

# THE HARVEST of LIFE



The Blavatsky Lecture 2002  
by Alan Hughes



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## PREFACE

The following pages of this extended version of the 2002 Blavatsky Lecture contain authoritative sounding statements, advice, admonitions – even severe warnings. These are taken entirely (well, almost entirely) from the books listed in the appendix at the end.

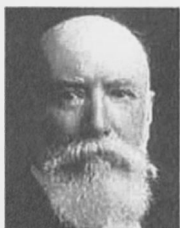
Footnotes, and even those little numbers and hieroglyphs in the text, can break the flow of a narrative so they have not been used. Quotation marks where these seemed absolutely necessary do appear but mostly they too have been omitted. If this has resulted in my doing a “Kiddle”, so be it.

APH



# 1

*"What is the good of the whole cyclic process if spirit only emerges at the end of all things pure and impersonal as it was at first before its descent into matter? My answer is that I am not at present engaged in excusing, but in investigating the operations of Nature. But perhaps there may be a better answer available."*



Alfred Percy Sinnett

A. P. Sinnett. Letter to the Mahatma KH

How would you have answered Sinnett's question? Is it so different from the child's question: What are people for, Dad? It's the question of questions. Without a satisfactory answer, our lives will lack direction and purpose.

What a massive industry the prolonging of life is today. Vanity, vanity, says The Preacher of Ecclesiastes, unless – to paraphrase him – one's labour under the sun produces a harvest. And Thomas à Kempis uses the same word: it is vanity, he says, to desire a long life and to take no heed of a good life.

'The Good Life' is a common phrase today but what does it mean? I sit on Goring beach and wonder how Thomas à Kempis would have defined it. I watch and feel the fire of the sun setting; the air moves around me and the sea heaves and crashes its arriving waves onto the stones which grumble at being disturbed. What are the hidden causes of this – this life? Who is contemplating these four elements, and – more importantly – is the outcome of all this process beneficial in any way; which brings us back to Sinnett's question to the Master.



Thomas à Kempis

What is the nature of a good harvest and what is not?

This is not an easy question to answer. It is something, *The Bhagavad Gita* says, that even the most intelligent are perplexed in determining (4.16) especially as Krishna says just prior to this: There is no work that affects Me; nor do I aspire for the fruits of action. Well, these words notwithstanding, cannot we see ourselves as having a mission? And if so, what is it? This may be answered in as many ways as there are members of the Theosophical Society. We do read though, in Letter 18 of *The Mahatma Letters*, of the “mission” of the Adept: “It is we who were the divers and pioneers, and the men of science have but to reap where we have sown. It is our mission to plunge and bring the pearls of Truth to the surface; theirs – to clean and set them into scientific jewels.”

If the Masters’ work is on the inner planes, then it is surely an indication where our energies should also be primarily directed; with no such grand accomplishment in immediate view perhaps, but each according to their abilities. Have the views of those who would teach us science changed since the letters were written? The establishment view today can still be summed up by the declaration that consciousness is produced through an increase in complexity of the material organization. And by material is meant physical. Knowledge of inner planes? Those daring to speak of such things are still mostly considered unworthy of a serious hearing, or openly scorned.

The great Arabian philosopher Ibn Arabi wrote: “What the Seers taught of the sciences is clothed in forms which are intelligible to those of little intellectual capacity. He who does not look beneath the surface of things will say, ‘what a beautiful robe’ and will be seeing it thus in the highest degree. But the man of subtle comprehension – the diver seeking the pearls of wisdom – will not only see the beauty of the robe, but will perceive the nature of the material of which it is made and *all that it covers*, awakening thus

to a science which remains inaccessible to those who do not have knowledge of this order.”

The desire to understand life's mysteries is with us. It could be tempting to suggest that the intensity of the desire to understand is proportional to the likelihood of our stumbling on Theosophy! And with that comes an introduction to those pearls of guidance in the literature that TS members have access to, usually with disturbing results. We may realize that, here we are, nearly halfway through our allotted three score years and ten and we've only just discovered some of the 'rules of the game'! We may well have intuited some of them but here in the words of Adept Masters they're written down for our study, albeit often in the form of nudges and hints only.

How, for example, can we make any sense of our lives without the twin doctrines of karma and reincarnation, which alone, says H. P. Blavatsky, can explain the mysterious problem of good and evil and reconcile man to the terrible and apparent injustices of life. Those without an understanding of these fundamental teachings may well jettison completely all they have been taught in their religious upbringing, protesting with justification that if the blindness, say, of their little child is the will of a capricious God, then let's hope for all our sakes he doesn't exist. Out goes the spiritual baby with the dirty bathwater of their unsatisfactory 'theology'.



Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

There's a potential bite though in the serpent of wisdom: Once aware that certain effects ensue from this or that action – specially on the mental level – then do the 'rules' become less forgiving? As someone I read somewhere put it: There are four grades of humanity: A – Knowing and good; B – Ignorant yet good; C – Ignorant and bad and D – Knowing yet bad.

Despite the possibility that when the history of the 19th century can be written from a greater distance, and HPB may be seen as one of its greatest personages, the TS makes no claims about the uniqueness of the doctrines it studies. Nevertheless with our coming into it, we find certain seeds in our possession. What to do with them?

As the process of a dawning awareness of purpose stirs, our routes may seem to diverge. Again, we could say that no two members of our Society find exactly the same path. No two will bring in the same harvest if only because of their differing circumstances and capabilities (they are ploughing different plots). That central question of purpose or harvest nonetheless persists.

Some years ago, Ianthe Hoskins was General Secretary of the TS in England. When enquirers to Ianthe's office called to ask a question about the Society, wanting chiefly to know how Theosophy answered the great question of what life is for, she realized there was no simply stated reply to this so she set to and with the help of others produced that single sheet of profound words headed "Do you ever ask yourself . . . Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?"



Ianthe Hoskins

Here are two extracts: "You are here in order to discover what you really are, and to bring into activity all the powers that lie sleeping within you. Since you are, in your true nature, a part of the divine life, you have within yourself all the attributes of divinity: infinite love, infinite wisdom, infinite power. Humanity is still very young, and most of us have hardly begun the immense task of Self-discovery. But we are here to do this very thing, and we have all the time we need to do it . . . You are going in the direction you have chosen, either drifting through life, at the mercy of events and of your own passing whims and moods, or taking adult responsibility for the whole of yourself, your character, your actions and your future. The full stature of manhood is the perfect

expression of divinity in a human personality. You are choosing, at every moment, either to waste your opportunities and deny your true Self, or to accept your destiny and move consciously towards the goal of Self-realization.”

