

## 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:** Bas-relief sculpture from interior of the Jyotir-alaya (Temple of Light) of the Bharata Samaja on the TS Adyar campus – Suresh Jayadev, photographer

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# THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

# 170th Anniversary of Annie Besant's Birth

TIM BOYD

ANNIE Besant lived a life that exhibited true greatness. As with all such people there are many directions from which we can approach a discussion of her life.

If we were to only consider the second half of her life, the time that she spent in India, we would be faced with having to comment on the many things that she did, not only *in* India, but *for* India. She was not only an activist and visionary, but she was also an institution builder. Far in advance of the nation's independence, she anticipated and then created institutions suited to the dawning national life. All across the country she founded numerous educational institutions, from colleges and universities to the primary and secondary level. Not the least of these was the Central Hindu College, which went on to become the Banaras Hindu University. The College was her creation because of her profound commitment to education, and not just education as it was being offered during her time, but a system that also included the education of women. She was an educationist at heart.

She also founded a weekly newspaper, *The Commonweal*, and purchased a daily, *New India*, which she used as an organ for Indian independence. She was

the heart and soul of a movement for the independence of India, and the founder of the Home Rule movement — the first organization within the growing independence movement to clearly call for India's self-rule. Two years ago I was invited to be chief guest for an organization which was celebrating its centenary, also founded by Annie Besant: the Young Men's Indian Association, which was specifically founded to prepare India's young men for leadership in the coming nation. She was one of the founding members of the Women's India Association, which also celebrated its centenary earlier this year. The President of India joined us here to celebrate that occasion.

In area after area, Arts Leagues, civic associations, the Boy Scouts, which previously did not exist in India, she fought to bring necessary structures to a newly-forming India.

One hundred years ago, in 1917, one of the things that marked not only her personal history, but also the history of this nation, was that she was arrested and interned. The arrest took place because during the course of World War I, many of the other Indian politicians involved in the freedom movement felt that it was appropriate to call a truce during the

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critical time when England was at war, that all should come together and support England in its time of need. Her idea was that it was not the time to step back from this movement toward India's rightful independence from colonial misgovernment, but that "England's need is India's opportunity". So rather than retreat, she accelerated her attacks, speeches, and writings against colonial rule. Her motto was: "You strike while the iron is hot, and you make the iron hot by striking." All this caused her to be arrested by the Viceroy of India.

Her arrest lasted only three months because, in support of this supporter of India, the Home Rule movement spread throughout the nation. Where once it was only in the major cities, it spread into villages, where they cried, "Annie Besant must be released". So the British government had to succumb and commit to a policy of gradual movement toward Indian Home Rule. This is what happened in 1917, one hundred years ago. That same year she was elected as the first woman President of the Indian National Congress.

Often when we speak of people who have done great things, rightfully we speak in terms of an ideal. We tend to acknowledge people in a heroic aspect who have done such great things as Annie Besant. Along with idealization and heroism come reverence and worship; along with these come distance and separation, these great ones appear so different from the state in which we find ourselves. The great one is somehow beyond us,

beyond our stature in the purity of their motives and in the greatness of their being. For all of the remarkable heights *to* which Annie Besant climbed, even more remarkable are the depths *from* which she climbed.

Nothing about Annie Besant's birth or upbringing destined her for the roles that she eventually played, not only in India, but throughout her life in the world. Few among us will found a university or newspaper, or start national organizations that live for more than one hundred years. Few of us will ever be the heart and soul of a national independence movement; I would venture to say that none of us will be. Those are the things that are unique to her, but *if* we were to view the process of her unfoldment, Annie Besant as the national leader, the spiritual giant, was not born in that way. There was a process that moved her to this place of reverence and heroism.

Although we may not have founded universities and the like, certainly every one of us has had times in our lives when we have experienced dark moments, when we have been uncertain and confused. There have been times in *all* of our lives when we have had to make difficult choices, when our views about the world and our lives and relationships were in flux and uncertain. Hopefully we have had times when we have had a burning desire to connect ourselves more intimately, more deeply, with an all-pervading, all-wise common source. As human beings, we have all had those times. These are the experiences that are more relevant

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to us when we take into consideration the life of a great one as Annie Besant.

She was born Annie Wood, of Irish parentage, in 1847. Probably, we lose sight of the context that these times indicate — a time when women were not allowed in universities in England, certainly there was no thought of vote, an era when a married woman was the *property* of her husband, and so on.

She had a very loving family of good situation, except that her father died when she was five, leaving her mother and her two children in dire financial straits, something that persisted during the lifetime of her mother. In trying to raise the two children, obviously, her mother wanted the best for the boy, which was for him to go to a university, and she sacrificed toward that end. She also wanted the best for her daughter, but a university education was not an option, as her meager finances did not permit it.

Soon after her father's death a wealthy spinster who had just lost her brother, whose mother had died, and who was looking for something productive to do in the world, had a friend who pointed out this very precocious and bright young child, Annie Wood. Soon it was arranged that this lady would use her extensive means to educate this child. The lady's name was Ellen Maryatt.

Miss Maryatt was an extraordinary teacher and educator, whose methods marked Annie Besant for the rest of her life. She did not teach by making one memorize, the way that probably most of us learned. Rote learning to her was

wasted, and it was all learned in "doing". The writing that Besant became famous for was learned in these very early days through observing, writing, and then explaining. Often Besant said Miss Maryatt would ask her to explain something. Young Annie, in trying to explain would say, "I have it in my head, but can't quite explain it." That was not good enough for Ellen Maryatt. Her comment was: "If you had it in your head, you would be able to explain it, so that then I would have it in my head." And she insisted that her student observe, then explain.

A great American, one of the founding fathers of the United States nation, Ben Franklin, had an expression about education: "If you tell me, I will forget, if you teach me, I will remember, but if you involve me, I will learn." This was Miss Maryatt's method. She even surpassed this method in saying: "Not only will you become involved, but you will also teach others." Study after study today demonstrates that this is when the deepest learning takes place. Not only when we are able to repeat it, or explain it, but when we are able to teach it, is when we learn at our deepest levels.

With this method Annie Besant learned French, German, writing, music; and she became quite a good pianist and composer. Hers was a very broad education that instilled in herself a love of knowledge. She was naturally an intellectually oriented person. A love for learning and a knowledge of how to *find* knowledge was instilled in her at a very early age, and carried her throughout.

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One of the other things that came with Miss Marryatt's education was that she was an Evangelical Christian. Not only did she teach book-learning, but also Christian values, and Annie Besant gobbled them up: for her there was Hell below and Heaven above, and depending on one's actions here, one was going one way or the other. But also Miss Marryatt was brilliant in that she insisted that true religion was not a matter of belief or dogmas only, it was certainly involved in that from her perspective, but it also required service, working on behalf of those in need.

So Besant, at a very young age, was taken to help the needy, the poor, and the sick. Miss Marryatt would very rarely give people money. If they were hungry, she would feed them; if they needed work, she would find work for them. She believed that unless a gift had some cost to the giver, it was of little value. This is what was instilled in Besant, that unless the giver came with the gift, the gift was empty.

At age 20 she was married to a priest in the Anglican Church, which turned out to be a very unhappy marriage. She had two children within three years. The marriage lasted six years before the separation took place for a number of reasons. Not the least of these reasons was that Annie Besant, who was a devout Christian who thought there was nothing better than being married to a priest to be able to serve in the Church, had the "problem" of having an intense intellect that caused her to ask questions.

She began writing about the glories of the Christian faith, something that required her to research. At one time she wanted to produce a "harmony" of the four Gospels in the New Testament of the Bible. She wanted to show their harmony in their reporting of the events in the life of Jesus. But as soon as she started this effort she found that the Gospels were telling different stories. The dates, times, and events did not coordinate. This was the first seed of doubt that was planted in her previously undisturbed view of her Christian faith.

She tried to get rid of this first seed of doubt. The method she used remained the same for the rest of her life: she had to know. Her deepest problem and deepest asset was that she asked questions and required answers. So she would go to the most profound people, the strongest writers and thinkers within the religion to ask her questions, a practice which resulted in few answers and a lot more questions. At a certain point, the combination of doubt and profound unhappiness in her life and marriage brought her to a critical stage. Her depression and uncertainty became so severe that she not only contemplated suicide, but actually sat down with a bottle of poison in her hand, prepared to take her own life.

She relates the story that at this critical moment, just before taking the poison, for the first time she heard a voice that was to become familiar to her many years later. The voice said to her: "Oh coward, coward, who has dreamed of martyrdom, but cannot stand a few years of woe."

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Upon hearing this she threw the bottle of poison out the window and started afresh. This was when she realized that she could not continue in a marriage that had its difficulties, not the least of which was physical abuse, and so the separation took place.

At the same time her ideas were evolving within her own religion, and she started to find too many things that she could not support. She went from devout Christianity to atheism. In our normal thinking, when someone describes themselves as an “atheist”, the idea is that there is no God, which was not at all her position. Annie Besant, like *anyone* of high intellect, felt that *everything* required evidence.

From all the evidence, she could ascertain that God is necessarily unknowable; we cannot know God by evidences. But she was certain that the God that was described as the “angry, jealous God” of the Old Testament — the one that visited harm on those who he opposed and good on those who he liked, who responded to the prayers of those who were undeserving because they called his name using an approved formula — was not a God that she recognized as capable of being in existence. So she went in a different direction. She moved on to what was then called the Freethought movement and became one of its most vital proponents in England.

