

# **The Theosophical Movement**

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- **Commitment of U.L.T.**
- **The Single Eye**
- **The Mystery of Time**
- **Positive Thought in a Negative World**
- **Inner Communion is True Prayer**
- **The Gita Way of Life**
- **In the Light of Theosophy**

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# Commitment of U.L.T.

Associates and friends of the United Lodge of Theosophists all the world over will celebrate U.L.T. Day on June 25. They will remember with gratitude the debt that they owe to the Friendly Philosopher, Robert Crosbie, for salvaging genuine Theosophy from the debris of personality politics and successworship disputes, and for presenting to generations to come a line of endeavour calculated to keep the Original Impulse and Original Teaching intact. The time is opportune for self-examination and right resolves. Self-examination enables us to see in retrospect whether we have studied, practised and promulgated Theosophy in the right spirit and with the right motive, and our resolutions for the future help us to act in terms of the U.L.T. Declaration, which, with its signature by the Associates, has been described as "a wide departure from anything that exists as an organization."

But what *is* U.L.T.? U.L.T. is not a society or organization in the ordinary sense. On the contrary, it is "*a School of Theosophy—an informal and wholly voluntary association of students of Theosophy*, and is no more concerned with the various theosophical organizations than it is with similar societies and sects of the various popular religions. It deals only with *individuals* who are, or may become, interested in Theosophy and the Theosophical Movement." Again, "U.L.T. is a *name given to certain principles and ideas*; those who associate themselves with those principles and ideas are attracted and *bound by them only*—not by their fellows who do likewise or refrain or who cease to consider themselves so bound."

U.L.T. is an integral part of the larger Theosophical Movement, which has itself been described as a "Universal Lodge of Free and Independent Theosophists which embraces every friend of the human race." The emphasis here, be it noted, is on freedom and independence. U.L.T., it may be said, trains students to become wise and compassionate, and not "ceremony-masters": it increases their devotion, not observances.

U.L.T. is committed to 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."

U.L.T. is committed to the study, practice and promulgation of Theosophy as given out in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky and W. Q. Judge. There is a valid reason for regarding what these two gave out as the authentic teachings of Theosophy. As Robert Crosbie says, we have to understand clearly that Theosophy is "a gift to mankind by more progressed beings than ourselves," and he advises that "we must learn and *apply* the fundamental principles which underlie that grand philosophy, and understand the operation of law as disclosed therein." It is under that law that H.P.B. was chosen as the Masters' Messenger. It follows, therefore, that only that which is in full accord with her teachings and writings deserves to be called Theosophy, for that is the name she gave to the Wisdom she made public. U.L.T. is committed to uphold H.P.B. and W.Q.J. all the time

The way in which W.Q.J. upheld H.P.B. is an object-lesson for all those who have a tendency to waver and wander from the path. If we follow the example of W.Q.J., we shall find where H.P.B. pointed. "In effect it comes to this, that those who professed or who profess to look to H.P.B. as their *Teacher*, do not do so unless they also look on Judge as she looked on him. If they minimize or vilify Judge, they *have* to minimize and vilify H.P.B." In other words, we cannot accept the philosophy taught by Sri Krishna in the Gita and reject his estimate of Arjuna. We have always to draw attention by every means in our power to the indisputable fact of the existence of the Masters of Wisdom, to their messenger H.P.B., to the body of knowledge she named Theosophy, and to her colleague and co-worker W.Q.J. All the upheavals that occurred in the Theosophical Movement within the 30 years since it was launched, were a result of either ignorance or deliberate non-recognition of these facts. Students of U.L.T. are committed to see that history does not repeat itself in this regard.

As an integral part of the Theosophical Movement, U.L.T. is committed to further the three objects of the Movement, which are:

- (1) To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour;
- (2) The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such a study;
- (3) The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

We must bear in mind the aims and objects of the Masters, to carry out which is the bounden duty of U.L.T. and its Associates. These are stated in "The Great Master's Letter" (U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 33) and can be briefly paraphrased as follows:

- (1) To preach and popularize a knowledge of Theosophy so that its doctrines may practically react upon the so-called moral code of the people, or the ideas of truthfulness, purity, self-denial, charity, etc.
- (2) To give a rational basis on which the intellectual classes can reconstruct their crumbling faith and avoid the extreme of bigotry and superstition on the one hand, and that of brutal materialism on the other.
- (3) To arouse in the ruling nations and the upper classes a sense of their responsibility to protect and guide the so-called despised nations and classes.
- (4) To show that all religions teach self-redemption through one's own seventh principle, the liberated Atma. One should not seek redemption for oneself alone, but strive to make all other people see that truth and recognize the reality of the transcendental Self.
- (5) To teach people that life on earth, even the happiest, is but a burden and an illusion; that it is one's own Karma, the cause producing the effect; and to lessen the intensity of that struggle for existence which is the prolific parent of most woes and sorrows, and of all crimes.
- (6) To offer the right and logical explanations of the great dual principles of right and wrong, good and evil, liberty and despotism, pain and pleasure, egotism and altruism.

In conclusion, Associates and students of U.L.T. should consider themselves "fortune's favoured soldiers" in that genuine Theosophy has come down to them intact, and it is up to them to study, practise, assimilate and promulgate its teachings so that the message of Theosophy may spread over the entire world.

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The Masters once wrote that we should not be thinking on our good or bad Karma....It is a curious kind of conceit, which seems to be the product of 19th-century civilization, that causes us to falsely imagine that we, weak and ignorant human beings, can interfere with Karma or be vicarious atoners for others. We are all bound up together in one coil of Karma and should ever strive by good acts, good thoughts and high aspirations, to lift a little of the world's heavy Karma, of which our own is a part. Indeed, no man has any Karma of his own unshared by others; we share each one in the common Karma, and the sooner we perceive this and act accordingly the better it will be for us and for the world.

—W. Q. Judge

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## The Single Eye

When a babe is born, we generally say that it has seen the light of day. Our daily evolution consists of a series of progressive sense-awakenings. The newborn infant finds the light too strong; by gradual effort it opens its eyes and by steady and persistent endeavours it learns to use those eyes.

So also it is with the soul. The growth of the soul is also a series of progressive awakenings; soul-sight, soul-hearing, soul-speech and so on, unfold slowly and gradually. The soul at first finds the light of *Nirvana* too dazzling; it is in a progressive manner that soul-sight opens, widens and deepens, and it takes many lives to reach its full brilliance.

Therefore we come across this strange phenomenon: Just as men and women have different eye-strengths—some are short-sighted, others are long-sighted, some have a more keen right eye compared to the left, or *vice versa*—so all human souls have a different power of soul-sight. Yet ordinary men and women of the world do not even know that there is such a thing as soul-sight.

The long evolution of the human soul has been compared to a Path—known as the Path of *Dhamma*-Law in Buddhist philosophy. It is called the Noble Path, for noble souls walk on it, and there are given to us eight steps, the first of which is Right Seeing: *Samma-Ditthi*, correct understanding of doctrine. We are going to study it with the aid of quotations from the Dhammapada.

The very first verse we must consider is this:

This world is wrapt in darkness. Only a few can see here. Only a few birds escape the net. Only a few escape into the heavenly light. (Verse 174)

This is an unlighted world, full of darkness, says the Buddha, and people are not able to see. They are like birds caught in a net and are unable to escape, to find freedom. But most people do not know that they lack the necessary vision. He who begins to see, inquires and tries to understand what he sees. Sorrow and suffering is a phenomenon in life. Would people behave as they do if they could fathom the meaning of sorrow which is omnipresent in the human kingdom? Suffering and its offspring sorrow have not laid their hard hands on these people; when they themselves experience suffering they are bound to see. The opener of soul-sight is suffering.

