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"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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THE WORK GOES ON

[Reprinted from THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, November 1958.]

"I care everything for the unsectarianism that H.P.B. died to start."

—W. Q. JUDGE

WITH this issue we commence a new volume—[the 65th]. For 64 years an honest endeavour has been made to spread broadcast the potent Teachings of Theosophy in the pages of this magazine. For the doubter and the enquirer, as well as for the student-server and the aspirant-devotee, it provides that nourishment which brings peace to the human mind and light to the human heart.

On this 17th day of November also falls the [119th] anniversary of the Theosophical Movement, the most serious movement of our age, which received its Original Impulse from the Living Gurus, who stand behind it to this day. Convinced that what the world needs in our era are the Living Ideas of the Ancient Wisdom-Religion, They sent Their Messenger, H.P.B., to record them. For all these years these Ideas have been in circulation in the world. What has the world, and what have students of Theosophy in particular, done with them?

One of the prime objects of the Mission of H.P.B. is hinted at in the words of Mr. Judge quoted above. She laboured that the force

of sectarianism, which exists almost everywhere and which often works in a very subtle manner, might weaken and vanish from the world and that the ground might be prepared for the era of true cosmopolitanism to emerge. This is implicit in the First Object of the Theosophical Movement—Universal Brotherhood. Students of the Esoteric Philosophy have to guard against sectarianism and dogmatism—religious, communal, racial, nationalistic and of every other form. They are prone to forget that their own human nature is no different from that of the race to which they belong, and that consequently the same tendencies and weaknesses that they see and condemn in others have to be faced and conquered by themselves if they would not have the Theosophical Movement of our era meet the same fate as similar attempts in the past have met. The duty of every earnest student of Theosophy, therefore, lies in shedding his own species of sectarianism and dogmatism and in endeavouring to broaden his horizon. The moment we dogmatize and insist on the construction that we put upon Theosophy, that moment we lose sight of Universal Brotherhood and sow the seeds of future trouble.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, in the "Conclusion," H.P.B. expresses the hope that the Theosophical Movement might not, after her death, become dogmatic and "drift off on to some sandbank of thought or another," but that it might remain free and open. This idea can be found constantly reiterated in all her writings. Human nature is ever inclined, because of arrogance and ignorance, to draw circles outside whose circumference is the darkness of heresy; inside, the comfortable superiority of orthodoxy. U.L.T. Associates, if they wish to remain true to the Original Impulse, the Original Programme, the Original Teachings, should, in the words of H.P.B., endeavour to become well established "in their conviction that they know nothing in comparison with what is to be learned; in their sacrifice of every pet theory and prompting of emotionalism at the shrine of fact; and in their absolute and unqualified repudiation of everything that smacks of 'dogma.'"

Again and again have students of Theosophy been charged with being narrow and dogmatic. What is apt to make the teachings

of Theosophy seem dogmatic is not anything in the character of the teachings themselves, but the *mode* of exposition and acceptance, the manner of the speaker or the writer or the reaction of the hearer or the reader. When a student accepts on blind faith the statements he repeats, and expects others to believe them likewise on his mere word, his speech or written word cannot but be dogmatic. Similarly the hearer or reader who has never bothered to examine or evaluate his preconceived notions is the first to proclaim as dogmatic any statement which conflicts with his own unproven ideas.

Wherein lies the remedy? The student of Theosophy of this generation has to guard himself against two extremes: one is to limit the freedom of thought and to live like a frog who looks upon his pond as the world, with nothing outside; the other is to expand and embrace indiscriminately—in the name of brotherhood and fellow feeling—falsehood, ignorance and humbug.

The practical work on himself which an earnest student has to undertake is to become cosmopolitan in his outlook. He needs to learn what able minds in East and West alike are thinking, how the race-mind is unfolding. To live and labour for his Cause in a better fashion he needs to familiarize himself with the world of science, philosophy, religion, literature, art. He needs to recognize that there is a large body, outside Theosophical circles, of those who are seeking for noble ideas and aspiring to the higher life, and that Theosophy has to be made practical for all such.

It needs to be realized above all that Theosophy is for *all*, not for a select few. Students sometimes tend to be discouraged when they see the enormous disproportion between those who have accepted the great ideas of Theosophy and whose lives have been transformed by them and the millions in the world who do not know of Theosophy or do not care for it. It is pertinent here to recall these words of H.P.B., recorded by Mr. Judge:

When you consider and remember those days in 1875 and after, in which you could not find any people interested in your thoughts, and now look at the wide-spreading influence of theosophical ideas—however labelled—it is not so bad. *We are*

not working merely that people may call themselves Theosophists, but that the doctrines we cherish may affect and leaven the whole mind of this century [italics ours]. This alone can be accomplished by a small earnest band of workers, who work for no human reward, no earthly recognition, but who, supported and sustained by a belief in that Universal Brotherhood of which our Masters are a part, work steadily, faithfully, in understanding and putting forth for consideration the doctrines of life and duty that have come down to us from immemorial time. Falter not, so long as a few devoted ones will work to keep the nucleus existing. You were not directed to found and realize a Universal Brotherhood, but to form the nucleus for one; for it is only when the nucleus is formed that the accumulations can begin that will end in future years, however far, in the formation of that body which we have in view. (*Vernal Blooms*, pp. 6-7)

The Theosophical Movement is an esoteric movement. We must not overlook the silent and invisible influence of Theosophical ideas which have been circulating in the universe of thought through the decades, the impress they have made and still continue to make on the *Akasha* which pervades all space and which affects the Manas and the Buddhi of each, according to his capacity to absorb and retain the beneficent influence. Also, each student has his own circle of non-Theosophical contacts and, through example and precept, he can and should, as he lives his life, go about dropping the "proper seeds of mental action" in an individual here and an individual there, which may in time fructify when they find favourable soil.

To come out from the narrowing influence of sectarianism and to broaden his vision, the student of Theosophy needs to realize the wider aspect of our Movement, well described in the following words:

Wherever thought has struggled to be free, wherever spiritual ideas, as opposed to forms and dogmatism, have been promulgated, there is to be discerned that great surge of moral evolution which H. P. Blavatsky described and named as the Theosophical Movement. It may, therefore, be considered sim-

ply as the path of spiritual progress, individually and collectively, of human beings. The continuous effort of men to act upon their aspiration toward a higher and nobler life is always pressing against and bursting through the limitations of the established social order.

In the words of a Master of Wisdom, "The sun of Theosophy must shine for all, not for a part. There is more of this movement than you have yet had an inkling of"; and He adds that the work of the Movement "is linked in with similiar work that is secretly going on in all parts of the world." In H.P.B.'s articles, *e.g.*, "Let Every Man Prove His Own Work," "The Tidal Wave," etc., as also in her hints in *Five Messages*, there are clear indications that such work has to be organized or supported by individual students.

Since 1875 the world of thought has been transformed considerably and many ideas brought forward by H.P.B. have percolated into modern knowledge. Significant developments have taken place in the world along the lines of the Three Objects of the Theosophical Movement.

Indirectly promoting the First Object, there are such movements as those for One World Government and World Citizenship; there are campaigns for disarmament and for the establishment of world peace; there are cultural movements which are bringing the peoples of the world nearer to one another in thought and ideation. Though the practical realization of Universal Brotherhood may seem far off to many, yet the idea is percolating into the race-mind and public opinion is being formed in its favour.

