Yet, it is surprising that we go through this state each day with little or no interest in finding out what happens during it, or even what causes sleep. Why do we fall asleep every night? The general belief is that when the body becomes tired and depleted of vitality, sleep overpowers us. Theosophy, however, says that we are more full of life-energy when we fall asleep than in the morning when we wake up. For, this life-energy exists around us like an ocean, and when we are awake the life waves rush into the body with greater intensity every hour. Our power to throw it off or resist is limited, and so we fall asleep. During sleep, the equilibrium is restored, and so we wake up.

The actual number of hours for which we sleep, varies from person to person, but sleep we must. One can survive without food for up to three weeks, but one cannot remain sleepless that long. Experiments have shown that when people are deprived of sleep, not only is their physical health affected, but their mental fitness and power of concentration also suffer.

Explaining the necessity for sleep, H.P.B. states:

It is said by Occultism to be the periodical and regulated exhaustion of the nervous centres, and especially of the sensory ganglia of the brain, which refuse to act any longer on this plane, and, if they would not become unfit for work, are compelled to recuperate their strength on another plane or *Upadhi*....As a man exhausted by one state of the life fluid seeks another; as, for example, when exhausted by the hot air he refreshes himself with cool water; so sleep is the shady nook in the sunlit valley of life. (*Transactions*, pp. 70-71)

Patanjali defines sleep as "that modification of the mind which ensues upon the quitting of all objects by the mind, by reason of all the waking senses and faculties sinking into abeyance." (*The Yoga Aphorisms*, p. 5)

This shows that in sleep we are at a different level of consciousness, and that the senses and faculties which we use during waking

life are paralysed and at rest. In waking life it is the cerebrum that is active, while during sleep the cerebellum, which controls the unconscious activities, takes over. So sleep is not all unconsciousness. Certain centres in the brain are awake and act as guard; so that a mother may sleep like a log through a thunderstorm, but is awakened by her baby's crying. In sleep, a different set of senses, *i.e.*, the astral senses, are at work. Thus, in the case of people who suffer from somnambulism or sleep-walking, the astral has taken over full control, and the astral body drags the physical along. Its judgment is so accurate that we find somnambulists walking over the narrowest of ledges without falling—something which in their waking state they would never dare to do.

In sleep, we are at a different level of consciousness. There is one consciousness, functioning at several levels. Theosophy talks about four states of consciousness, *viz.*, *Jagrat*, *Swapna*, *Sushupti* and *Turiya*. The Higher *Manas*, a ray of *Atma-Buddhi*, is the reincarnating Principle or Ego in man. Every incarnation a fresh ray projects itself and is called the incarnated *Manas*. On incarnation, *Manas* becomes dual, *i.e.*, it can gravitate towards the desire principle or levitate towards *Buddhi*. An aspect of this incarnated *Manas* is absorbed in desires and in the affairs of the world, but there is that higher aspect of *Manas* which feels imprisoned while it has to work through the personality. It is this aspect of *Manas* which gets the opportunity, during sleep, to make contact with the higher principles, *Buddhi* and *Atma*, which are entirely inactive during the waking state.

The four states of consciousness can be looked upon as concentric circles. *Turiya* is the highest state, a state of high spiritual consciousness, and is at the centre, closest to *Atma*. This is the state into which only sages and seers can enter at will. *Jagrat*, the waking state, is at the other end, farthest from the centre. One cannot reach *Sushupti*, the deep sleep state, directly from *Jagrat*, because there is the intervening state of dreaming—*Swapna*.

As we fall asleep, we enter *Swapna* or the dream state. But this dream state—as we go from *Jagrat* to *Sushupti*—is quite different from the dream state we enter while coming back from *Sushupti* to

*Jagrat*. These dreams are produced by the combined action of *Kama*-desire and the "animal soul," which action is purely mechanical. It is instinct, not reason, which is active in the dreamer, and even animals have this kind of dreams. Freud's theory covers only these dreams. As per his theory, the rational and irrational desires which we try to repress and push back into the "unconscious," find their expression in dreams.

From the dream state we pass into *Sushupti*, or dreamless sleep. In this state, our lower nature, which includes the lower emotions and intellect, is paralysed. Here, that aspect of *Manas* which is all wrapped up in the personality—the jailer—falls asleep, and the inner man who was held prisoner in waking life becomes free to unite with *Buddhi-Manas*. The jailer is half asleep, and catches only occasional glimpses, as through a window, of the acts and thoughts of the inner man.

In *Sushupti*, we exist as our true individuality, unhindered by personality. As the Upanishads say, "Here the father is father no more; nor the mother a mother; nor the worlds, worlds...." Even the most hardened criminal passes through this state of dreamless sleep, however fleetingly. Mr. Judge calls it a great spiritual reservoir "by means of which the momentum toward evil living is held in check." In fact, it has been shown experimentally that a person deprived of this state of sleep gets up all tired. Here our Ego acts on its own plane and is fully conscious and omniscient, and it can communicate with other Egos on the same plane if there is spiritual rapport between them. It is in this state that we can contact our dear departed ones; one may have no clear recollection of it upon waking, but a vague feeling of having made the contact gives us solace.

Then from the dreamless state we once again enter the dream state. It is in these dreams that the ideas and experiences of the inner man are reflected. In *Sushupti*, we find the solution to our problems. So many artists and inventors have found inspiration in dreams, or the solution of a problem which they were struggling to find while awake. Kekulé, the German chemist, for instance, dreamt of a serpent biting its own tail, and was able to arrive at the

closed ring structure of the benzene molecule. The solution obtained in dreams is in the symbolic form. The language used by our Ego on its own plane is quite different from any that we know of in waking life. So when the Ego resumes its life in the body, it has difficulty in conveying its experiences to our brain. It communicates in the form of pictures and images.