The next group comprises those who are not quite without vision. Having suffered in the past, they have begun to question and to inquire. They recognize that there is a mystery to this problem of life and suffering and seeing that, however dimly, they have begun their search. To them, another verse brings a message:

Why this laughter, why this jubilation, when this world is burning, burning?  
Shrouded in darkness why do you not seek for light? (Verse 146)

We who have seen a little, have no business to laugh with the foolish, laughing world. The Buddha advises us to seek a light, and with the help of that light to see for ourselves that the world is burning, and that we ourselves will burn up with the world if we do not recognize that fact.

What is the nature of the fire? In the fire-sermon the Buddha says: "It is the fire of lust, the fire of anger, the fire of ignorance. Mortals are afire; they verily are consumed by the fire of birth, of ambition, of grief, of lamentation, of dejection, of decay and of death." In such a world which has caught fire we are abiding; but we can get out of it before we are altogether consumed.

Men and women do not admit that the world is burning and that they themselves are burning up with it. Just as the blind cannot see that they are blind, so also among those who see that they are suffering there are many who refuse to seek the true explanation and the implication of the questions posed in the above verse: What is there to laugh about? What is there really to enjoy in this burning world? Are we being consumed by the world-fire, and if so what are we going to do about it?" If in spite of our glimpse of perception that sorrow is, that vice is a consuming fire, we continue to laugh and enjoy with the laughing and enjoying sense-world, something more serious and fundamental will overtake us.

Whoso lives pursuing pleasures, his senses unrestrained, immoderate in eating, indolent, devitalized—him verily doth Mara uproot as a gale a weak tree.

Whoso lives disciplining himself, unmindful of pleasures, his senses restrained, moderate in eating, full of faith and dauntless energy (*Virya*)—him verily Mara doth not overturn as a gale doth not overturn a rocky mountain. (Verses 7-8)

Many are desirous to know the truth, but they make mighty little effort to ascertain the nature of truth. Great and greater suffering is bound to overtake them if they fail to pursue the great truths whose existence they have begun to sense, however vaguely.

So this is the first thing for us to see: humanity is burning with the fever and the fire of *kama*, *tanha*, *trishna*, of lust, greed, thirst. But it is often very difficult for some people to include themselves among the worldly. They say, "But we are not greedy, nor impure, nor selfish; we are not evil; what about us who labour and earn our bread, who love and rear our family, who live as best we can? We too suffer. Why?" Just as bad people are blind to their own folly and wickedness, so are many good people blind to their own weaknesses, which are often locked up in their virtues. We know that it is very common experience for good and virtuous men and women to be ever fearful of the future. They are on guard against evil and wickedness, but how many good people are free from the fear of poverty, of ill-health, of loss of good name, and so forth? Grief and fear, we are told, arise from attachment, affection, indulgence, desire and craving (verses 212-16). At first sight this might seem confusing. Attachment and affection, which are the basis of family life and the binding energy of brotherhood itself in the world at large, are here made the source of grief and fear. Attachment is the force that blinds us, and it is this truth which we at our state of evolution must see. It is that attachment which arises from the sense of proprietorship rooted in egotism. We need to make a distinction between impersonal compassion whose very soul is detachment, and personal love whose soul is attachment.

With the help of illustrations perhaps we can perceive the truth of this proposition. In ordinary life there are two attachments which they are as holy as they are strong—the love of the mother for her son or daughter and that of the son or daughter for the mother; and the love of husband and wife for each other. In these relationships great felicity, peace and inspiration are found. The mother's entire universe is centred in and made up of her strong love for her children; so it is with the son or daughter, the husband or wife. But that felicity and contentment are marred by fear of what might not happen, by grief because of what has actually happened. Besides, such a situation is not everlasting, is not immortal.

Turn to the divine, immortal counterparts of these relationships. The love between husband and wife is like that which subsists between two co-disciples of the same Guru. The love between parent and child is like that between Guru and chela, Master and pupil. In these spiritual ties, disease, decay and death of body do not interfere. The love persists and does not end with the death of the body. Secondly, while in human love, however pure, there is some desire for requital, some wish for recognition by the other member of the pair, in divine love no such feeling exists. The Buddhas and the Mahatmas love Orphan Humanity without seeking anything in return. So in our happiest and holiest of relationships there is still personal attachment. It is difficult, almost impossible, for us to conceive of the love that gives without asking, the sacrifice that looks for no return, the compassion that feeds and sustains regardless of any reward, recognition or gratitude.

At our stage of evolution, we must see this fact, this great truth of the spiritual world. We will not succeed in practising it in any great measure, yet we must endeavour to see the truth. Right seeing leads to Right Resolve; we cannot will or think or feel unless we have seen and perceived.

What will enable us to see this fact that from affection and attachment proceeds the fire of lust and passion and greed?

Sons are no protection, nor father, nor kinsmen when one is seized by death. There is no help from relations when death seizes one.

Recognizing the significance of this a wise and good man should straightaway begin to clear the path that leads to Nirvana. (Verses 288-89)

Here are some steps which if taken will surely bring us the vision: first, the recognition that death is the final outcome of that consuming fire with which the world and ourselves are burning; secondly, that friends and relations who also live in this world which is on fire can give no help—the blind cannot lead the blind. If we recognize these two facts, we shall see the logical deduction: we must seek out the way that will lead us away from this world into another where evil and suffering and death are not. "Clear the path that leads to Nirvana," says the above verse. That path is covered over with our ignorance, our pride, our passion, our numerous prejudices. We cannot undertake the task of finding that path unless we see that there is no refuge in this burning house.

In what way then must we seek refuge?

Irrigators lead the waters. Fletchers shape the arrows. Carpenters carve the wood.  
Wise people discipline themselves. (Verse 80)

The similes are not only beautiful, they are profound. We must be like irrigators, give course to our own waters of heart-feeling and emotions so that these waters may assuage the thirst of the thirsty. We must be like fletchers and sharpen our thoughts, make them clear-cut, so that the ignorant may learn, the simple-minded understand. We must be like expert carpenters whose deeds are like beautiful carvings that give pleasure as well as offer use to others. This triple blessing can be had by disciplining ourselves, and that is no easy task!

So we have seen (1) that this a dark world; (2) that it is being destroyed by passion and lust; (3) that attachment produces evil; (4) that detachment leads to *Nirvana*; (5) that friends and relations cannot help; (6) that we have to tame ourselves. But there is the seventh step without which it is impossible to see these propositions clearly. What is that?

As worldly men and women we see with two eyes: that of feeling-emotion-desire-*kama*; and that of thought-understanding-worldly knowledge-*Manas*. *Kama-Manas*, the passionate mind, is that mind which attaches itself to the objects it comes in contact with. We waver to and fro. from feeling to thought, or from thought to feeling. We are always double-sighted. We must work to

possess the Single Eye of Spirit: the Eye of *Dhamma*, the Eye of the Buddhas, the Sacred Third Eye of Shiva.

That Single Eye is *Bodha*-Wisdom. When worldly knowledge is purified by the power of discrimination, when worldly feelings and attachments are purified by the force of detachment, we succeed in developing that Single Eye.

