

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FESTIVALS

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Even a parable is a spoken symbol: a fiction or a fable, as some think; an allegorical representation, we say, of life-realities, events, and facts. And, as a moral was ever drawn from a parable, that moral being an actual truth and fact in human life, so an historical, real event was deduced—by those versed in the hieratic sciences—from certain emblems and symbols recorded in the ancient archives of the temples. The religious and esoteric history of every nation was embedded in symbols; it was never expressed in so many words. All the thoughts and emotions, all the learning and knowledge, revealed and acquired, of the early races, found their pictorial expression in allegory and parable. Why? Because *the spoken word has a potency unknown to, unsuspected and dis-believed in*, by the modern “sages.”

—*The Secret Doctrine*, I, 307

PERHAPS in no other country is there so great a possibility of the revival of the ancient knowledge of Soul Science through festivals as in this country of India. Like folklore and many persistent social and religious customs, festivals too have a core of truth hemmed in too often by superstition and sham. Some of the sacred festivals have an astronomical significance. Some were fixed by the spiritual instructors of old to coincide with the seasons, for seasons are reflections of the cosmic processes in invisible Nature, and the

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climatic peculiarities of the seasons correspond to the psychic and spiritual tendencies of humanity. Every symbol has its meaning and many festivals and traditional events have their own symbolism.

Theosophy admits that many festivals enshrine facts of soul-life, and it provides the key for looking into their real meaning. Using that key intelligently, each can participate in them in an enlightened manner. Those who understand their significance celebrate them not by mere feasting and merry-making, or by the observance of an outer ritual, but in their own heart-consciousness. But for their meaning to be understood they need to be dissociated from their form side. Dassera and Divali, which fall this year in October, are two such festivals—festivals which have a message for the earnest seeker.

Many are the stories and customs connected with these festivals, which have an esoteric basis. But how many people know, for instance, when they gather the leaves of the Shami tree on Dassera day, that they are commemorating a very ancient event? Or, when they illuminate their houses during Divali, the festival of lights—with humble oil lamps or with glowing electric bulbs—that this is symbolic of the lighting up of our tabernacle of flesh with the radiance which comes from within? How many realize that this hidden radiance, this “imprisoned splendour,” cannot escape from the recesses of the heart, where it has been hemmed in by wall after wall of matter, save through the acquirement of spiritual knowledge—which is not mere head-learning?

The symbol of light can yield many meanings. From the Theosophical point of view, light stands for the one Source from which all things emanate, and in more than one place H.P.B. has explained its significance from the cosmic and metaphysical points of view.

Light is the first begotten, and the first emanation of the Supreme, and Light is Life, says the evangelist. Both are electricity—the life-principle, the *anima mundi*, pervading the universe, the electric vivifier of all things. Light is the great Protean magician, and under the Divine Will of the architect,

its multifarious, omnipotent waves gave birth to every form as well as to every living being. From its swelling, electric bosom, spring *matter* and *spirit*. Within its beams lie the beginnings of all physical and chemical action, and of all cosmic and spiritual phenomena; it vitalizes and disorganizes; it gives life and produces death, and from its primordial point gradually emerged into existence the myriads of worlds, visible and invisible celestial bodies. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 258)

Light issues out of the eternal background and splits up into Seven Rays or Seven Lights, “whose reflections are the human immortal Monads—the Atma or the irradiating Spirit of every creature of the human family” (*The Secret Doctrine*, I, 120). Here we have the metaphysical principle for understanding the radical unity of all manifestation. This is one fundamental idea of which the Divali festival reminds us. There are others, which the intuitive seeker can find for himself.

It is always interesting to discover that many of the customs which we observe in this 21st century, without knowing the reason for their observance, have come down to us from races and civilizations long since dead. It gives us a strange feeling to find that there is indeed nothing new under the sun and that what we are doing today other people in other lands have done in other eras. It makes us realize that, if anything is of true importance to men, whether it be a custom or the celebration of a festival, there must be something universal at its source.

Even the aspect of merry-making associated with festivals has its own significance. Joy—*Ananda*—is of the essence of the inner illumination. The clue to that real and deeper Bliss is primarily in knowing, to begin with theoretically, that man carries the radiance of divinity in the recesses of his heart and that it is “nearer unto man than his own jugular vein,” as the *Koran* says. But,

Alas, alas, that all men should possess Alaya, be one with the Great Soul, and that possessing it, Alaya should so little avail them!...Alas, that so few men should profit by the gift, the priceless boon of learning truth, the right perception of

existing things, the knowledge of the non-existent! (*The Voice of the Silence*, pp. 26-27)

Right perception of all things means evaluating them correctly; not as the world does, fancying reality where it does not exist.

To live and reap experience, the mind needs breadth and depth and points to draw it towards the Diamond Soul. (*Voice*, p. 28)

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THE WISDOM-RELIGION EVER ONE

What we desire to prove is, that underlying every ancient popular religion was the same ancient wisdom-doctrine, one and identical, professed and practised by the initiates of every country, who alone were aware of its existence and importance....The proofs of this identity of fundamental doctrine in the old religions are found in the prevalence of a system of initiation; in the secret sacerdotal castes who had the guardianship of mystical words of power, and a public display of a phenomenal control over natural forces, indicating association with preterhuman beings.

—*Isis Unveiled*, II, 99

SEVERAL are the ways in which this subject can be approached: (1) a tracing of the chronological sequence of prehistoric and historically identified spiritual teachers; (2) a comparison of the philosophies, religions, myths, traditions and symbology of the ancient, mediaeval and modern worlds; (3) an investigation of the records of ancient civilizations, and their modern heirs; (4) an examination of modern scientific findings in the light of occult science; (5) a detailed analysis of findings of an architectural or archaeological nature—all these means and many more are employed by Madame H. P. Blavatsky in her great books and her many articles to reiterate to the world the unified system of the Wisdom-Religion of the Ancients.

We cannot understand the scope of the teachings in *The Secret Doctrine* and the antiquity of the Wisdom-Religion unless we keep in mind that records exist which tell us of the origins of our earth and the changes it has gone through. These records are in the safe custody of the Lodge of Adepts. Earthquakes and subsidences have shown us how even now the earth is changing. Many of the lands that were once thought to be legendary are now being found to have had an actual, historical existence.

In this changing world, there is, however, a land which H.P.B. calls the First Continent, the “Imperishable, Sacred Land” that

capped over the whole North Pole like one unbroken crust, and remains so to this day. This land will remain, we are told, until the earth has passed away, regardless of the shifts in the axis of the earth. The second Continent, the “Hyperborean,” peopled by the Second Race, stretched out its promontories southward and westward from the North Pole and comprised the whole of what is now known as Northern Asia. The Third Continent, which we now call “Lemuria,” was the home of the Third-Race men. It stretched south from the foot of the Himalayas across what is now India, Ceylon and Sumatra; then going further south and embracing on its way Madagascar and portions of Africa on its right, and Australia, Tasmania and the Pacific Ocean on its left, it ran down to within a few degrees of the Antarctic Circle.

