



# LET ME SEE

A BOOK OF THINGS TO PONDER ON.

By

ABHINYANA

1999





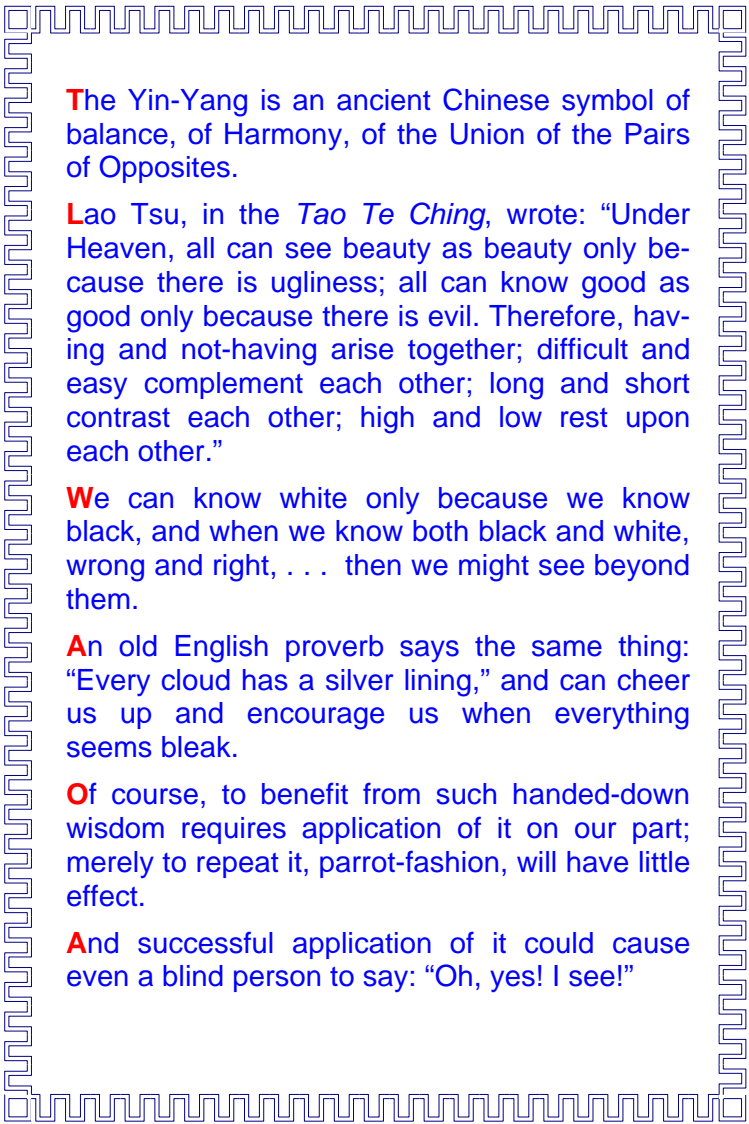
In the black,  
there is some  
white;

In the wrong,  
there is some  
right;

In the dark,  
there is some  
light;

In the blind,  
there is some  
sight.





**T**he Yin-Yang is an ancient Chinese symbol of balance, of Harmony, of the Union of the Pairs of Opposites.

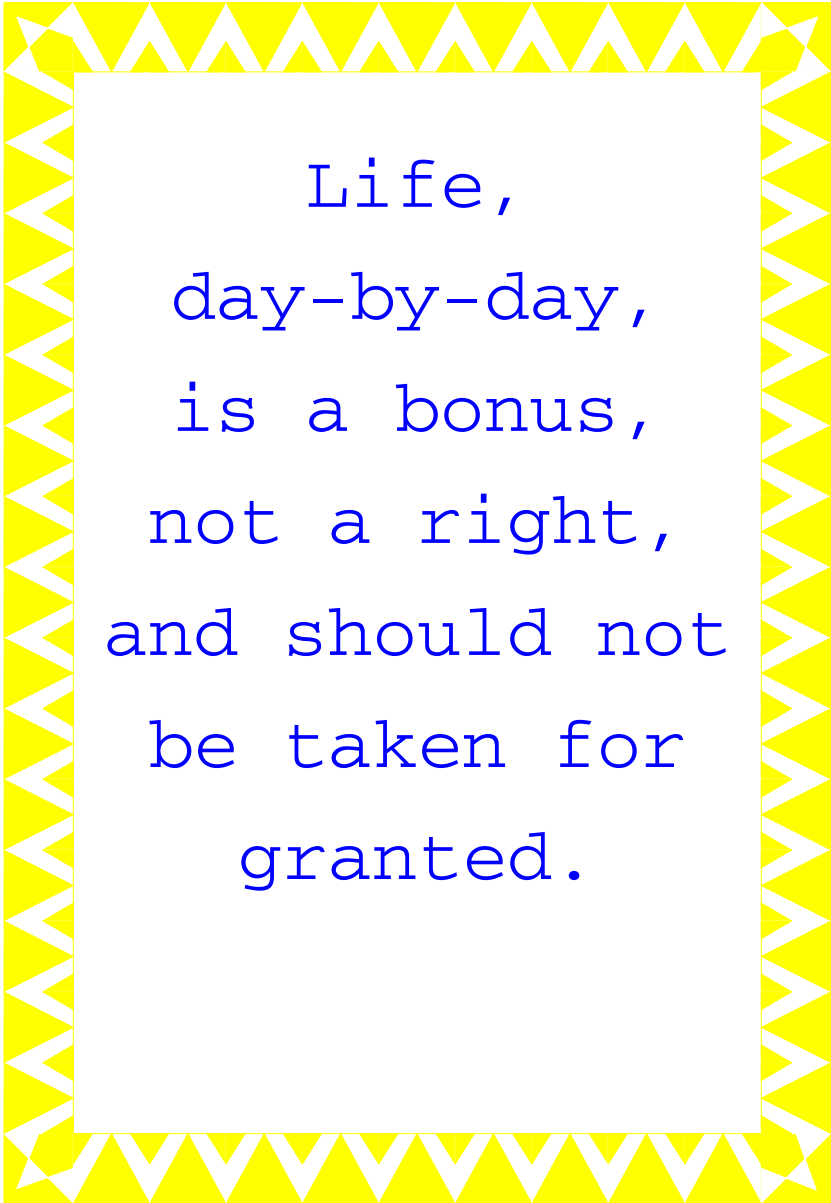
**L**ao Tsu, in the *Tao Te Ching*, wrote: “Under Heaven, all can see beauty as beauty only because there is ugliness; all can know good as good only because there is evil. Therefore, having and not-having arise together; difficult and easy complement each other; long and short contrast each other; high and low rest upon each other.”

**W**e can know white only because we know black, and when we know both black and white, wrong and right, . . . then we might see beyond them.

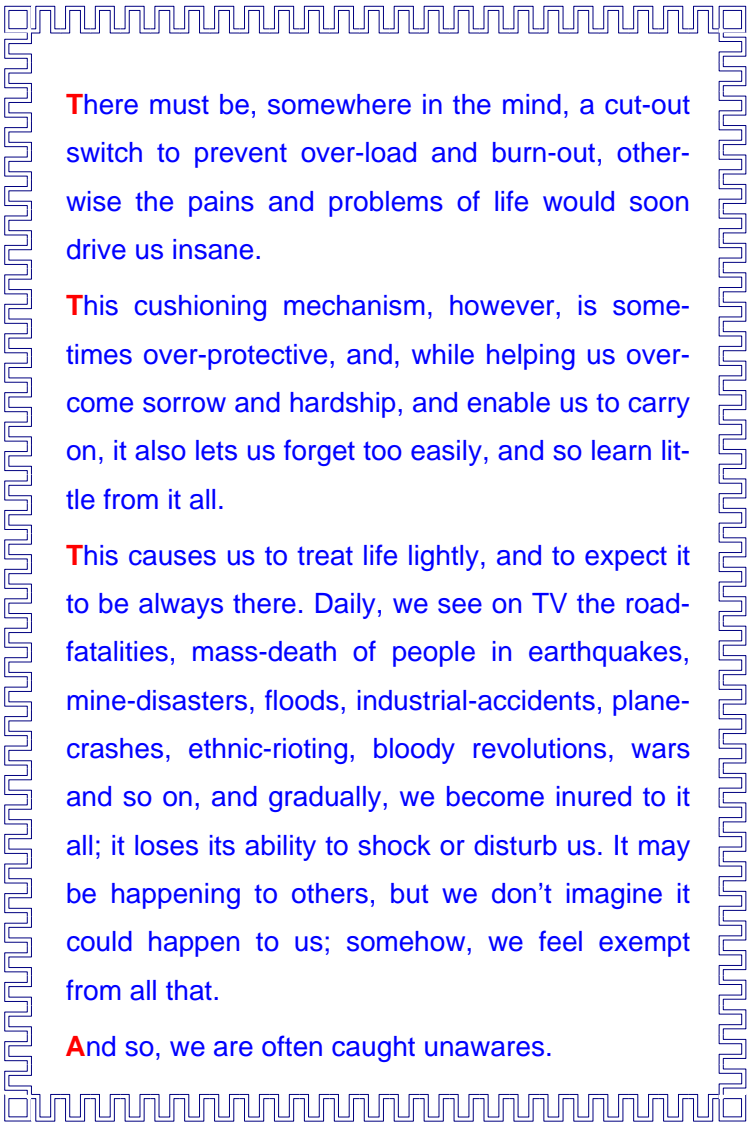
**A**n old English proverb says the same thing: “Every cloud has a silver lining,” and can cheer us up and encourage us when everything seems bleak.

**O**f course, to benefit from such handed-down wisdom requires application of it on our part; merely to repeat it, parrot-fashion, will have little effect.

**A**nd successful application of it could cause even a blind person to say: “Oh, yes! I see!”



Life,  
day-by-day,  
is a bonus,  
not a right,  
and should not  
be taken for  
granted.

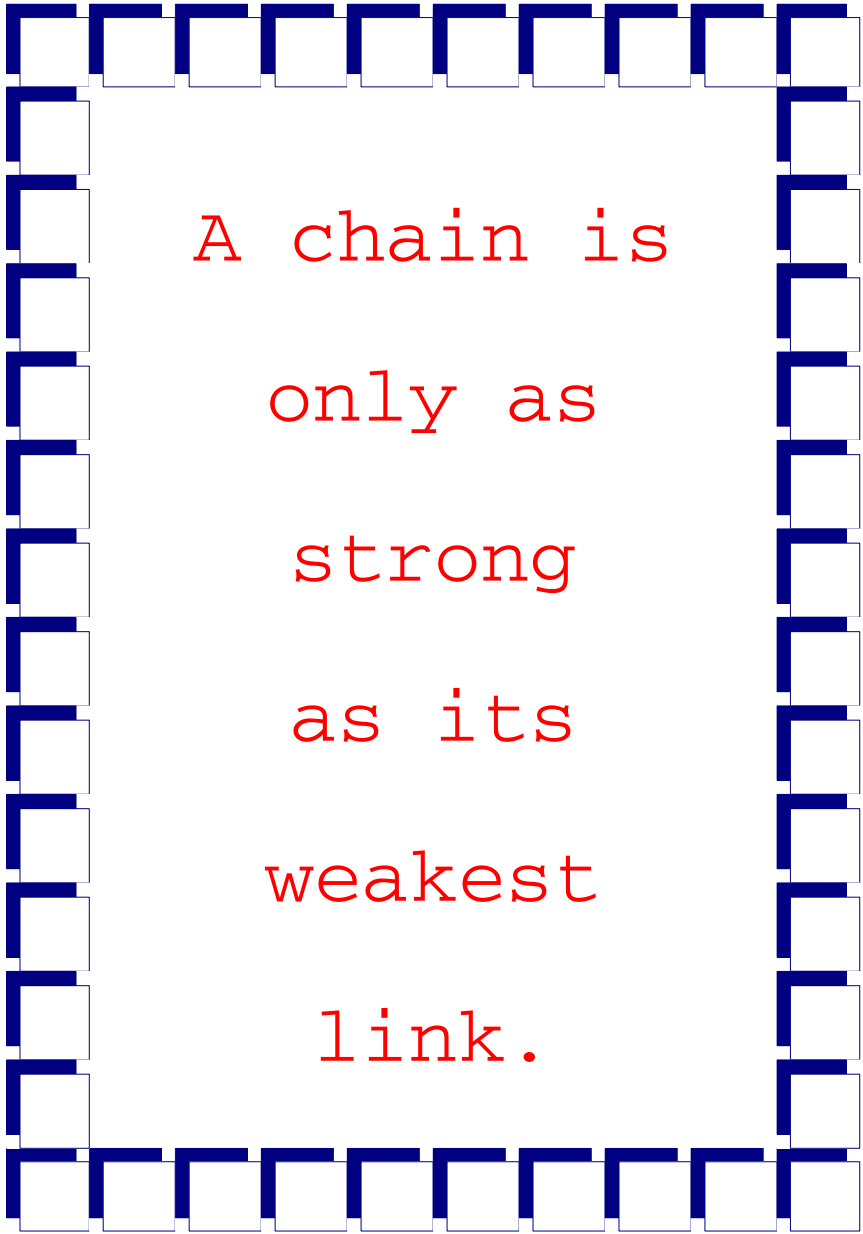


**T**here must be, somewhere in the mind, a cut-out switch to prevent over-load and burn-out, otherwise the pains and problems of life would soon drive us insane.

**T**his cushioning mechanism, however, is sometimes over-protective, and, while helping us overcome sorrow and hardship, and enable us to carry on, it also lets us forget too easily, and so learn little from it all.

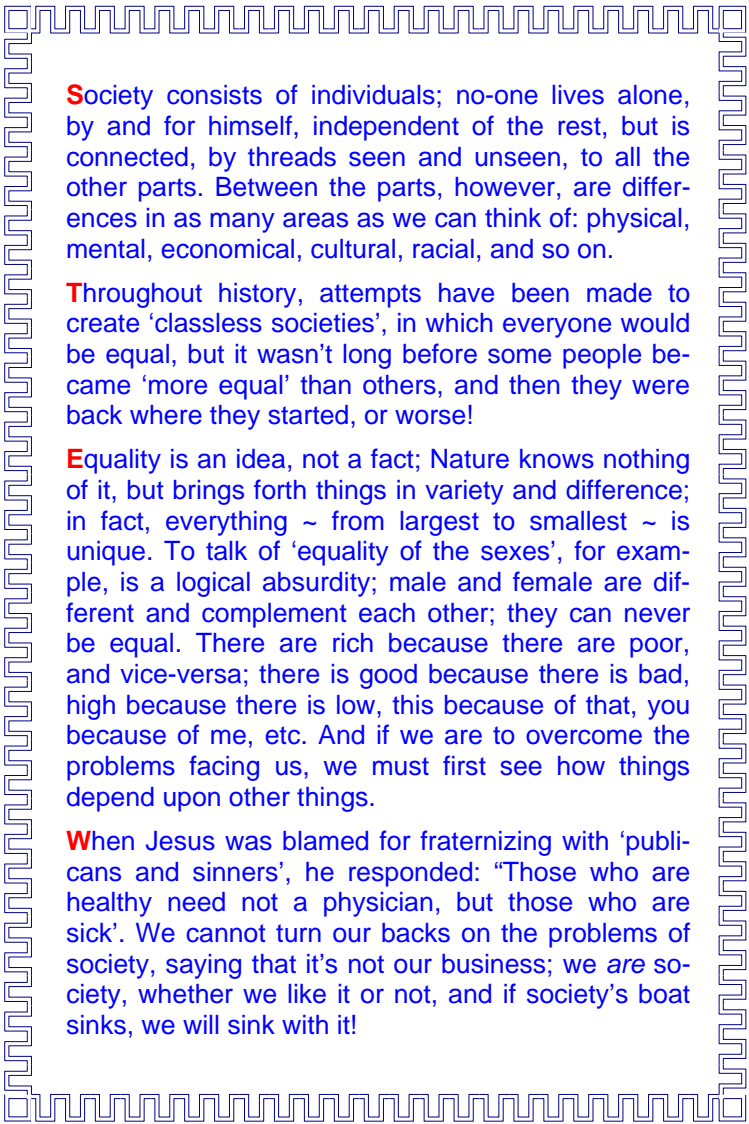
**T**his causes us to treat life lightly, and to expect it to be always there. Daily, we see on TV the road-fatalities, mass-death of people in earthquakes, mine-disasters, floods, industrial-accidents, plane-crashes, ethnic-rioting, bloody revolutions, wars and so on, and gradually, we become inured to it all; it loses its ability to shock or disturb us. It may be happening to others, but we don't imagine it could happen to us; somehow, we feel exempt from all that.

**A**nd so, we are often caught unawares.



A chain is  
only as  
strong  
as its  
weakest  
link.





**S**ociety consists of individuals; no-one lives alone, by and for himself, independent of the rest, but is connected, by threads seen and unseen, to all the other parts. Between the parts, however, are differences in as many areas as we can think of: physical, mental, economical, cultural, racial, and so on.

**T**hroughout history, attempts have been made to create 'classless societies', in which everyone would be equal, but it wasn't long before some people became 'more equal' than others, and then they were back where they started, or worse!

**E**quality is an idea, not a fact; Nature knows nothing of it, but brings forth things in variety and difference; in fact, everything ~ from largest to smallest ~ is unique. To talk of 'equality of the sexes', for example, is a logical absurdity; male and female are different and complement each other; they can never be equal. There are rich because there are poor, and vice-versa; there is good because there is bad, high because there is low, this because of that, you because of me, etc. And if we are to overcome the problems facing us, we must first see how things depend upon other things.

**W**hen Jesus was blamed for fraternizing with 'publicans and sinners', he responded: "Those who are healthy need not a physician, but those who are sick'. We cannot turn our backs on the problems of society, saying that it's not our business; we *are* society, whether we like it or not, and if society's boat sinks, we will sink with it!



Tell yourself

this:

It is better  
to be cheated  
than to  
cheat.

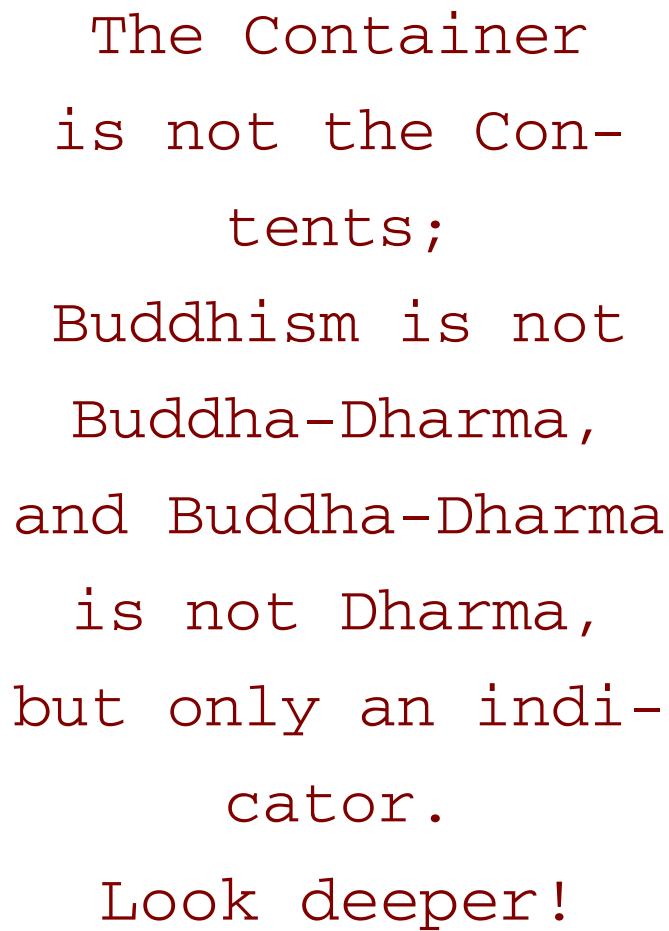
**H**ow strange: the harsh words of, and injuries done to us by others, we store up and reflect upon, like treasures, instead of letting them go and thinking of better things. The harmful acts of others are useful to us, and worth recalling, only insofar as we might learn something from them that might help us to avoid doing the same things to others. If we brood on them, with resentment, nothing good will come of it, and we will only make ourselves feel worse; what is the use of such self-inflicted suffering?

**I**n the Dharmapada, verses 3 and 4, we find:

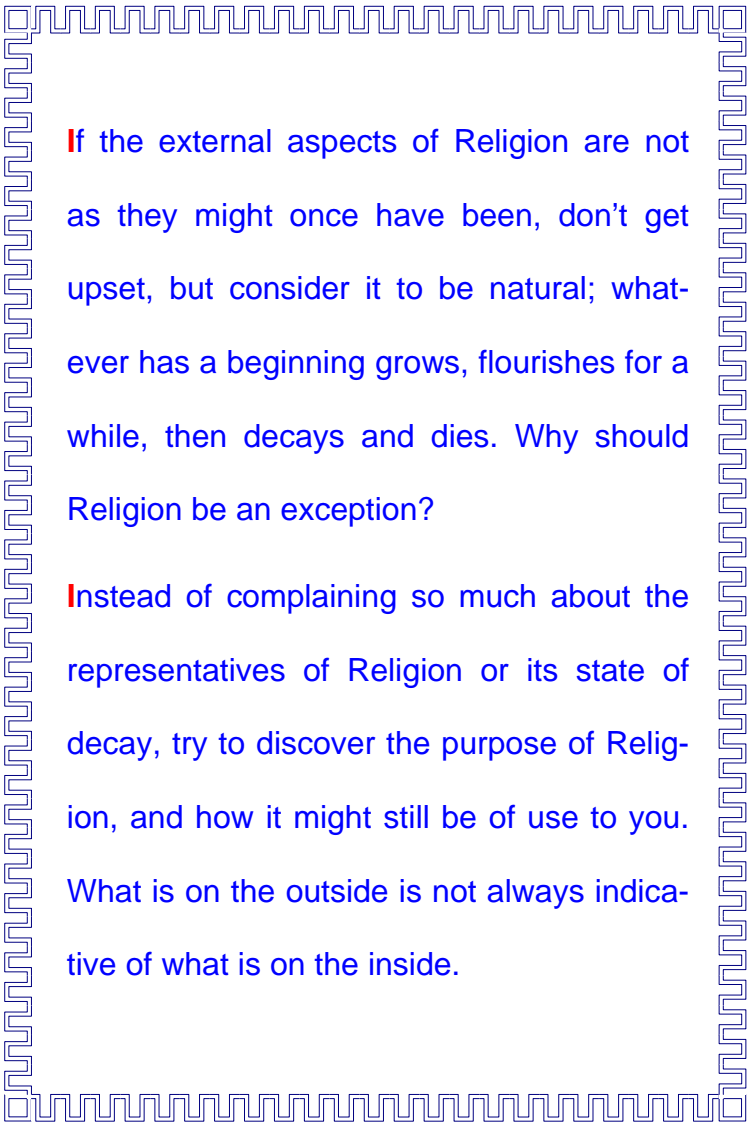
“He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me.”

In those who harbour such thoughts, hatred is never appeased. “He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me.” In those who har-

bour not such thoughts, ha-  
tred *is* appeased.

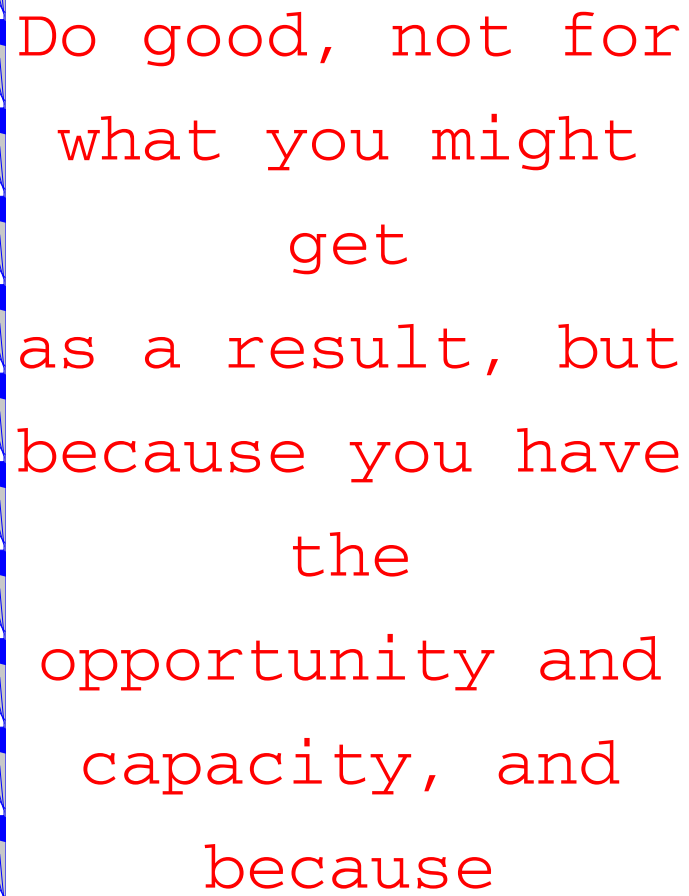


The Container  
is not the Con-  
tents;  
Buddhism is not  
Buddha-Dharma,  
and Buddha-Dharma  
is not Dharma,  
but only an indi-  
cator.  
Look deeper!



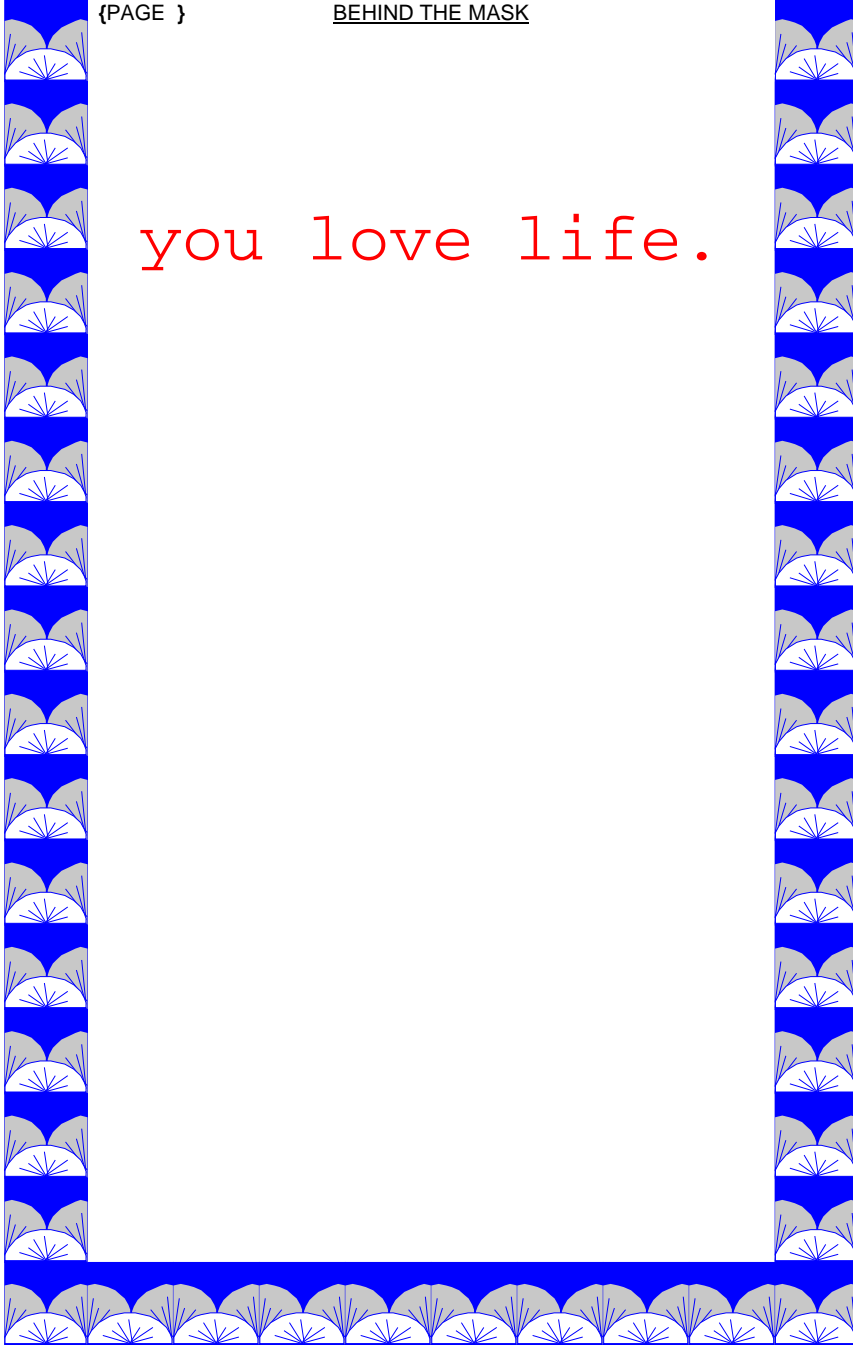
If the external aspects of Religion are not as they might once have been, don't get upset, but consider it to be natural; whatever has a beginning grows, flourishes for a while, then decays and dies. Why should Religion be an exception?

Instead of complaining so much about the representatives of Religion or its state of decay, try to discover the purpose of Religion, and how it might still be of use to you. What is on the outside is not always indicative of what is on the inside.

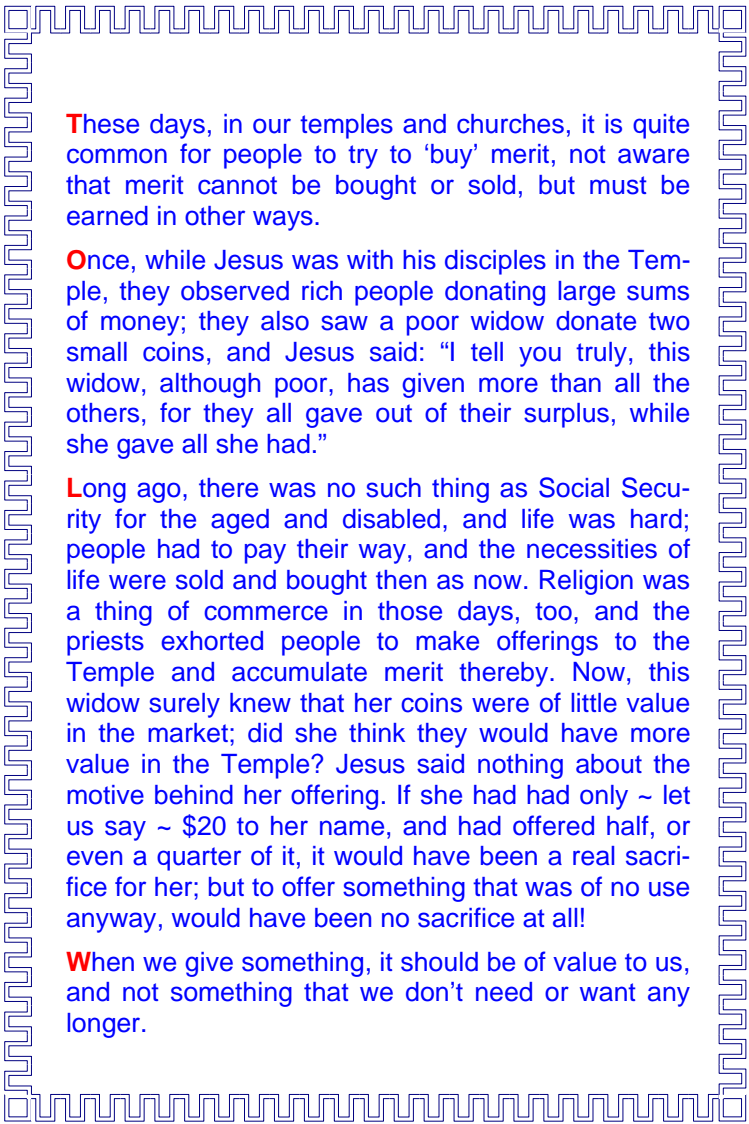


Do good, not for  
what you might  
get  
as a result, but  
because you have  
the  
opportunity and  
capacity, and  
because

you love life.





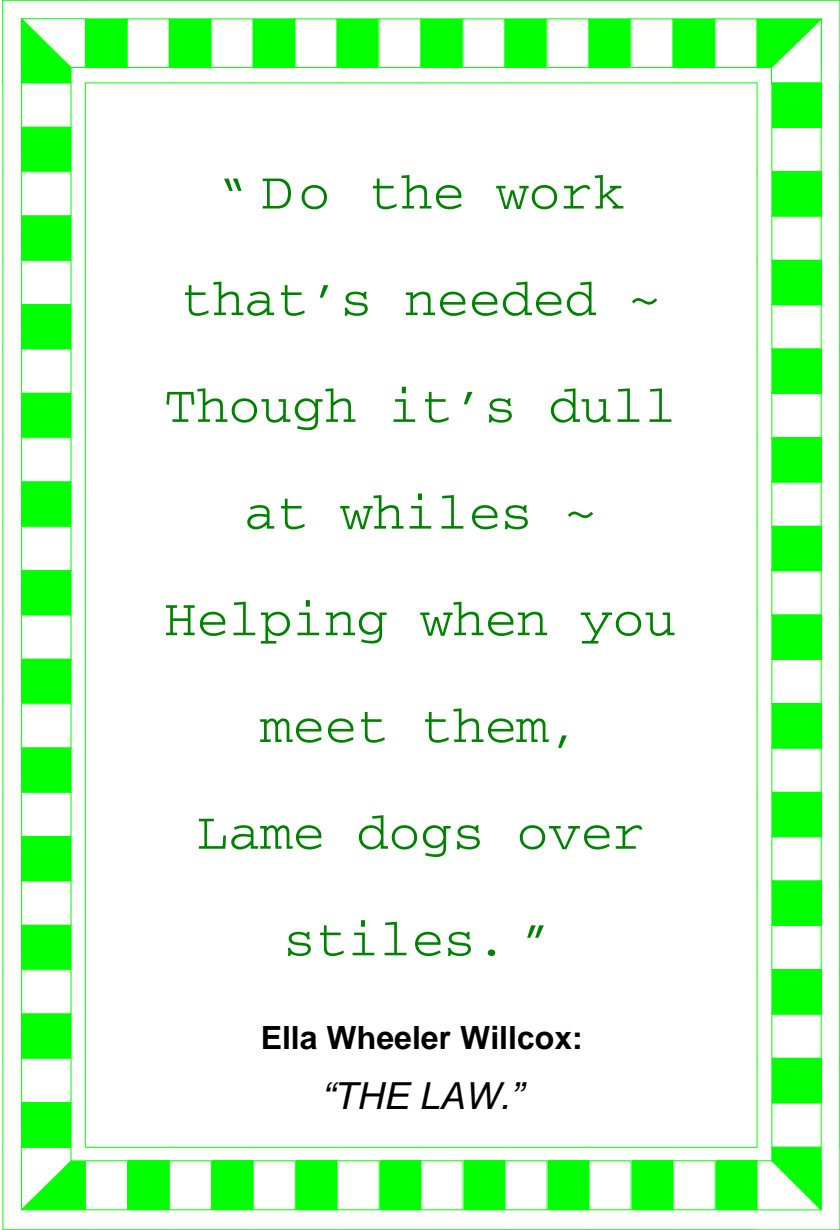


**T**hese days, in our temples and churches, it is quite common for people to try to 'buy' merit, not aware that merit cannot be bought or sold, but must be earned in other ways.

**O**nce, while Jesus was with his disciples in the Temple, they observed rich people donating large sums of money; they also saw a poor widow donate two small coins, and Jesus said: "I tell you truly, this widow, although poor, has given more than all the others, for they all gave out of their surplus, while she gave all she had."

**L**ong ago, there was no such thing as Social Security for the aged and disabled, and life was hard; people had to pay their way, and the necessities of life were sold and bought then as now. Religion was a thing of commerce in those days, too, and the priests exhorted people to make offerings to the Temple and accumulate merit thereby. Now, this widow surely knew that her coins were of little value in the market; did she think they would have more value in the Temple? Jesus said nothing about the motive behind her offering. If she had had only ~ let us say ~ \$20 to her name, and had offered half, or even a quarter of it, it would have been a real sacrifice for her; but to offer something that was of no use anyway, would have been no sacrifice at all!

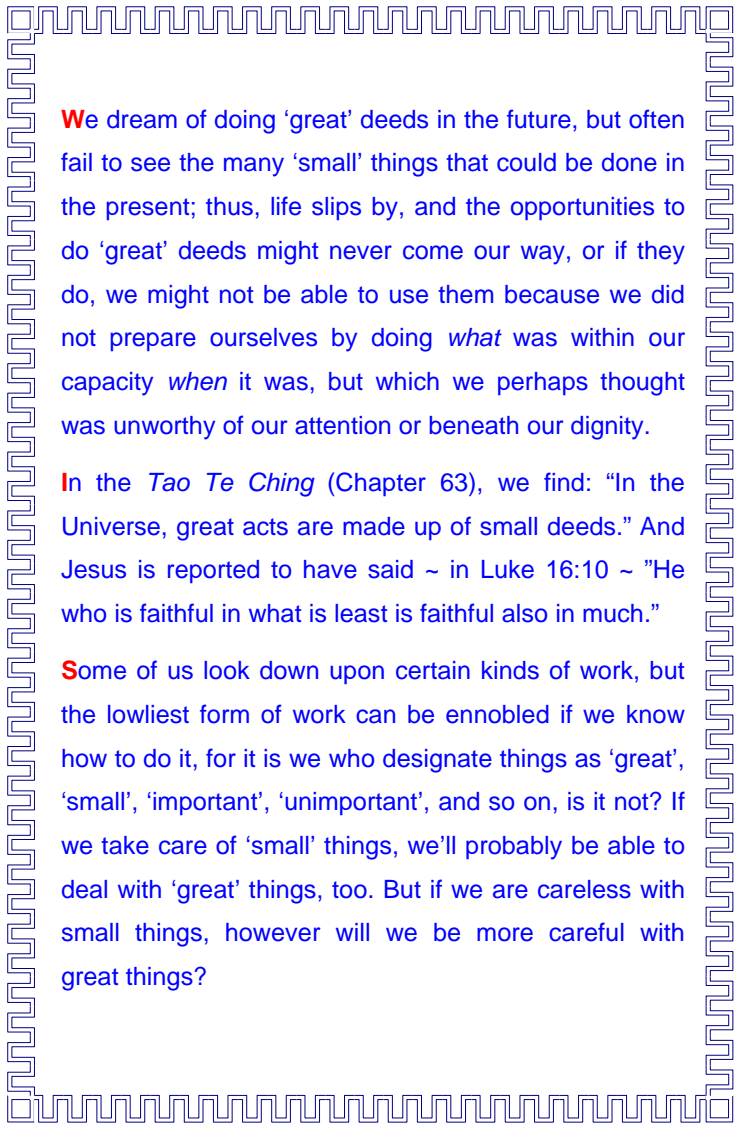
**W**hen we give something, it should be of value to us, and not something that we don't need or want any longer.



“ Do the work  
that’s needed ~  
Though it’s dull  
at whiles ~  
Helping when you  
meet them,  
Lame dogs over  
stiles. ”

**Ella Wheeler Willcox:**

*“THE LAW.”*



**W**e dream of doing 'great' deeds in the future, but often fail to see the many 'small' things that could be done in the present; thus, life slips by, and the opportunities to do 'great' deeds might never come our way, or if they do, we might not be able to use them because we did not prepare ourselves by doing *what* was within our capacity *when* it was, but which we perhaps thought was unworthy of our attention or beneath our dignity.