What the Single Eye of the long line of Buddhas and Acharyas has seen, is recorded. The record of all that Gautama Buddha saw can be found in his *Bodha*, his Wisdom, in his *Dhamma*—the Four Noble Truths, the Three Jewels, the Five Virtues. Study and effort to see these great Truths with a becalmed mind and a cleansed heart will ultimately develop the Single Eye. At our own particular stage of evolution we have to see that our attachments and affections are veritable wombs of pain. We are not called upon to kill out affection, but to transform it into Compassion, into Love that is wise and that in its sacrifice gives wisely; and whatever it gives, it gives without any thought of recompense. Our fears and our griefs come from our attachments, and so as we walk the streets of our city, labour in our kitchens or in our studies, talk to our friends or teachings of the *Dhamma*. Thus shall we bring to birth the Single Eye of *Bodha* and we ourselves shall shine with the radiance of the Law. On this best of Paths the Seer of the True is the best of men ; therefore we must learn to see the True. Not knowledge can show us the Truth; but Wisdom, Heart-Knowledge, Heart freed from attachment, can. Having seen the *Dhamma*, we shall be ready for the next step—*Samyak-Sankalpa*—Right Resolve or Right Aspiration.

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## The Mystery of Time

Time was not, for it lay asleep in the infinite bosom of Duration.

—Stanzas from the Book of Dzyan, I, 2

Be free from the future; be free of the past; be free in the present; cross to the yonder shore. With a mind wholly free you will not fall into birth and death.

—Dhammapada, Verse 348

This month brings us to an important astronomical event which marks the beginning of a new season of the year. The 21st of June is the summer solstice, the longest day of the year for the Northern Hemisphere.

Such an event is not without significance for humans and affords an opportunity to reflect upon Time. Nature's acts are all cyclic and periodical, and her movements can best be described by moving circles ever returning on themselves. Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita refers to Himself as "Time matured" (XI, 32) and speaks of the Universal Wheel of Time (XVIII, 61).

But what *is* Time? We cannot see time; we cannot hear it, or smell it, or taste it; we cannot touch it! And yet no one doubts that time *is* and that it dominates our lives. Our every move is dictated by this most elusive and illusive factor—the time element. Its mystery has haunted human minds down the ages, and yet even today our modern scientist must accept the fact that he has not yet penetrated it. Time changes man; yet man cannot change time.

We speak of saving time and also of wasting it. We say time flies or time drags. And yet we cannot say what time itself is! Our age is one of speed. We are constantly inventing mechanical devices to hasten all tasks and to traverse distances in space with ever-increasing speed. We want to go faster and faster because we want to "save" time. The story is told of an old man who failed to respond enthusiastically to the glowing accounts of the speed of air travelling. He listened unmoved, and then asked: "But what will you do with the time so 'saved'?" It is not merely saving time that makes for progress, but how we utilize it.

However, while time is imperceptible to our sensorium, we can measure it. From the remotest antiquity men have sought ways and means of measuring time and found in Nature the basis for such measurements. Because astronomical events ever recur cyclically they were chosen to measure that unknown factor, time. We really measure the interval between the occurrence of an event and its recurrence. And so we have come to regard time as the interval between events.

For us mortals time is measured by the journey of our earth through space. Our planet's trip around the Sun, the monthly orbit of the moon, and the daily rotation of the earth on its axis have given us our year, our month, our day. But while we measure the passage of time, time itself remains unknown.

In modern physics it has been found convenient to use "events" instead of "points" in describing physical phenomena, and so to the three dimensions of space, *viz.*, latitude, longitude, and altitude, has been added a fourth—Time. Thus, if we want to describe the position of a moving object we measure its three dimensions in space and record the exact time of our observations. This is one of the key ideas in Einstein's theory of relativity. Time was regarded by Einstein as a fourth dimension. In his theory these four dimensions are so intimately related that they are referred to by one single expression, "time-space." Einstein's theory of relativity increased our knowledge about time, but did not reveal how to control, check, or direct it. We still remain the subjects of time.

What lies behind the passing flow of time? When we say this day has passed away, what do we really mean? Where has it gone to? We speak of the past, the present, and the future, but these exist only in reference to the consciousness of the one who experiences them on this plane. Madame Blavatsky offers this definition in the form of a question: "What is Time, but the panoramic succession of our states of consciousness?" (The Secret Doctrine, I, 44). And in that same work, in the second volume, explaining that humanity is the child of cyclic destiny, she concludes with the following quotation from a Sage:

THE PRESENT IS THE CHILD OF THE PAST; THE FUTURE, THE BEGOTTEN OF THE PRESENT. AND YET, O PRESENT MOMENT! KNOWEST THOU NOT THAT THOU HAST NO PARENT, NOR CANST THOU HAVE A CHILD; THAT THOU ART EVER BEGETTING BUT THYSELF? BEFORE THOU HAST EVEN BEGUN TO SAY "I AM THE PROGENY OF THE DEPARTED MOMENT, THE CHILD OF THE PAST," THOU HAST BECOME THAT PAST ITSELF. BEFORE THOU UTTEREST THE LAST SYLLABLE, BEHOLD! THOU ART NO MORE THE PRESENT BUT VERILY THAT FUTURE. THUS, ARE THE PAST, THE PRESENT, AND THE FUTURE, THE EVER-LIVING TRINITY IN ONE—THE MAHAMAYA OF THE ABSOLUTE IS." (The Secret Doctrine, II, 446)

The above gives us the metaphysical key to solve our problem: Behind time, lies Eternity. Time belongs to the world of conditioned existence, the world of constant change. It begins at any given moment in reference to a particular event or a particular phenomenon. But behind that beginning, Time which is infinite and measureless already was because it ever *is*. Thus, conditioned time, which can be measured, which begins and ends, arises out of Timelessness or Eternal Duration. And that is why the present, the past, and the future have validity only in this world of relativity. They cease to be valid when we transcend that which pertains to the world of changing phenomena. This is suggested in the mystic title given to Parabrahm, *Kalahamsa*, "the swan *in* and *out* of time."

Can we transcend the illusion of time? All mystics and sages answer in the affirmative. Meister Eckhart refers to the illusion of time as hindrance which must be overcome if one is to hear the voice of the inner god. He says:

Whoso will hear the Wisdom of the Father dwell deep and abide at home, and be at unity with himself. Three things hinder us from hearing the everlasting Word. The first is fleshliness, the second is distraction, the third is the illusion of time. If a man could get free of these, he would dwell in eternity, and in the spirit, and in solitude, and in the desert, and there would hear the everlasting Word.

"Accept the woes of birth," says The Voice of the Silence, and Lord Buddha taught as the first of the Four Noble Truths: "Sorrow Is." Have we accepted this central fact? Not merely passively, but with understanding? Rising above it will not be possible before intelligent acceptance. The first step in becoming, it has been rightly said, is Resignation. But such resignation must be a dynamic quality rooted in our inner faith, in our perception that the Reality is always present, here and now, and can be apprehended amidst the moving, ever-fluctuating stream of the temporal and the evanescent.

The establishing of an orderly and rhythmic pattern of life in harmony with Nature's laws, the observance of punctuality, the unfolding of skill in action—these have been declared by all Teachers of Life to be the means of realizing the presence of the Eternal and the Uncreate within our own Soul-consciousness.

