

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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A BOOK OF DISCIPLINE FOR DAILY USE	325
GOD, THE SPIRIT OF THE UNIVERSE AND IN MAN	329
THE MIRACLE OF BIRTH	336
“LIVE AND BREATHE IN ALL”	341
OVERCOMING ADVERSE INFLUENCES	345
LEARNING FROM LIFE	352
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	354

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A BOOK OF DISCIPLINE FOR DAILY USE

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As Krishna truly says—the same words being repeated later by another *vehicle* of the LOGOS—“I am the same to all beings...those who worship me (the 6th principle or the intellectual *divine* Soul, *Buddhi*, made conscious by its union with the higher faculties of *Manas*) *are in me, and I am in them.*” The Logos, being no personality but the universal principle, is represented by all the divine Powers *born of its mind*—the pure Flames, or, as they are called in Occultism, the “intellectual Breaths”—those angels who are said to *have made themselves independent, i.e.*, passed from the passive and quiescent, into the active state of Self-Consciousness. When this is recognized, the true meaning of Krishna becomes comprehensible.

—*The Secret Doctrine*, II, 318 fn.

THE eighth day of the second half of the Hindu lunar month Shravana is traditionally accepted as the Natal Day of Krishna, the Great *Avatara*. It falls this year on the 30th of August. This festival of Gokul Ashtami or Janmashtami, as it is called, has much in common with the festivals associated with the Birthdays of others described as Saviours of the world. This is but natural, for great days, sacred festivals, are symbols, and in these symbols, though much of ignorance and misunderstanding prevails round them, we have one of the means whereby we can fathom the message of the Ancient Teachers of our race. To the student of symbolism,

therefore, the Birth of a Saviour signifies something more profound than it does to the orthodox and to those who accept literally and even materially the stories of such Births.

All that we know of great Personages is what is revealed in their message. When we seek to know the history of Krishna's life on earth we are lost in contradictions. Legends and myths have arisen around his life as around the life of every Adept-Teacher; these are often misunderstood and distorted because symbols and metaphors are taken for objective realities. Events in the life of Krishna are described in the *Mahabharata*, in the *Bhagavata Purana* and in other books, and from each of these a different picture of Krishna emerges. How then shall we understand who Krishna really was? By going to the one authentic book of his teaching and philosophy, the greatest of his gifts to all humanity and for all times—the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Therein all the aspects of this great Personage—the Divine Incarnation—variously revealed in different texts as Cowherd, Playmate, Statesman, Warrior, Friend, Teacher and *Avatara*, are synthesized in a harmonious whole. Thus out of the impersonal message emerges the true personality of the Messenger.

The *Gita* has been variously claimed to be a book of devotion, of action, of knowledge. But it does not teach any of these three exclusively. Its message affects every constituent of our being—head, heart and hands. As these are interdependent, we find the *Gita* teaching action in meditation, meditation in action; compassion wedded to wisdom, love to knowledge, knowledge to be practised and to be derived from every action. Krishna was a *Karma-Yogi*, a perfect performer of action, who taught “inaction in action and action in inaction.” But he was not a *Karma-Yogi* only. As a matter of fact, he refused to act on the battlefield and remained but the charioteer. He was also a *Gnyani*, Wisdom incarnate, who yet possessed the humility to appear as a man among men. And finally, Krishna embodied the devotion or *Bhakti* whose essence is discrimination. He called Arjuna his friend, but his love did not make him hesitate to rebuke Arjuna for his “despicable weakness,” his impulsive decision not to resist the evils of

Duryodhana and of his brothers. In the personality of Krishna every principle is harmonized with every other.

The message of Krishna is at best only partially applied today. To understand the all-round nature of the message, the all-sided perfection of the Messenger—that is what is needed. We need purity of motive, of desire, which has to be both just and compassionate; we need knowledge of the spiritual pattern of Nature's laws, which will enable us to know what to do and when; we need to perform our actions in the daily routine of life in the spirit of justice and of love rooted in knowledge, which the *Gita* can give us. The *Gita* makes full provision for the purification and development of every avenue through which the power of the Soul expresses itself during incarnated existence.

Let us learn to use the *Gita* as a book of discipline for daily use, as a never-failing source of help and of guidance, in which vital issues affecting the whole man are examined and ways and methods of right living shown. Every educated person aspires to discipline himself. But in building his home, in earning his livelihood, in understanding the world around him, in purifying his own character, in training his mind, in improving his speech and in numerous other ways he needs guidance. This the *Gita* can supply.

To look upon it as a book of daily discipline one must first realize that it is the allegory of the Holy War which Arjuna, the human Soul—Manas, the Thinker—wages against his greatest and most constant enemy, the lower self, and in which his guide, philosopher and friend is Krishna, the Higher Self or Atma-Buddhi. Without the help of Krishna, Arjuna could not wage the war, let alone win it. Unless the embodied human Soul has evolved to the point where he recognizes the presence and the power of the Inner Self and invokes Its aid he cannot begin the fight.

The appeal of the *Gita* is for all. Those who have made Krishna a Personal God with power to forgive their sins and to respond to their petitions for health, wealth and happiness have deprived the *Gita* of its status as a scripture for all mankind.

What is the central message which the *Gita* offers to all humanity?

W. Q. Judge wrote that “inquirers ought to read the *Bhagavad-Gita*”; and yet he said, “It is the study of Adepts.” It is like a mighty ocean on whose shores infants can play and in whose depths giant Souls can swim. It might be said that there are as many messages in the *Gita* as there are men on earth, and yet it has a single doctrine to impart. But to perceive it one has to gain the faculty of spiritual perception. In the process each individual has to secure for himself his own message from the Holy Book. For the Theosophical student-aspirant the *Gita* brings the message of Spiritual Birth: out of the carnal aspect of man the human aspect is born; out of that human aspect the Divine is born. How the Birth of the Spirit can take place is taught in the 18 chapters of the *Gita*: what not to do and what has to be done—the eschewing and the overthrowing of the evil; the pursuing of good through the performance of duty; the radiating of the light of the Spirit. Janmashtami, like Christmas, is a reminder of the verity of Second Birth, a reminder that we are here on earth to die, not only in the body but also in the personality, so that the Spirit is born. To become a *Dwija*, a Twice-Born, one must begin by becoming a devotee and a friend of Krishna or Christos, the Word made Flesh, Wisdom Incarnate, the Great Sacrifice.

THE Ego—meaning thereby the Self, Ishwara, Krishna, the Supreme—is unborn, changeless, all-knowing. It knows evolving Nature, the instrument, but the latter comes but slowly to a knowledge of the Self. It is therefore latent only in the sense that there are periods when the instrument, the false personality, recognizes it not. Such a period is the present, when although the body has been evolved by Nature—with the aid of the Ego—we do not know the Ego.... Under the position thus taken, the Ego is still latent and will be until *Manas* is fully developed in a succeeding round.

—W. Q. JUDGE

GOD, THE SPIRIT OF THE UNIVERSE AND IN MAN

THE above title, “God, the Spirit of the Universe and in Man,” gives, in a way, the answers to the questions: Where is God? Who is God? What is God? But our general knowledge about Spirit and Universe and Man is so shallow and so limited that even the straight answer that Deity is the Spirit of the Universe and in Man means little to most people.