Sometimes, as we enter the waking consciousness, our dream experiences get distorted, and appear to be a meaningless jumble of pictures. These are called confused dreams. At times, a dream is of a prophetic nature, and a future event is seen as a clear picture. History is replete with instances of prophetic dreams. Buddha's mother, for instance, dreamt that a shining six-rayed star from heaven, whose token was a white elephant, entered her womb, and she woke up with a happy feeling. The dream-readers said it signified that she would give birth to a boy, "a holy child of wondrous wisdom, profiting all flesh," as Edwin Arnold puts it in *The Light of Asia*.

Sometimes in dreams we get warnings. In waking life, we are not always able to foresee the danger we are going to get into, as our mind is involved in a multiplicity of thoughts and desires. These are called warning dreams. Either the person himself may get the warning—*e.g.*, Abraham Lincoln had a premonition of his own death—or if that person cannot easily be impressed, someone else may get the warning dream for him. There are instances of someone close to a person dreaming about, say, a plane crash, and warning him not to board the plane—and the plane really crashes.

Then there are retrospective dreams. These are flashes of memory from our past lives, and are generally stray pictures picked up from the astral light. As the astral light is a universal register, therein are impressed all events, past, present and future.

There are allegorical dreams, and dreams sent by good or bad adepts or mesmerizers who may want us to do something according to their will. There are also chaotic dreams and nightmares, which may be caused by some physical factor—such as indigestion—or by mental trouble.

Then, again, there is the dream that often comes to those who are striving to live the higher life and to develop their inner faculties. In this, one is often apparently attacked and pursued. It is the struggle between the higher and lower nature....If the aspiration towards a higher life is kept up, but a corresponding change in daily thought and act does not take place, the dream will be repeated, varying perhaps in detail, and cease to come only when the fight is given up and one re-plunges into the lower sort of conduct, or when the battle is won by the opposite course of life and thought. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, Book III, p. 149, 1996 ed.)

We see from the analysis of different kinds of dreams that it is very important (a) to bring the experiences of *Sushupti* to the waking state, and (b) to interpret these dreams. It is said that a dream that is not understood is like a letter that is not opened. We are the only ones who can interpret our dreams. No one else, nor any dream book, can do this.

To bring back the experiences of the dreamless state, the channel of communication from *Jagrat* to *Sushupti* and back should be clear. What and how much our brain can remember of these dreams depends upon how porous the brain is. For our brain to become porous, we should lead a virtuous life, have fewer personal desires, give up materialistic pursuits. The state of mind immediately before going to sleep also affects the sleep state. So it is recommended that we practise self-examination every night. Our motives, methods, habits, dealings with others through the day, all need to be examined. Even the repetition of a verse, from *The Voice of the Silence*, the *Gita*, or any other sacred text, might help to calm the mind.

Dreams play an important role in our evolution, so it is necessary for us to learn to interpret them. These nightly visions are like a storehouse of accumulated wisdom. Just as our link with our higher nature in the waking state is through the voice of conscience, which checks us from doing wrong, so in sleep there is one more link with our higher nature. We must learn to take advantage of these nightly visions.

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## POETRY OF THE SPIRIT

THE Master K.H., in a letter to one of his correspondents, says that: "A true seer is always a poet, and a poet can never be a true one—unless he is in perfect unity with occult nature—'a creator by right of his spiritual revelation,' as the great Danish poet expresses it." Of course to be a poet does not just refer to someone who writes verse; it is also a way of looking at life, so that one is aware of the beauty of things beyond the apparent confusion. Spiritually, it is the ability to see the Divine in everything. If one is able to catch glimpses of the truly Divine, then one cannot help being a poet, as the soul sings in harmony with true moral beauty. Modern poetry, music and art have on the whole lost contact with nature, both occult and material, and therefore stand as sad caricatures of true inspiration and vision. John Ruskin, speaking of art, stated: "No man ever did or ever will work well, but either from actual sight or sight of faith"; and H.P.B. tells us:

Of all the beautiful ideals of the Past, the true religious feeling that manifests in the worship of the spiritually beautiful alone, and the love of plain truth, are those that have been the most roughly handled in this age of obligatory dissembling. ("The Fall of Ideals" *Lucifer*, December 1889)

The true poet must necessarily gain his inspiration from the spiritually beautiful, whether in another person, in the world around him, or as some inner experience of Reality. From this springs the Love that poets are so fond of extolling in their words. But real Love is a wonderfully beautiful and ennobling experience; and the wider its focus, the more effective it becomes. Even love for another human being is purifying if it is free from the sensuality that we mistake for the real feeling. The true poet could never desecrate the beauty that he or she feels and tries to express. That would certainly be the worst of crimes in their eyes, as their aim is to try to *live* life the way they are aware of it in their moment of inspiration. Often the difficulty of this endeavour leads to an actual regression in morals, as the lives of many of our great poets testify. But this is just on the surface. It may be actually a process of

bringing to the surface qualities that need to be expelled, in the same way that an aspirant for chelaship must face all his previously hidden vices. Unfortunately, in many cases the poet does not have the wise guidance of a Master as the spiritual student may have, and so is not able to cope with the pressure in the same way. However, despite all of this, the true poets have that vision of Beauty that carries them on through all trials and sustains them during the worst of times. Many of them are guided by an intense love of nature, inner and outer, which gives them great insight into many truths that escape the merely intellectual student.

Of course it will be noticed that all the world's great spiritual classics are poems. The *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavad-Gita* contained within it, the *Ramayana*, the Buddhist *Sutras*, the *Koran*, the Christian *Bible*, the *Secret of the Golden Flower*, the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, *Light on the Path*, *The Voice of the Silence*, etc., are all poetic classics. If they were not so, they would not have the appeal that they have, nor the *mantraic* value. To read these works aloud is almost like singing; there is a definite positive effect on our consciousness. If the Indian classics are read in the original Sanskrit, then the results are much more profound and we are opened to new dimensions of meaning. The comparatively limited English language has not the range of words to express some of the more recondite mysteries of the Spirit. But what would we do without the wonderful metric verses of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, without the uplifting poetry of *The Light of Asia*, *The Song Celestial* and the *The Indian Song of Songs* of Sir Edwin Arnold? The Master K.H. states that music is "the most divine and *spiritual* of arts," and there is a definite music in poetic works of a refined nature. Who can fail to marvel at the inspired writings of Shelley, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Byron and many more! All these poets shared with us the fruits of their inspiration, and for that we must be eternally grateful.