*That’s what you’re here for, my son.*

Using our energies wisely (and please see the first letter of KH to A. O. Hume on this subject) we set out with the seeds that are going to grow and mature within us. Zeal without wisdom, however, is like heat without light, for clearly this Self-realization is not insular. Indeed it could be said that the first step towards it is being aware of this fact. As HPB writes in Volume IX of *The Collected Writings*: remember that every person that draws the breath of life affects the mental and moral atmosphere of the world and helps to colour the day for those about him.

She continues: Everyone has to discover this fact freshly for themselves and when once they have realised it they know they would be wretched if they did not endeavour to make the possibility a reality in their own lives. Man’s life is in his own hands. His fate is ordered by himself.

Thus we have the beginnings of an answer to Sinnett: The ‘good’ of any cycle of existence is the benefit of that life to others – and to the whole; for the 3rd Fundamental Proposition of Theosophy is *The Identity of All Souls* (yes, the fundamental identity!) with the Universal Over-Soul.

W. Q. Judge writes in one of his letters: What should be done is to realize that the Master-Soul is One, with all that that implies; to know the meaning of the old teaching, “Thou art That”. When this is done we may with impunity identify our consciousness with anything in Nature; not before. But to do this is a life-time’s work, and beforehand we have to exhaust all karma, which means duty;



we must live for others and then we will find out all we *should* know, not what we would *like* to know.

If the realization of our fundamental identity with the Universal Self leads to a direct perception of the nature of things, it is for the greater harvest this makes possible. If it leads to an awakening of intuition, it is for what this reveals. And if it leads to the development of a creative will, it is so we can become – as the Master says – Co-Workers with Nature. Nothing draws us to anyone, says KH, save his evolving spirituality. Your greatest men count but as nonentities in the arena where greatness is measured by the standard of spiritual development. He who conquers self is greater than the conqueror of worlds.

The overcoming of the desires of the self for the good of the greater Self is what has been termed our personal civil war, but then the magnitude of our harvest will be as the greatness of the sacrifice. And even then we must add: the prize life offers us lies not so much in the personal worth of any harvest but in the not to be wasted opportunity that life gives us to fulfil a wider, grander responsibility. From becoming aware that no-one can work for himself alone and that to elevate oneself is to elevate all, one can see why the TS's first object is stated as it is; for the Universal Brotherhood we readily give lip service to is not a pious ideal but a fact of nature.

Judge again: We are not working merely that people may call themselves Theosophists, but that the doctrines we cherish may affect and leaven the whole mind of this century. This alone can be accomplished by a small band of earnest workers who for no human reward, no earthly recognition, but who, supported and sustained by a belief in that Universal Brotherhood of which our Masters are a part, work steadily, trying both to understand and put forth for



William Quan Judge

consideration the doctrines of life and duty that have come down to us from time immemorial. Falter not; a few devoted ones can keep the nucleus existing. You are not directed to realize a Universal Brotherhood but to form the nucleus for one, for it is only when the nucleus is formed that the accumulations can begin that will end in future years – however far – in the formation of that body which we have in view.

The concept of a Universal Brotherhood to western thought of the nineteenth century was a radical and unpopular one, but it was central to what the Masters were trying to achieve in the great outpouring of the 1880s. And one of the most important aspects of the *harvest* we talk of can be likened to contributing to what the Adepts call this New Continent of Thought; a continent, however subtle its constitution, whose foundations must be so firmly built that against it no amount of opposition will be found to prevail.

## 2

*"You are part of the One Existence which men call God. You are divine in your origin and divine in your innermost nature. Your body is mortal; your spirit, which is your true Self, is immortal; your soul, which is the self which thinks and feels and regards itself as 'I', may win its immortality if it becomes the servant of spirit, and not otherwise."*

Ianthe's pamphlet

The child (now a teenager) says: Dad, what is this Higher Self I read of? Have I really got two Selves?

Dad: In a way, son, you have three: First, there's . . .

Child: (impatiently) Er, Dad – do you mind if I go and ask Mum?

We must have some understanding of the theosophical teaching on the nature of our various 'selves' if we are to ask the question: Who is bringing in the harvest?

It is unfortunate that there is not consistency in the terms used in the various books of Theosophy. In *The Key*, under the chapter heading of *Definite Words for Definite Things*, HPB speaks of a lower, or personal ego which she calls the physical man in conjunction with his *lower* self, ie animal instincts, passions, desires etc. It is called the false personality and consists of the *lower manas* combined with kama-rupa, and operating through the physical body and its phantom 'double'. Using this as a vehicle is the Inner or Higher Ego. This she defines as: manas, the 'fifth' principle, so called, independently of buddhi. The mind principle is only the spiritual Ego when merged *into one* with buddhi; a no materialist is supposed to have in him such an ego, however great his intellectual capacities. It is the permanent *Individuality* or the 'reincarnating Ego'. Where Dad's third self comes into the picture is with what HPB terms the spiritual Divine Ego. This is the spiritual Soul

or buddhi in close union with manas, the mind principle without which it is no Ego at all, but only the *atmic vehicle*. For students new to Theosophy this can be confusing enough but HPB increases that confusion by calling atma - the inseparable ray of the Universal and One Self - *the Higher Self*. Elsewhere she says of atma that it is not – and can never be – an *individual* principle – more *Selfness* rather than Self. ‘

It might be helpful in our lodge studies therefore, if we agree to use the term atma in the sense of Selfness; buddhi as the spiritual Soul, the vehicle of atma (an ‘Ego’ in union with manas, but Divine, rather than individual); and our higher Ego or Self as the permanent individuality, or reincarnating Ego.

Then finally comes the lower personal ego or self as she defines it above – which is the seat of all our troubles. Phew!

Brushing any confusion aside, HPB says (in the papers published after her death and called the 3rd volume of *The Secret Doctrine*) that an understanding of the difference between the higher Self and the lower self, or that duality in our nature, is a necessary one for the student of Theosophy. (Or, for that matter, anyone whose thoughts rise above insurance policies, supermarket prices or the frustrations of the M25.) It is necessary because without this basic teaching we would surely be baffled by the continual conflict between what we call good and evil, or the promptings of the higher Self as against the self-will of the lower personal self.

The distinction between these two is as old as the oldest philosophy in the world, but in the West it has been lost sight of in church doctrine, which recognizes only one self – a personal self; current theology making no distinction between soul and spirit. This self, we are asked to believe, commences its existence – apparently from nowhere – when the individual is physically born into this world; it had no pre-existence and yet from that moment has before it an endless eternal life – be that either of everlasting bliss or excruciating suffering of similar duration. This, incidentally, was not the teaching of the more enlightened of the early Church Fathers.

