

## Chapter 5

### **From Spirit to Child: Birth into Being**

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,  
The soul that rises with us, our life's star  
Hath had elsewhere its setting  
And cometh from afar  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
But training clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home.

*Intimations of Immortality:* William Wordsworth

Our inner journey to healing involves going way back into our histories. How we come into being greatly influences how we live our lives and how we are in relationships. Our earliest period functions as a school where we learn how to love and relate to others and ourselves. The journey from spirit to child holds within it the key to understanding the origins of an individual's psychological, as well as spiritual, evolution.

If we want to understand ourselves in relationship and the patterns that underpin the way we relate, we have to be prepared to look within and review our formative years and our earliest experiences. As babies and small children we are closest to our spirit and our essential selves. Our first relationships teach us about life – and about love. It is during our formative years, when we are coming into being, that we lay down the foundations of our later relationships.

Working with pregnancy, childbirth and babies has taken

me to a new level of understanding about the soul, and has greatly enhanced my work with my adult clients. I have always felt privileged to be witness to a new baby's entry into the world. Each birth was a sacred moment that I still treasure. The wisdom and purity of soul is very present at birth, since the newborn has not long left the spirit world and it still carries the divine as a recent memory. You can see this in a newborn baby's eyes.

I have written extensively on the birth experience and more particularly on the formative impact of prenatal life and birth on our lives.<sup>21</sup> Birth and life in the womb are soul experiences that create patterns we carry with us into future life. However, the more I work in this area, the more I believe that, in line with our spiritual challenges, some of these energetic patterns are pre-existing in the unborn child. The incoming soul brings archetypal patterns and potential with him or her, and these are dependent on what it has chosen to learn in this embodiment. Human life offers a soul the greatest chance for growth, as the opportunities to learn are great. The human journey is a difficult one, with many challenges together with many joys.

Each person has a sacred soul contract, which represents an agreement each soul makes before being born. Caroline Myss, author of *Sacred Contracts* writes: 'A sacred contract is an agreement your soul makes before you are born. You promise to do certain things for yourself, for others and for divine purposes. Part of the contract requires that you discover what it is that you are meant to do the divine, in turn, promises to give you the guidance you need through your intuition, dreams, hunches, coincidences, and other indicators.'<sup>22</sup>

As already said, the soul's journey does not end in one lifetime. Life is a continuum, and our soul's existence may span many embodiments. We choose our embodiments in line with our spiritual challenges. This means that a soul wish-

ing to incarnate will seek out the particular parents and circumstances that will offer it the greatest opportunities to fulfil its soul contract. I will return to look at this more fully later in this chapter.

### **Love and Babies: ‘Our Birth is but a Sleep ...’**

My work with pregnancy and birth was a spiritual opening for me in that it revealed and confirmed the ever presence of the divine in our lives. Unborn souls are close to the divine. It is possible that they are also closer to knowing their soul’s purpose. There is a story told that on the night before birth the little unborn soul is carried all over heaven and earth by an angel of God. It learns all there is to know. The light of knowing burns brightly in its face. Just before it is put back into its mother’s womb, the light is extinguished, thus the tiny depression at the base of the infant’s nose and peak of its lips. From birth on, one searches for this feeling of knowing God, of completion and divine love.<sup>23</sup>

Love is not a problem for babies since we are all born with the capacity to love. The memory of being part of a great oneness and love are all close to the child since he or she is still largely unconscious of the sense of ego awareness. The ‘forgetting’ that happens to a soul once it incarnates and begins its human journey is muted in the baby. The memory of infinite love and oneness gradually fades as the child begins the process of differentiation out of the maternal matrix and forms its own separate ego and personality. The following story illustrates this very well.

A little girl awaited with great eagerness the birth of her sibling. Her mother went into hospital to have the baby and at last the great day came when her little baby brother was brought home. The little girl, keen to be alone with her new brother, kept insisting that her parents leave them in a room together. Her parents, concerned about the possibility that

sibling rivalry might get out of hand, reluctantly agreed but not before they had hooked up the baby intercom so they could hear what was going on, in case of a problem. The little girl thanked them and gravely shut the door. She approached her little brother's cradle and bending low, she said 'Little baby, remind me what God looks like, I'm beginning to forget!'

The divine knowing is there in all of us, however.

### **The Myth of ER**

Our origins in the divine, our fall, and our endless search to return to something we feel but cannot remember, seem to be part of us. In Plato's *Republic*, there is a detailed description of the stages a soul must go through before incarnating on earth. In the story of ER, a soldier who returns to consciousness after being left for dead on a battlefield, ER finds himself suspended in a state between life and death. Tibetan Buddhists call it a 'bardo' state meaning an in-between place, between heaven and earth. He found himself in a kind of station where souls were passing from one plane to another. Souls that were preparing to incarnate on earth went before three fates: Clotho, who spins the thread of life; Lachesis, who determines its length; and Athropos, who cuts it off. Many lives are then set out before the souls waiting to incarnate and they are advised to choose. There were all sorts of lives of every type. Plato makes it clear that some souls were new but others had lived before and their choices were influenced by their previous lives. After the souls have chosen they are led before the three fates, and their choices and destiny are sealed. Then before entering life on the earth plain they are marched to the Plain of Forgetfulness and required to drink from the River of Un-mindfulness. As they drink, they forget everything that has just transpired.<sup>24</sup>

It makes complete sense that if we knew what was to happen in our lives, we may never make any choices. If you

knew, for example, that you had contracted with your soul mate that in order for you to learn the lessons involved in being abandoned, he would leave you after ten years of marriage, then you would never bring yourself to start this relationship! Similarly, would you choose to become involved with someone if you knew beforehand he would cheat and rob you? Or how could you bear to give birth to a child if you knew that some years later she would be killed in a brutal manner?

