

## 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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Cover: Annie Besant (b. 1.10.1847) with her daughter and granddaughter – <[goo.gl/VRVxG9](http://goo.gl/VRVxG9)>. She was the second President of the TS, and this year marks the centenary of her election as the first woman President of the Indian National Congress. She was also the first Congress president to serve for a one-year term, instead of for the few days of the Congress duration, as had been the earlier practice.

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The Theosophical Society is responsible only for official notices appearing in this journal.

# 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.

# Address to 38th European Congress

TIM BOYD

THE theme of the European Congress, “Theosophy — A Way toward Universal Consciousness”, is profound in its humility; the idea of Theosophy as *a way*, not *the way* deserves our special attention. If we are going to be honest with ourselves we must ask: “What do we really know about universal consciousness?” Certainly in the history of the Theosophical Society we have had individuals who have spoken from their experience of this expanded state: HPB, the Masters, J. Krishnamurti, N. Sri Ram, and so on. But, really, what is it that can be said about universal consciousness? Are there words to capture it; are there ideas that can embrace it? I think not. What we *can* talk about is “a way” that leads in that direction.

I will give you two statements, perhaps paradoxical. After H. P. Blavatsky died, in her unpublished writings this piece was discovered: “There is a road steep and thorny that leads to the heart of the universe.” Years later we have the often-quoted statement of J. Krishnamurti that “Truth is a pathless land”. So on the one hand, we have Blavatsky speaking of a road that leads to the heart of the universe, on the other, that no path exists. There is a road, and there is no road. Is one

correct and the other incorrect? Or is there some deeper meaning, perhaps that there is in fact a road that leads to Wisdom, that leads to Truth. But Truth, Wisdom, or Universal Consciousness, ultimately is inexpressible and unfindable by ordinary means. These are questions that we need to ask in a spirit of humility.

When the TS was founded in 1875, there was a boy in America who at that time was nine years old. He was influenced to some degree by Theosophy, but also by the growing New Thought movement based on the ideas of Phineas Quimby, Emerson, Thoreau, and others. He went on to write a book in 1897. It was, and still is, one of the most read books in this new movement. His name was Ralph Waldo Trine, and the book that he wrote was called *In Tune with the Infinite*.

In the book Trine has a beautiful example that I think would be helpful for us in our consideration of universal consciousness. Trine speaks about a friend of his who owned a property in the country, and on this farm the gentleman had a beautiful lotus pond. He made it a point to invite others to this beautiful spot. For him all were welcome to share in the

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beauty and peace of the pond. Bees and animals flocked to the place, the flowers bloomed; it was a place of beauty and of peace. The pond was able to exist because there was a reservoir of water far away. Between the reservoir and the pond was a gateway controlling the flow of the water which the owner always kept open so that it could feed the pond.

There came a time when this gentleman had to travel for a year. He rented his property out to someone else, but the person who rented was a “practically minded” man. He was not much concerned with beauty or with the extra work of maintaining the pond. So he closed the gate leading to the reservoir, and the pond dried up. The fish died and began to smell, and the bees and birds ceased to come to the place. The children and the neighbors who used to visit, and the animals that fed from the stream that flowed on from the pond also stopped coming. The example speaks to the path that we are talking about, the way to universal consciousness.

From the perspective of the theosophical teachings the human being can be defined as: “Highest spirit and lowest matter, linked by mind.” The spirit that is distant, unseen, unknowable, is the reservoir of Trine’s example — the life-giving source that is ever invisible, but ever present. The material world of our personality, our personal nature, is the pond of potential beauty, or the one that is foul, barren, unattractive. The determining factor between a place of beauty or one that is repulsive is the gateway,

the mind. All of the work that we engage in on our way to universal consciousness is strictly rooted in the work that is done, the openness that we have of this gateway that is the mind.

There is a fundamental principle for all of us who are involved in what we call the spiritual path. It can be described in this way: within us there is a spark from a divine flame, a spark of universal consciousness. When we recognize the presence and potential of this spark, it is possible to fan it into a flame that can ultimately burn so brightly that it reunites with its source. The journey that we are on, is one of discovery, of how we accomplish this.

The founders of the TS were wise in many ways. One of those ways was that Theosophy was never, and has never been officially defined. There is no official sentence or paragraph that anyone can say that encompasses what Theosophy is. Sometimes I regret that, because it would be easier if there was a ready, prepackaged definition in three sentences or less, but, of course, such a thing is not possible.

That being said, it is true that on certain occasions HPB did give definitions of what Theosophy is. There are two in particular that I would like to share for our consideration. Once she defined Theosophy as “the Ageless Wisdom tested and verified by generations of seers”, and she added that “to the mentally lazy . . . Theosophy will always remain a riddle”. This seems very precise, but is it? One of the things I find impressive about

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this is the demand that is made for the involvement of the mental component. Theosophy will always remain an enigma unless the mentality, the mind, the intellect, is engaged in considering its value.

So while Theosophy is not comprised merely of its concepts, the conceptual basis of Theosophy is certainly important. Within that same definition, though definitely involving the intellect, Theosophy is also more than a matter of concepts, it is experiential. It is “tested and verified”. And where, in what laboratory is this testing done. The experimentation that leads to verification of the profound principles embodied in Theosophy takes place within the laboratory of our own consciousness.

The second definition that Blavatsky gave of Theosophy is more brief. She said that “it is altruism first and foremost”. This moves into another dimension. In this definition compassion is the basis of Theosophy. So, concept, experimentation, altruism, compassion, begin to describe something of this Theosophy which is a way toward universal consciousness. It is no accident that HPB states about compassion in *The Voice of the Silence* that it is not a mere attribute, “it is the Law of Laws”. These are things that it would be well for us to think about.

Given this background, we must ask ourselves: What is our task? What is the work for us to do? In the United States there is one poet who is more read and whose books sell more than any other. Surprisingly, he is not an American poet. He was born in Afghanistan in the 13th

century. He is the mystic poet and teacher Jalal ad-Din Rumi. He said something outstanding for the purposes of our consideration of universal consciousness. He says: “Your task is not to seek for love.” In our context this love is synonymous with the universal consciousness that is everywhere around us. So our task is not to seek love, “but to seek and to find all of the barriers we have created within ourselves against it”.

Universal consciousness, love, compassion, Theosophy, whatever the name may be, does not require our help. It does not need improvement, development, or discovery. The only thing that is required on our part is to make the opening for this ever-present wisdom to make itself known through us and within us. Mahatma Gandhi said something similar, but in a very different way. In speaking about history as it is taught to us in our schools and our families, he said that “history is the record of every interruption in the flow of the force of Love”.

What did you learn in school? The wars that were fought, the leaders that came to power, the cycles of economy that went up and down, every interruption in the flow of this most natural quality of our being is what we call history. We are capable of perverting even the teachings from the greatest voices that come periodically to try and bear witness to this universal consciousness. I sometimes find myself saying that the TS is perfect in every way, the only problem is the theosophists: you and me. In our sincere-hearted attempts to realize something

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of this Wisdom Teaching that is more profound than any of our capacities, we get it wrong time and time again; but we also get it right. So this work continues. There is a task, which is not to seek for this universal consciousness, but to become open to it. And then there is the work that we must do. So how do we do the work of becoming open?

Anyone who has read the writings of HPB is aware that she was a great proponent of the value and power of meditation. Even so, there is almost nowhere where she actually gave any specifics about “how to” meditate. Toward the end of her life, when she was in England, she did dictate what became known to us as “The Diagram of Meditation”. It is a most powerful tool that I would recommend to all because it lays out a very profound approach to this process of cultivating the mind toward universal consciousness. One has to come back to it again and again. One will not see it and grasp it immediately.

I would like to dwell on one aspect of that diagram. It begins with this statement that first we must conceive of Unity, which, obviously, is impossible. Unity is not something that can be captured in anyone’s conception, but the direction is indicated: “First conceive of Unity by expansion in Space and infinite in Time.” So the immediate direction is one of removal of barriers to Oneness, Unity, what we have named in our first Object as Brotherhood. This is the very first statement. Then she says that we must mold the state of our personal conscious-

ness by dwelling on what she describes as things that we acquire and things that we deprive the consciousness of.

In one of the Acquisition phases: We must arrive at “the perception in all embodied beings of Limitation only”. Everything that has embodiment is merely a casing that hides the universal from us. This is a consciousness that she says should be persisted in, that *everything* that we see only hides from us its universal nature. She adds that the results of this is a universal perception of ourselves and our connection with the whole. Obviously there is great value in arriving at a connection that is broader than nation, race, and religion.

There is nothing new in saying that in the world today we face countless problems that are based solely in these separative identities that we embrace. As much as we feel that these problems may be solved by scientific discoveries or political rearrangements, historically we find that is not true. I frequently quote Albert Einstein, who famously said that “no problem can be solved on the same level of consciousness that created it”. For every existing problem we face, from ecological changes to imbalances in the economies, we have sufficient knowledge right *now* to address them. This suggests to us that knowledge in and of itself is not sufficient.

The message of the Theosophical Society is that there is a Wisdom which exceeds all knowledge, that Wisdom exists not only outside, but within us, and that there is a way that leads toward this

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Wisdom. In the world today the importance of the theosophical movement is not that we have better concepts than other organizations, or that we have more prominent people and greater thinkers than others. The value and the purpose of the attempt at this theosophical movement will be found when we as members come to realize what Unity means.

