

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

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W. Q. JUDGE—A GREAT THEOSOPHIST

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He who does the best he knows how and that he can do,
does enough for us.

—A MASTER OF WISDOM

WHO deserves to be called a “great Theosophist”? Why is Mr. Judge so called? Perhaps if we can answer this satisfactorily we shall understand him and his place in the Theosophical Movement of all time.

One of the signs of his greatness was his attitude and behaviour after the passing of H.P.B. Whereas many thought and acted as though H.P.B. was dead and gone, he acted as though she were alive—as indeed she was, and is, through her writings. By studying what she wrote, we can contact her mind and draw near to her. Whether in a body or not, she remains a living, vital reality. Mr. Judge recognized this, while others acted as though with her passing they were free to do what they liked with her writings, or even to forget them if they wished. “Where thought can pass they can come” is true not only of the Masters but also of H.P.B. It should become for us a living fact that as we study—not merely read—her writings, we contact her dynamic mind.

The question arises: Why did Mr. Judge see this while many others did not? We have a clue in his repeated references to the continuity of the Movement. He has recorded that when he met

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H.P.B. in 1874, apparently for the first time, it seemed to him as if he were meeting an old friend, one whom he had known and worked with towards a common end in lives gone by, and with whom he was once again joined to carry on that work where it had been left off. Again we must note that thought binds; unity is possible only when there is similarity of Teachings and of Purpose. All other unions will prove unfruitful in time. Mr. Judge's bond with H.P.B. was based on similarity of Teachings—for he responded immediately to them—and of Purpose—to spread the Teachings. He had been a Theosophist in other lives, for he showed instant recognition of both Teacher and Teaching and was loyal to them till the very last, in word and deed. It is these facts that show him to be a great Theosophist.

We can become such if we remember that we are working for the morrow, for other lives, creating bonds with those having similar ideas and purpose. It is not enough to create bonds of love and affection, or to refuse to make enemies. This is good in its own way, but the vital necessity is to bind ourselves more and more firmly to those who have the same Teaching and Purpose as we have. Even today, those who are drawn to Theosophy and wish to further its work in the world must have contacted it and other students of the Philosophy in prior lives. How else could they be drawn to it and to one another in this life? For some, the attraction is like the awakening of a memory, the end of a search for understanding life's problems; it is a call to help the Purpose of the Movement by sacrifice and work, which brings its own thousandfold reward. Remembering this, we can bind ourselves to the Philosophy, to the Purpose, to Those who stood and stand behind the Movement, and to our fellow students now, so that we may in time become like Mr. Judge, and in another life take up the work where we left off.

One most important virtue that Mr. Judge possessed, and which we too must strive to possess, was—trust. Trust, first, in the Philosophy and Purpose of the Movement. *From the Teachings to the Teacher* is a good maxim to remember, for the Teacher is the

embodiment of the Teaching. One common failing which hinders our progress and that of the Movement is that we are apt to follow others blindly, rather than follow the Teachings. Mr. Judge advises us to formulate to ourselves certain things as true that we feel to be true, and then increase our faith in them. The more we study the Teachings, the more full of trust and trustworthy shall we become. "I trust Judge more than anyone in the world," said H.P.B. In this, as in many other things, he has set a noble example for us to emulate.

All of Mr. Judge's actions and writings are what they are because he *knew*. He was no newcomer to Theosophy; he *knew*, and therefore he had the true faith. Let us try to qualify ourselves in a similar manner by impregnating our minds and hearts with that other quality of his—devotion.

Recognition of the value of that which we trust brings with it devotion to the Truth and its Teacher. This devotion brings us, as it brought Judge, to the realization that what matters is not what we want, or think, or what ideas we have. All that matters is that we love and trust, and that therefore we study and learn and promulgate. This underlies from one point of view the statement: "The power which the disciple shall covet is that which shall make him appear as nothing in the eyes of men." That which destroys faith, love and devotion is pride, and so right from the early stages we must learn not to push ourselves forward, as again Judge warns us. He had the great quality of humility, and had no desire to shine. If something needed to be done and someone else did it, that was for him an occasion for rejoicing, even if it meant that he could not have the privilege of doing it himself. He always tried to bring others more closely into the work, thus helping them to grow. His pride was never hurt, not even during the great trials he had to face on account of pride in others. He felt no resentment in himself. But he did feel strongly when the Teacher and her Teachings were being neglected, and spoke out very firmly against this trend. It needed great courage to struggle to keep the Original Teachings and the Original Methods pure, and it is in a large measure because of him that we have with us today the unadulterated Teachings of H.P.B., for it was he who

brought Mr. Crosbie forward and thus made possible the foundation of the U.L.T.

Judge was utterly selfless and completely fearless, and these qualities were his because he was impersonal. With him it was “Theosophy first and Theosophy last” all the time.

His writings show that his power of absorption and of giving the essence of the Teachings was remarkable. The depths they explore indicate that he had realized the essence. He was what he wrote; he was sure because he had proved it all in his life. Therefore he could reiterate the Teachings with authority. He was a true “hand-on.”

“What man has done, man can do.” But we must follow the right path, that of humility and impersonality, devotion and love, faith and trust, while struggling to attain a deeper union with those devoted to the same Teachings and the same Purpose.

A LITTLE consideration of what takes place around us every day would show us, that a higher law than that of our will regulates events; that our painful labours are unnecessary, and fruitless; that only in our easy, simple, spontaneous action are we strong, and by contenting ourselves with obedience we become divine. Belief and love,—a believing love will relieve us of a vast load of care.

There is a soul at the centre of nature, and over the will of every man, so that none of us can wrong the universe.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

FOUNDATIONS OF LIFE

THE foundations of any house are the most important part of the structure. Strength and durability depend upon those foundations. Also, the size—length and breadth and height—are determined by the foundations; even the inner walls which go to make rooms and chambers are dependent on the original foundations.

The analogy between the foundations of a house and those of life is perfect. But what are the foundations of life? On what actually does our life rest? What are the basic elements of which the life-foundations are composed? It is outside the scope of modern science to answer these questions. Science observes natural phenomena and tells us *how* things happen, but it does not trouble itself with *why* they happen. That is supposed to be the sphere of religion and philosophy. But religious knowledge has degenerated into theological argumentation, and philosophy has become speculations in logic and abstractions unrelated to our lives. In our modern world, Theosophy is perhaps the only philosophy which adequately answers not only the how but also the why of life.

The foundations of anyone’s life are composed of the principles of thought and action of that individual. Our understanding and our character produce our behaviour and conduct in outer life. If we ask a person, “What are the principles of your life?” most often we get for answer a surprised expression. Very many people do not live according to principles, but live, from day to day, according to the customs and traditions of their family and community. Their own personal habits distinguish them from other members of the family, and but for those personal habits most men and women would be undistinguishable—just as we are unable to distinguish between individual sheep in a flock! These personal habits form part of our character and spring from our inclinations, *i.e.*, our likes and dislikes.