For the next thirteen years she was deeply involved in a materialistic approach to human betterment. She worked on behalf of the poor, on providing the

knowledge that would support a better life, a kinder life, to people. She put herself in harm's way time and time again in organizing unions, in working with people who were grindingly poor. She was not just a theorist, or an idealist, but someone who put her body right alongside her words.

During these times she was recognized as one of the greatest orators of her time. Thousands of people would gather to hear her speak. As great a speaker as she was, she said that every time she ever gave a speech, prior to doing so, she was nervous. Every time she was nervous when she was waiting to speak, but when she stood, all nervousness disappeared.

In her own autobiographical sketches, she describes the first talk that she gave, which was a talk to no one. She was alone in her husband's church, practicing the organ pieces for the Sunday service. She wondered what it would be like to give a speech. Knowing that the doors were locked, and that she would never be allowed to reach the pulpit officially, on her own she stepped into the pulpit, and she said that words flowed out of her. After this very first talk, which nobody heard, she knew that this was an avenue that was calling.

In 1875 she gave her very first public talk. Later in her life she realized that this happened at the same time when Madame H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) and Col. H. S. Olcott were founding the Theosophical Society in New York City, far across the ocean. She was proud to note that during this year, it was her growing involvement

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with the Freethought movement that ultimately would lead her to the Theosophical movement, and that both began at the same time.

Around the time when The Theosophical Society headquarters at Adyar was established in 1882, HPB, who was very much in tune with what was going on in the world, was following the activities for social upliftment in England. In her writings she would comment from time to time on the work being done in England by Annie Besant, although they had not met. This was a time when Besant had no interest whatsoever in Theosophy. Her involvement was in what she considered to be clear thinking and material help to the world.

On one occasion some people in the Freethought movement asked Besant what she thought about members of their secular movement joining the Theosophical Society. So she studied a bit about Theosophy, and she told them that she did not see any basis of commonality. From her point of view, she wrote: "This Theosophy seems to be a dreamy, emotional, somewhat scholarly interest in the religio-philosophic fancies of the past." Clearly, it was not something that she could recommend. Again, HPB learned of what Besant had said and she wrote to Besant very kindly, commenting that her view was partial. So there was interplay between the two of them although they had not yet met.

In her *Autobiography*, she writes that eventually the Freethought movement was not enough to encompass an inner

growth that had been taking place. In her life she transformed from a devout Christian to an atheist, to a Freethinker, to a Socialist, and in every phase she was fully invested.

In the same *Autobiography* she has a final chapter: "Through Storm to Peace". In it she speaks about herself and what had started to grow inside of her, and the awareness that for all of the work that she had done, for all of the organizing and raising of people's wages and living conditions for which she had sacrificed, it was not enough. Nothing in her experience had inspired an abiding commonality, something that could lift people to selfless service. In all of that time she had been unable to put together a group of selfless servers who were interested in the betterment of humanity, not just from the point of view of material conditions, but rooted in a universal force she would describe as "love".

Again she started to search, and to think, and to wonder. Soon she found that the materialistic approach that she had for so long embraced had had the effect that her "intellect had misled her from the soul". Typical to Besant, she started to research and to find, current studies and experiments in psychology, hypnosis, things that were pointing out recesses and uses of the mind that went beyond anything that she had previously conceived. She needed an explanation which she sought, but could not find.

She had a habit that after a long day of work, when it became dark, she would sit alone and ponder. One evening she

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found herself wondering about when she would be able to find some light in the darkness that was pervading her mind. At this point she says she heard a voice again, a voice that she was beginning to recognize. And this voice told her: "Be patient, the light is near."

Two weeks later an editor for one of the newspapers for which she wrote said to her: "We need to have a book review done. I have these two very thick books and nobody else wants to do it. I know you are interested in this sort of thing." And he handed her the two books. The two books were the two volumes of *The Secret Doctrine*, written by H. P. Blavatsky. She went home, read the books, and she said that as she turned each page it was filled with meaning. She had an intuitive understanding of these very deep subjects. It was something that page by page, she felt herself coming closer and closer to the missing Truth that for so long she had been seeking.

Having read the volumes and published the review (see p. 13 of this issue), Besant asked her editor to arrange a meeting with HPB, who was then living in England. Describing how she first saw HPB, she says that she recognized in HPB someone that her heart had longed for, but that at the same time the proud nature inside of her rebelled against. She said that it was "as if a wild animal was rebelling against the mastering hand that was now taking hold of her".

The conversation between them was "normal" for HPB, which is to say it was about her world travels and a variety of

things, but nothing about occult wisdom. When Besant got up to leave, HPB came to her and told her: "My dear Mrs Besant, it would be so wonderful if you were among us." Besant said that when she heard that, her proud resistance dropped away. Within one month she had joined the Theosophical Society. For Annie Besant, the world renowned Freethinker and Atheist, joining the TS was not the same as others joining the TS. What it meant for her reputation among the community of people that she had worked with, among the army of people that she had raised in social causes, was that all but a very few of them would turn their back on her.

Her choice was made, knowing full well that once again she would be reviled and fighting for a point of view that was not accepted, but for her there was no choice in the matter. She joined the TS, eventually becoming its second President. This place that was the Adyar headquarters, all fourteen acres of it, she expanded to 266, feeling that a deeper sort of silence was needed for the work that was being done here. All the work she did around the world and in India followed from that moment, and from the choice to follow her teacher, HPB.

Many more things could be said about her life, but probably the most important is her epitaph — very short, very simple. It was her request that when she died she did not want a lot of language taking up space on her tombstone. The most apt description of herself was the one she provided in her *Autobiography*:

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“SHE TRIED TO FOLLOW TRUTH.” (p. 326). To those who look back toward her on occasions like her birthdate, we look to her as one who was an exemplar of Truth, a spokesperson for Truth, a person for whom Truth was the byword and the key to her living. From her perspective, she *tried* to follow Truth.

Once a year we try to understand this great person from different avenues. The details of a life have a certain importance, but the motivating power behind that life comes down to this: There is something which can be known and identified as Truth. To the extent that we find it within our capacity to embrace that, we must try. If there is any meaningful example that she provides, it is of someone who tried. She left with us this marvelous invocation:

O hidden Life, vibrant in every atom,  
O hidden Light, shining in every creature,  
O hidden Love, embracing all in Oneness,  
May each who feels himself as one  
    with Thee,  
Know he is also one with every other.

The Theosophical Society was founded to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity; oneness is its keynote. That oneness is not based on similarities or even shared humanity, but on the simple fact that there is an all-embracing love that links us all; that is actually the formative power behind each and every one of us. “May all who feel themselves as one with Thee, know they are therefore one with every other.” Think about it. On this day we commemorate Annie Besant.      ✧

**If sorrow that you shrink from comes upon you,  
remember that the hand of Love allows it thus to fall,  
and that in bearing that sorrow bravely, you are swiftly  
working out your own deliverance.**

Annie Besant  
*Meditations*

# Review of *The Secret Doctrine* by Madame H. P. Blavatsky

ANNIE BESANT

THE *National Reformer* reaches so many different types of readers, all of whom must be more or less liberal-minded, that it seems likely that among them all, some will be found to take interest in the unfamiliar views of the universe set forth in this very remarkable work. Madame Blavatsky, from whose pen it comes to us, is a personality as remarkable as her book. She has been lauded as the apostle of a new revelation; denounced as the inventor of the greatest imposture of the age. That she is an impostor no one who knows her will believe; while the fact that she is possessed of wide and deep Oriental learning, and has access to rare and recondite sources of information, will be apparent to anyone who even skims these volumes.

But skimming is more likely to repel than to attract: the unfamiliar archaism and yet more unfamiliar mysticism of the Book of Dzyan, which is claimed as one of the oldest manuscripts in the world; the subtle metaphysics, which become wholly unintelligible and even contradictory unless the delicate grada-

tions of phrase be noted and understood; the Oriental atmosphere in which the mental images live and move; the antagonism of the whole intellectual trend to the thought of our Western civilization; all this is but too likely to make the 19th century Englishman raise his eyebrows, shrug his shoulders, and throw the book down. For the Orient begins to study the universe just where the Occident ceases to study.

With telescope and with microscope, with scalpel and with battery, Western Science interrogates Nature, adding fact to fact, storing experience after experience, but coming ever to gulfs unfathomable by its plummets, to heights unscalable by its ladders. Wide and masterful in its answers to the "How?", the "Why?" ever eludes it, and causes remain enwrapped in gloom. Eastern Science uses as its scientific instrument the penetrating faculties of the mind alone, and regarding the material plane as *māyā*, illusion, seeks in the mental and spiritual planes of being the causes of the material effects. There, to it, is

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**Dr Annie Besant** was the second international President of the Theosophical Society from 1907 to 1933. From *The Theosophist*, September 1889, reprinted from the *National Reformer*.

the only reality; there the true existence of which the visible universe is but the shadow.