In the spheres of religions, philosophies and sciences, great strides have been made. Religious bigotry is on the decrease and the debasing notion of an anthropomorphic god is now rejected by many thoughtful persons. The idea of religious unity is spreading. The reign of Law in the whole of Nature is more readily accepted and many talk of causation and of cycles. The literature of the last few decades is full of Theosophical ideas, and terms such as "Reincarnation," "Karma," "Astral," etc., are freely used. Ancient Oriental Philosophy is being studied by increasing numbers in both

East and West alike. In the scientific world, materialism has received a deathblow as prophesied by H.P.B., and modern science is gradually coming closer to Ancient Science. Also a fusion of the different branches of modern knowledge is being attempted and a harmonious synthesis is being created in which religions, philosophies, sciences and arts, all take their proper part and place.

As for the Third Object of the Movement, great interest in the unseen worlds has been evinced in recent years. Psychology is more rationally studied and, though researchers into psychic powers and phenomena still seem to be groping in the dark and to be unable to draw the line between the psychic and the spiritual, there is every likelihood that, if they keep on probing deeper and deeper, they may one day stumble across the truth about the phenomena they are investigating.

When we speak of the wider aspect of the Theosophical Movement, we do not intend to convey that false and fanciful notions are to be taken as Theosophical expressions. Let not the student of Theosophy be glamoured by the feverish activities of politicians and reformers who do not, as a rule, take into account the causal aspect, but handle only the surface effects. Let us all remember the words of H.P.B.: "We believe in relieving the starvation of the soul, as much if not more than the emptiness of the stomach." Our task is primarily to affect and leaven the Manas and the Buddhi of the race, though students of Theosophy are necessarily the friends of all wise and well-considered social efforts. In the world today, many there are who are eager to help and serve their fellow men; many are the schemes that are set afloat, many the organizations and associations founded; but how often do we find that, instead of reducing the sum of human misery, they tend to increase it!

What type of activities should individual students support and labour for, while they are busily engaged in the work of study, application and promulgation of the teachings of the Esoteric Philosophy? True service of the race has to be rendered in a way and by a method very different from the ways and methods that

obtain in the world of social service. H.P.B.'s "Let Every Man Prove His Own Work" (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 31*) contains ample hints as to what constitutes true Theosophical service. One general test, she says in *The Key to Theosophy*, may be applied: "Will the proposed action tend to promote that true brotherhood which it is the aim of Theosophy to bring about?" The individual student has to use his own judgment and discrimination to determine for himself where he will lend his help and where he will not.

Great is the task the student of Theosophy has before him. Great is the contribution he can make to the world of thought, thereby preparing the race-mind for the coming cycle. To be in a position to do this effectively, he should see that his work in and upon himself, by the triple means of study, application and promulgation, is not neglected. In closing, let us recall the words with which Mr. Judge ends his editorial in *The Path* for December 1890:

Every day of this year should be used wisely, earnestly, thoroughly, so that we shall be able at each anniversary to feel that we have lived nearer to our highest ideals and at least tried to do the work which of all others humanity needs.

MEN, in struggling with untruth and superstition, often console themselves with the quantity of superstition they have destroyed. This is not right. It is not right to calm oneself until all that is contradictory to reason and demands credulence is destroyed. Superstition is like a cancer. Everything must be cleaned out if one undertakes an operation. But if a little bit is left, everything will grow from it again. The historic knowledge of how different myths and beliefs arose among peoples in different places and in different times ought, it seems, to destroy the faith that these myths and beliefs which have been inoculated in us from our infancy, constitute the absolute truth; but nevertheless, so-called educated people believe in them. How superficial, then, is the education of so-called educated people!

—LEO TOLSTOY

THE LIVING MAHATMAS

OF all the spiritual teachings, the one that has perhaps been most corrupted is that dealing with the existence on earth of Great Souls—Mahatmas. In the old world, the position and function of the Guru was as high as it was noble; and in India, the institution was put to the greatest of practical uses. Though Egypt and Greece honoured the Hierophant, perhaps in no country was the Guru's mission and necessity so well recognized as in India. It is equally true that in no country has the institution of the Guru been more exploited, more abused and more misunderstood. Fanciful notions about the nature and powers of the Mahatmas prevail even today, and They are either being laughed off or prayed to as gods!

It was a hard task for H.P.B. to proclaim to the world that Masters were Living Men, not omniscient gods; that these Living Mahatmas were but the Elder Brothers of the human family, who were willing to teach human souls how to save themselves; that They were wiser men, with extraordinary and supernormal powers, but men all the same, though freed from the fetters of prejudice and the bonds of ignorance. They were Philanthropists, pure and true, because of Their noble sacrifice. Within the short time at her disposal, H.P.B. made all this amply clear, and went even so far as to demonstrate the working of supernormal powers, some of which she herself possessed, having learnt under Them and having advanced considerably in the life of Adeptship.

In our day and age, all believe in evolution. If growth is the law of nature, as we know it is, then human intelligence too must continue to evolve. As miracles do not take place anywhere in nature, a genius like a Plato or a Buddha is not a miracle. Uniformity and repetition are to be found everywhere in nature, so it is but logical to deduce that other human minds will reach the heights of a Plato or a Pythagoras, that other human hearts will show the depths of a Buddha or a Christ.

Those who believe that we are all souls and that the soul evolves by the law of reincarnation, will easily perceive that

growth must lead to perfection. If from the condition of savagery we have reached our present position of understanding and good behaviour, it is but logical to deduce that we must further unfold to the Wisdom of a Buddha and the Sacrifice of a Krishna, as well as to the Love of a Jesus for his fellow-men and the Compassion which all of them evinced. It was Huxley who correctly said that we should conceive of the existence of beings whose intelligence is as superior to ours as ours is superior to that of the black beetle. Naturally modern science cannot have anything to say on the subject of highly evolved souls, when it is still struggling to find out the nature of the soul, nay, its very existence!

In almost every religion, especially in the older ones, there are several specific indications, nay more, instructions, about Perfected Souls, Their nature and powers. Every religion has a secret, an esoteric side. Jesus spoke to the laity in parables, but otherwise to his own disciples, advising them to be discreet and reticent about these inner teachings. "Cast not your pearls before swine," he said. In Islam, Sufism represents the esoteric side, and it teaches in detail the steps of the Path to the great Murshids or true Gurus. The Hebrew Kabala is a witness to the Inner Wisdom and the invisible Wise Ones—invisible but not unapproachable. In Hinduism, the Esoteric Science, *Gupta Vidya*, is freely spoken of. The *Gita* speaks of *Raja Vidya* and *Guhya Vidya*, the Kingly Science and the Kingly Mystery, which is secret. In modern India, however, what passes as *Raja Yoga* is in fact a species of *Hatha Yoga*. The tradition of Spiritual Teachers and Occult Teachings has practically disappeared from most of the religions of the world. It is to be found in some completeness, though in an allegorical form, in extant Hinduism.

In Hinduism, there are two paths mentioned—*Pravritti Marga* and *Nivritti Marga*, the Path of Forthgoing and the Path of Return. They mean little unless understood by the light of Theosophy. *Pravritti*, the Path of Forthgoing, is the Path on which the soul goes forth to find Truth, to seek in visible and in invisible nature its message. For all souls on the Path of Forthgoing, there are in

existence teachings that are collectively called *Pravritti Dharma*. Going forth, the soul comes upon the mighty truth that there is a world within as there is a world without, and then that soul begins to tread the Path of Return, *Nivritti Marga*. For such souls there is *Nivritti Dharma*.

