

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



THE THEOSOPHIST

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

Why Do We Serve?

TIM BOYD

Why do we serve?

Conventional Darwinian thinking emphasizes the survival of the fittest. From such a selfish, or evolutionary sense, service could be seen as a questionable activity. What is the advantage of serving, of being the one who bestows an advantage to another? Yet, it seems that we are hardwired with an inescapable urge to be compassionate. We cannot help it. Otherwise, why would it be that so much of our attention and effort is put into helping or aiding the very weakest among us? This is what we do instinctively, naturally.

As we age and become weak and infirm, or as we become sick, the evolutionary advantage would seem to be to look out for yourself and move on, but that is not what we do. Our energies, our attention, are inevitably focused on the weakest among us.

In Buddhist terms, the word used is “compassion”. It has become a buzz word in the world today, and it should be. In Buddhism there is a very specific definition of compassion. They would say that it is “the desire to alleviate the suffering of others”. So when we are behaving in compassionate ways we are working toward alleviating the suffering of others.

H. P. Blavatsky’s *The Voice of the*

Silence presents another way to look at compassion. In that short book we find the enigmatic word: “Compassion is no attribute. It is the Law of laws”. This is a very broad statement which seems to be clear and unambiguous, but what does it mean?

What is the compassion that rises to this level, superseding every other law we are aware of—gravity, thermodynamics, karma? Clearly this is not limited to a behavior in which we are attempting to alleviate suffering. Conscious compassionate activity, which we name “service”, is a subset of this great compassion.

It may be helpful for us to examine the inner dynamics of what is going on when we behave compassionately. For the normally self-centered individual it is as if they operate within a shell or bubble. There is an intense focus on those sensations, circumstances, and activities that benefit the self. What lies outside of the personal shell is of less concern. However, in those compassionate moments when we witness and feel a desire to help with the suffering of another, this shell of self-concern enlarges. It expands to embrace the needs of the suffering “other” in much the same way one addresses their personal need. This is the dynamic of compassionate activity.

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When we are compassionate toward an individual, our circle increases to that extent. When we feel compassion for our loved ones or friends, it increases even more. Carried to its extreme we find that there are no limits to that circle — *all* beings fall within the range of this compassion. This is the example of all the great beings that come to earth — the Buddhas, Jesus, Krishna. Compassion as the Law of laws is nothing less than the Law of Unity, the recognition of the indivisibility of All Life.

So why do we serve? Mainly because we do not really have a choice. We live in a world where *all* things are interdependent. To the extent that we awaken, open our eyes, and *look*, then our options become few. Then compassion becomes an attractive pathway because it is *necessary*.

The Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) has a motto: “A union of those who love in the service of all that suffers.” What is it that makes theosophical service different from other service organizations — the Red Cross, feeding the hungry, or animal protection? In essence, nothing, except it is theosophical. What makes it theosophical is the recognition of union in the act of serving — the Union, the Oneness, the Unity of those who love.

Love as a word is understood in many different, sometimes strange, ways. Here Love is the expression of Oneness, of spirituality. We link ourselves in bonds of love. We serve because in some phase of our unfoldment we become awake, aware of certain undeniable facts of existence, the most obvious and immediate

being that we are One, and our service and life flows from that.

But what is service? The dictionary will say something like action done in order to help others. There is always a focus on the idea that we are acting on behalf of the other. There are infinite ways in which we can serve, but not all service is equal. There is a core idea in theosophical teachings that “motive is everything”. Our motivation completely colors the actions that we take, so much so that the same action taken by someone with a different motivation is a very different service than the action taken by another.

For example, in the United States, whenever a political election is being held, a very common experience is that politicians who are seeking to be elected to office, want every opportunity to appear in front of a camera, so that they can be seen by potential voters. Politicians will engineer a photo opportunity, where they will come to a homeless shelter. On the other 364 days of the year, they will not be seen there. But when the cameras and the media announcement go out, they are right there in line at the “soup kitchen” seeming concerned about feeding the hungry and the poor. Yet standing next to the politician will be someone who is there regularly because their motivation is: “I’m here because I witness suffering and I want to do my part to try to alleviate it.” So day after day that person serves.

