



THE THEOSOPHIST

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths, and theosophists endeavour to live them. Everyone willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.

Why Study *The Secret Doctrine*?

RADHA BURNIER

THE Secret Doctrine of H. P. Blavatsky has a series of reprints. Here we may see evidence of the inroad being made by the principles and doctrines of the esoteric philosophy into the human consciousness, even though proof of their effects upon human relationship is not too visible in the present strife-torn, cruel world.

HPB made it clear that she was presenting to the world only a part of what she herself had been taught. However, her occultist contemporary, T. Subba Row, seems to have held that she revealed too much. He was to be her partner in the production of *The Secret Doctrine*, but withdrew because of differences of opinion on various matters. She herself wrote:

There were portions of *The Secret Doctrine* that for incalculable ages had to remain concealed from the profane gaze. But this was because to the unprepared multitude secrets of such tremendous importance was equivalent to giving a child a lighted candle in a powder magazine. (introd. To S. D.).

She went on to say that people understand the need to conceal ‘such secrets as the Vril, or the rock-destroying

force’, but the reason for withholding purely philosophical information such as the evolution of the planetary chains. But she pointed out:

The danger was that such doctrines as the Planetary Chain, or the seven Races, at once give a clue. . . to the sevenfold occult forces, those of the higher planes being of tremendous power. So that any septenary division at once gives a clue to tremendous occult powers, the abuse of which cause incalculable evil to humanity; a clue which is, perhaps, no clue to the present generation — especially to Westerns, protected as they are by their very blindness and ignorant materialistic disbelief in the occult. . . (loc. cit.)

For the reason stated above, *The Secret Doctrine* does not contain the secret lore of the ages (*guptavidyā*) in its entirety but only ‘a select number of fragments of its fundamental tenets’. Even to understand fully what she was allowed to transmit involves such self-purification and training that none but the hardy few would like to undertake it. ‘The mysteries have ever been made a discipline and stimulus to virtue’. Even when purity and virtue are achieved

The year 2013 marks the 125th year of *The Secret Doctrine*.

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the fact remains that the deepest truths cannot be put into words; they have to be experienced.

Although HPB has given some information about the septenary nature of the universe and perhaps other clues of that kind, fortunately they have not been recognized as clues by the 'present generation of Sadducees'. Hence, despite the aggressive pursuit of power and success, which is a dominant feature of modern society, the danger of which HPB made mention is not immediate. *The Secret Doctrine* is intended to be a key to further knowledge, but to the fullest extent, each one must equip himself with another key — a purified mind open to intuitive perception.

HPB tapped a vast range of sources to make it self-evident to the reader that 'the nations the world over'. The doubting mind is offered no loophole to escape from the fact that there is but one primeval, universal wisdom, which is not the possession of any particular religious group or chosen set of people. The power of her intellect and pen have also made it clear as daylight that esoteric philosophy reconciles all religions, but it 'strips every one outward human garment'.

Even as the source, history and significance of religious knowledge are illumined by *The Secret Doctrine*, so also science in general and the scientific theories of the day in particular are put in their proper perspective in many a passage. HPB referred to this by saying:

The writer hopes that, however superficially the comments on the Seven Stanzas may

have been handled, enough has given in this cosmogonic portion of the work, to show the archaic teachings to be on their very face more *scientific* (in the modern sense of the word) than any other ancient scriptures left to be judged on their exoteric aspect. (I. 321, 6 vol. ed.)

She adds that:

'scientists' and 'sciolists' ought alone to bear the responsibility for the many illogical theories offered to the world. In its great ignorance, the public, while blindly accepting everything that emanates from 'authorities' and feeling it to be its duty to regard every *dictum* coming from a man of science as a proven fact — the public, we say, is taught to scoff at anything brought forward from 'heathen' sources. (I. 321).

Alas, this tendency continues. But the esotericist is the forerunner and guide of the scientist as well as the man of religion and philosophy. It is interesting to read in *The Secret Doctrine* the following:

Science teaches us the living as well as the dead organisms of both man and animal are swarming with bacteria. . . But science has never yet gone so far as to assert with the occult doctrine, that our bodies as well as those of animals, plants and stones, are themselves altogether built up of such beings; . . . chemicals science may well say that there is no difference between the matter which composes the ox, and that which forms man. But the Occult doctrine is far more explicit. It says:

Not only the chemical compounds are the

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same, but the same infinitesimal *invisible*. Lives compose the atoms of the bodies of the mountain and the daisy, of man and the ant, of the elephant and of the tree which shelters it from the sun. Each particle — whether you call it organic or inorganic or — is a life. (I. 304-5).

Science seems to be beginning to discover this truth as for instance, indicated by Lewis Thomas in his popular essays. Writing of ‘Organelles as Organisms’ he says:

My mitochondria comprise a very large proportion of me. . . Looked at in this way, I could be taken for a very large, motile colony of respiring bacteria, operating a complex system of nuclei, microtubules and neurons for the pleasure and sustenance of their families, and running, at the moment, a typewriter. (*The Lives of a Cell*, Bantam Books, 1975, p. 85).

The Archaic Wisdom which has existed through the ages will continue to exist in the future also, irrespective of the ups and downs of civilization on earth. As the Veda declares, *ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*

(The one truth is taught by sages in many ways). Aspects of *The Secret Doctrine* will be revealed from other sources at other times. The transmitters of the wisdom are all worthy of reverence, but none must be set up as the ‘last prophet’ and the one and only authority. The great river of vivifying knowledge will flow on. HPB would have been the last one to erect a barrage and stem the flow or claim final infallible authority.

No true Theosophist, from the most ignorant up to the most learned, ought to claim infallibility for anything he may say or write upon Occult matters. . . . those of us who pretend to teach others more ignorant than ourselves — are all liable to err . . . This cannot be helped . . . so long as the artist is imperfect, how can his work be perfect? ‘Endless is the search for Truth’. Let us love it and aspire to it for its own sake, and not for the glory or benefit a minute portion of its revelation may confer on us. For who of us can presume to have the *whole* truth at his fingers’ bends, even upon one minor teaching of Occultism? (IV. 211). ✧

To imagine that a human brain can conceive of anything that was never conceived of before by the ‘universal brain’ is a fallacy and a conceited presumption. At best, the former can catch, now and then, stray glimpses of the ‘Eternal Thought’ after this has assumed some objective form, either in the world of the invisible or visible universe.

H. P. Blavatsky Quotation Book

Annie Besant, the Diamond Soul

C. JINARĀJADĀSA

IT is rarely that there appears among mankind a soul of the quality of Dr Annie Besant, a quality I want to describe with the simile of a diamond. A diamond is the hardest mineral that we have; it can be cut only with diamond-edged tools and ground with dust of its own substance. Another characteristic of a diamond is that it has many facets, and a polished diamond gives out colour after colour as it is turned to the light, for the colours of the solar spectrum are reflected through its many facets. In the same way, a 'diamond soul' is unbreakable, has the quality of incredible resistance, and therefore a very great capacity for work in many aspects of activity. It is this last quality I wish to bring out — the many-faceted aspects of Dr Besant's life and work.

We find her first as a devout Christian, accepting the truths of Christianity blindly without doubt or enquiry. Then came the awakening. She had difficulty in understanding the story of Christ as narrated in the Gospels, she therefore made four columns and entered side by side passages from the four Gospels which described the incidents in the life, and found that they

did not tally. This seemed strange to her, as the Gospels were supposed to be inspired by the Holy Ghost and to represent the true Gospel, the only revelation of God, which the Christian was bound to accept. From that time began her phase of doubt, which resulted in her finally leaving the Christian faith. She became an Atheist, for she could not believe that there was God.

Her denunciation of oppression

But an outstanding characteristic of hers shone out from those days onward, namely, her passionate denunciation of oppression. She became the champion of all the oppressed individuals and causes she came across, in any part of the world. Thus we see her in 1888 taking up the cause of the match-girls in one of the factories in London (Bryant and May's). They were underpaid and many suffered from phosphorous poisoning in the jaws. Dr Besant in her small journal, *The Link*, published the facts; legal action was threatened against her for defamation and the girls were bullied to find out who gave her the information. The girls were pressed to sign a statement denying the facts revealed, and then they all came out on

From Besant Centenary Issue of *The Theosophist*, October 1947.

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strike. Dr Besant and others stirred up public opinion, appealed to members of Parliament, and worked hard till the whole problem was brought before the minds of the public, and such pressure was brought to bear upon the management of the factory that they gave way. The match-girls won their demands. It was after that that the Match-Makers' Union was established, of which Dr Besant was the Secretary for some years.

We find her again in the year 1878, from far away taking up the cause of Afghanistan and India in a pamphlet entitled *England, India and Afghanistan*.