Next in order arose the Continent of Atlantis, while parts of Lemuria were falling to pieces and sinking. It covered the whole of the North and South Atlantic regions and had islands even in the Indian Ocean. Tradition indicates that the Atlanteans, the Fourth-Race men, had an alphabet, a language and books ages before the Phoenicians. They knew the arts and the sciences, had better technological knowledge, and far wiser physicians than we have. This Continent of Atlantis began to break up several million years ago. The island of Poseidonis, the last remnant of Atlantis, sank some 11,000 years ago. Long before that, about one million years ago, began the formation of the Aryan, the Fifth Race, on the fifth great Continent. If we follow the appearance of the Continents in their geological and geographical order, then America is the Fifth Continent; but as the sequence of the Continents is made to follow the order of evolution of the Races, from the first to the fifth, our Aryan Root-Race, Europe and Asia Minor must be looked upon as the Fifth Continent. We are now said to be in the fifth sub-race of the Fifth Root-Race, and two more sub-races are to come before the Sixth Root-Race will have appeared on new lands that will appear in consequence of cataclysms.

Ancient records, which have most faithfully preserved the Ancient Wisdom, show that the one centre recognized as the cradle

of our present Aryan race was ancient India—not the India we know of today. There was a time when under the generic name of India many of the countries of Asia now classified under other names were included. In those ancient times an unbroken continent included not only the present India but also Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and the Malay Peninsula, and extended from Iran on the one hand to Tibet, Mongolia and Great Tartary on the other, making up what was designated as Upper, Lower and Western India.

Many ancient nations guard to this day the secret records of the Ancient Wisdom, and it is said that a few Elect are the custodians of these records. They form a Great Body of Living Initiates, all knowing one another and participating in the task of guarding the Wisdom-Religion for the future. In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, for instance, we find the Teacher, Krishna, declaring:

This exhaustless doctrine of Yoga I formerly taught unto Vivaswat; Vivaswat communicated it to Manu and Manu made it known unto Ikshwaku; and being thus transmitted from one unto another it was studied by the Rajarshees, until at length in the course of time the mighty art was lost....It is even the same exhaustless, secret, eternal doctrine I have this day communicated unto thee....

These records describe the origin of the world, the history of former Continents, of the Races of men that lived on them, and the great floods and cataclysms that destroyed them. They deal with the beginnings of Knowledge and the line of succession of the teachings—the Great Chain of Teachers who are the Knowers of Celestial Wisdom, and who train their disciples to become like unto them. They tell of the Nameless, the ONE, the Deific Essence, without attributes, from which all beings emanate and into which they are ultimately reabsorbed. They tell, further, of the eternal “pairs of opposites”—Father-Mother—spirit-matter; of the manifold forces of Nature; of the light and the dark sides; of the Path that leads to Perfect Knowledge. All this is told in symbols and allegories, the true meaning of which is known to but a few. It was obviously well known to the Teachers of H.P.B., and through

her conveyed to us in her books. Many modern scholars see in the myths and allegories of the ancients only foolish tales and dispute over their interpretations. Occasionally, however, we see a trace of understanding. Some of the discoveries of the day, in the geological and archaeological spheres, for instance, reveal to the discerning that the teachings and records left by H.P.B. and her Teachers are fact and not fiction.

The ancient traditions of all lands speak of seven Great Teachers who were present as instructors and guides at the beginning of man's life on earth; and, further, tradition supports what the secret teachings affirm, that these Elect were the germ of a Hierarchy which never died since that period. Their prime duty was to teach, help and guide infant humanity in the arts and sciences, in mathematics and astronomy, in architecture and in agriculture, in the art of writing and of speaking, and they finally took human form to reign as Sage-Kings. This was long before the historical record of kings in any land.

Every Race had its Great Teachers, and from the close similarity of their teachings it is evident that their Wisdom was derived from a single Body, a single Lodge, a single System. They form part of an imperishable race, and live even now, secluded in the remote fastnesses of the earth. Mankind is never without their help, even though they be ignored, laughed at, disbelieved in. It is a condition of the work of this Great Lodge that its members be not observed by ignorant, thoughtless men who might create hindrances; so, when they occupy physical bodies they live in secret, guarded places, and when they pass among men they do so unrecognized and unnoticed except by their disciples. It cannot be imagined that we could locate them or their places of residence, for we would not recognize them unless we were completely pure and bent utterly on their Cause and devoted to their service. It is significant to note that they call themselves the "Servants of Humanity." It is we who keep ourselves away from them by our own selfish thoughts and actions.

Cyclically, to revive the Ancient Wisdom and its forgotten

truths, they are permitted to send into the world a Messenger from among them. Often his message is given only to a narrow circle; but, occasionally, at the intersection of great cycles, to a far wider sphere.

Even if we consider only the Great Teachers known to humanity and of whom religious traditions speak, we shall find that they have made an indelible impress on mankind. For instance, the ancient Persians had the line of Zarathushtras—a generic name for great reformers and lawgivers, 13 in number, the first of whom lived in the early Atlantean days. The age of the last Zarathushtra is not known; according to some, he lived some 10,000 years ago. Many sacred and precious works of the Zoroastrians or Mazdeans were destroyed by Alexander, so that very little is known to us now of the line of Zarathushtras; but Occult records claim to have the correct dates and teachings of each of them.

The ancient Chinese, likewise, had their line of Divine Teachers. Their records are partly available in the *Kiu-ti*, the old *Bamboo Books* and the *Shu-King*. They have records of the Dragons (or Serpents) of Wisdom, of divine rulers and divine instructors who taught mankind all the arts and sciences. These records are said to stretch back over a period of more than five million years.

India baffles Orientalists and historians, and the dates they have assigned to its ancient records are generally most inaccurate. The Vedas, for instance, were known thousands of years before the date commonly assigned to them. H.P.B. says that they were composed by some of the earliest Initiates of the Fifth Race; and before the teachings they contain were recorded in writing, they were handed down by word of mouth from one generation to another. Volumes could be written on the treasures the ancient books of India contain; and though scholars see in some of them but myths and absurd fairy tales, those who read with the eye of understanding can discern in them profound truths. Thus, for instance, the great epic poem, the *Ramayana*, is a record of the early races of mankind—of the downfall of the Atlanteans, etc. The *Mahabharata*, too, is a repository of the ancient records and was used for the

conveying of moral and spiritual precepts.

The origins of Egyptian civilization can be traced back to Atlanto-Lemurian days, long before the pyramids were built. And the pyramids themselves are of untold antiquity. While in ancient records they are described as standing on the seashore, now they stand surrounded by desert sands. The history of Egypt goes so far back into prehistoric times that superhuman kings are said to have ruled there before the human ones, Menes being their first great *human* king. Records show the height of civilization that the ancient Egyptians had reached. They had advanced practical knowledge of hydraulics, engineering, architecture, mathematics, agriculture, land-reclamation, wireless and telephones, railroads, telescopes, electricity, chemistry, medicine, weaving, music, painting and other arts, astronomy, astrology, etc. Egypt had her great Teacher in Hermes. This is a generic name and there were at least five different personages in the line. The teachings of Hermes are recorded in the *Book of the Dead*, on monuments and tombs and tablets, and in the *Books of Thot*. All these reveal the depth and extent of the knowledge and wisdom of the ancient Egyptians.

The ancient glory of America is to be sought in Mexico, Central America and Peru. Peru had its line of great instructors and leaders. Its Incas belonged at the beginning of the Fifth Root-race to a dynasty of divine kings, such as those of Egypt, India and Chaldea. The Mayas and Toltecs of Mexico and Central America also had their great Teachers. H.P.B. has said that the Mayas were coeval with Plato's Atlantis.