So when we speak at our meetings of the immortality of the soul, we have to be careful to distinguish between our mortal and our immortal nature – our mortal and our immortal souls. Our *mortal* nature is that part of us which belongs to the phenomenal world, the world of time, space and causation, in which everything is subject to birth, maturity and death. Our *immortal* nature is that higher or innermost part of our being the essence of which lies in the *Eternal Absolute Principle*, from which all things proceed and to which all things must return. The lower self in us – called personality – cannot in the nature of things be immortal; whilst our higher Self, on the other hand, *is inherently immortal*. Thus it is that the higher Self is the spiritual Reality of our nature. It needs no ‘salvation’.

For us the message is clear: It is only by reuniting with the higher Self that there can be any salvation for the lower personality – or that which we call ‘ourselves’. This lower personality, being inseparable from our physical brain and senses, is dependent upon them and must of course fade out and die when the physical brain dies. It is only the higher kind of consciousness, whose root lies in eternity, which can survive.

Shining through all this teaching on ‘souls’ is the idea of responsibility, which brings us to that doctrine which stops us in our tracks when we first become aware of it; and certainly when we consider the implications of it. This is the burden of Volume II of that pearl beyond price – *The Secret Doctrine* – in which the Mahatmas invested so much energy and hope. Briefly stated, the humans of this planet Earth were mindless and therefore irresponsible until the latter part of the third root race – a time the best part of 20 million years ago in round figures. It was then the processes began that we could call the ‘Second Fall’, or the Greater Fall. Not man into matter but God into man.

Though what we have been taught of this ‘event’ in our history should be the substance of several Blavatsky Lectures, a few brief notes are needed here:

The Spiritual or Monadic Essence can only become intellectual through contact with the man of matter; but for millions of years on this Earth its evolving humanity could be compared to damp wood that won’t ignite to the flame of a match. For the logs in the grate to catch fire they must

either be in a suitable (i.e. dry) state, or the source of the fire great enough to quicken the change and cause the flames to take hold.

How long this unaided 'drying-out' would have taken – that is, for mankind to have evolved into thinking, self-conscious entities – would have depended upon the degree of progress each would have made. However, if it hadn't been for the direct involvement of a superior class of beings, most of us would have remained mindless for at least the duration of the further millions of years of this fourth round of Earth's evolution.

These superior beings are variously referred to as Lords of Wisdom, Manasaputras, Sons of Fire, Solar Pitris etc. They are all beings who, aeons ago in a previous evolutionary period had to pass through a human stage and who now by karmic necessity have to leave the bliss of the nirvanic state and incarnate in the evolving humans of this Earth. It is necessary for them to do this to become fully evolved Dhyani Chohans – or gods. This reincarnation was (or has been since the fourth race of this round) a complete union of the god and the man and can perhaps be seen as the greatest event in the story of our human evolution.

It means that had this 'Fall', so called, not taken place, we would not be the self-conscious thinking beings we are today – albeit with the attendant responsibility of choice.

But it does not mean we have *two* monads inside us. From what is written on page 167 of Volume II of the *SD* we should not infer that this 'descent' means that monads entered forms in which other monads already were, for the monad, or better still, the monadic Essence is a Unity and thus incapable of being sub-divided. Here another analogy is used: the entrance into a dark room through the same aperture of one ray of sunlight following another will not constitute *two* rays but one ray intensified. And to revert to our first example of trying to light a fire: should one manage to encourage a flicker from some lumps of coal in the hearth but wish to boost this to give the warmth of a greater flame, then one could push a lighted gas poker into the grate, (in the old days at least, before they were declared dangerous, and made illegal). The result was an instantly bigger, brighter and better fire. The flame of the original flicker had not only been boosted by the fire from the poker but had *become one with it*.

It could be said of course that these spiritual beings – who are literally our individual Egos – had little choice in the matter, one limited to when, rather than whether or not, to reincarnate. Nonetheless their descent again into matter was a sacrifice, not only of their condition of bliss but also because it meant having again to evolve through a personality.

These ‘Sons of God’ the modern Church sees as ‘Fallen Angels’, the result of a ‘War in Heaven’ or, collectively, Satan! Lucifers, however, they definitely are, for they brought the Light of Mind to humankind on this Earth, and by saving us from a state of continued mindlessness, they can truly be called – our Saviours. Is it any wonder that HPB was – and indeed still is – so vehemently castigated for preaching such heresy!

What are the implications of this ‘heresy’? They are many but perhaps two need to be stressed:

The first, as stated above, is that today we are beings with *responsibility and choice, and must bear the results of that responsibility and those choices.*

Secondly, that we should conduct our affairs at all times in the knowledge that we are – though it may be more comfortable to doubt it – Sons of God. And for those of us who really can’t bear such a label, then perhaps ‘gods in the making’ may be considered more tolerable! Certainly, as the acquisition of Dhyān Chohanship means the broadening of self-consciousness so that individuality becomes a characteristic of the respective hierarchy rather than its individual units, then the switch to a more corporate responsibility may sound comforting! During our human phase, however, we must become aware of the reality that our essence is *divine*, and with all this sustenance to draw upon, why do we seem to be more conscious of our frailties than our strengths? Or as Dante put it: “Oh human race! Born to ascend on wings; why do we fall at such a little wind?”



„Dante Alighieri

The more we can be in communion with our higher Self, the greater can be our harvest. Our manas (mind) principle alone is ‘of the Earth,



earthy', but when illumined by the light of the Spirit, brings direct and certain knowledge. Intellect which is solely a product of the lower manas has in our age, says HPB, paralysed spiritual perceptions. It is at the expense of wisdom that the intellect lives.

This illumination like the sun will shine upon us so long as we don't stand in the shadow of that which will block its rays. And in human terms, it is the demands of the lower self that do this. To be put in touch with one's higher Self, therefore, is a pressing need, so break up that within you which resists change, we are advised. Fixed ideas are rocks in our path, says W. Q. Judge; true learning is the destroyer of arrogance. To what extent though, can this process of illumination go? There are no limits, it could be argued, as the source is infinite. Does this mean there are no limits to the harvest we can bring in?

Pause and reflect on this with Ibn Arabi: If we look at an artisan, he says, who is engaged in moulding things out of clay, we might make a superficial observation that the clay in his hands is sheer passivity; that the limits to what may be produced is the limit of his skill. If we think this, we overlook the important fact that, in reality, the clay for its own part positively determines the activity of the artisan; there is a far greater constraint on the end product because of the limitations inherent in the nature of the clay itself. The limits to our harvest therefore lie in the ability of the lower to receive the Higher. And when the limits to this ability are reached? Then the form will dissolve and after a period of assimilation of its harvest, a form of greater capacity will be ensouled. It follows then, does it not – as the dawn follows the night – that it is only by the *repeated* encapsulation of spirit in matter (or consciousness in form) that Nature can continue her evolutionary march.