The next phase in her life is marked by her conviction that since religion gave no help and no opportunity to mankind for advancement, the only possible solution seemed to be in science, so she took up scientific study. Her plan was to take the degree of Bachelor of Science in the University of London and later that of a Bachelor of Medicine. She passed the Matriculation examination of London University, and then the Intermediate examination with honours in all subjects required. We see therefore that she had a very good scientific brain. But why did she not go on to the examination of B.Sc.? She has explained. There was one examiner in the University who told her beforehand that however brilliantly she might do the papers which were set, he would not pass her, because he had a strong antipathy against her Atheism and to certain of her activities for the masses, which he considered immoral; so she had to give up studying for the degree.

But she did not only study Science, she did something much more directly important. She began teaching science, for science to her was the gospel of truth. We find her issuing manual after manual on Science, each quite small, as the result of certain classes for the masses which she conducted. They are like small textbooks and worth reprinting now, with of course changes. At this time, then, she tried to make science the gospel of life for all.

The Knowlton Pamphlet

This period was soon followed by that of the famous Knowlton pamphlet. A certain Knowlton had published in USA a pamphlet on birth-control, which had been reprinted in England in 1833, and no one had made any objection. Then a man in Bristol reprinted it in 1884, but he added some pornographic illustrations not in the original. The publisher was prosecuted by the police for publishing immoral literature. Mr Charles Bradlaugh and Dr Besant saw in this action of the police a point of danger for freedom of thought. What did they do? They printed a new edition of the original pamphlet, *without* the objectionable illustrations, they planned to open a small shop, and notified the police that on a certain day they would sell the pamphlet to the public, and so faced prosecution. They were prosecuted, and for the first time Dr Besant appeared in court to plead her own case. The case was lost, but later she and Mr Bradlaugh won on an appeal to a higher court on a technical legal point. The police prosecution was not resumed, and the

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moment the case for freedom of thought was won they withdrew the pamphlet.

In this phase of her life as an Atheist, Dr Besant delivered some brilliant lectures on Atheism. She did not believe in God; she believed that it was only through science that there could be any kind of happiness for mankind. At this time an English poet, Gerald Massey, saw that she, though an Atheist, was ever championing the cause of the oppressed, and he wrote a poem which is the more striking because he had never met her; he only knew about her. But in this poem he gave as brilliant a description of her as has ever been given.

ANNIE BESANT (1879)

A Greeting by Gerald Massey

Annie Besant, brave and dear,
May some message uttered here
Reach you, ringing golden clear.

Though we stand not side by side
In the front of battle wide,
Oft I think of you with pride.

Fellow-soldier in the fight!
Oft I see you flash by night
Fiery-hearted for the Right!

You for others sow the grain;
Yours the tears of ripening rain;
Theirs the smiling harvest gain!

Fellow-workers we shall be,
Workers for eternity;
Such my faith. And you shall see

Life's no bubble blown of breath
To delude the sight till death,
Whatsoe'er the unseeing saith.

Love that closes dying eyes,
Wakes them too, in glad surprise,
Love that makes forever wise.

Soul-whilst murmuring, 'There's
no soul' —
Shall upspring like flame from coal,
Death is not life's final goal.

Bruno lives! Such spirits come,
Swords immortal, tempered from
Fire and Forge of Martyrdom.

You have soul enough for seven;
Life enough the earth to leaven;
Love enough to create Heaven!

One of God's own faithful few,
Whilst unknowing it are you,
Annie Besant, bravely true.

It is interesting to note that in it Massey mentions Giordano Bruno, who also had battled for freedom of thought and expression.

It was at this time that Dr Besant was fascinated by India and wrote a very striking series of tales for children, 'Young Folks Library', published in 1885. In the first story, 'Ganga and the River Maid', she gives a description of India, this even before she saw India. Also she wrote stories about Hypatia and Bruno (she knew nothing at the time of the mystery behind those two martyrs, that they were her own past incarnations), two characters who have left an unforgettable message to humanity. I wish to mention also that she wrote one pamphlet called *The Natural History of the Christian Devil*. She could be very charming in her satire of the Christian traditions;

this facet of the diamond is something very attractive.

Constitutional methods

In the next facet she is among a group of Fabians of the famous Fabian Society, of which original band three are still living [this was written in 1947-Ed.] George Bernard Shaw, and Lord and Lady Pethick-Lawrence. Dr Besant took part in all the discussions and wrote two or three pamphlets for the Fabians. The era of Socialism had started, the Fabians enquired into the conditions in various industries in England, hours, wages etc., and suggested immediately necessary improvements. The gospel of the Fabians was to create economic changes not by strikes and revolution, but by methods of constitutional procedure, bringing about results aimed at by passing new laws to change bad laws.

I must here mention an interesting event which occurred about this time. For it is during her work with Mr Bradlaugh that she learnt from him the constitutional method of agitation. Mr Bradlaugh was an Atheist, but he has become famous in the annals of Constitutional Law for that reason. He was elected a member of Parliament from Northampton, but as an Atheist he refused in the House of Commons to take the oath of allegiance with the Bible in his hand, and say 'So help me God', as was required of every member. He said he would take the oath, but not on the Bible, in other words that he would affirm, and give his word of honour, and he claimed his seat in Parliament as a duly elected member. But

the House of Commons refused him permission to take his seat, since he would not take the necessary oath, and the House declared his seat vacant. So another election had to take place. But Bradlaugh was re-elected. Once again he came to the House and the English procedure in Parliament as to the oath was challenged by him. Once again the House of Commons would not permit him to sit and declared that his seat was vacant. For the third time an election took place and for the third time he came back to Parliament, with hundreds of people following him and insisting on the rights of the people. Again he was not allowed to 'affirm', that is, without the Bible, and to take the oath in his own way. Mr. Gladstone, the Prime Minister, a devout Christian, was perplexed and did not know what to do. Finally the House decided that though Mr Bradlaugh had been duly elected as a member, he had violated the law of Parliament, and therefore he had to be punished; so they sent him to be imprisoned in the Clock Tower of the House of Commons, while they considered his case. Meantime tens of thousands were protesting throughout the country. Bradlaugh was a prisoner for only thirty-six hours; the law was later changed; a modification was made allowing people, not only members of Parliament, to make an affirmation, and not obliging them to take the oath on the Bible. Thus Mr Bradlaugh came into Parliament and took his seat legally. Dr Besant was by his side throughout all this turmoil, and learnt from him how to agitate to change bad laws by

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constitutional procedure without resort to violence.

Comes into Theosophy

It is at this time that Dr Besant came into Theosophy. She has narrated all that in her Autobiography. At that time there were only a few books of Theosophical literature, *Isis Unveiled*, *The Occult World*, *Esoteric Buddhism* and *The Secret Doctrine*. After Dr Besant became a Theosophist, she did something which nobody else could have done. She took the truths of Theosophy from these books and presented them in public addresses, full of idealism and beauty. That is the remarkable gift which she had; she gave beautiful settings for all these wonderful Truths. We find her always giving to our Theosophical work an aspect which never existed before. I think particularly of one lecture of hers, which I did not hear because I was in America at that time. It was a lecture on 'The Spiritual Life for the Man of the World', given at the City Temple; it is exquisite in form, there could not be a more artistic presentation of a great topic. One can take that lecture, analyse it section by section, and see how the whole subject is presented with a perfect symmetry. She also gave a set of lectures entitled *In the Outer Court*, and then later *The Changing World*. All these have an artistic structure, and the second work plans for an ideal united world.

I think Dr Besant can be described more as an artist than as a lecturer of the professorial type, because she does not survey any subject in its entirety, but gives

a definite presentation of it from some one angle which she selects, as a painter does when painting a landscape. While she gives *Wisdom*, she gives it in an exquisite setting. Of her many books, perhaps the one that will last longest is that most fascinating book, *A Study in Consciousness*, for in it there is a depth of philosophical presentation that will fascinate many a generation to come.

One brilliant contribution of Dr Besant was her *History of the Great French Revolution* up to the death of Robespierre. There are many histories of the French Revolution, but this work is written by her *from the standpoint of the people*. Usually historians denounce the bloodthirstiness of the Terror, but they do not sufficiently stress the terrible sufferings of the masses which made this Revolution inevitable, for it was a Revolution of Hunger. (It was this she feared in India, and so when the time was ready she entered Indian politics as a leader.)

Dr Besant said once to me that Robespierre is one of the great pathetic figures in history, for he saw an ideal to accomplish but had not the strength to do it. Instead of the Terror being of his making, to her the Terror grew to be what it became because his guiding hand was withdrawn. Certainly the last pages of the chapter of hers on Robespierre describing his end, leave a profound impression on the reader's mind.

