

spirit ~ FIRST PERSON



GOLDIE HAWN'S NEW AUTOBIOGRAPHY IS A RECORD OF

SELF-EXPLORATION AND LESSONS LEARNT

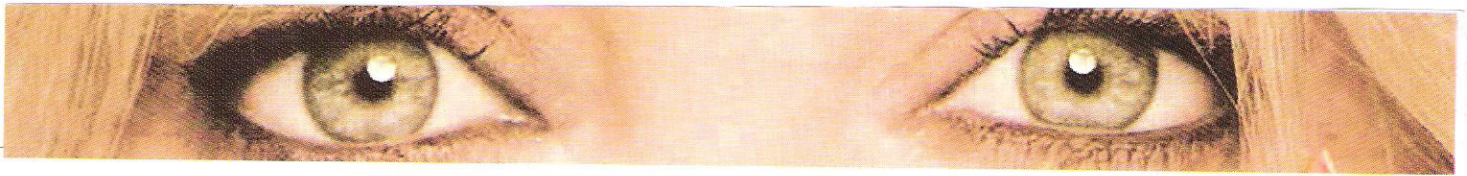
by Parveen Chopra

The author may be a Hollywood star who retains her glamorous appeal even at 60 plus, but *A Lotus Grows in the Mud* is not hagiography or a tell-all, it's spiritual autobiography. It reminds you of Shirley MacLaine's successive books such as *Dancing in the Light* and *Out on a Limb*, but Goldie Hawn has put all her self-explorations amid pressures of showbiz and celebrity in one big book of 400-plus pages. In her own words, her memoirs, not yet available in India, is a record of what she has learnt in her life so far.

The structure of the book helps to serve the author's intentions. There are the word pictures of select meaningful scenes from her life. Each vignette is followed by a little commentary, on lessons learnt and insights gained. Her love life and marriages or movies find scant mention, only when they illustrate a valuable point. For the record, the daughter of middle class parents, Goldie Hawn started off as a dancer, went on to become an acclaimed comic actress (won supporting actress Oscar for her debut *Cactus Flower*), turned producer with the highly successful *Private Benjamin* and later directed some films too.

Though devoid of any 'juicy' bits or prurient interest, *A Lotus Grows in the Mud* has already sold over a million copies, a sign that the number of differently moved readers is growing.

Overt spirituality and mystical practices don't dominate the book either, but they are there: initiation into transcendental meditation, a guided meditation with a wise woman in Jerusalem, a rebirthing experience. Goldie had her share of encounters with the miraculous too: an out-of-body experience during a car crash at age 19 which changed her outlook in life, reviving the heartbeat of her newborn first baby herself with a kind of reiki, an astrologer in Varanasi predicting that the twice-divorced Goldie would meet a man (Kurt



Russell, her companion till date) through whom she would have a son, a Chinese healer making Goldie's ageing, immobilised mother walk after some energy field manipulation.

The major part of the book is about growing up, about success and dealing with it, about man-woman relationship, family and giving.

Goldie is a practising Buddhist – she considers the Dalai Lama among her many teachers – but hasn't disowned her Jewish identity. She has been coming to India, which she calls her home, every year since 1981 and shot a documentary here on the Asian elephant called *In the Wild*. Her current movie project, titled *Ashes to Ashes*, starring Kurt Russell, is set in India. The story is about a New York widow who loses her late husband's ashes in India.

Goldie Hawn credits India for inspiring the title of her book: "Lotus symbolises compassion and beauty, it can grow only in the mud. We are all lotuses, some are open, some are like buds."

### In her own words

From *A Lotus Grows in the Mud* by

*With little girls in India*



**Goldie Hawn, Berkley Books.**

Happiness was always important to me. Even at the young age of eleven, it was my biggest ambition. People would ask, "Goldie, what do you want to be when you grow up?"

"Happy," I would reply, looking into their eyes.

"No, no," they would laugh. "That is really sweet, but I mean... what do you want to be? A ballerina? An actress maybe?"

"I just want to be happy."

### (About being groped as an 11-year-old by an older boy for the first time)

It is proven that the more you remind yourself of a bad experience, the more damaging it can be because it imprints that experience indelibly on your mind and creates a new reality. Like wiggling a bad tooth with the tip of your tongue...

To be afraid or ashamed is to lock the door on the experience. If we lock the door, then the psyche represses feelings, and later symptoms will begin to emerge... Worst of all, don't revel in being a victim. Don't become comfortable in your misery. Take back

control. You may not be able to change what happened, but you can change your perception of it.

### (On first witnessing the casting couch phenomenon)

There is never a happy ending for people who lose their integrity. Not just in show business but in the fast-paced competitive world we live in as well, where so much energy is put into winning at the sacrifice of so much.