It is easy to stand up on a stage and talk about Unity, but the work that goes toward it is one of a lifetime. It is the work of seeking and finding the obstacles to the presence of Universal Consciousness, of Unity, of Brotherhood. This work can be started, but it is never finished.

There is a book by Jiddu Krishnamurti called *The First and Last Freedom*. Certainly I would not be one to disagree with Krishnamurti, but I feel it would be more accurate to think in terms of the most *recent* freedom, the most recent barrier of identity that we have been able to recognize within ourselves. Obviously, the time within which we live is one of transition, and in transitions there are necessarily confusions, and that is something that we cannot realistically expect

to stop any time soon. But the role that we have is to create in the midst of the turmoil and confusion a dynamic center of individuals who have touched, valued, and realized something of this deeper quality of being.

That is the point of coming together time and time again to theosophical gatherings. Often we think that we come together because it benefits us individually, because something awakens in us, and the community that we share enlivens something within us. Certainly that does happen and it is of great value. But there is a deeper purpose that we serve when we come together. When we are able to be harmonious, to be quiet, we provide a vehicle for those Great Ones who stand behind this movement—a vehicle through which their energy, their life, can find expression and move into this world that is so deeply in need. Let us keep these thoughts in mind.

The main point of this theosophical movement is Unity, to form the nucleus, to provide the means, the base for that which is beyond us to enter into this world. Let us make an effort to accomplish this. ✧

**The self of matter and the Self of Spirit can never meet. One of the twain must disappear; there is no place for both.**

H. P. Blavatsky  
*The Voice of the Silence*, Fragment I, v. 56

# Spiritual Life and Perception — II

I. K. TAIMNI

In the *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patañjali this power of perception is called *viveka-khyāti*, which means the power or faculty of discriminating between the Real and the unreal, or in other words, of seeing the Real in the unreal or becoming aware of the Real in the unreal. For, the purpose of yoga is to become aware of that Reality from which the whole universe is derived, and thus to be able to see the whole field of manifestation as an expression of that Reality. This alone can free the yogi from the illusions, limitations, and miseries of life. The real purpose of samādhi, the essential technique of yoga, is really to develop this penetrating power of perception, step by step, until the yogi is able to see through all the intervening states of mind and perceive the Reality which lies beyond and also within them.

If the development of the penetrating power of perception is the essential technique of Jnāna Yoga, then Jnāna Yoga is an integral and major part of the yogic technique outlined in the *Yoga-Sūtras* of Patañjali. Many students can see easily the essential elements of other systems of yoga in Patañjali's integrated

system, but somehow fail to see what role Jnāna Yoga plays in his system.

A careful examination of Patañjali's system in the light of what has been said above about Jnāna Yoga will show that Jnāna Yoga permeates the whole system of Patañjali, and from a general point of view this system may be considered as an elaborated technique of Jnāna Yoga, for the emphasis in Patañjali's system is throughout on gaining direct knowledge, culminating in the attainment of the knowledge of the Reality which is the source of all kinds of knowledge. The fact of the matter is that it is impossible to divide different systems of yoga into watertight compartments. They have all to be considered as different aspects and techniques of one comprehensive philosophy and method of realizing by direct experience the Reality which underlies the universe as a Whole and is also the ultimate basis of each individual human consciousness.

This power of perception is developed not only by means of samādhi and all the other practices that precede samādhi but also by the intensive practice of *vairāgya*

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as indicated by the well known aphorism of the *Yoga-Sūtras* (I-12):

*abhyāsa-vairāgyābhyām tan-nirodhah*

That is why in Jñāna Yoga, *vairāgya* and the different methods of developing it play such an important part. The practices which develop *vairāgya* cannot be defined as clearly as those which lead to the attainment of samādhi by manipulating the mind, but all the same they are equally effective in bringing about that state of mind which leads to samādhi.

The fact that Jñāna Yoga is based on the direct unfoldment of the power of perception also becomes clear when we examine the seven stages in the development of knowledge referred to as *sapta-jñāna-bhumika*. The first three stages in this progressive unfoldment of consciousness will be seen to be stages of developing *viveka* as ordinarily understood by the common man, and the last four stages those of developing *viveka-khyāti* as defined in the *Yoga-Sūtras*. These last four stages are attained by means of techniques like samādhi, and so on, which are more specifically identified with the path of yoga.

If we consider *viveka* as the power of spiritual perception instead of the capacity to discriminate between the Real and the unreal it will perhaps be easier for the ordinary student to understand its nature and role on the path of Self-unfoldment. For *viveka*, or spiritual discrimination, on closer analysis, is seen to be nothing but the capacity to perceive the deeper and more spiritual significance

of things with which we are familiar and which we miss partly or entirely owing to our insensitiveness. The whole of the manifested universe down to the lowest phenomenal worlds in which we live and pass our life is an expression of the One Reality, but we remain completely unaware of this fact because our perceptive power is not sufficiently sharp to perceive this Truth of truths. When this power or faculty begins to unfold from within, the same humdrum monotonous and even evil world begins to put on a more spiritual complexion until it is transformed in the last stage as the expression and embodiment of the One Reality, and it is this realization which frees us from the illusions, fears, and miseries of embodied existence.

This view of *viveka* will also enable us to bridge the gulf between *viveka* and *viveka-khyāti* which exists in the minds of many students. They regard *viveka* and *viveka-khyāti* as two different faculties, while actually these are merely two phases or aspects of the same faculty of spiritual perception at the earlier and later stages of its development. The path of yoga is entered through the exercise of ordinary *viveka* which enables the aspirant to perceive the illusory nature of worldly life and pursuits and makes him decide to rise beyond these illusions and limitations by finding the Reality which is hidden within the deeper layers of his own consciousness. *Viveka* and its correlate *vairāgya* continue to play an ever-increasing and deeper role in his spiritual life until the yogi attains *dharma-*

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*megha-samādhi* through the intensive practice of *para-vairagya* and *para-viveka* and becomes permanently established in the world of Reality. He has now acquired the capacity of remaining fully and permanently aware of his divine nature.

*Viveka* thus passes into *viveka-khyāti*, and *viveka-khyāti* flowers into the state of Enlightenment and Liberation. Treading the path of yoga will thus be seen to be, from one point of view, a matter of unfolding more and more penetrating power of spiritual perception.

This awakening of our perceptive powers is one of the most wonderful realities of spiritual life. All of us have some kind of qualitative experience of this awakening in our ordinary life. We read a book of deep thought and find nothing in it and forget all about it. Years pass in which we make progress mentally and spiritually. We happen to take up the same book again and find it full of deep significance of which we had not the slightest inkling before. Why? Has the book changed? No! It is we who have changed in the meantime, or rather our perceptive power has unfolded and it is this fact which enables us to see much more in the same book.

But such experiences, though common, are not very remarkable or of much significance because they are on the plane of our ordinary experiences. We see more meaning and greater significance in such cases because our mind and intellect have unfolded or become more developed during the interval and

it is this fact which enables us to see more and more in the same things. It is only when we enter the realm of inner realities of spiritual life that we discover what a tremendous difference it makes when our perceptive powers with regard to spiritual matters begin to awaken.

This kind of experience is not necessarily very pleasant or agreeable in the early stages because the dawning of *viveka* not only enables us to see deeper into the realities of spiritual life which, hitherto, were matters of mere intellectual knowledge devoid of any spiritual significance. It is also more likely to tear down in the beginning the veils of illusion, which surround ordinary worldly objects and pursuits and invest them with glamour. When these veils fall from our eyes all the pleasure which we found in them and the zest which we felt in their pursuit disappears and our life may appear to have become quite empty and purposeless.

But this negative phase of spiritual awakening, if we may use such a phrase, generally passes after a time, unless we get alarmed and unbalanced and plunge back again into our old life and pursuits with greater zest to drown our budding *viveka* deliberately. If we can resist this tendency we begin to see and feel gradually the positive aspect of the spiritual realities which are hidden in their fullest splendour beneath the common things of life. It is when we begin to perceive these, at least to some extent, that real spiritual life begins. Till then it is all a play of ideas, illuminated partially perhaps by the light of intuition.

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As this perception deepens and becomes more and more penetrating, the awareness of different spiritual realities or different aspects of these realities takes on a better defined and dynamic character. And as our progress continues and we draw nearer to our goal, we begin to see a glimmer of that all-pervading Reality which is the source as well as the substance of the manifested universe. We see the ultimate truth of our existence first darkly, as it were, then more and more clearly, until gradually the whole world of objects gets transformed into that Reality in which they essentially exist and of which they are different expressions. As a matter of fact the objects do not disappear, but being seen as Real in the light of that Reality, they lose their significance as separate objects and merge in that all-embracing and overpowering experience which is beyond our present comprehension and imagination.

As this concept of the ultimate state of Self-realization is extremely subtle, let us dwell on it for a while to clarify our ideas. To understand this concept we have to recall that consciousness is not only the subtlest principle in existence but it has a unique character with which we cannot find any parallel in our ordinary experiences. It is this subtlety and uniqueness of character which enables consciousness not only to pervade everything but also at the same time to contain everything in the manifest and the Unmanifest within itself. The idea of pervasion which is generally associated with the underlying Reality of the universe does not

fully represent the relation of this Reality with the manifest and the Unmanifest. For a thing which pervades another is different and apart from the thing which is pervaded. But this Reality not only pervades but also contains everything in itself. Whatever exists, exists in this Reality and is derived from It. It, no doubt, pervades everything, but it is also what is pervaded.