Clairvoyant investigations

I pass on to another facet of her work, and that is the contribution which she has

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given when she developed the powers of clairvoyance. Here I can speak with some personal knowledge. It is interesting to note that while Bishop Leadbeater had to develop his powers slowly, step by step, Dr Besant developed them all almost overnight. This happened in 1895. The first of the great investigations made by them jointly was into the conditions of the Heaven World. This resulted in the manual *The Devachanic Plane*, written by C. W. Leadbeater, who had already written *The Astral Plane*. Next came a series of investigations into the early Rounds of the Earth Chain, the notes of which are all in my handwriting as they were taken down by me during the investigations. In 1895 the first 'Occult Chemistry' investigations took place into the structure of hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen, and a new unknown gas later labelled Occultum of atomic weight 3. In 1907 seventy-one chemical elements were mapped out by their joint investigations, 'broken up' and followed into the sub-planes. The two investigators saw the various forces in the atom whirling at incredible speed, and Dr Besant selected as her part of the work that of following up the breaking-up of the groups from sub-plane to sub-plane.

Now we come to another facet, the Regeneration of India. The moment Dr Besant landed in India in 1893, she set the work before herself. She lectured on the best that is in Hinduism, she preached a new type of education, and she urged Theosophical Lodges to start new schools, and to keep the keynote of Indian ideals when teaching Hindu boys and girls.

Before she landed in 1893, she already spoke of India as her 'Motherland'. That phrase is in a letter she wrote in 1892. I will mention one particular book which it will be very useful for all Youth Lodges to study, her *Lectures on Political Science*, for they give a clear presentation of what a student of politics should know.

'Watched' by her Master

From early life she was 'watched' by her Master and heard His voice. As a young woman she was once in despair and considered committing suicide because of the utter wretchedness of her married life. As she held the bottle of chloroform in her hand she heard a voice saying: 'Coward, coward, who dreams of martyrdom and yet cannot stand a few years of pain.' This brought out the warrior spirit in her and she threw the bottle of chloroform out of the window. Later, during her phase of Socialism and Fabianism, one evening in her office in Fleet Street, when she was in much despair as Truth seemed unattainable, she heard the same voice speak: 'Are you willing to sacrifice everything to find Truth?' and she answered: 'Yes, Lord.' Then the voice continued: 'You will find it soon.' A few weeks afterwards her friend William T. Stead, Editor of *The Review of Reviews*, sent the two volumes of *The Secret Doctrine* of H. P. Blavatsky for her to review. She read them; saw where Truth lay, and asked Mr Stead for an introduction to HPB.

Thus she found Truth, but it meant for her a heartrending sacrifice, for it meant parting company from Mr Bradlaugh

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and all her many Secularist fellow-workers. When Dr Besant became a Theosophist, many of her old friends not only shook their heads but prophesied that Theosophy was only a stage to something further. The general forecast was that she would finally become a Roman Catholic. This of course could not happen, for she had come at last to Truth.

To the end of her life she gave her testimony to the existence of the Masters, for she had found her Master.

This is a rapid description of this diamond soul flashing out brilliant colours. May we all some day acquire something of that diamond soul quality of brilliance and resistance which was the very nature of Dr Annie Besant. ✧

PRAYER

Who pants and struggles to be free,
Who strives for others' liberty,
Who, failing, still works patiently,
He truly prays.

Who, loving all, dare none despise,
But with the worst can sympathize,
Who for a truth a martyr dies,
He truly prays.

Who, when a truth to him is known,
Embraces it through smile or frown;
Who dares to hold it though alone,
He truly prays.

In musing, strength must come to dare,
Petitions are but empty air,
Brave action is the only prayer,
Thus learn to pray.

Mrs Besant

Theosophy and the Crowding World

TIM BOYD

IT is not often that one can point to an event and identify it as something that has never occurred before in human history. Many people can remember when the first man landed on the moon, or the first satellite in space, or even the first public awareness of nuclear fission. Very recently such a momentous event transpired. Largely unnoticed in the popular media, it has entered our world and proceeded to take root. This new state of affairs is influencing every aspect of life on earth in both subtle and in very blatant ways. While it offers great promise it also assures massive problems and disruptions in its wake. It is something which should hold special interest for those who feel that Theosophy has meaningful application to the problems in the world.

To describe the event is simple. Throughout known history the vast majority of human population has been rural. In the late 1800's, around the time that the Theosophical Society was founded, in the United States, 5% of its people lived in cities. In 2008 for the first time in known human history the planet's population became predominantly urban. More people now live in cities around the world than

in rural environments. Worldwide, urban concentration is accelerating at breakneck speed with estimates of 80% of the global population crowding into cities within the lifetime of most of us. As a condition of contemporary living this is a demanding state of affairs. For us as theosophists it is even more challenging. The simple fact is that barring some unknown global catastrophe, the future of the spreading urban landscape is guaranteed.

The early literature and teachings of the Theosophical Society make little reference to this aspect of our current reality. The fact that it was not commented on does not mean that it was not anticipated by the inner founders of the Theosophical Society. In a letter to Colonel Olcott, Master K.H. describes the Mahachohan as one 'to whose insight the future lies like an open page'. Given the perceptive powers of those founders it would be safe to assume that not only was the underlying pattern which has led to our present situation foreseen, but that one of the reasons for the founding of the TS was to address it. It was not accidental that the TS was founded in New York City, one of the world's largest urban centres in 1875.

Mr Tim Boyd is President of the American Section, The Theosophical Society.

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One might say that perhaps it goes unmentioned because it has no real bearing on the inner life; that the potentials of the human spirit transcend outer conditions. On a certain level this is true, but perhaps we should explore more deeply.

Sophocles once said that, 'nothing great comes into the world without a curse'. The history of human development demonstrates the truth of his insight. Examples abound. Atomic energy and electricity have been used to better the human condition, but their misuse has also been an intentional cause of intense suffering. The ideal of individual freedom and democracy has ushered in an era of expanded opportunity and shared responsibility in governance, but has also been the source of bloody revolution and entrenched corruption. It has been said that in Atlantis even psychic forces were used as a means of waging war. Even the appearance in the world of avatars and great spiritual teachers has been a source of significant turmoil. Some words of Jesus speak to this pattern, 'Do not think that I have come to bring peace. I have come to bring the sword...to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother . . .' War, destruction, and social upheaval as well as profound spiritual revelation were part of the lives of Krishna, Rama, and Muhammad. Even Buddha's formulation of the sangha was socially disruptive because its egalitarian nature violated the caste or varna system. In these times the growth of the urban world is one of those 'great' things.

For sociologists the term that is used for

the population density which characterizes cities is 'crowding'. The best and the worst of human potentials become concentrated in the crowded urban environment. Historically the development of the city began with the experience that 'there is safety in numbers'. In dangerous times the walled enclave became a refuge from marauders. The concentration of people led to a concentration of resources which fuelled the development and spread of ideas, the growth of higher education and the creation of wealth.

The list of the numerous ills associated with cities is also well known. Crime rates are highest in cities, lower in suburbs, and lowest in rural areas. The same pattern is true for human fertility. Close contact with large numbers of people has been at the root of the spread of disease. Every modern epidemic, from bubonic plague to seasonal flu has depended on crowded environments for its spread. Viruses, germs, bacteria, parasites thrive in crowded places. One severe consequence of crowding is that people become cut off from the natural world. In the city the normal rhythms and cycles of nature are suppressed. Even the most basic cycle of the alteration of night and day is manipulated in ways that have created a whole class of illnesses classified as 'circadian rhythm disorders'.

In the same way that physical diseases spread through populations, the modern city with its easy access to information and technology has spawned a variety of mental contagions fuelled by ideas moving from mind to mind in close proximity. Both the global outpouring of compassion

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following the 9/11 attack in the USA, and the vicious backlash of what has come to be named 'Islamaphobia' are examples. The social ills of urban slums, poverty, the creation of an underclass of unskilled, unhealthy, and uneducated groups are the persistent hallmark of cities around the world. Then there is the massive collateral damage to the natural world resulting from the excessive demand which rapidly expanding urban centres are placing on the earth's resources — deforestation, mass extinctions, and pollution.

These are some of the outer effects of the current cycle of crowding. Dire as these may be, for the Theosophist the inner effects are at least as challenging. The mental atmosphere in the cities of the world bears a close resemblance to the physical. Scattered throughout the Mahatma Letters and the writings of Blavatsky are numerous references to the stifling influence of crowding on the unfoldment of our inherent spiritual qualities. In one of the letters to A. P. Sinnett, Mahatma KH comments about his experience of entering the city of Amritsar, India. He says: 'I determined to emerge from the seclusion of many years and spend some time with her [HPB, who was then in Amritsar]. I had come for a few days, but now find that I myself cannot endure for any length of time the stifling magnetism even of my own countrymen . . . I turn my face homeward tomorrow.'

One of the problems for today's urban spiritual practitioner is that, to a greater or lesser degree, one of the results of genuine practice is a heightened sensitivity.

Anyone who is growing in their awareness and expression of compassion necessarily feels more intensely. An experience of Annie Besant on travelling to Chicago illustrates the point. At the time she was travelling Chicago was known as the 'Slaughterhouse for the World' because one of its prominent industries was meat.