Since through our sacred contract we are seeking to achieve our divine potential as the fullest expression of our spirit, we are propelled to live and reflect life in particular ways according to our soul's choices. These choices are not usually apparent to us because we are not generally conscious of our soul's sacred contract. Over time, our lives, relationships and experiences may gradually reveal our contract; nonetheless, we do unconsciously carry memories of our soul's code. It becomes easier for us to become conscious of our spiritual tasks when we pay attention to our dreams, our intuition and our inner voice.

Our soul only gradually awakens us to our relationship with the divine. We go through life experiences to become spiritually mature. We have to earn spiritual qualities; they are not handed to us on a plate. To develop the capacity to love unconditionally, for example, we have to raise our consciousness to a level beyond our own basic needs. Like heroes in a mythical journey, we have to struggle to make the right choices and achieve spiritual qualities. We must be initiated, and life offers us many initiations that we are challenged to endure and overcome. Perhaps it is for this reason we need to forget our origins in the divine. If we thought we knew it all there would be no need to struggle, to strive.

We learn lessons by meeting and overcoming life's challenges. Learning forgiveness, for example, is a spiritual quality we need to develop. If we have been let down or

abandoned by a lover, learning to forgive him or her will constitute a challenge we will sooner or later have to face.

It took me a long time to reach the stage where I could forgive my former partners for the pain I felt they caused me. When I understood that our life partners tend to be our soul mates, I found it easier to forgive them and I realised that, rather than harbouring resentment, I should be grateful to them for having the courage to fulfil our agreement, our soul's contract, and for helping me meet some of my challenges.

With one man in particular, whom I loved very much, this was the case. I believe we came together so that I could learn to deal with abandonment, principally, and develop the capacity for unconditional love. Our relationship did not work out but loving him and suffering his loss when we broke up opened my heart in a special and very deep way. Now I can look back and thank him and still love him, knowing that something was completed. This does not, of course, diminish the sense of deep hurt I felt at the time. But I believe I would not be writing this book if I had not been driven into exploring the deepest terrain of my own heart.

We are meant to forget our divine origins, and the agreements we made before birth, so that we can live fully and fulfil our soul's contract to the best of our ability. By enduring and overcoming life's obstacles and challenges, we grow. Our initiations are our spiritual tasks of empowerment. If we can manage to think this way about our lives and to believe, furthermore, that we are provided with everything we need to help us fulfil our soul tasks, I believe we can live with less fear, knowing that everything that is meant to come to us will come, and that divine guidance is always present. Taking this attitude helps us to trust that all is in divine order.

## **Roots of the Soul**

How far back do we need to go to find the patterns that un-

derpin our lives and determine our relationships? Where do the roots of the soul lie? When I wrote *Songs from the Womb*, it was to highlight the formative impact of our prenatal lives and the birth experience, and to draw attention to the loss of soul many encounter due in large part to the over-medicalisation of modern childbirth. Back then, I thought that birth and prenatal life constituted, in large part, the origins of our experience. The archetypal and spiritual level were there somewhere, but not defined in any way.

At that time I had been preparing women and their partners for childbirth, and had founded an holistic birth centre, where couples were encouraged to have their babies in the most natural, empowering and fulfilling way they could. I learned in those years about the great pain that results when women are prevented from giving birth in the way they feel they want to, and congruent with their instincts, and when their choices are denied them. I learned about the suffering endured by mothers and their babies when the birth experience was not as they expected, and there had been interference in the natural process. Most of all, I came to understand not only the powerful impact on the mother of giving birth, but also the formative nature of both life in the womb and the birth experience on new babies.

I know that at that time, the focus of my attention had been drawn there for a purpose: to help create more soulful birthing conditions for mothers and babies by highlighting the sacred and spiritual dimensions of childbirth.

My work with childbirth led me to further examine the origins of human consciousness, the formative impact of early life, and the nature of the psyche, and I undertook studies and training in psychoanalytic psychotherapy, which resulted some years later in my qualification as a Jungian psychotherapist.

My clinical practice, together with further studies in the fields of consciousness research and pre- and perinatal psychology, suggested not only that birth and prenatal life are formative

experiences affecting later life, but that such memories could be recovered. As I continued exploring the roots of human experience, I found my explorations led me increasingly to the spiritual and archetypal dimension of human existence.

If life is a continuum, and the soul or 'spirit' of each person is eternal, what memories might we bring with us into the world? What if, as evidence anecdotal or otherwise seems to suggest, our individual consciousness goes further back than conception? Could the roots of our soul lie beyond what we generally accept as the start of human life? And if so, what kind of memory might we have of a time in spirit when our souls had not yet incarnated?