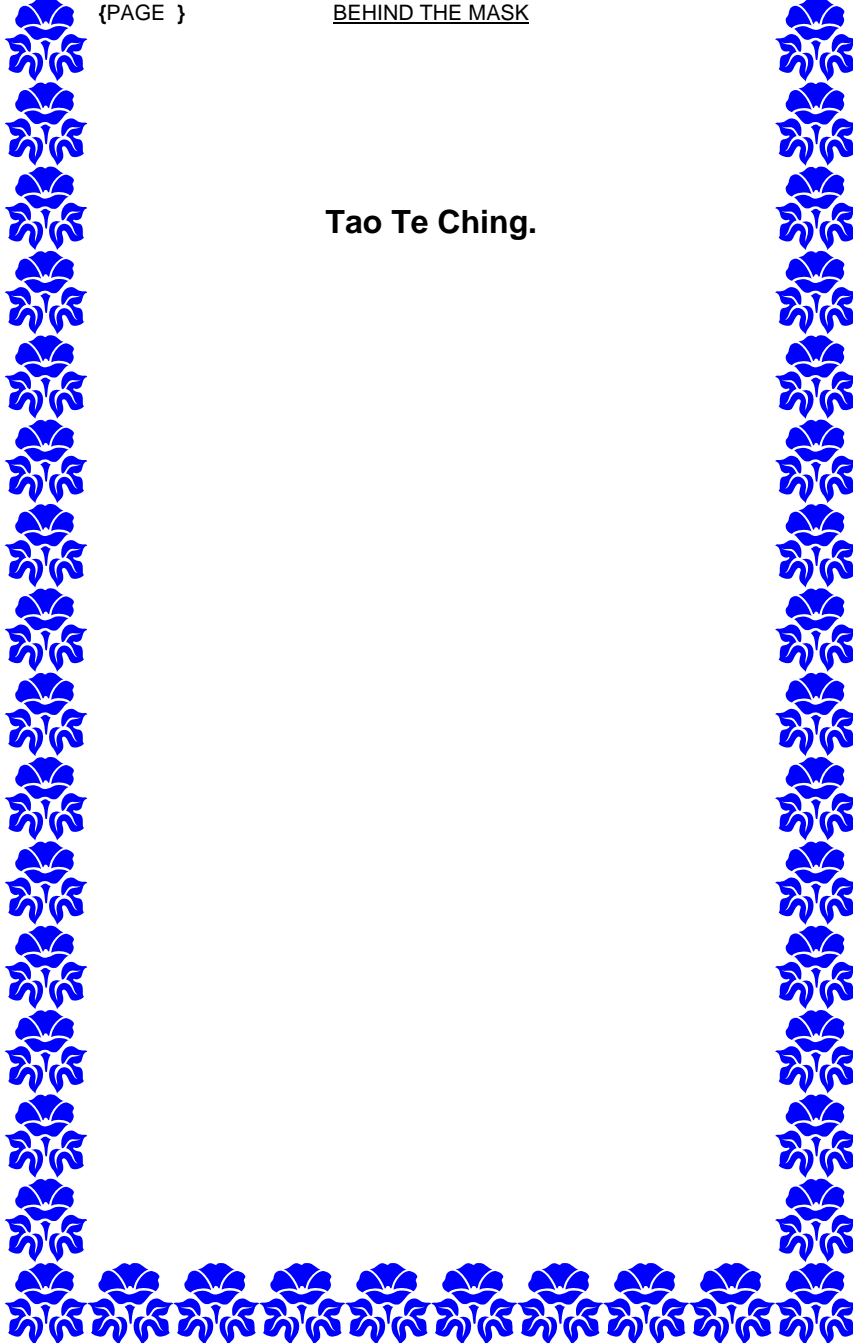
In the *Tao Te Ching* (Chapter 63), we find: "In the Universe, great acts are made up of small deeds." And Jesus is reported to have said ~ in Luke 16:10 ~ "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much."

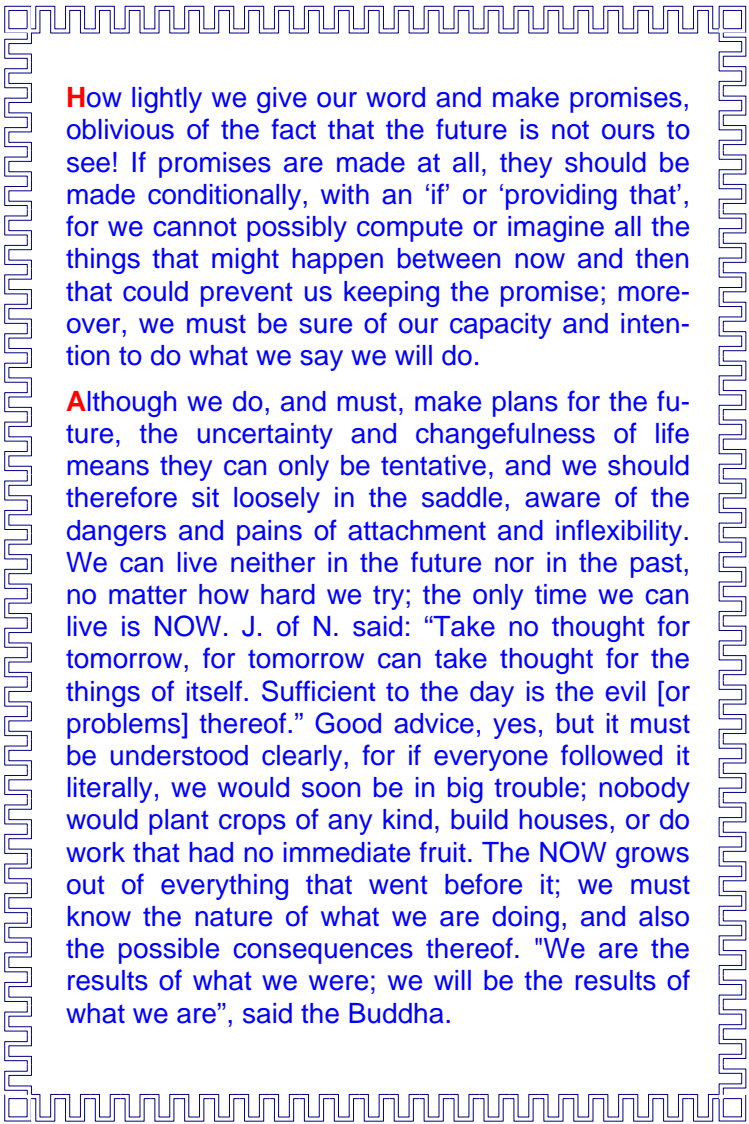
**S**ome of us look down upon certain kinds of work, but the lowliest form of work can be ennobled if we know how to do it, for it is we who designate things as 'great', 'small', 'important', 'unimportant', and so on, is it not? If we take care of 'small' things, we'll probably be able to deal with 'great' things, too. But if we are careless with small things, however will we be more careful with great things?



" Easy prom-  
ises  
make  
for  
little  
trust" .

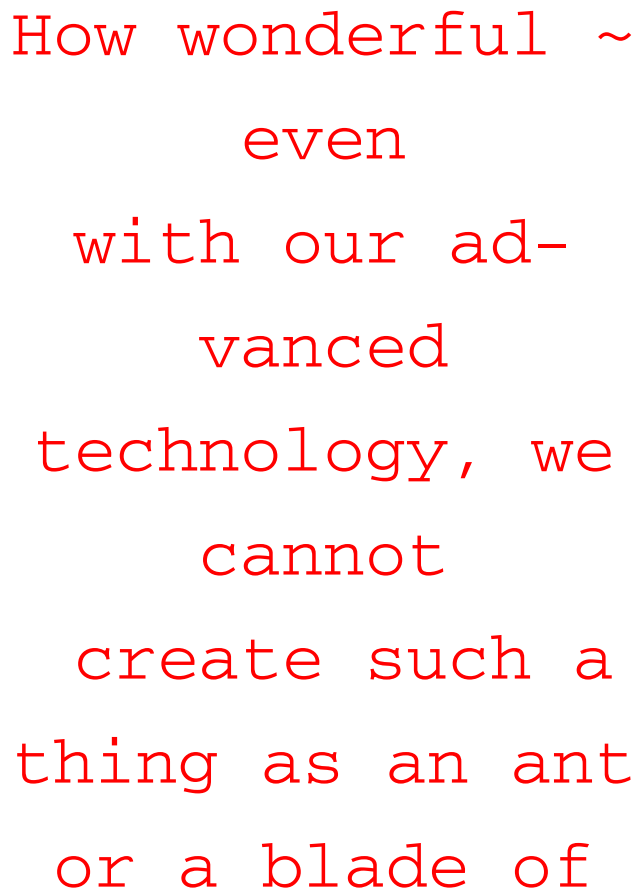
**Tao Te Ching.**





**H**ow lightly we give our word and make promises, oblivious of the fact that the future is not ours to see! If promises are made at all, they should be made conditionally, with an 'if' or 'providing that', for we cannot possibly compute or imagine all the things that might happen between now and then that could prevent us keeping the promise; moreover, we must be sure of our capacity and intention to do what we say we will do.

**A**lthough we do, and must, make plans for the future, the uncertainty and changefulness of life means they can only be tentative, and we should therefore sit loosely in the saddle, aware of the dangers and pains of attachment and inflexibility. We can live neither in the future nor in the past, no matter how hard we try; the only time we can live is NOW. J. of N. said: "Take no thought for tomorrow, for tomorrow can take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient to the day is the evil [or problems] thereof." Good advice, yes, but it must be understood clearly, for if everyone followed it literally, we would soon be in big trouble; nobody would plant crops of any kind, build houses, or do work that had no immediate fruit. The NOW grows out of everything that went before it; we must know the nature of what we are doing, and also the possible consequences thereof. "We are the results of what we were; we will be the results of what we are", said the Buddha.



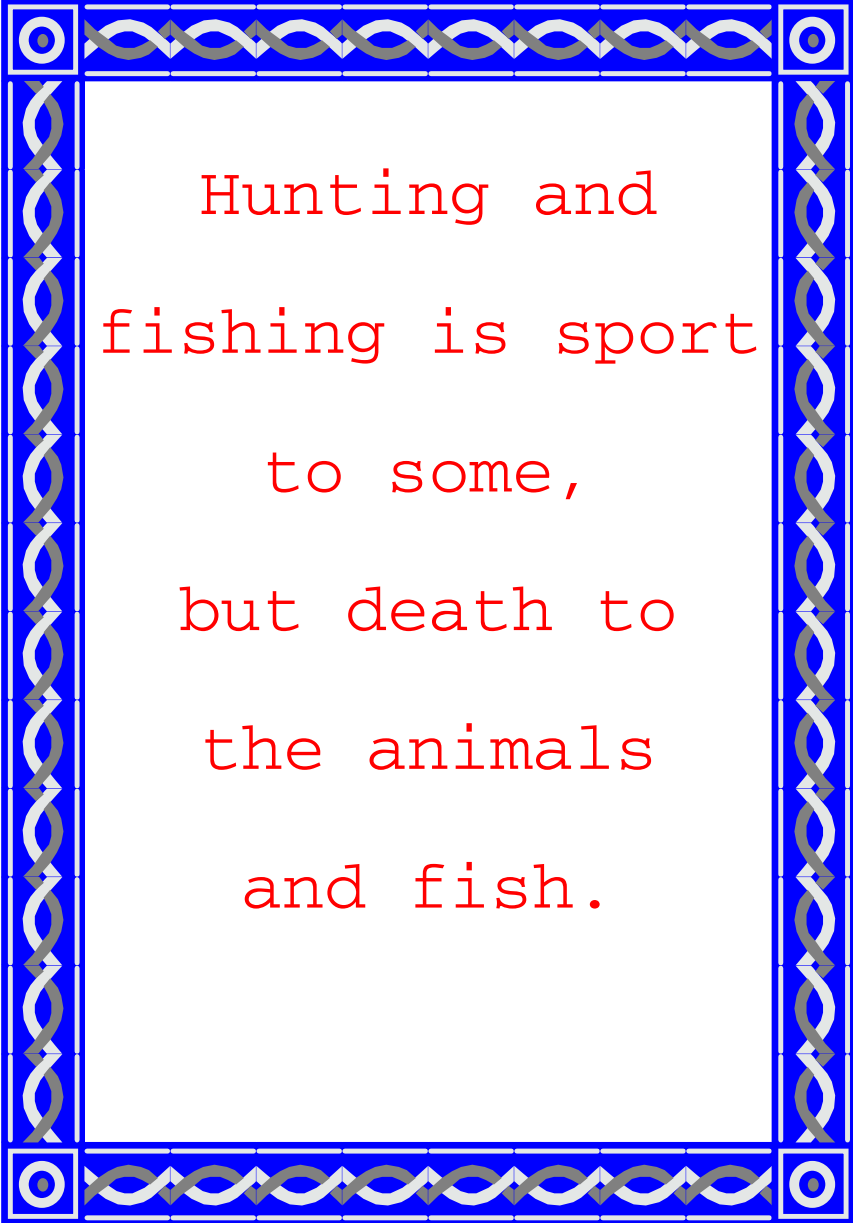
How wonderful ~  
even  
with our ad-  
vanced  
technology, we  
cannot  
create such a  
thing as an ant  
or a blade of

grass, but gods  
and ghosts we  
produce by the  
sackful!

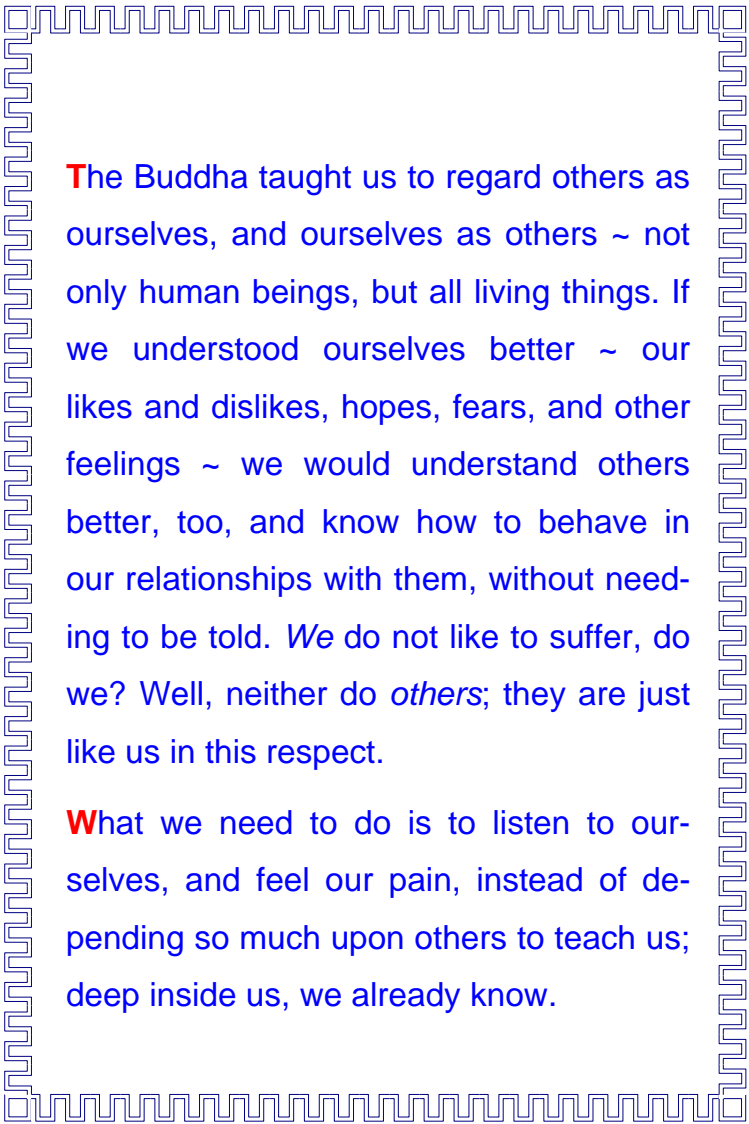


**M**ars, Jupiter, Saturn, Zeus, Apollo, Poseidon, Isis, Ra, Osiris, Wotan, Thor, and Freya are just some of the gods of the ancient world; people used to worship and pray to them then as people worship and pray to their gods today. Were they any less real? What happened to them? Did they die off and cease to exist with their worshippers? Were they pensioned-off to other planets? Or were they, perhaps, mental creations of their worshippers, fulfilling a psychological need? If so, then they had no objective existence at all.

**I**n one book it is written that God said: "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness" (Genesis 1:26, of the Bible); but maybe it was the other way around: that man has created *God* in *his* image. This is known as *anthropomorphism*, that is, 'with human form'. People endowed the supernatural ~ or what they thought of as such, because they didn't understand the forces or laws of Nature ~ with human attributes, such as form, and emotions such as love, hate, anger, jealousy, favoritism, etc., and then proceeded to worship it. They attempted to put a limit on the Limitless, but only succeeded in limiting themselves thereby. So now we are stuck with a human-like God of their own making, necessitating further fantastic mental gymnastics in order to make facts fit the concept.



Hunting and  
fishing is sport  
to some,  
but death to  
the animals  
and fish.



**T**he Buddha taught us to regard others as ourselves, and ourselves as others ~ not only human beings, but all living things. If we understood ourselves better ~ our likes and dislikes, hopes, fears, and other feelings ~ we would understand others better, too, and know how to behave in our relationships with them, without needing to be told. *We* do not like to suffer, do we? Well, neither do *others*; they are just like us in this respect.

**W**hat we need to do is to listen to ourselves, and feel our pain, instead of depending so much upon others to teach us; deep inside us, we already know.

## IMAGINE

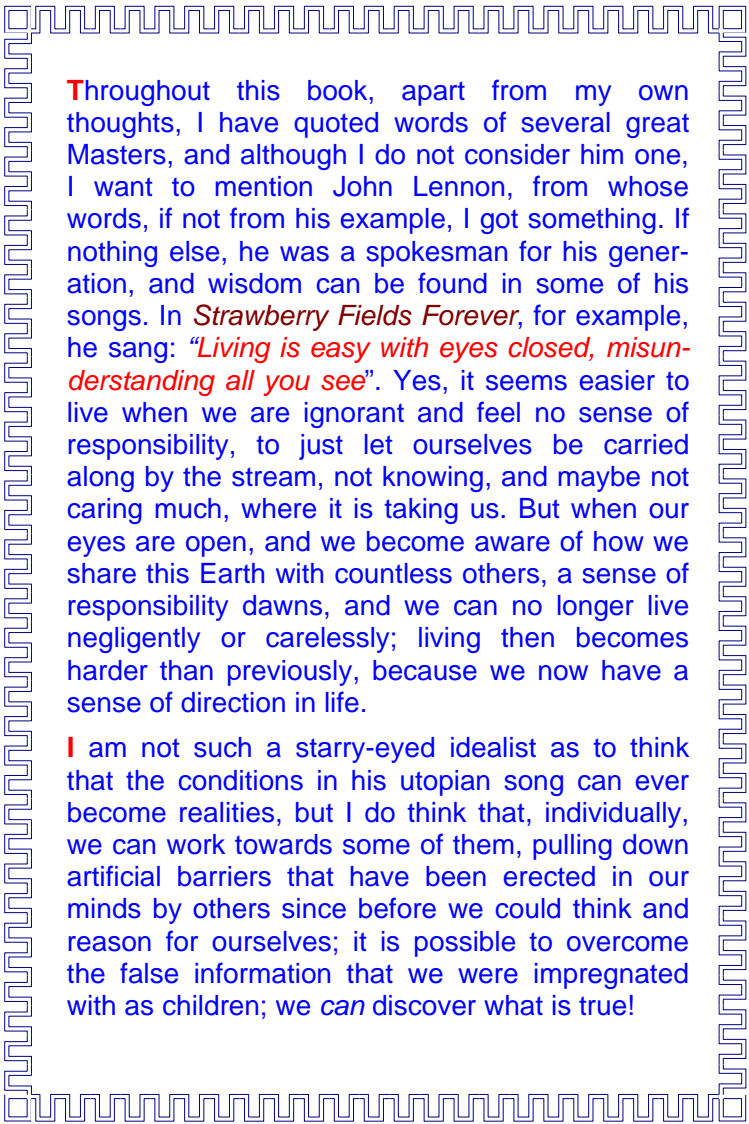
Imagine there's no Heaven ~  
It's easy if you try ~  
No Hell below us ~  
Above us only sky;  
Imagine all the people  
Living for today ....

Imagine there's no country ~  
It isn't hard to do ~  
Nothing to kill or die for ~  
And no religion, too;  
Imagine all the people  
Living life in peace....

Imagine no possessions ~  
I wonder if you can?  
No need for greed or hunger ~  
A brotherhood of man.  
Imagine all the people  
Sharing all the world ....

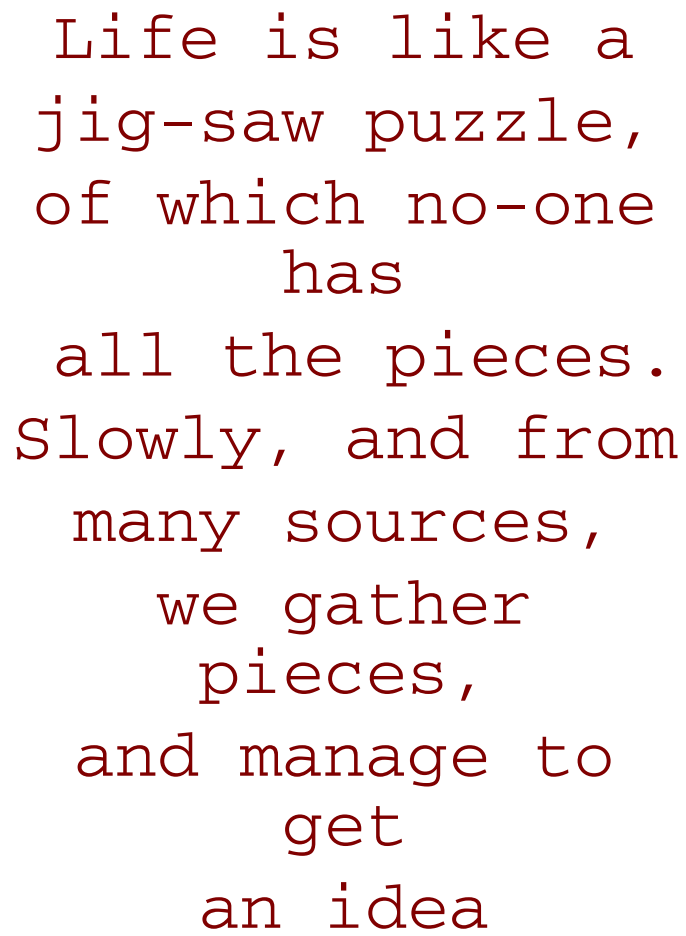
You may say that I'm a dreamer,  
But I'm not the only one;  
I hope someday you'll join us,  
And the World will be as One.

~ John Lennon ~



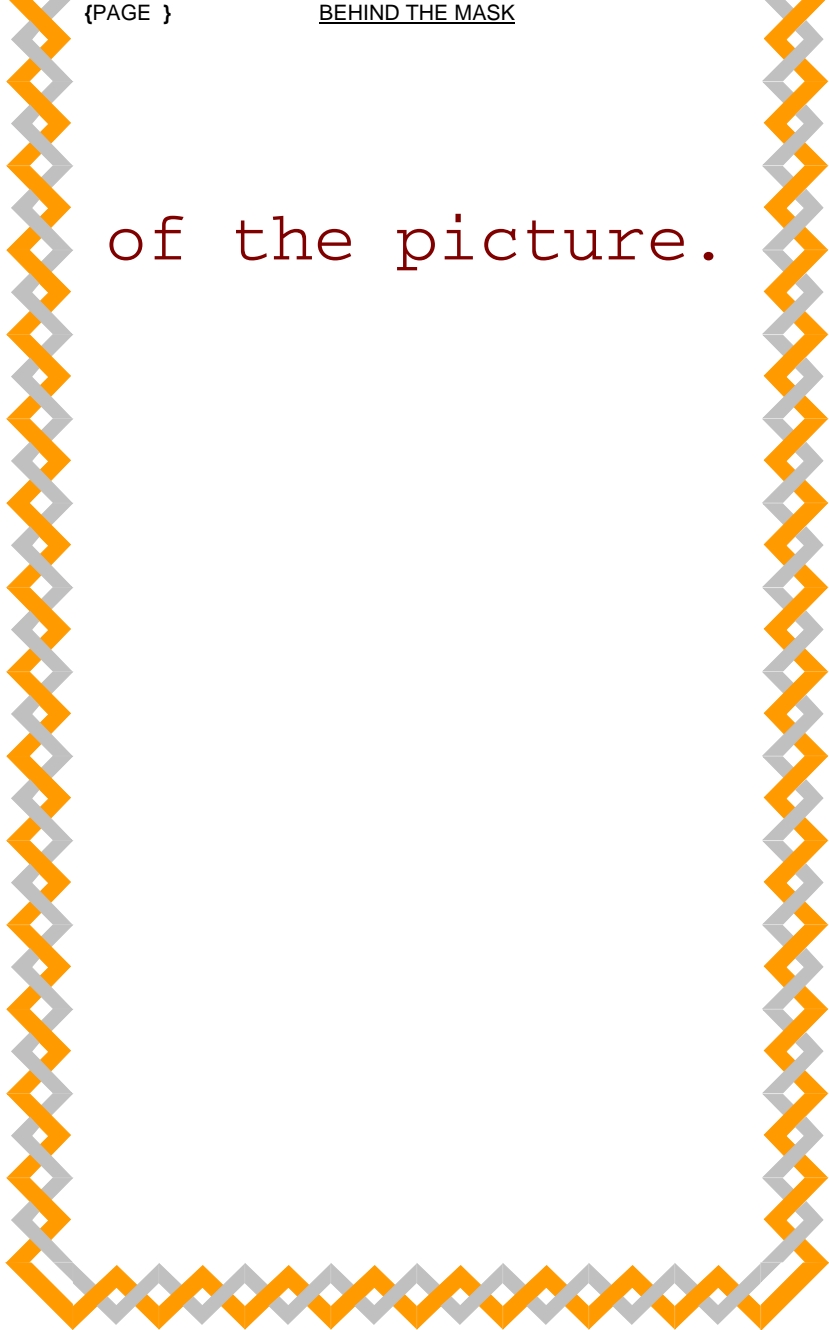
Throughout this book, apart from my own thoughts, I have quoted words of several great Masters, and although I do not consider him one, I want to mention John Lennon, from whose words, if not from his example, I got something. If nothing else, he was a spokesman for his generation, and wisdom can be found in some of his songs. In *Strawberry Fields Forever*, for example, he sang: “*Living is easy with eyes closed, misunderstanding all you see*”. Yes, it seems easier to live when we are ignorant and feel no sense of responsibility, to just let ourselves be carried along by the stream, not knowing, and maybe not caring much, where it is taking us. But when our eyes are open, and we become aware of how we share this Earth with countless others, a sense of responsibility dawns, and we can no longer live negligently or carelessly; living then becomes harder than previously, because we now have a sense of direction in life.

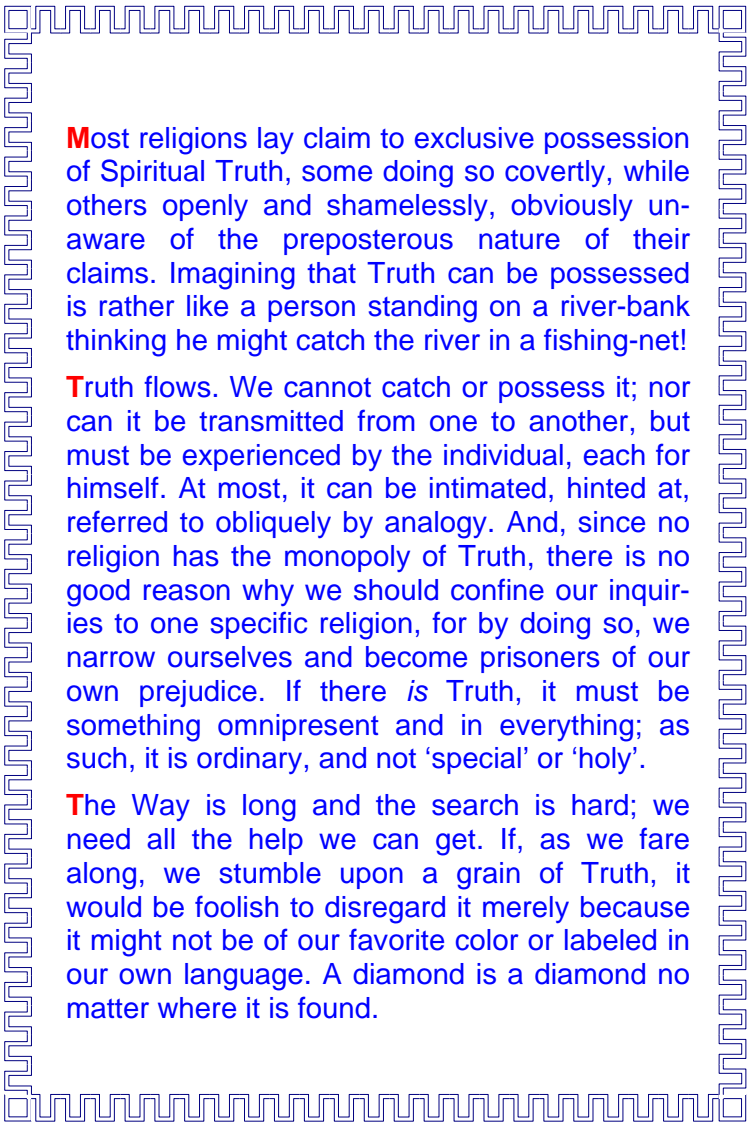
I am not such a starry-eyed idealist as to think that the conditions in his utopian song can ever become realities, but I do think that, individually, we can work towards some of them, pulling down artificial barriers that have been erected in our minds by others since before we could think and reason for ourselves; it is possible to overcome the false information that we were impregnated with as children; we *can* discover what is true!



Life is like a  
jig-saw puzzle,  
of which no-one  
has  
all the pieces.  
Slowly, and from  
many sources,  
we gather  
pieces,  
and manage to  
get  
an idea

of the picture.



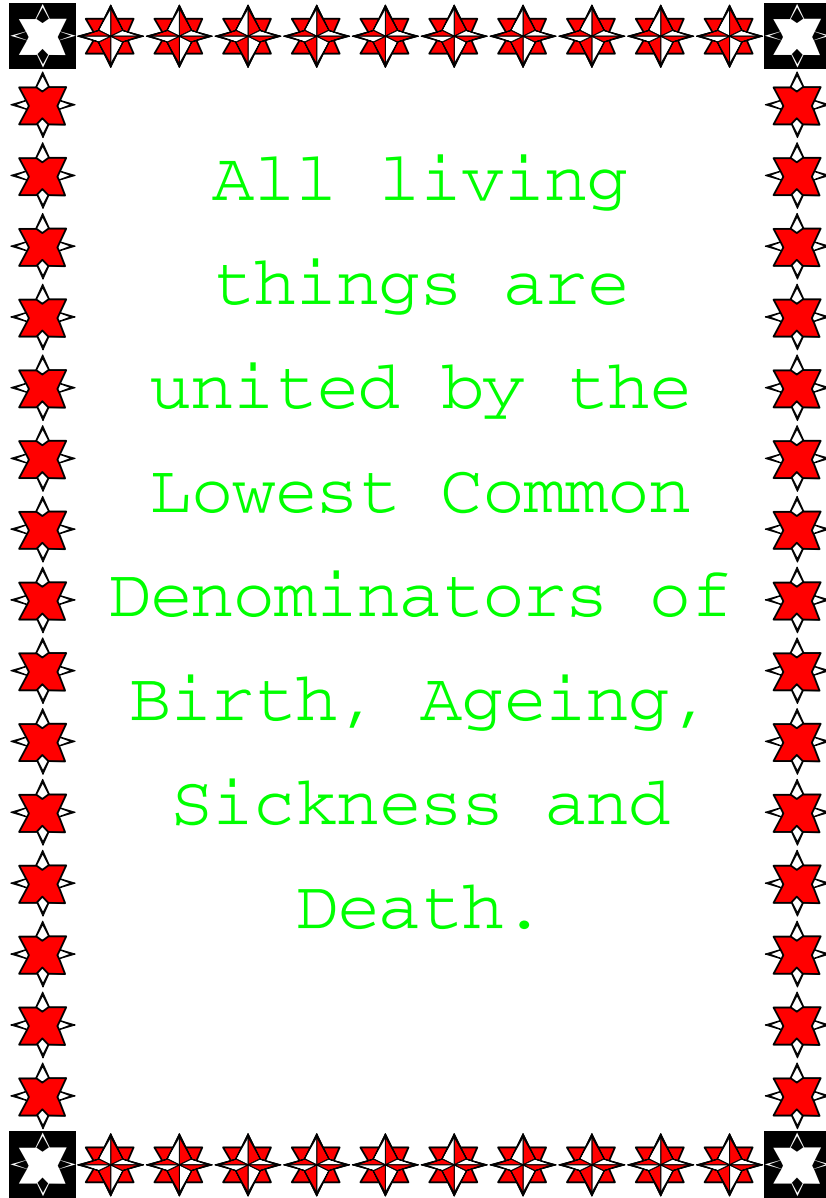


**M**ost religions lay claim to exclusive possession of Spiritual Truth, some doing so covertly, while others openly and shamelessly, obviously unaware of the preposterous nature of their claims. Imagining that Truth can be possessed is rather like a person standing on a river-bank thinking he might catch the river in a fishing-net!

**T**ruth flows. We cannot catch or possess it; nor can it be transmitted from one to another, but must be experienced by the individual, each for himself. At most, it can be intimated, hinted at, referred to obliquely by analogy. And, since no religion has the monopoly of Truth, there is no good reason why we should confine our inquiries to one specific religion, for by doing so, we narrow ourselves and become prisoners of our own prejudice. If there *is* Truth, it must be something omnipresent and in everything; as such, it is ordinary, and not 'special' or 'holy'.

**T**he Way is long and the search is hard; we need all the help we can get. If, as we fare along, we stumble upon a grain of Truth, it would be foolish to disregard it merely because it might not be of our favorite color or labeled in our own language. A diamond is a diamond no matter where it is found.



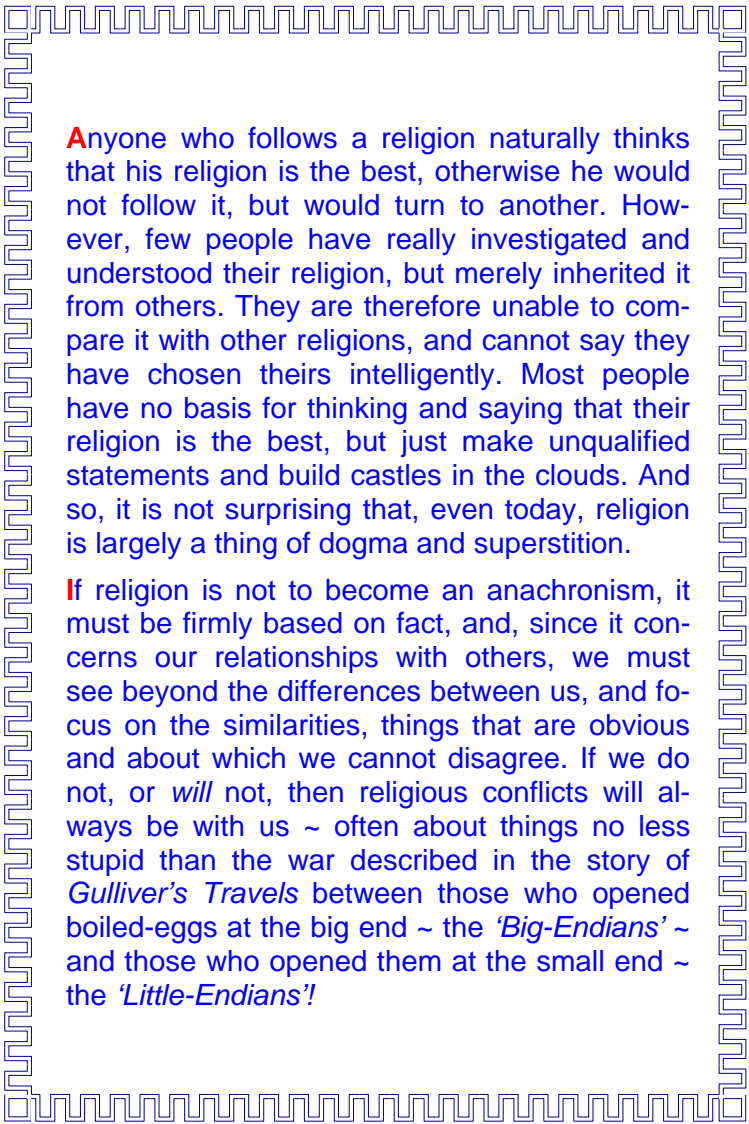


All living  
things are  
united by the  
Lowest Common  
Denominators of  
Birth, Ageing,  
Sickness and  
Death.



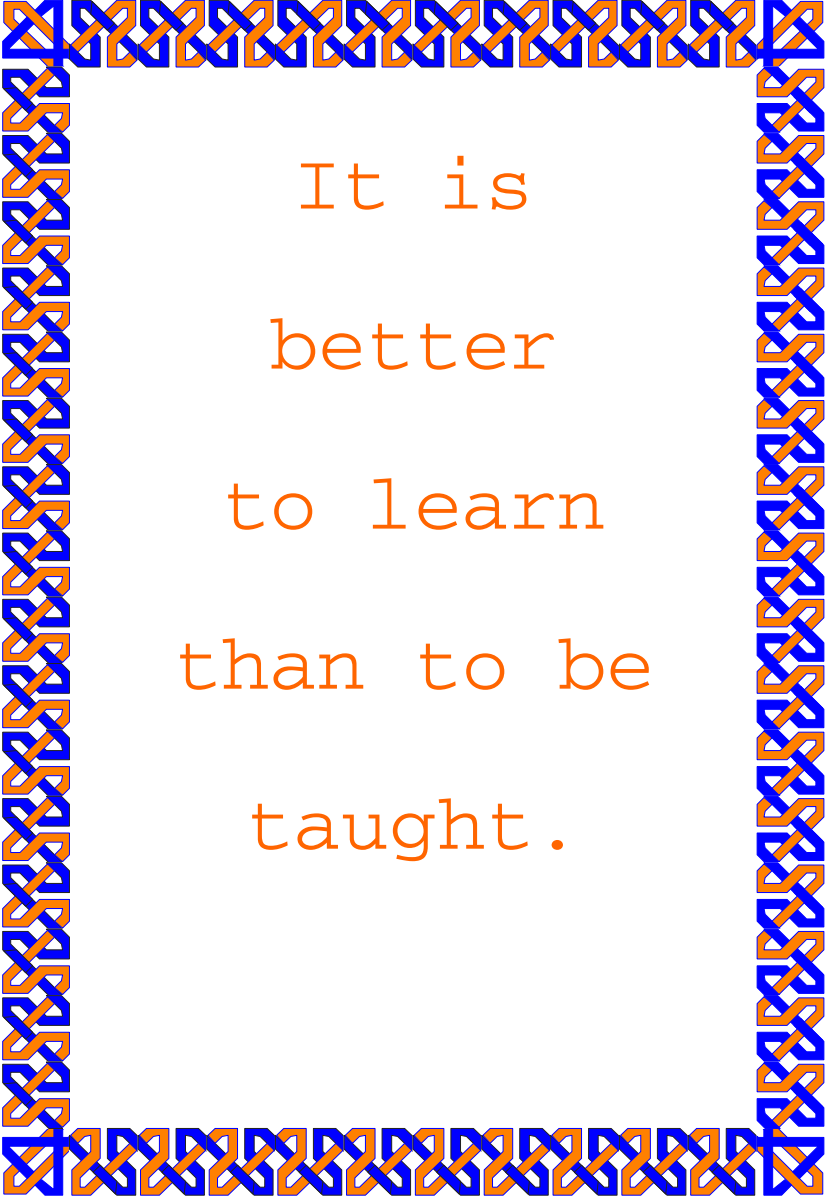
Is there not,  
therefore, a  
firm foundation  
for cooperation  
and peace?





Anyone who follows a religion naturally thinks that his religion is the best, otherwise he would not follow it, but would turn to another. However, few people have really investigated and understood their religion, but merely inherited it from others. They are therefore unable to compare it with other religions, and cannot say they have chosen theirs intelligently. Most people have no basis for thinking and saying that their religion is the best, but just make unqualified statements and build castles in the clouds. And so, it is not surprising that, even today, religion is largely a thing of dogma and superstition.

If religion is not to become an anachronism, it must be firmly based on fact, and, since it concerns our relationships with others, we must see beyond the differences between us, and focus on the similarities, things that are obvious and about which we cannot disagree. If we do not, or *will* not, then religious conflicts will always be with us ~ often about things no less stupid than the war described in the story of *Gulliver's Travels* between those who opened boiled-eggs at the big end ~ the '*Big-Endians*' ~ and those who opened them at the small end ~ the '*Little-Endians*'!