Each hungry person gets his plate of food, each one eats and satisfies his hunger. To the person who receives the food from the politician, the effect on his

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appetite is no way different from the effect of the person who is giving it with love and compassion. For all those people the tightness in their stomach relaxes and they have a sense of satisfaction, of their hunger being ameliorated. From the point of view of the hungry man the same act produces the same result. The food from one man is no less filling than the other's. The difference is the impressions that are developed in consciousness by acting in a certain way, predisposing us to act that way again.

For the person of compassion each bowl of soup and interaction expands the sense of connection with others. It influences their life in terms of how they will touch the world. In the person who is there purely for a political motive, the tendency toward selfishness is strengthened. Motive is everything. So there is a motivation that is theosophical.

How do we serve?

As human beings, one of the things we gain from the theosophical approach is the clear recognition that we are multi-dimensional beings. We function on many levels. We are able to serve on multiple dimensions. One of the beauties of Theosophy is that it addresses the cause of all human problems. That cause is our conviction, confirmed in every moment, that we are all fundamentally separate from one another. HPB called it the "heresy of separateness". We believe it for very good reason. I remember Radha Burnier used to say: "If I tell my hand to open or close, that is what it does. If I tell

your hand to do it, nothing happens." This exemplifies the moment-to-moment confirmation that we are separate.

However, our deeper experiences confirm something quite different — that our separateness is an appearance, superficial, whereas the reality beneath the surface is one of interconnection. At the level of thought and emotion we find a shared-thought atmosphere. In the presence of people who are depressed or down, our energy is affected. When we are with uplifting, inspired, enlightened people, we are similarly affected. The scriptures of the world talk about this. In Christian scripture it says: "If I be lifted up, I will raise all people to me". That is what we do from the theosophical point of view.

We also work at other levels. When we work together, as a group, things happen that many would describe as miraculous or as impossible. It is not just an arithmetic multiplication of our potentials; it is far beyond that. Learning to work together is a training, even though we do not yet resonate with everybody equally. We have to come together in these groups that constantly challenge us to develop the capacity to unite. First we recognize, then submerge those aspects of our nature that we may feel are so important, but which only serve to divide us.

This is the prescription for the future, based on a certain principle. The fact that groups have the capacity to do things that no individuals can, is rooted in a spiritual principle. It has been stated in various ways, but perhaps the one we are most familiar with is: "Wherever two or more

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are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.” When we are gathered with a certain focus, one of the results is we find that there is something more around us, a presence; we feel ourselves expanding. It is one of the principles of the work that we do, and it is able to create changes of a remarkable kind.

It does not matter so much what it is that we do, but *how* it is that we do it is all-important. Any consistent service is a basis for profound self-transformation. Gandhi’s words: “To a hungry man, a piece of bread is the face of God.” On whatever level that hunger operates, to the degree to which we are able to help quiet it, allows for something hidden to make itself known; something greater.

As multidimensional beings the type of transformation we talk about in the TS world can take place from two directions: from the bottom moving upward, or from on high moving downward. I have known people who stopped eating meat because they read it was good for their personal health, that it could help them lose weight, and have more energy. Basically their reasons for adopting a vegetarian diet were self-centered. Often these people, upon starting their new diet, felt an upsurge in their energy making it possible to connect with others more actively. They found that their participation in a wider life increased. This started them thinking more broadly about the universal and divine. So, a piece of food led them to a dimension of spiritual awareness. I have also seen the reverse happen. Where someone had a spiritual experience and it filtered down

to their physical behaviors and habits. It is *all* interconnected, and to the extent that we try to divide it, we are mistaken. We are engaged in only one thing always — one life undivided and everywhere present in its fullness. Unity is the one thing we keep in front of our minds.

What do we do?