From this relation of the One Reality to the manifest and the Unmanifest, and keeping in mind the order in which the different fundamental principles of existence are derived from this Reality, we can see, at least intellectually, what happens when spiritual perception awakens and its penetrating power increases progressively. In the first stage, the outer world of sensuous perception dissolves in the mind. This does not mean necessarily that it disappears. It means that it is seen clearly as an expression of the mind. The mind then dissolves in the consciousness. This again does not mean that the mind disappears. It means that it is seen as an expression of the consciousness.

The consciousness then dissolves in the Reality in which everything is contained. This is the supreme phase of the awakening perception when everything is seen as contained in the One Reality and as an expression of that Reality. And yet in all these tremendous changes which take place no change in the content of consciousness need take place. For, everything is inherently and always contained in consciousness and is an expression of

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consciousness. It is only a question of deeper perception or seeing the same things from a deeper level of consciousness.

What has been pointed out above should make the aspirant realize the importance of making definite efforts to develop the penetrating power of perception and not remain content with merely adding to the stock of ideas in his mind. The first requires bringing about drastic changes in our mind, heart, and attitudes by means of rigorous self-discipline, while all that is necessary in enlarging our stock of ideas is to read books and hear lectures. The first course leads ultimately to Enlightenment and freedom from the illusions and miseries of life while the second course enables us to have merely the satisfaction of

enlarging our mental horizon and being considered as a very learned person, possibly involved in greater and more insidious illusions of life as pointed out in mantra 9 of *Īśāvāsyopanishad*.

Many students who are not used to deep thought and do not feel inclined to undertake this more strenuous task frequently ask: What is the use of going into these deeper aspects of religion, philosophy, and science? The answer to this question is quite clear and definite. This is the first step in our effort to leave skimming the surface of life and dive into the deeper realities of existence. We must first learn to go at least into the deeper aspects of intellectual knowledge before we can succeed in diving into the much deeper realities of spiritual life. ✧

**Each must discover his own way in life,  
and that way lies in his heart.  
Let him delve deeply into the depths of his being;  
his true centre is not far from there.**

N. Sri Ram

# Nature's Role in the Flowering of Goodness

CLEMICE PETTER

MUCH has been said about human evolution through the million-years' journey of the Soul, and perhaps it would be important to look at it once more. We are familiar with the teachings which say that the first manifested state was in the mineral kingdom, then the vegetable, animal, and finally in the human kingdom. There may be more, but we will see what is there for us, in our present condition, to understand the process of unfoldment of consciousness.

When consciousness is operating from a particular kingdom, the expression in the physical world will be of the nature of that specific kingdom. A tree from the vegetable kingdom is not to be mistaken with a rock. So we see that each kingdom has well-defined characteristics. When we come to the human stage, and we can very well see this in our own life, we still have much of the animal in us. Blavatsky said that the human being is but the highest expression of the animal; we can see that our struggle is to turn into pure humans, without a trace of animalism.

We also see that the ego is the remnant of the animal, the territorial demarcation,

the possessiveness, the readiness to fight and kill, the sense of self-defense, self-protection. All this and more we can easily see in animals around us. If we observe dogs, we will see the same territorial fight, the readiness to kill, and all the rest of it. So, we ask, what is it to be *human*? What is a *pure* human being like? Here we have to be very careful, in order not to project something that has no reality.

Let us start looking objectively at life and human behavior as it is, not how it should be, because this "should be" is a projection, and has no validity or reality. When we take H. P. Blavatsky's statement that human beings are but the highest form of animals we can understand that our work is to walk away from all animalistic behavior. She gave us the way to do it. She said that the mind is the trouble-maker, that it is in the mind that we find the cause for our misery, and that our work is to kill that which is killing reality, which she points out is the mind. Here it becomes clear that it is on the mind that we have to focus attention if we want to walk away from the present state of misery and confusion in which humanity is caught.

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## Nature's Role in the Flowering of Goodness

We may ask why animals do not have all the problems that humans have. The answer is simple, because animals do not think as we do, they have not yet developed the mind as we have, so they still are at peace, without thinking, and therefore not developing the ego. Their life is basically directed by instincts and they just follow them. We have the instincts and a mind distorted by all sorts of cravings created by thought. The mind has to be developed because it is an important tool in human life, and this development is a delicate period in the process of unfoldment of consciousness. According to theosophical teachings this period of development is divided and subdivided into many stages, called in *The Secret Doctrine (SD)* "races" and "sub-races". But we would like to call them stages of development of the human, which means that as one walks on this road, one becomes less territorial, possessive, selfish, and the qualities of humanity start to flourish.

We can see that this development is all about the *inner* being, it has no relation to skin and bones, the latter being the outcome of the physical environment and climate conditions of the place where the physical body was first born. Here also we have to keep in mind the fact that Mother Nature is working to give us a body in which the inner being can be developed, and the work of Nature is intelligent and will provide a body that can easily endure the climatic conditions of the particular place where it is going to live. We have to go back to the time when these bodies were first created to

serve as temporary clothing for the developing consciousness. In those days, people did not use to travel long distances, as there was no developed technology; a person used to live and die, more or less, in the same surroundings. This way, if the sun was hot, as it is in the tropical areas, the skin was darker in order to endure the environmental conditions; in a cold, snowy climate the skin was whiter, and what defines the color of the skin is the amount of melanin present in the skin's makeup. In theosophical literature we also learn that Nature uses her resources in an intelligent and responsible way, using only what is strictly necessary. So we can see that to use melanin where it is not needed is not only unintelligent but also irresponsible. Wasting resources is a sin that Mother Nature will not indulge in.

Here we can see that different skin colors are more a matter of practical necessity and a natural tendency of diversity. Nature has so many possibilities that it would be a shame to make all bodies the same. And it is said that those beings that work with Mother Nature are also perfecting themselves and need to exercise the many possibilities available to perfect their work. This will happen as creation goes on. We can also see that the process of evolution of the physical is only one part of the whole process, and that spiritual unfoldment happens in another dimension, even though it happens along parallel lines, and each one supports the existence of the other.

Here we can understand the need to

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work together with Nature and not destroy or try to change the environment in which we are developing, the very womb of our Mother, which makes the growth of the inner being possible. If we harm the physical on purpose, there are consequences, and we have to face them in due time. We have no idea what those consequences would be, the misery created by irresponsible actions. Our bodies are not ours, they have been entrusted to us for the period of one lifetime, at the end of which they will be given back to Mother Nature.

The abuse of the body, as well as prejudice toward other people's bodies because of their appearance, or cruelty to animals, or destruction of the environment are sins against Nature. Whatever we do to others — human beings, animals, or trees — in fact, we are doing to ourselves. Whether we see it or not, it does not matter, because this is a law of Nature, we cannot escape its consequences.

In human history, we can see that migration started not so long ago. At the beginning, the more primitive humans were hunters and, as such, they used to explore places, travelling by foot, and had no definite home. After a long time they discovered agriculture, and this made them stay in one place. Maybe the stability created by a fixed home helped in the process of developing technology. So the first tools were developed, and with them the building of houses, boats, and the discovery of the wheel, which was a revolutionary tool, making it possible to slowly start to travel longer distances.

With traveling, a mixture of different stereotypes started to appear. This is all related to the development of the physical body, which is a temporary clothing for the real being that is unfolding.

What we call human evolution is happening at another level; it has almost nothing to do with the appearance of the physical body. The development of the *inner* being is such a complex matter that it cannot be measured at the physical level. And what is said in *SD* about the human race refers to the inner Man. Blavatsky is talking about what cannot be seen by us, even though to us it looks like she is talking about the physical, or the manifestation of the eternal. This illusion can easily be understood, because we are so self-centered, so identified with the manifested, the material world, that we lose ourselves in it, and mistakenly take the physical body to be the real being. But what is real is out of reach for those who are entangled with the material aspects of living beings.

When color is mentioned in *SD*, it seems like it refers to the color of the skin; but what is referred to as the purity of the race is the purity of the inner Man, purity in consciousness, the development of human qualities, and the animalistic being left behind, which is all self-centered notion and behavior. To make it very clear: the more selfish one is, the more darkness or ignorance in one's consciousness; and the more altruistic, the clearer the understanding, the more human characteristics developed. In this way, we can also see why the White

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Brotherhood is called “white”, because it is the Brotherhood of those pure in consciousness, purely altruistic, in whom the totality of the animal is no more, and the human is fully developed.

As consciousness unfolds, the inner human being grows and an inner world develops along this journey. In the beginning there is little focus, and instinct plays a big role. As the inner being develops, the human qualities start to show their colors in day-to-day life. The more inwardly developed, the more ethical the manifestation in the physical will be.

What are the qualities that are human characteristics? We can say that selfishness is the remnant of the animal in us. Possessiveness, jealousy, envy, competition, lust for power, pride, arrogance, vanity, and the list of cravings that are the known in our daily lives are but the signs of selfishness, and thus of the animalistic nature that we are struggling to let go. Human nature is of kindness, the capacity of empathy, sympathy, and charity, which means that charity is our natural state of being as we further develop the human in us. If we need to be reminded that our neighbor is in need and we should help, this is a sign that we are not sensitive enough to see it for ourselves, and do what is natural for a human being.

This also shows that for more than two thousand years we are being taught that without charity, there is no salvation, but despite all the teachers we have had, and they have been many, we have not learned even this basic teaching. We still need organizations for us to be charitable, which

seem to be only a podium from where we promote ourselves, making propaganda of all the help we have given. It was taught by the Christ that what the right hand does should not be acknowledged by the left. This means, among other things, that we should not advertise what we do in order to get a good name or to be praised, because this is also part of pride, and we are taught that we are not the doer, it is life that does. But because we are selfish and therefore blind, we are proud of doing, of helping, and think we are charitable. Real charity has no pride in it, does not need an audience, it happens naturally at every moment of our life, with everybody that crosses our way, in the silence of love and the gratitude to life that finds us trustworthy and takes us as a tool for its mercy.