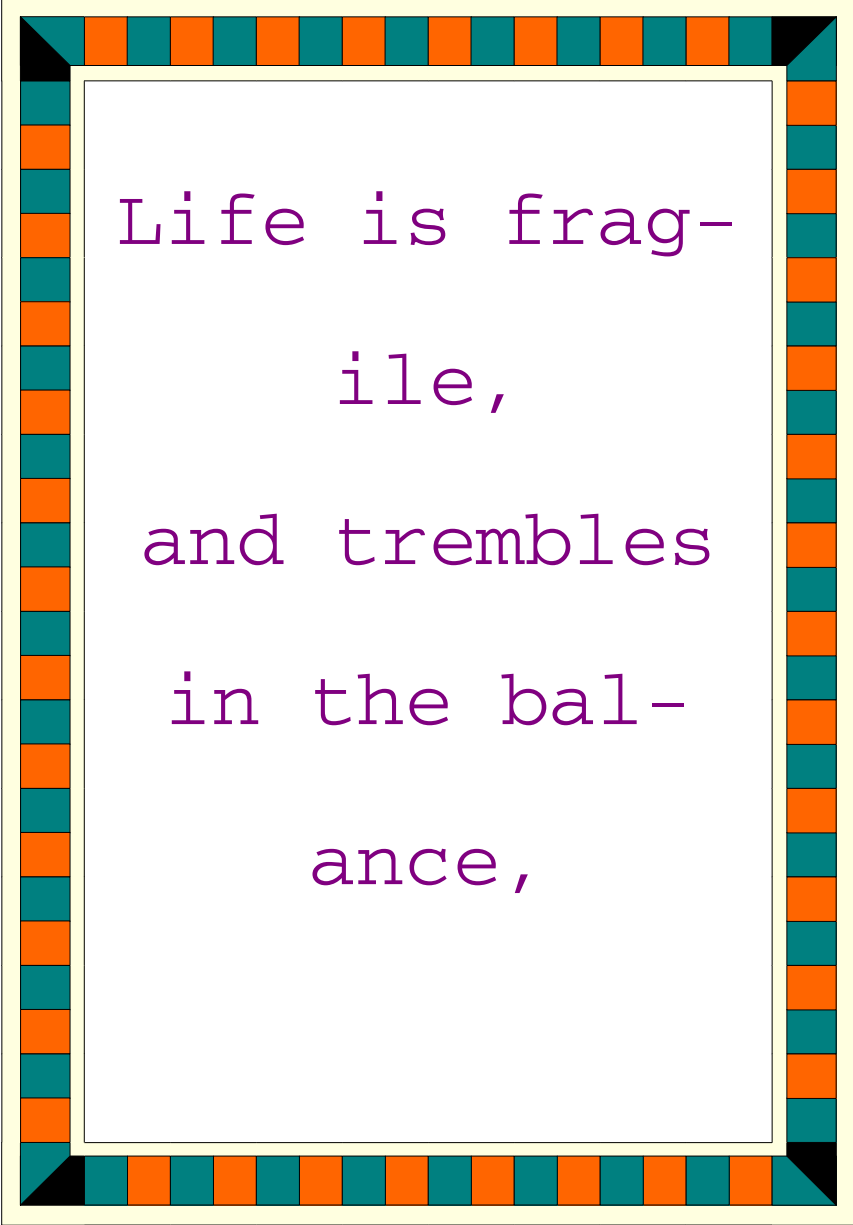
It is  
better  
to learn  
than to be  
taught.

**W**e often hear people saying of some famous monk or spiritual leader: “Lama So-and-So / Guru This-and-That is my Teacher!” Ask them what they have learned from these teachers, however, and there is sometimes an embarrassed silence.

**P**eople flock from far and wide to see a monk who is reputed to have psychic powers ~ not in order to learn something from him, but just to see something extraordinary and to be entertained. Thus, they are easily misled by the numerous cheats and charlatans who masquerade as ‘living Buddhas’ or ‘Enlightened Ones’.

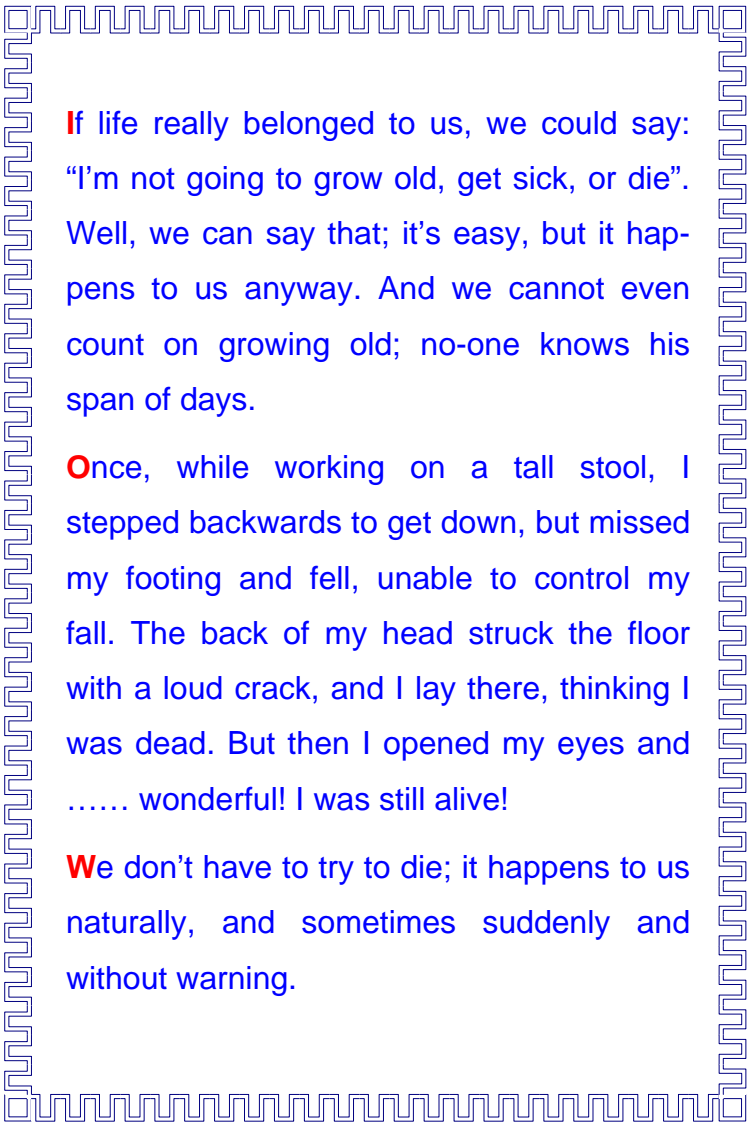
**A** person *might* have someone enlightened as his teacher, but that is no guarantee that he will learn anything. In the *Dhammapada*, verses 64/65, we find the Buddha’s words about this: “Though a fool throughout his life associates with a wise man, he no more understands the Dharma than a spoon tastes the flavor of soup. Though an intelligent person associates with a wise man for only a moment, he quickly understands the Dharma, as the tongue tastes the flavor of soup”.

**T**he Buddha had no teacher to show Him the way to Enlightenment, but discovered it for Himself. This is not to say that we should abandon teachers and depend solely upon ourselves, but that, instead of always waiting for a teacher to teach us everything, we should strive to learn for ourselves, and in this way, make ourselves ready to receive instructions and help.



Life is frag-  
ile,  
and trembles  
in the bal-  
ance,

like a dew-  
drop  
on a lotus-  
leaf.

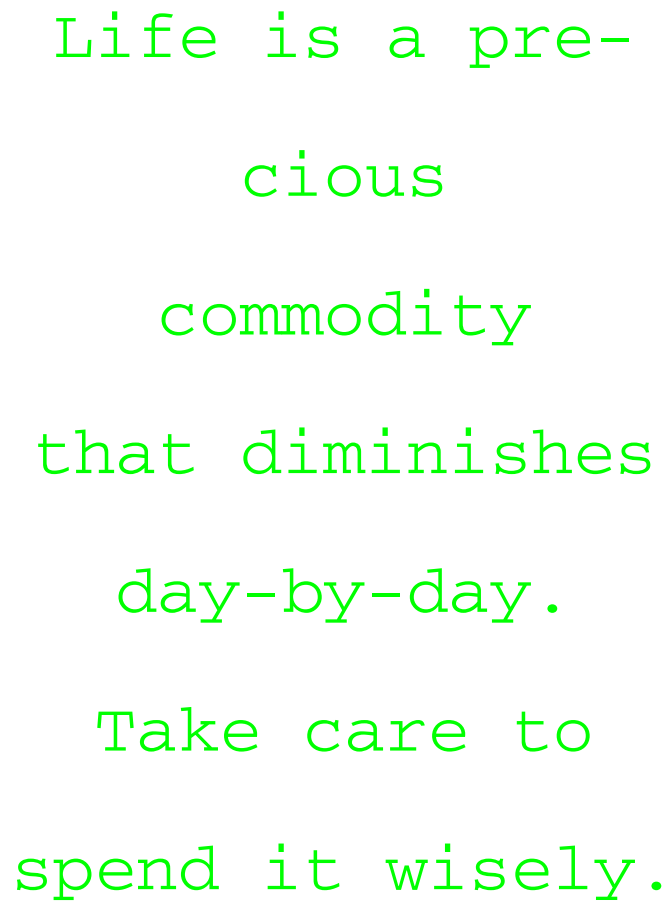


**I**f life really belonged to us, we could say: “I’m not going to grow old, get sick, or die”. Well, we can say that; it’s easy, but it happens to us anyway. And we cannot even count on growing old; no-one knows his span of days.

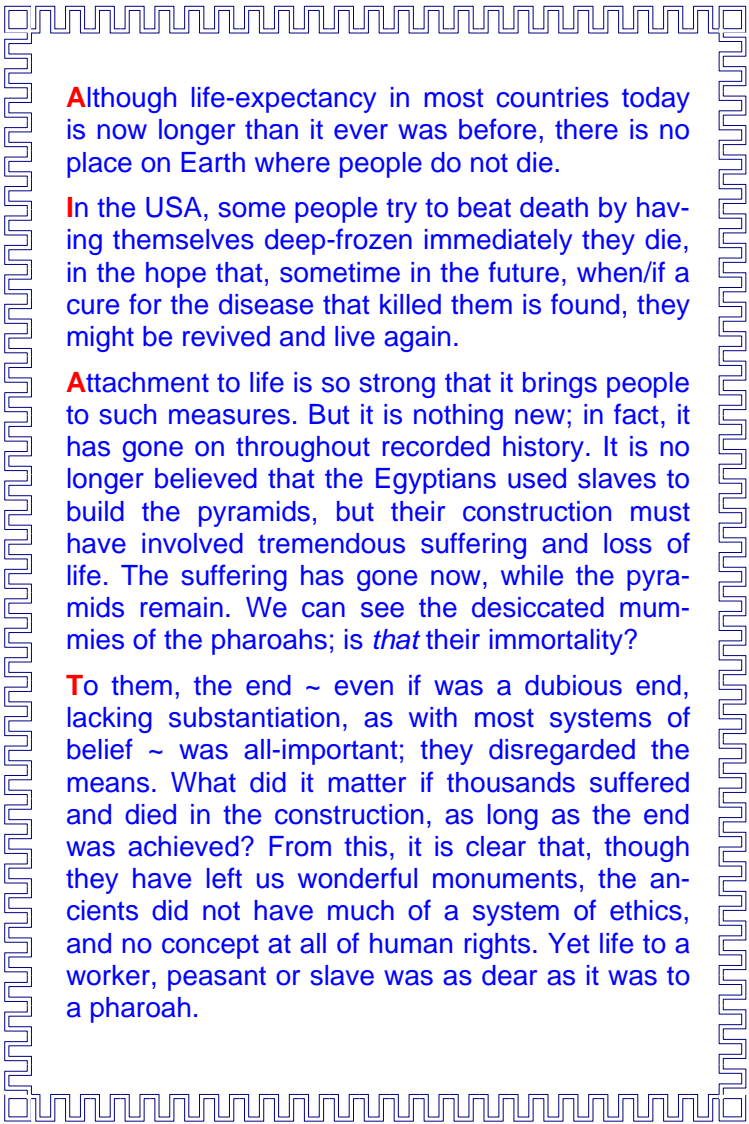
**O**nce, while working on a tall stool, I stepped backwards to get down, but missed my footing and fell, unable to control my fall. The back of my head struck the floor with a loud crack, and I lay there, thinking I was dead. But then I opened my eyes and ..... wonderful! I was still alive!

**We** don’t have to try to die; it happens to us naturally, and sometimes suddenly and without warning.





Life is a pre-  
cious  
commodity  
that diminishes  
day-by-day.  
Take care to  
spend it wisely.



**A**lthough life-expectancy in most countries today is now longer than it ever was before, there is no place on Earth where people do not die.

**I**n the USA, some people try to beat death by having themselves deep-frozen immediately they die, in the hope that, sometime in the future, when/if a cure for the disease that killed them is found, they might be revived and live again.

**A**ttachment to life is so strong that it brings people to such measures. But it is nothing new; in fact, it has gone on throughout recorded history. It is no longer believed that the Egyptians used slaves to build the pyramids, but their construction must have involved tremendous suffering and loss of life. The suffering has gone now, while the pyramids remain. We can see the desiccated mummies of the pharaohs; is *that* their immortality?

**T**o them, the end ~ even if was a dubious end, lacking substantiation, as with most systems of belief ~ was all-important; they disregarded the means. What did it matter if thousands suffered and died in the construction, as long as the end was achieved? From this, it is clear that, though they have left us wonderful monuments, the ancients did not have much of a system of ethics, and no concept at all of human rights. Yet life to a worker, peasant or slave was as dear as it was to a pharaoh.



We look,

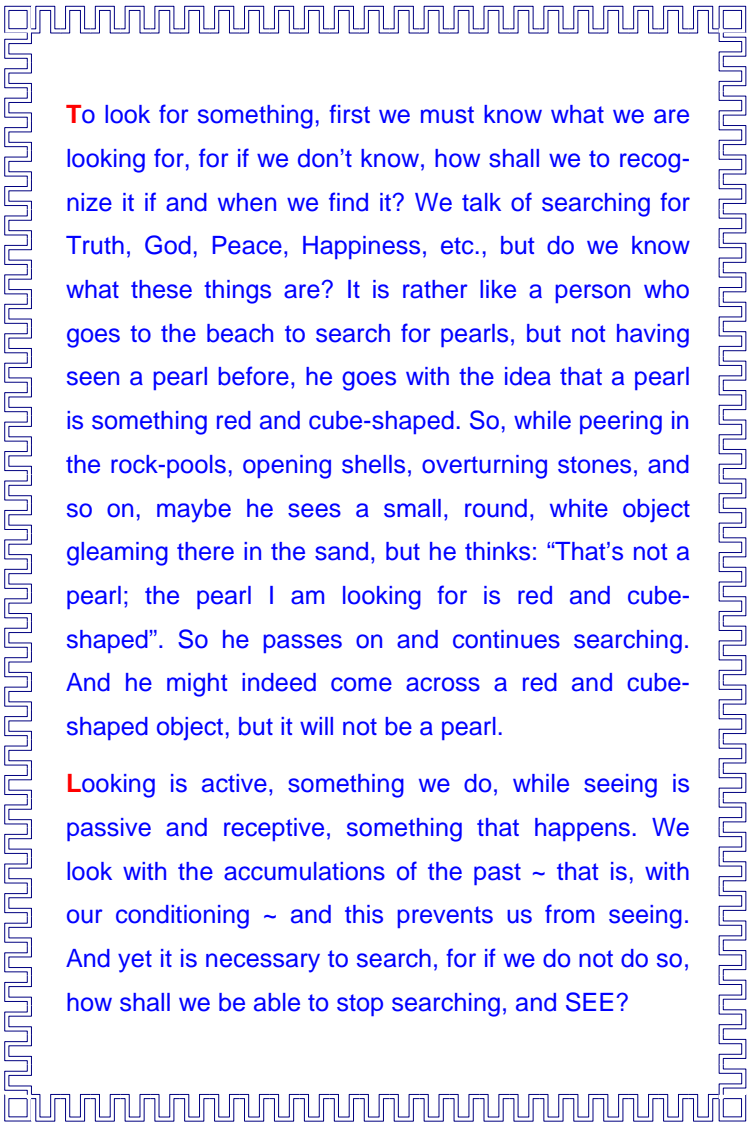
but we do not

see.

We see

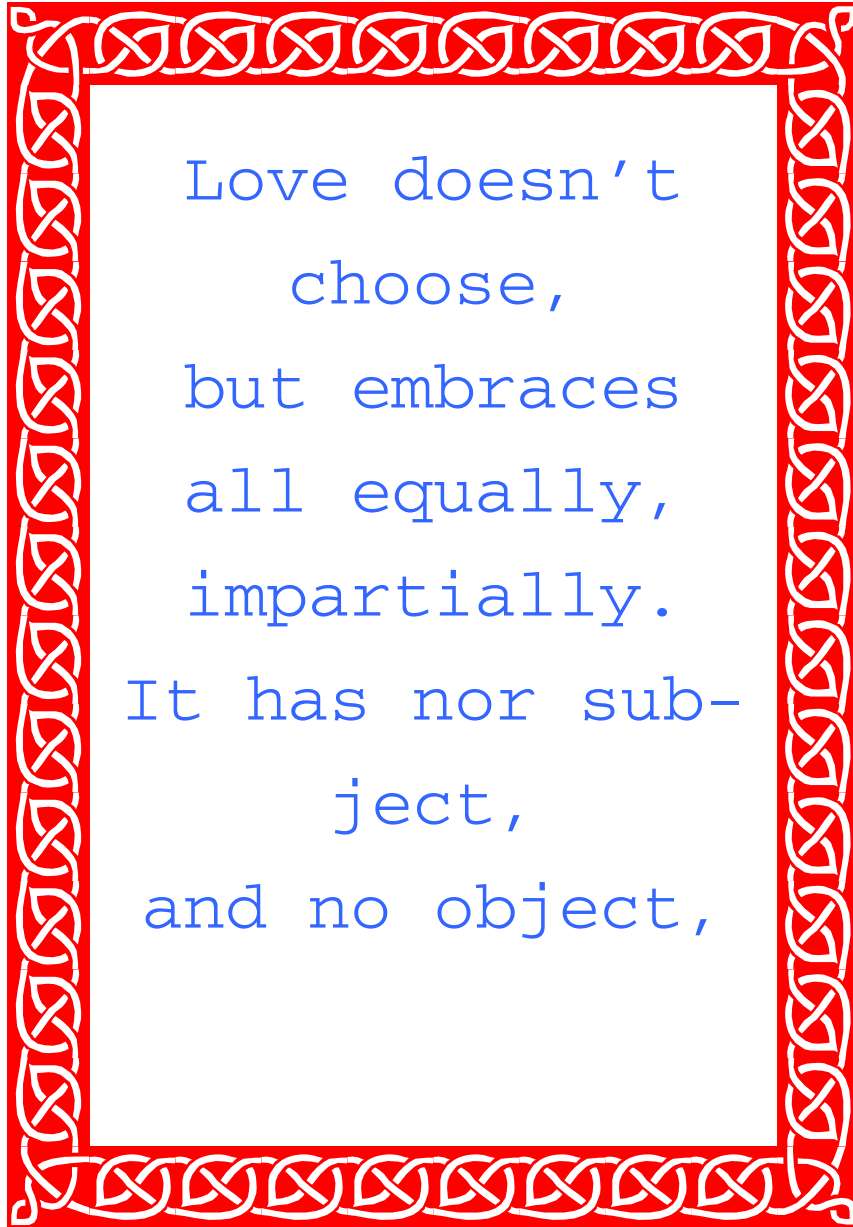
when we do not

look.



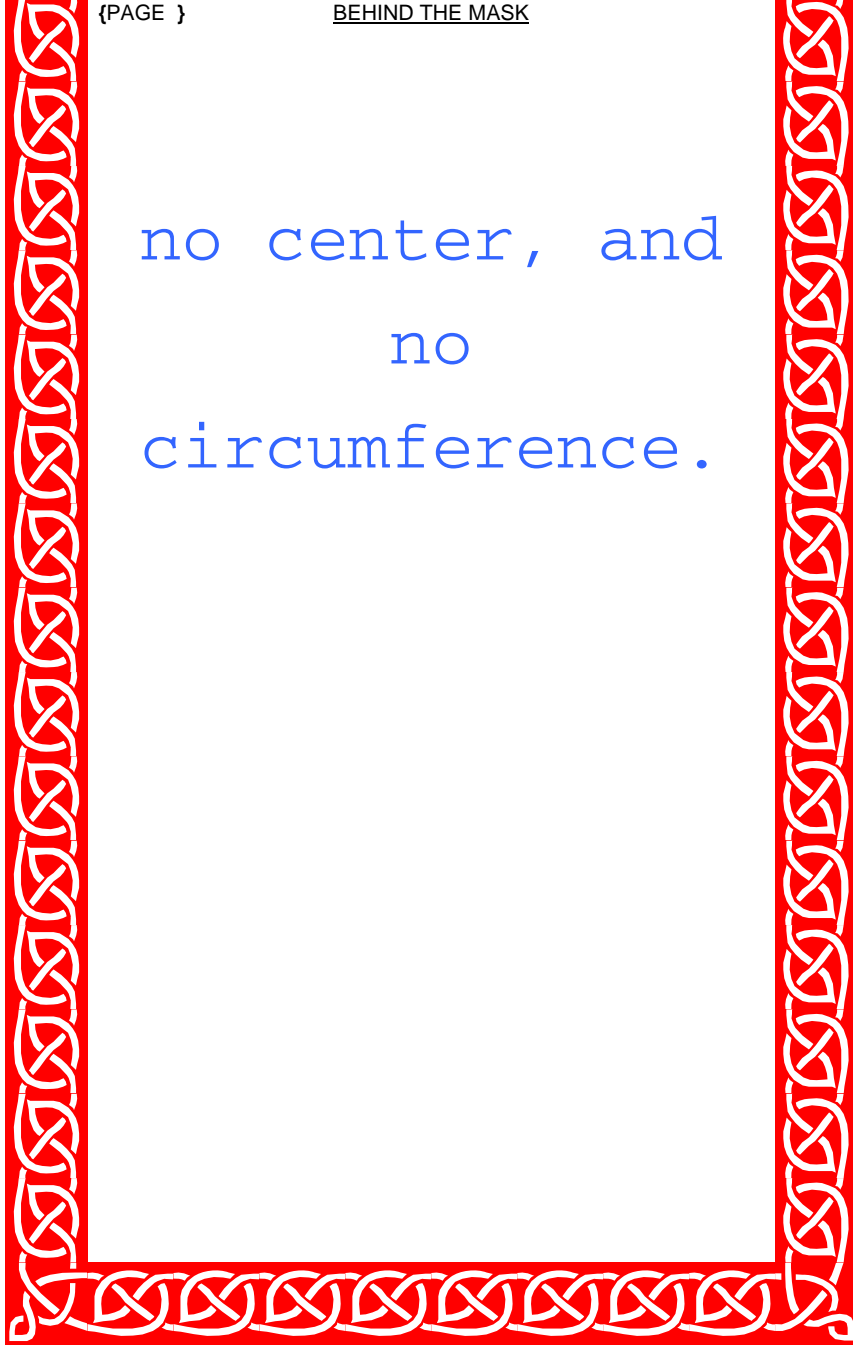
**T**o look for something, first we must know what we are looking for, for if we don't know, how shall we to recognize it if and when we find it? We talk of searching for Truth, God, Peace, Happiness, etc., but do we know what these things are? It is rather like a person who goes to the beach to search for pearls, but not having seen a pearl before, he goes with the idea that a pearl is something red and cube-shaped. So, while peering in the rock-pools, opening shells, overturning stones, and so on, maybe he sees a small, round, white object gleaming there in the sand, but he thinks: "That's not a pearl; the pearl I am looking for is red and cube-shaped". So he passes on and continues searching. And he might indeed come across a red and cube-shaped object, but it will not be a pearl.

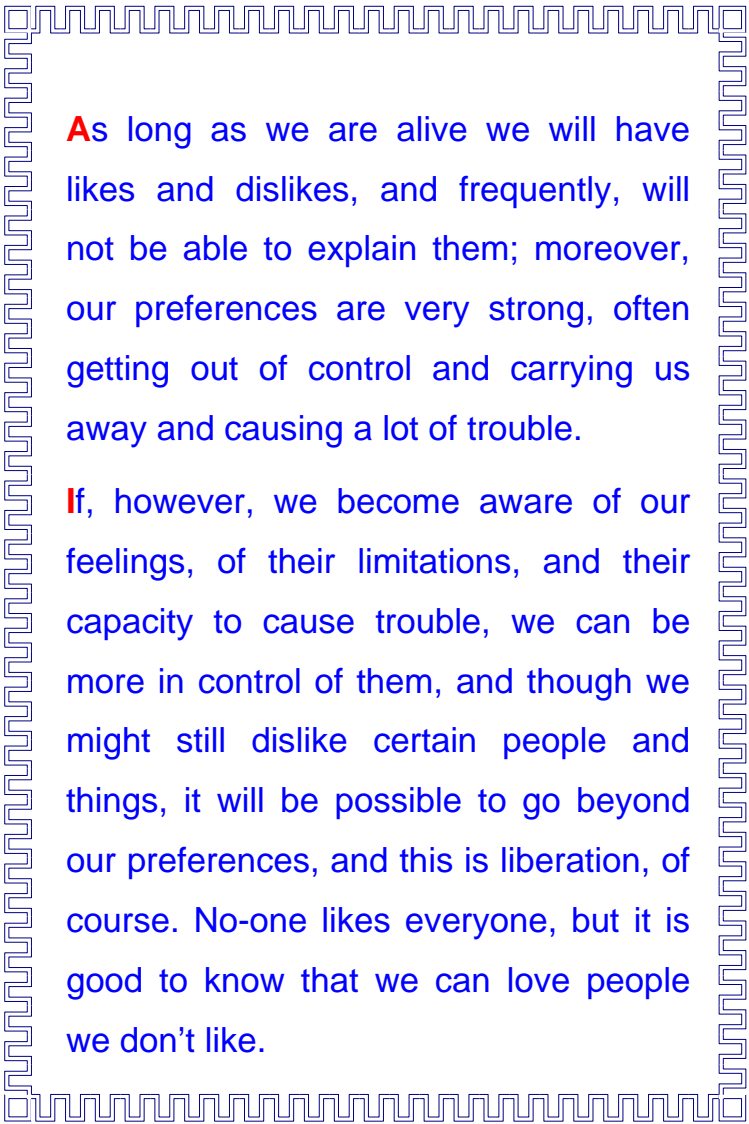
**L**ooking is active, something we do, while seeing is passive and receptive, something that happens. We look with the accumulations of the past ~ that is, with our conditioning ~ and this prevents us from seeing. And yet it is necessary to search, for if we do not do so, how shall we be able to stop searching, and SEE?



Love doesn't  
choose,  
but embraces  
all equally,  
impartially.  
It has nor sub-  
ject,  
and no object,

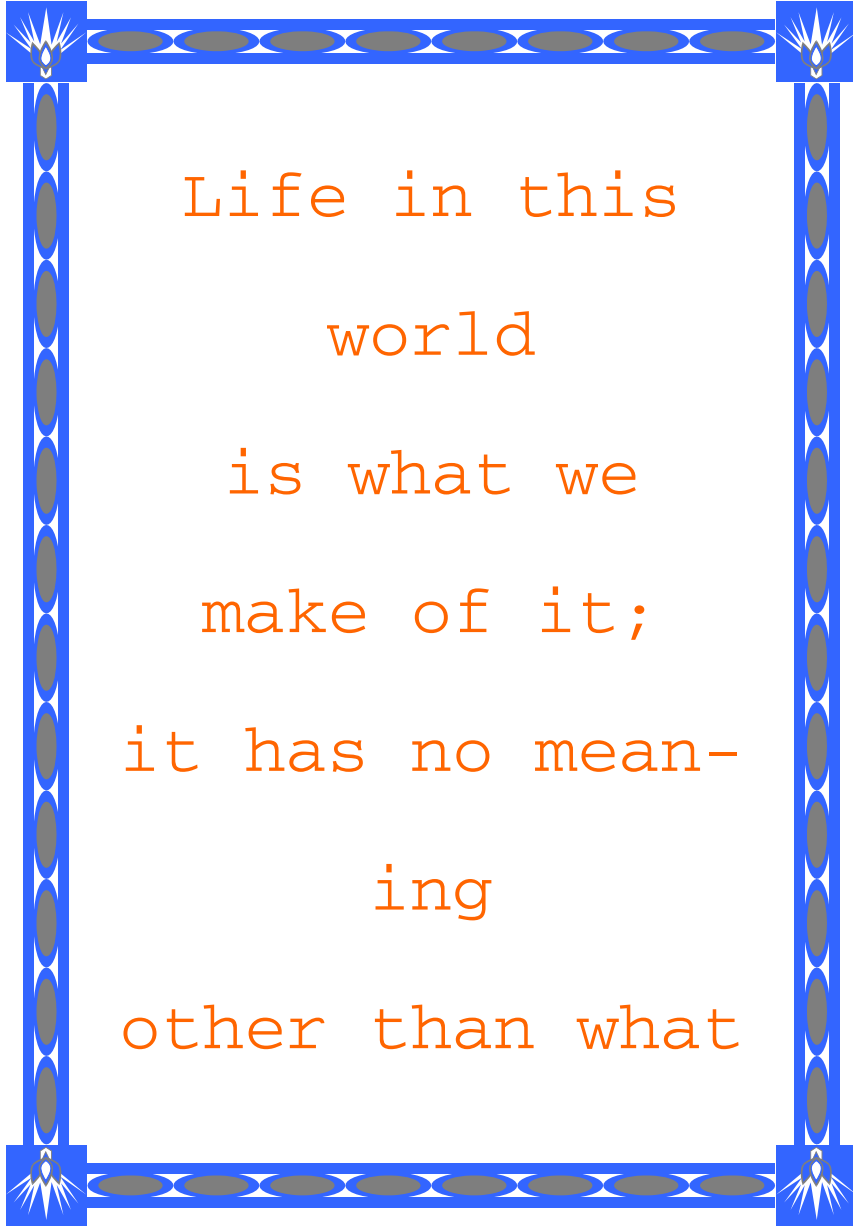
no center, and  
no  
circumference.





**A**s long as we are alive we will have likes and dislikes, and frequently, will not be able to explain them; moreover, our preferences are very strong, often getting out of control and carrying us away and causing a lot of trouble.

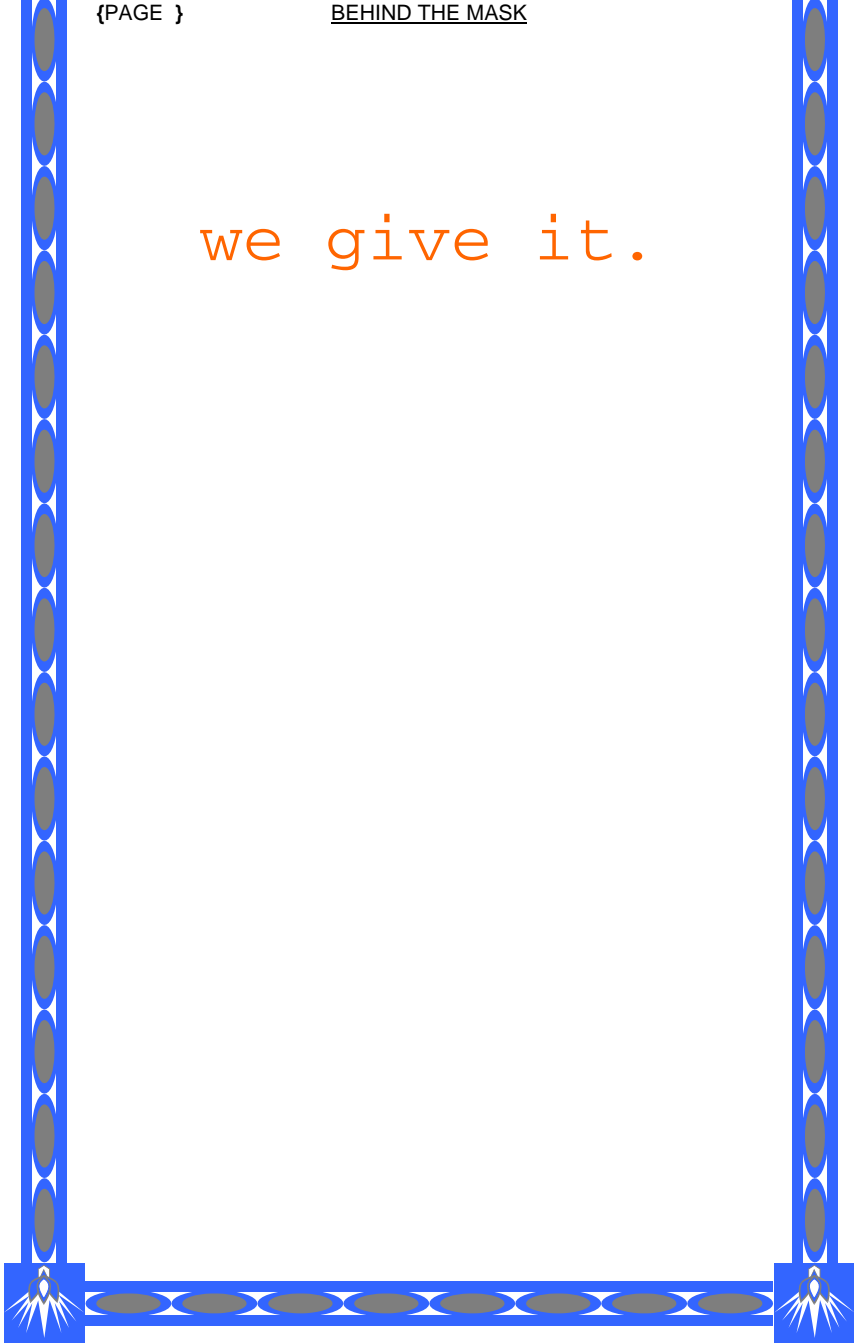
**I**f, however, we become aware of our feelings, of their limitations, and their capacity to cause trouble, we can be more in control of them, and though we might still dislike certain people and things, it will be possible to go beyond our preferences, and this is liberation, of course. No-one likes everyone, but it is good to know that we can love people we don't like.

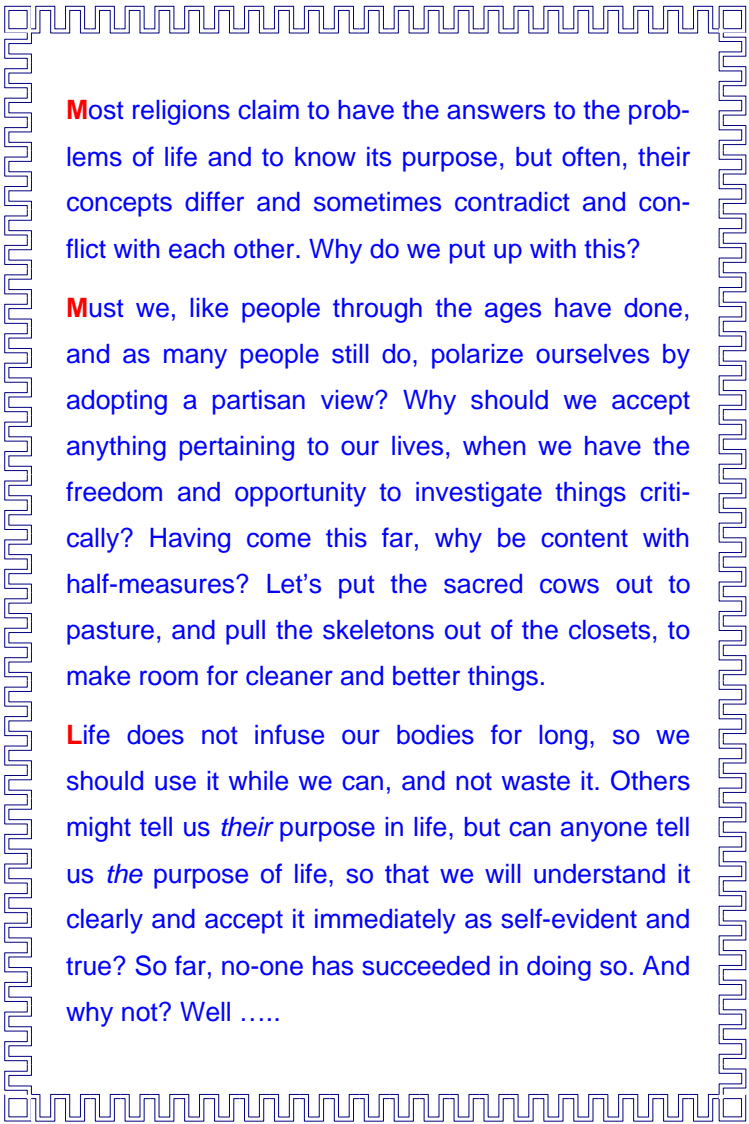


Life in this  
world  
is what we  
make of it;  
it has no mean-  
ing  
other than what



we give it.

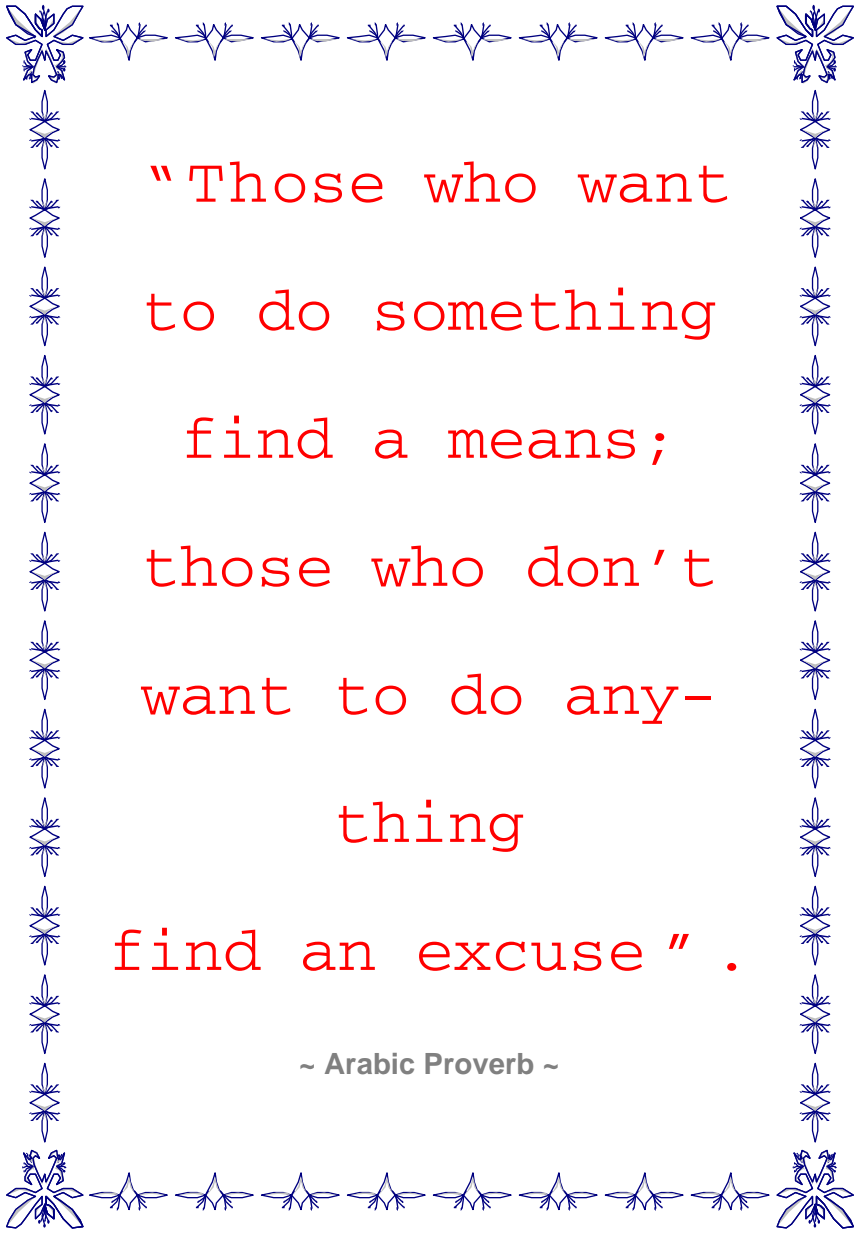




**M**ost religions claim to have the answers to the problems of life and to know its purpose, but often, their concepts differ and sometimes contradict and conflict with each other. Why do we put up with this?

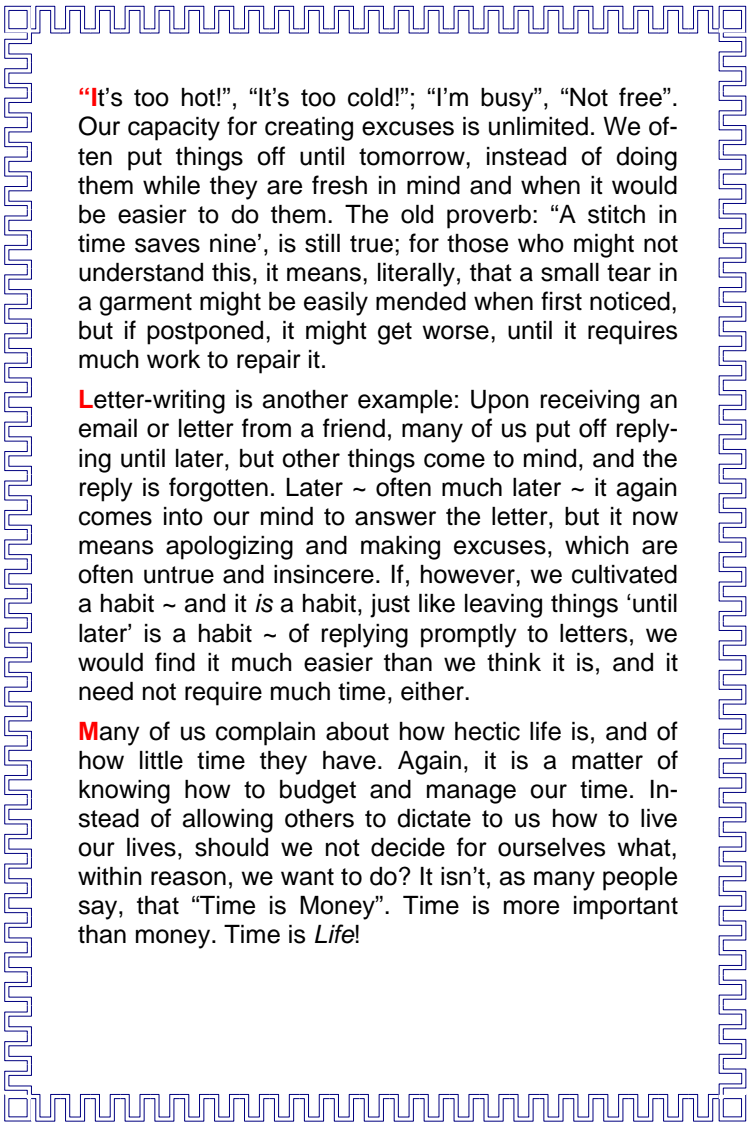
**M**ust we, like people through the ages have done, and as many people still do, polarize ourselves by adopting a partisan view? Why should we accept anything pertaining to our lives, when we have the freedom and opportunity to investigate things critically? Having come this far, why be content with half-measures? Let's put the sacred cows out to pasture, and pull the skeletons out of the closets, to make room for cleaner and better things.