Thus does the road seem to 'wind uphill all the way', for unto whom much is given (albeit by himself) of him will much be expected, which is another way of putting the old proverb that the fuller the cup is, the more carefully one has to carry it. However, shouldn't it be uplifting rather than dispiriting that with the acquisition of a wider vision, we see – though as through a glass darkly – the fields as yet uncut!

# 3

*T. S. Member: "Master, what can I do to help poor suffering humanity?"*

*Master: "What can you do?"*

Humanity is the great Orphan, says the Mahatma KH, and it is the duty of everyone capable of an unselfish impulse to do something, however little, for its welfare. Its suffering never ceases, and who can blame it if it has evolved gods unto whom it ever cries for help but is not heard.

So who is there to lean on? Who is there to help us bring in our harvest?

In *The Conference of the Birds* by the twelfth century Persian poet Attar, the hoopoe assembles the birds to begin the quest for the fabulous Simurgh. After many trials, setbacks and failures to stay the course, only those who see life beyond its materiality complete the journey. At the end of the quest, the birds find that the Simurgh (the higher Self) has been with them all along.

In what way though is it true to say that the higher Self guides us? Our personal selves can surely only receive the light for our guidance to the extent that we become one with it. We can polish the glass of self to let the sun shine through but we can't petition the higher Self to clean it for us.

In what way then can we answer the Master's question – 'what *can* you do?' The most sensible answer to an enquirer would be to say: That's a question for *you*, because no-one knows but you (or thinks they know) where they are and what tendencies they have brought with them. Effort translates into different results because, as the Master says: the course of every river will be according to the nature of its basin.

Perhaps it would be a good thing if we were able to wear our skandhas round our necks like so many coloured beads. It might make us a bit more understanding and considerate. What we *can* do though, is to reflect upon the hints and advice given throughout our theosophical literature and other inspired sources:

First – as the Spanish wisely say – one can only dance to the tune that's being played, which is another way of saying (switching metaphors) that we can only row with the oars we've got. It's as unrealistic for us to moan about the oars being too small or frail as it is (switching again) to feel we're unlucky to have this hand of cards when we are the ones who shuffled the pack and dealt it out.

Every evil we don't succumb to becomes a benefactor, we're told, but can we really learn only by overcoming adversity and through the suffering resulting from mis-directed action? Well, a smooth sea never made a skilful mariner – as they say down here in Sussex – and, more than that, the winds and waves usually seem to be on the side of the ablest navigators. This observation, you may remember from your school days, T. S. Eliot makes Becket say in his *Murder in the Cathedral*: Those who serve the greater Cause may make the Cause serve them. Does that sound familiar? When HPB wrote down from memory the *Voice of the Silence*, she included the verse: Help nature and work with her; and nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance.

More advice: In Letter 42, the Mahatma M says – I tell you a profound truth in saying that if you – like your fabled Shloma (Solomon, presumably) – but choose wisdom, all other things will be added to it – in time. The most oft quoted passage in *The Key* reads: To the mentally lazy or obtuse, Theosophy must always remain a riddle; for in the world mental as in the world spiritual, each man must progress by his own efforts. The writer cannot do the reader's thinking for him, nor would the latter be any the better off if such vicarious thought were possible. Hence the steps: study your theosophy; meditate on what you have studied; act - i.e. *live* - your Theosophy. To attempt the third of these without the first two would be like setting out from A to get to B without a map. And to engage in the second without study would be like gardening without seeds.

*The Key* again: What we have to do is to seek to obtain *knowledge* of all the laws of nature, says HPB, and to diffuse (that knowledge). Of the TS she says: Its future will depend almost entirely upon the selflessness, earnestness, devotion, and last but not least, on the amount of knowledge and wisdom possessed by its members. And the feeling of responsibility is the beginning of wisdom – its spring crop.

But never, says Judge in his letters, never desire to get knowledge or power for any other purpose than to give it on the altar. And as KH more or less said: Your harvest will be tainted with selfishness (full of weeds) if there has lurked in your heart even the shadow of desire for self-benefit. The advice from the Masters that is repeated many times in *The Mahatma Letters* is: We have but one word for all aspirants – TRY. And if he wearies not of trying he may discover that most noble of all facts – his true SELF. Even failure has value, except when it results in our ceasing to try.

But ‘trying’ for Sinnett meant – among other things – doing his best to disseminate, chiefly through his writings, his understanding of the teachings he was being given by the two Adept Masters. In fact, the theosophist’s duty, he was told, is like that of the husbandman; to turn his furrows and sow his grains as best he can. The issue is with nature, and she is the slave of Law. Hence, in our lodges, our exchanges should be without dogmatism, our views being expressed as *offerings* to the group.

On the sheet of rules (originally from a Baha’i group) by which we have tried – not always successfully – to conduct our studies, rule number six reads: “Respond to a speaker’s intention even if the words seem to you inadequate or even tactless. Anybody can have good ideas. Be detached. *Don’t own what you say*; you won’t then be hurt if others disagree. Try not to be prejudiced.”

Prejudiced? Who me!? Prejudice is easy to see in others – especially in those the world considers learned. Today’s more materialistic scientists, as said earlier, subordinate consciousness to a by-product of material organization. It has become a prejudice with them, and by so preaching, they try to rob us of our *essential* Divinity.

The prejudices of the priesthood also, provoke strong language from the Masters in their condemnation, especially of the belief that what is termed 'God' is some sort of intelligent super-anthropomorphic creative Being 'up there' somewhere. They avoid the use of the word God, principally because of the image it is likely to convey in our minds, and to discourage any desire to address petitions to 'him', or – on the occasions when our toast lands butter side up – our feelings of thanks. Our chief aim, says KH, is to deliver humanity of this nightmare, to teach man virtue for its own sake and to walk in life relying on himself instead of leaning on a theological crutch, that for countless ages has been the direct cause of nearly all human misery. Yes, very strong language!

All such and other prejudices we must do what we can to break down; not by a brutal iconoclasm, but by the offering of ideas that will appeal more; appeal more to those capable of considering them. Try, for instance, the teaching that 'God' being omnipotent means not that 'he' is all-powerful but *All in Potential*.

If this has been up to now an unconsidered concept, it would be as well to set aside these pages for a few days to consider the awful responsibility implicit in this rendering. To use Ibn Arabi's artisan and clay analogy in a different way, it may be said that God (Godness) or the All-Potential, can create – or fashion, rather – nothing without the clay as a basis for any vehicle of expression; such vehicles being all the forms of Nature however subtle, and – most significantly – we humans. To find out how today's clerics would react to the notion that we should think of ourselves as a means for God to be known on Earth, you'll have to make your own enquiries, *but* if the realization of this inner fact doesn't change your life – nothing will! The bountifulness of our harvest, therefore, will be the extent to which the All-Potential is made manifest through us.