This is just an example of how we deceive ourselves, and this can be seen everywhere in almost every activity in which we are engaged. It is also part of our illusion to believe that we are a human being; we would rather say that we are on the way to be one, as soon as we purify our consciousness from all the animalistic remnants. When we talk about a pure heart or pure mind, we are talking of a heart and mind that are no longer contaminated by selfish thinking and feeling.

Here the evolutionary scheme of *SD* comes in. As we walk and grow within, developing the human nature, we refine and become more sensitive toward the life that surrounds us. As we grow, we develop more sensitivity. This will show in the physical world, in the way we relate

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with others and with all that we are in touch. The level of kindness and empathy will rise as the inner Man grows, and the many races mentioned in *SD* are not about the color of the skin, but of the inner development that will appear in the physical.

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, the fact that there are many different skin colors and body forms is part of the physical development that is going on at the same time, that Mother Nature is responsible for. She takes care of the physical development, and the Father, who is the Spirit, takes care of the inner development. In the theosophical literature, we find many descriptions of the spirits that work with Nature, and all this is done in a silent and unknown world.

Neither the physical nor the inner man is building a new body that will be clothing another newborn being in the physical world. This is done by Nature, using the raw material produced by the existing body. For example, a woman does not notice that in her body a new one is in the making until very strong signs start to reveal the process that is already going on. We know of cases where the woman realizes that she is pregnant after three or even four months and the fetus' heart is already beating. The development of the fetus going on all this time was completely unknown to the body and to her. So the work was done silently and unknowingly by the workers of Nature, who are the architects and builders of this physical world in which the eternal manifests.

It is true that each country has its own

characteristics, with a different culture and social habits. This is the result of many influences, such as the language, history, social and economic setup, religion, and so on. We cannot say that a person is more or less inwardly or spiritually developed because of place of birth or social environment. We see many examples of people born in the same family who behave completely differently. We see families that have one member inclined to live a religious life while others just live an ordinary one. We see cruel people that come from noble families, thieves born and raised in good families; it is a common fact that we have three or more races born in the same family, that is, people at different levels of inward development, and we all know that many times a wise man has a crook for a son. Thus we can see that the assumption that one group of people is more advanced spiritually because of their place of birth or the color of their skin has no leg to stand on and no logic whatsoever.

When Blavatsky talks about races, she is talking about the many stages the inner being goes through. So as one perfects and refines inwardly, one goes from one stage to the next, which she calls races. According to her teachings, each race develops a specific faculty and we also have all the subdivisions (or sub-races) in each stage. We can see how delicate the process of unfolding of consciousness is, and to jump to conclusions such as those giving rise to racism is but the testament of ignorance and lack of intelligence. Due to our identification with the physical we cannot

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see that it is just the manifestation of that which is developing within. We have developed so many forms of discrimination and classification, that we think we can understand what is whole with our divisive mind. This is also a sign of our ignorance and pretentiousness.

What is perfecting at many levels within will also show that perfection at the physical level, as it grows, but, to see it in the physical is not so easy as we think, if it is possible at all. We cannot relate the inner development with the form, shape, or color of the manifested body. These characteristics are of a very subtle nature and can be seen only by those who are at the same level of development. This can be seen from a centuries-old story in India, when the Lord Krishna was teaching Arjuna during the battle described in the *Bhagavadgītā*. At a certain point, Arjuna asked Krishna: "How am I to recognize a wise man, the enlightened one? How does he walk, eat, or live?" Krishna's answer was that the holy one lives just like ordinary people, the difference lies only within, which is the motive of his actions. The ordinary man's motives are of a selfish nature, while the holy one acts out of altruism, or love and compassion.

Since the selfish do not know about altruism, love, or compassion, it is impossible for them to recognize the holy one, and if we come across such a blissful one, we may even call him a fool. Because our measure is our own mind, we will project what we are, and think that the motives behind his actions are the same

as those we would have in that situation.

The teachings given through the *SD* are not at the divisive level, or of the self-centered mind. This is because the mind cannot understand anything that is not mechanical, as its nature is to divide and classify everything. To understand the whole scheme of the unfolding of consciousness and growth of the inner man, one needs to look at it as a unity, not divide it and classify the different stages of the process as good and bad, high or low.

One may wonder why this scheme has been given to us in the first place, since we cannot understand it. Then we need to look back and remember that most of those who watch over human development were not really in favor of giving it to us at that point. But because of the compassion of two beloved Teachers, who being able to foresee the pain and misery which humanity was rapidly moving towards, with all the prejudices and superstitions developed by the wrong interpretation of what has been taught before, decided to take the risk and bring clean water from the eternal source once more, hoping this time it would be understood to some extent, at least.

But again we misunderstood the teachings, and thought in terms of division of the more and the less, the higher and the lower. The same dogmatism started, with some claiming that only Blavatsky knows; even though she said that the Society established by her has no teachings of its own, it is rather the storehouse of the wisdom of all sages and teachers that ever set foot on Earth. Still there are many who

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think in terms of best and worst, not being able to see that we are the ones distorting and misunderstanding what has been taught through millennia. All we need is humility to see that whatever we see we interpret, and all interpretations are bound to be wrong. We interpret because we cannot see clearly, directly. Interpretations are colored by the background through which we look. To see directly we need to be free from all accumulations, which are the "me". It is only in freedom that direct perception of what *is* takes place.

Blavatsky also said that to understand the teachings in the *SD* one needs to transform one's mind and heart. She said that it will be understood by those able to grow in goodness and comprehend their own selves. There has to be inner growth in order to understand what has been taught by her, and this is not about following a set of rules or performing certain rituals, or even sitting in a corner for half an hour every day to meditate. The inner growth needed to understand is the strength to look at ourselves and face what we are.

It is like when we have a disease, as long as we do not know that we are sick we cannot treat it, and even knowing that we are sick is not enough, we need a diagnosis. We need to see what is making us sick in order to have the proper treatment. In the case of self-knowledge, we need to clearly see what we are and understand the process that is creating this world, and see what kind of world we are creating, because we so easily deceive ourselves and think that we can

create a different, a better world, if we change our way of thinking. This is the greatest illusion, because thinking, in any form, positive or negative, is what is creating all the problems we are facing. Thinking cannot solve the problems created by thinking itself. As J. Krishnamurti said: "One cannot solve a problem with the same mind that created it."

The selfish, self-centered mind creates the divisions and separatist feelings that prevail in the world. To deal with the problems that division has created we need a mind that can look at life as a whole, at humanity and the environment in which we are developing as a unity, one body that has many different parts, but those differences do not make for separation.

Geographically we have many continents, but together they are the Earth, one body that cannot be divided, that cannot be separated. In the same way, all living beings are of different natures but are one body that cannot be separated. If we see it or not, it does not change the fact that all living beings on the planet are interconnected and equally important, one supporting the other.

To understand the Unity that we so easily talk about is not a task for the divisive mind. As long as one feels separate, as "you and me", there is no possibility of understanding the unity of life. To understand is to see, to feel that there is no other. To see that all that lives is one is to understand the whole of life. It is out of this understanding that love and compassion are born. When love and compassion come into being, a human being is born. ✧

# All Roads Lead to Rome: the Human Journey in Vedānta

DARA TATRAY

To begin with, we might first ask, what is especially human about the journey that all living beings and entities are on? What makes the ubiquitous process of birth, change, death and rebirth, human — as distinct from arboreal, celestial or bovine? How is the human journey different from the bovine journey?

There seems to be something of a consensus that what makes our particular journey through life different from that of any other living being is our unique capacity for self-reflection, self-awareness, self-enquiry, and eventually the capacity for enlightenment and empathy with all of life. Without entering into a discussion on the remarkable capabilities of other living beings — their intelligence, their compassion, their resourcefulness — for now, let us just say for the sake of argument, that the human being is hardwired for self-reflection. We are conscious beings designed to know ourselves in ways that other creatures are not, even though they too are conscious beings, capable of rational thought and of compassion or empathy. Then the question

arises, are we there yet; have we thrown that switch, have we turned on the light? Have we so much as begun to explore what self-consciousness means?

Possibly every religion, fundamentally, is about taking the human being from a state in which he or she has been hardwired for something, to the state in which that something has been realized: from the merely given (*prākṛt*) to the earned/created/brought forth/made perfect (*samskṛt*). This is perhaps the oldest doctrine of them all, that the ordinary condition of the human being is not the ultimate state; that we have in ourselves a deeper self, and access to a higher state of consciousness, of which we are largely unaware. That is perhaps the journey we are all on, the journey to what we essentially are, or what as human beings we are destined to be. And in that case, all roads will lead us there, eventually, following a trajectory that might be called spiritual evolution. Inevitable though it may be however no one completes the journey without making the effort.