Babylonia, Assyria and Chaldea were once seats of great learning and culture; and wherever these have prevailed, there we are bound to find evidences of the Wisdom-Religion and of the great Adepts, even though a clear record of a line of spiritual teachers may now be difficult to trace. Babylon had its great King and lawgiver, Hammurabi. The Chaldean *Book of Numbers* is said to be derived from the "very old book" which was used as the basis of *The Secret Doctrine*, and itself served as the basis of the Kabala of the Jews. This *Book of Numbers*, as also the Sumerian

literature with its account of creation and of the deluge, and the Babylonian hymns and poems, all served as models for many of the Old Testament books. The Jews, too, had their line of prophets and their real secret books.

Coming to comparatively recent times, we can compare with somewhat greater preciseness the great teachings offered to many peoples by their Great Men—by Krishna to the Hindus of 5,000 years ago, at the beginning of the Kali Yuga; by Buddha to the India of 2,500 years ago, and later by his grand successor, Shankaracharya; by Lao-tse and Confucius in China, in the sixth century B.C.; by Pythagoras and Plato in Greece, and later by the Neo-Platonists; by Jesus and Simon Magus and Apollonius of Tyana; by Tsong-kha-pa, the Tibetan reformer of the 14th century who introduced a purified Buddhism into his country. All these and many others reiterated in one form or another, under one system or another, the one and identical immemorial sacred and secret Philosophy. What they taught becomes more intelligible with the help of H. P. Blavatsky, the last Messenger of the Great White Lodge of Adepts to the 19th-20th century, who came under the centenary effort to enlighten the world, an effort initiated by Tsong-kha-pa in the 14th century.

To consider the key teachings of some of the Great Teachers mentioned above: Krishna's teachings we have in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. He stresses there the idea of *duty*—one's own and not another's. He taught the value of *action* as opposed to inaction, of *devotion* to the Supreme Spirit which is everywhere and therefore within each man.

Buddha taught renunciation, compassion, self-help. Sorrow, he declared, ever exists, but its root cause—selfishness—once found can be eradicated. In his Noble Eightfold Path he gave the steps that would lead one to the goal of Peace.

Lao-tse was a great sage, saint and philosopher who preceded Confucius. His philosophy is known by the name of Taoism and is contained in the *Tao-te-king* (the Treatise of the Way and of Virtue). He taught that the universe is based upon a formative Principle,

Tao—the Way. It is the uncreate, unborn and eternal energy of nature, manifesting periodically. Nature as well as man will reach rest after reaching the state of purity, and then all becomes one with Tao, which is the source of all bliss and felicity.

Jesus, who came to the Jews with a special mission, had in his youth studied under the Essenes, a mysterious sect having many Buddhistic ideas and practices. Perhaps that accounts for the fact that his teachings are so similar to those of the Buddha. The God he spoke of was, the Father who is in secret and who cannot be appealed to by public prayers. Self-reform, correct understanding of law, brotherliness, tolerance and goodwill to all, returning love for hatred, were his key teachings.

Greece had its Orpheus, who went round the world teaching wisdom and the sciences and establishing Mysteries. His system was one of the purest morality and of severe asceticism.

In historical times, Greece had Pythagoras, the famous mystic philosopher, born at Samos about 586 B.C. He belonged to the same general cycle as Buddha, Lao-tse and Confucius. He is known to have studied the esoteric sciences in India, where he is still remembered under the title of Yavanacharya. He also studied astronomy and astrology in Chaldea and Egypt, and later established at Crotona a college which attracted scholars from all over the world. He was the first to teach the heliocentric system, and was the greatest mathematician, geometer and astronomer of historical antiquity, as also the highest of the metaphysicians and scholars. He taught reincarnation as it was professed in India and much else of the Secret Wisdom.

Plato, who lived 400 years before our era, was another of the great Greek philosophers. He was an Initiate and his writings are known the world over. He was the pupil of Socrates and the teacher of Aristotle. In his works is to be found a complete guide to right thinking and living for individual and state for all time.

Later on, in 193 A.D., Ammonius Saccas founded in Alexandria the Neo-Platonic School of Philaletheians or “lovers of truth.” It sought to reconcile Platonic teachings and the Aristotelian system

with Oriental Theosophy. Its aim was to check the ever-increasing ignorant superstition and blind faith of the times. Among his followers were Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Origen, Longinus and Hypatia, all of whom made valuable contributions to the Neo-Platonic system of thought. But the Catholic Church did not allow this School to survive for long. With the fall of Hypatia and the ruin of the Alexandrian Library began the Dark Ages, a period when the light of truth was eclipsed by the growing power of the Church of Rome, when intellectual freedom and religious inquiry were suppressed, and those brave souls who dared express their individual opinions, persecuted.

The system the Alexandrian philosophers founded was also known as the Eclectic Theosophical system. The word Theosophy, therefore, can be traced back to the third century. Like its predecessor, the Theosophical Movement of our time has as one of its objects the reconciliation of all religions, philosophies and systems of thought under a common system of ethics, based on the eternal verities.

In recapitulation, all the traditions of antiquity, regardless of name and location, show similarity of metaphysical and ethical precepts. They speak of compassion for all living things, of unity and brotherhood, of One Life and One Truth; and though the Teachers of that Truth have been many, all show evidence of complete accord and attunement. They come from age to age to revive the age-old Science of Life and Art of Living. The few who make themselves ready will find themselves among the privileged who tread the narrow old Path that leads to the Lodge of the Spiritual Leaders of mankind.

THE Secret Doctrine will explain many things, set to right more than one perplexed student.

—MAHATMA K.H.

CHEERFULNESS

“Be of good cheer, O daring pilgrim to the other shore.”

—*The Voice of the Silence*

THREE great ideas to reflect upon and practise as we live our life from day to day are contained in the words from *The Voice of the Silence* quoted above. It is a book dedicated to “the Few.” Those few are fortune's favoured soldiers who are trying to tread the spiritual path according to the teachings of the dynamic philosophy of Theosophy, they who aspire to live the Higher Life amidst worldly turmoil. They are the daring pilgrims. Every human soul who goes through the circle or cycle of necessity is an eternal pilgrim, according to the Third Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*. He generally goes from life to life, bound by his own karma, unaware of why he is here and whither he is going. The daring pilgrim is an awakened soul who has recognized his own duties and responsibilities to himself and to the world, from the spiritual point of view. He has dared to do something that most others are not doing—to follow in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessors, the great Lords of Wisdom and Compassion. He has to fight his way to the supernal Truth out of the mire of lies terrestrial. He has to become his own Master and God, controlling Nature and Nature's forces and laws. He has to unfold from within his own Self the knowledge acquired through countless ages, and regain the purity and innocence of the child state which was once his and which he subsequently lost. He has to listen to every cry of pain, just as the lotus opens its heart to the warmth of the morning sun. In fact, he has to make altruism the key-note of his life. He has dared to do this slowly and perseveringly. It is a full-time job, and he has, besides, his obligations to his kith and kin.