'No one who is the least sensitive, far less anyone who by training has had some of these inner senses awakened, can pass not only into Chicago, but within miles of Chicago, without being conscious of a profound sense of depression that comes down upon him . . . which at first is not clearly recognized nor is its source at once seen . . . when I went to Chicago, I was reading, as I am in the habit of doing in the train, and I did not even know that I was coming within a considerable distance of the town . . . I was conscious suddenly, as I sat there in the train, of this sense of oppression that came upon me; I did not recognize it at first, my thoughts were anywhere but in the city; but it made itself so strongly felt that I began to look and to try to sense what it was that was causing this result; . . . then I remembered that I was coming into the great slaughter-house of the United States. It was as though one came within a physical pall of blackness and of misery — this psychic or astral result being, as it were, the covering that over-spread that mighty town . . . this continual throwing down of these magnetic influences of fear, of horror, and of anger, and passion, and revenge, works on the people amongst whom they play, and tends to coarsen, tends to degrade, tends to pollute.'

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Although Annie Besant's example specifically addresses the psychic atmosphere created by the slaughterhouse, the principle it expresses is universal — thoughts are things and affect the consciousness of living beings.

In the first letter from the Mahatmas to A.O. Hume the comment is made: 'Earth is the battle ground of moral no less than of physical forces; and the boisterousness of animal passions under the stimulus of the rude energies of the lower group of etheric agents, always tends to quench spirituality.' In that same letter a profound clue is given to the workings and the effects of thought.

'Because every thought of man upon being evolved passes into the inner world and becomes an active entity by associating itself — coalescing, we might term it — with an elemental; that is to say with one of the semi-intelligent forces of the kingdoms. It survives as an active intelligence, a creature of the mind's begetting, for a longer or shorter period proportionate with the original intensity of the cerebral action which generated it. Thus, a good thought is perpetuated as an active beneficent power; an evil one as a maleficent demon. And so man is continually peopling his current in space with a world of his own, crowded with the offsprings of his fancies, desires, impulses, and passions, a current which reacts upon any sensitive or and nervous organization which comes in contact with it in proportion to its dynamic intensity.'

The activity of 'peopling one's current in space' defines both the current conditions of crowded living and holds the

key to an ennobled future. In our efforts to understand the present nature of life in the city we can examine a host of factors. What are the demographics for the population? What are the educational opportunities? Health, sanitation, housing, industry all could be considered. All of these can be seen as symptoms of something more central. A more fruitful approach might be to ask the question, 'what are the thoughts of my neighbours and fellow city dwellers?', and even more important, 'what are my own thoughts'? From this path of inquiry we can form some conclusions.

The 'struggle for life' which was such a focus in the Mahachohan's letter has not diminished. One might even say that in present conditions it has increased. All of the worry and stress related to 'making a living' dominate the thought life of many. A constant stream of worry, distress, and craving is the populating agent for countless people's 'current in space'. In the Mahachohan's letter the point is made that the 'intellectual classes . . . degrade and morally ruin those they ought to protect and guide.' Today the cultivation of values of consumption and distraction has become a profession, influencing millions worldwide. Hollywood, Bollywood, Television, sports, surfing the web, celebrity news have become a daily refuge for countless tired individuals looking for some momentary rest.

Any person living in any of the cities of the world finds himself continually affected by the thought atmosphere surrounding him. Like fish in water, for

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most the effect is largely unconscious, subliminal. However, those who find themselves growing in awareness sense not only the quality of the thought currents, but the possibilities for shifting them. As much as global living conditions have changed in recent times, the essential human problem has not changed. In *The Voice of the Silence* HPB names this problem ‘the heresy of separateness’ — the idea that a person’s perception of reality places him or her apart from others.

There is a story of a woman who was shown a vision of hell and heaven. In the vision of hell many people were sitting at a dining table piled high with wonderful food. Every imaginable delicacy was available before them. The problem for the people in hell was that their arms were long and could not bend. As they took the food they could never reach their mouths. So, even in the presence of the finest food they were emaciated and continually tortured by hunger and longing. The vision of heaven was exactly the same — the same table, the same food, the same long unbending arms on the people around the table, yet at this table the people were smiling and well fed. The difference in the heaven world was that the people there used their long unbending arms to feed each other.

What is the situation for today’s spiritual practitioner, for the person who is drawn into a deepening relationship with their higher nature? Except for a few, retreating to the cave or forest is no longer the option, or need of this particular moment. Our ability to apply the insights of Theosophy to the creation of energetically wholesome islands in the midst of the roiling currents of modern city living is what is called for — whether that island finds its location in a home, a meeting place, in an internet virtual community, or within the growing expanse of our own consciousness. The work for us is not merely to form these centres of influence, but to connect them with others, those kindred spirits whose teachings and practices have been made possible by the reintroduction of Theosophy to the world scene. It is the karmic responsibility of today’s urban populations to participate in the ongoing process of both creation and destruction that the modern city imposes on the planet. For the conscious individual this is a time of great opportunity.

In the words of Annie Besant, ‘Let us judge our spirituality by our effect on the world, and let us be careful that the world may grow purer, better, happier, because we are living in it.’ ✧

Only a very few people achieve spiritual evolution, for it demands a persistent effort of the will . . . But all can set out on this path which, though it must be followed through clouds, leads to the radiance of the heights.

Dr Alexis Carrel

The Beauty of Service

BEREZANSKA NATALIA

THE SIGN of Aquarius is the sign of a servant, a man with a jug of water on his shoulders, so full that it is abundantly poured outside. A jug on the shoulders can be considered as characteristic of service. Serving is not an easy thing as it involves giving energy and time, to sacrifice one's own interests, to work a lot and all the time. Certain qualities are needed for service: self-oblivion, tolerance, wisdom, directed efforts, ability to work without attachment, stability and persistence.

The beginning of the Aquarius era is characterized by the display of the quality of service everywhere. We see the formation of more new public organizations and funds, different associations in which people are often far from the esoteric, from the philosophical understanding of service, but they unite to help others, just to make their country, our world, our planet better.

In our present time man is only beginning to study service. Therefore, we can see how in our real life this service acquires sometimes distorted forms. For example, there is an attempt of a servant to bring the people around to his point of view. All that, such a servant considers

useful, kind and true, he expands on the colleagues and requires from them the same devotion and love.

We often consider as service, our help to poor people, sufferers, invalids, to those who seem to be unhappy, although actually it simply is uncomfortable for us to be near such people, and we act in order to restore our calmness, deliver ourselves from suffering.

Often benefaction appears as the result of self-confidence, ambitions, a desire to excel or confirm, become noticeable, to be looked upon as the ideal, but not as the result of spontaneous compassion to needy people.

Also charity can be the manifestation of a deeply secret desire for spiritual perfection by those who know that one of the attributes of discipleship is service. We may add also that the reason for service can be fashion, conformity or tradition; an anxiety about others delivers us from loneliness, helps us to find new friends and often gives a servant more than he gives.

In all of the examples listed above, a likeness of service is really present, but its veritable essence, its true intention, is absent. True service is the spontaneous

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radiation of a loving heart. The Law of Service is an expression of the Great Life which flows through our Higher Self and is realized through our lower vehicles. Service is not making the default of certain actions; it is not activity to which one needs to aim, and not the means to rescue an individual or the world. Service is a natural quality of our true Self, our Higher Nature; it is the same engine of its evolution, as is aspiring to self-preservation or reproducing is for our animal soul. Compassion, sympathy in need, an unselfish action in the name of the higher good is a specific and inalienable feature of the heartfelt opening. It is a characteristic feature of our Divine nature, as desire is a characteristic feature of our personality.

Service is the effective method of self-disclosure and self-perfection, because exactly through an action there is verified the degree of our maturity, the truth of our world-perception, the purity of our intention. Through perfecting and developing of the forms of our service, we harmonize the world around us, at first in our immediate surrounding, then in wider ranges, and, finally, we become the explorer of Divine Will, which in one of our lives begins to pour out to our nation, our country, the whole world.

It is therefore impossible to teach service or stick it to a man, if this intention does not come from within, and is based only on the theory of service. Neither a theory nor imitation makes a man a real servant. He becomes a real servant only when Higher Will conduces him to the

realization of the Divine Plan, when he consciously submits to the Law of Sacrifice. True internal knowledge is sharpened and converted into wisdom only through service for others.

Humanity does not head a casual unmarked course — there is the Plan. Humanity sets itself, on its own, the speed of the evolution and execution of its fate, in obedience to this Plan. Success depends on the loving conscious collaboration of all human beings who undertake the responsibility for their own fate, joined by the intention of creating the new, the best world. The ideals of Brotherhood and Freedom are everywhere acknowledged and provide an indissoluble unity of purpose in the infinite variety of human aspirations and beliefs.