I found my training inadequate to contain the kind of experiences that were presenting themselves to me. As an evolving therapist, trained in traditional psychoanalytical methods and theories, there was no frame of reference for the material flowing into my consulting room. I sensed something greater was needed, and felt limited by my training thus far. Here were young women afraid to become pregnant and give birth for no reason apparent to us, and men suffering from a sense of disconnection that prevented them from relating, sons living their dead father's un-lived lives and women carrying generations of other women's pain. Working with biographical material, as I had been taught, was often not enough to reveal the hidden messages of the soul in these clients' stories.

In one instance a young woman came to see me because she wanted to have a baby. She was happily married and there seemed to be no reason why she could not conceive. However, she was afraid to try. In the course of some sessions we worked through the pain of a former abusive relationship which had resulted in a pregnancy and abortion, but that did not seem to do it. Although travelling back to this time helped her release some of the pain associated with this relationship and lost pregnancy, it did not seem to shift things for her. It was not

until I asked her about her family, her mother, grandmother and her female lineage, that we made a startling connection. She told me that her maternal grandmother (whom she had never met) had developed puerperal psychosis and had been incarcerated in a mental institution. She had never recovered and ended her days there.

In this young woman's psyche was a great fear of pregnancy. To her, pregnancy was equated with madness. Unconsciously, she carried her grandmother, together with a story of pregnancy and madness, so that they were indistinguishable. When we made this connection something was lifted and she was able to allow herself, in due course, to conceive a child.

It fascinated me that connections like this could be made with distant and sometimes unknown figures in a family history. It brought it home to me how intrinsically we are all connected, and especially how the history of our family and ancestors still live on in us; how we seem to carry un-lived dreams and un-lived lives of characters we have never met and who might have died before we were born. How does this all come about? Here is one answer.

### **Soul Waves**

There seems to be continuity in the soul. This sense of continuity was accepted widely in earlier times and Jung's archetypal theory and Myss' idea of sacred contracts both encompass this notion. The Sufi poet Rumi makes reference to our endless search to release the karmic imprints of our souls:

We search this world for the great untying  
Of what was wed to us at birth  
And gets undone at dying.

Jung, referring to our archetypal heritage, also wrote that the story of those who have gone before continues to unfold in

us. We are born into and inherit our chosen family's history, and the myths of that time. We call this our personal and archetypal heritage. Each child is born with the contours of its life already present in potential. This means that we are born with, and carry, memories of both our ancestry and our future destiny. Our archetypal heritage and our soul's choices will inform how we go on to live our lives.

We are influenced not simply by the archetype per se, but by the archetype as it has been constellated and handed down to us through our ancestry. In this way, a pregnant woman can be informed by generations of pregnant women before her, and influenced by imagery and conditioning from her female lineage. Trans-generational patterns are passed on from parent to child so that a daughter can unconsciously carry her mother's, even her grandmother's wounds, thoughts, expectations, disappointments and pain, and a son can give birth to his father's un-lived dreams.

Jung describes it thus:

Man possesses many things which he has never acquired but has inherited from his ancestors. He is not born a 'tabula rasa'; he is merely born unconscious. But he brings with him systems that are organised and ready to function in a specifically human way, and these he owes to millions of years of human development. Just as the migratory and nest-building instincts of birds were never learnt or acquired individually, man brings with him at birth the ground plan of his nature, and not only of his individual nature but of his collective nature. These inherited systems correspond to the human situations that have existed since primeval times: youth and old age, birth and death, sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, mating and so on. I have called this

congenital and pre-existent instinctual model, or pattern of behaviour, the archetype.<sup>25</sup>

We are all on an archetypal journey, and our soul contract ensures that we meet the right people and experience the right experiences, in order to fulfil our soul purpose.

### **Archetypes as Architects of Our Lives**

Archetypes hugely influence us, they inform our thinking and behaviour and are part of nature and the soul. This soul level also embraces a social ethic so that we are concerned about others and humanity in general. In the archetypal domain we are all interconnected so that what we do influences others.

The archetypal dimension is also the spiritual dimension, our understanding of which helps us approach life philosophically, and enables us to grow beyond the narrow viewpoint of our own ego needs and desires. Thinking in spiritual and archetypal terms helps us not only to heal our painful past but also to connect with our inner selves. It returns us to ourselves so that we do the work, rather than expecting the answers to come from outside us, and expecting others to heal us.

An appreciation of the soul level helps us transcend our everyday life and our emotional wounds. Engaging with our inner selves develops a soul stamina without which we cannot change direction, engage in healing or take opportunities. It is only when we release the past that a new part of us can be born, thereby ensuring our spiritual evolution.

In essence, the archetypal level constitutes the roots of our experience. Trans-generational patterns are passed on in prenatal life since it is in the womb the archetypes become humanised, and pre-existing trends or patterns begin to be activated. It is not that we are already primed to live a particular life or that our future is mapped out for us; it is more that we are

predisposed to experience life a particular way. Our archetypal and psychic inheritance, together with our early life experience, greatly influence us, but need not determine how we go on to live our lives. We always have choice, but we generally need to become aware of our unconscious patterns before we can exercise this choice.

In prenatal life, we learn about life through our mothers. Everything is filtered through her. If she feels loved, secure and happy then her womb will be filled with lovely endorphins, the love hormone. If she feels unhappy, or has persistent anxiety and fear, then the child will feel it too. A child's experiences in the womb will begin to flesh out that child's archetypal heritage, and the child will be marked by that intrauterine experience in such a way that unconsciously will affect the child in later life.