What is it that each one of us does when we find ourselves in this world with a whole palette of issues to choose from? What is our calling? There was a story in one of the world scriptures about a very poor woman who had really little or nothing, and she heard that there was a great master who was coming her way, and she thought: “With this great being who is coming, what do I have to give? What do I have in my house?”

That is the question for us: What physical possessions do we have, or what do we have in the house of our consciousness? No one is so poor that they have nothing. Then how do we learn to give? Whether we give of our thought, of our food, or our experience that might be helpful to another, *all* of those are gifts that we have to give to this world, which if we choose not to give, not only do the gifts die with us and do not pass on, but our potential to enhance the world also withers.

There is power in a very simple word that we say every day, some of us more than others, so much so that we ignore it and its capacity and power, its potential for good. The word is “Yes”. It is not just a word. At its deepest level it is a state of being that we can embrace. The mind that

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utters to this world, “Yes, I will; yes, I am open”, is connected. There is a greater life which we *sense*, but somehow cannot realize. In saying “Yes” to a suffering fragment of that greater life, we connect ourselves. We have to learn the openness,

the freedom, and the *power* that comes from a spirit that can say “Yes”.

These are just a few thoughts in terms of the work that we are here to do, and, more importantly, the work that we are actually *capable* of doing. ✧

There is a seed of uniqueness in every human being, but the seed is buried in the hard soil of our natures. That soil has to be changed, softened and purified. One has to have a purely human quality without any modification that can be labelled. Having become conditioned, one has to become deconditioned. This can come about with a full awakening to the nature of the conditioning that one has undergone. One has to become aware of everything that is wrong, unbeautiful, false, either in his thinking or his action in small matters or great.

In a condition of complete freedom from all conditioning what acts can only be the pure intelligence and the love that radiates from one's unsullied being. The intelligence acts according to circumstances and conditions; it acts in a particular way. But all its action is characterized by love, so that there is the action of intelligence and love at the same time. Both love and perception arise from a state of sensitivity in oneself. And that condition of inner sensitivity is really the basic or true nature of man. What we observe in people is mostly the nature of their conditioning, the forces that operate in that conditioned state.

N. Sri Ram
The Nature of Our Seeking

Is Conscience Dead?

GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI

I am speaking to you today on a subject which is of importance to all of us as human beings, as it is important to me. Honesty compels me to say this as well, that every day is a challenge to one's conscience, not just because of what one may do wittingly or unwittingly as a person, but because of what one *does* as a member of a part of creation which uses its dominant place on this planet, sometimes knowingly, but very often unknowingly, to trample upon, exploit, and misuse other parts of creation. This is not to stoke a guilty conscience in anyone, because, as I said, very often we do harm to this planet and its other creations without really intending to do so.

The opposite of a person with an active conscience is not what one may imagine it to be, namely, someone who has *no* conscience, who has no qualms of conscience, who works and acts and thinks and lives without moral considerations. The opposite of a person of conscience is the absence of any interest in having a conscience. It is an *exemption* given to oneself not to have a conscience. It is also one who does not really care about conscience, about moral considerations, but wants to pass off as a

person who has a very active conscience.

The opposite pole of a person of conscience is the hypocrite who wants to pretend that she or he is highly moral or morally motivated. I think the person who wants to be treated morally, seriously, has only two options: One is to actually feel that morality matters to himself and to *try* to live according to that moral measure. The other is to just pretend to be very moral.

Godmen and godwomen of whom there is no dearth in India frighten me. I run away from those who are supposed to be holy persons because I do not really know whether they are really holy or not, and I am scared to find beneath the veneer of holiness the opposite of holiness because I am not prepared to give up my faith in what is holy, in what is sacred, in what is moral. The prospect of disappointment from persons who strike a moral tone, that prospect is chilling to me. I would rather spend time with those who have no moral pretensions, who claim nothing by way of a conscience-led life than those who have a halo around their head and walk as if this planet has been made for the footfall of their lotus feet.