The implanted notions of our formative years may be the cause of guilt feelings later when first we start to question. We should nonetheless watch our opinions carefully and *allow* them to change, even though with every change there may come with it a blow to our self-esteem. And going back to Goring beach: I notice that every wave is formed – partly at least – by the withdrawal of the one before. What are they trying to tell me?

The possibility of a diminished self-esteem notwithstanding, what could be more stimulating than a new idea! Let go those outward notions, therefore, as the tree lets fall its withered leaves when the vital sap is no longer in them. Bigotry, says Rabindranath Tagore, tries to keep truth safe in its iron hand – with a grip that kills it.



Rabindranath Tagore

It's a case of sacrificing what was for what could become.

The *consequences*, however, of the causes which we are always at liberty to create and shape at our will, we are unable to control and so they can become our masters. And though we may consider our thoughts private, their effects can be anything but.



Sir Edwin Arnold

And sooner or later they come home to roost. In the most-quoted lines of Edwin Arnold:

*Times are as nought, tomorrow it will judge  
Or after many days.*

*The Light of Asia*

Yes, things that may be sweet to taste can prove to the digestion sour, Shakespeare makes John of Gaunt say in Richard II. This delayed action, suggested Sinnett, can mean that whilst our minor transgressions may be dealt with by Nature as ready money transactions that she doesn't bother to record in her ledger, paying-up time for more serious misdemeanors may have to be delayed until a future lifetime. Well, the law of karma may not operate in quite such a compartmented fashion, but it does give us an example of the delightful way Sinnett had of putting things. He might have added in similar vein that though the harvest barn is a *general* store, still there exists in some mysterious way an individual tag on contributions, which credit finances the new venture – the next incarnation, in other words; but no overdrafts are allowed. \*

As with flower seedlings left in the greenhouse too long, or given too much fertiliser, there are dangers a-plenty in forcing any growth. Why,

asks KH – and one can almost hear his pleading tone – will would-be chelas with such intense self personalities, force themselves within the enchanted and dangerous circle of probation!? Be warned: That which is generally accumulating to find its legitimate issue only in the next rebirth of an ordinary man is quickened and fanned into existence in the chela.

Should these words of warning only spur on the student who has the word TRY ringing in his ears, and whose slogan is “Je n’ai pas peur” or “I’m tough enough to take anything life can chuck at me”, he may, despite the cautions he has received, want to feel he is making progress. How does he know, if certain out of the ordinary things start happening, whether or not these are signs that he’s on the right path?

The following is adapted from a commentary on *The Bhagavad Gita* by Sri Krishna Prem: “Master, Master!” cries the pupil in a state of excitement, “I was meditating last night and bright lights appeared before me!” “Well, keep on meditating”, replies the Master, “and they should go away.”

Those new experiences that one has from time to time; are they signs of real spiritual progress or are they the snares of self-deception? A restless urge for action, for example; is this the Divine Activity rising within us, or is it just a fear of quietude and silence?

And what of the dramas of sound and sight that the psychic senses can present to us? Does the witnessing of events and persons – yes, even the good and the great – show we are above the ruck of present humankind? Would we feel our pulse start to race at the invitation of some white-robed apparition to “forsake all and follow Me”? Or should we be mindful of HPB’s warning that “unless one’s psychic growth proceeds in conjunction with one’s moral development, then terrible dangers both mental and bodily are inevitable”?

Conversely, what are we to make of any creeping feeling of indifference to one’s welfare? Is this to be interpreted as a growing non-attachment to comfort, wealth and influence, or is it simply laziness? And what of a similar indifference to our circumstances? We could say this was a sensible acceptance of one’s karma, but could it also be a misguided



fatalism – “I don’t have to bother because all that happens to me is the will of God”.

When there is no longer any special place or feeling in one’s heart for any one person or group, we may claim we have risen to a state of *impersonal spirituality*, but could it really be the lack of any sense of brotherhood? And a lack of personal involvement when the needs of another are before us we can tell ourselves is a rising above love and hate, but is it rather an atrophy of the soul?

“All that is essential for the triumph of evil is that good men should do nothing”, said Edmund Burke. “Ah, but I believe in the non-reaction to injustice, one might reply.” This – as Christ taught – is turning the other cheek. Is it? Or is it simply cowardice?



Edmund Burke

And when we feel fading within us any sense of the excitement we used to experience through our contact with literature, music and art; are we justified in telling ourselves we are at last transcending the lures of the senses, or is it a poverty of the spirit? How can we know the truth of the matter? Only by the growth of that faculty which will develop in us in proportion to the attempts we make to use it; the faculty “through which direct and certain knowledge is obtainable”; in a word - intuition. Or in two words – *inner tuition*.



Marcus Aurelius

And in the while it will take this fully to develop, let us heed the advice of Marcus Aurelius: Just get on with the business of adapting ourselves to the environment in which our lot has been cast and show true love to our fellow mortals with whom destiny has surrounded us.

But in this whizz-bang age, are we not becoming obsessed with *doing*?

Paul Brunton: “If the world stands bewildered and confused in the face of its trouble, it is partly because we Westerners have made a god of activity; we have yet to learn how to be, as we have already learnt how to *do*.”

A harvest through 'being' and not 'doing'? This is not to imply any merit in complete passivity or indolence but, as Judge writes: It is not that you must rush madly and boldly out *to do, to do*. Do what you have to do . . . there is never any need to worry. The good Law looks out for all things, and all we have to do is our *duty* as it comes along from day to day. It is better to acquire what would be seen as carelessness by the world, but is in reality a calm reliance on the law, satisfied that the results must be *right* no matter what they may be.

But what *is* our duty?

One year after Sinnett's return to London, the famous correspondence virtually came to an end. Sinnett felt this was due at least in part to the fact that he hadn't found time to maintain the correspondence at its former level. The 123rd letter he received from the Mahatmas was one of the last, and was in reply to Sinnett's apology that he had been busy with 'family duties'.

Here is an extract from the Mahatma's letter:

"Does it seem to you a small thing that the past year has been spent only in your 'family duties'? Nay, but what better cause for reward, what better discipline, than the daily and hourly performance of duty? Believe me, the man or woman who is placed by Karma in the midst of small plain duties and sacrifices and loving kindness, will through these faithfully fulfilled rise to the larger measure of Duty, Sacrifice and Charity to all Humanity. What better path is there towards enlightenment than the daily conquest of self, the perseverance in spite of want of visible progress and the bearing of ill-fortune with that serene fortitude which turns it to spiritual advantage?"

Wonderful, wonderful words!

Thus the advice of the Mahatma KH and Judge is in accord, Judge adding that not only is 'the work' done in small things but the servants of the law work oft unseen, the greatest harvest coming mostly from unknown hands.

And reaped in joyfulness, Christmas Humphreys would have added. *In The Search Within*, he quotes Voltaire as having said: I look on solemnity as a disease. It certainly never cured one. Ecclesiastic it might be, says the founder of The Buddhist Society, but spiritual it is not.