Later, after birth, the child will learn about father, about siblings, about the world, and more about love. In *Reclaiming Father*, I write about how it is through his father that a boy learns how to love a woman.<sup>26</sup> All babies and children learn about human love through their parents and early life experiences.

## **Soul Contracts**

Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you

Before you came to birth I consecrated you

*Old Testament Jeremiah cp.1*

Before there is a child, there is a soul wishing to incarnate. And in the parents, there is often the thought or the desire for a child, whether this is conscious or not. 'You were still a glint in your father's eye', people often say to a child who asks where they were at a time when they had not yet been conceived. Many of us call our babies to us, but most often I think it is our babies' unborn souls that call to us from some

place between the earth and the sky when they decide to incarnate through us. Each child will have contracted to be born to you and your family as part of its spiritual destiny.

Caroline Myss, author in the field of energy medicine and consciousness, writes in *Sacred Contracts* that your soul contract consists of agreements you made before you were born. This includes choosing to be born to parents and into families that will best provide you with the experiences you need to fulfil your agreements. Your sacred contract comes through your particular archetypal constellation or pattern. Linking them with Jung's archetypal theory she suggests that:

Just as the energies of your chakras work together to provide a map of physical and energy information, the collective body of your archetypes produces a view of the governing forces of your psyche and soul.<sup>27</sup>

Jung believed that all souls are connected in the collective unconscious where the history of all people and the universal currents of life are held. As we saw earlier, archetypes are organising principles that exist in the collective unconscious. Archetypal patterns are in potential in each person and are given shape through life experiences. They operate as dynamic living energy and form part of our psychic heritage. Myss describes them as the architects of our lives.

Functioning in the same way, our individual soul contract influences the people and experiences we draw into our lives, and some of the choices we make. Some souls are destined to meet, for example, and have certain experiences that are meant to further their soul's growth. Knowing that you have a sacred soul contract can help you understand why certain relationships and experiences are or have been necessary in your life.

As I have previously said, the archetypal level is the spiritual level and contains the roots of the soul. Archetypal patterns

awaken in us our own divine potential. They tap into the great flow of the collective and the currents that contain soul contracts. Through them we can begin to access our own histories and the life challenges we have chosen to experience.

Myss sees archetypes as part of each person's spiritual chronology. Since they are ancient, prehistoric and primal in origin, they are trans-biographical and pre-date our own birth. She writes of our archetypal inheritance:

It comes from our own energy origins in the divine, which is also the source of our sacred contract – the guided plan for our life. We co-create our contract with divine guidance, and it includes many individual agreements – or subcontracts – to meet and work with certain people, in certain places, at certain times.<sup>28</sup>

### **A Sense of Essence**

Many people wonder what their life purpose is, and would like to have access to their sacred contract. However, such information is not readily available – it is buried deeply in our unconscious. Most of us do not have a conscious memory of our own births, never mind further back. However, many people have been able to recall and relive their birth experiences through hypnotherapy, age regression, and other forms of therapy. Past-life therapy also brings people back to previous lives to connect with whatever archetypal energetic patterns are still influencing their lives now.

Memory can be locked in the cells of the body, as well as the psyche. Releasing these memories can have a powerful transformative effect on the person. Typically, clients move from the past life through the prenatal realm, where energetic patterns expressed in their current life begin to take shape. As I said before, the prenatal realm is a place of learning; it is in the womb that many pre-existing archetypal pre-dispositions begin to take root.

What about earlier? Do we remember anything of the time we were in spirit? There are indications that we have some inkling of existence before we took human form. In prenatal and past-life regressions it has been found that somewhere in the unconscious psyche, there is awareness not simply of birth memory and life in the womb, but also of individual essence, of energies, of emotions and imagery, particularly when the stage or just prior to the stage of conception is recalled. Often this comes through a sense or vision of colours, sounds and/or feelings. In essence there is recall of a spirit state, or a beingness specific to that individual.

Four years ago, early one morning, I was in a dingy gymnasium in the basement of an apartment block in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Minding my own business, and exchanging the briefest of comments with a fellow gymnast on the bicycle next to me, he turned to me suddenly and said, 'Can you feel your essence when you are cycling?' After we both fell about laughing, we got to talk more seriously about one's essence and what it was. Leaving the gymnasium we continued our discussion over breakfast. We both knew that, without being able to describe it, we each have our own unique 'essence'.

We never met again after that particular holiday but it was a moment I remember well and probably the start of some search in me to go to a deeper level in my work. I believe that this essence, when we can connect with it, can tell us something of what our soul purpose is, and sometimes help us understand the tasks we have undertaken in this lifetime. An inkling of our soul's purpose can also help us heal our relationships. Understanding that all our relationships and love affairs contain spiritual lessons we need to learn from can help us heal painful emotional wounds we might carry from them, so that we are empowered rather than crippled by our past.

To recover our essence and our soul contract we generally need to go further back than our normal biography – before

birth. It is possible that it is at conception that each person is most whole, complete, full of potential, and more in touch with his or her divine purpose and soul tasks. The incoming soul is as yet untouched by energetic or material influences from its parents. Is there at this time an awareness of the soul's code and purpose? And if so, can we recover it?