**L**ife does not infuse our bodies for long, so we should use it while we can, and not waste it. Others might tell us *their* purpose in life, but can anyone tell us *the* purpose of life, so that we will understand it clearly and accept it immediately as self-evident and true? So far, no-one has succeeded in doing so. And why not? Well .....



"Those who want  
to do something  
find a means;  
those who don't  
want to do any-  
thing  
find an excuse" .

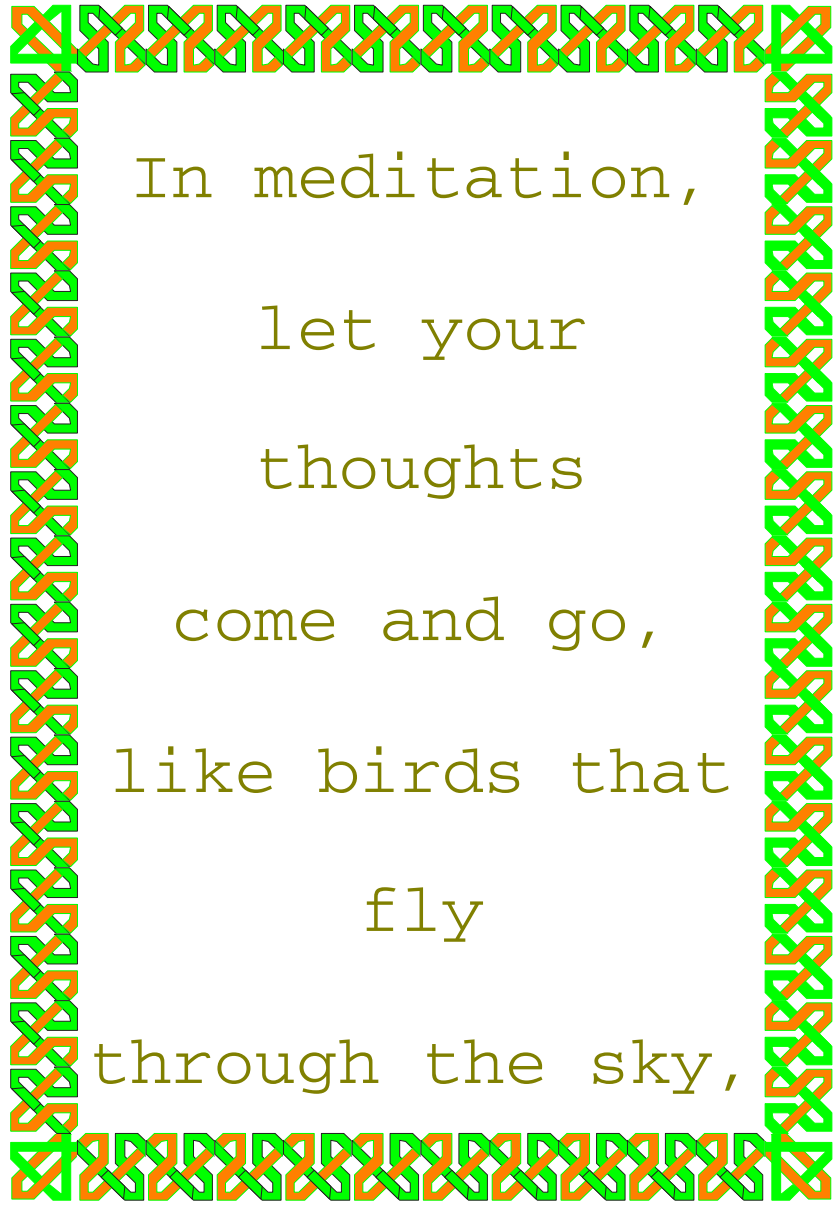
~ Arabic Proverb ~



**“It’s too hot!”**, “It’s too cold!”, “I’m busy”, “Not free”. Our capacity for creating excuses is unlimited. We often put things off until tomorrow, instead of doing them while they are fresh in mind and when it would be easier to do them. The old proverb: “A stitch in time saves nine”, is still true; for those who might not understand this, it means, literally, that a small tear in a garment might be easily mended when first noticed, but if postponed, it might get worse, until it requires much work to repair it.

**L**etter-writing is another example: Upon receiving an email or letter from a friend, many of us put off replying until later, but other things come to mind, and the reply is forgotten. Later ~ often much later ~ it again comes into our mind to answer the letter, but it now means apologizing and making excuses, which are often untrue and insincere. If, however, we cultivated a habit ~ and it *is* a habit, just like leaving things ‘until later’ is a habit ~ of replying promptly to letters, we would find it much easier than we think it is, and it need not require much time, either.

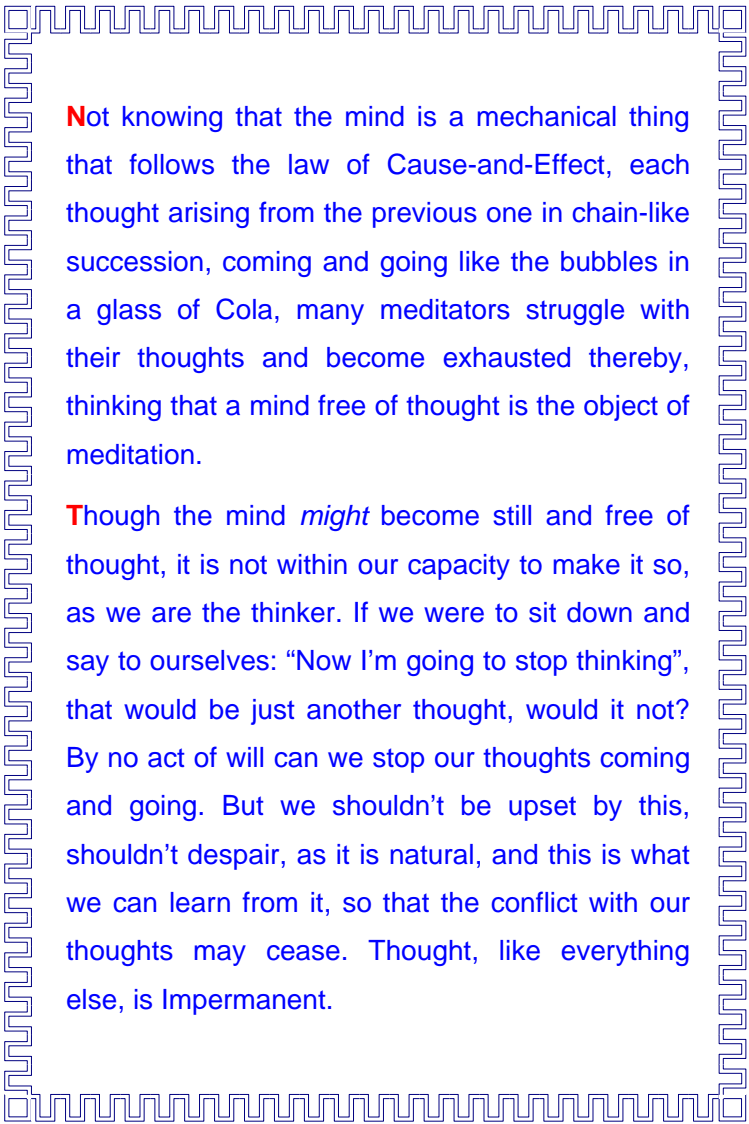
**M**any of us complain about how hectic life is, and of how little time they have. Again, it is a matter of knowing how to budget and manage our time. Instead of allowing others to dictate to us how to live our lives, should we not decide for ourselves what, within reason, we want to do? It isn’t, as many people say, that “Time is Money”. Time is more important than money. Time is *Life!*



In meditation,  
let your  
thoughts  
come and go,  
like birds that  
fly  
through the sky,

leaving no  
trace.





**N**ot knowing that the mind is a mechanical thing that follows the law of Cause-and-Effect, each thought arising from the previous one in chain-like succession, coming and going like the bubbles in a glass of Cola, many meditators struggle with their thoughts and become exhausted thereby, thinking that a mind free of thought is the object of meditation.

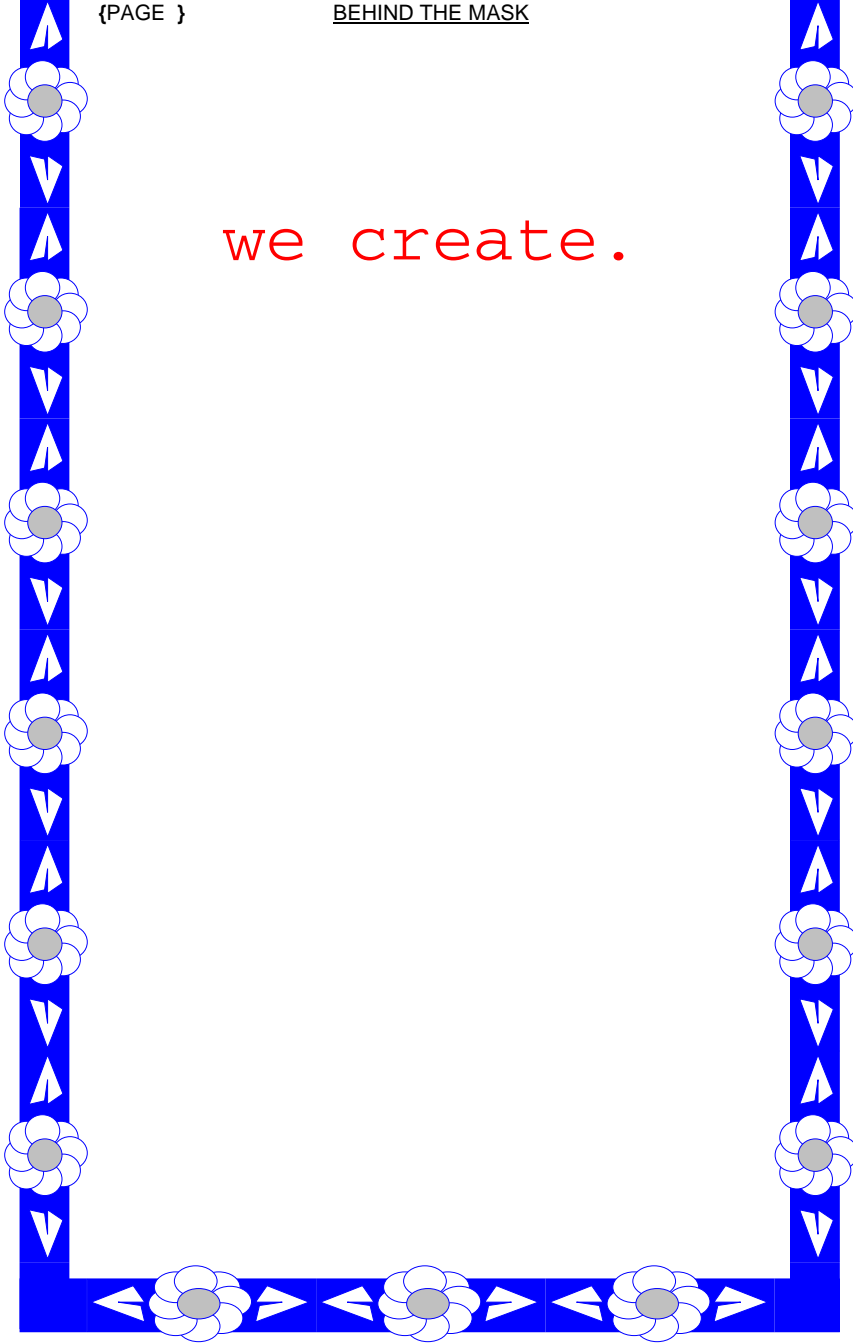
**T**hough the mind *might* become still and free of thought, it is not within our capacity to make it so, as we are the thinker. If we were to sit down and say to ourselves: "Now I'm going to stop thinking", that would be just another thought, would it not? By no act of will can we stop our thoughts coming and going. But we shouldn't be upset by this, shouldn't despair, as it is natural, and this is what we can learn from it, so that the conflict with our thoughts may cease. Thought, like everything else, is Impermanent.

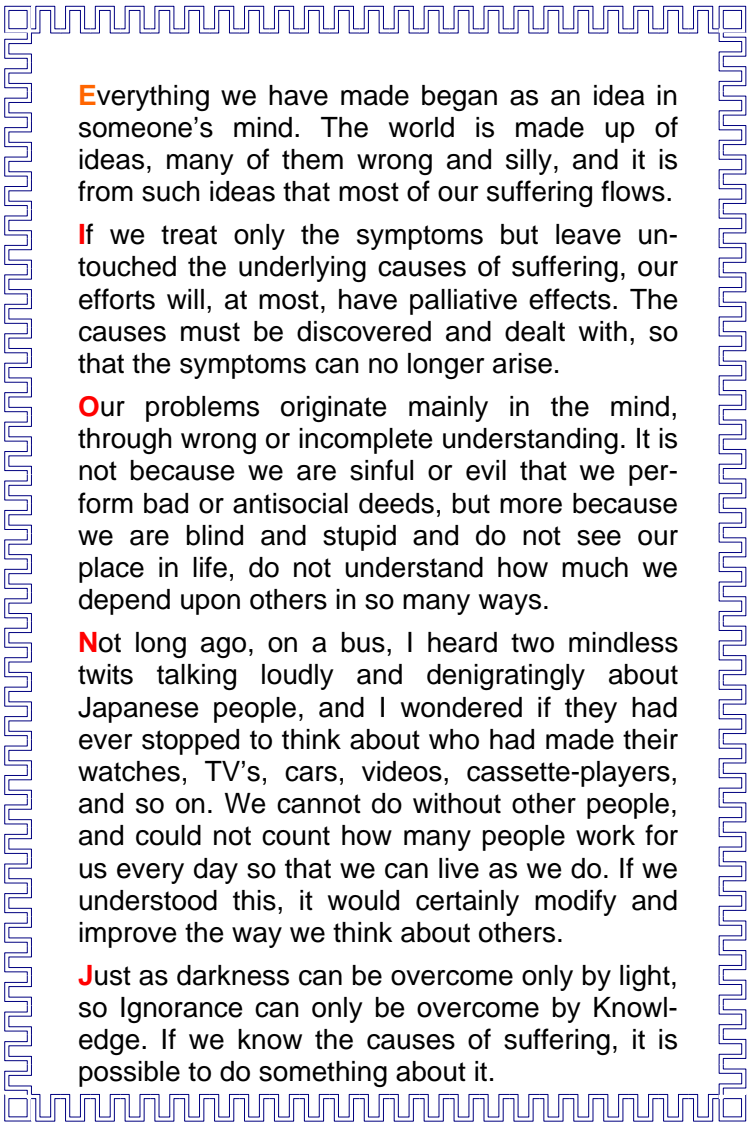


The Mind ...  
has no walls,  
no door,  
no ceiling,  
no floor,  
except those  
which,  
in our igno-  
rance,



we create.





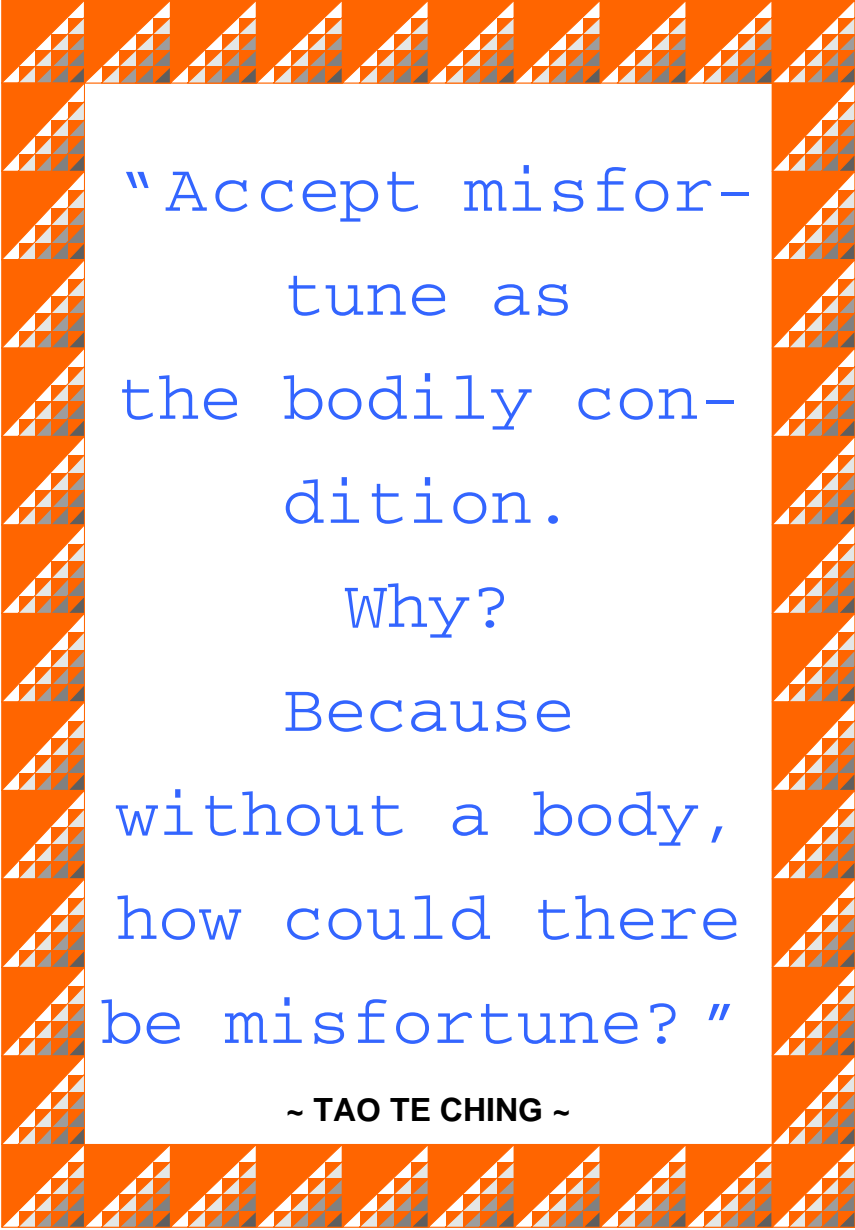
**E**verything we have made began as an idea in someone's mind. The world is made up of ideas, many of them wrong and silly, and it is from such ideas that most of our suffering flows.

**I**f we treat only the symptoms but leave untouched the underlying causes of suffering, our efforts will, at most, have palliative effects. The causes must be discovered and dealt with, so that the symptoms can no longer arise.

**O**ur problems originate mainly in the mind, through wrong or incomplete understanding. It is not because we are sinful or evil that we perform bad or antisocial deeds, but more because we are blind and stupid and do not see our place in life, do not understand how much we depend upon others in so many ways.

**N**ot long ago, on a bus, I heard two mindless twits talking loudly and denigratingly about Japanese people, and I wondered if they had ever stopped to think about who had made their watches, TV's, cars, videos, cassette-players, and so on. We cannot do without other people, and could not count how many people work for us every day so that we can live as we do. If we understood this, it would certainly modify and improve the way we think about others.

**J**ust as darkness can be overcome only by light, so Ignorance can only be overcome by Knowledge. If we know the causes of suffering, it is possible to do something about it.

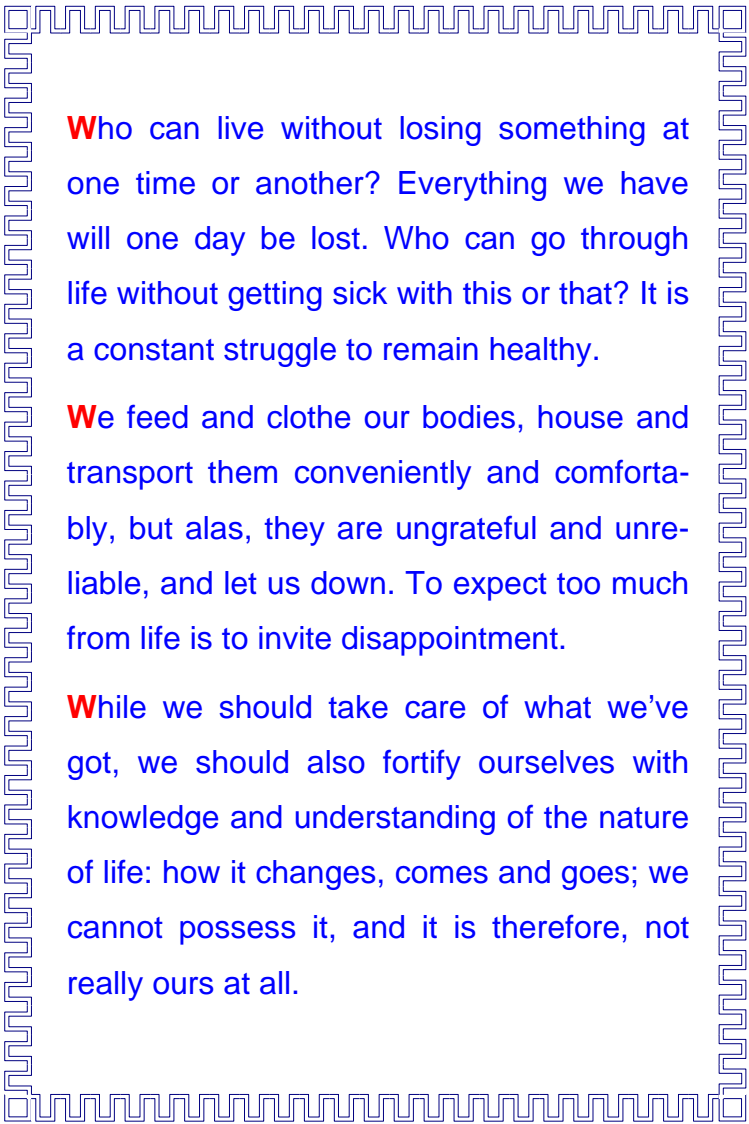


"Accept misfor-  
tune as  
the bodily con-  
dition.

Why?

Because  
without a body,  
how could there  
be misfortune? "

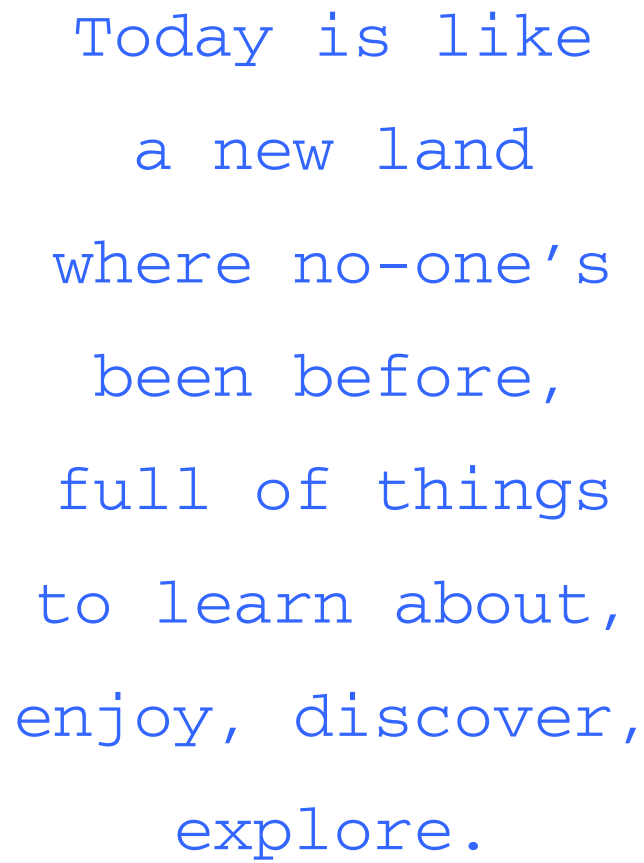
~ TAO TE CHING ~



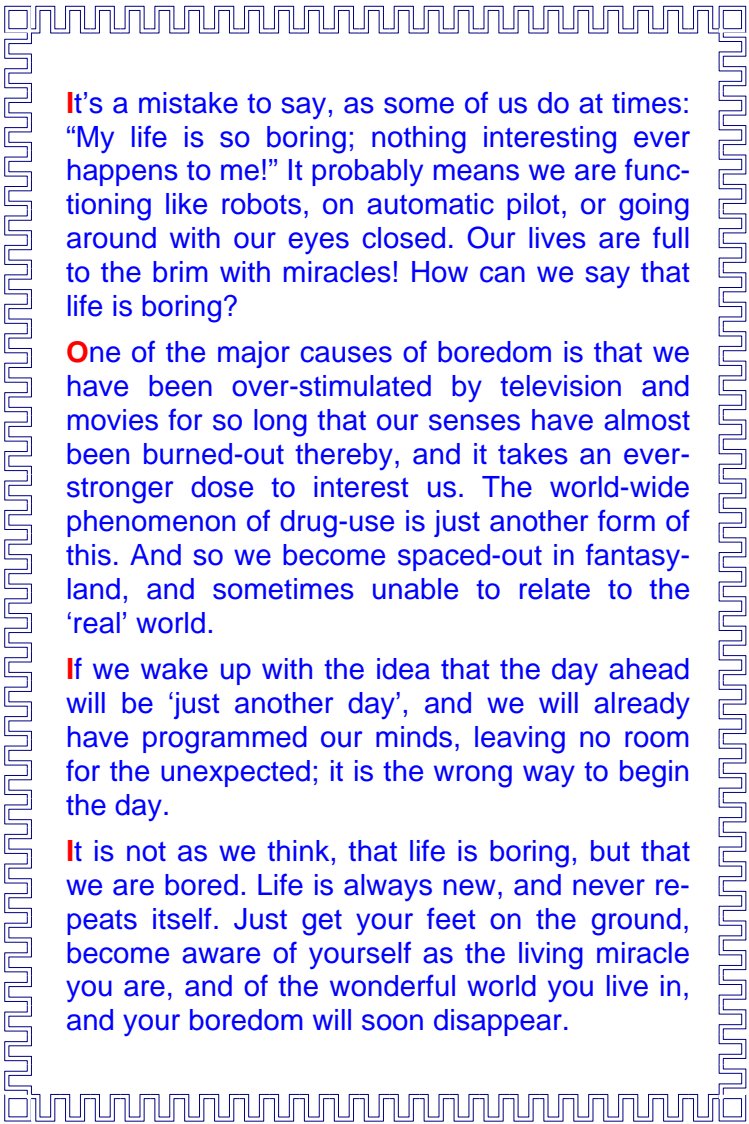
**Who** can live without losing something at one time or another? Everything we have will one day be lost. Who can go through life without getting sick with this or that? It is a constant struggle to remain healthy.

**We** feed and clothe our bodies, house and transport them conveniently and comfortably, but alas, they are ungrateful and unreliable, and let us down. To expect too much from life is to invite disappointment.

**While** we should take care of what we've got, we should also fortify ourselves with knowledge and understanding of the nature of life: how it changes, comes and goes; we cannot possess it, and it is therefore, not really ours at all.



Today is like  
a new land  
where no-one's  
been before,  
full of things  
to learn about,  
enjoy, discover,  
explore.

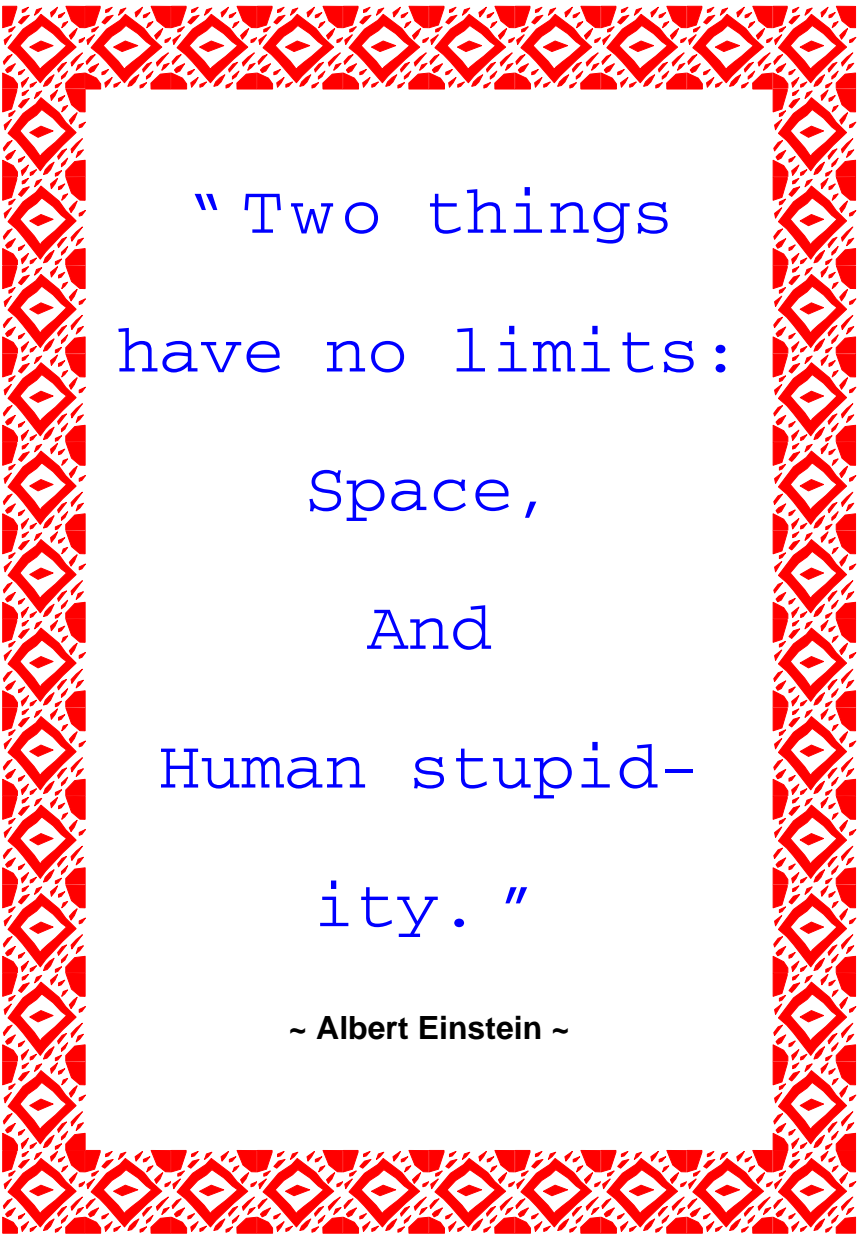


**I**t's a mistake to say, as some of us do at times: "My life is so boring; nothing interesting ever happens to me!" It probably means we are functioning like robots, on automatic pilot, or going around with our eyes closed. Our lives are full to the brim with miracles! How can we say that life is boring?

**O**ne of the major causes of boredom is that we have been over-stimulated by television and movies for so long that our senses have almost been burned-out thereby, and it takes an ever-stronger dose to interest us. The world-wide phenomenon of drug-use is just another form of this. And so we become spaced-out in fantasy-land, and sometimes unable to relate to the 'real' world.

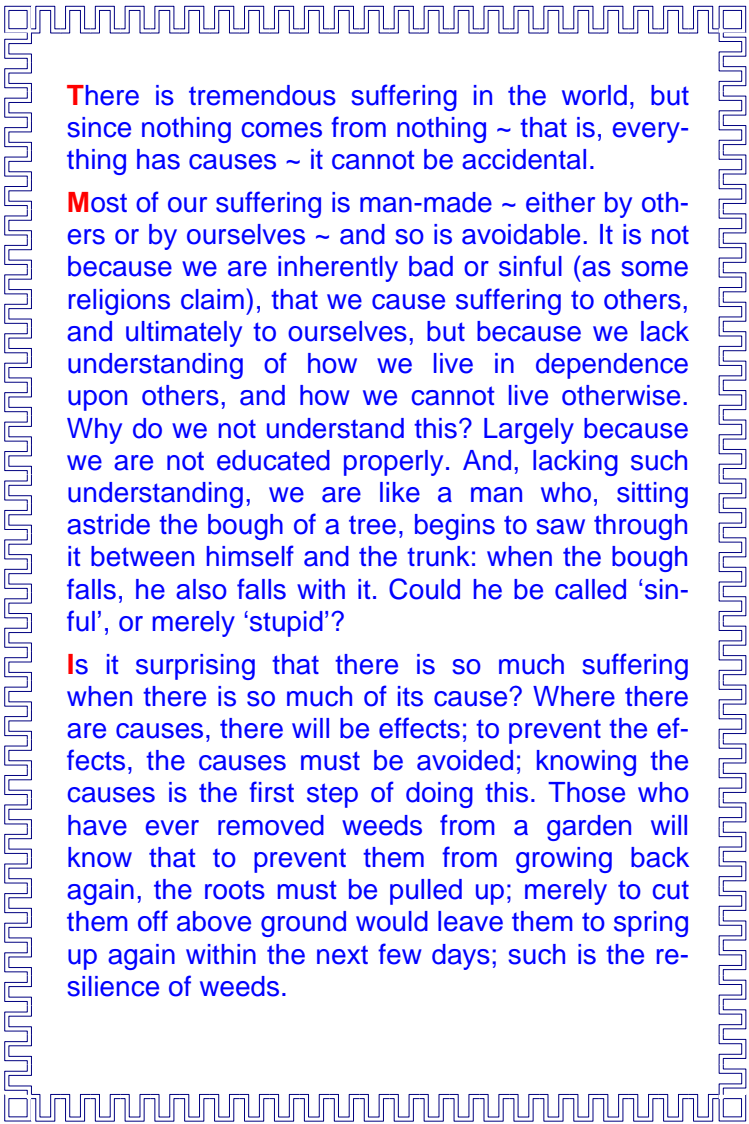
**I**f we wake up with the idea that the day ahead will be 'just another day', and we will already have programmed our minds, leaving no room for the unexpected; it is the wrong way to begin the day.

**I**t is not as we think, that life is boring, but that we are bored. Life is always new, and never repeats itself. Just get your feet on the ground, become aware of yourself as the living miracle you are, and of the wonderful world you live in, and your boredom will soon disappear.



“ Two things  
have no limits:  
Space,  
And  
Human stupid-  
ity. ”

~ Albert Einstein ~

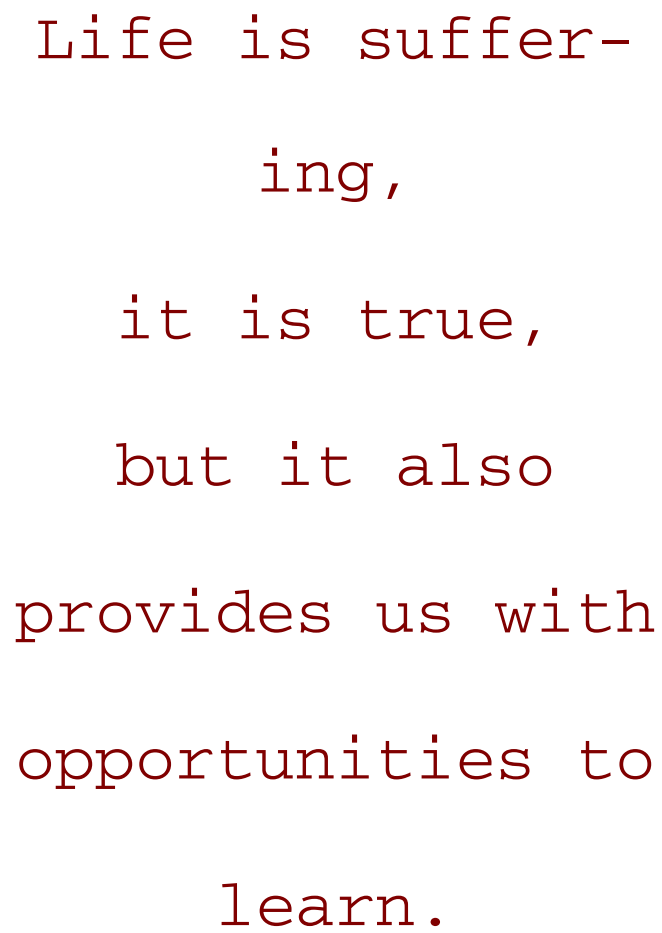


**T**here is tremendous suffering in the world, but since nothing comes from nothing ~ that is, everything has causes ~ it cannot be accidental.

**M**ost of our suffering is man-made ~ either by others or by ourselves ~ and so is avoidable. It is not because we are inherently bad or sinful (as some religions claim), that we cause suffering to others, and ultimately to ourselves, but because we lack understanding of how we live in dependence upon others, and how we cannot live otherwise. Why do we not understand this? Largely because we are not educated properly. And, lacking such understanding, we are like a man who, sitting astride the bough of a tree, begins to saw through it between himself and the trunk: when the bough falls, he also falls with it. Could he be called 'sinful', or merely 'stupid'?

**I**s it surprising that there is so much suffering when there is so much of its cause? Where there are causes, there will be effects; to prevent the effects, the causes must be avoided; knowing the causes is the first step of doing this. Those who have ever removed weeds from a garden will know that to prevent them from growing back again, the roots must be pulled up; merely to cut them off above ground would leave them to spring up again within the next few days; such is the resilience of weeds.





Life is suffer-  
ing,  
it is true,  
but it also  
provides us with  
opportunities to  
learn.

**B**uddhism is sometimes accused of being pessimistic because it speaks so much about suffering, but it shrugs off such criticism with a smile, and asks: "What do *you* say?"

**A**round 1880, Sir Edwin Arnold wrote an account of the Buddha's life in poem-form, entitled, *The Light of Asia*. Here is a verse from it:

Ask of the sick, the mourn-  
ers, ask of him

Who tottereth on his staff,  
lone and forlorn:

"Liketh thee life?" ~  
these say the babe is wise

That weepeth, being born.

**W**ho can say there is more happiness and enjoyment in life than pain and sorrow ~ or even as much? We have only to look around us, at the overflowing hospitals, Homes for the Aged, Asylums for the insane, deformed, mentally-retarded, at the unspeakable horrors of war, and man's inhumanity to man, etc., to realize that Hell is not a myth.

**I**n spite of the suffering that always accompanies life, however, human beings ~ unlike other animals, which live by instinct ~ have developed and made progress. Indeed, had it not been for the suffering to impel and motivate us, coupled with

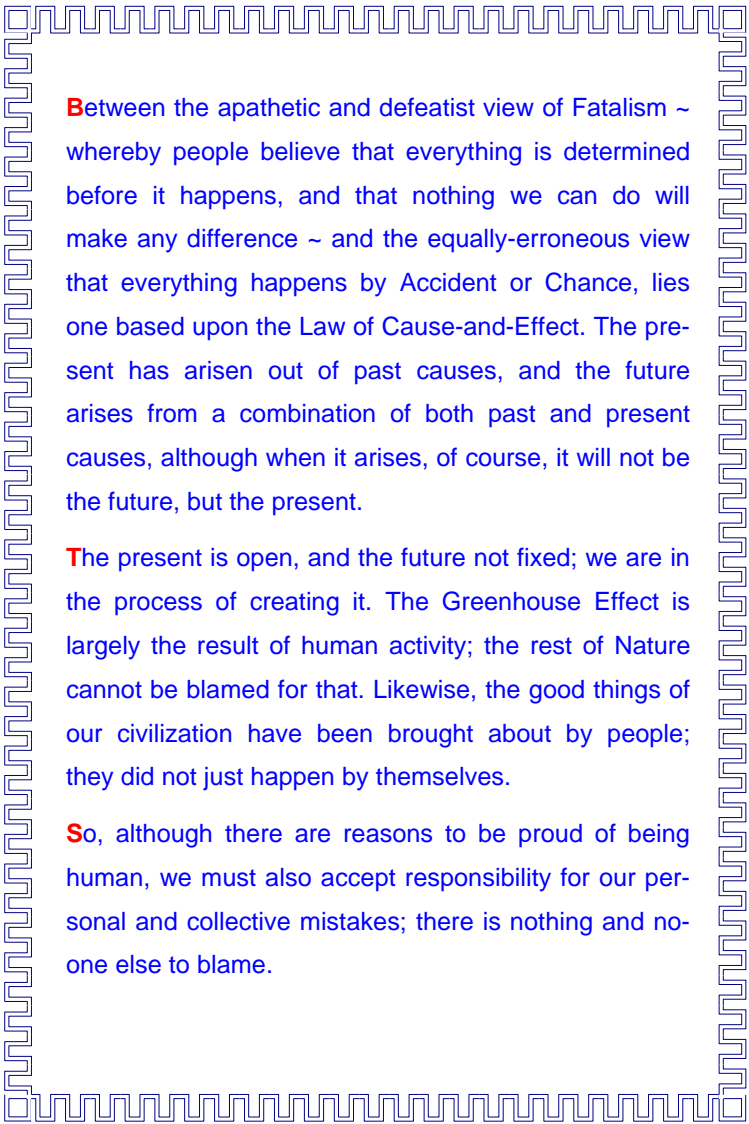
our ability to criticize, visualize, imagine and assess, we might still be living in caves!