We cannot recall the past. We are unable to anticipate the future. But the present is ours, and while we cannot tell what Karma has in store for us, we can always decide what happens to us, inside of ourselves, what our attitude should be, how we deal with whatever may come to us.

When all is said and done it is our own response to life that counts and that transforms the world for us.

Dispassion coupled with wakeful attention will help us to live neither in the past, nor in the future, but in the Eternal Now. While we deal with each day to the best of our ability, while we discharge our duties with zest and integrity, accepting cheerfully the limitations of embodied existence, let us endeavour to apprehend the presence of the Divine.

The cry of the world is for Light, more Light. As we approach the Summer Solstice, let us determine to draw nearer to the Light within our own hearts that we may reflect its golden radiance in our daily lives, and thus help brighten the lives of our fellow men.

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In living your life of peace and virtue be indifferent to praise and censure alike of mankind.

—Sri Ramakrishna

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## Positive Thought in a Negative World

Modern society is very much one of information. We seem to be obsessed with filling our heads with trivial facts. Now we have the Internet which gives us access to almost unlimited information on a wide range of topics. This is said to be a great leap forward for humanity in that we can acquire a great deal of knowledge with relative ease. It is a step forward, however, only for the lower aspects of the mind, which accumulates facts but shuts out the true light of the Higher Mind.

Human nature in general has not changed much over the last few thousand years. It has still not learned how to rely upon the Inner Self in contradistinction to the outer. We have built a civilization that is reliant upon externals, upon machines and devices. In England recently there was a fuel shortage, due to a strike by the suppliers. In a few days the whole country was brought to a virtual standstill; even food supplies dwindled to practically nothing because of "panic buying," *i.e.*, people selfishly thinking of themselves and their own families and ignoring the plight of others. Lack of fuel had meant that deliveries to shops had ceased, but if people had thought in a communal sense, the situation would not have escalated to the level that it did. It is also true that if there were a breakdown in the computer system, due to a virus for example, much chaos would result.

It is true to say that there are some benefits to all of this from the perspective of education, but the technological society is in danger of controlling instead of being controlled. All the great scriptures of the world point to man being capable of achieving "wonders," by the development

of his own spiritual nature, by disciplining his own mind. Sadly nowadays we chase after externals, mere will-o'-the-wisps that will lead us nowhere in the end, except a divorce from the Light of the Soul and deeper into despair and doubt. This society is an extremely cynical one in which people gain pleasure from gossip and denouncing their neighbour and from repeating the Old Testament adage, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," which Jesus refuted in the New Testament, telling us instead to love our enemies and forgive them. But nowadays it is a case of "revenge is sweet" and people revelling in the fact that they made another human being suffer "deservedly." Elderly people who seek only peace in their later years are preyed upon by violent criminals and confidence-tricksters, weak and miserable examples of manhood who exemplify the worst in a material Society.

Even "serial killers" are lauded. A recent film, "Hannibal," tells of the exploits of a cannibalistic murderer, and pictures of the character "Grace" the covers of countless magazines worldwide. What is more, the film broke all box-office records in its first few days of release. This kind of salacious material will certainly pollute the collective imagination of humanity and incite weak, mediumistic natures to commit the most abysmal crimes. But even the strong-willed cannot be free from the taint of such degrading material, whether it takes the form of films, television, books or music. H.P.B. says in one of her articles that dwelling on gruesome murders can help to cultivate the "evil eye" in certain individuals and that the deadly magnetic influence will be passed on to others by merely gazing at them. This is a chilling thought, given society's obsession with murder and "horror" in films and books.

H.P.B. also tells us that we must never despair of humanity if we are to be true Theosophists, therefore we need to find positive solutions to the world's plight. It is obvious that it is the preponderance of materiality that has caused this sad state. There is no longer any appreciation of true beauty, the beauty that arises from a respect for all things spiritual. The Tao Te Ching says:

By not exalting the talented  
You will cause the people to cease from rivalry and contention.  
By not prizing goods hard to get  
You will cause the people to cease from robbing and stealing.  
By not displaying what is desirable  
You will cause the people's hearts to remain undisturbed.

Yet the whole of society is based upon the exact opposite of these wise maxims. We put a great deal of effort into making material goods seem, not just desirable, but essential. Therefore, according to this reasoning, we are not leading life to the full unless we possess all the latest material gadgets! We are prepared to go to any extent to obtain these goods, because, if we have exalted technological "wonders" we have at the same time degraded the concept of humanity. The Theosophical Movement in general was the latest attempt to try to reveal to the world the true nature of humanity and its place in the unfoldment of consciousness. It also reveals to us the value of human life, which is not truly understood by the majority of people.

Low "self-esteem" is a common problem for which people consult psychiatrists and counsellors nowadays. Depression follows in the wake of this. The following verse from The Voice of the Silence is very appropriate here:

Alas, alas, that all men should possess Alaya, be one with the Great Soul, and that possessing it, Alaya should so little avail them!

We have so much potential and yet squander it at every moment of our lives. It seems that we try to cultivate the negative side of our nature, almost consciously. Lust, anger, greed, jealousy and hatred are looked upon as normal and regarded as "human" emotions by the light of modern values. Ancient texts predicted a time when values would be reversed and acts of kindness, compassion and gentleness would be regarded as impractical and the reverse accepted as necessary. Sadly, that time is upon us. It is now considered important to be self-centred both in business transactions and ordinary life. Those of us who try to cultivate the more sensitive side of our natures are regarded as "soft" and of no account in modern society. This animalistic "survival of the fittest" attitude ignores all the finer human feelings that are described in all the sacred texts. It is true that the world needs more tender loving care and it is good that we have the example of many men and women who have shown this in their lives and teachings. H.P.B., who herself was a prime example, mentions two instances from the Roman-Catholic faith—Father Damien and Sister Gertrude, who lived and died to help the lepers on the Island of Molokai. In the Buddhist faith there are countless holy men who exemplify the words of the Master K.H.: "The greatest consolation in and the foremost duty of life is not to give pain, and avoid causing suffering to man or beast."

This is also true in all other traditions, no matter how much they may have been tainted by dogmas and rituals, etc. There are always those who transcend tradition and see beyond the dead letter. Writing of the above mentioned Sister Gertrude in her article "The Last Song of the Swan," H.P.B. says that which can be applied to all those beings who "sweeter make the Ocean's bitter waves—that mighty sea formed of the tears of men":

She is the rare manifestation of a "Higher Ego," free from the trammels of all the elements of its Lower one; influenced by these elements only so far as the errors of her terrestrial sense perceptions—with regard to religious form—seem to bear a true witness to that which is still human in her Personality—namely, her reasoning powers. Hence the ceaseless and untiring self-sacrifice of such natures to what appears *religious* duty, but which in sober truth is the very essence and esse of the dormant Individuality—"divine compassion," which is "no attribute" but verily "the law of laws, eternal Harmony, Alaya's SELF."

In this seemingly cruel and heartless society, it is heartening to think that there are beings in all walks of life and at all levels who are actively trying to help humanity despite its numerous failings. These beings form part of what is known as the "Guardian Wall" and work on different levels. At the lowest level there may be no knowledge of the import of the task. Some people have a natural desire to help others, even though they may have no religious or spiritual inclinations. More enlightened beings are able to continue this work with full consciousness of

what they are doing and there are countless degrees in between these extremes. It is therefore essential that we realize that there are constant endeavours to prevent civilization from slipping deeper into the mire of its own making and that we should always have faith in the TRUE human nature, not the failings of the transitory personality. From our studies and meditations we should find methods to promote spirituality and to help to awaken humanity to the TRUTH. We are all different. Some of us are intuitional, some poetic, others scientific and logical. There are ways that each of these types can contribute something to the welfare of the world. This is Theosophical work pure and simple. All these viewpoints are represented in the works of H.P.B. and the Masters, as well as in other genuine spiritual writings. It is up to each one of us individually and collectively to make Theosophy a living reality in our daily lives.