I have on occasion regressed my clients into womb life and conception, when it feels appropriate to do so. This is always done within the context of ongoing work, and an established therapeutic relationship. Sometimes we are guided there by the psyche of the client when we seem to be stuck and getting nowhere with regular psychoanalysis of childhood experiences. The unconscious may have come through in a dream or other kind of imagery, and when the indications to go deeper and further back are there, we proceed.

In such regressions, I have had startling results that have produced dramatic changes in the lives of those I regressed. Many people were able to connect with some aspect of their original soul's purpose and a sense of individual essence, which gave meaning to their lives. Sometimes connecting with one's essence, a person's soul tasks and purpose in incarnating into this particular lifetime are revealed or partly revealed. This knowledge can help a person in many ways and unlock hidden aspects of their soul.

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Jenny, a 43-year-old nurse, was burdened with the sense of having to look after others. Though she enjoyed her profession and found it fulfilling, she could never switch off. She never seemed to be able to let herself go and enjoy life. She had friends and a social life but had remained single and unfulfilled in love.

When she came to me first I was struck by her opacity. I can only describe it as a sense of layers and packaging!

She was a heavy enough woman but not physically fat. I had a sense of not being able to get at who she really was. Usually I sense energy around my clients and something of their essence typically radiates out, but Jenny was different. She seemed hidden somehow beneath layers of padding. And yet some small spark in her, the one that had propelled her to come to see me, was obviously alive and wanted to be discovered.

Jenny, approaching middle age, dearly wanted to meet a man and have a relationship. However, when anyone came remotely close, she clammed up. Because she was comfortable in the caring role, she generally chose men who needed her but who in turn could not truly give to her. Moreover, she was afraid of full sexual intercourse and had remained a virgin, which also caused a problem in her relationships. When I met her she had not had a relationship for many years. She longed to break out of this cycle and discover what the problem was.

‘I can’t seem to be able to let my guard down,’ she told me. The eldest of three daughters from a rural family, her parents had since died. As the eldest in the family, her mother, who was often sickly, had relied on Jenny to provide the mothering she herself seemed unable to supply. On top of that, the girls were brought up very strictly indeed, particularly when it came to sex and love. Both parents seemed to have an obsession about pregnancy and the fear that one or any of their unmarried daughters might become pregnant. This shameful ethic around sex and the body was responsible for a great deal of shame, neurotic behaviour, and misery in the family.

After some months, Jenny asked me if I would do a birth regression. Her mother was so much part of her that we rarely seemed to be able to move on. It was as though she carried her mother around with her. She would get very upset thinking about her mother and remembering the suffering she perceived her mother had endured. She felt there was

something deep down gnawing away at her and she wanted to get to it. Obviously she remembered nothing of her own birth except that her mother had always said that birthing and being pregnant were something she did not enjoy, but simply endured as 'women's work'.

Jenny settled on the couch, and I began the regression. At first all went in the usual fashion and she went back over time into her mother's womb. Then I asked her if she could see herself before she had been conceived. She became very quiet and appeared to be asleep. When I gently asked her where she was, she sighed and said:

'I'm up there, it's a wonderful light feeling. There's lots of sound and colours. I can see colours.'

'What colours can you see?' I asked her.

She became animated and began to shift on the couch. 'Lots of greens and light blues, oh, it's like a rainbow.' 'Where are you, are you there in spirit, can you see or feel your essence?'

I was close to her, taking notes by the couch as I normally do, and looking at her, I saw that a remarkable transformation seemed to have taken place. She seemed light and airy, and I could see the little blue/green light essence of her shining through. Joy, light and love seemed to be radiating from her.

After some time when I asked her if she could see her mother she became quiet again and then began to cry.

'What's the matter?'

'I can see my Mum, she doesn't know I'm here. It's so hard for her.'

'What's hard, what's happening?'

Jenny was so upset we stopped for a while. I asked again if she had a sense of why she had come down. 'Oh yes', she said, a weariness beginning to appear in her voice. 'I have come to help my Mum; she can't go through this alone. She needs help. I am here to help her.'

And with that Jenny was conceived and entered her mother's womb.

Later, when we worked through the material we had uncovered during the birth regression, Jenny remembered what her mother had always told her. That pregnancy and birth was women's work. But she also remembered her mother had hinted at the unpleasant surprise she had had when she discovered she was pregnant with her. As it turned out, Jenny's mother had conceived out of wedlock in a time when this was considered hugely shameful. And Jenny had contracted to help her mother.

Since this contract was buried deep in her unconscious and was later amplified by the reality of her early life as her mother's helper, Jenny was unaware of what imprints she was carrying. She was unaware that she carried responsibility for helping her mother, and that this was lodged in the cells of her body as a memory. Jenny was carrying layers and layers of suffering and responsibility that did not belong to her. Here too maybe had originated her fear of sex. Sexual intercourse can result in a child being conceived. And this was shameful.

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In many cases, regression work reveals an essential truth about a person. In this case what we uncovered helped Jenny to engage with her true nature, her essence. Engaging with this energy within her helped her release some of what she was carrying, and connecting with her colours seemed to give her a sense of place; a sense of home – a place she could always return to when things got hard and on top of her. It gave her a feeling of knowing herself, and it also helped her, in time, release some of the heavy soul bonds that were holding her back.