Such a stupendous task may sometimes weary and overwhelm the aspirant; hence the important and encouraging warning to be of good cheer. On this path, if the aspirant gets distressed and downcast he may stop all progress; he may even think of returning to the ways of mundane existence. Hence the need to keep cheerful

in spite of the difficulties, realizing that there are other pilgrims on the path, walking side by side, ahead, or behind, and that those who have successfully reached the other shore had to pass through similar experiences.

Therefore it is essential to cultivate the habit of cheerfulness. Each one of us is his brother's keeper; he influences and affects others, as he in turn is affected by them. Cheerfulness is as contagious as despondency and gloom. It helps one to extend friendliness and brotherliness. Cheerfulness usually follows true inner contentment, and Lord Buddha calls contentment the greatest wealth. It is like the health-giving sunshine of life which enables the flowers to bloom, and the fruits to ripen, and the birds to sing their sweet melodies. Likewise there is the beneficent light of the Spiritual Sun radiating its spiritual influence and affecting for good those who seek it. The forces of light need to be spread deliberately. Light and darkness are the world's eternal ways, but it is the duty of every aspirant to join the army of light and peace and thus triumph ultimately over the forces of darkness. When one thinks and acts and lives as the Self of all, then the heart begins to sing the song of cheer. When one is plunged in grief and troubles it is difficult to be cheerful, but if the habit of cheerfulness is built day by day in quiet times, it will be a true sustainer and will lighten the burden.

We have to reach the other shore. The sailing may be smooth or rough, the weather may be calm or stormy, but the ocean of *sansara* has to be crossed, and it is only true cheerfulness that can enable one to do so. Just as a soldier joins the army and dares to fight at peril to his life, so too the daring pilgrim has to move forward and sail onward till the other shore is reached.

What is meant by reaching the other shore? It implies the attainment of perfection in all aspects of life—conscious godhood. The more one dares, the more he shall obtain. Fearlessness is prescribed by Sri Krishna as the foremost of the divine qualities. The aspirant need fear no one and nothing except the tribunal of his own inner self. He starts from where he is, with his merit or demerit, till he completes his voyage, through waking or sleeping,

through embodied or disembodied states. Just as a sailor is always watchful of his direction, of the weather, of the stars in the firmament, so too the daring pilgrim has to be well guarded as he passes through various conditions and stages.

Elsewhere in *The Voice of the Silence* the advice is given:

Be of good cheer and rest content with fate. Such is thy Karma, the Karma of the cycle of thy births, the destiny of those who, in their pain and sorrow, are born along with thee, rejoice and weep from life to life, chained to thy previous actions.

Each one must realize that he has made his own fate through his past choices and past exertion. It is no use murmuring about our present circumstances; what we need is the practice of contentment, the generation of right thoughts, and the performance of unselfish deeds, to build a better future. H.P.B. states: "One little period passed without doubt, murmuring, and despair; what a gain it would be; a period a mere tithe of what every one of us has had to pass through. But everyone forges his own destiny." If we grumble and murmur and lose hope and faith, then before we know it we shall be lost in the wilderness of life. Therefore must we be of good cheer always. We must not fluctuate between smiles and tears. Living in the world of sorrow and misery, the heart must keep steadily cheerful. Not that we are to remain indifferent to the suffering around us; rather are we to help others with the right attitude of mind and heart. Good cheer means brightening up a dreary atmosphere, letting in the sunshine of love and kindness.

The most inspiring idea is that those who have reached the other shore are watching and waiting for the daring pilgrims sailing towards them. It is helpful to keep their great ideal in our hearts, their age-old precepts in our minds, and to sail on with good cheer to the other shore.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE ANCIENTS

THE word "ancient" has a definite meaning in Theosophy. When it is claimed that the teachings of Theosophy have been derived from a very *ancient* source, called WISDOM-RELIGION, it refers to a body of knowledge that is *immemorial* in time, universal as to space and impersonal. This sacred body of knowledge was known in every age to a few wise men, called Initiates and Adepts. The spiritual perceptions of these Adepts range beyond the material limits, enabling them to penetrate to the actual reality of things. These Adepts—the ancients—are the true scientists. Knowledge possessed by the modern scientists is limited, not only because of the imperfections of the instruments used, but also because of their unwillingness to probe beyond the physical realm. Neither science nor religion admits the existence of an occult or supermaterial region, governed by laws. Religion attributes it to the "will of God;" and science—not being able to weigh, classify, or analyze the knowledge of the ancients—rejects it as fraud and superstition.

Isis Unveiled gives examples of infants born with missing limbs—cases of the imagination of the mother affecting the child in the womb. In one case, a woman gave birth to a child with a wounded and bleeding forehead, because her husband had threatened her with a sword pointed at her forehead. In another instance, a woman witnessed a beheading and went into premature labour, giving birth to a headless child. Physiologists have recorded such instances. While some physiologists described these as "curious-coincidences," only a few are honest enough to admit their ignorance. According to some others, "*there is no reason to believe that the imagination of the mother can have any influence in the formation of these monsters*; besides, productions of this kind are daily observed in the offspring of other animals and even in plants." (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 387)

Madame Blavatsky remarks, "How perfect an illustration is this of the methods of scientific men!—the moment they pass beyond their circle of observed facts, their judgement seems to

become entirely perverted” (*Ibid*). She sums up the attitude of modern science toward the ancients:

The field of scientific investigation is bounded by physical nature on every side; hence, once the limits of matter are reached, enquiry must stop and work recommenced....Great is the self-satisfaction of modern science, and unexampled its achievements...they declare that the genuine, real knowledge of the nature of the Kosmos and of man is all of recent growth. The luxuriant modern plant has sprung from the dead weeds of ancient superstition....How many of our distinguished scientists have derived honour and credit by merely dressing up the ideas of those old philosophers, whom they are ever ready to disparage.... (*H.P.B. Series Pamphlet No. 14*, pp. 42 and 44)

Such *apparently* miraculous phenomena abound—their rationale is given in certain fundamental propositions of Eastern Psychology. The very first proposition is: “There is no miracle.” Just as there are laws governing physical nature, so there are laws governing super-nature. There is an *invisible* side to both man and nature. One of the constituents of invisible man is the astral body—*sukshma sarira*—which forms a sort of scaffolding for the physical body. The astral body is electro-magnetic in nature and is enmeshed in the physical like the fibres of the mango in the mango-pulp. Science has now been able to photograph it through Kirlian photography. It is elastic and can extend beyond the physical to a considerable distance. An Initiate can make a solid object move without contact by projecting his astral arm. He can lift himself up into the air like a bird by changing the polarity of his body with respect to the earth. This is known as aethrobacy. Earth is a magnet having positive polarity. If, through well-regulated will, a person is able to change the polarity of his body from negative to positive, he escapes the gravitational pull. The altitude of levitation depends upon his ability to charge his body with positive electricity. Thus, the Law of Gravitation known to science is only half the law. The other half is Levitation.