So the foundations of most people’s lives are habits and inclinations. No wonder their lives are chaotic, drifting, now here, now there, full of petty happenings, some pleasant, others

unpleasant, and interspersed with a few excitements and thrills which teach nothing and lead nowhere! And because most people live by desires and inclinations and habits, without a proper understanding of these very inclinations and habits, most of the time there are mistakes and puzzlement. Pain and suffering overtake and permeate most lives. These continue till the life of the person becomes veiled in the mystery of death.

The first duty of a human being to himself and to all others is to inquire into his own motives and methods. Why do we desire this thing? Why are we inclined to run away from that other thing? Is this habit of ours right and just? And so on. Such questions make us inquire into the meaning of our very existence, compel us to examine our own thoughts and ideas, our own feelings and emotions. Such inquiry and examination are the first steps in the right direction of living. If we insist on understanding the meaning of our own actions, we shall very soon be ready to appreciate the explanations and teachings that Theosophy offers.

This great and immemorial philosophy provides principles of thought and action. How and what should we think? What actions should we perform and how? In short, the purpose of life will reveal itself to our minds and enable us to introduce order and harmony, justice and happiness in our daily existence.

The first great principle that should become an ingredient in the foundation of our life is the truth that each one of us is a Spirit-being. We are neither our ever-changing bodies, nor our ever-moving and ever-wandering minds. Our desires change, and with them our moods. But the Soul in us, the Eternal Observer and Witness of all changes of mind, moods and body, is ever there. This Soul or Spirit-being uses mind and body, presides over all our actions, is the enjoyer of good actions done by mind or body, and is also the admonisher and adviser. When we indulge in bad thoughts, selfish feelings and evil actions, it does not and cannot approve. And because it is the Silent Spectator and Witness of all processes, it is called *Upadrashta*. Higher than that Spirit-being in us there is nothing; therefore it is also called the Great Lord,

Maheshwara, the Supreme Person. That is the *Gita* teaching and it is reiterated by Theosophy.

The spirit in the body is called *Maheshwara*, the Great Lord, the spectator, the admonisher, the sustainer, the enjoyer, and also the *Paramatma*, the highest soul. (*Bhagavad-Gita*, XIII, 22)

We are the Great Lord—not our body, not the mass of feelings, not even the mind, but that which is behind and within and beyond body, feelings and mind. Let us think of that as a principle of life and conduct. We, the Spirit in us, is the real, the immortal, pre-existent and everlasting. Theosophy repeats the teaching of the Upanishads—“Thou art That.” But we human beings are so immersed in our pettiness, in our wants and desires, that we have forgotten the great basic truth of life and of the universe. We need to make an attempt to seek the Spirit-being that we are. Says *The Voice of the Silence*: “Within thy body—the shrine of thy sensations—seek in the Impersonal for the ‘Eternal Man’; and having sought him out, look inward: thou art Buddha.” We must make an attempt to look for that “Eternal Man,” that Spirit-being.

The first step is to distinguish between that which is the Spirit-being, the Real Soul in us, and the mere assemblage of personal thoughts and desires, personal inclinations and habits. This is not the work of a day or a week, but if we persist and are steadfast, we shall notice that the Spirit-being that we truly are is imprisoned by thoughts and feelings, by inclinations and habits. Let us try to recognize the fact that we are the ever-existent and immortal Spirit. We have always existed in the past and will ever remain immortal in the future.

The second step: This Spirit in the body is of a triple nature—creator, preserver, destroyer-regenerator. We in our own nature are Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. We create, we sustain and preserve, and finally we destroy to regenerate and re-create. We ourselves are the creators of our environment and circumstances; none else put us where we are. We brought ourselves here and we alone maintain ourselves in our situation. It follows logically that we

alone can change ourselves if we wish to and know how to. It is not necessary to know all the details of how we are possessors of this triple power, or how it all happens. In the progress of time we will learn that. But what is most important is that we recognize that we are the real Soul, the Spirit-being, controller of mind and body, creator of circumstances and environment.

The third step: The method or process of refashioning our present environment consists in “working with the Law.” The universe of which we are a part is governed by Law. Between our body and the whole universe of matter there is an intimate connection. Between our mind and the universe of mind there is an indissoluble link. Our Spirit and the Spirit of the Universe are identical. We have to find out the Law of the Universe which applies to our mind, for it is the mind that can control and guide our body and can also know the nature of Spirit. Theosophy teaches that by right thinking, by correct ideation, we can learn to use the Law that is as infallible as it is just, as strict as it is merciful. To work with the Law we must go to our own mind and impress on that mind the truth of Duty and Sacrifice—*Dharma* and *Yagna*. The Spirit-being that we are is creator-preserver-regenerator and its chief and primary instrument of action is the human mind. This mind must be presented with two fundamental concepts. It must think about Duty and Sacrifice. Through the joint action of these two we can fulfil our life-mission, realize in experience the purpose of life.

So there are these three steps: inner recognition that we are Spirit-beings; that we create and re-create our own outer environment; that the primary and the most important instrument of our real Soul is the mind, and the mind must act according to *Dharma* and *Yagna*, Duty and Sacrifice. People often fail in the performance of their duties, or are confused by the conflict of duties because they look upon them only from the viewpoint of actions or deeds. The mental aspect of duties is not taken into account. That is the starting point of visible actions. Thoughts are causes, and deeds are effects; so the causal aspect of Duty is much more

important than the visible, effectual aspect. Similarly, we always relate the word “sacrifice” to deeds, to what is visible. A person gives money in charity and it is called sacrifice; but by what ideation, with what motive has he made that charity? If it is to get praise and win accolades, then it is no sacrifice. So, we have to learn to do our duty and to perform our sacrifices in the mind first, and then in a natural fashion acts of duty and sacrifice will manifest.

It is by the mind, generating right ideas of duty and of sacrifice, under the guidance of the Spirit in us, the Higher Self, that we are able to overcome our weaknesses, to elevate our character, to increase our knowledge, to spread purity and transform our surroundings, making them radiant with peace and prosperity. If we are weak and suffer poverty, moral or mental, which is far worse than the physical, we do so because our thoughts in the past have been wrong; right thinking, correct ideation, brooding over the spiritual aspects of Duty and Sacrifice, will bring us inner peace and contentment born of understanding, and make us friends and helpers of all humanity.

All of us, now and here, as we are, immersed in the affairs of ordinary life, are bound by a silver thread to the Great Master. Who is He? Krishna or Christ, Avalokiteswara or Ahura Mazda. All Lanoos and Chelas recognize this truth of truths and call their own Higher Self the Great Master. Let us seek that Great Master, the Mighty Lord, in the cave of the Mind, in the sanctuary of the Heart, and our lives will become noble, full of the strength of Wisdom.

WHAT profit is there in crossing the sea and in going from one city to another? If you would escape your troubles, you need not another place but another personality. Perhaps you have reached Athens, or perhaps Rhodes; choose any state you fancy, how does it matter what its character may be? You will be bringing to it your own.