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### Religion at the Esoteric Level

I probably do not have to convince any reader of this journal that there is a big difference between religion at the exoteric level and esoteric religion. Each of the revealed religions, including so-called Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and so forth, teach that there is a higher being or a higher state at the apex of life towards which we strive, or which we strive to conform to: but they will most likely disagree with each other as to what to call that ineffable condition. God, the One, Unity, Emptiness, Pure Contentless Consciousness, Allah: Among Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism there is much disagreement on these terms and the nature of the states they point to. Notably, there is far less disagreement among the various religions at the esoteric level, let us say Taoism, Zen, Vedānta, the Kabbalah, Sufism, mystical Christianity, perhaps because here we are dealing principally with metaphysics. Beliefs, dogmas, observances and appearances become much less important as we move closer to the apex of religious or spiritual endeavour, by whatever name it may be known.

Perhaps we could say that religion at the exoteric level is concerned with form, dogma, belief, appearances, observances; whereas religion at the metaphysical or esoteric level deals primarily with the human being's lived relationship with the highest, be that God, Brahman, the totality; and it is a relationship to be established largely through the medium of living awareness. It seems to be the

case in fact that esotericism, in whatever culture it arises, treats of a journey in which form is transcended; for as Meister Eckhart so beautifully put it, if you would have the kernel you must break the husk.

### The Human Journey in Vedānta

Vedānta is a tradition in which the husk has already been broken because it is pure metaphysics nothing else, having left behind all the other aspects of the Vedas, the rituals and the rules, and retained only the metaphysical essence. From a practitioner's point of view, Vedānta enters the picture when a person has already woken up to the fact that he or she is not really awake; that there is something fundamentally lacking. That is the first step, and possibly also the last step. No doubt the same could be said of some forms of Buddhism.

One way of looking at the journey in Vedānta, is to take as a guide the *śānti mantra* from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad*: From the unreal lead me to the Real; from darkness lead me to Light; from death lead me to Immortality. The journey in Vedānta is efficiently summarised here: it is from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality. That is probably not how the *śānti mantra* is usually conceived, as a map of the territory, but it certainly may be taken that way. Then of course, as soon as you see the road ahead, or the nature of the goal, you may want to know exactly how to get there. How do I get from the unreal to the Real, how do I get from darkness to Light? That is the subject

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matter of many if not all of the Upanishads, which treat of the human condition as infinite potential yet to be realized. We are therefore hardwired for self-reflection but have not gone very far down that road.

### Who Do You Think You Are?

This is a question beloved of genealogy shows, to which Vedānta would give a significantly augmented answer. Who we think we are is the body/mind complex, with its ancestry, its present likes and dislikes, its ambitions, its immediate family and circle of friends; even its material possessions. That is largely what we think we are. We are what we identify with and what we are attached to. Even our furniture gives us part of our identity (strangely enough); the colour of the paint on our walls. However, who you really are, in Vedānta and in Theosophy, is *ātman*. *Ātmā* is the Self of everybody, the content, the essence, the essential being. Just as clay is the *ātman* of the pot and water is the *ātman* of waves, the Self is what you and I are made of.

So fundamental is this teaching to Vedānta that it has often been summarized in just one well-known sentence: You are not the body or the mind — end of story. This would not be so significant were it not for the fact that all our problems are located in and revolve around the body and the mind (you might say, the lower mind); and all the solutions are centred in the Self or *ātman*. Given the possible payoff, the theory that each of us has access to a source (*the* source) of

unlimited happiness and pure intelligence bears some investigation, and not just by so-called religious folk or renunciates. According to Vedānta, we could all do with a healthy dose of ignorance renunciation.

While listening to some talks by Swami Paramarthananda on the text known as *Ātmabodha* <<http://hinduonline.co/AudioLibrary/Discourses/CommentaryOnĀtmāBodhaParamarthananda.html>> I discovered that woven into the word *ātman* are four streams of meaning, from four different roots. They are:

1. To pervade (*āp*)
2. To resolve (*ādā*)
3. To experience (*ad*)
4. That which always exists (*āt*)

So *ātman*, the Self of everybody, pervades everything; *ātman* is that into which everything resolves at the end of a cycle or a life, *ātman* is the real experiencer and witness of all that takes place, and *ātman* is that which always is. Swami Paramarthananda referred to a much-used Vedic trope here: a pot is made and the clay is; before the creation of the pot, the clay was; the pot comes and goes whereas the clay remains; just as *ātman* is that essence that exists whether the world comes or goes; whether your thoughts come or go. The phenomenal world, as our thoughts, conceals the underlying reality, the ever-present Self of all.

Taking the notion of *ātman* as the resolver a little further, it could well be that not only is *ātman* the final cause and fundamental substance into which everything is eventually resolved, it is that

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same inner Self which alone is capable of finally resolving all of our intractable problems. Given that the cause of conflict is the sense of separation, and all the baggage that goes with it, it is quite likely that in the absence of some degree of Self-realization, it would not be possible to resolve any conflict in which the separated self is engaged. Can conflicts be resolved at the level at which they were created, that is, at the body/mind level? I think not. Conflicts, problems, global warming, wars, perhaps they will just go on and on until we raise ourselves to the level of this higher consciousness, the pure-awareness intelligence and bliss that is the real Self of everybody.

### Why is there a problem at all?

As *ātmā* is the Self of everybody, and as it is pure consciousness, intelligence and bliss, what is the problem? Why isn't everybody already happy? The simple answer to that is that we are not aware of the Self of everybody, we are aware only of our own thoughts and feelings and sensations. The *Katha Upanishad* points out something of a design flaw in our constitution (just joking), where it says: "The Self is not to be sought through the senses. The senses have been made to open outward. Therefore one looks out-ward and not within oneself." So while the Self that we really are is present everywhere and at all times, whether we are awake, asleep or in deep dreamless sleep, it is certainly not in a manner that is immediately obvious to us. We have to train the inward eye in order to see the

Self. We need to learn what it is to "look within". To understand why this is so difficult it is necessary to understand *avidyā*, which as explained in the Patañjali *Yoga Sūtras* is the cause of all misery in life. Unfortunately for us, *avidyā* is also the cause of our fleeting pleasures, so it takes a great deal of spiritual maturity to overcome it. Probably all of us would like to be free of pain but few wish to be free of pleasure.

It may not be obvious that *avidyā* is the human or personal equivalent of *māyā*, the cosmic power of creation. The word *māyā* is often translated simply and incompletely as illusion, which is one meaning of the word. However, *māyā* is also the primordial creative power of the universe. Not such a bad thing. If *māyā* meant illusion in every context then people probably would not name their daughters *Māyā*! That would be like naming your daughter Mistake, or Error. *Māyā* however is not some cosmic mistake, it is the cosmic power to project the world through *vikshepaśakti* and *āvaranaśakti*: projection or super imposition, and veiling or concealment. Apart from the four great sayings of Vedānta, which speak of the nondual nature of *ātman* and Brahman, this is probably the most important teaching. The material world, which is but a fragment (a measure) of the totality, is projected or superimposed onto the eternal One, at the same time veiling or concealing it. Without this projection of the temporal which at the same time also conceals the eternal, there would be no world, no creation, no manifestation.

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The ultimate reality is as though a boundless plane on which or in which no movement or action takes place, it just Is; an eternal immutable principle, independent and uninvolved. That is the first fundamental proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*. But it contains within itself the power (and tendency) to project the temporal world, in a rhythmic cyclic pattern. The temporal world, having been projected out of the totality (the meaning of “existence”, to step out from the whole), is then superimposed on the totality, concealing the One without a second, the One without any vehicles or bodies. The projection from the totality conceals the totality, and makes it look as though there is nothing but what is projected, the fragments, the parts. For various reasons, you have to train hard to see behind that veil.

Exactly the same process takes place in the microcosm of the human being. Projection or superimposition and veiling or concealment are the twin powers (and flaws) of *avidyā* or ignorance. It is not difficult to see that every thought projects an opinion, at the same time veiling what it purports to describe. Not only does it conceal what it purports to reveal or to explain, but each thought works full time at bolstering the finite self: that is its default mode, known as “the me network”, a permanent self-referential tendency whenever the mind or brain is not otherwise engaged. As the Patañjali *Yoga Sūtras* teach: ignorance, I-am-ness, attractions and repulsions towards sense objects and the clinging to life in this form are woven into the fabric of each thought.

Every single thought, as its unacknowledged sub-text, superimposes your conditioning on what is, on the Real. When thought is not in the way, when there are no modifications of the mind, there is just pure nondual seeing, pure awareness which is also bliss. Abiding in that state, which is our underlying nature, is liberation. Every single minute experience of it will feel very liberating.

### What to Do about Existential Ignorance

What does it mean to turn inward? Finding out is the beginning of real Self-awareness, Self-reflection, which distinguishes the human being from other sentient beings, but in which we are so inexpert.

Because of ignorance, *avidyā*, which consists of projection and veiling, the Self appears to be finite, incomplete, limited. Because of ignorance, the full Self is not known. Ignorant of the full Self, which is not lacking anything, I always have a sense of lack. I always miss something in life. I miss people, I miss places, I miss things. This is a sign of *apurnata*: incompleteness. What is to be done about this? First the bad news (as conveyed by Swami Paramarthananda). You can't do anything about being incomplete. “An incomplete by a process of change can only ever become another incomplete”. That is a great saying. So the problem seems to be unsolvable. The good news is that the sense of lack, the feeling of incompleteness is only due to my ignorance of the full Self. It is not due to an

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absence of the full Self. There is therefore no need to change anything, other than my lack of awareness.

When ignorance is destroyed through Seeing, through Realization, then the Self reveals itself by itself, just like the sun does when clouds disperse:

It is only because of ignorance that the Self appears to be finite. When ignorance is destroyed, the Self, which does not admit of any multiplicity whatsoever, truly reveals Itself by Itself, like the sun when the cloud is removed (*Ātmabodha*, śloka 4).