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It is evident that when toleration is not the outcome of indifference it must arise from wide-spreading charity and large-minded sympathy. Intolerance is pre-eminently the consequence of ignorance and jealousy. He who fondly believes that he has got the great ocean in his family water-jug is naturally intolerant of his neighbour, who also is pleased to imagine that he has poured the broad expanse of the sea of truth into his own particular pitcher. But anyone who, like the Theosophist, knows how infinite is that ocean of eternal wisdom, to be fathomed by no one man, class, or party, and realizes how little the largest vessel made by man contains in comparison to what lies dormant and still unperceived in its dark, bottomless depths, cannot help but be tolerant. For he sees that others have filled their little water-jugs at the same great reservoir in which he has dipped his own, and if the water in the various pitchers seems different to the eye, it can only be because it is discoloured by impurities that were in the vessel before the pure crystalline element—a portion of the one eternal truth—entered into it.

—H. P. Blavatsky

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## Inner Communion is True Prayer

From the early ages man has offered prayers, rightly or wrongly, according to his notions of God and religion. Those materialistically inclined, who do not believe in God or religion, in the immortality of their own souls, do not care to pray. Their be-all and end-all is simply material existence. Those who pray hardly ever ask where to pray, to whom to pray, why to pray, what to pray and how to pray. These are important questions needing reflection. The great Sages have left illuminating instructions on the subject, but these have not been heeded; and so man continues to live in a wrong fashion, whether he believes or disbelieves in prayer.

One prays to gain something for oneself; another prays to bring about the downfall and destruction of another. Both are led by selfish motives. This is as true of nations as of

individuals. During the two World Wars, most of the nations concerned were so-called Christian nations (not true followers of the teachings of Jesus), and prayed to the same almighty God to protect their own country, to save them from dangers, to make them victorious, and to defeat and destroy the "enemy" country. Madame Blavatsky has stated in *Isis Unveiled*: "There has never been a religion in the annals of the world with such a bloody record as Christianity." Would this be so if individuals or nations had the correct concept of God and religion? Would people indulge in human slaughter if it was recognized that the spark of Light Divine which each human being is, emanated from one and the same Flame? Would people perform ceremonies through hired priests for their dear departed ones to absolve them from their sins? Then what about the law of Cause and Effect? As a man soweth, so shall he reap, is the common adage. The Voice of the Silence states: "In the 'Great Journey,' causes sown each hour bear each its harvest of effects, for rigid Justice rules the World." Then how can hired priests help the dead in any way? Would people flock to churches, temples and mosques, and make all kinds of offerings to their respective priests or gods if they were aware of the dangers of such malpractices? There is profound truth contained in this statement from *Isis Unveiled*:

The world needs no sectarian church, whether of Buddha, Jesus, Mahomet, Swedenborg, Calvin, or any other. There being but ONE Truth, Man requires but one church—the Temple of God within us, walled in by matter but penetrable by anyone who can find the way; the pure in heart see God. (II, 635)

This answers the question: Where should one pray? It points to the fact that there is only One Truth which can be realized in the Temple of God within; so there is no need for outside houses of prayer. Though the Inner Temple is covered over with the dust and dirt of material existence, these can be cleared through self-purification, and that is the way to self-realization. Vast amounts of money are spent in building temples and churches, and still more in sustaining the priesthood, when all that is necessary is to turn within and pray to the Divine Father.

This leads us to an understanding of who to pray to. Not to an outside god or any other being, but to the Spirit within. Does not Krishna, in the Tenth Discourse of the Gita, enumerating his Divine Excellences, mention at the outset: "I am the Ego which is seated in the hearts of all beings"? And in the Ninth Discourse he states: "Those who devote themselves to the gods go to the gods; the worshippers of the pitris go to the pitris; those who worship the evil spirits go to them, and my worshippers come to me." What greater assurance than these words of Krishna for the final reunion! Jesus gave the same instruction in the Sermon on the Mount: "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." People are turned outside all the time, are attracted to the things of the objective world, and therefore it becomes difficult for them to turn within for inner communion, which is true prayer.

True prayer is the song of the heart sung in utmost gratitude for all the blessings of Life. It is the communion of the human soul with the Divine Father, a means of union with the whole of Nature, a humble submission to the Law. For however brief a period, the mind becomes liberated from the fetters of earthly existence and becomes one with the Infinite. Buddhi and

Manas are united through true prayer and the strength and the power of the divine radiates through the personality. In The Key to Theosophy it is stated:

Meditation is silent and *unuttered* prayer, or, as Plato expressed it, "the ardent turning of the soul toward the divine; not to ask any particular good (as in the common meaning of prayer), but for good itself—for the universal Supreme Good" of which we are a part on earth, and out of the essence of which we have emerged.

How different this kind of prayer is from ordinary muttering done in a haphazard way, without understanding! Prayer has to become purposeful till it becomes will-prayer. The higher aspects of Will can thus be developed, bringing about a truer realization of the Self and a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood. Instead, how much time, money and energy are frittered away in useless prayer! It has been taught by Lord Buddha:

Pray not! the Darkness will not brighten! Ask  
Nought from the Silence, for it cannot speak!  
Vex not your mournful minds with pious pains!  
Ah! Brothers, Sisters! seek

Nought from the helpless gods by gift and hymn,  
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruits and cakes;  
Within yourselves deliverance must be sought;  
Each man his prison makes.

(Light of Asia, Book VIII)

People appeal to the gods, with offerings and sacrifices, for favours of one kind or another, but to no avail, because the gods also are bound by the Law of their own plane and are therefore helpless. Each one has constructed his own prison; by demolishing it he can breathe the free atmosphere of the higher altitude. It is wiser to seek for deliverance within oneself, through right prayer. Such prayer is essential for the soul of man as food is for the body. The body is fed at regular intervals; why not the Soul? Loving deeds are another form of prayer. As the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge says:

He prayeth well, who loveth well  
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.

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If the constitution of the material frame is mathematical, it is not merely so. If the mind, in its capacity of formal reasoning, obeys, whether consciously or unconsciously,

mathematical laws, it claims through its other capacities of sentiment and action, through its deep springs of emotion and affection, to hold relation to a different order of things. There is, moreover, a breadth of intellectual vision, a power of sympathy with truth in all its forms and manifestations, which is not measured by the force and subtlety of a dialectic faculty. Even the revelation of the material universe in its boundless magnitude, and pervading order, and constancy of law, is not necessarily the most fully apprehended by him who has traced with minutest accuracy the steps of the great demonstration. And if we embrace in our survey the interests and duties of life, how little do any processes of mere ratiocination enable us to comprehend the weightier questions which they present! As truly, therefore, as the cultivation of the mathematical or deductive faculty is a part of intellectual discipline, so truly is it only a part. The prejudice which would either banish or make supreme any one department of knowledge, or faculty of mind, betrays not only error of judgement, but a defect of that intellectual modesty which is inseparable from a pure devotion to truth.