The truth is that real poetry lies in our own souls, in the way we see the world and relate to others; the gradual unfolding of our spiritual nature necessarily transforms us into poets. We must learn to touch everyone with poetry, merely by our presence. Perhaps this may be silent poetry, but this is even more effective than that which

is uttered. H.P.B. writes:

Thoreau pointed out that there are artists in life, persons who can change the colour of a day and make it beautiful to those with whom they come in contact. We claim that there are adepts, masters in life who make it divine, as in all other arts. Is it not the greatest art of all, this which affects the very atmosphere in which we live? That it is the most important is seen at once, when we remember that every person who draws the breath of life affects the mental and moral atmosphere of the world, and helps to colour the day for those about him. Those who do not help to elevate the thoughts and lives of others must of necessity either paralyse them by indifference, or actively drag them down. ("1888," *Lucifer*, January 1888)

It is never the intellectuals, but only those who have within them some elements of the poetic vision, who are able to act in this way. It is those who have some glimpses of the reality of the spiritual life who realize that it is much different from the ideas put forward in books. There is life and vitality and heightened awareness, as well as a tremendous feeling of returning to naturalness and true sanity. It is the seeming conflict between these experiences and the harshness of material life that led many of these poets into the realms of debauchery, madness and even death. However, for those whose being is tempered in the fire of spiritual knowledge, and who know a little more of the mysteries of existence, the poetic vision opens the "gates of heaven" and gives them a true and marvellous insight into the reality and oneness of all things. Even some of the "orthodox" poets had this heightened awareness, which animated their lives and the lives of those around them.

As H.P.B. says, we can all do this even though we are unable to put anything on to paper; in reality, the true poet is someone who brings himself to live in tune with his divine nature and, consciously or unconsciously, affects everyone around him for the better. Would that the world had more of these! Fortunate are we that we have had some throughout the ages who have enriched our lives through their wonderful legacy of poetic writing. But the fact is that these are not specially chosen beings, but ordinary men and

women who have uncovered an intuitive awareness of the real Bliss and Beauty of life that lies behind the outer mask; and we can all do the same if we but TRY. There is adequate guidance in all the great world Scriptures and in our Theosophical writings to provide us with some important keys. However, the final answer lies WITHIN.

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WE have to take the first step. We must reinstate the idea of living an ethical life as a realistic and viable alternative to the present dominance of materialist self-interest. If, over the next decade, a critical mass of people with new priorities were to emerge, and if these people were seen to do well, in every sense of the term—if their co-operation with each other brings reciprocal benefits, if they find joy and fulfilment in their lives—then the ethical attitude will spread, and the conflict between ethics and self-interest will have been shown to be overcome, not by abstract reasoning alone, but by adopting the ethical life as a practical way of living, and showing that it works, psychologically, socially and ecologically.

Anyone can become part of the critical mass that offers us a chance of improving the world before it is too late. You can rethink your goals, and question what you are doing with your life. If your present way of living does not stand up against an impartial standard of value, then you can change it. More often, the commitment to a more ethical way of living will be the first step of a gradual but far-reaching evolution in your lifestyle and in your thinking about your place in the world. You will take up new causes, and find your goals shifting. If you get involved in your work, money and status will become less important. From your new perspective, the world will look different. One thing is certain: you will find plenty of worthwhile things to do. You will not be bored, or lack fulfilment in your life. Most important of all, you will know that you have not lived and died for nothing, because you will have become part of the great tradition of those who have responded to the amount of suffering in the universe by trying to make the world a better place.

—PETER SINGER

## THE INTERLUDE BETWEEN LIVES

AN understanding of the process and implications of the *devachanic* experience can be of value to the understanding of our nature. The proper grasp of the complexity of our natures and the relationship between the various principles provides the answer to the problems involved in knowing oneself.

The state of *devachan* or the heaven world is purely subjective. It is, in fact, produced by the operation of the subjective side of our nature, unobstructed by the demands and tensions resulting from our all-too-objective earth life. Such a condition, of course, is not possible during waking consciousness except in unusual and rare circumstances. For the most part, our ordinary conscious processes are a mixture of objective reactions to subjective forces. These reactions are modified by our environment, the restrictions and impetus provided by our everyday contacts and associations.

*Devachan* being free from all such exposures, we consider it as a state in which consciousness can function unimpeded by the modifications imposed by objective earth life. The fact that it is purely subjective accounts for the lack in that state of what we usually call progress, for progress, in the sense of conscious development, can take place only under conditions where contrasts prevail. We learn by comparing one thing with another. We make progress by intelligently comparing and resolving one experience in relation to another, in terms of an ideal objective. This is why it is stated that, in the final analysis, all persons act according to their understanding of the reason for existence. Thus the Christian will resolve his contrasting experiences in terms of his religion; the Hindu will interpret his experiences in terms of *his* religion; and the Theosophical student, in terms of his philosophy. From this it becomes clear that a proper understanding of the reason for existence is of prime importance for the correct understanding of our experiences, both here and in *devachan*.

We must understand that *devachan* is a necessary condition. We could not ordinarily obtain the full benefit of our experiences were it not for the interlude of *devachan*. In waking life, we do not have

the opportunity to assimilate all the impressions, hopes and desires that make up our lives. It is only under the completely subjective, hence protected, conditions in *devachan* that we can uninterruptedly pursue the highest thoughts and feelings of which we are capable, thus converting impressions and aspirations into faculty and character.