Today, more and more people appear to respond to the call of their Higher Nature; therefore we can see a considerable growth of charity and philanthropy, but frequently they demonstrate the deep imprint of personality. Thus the idea of service is perverted into and looks like business; it is replaced with ambitious attempts to compel others to serve in obedience to our pictures of blessing, and the love to people is replaced with the love to power and lays obstacles to real service.

Service is a living stream of love, spontaneous giving, a demonstration of light and beauty, creation and joy. The time will come when it will not be necessary to call a man for service, when conviction and criticism will disappear, when nobody will interfere with another to serve his own consideration, when

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everybody will simply pour out active creative service from the jug of his Soul, forgetting about his little self, and finding the best possible direction of action in the sphere of his service.

Today, during the 135th anniversary of the Theosophical Society, we can say with complete confidence that the Society's history abounds with examples of true service. We are reminded of the disinterestedness of Mme H. P. Blavatsky, Col. H. S. Olcott, Dr Annie Besant and many others in the different countries of

the world, who got through crucibles, but carried the ideas of Theosophy, maintained clemency and compassion for humanity, because they were led by their Soul.

Each of us possesses in oneself this wonderful ideal and knows the concrete examples of selfless and sincere servants.

The beauty of their service gives us strength to work and move farther, overcoming doubts and failures, to gain understanding and experience, and to get to know at once that real service is the state of true joy and love. ✧

He who does not practise altruism, he who is not prepared to share his last morsel with a weaker or poorer than himself, he who neglects to help his brother man, of whatever race, nation, or creed, *wherever and whenever* he meets suffering, and who turns a deaf ear to the cry of human misery; he who hears an innocent person slandered, and does not undertake his defence as he would undertake his own, is *no Theosophist*.

H. P. Blavatsky

Heaven sent Madness

WAYNE GATFIELD

Heaven sent madness is preferable to man made sanity (Plato)

IT is a truism that in this materially orientated society to follow any path that does not have the accumulation of money or goods as its goal is regarded as foolish in the least and madness in the extreme. As HP Blavatsky writes, in her article ‘Civilization the Death of Art and Beauty’:

The unconsciously prophetic *fin de siècle*, in short, is the long ago foreseen *fin de cycle*; when according to Manjunātha Sutra, Justice will have died, leaving as its successor blind Law, and as its Guru and guide — Selfishness; when wicked things and deeds will have to be regarded as meritorious, and holy actions as madness. Beliefs are dying out, divine life is mocked at; art and genius, truth and justice are daily sacrificed to the insatiable mammon of the age — money grubbing.

Sanity is very much ‘man made’ and there are definite modes of thought and action established in society based upon a materialistic outlook. Arts and sciences are no longer pursued for the Spiritual edification of humanity but for a speedy profit, and inspiration is derived from the

lower emotions and thoughts rather than the Divine nature. Much of this has to do with the fact that we are becoming more and more divorced from nature. John Ruskin, the art critic, has said that:

No man ever did or ever will work well, but either from actual sight or sight of faith

We live in a man made world, many children grow up hardly aware of the beauties of nature. Even schools teach biology in a rather dry manner. The same can be said of religious education. There is no curriculum that can inspire a love of nature or the Divine in an individual. Spontaneity is mainly regarded as a form of madness and people are encouraged to live within the very narrow precincts of societies understanding of life. When that view is expanded, due to meditation and the study of genuine spiritual subjects, then the student tears asunder the chains that bind and acts in an inspired way, which to most will be regarded as insane.

Indeed in some cases it may be a boon to be regarded as ‘mad’ as it may mean that we are not acting in ways that are

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normally accepted by Society, but are living by a different Light.

The truth is that the individuals are beginning to function under the aegis of their Higher Self, which takes them to a realm little understood by the average person. The Sufis and the Bhakti Yogis inspired by a love of 'God' or the Divine often poetically describe their experience as a form of 'madness'. Rumi in his poem 'The Lovers' states:

The Lovers
will drink wine night and day.
They will drink until they can
tear away the veils of intellect and
melt away the layers of shame and
modesty.
When in Love,
body, mind, heart and soul don't
even exist.
Become this,
fall in Love,
and you will not be separated again.

Wine here refers to Spiritual Knowledge and tearing down the veils of shame and modesty means transcending the limits of man made morals and laws which often constrict and prevent the emergence of the spontaneity needed to follow the dictates of the Higher Self. When in love nothing exists for a while but the object of one's adoration and so when that love is for the Divine body, mind, heart and even soul or forgotten as concepts and one only 'sees' or senses what lies beyond all powers of formulation.

If one becomes aware of the Divinity in all things then one's sense of separateness

disintegrates and only Oneness remains. So we must 'fall in love' with that Divinity and therefore love all things that share it. It is this awakening to the Spiritual nature in everything that may be regarded as insanity by modern society. Certainly under the 'influence' of the Spirit we would act in ways that are alien to most.

Life has a beauty that transcends the attempts of society to create a world of ugliness internally and externally. Very little in our modern towns and cities is designed to lead the mind towards a more enlightened understanding of what life is all about. Governments are concerned merely with the financial status of the country and are swallowed up by materialistic considerations. Nor are compassion and love encouraged, but rather an 'eye for an eye' policy. All of this, of course, is regarded as sanity. Leo Tolstoy in his book 'The Law of Love and the Law of Violence' stated that if the Christian societies of the West truly followed the words of their leader, as in the New Testament, then there would be no need for police forces, armies or courts of law. However if one suggested that we should 'love our enemies, bless those that curse us and pray for those that spitefully use us' or that we should forgive 'not seven but seventy times' and turn the other cheek we would be told that such actions were impractical. This is because they are the complete opposite of the laws upon which society is presently founded. This basis is a kind of madness which accrues when civilization loses touch with its Higher Nature. When the mind is preferred to

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the fruit, when lust for possessions takes the place of love for Truth. As H. P. Blavatsky states in the above quote many things that in the light of the Spirit would be regarded as 'wicked' are now regarded as normal. For instance it is thought to be acceptable to trample on others on the road to material success and even lying is a common practice if it helps the individual to get on in the world in a self-centred manner.

The reason for all this is that we are often ruled by our lower animalistic desires. These are needed to a certain extent to survive during our short stay in this particular body, but when they start to dominate and become the basis of our lives and also the inspiration for our artistic and scientific outputs then we realize that we have created our own obstacles on the already rocky road to enlightenment. What we need is to develop our Spiritual Will and develop as children of the Light. There is a trend amongst younger people mainly on Social Networking sites to promote what they call YOLO (You only live once). This is based on the idea that as there is only one life anything goes as regards sensual experience on this planet. There is, of course, no understanding or even awareness of the workings of karma or reincarnation. In the West to most people the mention of these twin laws may result in the purveyor of the information being regarded as slightly 'unhinged'. On an optimistic note, they are creeping more and more into the collective consciousness, hopefully with positive results in the long run. H. P. Blavatsky writes in the

magazine *Lucifer* October 1887 (page 96):

Will is the exclusive possession of man on this our plane of consciousness. It divides him from the brute in whom instinctive desire only is active.

Desire, in its widest application, is the one creative force in the Universe. In this sense it is indistinguishable from Will; but we men never know desire under this form while we remain only men. Therefore Will and Desire are here considered as opposed. Thus Will is the offspring of the Divine, the God in man; Desire the motive power of the animal life.

Most of men live in and by desire, mistaking it for will. But he who would achieve must separate will from desire, and make his will the ruler; for desire is unstable and ever changing, while will is steady and constant.

Both will and desire are absolute creators, forming the man himself and his surroundings. But will creates intelligently — desire blindly and unconsciously. The man, therefore, makes himself in the image of his desires, unless he creates himself in the likeness of the Divine, through his will, the child of the light.

His task is twofold: to awaken the will, to strengthen it by use and conquest, to make it absolute ruler within his body; and, parallel with this, to purify desire.

Knowledge and will are the tools for the accomplishment of this purification.

We need to cultivate our 'Heaven Sent Madness' to recover our true sanity. We are all Spiritual Beings in reality. It is the birthright of every living being to claim

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their Divinity by cultivating the kind of Will H. P. Blavatsky is writing about in this extract. The fractious lives we lead throw us into confusion, there is a loss of clarity. In still waters the moon is reflected perfectly, but toss a stone into them and there is just a bewildering mass of moving images. So is life a seeming chaos at times as our mind is pulled here and there by our desires and the needs of our physical nature. This is a kind of madness that is regarded as sanity in the modern world. It is important that we centre ourselves on that which is stable and unchanging, that helps us to think with clarity and calmness. We need to find that oasis within us where we can go in order to escape the clamour and din that surrounds us and also permeates our thoughts and emotions. Dwelling in the world of the lower mind this state seems somehow cold and distant and we feel that we need the stimulus of our emotions and the adrenalin rush of life in the 'fast lane'. Master KH stated that we need a calm and serene mind to be able to receive impressions from the Spiritual. Calmness and serenity are not popular in today's society. People feel a need to shut out anything that will lead towards a reflection on the deeper meaning of life. However cold and distant this reflection may appear it is actually the gateway to an increased awareness that will begin to work the alchemy that will transform us into truly Human Beings.