It is clear that for such investigations some further mental equipment is necessary than that normally afforded by the human body. And here comes the “parting of the ways” between East and West. For the study of the material universe, our five senses, aided by the instruments invented by science, may suffice. For all that we can hear and see, taste, and handle, these accustomed servitors, though often blundering, are the best available guides to knowledge. But it lies in the nature of the case that they are useless when the investigation is to be into modes of existence which cannot impress themselves on our nerve ends.

For instance: what we know as colour is the vibration frequency of etheric waves striking on the retina of the eye; between certain definite limits — 759 trillions of blows for the maximum, 436 trillions for the minimum — these waves give rise in us to the sensation which the brain translates into colour. (Why the 436 trillion blows at one end of a nerve become “Red” at the other end we do not know; we chronicle the fact, but cannot explain it.) But our capacity to respond to the vibration cannot limit the vibrational capacity of the ether; to *us* the higher and lower rates of vibration do not exist, but if our sense of vision were more sensitive, we should see where now we are blind.

Following this line of thought we realize that matter may exist in forms

unknown to us, in modifications to which our senses are unable to respond. Now steps in the Eastern sage and says:

That which you say *may* be, *is*; we have developed and cultivated senses as much superior to yours as your eye is superior to that of the jellyfish; we have evolved mental and spiritual faculties which enable us to investigate on the higher planes of being with as much certainty as you are investigating on the physical plane; there is nothing *supernatural* in the business, any more than your knowledge is supernatural, although much above that accessible to the fish; we do not speculate on these higher forms of existence; we *know* them, by personal study, just as you know the fauna and flora of your world. The powers we possess are not supernatural; they are latent in every human being, and will be evolved as the race progresses. All that we have done is to evolve them more rapidly than our neighbours, by a procedure as open to you as it was to us. Matter is everywhere, but it exists in seven modifications of which you know only four, and until lately knew only three; in those higher forms reside the causes of which you see the effects in the lower, and to know these causes you must develop the capacity to take cognizance of the higher planes.

Unless evolution be a dream, or we have reached the topmost rung of its ladder — a tolerably absurd assumption — there is nothing irrational per se in this statement. Whether it be true, whether such men with highly evolved psychical

faculties exist, is a matter for evidence: some people are as certain of their existence as they are of the existence of their own fathers and mothers; and those who know nothing about the matter are somewhat hasty if they take on themselves to deny it. It may be further suggested, as a hint towards further mental evolution, that it is beyond the possibility of doubt that psychical faculties not yet normal are showing themselves in many persons: clairvoyance, mesmerism, hypnotism, point to the existence, under abnormal conditions, of an inner vision that transcends the eye-power, and of faculties not yet understood. The grave difficulty in all investigations in this, as yet, little trodden region of psychology, is the tendency to lose control of the judgment in face of the abnormal; the grave danger lies in the possibility of upsetting the mental balance, of so straining the mind that the student may cross the line which separates sanity from insanity.

This introduction seems to me necessary in order to lead any reader who is new to the phase of thought with which we are concerned, to grasp something of the ideas which underlie *The Secret Doctrine*. For these ideas come from "The Wise Men of the East", in whose hands, as in the hands of their predecessors, it is stated that the manuscripts are on which the present work is based.

In an antiquity before which Roman and Greek and Hebrew are but as plants of yesterday, Indian sages thought, observed, and pondered on their observations, generation after generation taking

up the task. The garnered knowledge was ever kept secret from the mass of ordinary men, revealed only to those who after long probation became Initiates. With the evolution of the race has come the time when some of this knowledge would be useful to mankind, and during the last few years portions of it have filtered out. In the book before us we have the record of the evolution of the universe, and the genesis of man, which whoso will read let him gird up the loins of his mind for prolonged and strenuous effort.

Briefest outline only can here be given for two reasons: first, that space would not allow of lengthened exposition; second, that anyone who wants to understand *The Secret Doctrine* must study it for himself. You cannot map a continent on the palm of your hand, nor compress a mountain into a marble. Briefly then:

Ere the visible universe comes into existence there is Absolute Be-ness Being in the abstract — boundless, infinite, changeless. On this conception we will not dwell: every student knows the endless contradictions into which we flounder when we strive to describe the Absolute in terms of which relation is the essence. The moment we begin to precise, we contradict. At the commencement of a cycle awakens the Unmanifested Logos — abstract and potential ideation, the root of the later Mahat, the universal intelligent soul — and thence the second Logos with its double aspect, Purusha and Prakriti — Spirit-Matter, "Father-Mother" — and Mahat

the Son. From this Triangle of Being, Purusha, Prakriti, and Mahat, go forth all life and form, in numerous hierarchies, on the seven planes of existence.

Spirit crystallizes, as it were, into matter through the first three, becoming more and more consolidated and gross, reaching its turning point in the fourth, becoming intellectually self-conscious as it thus grows denser; from the fourth it climbs upward again, shaking off the grossness of its material envelope but retaining the experience it could not otherwise have won, until, wise with all it has gathered during its struggles and its wanderings, it returns whence it came forth and rests. Such a cycle forms a Manvantara, and this is followed by "the sleep of Brahma"; when he awakes, another cycle commences, but on a higher plane. My readers must turn to the book to fill in this bare outline, and they will find it worth their while.

What part does man play in this vast drama of a universe? Needless to say, he is not the only living form in a Cosmos which, for the most part, is uninhabitable by him. As Science has shown living forms everywhere on the material plane, races in each drop of water, life throbbing in every leaf and blade, so *The Secret Doctrine* points to living forms on higher planes of existence, each suited to its environment, till all space thrills with life, and nowhere is there death, but only change.

Amid these myriads are some evolving towards humanity, some evolving away from humanity as we know it, divesting

themselves of its grosser parts. For man is regarded as a sevenfold being, four of these parts belonging to the animal body and perishing at, or soon after, death; while three form his higher self, his true individuality, and these persist and are immortal. These form the Ego, and it is this which passes through many incarnations, learning life's lessons as it goes, working out its own redemption within the limits of an inexorable law, sowing seeds of which it ever reaps the harvest, building its own fate with tireless fingers, and finding nowhere, in the measureless time and space around it, any that can lift for it one weight it has created, bear for it one burden it has gathered, unravel for it one tangle it has twisted, close for it one gulf that it has digged.

The physical and mental evolution of man is traced step by step for us in the second volume, the life of each race, with its characteristics, being sketched. How curiously this Eastern teaching now upholds, now contradicts, our Western views, will be marked with interest by the careful reader. One matter, small in itself, but significant in its bearings, may here be put on record — the knowledge, quite lately reached by Western Science, that the pineal gland, of much debated function, is the remains of "the third eye". This has now been "discovered" by the West, but it is a very very old story in the East.

Very attractive, and showing wide acquaintance with the latest discoveries of science, is the third section of vol. 1,

Review of *The Secret Doctrine* by Madame H. P. Blavatsky

“Science and the Secret Doctrine Contrasted”. It is of curious interest to note how some of the latest theories seem to catch glimpses of the occult doctrines, as though Science were standing on the very threshold of knowledge which shall make all her past seem small. Already her hand is trembling towards the grasp of forces beside which all those now at her command are insignificant. How soon will her grip fasten on them? Let us hope not until social order has been transformed, lest they should only give more to those who have, and

leave the wretched still wretcheder by force of contrast. Knowledge used by Selfishness widens the gulf that divides man from man and race from race, and we may well shrink from the idea of new powers in Nature being yoked to the car of Greed. Hence the wisdom of those “Masters” in whose name Madame Blavatsky speaks, has ever denied the knowledge which is power until Love’s lesson has been learned, and has given only into the hands of the selfless the control of those natural forces which, misused, would wreck society. ✧

**Spirit and Matter, though one and the same thing in their origin, when once they are on the plane of differentiation, begin each of them their evolutionary progress in contrary directions — Spirit falling gradually into Matter, and the latter ascending to its original condition, that of pure spiritual Substance. Both are inseparable, yet ever separated.**

H. P. Blavatsky  
*The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I

# From Definitions to Insight

MARJA ARTAMAA

WE like to define the indefinable in our journey towards Universal Consciousness. Theosophists are good in giving definitions and explaining their views. It is evident that we do need definitions, but more important is to have insight into our own self. The indefinable fascinates us, because we want to know what is beyond understanding.

We are well aware that many mystics, saints, philosophers, and even scientists say that there exists a level which cannot be described. This is said by those who have had experiences of something greater.

Esoteric philosophy states that on the other shore of our experience, beyond it, is One Absolute Reality, which is the beginning and source of all that was, is, and will be. Everything from which Nature is built belongs to that Primordial Reality. The idea that there exists One Absolute Reality, means that all is One, Oneness.

H. P. Blavatsky describes this Reality as an “Omnipotent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable Principle”. Each of these terms can serve as a subject for meditation, in which we try to stretch our minds

to realize more deeply what the One Reality might be.

We try anyhow to define everything in order to be able to understand. It is the nature of the mind. There is nothing wrong in that. Defining is an attempt

- ◆ to make sense,
- ◆ to know more,
- ◆ to expand our consciousness.

And yet when the real experience is there, it cannot be defined nor described by words. Because of this, many sceptics do not believe the undefined. What a pity to limit the consciousness like that.