The subject of God can be studied in numerous ways: we can discuss it with the aid of learned books; we can study it from the point of view of modern science and find God to be the Imponderable Nothing; we might go to the other end and approach God from the viewpoint of orthodox religions, as a mighty man, who is cruel if he is wise, who is weak if he is loving, who is very muddle-headed and impotent; we might approach God as the artist does, and look upon the symbol representing God, which pleases for a while but which does not bring comfort to the confused or solace to the sorrowful. Theosophy demolishes the negation of science about the existence of God, exposes the folly of the Personal God of religions, shows the beauty of the many symbols of God created by the artist. But Theosophy goes further.

It is a profound subject and can be truly grasped only if mind and heart combine. Let us put away for a while our notions and beliefs about God, and learn with a fresh mind and an intent heart what God is and what practical use we can make of that knowledge in our daily lives.

God, the Spirit of the Universe: What is Spirit? There exists much confusion of thought and lack of agreement about the meaning of the word. The word is used in many contexts. People speak of the spirit of wine, and go as far as the spirit of wisdom! Theosophy gives a synonym for Spirit—Life. God is the Spirit of the Universe or the Life of the Universe. But what is Life? Here is another word very commonly used; we speak of the life of gluttony, and the life of avarice, and the life of love; we speak of the life of body and of mind; we speak of animal life, vegetable life, mineral

life; we also speak of the universal life; we speak of the life-process. Both these words, Spirit and Life, certainly convey the idea of omnipresence. Spirit and Life are present everywhere. Theosophy teaches that the whole universe is composed of living things; Theosophy does not make the distinction that science makes, between dead and living matter or inorganic and organic matter. Theosophy teaches that all forms of matter are living. There is no dead matter. The rock and the crystal are alive, however inert they may look to the human eye. As science advances, it is finding out the truth which the ancient Sages taught, that everything is alive and that the whole universe is instinct with the presence of God.

When we say that God or Spirit or Life is omnipresent, what do we mean? There is a Presence at the core of everything, and that Presence is Spirit or Life. We see with the eyes or perceive by the mind the effects produced by the presence of God or Spirit or Life. We do not see the causal aspect of that presence, either by our eyes or by our minds. The presence of Life or Spirit is seen in its effects; these effects veil the presence. Our eyes and our mind contact the veil—the great *purdah*. Behind and beyond that veil of matter our ordinary vision cannot penetrate. In Sufi mysticism, God is compared to the Beloved who wears a veil, and the devotee or the Sufi has to learn to unveil the face and see the Beloved. This veil, or this *purdah*, is what we call matter, *prakriti*, or nature.

The Presence of Spirit or Life is beyond the range and reach of thought; therefore the Upanishads say that God or Spirit is unthinkable, unspeakable, unknowable. But it is unknowable by the ordinary human mind, and human lips cannot describe it; but there is that in man which is superior to the mind. The Spirit in man can sense and know that one ever-existing Root-Essence. All of us here and now can feel the Presence of Life and understand by our mind that that Presence exists. So, when we say God is the Spirit of the Universe, we mean that there is a Presence in the Universe behind that which our eyes see, and beyond that which our minds understand. Spirit or Life is omnipresent, and that Presence produces effects which we see and talk about.

To explain the mystery of that Presence, to aid the human mind

to understand the nature of that Presence, great Sages and Philosophers have given symbols and names, meditating on which the mind begins to learn about Deity or God. In the scriptures of all religions, the names of God have been given. Muslims have 99 names of God. When Zoroaster asks Ahura Mazda what teaching or aspect of the Holy Law was most beneficent and protective, Ahura Mazda answers: “Oh Zarathushtra, my Names, the Names of us Ameshaspentas.” Ahura Mazda proceeds to give the Names in the beautiful hymn, the *Ahura Mazda Yasht*; and one of these names is that he is omnipresent—in every body, in every form. Likewise, in the Tenth Discourse of the *Gita*, Krishna mentions his *Vibhutis*—Excellent Glories or Glorious Excellences.

In the modern presentation of the Ancient Philosophy, to be found in H.P.B.'s *Secret Doctrine*, we are given a few symbols, meditating on which we come to have a mental understanding of how Deity or God is omnipresent. The difficulty about the names of God given in different religious scriptures is this: these names were meant for the minds of the people of the past; their repetition is not quite suited to the minds of present-day humanity. Further, the corruption of all religions is now worse, and that is the reason why religions have lost their influence on most and possess inspiration for few. Priests have degraded religious teachings, and the greatest and grandest name of Deity, the Omnipresent or the Great Presence, is not understood. Therefore, when H.P.B. rewrote the ancient truths, she gave a set of symbols for the student to comprehend the nature of Deity or Life, Spirit or the Great Presence. These symbols are more direct and less allegorical. It is true that the symbols are abstract, while the Names are concrete; but this very concreteness of the Names has been instrumental in the hands of the priests in erecting an anthropomorphic personal God, sitting somewhere far away. Moreover, these abstract symbols are more suitable for the modern mind, which is being educated and trained along scientific lines in our schools and colleges.

Let us name some of these symbols used in *The Secret Doctrine* to expound the nature of Deity, or Life, or Spirit, or the Great Presence. First, there is the graphic symbol of Space; then Eternal

Motion, or the Great Breath; then Duration or Eternal Time, beginningless and endless; then Creative Speech, and so on. These are not new inventions of modern Theosophy; Creative Speech or Logos of the Greeks, or Vach of the Hindus, is as old as Endless Time of the *Avesta*—“*Zervane Akarnae*.” What does obtain, however, in Theosophical Philosophy is an explanation and an exposition of these abstract symbols which suits the modern mind.

Let us consider one which H.P.B. stresses in the First Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*—Space. From one point of view, the symbol of Space is easy to understand. There is hardly any other symbol that so graphically and so quickly impresses the human mind with the concept of the omnipresence of Deity. Space is everywhere. All around us as far as the eyes can reach, and beyond our horizon, space extends and expands wherever the mind can go, and more—the mind is able to perceive that there is a beyond to any and every boundary of conceivable space. We cannot think of anything without the basis of space. Continents and countries, towns and villages, streets and houses, things and beings, in them all is space, and they all are in space. Look around and note mentally the fact that space is the one thing which exists everywhere, and nothing can possibly exist without space. That is the first concept—space is the container of all.

Next, every thing and every individual is a part of space; each one of us is a portion of space, in contact with the vast, boundless whole. Living the ordinary sense-life, we do not recognize our indissoluble connection with that boundless whole. We see the sun, the moon, the stars which are millions of miles away; but how do we see them? The magic of perception is not in the stars, it is in our eyes. A blind person is not able to see, though the stars exist. By naked vision we are not able to see some stars that we do see by the aid of a telescope. The heavenly bodies reflect themselves on our retina—we might say that the sun and the stars come to our eyes; a conjunction is achieved between the stars and our eyes. That union depends on two things: First, the proper functioning of the eyes; without the eyes we cannot see. Secondly, our eyes see only those objects which are of the same density and grade of

matter; we see the distant stars because our eyes are consubstantial with them; but we do not see the air we breathe, because our eyes and the air are not consubstantial, are not of the same substance.