The Knowledge that H. P. Blavatsky mentions in the above quote is of course true Spiritual Knowledge, which has little to do with merely remembering words or

forming concepts. Words are pointers or signposts. If we do not develop the intuitive knowledge that will enable us to extract the essence from the written word then we fall victim to the 'dead letter'. We need to go through the words and ever onwards, not become bogged down in materialized understanding which gratifies our lower mind, but only creates the 'mind forged manacles' that William Blake mentioned in his poem 'London'. Just as Zen Koans cannot be fathomed by the limited intellect and need the assistance of something more profound, so it is with many Theosophical and Spiritual writings. *The Secret Doctrine* by H. P. Blavatsky may seem confusing to the intellect but something much deeper is conveyed to the intuition and these insights increase as the intuition is developed by true study, meditation and the living of the life as taught in many of the world's Spiritual scriptures.

One of the first things we need to do is to determine to extract our minds from the 'insanity' of the world we live in. To step back and to consider what is truly sane in the light of genuine Spirituality. H. P. Blavatsky gives us some advice in this direction from *Lucifer* October 1887 (page 89):

The first necessity for obtaining self-knowledge is to become profoundly conscious of ignorance; to feel with every fibre of the heart that one is ceaselessly self-deceived.

The second requisite is the still deeper conviction that such knowledge — such intuitive and certain knowledge — can be obtained by effort.

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The third and most important is an indomitable determination to obtain and face that knowledge.

Self-knowledge of this kind is unattainable by what men usually call 'self-analysis.' It is not reached by reasoning or any brain process; for it is the awakening to consciousness of the Divine nature of man. To obtain this knowledge is a greater achievement than to command the elements or to know the future.'

There is nothing more guaranteed to recover our sanity than 'awakening to consciousness of the Divine nature of

man.' Then we will not see through a 'glass darkly' any more, but will become aware of realities that words only veil and we will comprehend that all words and images were clouds in front of the sun masking something that only the intuitive side of our nature can reveal. When our mind becomes illumined by the intuition then the alchemical process is complete and our leaden perceptions of life and our distorted views of sanity will be transformed and our 'Heaven sent Madness' will enfold and uplift us to realms beyond conditioned understanding. ✧

We are continually clinging to the impermanent: the impermanent in the form of ideas, of attachments, in the form of organizations and systems, in a number of different forms. One of the Upanishads says that the Eternal can never be found through grasping at perishable things. But that is what we are seeking to do. We are all the time concerned with the things which will pass away.

Radha Burnier

The Best Human Life Promotes Evolution

ENEIDA E. CARBONELL

THE Ancient Wisdom entails a positive or optimistic philosophy based on laws which govern the universe. This optimism is not based on a fleeting, artificial satisfaction, nor is it provoked with a certain intention; it is optimism upheld by facts, by true-life stories, and has been studied under careful and profound observation since immemorial times.

All these laws work unanimously to maintain a perfect universal equilibrium or balance which is full of beauty, harmony, truth, and eternal joy. Their study offers us a complete outlook of the mechanism and linkages of the universal and particular process, because the latter is contained in the former. These laws have been presented by different philosophical schools, religions, and science under a variety of names, but underlying them all, the meaning is analogous. Further, some philosophical schools and science do not bother to study all these universal laws, but they study emphasizing only one or two of them, depending on whether they have made a narrower or more-encompassing observation.

Fortunately, we have an immense wealth of knowledge about these laws in the works of H. P. Blavatsky, mainly in *The Secret Doctrine*, where she made sure not to leave out any of the philosophies, religions, or science of her time, dealing with their study, in addition to those obtained from the Ancient Wisdom, provided by the Masters of the Wisdom. In general, HPB said that the Law of Perfect Harmony is the one which maintains the functioning of the other laws — of cycles, evolution, analogy, karma and reincarnation, attraction, the esoteric law, and so on — presenting Unity as the basis for all, not as a group of elements, but as the origin of everything; and the three primary powers — of creation, conservation, and transformation; plus the legion of forces, subtle elements, or *tattva-s*, and secondary powers which cooperate with the three primary ones.

As we can see, the study of Unity, its laws, forces, and powers, is wide-ranging and fascinating, but the topic of this article is mainly about the law of evolution. Since all these laws are interrelated, by studying

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one of them one can approach all the others. And that is what happened with the law of evolution, which attracted most attention when, in the nineteenth century, the British naturalist, Charles Darwin, after travelling extensively around the world making numerous observations about the variability of the species, presented to the world the doctrine of evolution, also known as Darwinism, in his *On The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859).

Years later, HPB clarified that when you leave Nature alone, the process of evolution is slower, although certain. In the specific case of human beings, when they reach a certain stage, it is necessary to accelerate their evolution, and thus the solar *pitri-s* (the ancestors, or creators of inner mankind) intervene. At those moments, some men knew how to correctly utilize this help and started taking their place at the vanguard of the human race, offering their services today to the Great White Brotherhood. And this is also the work that awaits that portion of humanity which is consciously awakening, and about which HPB wrote in the way that she did, so that when we apply ourselves to understand it, the best in our faculties will be activated, enabling us to act wisely, discovering the harmony in living.

And surely, if we are receptive, we will note that if we give sufficient consideration to what has been stated above about universal laws, the results are astounding, because we are bathing ourselves in the waters into which the genuine seekers of

Truth immerse themselves. And since this benefit is offered equally to all, modern science has learned to dip itself in the same waters that HPB offered us. They started in Darwin's time by taking the law of evolution as a pillar to close the doors to spiritual avenues, to Divinity, or God. But today, in the light of their own observations and deep study, their theory of evolution has become an ally of religious sentiments and certain philosophies. It [the theory of evolution?] is the friend of those who go deeply into creative activities with spiritual significance in our nature and the potential development of human culture.

As a result, modern science reconsidered Darwin's own words when he said: 'God lives in the depths of an elusive, but always hopeful future.' These same words inspired Catholic theologian, John Haught, to write *Making Sense of Evolution*. Bernard Heisch also wrote *The Purpose-Guided Universe* in which he uses Darwin, Einstein, and God to reconcile atheists and theists, offering them a general view of quantum physics, cosmology, and non-dualistic spirituality based on a series of scientific and philosophical justifications, laying the foundation for the purpose of the evolutionary process. This is all studied and understood in what we know as the Divine Plan. It is interesting to note that in the search outward, towards only what is objective and concrete, modern science opened up a magnificent inward world, due to (1) the interrelationship (the one which is certain to those who adequately understand Unity) with the law of analogy, as well as (2) to its

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corroboration of the complementarity of opposites.

Nowadays, modern science has a cosmogony based on eleven powers of the Universe which it has been discovering. These are identical to those primary and secondary powers, to the universal laws, and to the underlying Unity presented by HPB. Although so far scientists take into consideration only eleven powers, these are sufficient to enable them to understand, or to catch a glimpse with more certainty, of the Ancient Wisdom (if they are interested in it). It would take a long time to describe these eleven powers in detail, but following we briefly present a bird's-eye view.

Scientists call the first power 'Nothingness' or 'the power of continuity' (Seamlessness). They establish that its description may be adequate in a certain way and inadequate in another, because if we call it 'nothingness', it must be because it has no objects, and if 'continuity' because it is full of subtle connections. It is the primordial region of the elementary physical particles, studied as a quantum vacuum, first presented as a hypothesis in 1920 and verified in 1940. This power helps scientists accept the common origin of all existence, which was enunciated by HPB in *The Secret Doctrine* (*SD*) as one of the three fundamental propositions, the first one being:

An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable PRINCIPLE, on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human

expression or similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought — in the words of *Māndukya Upanishad*, 'unthinkable and unspeakable'.

It should be noted here that the power which scientists are talking about does not coincide with HPB's definition of her fundamental proposition, but they are related as it pertains to their source. That is, the power of the scientists shows qualities that are implicit in HPB's definition.

They call the second power 'centralization' (Centration) and it is backed up by the study carried out of the energy or power of action transmitted for giving life, passing from one centre to the other. Solar energy is transmitted to the Earth, which gives us her fruits and it becomes part of us through the foods we eat, but the sun takes its energy from hydrogen atoms, which in turn take it from the energy which gives birth to the universe, and this energy also becomes part of us. This reminds us of the power of *fohat* (the essence of cosmic electricity), which transmits intelligent life, and the *laya* points (of equilibrium), given that *fohat* is described as if drawing spiral lines, because this power lies in the evolution of the principles of man as well as those of Nature. It is the messenger or vehicle, the electric power of affinity and sympathy, the tie of unity at superior levels between the spirit and its own breath, which will originate the manifestation we find ourselves in. The *SD* explains that its wheels or circles cover the six directions plus the central wheel, which would be

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the primary *laya* point in our manifestation.