The benefit of trying to define what we do not fully know, is that it stretches our mind and thinking: we need explanations, we need definitions — we need to go beyond. That is what Theosophy offers. Someone has said quite well that Theosophy is a complete set of knowledge, wisdom knowledge. Theosophy gives explanations to everything, whether it is life, cycles, mind, consciousness, energy, human constitution, Masters, reincarnation, karma, and so on.

The whole set of definitions are

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there for us to deepen understanding from theory to insight. At some point all the definitions transform into insight — to seeing things as they are, without naming them.

Naming things does not explain them. For example, we talk about Masters. Some try to describe their character and their aspect of work, and they may be happy with just that. But to have an insight about the Masters is closer to the indescribable, because that requires an inner connection to a deep level of consciousness, universal consciousness. That insight does not need any talk about it. The same may happen when you read one of our jewels, like *Light on the Path* or *The Voice of the Silence*. During the reading we may attain a level of understanding which touches us within — without explanations and definitions. That consciousness is like a voice of silence, which is eternally here.

### Insight

What is “insight”? You may look up the word in dictionaries, but in this context we may find that it means to have “direct perception” of something or someone. It is an inner view, close to consciousness and close to intuition, and a bit more. Intuition is a flash of understanding, but when there is insight, we find that within us we know, without words. The deepest in us is beyond expression.

How is insight developed? It may develop through pondering over definitions or enigmas, and practicing mind-

fulness and meditation. Practice and sincerity may be the key words here.

A Zen master has said: “A word is like a finger pointing to the moon, but the finger is not the moon.” If man has such an inner state that he can see the moon, then the finger has accomplished its task. But the one who stares at the finger has erred.

Insight can develop also through right living, and through meaningful experiences. Meaningful experiences start where words end. It is possible to experience life positively, brightly, and truthfully. That is a way towards universal consciousness. Earlier I mentioned that we have a good theosophical set of knowledge, wisdom knowledge. What about taking a new approach to open the set of knowledge? Let us take some of the theosophical concepts, and try to see how they could be interpreted in a way to open up the mind to universal consciousness. We can find for example the following four sets of theosophical concepts:

1. Evolution of planet and solar system, cycles, levels of existence, the sevenfold structure: if we study these as expressions of many-faceted universes, and seeing them as a web of interconnected life, with a holistic approach, it leads to developing an intuitive worldview.
2. Self-education, self-knowledge, higher evolution of man, human constitution: when we talk about these by emphasizing the practice of yoga, meditation, the importance of being present at the moment, it leads to self-transformation in one’s own path.

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3. Reincarnation and karma: if we study these with a logical mind of cause and effect, we just make a circle. Where can it lead; can we have another kind of approach? When we talk about these with the idea of evolution and constant development, it leads us to the search for self-realization and happiness, instead of only acknowledging them as a theory.

4. Life and death: we may talk about these by trying to understand time and timelessness, seeing them as patterns of Existence, thus leading to widening our consciousness and view of Oneness — looking at them as states in Existence, in timelessness.

We have a tendency to search and find formal solutions and schemes. They give a sense of safety. But Reality does not acknowledge them. Everything is new from moment to moment. Real truth is never solved by intellect or definitions. Truth is behind *all* our definitions. The deepest in us is beyond all expressions, yet our task is to encourage to find insight and Truth.

Our inner regeneration does not assume a new world around us. In a certain way it is the same world, and yet in a true sense, it is a completely new world, because our relationship to it is new.

### To conclude

How do definitions and then insight help us? See suggestions below. They help us to be:

- ◆ less attached (because understanding limits us),
- ◆ more responsible (because of understanding the laws of Nature, and service for humanity),
- ◆ more tolerant,
- ◆ more satisfied at a deeper level (because there is trust in Life),
- ◆ more quiet and considerate, and
- ◆ capable of observing life in a new way, from a wider perspective.

To give some depth to this short talk, I want to borrow Vivekananda's words:

To gain infinite universal individuality, this miserable little prison — individuality — must go.

Then alone can death cease when I am one with Life.

Then alone can misery cease when I am one with happiness itself.

Then alone can all error cease when I am one with knowledge itself.

Then alone can all error cease when I am one with Universal Consciousness.



**To a reasoning being, an act that accords with Nature  
is an act that accords with reason.**

Marcus Aurelius  
*Meditations*

# The Concept of God in the Mahatma Letters

VICENTE HAO CHIN JR.

TWO of the most controversial letters written by the Mahatma Koot Hoomi are the ones about God (Letters No. 88 and 90 in the chronological edition of *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*). Many theosophists hesitate to discuss these letters because their views on God go straight against the usual religious concepts of God in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. The subject can be troubling to some, but there comes a point in the life of every earnest theosophist who desires to seek truth above any “ism”, when this topic can no longer be skirted, and he or she must confront the issues raised not only by these letters but by the writings of H. P. Blavatsky on the same topic, especially in *The Secret Doctrine*, (which was co-authored by the Mahatmas KH and Morya, as stated in Letter No. 19 of *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, Ser. I).

## Background

Most reflective persons are vaguely aware that there is something wrong with the popular concepts of God. If God is allgood, why is there evil and suffering

in the world? If God is all-merciful, why will some people go to hell?

If we go beyond popular belief and go deeper into theology and biblical studies, we encounter even worse kinds of incongruities.

In the Old Testament, the Lord God repented many times what he had done (Gen 6:6, Exo 32:14, 1 Sam 15:11, 1 Chron 21:15, Jer 15:6, and so on)<sup>1</sup> which implies that he did not foresee that his decisions and actions would turn out to be wrong. More seriously, it means that God makes mistakes. This alone would make the common concept of God unbelievable and absurd. But this is just one of the many points.

The God of the Old Testament also gets angry and wrathful (Nahum 1:2, Zeph 1:18, and so forth).<sup>2</sup> When he does, he can be very cruel, like drowning all men, women, children, land animals and birds (except those in the Ark), or ordering Joshua to slaughter all men, women, children and animals in cities that Joshua was told to grab in Canaan and other places after they left Egypt.

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The Lord also gets jealous of other gods (Exo 34:14, Josh 24:19, and so on).<sup>3</sup> Common sense tells us that an all-powerful God cannot be jealous about anything since he can do whatever he wants. Jealousy is a sign of insecurity and uncertainty, which no omniscient being can ever feel. But a more important historical and biblical background on this is that the Jews of those times were actually polytheistic, contrary to the popular conception that they were monotheistic.

Jehovah was actually only one of the many gods that the Jews themselves recognized. See the following verses: Ps 82:1, Ps 97:9, Deut 32:12.<sup>4</sup> They were monotheistic only in the sense that they were loyal or beholden to one particular Lord, and were not supposed to follow the others. Furthermore, Jehovah was not even the highest God. There is one higher than him called El or Elyon (translated in English as “the Most High”) who apportioned mankind into groups, and Jehovah’s share or dominion was only the people of Jacob or Israel (Deut 32:8–9, Zech 2:12).<sup>5</sup>

God also could not do everything, such as when he could not defeat the armies of the Canaanites: “And the Lord was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.” (Judg 1:19)

If we expand this discussion wider we encounter insolvable contradictions when theistic religions assume that God is

omniscient and at the same time human beings have free will. If God knows everything, he would have the foreknowledge of who will go to heaven or hell even before the world was created. This could not be changed, otherwise his foreknowledge would have been wrong. This logical conclusion, which is also confirmed by several Bible verses (Rom 8:29, Eph 1:5, Eph 1:11, Acts 4:28),<sup>6</sup> compelled Martin Luther and John Calvin to adopt the doctrine of predestination, which says that those who would be saved and those who would be condemned to eternal hell are already unalterably predetermined since the beginning of time. If indeed God is omniscient, then this fatalistic view is logical and correct; but this puts into question the value of all efforts to be good and religious, since people have been predestined to either happiness or perfidy regardless of what evil or good they do in this life.

Then add to this the oft-declared all-goodness of God in the face of evil in the world. How could God allow evil to happen in a world that he said was good at the time of creation?<sup>7</sup> The usual answer that this is due to human free will is contradicted by the Old Testament itself, which says that God is the one who creates evil (Isaiah 45:7). In one passage it even says, “Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” (Amos 3:6) This dilemma has spawned an entire branch of theology called theodicy, where there remain no clear answers because the assumption about the nature of God remains unaltered.

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In the Mahatma Letter No. 90, the Mahatma KH asks A. O. Hume:

I cannot help asking you, how do you or how can you know that your God is all wise, omnipotent and loveful, when everything in Nature, physical and moral, proves such a being, if he does exist, to be quite the reverse of all you say of him? Strange delusion and one which seems to overpower your very intellect. (p. 282)

Much, much more could be said but the above is probably enough for a thoughtful person to see that the concept of God in popular religion is fraught with contradictions and untenable conclusions that go against human reason, common sense and intuition. With all the brilliant theologians through the centuries, how come there seems to be no solution to all these contradictions? Is it no wonder that as of 2001, there were 33,800 different Christian denominations all over the world many of whom could not agree with the others on the nature of God, Jesus, Bible or Christianity itself?