—George Boole

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## The Gita Way of Life

In Chapter VI of the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna sums up his review of the then existing philosophies and schools of thought. Having shown to his disciple Arjuna what is of worth and what is worthless in the ideas and views current then, Krishna gives the correct view. In verse 5 it is said:

He [man] should raise the self by the Self; let him not suffer the Self to be lowered;  
for Self is the friend of self, and in like manner, self is its own enemy.

Here are two selves mentioned, the higher and the lower. We are told that we should raise our self—from the lower pole to the higher, from the compound self to the homogeneous, as the Buddha said. Krishna says the same thing: Do not debase yourselves; each one is the friend and foe, not of others but of himself. Man is triple: (1) spiritual Individuality, (2) material bundle of attributes, the magic mirror of nature, and (3) the reflection cast by the Individuality into that mirror, which reflection is the personality, the false "I". This false or personal "I" is caught up in the meshes of illusion called *tanha* in Buddhism—the dust of our illusions, as The Voice of the Silence puts it.

This *tanha* or dust of illusion on the mirror of mind and matter makes all the mischief prevalent in the human kingdom. In Chapter III, verse 34, Krishna says to Arjuna:

In every purpose of the senses are fixed affection and dislike. A wise man should not fall in the power of these two passions, for they are the enemies of man.

Love and hate, affection and aversion, attraction and repulsion, like and dislike, are bound to arise, says Krishna, because man possesses senses and sense-organs; looking at the objects of sense, he gets illusioned and is deluded. Shall we then turn away from the world of objects? No, says Krishna: do not come under the sway of these opposites, for they are the enemies of every man. Affection and dislike are a pair, two aspects of one and the same force. Just as electricity shows itself as light and again as heat, so also this one force has two aspects. So Krishna says: do not be swayed by these two—*raga and dvesha*, attraction and repulsion, affection and aversion, like and dislike, love and hate. How not to come under the sway of these opposites is indicated in the next verse: Do your own duty; mind your own business; obey the law of your own being; do not try to perform the duties of another; do not meddle with the business of another; do not live by the law of another being. Here in one single verse the problem of every one of us is given an answer: do your own duty by every duty.

A most perplexing problem, called conflict of duties, arises. How to mind our own business? How to find out what the law of our being is? This is a fundamental problem. In our civilization, many programmes of development are formulated, as also numerous methods given of how to escape misery and disease and anguish. We must go to the root, and ask: What is the cause of sorrow and pain which follow upon non-performance of duty, upon our breaking the law of our own being? It is self-evident and simple that if we could know for certain what are our duties and what constitutes the law of our being, we would live according to that knowledge. Most people want to do the right, yet they do wrong. They are exactly in the position of Arjuna, who asks the same question that millions ask today: What is this hidden force or power which, so to speak, compels a person to do wrong, even when he resolves to do right? This question is on everyone's lips. But the answer? Orthodox religionists say, "God's will"; some students of Theosophy say, "Karma." But what is God's will and what is Karma, and how do they spring into existence?

As we have seen already, the Buddha named this force *tanha*, longing. Krishna calls it *rajas*, the force or the power that compels one to move in the direction of the myriad objects of sense. *Rajas* has two aspects, says the Gita. *Kama*-passion-lust is one—the force of attraction that causes affection and love and the many, many likes; the other is *krodha*-anger-hate—the force of repulsion that produces the many kinds of dislikes. *Kama*-passion or attraction, and *krodha*-anger or repulsion are the two aspects of *rajas*. As verse 38 in Chapter III puts it:

As the flame is surrounded by smoke, and a mirror by rust, and as the womb envelops the foetus, so is the universe surrounded by this passion.

Here we have three very wonderful examples which need to be looked into.

*Rajas* or *tanha* is like smoke which envelops the flame. The Soul in man, the soul who is man, is fire, is flame, and it is surrounded by smoke—something that the flame does not want. If the quantity of smoke increases, the flame goes out. This is a very true analogy. If desires and passions are powerful in any person, he faces spiritual extinction, what is called in Theosophy the death of the Soul. When *tanha* or *rajas*—thirst for things of the senses, the motion in the direction of the many objects of the senses—so engrosses the Incarnated Ego that he is

overpowered, his connection with the Star of Individuality, whose ray he is, is broken and the personal self is spiritually dead. There are many in our civilization who are spiritually dead. So that is the first step for all of us to take: not to allow the quantity of smoke, our personal likes and dislikes, to increase and envelop our soul-perception.

The next example in the verse quoted above is that of the mirror. The Voice of the Silence says, "Mind is like a mirror; it gathers dust while it reflects." Mr. Judge, in his rendition of this Gita-verse, uses the term "rust" instead of "dust," and it is a better simile. We can easily wipe off the dust that has gathered, but if in the process of time the mirror has become rusty, then it is a more difficult proposition. We will need knowledge of chemistry, the science of the elements of matter, and the laws of their combination. Higher chemistry is Alchemy; the spiritual branch of Alchemy enables us to transmute base metals into gold. Theosophy is defined as "that branch of chemistry, by which one begets Immortality." We have to gain Immortality, first of all by removing the rust that has spoiled the mirror.

Let us pass on to the last example. The foetus is living in the mother's womb; unless it comes out of the womb it cannot become a real human. Each one of us, every human soul, is like a foetus, confined within the womb of its own material nature; we are not able to see the Light of Day—the Light of Brahma's Day. Unless we are born again, we are in danger of spiritual death. The evildoers who surround themselves with smoke are like aborted embryos, dead forms; those men and women who do not remove the rust from their own souls are also doomed; only those who are born again are spiritual entities, ready for Immortality. That is what Jesus taught Nicodemus: "Unless a man has been born over again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Like smoke around fire, like dust and rust on a mirror, like the womb enveloping the foetus, the human personality is enveloped by the force of *rajas* in the form of desires—*kama*. Likewise true Knowledge or Wisdom is enveloped by false or perverted knowledge.

Each of these three examples has a message of its own. They trace the whole course of human evolution. Smoke and flame is one stage, rust and mirror is the second; the foetus and its birth—the second birth—is the third stage. We can understand this if we obtain for ourselves the true key that ancient Wisdom and its restatement, H.P.B.'s Theosophy, offers to us. We must study her books and then we learn how to practise—how to handle the smoke and the rust, and how we can become, each one of us, as one newly born. But, at the very start we must take the teaching of the Gita to heart and remember that Wisdom has become corrupted and that we must go to the source.

*Raja, tanha*, desire, is smoke: when we construct a house and want to build a fireplace, we have to have a proper chimney, otherwise we will not have a good, blazing, warming fire. That chimney must let the smoke out in a proper fashion. That is the first step—the smoke of our personal desires must be thrown out. The moisture of passion must be dried up and we must by control purify ourselves. Purification is the first step. There are four kinds of purity: (1) mental purity; (2) purity of emotions and character, or moral purity; (3) purity of speech; (4) purity of deeds or actions. Purity is the key word for this first stage of development. Mere desire or aspiration will not bring about purity; even resolves made at New Year do not succeed—because of lack of Knowledge. We must study and find out what purity really means

and how it can be practised, to eliminate vice and unfold virtue. At this stage we learn to leave evil behind and to do good. We do that scientifically, like the chimney-builder; and the technique lies in the word—unselfishness. We must learn to curb, to control, to kill selfishness. Selfishness is the root vice from which all other vices fructify. Selfishness and impurity are one and the same; unselfishness and purity always go together. Smoke is impure, choking to the Soul. What chokes and smothers the Soul is selfishness.