### **Learning from Unborn Souls: a Spiritual Wisdom**

As we saw in Jenny's story, we all come into the world with a soul contract, and this involves being born to certain parents, and having certain lessons we have agreed to learn to further our spiritual evolution. Many souls come in with issues such as how to overcome abandonment, guilt and betrayal, to learn the difference between conditional human love and unconditional divine love, and many others. Still others come in to help their chosen parents learn some lessons. This is an area that fascinates me, particularly with unborn souls that do not make it to birth – babies that do not survive womb life or that die at birth. What might these souls be teaching their mothers? Or what might the short womb life they inhabited have taught them?

I lost two babies in early pregnancy and these experiences no doubt stimulated in me a desire to discover their purpose in my life. In deep inner work, I have connected with these little unborn souls, particularly my little daughter to be; at the time of writing she would now be twelve years old. I know she came in unexpectedly at a time when her father and I were not happy together, and unconsciously I held on to her for some time after I lost her, maybe as a way of not facing the loss or failure of my marriage. In time, through deep soul work, I was able to connect with both my unborn babies' souls, learn why they had come and gone, and let them go.

I consider both these unborn souls as gifts I was given – their presence and loss represented important spiritual lessons I had to learn. These experiences have also guided me to help other women who have lost babies before birth. I know that there is probably no woman alive who conceives and loses a baby, whether by design or accidentally, who ever forgets 'what might have been'. I still remember clearly that early spring morning, looking wistfully at the buds sprouting on the trees and bushes in my garden and thinking my baby never got the

chance to grow into fullness. My child had been due in June.

What purpose can there be to losing a child early in pregnancy? All experiences of loss teach us something; however, the loss of what might have been is especially poignant. It is the loss of unfulfilled life and can draw us to heal a hidden, very vulnerable part of ourselves. Healing the loss of an unborn baby involves profound inner work and the courage to dialogue with the little unborn soul so that both mother and baby can understand the soul bond or contract between them. Releasing and letting go can only happen after truly integrating the experience and uncovering the lesson it carried.

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Tara was a lovely young girl: tall, bubbly and energetic. She came to see me because she was having trouble at home. The youngest of four, she still lived with her separated mother, who had a crippling dependence on her. Tara worked and had a boyfriend and would have liked to move on, but her mother's emotional needs always pulled at her so that she felt guilty about even thinking of leaving home. Tara had got pregnant by her boyfriend and had an abortion about six months before she came to see me. Brought up as a Catholic, she was riddled with guilt about this and needed to talk about it. No one knew her secret except myself, her boyfriend and the priest to whom she had been for confession. She was particularly concerned that her mother should never know.

One evening (I shall always remember it because of the way the late evening sun shone with particular brightness through the dirty windows of the rather dingy consulting room I rented at that time in west London), Tara and I began to talk about her unborn baby. By now, she no longer referred to it as 'the abortion' but rather 'the baby'. I was glad of that as I felt instinctively that this little soul needed to be heard. I have always

respected the sacred nature of pregnancy and birth. Tara was in tears as she recounted yet again her experience in a day hospital where she had gone to have the abortion.

‘Tara,’ I cut in, ‘why don’t you try to talk to the baby? I think she is here, she will listen to you.’

Tara stopped and went quiet. We were both quiet and then it felt as though the light shone more brightly than usual in the room and there was a sense of light, softness and love. It is hard to explain, but it was a presence we both felt without words. Tara then spoke with her unborn child, and the child responded to her. I said nothing, and simply held the sacred space we had created in the room, so that the little soul and Tara could tell each other everything they needed to say. Tara told her what was in her heart, her guilt, her sorrow and her pain. She asked for forgiveness and I do not know what words or thoughts passed between them but when Tara had finished, she radiated a sense of peace and love. Touched by this sacred presence, we were both in tears, but I knew the healing process would now begin in earnest.

Later, Tara told me that her little baby had told her she had come in to help Tara separate from her own mother and be a mother herself; that it was time for her to live her own life and that, it was OK, she would return to her, when Tara was ready.

Tara was not yet ready to become a mother – she had work to do in releasing herself from her mother and her childhood bonds. But her pregnancy had represented an opportunity both to heal herself, and to move on.

Working with Tara in this way confirmed for me yet again the wisdom and presence of unborn souls and the sacred nature of pregnancy. It also tugged at memories I had of my own – memories of being involved in this work over many years, perhaps centuries. Had I been a midwife, a healer, in former times? I think so, because it is never difficult for me to communicate with unborn babies and to help mothers do so.

The importance of this story is that it represented yet another turning point in my work. Tara's experience of communicating directly with the spirit of her unborn child established that healing is always possible at the level of the soul. It confirmed beyond a doubt that unborn souls are part of us, and can lead us to a deeper knowing which we can either receive or reject. There is always a reason, a spiritual lesson to be learned from each experience, so that it is important to listen to the wisdom of unborn souls.

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Communicating with unborn babies is a very important component to healing loss, and it is something I encourage and foster when a woman comes to me for therapy after losing a baby. Many mothers feel guilt when they have lost a child. Often, as in the case of an abortion, the guilt is buried along with other feelings and uncovering the feelings can feel threatening – it can feel like opening a can of worms. However, true healing can only happen when the emotions have been released and expressed. And such women need to feel they are accepted and supported in a non-judgmental way as they process their grief.