Once we accept the existence of the astral form, upon which

the physical is built, it is easy to understand the phenomenon of the mother's imagination affecting the child in the womb. Mr. Judge explains:

The growing physical form is subject to the astral model; it is connected with the imagination of the mother by physical and psychical organs; the mother makes a strong picture from horror, fear, or otherwise, and the astral model is then similarly affected. In the case of marking by being born legless, the ideas and strong imagination of the mother act so as to cut off or shrivel up the astral leg, and the result is that the molecules, having no model of leg to work on, make no physical leg whatever...For knife or acid will not injure the astral model, but in the first stages of its growth ideas and imagination have the power of acid and sharpened steel. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 44)

The *real* centres of touch, taste, smell, sight, etc., are located within the astral body. In nature, there is the astral light, corresponding to the astral body in man. It is the invisible canvas or photographic plate of the universe upon which every feeling, thought and action leaves an impression. Clairvoyance is seeing in the astral light, using the astral organs. Sitting for the development of clairvoyant perception involves the risk of slipping into passivity. Unless properly trained, one can never be sure of one's astral perceptions. An anxious mother imagines her child to be in danger and vividly makes the picture of the child meeting with an accident. This picture is impressed in the astral light. This is the product of mere emotion and imagination; of an accident, which has not actually taken place. A clairvoyant who is not properly trained is unable to distinguish.

Too much involvement in psychic perceptions can lead to the confusion of ego—if the person is introduced to such perceptions before he is ready. In a disciple, the astral senses are allowed to remain sealed; as otherwise, there is a danger of his becoming a medium. While an *adept* has complete control over his faculties as also over the occult forces and processes of nature, a *medium* is a

sensitive, who exhibits excessive passivity. An adept can consciously withdraw his astral body out of the physical. In a medium such withdrawal takes place involuntarily.

Man is a little copy of the universe. He has in him a centre or focus corresponding to every force or power in nature. For instance, nature exhibits the power of drawing materials from the air and compressing them into the ideal forms of a tree or animal, and making them visible. Man also has the power to make visible what is ideal and invisible. This is done by filling the ideal form with matter condensed from the air. For instance, it is possible for an Initiate to precipitate the message at a distance on a paper. He can draw the carbon and other chemicals from the air and then pack them into a mould or a matrix. Using the power of imagination, a picture is made of every letter in a sentence to be precipitated. The picture is held by the combined action of will and imagination.

Will, faith and imagination are all attributes of the mind and play an important role in performing apparently miraculous-looking phenomena. “Mind is the name given to the sum of the states of Consciousness grouped under Thought, Will and Feeling.” (*S.D.*, I, 38). Man has the power of *Kriyasakti*, *i.e.*, “the mysterious power of thought which enables it to produce external, perceptible, phenomenal results by its own inherent energy. The ancients held that *any idea will manifest itself externally if one's attention is deeply concentrated upon it. Similarly, an intense volition will be followed by the desired result.*”

“A Yogi generally performs his wonders by means of Itchasakti and Kriyasakti.” (*S.D.*, I, 293)

Mind is not the by-product of brain activity. Brain is only an instrument of the mind. There are three aspects of the mind. Modern psychology at best describes the lower mind or Kama-Manas—mind involved in passions and desires. The “Ego” mentioned by Freud is the “I” that links inner and outer worlds. It evaluates, plans, remembers and deals with the real world. Freud's Super-Ego falls far short of what Theosophy describes as the Higher Mind. Madame Blavatsky describes the position of modern psychology thus:

“Thought is to the psychologist metamorphosed sensation and man a helpless automaton, wire-pulled by heredity and environment”...It is psychology, *minus* soul; psyche being dragged down to mere sensation; a solar system *minus* a sun; *Hamlet* with the Prince of Denmark not entirely cast out of the play, but in some vague way suspected of being probably somewhere behind the scenes. (*H.P.B. Series Pamphlet No. 31*, pp. 3-4)

Modern psychology mentions only three states of consciousness: sub-conscious, conscious and super-conscious. According to ancient psychology, there are not three but seven states of consciousness. For instance, when we are angry or sad, we are at the kamic plane; while reasoning, discussing and cogitating, the consciousness functions on the mental plane; when in deep meditation, it is on the Buddhistic plane. Similarly, in waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep the same consciousness functions, and uses different sets of senses.

Unless modern psychology admits the presence of a higher mind in man, free-will, soul-memory, intuition, etc., must remain a mystery. A great majority of scientists and psychologists reject the idea of free-will. But occultism teaches that if we deny free-will, we have to reject psychic individuality, *i.e.*, the self-determining power which enables man to override circumstances. Madame Blavatsky argues, “Place half a dozen animals of the same species under the same circumstances, and their action, while not identical, will be closely similar; place half a dozen men under the same circumstances and their actions will be as different as their characters, *i.e.*, their *psychic individuality.*” (*Raja Yoga or Occultism*, 1973 ed., p. 63)

Higher Manas is the storehouse of all our thoughts. All impressions, feelings, events are stored in the higher mind. While psychologists define memory as an innate power of reproducing past impressions, which is dependent upon normal, healthy functioning of the brain, they are only able to explain *remembrance* and *recollection*. How little is known even of these two forms of

memory is clear from H. P. Blavatsky's explanation of memory:

There are cells in our brain that receive and convey sensations and impressions, but this once done their mission is accomplished. These cells of the supposed “organ of memory” are the *receivers* and *conveyers* of all the pictures and impressions of the past, not their *retainer*. Under various conditions and stimuli, they can receive instantaneously the reflection of these astral images back again and this is called *memory, recollection, remembrance*: but they do not preserve them. When it is said that one has lost his memory, or that it is weakened...it is our memory cells alone that are enfeebled or destroyed. The window glass allows us to see the sun, moon, stars and all the objects outside clearly; crack the pane and all these outside images will be seen in a distorted way....The Universal Memory preserves every motion, the slightest wave and feeling...of man or of the Universe. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 25, Foreword*)

But they know nothing about *reminiscence*, or soul-memory—which is not a part of physical memory. It is the memory of the soul. It is this soul-memory which enables a person to recall his past lives. When the incarnated mind is put *en rapport* with the Higher Mind, one has memory of past incarnations. When the lower mind is paralyzed, either because of pure living or in certain conditions like somnambulant trance, the memory of the soul comes to the surface. Madame Blavatsky gives an instance of the servant-girls who could speak Hebrew and play violin in a trance state, but not in the normal condition. She writes (*Key*, p. 129):

How is it that the servant girls in a poor farmhouse could speak Hebrew and play the violin in their trance or somnambulant state, and knew neither when in normal condition? Because as every genuine psychologist of the old, not your modern school, will tell you, the Spiritual Ego can act only when the personal Ego is paralyzed. The Spiritual “I” in man is omniscient and has every knowledge innate in it; while the personal self is the creature of its environment and the slave of the physical memory.

WE LIVE IN THE MIND

OURS has been called the Age of Anxiety. Many hold that this is an inescapable hazard of modern existence. Few realize that each individual contributes to and actually causes this psychological phenomenon to occur. The reason—lack of understanding about the real nature of Man, and the part played by Mind in perceiving or failing to fulfil his Divine Purpose.

Today, so far as one can judge, no remedies are available to combat this “disease.” Fewer and fewer are turning for help to that mental idol, the Personal God, which, day by day, in accelerated degree is losing its pretension to authority. The great majority is held fast in the toils of Materialism, which has in large part contributed to this problem, and is helpless to offer a solution.

Most people believe that “reality” exists in external conditions, the environment. They do not realize that it is our *attitude* towards the environment that defines “reality” to each one. By attitude is meant: (1) the belief we hold as to the significance of the environment, and (2) the values we place upon it because of our belief.