The human soul, or self-conscious thinker, perceives the boundless world of Spirit as our eyes see the stars—because the human soul is consubstantial with Spirit or Space. Just as by a single pair of eyes we catch the reflection of the vast starry firmament on our retina, so the self-conscious thinker catches hold of and retains the reflection of the Boundless spirit. This is Yoga. A real Yogi, by the power developed in his own spiritual consciousness, is able to catch and to retain the reflection of the whole of the Spiritual Universe, and then he cries: “*Aham Brahmasmi*”—“I am verily the Supreme Brahman.”

Now we come to the ethical and practical aspect. Every one of us, as a self-conscious thinker, as a human soul, reflects within himself or herself the boundless Spiritual Whole; but, because our senses and our desires have entangled the soul, here in our bodily existence, we do not recognize and remember that indissoluble link, that permanent tie. As we purify ourselves, as the dust of illusions raised by the senses is wiped away, and our brain becomes porous to the direct action of the soul, we perceive that tie and that bond, and then we have become that which we are; we have become a Yogi. We see what some call God, the Great Presence. The *Gita* describes real seeing thus: “He who seeth the Supreme Being (*Ishvara*) existing alike imperishable in all perishable things, sees indeed.” (XIII, 27)

Overlaid with sense-images, overpowered by *kama*, energized by *tanha*, thirst for things and objects, we do not recognize that each one of us is now and here an immortal entity. Theosophy says we have to realize our own immortality by carving out of the stone of our lower personal existence the image of the God we are. A sculptor takes a piece of marble and then he knocks off bits and pieces of that marble with his chisel; he goes on removing a bit here, a piece there, till the image he wants is produced. Where has that image been? In the sculptor’s mind. So also in our innermost mind there is the image of Parameshvara, because we are linked

up with the Boundless Whole; but our desires and passions have obscured it; and we have to use the chisel of our resolve, the hammer of our effort, and labour till the face of the Supreme shines forth in our face.

Resolve and effort are necessary. The fight is in the mind, and Arjuna recognizes that when he complains about his wandering mind. Krishna asks Arjuna to fix his mind on the Supreme Self, the Universal Whole, the Impartite Unity. But Arjuna says that his mind is *chanchala* (VI, 33), which does not mean only “wandering.” Arjuna was no ordinary man; he was the chela of the Great Master, Yogeshvara, the Lord of Yoga. The *chanchala* mind is the mind that sees the images of the material and psychical universe very quickly; it is not an evil mind, but a mind that cannot free itself from the world of many objects and many beings. Krishna says that by practice and detachment he will see the Self in all things and all things in the Self. Then it is that Arjuna asks what happens to one who is not able to finish the task of cleansing the mind when death overtakes him; and the Lord answers that such a striver will continue his work in another life. But we must begin now; for, unless we begin there is the danger of destruction for us. Our evil will overpower us, and Krishna speaks of the “evil place” the one who does evil goes to (VI, 40). He who strives to go in the right direction never descends to that evil state, says the *Gita*. With resolve and effort, once we have entered the stream we are bound to reach the other shore if we keep on striving.

Each one of us, within ourselves, is divine; and there is no one, no thing, which has not that same divinity. The Great Presence is working everywhere, though its manifestations are different in different things. At every point of Boundless Space, at every moment of Boundless Time, the Supreme is active. When Krishna begins to describe his *Vibhutis*, his Glories, he commences by saying: “I am the Ego which is seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all existing things.” (X, 20)

So by resolve and effort one can know oneself as the Supreme. We are all One, though we think that we are many. When our minds

unite in study, when our hearts blend in aspiration, we feel the happiness and the joy of the Self—Atma. Such study and such aspiration also unite us to those Great Ones who are, says the *Gita*, “very difficult to find.” By studying the great Philosophy of Theosophy, by serving the One Self which has many hands and feet, many eyes and ears, many heads and hearts, we come close to Them, and what we vaguely and dimly sense by the mind now, will be clear to us when we hear such a Great One give instruction and say, “Thou art That”—*Tat tvam asi*.

As a body, the Theosophical Society holds that all original thinkers and investigators of the hidden side of nature, whether materialists—those who find in matter “the promise and potency of all terrestrial life,” or spiritualists—that is, those who discover in spirit the source of all energy and of matter as well, were and are, properly, Theosophists. For to be one, one need not necessarily recognize the existence of any special God or a deity. One need but worship the spirit of living nature, and try to identify oneself with it. To revere that *Presence*, the invisible cause, which is yet ever manifesting itself in its incessant results; the intangible, omnipotent, and omnipresent Proteus: indivisible in its Essence, and eluding form, yet appearing under all and every form; who is here and there, and everywhere and nowhere; is ALL, and NOTHING; ubiquitous yet one; the Essence filling, binding, bounding, containing everything, contained in all. It will, we think, be seen now, that whether classed as Theists, Pantheists or Atheists, such men are near kinsmen to the rest. Be what he may, once that a student abandons the old and trodden highway of routine, and enters upon the solitary path of independent thought—Godward—he is a Theosophist; an original thinker, a seeker after the eternal truth with “an inspiration of his own” to solve the universal problems.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

THE MIRACLE OF BIRTH

REINCARNATION is in a way a simple idea, which is, moreover, a beneficent force having the power to heal as to impart life. It is beneficent in its unerring justice; it heals the dire disease of sorrow, and imparts life by explaining to us why we are what we are, with our limitations and faculties, with our virtues and weaknesses, with our divine aspirations and our devilish tendencies.

The simple central idea underlying reincarnation is that the Soul in man does not come for the first time into a human body of flesh and blood when it sees the light of day in this life. That Soul has lived on this earth in other human bodies, learning its lessons and garnering its experiences; then at death taking a vacation, a rest, to come back again in a new body and continue its task in this mightiest of all schools. Yet, simple as this idea is, it ramifies in almost every direction and becomes so profound that years of study but bring forth new questions, further research, new solutions followed by new problems once again.

Let us ask the preliminary question: If the Soul *was* before the birth of this body, where was it and what was it doing? It was in the state of ideation that is called *Devachan*, the Land of the Gods. In this state the Soul sees the whole panorama of its good and heroic deeds in its past earthly life. It hears the symphony composed of its own pure and noble words. It feels the aspiration to perfect those deeds and to make living those chords and notes of words. For, mighty as is the vision it now beholds, powerful and wonderful as is the music it hears, such is the miracle of Life that within the ideating Soul lies the possibility of further aspiration, further effort and hope for still mightier achievements!

Therefore each human Soul in its godlike meditation awakens within itself the desire and the potency to grow nobler and better and wiser than it was before. And this in turn brings a desire for further experience. Just as in our own daily meditation we reach a point which is our saturation point, higher and deeper than which we cannot go, so, too, in the state of *Devachan* the *devas* or divine

Souls reach a saturation point, attain the highest stage possible, each according to his own past merit; they see the deep of truth and recognize that there is a greater deep, hear the music of beauty and recognize that mightier music exists, feel the prolonged thrill of goodness and recognize that there is no end to Compassion; and in this moment of highest ecstasy and illumination they obtain, prophetlike, a glimpse, a flashing gaze, into what is to come. Just as the clever gardener can tell how the bud will blossom forth and when, how the shrub will flower and in what season, when the seed will begin to sprout forth and by what process, so too the divine Soul, fully awakened in the spiritual world, can get a glimpse into the future, can see what seed the fruit of many past efforts is about to yield, what reflections the deeds of previous lives are now about to cast. Thus the awakened Soul falls from the highest state of contemplation into a shadowy dreaming of the life to come.