Francois Voltaire

Theosophy has rightly been called "The Joyful Wisdom". Perhaps it would be going too far to suggest that there is a legitimate route to enlightenment through laughter, but how wonderful it would be if we all felt at the end of our week's gathering here that it had been –  
*a week of Joy!*

# 4

*"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness  
And not in utter nakedness  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home."*

Wordsworth: *Intimations of Immortality*

Intimations of Immortality? Intimations of the cyclic nature of birth and death for the Soul's forays out in different suits of personal clothing, might have been a better title. Well, perhaps not, but is it not more than passing strange that no Establishment eyebrows were raised at the expression of such sentiments?

'Worse' than this was in Masfield's lines:

*"I hold that when a person dies  
His Soul returns again to earth;  
Arrayed in some new flesh-disguise  
Another mother gives him birth.  
With sturdier limbs and brighter brain  
The old Soul takes the road again."*

John Masfield: *A Creed*

How did Masfield manage to hold down his laureateship for over 30 years!? And though we might nit-pick at the odd phrase in these lines, it is surprising they both got away with it.

Still, Wordsworth's use of the word 'afar' to describe our *fons et origo* we should look at. We can assume that he did not mean afar in any geographical sense but that when he speaks of the abode of the soul, he is talking of more subjective realms – the beginning and end states of any cycle, 'book-ending' life's objective expression.



William Wordsworth

Thus we have two questions: From whence does the potentiality for any harvest come? And secondly, where is that harvest taken? Or, in other words, in what way or state do the spiritually beneficial contents of life persist?

Sinnett's bafflement (see his question to the Mahatma that we began with) may or may not have been eased when HPB's *Secret Doctrine* was eventually published in 1888. In this magnum opus of Theosophy, we have a subtlety that is not found in other philosophies: All cycles of nature originate from a 'First Cause' – the 'from whence' of all harvests. But behind this First Cause (which could be seen if not as mutable then at least as the root of mutability) must be *THAT* from which the First Cause arises, or *of* which it is a *reflection*. This is what HPB termed *Be-ness* or the Causeless Cause and is the basis of the first of the three fundamental propositions of Volume I of *The Secret Doctrine*.



Krishna and Arjuna on 'the battlefield'  
cover illustration on *The Bhagavad-Gita*  
(Quest Books, Wheaton, U. S. A.)

No 'harvest' of course can be brought into or in any way affect that which is immutable. Hence, Krishna's statement in the *Gita* that he is unaffected by the fruits of action suggests the immutability of his nature. If on the other hand, he is intended to represent Arjuna's higher Self, then we have a problem of interpretation, because – as already noted in section 2 of these notes – in Volume II of *The Secret Doctrine* we have much

detailed teaching on the 'nature' of the spiritual beings that fulfil this role

by incarnating in the previously non-selfconscious mankind of this fourth round. Returning nirvanees from a previous maha-manvantara, they are described as, who have yet to evolve further to achieve the full status of a Dhyan Chohan; and that which is capable of further evolution cannot be immutable.

If, as the *Gita* says, it is a philosophical question that “even the most intelligent are perplexed in determining”, perhaps we should get back to more worldly matters, but because it would be unsatisfactory to leave the question of ‘where’ unanswered; ie, where do the results of one’s selflessness reside, then may we simply say that with the exercise of will for the common good, every kind deed, every pure emotion and every noble thought, help to purify the matrix – or matrices – of Nature and increase the potentiality for more glorious Cycles of Being.

“Thou shalt ever joy at eventide if thou spend the day fruitfully,” said Thomas à Kempis. The fruitfulness of one’s life however may be seen in two ways: First, in the devachanic experience; that personal overlay to the spiritual existence (forgive the term as there is no such word as inistence in the English language) between incarnations. And secondly, any permanent beneficial effect our life has produced for the Whole.

Current church doctrine teaches the St Peter at the gate idea again of being judged worthy or unworthy of ‘admittance’ at the end of one’s life by virtue of what we have brought with us. This is akin to saying the worth of a ship’s voyage can’t be determined until it has sailed back into port – the ‘end’ trying the man, as Shakespeare said. But this ‘examination’ to students of Theosophy is a continuous process, not one which kicks in the day you hang up your scythe. The booming voice of the narrator to *Star Trek* informs us that space is “our final frontier”, but what we need to be concerned about is not the space ‘out there’ but the crossing of the frontier of the space within.



William Shakespeare

It is ironic that one’s devachanic harvest recompense of “unalloyed bliss” should be described by KH as a state of intense *selfishness*, even though it is the reward of one’s *unselfishness* whilst on Earth. It is nature’s

recompense: The Ego is completely engrossed in the bliss of all its earthly affections, preferences and thoughts. No pain, no grief, nor even the shadow of a sorrow comes to darken the horizon of the devachanee's happiness. Since the continuous perception of one's personality on Earth is but an evanescent dream, that sense will be equally that of a dream in devachan – only a hundred fold intensified. It lives in that sweet dream with its loved ones, whether gone before or yet remaining on Earth; it has them near itself, as happy, as blissful and as innocent as the disembodied dreamer himself. (Letter 68).

“Innocent”, note. This is because the karma of our selfish thoughts and deeds with its army of skandhas has temporarily stepped aside but is waiting at the threshold of devachan to pounce once more on the poor unsuspecting Ego as it re-emerges to assume a new incarnation. It is at this moment that the future destiny of the now-rested Ego trembles in the scales of just retribution as it falls once again under the sway of active karmic law (*The Key*). No wonder in the Zohar, there is this exchange between The Soul and the character called “The Lord of the Universe”:

Soul (*pleading*): Lord of the Universe, I am happy in this world and do not wish to go into another world where I shall be exposed to all sorts of pollutions.

Lord of the Universe (*unmoved*): Against thy will art thou born.

Memo: Next time I'm on my deathbed and about to be called home, instead of wishing for a day or two more, bid a temporary farewell to those present with the words of Hermes:

*Hitherto I have been an exile from my true state;  
now I return thither. Do not weep for me:  
I return to that 'Celestial Land' where each goes in his turn.*



# 5

*"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit  
is hewn down and cast into the fire."*

St Matthew's Gospel: 7.19.

Health warning: Those of a nervous disposition are advised to skip the next few pages and turn to section 6.

It is surely unnecessary to ask why we should strive our utmost to use the 'talents' we have. The fact that the devachanic experience masking the periods of subjective being between incarnations is described by KH as "unalloyed bliss", and one of "intense selfishness", may to the saintly, selfless person seem almost an embarrassment. Such a sentiment I've heard expressed, and understandably if one's labours have been genuinely for the good of all.