*Devachan* therefore is both desirable and necessary. But those of us who are students of Theosophy must endeavour to shorten our stay there, if we wish to fulfil the true purpose of life in the most effective manner. This purpose is: uninterrupted service in the cause of Brotherhood. But, between the logical conception of a necessary objective and the ability to realize that objective, there usually exists a considerable gulf. This gulf is caused by lack of understanding and of control of our subjective natures. No matter how deep is our understanding of the necessity to help Masters in Their great Work for humanity, we shall not be able to avoid the interlude of *devachan* so long as we desire the joys that this state affords. Do we then desire this heaven of unnumbered years? Very probably we shall answer, "No," the reasons given usually being logical and in accord with the Theosophical teachings on the subject, such as: "We are unable to obtain new knowledge in *devachan*." "We are unable to work for our fellow men in that state." "It is a selfish condition of bliss, to be avoided if possible." "We wish to get back to earth life as soon as possible in order to continue our work of service and self-improvement."

To help us determine whether or not we have come to a point in our evolution where we really are capable of renouncing *devachan*, we should supply the answers to several pertinent questions. Do we prefer conditions wherein we can pursue our studies and philosophical pursuits to those where we can fulfil our obligatory and self-chosen duties and responsibilities? If we long for the former, we shall probably be unable to shorten or renounce *devachan*. Do we rationalize or even unconsciously ignore the failures, faults and errors of ourselves or of our loved ones? If we do, we probably have an abiding desire for the heavenly condition provided by *devachan*. Do we desire cultural accomplishments without

consistently striving to acquire these for the purpose of being the better able to help others? If we do, then we can know that we probably shall be under the necessity of accepting a long *devachan*.

It is in the realm of our hidden nature that we must search for the motives for our actions. This is why the task is most difficult and tedious. Probably the most helpful characteristic we can have in this task is courage. It takes courage of the first order to honestly face the questions presented. It is no small thing to engage in the performance of our immediate duties in preference to the pursuit of a cultured life. Yet it is necessary that we bring ourselves to such an attitude if we are ever to acquire the strength which will make it possible for us to avoid being detained in *devachan*.

So we see that resolution and understanding are necessary if we are to accomplish the objective we have set for ourselves. Zeal and enthusiasm are, of course, the keys to the situation. Enthusiasm is the generator of the force that will bring about the effective realization of our hopes and objectives. Enthusiasm is generated and sustained by keeping in view our ideals.

The difference between an enthusiastic attitude and uninspired, routine work is well illustrated in the story of two workers engaged in the construction of a building. The one when asked what he was doing, replied: "Can't you see, I am laying stones!" When the other worker was approached and asked the same question, he looked up and with great interest said: "I am helping to build a temple." So with the earnest disciple. By keeping the noble purpose of his work and life constantly in mind, he is always conscious that his efforts are directed toward building a Temple through which can manifest the teachings and forces of the Spirit.

This realization will furnish the enthusiasm necessary to sustain our efforts, even to the extent of overcoming the drag of *devachan*. This sustained enthusiasm is one of the ingredients which must be present if the disciple is to be helped by the Masters to return quickly after the death of the body, thus making possible the effective resumption of his labours in the service of humanity.

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# THEOSOPHY AND YOGA

## III

[Collated from the writings of H. P. Blavatsky]

EVERY man has his own ideas about "God." So far as we have learned, the Yogi discovers his God in his inner self, his ATMA. When he reaches that point he *is* inspired—by the union of himself with the Universal, Divine Principle—Parabrahma. With a personal God—a God who thinks, plots, rewards, punishes, and repents—we are not acquainted. Nor do we think any Yogi ever saw such an one....

Yoga exacts certain conditions....One of these conditions is seclusion in a place where the Yogi is free from all impurities—whether physical or moral. In short, he must get away from the immoral atmosphere of the world. If anyone has by such study gained powers, he cannot remain long in the world without losing the greater part of his powers—and that the higher and nobler part. So that, if any such person is seen for many consecutive years labouring in public, and neither for money nor fame, it should be known that he is sacrificing himself for the good of his fellow-men. Some day such men seem to suddenly die, and their supposed remains are disposed of; but yet they may not be dead. "Appearances are deceitful"—the proverb says, ("Questions Answered About Yoga-Vidya," *The Theosophist*, February 1881)

The power of the Yogi to quit his own body and enter and animate that of another person, though affirmed by Patanjali and included among the Siddhis of Krishna, is discredited by Europeanized young Indians. Naturally enough, since, as Western biologists deny a soul to man, it is an unthinkable proposition to them that the Yogi's soul should be able to enter another's body. That such an unreasoning infidelity should prevail among the pupils of the European schools, is quite reason enough why an effort should be made to revive in India those schools of Psychology in which the Aryan youth were theoretically and practically taught the occult

laws of Man and Nature. We, who have at least some trifling acquaintance with modern science, do not hesitate to affirm our belief that this temporary transmigration of souls is possible. We may even go so far as to say that the phenomenon has been experimentally proven to us—in New York, among other places. And, since we would be among the last to require so marvellous a statement to be accepted upon anyone's unsupported testimony, we urge our readers to first study Aryan literature, and then get from personal experience the corroborative evidence. The result must inevitably be to satisfy every honest inquirer that Patanjali and Sankaracharya did, and Tyndall, Carpenter and Huxley do not, know the secrets of our being. (Footnote to "The Life of Sankaracharya, Philosopher and Mystic," *The Theosophist*, January 1880)

The person who guides [the hidden powers of the human body] must be partially, if not wholly, acquainted with that which, in the Sanskrit works on Occultism, is called the "Nava Nidhi" or the *nine jewels* of Raja-Yoga....The student of Yoga philosophy must not confound these nine degrees of Initiation with the "Ashta Siddhis" or the minor eight degrees of "Hatha-Yoga." In knowledge and powers, the latter stand in the same proportion to the former as rudiments of Arithmetic to the highest degrees of Mathematics....The most perfect "Samadhi," the highest of the "Siddhis" of "Hatha-Yoga," can at best guide the subject to the threshold of the world of *invisible* matter, not to those of the world of spirit, where the hidden and subtler potencies of nature lie dormant until disturbed. ("Whipped Into Admission," *The Theosophist*, March 1882)