In the first stage the Soul has a full realization of its own spirituality. Then it passes from its wakeful introspection of its past to a dreaming of the future. The past fades away more and more because the Soul begins to concentrate on the future. It now dreams, "What shall I do, where shall I go, and how shall I go?" The Soul so to speak says to itself in its dream condition: "I want to learn this and to teach that; I need this and can give that. I must go back to earth. Where and how shall I go?" Thus the third stage is reached. The divine vision has now vanished and only a vague memory of it persists.

In this very search and questioning, the dreaming Soul, on the principle that Nature supplies every demand, attracts to itself the army of its past feelings and desires, of the *tanhaic* and *skandhaic* elementals which belonged to its former birth, and without which it could not be drawn back to birth again. The *deva* by his very dreaming attracts the *devatas*. The army of *skandhas* or the aggregates that make up the man, it is said, await the Soul at the threshold of *Devachan*. These *skandhas*, left behind at the time of death, are now magnetically collected and drawn back to the Soul. The body includes one set of *skandhas*, the astral man another, the

Kama principle is another set, and still others pertain to other parts. In Kama are the really active and important ones which control rebirths and lead to all the varieties of life and circumstance upon each rebirth. These desire-lives, these threads of *Tanha* and *Trishna*, are now ready to join the Soul for a new life on earth. And this is all under Karma, under the Law of Ethical Compensation. It is not a matter of chance, accident, coincidence or miracle. Like a bit of metal which flies to a magnet as soon as it comes within the sphere of magnetic influence, so these *skandhaic* and *tanhaic* elementals fly to the dreaming Thinker, and the third stage of a new life on earth is reached. Now the Soul has the basis for its new personality and it has forgotten much of its Vision.

Just as the first stage of full awakening merges into the second, the dream stage, in which the future life just glimpsed becomes the subject of the dream, so too the second stage becomes the third in which the *skandhas* or desire-attributes are drawn to the Soul.

At this third stage the Soul, enmeshed in its own desire-lives or *tanhaic* elementals, gets ready to be attracted to its new family, race and nation. The Soul, like a curious person, peers about, so to speak, and its dream now becomes more shadowy and vague, less divine, less abstract and more concrete, less self-conscious and more automatic.

That brings us to one aspect of the miracle of birth. A relationship in accordance with past Karma is now established between the thinking-dreaming Soul and the future mother of its new body. This mighty mystery of birth has never yet been fully disclosed. But there is no more striking miracle in ordinary life than this silent, psychic link established between the mother and her future child. Its equal can only be found in the spiritual life, in the attraction of the aspirant to his Guru, which magnetic attraction brings about the Second Birth.

Under the law of magnetic attraction, then, some of the subtle matter of the ethereal vesture of the incoming Soul is drawn to the mother, and the father through the sperm furnishes the basis for the building of the physical body. At the seventh month, the process

of the Soul joining itself to its future body, fibre by fibre and thread by thread, is completed. That Soul is connected with its Divine Parent, its Higher Self, by the bridge of *Antaskarana*.

In the mystery of embryology lies concealed the whole course of human evolution, but modern science knows it not. The ancients knew it and the *Vishnu Purana* relates it in the form of allegory.

Once born, the being who has identified himself with the body receives impressions from without, and the gathering of such impressions on the foundation of the incarnated being develops into what is called our personality. At one end it is connected with the Divine Soul by the Bridge of Conscience; at the other, with the senses and sense-organs of the body by the personal self.

Each Soul attracts to itself its natural conditions. There are no misfits at all, all are attracted to a particular environment according to Karma, their past deeds, words, feelings and thoughts, so that they may learn through them and grow in purity, making also the environment pure, and so that the very devil in them may be raised to the stage of divinity.

Reincarnation means *Justice*, unerring Justice that is not human justice but Nature's Justice, which acts impersonally and universally, and which therefore is also merciful and compassionate.

Reincarnation means *Contentment*, for what has come to us has come because of our own deeds of body or speech or mind; whatever condition is ours today, that condition is exactly what we ourselves desired—a difficult concept, but a true one.

Reincarnation means *Progress*, for it offers us fresh opportunities, with every birth, to mend our ways. The saints and sages of today were sinners yesterday; the sinners will become saints and sages tomorrow.

Reincarnation means *Effort*, for the Soul passes from one condition to another by self-endeavour. In daily life we see this: he who wants to earn must labour; he who wants to know must learn; he who wants to serve must sacrifice.

Reincarnation means *Divinity*, for in our innermost nature we are godlike, nay, we are verily gods, and by effort and knowledge

we can make the “Father in Heaven” incarnate fully and wholly in the Temple of the Body. The birth of the body is a miracle; the second birth of the twice-born, the *Dwija*, is a still greater miracle. By right action, by the true understanding and application of the Law of Fate and Free Will or Karma, we shall attain to that Second Birth.

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“LIVE AND BREATHE IN ALL”

TO tread the Paramita Path, the Path of the Divine Virtues, a certain attitude of mind and of heart has to be cultivated, otherwise we start without planning, without the necessary preparation, and fail.

This is brought out in Fragment III of *The Voice of the Silence*, where we learn that the candidate must already have reached the condition when he can say to the Teacher, “I thirst for Wisdom”; and also, “Thy servant here is ready for thy guidance.” This thirst, this readiness, is essential on the spiritual path. We also learn that the practice of the *Paramitas*, the glorious virtues, is not the first step. The foundation, the very purpose, of the hard struggle we have to make is—“To live to benefit mankind.” Only with, or on, this foundation can we successfully practise the virtues.

The Voice of the Silence also reminds us: “Before thou wert made fit to meet thy Teacher face to face, thy MASTER light to light, what wert thou told?” So, we must get to a certain position before we can proceed. We are warned, also, that there are steps that we must pass before we can even begin to practise *Dana*, the first *Paramita*:

Before thou canst approach the foremost gate thou hast to learn to part thy body from thy mind, to dissipate the shadow, and to live in the eternal. For this, thou hast to live and breathe in all, as all that thou perceivest breathes in thee; to feel thyself abiding in all things, all things in SELF.

The latter part of this quotation is important. We often think that we are trying to live and breathe in tune with the whole of the unified universe, but do we also try to see the other half of this idea—“as all that thou perceivest breathes in thee”? That is true brotherhood; it implies the real understanding of unity. There is no one, no thing, that is really separate from ourselves. What hurts one, hurts all, whether it is the death of a friend, our own death, or the death of a mosquito or a beetle; the ill treatment given to a fellow human being, or to ourselves, or to the lowest creature that lives, reacts on all. The animal is a part of us; the criminal is a part

of us. We are a part of the animal and of the criminal. That part of us which is in the animal and in the criminal suffers when the animal or the criminal is ill treated.

That which makes for the unity of all life is the SELF. Coming down to the astral light, which affects us because of its photographic quality, its receptivity to the thoughts, feelings and actions of all creatures and its capacity to vitalize all these, we can perhaps see how this unity is a reality. It is worth while studying this and putting the teaching into practice. But this recognition of unity has to be seen from the basis of the SELF which operates in and through even the tiniest forms and on all planes. Hence we are told that we must begin to put the idea of Unity into practice and must live in the Eternal.