The cloud in this metaphor is thought. The feeling that I am limited, indeed, anything following on from “I am” is an error or a delusion caused by the superimposition of thought, which is the greatest creative power that we possess and the greatest obstacle. When not pro-

jecting, as for example in the quiet mind state of *citta-vṛtti-nirodha*, the mind just reflects the truth of what is. Thinking therefore is the opposite of Being, and the opposite of intelligence. We have been conditioned to believe that thinking produces intelligence, whereas in fact it is the opposite: thinking veils intelligence, and at the same time masquerades as intelligence.

Without waking up to our full Self, to our real selves, we can only be said to be minimally self-conscious beings. Self-awareness may be what sets us apart as human beings, but the capacity to look deep within, to see the Seer, to raise our consciousness to the level of awareness, is not a given; it must be earned or unveiled. This is the greatest power latent in the human being and I think it fair to say that as a species we have not even begun to explore it. ✧

**In order to fill rightly our place in the world, we should seek to understand Nature and work with her laws, quickening indeed their action by the cooperation of our intelligence, but not quickening it to the point at which growth is made unhealthy and its product frail and “out of season”.**

Annie Besant  
*A Study in Consciousness*, 2nd ed. p. 97

# The Masters — on Themselves

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

TOWARDS the end of her life Madame H. P. Blavatsky regretted having brought to the attention of the world the existence of perfect Adepts, the Mahatmas, also referred to by her as Masters of the Wisdom. The main source of her regret was that some people were misusing the concept of that noble reality to advance their own petty and personal agendas.

Fast forward to the twenty-first century and you will see many groups and individuals advancing many claims, including the one of being the mouthpiece of the Masters, introducing their new “teaching” to the world and not invariably proclaiming the Theosophical Society to be an outdated body in a world of fast “spiritual” communications. The messages of such “Masters” appear to suit what people want to hear.

In her article on “Spiritual Progress” HPB presented her view about the nature of Adeptship:

The true Adept, the developed man, must, we are always told, *become* — he cannot be made. The process is therefore one of growth through evolution, and

this must necessarily involve a certain amount of pain.

The main cause of pain lies in our perpetually seeking the permanent in the impermanent, and not only seeking, but acting as if we had already found the unchangeable, in a world of which the one certain quality we can predicate is constant change, and always, just as we fancy we have taken a firm hold upon the permanent, it changes within our very grasp, and pain results.

*(H. P. Blavatsky  
Collected Writings, vol. 6)*

One of the Masters stated that “the adept is the rare efflorescence of a generation of enquirers; and to become one, he must obey the inward impulse of his soul irrespective of the prudential considerations of worldly science or sagacity.” This seems to indicate how few they are in comparison with the general population, even among serious researchers. HPB’s passage also reveals that reaching Adeptship is the hardest task any human being can accomplish, the main difficulty being in obtaining a clear,

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Mr Pedro Oliveira is Education Coordinator for the Australian Section of the TS, former International Secretary, and later Head of the Editorial Office at Adyar.

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unequivocal and complete realization of the distinction between the permanent and the impermanent within human consciousness.

Theosophical literature has produced two unique sets of documents which contain, in their own words, insights of the Masters about the work of the TS, about human nature as well as on who they are and what kind of work they do. They are *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett (ML)* and *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom (LMW)*. Although some of the commentaries in them belong to the historical context of the late nineteenth century, involving the work of the TS and its members at that time, there is a great deal in them that is of perennial value for spiritual aspirants facing the challenges inherent on the path to Self-Knowledge.

As we shall see, the Masters' communications are direct, uncompromising, and confronting selfish motives and attitudes, while offering hope of progress for those who are sincere and who dare to live not for the self.

Rather perish the Theosophical Society with both its hapless founders than that we should permit it to become no better than an academy of magic, a hall of occultism. That we the devoted followers of that spirit incarnate of absolute self-sacrifice, of philanthropy, divine kindness, as of all the highest virtues attainable on this earth of sorrow, the man of men, Gautama Buddha, should ever allow the Theosophical Society to represent the *embodiment of selfishness*, the refuge of the few

with no thought in them for the many, is a strange idea, my brothers.

(*LMW*, L. 1, First Series,  
*The Mahachohan's Letter*)

The Masters' letters demonstrate that the two Masters who stood behind the formation of the TS — M. and KH — as well as the Mahachohan, who was their Master, were Buddhists, and for them wisdom and compassion were paramount values. For that reason they did not want to see the TS transformed into an academy of magic for the display of occult phenomena.

Mahatma Kut-humi can, of course, as an independent Adept, in his own private capacity write to whomsoever he chooses — should he find the means of doing so without infringing the good Secret Law. But he will never consent to depart from the Law even though and for the satisfaction of those who have been to him the most devoted.

(*LMW*, L. 3, First Series)

The above quote is part of a communication from the Masters to officers of the London Lodge of the TS in 1884. There was a division in the Lodge at that time between those members who wanted to study Esoteric Buddhism and those who preferred Esoteric Christianity. There are many instances in the Masters' letters in which reference is made to their adherence to their Laws, the timeless principles which have guided the Brotherhood of Adepts for centuries.

But remember: we are not public scribes

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or clerks, with time to be continually writing notes and answers to individual correspondents about every trifling personal matter that they should answer for themselves.

(*LMW*, L. 4, First Series)

The Adepts have mentioned in their communications that they are very busy people, that their attention is constantly engaged in their main task of helping the world and to facilitate conditions in which human consciousness can be raised to a higher level of perception and understanding. They did not engage in “every trifling personal matter”.

Think you the truth has been shown to you for your sole advantage? That we have broken the silence of centuries for the profit of a handful of dreamers only?

(*idem*)

When some members in London had received a couple of communications from the Masters it is possible that some of them thought that the Teachers were giving them undivided attention, at a *personal* level. The above-mentioned quotation soberly puts things right and reveals that for many centuries the Brotherhood of Adepts was silent, which indicates that the Masters do not necessarily want to make themselves known to the world.

Our cause needs missionaries, devotees, agents, even martyrs, perhaps. But it cannot demand of any man to make himself either.

(*LMW*, L. 7, First Series)

This passage occurs in a letter to C. W.

Leadbeater in 1884. What is their cause? Perusing the letters it is not difficult to find out: “a regenerating practical Brotherhood”, a spiritually regenerated humanity. But theirs is not an ideological crusade, an exercise in political persuasion. Individual seekers need to see the urgency of it and offer to help them for the Masters are not there to convince anyone.

And, instead of doubting, thank heaven, if you have a patriotic heart beating in your breast, that there are a few “Brothers” yet left in India, to watch over her interests, and protect her in hours of danger; since in their hourly increasing selfishness none of her sons seem to ever remember they have a Mother — degraded, fallen down, and trampled under the feet of all, of conquerors and of the conquered — still a MOTHER.

(*LMW*, L. 15, First Series)

In their letters the Masters display a concern and affection for India, the land of rishis and avatars. Annie Besant derived her inspiration for her political work in India from the Adepts’ vision for that great land. And yet, the Mahatma does not shy away from denouncing India’s degradation.

I came to you not alone of my own accord and wish, but also by order of the Maha Chohan, to whose insight the future lies like an open page.

(*LMW*, L. 16, First Series)

In different passages of their letters the Masters make clear that they do not work alone and that they answer to senior

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members of the Occult Brotherhood, chief among them the Mahachohan. It was he who conveyed his views about the work before the TS to Master KH, in 1881, which were later sent to Mr Sinnett. That document has been regarded since its reception as the Magna Carta of the TS.

Those who have been so perplexed and puzzled over our policy as regards the London Lodge will understand its necessity better when they become better acquainted with the very occult art of drawing out the hidden capacities and propensities of beginners in occult study.

(*LMW*, L. 18, First Series)

Those who have had some experience in the international work of the TS will attest to the fact that, invariably, a deeper involvement with the Society's work brings with it some form of self-confrontation in which dormant tendencies become active character traits. When this process is not understood it is easy to indulge in blaming or belittling others, if not worse. It has been suggested that it is the spiritual power present in the TS, which is dedicated to Truth and Brotherhood, that tends to accelerate the process of self-confrontation which lays bare the contents of the person's psyche.

One of the most valuable effects of Upāsika's mission is that it drives men to self-study and destroys in them blind servility for persons.

(*LMS*, L. 19, First Series)

Madame Blavatsky was an unconventional teacher. She had no regard for

the superficial varnish that society in general attaches so much importance to, as she was relentlessly outspoken and truthful. To be near her was in itself a test. And she was chosen by the Masters for starting in the world a new cycle of occult research and dissemination of the timeless Wisdom-Tradition.

Ah! If your eyes were opened, you might see such a vista of potential blessings to *yourselves* and mankind lying in the germ of the present hour's effort, as would fire with joy and zeal your souls! Strive, towards the Light, all of you brave warriors for the Truth, but do not let selfishness penetrate into your ranks, for it is (un)selfishness alone that throws open all the doors and windows of the inner Tabernacle and leaves them unshut.

(*LMW*, L. 20, First Series)

Throughout their letters we find profound reminders as well as warnings regarding the need for selflessness in theosophical work. If one allows selfish motives to dominate one's efforts this will necessarily bring about confusion in the Society's work as well as damaging one's opportunities to delve deeper into the spiritual life. The Masters are the very embodiment of unselfish living, which is dedicated to the upliftment of humanity, and they offer their help for all those who are ready to receive it.

You have much to unlearn.