In the normal or natural state, the sensations are transmitted from the lowest physical to the highest spiritual body, *i.e.*, from the first to the 6th principle (the 7th being no organized or conditioned body, but an infinite, hence unconditioned principle or state), the faculties of each body having to awaken the faculties of the next higher one, to transmit the message in succession, until they reach the last, when, having received the impression, the latter (the

spiritual soul!) sends it back in an inverse order to the body....The Yogi, who, by a constant training and incessant watchfulness, keeps his septenary instrument in good tune and whose spirit has obtained a perfect control over all, can, at will, and by paralysing the functions of the four intermediate principles, communicate from body to spirit and *vice versa*—direct. (Footnote to "Mediums and Yogis," *The Theosophist*, May 1882)

Wherever we have been we have spared no pains to show the close and intimate relationship that exists between our modern discoveries in mesmerism, psychometry, and odic force, and the ancient Indian Science of Yoga-Vidya. We look forward with confidence to a day when the thorough demonstration of this connection will give to both Asia and Europe the basis for a perfect, because experimentally demonstrable, science of Psychology. ("A Year of Theosophy," *The Theosophist*, January 1881)

When those men who have been and still are often termed "the obscene ascetics," the devotees of different sects of India in short, generally termed "Yogi," were asked by Marco Polo, "how it comes that they are not ashamed to go stark naked as they do?" they answered the inquirer of the thirteenth century as a missionary of the nineteenth was answered. "We go stark naked," they say, "because naked we came into the world, and we desire to have nothing about us that is of this world. Moreover, we have no sin of the flesh to be conscious of, and therefore, we are not ashamed of our nakedness any more than you are to show your hand or your face. You who are conscious of the sins of the flesh, do well to have shame, and to cover your nakedness." (*Isis Unveiled*, II, 346)

The secret of secrets, that *soul* is not knit to flesh, was practically demonstrated in the instance of the yogis, the followers of Kapila. Having emancipated their souls from the fetters of *Prakriti*, or *Mahat* (the physical perception of the senses and mind—in one sense, creation), they so developed their soul-power and *will-force*, as to have actually enabled themselves, while on earth, to commu-

nicate with the supernal worlds, and perform what is bunglingly termed "miracles." (*Isis Unveiled*, II, 565)

The yogi, the sannyasi, the holy men who acquire enormous psychological powers by mental and physical training....some of these men are regarded by the Hindus as demi-gods. Europeans cannot judge of these powers but in rare and exceptional cases. (*Isis Unveiled*, II, 612)

*Anugita* explains, says Arjun Misra, Pranayama, or regulation of the breath in Yoga practices. This mode, however, without the previous acquisition of, or at least full understanding of the two higher senses, of which there are seven, as will be shown, pertains rather to the lower Yoga. The *Hatha* so called was and still is discountenanced by the Arhats. It is injurious to the health and alone can never develop into Raj Yoga....The Occult claim that there are seven senses in man, as in nature, as there are seven states of consciousness, is corroborated in the same work, chapter vii, on Pratyahara (the restraint and regulation of the senses, Pranayama being that of the "vital winds" or breath).... As A. Misra says, "You are all possessed of one another's qualities. All are greatest in their own spheres and all support one another. There is one unmoving (life-wind or breath, the '*Yoga inhalation*,' so called, which is the breath of the *One* or Higher SELF). That is the (or my) own Self, accumulated in numerous (forms)." (*The Secret Doctrine*, I, 95-96)

The Life-winds are the various modes of out-breathing and in-breathing, changing thereby the polarity of the body and states of consciousness. It is Yoga practice, but beware of taking the exoteric works on Yoga literally. They all require a key. (*Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, p. 141)

I knew that the Colonel vainly hoped to attain, even in small measure, not only the heights of *raja-yoga*, but also those strange, inexplicable psycho-physiological faculties, in order to produce the so-called "miracles," for which certain *hatha-yogins* are justly famous. As has been shown, *raja-yoga* requires training and an

undeviating effort of a purely psychic nature in this direction from the earliest years; a comprehensive study and, especially, an understanding of the *secret* meaning of Patanjali's instructions instead of the dead letter of his system, as well as initiation into the mysteries which the initiated Brahmanas will not disclose to anyone for any price. To become a *hatha-yogin*, years of preternatural, superhuman effort and physical mortification are indispensable; one has to be born with such physiological *idiopathies*, otherwise nothing will come of it, except a fakir's repulsive exterior and pure charlatanry. (*From the Caves and Jungles of Hindustan*)

Anyone can dedicate himself to the study of *hatha-yoga* according to the *dead* letter of the Patanjali system. To do this, it is not necessary either to be a philosopher or even to know how to read and write, but simply to possess the iron will and endurance of the Hindus, their indifference to physical suffering, their blind fanaticism, and their faith in a chosen *god*. Real *hatha-yogins*, I would say, are much the same as mediums, but with *deliberation* and *volition*, which are lacking in the Western medium. They produce their phenomena *ad libitum*, making them dependent on their own will and *control of the jinn*, whereas the spiritualists are themselves under the control of the *jinn* (spirits) that personify this as yet undiscovered power. *Hatha-yogins* attain this also by terrible self-mortification, which they finally cease to feel like the *convulsionnaires* of St. Medard and certain Catholic saints. The method of the *raja-yogins*, however, is entirely different. Their motto is: *Mens sana in corpore sano*. (*Ibid.*)