Just what does it mean to “live in the Eternal”? Nothing is outside of the Eternal. Everything lives in Spirit, which is eternal; we have to learn to live in it consciously. We have to become one with the Eternal, not by jumping to It in imagination, but by seeing that we and It, and therefore we and all others, are one. If this is so, then it becomes obvious that just as we “like” ourselves and work for our own good, so we must apply the “liking” or love to all. First, we must begin to think of all as learners, as though they were our fellow pupils, “disciples of one Teacher, the sons of one sweet mother.” The real Teacher is the Master-Soul, the Universal Soul, a ray of which is in us and in all men. At present we think of the Universal Soul as apart from ourselves, a kind of misty background. But, before we can progress, we have to see these two as one. The practical aspect of this is to “sacrifice the personal to Self impersonal.”

More practical advice is given to us, which calls to mind the letter of the Mahatma printed in *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 167): “Lead the life necessary for the acquisition of such knowledge and powers, and Wisdom will come to you naturally.” This concept we also find in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (VI, 32): “He, O Arjuna, who by the similitude found in himself seeth but one essence in all things, whether they be evil or good, is considered to be the most excellent devotee.” Elsewhere in the *Gita* (IV, 38) we are told: “...he who is

perfected in devotion findeth spiritual knowledge springing up spontaneously in himself in the progress of time.”

So, through the recognition of the one SELF and the devotion that leads to IT, we have to practise the attuning of our heart and mind “to the great mind and heart of all mankind.” This is to be done by being able to “thrill in response to every sigh and thought of all that lives and breathes.”

The feeling of love that arises in the heart when we dwell on these concepts makes us sometimes forget, or transcend, the field of human life which is enveloped in pain. Therefore we are asked to cast our glance downward from the superlative heights we may reach, and see the pain that is humanity’s: “Hast thou attuned thy being to Humanity’s great pain?” we are asked. The word “attuned” needs to be noted. What is needed is not a feeling-thought of sympathy, or a shrug of the shoulders with the feeling “What can I do?” It is an *attunement with*, a *suffering with* those in pain that has to be cultivated. Others’ pain becomes *our own* pain. Indeed, we are further told that this attunement is not mere passive suffering but an active search for the cause of the pain, without resting until we have removed it. As *The Secret Doctrine* tells us, we have to get at the evil causes and remove them, for then and then only can we finally get rid of the evil effects. Even the suppression of one single bad cause (*S.D.*, I, 644), not even its removal, will accomplish some good, though the probationer must in time *remove* the cause. Before *removal* is possible, let us at least *suppress*! We cannot remove anger from our nature by the mere wish; we have to go through many a year of suppression, while at the same time cultivating the opposite virtue, before anger is removed beyond resurrection.

Why is it so necessary to begin to alter our whole character before stepping on the Path? The Mahatma answers this question:

Beware then, of an uncharitable spirit, for it will rise up like a hungry wolf in your path, and devour the better qualities of your nature which have been springing into life.

He tells us how this is to be guarded against:

Broaden instead of narrowing your sympathies; try to identify yourself with your fellows, rather than to contract your circle of affinity.

Light on the Path gives us further aid. How can we become charitable or wipe away the tears of others if we do not see or hear the groan of mankind? Therefore we are told to “listen to the song of life,” and to “learn from it the lesson of harmony.” But equally we must learn to hear the cry of pain, of which Mr. Judge wrote:

O, what a groan Nature gives to see the heavy Karma which man has piled upon himself and all the creatures of the three worlds! That deep sigh pierces through my heart. How can the load be lifted? Am I to stand for myself, while the few strong hands of Blessed Masters and Their friends hold back the awful cloud? Such a vow I registered ages ago to help them, and I must. Would to great Karma I could do more! And you! Do what you can.

“Armed with the key of Charity, of love and tender mercy,” we are secure before the gate of *Dana*, and we may enter. The harmony we have established between ourselves and others and the Whole makes the path “straight and smooth and green.” All is well, and with the song of the “nightingales of hope” in our heart we pass on. Let us still remember that the Path is a path of woe; let us try to keep the vision of the goal before us as we struggle on and meet and conquer the obstacles on the way. Each obstacle conquered is a gate opened. There is no return. But the thought that we are doing it for the sake of all, not for our own sake, will inspire us. And at the end of the journey the very effort we have made to feel at one with all Nature makes it possible for the “chant of love” to arise “from the flaming Fire and flowing Water, and from sweet-smelling Earth and rushing Wind,” heralding our return “from the other shore.”

The Master wrote: “...the adept sees and feels and lives in the very source of all fundamental truths—the Universal Spiritual Essence of Nature, SHIVA the Creator, the Destroyer, and the Regenerator.

OVERCOMING ADVERSE INFLUENCES

IS not sadness often caused by the disappointments of unfulfilled desires? By something that we get and do not like, or, liking, do not get? Do not the oppressive influences of our unwholesome surroundings, including our disliked neighbours, produce despair and sadness in us? Are not these the symptoms of unbrotherliness and selfishness?

Sadness is akin to sorrow, the first of the Four Noble Truths of Lord Buddha. The second and third Noble Truths indicate the cause and cure of sorrow. All of them point to selfishness—the dire heresy of separateness—as the root of all misery. The remedy—surmount and eradicate selfishness by conscious, deliberate efforts; become unselfish first, selfless next; aspire to open up a channel of communication with the Higher Self by subduing the lower.

What produces sadness? Mainly, our objective external surroundings, or rather, our attitude towards them; also, the subjective internal images which assail us when a deliberate attempt is made to shut off the sensory channels. Says *The Voice of the Silence*: “Withhold thy mind from all external objects, all external sights. Withhold internal images, lest on thy Soul-light a dark shadow they should cast.”

How are these adverse influences to be neutralized and overcome? How else than by the simple expedient of placing ourselves beyond their power and exposing ourselves consciously to beneficent, cheerful and helpful influences? That is what H. P. Blavatsky means when she says that “by altering the surroundings of the organism we can alter and improve the organism; and, in the strictest sense, this is true with regard to man.” For those who wish to dispel depressing moods, W. Q. Judge’s suggestion is that they try to feel the joy of others. The enlightened Buddha recommended good company for guarding against bad influences. Hence, in the three Refuges for those desirous of the spiritual life, the Sangha is included. This Sangha, or Order, implies companionship of those who are inspired by similarity of aim, purpose and teaching—all for spiritual upliftment.

Fate, Destiny and Karma appear synonymous; but the first two are only partial aspects of the third. W. Q. Judge's answer to a question on the difference between Karma and Destiny establishes the position clearly.

Destiny is the English word applied to a Karma so strong and overpowering that its action cannot be counteracted by other Karma; but in the sense that all happenings are under Karma, all things are destined as they occur. Men have always found that some events were so inevitable that, for want of knowledge of the law of Karma, they have said, "These things were destined." But when we grasp the meaning of Karma, we see that *destiny* is only the working out in action of causes so powerful that no act of ours and no other sort of Karma could by any possibility either avert or modify the result.