THE SYMBOLOGY OF THE BANYAN TREE

There are no ancient symbols, without a deep and philosophical meaning attached to them; their importance and significance increasing with their antiquity. (*The Secret Doctrine*, I, 379)

THE Ancients, Madame Blavatsky wrote, knew “that nothing could be preserved in human memory without some outward symbol.”

The subjective can hardly be expressed by the objective. Therefore, since the symbolic formula attempts to characterise that which is above scientific reasoning, and as often far beyond our intellects, it must needs go beyond that intellect in some shape or other, or else it will fade out from human remembrance. (*S.D.*, I, 473)

Such a symbolic formula as she refers to seems to be the designation given to the “Root-Base” from which the Hierarchy of “the *Arhats* of the ‘fire-mist’ of the 7th rung”—the highest on earth—is “but one remove.” That designation—in English translation “the ever-living-human-Banyan”—we may perhaps profitably consider.

This “Root-Base” is also described as a “Wondrous Being” that, before the separation of the sexes in the Third Race, is said to have descended from a “high region.” This Wondrous Being, called the “Initiator,” is described as “the *Tree* from which, in subsequent ages, all the great *historically* known Sages and Hierophants, such as the Rishi Kapila, Hermes, Enoch, Orpheus, etc., have branched off.” A passage of great beauty and appeal thus describes this Being:

As *objective man*, he is the mysterious (to the profane—the ever invisible) yet ever present Personage about whom legends are rife in the East, especially among the Occultists and the students of the Sacred Science. It is he who changes form, yet remains ever the same. And it is he again who holds spiritual sway over the *initiated* Adepts throughout the whole world....He is *the* “Initiator,” called the “GREAT SACRIFICE.”

The name is most appropriate, for,

sitting at the threshold of LIGHT, he looks into it from within the circle of Darkness, which he will not cross; nor will he quit his post till the last day of this life-cycle. Why does the solitary Watcher remain at his self-chosen post? Why does he sit by the fountain of primeval Wisdom, of which he drinks no longer, as he has naught to learn which he does not know—aye, neither on this Earth, nor in its heaven? Because the lonely, sore-footed pilgrims on their way back to their *home* are never sure to the last moment of not losing their way in this limitless desert of illusion and matter called Earth-Life. Because he would fain show the way to that region of freedom and light, from which he is a voluntary exile himself, to every prisoner who has succeeded in liberating himself from the bonds of flesh and illusion. (*S.D.*, I, 207-8)

He sets what may be called the archetypal pattern followed by all who at the journey’s end forgo Nirvana, electing to remain with suffering mankind until the “endless end.”

It is said that “it is under the direct, silent guidance of this MAHA—(great)—GURU that all the other less divine Teachers and instructors of mankind became, from the first awakening of human consciousness, the guides of early Humanity.”

The Secret Doctrine also tells us that

there never yet was a great World-reformer, whose name has passed into our generation, who (*a*) was not a direct emanation of the LOGOS (under whatever name known to us), *i.e.*, an *essential* incarnation of one of the “the seven,” of the “divine Spirit who is sevenfold”; and (*b*) who had not appeared before, during the past Cycles. (II, 358-59)

When men have become sufficiently spiritualized, Madame Blavatsky writes, they will *know* this, and also recognize why “Krishna and Buddha speak of themselves as *re-incarnations*.”

The esoteric doctrine explains...that each of these (as many others) had first appeared on earth as one of the seven powers of the LOGOS individualized as a God or “Angel” (messenger); then, mixed with matter, they had re-appeared in turn as great

sages and instructors who “taught the Fifth Race,” after having instructed the two preceding races, had ruled during the Divine Dynasties, and had finally sacrificed themselves, to be reborn under various circumstances for the good of mankind, and for its salvation at certain critical periods; until in their last incarnations they had become truly only “the parts of a part” on earth, though *de facto* the One Supreme in nature. (*S.D.*, II, 359)

Consider also, in the light of the teaching about “the ever-living-human-Banyan,” the following prophecy from the *Vishnu Purana*, quoted by H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 378):

When the close of the Kali age shall be nigh, a portion of that divine being which exists, of its own spiritual nature...shall descend on Earth...(*Kalki Avatar*)....He will re-establish righteousness on earth....

In the light of these quotations, does not the significance of the banyan tree symbol appear almost self-evident? Without attempting to develop here the symbolism underlying the reference to the banyan tree as “the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life,” let us turn our attention to the tree itself, under the mighty shade of which Vishnu, in one of his incarnations, is said to have reposed and there taught to men philosophy and sciences. It seems appropriate that, as Madame Blavatsky tells us,

under the protecting foliage of this king of the forests, the Gurus teach their pupils their first lessons on immortality and initiate them into the mysteries of life and death. (*S.D.*, II, 215)

A mighty shade indeed an ancient banyan spreads, though yielding here and there a glimpse of sky. Its leafy vault sometimes extends over a very large area, sometimes more than a leaf-carpeted, sun-flecked acre. One can pass unhindered through the tree from side to side in any of several directions. Many small rooms, however, are outlined by the numerous aerial roots, stretching downward from nearly horizontal branches high above the ground. These roots have sometimes 20 feet or more to go before they

reach and penetrate the soil. That once achieved, they thicken and form supporting pillars, indistinguishable in appearance from trunks. And ever from these, as well as from the upper branches, there spring fresh roots, sometimes in a cluster, sometimes intertwined, expressions of the exuberant vitality of the tree.

How easily can one imagine such a grove sheltering ancient teachers who, retiring to the forest, yet attracted pupils from near and far! And who knows whether the noble vault of such a giant tree might not from time to time have been the meeting place of Adepts from different quarters?

Apparently, even for the root that has reached and penetrated the soil, its contact with the branch or bole from which it sprang is vital, for here and there under the great tree’s vault one sees a slender stump or huddled group of stumps standing erect, all bare and gaunt in contrast to the leafy verdure of the living tree.

A reflection of Marcus Aurelius seems sadly apposite in this connection. He wrote:

A branch lopped from its adjacent branch must of necessity be severed from the whole tree at the same time. And in exactly the same way, the man who sunders himself from any single one of his fellow-creatures drops out of the community.

Fortunately, though the root’s severance is final and almost irrevocable, there is still hope for man. Marcus Aurelius recognizes a difference between “the branch that has from the first grown with the parent tree and continued to share one common life with it” and the branch once lopped off and then regrafted. But “it is in our power to grow once more to the branch we quitted, and resume our place as active members of the Whole.”

KEEP a green tree in your heart and perhaps a singing bird will come.

—CHINESE PROVERB

HOW TO BE BROTHERLY

THEOSOPHY teaches that Universal Brotherhood is a fact in nature. But, our day-to-day behaviour, in most part, is so unbrotherly as to prove the statement false. We behave as though we were an isolated, encapsulated and separate entity and as a result we find ourselves amidst a lot of problems. We also find that the only solution to these problems is to adhere to the assumption and act accordingly.