*Hatha-yoga* is the latest and, in comparison with *raja-yoga*, a modern compromise of mysticism. It is the result of centuries of the slipshod practice of philosophy, the victory of the external form and ritual over the spirit of the teaching and, consequently, the gradual degeneration of *Brahma-vidya*, the divine wisdom. Having lost, as the result of personal ambition and earthly passions, the faculty for union with Brahman, that is, with Unconditioned Nature, the majority of the Brahmanas, debarred from the final

supreme initiation, the difficulties of which they could not surmount, substituted *hatha-yoga* for *raja-yoga*....For the *raja-yogin* there are no anthropomorphic gods, but only the unconditioned, double-edged power of creation and destruction, the one universal, primordial substance, of which he is an inalienable particle, even though, in the deceptive consciousness of his earthly senses, he appears to be a transient individual. Having verified its properties by years of methodical experiments and recognizing this power in himself, he endows the given object with it and concentrates it in the object, be the latter a *rudraksha*, a *salagrama* or a *danda*. Then, when occasion arises, using his own will and discretion, he aims, in one direction or another, this power, the twofold quality of which is attraction and repulsion. By such means he transforms also the wand or *danda* into a *vahana*, filling it with his own power and spirit and giving it for the time being his own properties. In the West, your magnetizers, impregnating with their life-current either paper or any other object to be used by the sick, do exactly the same, only to an incomparably lesser degree. (*Ibid.*)

For him who knows exactly nothing or very little about *raja-yogins* and the real *Brahma-vidya*, and for him who is unfamiliar with the psychology of the East, substance is the product of his own conceptions, or of deductions of Western science with its hypotheses: in other words, the result of *unquestionably relative ideas*. For the Westerner every substance, from the life-force current to the mineral, is matter. He is ignorant of the successive levels, from conditioned and limited substance, to primordial and unconditioned substance, *i.e.*, primordial matter—*mulaprakriti*. Hence it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to explain to him the nature of the actions of the *raja-yogin* and of the transference of the essence of his creative power to an inanimate object. (*Ibid.*)

The properties imparted to "the wand" are various, depending upon its owner, as is also the case with any other similar object....The stick without the hand which imparts to it the power to perform one or another deed is useless; in the hand of a *raja-yogin*, whose mind

*and will function with complete consciousness*, the stick becomes the conductor of that will, like a telegraph wire which conducts the thoughts of him who sends the dispatch, yet remains but a piece of ordinary metal in the absence of such an agent. In the hand of a *hatha-yogin*, its operations are frequently amazing, but as the mind of the motivating agent functions *unconsciously*, the properties of the *danda* are variable and not always consistent with reason and strict morality. Believing in his nonexistent gods and their help, he is not *aware of his own complete consciousness* and does not admit his own personal control. Separating his acts from their cause, *i.e.*, from his own conscious will, since most of such wonder-working *sannyasins* are not philosophers but merely fanatics, he himself considers the phenomena performed by him as the work of Hanuman and leads others into error, spreading only superstition and, frequently, great evil as well, in place of knowledge and good. (*Ibid.*)

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WITH every man that is earnestly searching in his own way after a knowledge of the Divine Principle, of man's relations to it, and nature's manifestations of it, Theosophy is allied. It is likewise the ally of honest science as distinguished from much that passes for *exact* physical science, so long as the latter does not poach on the domains of psychology and metaphysics.

And it is also the ally of every honest religion—to wit: religion willing to be judged by the same tests as it applies to the others. Those books which contain the most self-evident truth, are to it inspired (not revealed). But all books it regards, on account of the human element contained in them, as inferior to the Book of Nature; to read which and comprehend it correctly, the innate powers of the soul must be highly developed.

— H. P. BLAVATSKY

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

The millennium is about to end, and it is generally believed that it will mark 2000 years of the Christian era, which is supposed to have been dated from the birth of Jesus Christ. Some scholars, however, say that "the count is simply wrong: the millennium actually turned several years ago." Kenneth L. Woodward's reflections on the event appear in "The Millennium Notebook" (*Newsweek*, August 18, 1997):

Time being what it is—a necessary fiction—the year 2000 is based on a calendar (another fictive device) that rests on an arbitrary division of time itself: the years before the birth of Christ (B.C.) and the years after the "*anno Domini*" (the "Year of Our Lord," or A.D.). But if modern scholars are right, Jesus was actually born four to six years "before Christ," which means that we are already well into the third millennium....

Dionysius was commissioned by Pope John I in 525 to develop a standard liturgical calendar so that Christians everywhere would celebrate Easter and other feast days of the church on the same date. Dionysius, a canon lawyer as well as a mathematician and an astronomer...decided to create a new calendar numbering the years from the birth of Jesus. Using the Gospels of Matthew and Luke as guides, the monk calculated—erroneously—that Jesus was born in the 753d year of the old Roman calendar, which eventually became the year 0 B.C. in the Christian West....

Short of discovering a notarized birth certificate, historians will never know for sure exactly when Jesus was born. Even the dating of Christmas, which celebrates his birth, is arbitrary. The church selected Dec. 25, scholars believe, to coincide with—and religiously counter—pagan celebrations of the winter solstice.

According to occult records, Jesus was born about a century before the year one of our so-called Christian era. In a footnote in "The Esoteric Character of the Gospels" H.P.B. refers to

the Rabbinical tradition in the Babylonian Gemara, called *Sepher Toledoth Jeshu*, about Jesus being the son of one named

Pandira, and having lived a century earlier than the era called Christian, namely, during the reign of the Jewish king Alexander Jannaeus and his wife Salome, who reigned from the year 106 to 79 B.C. Accused by the Jews of having learned the magic art in Egypt, and of having stolen from the Holy of Holies the Incommunicable Name, Jehoshua (Jesus) was put to death by the Sanhedrin at Lud. He was stoned and then crucified on a tree, on the eve of Passover. The narrative is ascribed to the Talmudistic authors of *Sota* and *Sanhedrin*, p. 19, *Book of Zechiel*. See *Isis Unveiled*, II, p. 201; Arnobius; Eliphaz Levi's *Science des Esprits*, and *The Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ*, a lecture by G. Massey.

H.P.B. states elsewhere that "the biography of Jesus was *invented after the first century*."