But what is destiny? *Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary* gives two short definitions: "unavoidable fate," "necessity." *Webster's Dictionary* defines the word as a "predetermined state; a condition foreordained by the divine will or by human will." The words "destiny" and "fate" are generally considered to be synonymous, yet they do not mean exactly the same thing. Destiny, according to H. P. Blavatsky, is "the power which rules over the actions, sufferings, life and struggles of men. But this is not *Karma*; it is only one of its agent-forces."

The allegorical presentation of the Fates in Greek and Scandinavian mythologies shows many parallels with ancient Indian traditions and is in accordance with the universal ideas of the perennial philosophy of Theosophy.

Moirai, the Greek Goddess of Fate, says Madame Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine*, "is a deity 'who...gives to all their portion of good and evil,' and is therefore *Karma*. By this abbreviation, however, *the subject to Destiny or Karma* is meant, the SELF or EGO, and that which is reborn." The *Moirai*, the goddesses of Fate, are three in number. The word *moira* means "part," and their number corresponds to that of the three "parts" of the moon: the waxing, the full and the waning. The *Moirai* are known as the Spinners,

Klothes, although only the eldest of them is called Klotho. The second is called Lachesis, "the Apportioner"; and the third, Atropos, "the Inevitable." Homer mostly speaks only of one *Moirai*, a single spinning goddess who is "strong," "hard to endure" and "destroying." The *Moirai* spin the days of our lives, and one of these inevitably becomes the day of death.

These three *Moirai* have to be understood as symbols of the three groups of Karmic life-forces which operate on three planes in accordance with law, in the formation of the three bodies which are the vehicles of the soul. "Atropos" signifies the higher-mind forces conjoined with Buddhi, which build up the causal body, the Spiritual Soul, the vehicle of Atma, and together they form the immortal individuality. "Klotho" represents the "web" of psychic forces which build up the psychic body and provide a connecting link between the physical man on the one side and the spiritual on the other. "Lachesis" signifies the forces of heredity and growth on the physical plane, which build up the physical body for a life-period. This lowest vehicle, the physical body with its limitations or possibilities, is animated from the astral and pranic planes, for by itself it is inert and lifeless.

In the Scandinavian *Edda*, the Norns, the three sister goddesses, make known to men the decrees of Orlog or Fate. Their names are "Urd," the Past; "Werdandi," the Present; and "Skuld," the Future, "which is either rich in hope or dark with tears." Like the *Moirai*, the Norns also are symbols of the life-forces which operate in forming the soul-sheaths or bodies on different planes. The object and scope of these forces are determined by the Archetype, or divine pattern within, which fixes for each soul the instrument through which it may work.

H. P. Blavatsky refers to these sisters in her story "Karmic Visions" (reprinted in *The Tell-Tale Picture Gallery*):

"What is my Past?" enquires the Soul-Ego of Urd, the eldest of the Norn sisters. "Why do I suffer?"

A long parchment is unrolled in her hand, and reveals a long series of mortal beings, in each of whom the Soul-Ego recognizes one of its dwellings....

“What is my immediate Present?” asks the dismayed Soul of Werdandi, the second sister.

“The decree of Orlog is on thyself!” is the answer. “But Orlog does not pronounce them blindly, as foolish mortals have it.”

“What is my Future?” asks despairingly of Skuld, the third Norn sister, the Soul-Ego. “Is it to be for ever dark with tears, and bereaved of Hope?”

No answer is received.

Thus the Norns reveal the decrees of Fate, “for out of the past and present the events and actions of the future are born.”

In the Hindu tradition, three kinds of Karma are spoken of:

1) *Prarabdha*—that portion or aspect of Karma with which one is born and for whose precipitation the field is ready.

2) *Vartaman* or *Agami*, which is but the fruit on the tree of *Prarabdha*—bitter, sour, or sweet. It is built up by the thoughts, feelings, words and deeds generated now and here, day by day.

3) *Sanchita*, meaning stored-up Karma, is a reserve stock held over from the past. This is a sort of dammed-up Karma which will begin to flow out as *Prarabdha* on opening the sluices. When one resolves to break the limitations of Karma, one cuts a canal through which this dammed-up Karma begins to flow and becomes *Prarabdha*.

Destiny is Karma that has ripened and whose motion toward expression cannot be averted or postponed. It may well be termed *Prarabdha* and cannot be overcome any more than one can change the family, nation, or race into which one is born. The proverb says: “What cannot be cured must be endured.” So also with *Prarabdha* precipitations, which should be utilized to develop patience and endurance. “The ripple of effect, as the great tidal wave, thou shalt let run its course.” Yet, though nothing can be done to this Karmic precipitation, a great deal can be done in it.

The endurance of *Prarabdha* should be looked upon as a test. This test consists in our facing the effects without depression, without complaining, without self-pity or the feeling of martyrdom. One sure way is to keep the consciousness away from the processes

of effects and to put it, as far as possible, on the Spirit and on Spiritual truths.

The precipitation of bad and difficult Karma is a test of endurance. The general reaction is to seek refuge in prayers and in propitiations of the Deity. Among the four classes of men working for righteousness, who worship Krishna, are the afflicted. The test of endurance passed, we find that some development of Spiritual Will has taken place.

The aspect of *Buddhi Yoga* which corresponds to *Prarabdha* and which frees us from the bonds of Karma (*Gita*, ix, 28), is the offering as sacrifice of that *Prarabdha* to the Divinity within. It is the surrender of our personal will or volition to the Divine Will of the Higher Self.

The definition of destiny as “unavoidable fate,” referred to earlier, can be understood now in the light of the preceding.

Then what of the other definition mentioned earlier—“necessity”? How is this “necessity” aspect of destiny built up? By a repetitive process, leading to the acquirement of a skill or the formation of a habit; and the continuance of the habit leads to destiny. “Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.” The seeds of destiny, verily, are wrapped up in the daily, hourly and momentary habits of thinking and of acting that men pursue.

The manner in which one turns into a chain smoker illustrates this process. From small beginnings rooted in bravado and confidence in his own will power, the occasional smoker reaches the stage of a habitual smoker, for whom extrication from this enslavement becomes difficult. The habit that has been consciously and deliberately formed has been built into the character and has turned into a network of “necessity”! This is the “avoidable” aspect of fate. If people would only realize where their actions—including thoughts, feelings, emotions, speech and deeds—are leading them, they would avoid the fate that is to be, by properly controlling all these channels of activity.

In this connection, H. P. Blavatsky states that, just as a spider spins his cobweb, so each one, from birth to death, weaves around

himself, thread by thread, his destiny or Karma. When the last strand is woven and man is seemingly enwrapped in the network of his own doing, he finds himself completely under the empire of this *self-made* destiny, which either fixes him like an inert shell against the immovable rock, or carries him away, like a feather, in the whirlwind raised by his own actions. Such is the destiny of the MAN, the true Ego, not the automaton, the *shell* that goes by that name, the *namarupa*. It is for the Real Man to become the conqueror over matter.

In *The Secret Doctrine*, H. P. Blavatsky says that man

cannot escape his *ruling* Destiny, but he has the choice of two paths that lead him in that direction, and he can reach the goal of misery—if such is decreed to him, either in the snowy white robes of the Martyr, or in the soiled garments of a volunteer in the iniquitous course; for, there are *external and internal conditions* which affect the determination of our will upon our actions, and it is in our power to follow either of the two.