Anxiety is an experience of the mind, while that about which I am anxious exists *outside* the mind, *i.e.*, in the body, circumstances, situations. Thus, we clearly perceive a process of duality: (*a*) events outside the mind; (*b*) reaction to the events within the mind. On the basis of this perception, we can recognize the meaning of the expression—“we live in the mind.”

After pondering this thought—“we live in the mind”—and dwelling on its possible significance, a feeling will struggle through our consciousness that we are not as completely dependent on “things out there” as at first we believed. Somehow, in recognizing that we are directly concerned with mind, and only indirectly with body, questions and hopes arise. Maybe the mind-reactions need not slavishly follow the changing fortunes of circumstances! Why do they, anyway? Can they be made free from the tides of change?

Immediately, there arise in memory confirmations of this

intuition: the polio victim with smiling face and cheerful disposition; the healthy, affluent one with a perpetual scowl. The “inevitable” mental reaction *can* then be broken! But how?

It is then that statements often read suddenly assume a startling significance. We see their relevance, their application to this poignant problem. Belief and Personal Desire—these are the keys! As we ponder on the relation of each to the creation of anxiety, a wonderful realization arises—I *can* do something about eliminating anxiety! Slowly, or in a flash, the steps become clear.

Belief, in one sense, is like a rocket in space, opening vast areas for exploration; in another sense, it is a statute of limitations. In the latter case, the believer seldom or never ventures outside the limits of possibilities prescribed; because, as a result of such belief, the task seems either useless or impossible. Such a belief is Materialism.

The effects of Materialism are too well known to require anything more than a quick résumé. The limitations: one physical existence, no purpose, no meaning; only matter is “real”; therefore in the body, no particular value is given Mind, except as tabulator, memory-bank, planner; the only pursuit worth while is pleasure. What brings pleasure? Things, circumstances, situations that are “right”; wrong kinds bring pain. So, mind plans to get and to hold the “right” kind.

Thus it is that mind registers joy at a pleasurable sensation, and anxiety when we fear the loss of those things upon which pleasure depends. And this process, for untold millions, has become automatic. This is how Materialism has chained the Souls of men to perpetual anxiety, through its false doctrines.

Theosophy brings the message and the method to break the chains that lead to mental slavery. Man is Soul, a Mind-Being. His existence does not depend on any states or conditions of matter. He uses matter for the sake of experience. Thus, his presence in the body is analogous to that of a visitor to a foreign country. He observes the life there, he tastes the representative dishes, he compares the customs with his own, but never forgets that he is an

Observer. Unlike this visitor, we, in the body, have forgotten our own Country. We must feel unbounded gratitude for the Messenger who reminded us of our real status—that of Observer of the life around us and within the body. If we use this wonderful knowledge, we need never feel the pangs of anxiety, no matter what loss or deprivation comes to the personality. These become merely experiences from which we may garner precious direct knowledge.

Personal desire is the other cause for anxiety. Expressed in terms of the dual process of mind-reaction to things or conditions—if “I love that summer vacation,” I will be “anxious and fearful” that unexpected circumstances will deprive me of it. Or, in more general terms, if I place dependence on things outside of Self, for joy or happiness, I have built my house of life on shifting sands. The perpetual winds of change will shift the foundation, and then my happiness turns to worry, fear and misery.

What then is the remedy? Separate mind from body, in refusing to place dependence on external events. Assume the position that mind is the observer of events, not the participator. To view what happens to *me*, with the same impartial appraisal that I apply to a stranger, will bring freedom to mind. Let us become researchers in the laboratory of the mind, and sift out all the impulses and desires that lead to dependence on externals.

To what end? So that mind, liberated from involvement in matter, may, in time, reflect the glories of Soul Life.

IN sensation no permanent home can be found, because change is the law of this vibratory existence. That fact is the first one which must be learned by the disciple. It is useless to pause and weep for a scene in a kaleidoscope which has passed.

—*Light on the Path*

THE MELODY OF LIFE

LIGHT ON THE PATH advises us to listen to the song of life. Amidst human slaughter and war-drums, with food shortage and starvation all around, and with all kinds of diseases taking their toll, it seems incredible that one can listen to the song of life. The picture of our world is so dark and gloomy that one wonders how there can be a song of life, and whether there is any joy in living. But if we turn our gaze from the human kingdom to nature in all its beauty and bounty, we do find it singing the song of life in its manifold moods, emitting its own expressions in colour, rhythm, sound, harmony, motion, each performing its own duty, providing true joy to human beings.

Sunrise every morning and sunset every evening put us in inner communion with the orb of light, both physical and spiritual. Then it is that the song of life can be heard, because we are in tune with the Infinite, away from the noise and clamour of the objective world. The vast firmament with rolling clouds during the day and sparkling stars during the night is an amazing sight which overwhelms us, but it opens our mental horizon far and wide and takes us away from our narrow, limited, petty, personal existence. The earth produces a thick green carpet of parks and meadows, fields and farms, with beautiful trees, flowers and fruits; the birds soaring heavenwards sing their melodies, giving us indescribable joy—then it is that we can listen to the song of life.

Sri Krishna is ever playing on his magic flute the divine melodies, but human beings prefer to remain where they are, from the spiritual point of view, so that all the sweetness of life is missed out, the joy of life becomes a remote experience, the meaning and the purpose of life is not understood, and the goal of life remains unknown. Sri Krishna's flute is ever playing melodious tunes to awaken human beings from their slumber, to activate their minds and hearts to reach the harmonious centre of life where peace and joy abide eternally. Human beings prefer to remain in their tamasic sleep unless and until some kind of sorrow or suffering bewilders

them. Then they begin to question life's mysteries and try to understand what the great teachers have taught down the ages. That becomes a turning point in life for some.

What is life? It is the manifested expression of the divine source, the one reality back of all visible and invisible forms. Life is the teacher and brings us all the lessons necessary for our growth and evolution under the law of karma, pleasant or painful as the case may be. So it is life itself which sings, as it opens before our eyes one chapter after another which discloses to us its meaning and message. Life is also a school where we learn as we go through different grades of experiences, physical, mental and moral, individual and collective. Some are fruitful, others barren, depending on whether we have worked with the law or against it.

Light on the Path also tells us: “Store in your memory the melody you hear.” The melody must be in tune with the Infinite, for then only is it worth storing. It is not the brain memory but the soul memory that records the melodious tunes of the experiences of the soul. Further, we are asked to “learn from it the lesson of harmony.” Around us, in the outside world, there is discord between man and man, nation and nation. Only at the centre of life does eternal harmony prevail, whose other name is compassion. To the extent that we unfold compassion we shall reach the very centre of life. Self-knowledge is of loving deeds the child; it is the way to compassion. And it is through the very law of compassion that the great teachers come down upon earth to sing the song of life, now of *ashoi*, purity of thought, word and deed, as did Lord Zoroaster; of love and meekness and humility, as did Jesus. The picture of Buddha in meditation is a song in itself, indicating the four truths: sorrow is, the cause of sorrow; the cure of sorrow; and the Noble Eightfold Path leading to *Nirvana* and renunciation of it.

What does Sri Krishna play on his flute? He sings of his divine pedigree, and how he comes upon earth cycle after cycle for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of righteousness. So we naturally owe our heart's gratitude to all the teachers for their devotion to the spiritual welfare

of humanity. Had it not been for them, humanity would have been in worse plight and misery. Theosophy is in the world to keep alive in man his divine intuitions so that he may listen to the song celestial. When human memory fails, then the teachings are forgotten, the teachers are forgotten, and chaos and confusion prevail in the world.