No Theosophist, of those who ever gave a thought to Christianity...ever denied the existence of the Apostle who is an historical personage. Some of us, a few learned Christian mystics among our British Theosophists included, deny but the *Gospel* Jesus—who is *not* an historical personage...but believe in an *ideal* Christ. Others are inclined to see the real Jesus in the adept mentioned in the oldest Talmudic as well as some Christian books, and known as Jeshu ben-Panthera....This *historical* character (as historical as any other) *was* a great adept. ("A Word with the Theosophists," THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, December 1976)

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The extinction of the dinosaurs, which according to scientists took place at the Cretaceous-Tertiary period boundary, has become a matter of hot debate. Till recently, the popular theory was that a massive asteroid struck the Earth, wiping out 65 per cent of its species. But a group of scientists is now of the opinion that this "impact theory" is flawed. "Whatever wiped out the non-avian dinosaurs was a lot more complicated than a single hammer blow from an asteroid," says Norman MacLeod of London's Natural History Museum. (*New Scientist*, 16 August 1997)

MacLeod and others in the "gradualist" school believe that there

are alternative explanations, both cosmic and terrestrial. It was not a sudden calamity, they maintain, but something gradual that killed the dinosaurs and other species. The solar system passing through the dense core of a giant molecular cloud, exposing life to the threat of molecular hydrogen, is one of the theories being considered. A number of scientists now think that not a single event but "a cocktail of causes" could have been responsible for the Cretaceous extinctions.

As is usual with scientists in their study of the past, fossil record is being looked into for understanding the extinctions. They are trying to figure out why the dinosaurs and some other groups of living creatures perished, while still other species remained entirely unaffected. Scientists admit that "the overall picture is a muddy one."

Theosophically speaking, one could say that the same law of Evolution that brings species into existence also causes their extinction—that is, when they die a natural death and man is not responsible for their extermination. No more than science does esoteric philosophy accept anything outside the uniform and immutable laws of Nature. But it teaches a cyclic law, a double stream of spirit and of matter, which, starting from the neutral centre of Being, develops in its cyclic progress and incessant transformations. *The Secret Doctrine* speaks of "designers" and "builders," "working under the impulse given them by the ever-to-be unknown (on our plane) Master Mason—the ONE LIFE and LAW.... That they work in cycles and on a strictly geometrical and mathematical scale of progression, is what the extinct animal species amply demonstrate." (*S.D.*, II, 732)

According to esoteric science, the first trace of reptiles, along with some other life-forms, existed even in the Primary Epoch. These were all relics of the preceding Third Round, or Life-Cycle. In those early ages, *astral* evolution was alone in progress. "Once, however, the prototypes are projected out of the astral envelope of the earth, an indefinite amount of modification ensues" (*S.D.*, II, 712). It was the Secondary or Mesozoic era, comprising the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods, which was the age of the

giant reptiles. Modern science denies the presence of man in that period, but according to the esoteric theory, the Third Race of humanity had already made its appearance and coexisted with the reptiles—the gigantic Megalosauri, Ichthyosauri, Plesiosauri, etc. One of the fundamental propositions of the Secret Doctrine is that man, in this Round, *preceded* every other mammalian—the anthropoids included—a fact that modern science does not yet accept.

The dinosaurs and other animals of gigantic proportions, says *The Secret Doctrine*,

*were co-existent with man, most probably attacked man, as man attacked them; and we are asked to believe that the said man was no larger than he is now! Is it possible to conceive that, surrounded in Nature with such monstrous creatures, man, unless himself a colossal giant, could have survived, while all his foes have perished? Is it with his stone hatchet that he had the best of a Sivatherium or a gigantic flying saurian? (II, 219)*

If we see on it [Earth] everything evolving from the non-nucleated jelly-speck that becomes the sarcode of the *moneron*, then passes from its *protistic* state into the form of an animal, to grow into a gigantic reptilian monster of the Mesozoic times; then dwindles again into the (comparatively) dwarfish crocodile, now confined solely to tropical regions, and the universally common lizard—how can man alone escape the general law? "There were giants on earth in those days," says *Genesis*, repeating the statement of all the other Eastern Scriptures; and the *Titans* are founded on anthropological and physiological fact. (II, 153-54)

Kasyapa [the progenitor of serpents, reptiles, birds and other walking, flying and creeping beings] was also the father of *Garuda*, the bird, the "King of the feathered tribe," who descends from, and is of one stock with the reptiles, the nagas; and who becomes their mortal enemy *subsequently*—as he is also a cycle, a period of time, when in the course of evolution the birds which developed from reptiles in their "struggle for life," "survival of the fittest," etc., etc., turned in preference on those they issued from, to devour them—perhaps prompted by natural law, in order to make room for other and more

perfect species. (II, 253-54)

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Among the new breed of scientists challenging the mechanistic view of life is the Cambridge theoretical biologist Rupert Sheldrake. Since his book, *A New Science of Life: The Hypothesis of Formative Causation*, was published in 1981, his theory of morphogenetic fields has become one of the most controversial in recent times.

Sheldrake argued that every living creature, before it takes its final form, has an already existing blueprint. Geneticists say that the cells making up a form are programmed by the DNA within them. But, while all the cells have the same DNA code, they yet perform different functions by arranging themselves differently. Sheldrake felt that there had to be another explanation for the structure and shape a form assumes. He hypothesized that every object has a particular field associated with it—in the same manner as a magnet causes a magnetic field. This field was called by Sheldrake "morphogenetic field." He went a step further and said that the morphogenetic field persisted, whether the object remained in existence or not. Sheldrake then generalized that a particular system, say a flower or a crystal, arranges itself in a particular way because systems with similar constituents had arranged themselves in the same way in the past.

Sheldrake does not stop at forms and structural patterns. His theory also covers learning. Among other things, the theory says that once something, say a skill, has been learnt by someone somewhere, others will find it easier to learn it than the first person. And the more often it is learnt, the easier will it be for subsequent learners to master it. Sheldrake extends his theory to behaviour as well.

Commenting on Sheldrake's work and his concept of "mass consciousness," Mukul Sharma writes in *The Times of India* (November 29, 1997):

His theory of "morphogenetic fields" is that all living organisms contribute their experiences to a "memory pool" which endures even after the particular species ceases to exist.