All exoteric religions, with their respective superstitions and limitations removed, are *Pravritti Dharma*. They teach people to shun vice and to practise virtue. Rituals and ceremonials are prescribed, but they have now become corrupted and their true meaning is lost. Decay of *Pravritti Dharma* is a marked feature of *Kali Yuga*, the Dark Age.

The esoteric side of *Pravritti Dharma* is the body of teachings, rules and instructions that we call Occultism, Esotericism. Theosophy, the Wisdom-Religion, has always and ever two aspects—exoteric or *Pravritti Dharma*, and esoteric or *Nivritti Dharma*. The inane, unwise and illogical dissension between Shiva- and Vishnu-worshippers is rooted in misunderstanding about these two aspects. Vishnu represents powers in Great Nature that are the Presiding Deities or Presiding Gurus of *Pravritti Dharma*. Shiva-Rudra, Mahadeva, represents powers in Great Nature which preside over *Nivritti Dharma*. Shiva is called the Patron-Saint of all Yogis, and is dreaded by those who are not ready for Him, *i.e.*, who are still in the *Pravritti* stage. Hindus should not and would not quarrel if they understood the real meaning of Vishnu and Shiva—the two Powers personified in Hindu Occultism as the Gurus or Prophet-Teachers of *Pravritti* and *Nivritti Dharma*, respectively.

The teaching about Gurus, or Masters, is more specifically a teaching of the esoteric side of religion. While ordinary exoteric religions make mention of Them, it is the esoteric *Nivritti Dharma* alone which instructs us about Their true status and how to reach Them. Although *Pravritti Dharma* or exoteric religions are either corrupted or dead in this *Kali Yuga*, yet there is hope, for the Compassionate Gurus continue to exist, continue to teach, continue to watch; and those who are desirous of overcoming the "great disease" as the Buddha put it, can do so.

Modern Theosophy, promulgated by H.P.B. in 1875, is a public effort to draw the attention of all to certain spiritual facts: (1) Because of the advance of materialism and its progeny atheism, H.P.B. proclaimed that science would not be able to help the souls of men and women, however much comfort and convenience it might bring to their bodies. (2) Because of the decay of *Pravritti Dharma*, exoteric religions, in every land and on every continent, people might drift into scientific atheism, when they did not drift into religious superstition, and this would react adversely on soul and body alike. (3) Because there was a sufficiently large number of souls ready for the Inner or the Higher Life, who could be guided aright and drawn away from materialism as from religious superstition, the Great Gurus, the Jivanmuktas, the Rishis, the Mahatmas, the Elder Brothers, made one more public attempt to give some indication of the Esoteric Science, *Gupta Vidya*.

Therefore, H.P.B. reiterated the fact that it is possible for us to walk the Path to the Gurus, to live according to the Religion of the Soul, the Hidden Science of Occultism, *Gupta Vidya*, the Philosophy of Salvation, of the Return of the Soul to the Spirit.

All this explanation is necessary to lead us to the practical questions about the great Masters. Who are They? What are Their functions and powers? (a) They are living men, wearing physical bodies, but those bodies are so purified, so controlled, so refined, that they may be likened to veritable temples, while our bodies are like hovels or hospitals. (b) Their character is marked by compassion, sacrifice, patience: They love all without distinction; They sacrifice for humanity at large; They are patient in the presence of folly and crime and sin. Their altruism and philanthropy is to our way of thinking supernormal and extraordinary, for They do possess supernormal and extraordinary powers and faculties. (c) Their Knowledge is so profound that They are masters of life and therefore of death. They have studied first in theory and then in practice all the processes of nature, visible and invisible, and have gained control over nature, having subdued and conquered Their own inner natures. (d) Finally, They are universal souls, *i.e.*, in

Their individual souls the universal focuses and reflects itself. Through Their personalities, universal or macrocosmic forces are let loose, and because Their Will is trained, Their Imagination creates beneficently.

An entire article would not suffice to describe Their faculties and functions. The important point for us to recognize is the fact of Their existence. They live on earth, but though we cannot reach Them geographically—and even if we did we would not know a Mahatma from an ordinary person—They can be reached and known otherwise. How? By following the Path of *Nivriddhi Dharma*. So the clear assurance is necessary to our own minds that They exist, and such an assurance Theosophy gives us. Who would bother teaching abstract truths of a cold philosophy if the concrete attainment to the stage of Chelaship were not feasible? The Great Mahatmas and Rishis exist; Their science exists; Their family of chelas and lay-chelas exists; and any human being aspiring to the life of Chelaship can find the door to the Path that Theosophy shows. Test that door by knocking at it with your own soul-strength and discrimination. Test every other door if you please—the door of superstition, of make-belief, of claims—they all lead astray. Find the right door by the test of knowledge, the test of sacrifice, the test of labour, the test of one-pointedness in service, the test of true devotion. By those tests, if you find the right door, enter therein and you will attain the Power that is Peace, the Sacrifice that is Joy, *Ananda*—Bliss Supreme.

Two are the avenues that can bring one near to the Path of Chelaship and to the door to the *Ashram* where the Masters abide. The first is an intense desire for spiritual knowledge. This arises out of the conviction that the mystery of the universe is solvable. When one approaches the Path that way, one is bound to wait till the vision of altruism is his. The motive of acquiring knowledge, for the sake of knowledge, high as it is, does not bring response from the Gurus. Theirs is a *moral outlook*. They want to be sure of what the aspirant to knowledge will do when he has acquired it. The second avenue is that of service. When a person, however ignorant,

however humble, out of love and pity desires to help others, to help even a single other, he becomes entitled to the attention of the Great Gurus. If one desiring knowledge has to unfold the motive of service, one with the desire to serve must find out, through his service, that without *real* knowledge *real* service is not possible.

So, if we aspire after knowledge, let us begin to serve. If we aspire to serve, let us find out for ourselves that without the knowledge of the Science of the Soul, *i.e.*, of Theosophy, service of human bodies, human minds and human hearts is not possible. Misdirected service can prove harmful, but the gaining and applying of false knowledge is far more dangerous.

Thus intelligent and wise service is what opens the gate. If we think we know enough of Theosophy but do not serve, we have not acquired real knowledge. Conversely, if while serving we do not gain depth of knowledge and of perception, we will not make headway. A Master once said: "If you want to know us, study our philosophy; if you want to serve us, serve our humanity."

When we have engaged ourselves in study and service according to the Science of the Soul, then we can arouse in our heart the deep yearning to feel the Power and Peace of the Gurus. The stage during which this "feeling" is developed is often long and protracted and produces many failures. The Peace and Power that we need to feel are really one—the Peace of the Master is His Power; the Power of the Master lies in his Peace. Mind-Power and Heart-Peace are made one in the Master, the *Jivanmukta*. By knowing our own mind we touch the Power of the Master; by sacrificing our own heart we touch the Peace of the Master—that is, feel it. So by this dual process of knowing our own mind and sacrificing our own heart, Their Philosophy is learnt and Their Humanity is served.

