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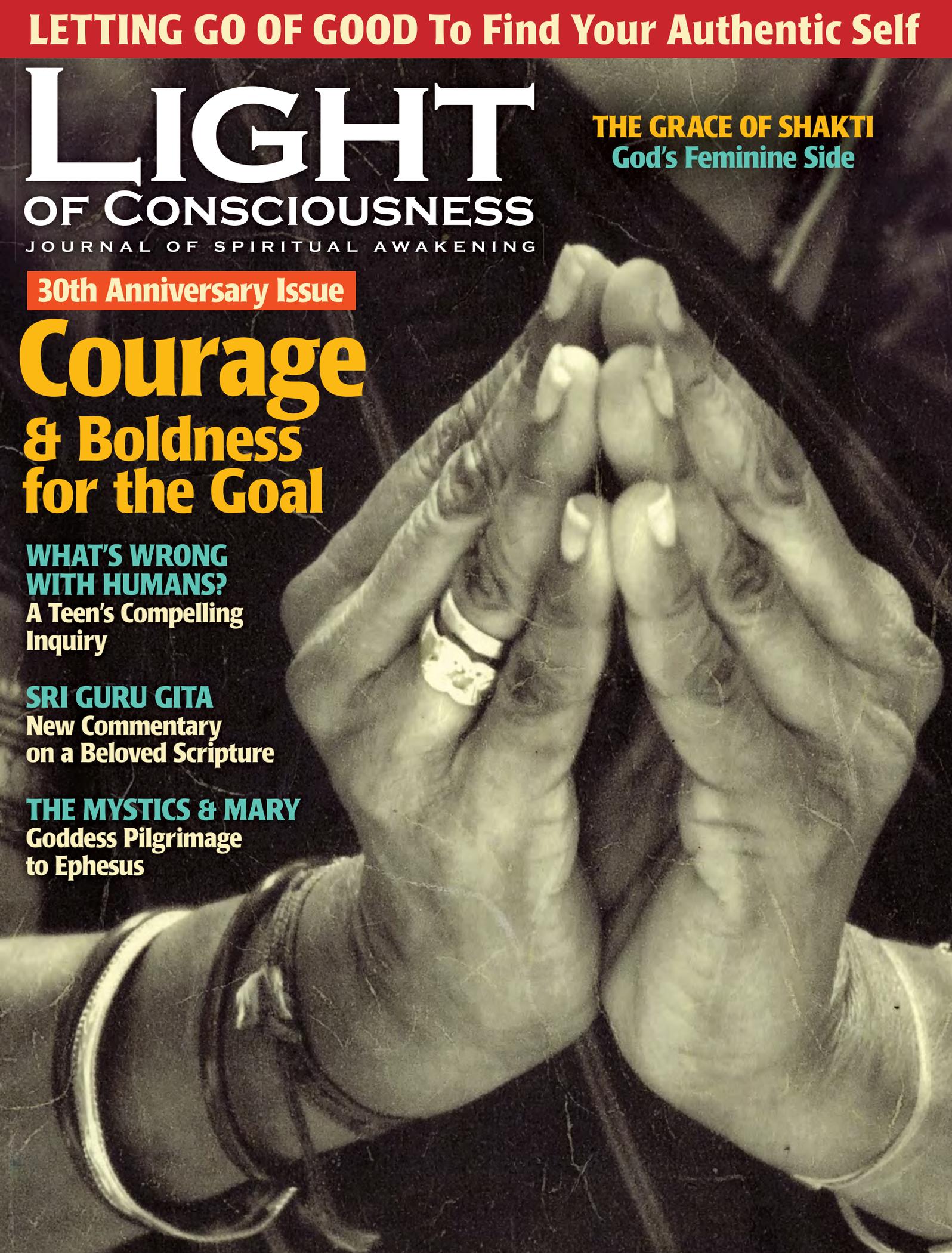
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Humanity's Spiritual Crisis

The search for peace within itself must precede and thus inevitably create peace in the world without. The world-wide unbalance is partly a result of the failure to recognize that being physically mature is not enough, that it is still needful to become emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually mature. **BY PAUL BRUNTON**

In Humanity's Spiritual Crisis, Paul Brunton makes it clear that we cannot build a new and better world until we have looked within, found the soul's light to guide us, and made unavoidable inner changes. We can choose to consciously co-operate with the inner purpose of this crisis and intelligently participate in it to our own benefit. If, however, we blindly resist or lazily delay, we will suffer the consequences—both individually and collectively.

PEOPLE DO NOT KNOW and need to be instructed that what is happening all over the world is a picture, in exaggerated degree, of what is happening inside themselves to a varying degree. How can real peace come into the world until the jungle-struggle mentality goes out of it? No law, no government can do more than curb to some extent its expressions in action. The statesman can regulate them within certain limits but not farther. Whenever this mentality is able to dominate, it not only poisons the inner being but also contributes towards the outer experience. The anger which is felt today may manifest itself on the physical plane tomorrow as an accident in which its owner falls and hurts himself—this is only a small incident illustrating the importance of self-control and the value of right thinking.

Wherever people have to live together in a home, or work together in a field or factory, an office or a business, the presence of even a single undisciplined aggressive personality among them is enough to bring trouble or create quarrels. From this we may see what benefits the insistence of all spiritual guides on

self-training and self-improvement can bring to social living. It teaches men to lift themselves up to their higher nature and to keep down their lower nature. To the extent that they are able to do this, to that extent, society benefits along with them. But to the extent that the warnings of the prophets are disregarded and the wisdom of the philosophers is unheeded, discord, strife, and war show themselves.

