

EDITORIAL

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The question of true meaning of birth and death as well as the meaning of our coming to this world is a subject that interested humanity since its appearance on Earth. Almost equal importance was given to enquiry into how to get back to the “*original state of being*”. Spiritual traditions of Christianity and Judaism speak about the *Tree of Life* in the Garden of Eden. In *Genesis* 3:24 cherubim guard the way to the Tree of Life at the east end of the Garden. The *Book of Proverbs* (9:11) declares in relation to the Tree of Life that “the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom” meaning that “obedience to God’s will” is the message of the Tree of Life. In Judaic *Kabbalah’s Tree of Life* we see ten Sephirot concepts, through which the Ein Sof – the unknowable Divine – manifests the Creation and thus also man. Saint Augustine in the *City of God* (xiv. 26) tells “man was furnished with food against hunger, with drink against thirst, and with the tree of life against the ravages of old age”.

In contrast, in Jewish tradition, the *Tree of Knowledge* and the eating of its fruit represents the beginning of the mixture of good and evil together. In Christian theology, consuming the fruit of the *Tree of Knowledge of good and evil* represents the “*original sin*”. The same tradition describes how humans, after consuming the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, were expelled from Eden into the present environment, which is characterized by birth and death.

Thus coming to this world is the result of “consuming the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge”. It means we are curious and try to learn, try to know so many things, some of which are good, some bad. Still, after enjoying the gifts of nature, culture and technology we feel that it always ends in some “dead end”, beyond which is the Unknown and unknowable, where time and age are irrelevant and where we rejoin those who exist in flow with the Will of Absolute – manifest or unmanifest. But we cannot access this region through our will. We have to learn where to find the fruit of the Tree of Life, which enables us to stay still and do what the Will of the Absolute indicates and what our *karma* needs us to do, if we are to reassume our original state of being. Even in meditation when we reach the upper edge of *dhāranā*, we have to be taken into the states of *dhyāna* and *samādhi*, where

our will is no longer a determinant, and we have to lay it down and accept the Will that is described in various traditions differently, but is the governing power of the created and uncreated universes. This is why before enlightenment one has to “die” in the sense that nothing can be brought to the area of highest Being from over here. When this happens, we are re-born into a state of being where the flow along the Will of the Absolute is the only “thing” we have to maintain. In between these ways of life there are levels, which are there to aid our becoming more and more simple and integrated.

The papers in this issue are devoted mostly to these processes and we can only hope that the informed readers will find a number of inspiring impulses for one’s own spiritual life.