Knowing our own mind is the first step in the direction of knowing the Self, because mind, the thinking principle, is the outer cover of the Self. Mind is the body of the Spirit. What life-energy is to the body, that *Atma* is to the mind. *Prana* makes and keeps the body alive; *Atma* makes and keeps the mind alive. To know our own mind is a difficult task, because the mind is covered up by the

personality—pride and *Ahankara*, prejudice and *Moha*. There is more truth than fiction in phrases such as "a swollen head" and "bursting with pride." So let us know our mind by turning within.

Next, to sacrifice our own heart we have to labour without. What do we do with our hands, with our possessions, with our kin and friends, with humanity at large? Do we give or do we receive? Do we hope that they will come to our assistance, or do we go after them to help, to nourish, to succour? Do we give only to those we love, or do we give to all in the proportion they deserve? Do we judge others from our own point of view or in the light of the eternal fitness of things? Let us make it a rule to send out pure thoughts as we walk the streets, instead of being like a sponge absorbing ugly and pell-mell thoughts—the refuse and scum of the streets. Let us sweep with the broom of our mind the dirt and dust, and water the street with the settling harmony of spiritual meditation. We need also to guard our tongue, for speech is a most vital factor in soul-life. What we hear and what we say can make or mar. Next, let us make it a rule to offer as sacrifice something of our objective possessions. The Occult maxim says: "Do good to yourself by the mortification of sacrifice." No one feels the joy of sacrifice without experiencing mortification.

Thus study and service are cemented by the living of the Life—we call it application. Let us live the Life—of knowledge, of love, of sacrifice. It enables us to feel the Power and the Peace of the Blessed Ones. As we study, Their Power flows into us; as we serve, Their Peace; as we live, Their very Life. Thus we become channels of Light. Chelas radiate the Supernal Light of the Gurus, and are helped to walk the ugly streets of this dark world. Let us resolve to be lighted up by the Light of Manas, endeavour to radiate the Light that we receive, make ourselves temples where the ignorant, the sorrow-laden, the heavy-hearted may come to gain peace and consolation, to secure power and strength. Thus we become worthy of Their Blessing, and win for ourselves the benediction that flows from the World of the Masters.

THE HEALTH OF THE PERSONAL MAN

I.—INTRODUCTION

[Reprinted from THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, November 1956.]

A disease is not an entity....Disease is a personal event. It consists of the individual himself. There are as many different diseases as patients.—ALEXIS CARREL in *Man, the Unknown*

What is the place of health in the frame of the idea of salvation?...*Salvation can be described as the act of "cosmic healing."*—PAUL TILlich in *The Review of Religion*, May 1946

The nature of man being complex, that part of him which is composed of soul, of consciousness, of mind and of reason is divine, and from the superior elements seems able to mount to heaven; while his cosmic and mundane part, formed of fire, water, earth and air, is mortal and remains upon the earth; so that what is borrowed from the world may be restored to it.

It is thus that mankind is composed of a divine part and of a mortal part, to wit, the body. The law of this dual being, man, is religion, whose effect is goodness. Perfection is attained when the virtue of man preserves him from desire, and causes him to despise all that is foreign to himself.—ASCLEPIOS (From "On Initiation" in *The Virgin of the World*)

DISORDERLINESS in outer habits bespeaks disorderliness of the mind. But, between mind and body there are the nerves of Nature called elementals. Some of them are the deities presiding over our bodily senses and organs. Without them, works cannot be performed. This nerve-stuff of Nature is living and conscious like all other things in the cosmos. Our human thought, will and feeling draw the nature spirits to us, and these intelligences so drawn play an important part in our everyday life—in bad moods or in exultations; in quick or delayed execution of duties; in moulding habits of order, neatness and accuracy, or of higgledy-piggledy, in dress or on desk, in eating and drinking, in writing a letter or drawing up a balance-sheet. These elementals or nature spirits are intimately related to our *skandhas*.

Skandhas form the personal man. By his thought, will and

feeling each one stamps on the nerve-stuff or nerve-essence which he draws to himself his own mark or monogram; thus we create our own *tanhaic* elementals. The personal man may be accurately described as lower or Kama Manasic, attracting and holding the *tanhaic* elementals. But the Manasic factor in lower Manas is a radiation from the higher, *i.e.*, the individual Ego, one with the Atma-Buddhic duad. There is between the two Manases, the lower and the higher, the bridge made up of the aspirations of the lower mind for the company and guidance of its parent. But, enmeshed as we are in *tanhaic* elementals, those aspirations are not heeded; so they become silent, and in the progress of time become atrophied. These aspirations not only are the force which enables the lower Manas to extricate itself from bondage to the *skandhaic* elementals; they also, when properly cultivated, become the foundation of the higher life.

What are our aspirations? Aspirations are twofold—higher and lower. First, there is the upward movement of the lower mind toward the higher life and the response from the higher. This is higher desire and is rightly called aspiration. Secondly, there are the yearnings of kama, the lower desires, which run to the sensorium, and get response in terms of attraction or aversion for the myriad objects of the world, the flesh and the devil. No one can ascend to a high altitude without breathing rare air; no one can touch mud without being dirtied. Thought, will and feeling, or ideation and imagination, are at work in both types of aspirations. Impulses and fancies are connected with lower desires; pure ideation and imagination, with the higher aspirations.

Because lower Manas, though mostly hidden in the activity of the lower elemental lives, is the higher Manas, stimulated and drawn to it by the desires, it is capable of responding to the higher.

As Kama absorbs our thinking today, the elemental nerve forces of Nature, attracted by Kama, derive sustenance and strength from some of our Manasic quality. Again, on a higher plane, Manas is ensouled by Buddhi. Buddhi is unconscious on the lower plane, but Manas is conscious. It is the "conscious principle of the monad,

Atma-Buddhi." When Manas becomes active on this plane, then is the Christ born in us.

At our stage, aspirations die quickly because we do not vitalize them by thought; and the Spiritual Will, the power of awakened Buddhi, is weak, when not absent. Therefore we must deliberately strengthen our aspirations with the help of the mind; we should impress the desire nature with right thought, and then act out our aspirations in the body built by food. Images left in the mind become atrophied. Aspirations not nourished continually, weaken and die.

Good aspirations are the foundation-stone of the higher life. Our everyday life is made up of inner desire-thoughts expressing themselves in words and deeds and affecting the outer environment. Our aspirations properly nourished by study, reflection and good company tend to brighten up our environment by the improvement of our *tanhaic* elementals. Our growing higher aspirations find a mirror in our *skandhas*, and it is necessary to clean the mirror and keep it properly polished.

Our *skandhas* reflect themselves, and make us decide what food we shall eat, what clothes we shall wear, what exercise we shall take; our speech and silence result from our *skandhaic* tendencies and affect our breathing, our ideation, our imagination. It is our aspirations affecting our ideation-imagination which should guide us, which should improve the rhythm of our breathing, of our speech and silence, and indicate how to exercise the body, what clothes to wear and what food to eat. Let us, therefore, consider the right purpose and correct service of food, dress, exercise, breathing, attention, so that our higher aspirations gain nourishment on this plane of waking life.

Theosophy teaches us to control our *skandhas*—to train them by proper education. Occultism points to four pairs which play a useful part in our effort at what may be described as curbing the *skandhas*. These are: (1) food and dress; (2) exercise and breathing; (3) attention and sleep; and (4) ideation and imagination. The first two deal with the outer or material aspect of the *skandhas*; the last

two, with the inner and psychological aspect.