In lay terms it means there exists a kind of group memory which any one animal is instinctively capable of tapping. Before this, conventional wisdom was that when one type of spider, for example, constructed its unique web pattern, it did so because the model already existed in its genes. But Sheldrake posits the pre-existence of a master-web metapattern in the form of a group memory with which the animal interacts symbiotically like an information retrieval system....

The implications of accepting the morphogenetic field theory are profound. It would mean that characteristics of species are not limited to the physical chemistry of DNA since a transcendent factor functions as an overriding mechanism exercising some form of control on future intraspecies behaviour.

So are we seeing this at work in the alacrity with which younger kids take to computers these days, confounding even their immediately previous generation? Some experts think so....Contemporary children also appear to pick up the rudiments of information technology faster and more seamlessly than their counterparts of a decade back. As the retromechanism of pool-memory tapping continues, it is possible that computer interfacing will become an inherent trait in new-borns, waiting only for muscle co-ordination to develop in order to express itself.

It appears, then, that there may be a tendency in nature and in man to share knowledge once learned. Today's scientists, save for the more perceptive among them, deny that which they cannot understand—pre-eminently the astral realm. Theosophy, however, throws light on this missing link of modern science—its multiple properties and uses. What can the "already existing blueprint" for every form that Sheldrake speaks of be than the astral model upon which the physical form is built? And what is the "memory pool" and "morphogenetic field" which he relates to behaviour and learning if not the astral light interpenetrating all things and on the indestructible tablets of which are stamped the pictures of all thoughts, deeds, events, tones, sounds, colours—everything? To it, space and time are no barriers. As it preserves the records of all past events and things, and as there is nothing new under the sun, the

ideas, the philosophies, the arts and sciences ever known to man are continually being projected in pictures out of the astral into the brains of living beings. This gives a meaning to many an event and curious happening which the generality of mankind finds baffling.

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What is happening to today's youth? In a major study carried out by India's National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, and by distinguished scholars, a sample of young people in the age group 16-25 drawn from four different centres in the country were interviewed. What the study reveals is that frustration, anger, withdrawal and escapism are rampant among the youth, irrespective of their backgrounds.

A feature in *India Today* (November 24, 1997) focuses on this disturbed generation, a generation which breaks down easily in a world of stress and competition:

Of late, youngsters seem to be in a vague kind of mourning: of having lost something, of a sense of betrayal, a gnawing frustration that often blazes into violence, insecurity, loneliness and a feeling of being on the brink of a crisis. Symptoms that are spreading through the nervous system of an entire generation....More than 40 per cent of all reported suicides occur in this age group....

Old value systems are crumbling....Compared to any other generation in this century, children today experience sex, drugs, "the good things in life," at a much younger age. A group of researchers in Punjab University recently carried out a mental-health study that showed "sensation-seeking" to be high among children today....

Anger is the flip side of depression. The smallest things tap into the hostility of this generation....Where is this anger coming from? Mainly from the tremendous pressure to succeed. Ambitions soar and images of making it big (cars, exotic holidays) constantly play on the mind, but when failure strikes, most can't handle it. The other reason, psychiatrists feel, is the "my world is me" syndrome. In a fast changing world, youth are obsessed

with themselves in a sort of reckless frenzy of "doing what you want" without actually thinking about it.

There are social, political and economic factors involved, but experts agree that the problem needs to be dealt with at a deeper psychological level. R. L. Kapur, professor of psychiatry at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, suggests the development of empathy. A child should be taught to put himself or herself in another's shoes and say, "Let me not hurt her because she is like me." Empathy is the base upon which future moral standards are built. Kapur suggests ways to deal with the situation:

First, with patience; one should be willing to understand the impact of massive and rapid social change on the young mind. Second, with trust; not all the violent youth are automatically enemies of the state, nor all the escapists numb to social responsibility. Third, with personal examples: the minds of the young are crying out for models who practise what they preach. Fourth, by providing opportunities so that the youth could put their social concerns into practice. And finally, with just a little bit of active guidance; after all, it is only a fraction of a turn of the screw which tunes up an errant car engine and produces that heart-warming hum.

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SHALLOW men believe in luck, believe in circumstances: it was somebody's name, or he happened to be there at the time, or it was so then, and another day it would have been otherwise. Strong men believe in cause and effect.

— RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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# The United Lodge of Theosophists

## DECLARATION

**T**HE policy of this Lodge is independent devotion to the cause of Theosophy, without professing attachment to any Theosophical organization. It is loyal to the great Founders of the Theosophical Movement, but does not concern itself with dissensions or differences of individual opinion.

The work it has on hand and the end it keeps in view are too absorbing and too lofty to leave it the time or inclination to take part in side issues. That work and that end is the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the Philosophy of Theosophy, and the exemplification in practice of those principles, through a truer realization of the SELF, a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood.

It holds that the unassailable *Basis for Union* among Theosophists, wherever and however situated, is "*similarity of aim, purpose and teaching*," and therefore has neither Constitution, By-Laws nor Officers, the sole bond between its Associates being that *basis*. And it aims to disseminate this idea among Theosophists in the furtherance of Unity.

It regards as Theosophists all who are engaged in the true service of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, condition or organization, and

It welcomes to its association all those who are in accord with its declared purposes and who desire to fit themselves, by study and otherwise, to be the better able to help and teach others.

*"The true Theosophist belongs to no cult or sect, yet belongs to each and all."*

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Being in sympathy with the purposes of this Lodge, as set forth in its "Declaration," I hereby record my desire to be enrolled as an Associate, it being understood that such association calls for no obligation on my part, other than that which I, myself, determine.

The foregoing is the form signed by Associates of the United Lodge of Theosophists. Inquiries are invited from all persons to whom this Movement may appeal. Cards for signature will be sent upon request, and every possible assistance furnished Associates in their studies and in efforts to form local Lodges. There are no fees of any kind, and no formalities to be complied with.