(idem)

In a short and simple sentence the Master communicated to the aspiring disciple not only the reality of conditioning

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but also the nature of their work. Only the awareness of the maladies caused by a self-centred view of the world can help us in overcoming our age-old conditioning.

You may struggle up out of the mire, or glide back into the depths of vice and misery now inconceivable to your imagination . . . remember, . . . that you stand before your Ātma, which is your judge, and which no smiles, nor falsehoods, nor sophistries can deceive. Hitherto you had but bits of *chits* from me and — *knew me not*; now you know me better, for it is I who accuse you before your awakened conscience.

(*LMW*, L. 24, First Series)

The teachings of Theosophy put before us a straight and direct truth: we are the architects of our own fate, our actions determine our own happiness or misery. In this letter the Master shows that it is the disciple's own essential consciousness — his Ātma — that was his judge. There is no escaping that foundational truth. In doing so the Master helped the disciple to confront his — and our — own failures.

How few are they who can know anything about us. . . . We never try to subject to ourselves the will of another. At favourable times we let loose elevating influences which strike various persons in various ways.

(*LMW*, L. 59, First Series)

The question has been asked quite often: why are not the Masters communicating again with people or writing letters? The questioner seems to ignore

the fact that his or her very question implies that they know what the Masters should do! The ordinary mind is incapable of understanding what true spiritual anonymity is. The profound wisdom of the Masters in this regard also sheds a light on the many so-called contemporary gurus and teachers who tend to market their message — and their *image* — far and wide.

Out of the three Objects the second alone is attended to, but it is no longer either a brotherhood, nor a body over the face of which broods the Spirit from beyond the Great Range.

(*LMW*, L. 60, First Series)

This quote is part of a communication from Master KH to HPB in 1888 and draws attention to the difficulties the Society was facing at that time. First, the lack of brotherhood among a number of its members, which prevented it from accomplishing its works; second, and derived from the first, the lack of harmony and unity of purpose among several members was making it impossible for the influence of the Masters to be invited upon the TS. It was this situation that led HPB to form a group of esoteric students in London towards the end of that same year.

Foolish are the hearts who doubt of our existence! or of the powers our community is in possession of for ages and ages.

(*LMW*, L. 76, Second Series)

As HPB explained in *Practical Occultism*, “all doubts come from the lower

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nature”. Even today, in spite of a considerable amount of historical and documentary evidence, we find authors claiming the Masters or Mahatmas were an invention of Madame Blavatsky. The second part of the quote makes reference to the perennial nature of the Brotherhood of Adepts, which has been with humanity for countless ages and is sometimes referred to as the Elder Brethren.

The Masters have declared, several times, that they are not ungrateful — “Ingratitude is not among our vices”. The passage below indicates that any sincere effort, although limited, on the part of the aspirant, does not go unnoticed. A link can be formed with their sphere of influence and such a link can grow stronger as time passes, and through it inspiration, clarity and insight may come to those who deserve them, for the greater benefit of the world and not for their unimportant personalities. It rests with the aspirant to

live in such a way that this link becomes eventually unbreakable:

Your strivings, perplexities and forebodings are equally noticed, good and faithful friend. In the imperishable RECORD of the Masters *you have written them all*. There are registered your every deed and thought; for, though not a chela, as you say to my Brother Morya, nor even a “protégé” — as you understand the term — still, you have stepped within the circle of our work, you have crossed the mystic line which separates your world from ours, and now whether you persevere or not; whether we become later on, in your sight, still more living *real* entities or vanish out of your mind like so many dream fictions — perchance an ugly nightmare — you are virtually OURS. Your hidden *Self* has mirrored itself in *our* Ākāśa; your nature is — yours, your essence is — ours.

(ML 45, chron. ed. 47)

**Realization that sorrow and evil lie neither in circumstances nor in the course of history but in the human mind and in human action logically progresses into the investigation of the structure and source of sorrow and evil in the psychology of man.**

Radha Burnier  
*The Way of Self-knowledge*

# Sat-Chit-Ānanda: An Approach to Our Nature

NILDA VENEGAS BERNAL

LIFE is the great opportunity to discover who we are and the meaning of existence. When some of us have already been in contact with spiritual teachings, the theosophical ones among them, we must be attentive to recognize from where or from which of our parts there come decisions, impulses, determinations, insights, and so on. This is because, unconsciously, we can project what we have learnt, which is conditioning our mind, blurring our capacity of discernment; or we also can elaborate false interpretations of what is happening in ourselves and of what we are doing and being. We have to clarify and give light, becoming aware of the illusions of the personality that prevent us from going towards what we really *are*, towards what is Real and True.

It is well known in the Hindu tradition, especially in Sāmkhya and Vedānta, and in the theosophical teachings, that our Being, or Ātman, consists of three elements which compose its nature and are a unity: *sat-chit-ānanda*, also called Brahman. This deep teaching is a reason

for study, pondering, and meditation.

The *Advaita Bodha Dipika*, a classic in Advaita literature, tells us:

After listening to the master about the nature of Being, which in the Scriptures is called Brahman or Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, we attain an indirect knowledge. Afterwards, according to the teaching and through an intelligent reasoning, we have to inquire and find the Being, which is pure Knowledge, and the non-being, which is inanimate and objective like the ego. We need to discriminate and separate them, and then experience them as being different from each other. Later on, through meditation, we eliminate everything which is objective and the residual mind is absorbed in the non-dual Being, which concludes with the direct experience of the Supreme Bliss.

In this synthetic statement we are shown the way for the search and ultimate realization of the nature of Being. Initially we approach the teaching, either through study or by oral transmission, and it will be a part of the indirect knowledge that

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we have. In this phase we can speak about a cognitive approach, but it is not an experiential approach of the teaching. The student must watch not to identify with the new concepts that are not yet his truth, as they have not been realized yet. The risk for the ego to be inflated, with all its consequences, could be present and the individual would be far from the reality he tries to approach, with the addition of a new veil to cover the Reality of Being. The attention to our own mental processes is the way to unveil this new trap of the ego that tries to be assertive through a strong personality with its distinct projections and identifications.

The seeker must remain in a state of reflection and inquiry, where he can access what he is. Here the mind stays calm and still, as a fundamental condition, to give way to the light of intelligence, *buddhi*, which illuminates that which is being investigated. This is the reason for the needed preparation or training of the practitioner, in the sense of an orderly life, which, in its turn, can prepare the mind and all its constitution for the meditation on that which is its nature. This investigation at this profound level is more and more liberated from the influence of the conditionings of the ego, and we will be able to discriminate between what belongs to the “Being” and what belongs to the “non-being”. “Non-being” implies everything perishable and finite, all that is material or objective, including our own emotional states and mental contents. In this way, if we let go of the identifications of the

ego, this will weaken until finally it will dissolve in its condition of *māyā* or illusory being. This non-identification of the mind allows the meditator to access deeper realities of the Being, the ones that were forgotten in his trip to manifestation, to the world of *māyā*, from which it has begun to rise in order to go back to the Light, to the Father, to the Ultimate Reality.

Finally the mind is absorbed, immersed in its essence or substratum, and it is one with Being, which is non-dual. The duality of the mind has been transcended, that duality which permitted what was manifested to be expressed in its individualities, the unity expressed in its diversity. This state of final integration, of realization of the Unity is expressed in Fullness, Bliss, in Ultimate Happiness. Those who had a glimpse or realized this state of integration and fullness, where there is no division or fragmentation, express, in the silence, the truth and beauty of the reality of the being. Their love and compassion reflect their unity with all beings. This Bliss and Light pour out and wraps us all in it.

Let us briefly remember the nature of our Being, of *Ātman*, and let us approach its Reality progressively. While listening to the teachings and through personal study, let us try to keep an unconditioned and receptive mental attitude, letting it resound deeply in our Being. At the same time, let us be attentive to any intervention of the mind with its thoughts, judgements, opinions, and so forth, that we are so used to. If we recognize that these movements

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of thought affect our listening, our study, we shall drop them quietly, keeping calm and trying to go deeper into what we are.

About *sat* (Existence) the *Advaita Bodha Dipika* says: “He always remains as a witness of the states that come over him. He is one, continuous, always existing and a witness of everything.”

And Śankarāchārya says:

Untouched by the five sheaths [matter or prakriti in the shape of the five *kośa*-s: dense physical sheath, pranic sheath or vital force, sheath of the mind, sheath of *buddhi* or intelligence, and sheath of bliss], a witness of the three states [vigilance linked to the dense body; sleep to the subtle body; and deep sleep to the causal body], Ātman is the unchangeable and untouchable Reality, whose knowledge enables the aspirant to break the chains with the relative world and to attain Supreme Liberation. With his ignorance, man identifies Ātman with one or more of his sheaths . . . Only when you practise total detachment, through discernment, only when this happens, the true nature of Ātman is revealed.

During meditation, through a deep inquiry coming from the mental silence, we can get to the denial of sheaths as our identities. The “*neti, neti*” or denial, is no more a meditative exercise, but it is lived, and the realization of our Ultimate Reality is possible. Then *sat* is unveiled, empty of attributes, although we try to qualify or describe it from our narrow consciousness. The partiality of our knowledge will be discovered when we understand our

real nature. *Sat* is omnipresent and self-existing. Psychological time as past, present, and future created by the mind to reinforce the ego disappears, and the eternal present expresses itself in the bosom of the self.

The *Advaita Bodha Dipika* speaks about *chit* (knowledge or pure consciousness): “Taking into account that it is always illuminating and manifesting the three states and its relative concepts about ‘I’, knowledge is self-evident.”