My experience with Tara confirmed both the spiritual dimension of pregnancy and the wisdom of unborn souls that is available to all mothers. Helping Tara work through her grief and guilt at having terminated her pregnancy confirmed too that healing between mother and baby is always only a heart-beat away.

This material may seem unrelated and removed from a book which deals with love and relationships. However, we all relate from our past, and some of our patterns in loving will stem directly from the pre- and perinatal period of our lives. Many women and men actively carry scar tissue from their own births and prenatal experiences because, as I have already

said, attachment patterns are formed in our earliest years.

### **Birth as an Initiation for the Soul**

Our births have a huge impact on our lives. To continue the journey into being, the new baby is about to be born, as a soul begins its journey into human life. It is said that when an earth mother rejoices a spirit mother mourns! Being born is a normal biological process, as well as a profound archetypal experience. On an archetypal level we are all primed to be born. We expect it; it is part of life and the human condition. The physical struggle involved in birth is mirrored on many levels and connects us with nature.

Birth is a major learning experience. Although birth itself should not necessarily be considered a trauma, a birth where there has been emotional wounding can hugely impact on the new baby and mother's relationship, which in turn influences that baby's choices and ability to love and be loved later in life. Birth represents a struggle, the incoming soul's first physical initiation into life. A baby has generally to work very hard to be born, and indeed the way a child is born creates a strong energetic and psychological pattern that is carried into later life.

I have already written about the various forms of initiations that represent different ways of being born in today's world. Caesarean section, for example, involves the interruption of a work in progress, or the natural order, and this creates particular energetic patterns.<sup>29</sup> Sometimes, far too often, due to painful and invasive birth practices becoming the norm in modern childbirth, birth can represent the incoming soul's first betrayal of love and trust.

Sometimes birth can be our first love wound

How is the child received? Is it roughly handled, blinded with bright lights or worse, pulled out with iron grips (forceps) on its tender skin so the marks of this violence remain physically for some time and emotionally a lot longer? After being

wrenched from its mother, is it then put away in a dark place, alone, separated from the one person who can console it for the pain it has endured in the struggle to be born? Or is it received with tenderness and care, and with full awareness of its delicate sensitivity and placed in warm, loving arms?

The birth experience propels us into a world of uncertainty. We do not know how we will be received and as my previous work demonstrates, we can often be deeply wounded by the manner in which we come into the world. *Songs from the Womb* bears witness to the suffering and trauma inflicted on many due to the over medicalisation of childbirth. Many mothers and their babies suffer deep soul wounds because of a lack of respect for the human soul and the exquisite sensitivity of the new baby.

Birth into an unwelcoming world is the first betrayal of the incarnating soul. It is a betrayal of love. It is a primal wound, and one that is hardest to reach because of its deep nature. Soul wounds inflicted at a very early stage in one's life are always the hardest to heal because they are so deeply embedded in the unconscious, it can be hard to find them.

That being said, it is important not to overly define and limit soul wounds. When we understand birth as an initiation and spiritual task of empowerment, it both heals and frees us. Seen from the perspective of the soul, our struggles can refine our purpose. Rosie in our previous story had a difficult birth and we saw how this predisposed her to experience life (and love) in a particular way. We could say one of her soul tasks was to learn how to overcome abandonment and the betrayal of love. We could also say that her birth experience represented her first challenge. Birth trauma may be part of a person's wounding but will rarely be the fulcrum of it.

One thing we can say is that Rosie's initiation into the world was a difficult one that activated energetic patterns within her, and set in motion her soul contract. Separated

from her mother after birth, and spending many weeks in an incubator, love was not something she encountered or could ever then count on. The primal experience of physical intimacy was also denied her so that perhaps she did not know how to be intimate. Her later love experiences with men further opened her initial heart wound so that, in time, she ceased to believe that love existed as other than an ideal which she relegated to her dreams and fantasies.

### **Birth and the Human Energy System**

The birth experience also has an impact at a spiritual level, and the manner of birth will have a resonance in a person's energetic system. Every human (and living thing) is known to have an 'aura' – an energy field. Additionally, there are central energy centres known as chakras, which each person possesses. Myss contends that the chakra system is, in actual fact, an archetypal depiction of individual maturation through seven distinct stages.

The first or root chakra is about our birth into this world. In spiritual empowerment terms, the root chakra represents tribal power: birth into our family of origin.<sup>30</sup> It represents group archetypal identity. We are interconnected with all of life and with one another.

The root chakra rules the base of the spine, spinal column, rectum, legs, bones, feet and the immune system. It is the foundation of emotional and mental health. From a psychological perspective this is why it is said that we need a loving, stable and emotionally sound beginning in order to function well in the outer world and later life. Emotional and psychological stability originate in the family unit and early social environment. To put it another way, love is something the new being needs in order to not simply survive, but to thrive.

People who have had difficult birth experiences can have root chakra imbalances. These are expressed energetically as

not being adequately earthed – not being well grounded. Psychologically this could mean not quite feeling connected to others, finding it hard to adapt to some of the demands inherent to living, and sometimes behaving in an inappropriate manner. There may also be fears relating to physical survival, and emotional and physical security. People who have had difficult birth experiences often have fears relating to their physical well being and their ability to overcome adversity.