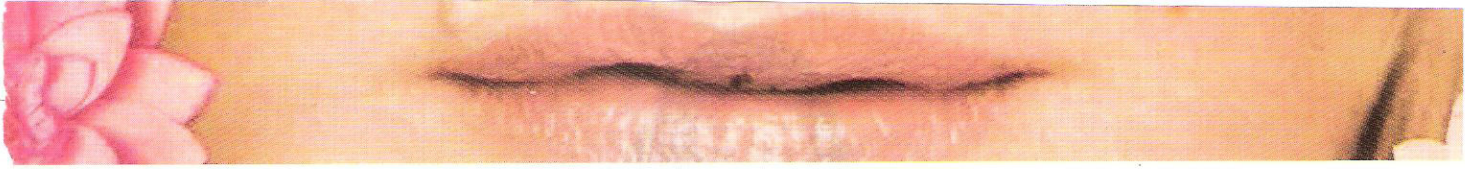
Knowing your limits, and that there is a limit to getting what you want, comes from a sense of self-respect instilled in you from an early age. It takes guts to stand up in the face of what you really want, but you have to know in your heart that if you make the wrong choice you won't be able to live with yourself for the rest of your life. If you give in to such pressures, you strip away your self-respect, your personal ethics and your standards – the very things that create the fibre that will hold you together for the rest of your life.

### (Following some early ugly experiences with men)

I have since come to learn a lot about men, about why they behave the way they do. Men had to protect their women and children when we were all roaming the earth. They were the hunters. They became sexual animals that wanted multiple partners. I am happy I was born a girl, because I never had to struggle with that innate need to spread my seed or impregnate a mate.

Instead, I have learned over the years to feel a deep understanding for how difficult it is for men just to be male, to have this hormone raging through their blood like a drug. It makes it difficult to control their behaviour. Just going out on the street can be hard for men because the sight of a girl in a short skirt, even if she has a bag over her head, ignites them physically. It goes directly to their sexual energy.

Men fight such impulses every day,



especially in their prime years, always having to corral themselves because they have a family, a wife or responsibilities, because they have to be good boys, be part of society and hold down a job.

**(Lessons learnt from going into therapy in her 20s)**

I have come to believe that the decade between the ages of twenty and thirty is the most difficult of our lives. We individuate from our parents, and questions arise like, Who am I? What am I going to be? We don't know where we're going, or if we'll be successful when we get there. But before we even address those questions, we should take the time to find out who we really are. What do we believe? And how do our relationships inform what we believe? Because if we don't figure out who we are in our twenties, the question is going to hit us hard later. We can't sail through life's difficult passages until we have first dealt with the child in us, the place where we feel like being young will just take care of everything, because it doesn't.

With Dr Greason's help, I was able to carefully peel away the layers of my own being and examine what was underneath. I worked harder at my therapy than almost anything else. I became intimate with my fears and my insecurities and my lack of self-esteem, and I was able to dissect these deficits and see what they were made up of, and how much of it stemmed from my mother's control issues and my father's physical aloofness.

**(Reviving the heartbeat of her newborn first son by giving it a mother's love energy)**

Something remarkable happened the day that Oliver was born. I learned that day that miracles can happen. That prayer is powerful. That faith in something is extremely important.

It was one of the first times in my life that I realised that by focusing on something and willing it with all my might,

I could actually change or rearrange the course of events. This experience started me on a journey. It led me to a lifelong interest in these sorts of phenomena and in the theory of small things, which is called 'the new physics' or 'quantum physics'—investigating and exploring the new frontiers of consciousness.

**(Travelling in Africa)**

It was an important journey for me because it reconnected me with the simplicity of life. I cleared my mind. I laughed and sang with strangers. I spent quiet moments of reflection counting my blessings. These experiences filled me with a light that shines inside me to this day.

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*Just going out on the street can be hard for men because the sight of a girl in a short skirt ignites them physically.*  
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Sometimes, when life gets too hard and crowds in on you and you become desensitised, you need to remember to just take time out. Go away. Change your surroundings. Put yourself in a situation where the outcome is uncertain. Give way to the kindness of strangers. Humble yourself on your road untravelling.

I have found that when we go on a journey, we buy time, because we give our full attention. We are present and conscious because all the newness of our surroundings keeps us sparked and alert. Travel prolongs our time, I think. I like to call it 'rubber time'.

**(Asserting herself during the making of a movie and gaining the reputation of being difficult)**

The question is how do we as women become realised, how do we deal with our own power? Whether it is in our relationships or in the workplace, it seems we are always negotiating for our own voice and always afraid of speaking what we feel. As a little girl, I was shy. I wasn't comfortable with my own ideas, never believing they were worthy of being heard. As I grew older, I was afraid of my own strengths and worried that if I showed too much power it would make me less attractive to men, or a threat to women.

But now, after all this time, I throw down the gauntlet. The only path to happiness is to really be all that you can be. To be secure and unafraid of speaking your mind. If your intentions are not just to win the game, then you can feel good that you have spoken your mind without malice or anger but just from the depths of your truth.

**(Visiting Varanasi after her mother's death)**

What are we mourning? What are we running from? Death is the one inevitability in life, yet so many of us, especially in the West, are uncomfortable with it. Certainly in my house, we never discussed it. My parents never spoke of death, and even to the very end my mother refused to say, "I'm going to die." And yet she did. We all do.

During this healing journey, I sensed some divine force had brought me to this mystical city to find the answers I was seeking to questions in my life, forcing me to focus on questions about death and to immerse myself in a culture that so embraces it. By rejecting the normal Western reaction of being so afraid of dying, I came to believe that it is vital that we come to terms with death, especially our own, in order to live out the rest of our lives fully and consciously.

Know that you are going to die, then back up and live each day with that truth in mind. Wake up each morning happy to be alive. ☺