The moral basis for the practice is succinctly reflected by the Mirror of Magic thus:

Longing for Purity, the heart cries as the frog cries for rain. Let not the longing bring forth a drought that famishes or a flood that devastates. Drought is of the womb of the miser; waste-thrift is the father of the flood. Both rob Nature. They become matricides. Truth is the soul of Purity. Long for Truth: learn from her silent and sacred lips how purity can be attained.

Longing for Truth, the heart cries as the bulbul cries for its mate. Let not thy Memory of Truth stay away from thee. Truth is the Pati, lord and husband; memory, the Patni, the wife who follows. Truth ever is—Forget thou the false, and memory of the True will spring up.

Longing for Memory, thou art like the earth-bound slave yearning for the azure akasha. Turn thy gaze heavenward. Look on and watch with vigilance and attention, zeal and zest. Contemplate the vault of Great Memory, so far, far away. Graciously will it descend to the crown of the head, to the cave of the heart.

Be vigilant. Remember Truth. Attain Purity.

(To be continued)

As a man who has devoted his whole life to the most clear-headed science, to the study of matter, I can tell you as the result of my research about the atoms, this much: *There is no matter as such!*

All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particles of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together....We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent Mind. This Mind is the matrix of all matter.

—MAX PLANCK

BE LIKE THE OCEAN

THE *Voice of the Silence* gives us this advice: "Be like the Ocean which receives all streams and rivers. The Ocean's mighty calm remains unmoved; it feels them not." What this means, in essence, is that we need to accept whatever comes to us while remaining rooted in the Divine Self. Another verse from the same book says: "His mind, like a becalmed and boundless Ocean, spreadeth out in shoreless space." This refers to the expanded consciousness of an enlightened Being. In both quotations the simile of the Ocean has been used to get across to the reader the immense depth and tranquillity of the mind of someone who has scaled the dizzy Paramita heights, or, in other words, has reached the summit of the Raja-Yoga path. This kind of spiritual development, we are told in *The Theosophical Glossary*, is attained by

the true system of developing psychic and spiritual powers and union with one's *Higher Self*—or the Supreme Spirit, as the profane express it; the exercise, regulation and concentration of thought. Raja-Yoga is opposed to Hatha-Yoga, the physical or psycho-physiological training in asceticism.

H.P.B. recommended this as the true Way, and progress is achieved as the result of enlightened study and practice.

A television programme recently examined the lives of several amateur astronomers, and one or two of them remarked on how gazing at stars through their telescopes and contemplating the vastness of space helped them to see things in perspective. One described the experience as "almost mystical," and another said that she ceased to worry about things like "paying the gas bill" as she saw things in a different light when "stargazing"! It was the contemplation of "eternity" in time and space that gave them this feeling of wonder, even if it was only vaguely felt.

The idea of contrast between the fast-flowing, turbulent streams and rivers and the calmness of the Ocean is an evocative one. The rushing waters of the former are swallowed up in the latter. And so all the disharmony of our lives should be dissolved in the harmony

of our higher nature. Once we have become aware of our true Being, this practice becomes increasingly easier, and we are able to face the hardships of life with a much more cheerful attitude. If we do not find this centre of quiescence, then it is likely that the tumultuous river will sweep us away and we will flounder helplessly, perhaps to drown or be dashed upon the rocks. But, if we have found out what we really are and what is our *real* potential, then we have nothing to fear.

Not only do we need the calmness of the Ocean, but also its strength, which comes from its depth. The Spirit that we draw sustenance from is endlessly profound, and knowledge of this gives a whole new dimension to our appreciation of the grandeur of life. If we are to develop compassion, then we need to understand the terrible limitations that ignorance imposes on the average man and woman. Whole lives are lived on completely mistaken premises. Actions and thoughts that are believed to be perfectly normal, disrupt the lives of millions and they are left wondering why they are suffering and why they cannot relate to others in a natural manner. Psychologists tell us that the way to get rid of our anger and our baser emotions is to give vent to them, and that great danger lies in suppressing them. There is no mention of cultivating the *higher* feelings, which is the only safe way of proceeding in life. The lower emotions must atrophy owing to lack of usage. We need to have a comprehension of the therapeutic power of contemplation on spiritual matters. Even reading the great scriptures of the world can have a decided effect on the consciousness of the reader who approaches them in the right manner. W.Q. Judge writes:

The best advice I ever saw was to read holy books or whatever books tend to elevate yourself, as you have found by experience....All these *are instinct with a life of their own* which changes the vibrations.

Too much "book learning" serves little purpose in the true sense. What really matters is *what kind* of books are read. The perusal of elevating literature can actually *help* the aspirant to develop his latent propensities, and, in many cases, a good book

may act as a talisman in difficult times. H.P.B. did not write *The Secret Doctrine* and her many other works just for the sake of writing. Some have criticized their verbosity, and in many cases this is an excuse for laziness of mind and an unwillingness to make the effort to understand the seemingly difficult teachings contained in the writings. It is only because of our materialistic over-complication of life that the simple truths of nature evade us.

Our minds can become as expansive as the universe only by magnanimity and by trying to develop infinite love for all beings. Selfishness limits the mind and prevents us from piercing through the veil of *maya* to see things as they really are. The serenity that is generated by a congeniality with the Spiritual Self will spread to others and something within them may respond, especially if they are passing through a period of unrest and uncertainty. So much emphasis is put on independence nowadays, but in truth there is no such thing, at least not in the way that most people think of it. We rely on others for most things. Someone has to pick the fruit that we eat, and someone has to grow it. Even the young person who leaves home to find "independence" will discover the illusiveness of that concept. Total independence would be almost impossible to achieve, and even if it was achieved, the person would become extremely selfish and divorced from his fellow human beings. What needs to be developed is interdependence; we should be trying to live for one another and sharing what we have with those in distress.

It is not enough to become as calm as the Ocean and be able to handle all the vagaries of our *own* lives. This will only lead us on the path of selfishness. If we are to be devotees of the Masters who were the real founders of the Theosophical Movement, then it is important that we appreciate the fact that our own sufferings and those of humanity are identical, and that we must use our experience of calmness in the midst of outer disturbance to ease the pain of others. This is following the Path of Compassion, which is the true path for the would-be Theosophist. This is summed up in another verse from *The Voice of the Silence* which speaks of the correct way to use the waters of spiritual knowledge:

Know, O Narjol, thou of the Secret Path, its pure fresh waters must be used to sweeter make the Ocean's bitter waves—that mighty sea of sorrow formed of the tears of men.

This is presenting another angle to the simile of the Ocean and is used here to give some impression of the immensity of human suffering. Our efforts must be to attune ourselves to Humanity's great pain, if we are to fulfil our duties as students of the teachings of genuine Theosophy. This is of vital importance and we cannot expect to understand the deeper Theosophical teachings that are beyond words if we do not comply with the original programme of the Theosophical Movement. The Masters are always on the lookout for those who are willing to work selflessly for humanity and who have a correct understanding of Theosophy, which will provide them with a firm foundation on which to build.