The question is sometimes asked, “When millions are starving, is it right for some affluent nations to dump their surplus wheat into the sea?” This behaviour is rooted in the feeling of separateness—one powerful nation acting as a unit against other less privileged nations. We cannot go into the economics of the problem. Ideally no man can sin alone or profit alone. What about our day-to-day life? If someone insults us, do we leave it to the law of Karma to mete out the justice? No. Depending on the time and circumstances, we either react angrily—if our opponent is weaker—*or* feel depressed, helpless, and remain withdrawn if the opponent happens to be stronger. It is true that we have not reached that point of development as to be guided by our Higher Self. Yet, the minimum we can do is to think rationally, use our reason before acting, instead of simply reacting. What should really be our response? Let our own careful thought decide the course of action. It is, therefore, important to cultivate *shravana* (listening) and *manana* (reflection) so that we can base our thinking on certain spiritual truths.

Action is done on three planes—thought, word and deed. All actions begin on the plane of thought. We are our brother’s keeper, teaches the Bible. Cain not only murdered his brother Abel, but questioned, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” This refusal of brotherhood in thought is the root cause of unbrotherly feeling and actions. We should feel responsible for one another, support one another, and help the life to grow and progress.

Thus great care has to be exercised in the thinking process. The *Bhagavad-Gita* considers faultfinding a great sin. Not speaking

of the faults of others is a discipline each one has to undertake. In *The Key to Theosophy*, Mme. Blavatsky names some of the negative Theosophical duties:

Never to backbite or slander another person. Always to say openly and direct to his face anything you have against him. Never to make yourself the echo of anything you may hear against another, nor harbour revenge against those who happen to injure you (p. 250)...No Theosophist should be silent when he hears evil reports or slanders spread about the Society, or innocent persons, whether they be his colleagues or outsiders (p. 248)...[In case what you hear may be true] then you must demand good proofs of the assertion, and hear both sides impartially before you permit the accusation to go uncontradicted. You have no right to believe in evil, until you get undeniable proof of the correctness of the statement (p. 248)...Keep silent about such things with every one not directly concerned. But if your discretion and silence are likely to hurt or endanger others, then I add: *Speak the truth at all costs.* (p. 252)

When a fault is detected in a person, we immediately make it a reason for us to behave in an unbrotherly manner towards him. At the root of it is envy or egoism. Do we not forgive those we love and even find excuses for their weaknesses and wrongdoings? We have to expand the circle. It may happen that our brotherly approach is not accepted or appropriately responded to by another. We must introspect and find out whether our method was right. Were we patronizing in our approach? Did we expect some kind of gratitude or indebtedness from another? Did we have a sense of superiority? If so, others are sure to sense it, and then the reaction is most likely to be quite the opposite of what we expected.

There is a tendency to gossip about a third person in his absence, or even about the whole world in general, as if the talkers themselves are aboveboard. Talking about or even pondering over the faults of others is bound to stir up emotions. Do we expect to feel brotherly towards the same person when we meet him the next time? It is absurd. The gossip shall pass, but the emotions

flow and disturb the mind and thinking.

In speech we must mind the tone. We should avoid a bitter, ironical and cutting tone. In *The Friendly Philosopher* (p. 48), Mr. Crosbie gives the rules for speech:

Let him say what is *true*.

Let him say what is *useful*.

Let him say what is *pleasant*.

Let him utter no disagreeable *truth*.

Let him utter no agreeable *falsehood*.

After speech comes action. Since we have generally been *reacting* rather than acting, it becomes difficult to act deliberately and in the right way. However, good acts will not come automatically. If we want to be good, we must act, as goodness requires us to act. If we keep up such a practice—difficult though in the beginning—necessary emotions will surely follow.

Man's life is so complicated and confused that he needs truth as a basis for action. In his critical moment, truth will aid him in doing the right action. As brother-pupils, we owe it to one another to share this truth. If we have been benefited by it, we must let it touch others. But if something is told in confidence, we should never reveal it to another. Hence, in order to adhere to truth we must be of limited speech. If we have established the right relationship with a person, we could always speak the truth without causing hurt or misunderstanding. A pleasant lie is hypocrisy—an unpardonable sin.

One must have personal concern and personal involvement in doing charitable acts, *e.g.*, giving food to a needy person. We should so arrange our life that a portion of our time, money and energy should always be available as a reserve for others who are really in need. This concern should become the way of life.

Apart from Brotherhood among humans, all the lower kingdoms of nature should be respected as living beings. In nature's scheme, the lower forms of life support the higher forms, and nature does so without leading to mishandling, wastage or contempt. We must use the lower kingdoms as nature does. Calcium in our bones

and iron in our blood is introduced by nature into the body without altering their *Dharma*, basic nature, yet contributing to the functions of the life of man—the higher life. On the other hand, we should so think, live and feel as would be beneficial to the lower kingdoms.

IN fact, the duty of defending a fellow-man stung by a poisonous tongue during his absence, and to abstain, in general “from condemning others” is the very life and soul of practical theosophy, for such action is the handmaiden who conducts one into the narrow Path of the “higher life,” that life which leads to the goal we all crave to attain. Mercy, Charity and Hope are the three goddesses who preside over that “life.”...

A true theosophist must be a cosmopolitan in his heart. He must embrace mankind, the whole of humanity in his philanthropic feelings....“Severe denunciation is a duty to truth.” It is; on condition, however, that one should denounce and fight against the *root* of evil and not expend one's fury by knocking down the irresponsible blossoms of its plant. The wise horticulturist uproots the parasitic herbs, and will hardly lose time in using his garden shears to cut off the heads of the poisonous weeds. If a theosophist happens to be a public officer, a judge or magistrate, a barrister or even a preacher, it is then of course his duty to his country, his conscience and those who put their trust in him, to “denounce severely” every case of “treachery, falsehood and rascality” *even* in private life; but—*nota bene*—only if he is appealed to and called to exercise his legal authority, not otherwise. This is neither “speaking evil” nor “condemning,” but truly working for humanity; seeking to preserve society, which is a portion of it, from being imposed upon, and protecting the property of the citizens entrusted to their care as public officers, from being recklessly taken away.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

APPROACH TO STUDY

THE Introductory to *The Secret Doctrine* is a very important part of the whole, for certain principles are laid down there which show us what attitude we should adopt in the study of the book.

H.P.B. tells us (p. viii) that the writing of the book was necessitated “by the wild and fanciful speculations in which many Theosophists and students of myicism have indulged, during the last few years, in their endeavour to, as they imagined, work out a complete system of thought from the few facts previously communicated to them.” Also, on p. xviii she wrote that “...people are always in the habit of judging things by their appearance, rather than their meaning.” And she added that “even most of the Fellows of the Theosophical Society have fallen victims to the same misconception.” How true this has proved to be in the years since her death!

Speaking of the past cycles of spiritual outpouring, she wrote that “Time and human imagination made short work of the purity and philosophy of these teachings...” (pp. xx-xxi). Is it not true that, as then, so today, “Works, most remarkable for their ingenious deductions and speculations...foregone conclusions generally changing places with premises...” have appeared in what is known as “Theosophical” literature? Have we not here a hint that we should study the original teachings and not the deductions and speculations of others?