Because our harvest, meagre though it may be, acts like the leaven of the woman in St Matthew's Gospel, is answer enough, and the word 'leaven' is appropriate. We have already quoted Judge's use of the term and HPB uses the word too when she says that the Theosophical Society was brought into existence to leaven the minds of our time. *The Oxford Concise English Dictionary's* 2nd definition of the word is: "A pervasive transforming influence (cf Mat.13.33!)" Yes, a good word, leaven.

There come certain times in the cycles of mankind when those better versed in the ways of nature make a special effort to "enlighten superstitious man" by sharing with us some of mankind's accumulated wisdom of which they are the custodians. At the end of the great cycle of the first 5,000 years of kali yuga there was to be a major 'giving-out' and for nearly a century the Masters had been looking for a suitable "European body (ie HPB) to send out upon European soil to serve as the connecting link . . . She had strong personal defects, but just as she was, there was no

second to her living fit for this work". "This work" was so important to the Masters that KH was prepared to postpone his own retreat "in search of supreme knowledge", to help the fledgling Theosophical Society.

Though this was all one hundred and twenty five years ago, the importance of the TS to the world (especially the Western world) even today can hardly be underestimated. But there is a problem: How does a society that was set up to promulgate what the Masters call "these Eternal Truths", try and do this whilst – paradoxically – existing in a state of continuous change? Adapt or perish, now as ever, is Nature's inexorable imperative, wrote H. G. Wells, and this applies to groups as well as to any single organism. How can we, being the kind of Society we are, do this? How, when we have (had?) this unique link to those custodians of "man's accumulated knowledge to date", the foundation of which we call the Ageless Wisdom, disseminate what we understand of Nature's *Eternal* Laws in a way that will lead to necessary reforms, both personal and social, being achieved?

How? (Your answers to this, please, in no more than 50 words!)



Ralph Waldo Emerson

Significantly, it was Emerson who wrote in his *Journals* three years before the formation of the TS that religions become obsolete when reforms do not proceed from them.

In the last letter from the Mahatma KH (apart from a note urging "courage, patience and *hope*, my brother") he sounds bitterly disappointed when he writes that the attempt made to open the eyes of the blind world has nearly failed; in India, partially, in Europe – with a few exceptions – absolutely.

The tone in the Master's words towards the end of the letter is one of despair:

"My friend I have little if anything more to say . . . Understand . . . that the present crisis that is shaking the TS to its foundations" (which had been caused in various ways but chiefly through a lack of unity) "is a question of perdition or salvation to thousands; a question of the

progress of the human race or its retrogression, of its glory or dishonour, and for the majority of this race – *of being or not being*, of annihilation, in fact.”

There is a depressing recurrence in our history: As with the progress of the yugas during a cycle from Golden through Silver and Bronze to Iron, mankind’s view of his world seems to mirror this change. Lower manas intellectualism becomes increasingly dominant as shown by the more



Leo Tolstoy

materialistic philosophies held by those the age considers learned. In the fading of empires, those practices considered unfitting in former times become more acceptable as they become the norm. There are no conditions, Tolstoy thought, to which a man cannot become accustomed, especially if he sees that all those around him live the same way. That is, until someone comes along to say: Hey! *There is* a better way. I’ll

tell you about it – if you’ll listen.

If we’ll listen, yes. We are, cyclically speaking, more than half way through the 5th *root* race in the 4th of our 7 Rounds, which though a very dense phase, is encouragingly past the half way point, hence we are on the *ascending* arc. This trend results in a polarization: Like a sponge thrust into a bath of water, many bubbles will ascend as the form of the sponge descends, for as flames obey the law of levity, so the ash of the log (mixing metaphors again) falls through the grate.

Those in whom the spiritual Ego has influence and who have struggled with the body and mind to bring in the harvest of life – to manifest the Ego’s transcendental powers, in other words – have little to fear. They have done what they could to help in the gigantic struggle. As the Mahatma KH says, happy is the man who lends a helping hand!

What of the rest?

Those, writes HPB, who do nothing to help elevate the thoughts and lives of others must of necessity either paralyse them with indifference, or actively drag them down.

Drag them down? The result does appear to be ‘gravitational’, for it is the weight of a person that carries him down to that bottomless pit called “the eighth sphere”. Almost irretrievably selfish must be he who yields *no* harvest and has to be annihilated – or rather, who annihilates himself – by disappearing as a *human ego and personality*; lasting in that world of pure matter for an inconceivable length of time before returning to primeval matter.

Is there a glimmer of hope in that word ‘almost’? Perhaps. Just one little ‘bubble’ will fight on the ego’s behalf and can by the exercise of any remnant of will-power attempt like a drowning man to struggle once more to the surface. Put in Judge’s words: In this is Nature merciful; for even in the darkness of the eighth sphere her impulses provide an opportunity of return if a single responsive energy is left in the self-condemned soul. Self-condemned. The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our genome, but in ourselves.

But so much for life’s ‘nonentities’. What of those who brought in a harvest alright, but a viciously destructive one of evil depravity? What is *their* fate? Well, just being snuffed out of existence is inappropriate. The law of karma demands something more – a punishment – hence the state of avitchi, the ‘polar opposite’ to devachan.

All we know of avitchi is what we can intuit, for the Mahatmas are reluctant to speak of it. The entities who self-propel themselves into the lowest degrees of this state of consciousness have no chance of a re-birth. Whilst then enduring a lasting nightmare in proportion to their grossness, “their thoughts become living things”, says KH; “their wicked passions – real substance, and they receive back on their heads all the misery they have heaped on others. Reality and *fact* if described would yield a far more terrible Inferno than even Dante imagined!”

Before putting aside any further thoughts of such darkness, we would do well to remind ourselves that both devachan and avitchi are *spiritual* states – one being the antithesis of the other. Thus, because we fashion our devachan whilst still on earth, so too do every act and thought of destructive selfishness carry us a step towards the faint suburbs of avitchi.

# 6

*"The days come and go like muffled and veiled figures  
sent from a distant friendly party, but they say nothing,  
and if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry  
them as silently away."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson: *Journals*

When can I bring in my harvest? Is there any other time but now? If one wishes to will one's efforts to the future, give them to the present.

The opportunity to welcome, then learn, then let go, is constantly with us; making the most of everything that comes along and, when passed, making the least of it. Feeling remorse, or even acknowledging that one should, does nought to "e-liminate the negative" – as we (well, some of us) remember from the pre-war song. In fact remorse reinforces the potency of the original act. Forget it.

*The scrambled eggs of a wasted day  
The Swan of Time can not re-lay.*

Anon

"Have you had a nice day, dear?"

"Yes I have – a lovely day! It was one of those days when everything went smoothly."

"Sure it wasn't a wasted day, dear?"