Life is like a  
play  
in which we are  
all  
actors;  
but the script  
is  
written as we  
act,  
not before,  
and nobody knows



what will happen  
next.

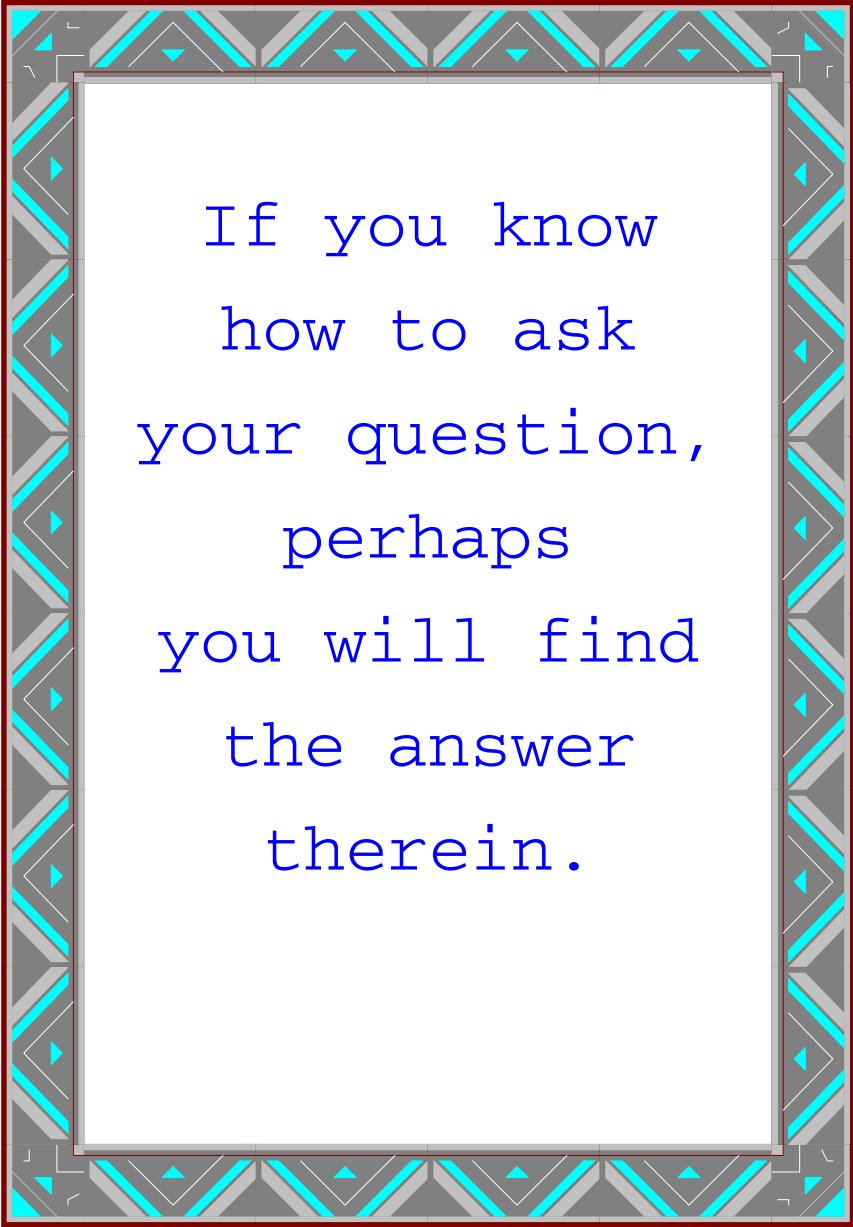




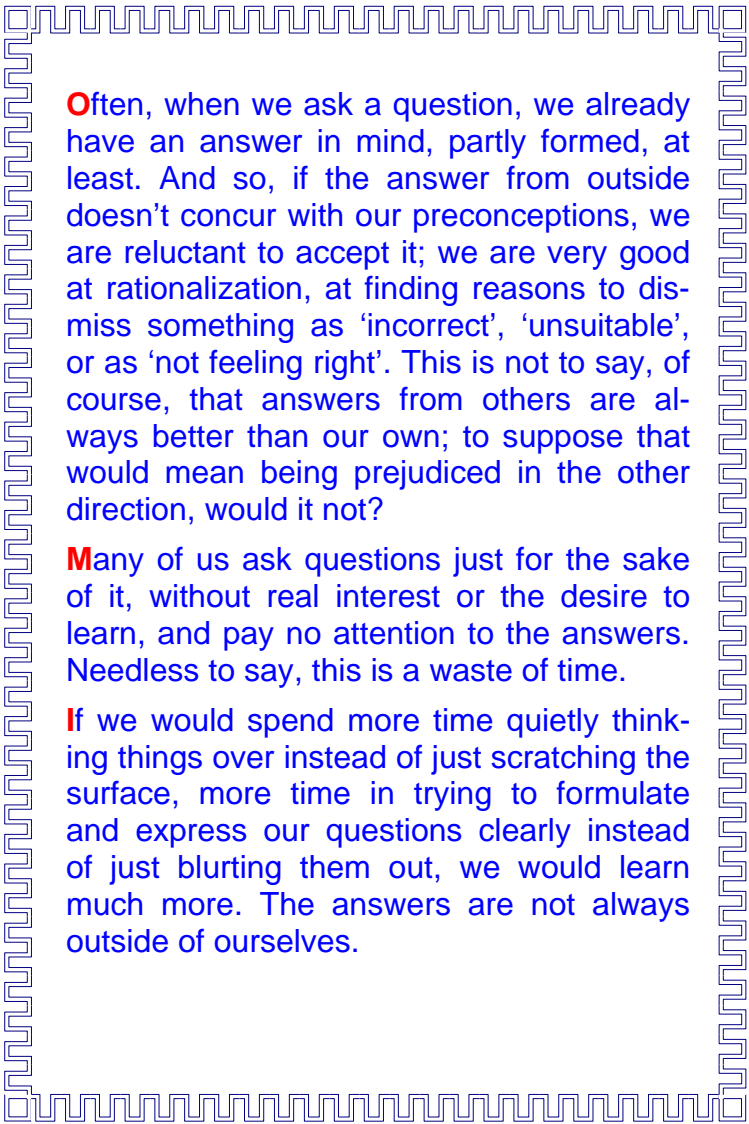
**B**etween the apathetic and defeatist view of Fatalism ~ whereby people believe that everything is determined before it happens, and that nothing we can do will make any difference ~ and the equally-erroneous view that everything happens by Accident or Chance, lies one based upon the Law of Cause-and-Effect. The present has arisen out of past causes, and the future arises from a combination of both past and present causes, although when it arises, of course, it will not be the future, but the present.

**T**he present is open, and the future not fixed; we are in the process of creating it. The Greenhouse Effect is largely the result of human activity; the rest of Nature cannot be blamed for that. Likewise, the good things of our civilization have been brought about by people; they did not just happen by themselves.

**S**o, although there are reasons to be proud of being human, we must also accept responsibility for our personal and collective mistakes; there is nothing and no-one else to blame.



If you know  
how to ask  
your question,  
perhaps  
you will find  
the answer  
therein.

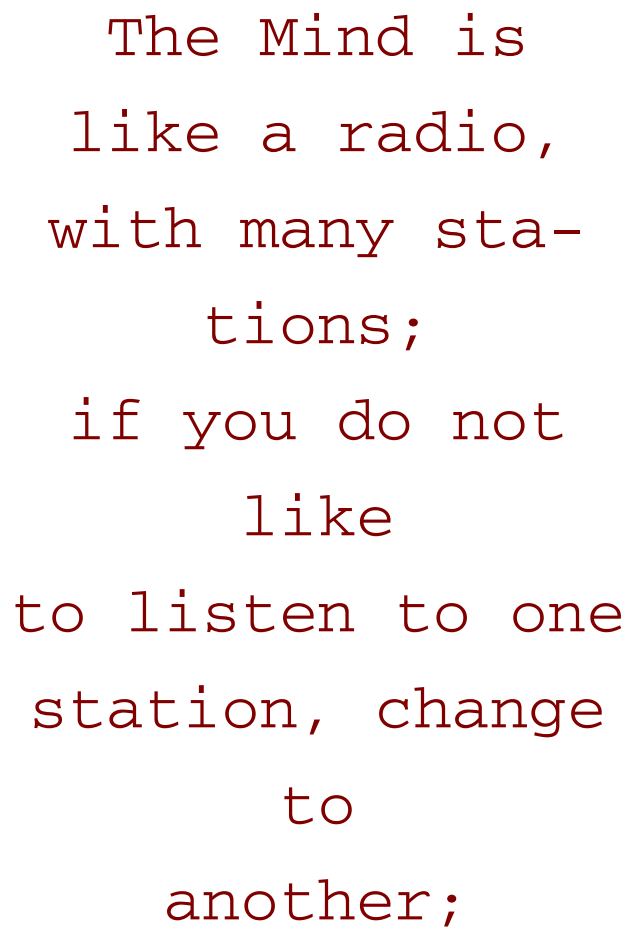


**O**ften, when we ask a question, we already have an answer in mind, partly formed, at least. And so, if the answer from outside doesn't concur with our preconceptions, we are reluctant to accept it; we are very good at rationalization, at finding reasons to dismiss something as 'incorrect', 'unsuitable', or as 'not feeling right'. This is not to say, of course, that answers from others are always better than our own; to suppose that would mean being prejudiced in the other direction, would it not?

**M**any of us ask questions just for the sake of it, without real interest or the desire to learn, and pay no attention to the answers. Needless to say, this is a waste of time.

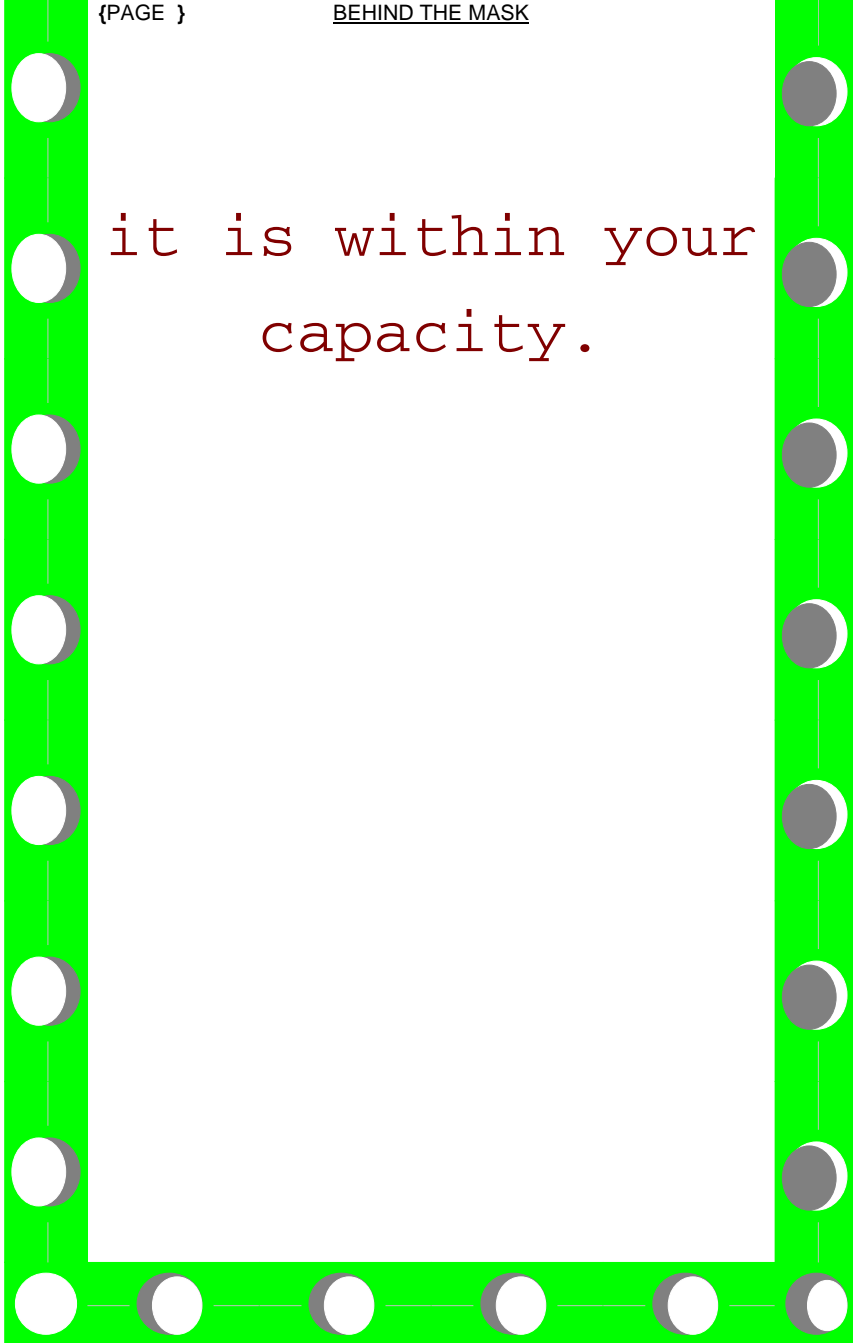
**I**f we would spend more time quietly thinking things over instead of just scratching the surface, more time in trying to formulate and express our questions clearly instead of just blurting them out, we would learn much more. The answers are not always outside of ourselves.

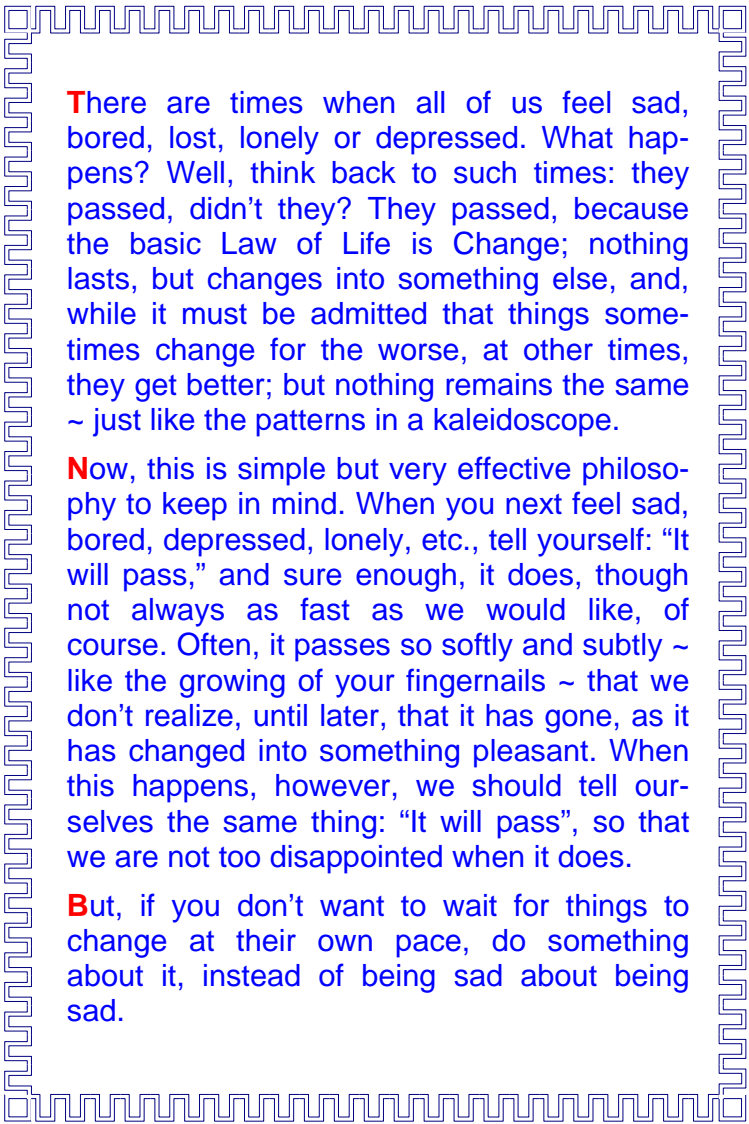




The Mind is  
like a radio,  
with many sta-  
tions;  
if you do not  
like  
to listen to one  
station, change  
to  
another;

it is within your  
capacity.

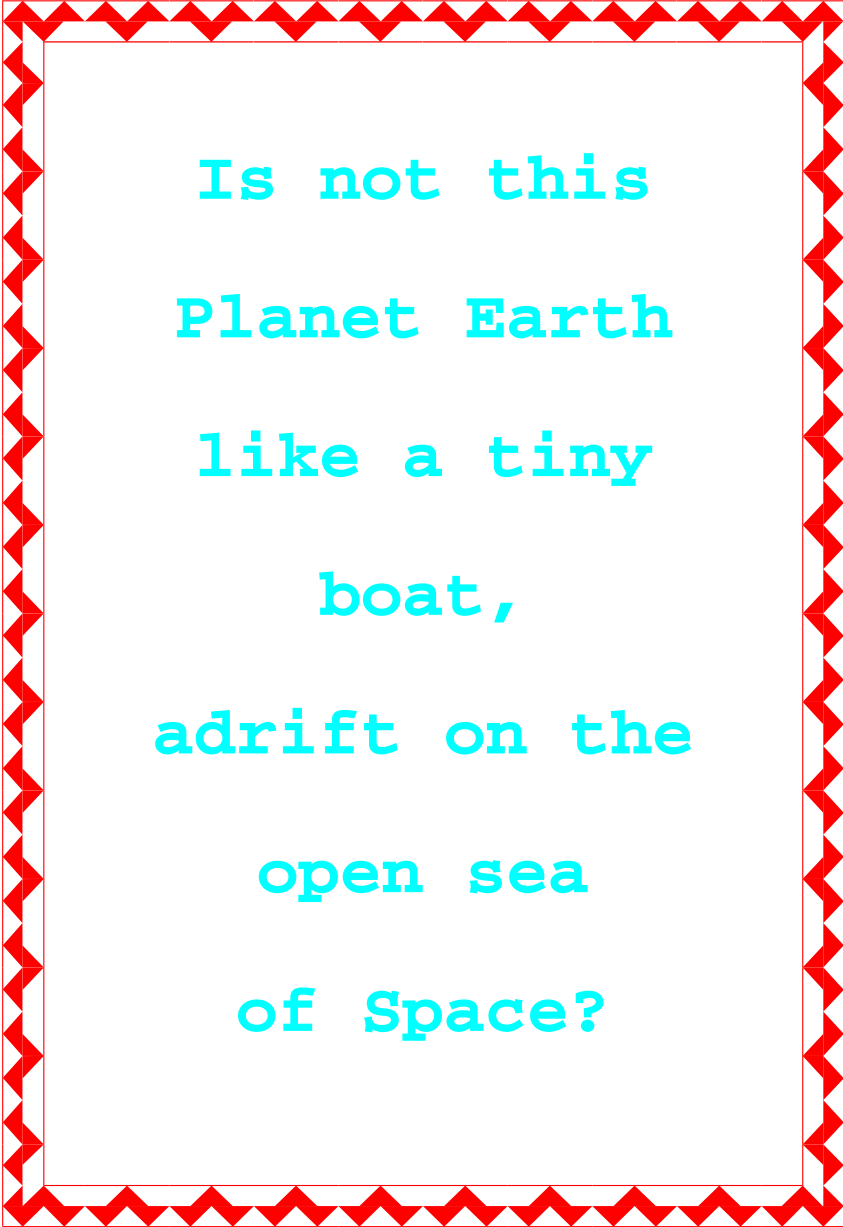




**T**here are times when all of us feel sad, bored, lost, lonely or depressed. What happens? Well, think back to such times: they passed, didn't they? They passed, because the basic Law of Life is Change; nothing lasts, but changes into something else, and, while it must be admitted that things sometimes change for the worse, at other times, they get better; but nothing remains the same ~ just like the patterns in a kaleidoscope.

**N**ow, this is simple but very effective philosophy to keep in mind. When you next feel sad, bored, depressed, lonely, etc., tell yourself: "It will pass," and sure enough, it does, though not always as fast as we would like, of course. Often, it passes so softly and subtly ~ like the growing of your fingernails ~ that we don't realize, until later, that it has gone, as it has changed into something pleasant. When this happens, however, we should tell ourselves the same thing: "It will pass", so that we are not too disappointed when it does.

**B**ut, if you don't want to wait for things to change at their own pace, do something about it, instead of being sad about being sad.



**Is not this  
Planet Earth  
like a tiny  
boat,  
adrift on the  
open sea  
of Space?**

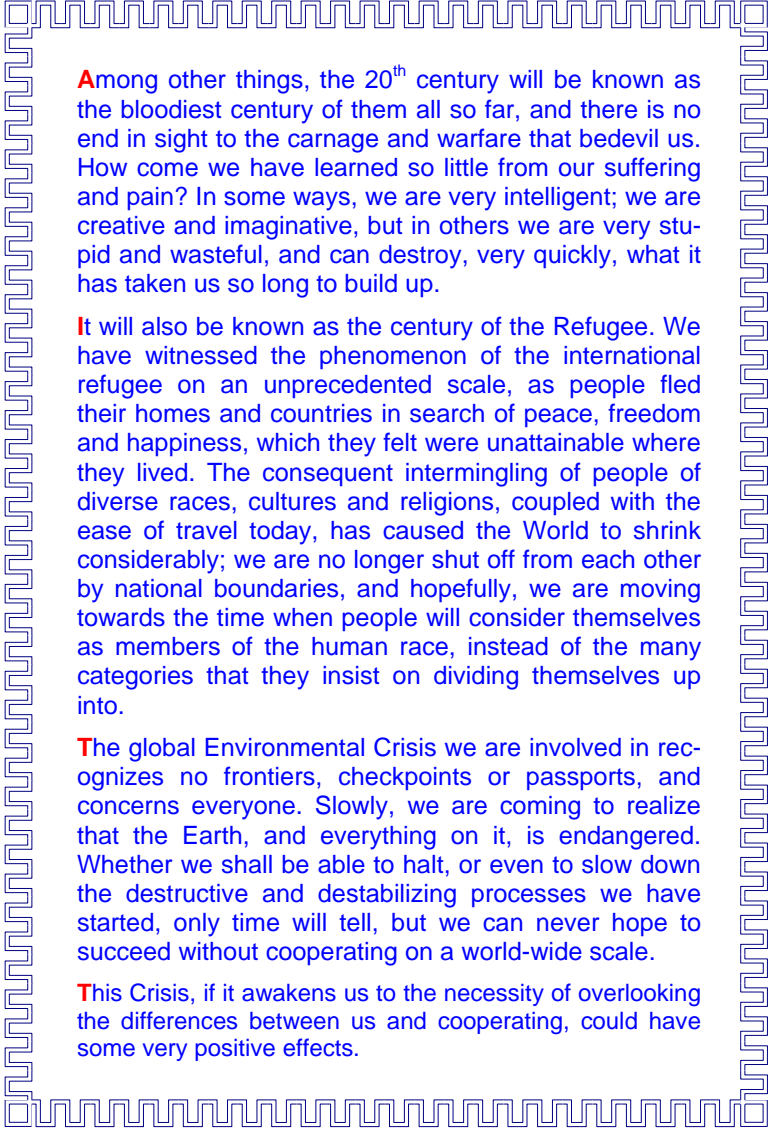


**Are we not all**

**Refugees?**

**Where are we**

**going?**

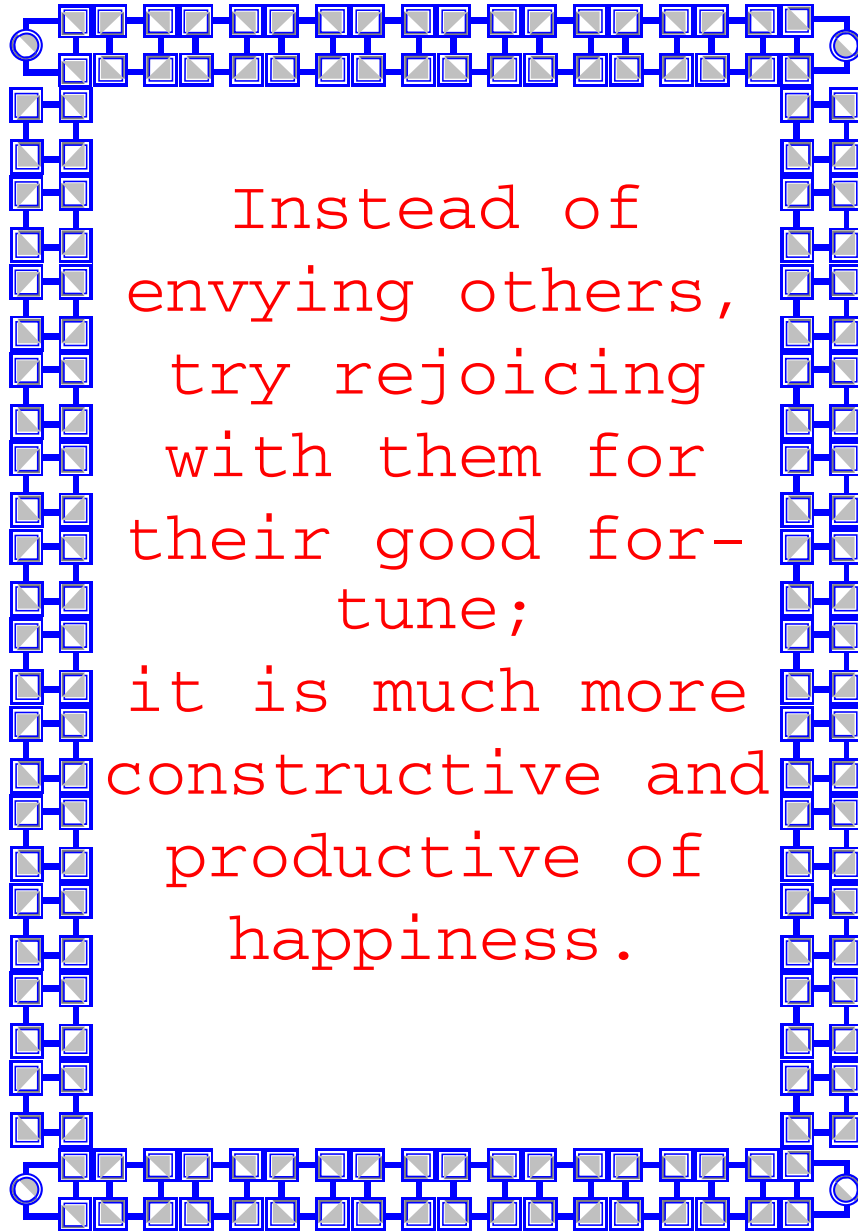


**A**mong other things, the 20<sup>th</sup> century will be known as the bloodiest century of them all so far, and there is no end in sight to the carnage and warfare that bedevil us. How come we have learned so little from our suffering and pain? In some ways, we are very intelligent; we are creative and imaginative, but in others we are very stupid and wasteful, and can destroy, very quickly, what it has taken us so long to build up.

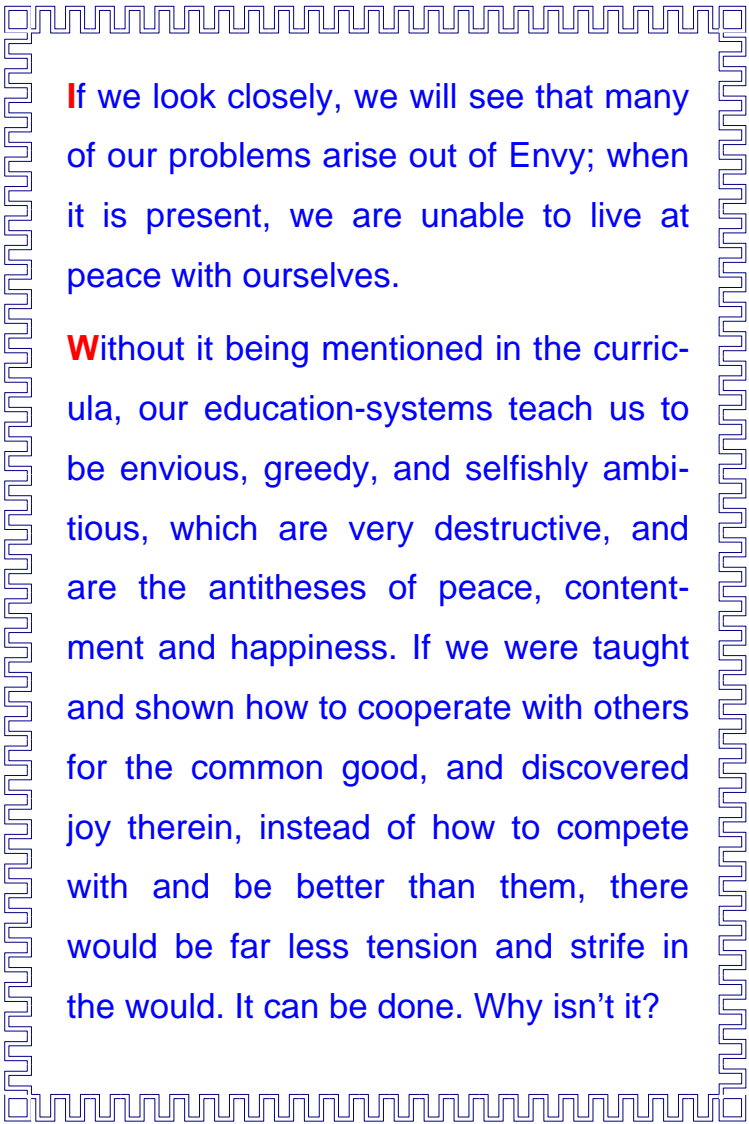
**I**t will also be known as the century of the Refugee. We have witnessed the phenomenon of the international refugee on an unprecedented scale, as people fled their homes and countries in search of peace, freedom and happiness, which they felt were unattainable where they lived. The consequent intermingling of people of diverse races, cultures and religions, coupled with the ease of travel today, has caused the World to shrink considerably; we are no longer shut off from each other by national boundaries, and hopefully, we are moving towards the time when people will consider themselves as members of the human race, instead of the many categories that they insist on dividing themselves up into.

**T**he global Environmental Crisis we are involved in recognizes no frontiers, checkpoints or passports, and concerns everyone. Slowly, we are coming to realize that the Earth, and everything on it, is endangered. Whether we shall be able to halt, or even to slow down the destructive and destabilizing processes we have started, only time will tell, but we can never hope to succeed without cooperating on a world-wide scale.

**T**his Crisis, if it awakens us to the necessity of overlooking the differences between us and cooperating, could have some very positive effects.



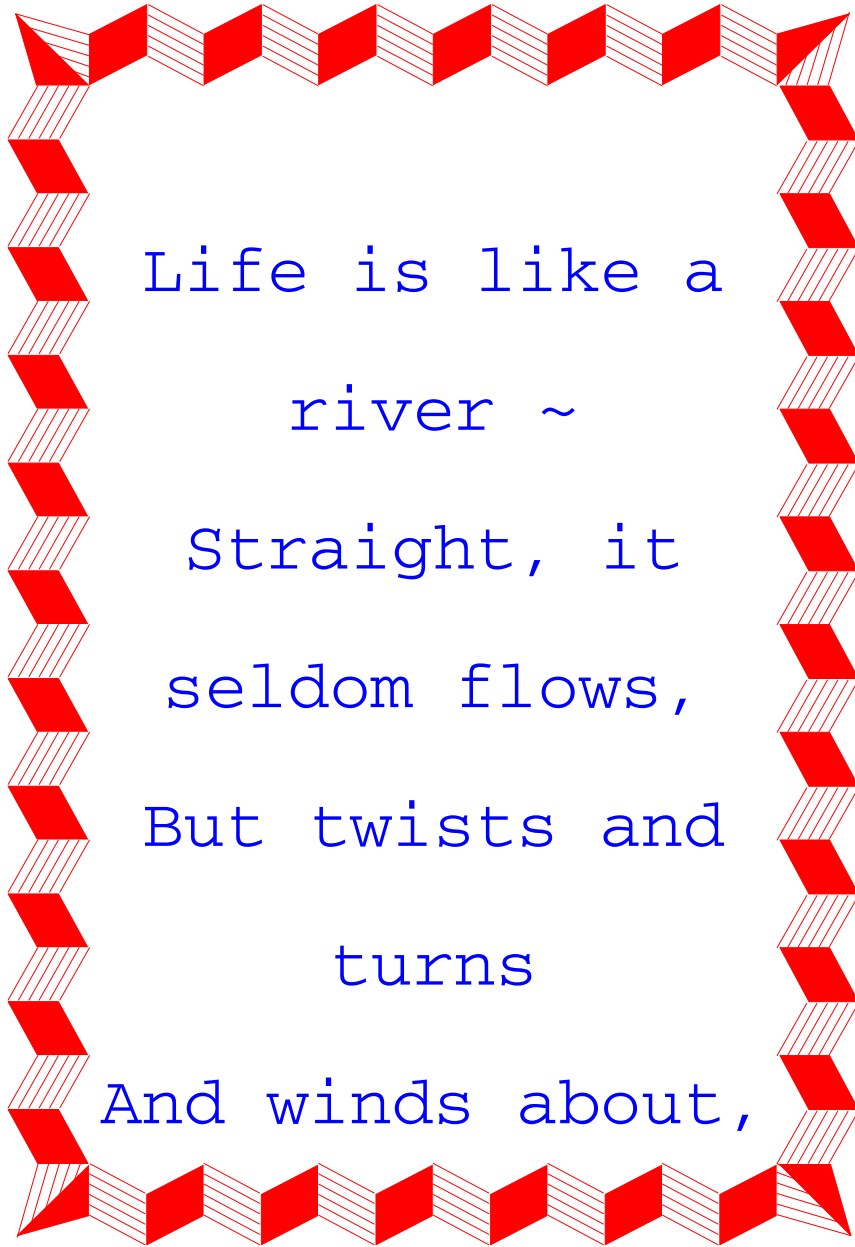
Instead of  
envying others,  
try rejoicing  
with them for  
their good for-  
tune;  
it is much more  
constructive and  
productive of  
happiness.



**I**f we look closely, we will see that many of our problems arise out of Envy; when it is present, we are unable to live at peace with ourselves.

**W**ithout it being mentioned in the curricula, our education-systems teach us to be envious, greedy, and selfishly ambitious, which are very destructive, and are the antitheses of peace, contentment and happiness. If we were taught and shown how to cooperate with others for the common good, and discovered joy therein, instead of how to compete with and be better than them, there would be far less tension and strife in the world. It can be done. Why isn't it?

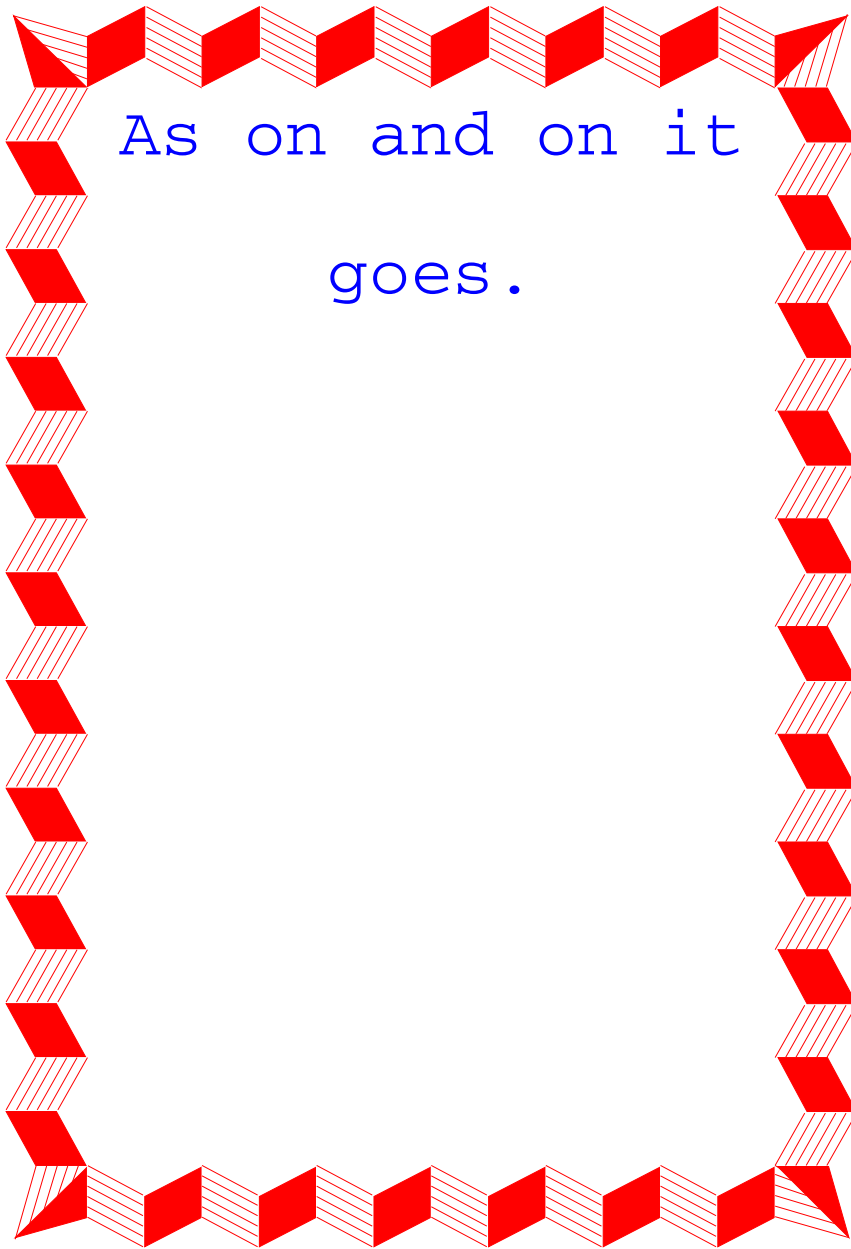




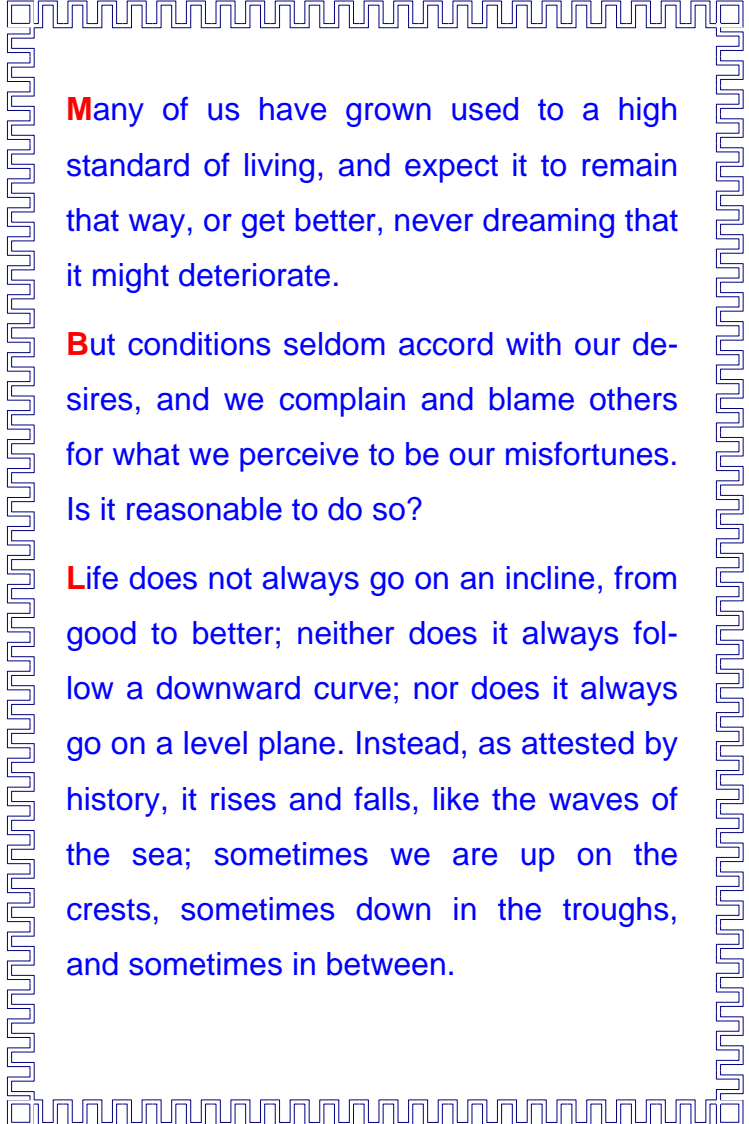
Life is like a  
river ~

Straight, it  
seldom flows,  
But twists and  
turns

And winds about,



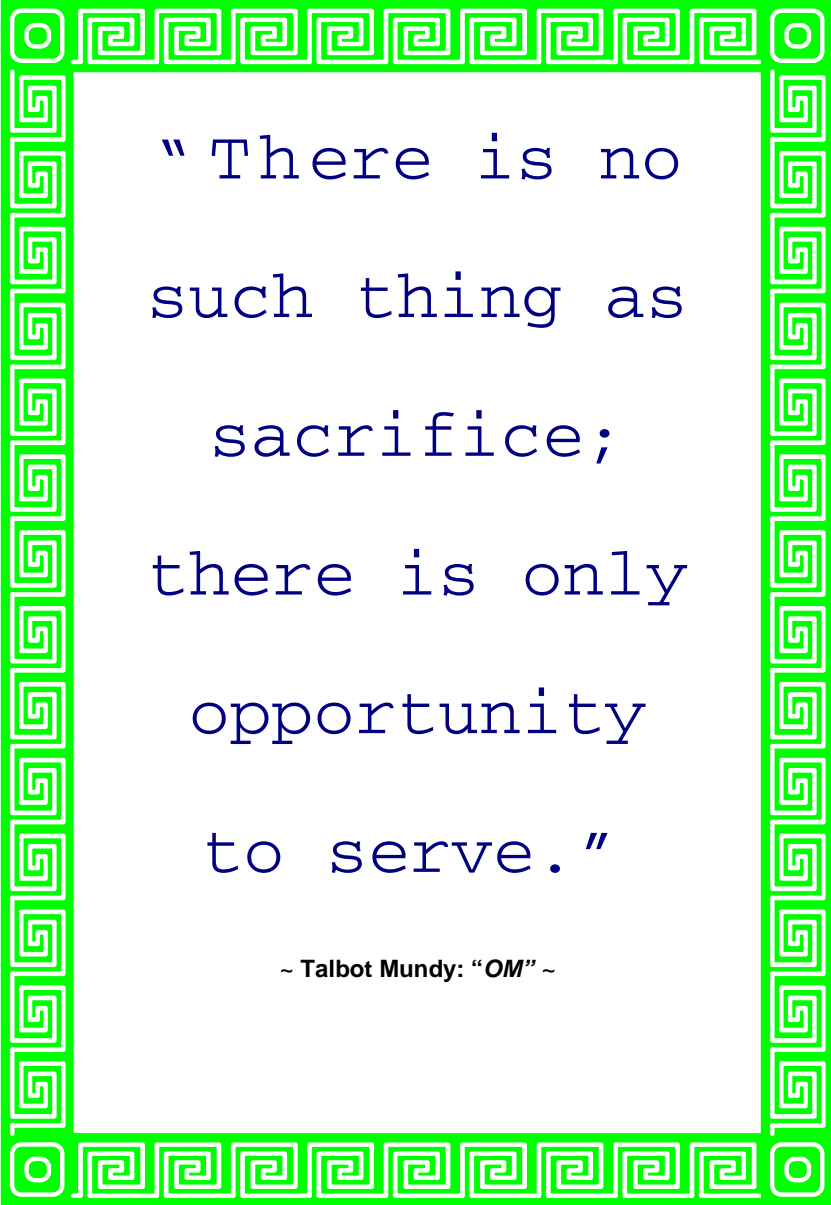
As on and on it  
goes .