She gave another hint when she wrote: “Every scholar has an opportunity of verifying the statements herein made, and of checking most of the quotations.” Should we not carefully check all subsequent teachings in the light of what H.P.B. taught us?

This is necessary if we would develop her own attitude towards the teachings. She wrote that she “believes in the ancients, and the modern heirs to their Wisdom.” And believing in both, she “transmits that which she has received and learnt herself to all those who will accept it” (p. xxxvii). She received, she learnt, she passed on. She did not speculate; she just *transmitted*.

Her personal contribution, she says, was to provide the “string”

which tied together the facts she gave out. Have we by our efforts, experience and understanding made the string which will tie the facts together for us? That, in fact, should be the basis of our study if we would get full value from it.

Study of the book does not mean complete understanding of every metaphysical statement at once. We learn that there are seven great keys to the unlocking of the Mysteries. Any one of these will open the doors of the Mystery. Some students will gain understanding by the study of geometrical signs—Plato’s fundamental method; some by the study of numbers—Pythagoras’s fundamental approach. Others will gain it by the study, illuminated by present knowledge, of the *Kabala*, some by the study of astrology, and so on. Each student “will inevitably judge the statements made from the standpoint of his own knowledge, experience, and consciousness, based on what he has already learnt.”

Hence each student has his own line of approach, and he has to find it out for himself and follow the thread through the book. It is unnecessary for each one to spend too much time in trying to understand every statement or idea from every possible angle, for the full study of one aspect, within the background of the whole, will bring him to the same goal. For example, whether he studies the seven principles of man in detail, recognizing that they exist throughout Nature and evolution, or whether he specializes in the sevenfold aspect of the planets, the seven groups of numbers or the mathematical seven, he will, by deep thought, come to understand that they all lead to the same knowledge. By following the law of analogy, as H.P.B. pointed out, the unity of all is seen.

This unification is necessary if the study is to produce real fruit through the expansion of the brain-mind, the synthesizing of the Manas-Buddhi in each student. And this alone brings true knowledge in contra-distinction to mere information and intellectual learning.

MAN'S LATENT POWERS

Thou hast to study the voidness of the seeming full, the fullness of the seeming void. O fearless Aspirant, look deep within the well of thine own heart, and answer. Knowest thou of Self the powers, O thou perceiver of external shadows?

If thou dost not—then art thou lost.

—*The Voice of the Silence*

OUR destiny, it is said, is “written in the stars”—and that is true in more than one sense. Astrology and horoscopy at one time were really a science and an art; today only a broken shell without the kernel remains, wholly unreliable in the hands of amateurs and a danger to the public in the hands of the mercenary, the fraud or the charlatan. Alchemy in ancient Egypt, as astrology in ancient Chaldea, were practised rightly; both were known also in ancient India. Knowledge of both has, however, disappeared today, and what remains speaks but of the glory that is gone.

In these days it is useless to run to an astrologer; this is not yet so generally accepted in India as is the fact that it is a waste of time to run to some self-styled alchemist with a piece of silver, because he promises to transmute it into gold. Very rarely do we hear of some gullible person falling prey to an alchemist; much more common is the practice of consulting the astrologer. Such a practice is not only useless; it has also its dangerous side.

Consulting astrologers, palmists, clairvoyants and spiritualistic mediums, and going by what they predict or prescribe, weakens human resourcefulness and self-confidence, and hinders self-effort. It is a demoralizing process. Many are misled because in all these practices there is a basic element of truth. Astrology *was* a science once, though it is not one now; clairvoyance *is* a real spiritual power of clear-seeing, but those who possess it do not boast about it, nor use it debasingly; palmistry *is* one of the minor occult arts, but knowledge of it is not easily acquired, nor may it be sold by one who possesses it; mediums *do* perform phenomena, but what the phenomena are and how they happen is not known either to them

or to the poor sitters who are fooled by them.

Superstition dies hard; when crass religious superstition is overcome, people fall into psychic claptrap; they refuse to consult a priest, but they do not mind visiting a palmist or an astrologer. “Educated” men and women laugh at “old wives’ tales” of the evil eye and the black art, but swallow without examination the phenomenon of the sleep produced by the hypnotizer! They reject the idea of praying to God, but readily mutter: “Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better.” They exclaim “Nonsense!” to the suggestion of propitiating a *bhut*, but they think it all right to consult a medium. What is the difference between the modern priest and the modern astrologer? None—both have to be paid. Is not the hypnotizer using the power of the evil eye? He is. Why distinguish between “O God! give me health” and “Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better”? If the spooks that come to spiritistic séances are not *bhuts* and ghosts, and often worse still, *pisachas* and vampires, what are they? *Bhuts* do not become “spirits” because they are so named; as well hope to transform stinking manure by calling it a fragrant rose! Why do people fall from one kind of superstition into another? Every time the cause is ignorance, *avidya*.

And yet, knowledge *is* available on what is true and what is false in all three spheres of spiritual, mental and psychic forces. In the two volumes of *Isis Unveiled*, H.P.B. has examined every kind of abnormal phenomenon—described and defined each type and explained it. Also, reliable information is available in Chapters XVI and XVII of *The Ocean of Theosophy* by W. Q. Judge. A reflection on the following items will lead the reader to the further explanations which are available in the above-cited books:

(1) There is no miracle in Nature; nothing happens by chance; everything occurs in accordance with Law.

(2) Man, the thinker, is the crown of visible evolution, and when he becomes an Adept of the Good Law he is the King of the whole of Nature. Man possesses all powers existing in Nature, some of which have become manifest, while others are still latent.

(3) The greatest power of man is *Kriyashakti*, that is, the power

to create by Thought-Will-Imagination.

(4) Creating rightly, man becomes an Adept in Beneficent Magic which is Divine Wisdom; creating wrongly, that is, selfishly, he becomes a devilish Black Magician, a Brother of the Shadow.

(5) Nature has two sides, both of which influence man and are influenced by him. They are the light and the dark sides of Nature.

(6) By his thinking man attracts to himself creatures of light or of darkness. He has the power to choose which to attract. Right resolve and right thought lead him to choose well. By right knowledge he becomes their master; by wrong living, their slave.

(7) Man himself is Spirit—Embodied Spirit—the mediator between Deity and the whole of the human race.

Man himself is the Alchemist, who in the crucible of Right Knowledge transmutes the iron of his lower nature into the gold of the higher.

Man himself is the Astrologer, who casts his horoscope by the right exercise of Will. “A wise man rules his stars; a fool obeys them.”

The admonition and the sterling advice contained in the following quotation from *Isis Unveiled* (II, 635) need to be reflected upon:

We would have all to realize that magical, *i.e.*, spiritual powers exist in every man, and those few to practise them who feel called to teach, and are ready to pay the price of discipline and self-conquest which their development exacts.