First chakra energy has trouble interpreting things symbolically: it takes things at face value. In adults it presents as a tendency to be very concrete and literal about life and a difficulty in seeing the bigger picture. Those with root chakra imbalances will be very focused on physical and emotional security, and often find it hard to trust in the world, since they can be dominated by fear of not having what they need to live life.

Rosie, for example, worried that she would not be able to manage her life when things got difficult. At a fundamental level she felt herself without the inner resources necessary to live life. She constantly sought security through the men she chose, who she imagined could support her financially and provide for her.

The physical act of birth can affect the balance of the chakras. The crown, or top chakra, of the baby is open at birth, since physically the baby's soft skull bones have not yet closed so that they can be compressed in order for the baby to pass down through the birth canal. The crown of a baby's head is called the fontanel and is very sensitive. The fontanel, through which you can see the baby's pulse, is still partly open at birth and for some time afterwards. It gradually closes over time but it represents, I believe, the baby's connection with the spirit.

Some years ago at a conference in Russia I learned with great excitement that in old people the crown chakra and the fontanel begins to open again just before death. It is said to be

the way for the spirit to exit the body! Hearing this filled me with awe and also with trepidation since I know that frequently the baby is born through violent means, often involving tremendous force to its head, surely traumatising the crown chakra so that a further closing happens in all of the other energy centres. If the crown chakra closes through trauma then generally all further energy centres follow suit. A violent or invasive birth will need healing at an energetic level and there are, thankfully, many therapists now who specialise in healing birth trauma.

What happens to the little soul's capacity and memory of love? I believe that if the baby is received in a way that is not conducive to making him/her feel secure in this new, uncertain and perhaps fearful world, then he/she begins to subtly close down or something latent in him/her may not grow. As I said, a primal love wound can originate at birth, and set up resonances in later life and love relationships.

### **Birth and Separation**

Birth is also significant as the first physical and emotional experience of separation. At birth, we are separated from our mothers and womb life, thereby activating what psychologists term 'separation anxiety'. However, I do not believe birth to be our primary separation. At a soul level, we already hold a memory of wholeness and of having lost this wholeness. The added significance of birth is that it triggers the original separation of our soul and oneness, when we lost something so integral to our spiritual well being that we spend our lives trying to return to the state of union we once had.

As we saw in the chapter on love and the soul, we are always inwardly driven to find what we lack, and falling in love fuels the illusion that we will find it.

From a psychological perspective, however, our original love affair is with our mothers, so that what happens before,

at, and immediately after birth, in relation to our closeness to her, is important as it sets down or activates dormant emotional patterns. We know that babies and mothers find separation very painful, and modern thinking has accepted that separation of mother and baby in the first formative hours and days after birth is not conducive to the bonding process. Bonding is necessary for the healthy emotional development of the child and his or her ability to will form healthy attachments later in life. Crucial bonding and attachment patterns are forged during pregnancy and birth, when the child is coming into being.

How does our birth experience then prepare us for love and influence where we will go to find it? Our birth experience will certainly affect the path we will take to return to this place of wholeness, of soul. Every time we find ourselves involved in a love experience we are re-enacting the lost wholeness that goes back to our earliest moments. To our love affairs we undoubtedly bring moments of memory of our first separation. We are not aware we do this; it is an unconscious impulse created by our need for healing. The soul hates to be fragmented, and always seeks wholeness, and trauma of any kind tends to fragment us.

In an earlier chapter I wrote about how difficult and complex the reception of love is; how somehow deep inside us, we find it hard to be loved, to receive love. I feel sure that our modern way of life and of birth has contributed to this difficulty because negative or painful life experiences can damage our self-esteem and contribute to our sense of unworthiness.

Our first relationship is with our mothers and fathers, and this relationship becomes the template for all future relationships, most particularly intimate ones. The heart is learning all this time about love. People that feel loved glow, and are generally able to give and receive love more easily than those who feel intrinsically unloved. As I said, babies are naturally primed to

*Love in a Time of Broken Heart*

love and be loved. If the outer world responds to the new human being, the natural opening of the heart will remain open for life, and the corresponding power becomes an integrated part of the psyche. Others will have to work at it.

## Chapter 6

### **Days of Becoming**

Avoid contributing material to the drama that is always stretched taut between parents and children; it uses much of the children's energy and consumes the love of their elders, which is effective and warming even if it does not comprehend. Ask no advice from them and count upon no understanding; but believe in a love that is being stored up for you like an inheritance and trust that in this love there is a strength and a blessing, out beyond which you do not have to step in order to go very far!

*Letters to a Young Poet: Rilke*

Our early life holds the key to understanding the way we relate and the kind of relationships we have because we are always marked by our childhood experiences. As we saw earlier, our first relationship holds a template for all future relating because attachment patterns are laid down in prenatal life, infancy and childhood. Early days are days of becoming, so that we are simply—we are learning to become who we will be. Through relating to our parents and/or siblings we are learning what love and relationships are all about and we build the foundations of our life.

There is something incredibly beautiful about coming into being; about creation and the various stages involved. The act of creation is a mystery unfolding. It is a mystery which we are witness to every day, in nature, the arts, children and even our own