Minor acts of selfishness gather together and become a strong force; these petty forms of selfishness in everyday life, if persisted in, produce in the course of time a permanent selfishness—like rust on the mirror. If we do not clean our looking-glass from day to day, it gathers dust; if we do not keep it well polished, it will rust in the process of time. This is also true of our personal lower nature. The duster and the polish are of two kinds—Philosophy and Philosophers. Purity and unselfishness are helped in their development by good company. An individual student may get rusty in his very goodness, if he remains satisfied with his unselfishness. Knowledge of spiritual alchemy is needed; he must transmute unselfishness into selflessness. In the first stage, he becomes unselfish and good; in the second stage, the ideal is higher—he must become spiritual. Just as by letting off the smoke of evil and selfishness he becomes good and unselfish, so now by further effort, by practising real alchemy, spiritual transmutation, he must progress—from evil to good, from good to spiritual, from selfishness to unselfishness, and then to selflessness. Good company is necessary. The first stage is the school-life of soul-study; the second stage is the home-life of the soul; true spiritual family brings true spiritual friendship and company. In ordinary life we make a distinction between kin and friends. In the higher life our friends *are* our kin. Our Guru-Teacher is our father and mother; our co-disciples are our friends and brothers.

When we are transmuting the rust into radiance and becoming selfless and spiritual, we are getting ready for the Second Birth. Control of the lower, determination not to let any impurity manifest in us or through us, makes us good in the true sense and brings us to the second stage; development, unfoldment, according to the technique taught in Theosophy, means that a dual-virtue—justice and mercy—begins to show itself more and more in all our life. As we act with justice towards ourselves and with mercy towards others, we make a good beginning. Therefore The Voice of the Silence asks us to be as hard as the stone of the mango fruit toward our own lower self, but like the sweet and luscious pulp of the fruit for the woes of others.

Thus we become ready for the next, the third stage. In our heart the soul of justice and mercy lives. This Inner Ego or Soul is like a foetus; it is surrounded by our own past Karma—good as well as evil.

The good man who is studying and who is applying the teachings to himself is a practical philosopher. By study and application he finds his true companions, real members of his true family. As the soul of justice and mercy in his heart is gaining strength, his past Karma gains speed. Opportunities come to him to pay off that Karma—by an increasing number of deeds of justice and mercy. These deeds, energized by his duty and application, purify the heart; his own good actions done now and here attract to him attention and bring *him* justice and mercy from those great Masters who are sometimes called Silent Watchers in the night. They watch, in

secrecy and silence, without trumpeting forth their labour, without anybody knowing it. They watch for the soul of justice rooted in Wisdom, and mercy rooted in Compassion. And when they see it in the heart of some warrior for Truth and against selfishness, the Great Gurus *fecundate* that soul of justice and mercy. Just as the sun fecundates and brings out the beauty and the glory of the lotus in the tank of mud and slime and stagnant water, so these Great Ones fecundate the soul, purified, studious, just and merciful, and bring out the latent devotion, *Bhakti*. The soul is compared to the lotus; just as the lotus opens its heart to the sun, so does the soul of the devoted disciple open in fragrance and holiness. But let us not forget that in developing justice and mercy, in expressing peace and holiness, the aid of the great Philosophy and Science should never be abandoned.

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## In the Light of Theosophy

Man and his natural environment are inextricably interlinked. We create our environment—for better or for worse. Millions of tons of toxic pollutants, greenhouse gases, that industry releases into the atmosphere, are taking their toll. Climate scientists from around the world have been sounding alarm bells since long. Now they have come out openly with the warning that humans are to blame for global warming, and if this continues, it could lead to disastrous consequences. Their conclusions, comments New Scientist (January 27), "send a tough message to politicians who have reached a deadlock in negotiations on how to combat soaring temperatures and sea levels."

This January, scientists met in Shanghai, China, to discuss the latest assessment from UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. In their final text for policy makers, they tersely say, "Most of the warming is attributable to human activities." The report cites global melting as powerful evidence that the world really is warming. Since the 1960s, there has been a 20 per cent decrease in snow cover and a 40 per cent thinning of the Arctic ice cap. The scientists predict sea level will rise by between 9 and 88 centimetres by 2100, endangering millions of people in low-lying areas.

The report also warns that temperatures will rise by between 1.4 and 5.8°C in the 21st century, depending on emissions of greenhouse gases.

We are all guilty. If we want to leave behind us a livable world for generations to come, action needs to be taken *now* and a restraint put on environmental pollution caused by overindustrialization and other human activities.

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Scientists have found life in the unlikeliest of places—in clouds. Birgit Sattler, a limnologist at the University of Innsbruck in Austria, has discovered bacteria that are not just surviving but thriving in thick cloud formations. (Discover, March 2001)

Sattler identified the bacteria after examining cloud samples collected and frozen onto Teflon plates set up on the top of Mount Sonnblick, near Salzburg, Austria. Even at subfreezing temperatures, the bacteria could take up radioactively tagged amino acids and DNA bases. This indicates the microbes were still growing and reproducing.

The bacteria could influence climate by acting as nuclei around which rain droplets form. In addition, Sattler says, finding bacteria in clouds suggests that life could exist in similarly extreme surroundings on other planets. "Why not? I've done research in glaciers, Antarctic lakes, and Alpine ice, but this is the most extreme habitat in which I've found bacteria," she says. "If anything happens to Earth, bacteria will survive."

This is another proof, if proof be needed, that microbes, bacteria, and the *tutti quanti* of the infinitesimally small exist everywhere in the universe. These lives, though invisible to us by virtue of their minuteness, have always surrounded us and have worked on, obedient to their own laws, and it is only as they are gradually being revealed that scientists have begun to take cognizance of them, as of the effects produced by them.

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Who are the Druses? The origins of this small community, evolved in 11th-century Cairo, and spread across West Asia, still remain shrouded in mystery. Members of the community were in India recently "to trace their Indian connections." Sheikh Hussein Aburukn, leader of the delegation and member of the Supreme Board of Religious Affairs of the Druse, said: "We have a close relationship with Sanskrit because we believe that Druse culture and religion have some of their roots in ancient India. We're here to trace as much of that past as possible." Piali Banerjee writes in *The Sunday Times of India* (April 8):

Spread across Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan, the Druse faith incorporates Gnostic and Neo-Platonic tenets. Druse history claims that the connection between Druse and Vedic culture goes back to the time of Al-Hakim. "At the time of establishing the Druse movement, Al-Hakim had several discussions with religious leaders around the world. He exchanged a number of ideas with Indian religious leaders who had been invited for the discussions," explains Hussein Aburukn, "He even exchanged religious texts. So much so that two of our books have actually been translated from the original Sanskrit to Arabic. One of them is *Al Mon Frad Pedateh* (One Without a Second), which talks about one Supreme Lord. The other book has a whole section on Ayurveda, where some of the words and phrases have been retained in Sanskrit since they didn't have Arabic equivalents."

Besides Ayurveda and Sanskrit, the main evidence of connection between Druse and Hindu thought is the belief in the reincarnation of the soul. Both cultures believe in it strongly.