In a practical sense, the quotation from *The Voice of the Silence* given at the beginning of this article certainly gives us this firm foundation. It helps us to understand how to cope with life and how to survive in difficult times, if only we can awaken in ourselves some awareness of the constant presence of the spiritual nature. If we then can begin to grasp its inexhaustible power, we can see the many apparently overwhelming problems in life as merely rivers and streams that are transformed as they enter the calm Ocean of our being. They can be seen as not different from that Ocean. In other words, all experiences, good, bad or indifferent, can be used to help us understand our inner being and, more important, understand the true identity of all living things. It is our attitude to life that is all-important. Do we see an unfortunate event as some terrible vengeance of an anthropomorphic God or as the result of some inadequacy in our being? Or do we take a more enlightened view and assign the occurrence a place in the vast drama of the unfoldment of our soul-life? Spiritual Will is an essential quality to cultivate. In reality we have sole charge of our destiny, and the sooner we realize this the better. We allow ourselves to be manipulated by external forces and the period of disentanglement from this way of thought may be a long one, but "the journey of a

thousand miles begins with the first step" and we need to make a start. We are sailing across the Ocean of life and we must learn to steer our vessel in the right direction if we are to reach the "other shore"!

IF recollection is the basis for the feeling of identity continuous throughout life, and if brain is the only instrument for perception, then there is an inexplicable series of gaps to be accounted for or bridged over, but admitting the Hidden Self no gaps exist.

We are born feeling that we are ourself, without a name, but using a name for convenience later on. We reply to challenge by saying "It is I"—the name following only for convenience to the other person. This personal identity remains although we fall asleep each night and thus far become unconscious. And we know that even when a long period is blotted out of memory by fall, blow, or other accidental injury, the same feeling of identity crosses that gap and continues the same identical "I" to where memory again acts. And although years of life with all their multiplicity of events and experience have passed, leaving but a small amount of recollection, we yet know ourselves as that unnamed person who came to life so many years before. We do not remember our birth nor our naming, and if we are but a bundle of material experience, a mere product of brain and recollection, then we should have no identity but constant confusion. The contrary being the case, and continuous personal identity being felt and perceived, the inevitable conclusion is that we are the Hidden Self and that Self is above and beyond both body and brain.

—W. Q. JUDGE

THE PINEAL GLAND

THEOSOPHY states that the physical form we now have will not be the one we will have for our bodies in the distant future, nor is it the first form humans had on this globe. They began quite differently, and will end for this earth as differently as they began.

Scientists admit that there are many unused organs and remains of organs in the human body which at one time had a function of their own. Take, for instance, the pineal gland, its former use and future possibilities. Many writers of old have asserted that man had once a third eye, and that the pineal gland is that third eye, dead, unused, and therefore retracted to its present place. Today, this once active but now atrophied pineal body is the least understood of all man's anatomical structures, and is considered by scientists to be one of Nature's "mysteries." In certain species of amphibians and reptiles, however, the "third eye" is externally visible.

Theosophical writings bear out that at one time this third eye had its use as an eye, and that in the far distant future it will again be in use. Eastern Psychology, as set forth in our day in the writings of H.P.B., conveys something of the function and significance of the pineal gland and of the brain in general, as well as of other portions of the human anatomy about which modern science knows so little.

H.P.B. calls the pineal gland "the very seat of the highest and divinest consciousness in man, his omniscient, spiritual and all-embracing mind" (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 119). The section entitled "The Races with the 'Third Eye,'" in the second volume of *The Secret Doctrine*, reveals many facts on the subject. Thus, on p. 298 of that volume we are told:

If the odd "eye" in man is now atrophied, it is a proof that, as in the lower animal, it has once been active; for nature never creates the smallest, the most insignificant form without some definite purpose and use. It was an *active* organ, we say, at that stage of evolution when the spiritual element in man reigned supreme over the hardly nascent intellectual and psychic ele-

ments. And, as the cycle ran down towards that point when the physiological senses were developed by, and went *pari passu* with, the growth and consolidation of the physical man, the interminable and complex vicissitudes and tribulations of zoological development, that median "eye" ended by atrophying along with the early spiritual and purely psychic characteristics in man. The eye is the mirror and also the window of the soul, says popular wisdom, and *Vox populi Vox Dei*.

No physiologist or biologist of today understands the functions of certain organs, says H.P.B. in "Dialogue on the Mysteries of the After Life" (reprinted in *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*),

nor yet does he know anything of the pineal gland, which he describes as a horny gland with a little sand in it, and which is the very key to the highest and divinest consciousness in man—his omniscient, spiritual and all embracing mind. This seemingly useless appendage is the pendulum which, once the clock-work of the *inner* man is wound up, carries the spiritual vision of the Ego to the highest planes of perception, where the horizon open before it becomes almost infinite....

So, before the disappearance of spirituality and the increase of materiality, the "Third Eye" was a physiological organ having a real function. That function was *spiritual vision*; that eye "embraced ETERNITY," in the words of *The Secret Doctrine*. It would seem from what H.P.B. writes that the revivifying of this now atrophied organ in aeons to come is not an impossibility.

FOR a parallel to the lesson of atomic theory [we must turn] to those kinds of epistemological problems with which already thinkers like Buddha and Lao Tzu have been confronted, when trying to harmonize our position as spectators and actors in the great drama of existence.

—NIELS BOHR

SORROW'S LESSONS

THE first of the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha is—*Sorrow Is*. Birth, sickness, suffering and pain, old age and death, are universal facts. H.P.B. proclaims the same truth when she says: "As long as we are in the body, we are subjected to pain, suffering and all the disappointing incidents occurring during life." (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 224)

Incarnated existence entails sorrow and suffering. Let us understand why, from the metaphysical point of view. Says H.P.B.:

The *Secret Doctrine* shows that the Manasa-Putras or incarnating Egos have taken upon themselves, voluntarily and knowingly, the burden of all the future sins of their future personalities. (*Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, p. 68)

These Divine Egos sacrifice themselves by incarnating in their lower personalities, though it must be borne in mind that without incarnation they would not get the experience of gross material existence. It is through individual experience and suffering that the Divine Egos are perfected. In like manner, the personalities have to purify themselves in the fire of suffering, if they would share in the immortality of the Divine Egos.

Out of the furnace of man's life and its black smoke, winged flames arise, flames purified, that soaring onward, 'neath the Karmic eye, weave in the end the fabric glorified of the three vestures of the Path. (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 35)

Incarnated existence thus offers the necessary experience by which we may rise to wisdom, to the "higher and more glorious planes of being."

This suffering and experience is sometimes spoken of as vicarious atonement of the higher for the sake of the lower, for through reincarnation the higher raises the lower to a sublimer state. Thus the final purpose of evolution is twofold: (a) "for the experience and emancipation of the soul," and (b) "for the purpose of raising the entire mass of manifested matter up to the stature,

nature, and dignity of conscious godhood." (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 65)

Sorrow is, but what is the cause of personal pain and suffering? As a man sows, so will he reap. As he thinks, so he speaks, so he acts, so he becomes. He cannot escape the consequences of his actions, whether they be good, bad or indifferent. They must all react upon him with the same force with which they were set in motion. Says H.P.B.:

...there is not a mental or physical suffering in the life of a mortal, which is not the fruit and consequence of some sin in this, or a preceding existence. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, p. 115)

We maintain that all pain and suffering are results of want of Harmony, and that the one terrible and only cause of the disturbance of Harmony is *selfishness* in some form or another. Hence Karma gives back to every man the *actual consequences* of his own actions, without any regard to their moral character; but since he receives his due for *all*, it is obvious that he will be made to atone for all sufferings which he has caused, just as he will reap in joy and gladness the fruits of all the happiness and harmony he had helped to produce. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 204-5)

Thus every physical action has its moral effect. Suffering of every kind, be it physical ailment, mental agony or heart sorrow, is determined by the law of moral retribution. All woes are rooted in wrong thought, followed by wrong action, the result of the misuse of powers in this or past lives. But, as H.P.B. points out, if there is retribution for selfishness, there is also a reward for unselfish deeds. The wheel of life turns ceaselessly—"each has his moment of good fortune when the wheel brings him uppermost...each in his turn is crushed as the wheel turns on" (*Light on the Path*, p. 76). "These two, *light* and *darkness*, are the world's eternal ways." What is not learnt cheerfully will have to be learnt through pain.