The natural and legitimate question is: “What is greater than destiny?” The answer—Exertion—sounds simple, yet is most profound. The *Rajadharmanushasana Parva* of the *Shanti Parva* of the *Mahabharata* narrates that, while lying on the bed of arrows on the battlefield, waiting to drop his mortal coil with the northward turning of the sun, the venerable grandsire, Bhishma, advised Yudhishtira thus:

O son, thou shouldst always exert with promptitude, for without promptitude of exertion mere destiny never accomplishes the objects cherished by kings. These two, namely, exertion and destiny, are equal (in their operation). Of them, I regard exertion to be superior, for destiny is ascertained from the results of what is begun with exertion. Do not indulge in grief if what is commenced ends disastrously, for thou shouldst then exert thyself in the same act with redoubled attention.

Destiny, therefore, is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for; it is a thing to be achieved.

Hence, in the words of Longfellow:

Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.

For, as another poet, William Ernest Henley, wrote:

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

We are the real *mover* behind the ideas and behind the will—the Experiencer—Spirit itself—that which looks out through our eyes and that which senses through our organs. It is the same Self in each and every instrument. Spirit has the faculty of identifying itself with the business upon which the mind is concentrated, so that it becomes involved in its instruments and confused by its involution. Although we are Spirit—divine, eternal, beginningless, endless—we have created right or wrong ideas as to our own natures, as to anything and everything which we experience in any direction, upon any plane of being. We are the One Reality behind all experiences, behind all planes of being—which are but temporary in their nature, while Man himself, divested of every means of communication with them, becomes creator of his own means. Within the spiritual nature lie every possible power, force and means for the creation of a more and more perfect instrument, yet, by our own actions, by our own creation of false ideals as their basis, we have made the conditions in which we find ourselves.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

LEARNING FROM LIFE

THE *Mahabharata* tells us that “All men are subject to and governed by two forces—Destiny and Exertion.” It goes on to say: “Success springs from the union of the two.” But, it adds, “Exertion succeeds through destiny.”

To understand this problem we must give up the present attitude of judging things on *appearance*. Since “truth is a gem found at great depth,” and since “the juice of the orange is inside the skin,” we will never understand the truth unless we can get to the reality underlying the appearances of things in life.

With regard to what *appears* to us to be fatalism, it is necessary to recognize first that there is a Cycle of Necessity and laws pertaining to it. We have to follow that evolutionary path, for we cannot avoid it; but to benefit from it, it is absolutely necessary to accept the idea without reservation. Without positive and complete acceptance of our destiny we waste our energies in fighting against it instead of fighting *in* it and *with* it. It has some value for us, something to teach us, something that urges us on to efforts of exertion. It is not the dull acceptance—“all is Kismet!”—that is needed, for it breeds stagnation. It is the absolute feeling of willing acceptance, with joy. Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor, expressed it this way: “Love that only which happens to thee and is spun with the thread of thy destiny. For what is more suitable?”

The great American writer, Emerson, taught that

Life invests itself with inevitable conditions, which the unwise seek to dodge, which one and another brags that he does not know; that they do not touch him: but the brag is on his lips, the conditions are in his soul.

So, first, by careful and earnest thought we must accept the inevitability of that which comes to us. Destiny *is*. What is to be done with destiny is the next proposition to be thought out. All obstacles which we recognize as such and which have to be overcome need will-power. We have to exert to overcome our destiny, to use it. It is the opposite of the old idea of praying to *escape* our destiny, and the recognition of the truth that we learn

through trials. In Theosophic language, the more worthy we are, the more “destiny” we have to overcome. Therefore we can see the uselessness of the effort to fight against destiny. We might use the story of Arjuna and Lord Shiva to help us see why it is useless to fight that which is too great for us. Arjuna fought with Shiva when he appeared as a hunter; his arrows struck the God but fell away, unable to injure him. When Arjuna turned his eyes away to worship at the shrine, he saw Shiva as the God, no longer as a hunter. To become *one with* is better than to fight!

Certain it is that we all experience suffering and sorrow at some time or another; also, we see others in the throes of sorrow and suffering. Indeed, we are urged to feel pity for our suffering friends, and often we try to help them bear their burden, for this way we begin to develop, in however small a degree, compassion for all. There is something in pain and suffering that, when rightly borne, brings to birth soul qualities in us. It makes us think of and feel for others in like circumstances, so that a conception of real brotherhood is established.

Whether our suffering is physical pain in the body or is caused by loss of friends or change of circumstances, we have to engender a power of exertion through acceptance and, with patience which strengthens the will, force our way through all obstacles to the goal ahead. The very human quality that is ours is that which makes it possible for us, as Shelley pointed out in “Prometheus Unbound,”

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
 To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope, till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
 Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
 This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

Our watchwords should be: Necessity, Acceptance, Exertion, Joy.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Recent studies hint at possible links between the ancient civilization of the Indus Valley and that of the Mayas of Mexico and Central America. B. G. Siddharth, director of the B. M. Birla science centre in Hyderabad, has pointed out striking similarities between the two ancient cultures, although Mexico and India are situated at opposite sides of the earth in longitude.

The experts took a deep interest in the calendars followed by the two cultures. While the Indus Valley people followed a calendar based on the movements of Jupiter, acknowledged to be the leader of the gods, the Mayas followed one based on the movements of Venus or Sukra, who, according to the Puranas, was the leader of the *Asuras*.

Siddharth also pointed out that some carvings in Mexico depicted an episode similar to that of the churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons in Hindu mythology. The Mexican representations of the tradition bore a striking resemblance to those found in different parts of India. Dr. Ganpati, a Chennai-based expert on ancient Hindu architecture, has also found similarities between the design and construction methods used by the Mayas and the ancient Hindus.

Students of H.P.B.'s *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* well know that the Mayas had links with the Old World. Their ceramics, fine arts and architecture, experts admit, compare favourably to the Hindu and South Asiatic. And herein lies the clue to understanding the "mystery" of the Mayas. In Chapter XIV in Volume I of *Isis Unveiled*, there is ample discussion of the origins of early American races. H.P.B. remarks in this work:

In order to institute a better comparison between the specimens of prehistoric architecture to be found at the most opposite points of the globe, we have but to point to the grandiose Hindu ruins of Ellora in the Dekkan, the Mexican Chichen-Itza, in Yucatan, and the still grander ruins of Copan in Guatemala. They present such features of resemblance that it seems impossible to escape the conviction that they were

built by peoples moved by the same religious ideas, and that had reached an equal level of highest civilization in arts and sciences. (I, 561)

Without recognizing that there once existed a vast Atlantic continent on which flourished a civilization which was the mother of all the cultures of the ancient world, it is impossible for modern archaeologists to arrive at the true explanation for similarities in prehistoric architecture, and in customs and traditions. "America," H.P.B. writes in "A land of Mystery" (reprinted from *The Theosophist* in THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT for May, June, July and August 1943), "was once united with Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia." And in *The Secret Doctrine* she states that "although certainly coeval with Plato's Atlantis, the Mayas belonged to the Fifth Continent, which was preceded by Atlantis and Lemuria" (II, 35 fn.).

Over the years it has been generally accepted, even by physicians, that people who suffer from all sorts of illnesses generally improve when they get placebo treatment—inane pills or potions that the patient *believes* are effective medication. Recently, however, two researchers from the University of Copenhagen wrote in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that "there is no justification for the use of placebos" in medical practice. Since then, a debate has been raging over the issue. No firm conclusion has yet been arrived at by researchers except that placebos do much more for some illnesses than for others. The placebo effect still remains a mystery.