Many men have arisen who had glimpses of the truth, and fancied they had it all. Such have failed to achieve the good they might have done and sought to do, because vanity has made them thrust their personality into such undue prominence as to interpose it between their believers and the *whole* truth that lay behind. The world needs no sectarian church, whether of Buddha, Jesus, Mahomet, Swedenborg, Calvin, or any other. There being but ONE Truth, man requires but one church—the Temple of God within us, walled in by matter but penetrable by anyone who can find the way; *the pure in heart see God.*

The trinity of nature is the lock of magic; the trinity of man

the key that fits it. Within the solemn precincts of the sanctuary the SUPREME had and has no name. It is unthinkable and unpronounceable; and yet every man finds in himself his god.

NOT only is man more than an animal because there is the god in him, but he is more than a god because there is the animal in him.

Once force the animal into his rightful place, that of the inferior, and you find yourself in possession of a great force hitherto unsuspected and unknown. The god as servant adds a thousandfold to the pleasures of the animal; the animal as servant adds a thousandfold to the powers of the god. And it is upon the union, the right relation of these two forces in himself, that man stands as a strong king, and is enabled to raise his hand and lift the bar of the Golden Gate....

That is the whole secret. That is what makes man strong, powerful, able to grasp heaven and earth in his hands. Do not fancy it is easily done. Do not be deluded into the idea that the religious or virtuous man does it! Not so. They do no more than fix a standard, a routine, a law by which they hold the animal in check....

You forget, you who let your animal self live on, merely checked and held within certain bounds, that it is a great force, an integral portion of the animal life of the world you live in. With it you can sway men, and influence the very world itself, more or less perceptibly according to your strength. The god, given its right place, will so inspire and guide this extraordinary creature, so educate and develop it, so force it into action and recognition of its kind, that it will make you tremble when you recognise the power that has awakened within you.

But this power can only be attained by giving the god the sovereignty. Make your animal ruler over yourself, and he will never rule others.

—*Through the Gates of Gold*

CIVILIZATION AND SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

HOW prophetic the writer of the *Vishnu Purana* was when foretelling to Maitreya some of the dark influences of this *Kali Yuga* is borne out by the following words:

Wealth and piety will decrease until the world will be wholly depraved. Property alone will confer rank; wealth will be the only source of devotion; passion will be the sole bond of union between the sexes; falsehood will be the only means of success in litigation; and women will be objects merely of sensual gratification....*External types will be the only distinction of the several orders of life;...a man if rich will be reputed pure; dishonesty (anyaya) will be the universal means of subsistence, weakness the cause of dependence, menace and presumption will be substituted for learning; liberality will be devotion; mutual assent, marriage; fine clothes, dignity. He who is the strongest will reign; the people, unable to bear the heavy burden, Kara bhara (the load of taxes), will take refuge among the valleys....Thus, in the Kali age will decay constantly proceed, until the human race approaches its annihilation (pralaya).* (Quoted in *The Secret Doctrine*, I, 377-78)

An almost unanimous belief is prevalent among men of science and the general public that man's evolution has proceeded from animal savagery to the present "enlightened" era; that the civilized man of today has attained to such a high degree of mental and moral culture that absolutely nothing like it was ever known before. It would be an interesting and profitable study to try to ascertain just what the learned men and women of the present understand by such words as "progress," "civilization," "culture," "education" and "morality." Do "progress" and "civilization" convey only the idea of an intensive growth of material luxuries, a great variety of amusements, a great army and navy and air force, more powerful and deadly instruments of destruction? Does "culture" mean only a veneer of courtesy and social polish? Does "education" mean a cramming of great numbers of unrelated, and therefore undigested, facts; a quickening of the lower mental faculties whereby greater

sensuous and sensual enjoyment of life may be had? Does "morality" mean only an outer appearance of virtue and upright conduct?

There are growing and alarming problems which countries with a high standard of living are facing: the growth of physical ailments, of neurotic diseases and insanity, alcoholism and drug addiction, juvenile delinquency and crime, immorality and permissiveness, broken homes and overall distress and unhappiness. Through a strange, ostrich-like blindness, the upholders of the wonders of this era do not see the ever-deepening shadow inseparable from all our vaunted progress. Their blindness is caused by the denial of man's inherent divinity. In the light of this divinity, it is seen that the conquest of physical nature which we pride ourselves about has been at the expense of the spiritual side of life; that religious, political and personal freedom has brought no real liberation, but has only intensified man's enslavement to institutions, creeds, parties and customs; and that modern gadgets and labour-saving machines have given man anything but the leisure to cultivate the things of the Spirit. Almost endless would be the task of enumerating the achievements of modern science and technology, and of delineating the uses, on the material plane, to which these achievements can be turned. Are any or all of these things progress? Not necessarily. Not one of the inventions of science possesses the slightest degree of value, *of itself*. For the real value of anything must be in the extent to which it furthers, either directly or indirectly, the progressive awakenings of Soul; all that exists, exists for the sake of the Soul's experience and emancipation.

What a perfect description does the sixteenth chapter of the *Gita* give of the theory of life current among most so-called civilized and educated people! They deny that there is any law or rhythm in the universe; they negate all spiritual values, and are so deluded as to think that we are material beings and that all is for enjoyment and sensuous gratification alone. The animal nature in us lives on sensuous gratification, and the more we indulge in it the more we get under the influence of the animal and the demoniac. Is not this

strengthening of the animal in us the very reverse of progress? All the rapid “advance” our civilization has made does not constitute one single inch of *true* progress, whether we consider man’s progress individually or humanity’s collectively, if our measuring rod remains our understanding of our divine origin, our sacred mission and our final destiny.

Civilization has ever developed the physical and the intellectual at the cost of the moral and the spiritual, and our present civilization is not peculiar in this respect. The very forces which brought about in the past the downfall of other civilizations, mightier than ours, are now corrupting our own. Increasing *pari passu* with the growth of our material civilization are selfishness, crime, immorality and all the evils imaginable. Ambition and selfish greed, which propel men and women to an incessant chase after wealth and the obtaining at any price of the supposed blessings of this life, cause our civilization to gravitate to the level of empty appearance.

Civilization has depended for ages, says Burke, “upon two principles...the spirit of a gentleman and the spirit of religion.” Religion has become no better than canting hypocrisy and the genuine religious spirit is regarded nowadays as insanity. And as for true gentlemen, how many have we left? In the words of Emerson: “The true test of civilization is, not the census, nor the size of cities, nor the crops, but the kind of man that the country turns out.” The best of thinkers are beginning to realize that raising the standard of living of the people does not make them any nobler or wiser.

Does our civilization turn out animal-men, or men and women who walk the Way of the Cultured Mind? What is the Cultured Mind? Like good and evil, beauty and ugliness, etc., culture and barbarism are relative terms. That which to one brought up in the Oriental tradition would appear the height of culture may be regarded by an Occidental as a shocking lack of etiquette. The word “culture,” however, assumes a different meaning when we apply it to the inner man and not merely to outer appearances, objects and things. Real culture is a unifying force. Cultured

individuals, irrespective of their race or their religion, embody the light of peace, good-will and knowledge. Cosmopolitans and internationalists, they take the whole universe for their province, regard the whole world as a city, consider humanity as a family. Mere formal education informs and instructs, but does not imbue one with the Spirit of Culture which tranquillizes the senses, brings peace to the mind and enlightenment to the heart. Real culture is spiritual. It removes the darkness of selfishness, softens the hardness of conceit, has a mellowing influence upon sharp and cutting natures, engenders altruism and prompts one to look after the interests of others.