**M**any of us have grown used to a high standard of living, and expect it to remain that way, or get better, never dreaming that it might deteriorate.

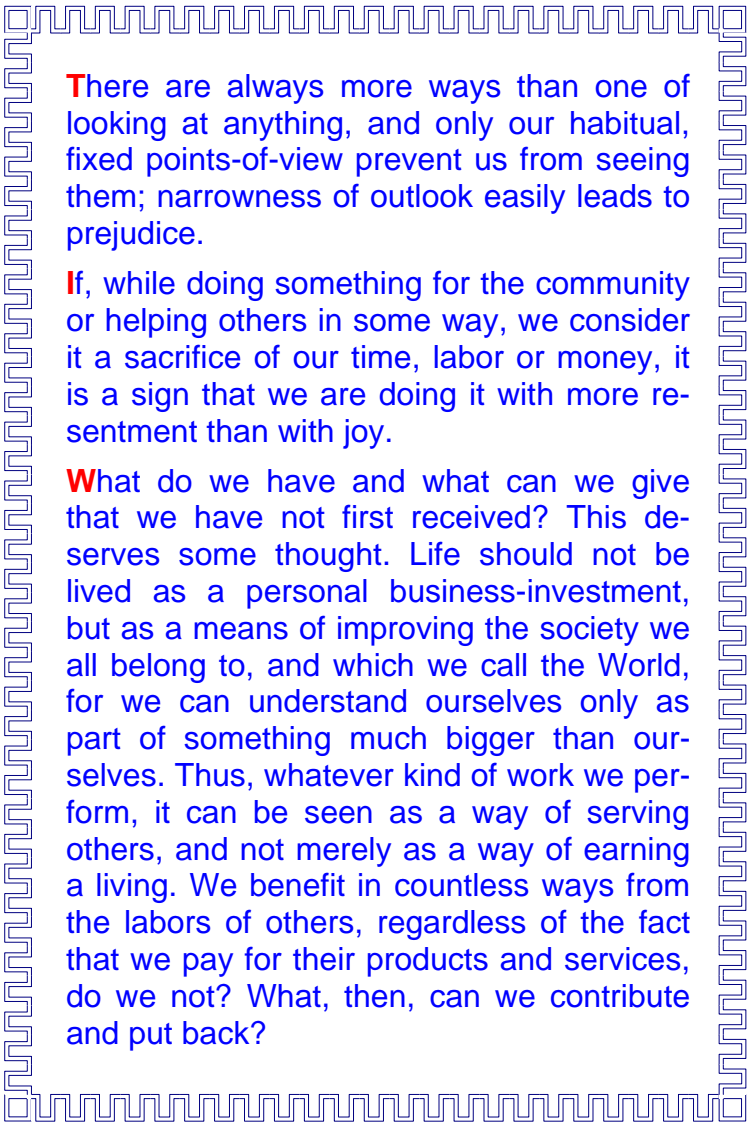
**B**ut conditions seldom accord with our desires, and we complain and blame others for what we perceive to be our misfortunes. Is it reasonable to do so?

**L**ife does not always go on an incline, from good to better; neither does it always follow a downward curve; nor does it always go on a level plane. Instead, as attested by history, it rises and falls, like the waves of the sea; sometimes we are up on the crests, sometimes down in the troughs, and sometimes in between.



" There is no  
such thing as  
sacrifice;  
there is only  
opportunity  
to serve."

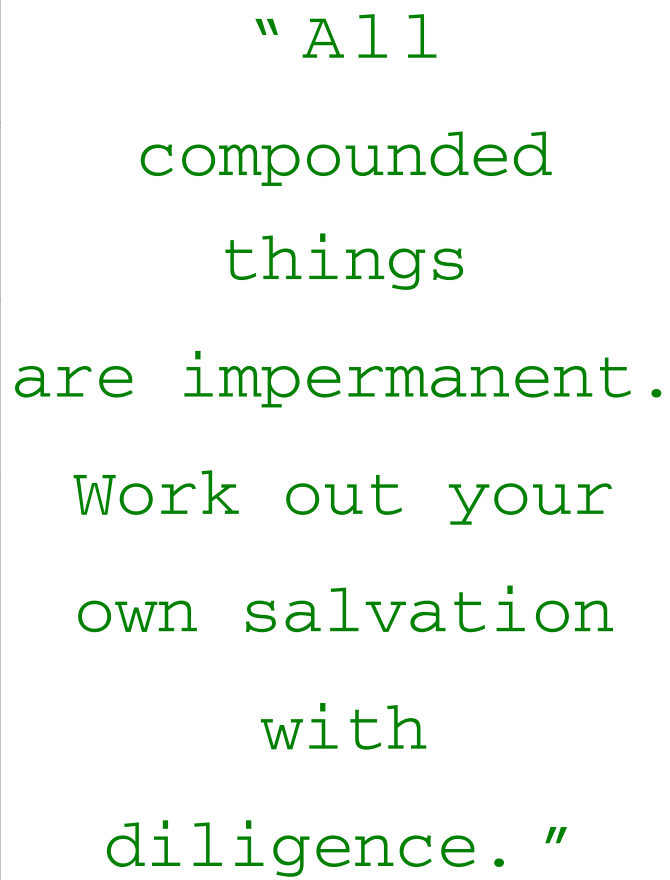
~ Talbot Mundy: "OM" ~



**T**here are always more ways than one of looking at anything, and only our habitual, fixed points-of-view prevent us from seeing them; narrowness of outlook easily leads to prejudice.

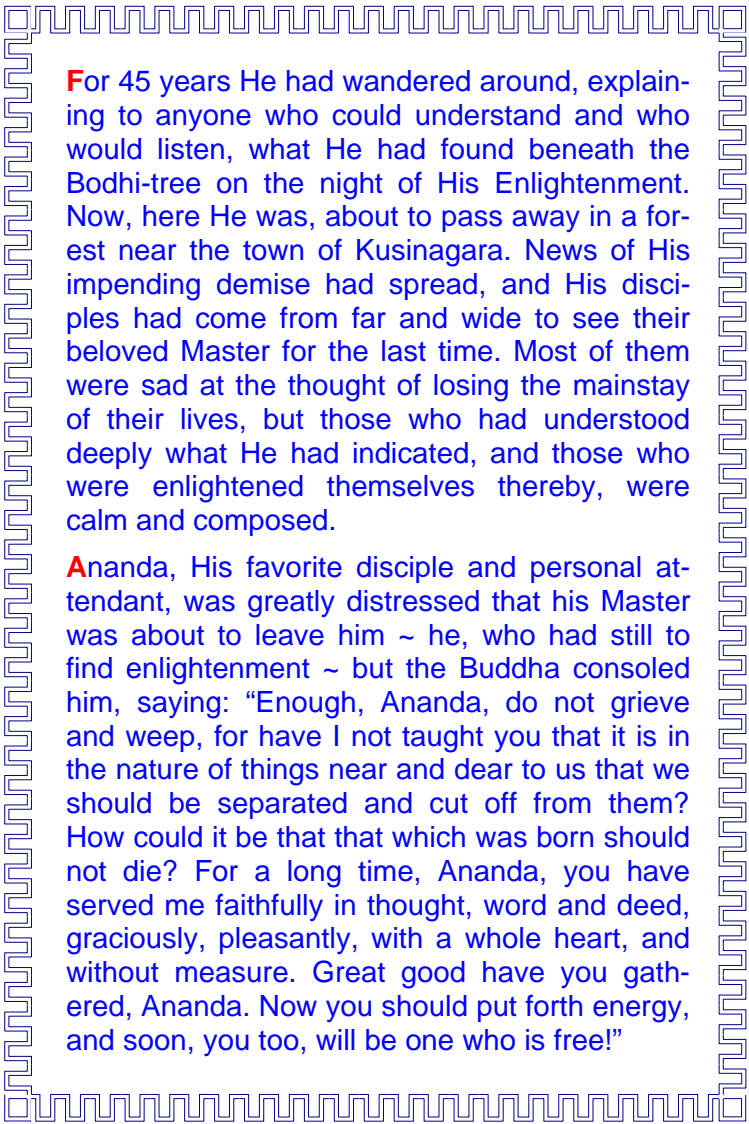
**I**f, while doing something for the community or helping others in some way, we consider it a sacrifice of our time, labor or money, it is a sign that we are doing it with more resentment than with joy.

**W**hat do we have and what can we give that we have not first received? This deserves some thought. Life should not be lived as a personal business-investment, but as a means of improving the society we all belong to, and which we call the World, for we can understand ourselves only as part of something much bigger than ourselves. Thus, whatever kind of work we perform, it can be seen as a way of serving others, and not merely as a way of earning a living. We benefit in countless ways from the labors of others, regardless of the fact that we pay for their products and services, do we not? What, then, can we contribute and put back?



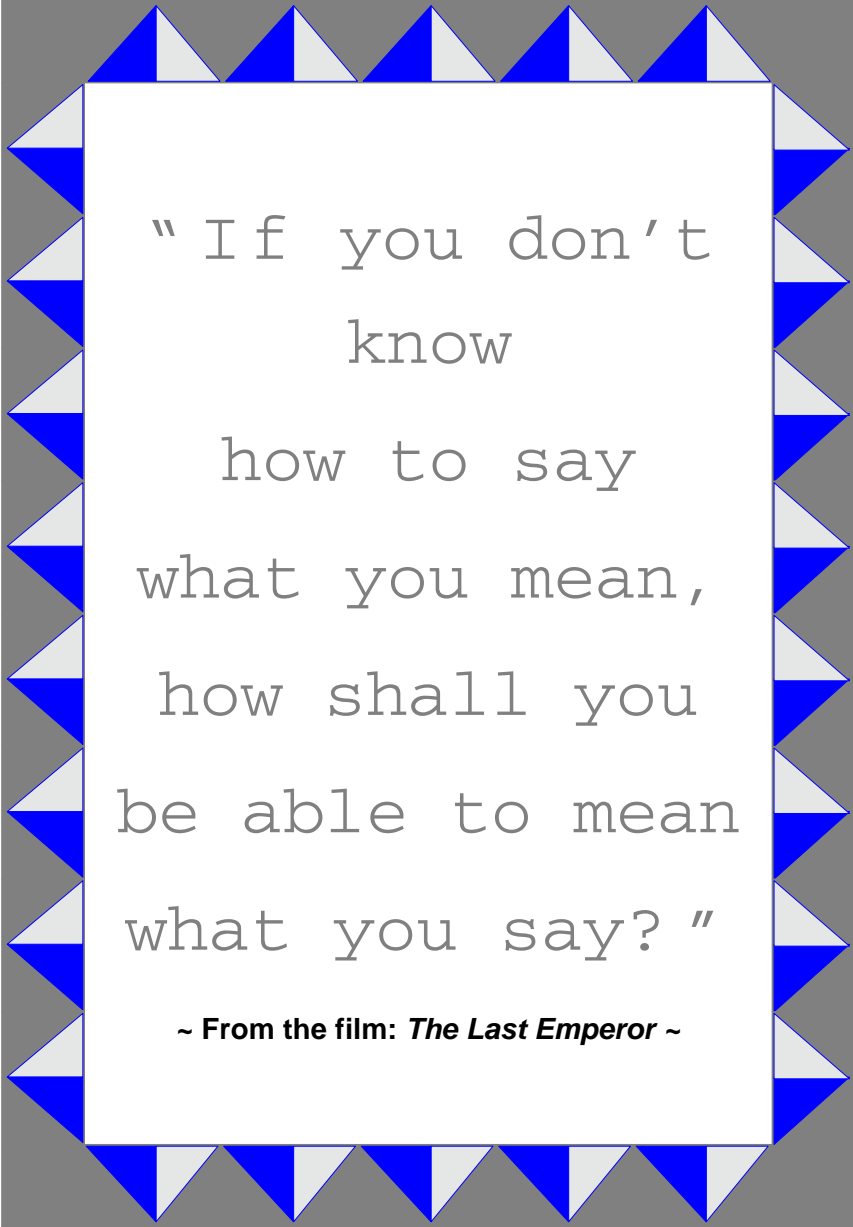
“ All  
compounded  
things  
are impermanent.  
Work out your  
own salvation  
with  
diligence. ”

~ The Last Words of the Buddha ~



**F**or 45 years He had wandered around, explaining to anyone who could understand and who would listen, what He had found beneath the Bodhi-tree on the night of His Enlightenment. Now, here He was, about to pass away in a forest near the town of Kusinagara. News of His impending demise had spread, and His disciples had come from far and wide to see their beloved Master for the last time. Most of them were sad at the thought of losing the mainstay of their lives, but those who had understood deeply what He had indicated, and those who were enlightened themselves thereby, were calm and composed.

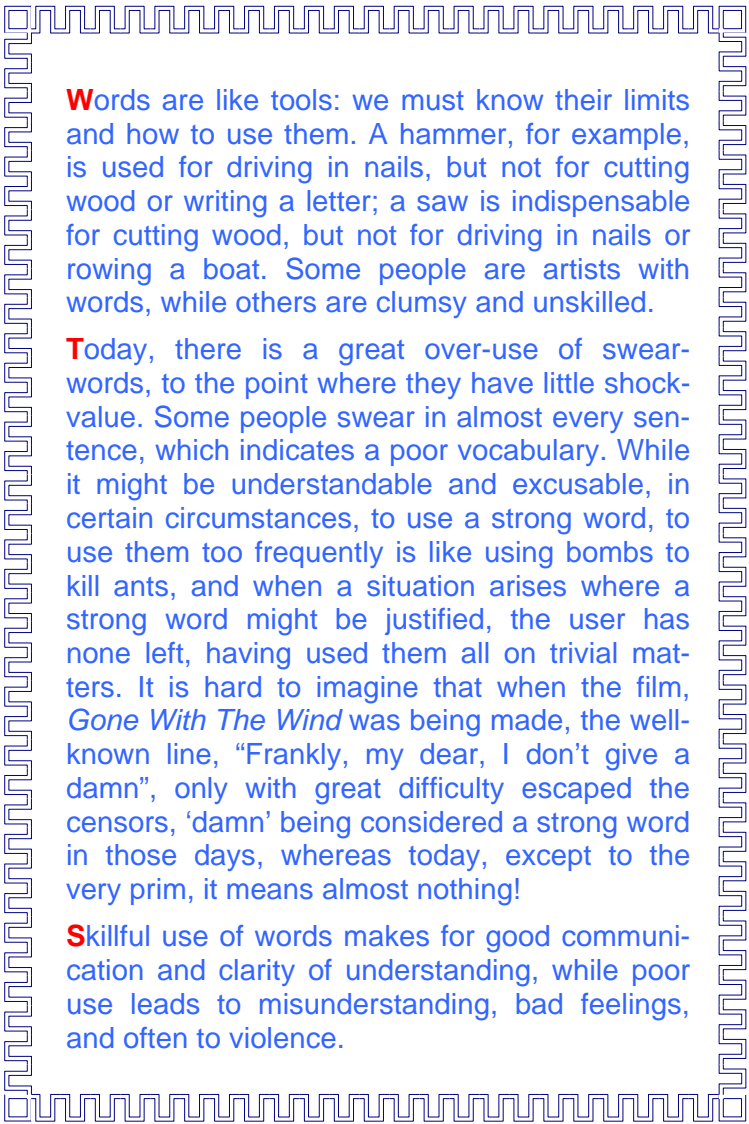
**A**nanda, His favorite disciple and personal attendant, was greatly distressed that his Master was about to leave him ~ he, who had still to find enlightenment ~ but the Buddha consoled him, saying: "Enough, Ananda, do not grieve and weep, for have I not taught you that it is in the nature of things near and dear to us that we should be separated and cut off from them? How could it be that that which was born should not die? For a long time, Ananda, you have served me faithfully in thought, word and deed, graciously, pleasantly, with a whole heart, and without measure. Great good have you gathered, Ananda. Now you should put forth energy, and soon, you too, will be one who is free!"



" If you don't  
know  
how to say  
what you mean,  
how shall you  
be able to mean  
what you say? "

~ From the film: *The Last Emperor* ~

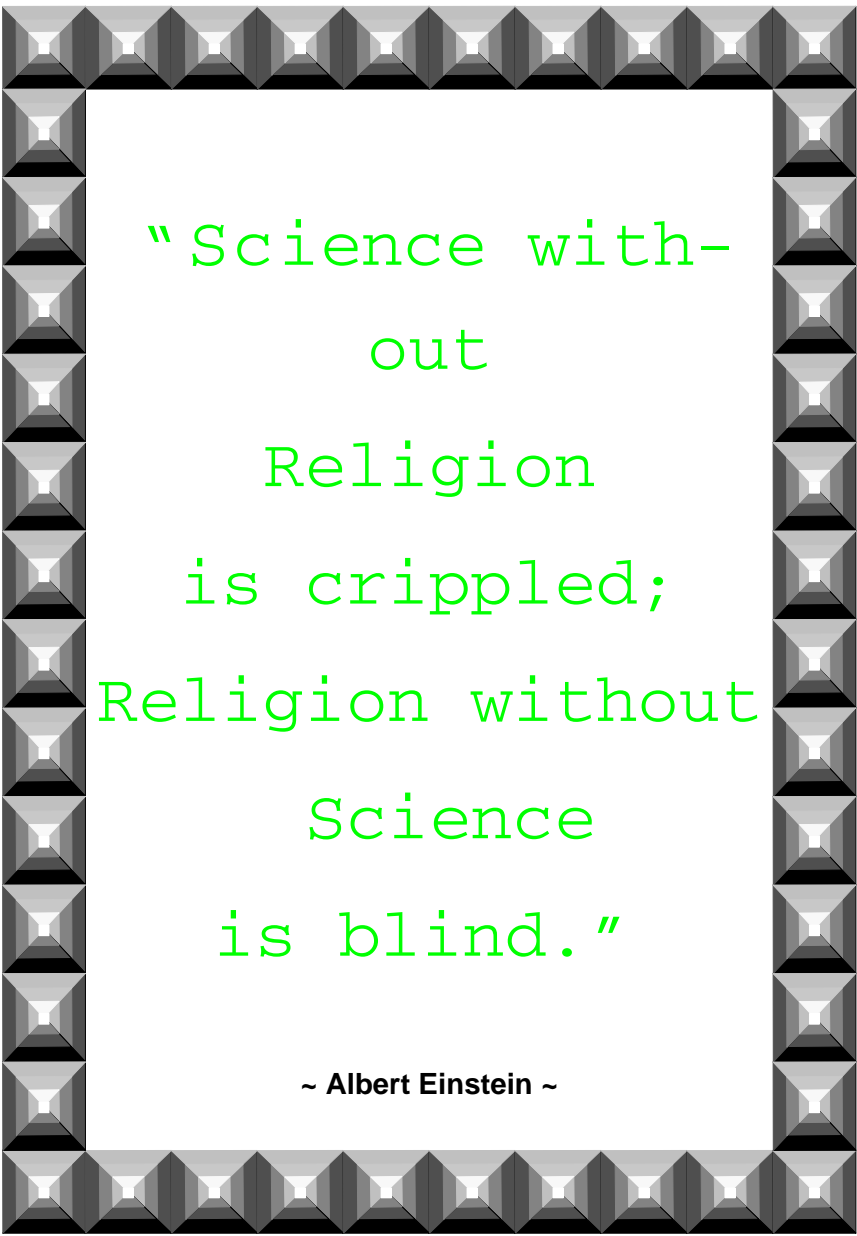




**W**ords are like tools: we must know their limits and how to use them. A hammer, for example, is used for driving in nails, but not for cutting wood or writing a letter; a saw is indispensable for cutting wood, but not for driving in nails or rowing a boat. Some people are artists with words, while others are clumsy and unskilled.

**T**oday, there is a great over-use of swear-words, to the point where they have little shock-value. Some people swear in almost every sentence, which indicates a poor vocabulary. While it might be understandable and excusable, in certain circumstances, to use a strong word, to use them too frequently is like using bombs to kill ants, and when a situation arises where a strong word might be justified, the user has none left, having used them all on trivial matters. It is hard to imagine that when the film, *Gone With The Wind* was being made, the well-known line, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn", only with great difficulty escaped the censors, 'damn' being considered a strong word in those days, whereas today, except to the very prim, it means almost nothing!

**S**killful use of words makes for good communication and clarity of understanding, while poor use leads to misunderstanding, bad feelings, and often to violence.



"Science with-  
out  
Religion  
is crippled;  
Religion without  
Science  
is blind."

~ Albert Einstein ~

**T**here are, as it were, two centers in our being: the *Brain*, which is the seat of the intellect, thought, or reason, and the *Heart*, from where feeling or emotion arises; this is a way of explaining the difference in nature between Thought and Emotion, Wisdom and Compassion.

**N**ow, a person might be highly-intellectual and wise, but without Love and Compassion, he would be cold and uncaring. As St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13:1, said: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become a sounding-piece of brass or a clashing cymbal". Conversely, a good and kind person, lacking wisdom to guide his goodness and kindness, might be foolish and do a lot of harm, even if unintentionally.

**S**o, Intellect and Feeling, Wisdom and Compassion, must go together, in mutual support of each other. And although today, in many people's eyes, Science has superceded and discredited Religion, it is not so; it has challenged Religion, to be sure, and has demonstrably proved some of its fondly-held dogmas incorrect and obsolete, but this has been good for Religion in helping it to understand the need for a serious stock-taking; it hasn't eliminated it.

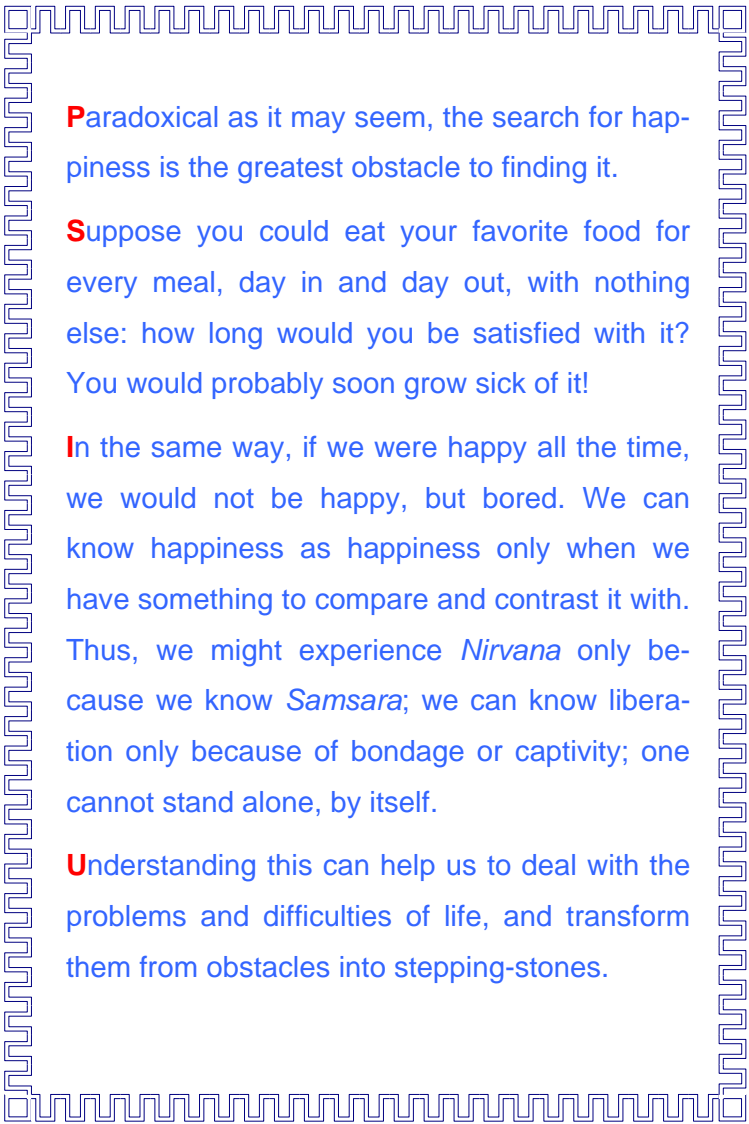
**S**cience, on the other hand, could benefit by applying the spirit of Religion in various fields, for example: vivisection, its activities affecting the environment, and by refusing to invent, develop and produce things detrimental to human life.

**A**nd, now that our eyes have been opened, we can and must strive to amalgamate Science with Religion ~ as they are not really the opposing magnetic poles that people once took them to be ~ to produce a Religious Science, or a Scientific Religion. If we do not, then these two great fields of human endeavor must remain antagonists.



"The stars  
appear  
brightest  
on the  
darkest  
night" .

~ Persian Proverb ~

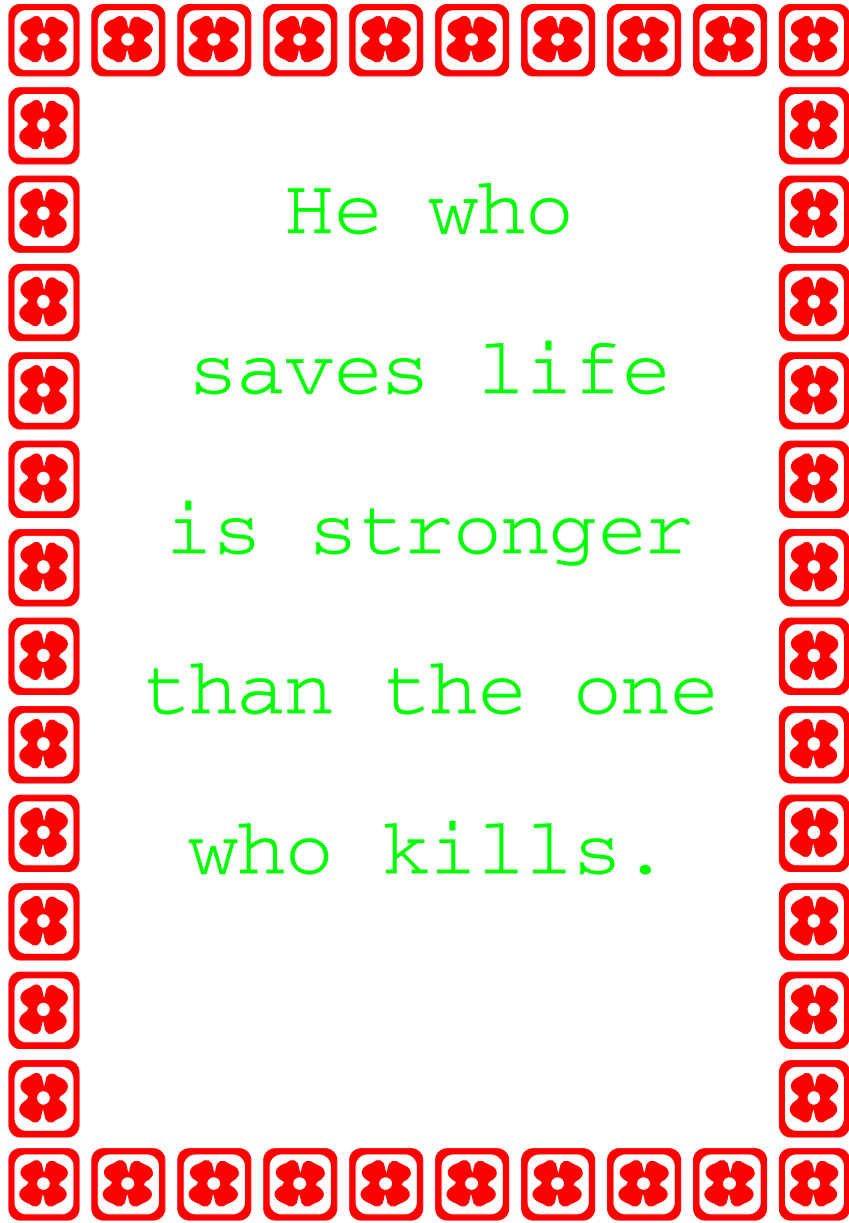


**P**aradoxical as it may seem, the search for happiness is the greatest obstacle to finding it.

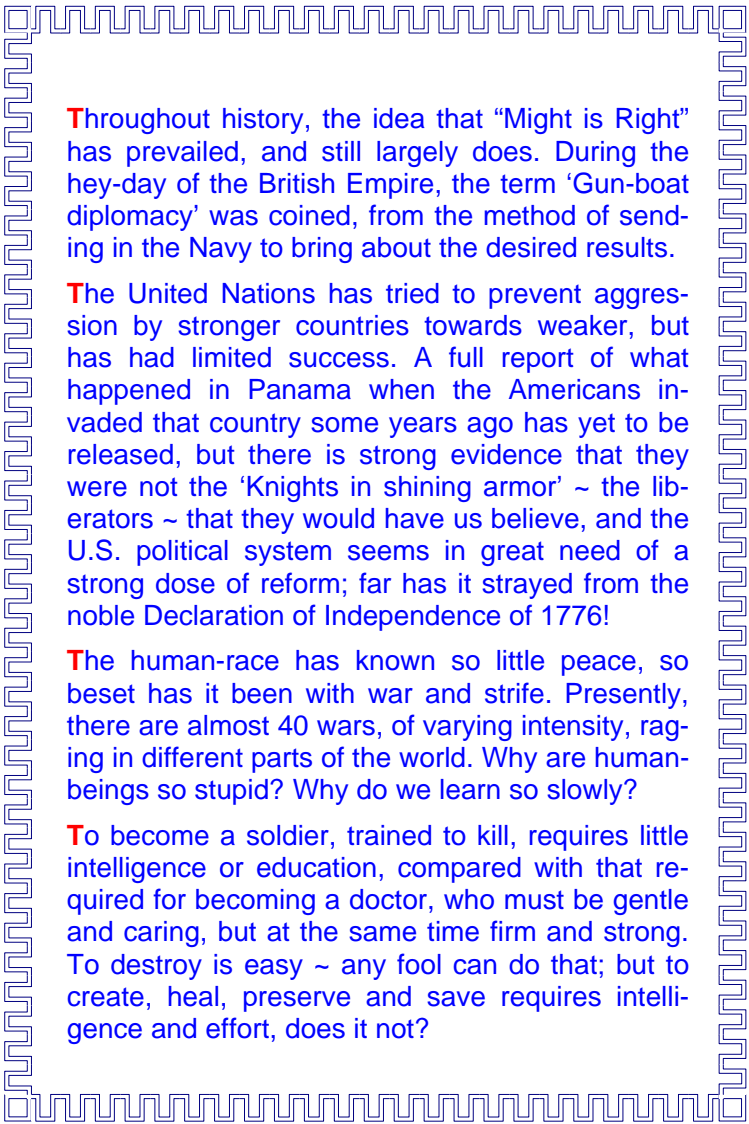
**S**uppose you could eat your favorite food for every meal, day in and day out, with nothing else: how long would you be satisfied with it? You would probably soon grow sick of it!

**I**n the same way, if we were happy all the time, we would not be happy, but bored. We can know happiness as happiness only when we have something to compare and contrast it with. Thus, we might experience *Nirvana* only because we know *Samsara*; we can know liberation only because of bondage or captivity; one cannot stand alone, by itself.

**U**nderstanding this can help us to deal with the problems and difficulties of life, and transform them from obstacles into stepping-stones.



He who  
saves life  
is stronger  
than the one  
who kills.

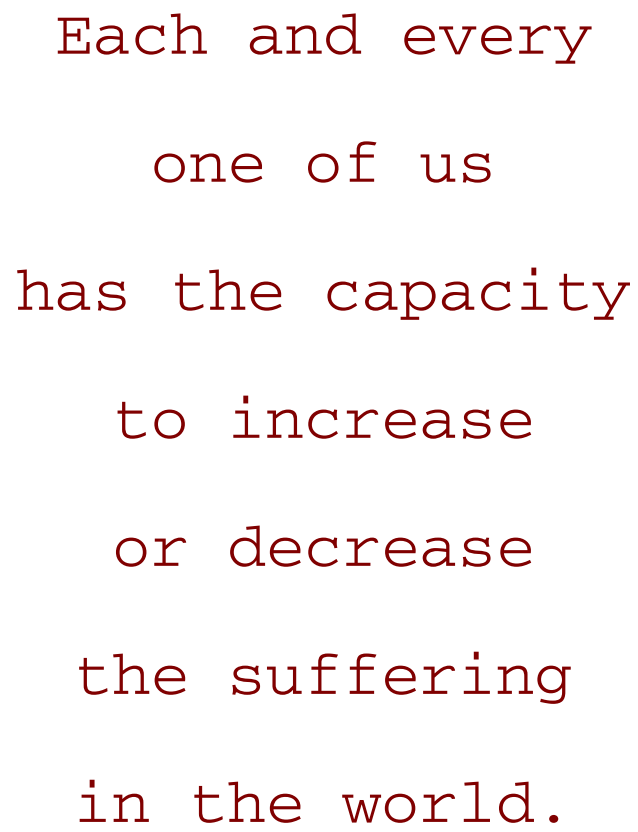


**T**hroughout history, the idea that “Might is Right” has prevailed, and still largely does. During the hey-day of the British Empire, the term ‘Gun-boat diplomacy’ was coined, from the method of sending in the Navy to bring about the desired results.

**T**he United Nations has tried to prevent aggression by stronger countries towards weaker, but has had limited success. A full report of what happened in Panama when the Americans invaded that country some years ago has yet to be released, but there is strong evidence that they were not the ‘Knights in shining armor’ ~ the liberators ~ that they would have us believe, and the U.S. political system seems in great need of a strong dose of reform; far has it strayed from the noble Declaration of Independence of 1776!

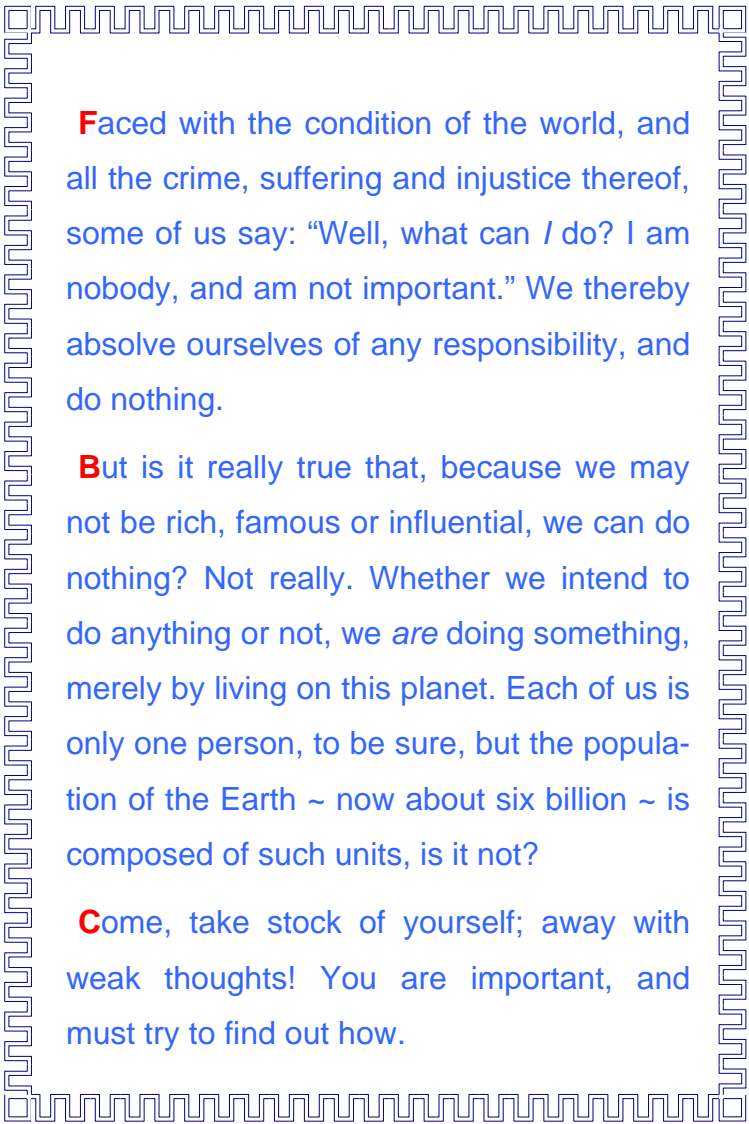
**T**he human-race has known so little peace, so beset has it been with war and strife. Presently, there are almost 40 wars, of varying intensity, raging in different parts of the world. Why are human-beings so stupid? Why do we learn so slowly?

**T**o become a soldier, trained to kill, requires little intelligence or education, compared with that required for becoming a doctor, who must be gentle and caring, but at the same time firm and strong. To destroy is easy ~ any fool can do that; but to create, heal, preserve and save requires intelligence and effort, does it not?



Each and every  
one of us  
has the capacity  
to increase  
or decrease  
the suffering  
in the world.