### Letter No. 88

From this background we may better appreciate the letter on God by the Mahatma KH. This letter contains notes for A. O. Hume who intended to write an article on the subject. In this letter the Mahatma goes into the root of the issue — the nature and existence of God itself — rather than argue about peripheral issues that are rooted in questionable assumptions. The very first paragraph of the letter goes straight into the central issue:

Neither our philosophy nor ourselves believe in a God. . . . We know there are planetary and other spiritual lives, and we know there is in our system no such thing as God, either personal or impersonal. Parabrahm is not a God, but absolute immutable law, and Iswar is the effect of Avidya and Maya, ignorance based upon the great delusion. The word “God” was invented to designate the unknown cause of those effects which man has either admired or dreaded without understanding them, and since we claim and that we are able to prove what we claim — that is the knowledge of that cause and causes — we are in a position to maintain there is no God or Gods behind them.

Now this sounds like plain atheism. But take note what H. P. Blavatsky wrote:

The Secret Doctrine teaches no *Atheism*, except in the Hindu sense of the word *nāstika*, or the rejection of *idols*, including every anthropomorphic god. In this sense every Occultist is a *nāstika*. (SD, I, 279)

Letter No. 88 continues:

The idea of God is not an innate but an acquired notion . . . The God of the Theologians is simply an imaginary power, *un loup garou* as d’Holbach expressed it — a power which has never yet manifested itself. Our chief aim is to deliver humanity of this nightmare, to teach man virtue for its own sake, and to walk in life relying on himself instead of leaning on a theological crutch, that for countless ages was the direct cause of nearly all human misery. Pantheistic we may be called — agnostic NEVER.

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### The Nature of the Deity

If the Masters or the Secret Doctrine does not teach Atheism, what then does it teach? It teaches a transcendent Reality so different from historical gods, whether personal or impersonal, so all-inclusive and transcendent that it is beyond human comprehension. This in fact is the first fundamental proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*:

An Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable PRINCIPLE on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and could only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude. . . . there is one absolute Reality which antecedes all manifested, conditioned, being. This Infinite and Eternal Cause — dimly formulated in the “Unconscious” and “Unknowable” of current European philosophy — is the rootless root of “all that was, is, or ever shall be.” It is of course devoid of all attributes and is essentially without any relation to manifested, finite Being. It is “Be-ness” rather than Being . . .

SD I, 14

The ABSOLUTE; the *Parabrahman* of the Vedāntins, or the one Reality, SAT, which is, as Hegel says, both Absolute Being and Non-Being.

SD I, 16

This is the limitless, eternal, unqualified principle. If we desire to call it God, we may do so but then we are no longer speaking about the God of the theistic religions, hence this Principle is never

called God in *The Secret Doctrine*. Its closest equivalents would be Parabrahman of the Vedantist, the Ain of the Kabbalist, the Absolute of Hegel. All the other beings, whether Logos, Elohim, Brahma, Jehovah, Dhyan Chohans, archangels, and so forth would be in the realm of the manifested, hence limited. They have beginnings and thus have endings.

Within or in this Absolute there is an eternal principle that manifests and unmanifests. In its unmanifested state it is called the 1st Logos in *The Secret Doctrine*. In its manifested state it is called the Third Logos. The state between the 1st and 3rd Logos is the intermediate 2nd Logos. Only the 3rd Logos is the creative deity, from which emanates all the things in the universe. It is a principle and not a kind of personal God that most people imagine God to be.<sup>8</sup>

This concept of a transcendent deity beyond God is not alien to Christianity. It has been taught in the 5th century by Dionysius the Areopagite in his *Divine Names*, by Meister Eckhart in his *Sermons*, and by others. Below are their statements:

Meanwhile, I beseech you by the eternal and imperishable truth, and by my soul, consider; grasp the unheard-of. God and Godhead are as distinct as heaven and earth. Heaven stands a thousand miles above the earth, and even so the Godhead is above God. God becomes and dis-becomes. Whoever understands this preaching, I wish him well. But even if nobody had been here, I must still have preached this to the poor-box.

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Meister Eckhart, quoted by Aldous Huxley in *The Perennial Philosophy*, p. 38

The Godhead is pre-eminent above, and surpasses every power, howsoever being and conceived.

Dionysius the Areopagite,  
*Divine Names*, ch. VIII, sec. 1

The idea of Godhead in Christianity does not fully measure up to the Absolute of Blavatsky and the Parabrahman of the Vedantists, but it recognizes the limitation of the manifested God or Gods. Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy* recognizes too the hierarchy of divine beings from the highest seraphims to the lowest angels, which brings us to the following statements of the letter of the Mahatma:

We know there are planetary and other spiritual lives . . . we believe in Dhyans, or Planetaries . . .

Historical gods, that is, beings or deities that may actually manifest or intervene in human affairs, when they are genuine and are not the products of fear or a fertile imagination, belong to the hierarchy of spiritual intelligences above human beings, but they are not the highest God itself. Such spiritual beings may be visible or invisible, may be discarnate or incarnate, may be powerful or full of wisdom, but they all have limitations. They are far from the omniscient, omnipotent or omnipresent God that religions idealize in their doctrines. This is true whether we speak of Jehovah, Elohim, Jesus, Buddha, and so on:

Ignorance created Gods and cunning took

advantage of the opportunity. Look at India and look at Christendom and Islam, at Judaism and Fetichism. It is priestly imposture that rendered these Gods so terrible to man; it is religion that makes of him the selfish bigot, the fanatic that hates all mankind out of his own sect without rendering him any better or more moral for it. It is belief in God and Gods that makes two-thirds of humanity the slaves of a handful of those who deceive them under the false pretence of saving them. Is not man ever ready to commit any kind of evil if told that his God or Gods demand the crime — voluntary victim of an illusionary God, the abject slave of his crafty ministers? The Irish, Italian and Slavonian peasant will starve himself and see his family starving and naked to feed and clothe his padre and pope. For two thousand years India groaned under the weight of caste, Brahmins alone feeding on the fat of the land, and today the followers of Christ and those of Muhammad are cutting each other's throats in the names of and for the greater glory of their respective myths. Remember the sum of human misery will never be diminished unto that day when the better portion of humanity destroys in the name of Truth, morality, and universal charity, the altars of their false gods. . . .

We are not Adwaites, but our teaching respecting the one life is identical with that of the Adwaites with regard to Parabrahm.

. . . According to Mr Massey's philosophical conclusion *we have no God?* He is right — since he applies the name to an

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extracosmic anomaly, and that we, knowing nothing of the latter, find each man his God — within himself in his own personal, and at the same time *impersonal* Avalokitesvara.

Letter 113, p. 390)

The next letter on the subject that the Mahatma KH wrote to Hume is Letter No. 90, where he wrote:

There are some modern philosophers who would prove the existence of a Creator from motion. We say and affirm that that motion — the universal perpetual motion which never ceases, never slackens nor increases its speed, not even during the interludes between the pralayas, or “nights of Brahma”, but goes on like a mill set in motion whether it has anything to grind or not (for the pralaya means the temporary loss of every form, but by no means the destruction of cosmic matter which is eternal) — we say this perpetual motion is the only eternal and uncreated Deity we are able to recognise. To regard God as an intelligent spirit, and accept at the same time his absolute immateriality is to conceive of a nonentity, a blank void; to regard God as a Being, an Ego and to place his intelligence under a bushel for some mysterious reasons — is most consummate nonsense; to endow him with intelligence in the face of blind brutal Evil is to make of him a fiend — a most rascally God.

A Being however gigantic, occupying space and having length breadth and thickness is most certainly the Mosaic deity; “No-being” and a mere principle lands you

directly in the Buddhistic atheism, or the Vedantic primitive *Acosmism*. What lies beyond and outside the worlds of form, and being, in worlds and spheres in their most spiritualized state — (and you will perhaps oblige us by telling us where that beyond can be, since the Universe is infinite and limitless) is useless for anyone to search after, since even Planetary Spirits have no knowledge or perception of it. If our greatest adepts and Bodhisattvas have never penetrated themselves beyond our solar system, — and the idea seems to suit your preconceived theistic theory wonderfully, my respected Brother — they still know of the existence of other such solar systems, with as mathematical a certainty as any western astronomer knows of the existence of invisible stars which he can never approach or explore.

Letter 90, p. 280

And we maintain that wherever there is life and being, and in however much spiritualized a form, there is no room for moral government, much less for a moral Governor — a Being which at the same time has no form nor occupies space!

Letter 90, p. 281

So how do the Mahatmas explain the existence of evil? The same letter explains this point, and further makes an important comment on why failure to understand this basic teaching on existence prevents Hume from going further into the mysteries of Nature:

And now to your extraordinary hypothesis that Evil with its attendant train of sin and

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suffering is not the result of matter, but may be perchance the wise scheme of the moral Governor of the Universe. Conceivable as the idea may seem to you, trained in the pernicious fallacy of the Christian, — “the ways of the Lord are inscrutable” — it is utterly inconceivable for me. Must I repeat again that the best Adepts have searched the Universe during milleniums and found nowhere the slightest trace of such a Machiavellian schemer — but throughout, the same immutable, inexorable law. You must excuse me therefore if I positively decline to lose my time over such childish speculations. It is not “the ways of the Lord” but rather those of some extremely intelligent men in everything but some particular hobby, that are to me incomprehensible.