Real culture and true progress are impossible without the development of the nobler qualities, without moral elevation and the deepening of spiritual perception. Signs of moral deterioration are becoming more and more evident, and modern education is responsible for it to no small extent. The situation calls for an honest investigation of the crisis we are facing, a crisis which is essentially a moral and spiritual one. Recognizing that all good and evil things in humanity have their roots in human character, we have to consider our situation in that light.

The fact that our civilization has made a mess of things is no reason for despairing; for, if we have placed ourselves in an abnormal condition, then within ourselves is the necessary strength to get out of it. The enemy of progress is not outside of ourselves; it is within us. That enemy is selfishness and pride and their brood which make us think of ourselves as separate one from the other.

Unless we as individuals begin to purify ourselves we shall not be contributing to the progress of humanity *en masse*. There can never be world improvement without individual improvement; there is no world problem—there is only the individual problem. Discord and wars in the world outside are but the outcome of the archetypal conflict—the conflict between the self of matter and the Self of Spirit within every single human being.

As time rolls on there is a growing latent fear everywhere as to what the future might hold in store for us. It is not unlikely that our

civilization may be destroyed by the very forces which it has had the knowledge to create but not the wisdom to control. Civilizations more mighty and glorious than ours have come to dust through loss of the vision of truth and moral failure, and there is no reason why ours should be an exception. But that does not mean the stoppage of the progress of mankind; human souls must go on and on in their divine pilgrimage. The ascending arc of the spiral of human evolution may bring us to a better time.

IGNORANCE is destroyed only by Knowledge. Ignorance is composed of false conceptions, and actions on the basis of false conceptions can only lead to more ignorance and its results in sin, sorrow and suffering. The Theosophical Philosophy, as given by Those who brought it, must be learned, studied and applied in all our relations with our fellowmen; this must be done by each of us, no one can do it for us. This implies that our predilections and prejudices acquired from an adoption of the ordinary views of life must be given up, and the basis of thought and action that the Philosophy indicates must take their place. The Devotional books, such as the *Gita* and the *Voice*, should be constantly read and meditated upon, for they tend to arouse spiritual perceptions. With the means supplied, and an effort to act for and as the Self of all, channels will be opened up within ourselves that will lead to Inner knowledge. As the Master said, "All Nature is before you; take what you can."

—ROBERT CROSBLE

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

It is a well-known fact that music affects moods and plays a vital role in curing disease. Both Hegel and Arthur Schopenhauer believed that in some respects music is more effective and useful than any language invented by man. Music helps to deal with and counteract sorrows, disappointments, depressions and emotional upheavals in life. It helps eliminate negative emotions and enhance positive emotions. It seems to work on the principle of "like cures like." "Are you short-tempered and prone to bouts of anger? Then try listening to any of these *ragas*: Atana, Deepak, Gauri Manohari, Hamsadhwani, Sankarabharanam, Simhendra Madhyama or Todi among others," urges T. V. Sairam (*Dignity Dialogue*, December 2003). He has shown that "a musical form representing a certain emotion could help to destroy the very same emotion." Thus, "listening to a fiery composition of Vivaldi...representing the moods of rage can actually melt away years of accumulated anger and frustration in an individual." It appears that curing the disease amounts to restoring the disturbed harmony. All biological activities follow definite cycles and involve certain rhythms. Disease is caused by disturbance in these cycles and rhythms.

H.P.B. writes in *Isis Unveiled* about the power of music over human beings and animals. She affirms that the philosophers of antiquity knew about the singular power of music over certain nervous diseases. Music has helped to cure diseases like epilepsy, impotence, insanity, lameness, dropsy, etc., believed to be incurable. Thus:

The sound has an attractive property; it draws out disease, which streams out to encounter the musical wave, and the two blending together, disappear in space. Asclepiades employed music for the same purpose, some twenty centuries ago; he blew a trumpet to cure Sciatica, and its prolonged sound making the fibres of the nerves to palpitate, the pain invariably subsided. Democritus in like manner affirmed that many diseases could be cured by the melodious sounds of a flute. Mesmer used...harmonica described by Kircher for his magnetic cures.

(*Isis Unveiled*, I, 215)

Certain kinds of music throw us into frenzy; some exalt the soul to religious aspirations. In fine, there is scarcely a human creation which does not respond to certain vibrations of the atmosphere. (*Ibid.*, p. 275)

The spirit of giving, or charity at all levels—physical, mental and emotional—has always been held in high esteem by all religious scriptures. “The best kind of giving involves sacrifice,” writes Suma Varughese (*Life Positive*, December 2003). When charity is not out of the surplus—but involves an element of sacrifice—it leads to inner transformation in both the giver and the receiver. Varughese writes:

It is spiritual giving at its highest. And when we engage with it, it is a path that leads to liberation. For sacrificial giving involves going beyond the ego with its narrow focus on our needs, desires, comforts and feelings....

Sacrificial giving is rigorous, and calls for discipline and self-restraint. We can start off small. Giving up a seat in a bus for someone who needs it more, gracefully acknowledging one’s fault in an argument, allowing others to stampede to the buffet table first, giving up one’s lunch to a hungry beggar....

The concept of sacrifice is endemic to most religions and is central to Hindu philosophy. The world is considered to owe its origin to the great sacrifice of *purusha*. The Vedic concept... “the world is one family” emphasizes both interconnection and the need to focus on the larger good. So strong is the current of altruistic thought that the *Bhagavad-Gita* says: “He who cooks for himself alone is a thief.”...

Giving then, is a two-edged sword that can only be wielded safely when our motive is pure. Through awareness, we must move away from using giving as a means of bolstering the ego, of gaining power and control over others, of gaining social recognition or fame, of one-upmanship.