Light on the Path further tells us: “There is a natural melody, an obscure fount in every human heart. It may be hidden over and utterly concealed and silenced—but it is there. At the very base of your nature you will find faith, hope, and love.” So, however silent and concealed it may be, the melody is certainly there and needs to be approached and attuned to. This can only be achieved by the cultivation of faith, hope and love. Faith in the great teachers and their teachings, their very life example of service and sacrifice, of wisdom and compassion, of purity and truth.

One must also have faith in one's own Higher Self. “Even if thou wert the greatest of all sinners, thou shalt be able to cross over all sins in the bark of spiritual knowledge.” What a solemn affirmation, what an encouraging note to those who have gone astray, to follow the eternal verities and walk the path of righteousness! It requires discrimination. “Even if the man of most evil ways worship me with exclusive devotion, he is to be considered as righteous, for he hath judged aright.” He has taken a right turn of mind and heart and therefore there is hope for him. The last of the great teachers was H. P. Blavatsky, who came not just to one nation or one race, but to the whole of Humanity, to sing the greatest of songs, that of brother-hood, so that all outward distinctions may fall away, and man look upon man as a divine ray of the Supreme Self. Tennyson speaks in “Locksley Hall” of “the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.” And again in “Locksley Hall Sixty Years After” he says:

Only That which made us, meant us to be mightier by and by,
Set the sphere of all the boundless heavens within the human eye,
Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, thro' the human soul;
Boundless inward, in the atom, boundless outward, in the Whole.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

The phenomenon of interchangeability of the senses has fascinated scientists since a long time. “The brain is so adaptable, some researchers now think, that any of the five senses can be rewired,” writes Michael Abrams (*Discover*; June 2003). Paul Bach-y-Rita, a neuroscientist at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, is carrying out experiments to prove that our senses are interchangeable. In one such experiment, a blindfolded man—who was fitted with a camera and some electrodes on his tongue—reported that he could see with his tongue. “We don't see with our eyes,” says Bach-y-Rita, “we see with our brains.” He is of the opinion that similar to sight and touch, sound and touch could also be swapped.

It is generally believed, even by some neuroscientists, that sight is a complicated phenomenon and that the eye is an astonishing organ that cannot be replaced. Bach-y-Rita counters this by saying, “There's nothing special about the optic nerve. The brain doesn't care where the information comes from. Do you need visual input to see? Hell, no. If you respond to light and you perceive, then it's sight.” Already, attempts are being made to take advantage of this discovery. “The Navy SEALs are working with him on a system that will allow them to see infrared through their tongues and to find their way through murky waters, leaving their eyes free for other tasks. NASA has worked with him to develop sensors to enable astronauts to feel things on the outside of their space suits.”

Madame Blavatsky has this to say:

...the senses are to a certain extent interchangeable. How would you account, for instance, for the fact that in trance a clairvoyant can read a letter, sometimes placed on the forehead, at the soles of the feet, or on the stomach-pit?...The sense of seeing can be interchanged with the sense of touch...One sense must certainly merge at some point into the other. So also sound can be translated into taste. There are sounds which taste exceedingly acid to the mouths of some sensitives, while others generate the taste of sweetness; in fact, the whole scale of senses

is susceptible of correlations. (*Transactions*, pp. 43-44)

Americans are debating the morality, legality and practicality of physician-assisted suicide. Is it legitimate to deny someone a right to die with dignity, especially when pain-relieving medicines prove ineffective? This and allied questions are being debated at Oregon, which passed the Death with Dignity Act (1997), making it the only state to permit physician-assisted suicide. “Although Oregon's law has strong safeguards against misuse, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft has strenuously opposed it, threatening that any physician who prescribed lethal doses of medicine would lose his license to prescribe medications as well as serve a twenty-year prison sentence,” writes Lawrence Rudden (*The World and I*, May 2003). Gerard V. Bradley explains why the government has an interest in preserving life. He writes:

A doctor's calling is always to heal, never to harm....The scandal created by doctors who kill is great, much like that caused by lawyers who flout the law, or bishops—shepherds—who do not care about their flocks....

When someone commits the crime of murder, all we can say is that the victim's life was shortened. We know not by how much; the law does not ask, or care....

Some risk to life is acceptable where the risk is modest and the activities that engender it are worthwhile....We might instinctively step in front of a car, or jump into a freezing lake to save a loved one, or a stranger's wandering toddler. We might do the same upon reflection, but we do not want to die. We do not commit suicide....

This distinction between intending and accepting death is...real, as real as space shuttles....

Some critics feel that such a law would result in driving the terminally ill patients to end their lives, out of guilt for being an emotional and a financial burden upon their relatives. It is feared that such a practice could be misused and may quickly become a

norm. Cathy Cleaver of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops points to the Netherlands, where physician-assisted suicide has been legalized for years—supposedly only in cases where desperately ill patients have unbearable suffering. However, now the Dutch policy has expanded “to allow the killing of people with disabilities or even physically healthy people with psychological distress; thousands of patients have been killed by their doctors without their request.”

A little reflection shows that this amounts to “suicide.” The soul is deprived of its opportunity to go through the experience of coping with the illness and learning its lesson—what it is to work through an extremely sick body. By trying to end life, we leave behind unexhausted karma—which is like leaving a debt unpaid—so that in some future life we will be placed in a similar situation by the unerring law of Karma, till the lesson is learnt. It is perhaps an opportunity for the family members also to learn something in attending to a terminally ill patient, and be willing to suffer along with him, helping him in bearing his suffering. Madame Blavatsky writes in “Modern Ignorance of Life and Soul”:

No man...has a right to put an end to his existence simply because it is useless. As well argue the necessity of inciting to suicide all the incurable invalids and cripples who are a constant source of misery to their families....There is a vast difference between the man who parts with his life in sheer disgust at constant failure to do good, out of despair of ever being useful...and one who gives it up voluntarily to save the lives either committed to his charge or dear to him...One *takes* away his life, the other offers it in *sacrifice* to philanthropy and to his duty. (*H.P.B. Series No. 15*)

We generally try to look for a support outside of ourselves. It is this tendency to readily accept as a “saviour” any person promising to provide an immediate solution to our problems, which is at the base of the New Age “guru-cult.” “The stereotype of the

saffron-clad sadhu is out. The New Age gurus are trendy, young people dispensing a designer manual for modern living,” writes Surya Swami (*India Today*, July 14, 2003):

In the past five years, a plethora of new gurus has sprung up across the country and unlike the earlier, older masters, they are trendy, urbane and educated. They are bending and blending ancient wisdom and modern techniques to concoct a novel millennial spirituality. For them wellness is the buzzword and they are more likely to discourse on relationships and career stress than the Upanishads and Vedas....The new generation teachers aren't deified, remote saints but accessible, aware buddies-cum-psychiatrists who help navigate through the minefield of modern life. It is the age of anti-guru.

The Guru-chela relationship has been considered sacred, occupying a central place in Theosophy. Thus:

One of the missions of Theosophy is to rescue and re-elevate the chair of the Guru to its noble height. It is most likely that immediately after her arrival in India, H.P.B. publicly spoke of the existence of the Great Gurus for the purpose of drawing a distinction between the Teachers of Universal Divine Wisdom pointing to the Path of Real Renunciation and those many others who taught numberless ways to personal emancipation or mukti....