The *jiva* (I, ego) goes through the three states already mentioned, and it identifies with the dense, subtle, and causal bodies, respectively. *Chit* is the light of consciousness projected over our vehicles to be Self-conscious through our mind. Knowledge goes from the most dense levels to the most subtle one, until the individual questions his deepest reality and begins to uncover his real Self.

I. K. Taimni, in the *Science of Yoga*, explains that this word is derived from *cit* or *citi*, one of the three aspects of *paramātmā* called *sat-chit-ānanda*. Then he says:

It is this aspect which is at the basis of the form side of the Universe and through which it is created. The reflection of this aspect in the individual soul which is a microcosm is called *citta*. *Citta* is thus that instrument or medium through which the *jivātmā* (or human soul) materializes his individual world, lives and evolves in the world until he has become perfected and united with the *paramātmā*.

When we see how the mind and the

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consciousness work, we can recognize the relationship with their vehicles at the different levels of depth of consciousness. The mind sets on the senses and through that the sensorial consciousness accesses the mental plane and it can reflect, at the mental level, *buddhi*'s perceptions, through intelligence. It is beyond the intellect where the seeker will go, where he will find the Ultimate Knowledge and the Consciousness will reveal the Truth about the Unity of which we are a part. On this trip he will understand the meaning of human life and he will be liberated from the slavery of the senses, concepts, criticisms and all the burden of the ego; a free man can realize what he *is*.

On this way towards ourselves, we must be attentive to the tendency of the mind to be constantly asking "why?, how?" in trying to know the causes and effects, or what would be the unknown and the known. The mind is trapped there and misses the possibility to go beyond this mental game by itself and to unveil the Truth which is outside the mental discourse, out of the duality of the mind. If this working of the mind can be stopped, silence comes and the consciousness will be able to rest beyond the intellect.

N. Sri Ram talks about the pure negative state of the mind, when he refers to that condition of receptivity and pure attention that allows to access the "new", the whole, the Truth.

Sri Ram says:

It is only in a pure negative state, without

any division . . . when the consciousness is fully awake, that it is alert and receptive to the full; for then the whole energy is in the reception and the consciousness is in full rapport with the object of its attention. Such a state of mind and heart is open to the actual, the truth.

And we must ask ourselves if we are living as a mind or as a consciousness, at the mind level or in a state of pure attention, of awareness, of full conscience or mindfulness? Can we live as consciousness through the body and mind?

About *ānanda* (Bliss) the *Advaita Bodha Dipika* says: "Since it is the object of Supreme Joy, or rather, the Supreme Joy itself, the Being is Bliss."

*Ānanda* can be understood as the expression of the conscious existence. In the search of this state of full happiness or joy, man initially centres his efforts to attain those external or internal objects that he thinks can provide him with this state . . . This hedonistic happiness cannot make the individual attain that fullness that he unconsciously needs. More and more objects are obtained or avoided, but the internal dissatisfaction is bigger. When he realizes he has been searching in the wrong place and for what cannot give him the true and permanent happiness, he directs his quest towards his inner self and starts to look for that happiness that is permanent and real.

Radha Burnier asks: "Since our nature is *ānanda*, that deeper level of joy which is delight, why do we renounce it?"

Exploring this tendency, she proposes

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that we try for a time to live without the idea of “I want; I am a person in want”. She continues:

Let us drop the idea and *be*, instead of desiring. It may be difficult in the beginning, because we have a habit of thinking of ourselves as needing to get somewhere, enjoy something, and be somebody. The more we try to enjoy, and imagine we need entertainment and excitement, the less we are ourselves . . . If we meditate and see somewhat deeply that all desire is futile, that it leads to restlessness, unhappiness, and frustration, very soon there is a sense of calm. The mind becomes clearer and brighter, and a serene joy fills the heart.

When the seeker rests in his being, his heart, seat of *buddhi*, and his mind, are transcended, merging with Brahman. As Śankarāchārya says: “The image in

the heart and the reflection of *buddhi* become one in the universal consciousness.”

In *The Secret Doctrine*, H. P. Blavatsky gives us inspiration for seeking when she says:

The master is made to ask the pupil:

“Lift thy head, O Lanoo; dost thou see one, or countless lights above thee, burning in the dark midnight sky?”

“I sense one Flame, O Gurudeva, I see countless undetached sparks shining in it.”

“Thou sayest well. And now look around and into yourself. That light which burns inside thee, dost thou feel it different in anywise from the light that shines in thy Brother-men?”

“It is in no way different, though the prisoner is held in bondage by Karma, and though its garments delude the ignorant into saying: ‘Thy Soul and My Soul’.” ✧

**I have no companion but Love, no beginning,  
no end, no dawn. The Soul calls from within me:  
‘You, ignorant of the way of Love, set Me free.’**

Rumi

## Theosophical Work around the World



Group photo of the delegates attending the Congress of the European Federation of the Theosophical Society, which was held in Barcelona, Spain from 22 to 26 August 2017

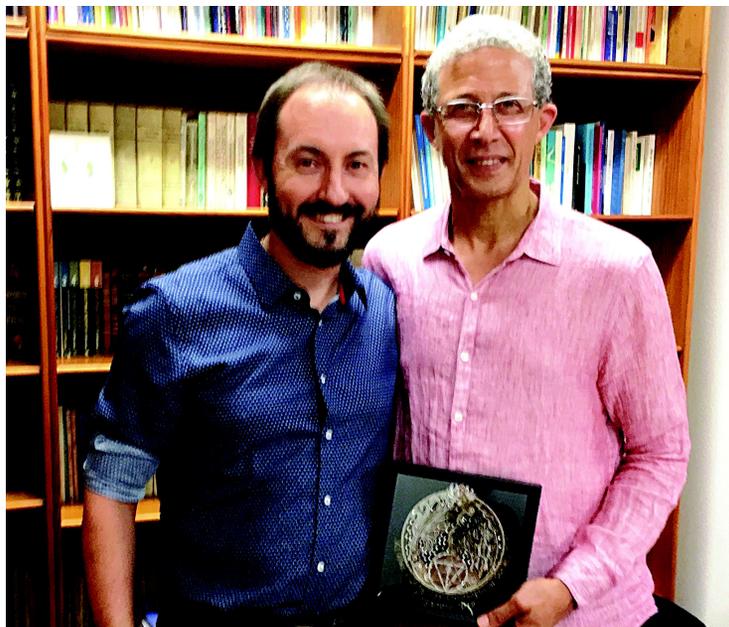


Participants of the Question-&-Answer session during the European Congress (*fr. l. to r.*): Mrs Jenny Baker, General Secretary of the English Section, Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu, Chairman of the European Federation, Mr Tim Boyd, international President, and Mrs Angels Torra Burón, General Secretary of the Spanish Section

## Theosophical Work around the World



Some Council members of the European Federation of the TS during the European Congress in Barcelona, Spain, in August



International President Tim Boyd (r.) and Joma Sipe in Porto, Portugal, after the former visited the Portuguese Section headquarters in Lisbon. Mr Sipe is a TS member and visionary artist, whose book of paintings, *Soul of Light: Works of Illumination*, was published by Quest Books in 2012

# Theosophical Work around the World

## 38th European Congress

The 38th European Congress took place in Barcelona, Spain, from 21 to 26 August, with the theme “Theosophy: A Way towards Universal Consciousness.” More than 200 attended from 18 different countries around the world to discuss and reflect together.

The opening lecture was delivered by our International President, Tim Boyd. Other lectures and talks were given by several General Secretaries (GS) and other officers of the TS, including Trânti-Kim-Diêu, Chairman of the European Federation; Angels Torra Burón, GS, Spanish Section; Jenny Baker, GS, English Section; and the President, Point Loma Society in The Hague, Herman Vermeulen. Some talks dealt with the influence of theosophical principles on current issues such as ecology and our environment. Altruistic service was stressed upon as one of the main practical ways to make Theosophy alive. A Q&A session preceded the closing. The whole programme can be watched on: [http://www.ts-efts.eu/congress\\_webcast.html](http://www.ts-efts.eu/congress_webcast.html) or [http://sociedadteosofica.es/?tribe\\_events=streaming-38th-european-theosophical-congress](http://sociedadteosofica.es/?tribe_events=streaming-38th-european-theosophical-congress)

The Congress premises and accommodation gave us the opportunity to experience unity in brotherhood, a unique occasion to live Theosophy as a reality and a way to Universal Consciousness.

## Portugal

President Tim Boyd visited the Portuguese Section of the TS in Lisbon, arriving on 29 August and meeting that same day with members only. The following day he gave a public lecture on “The problem of identity”. Both meetings were well attended and much appreciated. A harmonious and uplifting atmosphere reigned. In the very short free time available, the President visited the Museum and gardens of the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian and had enough time to have a bird’s eye view of Lisbon at night.

On 31 August he flew to Porto, the second largest city in Portugal. He was received by a group of members who took him for an extensive visit of the city, as he arrived in the morning and the talk was at 9 p.m. The next morning he proceeded to the International Theosophical Centre in the Netherlands.

Everyone was enchanted with the President’s affability, sympathy, friendliness, and profound thinking. It was really a special and important moment for the Portuguese Section, and hopefully for him as well, who promised to return for a longer visit in the near future!

## New General Secretary in Brazil

In July 2017 Mr Sergio Carvalho de Moraes, Jr, became the new General Secretary of the Brazilian Section, succeeding Mr Marcos de Resende. ✧

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