That all human sorrow is caused by personality and selfishness is generally recognized by the student of Theosophy, but few have

grasped the true significance of pain and sorrow. The following statements from *The Secret Doctrine* will help the aspirant to come to a better understanding of the intrinsic worth of suffering:

No Entity, whether angelic or human, can reach the state of Nirvana, or of absolute purity, except through aeons of suffering and the *knowledge* of EVIL as well as of good, as otherwise the latter remains incomprehensible. (*The Secret Doctrine*, II, 81)

Woe to those who live without suffering. Stagnation and death is the future of all that vegetates without a change. And how can there be any change for the better without proportionate suffering during the preceding stage? Is it not those only who have learnt the deceptive value of earthly hopes and the illusive allurements of external nature who are destined to solve the great problems of life, pain, and death? (*The Secret Doctrine*, II, 475)

From the above it becomes clear that pain is a necessary factor in soul-evolution—the martyrdom of self-conscious existence. It is in times of suffering, when man is afflicted, that he begins to question life, to turn within and search for truth. Painful experiences deepen his understanding and widen his vision. Agony and distress make him humble and more kindly disposed towards others; they awaken in him pity and compassion for his suffering fellow men. Says H.P.B.:

Pity and forbearance, charity and long-suffering, ought to be always there to prompt us to excuse our sinning brethren, and to pass the gentlest sentence possible upon those who err. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 248)

The value of suffering is that it purges the impurities and burns up the dross of the personality, thus clearing up "the sheaths of the Soul." All trials and vicissitudes are beneficial experiences—opportunities for strengthening the Inner Man. But the benefit the sufferer can derive from an experience depends upon his attitude towards it. He must learn to bear the suffering with calmness and resignation. By enduring his suffering with the right attitude, he lifts a little of the heavy Karma of the world. Bad Karma is worked out; old debts are paid off.

To the earnest student, therefore, suffering comes as a deliverer and friend. He is ready to regard whatever the Higher Self has in store for him as discipline and experience, without allowing his suffering to shake him from his fixed purpose in life.

The life of the man of the world is a constant mingling of joy and sorrow. Like the pendulum he moves between pleasure and pain, rejoicing and weeping from life to life, chained to his previous actions. How to break these fetters and free himself from his self-made entanglements? Teaches the Buddha:

Let a man forsake anger; let him root out pride; let him break all fetters. No sufferings befall him who clings not to name and form and who calls nothing his own. (*Dhammapada*, Verse 221)

The ladder by which the candidate ascends is formed of rungs of suffering and pain; these can be silenced only by the voice of virtue. (*The Voice of the Silence*, p.16)

He who desires to free himself from sorrow has to practise and learn to master the transcendental virtues, the Divine Paramitas of Perfection. The centre of his thoughts must be dispassion, detachment from pleasure and pain, for "Mara's arrows ever smite the man who has not reached Viraga."

Yet, even the Paramita Path is called the "Path of Woe"; and he who treads it is referred to as the "aspirant to Sorrow, throughout the coming cycles." It is the Path of Renunciation, the steep Path that "winds up-hill all the way; yes, to the very end." The climber is the *chela* on his way to Adeptship, who now enters upon a different and higher phase of suffering—"mental woe unspeakable; woe for the living Dead, and helpless pity for the men of karmic sorrow, the fruit of Karma Sages dare not still."

The Great Sages feel pain, but They are not disturbed by it. The agony They experience is no longer the result of Their own personal Karma—for They have crossed over all the sorrows of the heart—but is due to the Karma of the Race to which They belong. They have taken upon Themselves, voluntarily and knowingly, the burden of the sins of collective humanity.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

In this International Year of the Family, *The World and I* (August 1994) has a section on the relationship between the breakdown of the family and social ills such as poverty, instability and crime. The first article, by Charmaine C. Yoest, takes the position that a healthy family structure sustains a wholesome society and a vibrant economy. The family is the "fount of virtue" and the "spring of wealth," says the author, who is a Bradley fellow at the University of Virginia and a public policy consultant in the United States.

Children are the future citizens of any nation, and for this reason societies have a stake in whether children are raised to become good citizens rather than bad ones. Most of the lessons they need to learn as they grow and mature, Yoest argues, are best taught and modelled in the context of the family.

Quite simply, the family lays the foundation. As increasing bodies of research attest, our families are the fertile ground from which children acquire the patterns, habits, lessons, and values that, in our increasingly interdependent society, affect us all....Fundamentally, the state needs stability, achievement, and loyalty from its citizens, and families foster these qualities....

The daily escalation of violence attests to increasing instability and weakening of the social order. Respect for authority and willingness to accept personal limits are character traits upon which social order is built. The lessons that build that kind of private discipline, so important to public stability, are best taught in the home....

Research points to a strong correlation between the increasing numbers of children growing up in single-parent homes and the rising levels of violence and crime. One reason is the appalling number of adolescent boys who live on the streets and whose need for belonging, identity, camaraderie, and security that should come from family is filled by gangs....

The family fosters stability through its role in character formation. Stability has other facets, however. Among these is

economic stability....Research demonstrates another, slightly surprising, contribution the family makes to its members: Children in stable, two-parent homes are healthier than other children, and that includes emotional and psychological health....In looking at the overall behavioural problem score, children living with their biological parents once again score better....Values that are essential in the work force—discipline, respect for authority, perseverance—most often are forged in the family crucible.

The family is an irreplaceable foundation for education....Just as crime, health, and poverty are affected by family structure, the research leaves no doubt that children in two-parent families have a significant advantage in formal education.

This debate over the value of the family and its place in society is nothing new. The history of nations bears out that when concerns of the family as a unit are undervalued and when individualism gains the upper hand, the result is societal decay. Yet, unwisely, we fail to learn from history. As we approach the 21st century, the family's role in strengthening society needs to be re-evaluated. The wisdom of Confucius has a message for us even today: "The ancients who wished to order well their States, first regulated their families."

The first World's Parliament of Religions (1893) ended on the encouraging note that "the day of national religions is past," and that "henceforth the religions of the world will make war, not on each other, but on the giant evils that afflict mankind." Diana L. Eck's article, "Reflections on Religious Diversity" (*Span*, September 1994), brings out that during the intervening one hundred years vast global transformations and major new understandings derived from the comparative study of religions have challenged—but not destroyed—the century-old spirit of conciliation and co-operation. Several worldwide interfaith organizations named 1993 the "Year of Interreligious Understanding and Co-operation."

The author, who is professor of comparative religion and

Indian studies at Harvard University, writes that today, on the surface at least, most people see little evidence of a co-operative religious alliance against the ills of the world. This is because extremism captures public attention in a way that co-operation and understanding do not.