The bond between Chela and Guru of the true *Gupta Vidya*, the Secret Science, is a purely spiritual one....Beyond the physical and the psychic worlds is the spiritual world, the Hall of Wisdom, and there only the Guru of soul-life awaits the aspiring Chela....

Make yourself dry of the moisture of the personal and human feelings and then the wood will catch fire. Within the heart the Guru is to be found. (*The Theosophical Movement*, Vol. 8)

Madame Blavatsky describes the “true guru” thus:

...the real Guru is always an Adept in the Occult Science. A man of profound knowledge, exoteric and esoteric, especially the latter; and one who has brought his carnal nature under

subjection of the WILL; who has developed in himself both the power (*Siddhi*) to control the forces of nature, and the capacity to probe her secrets by the help of the formerly latent but now active powers of his being:—this is the real Guru. (*Raja Yoga or Occultism*)

Geologists are debating whether the Black Sea is the place of Noah's flood. According to the current theory, ten thousand years ago, the Black Sea was a freshwater lake. But, some 7500 years ago when the ice age ended, the world's climate warmed, raising the water level six inches each day, causing the flood, writes Eve Conant (*Newsweek*, July 14). Geologist Robert Ballard, who is investigating the Noah's flood theory, says, “I am convinced that there is more history in the Black Sea than in all of the museums of the world combined.” Robert Ballard and his colleagues are exploring the Black Sea for any evidence of human settlement. Many scientists are skeptical and feel that it would be difficult to prove the occurrence of such a flood and that it was indeed Noah's.

In *The Secret Doctrine* Madame Blavatsky mentions several deluges and cataclysms. She observes that Noah's flood is allegorical.

What we object to is the literal acceptance of Biblical chronology, as it is absurd, and in accord with neither geological data nor reason. Moreover, if Noah was an Atalantean, then he was a Titan, a giant, as Faber shows; and if a giant, then why is he not shown as such in *Genesis*? (*S.D.*, II, 265)

Noah's Deluge is astronomical and allegorical, but it is not mythical, for the story is based upon the same archaic tradition of men—or rather of nations—which were saved during the cataclysms, in canoes, arks, and ships. No one would presume to say that the Chaldean Xisuthrus, the Hindu Vaivasvata, the Chinese Peirun—the “beloved of the gods,” who rescued him from the flood in a canoe...are all identical as a personage. But their legends have all sprung from the catastrophe which

involved both the continent and the island of Atlantis. (*S.D.*, II, 774)

The “Deluge” is undeniably an *universal tradition*... Stockwell and Croll enumerate some half dozen Glacial Periods and subsequent Deluges—the earliest of all being dated by them 850,000 and the last about 100,000 years ago. But which was *our* Deluge? Assuredly the former, the one which to this date remains recorded in the traditions of all the peoples, from the remotest antiquity: the one that finally swept away the last peninsulas of Atlantis....The little deluge, the traces of which Baron Bunsen found in Central Asia, and which he places at about 10,000 years B.C. had nothing to do with either the *semi-universal* Deluge, or Noah's flood—the latter being a purely mythical rendering of old traditions...(*S.D.*, II, 141)

According to the story of *Kaliya daman lila* from the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, when Krishna found that the venomous serpent Kaliya had been contaminating the river water with his poison, he jumped into the river and after a long struggle, subdued him. Amishi Dhanuka interpretes the symbology of the story (*The Times of India*, July 8):

Kaliya symbolises many aspects of Kaliyug. Kaliya is black, the colour symbolising demoniac characteristics very similar to the inherent nature of contemporary man who is devious, proud, arrogant and envious. Kaliya imagines himself to be invincible, like many of us do today as we glow in the deceptive light of our false ego....

The story of Krishna and Kaliya the Snake is the story of how, ultimately, good triumphs over evil.

H. P. Blavatsky has something definite to say on the subject of Good and Evil, and especially on the symbology of this tale.

As there is far more evil than good in the world, it follows on logical grounds that either God must include evil or stand as direct cause of it, or else surrender his claims to absoluteness.

The ancients understood this so well that their philosophers...defined evil as the lining of God or Good....If evil disappeared, good would disappear along with it from Earth. (*S.D.*, I, 413)

We must not forget that Krishna does not destroy Kaliya, but asks him to retire into the fathomless depths of the sea.

Does not the permission granted [by Krishna] to the serpent [Kaliya] to betake himself to the fathomless depths of the sea, indicate that, though we may purge our individual natures of evil, it can never be extirpated but must still linger in the whole expanse of the Kosmos, as the opposing power to active goodness which maintains the equilibrium in Nature—in short, the equal balancing of the scales, the perfect harmony of discords? (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No.26*, p. 15)

Most of us are curious to know our pedigree. Where do we really come from? “A new generation of DNA genealogists stand ready to unearth our ancestors. We may not like what they find,” writes Kathleen McGowan (*Discover*, May 2003). For \$150 to \$500, and by sending one's cheek swab or hair sample, one can know one's line of descent. It all started with tracing the roots of Melungeons in the United States. Could their ancestry be traced back to Portuguese sailors shipwrecked in the 16th century, or to Gypsies, or to the ancient Phoenicians? Geneticist Kevin Jones seeks to unlock the mystery, using genetic analysis. Thus:

Most of the time, the three billion nucleotides in the human genome reproduce just fine. Occasionally, though, one of the nucleotide base pairs that make up the molecules gets switched, or a short stretch of genetic code is duplicated. Figuring out who is related to whom, scientists have realized, is just a matter of comparing these mutations. People with recent ancestors in common will have many of the same mutations. Distant relatives will share fewer of them.

Anthropologists now isolate the Y chromosome DNA or

mtDNA from the rest of the cellular gunk and feed the purified, prepared DNA into a machine. They then read out the nucleotide sequence of A's, C's, T's, and G's that comes out on the other side and compare the pattern of mutations with those in various public genetic databases. These patterns are known as haplotypes, and sets of similar haplotypes are organized into haplogroups. A haplogroup tells where a given line came from on a global scale (sub-Saharan Africa versus eastern Asia, for example). Often... a haplotype will point toward a more specific geography, like Japan or southern India.

Besides the uncertainty of the results, geneticist Jones realized that there is also the human side to this research, when he received a death threat from a Melungeon repelled by the possibility of having African-American blood. "I don't think many of us have a sense of how dangerous this is," he says. "It stirs the hornet's nest. We are driven, through the purity of science, to support or reject hypotheses, but it's a terribly naïve, pure, God-like approach..."

Is it enough to know our earthly pedigree?

We think we know our earthly pedigree when we have looked at the genealogical family-tree; science thinks it knows the physical pedigree of man and humanity, having traced his form from the protoplasm, and its growth from savagery. Neither the modern philosopher, nor the scientist, has traced the links of heredity, psychic, intellectual and spiritual; in the absence of that knowledge, it is not surprising and is very natural that the modern estimate of the human form is altogether a mistaken one. (*Studies in the Secret Doctrine*, Book I, by B. P. Wadia)

THE "easy" and happy times are the periods of rest; the "hard" times are the periods of training—opportunities for gaining strength and knowledge.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

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