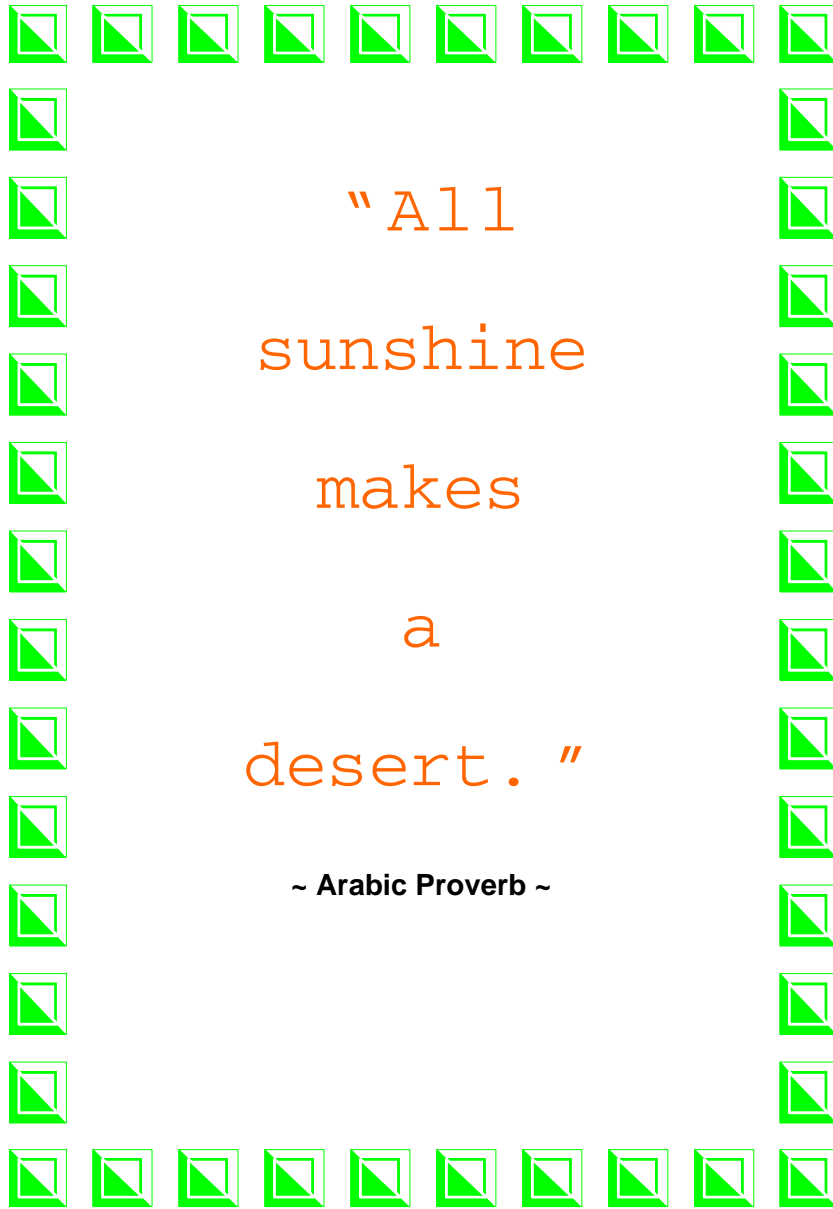




**F**aced with the condition of the world, and all the crime, suffering and injustice thereof, some of us say: “Well, what can I do? I am nobody, and am not important.” We thereby absolve ourselves of any responsibility, and do nothing.

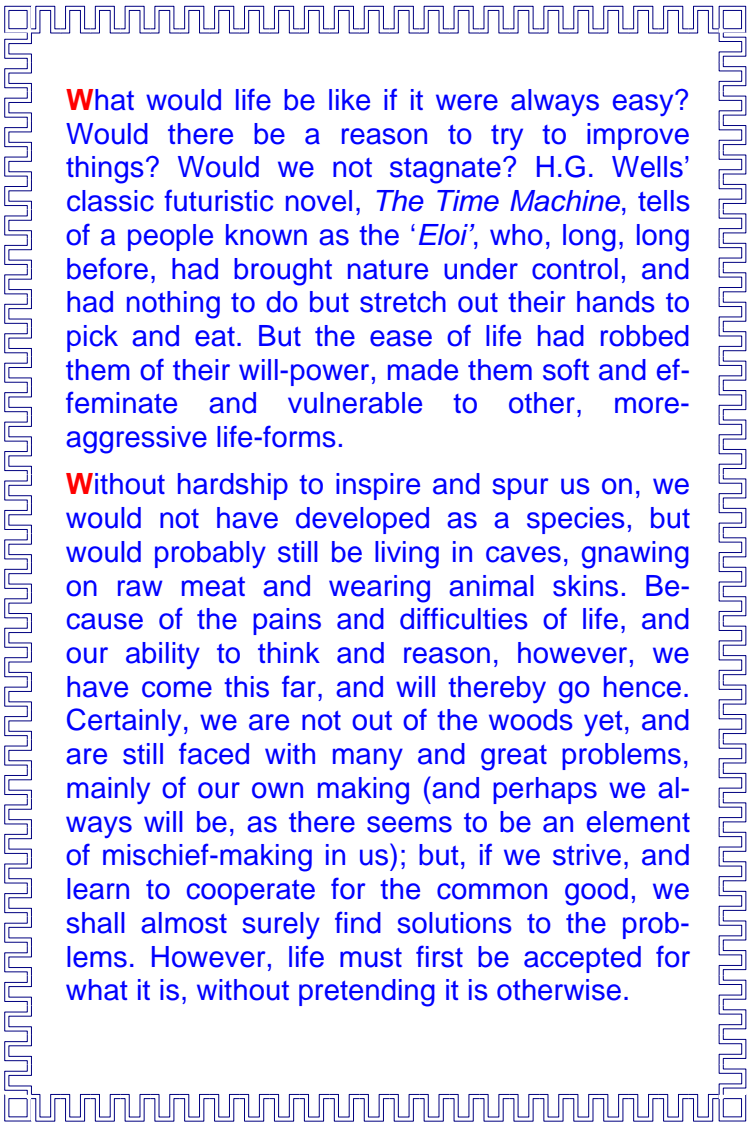
**B**ut is it really true that, because we may not be rich, famous or influential, we can do nothing? Not really. Whether we intend to do anything or not, we *are* doing something, merely by living on this planet. Each of us is only one person, to be sure, but the population of the Earth ~ now about six billion ~ is composed of such units, is it not?

**C**ome, take stock of yourself; away with weak thoughts! You are important, and must try to find out how.



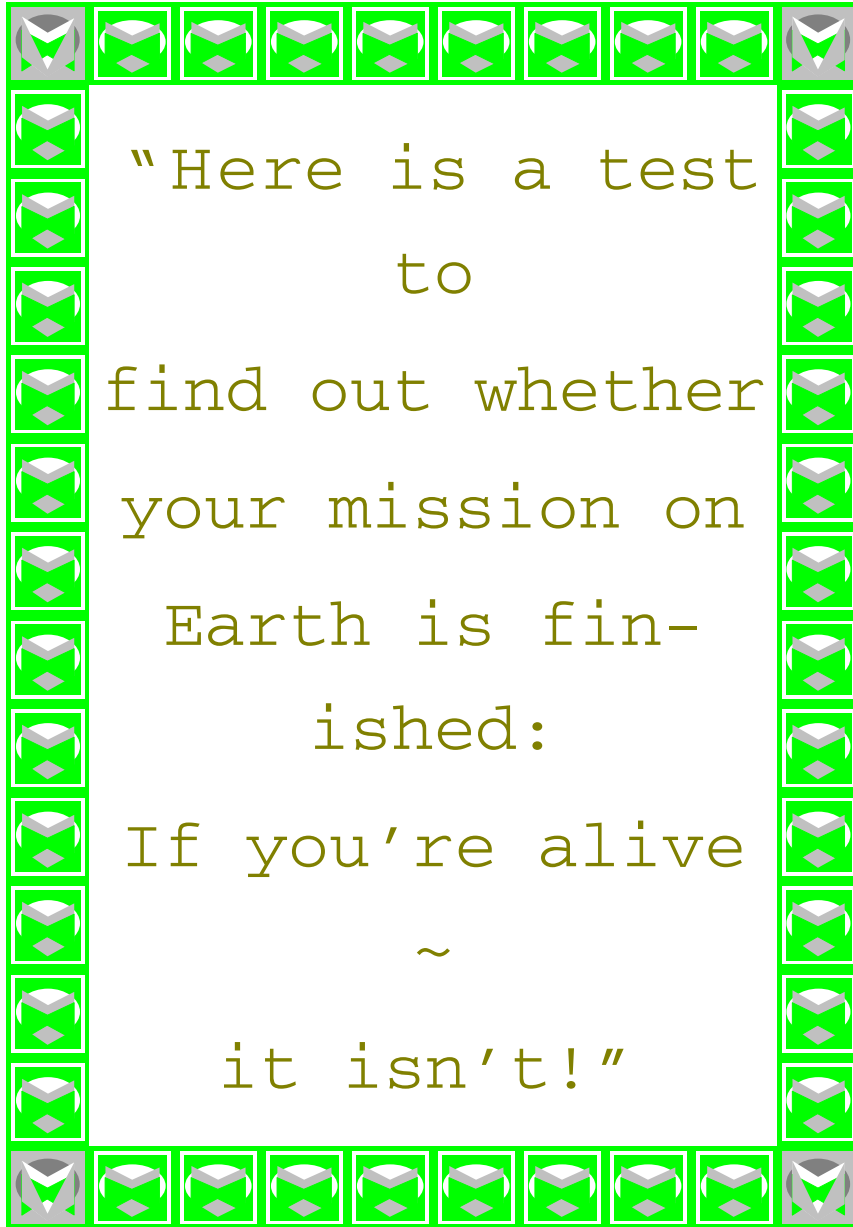
"All  
sunshine  
makes  
a  
desert. "

~ Arabic Proverb ~



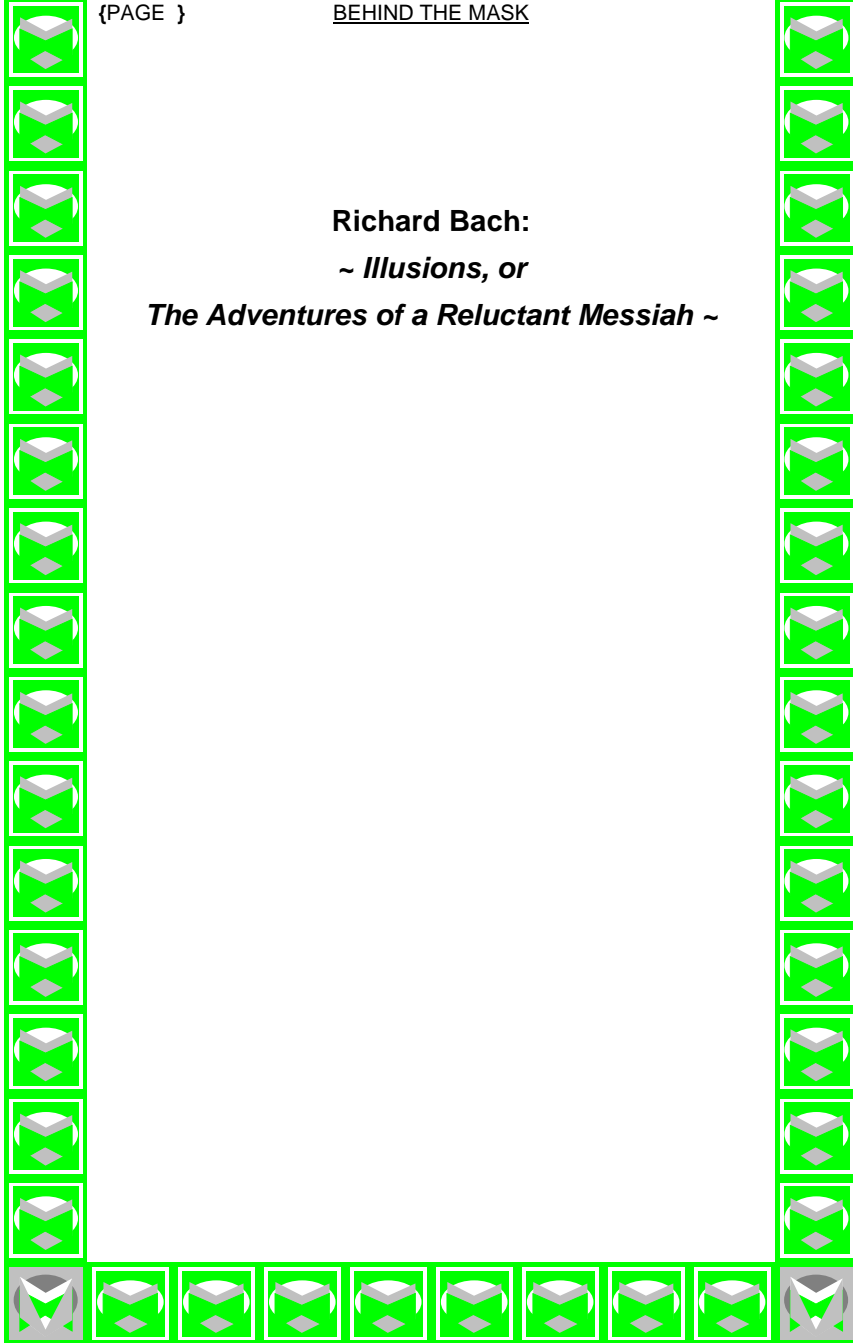
**W**hat would life be like if it were always easy? Would there be a reason to try to improve things? Would we not stagnate? H.G. Wells' classic futuristic novel, *The Time Machine*, tells of a people known as the 'Eloi', who, long, long before, had brought nature under control, and had nothing to do but stretch out their hands to pick and eat. But the ease of life had robbed them of their will-power, made them soft and effeminate and vulnerable to other, more-aggressive life-forms.

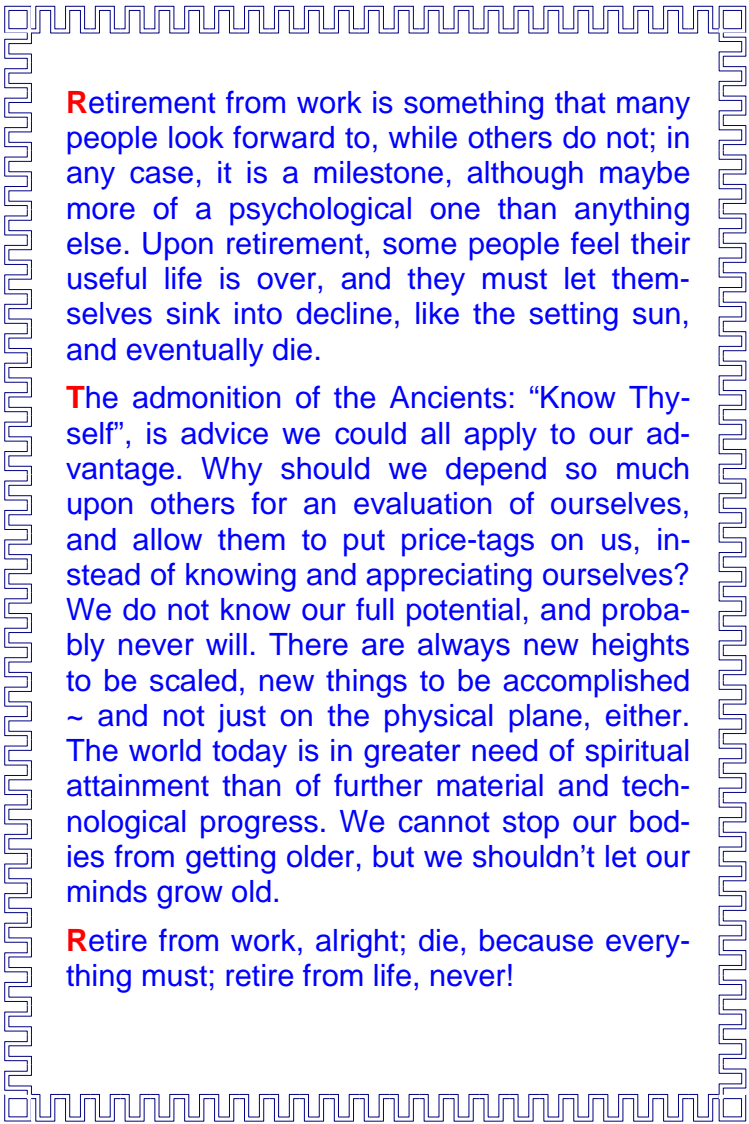
**W**ithout hardship to inspire and spur us on, we would not have developed as a species, but would probably still be living in caves, gnawing on raw meat and wearing animal skins. Because of the pains and difficulties of life, and our ability to think and reason, however, we have come this far, and will thereby go hence. Certainly, we are not out of the woods yet, and are still faced with many and great problems, mainly of our own making (and perhaps we always will be, as there seems to be an element of mischief-making in us); but, if we strive, and learn to cooperate for the common good, we shall almost surely find solutions to the problems. However, life must first be accepted for what it is, without pretending it is otherwise.



"Here is a test  
to  
find out whether  
your mission on  
Earth is fin-  
ished:  
If you're alive  
~  
it isn't!"

**Richard Bach:**  
***~ Illusions, or***  
***The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah ~***

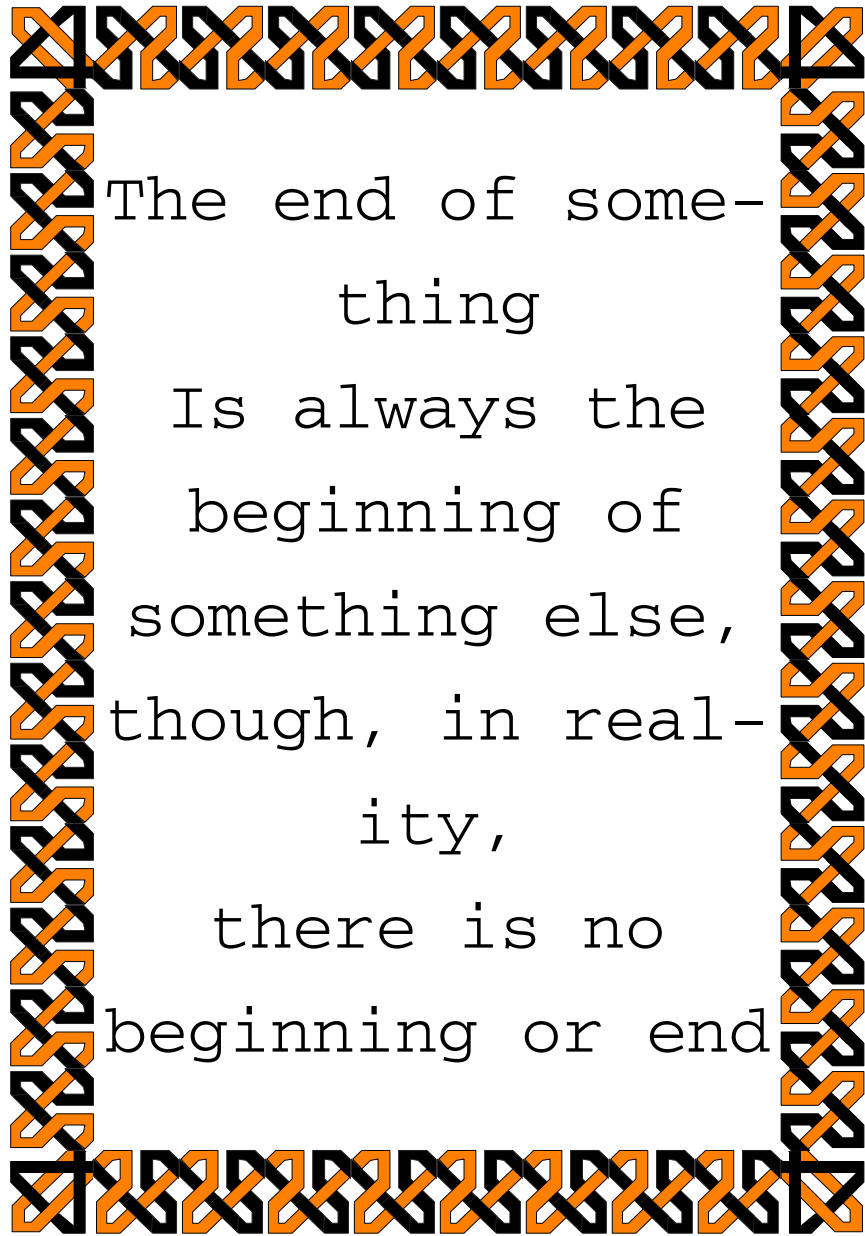




**R**etirement from work is something that many people look forward to, while others do not; in any case, it is a milestone, although maybe more of a psychological one than anything else. Upon retirement, some people feel their useful life is over, and they must let themselves sink into decline, like the setting sun, and eventually die.

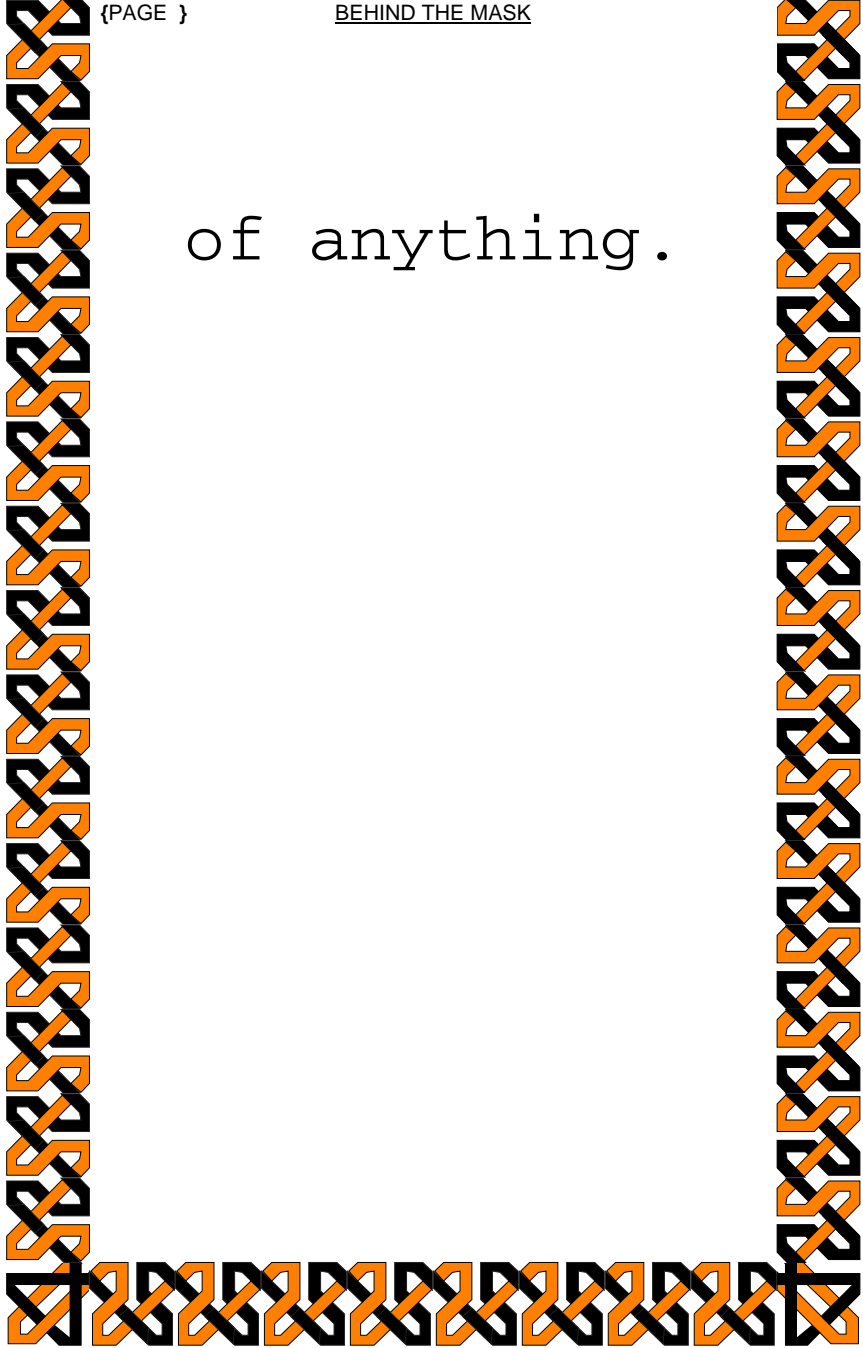
**T**he admonition of the Ancients: “Know Thyself”, is advice we could all apply to our advantage. Why should we depend so much upon others for an evaluation of ourselves, and allow them to put price-tags on us, instead of knowing and appreciating ourselves? We do not know our full potential, and probably never will. There are always new heights to be scaled, new things to be accomplished ~ and not just on the physical plane, either. The world today is in greater need of spiritual attainment than of further material and technological progress. We cannot stop our bodies from getting older, but we shouldn't let our minds grow old.

**R**etire from work, alright; die, because everything must; retire from life, never!

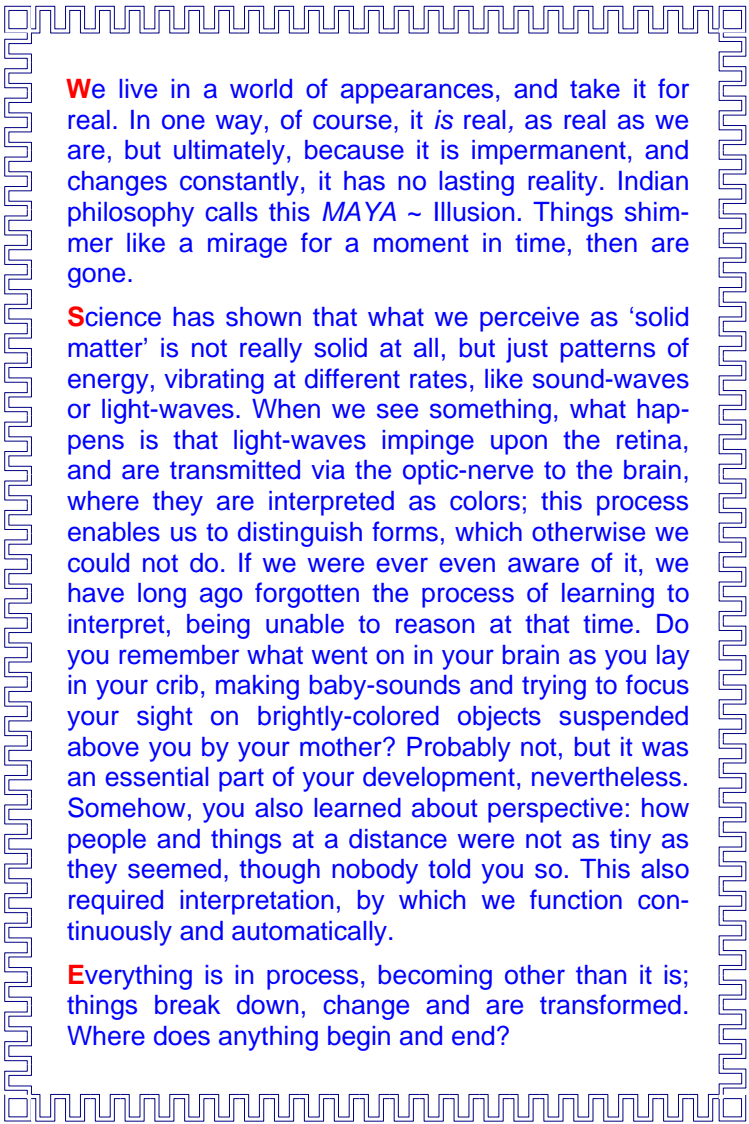


The end of some-  
thing  
Is always the  
beginning of  
something else,  
though, in real-  
ity,  
there is no  
beginning or end

of anything.



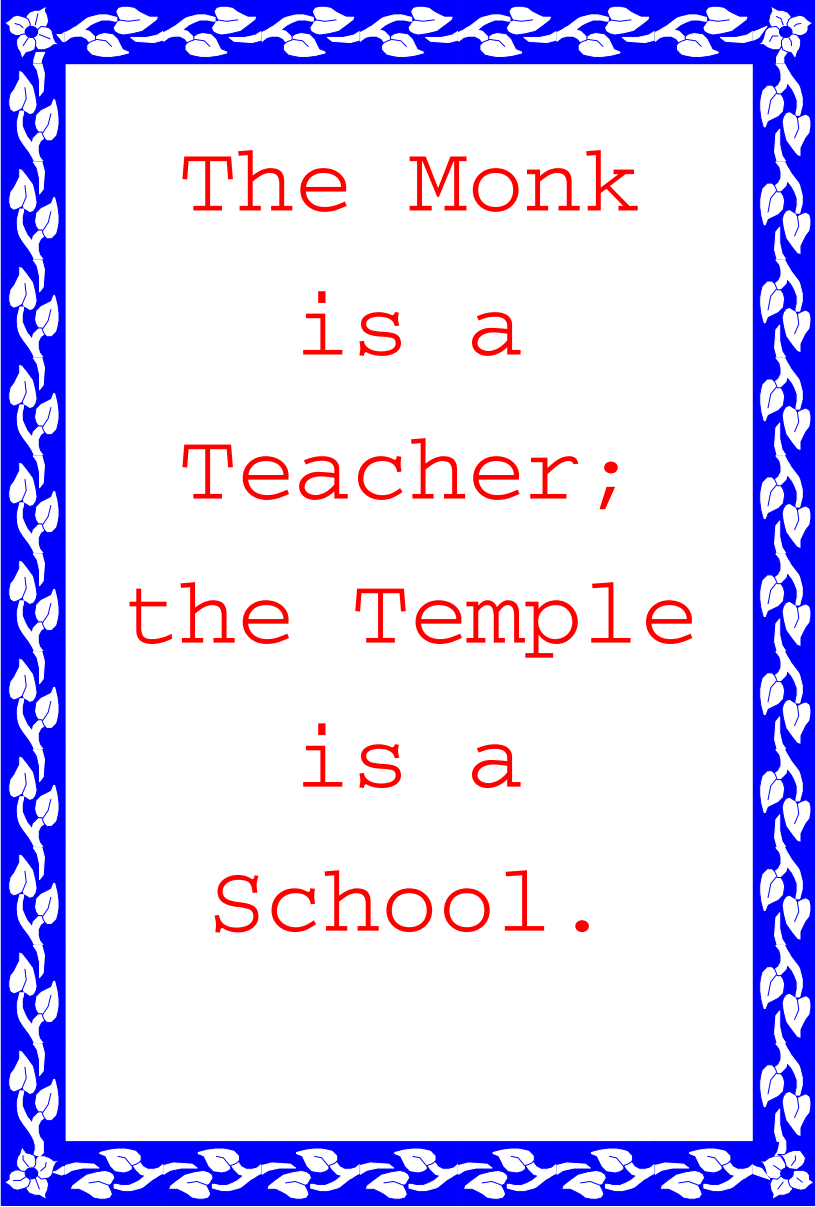




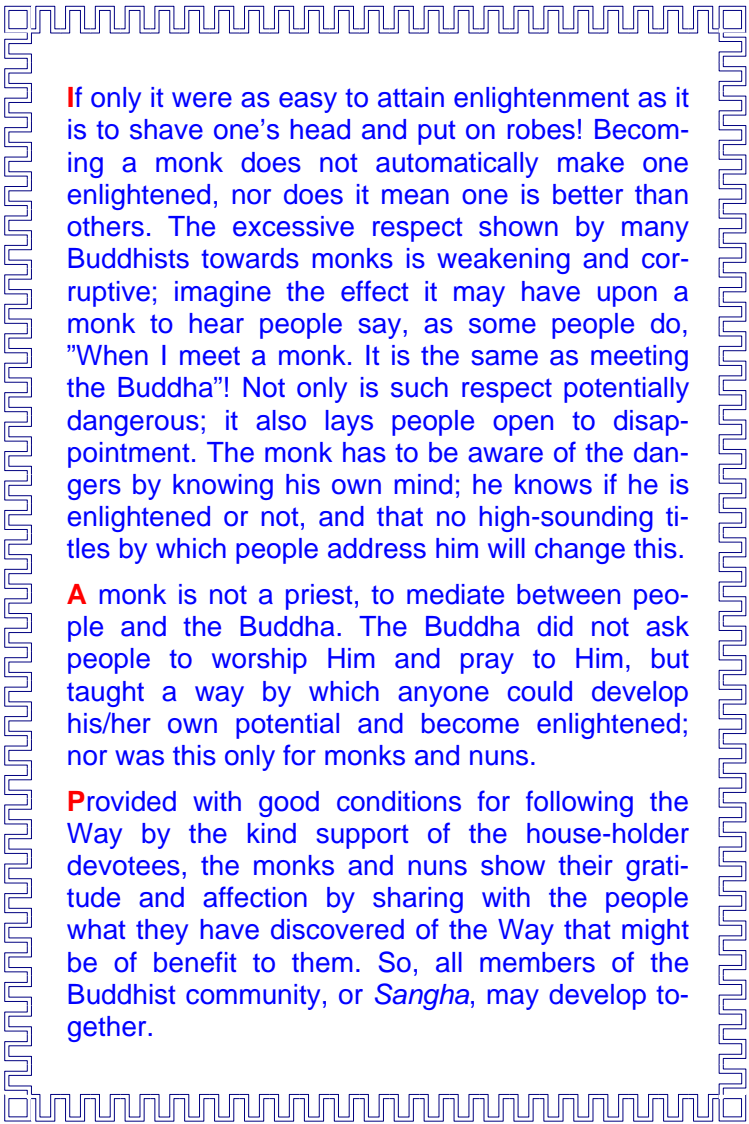
**W**e live in a world of appearances, and take it for real. In one way, of course, it *is* real, as real as we are, but ultimately, because it is impermanent, and changes constantly, it has no lasting reality. Indian philosophy calls this *MAYA* ~ Illusion. Things shimmer like a mirage for a moment in time, then are gone.

**S**cience has shown that what we perceive as 'solid matter' is not really solid at all, but just patterns of energy, vibrating at different rates, like sound-waves or light-waves. When we see something, what happens is that light-waves impinge upon the retina, and are transmitted via the optic-nerve to the brain, where they are interpreted as colors; this process enables us to distinguish forms, which otherwise we could not do. If we were ever even aware of it, we have long ago forgotten the process of learning to interpret, being unable to reason at that time. Do you remember what went on in your brain as you lay in your crib, making baby-sounds and trying to focus your sight on brightly-colored objects suspended above you by your mother? Probably not, but it was an essential part of your development, nevertheless. Somehow, you also learned about perspective: how people and things at a distance were not as tiny as they seemed, though nobody told you so. This also required interpretation, by which we function continuously and automatically.

**E**verything is in process, becoming other than it is; things break down, change and are transformed. Where does anything begin and end?



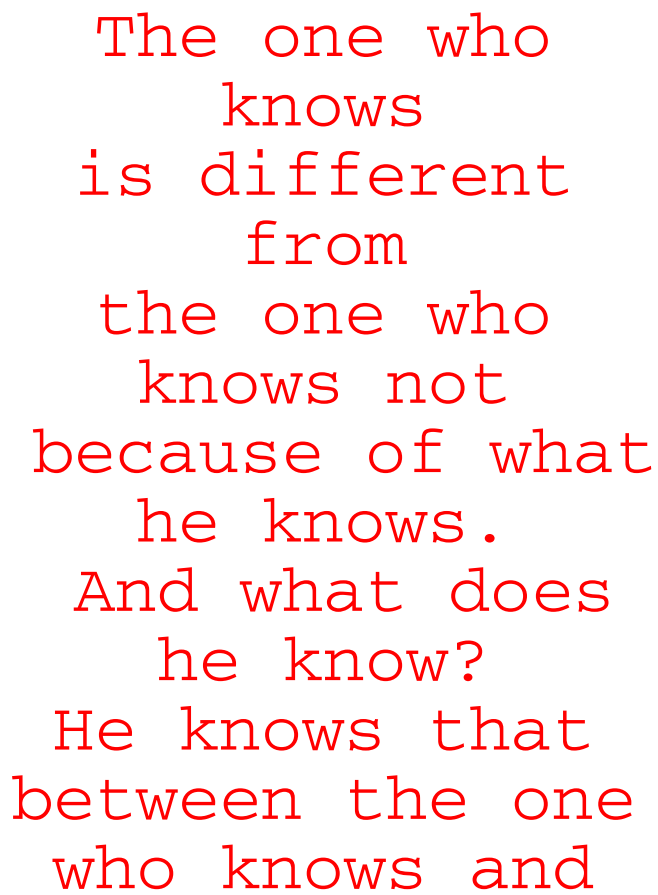
The Monk  
is a  
Teacher;  
the Temple  
is a  
School.



**I**f only it were as easy to attain enlightenment as it is to shave one's head and put on robes! Becoming a monk does not automatically make one enlightened, nor does it mean one is better than others. The excessive respect shown by many Buddhists towards monks is weakening and corruptive; imagine the effect it may have upon a monk to hear people say, as some people do, "When I meet a monk. It is the same as meeting the Buddha"! Not only is such respect potentially dangerous; it also lays people open to disappointment. The monk has to be aware of the dangers by knowing his own mind; he knows if he is enlightened or not, and that no high-sounding titles by which people address him will change this.

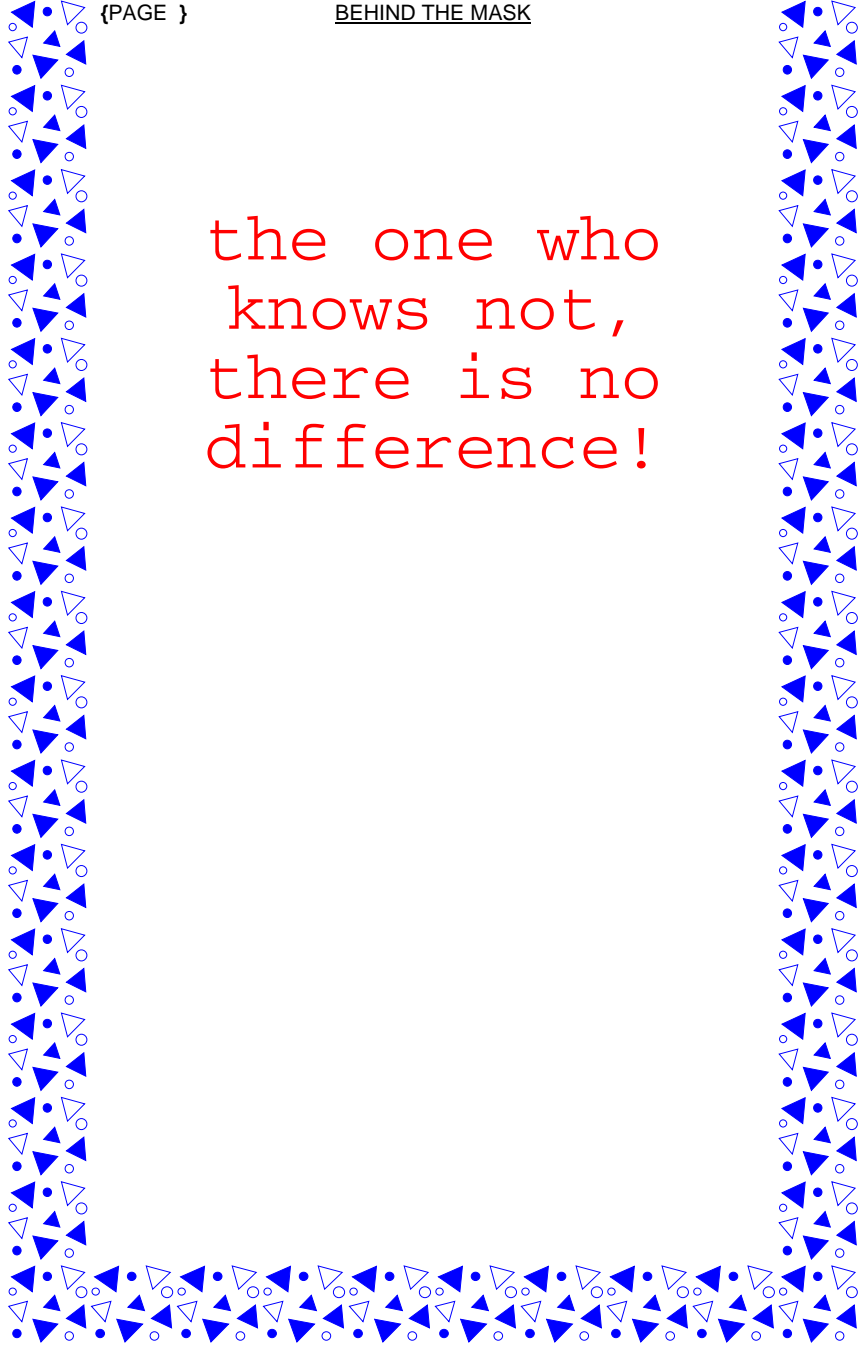
**A** monk is not a priest, to mediate between people and the Buddha. The Buddha did not ask people to worship Him and pray to Him, but taught a way by which anyone could develop his/her own potential and become enlightened; nor was this only for monks and nuns.