The Voice of the Silence describes Charity as one of the

transcendental virtues and asks us to step out of sunlight into shade so as to make more room for others. Altruism is the keynote of Theosophy. In the article “Practical Occultism,” H.P.B. defines a true Theosophist as he “who finds more joy in helping his neighbour than in receiving help himself; one who is ever ready to sacrifice his own pleasure for the sake of other people....” In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. puts emphasis on *personal* exertion, mercy and kindness, while exercising charity, as that would call forth gratitude in the receiver and “gratitude does more good to the man who feels it, than to him for whom it is felt.” The *Gita* considers the sacrifice of knowledge (*Jnana Yajna*) as the best and the highest. So does Theosophy. Mr. Judge describes the highest kind of philanthropy thus:

Each Theosophist should therefore not only continue his private and public acts of charity, but also strive to so understand Theosophical philosophy as to be able to expound it in a practical and easily understood manner, so that he may be a wider philanthropist by ministering to the needs of the inner man. This inner man is a thinking being who feeds upon a right or wrong philosophy. If he is given that one which is wrong, then, becoming warped and diseased, he leads his instrument, the outer man, into bewilderment and sorrow. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 61)

Demographers have observed gradually increasing life spans over the last two centuries. Worldwide, average life expectancy has gone up from about 27 years to more than 65, and in the United States it has shot up from 50 years in the last century to an average of 78 at present. Could we expect children born today to live to be 150? Some researchers support this view, others feel there is no upward limit on longevity. James Vaupel of the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock, Germany, predicts that the average life span in industrialized countries will be 122.5 years, in the year 2150. “Most researchers agree that the biggest boost in

human life expectancy will not come from curing diseases. Instead, the rate of aging itself has to be slowed down,” writes Karen Wright (*Discover*, November 2003). However, there are many gray areas. Why do our bodies begin to deteriorate when we reach our thirties? It is difficult to explain longevity in terms of genes. There are genes responsible for growth, metabolism and reproduction. But there is no life-extending gene found in the human genome or any physiological determinants of mortality.

Steve Austad, a gerontologist at the University of Idaho, ascribes longevity in human beings to “the low-risk environment we have created for ourselves.” Geriatrician Tom Perls of the Boston University School of Medicine, feels that those who live to be hundred, *lack* genes that predispose them to old-age diseases, but “possess genes—as yet unidentified—that protect them from the ravages of time.”

But is it true? In her comments on “A Treatise on the Yoga Philosophy” (*The Theosophist*, September 1880), H.P.B. mentions that “the greater the number of respiratory movements per minute the shorter is the life period.”

“The Elixir of Life,” reprinted in *Five Years of Theosophy* (*The Theosophical Movement*, July and August 1966), deals at length with the subject of “longevity.” Thus, in each species—including human—there is a “well-known limit within which the Race-life lies, and none are known to survive beyond it.” Even when disease, accidents and famine are avoided, there comes a time “when the particles of the body would feel the hereditary tendency to do that which leads inevitably to dissolution.” However, it is possible to live beyond the limits determined by heredity. Thus:

The whole rationale then, of the first condition of continued existence in this world, is (a) the development of a Will so powerful as to overcome the hereditary (in a Darwinian sense) tendencies of the atoms composing the “gross” and palpable animal frame, to hurry on at a particular period in a certain course of Kosmic changes; and (b) to so weaken the concrete action of that animal frame as to make it more amenable to the

power of the Will. To defeat an army, *you must demoralize and throw it into disorder...*

The aspirant to longevity then...must beware especially of impure and animal thoughts. For Science shows that thought is dynamic, and thought-force evolved by nervous action expanding outwardly, must affect the molecular relations of the physical man....

To do this then, is the real object of all rites, ceremonies, fasts, “prayers,” meditations, initiations and procedures of self-discipline enjoined by various esoteric Eastern sects.

The wayward life of the teenagers in India, is a cause of grave concern. Piali Banerjee and Somit Sen give a graphic description of the deplorable state of the younger generation (*Sunday Times of India*, January 11). Thus:

Begining with cheating, and going on to shoplifting, stealing money, car theft, rash driving, vandalising, kidnapping for ransom, and sometimes even indulging in prostitution or the stray murder, teenagers today seem to be driving down the fast lane of crime without a glance in the review mirror. Greed is God on the college campus, while the world outside is a big object of youthful desire, whether it’s the Big Apple, big bucks or the big kicks of life....

Psychologists point out that teens today are more like adults. They know their rights and have wrested liberties for themselves that were till recently associated with older generations. College girls shrug that no one at home minds if they walk in at 4 a.m.—something for which the previous generation would probably have had hell to pay....

The solution, say counsellors, lies in communication, and more communication. Since the consumerist clock can’t be turned back now, the best way forward for parents is through “talking, talking, talking, to their kids.”

Society must play its role too—in leading by experience.

“When children see adults achieving success through crooked means, and these same adults being feted by society, naturally, their belief in values goes down one more notch,” says counsellor Anjali Chhabria.

In a way, the life of teenagers is a mirror of our civilization, with its consumerism, free play to sexual passions, self-centredness, etc. Ever-increasing consumerism, materialism, sexual perversion are all indications of “desire principle” going out of control. The solution lies partly in the adults setting an example. H.P.B. describes our present race thus:

As we are in the mid-point of our sub-race of the Fifth Root Race—the acme of materiality in each—therefore the animal propensities, though more refined, are not the less developed for that: and they are so chiefly in civilized countries. (*S.D.*, I, 611)

She describes graphically the state of civilization in the 19th century, and the same is applicable to our present civilization. Thus:

As civilization progresses, moral darkness pervades....The chosen symbol of our boasted civilization ought to be a huge boa constrictor. Like that monstrous ophidian, with its velvety black and brilliant golden-hued spots, and its graceful motions, civilization proceeds insidiously, but as surely, to crush in its deadly coils every high aspiration, every noble feeling, aye, even to the very discrimination of right and wrong.

Conscience, “God’s vicegerent in the soul,” speaks no longer in man; for the whispers of the still small voice within are stifled by the ever-increasing din and roar of Selfishness. (*Lucifer*, August 1888)

What is the best method for reforming the criminals? *The World and I* (December 2003) carries a Special Report discussing the efficacy of rehabilitation, incarceration (imprisonment) and religious rehabilitation programmes—regarded as the three

alternatives. The United States locks up its citizens at a rate of 700 per 10,000, and leads the world in incarceration. It has been found that it is not the most effective way to deter crime. Increase in incarceration is not matched by a corresponding drop in crime. In fact some critics suggest that high incarceration of adults may produce socially destabilizing results—affecting family stability and child supervision—in turn sustaining high rates of crime. Unfortunately, prisons, which seek to *improve* the character of prisoners, tend to degrade it instead, as they lack empathy and self-control. “How can inmates learn to empathize with the rights, needs and feelings of others and not view their fellow citizens as mere objects to be exploited or harmed when so many of the guards regard them as objects of gratification, derision and contempt?” Prisons are taking refuge in the conclusion of the research finding—30 years ago—that “nothing works.” Recent scholarly literature has challenged the “nothing works” conclusion, claiming that rehabilitative programmes *can* have a positive impact. Religious rehabilitation programmes have met only with partial success. It is felt that there is no simple solution to the problem.

H.P.B. warns against the “nothing works” attitude, as she writes: “Selfishness, indifference and brutality can never be the normal state of the race—to believe so would be to despair of humanity—and that no Theosophist can do” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 233). Moreover, measures taken should be restrictive and not punitive. No lasting reform can be achieved unless human nature is changed. She writes:

Make men feel and recognize in their innermost hearts what is their real, true duty to all men, and every old abuse of power, every iniquitous law in the national policy, based on human, social or political selfishness, will disappear of itself. Foolish is the gardener who seeks to weed his flower-bed of poisonous plants by cutting them off from the surface of the soil, instead of tearing them out by the roots. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 229)