Indeed, the past 100 years [she writes] have provided ample evidence that religions are still powerful producers of symbolic weaponry for the strife of humankind....The fear of losing ground to the "other" or to "secularism" seems to lodge equally in the hearts of majorities and minorities, and fanning that fear is the strategy of religious communalists the world over. In the 1990s the politics of identity is reshaping the globe, with religion forming an important part of ever more narrowly construed ethnic and national identities....

Yet a careful observer of the religious world today would have to conclude that if religious extremism and religious chauvinism has had an upswing in the late 20th century, so has interreligious dialogue and co-operation. The last two decades have seen the genesis of countless interfaith activities....And today, 101 years after the Chicago Parliament, there are five major international interreligious organizations—the International Association for Religious Freedom, the Temple of Understanding, the World Congress of Faiths, the World Conference on Religion and Peace, and the Global Forum.

Are we then at the beginning of a new era of religious extremism, chauvinism, and fundamentalism, or one of religious pluralism based on the recognition of interdependence and the necessity of interreligious co-operation? While the georeligious world today is too complex to assert that either of these two powerful currents predominates, one can safely say that fundamentalism and pluralism pose the two challenges that people of all religious traditions face....

To understand the unfolding history of religions, scholars have to study the new forms of religious exclusivism and pluralism. At present, the greatest religious tensions are not those between any one religion and another; they are the tensions between the fundamentalist and the pluralist in each and every

religious tradition....

Finding new forms of imagined communities—national and international, religious and interreligious—is one of the more challenging tasks of our time. The worlds of technology, business, and communications have put concerted effort into the imagining of transnational networks of activity and loyalty, for better or for worse. Even the political and military implications of our global situation have received attention. Yet the careful construction of forms of interreligious communication and cooperation that might be considered part of the basic infrastructure of the world of the 20th century lags behind. And in academia, the comparative study of religion, still in its infancy in many parts of the world, is just beginning to develop the dynamic and dialogical models adequate to the interpretive task.

"Tradition and Conflict: The Obligation of Being Human" is the theme of Nirmal Verma's article in *The Times of India* for September 3. What one understands by conflict is what is associated with one's notion of change. Change is the natural quality of life; conflict arises when one accepts this passing state as permanent and clings to it desperately. This resistance to what is beyond resistance brings suffering, says the author.

The acceptance of this law [of change] need not be a passive resignation to what is happening around us; on the contrary, it is a kind of active seeing, which involves attention. Nothing could be a better definition of *dharma* than this concentrated spirit of attentiveness, a kind of night vigil born out of inner illumination....

There is nothing static and repetitive about tradition. It is enriched by the continuous endeavour to internalize that which is the other, the alien, the outside, till it reaches a point where the boundaries merge. The notion of sacred in a tradition is born precisely from this act of merger. The world ceases to be something "outside," a kind of screen reflecting the images projected on it by man. It is now in-built within man himself....

There is a way shown by all traditions, a way of withdrawal from an egoistic self which is the battleground of all conflicts. It is not a withdrawal of self to non-self, but from a state of exile to one of homecoming; from the depleted reality of the world where man is alone in his own isolation to a world swarming with beasts, gods and stars. What are merely poetic symbols in a secular world are transformed into a kingdom of living spirits to which he can go for pilgrimage in the same way as one goes to holy places.

For this, one does not have to go outside in space or backward in time. It is buried deep beneath the layers of forgetfulness which can only be unearthed by memory. Hence the importance of memory or *smriti* in all traditions which connects us with the deeds of our ancestors. The very notion of creativity undergoes a change. It no longer consists in creating something new, but it resides in the capacity to recall from oblivion that which was always "natural" to man, his obligation of being human in the world, which is what man's *dharma* is all about....

Science and technology might have made deep incursions into the traditional modes of life and may have pushed it to the brink of extinction but it is so deeply ingrained within the texture of man's consciousness that the sense of tradition survives even after the extinction of traditional modes of existence. In the darkest hour of stress and crisis, man turns to it, posing a moral challenge to the acquisitive and aggressive ideologies of the modern world.

Scientists today view the universe not as existing forever in an unchanging state, or as having been created at a finite time in the past more or less as we observe it now, but as continually changing, expanding and contracting, without beginning or end.

A report published in the British science journal *Nature* refers to the discovery, by a group of international astronomers, of an enormous super-galaxy that seems to have been formed by several smaller galaxies colliding. Their findings, say the astronomers, add to the body of evidence that "dark mater—a substance different from the atoms and particles that make up the visible world—

actually exists." The super-galaxy is said to be about three billion light-years away.

"This is actually a galaxy that used to be a group of galaxies and they all merged together, says the report's main author, Trevor Ponman of the University of Birmingham. "It looks like the first pretty solid evidence that galaxies in groups can all merge together," he adds. The galaxy, which is elliptical rather than spiral-shaped, is surrounded by what looks like an enormous cloud of very hot gas. But there is no visible body that could create enough gravity to hold the gas in place. Ponman says this is evidence that there is dark matter in the galaxy.

Life takes on a new meaning when viewed from the perspective of the vast expanses of space teeming with galaxies and universes, with new ones appearing or reforming from time to time, and old ones dying out. *"This process,"* says *Isis Unveiled* (II, 265), *"has been going on from all eternity, and our present universe is but one of an infinite series which had no beginning and will have no end."*

Another report published in *Nature* emanates from French astronomers who believe that they have evidence of planets orbiting a distant star. They used a new high-resolution telescope at an observatory in Chile to examine dust around the star and found the dust swept clear in places, indicating the possible presence of planets.

"We find that the dust is asymmetrically distributed and is clearly depleted within 40 astronomical units (3.7 billion miles or six billion km) of the star, which we interpret as indicating the possible presence of at least one planetary body orbiting Beta Pictoris"—a star that is 52 light-years from the Sun. A light-year is the distance light travels in a year at the speed of 186,000 miles (300,000 km) per second.

Researchers have reported that water has been found in Markarian 1, a galaxy 200 million light-years away and located in the

constellation Pisces, suggesting that the substance so vital to life on Earth may be more widely distributed in the Universe than previously believed (*Astronomy Now*, August 1994). According to astronomer James A. Braatz, the water molecule's signal is normally too weak to detect by radio telescopes on Earth, but so much energy is being spewed from near the centre of Markarian 1 that an extremely powerful beam of concentrated radio signals is being created. The energy waves bear the unique electromagnetic signature of water.

Even in our solar system, Earth is not the only planet where there is water. Researchers have found suggestions that water once existed on the Moon and Mars. Recent studies have led to speculation that water ice may also exist in deep craters near the poles of Mercury.

The presence of water on other planets, and even in distant galaxies, suggests the existence of life. "Fire and Water," says H.P.B., "are the elements in which, as Occult Science teaches, the active and passive procreative powers of the universe are respectively centred." And she quotes Hippocrates as saying: "Father fire gives life to all things, but Mother water nourishes them." ("Zoroastrianism in the Light of Occult Philosophy": THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, July 1971)

In *Transactions*, H.P.B. calls water the first cosmic, universal element, not to be confused with the terrestrial element or the chemical element; and she adds that the cosmic elements are not confined to our little Solar System. And in *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 136-37 fn.) she quotes W. Mattieu Williams, who, she says, has emitted "some quite *occult* theories":

Our notions of solids, liquids, and gases are derived from our experiences of the state of matter here upon this Earth. Could we be removed to another planet, they would be curiously changed. On Mercury water would rank as one of the condensible gases; on Mars, as a fusible solid.