When emotion runs out of hand in the wrong direction, be it in anger, lust, hatred, or pride, it is also apt to run away with peace and happiness. It becomes a danger to person and property. The most predominant among the evil complexes which, under the law of recompense, bring suffering when activated are the aggressive, violent, explosive, and selfishly passionate ones. People who want to keep these causes of their troubles simply because they are natural or familiar, but do not want to experience the troubles themselves that inexorably follow, have an attitude which is illogical. Until angers and greeds, hates and lusts die out in men's hearts, conflict and contention will persist in their lives. And such a death to the primitive passions comes only with total surrender of the ego to the Overself. Those who seek this are not many: those who attain it, very few. Peace on earth is a noble dream; its full realization is far off (although its limited realization is not) until more people come to its quest in this, the only true and lasting way. Each individual must deal with his lower nature for himself and in himself, must pit intellect against it, instead of letting intellect serve it. This done, not only does he profit but also his people.

Humanity must learn to discipline and rule its violent negative passions, its aggressive emotions, and



antagonistic destructive thoughts, must begin to fight itself if it is ever to refrain from fighting others, must grow out of adolescent emotional immaturity and move upward from infantile, wholly ego-centered attitudes. The search for peace within itself must precede and thus inevitably create peace in the world without. The world-wide unbalance is partly a result of the failure to recognize that being physically mature is not enough, that it is still needful to become emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually mature.

It is a plain fact that the spiritual life is outside the vision and beyond the power of so many today. If we inquire into the causes we find that they have become so enslaved by their lower natures, so responsive to materialistic outside suggestions and environments that only the things which they can touch and feel and see with their bodies have any reality or meaning for them. Only those things attract them, not the finer things of the mind and the heart, not the sublimer ideals of the intuition.

What wisdom dictates and experience endorses is that if a better world is to come to humanity, better thoughts and feelings in humanity must be the prelude to that desirable condition. The notion that it can have a better order of society, without troubling to better itself first, is an idle one. Reform must start with human character, if it is to make a real rather than a sham start.

For out of its own long past it has brought over a residue of qualities of feeling which belong naturally to the sub-human kingdom, to wild ravaging jungle-beasts. It is their combination with cold ruthless intellect which has produced megalomaniacal, inordinately ambitious men who in turn have led so many others down roads of strife, selfishness, and atheism to what can only be disaster and doom in the end.

The suspicions and fears exhibited by such leaders, who represent the evil forces in our time, the psychotic intensity of their hatreds which are partly the result of the contemporary situation and partly contributory to that situation, are instinctive if unwitting recognition of the ultimate defeat and doom of what they try to express to the rest of the world and to impose on it. What is lacking in their views of the situation is not only faith in higher values but also faith in the idea of higher powers. They are, for so long and so deeply, drunk with the success of material development and achievements in apparently mastering Nature, that they have become the victims of an inflated ego, the proponents of the complete capacity of the human will to flout ethics and deny spirit when moving on its goals. But dramatic events will show them what a tremendous delusion this vaunted capacity really is for our planet is not a dead thing, but a living one. It is the body of a living, intelligent and potent Mind. It eventually

shakes out of its system and off its surface the moral and mental poisons which threaten to become utterly self-destructive to its own children, just as a human body throws up and throws out its own poisoned blood through skin eruptions. Those who refuse to permit themselves to be infected by the negative characters and adverse forces of our time, who seek the knowledge of, and obedience to, spiritual laws of being, provide for themselves in this way part of a form of protection against whatever dangers such forces may seek to involve all mankind in.

The tragic helplessness which the individual feels as the tide of events moves grimly onward, the apparent uselessness of striving against such happenings, crushes emotion and taunts any concern for personal fate. In the face of this formidable drift towards self-destruction, an individual in his or her aloneness and unimportance seems to count for very little. People can hardly be blamed for raising their hands resignedly as they come to the pessimistic conclusion that whatever they do, the outcome of the world events will remain unchanged, that however much they try to influence them, the extent to which they can do so is too small to count and that even if they do the utmost that their situations and status permit them to do, they will find that it is only a small effort with a very limited range at most.

Our times are a challenge to each individual to save himself, an enforced command to seek out the inner refuge and not helplessly to stake one's all only on political and military protection. We must make an

external and internal change in our way of living and no longer look solely to others to take care of us and bring us safely through this crisis. Each of us has to bear the deepest part of our anxiety alone. No one can bear it for us, or even help us to do so, however much we may delude ourselves that this is being done. Life, the great tutor, places us in such isolation to show us the face of our own psyche. It is a wise person who will profit by the revelation, and see his or her own weaknesses and strengths, ignorance and knowledge, frustration and sufficiency.

One does not have to join any group, institution, creed, religion, or organization to do this, nor on the other hand does one need to leave whatever group or organization, or religion he now belongs to. Such changes are less important than one's belief that a good life is somehow the way to satisfaction, and wrongdoing somehow the way to suffering. If we can bring ourselves to believe in this law of recompense and in the existence of some Higher Power behind it, and if we will make some effort to improve our character and unfold our inner resources, all this will be arms and armor for our defense in the crisis. 🌸

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