As you say this need “make no difference between us” — personally. But it does make a world of difference if you propose to learn and offer me to teach. For the life of me I cannot make out how I could ever impart to you that which I know since the very A.B.C. of what I know, the rock upon which the secrets of the occult universe, whether on this or that side of the veil, are encrusted, is contradicted by you invariably and a priori. My very dear Brother, either we know something or we do not know anything. In the first case what is the use of your learning, since you think you know better? In the second case why should you lose your time? You say it matters nothing whether these laws are the expression of the will of an intelligent conscious God, as you think, or constitute the inevitable attributes of an unintelli-

gent, unconscious “God”, as I hold. I say, it matters everything, and since you earnestly believe that these fundamental questions (of spirit and matter — of God or no God) “are admittedly beyond both of us” — in other words that neither I nor yet our greatest adepts can know any more than you do, then what is there on earth that I could teach you?

This view on God is reflected and summarized in H. P. Blavatsky’s *The Key to Theosophy*:

ENQUIRER: Do you believe in God?

THEOSOPHIST: That depends what you mean by the term.

ENQUIRER: I mean the God of the Christians, the Father of Jesus, and the Creator; the Biblical God of Moses, in short.

THEOSOPHIST: In such a God we do not believe. We reject the idea of a personal, or an extra-cosmic and anthropomorphic God, who is but the gigantic shadow of *man*, and not of man at his best, either. The God of theology, we say — and prove it — is a bundle of contradictions and a logical impossibility.

ENQUIRER: State your reasons, please.

THEOSOPHIST: They are many, and cannot all receive attention. But here are a few. This God is called by his devotees infinite and absolute, is he not?

ENQUIRER: I believe he is.

THEOSOPHIST: Then, if infinite — that is, limitless — and especially if absolute,

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how can he have a form, and be a creator of anything? Form implies limitation, and a beginning as well as an end; and, in order to create, a Being must think and plan. How can the ABSOLUTE be supposed to think — that is, to have any relation whatever to that which is limited, finite, and conditioned? This is a philosophical, and a logical absurdity.

ENQUIRER: Then you are atheists?

THEOSOPHIST: Not that we know of, and not unless the epithet of “atheist” is to be applied to all those who disbelieve in an anthropomorphic God. We believe in a Universal Divine Principle, the root of All, from which all proceeds, and within which all shall be absorbed at the end of the great cycle of Being. ✧

### Endnotes

1. Gen 6:6: “And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” Exo 32:14: “And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.” 1 Sam 15:11: “It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king . . .” And so on.
2. Nahum 1:2: “. . . the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.”
3. Exo 34:14: “For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”
4. Ps 82:1: “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.” Ps 97:9: “For thou, Lord, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.”
5. Deut 32:8–9: “When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob *is* the lot of his inheritance.” In the Septuagint (Greek), the words “children of Israel” was “angels of God”.
6. Rom 8:29–30: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son . . . Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Eph 1:5: “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”
7. Pope Benedict XVI, when he visited the former German concentration camp in Auschwitz, asked: “Why, Lord, did you remain silent?”
8. *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 1, p. 16, “Proem”.

**There cannot be peace in the world without peace in our own hearts.**

N. Sri Ram  
*Thoughts for Aspirants*, Second Series

# Theosophy: The Unifying Link Between Mind and Heart

ANTONIO GIRARDI

WHEN discussing the mind and the heart, first and foremost it is essential to set aside the semantic ambiguities and sense of separation that words sometimes bring.

The mind should not only be considered in tangible terms involving “mechanical” aspects, and the heart is not merely about emotions. In this respect both epitomize sensory illusion, which arises because there is a tendency to give values verging on the absolute to things that are apparent, and therefore relevant.

In her transcription of fragments from *The Book of the Golden Precepts*, which is known in theosophical circles as *The Voice of the Silence*, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky very clearly explains the difference between the eye doctrine and the heart doctrine. After warning pupils against the dangers of illusions, in the initial fragment she emphasizes that:

Before the soul can see, the harmony within must be attained, and fleshly eyes be rendered blind to all illusion. Before the Soul can hear, the image (man) has to become

as deaf to roarings as to whispers, to cries of bellowing elephants as to the silvery buzzing of the golden firefly. Before the Soul can comprehend and may remember, she must unto the Silent Speaker be united, just as the form to which the clay is modelled is first united with the potter’s mind. For then the Soul will hear, and will remember. And then to the inner ear will speak THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE.

Classic theosophical literature provides us with important cues for understanding the complexity of existence and the nature of humankind.

In the second chapter of *Esoteric Buddhism* by A. P. Sinnett, which is about the constitution of man, there is a table that can provide us with enormous help in understanding how things stand:

|                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. The Body       | Rupa           |
| 2. Vitality       | Prāna, or Jiva |
| 3. Astral Body    | Linga Sharira  |
| 4. Animal Soul    | Kāma Rupa      |
| 5. Human Soul     | Manas          |
| 6. Spiritual Soul | Buddhi         |
| 7. Spirit         | Ātma           |

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Mr Antonio Girardi has been General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in Italy for many years. Talk given at the European Congress, Barcelona, Spain, August 2017.

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From looking at this depiction, which should nonetheless not be confused with reality, it seems to be evident that if human beings identify with the first four levels — body, vitality, astral body (with the etheric body or double) and animal soul — they are bound to fall for the illusions of the senses. In order to transform the spiritual dimension into enlightenment, it is necessary to open the inner self up to the dimensions of the higher mind (with Platonic ideas and archetypes) and intuition (Buddhi). Only at this level is it possible to comprehend the profound sense of unity that binds the higher mind to intuition and the heart.

In a certain sense, we have to create a *bridge* between the personal and impersonal aspects. By what means can we pull off such a huge achievement? Perhaps the answer lies in the title of a song by the famous singer Cher: *Love can build a bridge*. Love can help us to understand that life is the manifestation of everything, intelligence in action and an evolving network of connections and possibilities. It is a common thread running through the relationship between the aspects of the manifold.

In the *Bhagavadgītā*, it is love that makes Arjuna accept his karma and helps him to understand the renunciation of the fruits of action.

It is love that helps us to see the illusoriness of the psychological burdens that we bear due to the weight of knowledge. It is love that makes human beings decide to resolutely take the path of spirituality and fraternal experimentation,

whose supreme value lies not in the results of relationships but in the relationships themselves. It is love which is capable of transforming any act of our existence and our lives into meditation. It is love which leads human beings along the vibrant paths of service, community, dedication to others, sharing and joyful, enlightened renunciation. It is love that gushes out of the hearts of poets and artists and urges them to give voice to the songs of the soul and the spirit.

Consequently, it is not a question of defining love but rather of perceiving its mysterious song, its constant march and its strong appeal. If the vast echo of love can find space in our hearts, everything is possible and every obstacle can be overcome, not because of omnipotence, but simply due to an altered outlook on *how* to deal with life as it unfolds.

Love is also about rediscovering the sacred side of life. In *Krishnamurti's Notebook*, Jiddu Krishnamurti states:

That which is sacred has no attributes . . .  
But there's a sacredness which is not of thought, nor of a feeling resuscitated by thought. It is not recognizable by thought nor can it be utilized by thought. Thought cannot formulate it. But there's a sacredness, untouched by any symbol or word. It is not communicable. It is a fact . . . This sacredness has no worshipper, the observer who meditates upon it. It's not in the market to be bought or sold. Like beauty, it cannot be seen through its opposite for it has no opposite.

According to the Krishnamurti ap-

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proach, it is possible to go beyond separateness and discrimination.

In Letter No. 88, chron. ed. (ML–10) from KH to A. P. Sinnett, which is one of the most philosophical of the precious collection of *The Mahatma letters to A. P. Sinnett*, KH states:

Our chief aim is to deliver humanity of this nightmare [the nightmare in question is separateness and separate outlooks], to teach man virtue for its own sake, and to walk in life relying on himself instead of leaning on a theological crutch, that for countless ages was the direct cause of nearly all human misery. . . . When we speak of our One Life we also say that it penetrates, nay is the essence of every atom of matter; and that therefore it not only has correspondence with matter but has all its properties likewise, etc. — hence *is* material, *is matter itself*.

This strong, radical statement tells us that spirit is matter and the light of matter is the spirit.

While the world today is full of contradictions, it also presents great opportunities. Human beings have a number of elements at their disposal that can act as “keys” to open the doors to the enlightenment that springs from the desire to go beyond sensory illusions.

The secret lies in observation; in meditation and action:

- Neutral observation that is free of aprioristic opinions and seeks to discover the karmic reasons for things.
- Meditation that cannot be summed up

with a technique or a sign and is capable of pushing beyond the dualism of the observer and the observed.

- Action that does not produce negative karmic effects and does involve attachment to its fruits, but instead leads to expansion in an impersonal and genuinely fraternal dimension.

All of this must be done within close range of the tangible dimensions of our lives.

For all people of goodwill who have not made a radical contemplative choice or totally dedicated themselves to spiritual life, the daily challenge — both on the inside and on the outside — is encapsulated by the famous statement: “Be in the world but not of the world.”

Be in the world as sons, fathers, mothers, sisters, husbands, wives, brothers and so on; be in the world as people who work and give their all in their careers, voluntary service and social lives; be in the world sharing cultures, thoughts, dreams, impulses and fears.

All of this should be done without being *of* the world, which means having the ability to discern and comprehend; the capability of picking up on manipulation and violence even in hidden forms — without sharing them; and above all the capacity to shun the influence of false models that play into the hands of the powers that be.