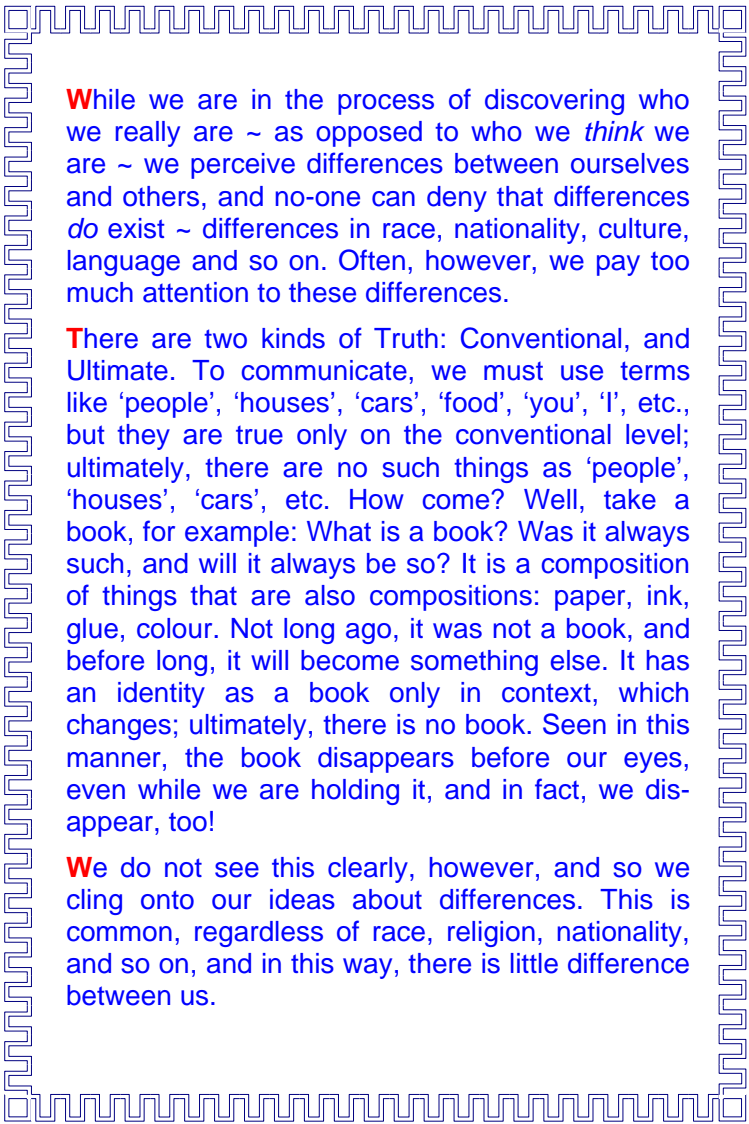
**P**rovided with good conditions for following the Way by the kind support of the house-holder devotees, the monks and nuns show their gratitude and affection by sharing with the people what they have discovered of the Way that might be of benefit to them. So, all members of the Buddhist community, or *Sangha*, may develop together.



The one who  
knows  
is different  
from  
the one who  
knows not  
because of what  
he knows.  
And what does  
he know?  
He knows that  
between the one  
who knows and

the one who  
knows not,  
there is no  
difference!

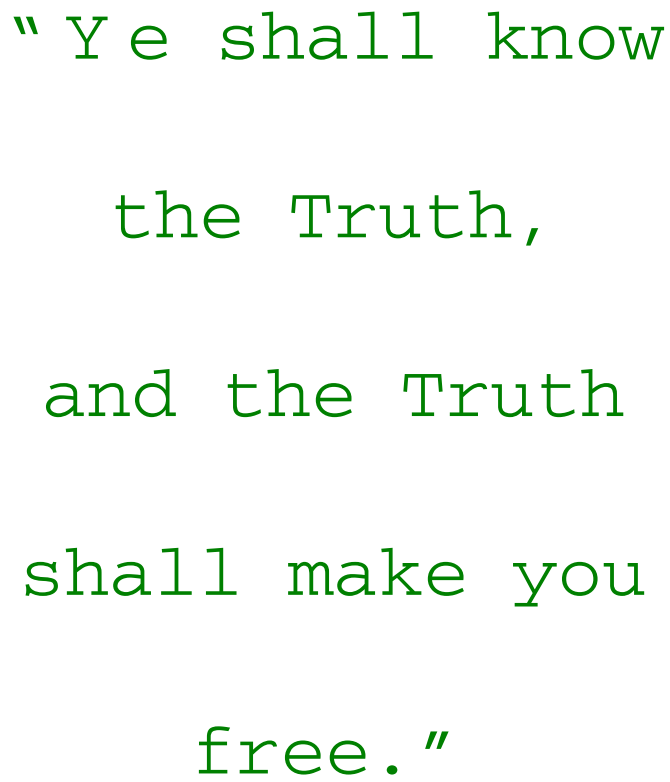




**While** we are in the process of discovering who we really are ~ as opposed to who we *think* we are ~ we perceive differences between ourselves and others, and no-one can deny that differences *do* exist ~ differences in race, nationality, culture, language and so on. Often, however, we pay too much attention to these differences.

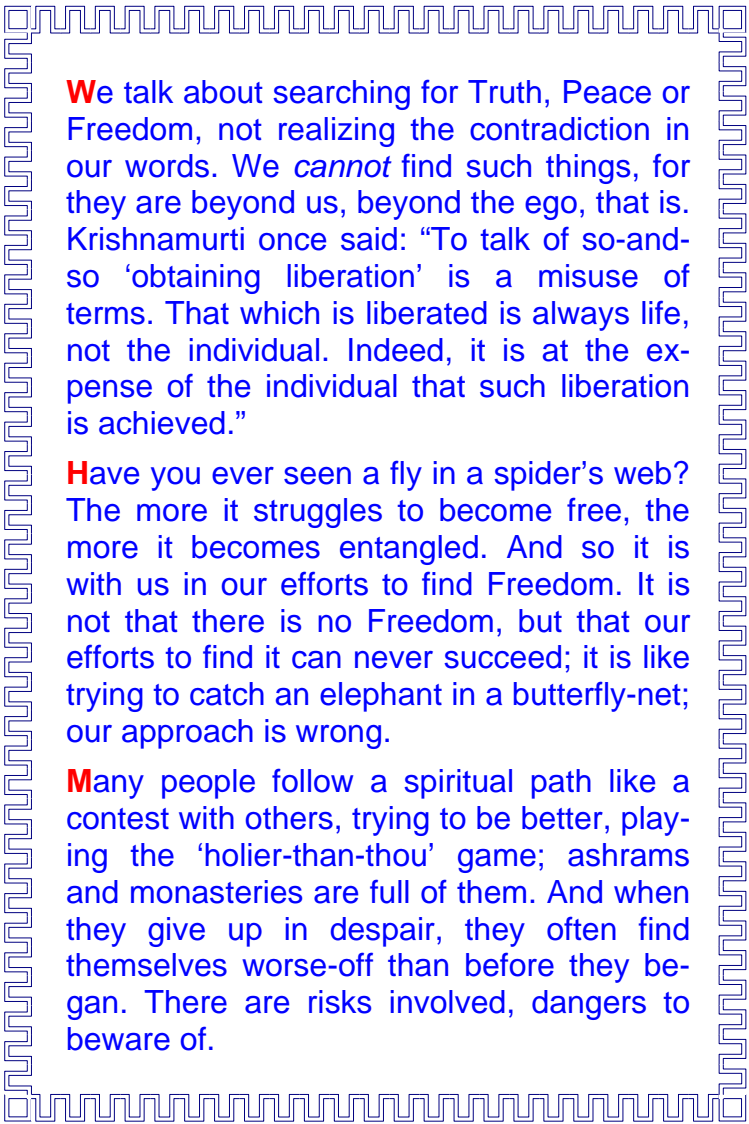
**There** are two kinds of Truth: Conventional, and Ultimate. To communicate, we must use terms like 'people', 'houses', 'cars', 'food', 'you', 'I', etc., but they are true only on the conventional level; ultimately, there are no such things as 'people', 'houses', 'cars', etc. How come? Well, take a book, for example: What is a book? Was it always such, and will it always be so? It is a composition of things that are also compositions: paper, ink, glue, colour. Not long ago, it was not a book, and before long, it will become something else. It has an identity as a book only in context, which changes; ultimately, there is no book. Seen in this manner, the book disappears before our eyes, even while we are holding it, and in fact, we disappear, too!

**We** do not see this clearly, however, and so we cling onto our ideas about differences. This is common, regardless of race, religion, nationality, and so on, and in this way, there is little difference between us.



"Ye shall know  
the Truth,  
and the Truth  
shall make you  
free."

~ Jesus of Nazareth ~

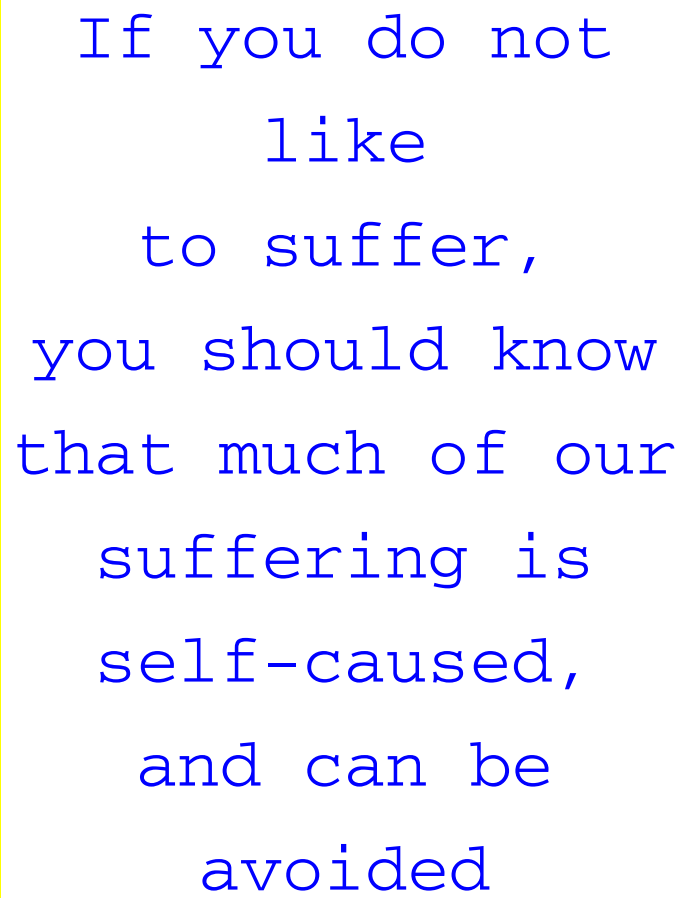


**W**e talk about searching for Truth, Peace or Freedom, not realizing the contradiction in our words. We *cannot* find such things, for they are beyond us, beyond the ego, that is. Krishnamurti once said: “To talk of so-and-so ‘obtaining liberation’ is a misuse of terms. That which is liberated is always life, not the individual. Indeed, it is at the expense of the individual that such liberation is achieved.”

**H**ave you ever seen a fly in a spider’s web? The more it struggles to become free, the more it becomes entangled. And so it is with us in our efforts to find Freedom. It is not that there is no Freedom, but that our efforts to find it can never succeed; it is like trying to catch an elephant in a butterfly-net; our approach is wrong.

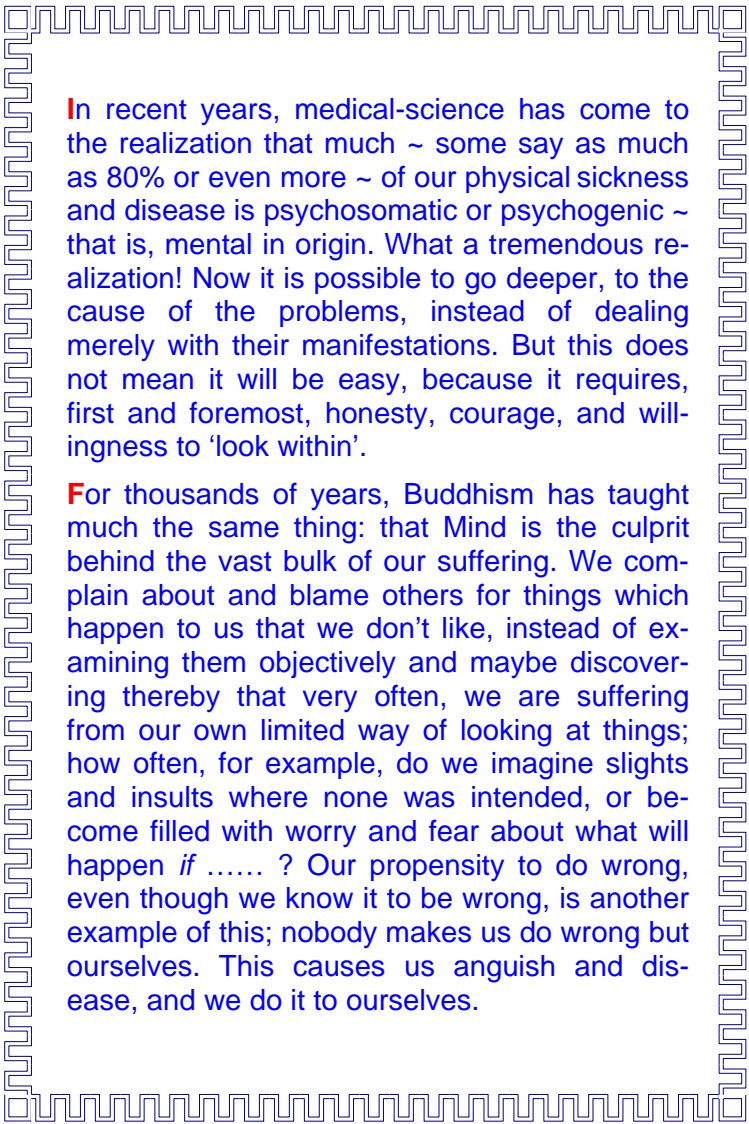
**M**any people follow a spiritual path like a contest with others, trying to be better, playing the ‘holier-than-thou’ game; ashrams and monasteries are full of them. And when they give up in despair, they often find themselves worse-off than before they began. There are risks involved, dangers to beware of.





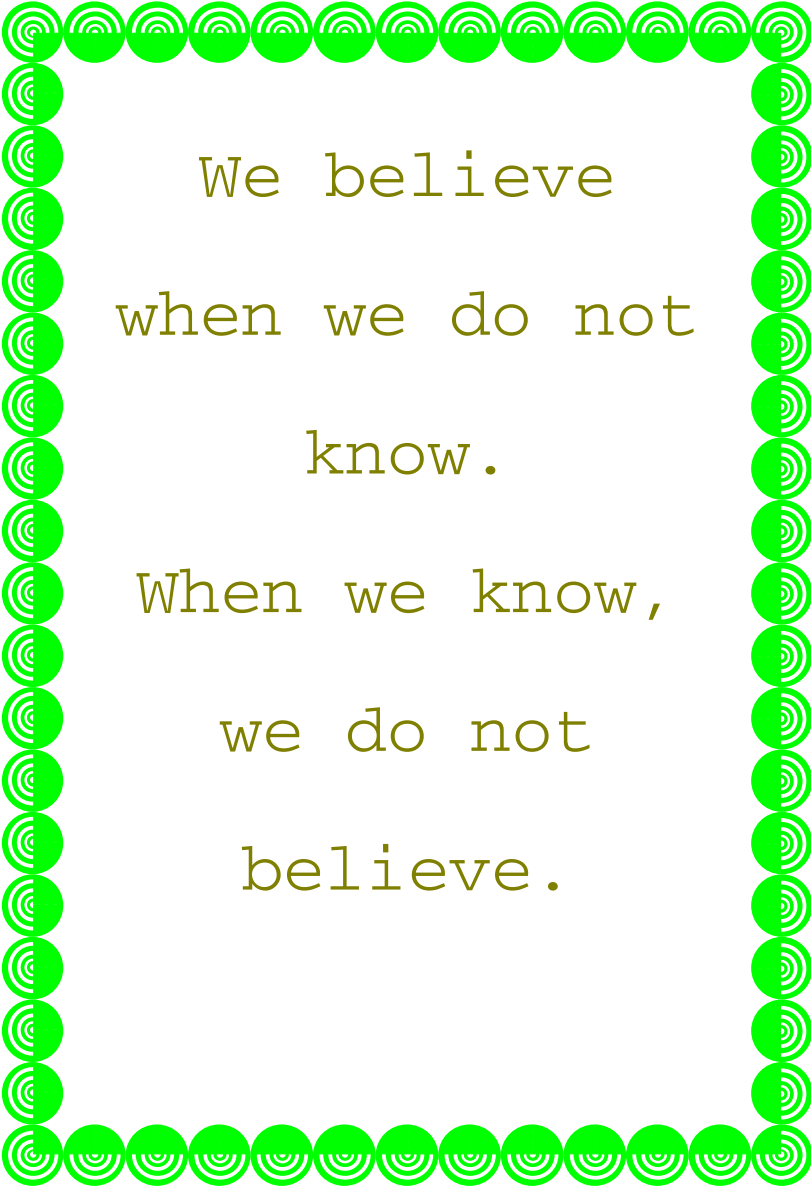
If you do not  
like  
to suffer,  
you should know  
that much of our  
suffering is  
self-caused,  
and can be  
avoided

if we wake up.



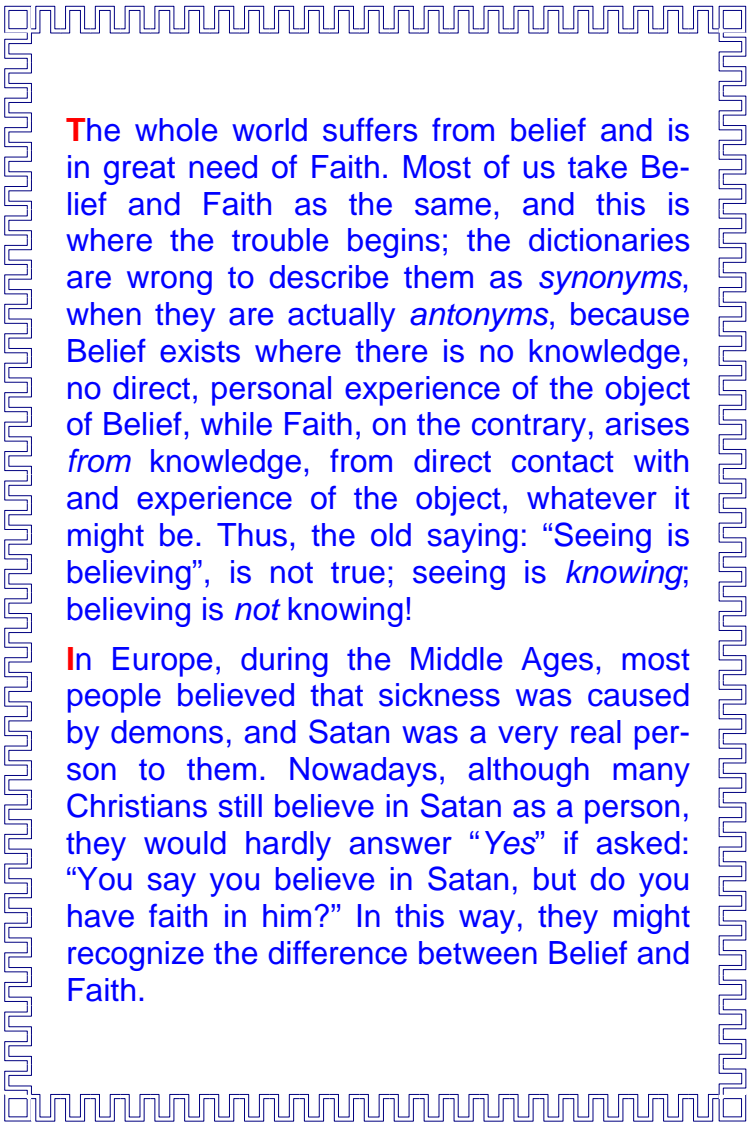
**I**n recent years, medical-science has come to the realization that much ~ some say as much as 80% or even more ~ of our physical sickness and disease is psychosomatic or psychogenic ~ that is, mental in origin. What a tremendous realization! Now it is possible to go deeper, to the cause of the problems, instead of dealing merely with their manifestations. But this does not mean it will be easy, because it requires, first and foremost, honesty, courage, and willingness to 'look within'.

**F**or thousands of years, Buddhism has taught much the same thing: that Mind is the culprit behind the vast bulk of our suffering. We complain about and blame others for things which happen to us that we don't like, instead of examining them objectively and maybe discovering thereby that very often, we are suffering from our own limited way of looking at things; how often, for example, do we imagine slights and insults where none was intended, or become filled with worry and fear about what will happen *if* ..... ? Our propensity to do wrong, even though we know it to be wrong, is another example of this; nobody makes us do wrong but ourselves. This causes us anguish and disease, and we do it to ourselves.



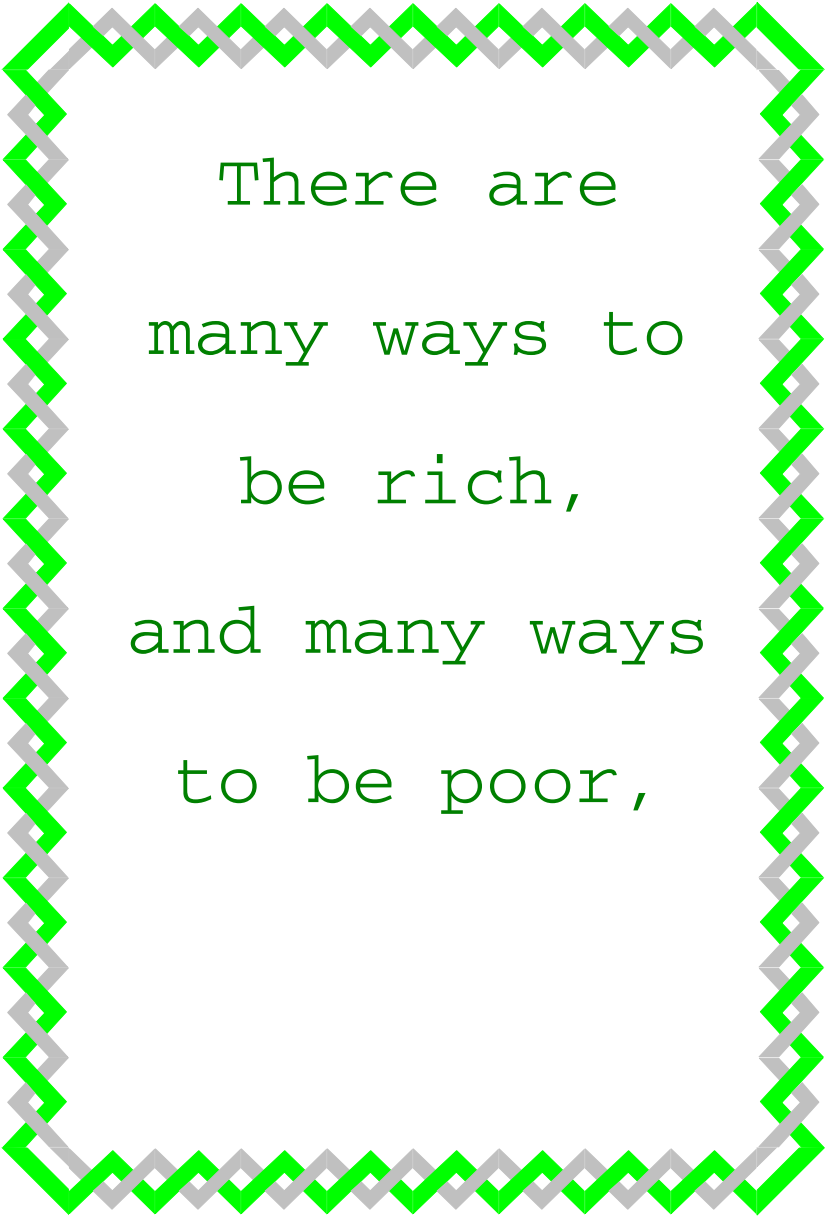
We believe  
when we do not  
know.

When we know,  
we do not  
believe.

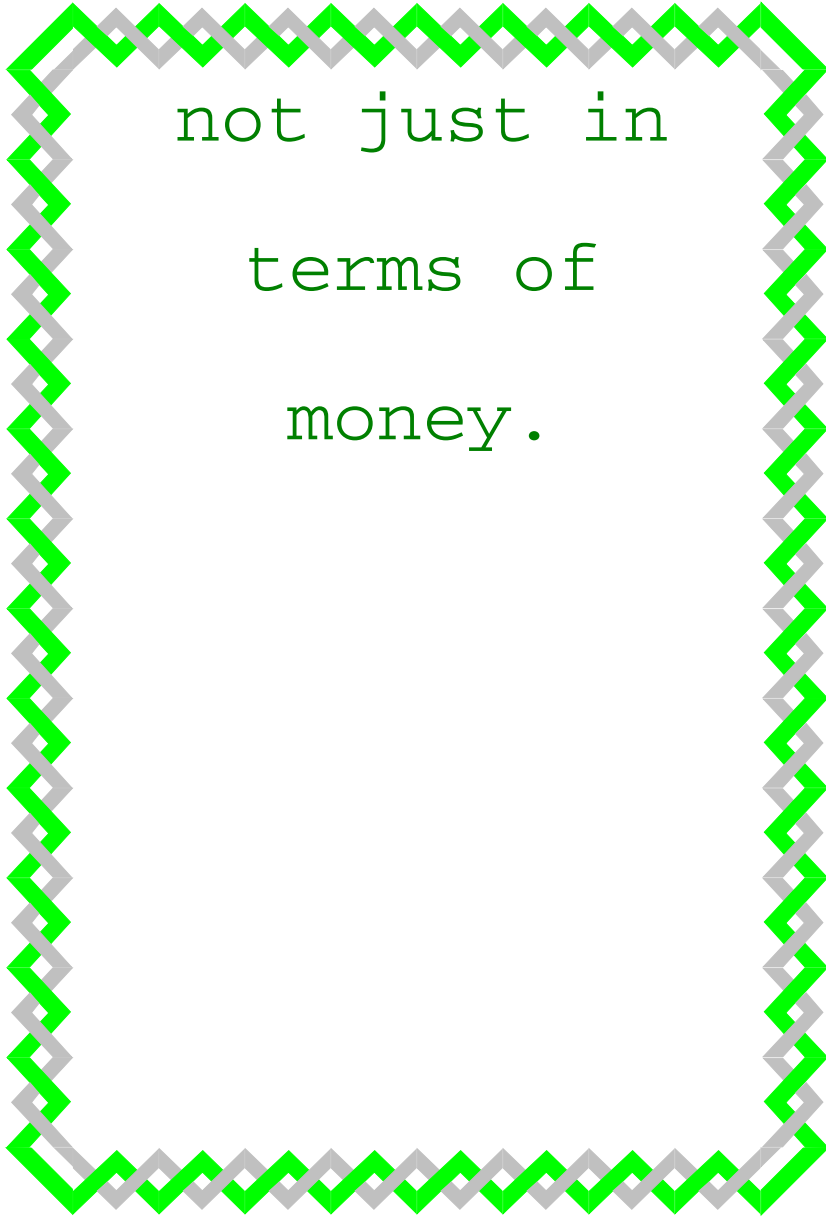


**T**he whole world suffers from belief and is in great need of Faith. Most of us take Belief and Faith as the same, and this is where the trouble begins; the dictionaries are wrong to describe them as *synonyms*, when they are actually *antonyms*, because Belief exists where there is no knowledge, no direct, personal experience of the object of Belief, while Faith, on the contrary, arises *from* knowledge, from direct contact with and experience of the object, whatever it might be. Thus, the old saying: "Seeing is believing", is not true; seeing is *knowing*; believing is *not* knowing!

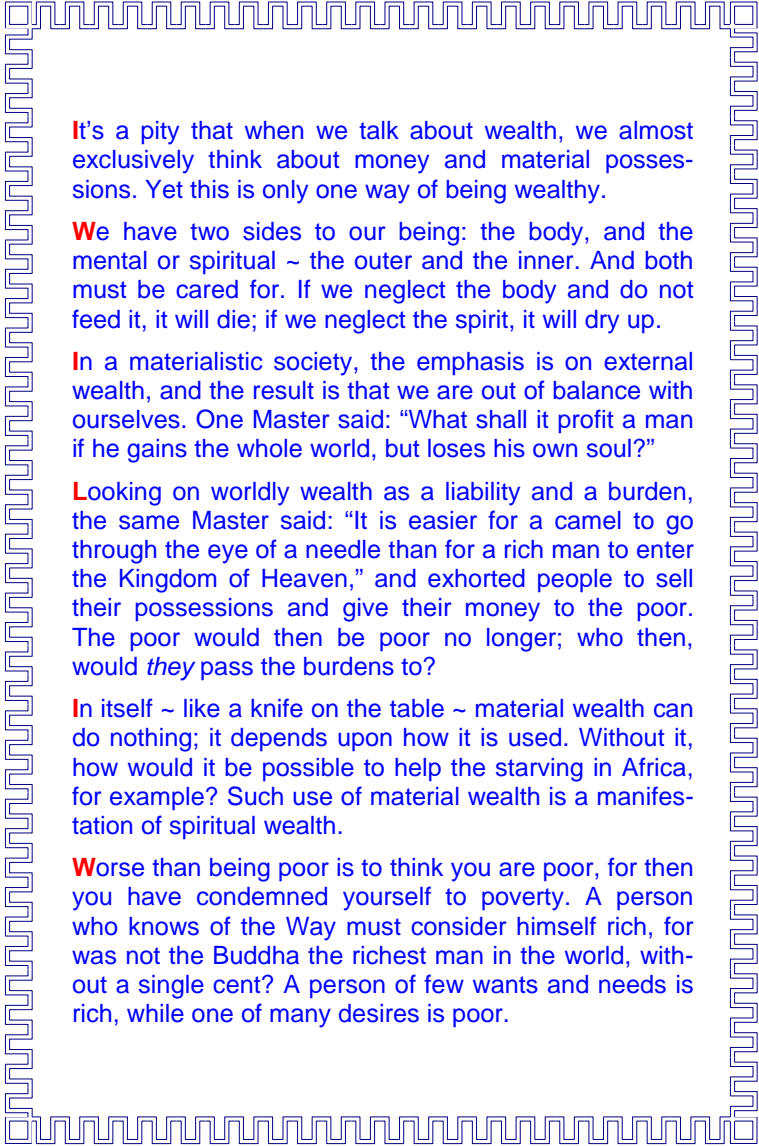
**I**n Europe, during the Middle Ages, most people believed that sickness was caused by demons, and Satan was a very real person to them. Nowadays, although many Christians still believe in Satan as a person, they would hardly answer "Yes" if asked: "You say you believe in Satan, but do you have faith in him?" In this way, they might recognize the difference between Belief and Faith.



There are  
many ways to  
be rich,  
and many ways  
to be poor,



not just in  
terms of  
money.



**I**t's a pity that when we talk about wealth, we almost exclusively think about money and material possessions. Yet this is only one way of being wealthy.

**We** have two sides to our being: the body, and the mental or spiritual ~ the outer and the inner. And both must be cared for. If we neglect the body and do not feed it, it will die; if we neglect the spirit, it will dry up.

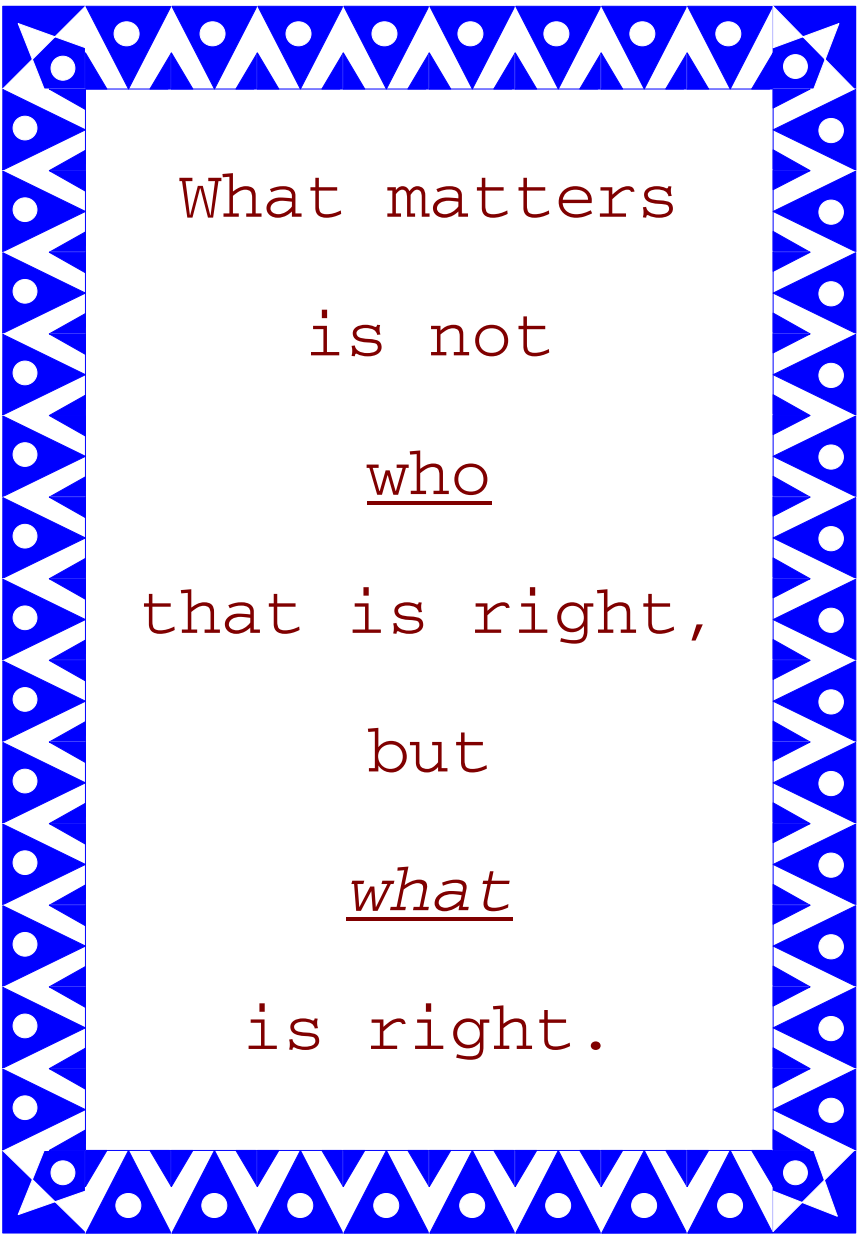
**I**n a materialistic society, the emphasis is on external wealth, and the result is that we are out of balance with ourselves. One Master said: "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his own soul?"

**L**ooking on worldly wealth as a liability and a burden, the same Master said: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven," and exhorted people to sell their possessions and give their money to the poor. The poor would then be poor no longer; who then, would *they* pass the burdens to?

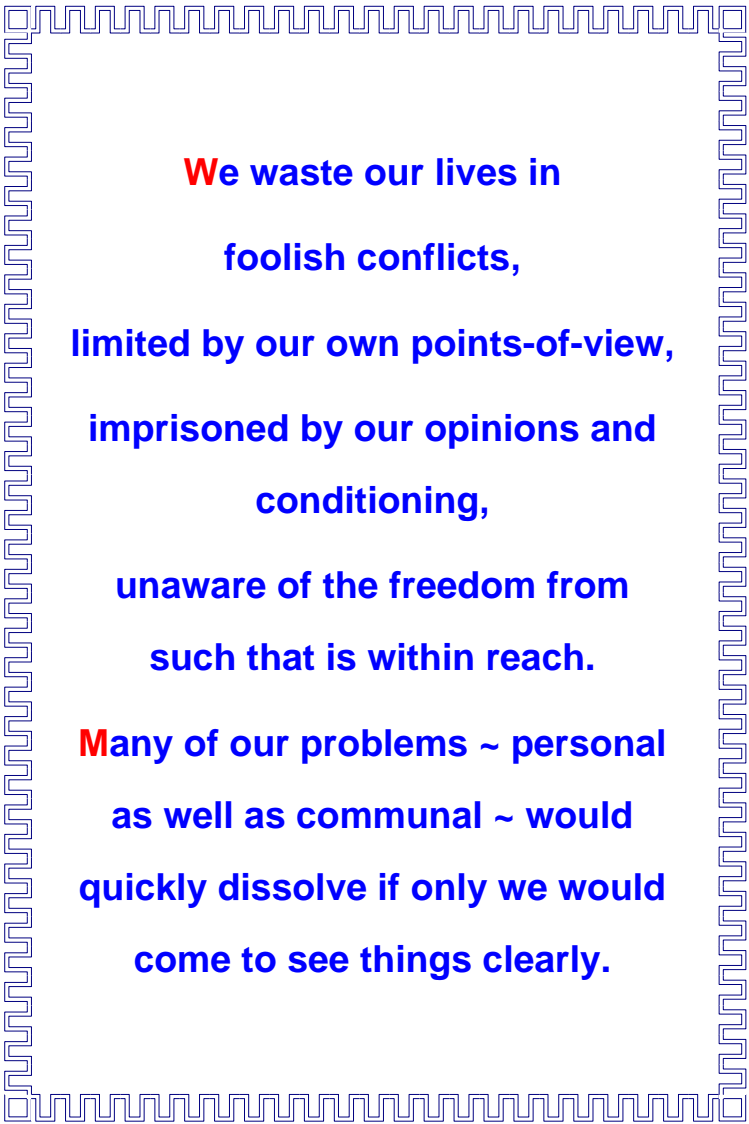
**I**n itself ~ like a knife on the table ~ material wealth can do nothing; it depends upon how it is used. Without it, how would it be possible to help the starving in Africa, for example? Such use of material wealth is a manifestation of spiritual wealth.

**W**orse than being poor is to think you are poor, for then you have condemned yourself to poverty. A person who knows of the Way must consider himself rich, for was not the Buddha the richest man in the world, without a single cent? A person of few wants and needs is rich, while one of many desires is poor.





What matters  
is not  
who  
that is right,  
but  
what  
is right.

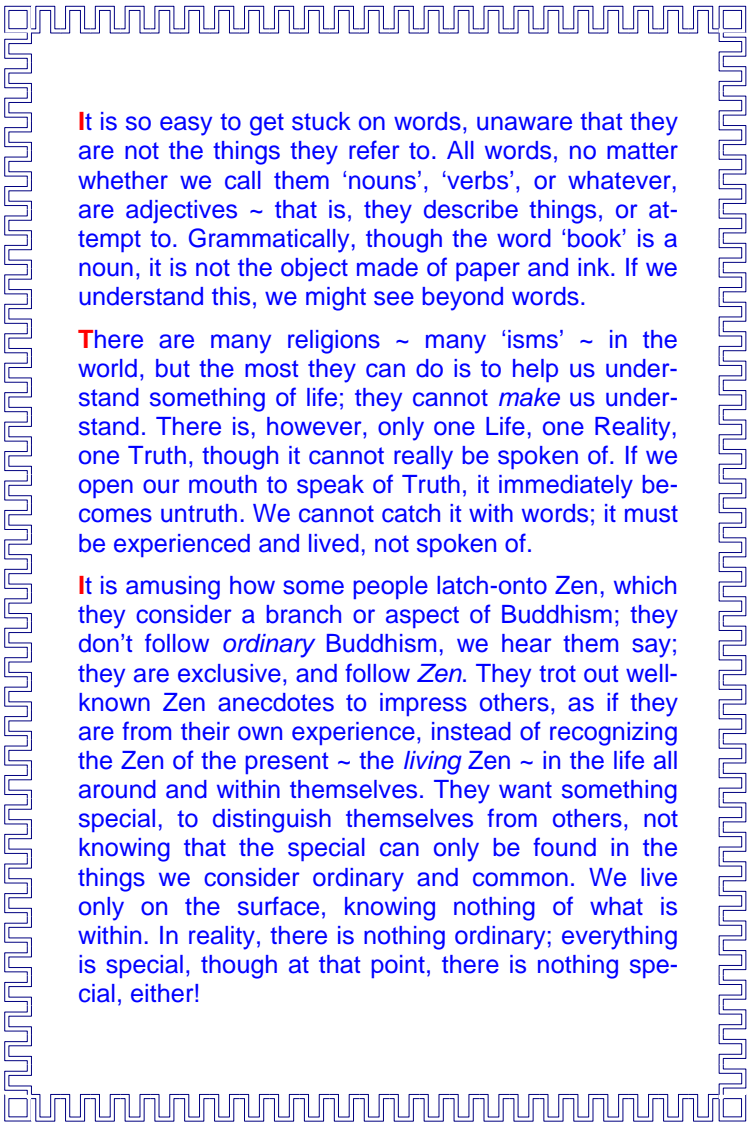


**We waste our lives in  
foolish conflicts,  
limited by our own points-of-view,  
imprisoned by our opinions and  
conditioning,  
unaware of the freedom from  
such that is within reach.**

**Many of our problems ~ personal  
as well as communal ~ would  
quickly dissolve if only we would  
come to see things clearly.**



When  
Zen  
is  
Zen  
it's  
not  
Zen.



**I**t is so easy to get stuck on words, unaware that they are not the things they refer to. All words, no matter whether we call them 'nouns', 'verbs', or whatever, are adjectives ~ that is, they describe things, or attempt to. Grammatically, though the word 'book' is a noun, it is not the object made of paper and ink. If we understand this, we might see beyond words.

**T**here are many religions ~ many 'isms' ~ in the world, but the most they can do is to help us understand something of life; they cannot *make* us understand. There is, however, only one Life, one Reality, one Truth, though it cannot really be spoken of. If we open our mouth to speak of Truth, it immediately becomes untruth. We cannot catch it with words; it must be experienced and lived, not spoken of.

**I**t is amusing how some people latch-onto Zen, which they consider a branch or aspect of Buddhism; they don't follow *ordinary* Buddhism, we hear them say; they are exclusive, and follow *Zen*. They trot out well-known Zen anecdotes to impress others, as if they are from their own experience, instead of recognizing the Zen of the present ~ the *living* Zen ~ in the life all around and within themselves. They want something special, to distinguish themselves from others, not knowing that the special can only be found in the things we consider ordinary and common. We live only on the surface, knowing nothing of what is within. In reality, there is nothing ordinary; everything is special, though at that point, there is nothing special, either!