Experts like Irving Kirsch of the University of Connecticut argue that the placebo effect is not unique in the psychology of expectation. It may be one more example of a wide variety of situations in which what we expect to happen is what actually happens.

The placebo response is described as "a non-verbal communi-

cation between patient and doctor, the affective response to this relationship being displaced on to the placebo. In other words, if the patient feels that the doctor is helping him, he will respond to the placebo.” The substance prescribed is infused with a virtue not naturally its own. The wise doctor knows that most people, when they are ill, need reassurance and hope more than medicine.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer once said: “Each patient carries his own doctor inside him. They come to us not knowing that truth. We are at our best when we give the doctor who resides within each patient a chance to go to work.”

An instance of what human will and determination can accomplish is provided by Ila Sachani, daughter of a farmer in Surat district of Gujarat. Diagnosed with an irreversible congenital deformity in her upper limbs, Ila, now 26 years old, learnt to cope with the disadvantage from an early age. Her hands are mere appendages on her body, but she seldom feels handicapped on their account. At a young age, she was taught how to go about her daily grind with the help of her legs. Things that people normally did with their hands, Ila learnt to do with her lower limbs. She was soon adept at using her feet for eating, combing her hair, dusting, folding clothes, even chopping vegetables. (*India Today*, May 13)

What is even more intriguing, Ila, while still a little girl, learnt to use her legs to paint and sew. The most intricate—and at times discouraging—lesson was on threading a needle. It took much perseverance, but her enthusiasm and determination to succeed made matters easier. The effort paid off and by the time she was 10 she had not only mastered the highly intricate Kathiavad embroidery typical of Saurashtra region but also styles from outside Gujarat like Kachha, Lucknowi and Kashmiri. Many awards, including the President’s Medal in December last year, have come her way.

Ila, and others like her (there is a worldwide institution of foot-and-mouth-painting artists), are a living example to handicapped

people wherever they may be. It has truly been said: “Exertion is greater than destiny.”

Letting go of a grudge can have dramatic health benefits, studies show; but forgiveness requires fortitude. It is about finding a genuine way to respond with compassion to a person who has done you a wrong. How can you forgive someone? Stop rehashing hurtful events and harbouring ill feelings, suggest psychiatrists. (*Health and Nutrition*, May 2002)

The following steps are suggested as a help to drop a grudge:

See it from the other side. Understand the factors that may have shaped the other person’s behaviour, and recognize that there are times when we hurt others too. Empathy is the gateway to forgiveness.

Acknowledge that no one can change the past. When you stop expecting that the offender can take back a hurtful act, you take responsibility for healing yourself. And don’t expect an apology or changed behaviour either, because forgiving doesn’t equal reconciling.

Wish him well. Find a small way to genuinely wish the other person well. For example, you might say to yourself, “I hope he gains control of his temper.” This helps you replace bitterness with a positive emotion.

Confucius said: “To the good I would be good; to the not good I would also be good, in order to make them good.” How many are there today ready to live up to this sage advice?

According to psychiatrists in Mumbai, mental health in the city is going from bad to worse. It is estimated that nearly 12 lakh people here suffer from mental health problems and more and more are seeking help. Statistics show that: one out of every three people who go to a medical practitioner suffers from mental problems;

one out of every 10 children suffers from a mental disorder; two out of every 10 suffer from depression.

Psychiatrists say that the ever-increasing workload and stress levels in a fast-paced city like Mumbai are too much; or, maybe, Mumbai's overcrowded, overpolluted physical conditions encroach on a person's physical and emotional "space," leading to lower thresholds of tolerance.

There are deeper causes of mental disturbances. There needs to be a perception on the part of both doctors and patients of the relation between philosophy of life and mental health, and of the fact that man is something more than a thinking animal. The recognition by medical men of something within each of us higher than brain consciousness and transcending the narrow personality would be a long step in the right direction.

How does one work toward the attitudes and behaviours which characterize a mentally healthy person? Among the steps in the "working-toward" process may be mentioned the taking of one's share of responsibility in all spheres of life, and the saving of a little time for doing something for others, especially for those who are in need of help. The least one can do is to offer others his sincere interest. Each one needs to remind himself that he can be important to his fellow men, regardless of his position, title, wealth, or knowledge.

Life needs must be lived. One who has good mental health lives it well, and one who lives it well has good mental health. One who does not, hurts not only himself but also those around him.

One of the fundamental factors that shape the future citizens is education. But the lessons that children learn in the classrooms are far removed from the reality around them. What kind of education should we give our children to enable them become better members of society in later life? *Purity* (May 2002) offers these suggestions:

Education should be a process of developing the spirit of rational inquiry and self-discovery. Even where facts are taught, teachers should facilitate children to inquire, explore, think and express different viewpoints and discern the values of life....

Discipline is a value that is imbibed and maintained by the self. Fear of reprimand or punishment is not the means to teach discipline as it is enforced in schools. Children need to learn from the beginning the value of self-discipline so that we may not require so many law-enforcement systems to control the citizens.

Value education is a hot topic these days. Many schools teach values as subjects, but values cannot be taught, they have to be caught by the young minds from their environment and good role models. When teachers fail to embody these values in their behaviour it raises confusion about the ideal and the practical. Education should be a means for getting in touch with our innate values like love, happiness and truth so that we become strong, balanced and constructive citizens. When we start educating in this way, we can begin to hope for a better future.

Most Indians are familiar with the story of Tansen, who lit up the lamps in Emperor Akbar's court with an evocative rendering of Raag Deepak. Likewise, Raag Megh Malhar is reputed to invoke the rains.

The practice of using music as a healing influence is thousands of years old. Dr. Anil Patil, an allopath who is also a practitioner of alternative therapies, remarks, "Music therapy is a great leveller in self-growth and understanding." Commenting on the role of therapists, he says, "Music therapists assess emotional well-being, physical health, social functioning, communication abilities, and cognitive skills through musical responses." (*The Times of India*, May 31)

How does music therapy actually work? "My theory," says Dr.

Patil, “is that the body is made up of vibrations, which get disturbed during illnesses. Eventually, only vibrations can balance vibrations. So, along with *ragas*, I also use different *laya* (beats) for each patient. A *vilambit* (slow) beat works for a hyperactive person, while a *dhrut* (fast) beat is more suitable for a dull person.”

Music has the power to relax a person. As a result, it combats tension and depression. “Consequently, the chances of such a person suffering from acidity, diabetes or heart problems are also greatly reduced,” says another music therapy practitioner.

Belief in the healthful and curative properties of music is not only ancient but almost universal. Theosophy abounds in references to the power of music, which is an aspect of the power of sound. H.P.B., who calls sound “*the most potent and effectual magic agent*,” writes:

Harmonious rhythm, a melody vibrating softly in the atmosphere, creates a beneficent and sweet influence around, and acts most powerfully on the psychological as well as physical natures of every living thing on earth; it reacts even on inanimate objects, for matter is still spirit in its essence, invisible as it may seem to our grosser senses. (*Isis Unveiled*, II, 411)

LIFE would be dull and colourless but for the obstacles that we have to overcome and the fights that we have to win.

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE