

Freedom of Thought

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasize the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher, or writer, from H. P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties. The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise the right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.

Freedom of the Society

The Theosophical Society, while cooperating with all other bodies whose aims and activities make such cooperation possible, is and must remain an organization entirely independent of them, not committed to any objects save its own, and intent on developing its own work on the broadest and most inclusive lines, so as to move towards its own goal as indicated in and by the pursuit of those objects and that Divine Wisdom which in the abstract is implicit in the title 'The Theosophical Society'.

Since Universal Brotherhood and the Wisdom are undefined and unlimited, and since there is complete freedom for each and every member of the Society in thought and action, the Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organization.



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.

The Choice of Change

TIM BOYD

WHEN we find ourselves involved in a spiritual endeavor, or path, we are looking toward some form of change of an inner nature. Unless we are supremely unrealistic, change necessarily involves a choice. It is not “I wish it were different”, where just the transformation of consciousness happens because we are watching the right TV show. We have to think in terms of change and how we interact with this process.

In the Sufi tradition, there are many stories about one great Master who is archetypal. His name is Khidr, or Al-Khidr. He is sometimes described as The Green Man, because his robes were depicted as green, symbolizing the freshness of knowledge “drawn out of the living sources of life”. One of the features of his stature is that he is said to be the teacher of the prophet Moses.

In Islam Moses was highly regarded and well known, as one of the great prophets and teachers. When he spoke, many people were having spiritual experiences based on his speeches. On occasions some people would say to him things like: “You know a lot, but there is someone who knows more than you do. His name is Khidr.” So Moses went to find him and when they eventually met

he said: “I would like to study with you.” Khidr responded: “That is alright with me, except I really do not feel that you would have patience for my way of teaching you, particularly because you are unable to understand it.” Moses then said: “I promise, I will be patient, I will learn.” And so they started traveling together.

The story says that three things happened. First they were walking by a riverside and had to get to the other shore. There were some fishermen who recognized Khidr and said to the two of them: “Come across on our boat and there will be no charge.” While they were still on the boat, Khidr picked up an axe and chopped a hole in the bottom of the boat. Moses said to him: “Is this the way you repay kindness? There’s something wrong with this. What are you doing?” And Khidr said, “I said that you couldn’t be patient with me”, to which Moses responded: “Excuse me, I won’t do this again”, and they walked off after the boat sank.

Then they ran into a boy who was playing with other boys. This time Khidr went over and killed the boy. Naturally, Moses protested about this apparent murder and again he was reminded about his patience. Again he apologized.

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The third time, they came to a village after traveling a long time. The custom in this part of the world was that you do not turn away strangers. You provide hospitality. In this village they did not, to which Khidr responded by rebuilding a crumbling wall that was there in the village. Again Moses protests, “They didn’t give us even a crumb to eat and here you are, repairing the wall. You could have been paid for it at least!”, to which Khidr responded: “That was your last chance!”

Khidr then explained: “When we were with the fishermen, I broke a hole in the bottom of the boat because a warring king was coming and he was going to commandeer the boats and the fishermen, who would have died in the upcoming battle. But you couldn’t see that. The boy who was killed, was of a believing and righteous family, but the boy was rebellious and disobedient, and he was killed because God will provide this family with another son who is more upright. Finally, underneath the wall that I rebuilt there is a great treasure, and it is one that had been hidden and left for his sons by a man who had died, and now these boys are orphans. I rebuilt the wall in order that the treasure would be secure until these boys come to full age and can have it.” And with that, he and Moses parted.

If we insist on a literal interpretation of the story, every one of Khidr’s reasons is questionable according to our common ethics and morals. But perhaps in the Sufi tradition, much like in Theosophy and other traditions, these “teaching” stories

are designed to open the consciousness in different ways. In the Sufi tradition, as in the Theosophical tradition, it is said that the teaching stories have seven levels at which they can be interpreted. One of them is the literal and moralistic level, and that is about as far as most people can go. But there are at least a couple of alternative ways to view this story.

The boat: a warring king was going to take this tool and use it and the people as instruments of war. In certain traditions there is the idea of ahimsa, or harmlessness. So the idea was of eliminating what would be used as the tool of violence by the warring king. When viewed from an internal perspective, we can ask ourselves “What is it within us that breeds all of the discontent, wars, and controversies that we are embroiled in?” We find that the king roosted in our mind is often described as the little ego, or the lower mind.

To neutralize the means of violent expression of this false ruler, who turns all things toward bad ends within us, what do we use as tools to deal with improper awareness? In the Eastern tradition they speak about organs of knowledge and also of action. There are five organs of knowledge, or senses. We come to know about the world in the way we touch it, see it, hear it, taste it, and so on. The organs of action are also five in number: the hands and feet, the eyes, the ears, the tongue, the sexual organs. These are the ways in which we act upon the world. This is a possible avenue of interpretation.

The idea of the boy who is killed is

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more difficult to understand. How do we justify such an action? If we look at it as the taking of a life of a young human being, it cannot be justified. In *The Voice of the Silence* there are many poignant phrases. One which is often quoted is: "The mind is the slayer of the real." The lower, immature, undeveloped level of the mind prevents our experience of reality; it is continually slaying the real by throwing up a constant stream of thoughts, pictures, and attachments. *The Voice* goes on to say: "You must slay the slayer." Again, these are possible suggestions for interpretation of something which is clearly not to be taken literally.

Then there is the building of the wall to protect the treasure that the orphans, when they come to their majority, will be able to find and utilize. The basic idea is that the father and the sons were separated when the father had died. The sons, orphaned in the world, cut off from their father, is a replication of the biblical Prodigal Son story which we find in all of the world's traditions. The son leaves his father's house and takes his wealth with him, squanders it, travels to a far-away land, and finally awakens and returns home. Khidr's effort in rebuilding the wall is similar to the work of all of the Great Ones, to become one of the "stones which form the Guardian Wall" protecting humanity, protecting an immature humanity until the mind comes to maturity.

There is a story about Khidr called "When the waters were changed". In the story Khidr came and announced to

humanity that the time was going to come very soon when all of the waters of the earth were going to be changed, and at that time, the new waters that would begin to flow would cause anyone who drank them to go mad. Only those who had saved a store of the original waters would be able to maintain their sanity. The story continues that in all the world there was only one person who listened. He put away a store of water. The day came when he saw that the rivers were starting to dry up and the streams stopped running. He went back to his sanctuary and waited, and within a time the new waters started to flow.

After a while the man came down from his place and arrived at where all the other people were. When he got there they were acting abnormally. He thought they had gone insane. And as he talked with them and tried to describe how they had deviated from what was real, which was so clear to him, they would look at him strangely. Some would even get quite angry. They could not understand what he was talking about and thought *he* was the one who sounded crazy. They came to believe that he had lost his mind.

Every day the man would go back and get water from his store, until at some point the abject loneliness of being the only one among all of these people who was different started to take its toll. He concluded that it was better to be accepted and be part of the rest, than to experience this pain of being the only one to see differently. So he took a sip of their water and forgot about his store of the

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“safe” water and about reality. He became one with the others.

This story speaks on a number of levels. On one level we are continually engaged in this process just by virtue of having been born into this world. An infant is not yet acclimated to the type of vision of the persons around him. He sees very differently. But gradually, he, as with ourselves, starts drinking the waters of this world, and with each progressive sip, he becomes more and more “normalized”, more habituated, more accepting of the various kinds of identities that are assigned to him by virtue of the family, religion, the nation that he is born in, until at a certain point those are the facts that he comes to accept as reality.

In its early stages this process is not under our control. As infants and children, our ability to choose reliably has not yet dawned. At a certain point, not necessarily in every life, but at some point in our inner unfoldment, we start to perceive differently. New vistas begin to open up, even if only momentarily. We start to become aware of something more profound just behind the veil that we tend to call “normalcy”. As those vistas arise within us, the experience is in stark contradiction to the “normal” world that we inhabit, often uncomfortably so.

For the person who finds themselves in this situation, often it is much easier to drink the water with the crowd because the behavior demanded of a true perception of reality is in such sharp contrast to the behaviors accepted in our “normal”

lives that it is guaranteed that on some level we end up being something of a problem in this world. These are the choices we make at a certain level of awareness. But if we are going to be perfectly honest, genuine choice is impossible without some inner unfoldment of consciousness.

We may think that we are making choices, but we are not changing much. It is like taking a chair in a room and changing it to another place in the same room. Rearranging the furniture in the mind or consciousness is not transformation. There was a member of the Theosophical Society and one of the great figures in the world of psychology in the 20th century — William James, author of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* and many other works. He said: “Most people think they are thinking when all they are really doing is rearranging their prejudices.” This is the necessary activity of an as yet *not* unfolded consciousness.

In the Proem of *The Secret Doctrine* of H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), she discusses the three Fundamental Propositions. They are broad and transcendent. One of them considers the Absolute, the other is about Cycles (such as reincarnation, day and night, and so on; they are undeniable). But the third one goes into what is happening with us on this human pilgrimage. She describes it as “the obligatory pilgrimage of the soul”.

The soul incarnates in matter and necessarily participates in a variety of experiences ultimately reaching the point

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where the consciousness awakens. HPB describes the two phases of this process of awakening. She says that it first occurs as “natural impulse”. The first way in which the soul starts to unfold its capacities is to be impelled, or driven, by Nature. It is not responding, but reacting. We are being driven by the various shocks of Nature that are constantly around us. This is how we grow initially and start to develop powers to direct, and channel forces of Nature so that we can be protected, such as trying to keep warm when it is too cold, and cool when it is too hot.

Next a very different phase ensues. HPB describes it as the soul then unfolds through “self-induced and self-devised efforts”. We enter that phase of unfoldment where at last we can make genuine choices. We are no longer reactive, but responsive.

The idea of freedom has various meanings. For many people, when they think of freedom, generally it is the freedom “from” something: the rule of dictators, the imposition of bad laws, compulsions of society, pressures of Nature, and so on. This is a common thought about what it means to be free, that somehow we are free when we are isolated from these outside influences. In many ways that is a stage that we necessarily must go through. It is much like that phase of growth that parents describe as the “terrible twos” when at two years old the child’s favorite word becomes “no”. The “no” of the two-year-old or the rebelliousness of a teenager

are reactions. In order to establish an identity and individuality of their own, it is done in opposition to other kinds of forces — in this case parents and their rules. This is one approach.

As people become involved in the unfoldment of a more profound, spiritual consciousness, a different vision of what it means to be free begins to dawn. When we look at the lives of great beings in the religious traditions such as Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, Lao Tzu, Confucius, Plato, Pythagoras, Quetzalcóatl, and so forth, what you see in terms of the kind of freedom they express, is that it is not a freedom “from” anything. In each case you find that the expanded consciousness is great because it encompasses everything in its reach, not just the joys, but the subtleness, the sorrows, and the pains.

The lifetime of the Great Ones tends to be spent in trying to communicate to us the ways in which we too can unfold. Always it involves not protecting ourselves from each other, or removing ourselves from the flow of life around us, but embracing it more fully. Often they ended up dying because of what they tried to communicate to alleviate the suffering of people like us. We can experience and understand freedom at different levels. In many ways it is a choice that we make to be free.

There is in Buddhist teachings something that HPB talked about a great deal. Often it seems a bit abstract — the twelve *nidhanas* — which are the interdependent links that propel us into the cycle of Samsara, or unenlightened cyclic

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existence. It describes twelve specific stages that bind the consciousness to this wheel. It is an extremely useful psychological tool. It is called the Wheel of Life, or Bhava Chakra. In the imagery the wheel is held by the fangs and claws of the Lord of Death, Yama.

On the Wheel there are drawings relating to processes of consciousness. At the very center of the circle is the root cause of the experience we find ourselves in, depicted by three symbols: the pig, the snake, and a particular bird, standing for ignorance, attachment, and aversion. Each one is holding the tail of the one in front, in that order, forming a circle. The fundamental ignorance depicted on this wheel does not refer to a lack of conventional knowledge, but to the fact that everything you *think* you know, is incorrectly seen.

The example often used to depict this type of ignorance is someone walking on a road in the twilight of the evening, thinking they see a snake ahead in the road, and reacting accordingly — adrenaline pumping, fear, readiness to flee, or attack. We are then asked to suppose that as he walks closer he becomes aware that what he thought was a snake is really a rope coiled in the middle of the road. At that point every single reaction suddenly disappears, because now he has perceived the reality of the rope. This is the example that is given for our fundamental ignorance. It is not that we do not know, but that everything we know, we know wrongly.

From the central three symbols of the Wheel of Life there is another wheel

around it where it is said karma is to be produced. As the karma is produced, there is another wheel, it has six slots on it, signifying the different realms of being. In Buddhist cosmology there are hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, and two levels of gods. Then you get to the outer ring of the circle, twelve interdependent links that depict our continuing repetition of cyclic existence. The first and seventh links in this wheel really constitute those places where we have some capacity to choose, or interrupt this repetitive cycle of birth, old age, death, rebirth, and so on. In the first one there is an image of a blind old woman with a cane, signifying our ignorance. This is one possible point for change. Perceiving reality correctly interrupts the cycle.

Next on the outer wheel there are karmic formations, human consciousness, and other symbols describing the way consciousness shrouded in ignorance is propelled along the wheel of samsara until we get to the seventh link. The seventh *nidhana* is described as feeling, or perception, the idea being that at this point we perceive the dual nature of our universe. The image used is a man standing with an arrow that has been shot into one eye: perception of the dual nature of the world, and the arising of the dual internal forces of attachment and aversion. The man who is wounded from seeing is another point where choice is possible.

The first of the three great principles or truths described toward the end of

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Mabel Collins' *The Idyll of the White Lotus* is that "the soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendor has no limit". We are limitless, as much as we may deny it. The third of these Truths talks about the reasons why we do or do not experience some degree of that limitless nature. That is, "each man is his own absolute lawgiver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself; the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment," and that there is a certain degree of responsibility that this engenders. The purpose of our knowledge-gathering process really could be described as a preparation for a specific moment that we will either see or we will miss. It is a moment that is ever recurring, and that we are ever missing.

There is a poem written by J. Krishnamurti as the postscript to *At the Feet of the Master* when he was a fourteen-year-old boy. "Waiting the word of the Master, watching the hidden Light; listening to catch his orders in the very midst of the fight; seeing his slightest signal across the heads of the throng; hearing his faintest whisper above earth's loudest song." It is a beautiful description of the process of awareness, attuned to these moments, these openings to the choice to change.

I used to be something of an athlete when I was younger. I was involved in American football as a quarterback. A great deal of training was required. Prior to gameday the coaches went out and scouted the opposing teams to see

what they did, and figure out the plays that our team could use to work against them. Moreover, as quarterback, it was part of my training that each time there was a play, I would look across and see how the other team was positioned. During the course of our coaches' scouting reports, they would point out that during the course of the game there would be specific situations when they would align themselves in a certain way that would present a unique opportunity. The key was to prepare so that when that moment arrived, I would see it. In the middle of the football game, when you are tired, people have been hitting you from all sides, you look out over the opposing team's lineup and see the opportunity you had prepared for. In that moment the preparation, thought, training, and presence in the moment allow you to see and choose — choose to change the play by giving a signal to your teammates. This is an analogy of the internal readiness that Krishnamurti describes with his poem.

In certain traditions there is the view that all of our thoughts and actions during the entire course of each lifetime in this world are only preparation for a particular moment — the moment when we die. Something unique happens at that moment. Essentially, one by one the different senses that have linked us to this world, fail: sight goes away, smell, taste, touch, we start to become more and more internal, with fewer and fewer outrushing energies. There is a winnowing process — a gradual stripping away that takes

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place. In some spiritual traditions a particular moment is said to occur when the Clear Light suddenly appears. Whether or not our minds are turbulent with attachments and desires cultivated during our lives will determine whether we are able to see the dawning of that light when it occurs. If the efforts of our lifetime have prepared us to see, we can choose to enter deeply into the experience of this profound awareness.

The preparations that we make for our unfoldment, which need not come at the last breath, are accomplished through countless small choices, and the few large ones that come in everyone's lifetime. These are the tools that we will utilize to propel us into that change or transfor-

mation. Living in today's world with its powerful demands and issues, the need for transformed individuals has never been greater.

For those who are participating in what may be called the spiritual path, there is a certain responsibility that falls our way. We are here to cultivate a particular kind of consciousness that will allow for the expression of this greater life within which we find ourselves, in which we live, and move. Allow for it to express through us. We need not have the plan and the answer. Our task is to be available, to perceive the opening, and to stand and embrace it. All of this will come through the choices that we make from moment to moment. ✧

The age-old human problem requires for its solution a mind that has width, comprehension, and keenness of attention. The problem is how to live in peace and harmony with other people, with Nature, with oneself, and to let all that is best within unfold into a state of beauty and perfection.

Radha Burnier
No Other Path to Go

The Life of HPB — I

BORIS M. DE ZIRKOFF

Ralph Gardner: Could you give us a brief statement of the family background of Madame H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), the principal founder of the Theosophical Society. I understand that she was [part of] fairly high circles of the Russian nobility.

Boris de Zirkoff: HPB belonged to a very old Russian family on the side of her grandmother, who was Princess Dolgoruki. On the side of her father she belonged to a German family that had immigrated into Russia about 300 years ago more or less, and became really a Russian family, the von Hahns. The various members of the family of the Princess Dolgoruki belonged to the nobility of old Russia and from their ranks have arisen quite a number of very well known individuals in the history of Russia. Also one or two of them became Empresses of Russia in the old days. The von Hahn German family came in about 200 years before the HPB days, probably under Katherine the Great more or less. We do not know the exact beginnings of that family in Russia. But originally

they came from Meklenborg in Germany.

HPB's family background was quite renowned in many ways because so many people in her family were well known in Russian history. She herself always said that this background was not too important because what we have to pay attention instead is the character of the individual and not exactly their lineage. But, to some extent, even a physical lineage has an importance of its own and the hereditary traits of these families were well reflected in HPB's own character.

Q: What do you know about the birth and early prospects of HPB's life. Was there anything foretold in her childhood as to her possible future greatness?

A: She was born in the night between the 30th and 31st of July 1831, according to the old-style calendar, which was prevalent in Russia in those days. It seemed to be a popular tradition in the folklore of the country that children born on that particular night are going to control the elemental forces of Nature. Apparently, this was quite a correct prophecy in the

Mr Boris de Zirkoff was a close relative of H. P. Blavatsky's father and compiler/editor of her *Collected Writings* in 25 volumes. An interview by Ralph Gardner, of the Denver Lodge, at the 1958 Summer Session of the "Olcott" national headquarters of the Theosophical Society in America, Wheaton, USA.

case of HPB. She had the fortunate or unfortunate destiny or fate to be, kind of, thrown around and about during her early years, because her father belonged to the horse artillery in Russia and his regiment was moving from one town to another, and there was little supervision of the children and the family, and the mother was very sickly. So there were some hard years there.

HPB's mother was a very remarkable individual, one of the first women in Russia who fought for women's rights. She was an outstanding writer. She wrote novels which in those days were considered to be first-class. She was a sickly person who died very young. There was quite a bit of incompatibility between her and her husband, Colonel Peter von Hahn, HPB's father. Very soon HPB was transferred into the family of her grandparents, and from then on things were a little easier.

It must be remembered that HPB was a very unusual child: greatly mediumistic, all sorts of strange happenings took place around her, and for a good many years she had mediumistic and psychic powers under no control whatever. We have strong and conclusive evidence on the part of several people, including her own sister Vera to the effect that this was by no means the imagination of anybody, but actual facts concerning HPB's early life. HPB was a very strong-willed individual right from the very beginning.

Her marriage at such an early age in 1849, which means that she was hardly eighteen, was a strange event in her life.

She was not an individual fit for any kind of a married life anyway, and though we do not know the exact reasons for that marriage, it would appear that she was already then a disciple, a very unusually awakened individual who was trying to get away from the family background. It is very likely that she chose this manner of acting to get away from everything that was around her. This she actually did, because after marrying an elderly gentleman, Nikifor Blavatsky — who, by the way, was not a general as has been stated in many books; he was a civil employee in the government of the Caucasus — she ran away from him, and that was the end of all the Russian background. She took a steamer and went to Constantinople, and that was the beginning of her many and unusual travels the world over.

Q: Where did she get money to travel after she had gone to Constantinople, and what did she do for the next few years?

A: As far as we know from her own statements and those of her relatives, the money for HPB's travels came from her father. There was a very close relationship between them. He always knew where she was, and sent her money. She travelled the better part of ten years. She went twice to the United States in those early days, anywhere between 1850 and '58 more or less. She crossed the US twice in a covered wagon. There was evidence that she stayed somewhere in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and other places, as well as Florida. She investigated the Indians in Canada. She must have gone to

all sorts of other places of which we have no record. It is very likely that she was in Yucatán, Mexico, as well as in Honduras, in Central America, and in Perú, investigating various secret centres of the Brotherhood of Adepts. This, of course, I could not very well prove, but the chances are very great that she was visiting here and there various mystical centres of which there was known but little, in preparation, as it were, for her work.

We find some evidences about it here and there but it is very difficult to find a connected story to write or say something that would become deeply coherent about these ten years of travel. It is also during these ten years that she tried to get into Tibet, and failed. She made at least two attempts, but they were unsuccessful. This was approximately in 1856 and '57. She returned to Russia in 1858.

Q: Do you think that she was in the United States during the Civil War period?

A: I hardly think so. I believe during that time she was somewhere in the Orient, as far as the scarce dates at our disposal go.

Q: What was the impact on her family on her return to Russia?

A: The impact on her family was quite considerable, because she was still in possession of a great many psychic powers only partially under control. She was considered to be a very strong medium when she was in Russia, although a very close observation would reveal that some of these powers were under her control, as they are not in the case of ordinary mediums. It is after her return

to Russia in 1858, and before she left Russia again and for good in 1864, during these five to six years, that she went through some great inward change, very likely around 1862 or '63, and probably while in the Caucasus.

This was a change which brought into complete control her own psychological nature. So we might speak of that change as one of her initiatory trials and tribulations and successes. The existing evidence would show that she left Russia around 1864 an entirely different person in that she ceased to be the strongly psychic temperament that she was before, and could be looked upon as a practical occultist. A great deal about it is contained in A. P. Sinnett's *Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky*.

Q: Whereabouts was she living in the Caucasus during that period?

A: She was mainly in Tiflis, but also in the back country. She tried her hand at various commercial enterprises, curiously enough. She was engaged in at least one business that we have some record of, and that is, she was shipping or had made some arrangement for shipping cork out of the mountains in the Caucasus from one of the harbours in the Black Sea. She engaged in several enterprises like this. Whether they were a sort of cover-up for her occult activities is difficult to say, but they might have been just that.

Q: While HPB was at home during this period of a few years, did she demonstrate any psychic faculties or occult powers to members of her family that convinced them of the reality of the unseen world?

A: Yes, very definitely so. There is quite a good deal of material in the daily journal of her sister Vera concerning this. An enormous amount of psychological phenomena took place in the family and among friends during her residence in Russia after her return from abroad, and these various phenomena created quite a stir among the people. There was no complete explanation of them. Many members of the family and friends were spiritualists in those days, and of course, interpreted these phenomena in totally different ways than a real occultist would. But the record exists, and it is perfectly plain that the return of HPB in the midst of her family and among her friends created quite a stir and was well remembered.

Q: Has the diary or journal of her sister Vera ever been published intact as a record?

A: Not altogether intact, but I might state this, and we have straightened this out only very recently. A. P. Sinnett, when he wrote his *Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky*, which were to be called *Memoirs of Madame Blavatsky* until HPB put her foot down on that prospective title, included quite a bit of text translated from the journal of HPB's sister, Vera de Zhelihovsky. This manuscript was in Russian and we do not know its whereabouts. Perhaps it has been destroyed long ago. But the main point is that HPB herself translated a considerable amount from her sister's diary into English, and that was done for the benefit of Mr Sinnett, who was then

writing his book about HPB. She did all this sort of under protest, but nevertheless she did it. This translation exists at Adyar in their Archives in HPB's own handwriting. About one third or one half of it has been used by Sinnett in his book, but the other half has never been published, and contains some illuminating footnotes by HPB, which she appended to her sister's narrative. I have recently obtained by permission of Brother Sri Ram, a complete microfilm of that manuscript, and as soon as I am through reading and transcribing it, we will probably be able to publish some of the unpublished portion either in *The Theosophist* or elsewhere.

Q: Could you trace, from the very beginning, from her childhood, the relationship of Madame Blavatsky with the two Masters whom she regarded as her mentors in the founding of the Theosophical Society?

A: In this relation we had better keep just one of the teachers in mind. It was, of course, what we later understood to be the Master M., or Morya. He was the personal teacher of HPB as a disciple. The relationship between that teacher and HPB for years was, of course, a very vague thing, indefinite, it was a matter of visions and general feelings, intuitions, and so forth, protective guidance, until 1851, which was the first time when HPB, then in London, met that individual in his physical body. Master M. was part of the Nepal Embassy in those days. He came, of course, under some other name and made himself known to HPB. They met in Hyde Park in London. That

was their first meeting in the physical, we might say. She recognized him as having been the individual whom she had seen in her early days in a psychospiritual manner. She met the same teacher physically again in 1854, also in England. But it was not until 1867 or '68 more or less that she actually penetrated into Tibet and cemented, we might say, her profound and abiding relations with the teachers.

It is our understanding that she met Master KH much later, in other words, not before she went to Tibet. He did not seem to play any definite role in the early days. From the days of the founding of the Theosophical Society, or even two or three years before that, her relation to these teachers and to others was a matter of everyday occurrence. It was a progressive thing. The whole of her relation to the teachers was a progressive thing from childhood, more and more so, until she blossomed out into a regular, accepted and officially recognized messenger from the Lodge of the Brothers.

Q: You mentioned that HPB met Master Morya in London again in 1854. Was he still with the Nepal Embassy at that time?

A: No, but he was on another mission. One of the Hindu princes had been deposed, and he was being sent to London in some capacity connected with him. I do not have the details of this on my fingertips, but I have the whole data as far as we know, in my file. Mary K. Neff has written something about that second meeting. We will put all of this material together as soon as possible and

really make either a record or a tape or a substantial article with all the evidence and references, so that it would be preserved for posterity.

Q: Let us go back now to the time when Madame Blavatsky left her home the second time in 1864.

A: Well, after that she went to Tibet. She was one of the first people to go through the Suez Canal, somehow or other, I think in 1862, if I'm not mistaken. These were the years of her training. Our understanding is that she never stayed in Tibet very long. When the question arose of whether she had been there for seven years, she said "Yes, but seven years all together." Her various visits there were at different times, probably mainly between 1864 and '72, I would say. She received her main and very severe training in Tibet in those days, before being ready for her official work in the forming of the Theosophical Society.

Q: What external evidence, not relating to the TS at all, do we have which would go to prove that Madame Blavatsky did go to Tibet sometime in the 1860s?

A: Very little indeed, except for the testimony of two or three people in India who met her in unusual places in the foothills of Tibet. We have very little evidence, if any, of any exoteric evidence from non-Theosophical sources.

Q: I thought there was a British Army officer who said that he had traced the journey of a lone white woman into Tibet during those years, and had come to the conclusion that it was Madame Blavatsky.

A: That is correct, and it has been

substantiated by all who met that officer. He was Colonel Murray, General later.

Q: Did Madame Blavatsky ever put into writing that you know of, any description of how she got into Tibet or how she got out, or how long she stayed or under what conditions she lived there, or under what conditions she found the Masters living?

A: Practically nothing. I don't believe I could point out to any letter or article or anything in which she said anything worthwhile or of any moment or factual type regarding her stay in Tibet. Perhaps the only reference I know of is that she stated that she lived in the house of Master KH's sister, and perhaps the passing reference that one of the Teachers was taken care of just like any other man of his own house in the sense of keeping it clean and all that sort of thing, just a

passing reference to that. Perhaps also another passing reference to the effect that KH had some purely exoteric function to perform in the Lamaistic hierarchy. He was engaged in some duties with regard to the administration at one of the monasteries, I think in Shigatse. Beyond that, I believe HPB never said a single word of what she did in Tibet, exactly where she was, how she got in or went out, except perhaps for vague hints that she met someone who guided her to where the Teachers were. I suppose the whole subject was under the pledge of strict secrecy as far as she was concerned and just was not supposed to be talked about. We have no first-hand statement from her lips as to what she did in Tibet, not even the actual years when she was there. (*To be continued*)

“Who am I”, she said, answering one question with another, “who am I that I should deny a chance to one in whom I see a spark still glimmering of recognition of the Cause I serve, that might yet be fanned into a flame of devotion? What matter the consequences that fall on me personally when such a one fails, succumbing to the forces of evil within him — deception, ingratitude, revenge, what not — forces that I saw as clearly as I saw the hopeful spark; though in his fall he cover me with misrepresentation, obloquy, and scorn? What right I have to refuse to anyone the chance of profiting by the truths I can teach him, and thereby entering upon the Path? I tell you that I have no choice. I am pledged by the strictest rules and laws of occultism to a renunciation of selfish considerations, and how can I dare to assume the existence of faults in a candidate and act upon my assumption, even though a cloudy forbidding aura may fill me with misgivings?”

Countess Constance Wachtmeister et al.
Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine

Approaching the Mahatma Letters

PABLO SENDER

DURING the first half of the 1880s A. P. Sinnett and A. O. Hume, British Theosophists living in India, began corresponding with some of H. P. Blavatsky's Adept teachers, known to us under the pseudonyms of Koot Hoomi (KH) and Morya (M.). In 1883 Sinnett published *Esoteric Buddhism*, presenting some of the teachings he received from these Mahatmas through their letters. The book had mixed reviews. In the summer of 1884 Sinnett asked Master KH if he could publish the letters to show his critics the source of the information he presented. The answer of the Master was in the negative. After explaining some of the reasons for this (which we will explore presently) KH concluded:

The letters, in short, were not written for publication or public comment upon them, but for private use, and neither M. nor I will ever give our consent to see them thus handled.¹

Eventually, Sinnett came to agree that it was better not to publish the letters and kept most of them private, except for a few he had shared with some Theosophists.

Sinnett died in London in June 1921.

He made Maud Hoffman, who had taken care of him during his illness, legatee and executrix of his estate and possessions, which included the Mahatma letters. A year later Hoffman and A. Trevor Barker decided to publish this correspondence. Barker was obviously aware of the wishes expressed by the Masters against doing this, but considered that the publication of the letters was warranted given that in the Theosophical movement there was "so much controversy in regard to what was, and was not the original Teaching of the Masters."²

The contents of the letters are very diverse. We find lofty metaphysical and occult teachings, insights into human nature and psychology, assessments about world affairs, personal advice to the correspondents, comments about people's actions in relation to the Theosophical Society (TS), and much more. While many Theosophists find in them great wisdom and inspiration, others feel that some of the statements in the letters cannot spring from an enlightened source. For example, some readers are taken aback by assertions that reflect cultural prejudices, misstate scientific or

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philosophical facts, or show a tendency to criticism. As a result, a number of people come to hold Blavatsky's Teachers in low esteem or conclude that the letters could not have been written by liberated souls.

A reading of the letters reveal that the Masters themselves were aware that the correspondence had important shortcomings. Responding to Sinnett's idea of publishing the letters, Master KH wrote:

Instead of doing any good thereby to yourself and others, it would only place you in a still more difficult position, bring criticism upon the heads of the "Masters" and thus have a retarding influence on human progress and the TS. Hence I *protest* most strongly against your new idea.³

This fact raises some questions. How much can we trust the content of the letters? Should one dismiss them altogether because of passages that (one may feel) cannot have come from an enlightened being? Or, if trusting that the letters *do* come from Mahatmas, should one accept *all* statements as truthful and correct? To understand how we should approach the letters so that we can make the best out of them, we must examine the nature and source of these shortcomings.

The Nature of the Letters

During the course of the communication between Sinnett and the Masters there were a few instances of errors and controversies connected with the letters. In some cases, the Masters provided an explanation as to the causes of these mistakes, which give us the opportunity

to learn more about the nature of this extraordinary correspondence. The interesting letter in this issue from HPB to Countess Wachtmeister provides additional insights on the nature of the letters.

Many of the unexpected features we may find in the Mahatma letters can be explained by the precarious conditions under which they were produced. But before we examine the circumstances surrounding the letters, we must keep in mind that the Mahatmas engaged in this enterprise reluctantly. Corresponding is not part of what they normally do. This kind of communication was exceptional, agreed upon only because it would help the growth of the newly formed Theosophical Society. However, as the Masters explain in the letters, they had virtually no spare time to devote to it, and had to operate in the midst of severe restrictions.

Let us examine some of the problems that the letters present according to the explanations given by HPB and the Masters themselves.

a) Their fragmentary nature

A first reason for the refusal to publish the letters was given by Master KH:

When our first correspondence began, there was no idea then of any publications being issued on the basis of the replies you might receive. You went on putting questions at random, and the answers being given at different times to disjointed queries, and, so to say, under a semi-protest, were necessarily imperfect, often from different standpoints. . . .

Therefore, to put before the world all the

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crude and complicated materials in your possession in the shape of old letters, in which, I confess, much was purposely made obscure, would only be making confusion worse confounded.⁴

An examination of the letters quickly shows that the treatment of the different subjects in them is far from systematic. An additional difficulty to the study of their content lies in the fact that a good amount of the terminology we use today (such as Planetary Chain, Globes, Rounds, Root-Races, *kama-loka*, *devachan*, the septenary constitution of human beings, and so on), developed gradually during this correspondence and, therefore, was sometimes used in a vague and confused way. Thus, the Masters thought it unwise to publish the original letters. However, they were not against sharing the teachings found in them. In fact, they not only allowed but also encouraged Sinnett and Hume to take the raw information found in them and publish it in a clear and methodical way in the form of articles and books. They also granted special permission to circulate some selected letters or portions of them.⁵

b) The “veils” introduced

The quote above states that “much” in the letters “was purposely made obscure.” What could be the reason for this? In their letters the Masters explain that, if esoteric philosophy is going to be understood in the correct way, it must be taught in a unique manner. One of the conditions is that certain information can only be given after the student has undergone some

changes in consciousness.⁶ But Sinnett and Hume kept asking questions (and many times *demanding* answers) that were far beyond what their understanding at the time allowed. Consequently, they oftentimes did not receive straightforward answers. Master KH actually warned them about this:

Beware! If your questions are found premature by the powers that be, instead of receiving my answers in their pristine purity, you may find them transformed into yards of drivel.⁷

Another strong reason for the need to “obscure” certain answers is that knowledge is power, and some facts of nature (cosmic or human) could be dangerously exploited by those who are not beyond personal ambition.⁸ As the Masters explained, some of the questions Sinnett and Hume were asking belonged to the “highest initiations” and could not be publicly given.⁹

The serious student of the letters must therefore be aware that some teachings found in them may not mean quite what they appear to mean. This should deter them from taking any of the statements as the “Teaching of the Masters” and encourage them to use their intuition while studying this material.

c) Conditions of their production

A cause for unwanted inaccuracies or even mistakes in the letters is the fact that the Masters many times produced them in less than ideal circumstances, and even in a hurry. Sinnett and Hume would sometimes get impatient when, in their eyes,

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the teachings in the letters showed some inconsistencies. In reference to this, Master KH remarked:

Writing my letters, then, as I do, a few lines now and a few words two hours later; having to catch up the thread of the same subject, perhaps with a dozen or more interruptions between the beginning and the end, I cannot promise you anything like Western accuracy.¹⁰

Another important factor to take into account is that the production of many (if not most) of these letters took place by psychic means, which will be explored in more detail later.

An example of the difficulties faced was given by the Master when explaining the cause of the controversy known as the “Kiddle Incident”:

The letter in question was framed by me while on a journey and on horseback. . . . I was physically very tired by a ride of 48 hours consecutively, and (physically again) — half asleep. Besides this I had very important business to attend to *psychically* and therefore little remained of me to devote to that letter. It was doomed, I suppose. When I woke I found it had already been sent on, and, as I was not then anticipating its publication, I never gave it from that time a thought.¹¹

d) The Nature of Precipitation

Addressing some deficiencies in the correspondence, Master KH told Sinnett, “bear in mind that these my letters are not written, but *impressed*, or precipitated.”¹² The method of “precipitation”

of letters involves complex occult phenomena for which the Masters recruited the help of a number of disciples (chelas). This method introduces a new dimension of possible mistakes which, in many ways, can result in more serious distortions than the conditions we have explored so far.

This process involves two steps — first, the psychic transmission of the content of the letter from the mind of the Master to that of the disciple; and second, the occult “materialization” of a letter written in the Master’s “handwriting”. In fact, the latter was a form of writing adopted by the Mahatmas for the TS, used by their disciples when thus directed.¹³

Some mistakes may take place during the transmission of the contents from one mind to the other. Master KH explained:

Two factors are needed to produce a perfect and instantaneous mental telegraphy — close concentration in the operator, and complete receptive passivity in the “reader” subject. Given a disturbance of either condition, and the result is proportionately imperfect. The “reader” does not see the image as in the “telegrapher’s” brain, but as arising in his own. When the latter’s thought wanders, the psychic current becomes broken, the communication disjointed and incoherent. In a case such as mine [when attending psychically to other matters], the chela had, as it were, to pick up what he could from the current I was sending him and, as above remarked, patch the broken bits together as best he might.¹⁴

The concepts embodied in the letters

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can be mentally dictated, although it was very rare that the Masters would dictate them verbatim, or literally.¹⁵ Frequently, only a general idea of what should be written was given to a disciple,¹⁶ and it was left to him or her to shape the concepts in the appropriate language. This is not too different from somebody asking another person, “write a letter saying such and such”, with the added difficulty that the disciple does not hear the Master physically, but receives the ideas psychically. On other occasions, a “mental photography” would be impressed in the disciple’s mind, which could be seen by him or her more or less clearly.

Once the disciple receives the information, it is brought onto paper by means of a kind of “occult printing” called *precipitation*, which requires great skill on the part of the disciple. Otherwise, mistakes are bound to happen, as it was the case of the letter that produced the “Kiddle Incident”:

[The letter] was dictated mentally, in the direction of, and “precipitated” by, a young chela not yet expert at this branch of psychic chemistry, and who had to transcribe it from the hardly visible [astral] imprint. Half of it, therefore, was omitted and the other half more or less distorted by the “artist”. When asked by him at the time, whether I would look it over and correct it, I answered, imprudently I confess — “anyhow will do, my boy — it is of no great importance if you skip a few words.”¹⁷

Practically speaking, disciples are not mere passive vehicles for the words of a

Master, but active co-participants in the communication. As HPB wrote:

Has Master KH written himself all his letters? How many chelas have been precipitating and writing them — heaven only knows.¹⁸

As a result of this complex process the letters may show forms of expressions, prejudices, and limitations that belong to the disciple, thus adding foreign elements that were absent in the original thought. Again, in HPB’s words:

Suppose the letter [is] precipitated through me; it would naturally show some traces of my expressions, and even of my writing.¹⁹

The difficulties are increased by the fact that, on several occasions, disciples were made to write on subjects with which they had little or no familiarity. Therefore, they failed to express the original thought in a correct manner. This is why some of the communications appeared:

— exhibiting mistakes in science, grammar, and thoughts, expressed in such language that it perverted entirely the meaning originally intended, and sometimes expressions that in Tibetan Sanskrit or any other Asiatic language had quite a different sense.²⁰

It must also be noted that on some occasions the letters were written in a language that either the Master, the disciple, or both of them did not know. In these cases, they had to take the knowledge of that language from somebody else’s mind. HPB explained this process:

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One of our Masters, who perhaps does not know English, and of course has no English handwriting, wishes to precipitate a letter. . . . He has first to impress that thought on my brain, or on the brain of someone else who knows English, and then to take the word-forms that rise up in that other brain to answer the thought. Then he must form a clear mind-picture of the words in writing, also drawing on my brain, or the brain of whoever it is, for the shapes. Then either through me or some Chela with whom he is magnetically connected, he has to precipitate these word-shapes on paper, first sending the shapes into the Chela's mind, and then driving them into the paper, using the magnetic force of the Chela to do the printing.²¹

The letters we have, then, are not the

result of a Master taking a pen and writing down his thoughts on paper. Their production involved remarkable occult phenomena that could introduce many unwanted elements.

It seems to be quite reasonable that the Masters would be against the publication of the original letters. However, they have been printed and, despite all these shortcomings, they are a source of esoteric wisdom and psychological insights. They have inspired thousands of Theosophists for more than a hundred years and are likely to remain a source of inspiration for many more years to come. Being aware of the limitations of this correspondence may help us benefit from it as much as possible while avoiding some of the undesirable side-effects. ✧

Endnotes

1. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (Chronological Edition) #128, p. 429.
2. *Mahatma Letters* (2nd Ed.), Intro., p. xiv.
3. ——— (Chron.) #128, pp. 428–429.
4. ——— #128, p. 428.
5. *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, First Series, #52, p. 112.
6. *Mahatma Letters* (Chr) #20, p. 73.
7. ——— #18, p. 57.
8. For example, in *The Secret Doctrine* HPB hinted at the fact that there was energy within the atom. When decades later humanity discovered this fact, the knowledge was first used to build an atomic bomb.
9. *Mahatma Letters* (Chr) #93B, p. 332.
10. ——— #85B, p. 262.
11. ——— #117, p. 398.
12. ——— #10, p. 26.
13. ——— #75, p. 231.
14. ——— #117, p. 399.
15. “HPB to Countess Wachtmeister on the Mahatma Letters” (“It is very rarely that Mahatma KH *dictated verbatim*”), p. 28.
16. ——— (“Suppose Bawajee receives an order from his Master to precipitate a letter to the Gebhard family, only a general idea being given to him about what he has to write.”), p. 29.
17. *Mahatma Letters* (Chr) #117, p. 398.
18. ——— #139, p. 456.
19. *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, 8, pp. 397–398.
20. “HPB to Countess”, p. 28.
21. *BCW*, 8, p. 397.

HPB to Countess Wachtmeister on the Mahatma Letters

[This is a letter by H. P. Blavatsky of 24 January 1886 to Countess Constance Wachtmeister.* Excerpts of it were first published by W. Q. Judge in *The Path* (March 1893). In 1923, C. Jinarājādāsa published other excerpts of it in his Introduction to *The Early Teachings of the Masters*, edited by him. These were taken from a partial copy of the original letter in the handwriting of Mrs Mary Gebhard. The whole letter, reproduced below, was finally published in the March-April 1982 issue (#68), p. 6, of *The Eclectic Theosophist* from the original letter in HPB's handwriting. The letter was found by Jean-Paul Guignette (Montreuil, France) folded and enclosed in a copy of the first edition of Countess Wachtmeister's *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine*, that he had bought in an "occult" bookshop in Paris. The book, which had belonged to Jacques Heugel, and the original letter were donated by Mr Guignette to the United Lodge of Theosophists in Paris (according to a letter to the Editor published in *The Eclectic Theosophist*, #70, July-Aug. 1982, p. 11).

PABLO SENDER]

MY dear Countess,

In the "Coulomb: Blavatsky" letters (first series of Sept. 1884) there is one addressed by me to that woman from Paris, *the only one* which, with the exception of *mispunctuation* and two or three words that change the sense and make me utter thus *a fib*, instead of making it what it is — a quotation from *her* letter — I say (as far as I remember the words) "If *to save the Society* (i.e. the *work* of the Masters, *their* creation), and do it good, I had to go in a public square and declare publicly and to the hearing of the whole world, that I AM AN IMPOSTOR and FRAUD, I *would do so without one moment of hesitation*. So would I now, at any day.

Now, what you advise me to do, I have for the last three or four years attempted most seriously. Dozens of times have I declared that I *shall not* put the Masters any worldly questions, or submit before them, family and other private matters personal for the most part. I must have sent back to the writers dozens and dozens of letters addressed to the Masters, and many a time have I declared — I will not ask them so and so. Well, what was the consequence? People still worried me "Please, do please ask the Masters" only ask and tell them and draw their attention to so and so. When *I* refused doing it, Olcott would come up and bother, or Damodar, or someone else. Now it so happens that

*Due to printing technicalities, the words underlined by HPB are given here in *italics*, and those doubly underlined by her, are here in SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS. — Eds

you do not seem to be aware of the occult law — to which even the Masters are subject themselves: *Whenever* an *intense desire* is concentrated on their personalities; whenever the appeal comes from a man of even an average good morality, and the desire is intense and sincere even in matters of trifles (and to them what is *not* a trifle!), They are disturbed by it, and the *desire* takes a material form and would *haunt* them (the word *is* ridiculous, but I know of no other), if They did not create an impassable barrier, an *akasic* wall, between that desire (or thought, or prayer) and so isolate themselves. The result of this extreme measure is that They find themselves isolated, at the same time from all those who willingly or unwillingly, consciously or otherwise, are made to come within the circle of that thought or desire. I do not know whether you will understand me; I hope you will. And finding themselves [cut off] from *me*, for instance, many were the mistakes made and dangers *realized* that could have been averted had They not often found themselves *outside* the circle of theosophical events. Such is the case ever since, owing to Mr Sinnett's suicidal (for all of us) desire to make their existence, names, and deeds public, he wrote *The Occult World*; and that Olcott, like a horse getting rid of the bit in his mouth, threw their names right and left, *poured in torrents* on the public, so to say, their personalities, powers, and so on, until the world (the outsiders, not only Theosophists) *deseccrated* their names indeed

from the North to the South Pole. Has not the Maha Chohan put HIS foot [down] on that from the first? Has He not forbidden Mahatma KH to write to anyone? (Mr Sinnett knows well all this.) And have not since then *waves* of supplications, torrents of desires and prayers poured unto them? This is one of the *chief* reasons *why* their names and personalities ought to have been kept *secret* and inviolable. They *were* deseccrated in every possible way by believer and unbeliever; by the former when he would *critically* and from *his* worldly standpoint examine them (the Beings beyond and outside every *worldly*, if not human, law!), and when the latter positively slandered, *dirtied*, dragged their names in the mud! O powers of heaven! what *I* have suffered — there are *no* words to express it. This is my chief, my greatest crime, for having brought their personalities to public notice unwillingly, reluctantly, and forced into it by Mr Sinnett and Olcott. Well, now to other things.

You and the Theosophists have come to the conclusion that in every case where a message was found couched in words or sentiments *unworthy* of Mahatmas [it] was produced either by *elementals* or *my own fabrication*. Believing the latter, Countess, no honest men and women ought for one moment to permit *me* such A FRAUD to remain any longer in the Society. It is not a piece of repentance and a promise that "I shall do so no longer" that you need, but *to kick me out* — if you really think so. You believe, you say, in the Masters, and at the same

HPB to Countess Wachtmeister on the Mahatma Letters

time you can credit the idea that THEY should permit or even know of it and still *use me*? Why, if They are the exalted beings you rightly suppose them to be, how could they permit or tolerate for one moment such a deception and fraud? Ah, poor Theosophists — little *you do* know the occult laws I see. And here Bawajee and others *are* right. Before you volunteer to serve the Masters, you should learn *their* philosophy, for otherwise you shall always sin grievously, though unconsciously and involuntarily, against them and those who serve them, *soul, body, and spirit*, aye — to spiritual and *moral*, not only physical, death. Do you suppose for one moment that what you write to me now I did not know it for years? Do you think that any person even endowed with simple sagacity, let alone occult powers, could ever fail to perceive each time *suspicion* when there was one, especially when it generated in the minds of honest, sincere people, unaccustomed to and incapable of hypocrisy? It is just that which killed me, which tortured and broke my heart inch by inch for years, for I had to bear *it in silence* and had no right to explain things unless permitted by Masters, and *They commanded me to remain silent*. To find myself day after day facing those I loved and respected best, between the two horns of the dilemma — either to appear cruel, selfish, unfeeling, by *refusing* to satisfy their hearts' desire, or, by consenting to it, to run the chance (9 out of 10) that they shall immediately feel suspicion lurking in their minds for the Master's answers

and notes (“the red and blue spook-like messages”, as Bawajee truly calls them) were *sure*, [in their eyes] — again 9 times out of 10, unless relating to some philosophical highly serious question — to be of that *spook* character. Why? Was it *fraud*? *Certainly not*. Was it written by and produced by elementals? NEVER. It was delivered, and the *physical* phenomena are produced by elementals used for the purpose, but what have they, those *senseless* beings, to do with the intelligent portions of the smallest and most foolish message? Simply this, *as this morning, before the receipt of your letter*, at 6 o'clock, I was permitted and told by Master to make you understand at last; you, and all the sincere, truly devoted Theosophists: “*as you sow, so you will reap*”; to personal and private questions and prayers, answers framed in the mind of those whom such matters can yet interest, whose minds are not yet entirely blank to such worldly terrestrial questions, answers by chelas and novices, often something reflected from *my own mind*, for the Masters would not stoop for one moment to give a thought to *individual* private matters relating but to one or even ten persons, their welfare, woes, and blisses in *this* world of Maya, to nothing except questions of really universal importance. It is ALL YOU, Theosophists, who have dragged down in your minds the ideals of our MASTERS; *you*, who have unconsciously and with the best of intentions, and full sincerity of good purpose, DESECRATED them, by thinking for one moment, and believing

that THEY would trouble themselves with your business matters, sons to be born, daughters to be married, houses to be built, and so on and so forth. And yet, all those who have received such communications, being nearly *all* sincere (those who were *not* have been dealt with according to other special laws), you had a right, knowing of the existence of Beings who you thought could easily help you, to seek help from them, to address them, once that a monotheist addresses his *personal* god, desecrating the GREAT UNKNOWN a million of times *above* the Masters, by asking him (*or* IT) to help him with a good crop, to slay his enemy, and to send him a son or daughter; and having such a right in the abstract sense, They could not spurn you off, and refuse answering you if not themselves, then by ordering a chela to satisfy the addresser to the best of his or her (the chela's) ability. How many a time was I, no Mahatma, shocked and startled, burning with shame when shown notes written in their (two) handwritings (a form of writing adopted for the TS and used by chelas, only NEVER *without their special permission or order* to that effect), exhibiting mistakes in science, grammar, and thoughts, expressed in such language that it perverted entirely the meaning originally intended, and sometimes expressions that in Tibetan Sanskrit or any other Asiatic language had quite a different sense, as in one instance I will give. In answer to Mr Sinnett's letter referring to some apparent contradictions in *Isis*, the chela who was made to precipitate

Mahatma KH's reply put: "I had to exercise all my *ingenuity* to reconcile the two things." The term "ingenuity", used for and meaning candour, fairness, an *obsolete* word in this sense and never used now, but once meaning this perfectly as even I find in Webster, was misconstrued by Massey, Hume, and I believe even Mr Sinnett, to mean "cunning", "cleverness", "acuteness", to form a new combination so as to prove there was no contradiction. Hence: "the Mahatma confesses most unblushingly to ingenuity, to using *craft* to reconcile things, like an astute tricky lawyer", and so on. Had I been commissioned to write or precipitate the letter, I would have translated the Master's thought by using the word "ingenuousness", or openness of heart, frankness, fairness, freedom from reserve, and dissimulation", as Webster gives it, and opprobrium thrown on Mahatma KH's character would have been avoided. It is not *I* who would have used *carbolic* acid instead of "carbonic acid", and so forth. It is very rarely that Mahatma KH *dictated verbatim*, and when He did, there remained the few sublime passages found in Mr Sinnett's letters from him. The rest, He would say, write so and so, and the chela wrote, often without knowing one word of English, as I am now made to write Hebrew and Greek and Latin, and so on.

Therefore the only thing I can be reproached with — a reproach I am ever ready to bear though I have not *deserved it*, having been simply the obedient and blind tool of our occult laws and

HPB to Countess Wachtmeister on the Mahatma Letters

regulations — is of having (1) used Master's name when I thought my authority would go for nought, and when I sincerely believed acting agreeably to Master's intentions,¹ and for the good of the cause; and (2) of having *concealed that* which the laws and regulations of my pledges did not permit me so far to reveal; (3) PERHAPS (again for the same reason), of having insisted that such and such a note was from Master, written in *his own handwriting*, all the time thinking JESUITICALLY, I confess: "Well, it is written by *his* order and *in* his handwriting, after all, why shall I go and explain to those, who *do not, cannot* understand the truth, and perhaps only make matters worse." Two or three times, perhaps more, letters were precipitated in *my presence*, by chelas who could not speak English, and who took ideas and expressions out of my head. The phenomena, in *truth* and *solemn* reality, were greater at those times than ever! Yet they often appeared the most suspicious, and *I had to hold my tongue*, to see suspicion creeping into the minds of those I loved best and respected, *unable* to justify myself, or to say one word! What I suffered, *Masters alone knew!* Think only (a case with Solovioff at Elberfeld) I sick in my bed; a letter of his, *an old letter*, received in London and torn by me, *rematerialized* in my own sight, I looking at the thing; five or six lines in the *Russian language*, in Mahatma *KH's handwriting* in blue, the words TAKEN FROM MY HEAD, the letter, old and crumpled, travelling slowly

alone (even I could not see the astral hand of the chela performing the operation) across the bedroom, then slipping into and among Solovioff's papers, who was writing in the little drawing room, correcting my manuscript; Olcott standing close by him and having just handled the papers looking over them with Solovioff. The latter finding it, and like a flash I see in his head, *in Russian*, the thought: "The old impostor (meaning Olcott) must have put it there!", and such things by hundreds.

Well, this will do. I have told you the truth, the whole truth and *nothing but the truth*, so far as I am allowed to give it. Many are the things I have *no* right to explain, if *I had to be hung for it*. Now think for one moment, suppose Bawajee receives an order from his Master to precipitate a letter to the Gebhard family, only a general idea being given to him about what he has to write. Tibetan paper and envelope are *materialized* before him, and he has only to form and shape the ideas into *his* English and precipitate them in Master's handwriting. What shall the result be? Why *his* English, his "ethics" and philosophy — *Bawajian* style all-round — a *fraud*, a *transparent FRAUD!*, people would cry out; and if anyone happened to *see such a paper before him* or in his possession *after it was formed*, what should be the consequences? Another instance — I cannot help it, it is *so* suggestive. A man, *now dead*, implored me for three days to ask Master's advice on some business matter, for he was going to become a bankrupt

and dishonour his family, a *serious* thing. He gave me a letter for Master “to send on”. I went into the back parlour, and he went downstairs to wait for the answer. To *send on* a letter two or three processes are used: (1) To put the envelope sealed on my forehead and then, warning the Master to be ready for a communication, have the contents reflected by my brain, carried off to his perception by the *current* formed by him. This, if the letter is in a language I know; otherwise (2) to unseal it, read it *physically* with my eyes without understanding even the words, and that which *my eyes see* is carried off to Master’s perception and reflected in it in his *own* language; after which, to be sure, no mistake is made, I have to burn the letter with a stone I have (matches and common fire would *never do*), and the ashes caught by the current, becoming more minute than atoms, would be *rematerialized* at any distance where Master was. Well, I put the letter on the forehead *opened*, for it was in *Bashya*, of which I know not one word, and when Master had seized its contents I was ordered to burn and send it on. It so happened that I had to go in my bedroom and get the “stone” there from a drawer it was locked in. That minute I was away, the addresser, impatient and anxious, had silently approached the door, entered the drawing room, not seeing me there, and seen his own letter opened on the table.

He was *horror-struck*, he told me later; *disgusted*, ready to commit suicide, for he was a bankrupt not only in fortune, but all his *hopes*, his *faith*, his heart’s creed, were crushed and gone. I returned, burnt the letter, and an hour after, gave him the answer, also in *Bashya*. He read it with dull, staring eyes, but thinking, as he told me, that, if there were no Masters, *I was* a Mahatma, did what [he] was told, and his fortune and honour were saved. Three days later he came to me and frankly told me all — did not conceal his doubts for the sake of *gratitude*, as others did — and was rewarded. By order of the Master I showed him *how* it was done and he understood it. Had he not told me, and had his business gone wrong, *advice* notwithstanding, would not he have died believing me the *greatest impostor* on Earth? And so it goes.

It is my *heart’s desire to be rid for ever* of any phenomena but my own mental and personal communication with Masters. I shall no more have anything to do whatever with letters or phenomenal occurrences. This I swear, on Masters’ Holy Names, and shall write a circular letter to that effect. Please read the present to all, even to Bawajee. FINIS all, and now, theosophists who will come and ask me to tell them so and so *from Masters*, *may the Karma fall* on THEIR heads. I AM FREE. Master has *just promised me this blessing!!*

Yours, H. P. BLAVATSKY

1. Found myself several times *mistaken* and now am punished for it with daily and hourly crucifixion. Pick up stones, theosophists, pick them up, brothers and kind sisters, and stone me *to death* with them for trying to make you happy with a word from Masters!

What is Your Way? — II

TRÂN-THI-KIM-DIÊU

The Way of Socrates (470–399 BC)

Almost contemporary to Confucius, Socrates had many common views with Confucius, such as contempt for position and power. He also had an uncompromising view towards politicians. Yet he did talk to politicians and writers of his time freely about their notions of right and wrong. He preferred to frequent — by choice — the society of young men of promise. Accused of corrupting the youth and of impiety, he was judged and sentenced to death. The Hellenic tradition allowed him to defend himself with a counter-proposition, but he acted in such a way that the death sentence was maintained and enhanced. Drinking the hemlock is a universally known image, so well described in *Phaedo* and *Apology* by Plato, his greatest disciple — who shared his view that *goodness is at the foundation of all things*.

Socrates wrote nothing. It is reported that according to him *the unexamined life is not worth living*.¹² His approach to ethics was that *no man is evil by nature*. His exhortation to *make use of reason in life*, and his constant questioning under

the form of *dialogue* [reported in his disciples' works, of which the most famous is known as Plato's *Politeia* (*The Republic*)], testify to the fact that he actually was a great teacher. Yet, unlike Confucius, he did not teach how they should live. What Socrates taught was *a method of inquiry* through which the "dialoguing partner" would discover himself the shortcoming of his own reasoning.

With Socrates, ethics is not conventional morality. The latter can never solve adequately any major "dilemma" in life, neither can human justice solve inequity. Human society is made up mostly of people who favour the conventional moral code because it makes life easy, and generally speaking people are lazy to reflect and, in short, lazy to learn. Since conventional morality is the choice of most people, the mind gets dull. This is the reason for Socrates exhorting *the cultivation of an inquiring mind*. This is also a prerequisite to freedom, which is no doubt a danger for the established order. His accusation and sentence to death make it clear that whoever goes against the desires of the people — even

Miss Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu is Chairman of the European Theosophical Federation, and lectures and writes extensively on Theosophy. Talk delivered at the European Congress, September 2004.

though with good intentions and lofty ideals — is in serious danger.¹³

With Socrates' death the Athenians declined in political and military power. Paradoxically, it corresponded to the beginning of another kind of Greek empire, the empire over the Western intellect. Undeniably, Socrates — according to what can be read from narrations about him — marked a turning point in Western thinking. This major change is that there is no certainty in anything that is stated; if there is to be any at all, it is to be discovered by the learner. The keynote of Socrates may be *reasoning, dialoguing, and inquiring through liberating scepticism*.

The Way of J. Krishnamurti (1895–1986)

More recently, we have J. Krishnamurti (K.), called the “seer who walks alone”. Is this so? Maybe not on a visible level. Indeed, he was at the origin of many Foundations and Schools.¹⁴ On some occasions he described himself only as “a passer-by”. Obviously, by doing so, he did not talk in terms of self-definition. The mystery of the man remains intact. There is perhaps no need to go into it. His teachings exalt freedom, but without denying responsibility.

To K., life itself is the teacher, and each one is in a constant state of learning. The learning here resembles a never-ending process. This dynamic, eternal movement seems to flow naturally, especially when one listens to his recorded talks. In the *First and Last Freedom*, he stated:

To bring about a society that is not repetitive, nor static, not disintegrating, a society that is constantly alive, it is imperative that there should be a revolution in the psychological structure of the individual, for without inward, psychological revolution, mere transformation of the outer has very little significance. . . . Outward action, when accomplished, is over, is static; if the relationship between individuals, which is society, is not the outcome of inward revolution, then the social structure, being static, absorbs the individual, and therefore makes him equally static, repetitive. . . . It is a fact that society is always crystallizing and absorbing the individual, and that constant, creative revolution can only be in the individual, not in society, not in the outer. That is, creative revolution can take place only in individual relationship, which is society.

The importance of right relationship is emphasized constantly by K. In this relationship, which is not avoidable — since we are living in society — virtue is a necessary constant, although K. very seldom expressed this fact.

Chuang-Tzu's innocence does not need virtue; it *is* virtue. It is not different from *freedom from self*. Intelligence, in Confucian terms, is the basis for right living, which is the outcome of virtue. Nourished by constant learning, intelligence leads to *that freedom which is earned by overcoming the self*. This freedom generates originality and a lively mind. The mind, when it is lively, freed from the burden of self, becomes

What is Your Way? — II

flexible, sensitive, and inventive.

One of the main tenets of K.'s teaching is listening. Learning begins with listening, and *listening cleanses the mind*. By listening, the listener lets his own self be carried away, or rather, he lets his self — *ego* — vanish in the process. *Attention* is thus the keynote of K.'s teaching. When genuine listening takes place, there is no listener, no observer; there is just *intelligence in action*. According to K., attention is like a flame (*buddhi*) shedding out the light of wisdom (*prajñā*).

In the process of attentive listening, no standpoint can be taken. Obvious enough, when there is the seeing of the whole, it is no longer possible to grasp a particular point of view. The mind — consciousness — is seized and set in the one-pointedness of attention. This dynamic state of consciousness, which is beyond reasoning (function of mind), beyond duality (nature of mind), calls for Reality in its solitude. Reality is elsewhere and is known as “That which IS”.

Freedom here is *freedom of solitude*, freedom of consciousness *alone*, undivided, the state of innocence of Chuang-Tzu, the Unique from which Confucius' thinking proceeds, the Good of Socrates and Plato.

Like Socrates, K. develops a way of teaching based on dialogue. Yet, here, more than just discovering the shortcomings of one's own reasoning, when the dialogue grows properly, the sensitive participants can get an intimation of *intelligence in movement*. In fact, this

resembles the art of Mādhyamaka¹⁵ dialectic, developed and expounded by Nagarjuna,¹⁶ ‘one of the greatest geniuses the world has ever known’.¹⁷ The system of Mādhyamaka, the Middle Way, does not stand either for an absolute affirmation, nor for an absolute negation. The Mādhyamaka position is in the middle, and yet it is not defined. It cannot be defined.

What then does dialectics mean? In plain words, dialectic is that movement of thought which, by examining the pros and cons of a question, brings about a clear consciousness of the antinomies into which Reason gets bogged up, and hints at a way out of the impasse by rising to a plane higher than Reason.¹⁸

Once this point is reached, it is the living proof that Reason cannot solve the essential question of Reality, because Reality transcends Thought and Reason. At that moment also there may be an intimation of “That which IS”.

The whole issue of ethics then can be regarded as endeavouring to bridge freedom and responsibility and finding a way of living which is possible, acceptable, and dynamic, and for the good of all. This way *necessarily combines innocence, intelligence, and freedom*. Such living is the true reflection of ethics.

To conclude here is — from one “thick skull” to another — a question for you, my friend: “What is your way?” And beware! Don't let the answer “blow in the wind”!¹⁹ ✧

What is Your Way? — II

Notes and bibliography

12. It sounds like a résumé of the Golden Verses of Pythagoras.

13. One cannot dissociate Socrates from Plato (428/427-348/347 BC), his greatest disciple. Indeed, most of Plato's philosophical works are based on narrations on Socrates, his biography and dialogues. Although Plato shares Socrates' point of view that goodness is at the foundation of all, he has a more obvious mystic part, perhaps, because — as HPB has pointed out at several places — Plato was an Initiate, like Aristotle, and Socrates was not. For Plato, the greatest pleasure was in intellectual speculation; probably this makes him different from Socrates.

14. Plato founded the Academy in Athens and Aristotle founded the Lyceum outside Athens. (The chief difference between the Academy and the Lyceum was that in the Academy the scientific interests of the Platonists centred on mathematics whereas the main contributions of the Lyceum lay in biology and history.)

15. *An Introduction to Madhyamaka Philosophy*, p. 4, specifies that:

'The correct name for the system is Madhyamaka, not Madhyamika. Madhyamika means the believer in or follower of the Madhyamaka system'.

16. Nagarjuna, name of the outstanding Patriarch of Mahayana Buddhism, a brilliant and subtle thinker, who developed the Madhyamaka philosophy (Middle Way).

17. *An Introduction to Madhyamaka Philosophy*, p. 11.

18. id., p. 16.

19. *Blowin' in the Wind*, song by Bob Dylan.

Suggested readings

(First date is first publication, second date is latest reprint).

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“The Forlorn Hope”

RADHA BURNIER

AGAIN and again, the question is asked: Why is the Theosophical Society not able to draw into it large numbers of people? Those who pose this question are often those who feel disappointed because the Society has an apparent lack of success, judging by the number of members it has had and has.

Careful consideration of the nature of the work the Society is meant to do clarifies this position, and eliminates false expectation and disappointment. The great personages who inspired the founding of the Theosophical Society called it the “Forlorn Hope” and said that “when one regards the magnitude of the task to be undertaken by our theosophical volunteers, and especially the multitudinous agencies arrayed, and to be arrayed, in opposition, we may well compare it to one of those desperate efforts against overwhelming odds that the true soldier glories to attempt”. They also referred to the “large purpose” in the small beginnings of the Theosophical Society.

The Theosophical Society has spread far and wide since those days. It exists in about sixty countries of the world. It



15 November 1923–31 October 2013

has also influenced the thinking and attitude of a vast number of persons who never became members of the Society, or who remained as members only for a short period. Out of the Society arose the impetus for many reforms in the social, educational and other fields.

Yet, in spite of the work done, it has to be admitted that not only did the

Mrs Radha Burnier was international President of the Theosophical Society from 1980–2013. Reprinted from *The Theosophist*, November 1983.

“The Forlorn Hope”

Society have a “small beginning”, but it still represents only a small stream of progressive thinking and living. This is inevitable because human nature changes slowly. For millennia, wars and strife, oppression and cruelty have marked human society. The corrupting influences in human society condition the individual, and individual human beings make up and corrupt the society in which they live.

Ancient Hindu books speak of the ages or yugas following one upon the other, each becoming darker with unrighteousness. After the darkest age, or Kali Yuga, a new cycle begins due to certain special influences. This picture of human civilization points to the acceleration of selfish tendencies which take place through the blind, mutual interaction of society and the individuals who compose it.

The conditioning of ages, and the strong pressures exerted by the psychic atmosphere of the world, have to be resisted and counteracted by a sufficient number of thoughtful and discerning human beings to make the tide change. This is no small task. “The road is uphill all the way.” The Theosophical Society works for no worldly success. Its work

is to erode, however slowly, “the old creeds and superstitions which suffocate in their poisonous embrace like the weed nigh all mankind”. It has to influence its fellows and others who come into contact with them to build a “practical Brotherhood of Humanity where all will become co-workers of Nature”.

A vast evolutionary movement is taking place in Nature. In human nature, the key to progress is unselfishness. In *At the Feet of the Master*, selfishness is defined strikingly as the antithesis of evolution. The members of the Theosophical Society who undertake seriously its work have the obligation of working for evolution and not for selfishness. The blind cannot lead the blind. A group of selfish people, however large, cannot arrest the decay of human society or help to bring about progress for other human beings in the true sense of the term.

The influx of a large number of persons into the Theosophical Society will, therefore, not help to accomplish “the great purpose” which animates it. Those who would join in the great task must be the first to change their mode of life. The question we have to ask is: “Where are the unselfish hearts and true hands?” ✧

Nor are we especially anxious to have anyone work for us except with entire spontaneity. We want true and unselfish hearts; fearless and confiding souls.

KH

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

There is naught whatsoever higher than I, . . .
All this is threaded on Me, as rows of pearls on a string:
 . . . I the radiance in moon and sun;
 the Word of Power in all the Vedas,
 sound in ether, and virility in men;
the pure fragrance of earth and the brilliance in fire am I;
the life in all beings am I, and the austerity in ascetics.
 Know Me, . . . , as the eternal seed of all beings.
 I am the Reason of the Reason-endowed,
 the splendour of splendid things am I.
And I the strength of the strong, devoid of desire and passion.
 In beings I am desire not contrary to duty, . . .
worship Me as the One and the Manifold everywhere present.

Bhagavadgītā, vii.7–11; ix.15

Theosophical Work around the World

India — Bhubaneswar

The first National Conference on Theosophical Education was held at Bhubaneswar on 23 and 24 September 2016, inaugurated by Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, international Vice-President of the Theosophical Society. It was presided by Mr B. L. Bhattacharyya, National Director, Theosophical Order of Service (TOS).

In her welcome address, Dr Deepa Padhi, President, TOS, Odisha Region, introduced the chief speaker, Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, former General Secretary of the TS in the Philippines. She said that Theosophical education brings about wholesome development of human beings by enriching them spiritually besides elevating their physical, emotional, and intellectual faculties.

In his inaugural address Dr Satapathy gave a historical narration of the contribution of Theosophy to education, highlighting Col H. S. Olcott's efforts and the Olcott Education Society in propagating theosophical values in education.

Mr Hao Chin delivered the keynote address, stressing that theosophical education helps to understand life with greater clarity and insight, and its goals can build a stable society by nurturing social values. He also released the booklet *Establishing Theosophical Schools* translated into four Indian languages: Odia, Hindi, Telugu, and Bengali.

The next day, Mr Hao Chin conducted

a meditation session, followed by a workshop on theosophical education. Over 45 delegates from 12 Schools participated.

India — Kerala

The 87th Annual Conference of the Kerala Theosophical Federation (KTF) was held in Alleppey on 1 and 2 October 2016, presided by Mr S. Sivadas, the KTF President, with Mr Tim Boyd, international President, as the chief guest. The theme of the conference was "Man — the Problem and the Solution". Mr P. T. Krishnadas, the KTF Secretary, read out the greetings received, and Mr K. M. Vasudevan, President of the hosting Anna-poorani Lodge, gave the welcome address.

In his inaugural address, Mr Boyd said that the prediction of Col Olcott when he inaugurated the Theosophical Society (TS) on 17 November 1875 in the USA came true, as now the work of the TS during the last 141 years cannot be ignored by any historian. Meditation and the unfoldment of consciousness, in addition to concepts such as karma, dharma, and reincarnation were unknown to the West before the TS was founded. The fundamental teaching of Theosophy is that the spark within oneself is the same as in every other living creature, and that one needs to fan it into a flame for the welfare of humanity and society at large.

Prof. R. C. Tampi spoke on "Theosophy in India — Yesterday and Today"

Theosophical Work around the World



L. to r.: Dr Deepa Padhi (*seated, third from left*); Mrs Teresita Hao Chin, from the Philippines; Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, and Mr B. L. Bhattacharyya, at the first National Conference on Theosophical Education, held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, on 23 and 24 September 2016



L. to r.: Mr K. M. Vasudevan, Prof. R. C. Tampi, Mr S. Sivadas, and Mr P. T. Krishnadas, with the international President, Mr Tim Boyd, at the 87th Annual Conference of the Kerala Theosophical Federation held at Annapoomi Lodge in Alappuzha (Alleppey), on 1 and 2 October 2016

Theosophical Work around the World



Inauguration of the 107th Annual Conference of the Karnataka Theosophical Federation at Huliya Sanmarga Lodge. *L. to r.:* Mr Maheshachar, Lodge Secretary; Mr Gopalakrishna, Lodge President; Mr M. R. Gopal, Lodge Ex-President; Ms Marja Artamaa, International Secretary; Mr B. V. Thippeswamy, Federation President; Prof. C. A. Shinde, National Lecturer; Ms K. Parvathamma, Federation Secretary; Mr S. M. Umakanth Rao, TPH Manager; and Mr K. L. Nanjunda Setty, Lodge Organizer



Huliya Sanmarga Theosophical Lodge Building, in Karnataka, where its golden jubilee celebration was held from 15 to 17 October, along with the Annual Conference of the Karnataka Federation described above

Theosophical Work around the World

as part of observing Dr Annie Besant's birth anniversary and the 125th year since the founding of the Indian Section.

The next day, Mr Boyd gave the keynote address and released a CD on the "Bharata Samaj Pooja". Others who spoke were Mr Bhaskaran Nair, Dr M. A. Raveendran, and Mrs A. V. Seethalakshmi.

The 125th anniversary of Sree Sankara Lodge in Ernakulam, Kerala, was celebrated on 2 and 3 October, where Mr Boyd was the chief guest. He interacted with the members of the Lodge on the evening of the 2nd.

On 3 October, Dr T. P. Babu, President of the Lodge, welcomed the gathering, and briefly described the history of Sree Sankara Lodge, started in the 19th century in the former princely state of Cochin. He then gave a report of the Lodge activities, such as free Homeopathic treatment, Naturopathy classes, and so on. The Lodge is also the venue of the J. Krishnamurti study centre at Ernakulam. Mr Boyd inaugurated the function and talked on "How is theosophy unique, and can it be a panacea for human misery?"

India — Karnataka

The 107th annual conference of Karnataka Theosophical Federation (KTF) themed "Universal Brotherhood — Inner and Outer Aspects" was held in Huliyaar on 15–17 October 2016, along with the golden jubilee of the Sanmarga Theosophical Lodge. Ms Marja Artamaa, international Secretary, was the chief guest. The latter event was held on 15th even-

ing, with Mr M. R. Gopal, former President of the Lodge, welcoming the gathering, and Ms Artamaa inaugurating the event and giving a talk on the theme.

On the next day, the 107th annual conference of KTF was inaugurated by Prof. C. A. Shinde, national lecturer, and Mrs K. Parvathamma, Secretary of KTF, welcomed the gathering. Prof. Shinde delivered a talk on "Unity Is a Fact of Nature". Later, Ms Artamaa released three books. Dr L. Nagesh, national lecturer, led the panel discussion on "How Universal Brotherhood is relevant and possible in the present-day world". Mr G. B. Nagan Gowdar, Secretary of Kottur Theosophical Lodge, delivered a public talk on "Universal brotherhood is achieved by practical Theosophy".

On the 17th, a women's symposium on "Unity of All Fundamental Existence" was conducted. Mr B. V. Thippeswamy, KTF President, delivered a talk on "Universal Brotherhood — 6th Root Race". About 250 delegates from 43 Lodges participated in the conference along with 50 local members.

Recent Changes

Mrs Ligia Simpson has become the Organizing Secretary for the Regional Association of Central America, and Mrs Blanka Blaj Borstnar for that of Slovenia.

Paraguay is now listed in the Directory, as Fraternidad Loge has become attached to Adyar. Two new Lodges have received Charters in Bangladesh: Lalon and Maynamati; and Argentina has a new Lodge called Loto Blanco. ✧

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