The third power is called that of 'attraction', and modern scientists base it on their experiments with the so-called law of gravity and electromagnetism, as well as their extensive observations of the behaviour of galaxies, planets, stars, atoms, molecules, and subatomic particles. We also call it the law of attraction, and saw its origin in the electric power of affinity described in the previous paragraph, but what has not yet been clearly expounded is how the law of attraction on our planes, upon giving rise to electricity and magnetism, brings forth a series of events which do not appear to be related to the law from which they originated. This time we find that in *Isis Unveiled*, HPB mentions a general called Pleasonton, an experimenter a bit more successful in the manner that he focused on these matters. And, in a nutshell, he expounded that there is an astral light, or transmitting medium, in the space between the Sun and the Earth. The enormous friction created by light as it goes through this medium, necessarily creates electricity, which transmuted into magnetism engenders the natural forces whose actions determine the variations of planetary life. Based on this, he concludes with theories that have not yet been accepted, but HPB says that if Pleasonton had backed up his hypotheses, future generations would not be able to make fun of the sidereal light of Paracelsus, nor of his doctrines about the magnetic influences exerted by the stars on animals, vegetables, minerals, and so on.

The fourth power is that of 'Emergence' and it postulates that the Universe is not a place but a history, a history of irreversible sequences of emerging events, a sequence of creativity. Scientists base this on their constant observations of the appearance of new planets, stars, and galaxies. They consider that science has accomplished a great discovery when realizing that the universe in its totality and within each being contained in it, is permeated by this power. And they have certainly taken a great step, as they are speaking of the primary power of 'Creation' (Brahmā, the first person of the Hindu Trimurti). Moreover, they are admitting the idea of the creative hierarchies.

They call the fifth power 'maintaining the structure' (Homeostasis). This one also corresponds to the primary power of 'Conservation' (Vishnu, second person of the Hindu Trimurti). It is supported by observations realized with the great accomplishments of Nature and how they are maintained by her. They have observed it in the functioning of the atmosphere, the biosphere, and the sphere, as well as in the species of the different kingdoms. This power of conservation cooperates intimately with evolution and is precisely what is being expounded in the title of this article: 'The best human life promotes evolution', because, as we see, it is preserved selectively, that is, preserving the best of what is realized, so that evolution may be a fact.

The sixth power is 'Cataclysm' and it also corresponds to the primordial power

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of 'transformation' (Śiva, the third person of the Hindu Trimurti). This power is very fitly placed as the one which enables the creative process to take place. Some declare that cataclysms happen to allow a new creation to occur (or a springing forth), as they call it.

Śiva is venerated, especially in India, as a powerful being or divine force. It was named 'The Destroyer', to later call it 'The Transformer', because it destroys to bring about a change for the better in evolution.

HPB spoke very enigmatically about metempsychosis, knowing that it could not be understood in her time, but she left the physical plane saying that it was a sublime concept. And observing the function of Śiva, we see how when we reach the culmination of an evolutionary stage, the necessary change takes place on the progress scale, and many times the change is so drastic that it does not look at all like its previous state. This was also the reason why she said that the scientists of her time would never find the missing link.

Currently, we can imagine these drastic changes if we stop to think what scientific theory has to say about 'the quantum leap'.

The seventh power, called 'Synergy' or association, is the one which brings about achievement in a common goal. The synergistic relationships give birth to factors which would otherwise not exist in the universe. This cosmologic law has been observed in the behaviour of neutrons that, if left alone, would disintegrate in a few minutes, but if the same neutron is placed in relationship with one or more protons, it can exist for

billions of years. This is according to quantum physics, and relates to biology; this associative collaboration can offer strategies that turn out to be successful in life's drama. That is, the power of synergy shows the ontological power of relations, and it is precisely the foundation of the first Object of the TS — to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity with the purpose of assisting humanity. Many theosophical thinkers have already told us about the important work that the TS is realizing on having been organized as a 'nucleus' of the Universal Brotherhood, that is, serving the role of broadcasting station for the beneficent influences of unity towards the rest of humanity.

The eighth power is called 'Transmutation', and it is based on the observation of the manner in which the Universe sometimes persists in bringing about the manifestation of something new, approaching the idea that the Universe seems not to be completely satisfied and remains in constant self-transmutation, as a necessity.

We know that the archetypal world waits until its full self-consummation is achieved. Thus the so-called power of transmutation is the one which allows the constant approach to its consummation, and which is precisely impelled by the law of evolution.

The ninth power is the one of 'Transformation' and it is related to transmutation. It is the way in which changes take place in a society or community, that is, when several transmutations, collectively have

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repercussions on a transformation, thus the entire system advances. As can be seen, this power is also directly related to the law of evolution.

The tenth power is called 'Interrelatedness' and is also named the power of integrity and of connecting; in addition it may be called the one of 'totality', and is supported by the manner in which each being in the Universe depends on other beings. Our own existence depends as much on the miniscule organisms that live in the Pacific Ocean as well as on the activity of protons in the sun. Seen externally, this power is the one dealing with relationships or interrelationship, but internally it is the power of compassion or care and shared help. Seen from either perspective, this power allows us to understand quite rightly, the unity underlying all things and its intimate connection of interrelationship and thus the subsequent awakening of love and compassion. These are the qualities that make possible the realization of everything beautiful, perfect, and real.

Modern scientists have named the last cosmological power of radiation as 'Radiance', based on the second thermodynamic law which briefly says that each energetic being disperses its energy. Radiating energy is a law of the Universe. This fact has been observed even in the coldest group of tiny hydrogen atoms in the darkest night of intergalactic space. This fact is described and studied under the subject of Auras in theosophical literature and is also supported in the tenth

power which we just cited, except that this time the interrelationship has been observed in even subtler worlds.

All this scientific knowledge is extremely limited compared to the one offered by the Ancient Wisdom. Further, even with what has been expounded about these matters by HPB and the Masters of the Wisdom themselves in their letters, they clarified that they were offering only fragments of the ultimate realities, simply because our evolution is gradual, and we are not yet qualified or prepared to receive the totality of this fascinating knowledge. This is because we are still in the fifth race, which has only developed five senses. When the fifth race reaches the point when each human being can be a free agent and totally responsible, the karma of this barely adult fifth race will slowly reach the necessary point to obtain more of this knowledge, which is only possible when the sixth sense begins to emerge. In the words of Master KH: '... it is illogical to enjoy the legitimate development of evolution and of the gifts of future races, with only the help of our current limited senses'.

Then neither we as seekers of truth, nor the so-called scientists who carry out work along egalitarian lines, will be able to obtain this full knowledge if we do not prepare the necessary conditions within ourselves so that in perfect harmony with divine laws, we will transform ourselves into their conscious agents. When this is realized, human life will have progressed, promoting evolution. ✧

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

IN the shadow of the temple my friend and I saw a blind man sitting alone. And my friend said, 'Behold the wisest man of our land.'

Then I left my friend and approached the blind man and greeted him. And we conversed.

After a while I said, 'Forgive my question; but since when hast thou been blind?'

'From my birth', he answered.

Said I, 'And what path of wisdom followest thou?'

Said he, 'I am an astronomer.'

Then he placed his hand upon his breast saying, 'I watch all these suns and moons and stars.'

Kahlil Gibran, *The Astronomer*

The Light of Buddhist Thoughts

BINAY KRISHNA

THIS is an exploratory article on Buddha's teachings. These teachings of Buddha Śākyamuni is an important heritage of mankind, serving human needs. When we examine the spiritual traditions extant in the world, all agree on the importance of ethical practice. Even the ancient Indian Charvaka — nihilist who denied any kind of after life — stated then that since this is our only life, it is vital to lead it morally by disciplining our mind. The famous scientist Erwin Schroedinger, who was the originator of wave mechanics (which later led to Quantum Mechanics) made an interesting statement, 'I consider science an interesting part of human endeavour to understand the one great philosophical question which embraces all others: WHO ARE WE?'

Nature functions according to the laws the scientists have discovered from their observations and experiments and their reasoning. Unfortunately science has become disconnected from the philosophic and religious quest of man and is often regarded as being antagonistic to it. Considerable importance is given to understand the external world around us, but there is total neglect of man's consciousness and functions.

It may be advisable to explore some broad aspect of western psychological experiments. Pavlov in the course of his experiments on his dog found that after the process of ringing the bell while feeding the dog with its favourite biscuit the dog salivated. The process was repeated several times. Later he found that even if the biscuit was not given and the bell was rung, the dog salivated. He called it 'conditioned reflex'. An inner psychological manifestation takes place from purely physical conditions.