The Druses claim that their religion had "existed since the beginning of the world in the hearts and minds of saints"—an interesting claim in the light of H.P.B.'s calling it "one of the last

survivals of the archaic Wisdom-Religion." In her article "Lamas and Druses," originally published in *The Theosophist* for June 1881, she says how difficult it is to fathom "the secret of the profoundly mystical beliefs of the Druses":

To begin with: Al-Hakim is *not* the founder of their sect. Their ritual and dogmas were *never* made known, but to those who have been admitted into their brotherhood. Their origin is next to unknown. As to their external religion, or rather what has transpired of it, that can be told in a few words. The Druses are believed to be a mixture of Kurds, Mardi-Arabs, and other semi-civilized tribes. We humbly maintain that they are the descendants of, and a mixture of, mystics *of all nations*—mystics, who, in the face of cruel and unrelenting persecution by the orthodox Christian Church and orthodox Islamism, have ever since the first centuries of the Mohammedan propaganda, been gathered together, and who gradually made a permanent settlement in the fastnesses of Syria and Mount Lebanon, where they had from the first found refuge. Since then they have preserved the strictest silence upon their beliefs and truly occult rites....They are the Sikhs of Asia Minor, and their polity offers many points of similarity with the late "commonwealth" of the followers of Guru Nanak—even extending to their mysticism and indomitable bravery. But the two are still more closely related to a third and still more mysterious community of religionists, of which nothing, or next to nothing, is known by outsiders: we mean the fraternity of Tibetan Lamaists, known as the Brotherhood of Khelang, who mix but little with the rest.

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Humans have long marvelled at the ease with which birds manoeuvre through the air, in some cases covering enormous distances during seasonal migrations. To unravel the mystery of how birds exert mastery over the air, scientists have studied their uniquely sculpted bodies and complex wing movements.

Dwight G. Smith, professor and chairman of the biology department at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, U.S.A., writes in *The World and I* (March 2001):

Wings alone are insufficient for flight. The entire body must be appropriately sculpted to achieve maximum strength and lightness. In birds, these features govern the structures and functions of the feathers, skeleton, muscles, and internal systems....

Exactly how flight originated continues to be controversial. Of the many theories advanced, the two most plausible are labeled "from the ground up" and "from the trees down." John Ostrom of Yale University is a leading proponent of the theory that ancestral birds learned to fly from the ground up....Other scientists, however, believe that the ancestors of birds learned to fly by climbing into treetops and gliding from tree to tree or from trees to the ground, gradually transitioning from gliding to true flight.

In The Theosophist for August 1882, a correspondent asks whether the flight of birds and the swimming of fishes is produced at will, as in the case of the Yogis who can levitate themselves or walk upon the surface of the water. To this H.P.B. remarks:

Occult science explains the mysteries of bird-flying and fish-swimming on principles entirely opposed to the accepted scientific theory of the day...."If," writes our correspondent, "we take the position that birds have the power to make themselves light or heavy *at will*, the phenomenon of their flight becomes easy to comprehend."

And why not take up such a position? Whether by *instinct* or *will*, whether an effect identical with another is produced consciously or unconsciously, by animal or man, the cause underlying that invariable and identical *result* must be one and the same, barring diversity of conditions and exceptions as to unimportant details....There must be something more than blind instinct or conscious volition. What is it? Occult science tells us the word: it is "a change of polarity and of normal gravity," not yet admissible by science. With birds and animals—as instinctive a mechanical action as any other they execute; with man, when he thus defies the familiar conditions of gravity, it is something he can acquire, in his training as a Yogi. Though the former act unconsciously, and he changes his polarity *at will*, the same cause is made operative, and both produce an identical effect. There are certainly alternating changes of polarity going on in the bird while ascending or dropping, and a maintenance of the same polarity while sailing at any given altitude.

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Doctors have joined psychologists in making people aware of the benefits of optimism. Researchers have documented health risks incurred by a negative outlook, and benefits conferred by a positive one. A fast-growing body of studies—104 so far—is proving that optimism can help people be happier, healthier and more successful. Claire Safran outlines what researchers are saying today (Mira, February 2001):

Pessimism leads to hopelessness, sickness and failure, and is linked to depression, loneliness and painful shyness. "If we could teach people to think more positively," says psychologist Craig A. Anderson of Rice University in Houston, "it would be like inoculating them against these mental ills."

"Your abilities count," explains psychologist Michael F. Scheier of Carnegie -Mellon University in Pittsburgh, "but the belief that you can succeed affects whether or not you will." In part, that's because optimists and pessimists deal with the same challenges and disappointments in very different ways....

"If people feel hopeless," says Anderson, "they don't bother to acquire the skills they need to succeed." A sense of control, according to Anderson, is the litmus test for success. The optimist feels in control of his own life. If things are going badly, he acts quickly, looking for solutions, forming a new plan of action, and reaching out for

advice. The pessimist feels like fate's plaything and moves slowly. He doesn't seek advice, since he assumes nothing can be done....

Many studies suggest that the pessimist's feeling of helplessness undermines the body's natural defences, the immune system. Dr. Christopher Peterson of the University of Michigan has found that the pessimist doesn't take good care of himself. Feeling passive and unable to dodge life's blows, he expects ill health and other misfortunes, no matter what he does....

Positive thinking leads to positive action—and reaction. What you expect from the world, the evidence suggests, is what you are likely to get.

Indeed, we are what we think. To a great extent, what we expect is what we get. Pessimism might seem a hard habit to break, but the dynamic power of thought and will can overcome all obstacles.

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Isis Unveiled provided several instances of the skill of the ancients in various arts and sciences, among them surgery. Modern discoveries amply bear this out. A recently discovered 3000-year-old female mummy from an Egyptian necropolis at Thebes-West has a well-shaped artificial big toe, consisting of three pieces of carved wood fitted onto her foot with leather straps. This is considered to be the world's oldest known prosthesis. Skin regrew where the toe was amputated, proving that the surgery was a success. X-rays and CT scans of the mummy revealed that the actual toe had been surgically removed. (Discover, April 2001)

Truly, "modern science has little or no reason to boast of originality," as H.P.B. said in Isis Unveiled.

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Misunderstanding and dead-letter interpretation of religious terms and concepts has caused much mischief in the world. *Jihad* is one such term which is commonly understood by Muslims to mean "religious Holy War against unbelievers in the mission of Allah and his Prophet Muhammad." In The Times of India (March 27), Sujata Ashwarya Cheema explains the true meaning of *jihad*:

In the literal sense of the term, *jihad* means "an effort or striving." ...*Al-Jihad al-Akbar* or "the greater warfare" is against one's own demons....*The perception of jihad in this sense is subjective and has moral implications. It involves a way of life in which fleeting temptations have no place.* Individuals become discerning subjects who comprehend that worldly temptations are ephemeral and have to be fought. It is also the ability to suffer virtuously the afflictions caused by the foe by following the commandments of *Allah* and to preach, through education, art and literature, the precepts of Islam, the religion of *Allah*....

An Islamic scholar, Syed Qutb, observes: "Those who state that Islamic *jihad* was mainly for the defence of the 'homeland of Islam' diminish the greatness of the Islamic way of life and consider it less important than their 'homeland'. The *jihad* of Islam is to secure complete freedom for every man throughout the world by releasing him from servitude...so that he may serve God."...*Jihad* has become a casual term for all acts of violence perpetrated by an Islamic group, individual or regime. Such groups and individuals need to be reminded about the "Greater *Jihad*," only through which all the people on earth can find redemption.