

# The Hall of Life

*By Paramahansa Yogananda*

In this hall of life, we are all motion picture actors as well as movie fans. We entertain, inspire and instruct others with the show of our experiences; and we ourselves watch the ever-changing, interesting pictures of other lives.

The pictures of current events are filmed in the east, west, north and south. The various nations with their strange and colorful actings of diverse customs, traditions and occupations amid varying scenic and climatic environments, offer infinitely rich and inexhaustible material for producing life-films of ever-new interest.

Educational, sensational, comical, saddening and inspiring pictures are taken by the mind-camera of the average man, every day, any time, anywhere. There are many comic films in life. Inspiring scenes help us when we behold the unrolled film of the lives of great men and great adventurers... as well as the heroic world figures of religious teachers...

We watch, moved and entertained, the mental motion pictures as filmed in Shakespearean tragedies and other great dramatic writings, in the house of our imagination. The pictures of world events, daily facts, evoked by our newspapers, hold our passing interest. The pictures of the sufferings of others bring a tear, a determination to help them. Through their sorrow, we find our own joy in helping them.

Sympathetic higher beings entertain themselves with the joy of helping mortals. If they cried, and became identified with the tears of others, they could not render help. For sorrow increases sorrow, which can only be diminished and healed through contact with the potent salve of unshakably happy minds...

Individuals who are highly nervous, or who are suffering with the malady of melancholia, or anemic pessimism, or who are stricken with spells of despair at the approach of the least difficulties of life—these do not profit by watching the pictures of tragedy in other lives. They will have fainting spells; they cannot thus learn the lesson of the result of wrong behavior and thus desist from error, nor can they render help to those who are suffering, since they themselves are not free from pain.

Thus, one must be thoroughly prepared mentally to watch profitably the motion pictures of the tragedy of trying experiences in the lives of others, in order to be able to render help in making others look upon life as only a picture for their entertainment and instruction.

The great wars of Europe and Asia, the natural cataclysms of earthquakes and floods, the famines, prosperous eras, influence of world-saints, statesmen, and villains, the work of the colossal geniuses of the ages—the poets, business men, writers, courageous reformers have all played their parts in the studio of the centuries.

Everything took time; to the consciousness of man everything seemed to last long. Each life seemed almost unending, each great event was all-absorbing, but when the Director of Life called “Cut!” the film was finished. The greatest lives, the complex knotted existences, the whole history of nations, your life and mine, past, present, and future (if we could but see), which seem to drag on minutely, could nevertheless be filmed and each life shown in a couple of hours. One’s life, lived through a hundred years, seems so long-drawn-out when taken through the slow mental camera, but with the telescopic lens of retrospection, one sees the whole panorama at a glance.

Is this life a movie show? The millions of geologic years, the constellations of heaven, the floating vapors, atomic combinations, earth materials, oceans, continents, nations, and their histories, millions of births and the almost complete change by death every hundred years of all the earth’s inhabitants, the various great intellectual, spiritual, and material civilization, their rise and fall—with this background, we can see all life as a vast, ever-changing, ever-new, ever-entertaining mighty film in the hall of introspection. This life is a picture shown in serials and by installments, infinitely interesting, ever-fresh, ever-stirring, ever-complex. The master minds and world-changing men... and other outstanding pioneers and leaders are the great stars of the motion picture productions, who command universal attention from their audiences.

The pictures of life must always be different to be interesting. One does not want to see, again and again, the same comedies of lives or the same news of prosaic facts, or the same tragedies of harrowing or gruesome experiences. One wants variety, and can hardly bear to see the same picture twice. That is why the Great Director of the motion picture of life keeps everything changing. You cannot drink twice from the same running water; you cannot watch the same event twice. The water passes by; the events change; you are not now the same person that you were a second ago—your thoughts have changed, your sum total is in a different proportion.

Why not then take life simply as a motion picture? To do that, you must steel your mind against sorrow. You must be prepared for variety. You must be a motion picture player, an entertainer, as well as one of the audience, in watching your own pictures and the pictures of others. While playing the part of combating disease, or fighting failures, or undergoing accidents, or enduring the trials of life, you must know that you are just playing a part.

Just as an actor in the moving pictures is untouched by the sorrow he has to depict in his characters, so must you remain untouched by the changing pictures of inevitable misfortune, sickness, sudden failure and unforeseen obstacles in life. Sickness, failure and grief are so, simply by the relative standards of human consciousness. A disciplined consciousness, united to cosmic consciousness, never inwardly experiences sickness, or suffering, or failure. We must recover that consciousness (of perfection) by wisdom and true understanding of the meaning of life and its problems.

Care not if you are not the principal player in the movies of life. No motion picture is made up of only one player, or one event. Your part in playing, if short or obscure, is yet very important, for without you the “plot” of life is incomplete. In the Universal Director’s eyes, he who plays his/her life’s part well, whatever that may be, is made a star to shine in His immortal galaxy.

Most of our troubles spring from not knowing what our parts are. This results from not developing our innate intuitive soul faculties. Rouse the all-feeling, all-seeing wisdom by regular meditation, and find your part. Then you must play and watch your own playing, or the playing of others—be it the news of plain facts, or a comedy of errors, or the tragedy of trying experiences—with an inwardly entertained mind. There is no room for pain, grievance, or boredom in watching the movies of our own lives. The retrospective consciousness of man can play all the noble parts of life joyously, untouched by suffering. These cosmic movies are all for our entertainment.

The Great Director of the Motion Picture Company of Life is made of joy. We are made in His image. From joy we came, in joy we live, in joy we melt. He brought out this cosmic motion picture to keep Himself entertained. Having come out of His being, we are endowed with the same quality of super-consciousness, by which we can watch the pictures of life, of birth, death and world events with the same divinely enjoying spirit.

You watch a tragedy in a motion picture house, and when it is over, you say: “Oh, it was a fine picture!” so must you be able to look upon the pictures of trials of your own life and say: “Oh, my life is interesting, with troubles and difficulties to be overcome. These are all my stimulants to show me my errors, and help me assume the right mental attitude by which I can watch with joy the fascinating spectacle of life.”

The consciousness of man is made of God and is pain-proof. All physical and mental sufferings come by identification, imagination, and wrong human habits of thinking. We have to travel along the labyrinthine path of life, visiting many motion picture houses of varied experiences, entering them with the consciousness of being entertained and instructed.

Then life and death will be watched with an unchangeable, joyous consciousness. We will find our consciousness to be one with cosmic consciousness, unchanged by the human waking of birth or the sleep of death. Thus we will watch the cosmic motion picture with perennial, ever-new joy.