Freud through his psychoanalysis connected all behaviour with sex libido which was a little deeper than the 'conditioned reflex' theory of Pavlov. It may be interesting to note that Carl Jung, the famous clinical psychologist, found that in the course of his practice persons engaged in philanthropic activities did not have any psychological problems. Self-centred persons had psychological problems who came for his aid. Western psychology has not much to say of the causes of mental afflictions in human beings.

The first cardinal truth of Buddha is that the world is full of suffering. Having diagnosed the disease, Tathagata shows a way out based upon his own knowledge

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and insight of true human psychology. When civilization comes to a time of trouble such as we are in, thoughtful individuals turn from the outer world of political and social chaos to the inner world of psyche. Let some of the basic principles be examined from insight into a new way of life through which civilization may find renewal. It calls for a different spiritual dimension.

The basic problem which confronts a thoughtful man is not what the world is, but 'who am I'. I see with my eyes forms, hear sound through the ear, objects we touch with our organs and so on. But even with the destruction of these organs we remain. Who is this 'self'? Who am 'I'? The five organs of the senses conveys this that it has nothing to do with the true 'Self'. Thinking may be added as the sixth sense activity which is affected by the five outer senses and their casual relationship to one another resulting in the phenomenon of the external world. The organ of thought has for its object infinite space. We recognize space by mere thinking when the five outer senses are at rest.

It is possible however, to eliminate space from our thinking in deep concentration upon the thought. This leads to the direct realization that space has no objective reality and has nothing to do with my true 'Self'. Even if the space is reduced to the size of the thumb the 'Self' remains.

It is not difficult to see that our corporeal organism is the apparatus by which we see, hear, smell, touch and think or cognize the external world. To say 'I see', 'I hear' or 'I think' is as erroneous as a driver on a steam engine to say that 'I am discharging steam.'

It is with desire that we are connected with our cognizing apparatus: we want an organism and we want to use it. Lord Buddha says that the most essential components, or attributes and my true self are in no way touched by all these and hence beyond cognition.

The question is how is it that we come to possess that which we desire by grasping. We repeat this process from time immemorial and we will repeat this perpetually. We swim in an 'immense sea of impermanence.' At the moment of death when I am compelled to relinquish my cognizing apparatus, I grasp new germs which are in harmony with my innermost *tanhā*.

Whatever we experience continually changes to something else is the other attribute of the sea of impermanence; there is no sensation of joy which does not become sensation of sorrow. *Tanhā*, craving for sense pleasure reigns in us. Not to obtain what we long for is suffering. All desire within us is aimed at sense pleasure but they are impermanent.

The other aspect of worldly sense-pleasure is that suffering arises from impeded *tanhā*, craving. Suffering ceases with the giving up of *tanhā*. Being desireless, boundless peace descends upon us as craving no longer disturbs us. He also sees that anxiety is another cause of suffering. Utmost richness can be obtained or achieved temporarily.

Think of a boy put in an enchanted palace. The boy will marvel at the beauty of the palace without seeing through the illusions. He will like the world as it presents itself to him at the first glance.

Human Psychology in the Light of Buddhist Thoughts

Tanhā or thirst will arise which further seals his fate. On the breakdown of the cognizing apparatus in death, he will put himself into the world's hand an incalculable number of times.

In the beginning even meditating in a secluded place becomes impossible, being disturbed by alien thoughts stirring within us. But to overcome this distraction, it is important that we repeat the attempt and not yield to them. We come to realize gradually as the cognizing activity becomes purer, the thought is freer and more independent until one remains for hours in peaceful contemplation.

For this we must become upright men, that is men who do not yield to gross manifestation of 'thirst'. One has first to achieve moral purity. The second step is distracting oneself to worldly things for moral striving. This may not result in outer poverty: it is a question of the inner one. He gradually uses resources and his faculty not for his own interest but for his fellow beings: he is a brahmin, an ascetic, a monk (Dha. X 142). Buddha calls this condition, the state of deliverance of the mind. He declares that those men, while still on earth live in voluntary detachment and in total purity, together with unlimited friendliness towards all living creatures, live 'a heavenly life on earth'.

The wayfarer on the path of life through pure cognizing activity, totally deaf and blind to the external world culminating in deep contemplation may enjoy exclusive perception of infinite void space. After his death he will be reborn in a sphere in which he enjoys the majestic supra-mundane peace of the void and

not facing death for millions of years. But this too is not the pinnacle. That too is impermanent therefore sorrow-bringing.

Buddha calls an adept (Accomplished One) a totally extinguished one. He gave the simile that one is extinguished at death as a lamp is extinguished. Burning and extinguishing are mere processes which concern the attribute of the lamp namely oil, wick, and the greed with which the flame grasps the oil. What underlies under the manifestation of five senses is an 'unfathomable X' in which arise *Tanhā*, thirst for grasping the fuel. Buddha clearly teaches what becomes extinct in us is the flame of greed, hatred and delusion. He says: 'What I see as originating and perishing is something different from me. If this was the same, I could have also ceased to be. All the components of the personality cannot be my true Self. Schoenhaur says: 'In fact the uncognizable essence is the most sublime and majestic: in it there is no arising or passing away.' From this standpoint, it is not He who is extinct, but the world. To us the process is just the reverse. It is a state in which there is freedom from any motion, profound silence, great stillness, absolute tranquillity; in short the great PEACE. Absolute harmony reigns in this sphere of Nibbāna and unlimited benevolence.

OM, AMITĀYA! measure not with words,
Th' Immeasurable; nor sink the string of
thought
Into the fathomless. Who asks doth err,
who answers, errs. Say naught!

The Light of Asia

Books of Interest

NICHOLAS ROERICH: *A Quest & a Legacy*, edited Manju Kak, Nyogi Books, New Delhi, 2013, pp. 258.

Amongst these essays by twenty-two contributors there are chapters devoted to all the phases in Roerich's varied life — the Russian archaeological and 'theatrical' period, the Central Asian Expedition, the Roerich Peace Pact and Banner of Peace for the protection of cultural treasures, Agni Yoga (or Living Ethics), the search for Shambhala, the crossing of the Gobi Desert and the work at *Urusvati*, the Himalayan Research Institute he founded in 1929.

Roerich's art and literary work after 1915 are seen by some contributors as an expression of his Agni Yoga practice, transcendental visions attempting to realign humankind with some higher truth in the expansion of human consciousness, a sacred art within the Eastern tradition and fostering utopian hopes. Mention is made of the Roerich family's 'closest collaboration with the Cosmic Hierarch' with reference to three canvases, but we are made aware (not usually the case with books on Roerich) of their Russian detractors, some of whom projected him as a pitiful political adventurer trying to create an independent state in Central Asia, whilst Helena Roerich's Living Ethics was described by some critics as 'mediocre esoteric writing'.

But the coverage here is mostly sympathetic to writings received from the 'Master Morya', recognizing in Roerich's art the luminosity of the artist's mind and liberation from worldly bondage and suffering. This being an Indian publication, emphasis is often given to what he felt about India, where he dwelt for much of his life and which, alongside Asia, failed to live up to the family's idealized expectations. The chapter on 'Diamond of Consciousness' is particularly valuable for theosophists in the quest for self-realization and finding one's place in the universe whilst transcending the world of *Māyā*, and the many references to the spiritual centre Shambhala show it to have alternative meanings with links to the Vajrayāna school of Buddhism — a necessary practice, according to the present Dalai Lama, for those aspiring to reach this haven of peace without obstacles.

This is a book to be approached and studied many times, particularly, as one writer observes, when we learn to cultivate an internal attitude of attention to the subtle and invisible aspects and meanings of everything that happens on the physical level, in a commitment towards the building of a new world in obedience to the Higher Laws. With regard to Roerich's 7,000 paintings (where sometimes not the best examples have been selected) one writer states: 'The paintings . . . are

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mystical in the sense that they lead us from the seen to the unseen . . . (a) tremendous civilizing influence against dogmas, absolutism and consequent violence . . . It is a spiritual journey from the world of space and time to the timeless omnipresence of cosmic consciousness.’ An intriguing book, then, which explores Roerich’s multi-faceted personality, with many

quotations, especially from diaries during the mountain expeditions. One wonders if the last word has been said on Roerich; yet, with so many paintings in collections all over the world, there is scope for further analysis of little-known or unknown works. Nevertheless it is difficult to see this work being superseded.

ALAN SENIOR

In the human kingdom also each one of us is a tree of life. This human Tree of Life which merely experiences things, which merely reacts to stimuli and puts out its branches in different directions, must be transformed into a Tree of Knowledge. It is only in the case of a human being that we can look for such a transformation. Man knows many things at many different levels; his knowledge reaches out in innumerable directions into the very heart of Nature. He is then capable of being transformed into a Tree of Wisdom.

N. Sri Ram

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