This approach enables spiritual researchers from “lay” backgrounds to find the meaning of their daily lives and the fluctuations — both external and internal

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— that means that their paths are not always easy.

Daily life and the associated normality are actually the ideal training ground for our inner journeys; in the here and now, they constitute the time and place in which life makes us face everything that karma — also in non-mechanistic terms — has in store for us, thus promoting the evolution and expansion of our consciousnesses.

So what is the key to espousing spirituality in daily life? The answer probably lies in the concept of “Service”. That means living life in a dimension of understanding causes and creating a feeling based on “higher” sentiments and ideals; this will lead to action that is disinterested and therefore no longer tied to the commercial aspects of existence.

It is worthwhile taking a closer look at this idea of enlightenment and in particular some fundamental reflections presented by H. P. Blavatsky’s “transcriptions” in *The Voice of the Silence*, which are as follows:

Three Halls, O weary pilgrim, lead to the end of toils. Three Halls, O conqueror of Māra, will bring thee through three states into the fourth and thence into the seven worlds, the worlds of Rest Eternal. . . . The name of the first Hall is Ignorance — *avidyā*. It is the Hall in which thou saw’st the light, in which thou livest and shalt die. The name of Hall the second is the Hall of Learning. In it thy Soul will find the blossoms of life, but under every flower a serpent coiled. The name of the third Hall is Wisdom, beyond which stretch

the shoreless waters of *akshara*, the indestructible Fount of Omniscience.

The path proposed in *The Voice of the Silence* involves moving from a state of ignorance to a state of enlightenment and wisdom. Far from marking the isolation of human beings, the latter state will lead them to the dimension of Bodhisattva: “Sweet are the fruits of rest and liberation for the sake of Self; but sweeter still the fruits of long and bitter duty. Aye, renunciation for the sake of others, of suffering fellow men.”

It is impossible to overlook the remarkable affinity with the Platonic method and with the Buddhist path to enlightenment, as described in *The Voice of the Silence*. Take Plato’s famous Allegory of the Cave and the Buddhist pictures of *Ten Bulls*. The former appears in the *Republic* and it can be broken down into three stages:

1. The stage when darkness and ignorance prevail. The prisoners are facing the cave wall and they can only see shadows of the real world.
2. The stage when the prisoners turn towards the entrance of the cave and after great effort are able to make out the real forms and the source of light that makes them visible.
3. The stage when those who have been freed from the chains of ignorance and contemplated the source of light return to the cave to free those who are still chained in the darkness.

The same stages can be found in the

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pictures of *Ten Bulls* (eight of which were painted by Fo-kuo Wei-poi and two by Kuo-an Shih-yuan, a 12th century Chan monk from the Linji school).

1. The first picture shows a person who is lost among weeds, mountains and rivers (which are metaphors for attachments and passions).
2. The second to ninth pictures show the wanderer finding the tracks of the Bull (a metaphor for the truth) and managing to approach it, tame it and identify with it.
3. The last picture shows the “awakened” individual returning to the everyday world and testifying his awakening to the benefit of humankind.

The remarkable affinity between *The Voice of the Silence*, Plato’s Allegory of the Cave, and the Buddhist *Ten Bulls* underlines the spiritual centrality of leading lives that benefit humankind and other beings as a direct consequence of inner enlightenment, an enlightenment that brings full comprehension of the meaning of *māyā*.

In an inspired passage in *The Key to Theosophy*, H. P. Blavatsky states that “the foremost rule of all is the entire renunciation of one’s personality”, which is a “difficult undertaking” and for an individual means “to become a thorough altruist, never to think of himself, and to forget his own vanity and pride in the thought of the good of his fellow-creatures”.

Flowing in life with spontaneity and warmth leads to development of the power of intuition and the ability to do the right things at the right time. Every moment of existence can be illuminated and precious, and every day is enriched by the awareness that every instant represents a film of consciousness resulting from the endless flow of the invisible world into the visible world.

The words of J. Krishnamurti resonate: “Truth is always new: it is to see the same smile and see that smile newly, to see the same person and see that person anew, to see the waving palms anew, to meet life anew.” ✧

**It is only as a united whole that the Theosophical Society can ever be a power in the world for good, or a vehicle for the exercise of the altruistic efforts of its Fellows.**

H.S. Olcott  
*Applied Theosophy and Other Essays*

# Living in Truth

Where HPB and Krishnamurti Meet

ALI RITSEMA

THIS article is based on my contribution to a study day in May 2015, organized at Naarden by the International Theosophical Centre and the Krishnamurti Information Centre on “Living in Truth”. This topic, with these two organizations together, is not surprising since Truth is as much a central theme in Theosophy as in the teachings of J. Krishnamurti although the approaches are rather different.

We often get stuck in our preferred approach and don’t quite get the value in other approaches. My intention was to highlight the close similarities between Theosophy and Krishnamurti in relationship to the search for and living in Truth. Both approaches, like many other approaches, can help us to come to an understanding from within, which is, after all, the aim of our studies.

In 1889 H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) wrote an article, called “The New Cycle”, *Collected Writings (CW)* XI, p. 133. In this article she states that a note has just been struck which has never been heard by the humankind of this era; and that

a New Idea is revealed, ripened by the forces of evolution. This Idea, she says, differs from everything that has been produced in the nineteenth century; it is identical, however, with the thought that has been the dominant tone and the keynote of every century, especially the last — absolute freedom of thought for humanity. HPB also states, in a different context, that the mental constitution of humanity will embark on a great change and that in the near future psychologists will have some extra work to do. (*CW* VIII, p. 174 fn).

In 1929 — only 30 years after HPB’s article — Krishnamurti starts his specific work and his emphasis is also on freedom of thought and the coming to a different quality of the mind. For he is a master in unravelling the complicated web of the mind.

Everyone interested in Theosophy is not only stimulated by HPB’s approach but also inspired by Krishnamurti’s striving for freedom of thought. The teachings passed on by HPB and Krishnamurti match quite well together and therefore

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## Living in Truth

I would like to present them side by side in this article.

“Truth” is clearly expressed in the seal of the Theosophical Society (TS): *satyānnāsti paro dharmah*, which could not only be translated as “There is no religion higher than Truth” but also as “Truth is beyond any teaching”. This seal can be seen as the imprint of the TS; this is what the TS stands for and the objectives and principles can only be seen and studied with this in mind.

Krishnamurti’s great impact on the world could be summarized by his memorable words “Truth is a pathless land”, with which he broke away from everything he was pinned down to. It is the core, the essence of his teachings.

Both the Theosophical teachings and the teachings of Krishnamurti point to the fact that every teaching, every path might become an obstacle in the search for Truth because *Truth is*, and is beyond our conceptual mind.

Within “Truth is” we can distinguish between absolute truth and relative truth. HPB states that “there is no room for absolute truth upon any subject whatsoever, in a world as finite and conditioned as man is himself. But, she adds, there are relative truths and we have to make the best we can of them. In every age there have been Sages who had mastered the absolute and yet could teach but relative truths. No one yet, born of mortal woman in *our* race, has, or could have given out, the whole and final truth to another man, for every one of us has to find that (to him) final knowledge *in* himself. As no

two minds can be absolutely alike, each has to receive the supreme illumination through itself, according to its capacity, and from no *human* light. The greatest adept living can reveal of the Universal Truth only so much as the mind he is impressing it upon can assimilate, and no more.” (*CW IX*, p. 31)

In *CW XI*, p. 451 she states: “Therefore, the ideas about the infinite and the absolute are not, nor can they be, within *our* brain capacities. They can be faithfully mirrored only by our Spiritual consciousness” — by our mind that is enlightened by *buddhi*.

Krishnamurti is aware of this. When, in August 1922, he decides to meditate regularly, he says about the importance of *buddhi*:

Since August 3rd, I meditated regularly for about thirty minutes every morning. I could, to my astonishment, concentrate with considerable ease, and within a few days I began to see clearly where I had failed and where I was failing. Immediately I set about, consciously, to annihilate the wrong accumulations of the past years. With the same deliberation I set about to find out ways and means to achieve my aim. First I realized that I had to harmonize all my other bodies with the Buddhic plane [the level of awareness immediately beyond the conceptual mind], and to bring about this happy combination I had to find out what my ego wanted on the Buddhic plane. To harmonize the various bodies I had to keep them vibrating at the same rate as the Buddhic, and to do this I had to find out what was the vital interest of the Buddhic.

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With ease which rather astonished me I found the main interest on that high plane was to serve the Lord Maitreya and the Masters. With that idea clear in my physical mind I had to direct and control the other bodies to act and think the same as on the noble and spiritual plane.

Aryel Sanat

*The Inner Life of Krishnamurti*, p. 77.

For Krishnamurti this was a take-off for an important phase in his transformation process. In making this effort, he is following the advice from Master Koot Hoomi:

Steady and widen yourself, and strive more and more to bring the mind and brain into subservience to the true Self within. Be tolerant of divergences of view and of method, for each has usually a fragment of truth concealed somewhere within it, even though often it is distorted almost beyond recognition. Seek for that tiniest gleam of light amid the Stygian darkness of each ignorant mind, for by recognizing and fostering it you may help a baby brother.