St Peter the tallyman won't ask to see your diplomas, and when he looks you over it won't be for your medals but your scars. Experience is the good school for learning but the fees are high:

*We must not hope to be mowers  
And to gather the ripe gold ears  
Unless we have first been sowers  
And watered the furrows with tears.*

The amount of the day's harvest, according to Nietzsche, is gauged by the greatness of the sacrifice it required. Despite the sermons of current theology, we don't have to wait until we die to have our sacks counted. We don't have to finish our Earth Walk to find out the answers to the Big Questions. It's foolhardy, we're admonished from the pulpit, for you to deny God's existence *now*. Come *then* and you'll know for sure, won't you? What then? You must have *faith*.



Friedrich Nietzsche

But Judge writes: Death is not the great informer or producer of knowledge . . . Complete knowledge must be obtained in the triune man: body, soul and spirit. Our *union* (nirvana) is only to be accomplished on Earth, not after the threshold of death has been passed. Have 'faith', yes, but it is not so much faith in the 'Good Lord' but faith in the Good Laws which govern today and tomorrow. Herein lies our *security*.

Theosophy teaches of civilizations that have flourished and faded on this planet for many millions of years past. It gives us glimpses of mankind's condition in the far distant future. Most importantly though, it teaches of the immediate. It teaches that it is what we are doing *now*, at this very second, that is important. Perhaps the most significant, the most far-reaching in its implications and the most *frightening* passage in *The Mahatma Letters* is buried in a long paragraph, in a letter to Allan Hume, who was a co-recipient of the priceless letters in the early 1880s before falling victim to his own pride.



Allan Octavian Hume

It's a shame the words can't here appear in letters six feet high – in flashing red and green neon:

“Every thought upon being evolved passes into the inner world and becomes an active entity by associating itself – coalescing, we might term it – with an elemental; that is to say with one of the semi-intelligent forces of the kingdoms (of nature). It survives as an active intelligence, a creature of the mind’s begetting, for a longer or shorter period proportionate with the original intensity of the cerebral action which generated it. Thus, a good thought is perpetuated *as an active beneficent power* (italics mine); and an evil one as a maleficent demon. And so man is continually peopling his current in space with a world of his own, crowded with the offspring of his fancies, desires, impulses, and passions; a current which reacts upon any sensitive or nervous organisation which comes in contact with it. The Buddhist calls this his *Skandha*, the Hindu gives it the name of *Karma*.”

Every thought? *Every thought*. Every thought is a seed that bears fruit – sooner or later. In contrast to the opinions of the health care companies and pension fund managers, our future security lies chiefly in the power and purity of our thoughts. Thoughts, says Judge, are 1,000 times more powerful in their effects than acts on the physical level. Words are cheap, one hears, but that’s not a blanket truth; for some we have to pay dearly, albeit in instalments. But our thoughts? Ah, that’s another matter; these can be amongst our most expensive outgoings, as through thoughts do we fashion ourselves.

What does all this mean? It means that we are literally our own creations. And our own Creators. We sit on our jury, on our own bench and make judgment. We are the result of our living. *We are our own harvest.*

To complete the four lines of Goethe quoted above:

*“It is not just as we take it,  
This mystical world of ours;  
Life’s field will yield as we make it  
A harvest of thorns or of flowers.”*



Johann von Goethe

Men are not the creatures of circumstance, as commonly thought, said Disraeli; circumstances are the creatures of man. But we must not jump to any false conclusions about others. There is no way one can judge another's 'inner health' by their outer condition or their circumstances. We will not burden a soul beyond its capacity, says the Koran, which is the equivalent of the Biblical teaching of not giving anyone a cross heavier than they can bear; and this can mean, can it not, that the saintly and steadfast may well be 'asked' to absorb their karma at a rate that is – well, at a faster rate. Anyone suffering from the Prophet Job Syndrome may not be as they appear. Judge not, therefore.

The wonderful phrase "The Harvest of Life" appears to have seen the light of day, according to HPB, when a certain Egyptian papyrus was discovered. This was later incorporated into what is now known as the *Egyptian Book of The Dead*. She explains the term by saying it is that which *survives*, for unless kama-manas transmits to buddhi-manas such personal ideations as can be assimilated by the Divine Ego, *nothing of that personality can survive*.

That which is unworthy of the God within us cannot become immortal. Thus it is only our noblest thoughts and most unselfish deeds – or rather, the permanent effects of these – that can be truly called "*The Harvest of Life*".

The *permanent effects of these*, note. The Italian may well flippantly remark that our last garment is made without pockets, but there is a real legacy we carry beyond death; not just the personal, temporary bliss of the devachanic state between lives, nor yet the prospect of a more glorious robe for the individuality when it next enters the fray, but – more importantly – the contribution we make which is "for all – for always"; a giving not so much from ourselves or through ourselves – but *of ourselves*.

It is a common phrase that death is the only inevitability – the only truth. But a truth is not that which one simply acknowledges, but that by which one lives; that by which one is transformed. A 'truth' cannot be a Truth for us unless it becomes – and remains - an aspect of our being. Even the certainty of death, it could be said is not comprehended as a Truth if it



does not rule our living. King Death! - the absolute monarch to whom we must pay homage always.

How can one live the Truth of Death? Perhaps by being ever aware of the question: this that I am doing now, is it to pass the time as pleasantly as possible, or is it for eternity? How futile are all our efforts to safeguard this little self. Our death, if not today, will be tomorrow.

To live consciously and continuously with the Truth of our Death and the curtain it brings down for the time being on the chance to bring in our harvest, must therefore be the only sensible philosophy for living.

As the paradox in the old Arabian proverb has it: "Live as though you are going to die tomorrow, but live as though you are going to live for ever."

Namaste.

## APPENDIX

If only to acknowledge indebtedness, here is a list of some of the works consulted in the drafting of this talk. They are books which I found on my bookshelves at home and are listed simply by their titles and without page reference. This omission may be considered an irritation, but at least it doesn't deprive the enquirer of the pleasure of a wider perusal of the work.

First, the core books with which most members will be more or less familiar:

*The Secret Doctrine, Volumes I and II*, H P Blavatsky  
*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*  
*The Voice of the Silence*  
*The Key to Theosophy*, H. P. Blavatsky  
*The Secret Doctrine, "Volume III"*, H. P. Blavatsky  
*The Collected Writings of H. P. Blavatsky*

The remainder, which includes a number of essays and poems, is in alphabetical order:

*Bhagavad Gita*  
*Dalai Lama's Book of Transformation - The*  
*Deity, Cosmos and Man*, Geoffrey Farthing  
*Dhammapada - The*, trans. Irving Babbitt  
*Divine Plan - The*, Geoffrey A Barborka  
*Enquiry into the Nature of Mind - An*, Adam Warcup  
*Esoteric Buddhism*, A. P. Sinnett  
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