*The Inner Life of Krishnamurti*, p. 57.

The same advice is given, in different words, in the letter of the Mahachohan (*The Mahatma Letters*, Appendix II): “All of us have to get rid of our own Ego, the illusory apparent *self*, to recognize our true self in a transcendental divine life.”

The illusory apparent self must be transformed into our true self by meditation and knowledge. HPB herself refers to it in *The Secret Doctrine (SD)* vol. I, as a second *inner* birth, footnote, p. xx.

To get such a second inner birth, the following advice is given in *The Voice of the Silence (VoS)*, Fragment I: “Seek for him who is to give thee birth, in the Hall of Wisdom, the Hall which lies beyond, wherein all shadows are unknown, and where the light of truth shines with unfading glory.”

The Hall of Wisdom is all about the Doctrine of the Heart, also called the “seal of truth”, because the heart is the center of spiritual consciousness. The brain, on the other hand, is the center of intellectual consciousness:

“But this Spiritual Consciousness cannot be guided by a person, nor can its energy be directed by him, until he is completely united with Buddhi-Manas.” (*CW* XII, p. 695)

In *CW* IX, p. 34 HPB explains:

As physical man, limited and trammled from every side by illusions, cannot reach truth by the light of his terrestrial perceptions, we say — develop in you the *inner* knowledge. . . . Man has to *know himself*, that is, acquire the *inner* perceptions which never deceive, before he can master any absolute truth. . . . To reach the state during which man sees and senses it, we have to paralyze the senses of the external man of clay.

However, “the great difficulty to overcome is the registration of the knowledge of the Higher Self on the physical plane. To accomplish this, the physical Brain must be made an entire blank to all but Higher Consciousness.’ When the Brain is thus rendered a blank,

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an impression from the Heart may reach it and be retained.” (*CW XII*, p. 696)

According to HPB:

There do exist men and women thoroughly qualified for this, whose only aim is to dwell under the Aegis of their Divine Nature. And she advises: “Let them, at least, take courage to live the life and not conceal it from the eyes of others! No one else’s opinion should be considered superior to the voice of one’s own conscience. Let that conscience, therefore, developed to its highest degree, guide us in all the ordinary acts of life. As to the conduct of our inner life, let us concentrate our entire attention on the ideal we have set ourselves, and look *beyond*, without paying the slightest attention to the mud upon our feet . . . (*CW XI*, p. 135–6)

This earth, O ignorant disciple, is but the dismal entrance leading to the twilight that precedes the valley of true light.

This earth, disciple, is the Hall of Sorrow . . . (*VoS*, I. 18/17)

And Krishnamurti wonders:

Is it possible to learn from everything, from our sorrows and joys, so that our minds are made fresh and are capable of learning infinitely more?

Bombay, 20 February 1957

Can the mind put away all its conditioning, so that it is actually, not verbally or theoretically or ideologically, but actually free, completely?

Saanen, July 1968

. . . unless the mind is emptied of the old, there can be no new impulse.

Bombay, 20 February 1957

He also states: “we are talking about something entirely different, not of self-improvement but of the cessation of the self.” And in Bombay, 10 February 1954, he is wondering: “How am I to be in that state?”

Being aware choicelessly, purely, simply . . . that the mind is in constant movement, in constant struggle, that very awareness brings about the ending of that noise choicelessly. . . . Pure intelligence is that state of mind in which . . . there is no choice, in which the mind is silent. In that state of silence there is “being” only; then that reality, that astounding creativity without time, comes into being.

Or, as Radha Burnier puts it: “When someone understands truly through his own listening, learning, observing, then there is a steady light and that is what each has to find.” (March 1986, article on Krishnamurti). HPB put it in a different way:

Those of you who would know yourselves in the spirit of truth, learn to live alone even amidst the great crowds which may sometimes surround you. Seek communion and intercourse only with the God within your own soul; heed only the praise or blame of that deity which can never be separated from your *true self*, as it is verily that *God itself*: called the Higher Consciousness. Put without delay your good intentions into practice, never leaving a single one to

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remain only an intention — expecting, meanwhile, neither reward nor even acknowledgment for the good you may have done. Reward and acknowledgment are in yourself and inseparable from you, as it is your Inner Self alone which can appreciate them at their true degree and value. For each one of you contains within the precincts of his inner tabernacle the Supreme Court — prosecutor, defence, jury and judge — whose sentence is the only one without appeal; since none can know you better than you do yourself, when once you have learned to judge that Self by the never wavering

light of the inner divinity — your higher Consciousness. (*CW* VII, 173–4)

I would like to end this article on “Living in Truth” with one more quote of Krishnamurti:

All that we can do is to be aware of our own appetites, desires, and vanities . . . and to be free of it, which means to be free of the self, the “me”. Then you do not have to seek truth; then truth will come to you because the field is there — a mind that is quiet, undisturbed by its own agitations.

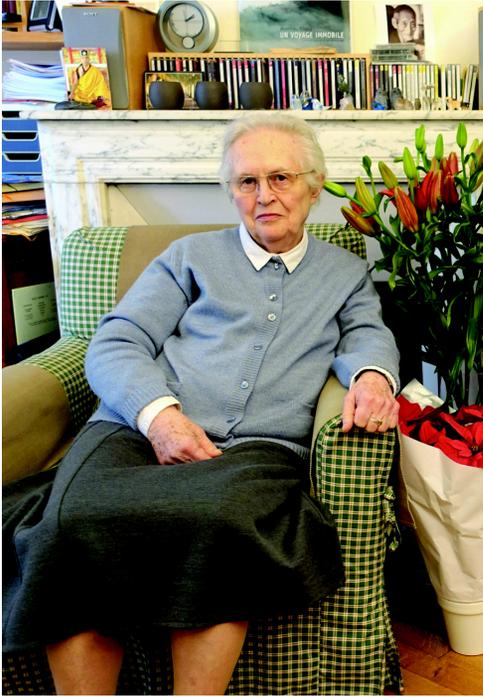
London, 16 October 1949

There is no other path to go. ✧

**The question of whether or not there is a God or truth or reality, or whatever you like to call it, can never be answered by books, by priests, philosophers, or saviours. Nobody and nothing can answer the question but you yourself, and that is why you must know yourself. Immaturity lies only in total ignorance of self. To understand yourself is the beginning of wisdom.**

J. Krishnamurti  
*Freedom from the Known*

## Theosophical Work around the World



Mrs Danielle Audoin, a former General Secretary of the French Section and stalwart member of the TS, passed into the Light on 26 June 2017



Former Vice-President of the Philippine Section of the TS, Mr Victor "Bimboy" Peñaranda, passed away suddenly on 23 September



Annie Besant's 170th birth anniversary was celebrated in the TS Adyar Headquarters Hall on 1 October, with Ms Nancy Secrest, acting international Treasurer, inaugurating the programme, and international President, Mr Tim Boyd, giving the celebration talk

## Theosophical Work around the World



International President of the TS, Mr Tim Boyd, conducting a study camp at the national headquarters of the Indian Section in Varanasi from 6 to 8 October



A Workers' Training Programme organized by the TOS in India was inaugurated by Mr Tim Boyd in Varanasi on 9 October

# Theosophical Work around the World

## France

The French Section of the Theosophical Society (TS) informs us that on 26 June 2017 Mrs Danielle Audoin, who was a long-standing and stalwart member of the TS, passed into the Light. She had been former General Secretary (GS) of the Section and author of several theosophical books, which had been translated into various languages. On 1 October 2017 homage was paid to her at the Section's headquarters in Paris. Some forty persons from five European countries gathered to pay tribute to Mrs Audoin, who had served the TS most of her life. It was a beautiful occasion to remember this great soul who had dedicated her life to serving others.

## The Philippines

Former GS of the Philippine Section of the TS, Mr Vic Hao Chin, Jr, reports that Mr Victor "Bimboy" Peñaranda passed away suddenly on 23 September due to heart failure. He was the Vice-President of the Section and had been an international lecturer for Theosophy and the "Self-Transformation" seminar for many years. Many will miss him as a good friend, co-worker, and teacher.

## Adyar

On 1 October the international headquarters of the TS held a celebration of Dr Annie Besant's 170th anniversary of

her birth date in their main hall, with the new international Acting Treasurer, Ms Nancy Secrest, inaugurating the programme, and the international President, Mr Tim Boyd, giving a heartfelt extempore presentation of Dr Besant's many accomplishments, both in England and in India, which was very well received. This was closed by a small choir conducted by Dr Karthiyayini Mahadevan, chanting in Sanskrit a beautiful composition by Sri Sankaracharya, interspersed with the English translation of each verse, which was fully appreciated.

## India

International President of the TS Mr Tim Boyd held a three-full-days study camp at the national headquarters of the Indian Section in Varanasi from 6 to 8 October on "The Process of Unfoldment: An Education of the Soul", with over 100 participating. A public lecture was also organized for the evening of 7 Oct. In addition, in the morning of 9 Oct., he inaugurated a TOS in India Workers' Training Program, also in Varanasi.

## New Lodges

Three new Lodges of the Indian Section have received their Charters: Besant Lodge in North 24 Parganas and Bharat-tirtha Lodge in South 24 Parganas, both in West Bengal; and Pragya Lodge in Lucknow. ✧

## INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY

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