Mr Gopalkrishna Gandhi is Professor of History and Politics at Ashoka University in Delhi and former Governor of West Bengal. Besant Lecture delivered on 3 January 2019 at the TS, Adyar, Chennai.

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I take it as my good luck, also as my great responsibility, to explore the meaning and the present, past and future, of conscience. There is, in all of us, an inner core, something we carry inside us, like we sometimes carry or wear a locket with a little image inside it, which could be an image of a human being not a divine being, or an amulet, or a charm. There is something within us, that little grotto, a little shrine, which is a constant accompanist of all our thoughts. Just as we forget the locket, we forget that grotto. But it is there.

The Sanskrit-derived Hindi word for conscience is *antarātma*, which is something inside, the inner soul, the inner being; and the Tamil word is *manasākshi*, which is almost wholly Sanskrit meaning “the mind as witness”. There are several theories about the mind: it is something different from the brain and different from the heart, as we know, the home of thought and feeling together, of insight and intuition, of intelligence and instinct. It is this mind’s witness that is the conscience. Now, what is the conscience doing; what is the mind’s witness witnessing?

Many of you have studied history systematically, many of you have been witnesses to history, all of us are part of the unfolding scroll of history. History tells us that conscience has never been at ease. It has been there, but it has never been happy. I do not think there was ever a time when the human conscience was at peace. But the fact that the human conscience has been troubled is as important, and as hope-giving as a possible peaceful conscience. Conscience as mind’s witness should not

be asleep; it should be alert and troubling the owner of that entire entity called the human being. But it has not been troubled to find an end to its troubles; it has been troubled to trouble, and to continue to trouble every entity that it is owned by.

The diabolisms of the human brain, the incredible calculations of the human mind — as opposed to the conscience, the witness of the mind — have probably never been equalled or exceeded as in the last century. There is no getting away from the fact that the Holocaust was a nightmare of nightmares, so quickly followed by Hiroshima, a nightmare of nightmares as well.

But we should not forget that the incredibly monstrous acts of single individuals were propped up by the collective support of several, amongst whom were scientists, administrators, and politicians. How they could overcome the promptings of the mind’s witness to subject themselves and to subordinate themselves to the diabolical will of a political system or a political dictator is beyond comprehension. But they did. Biological, chemical, and nuclear (BCN) weapons have been created by the human intellect, putting the mind’s witness, the *manasākshi*, within a vault that is completely impregnable to that mind. The intellect has imprisoned all that can be called *manasākshi* to produce these weapons of mass destruction.

But we should also be aware of the fact that the world has known this, been horrified by it, and has also proceeded with limited success, and sometimes a success that was reversed into unsuccess,

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to curb the manufacture of such weapons. That there is an international convention to reverse the world's stockpile of biological and chemical weapons, and to bring about in some extremely unconvincing ways the dismantling of nuclear warheads, that very fact, gives us hope. And that somehow the great tussle between the mind's witness and the demon in the mind is constant.

Every winter in Chennai, in Madras, one sees the International Convention of theosophists, a great articulation of Carnatic music, and also of dance and drama. Yesterday my wife and I were fortunate to see the production of a small section, but the crowning section, of the *Ramayana* in Kalakshetra: and there the Prince of Ayodhya says three things which struck me as being representative of the mind's witness, of the *manasākshi*, of the *antarātma*. Rama is on the verge of victory. He has instruments of war no less potent than the BCN war weapons of our time.

But when Ravana has been stricken, he looks at him and says: "You are tired, I have struck you, but it is going to be night and dark. It is not right for me to kill you, as I can't kill you when you are weak and it is night. Go, and come back tomorrow, refreshed, in your chariot, and we shall meet as equal combatants again." Now, that was the mind's witness, the *manasākshi*, speaking to him. He could have finished the story then and there, but the author of the *Ramayana* was not giving us a Superman's or Spiderman's story; he was giving us a story with a moral tale, and this was one.

The second occasion was when, after Ravana has been killed, Rama tells Ravana's younger brother: "Death ceases all enmity; enmity goes with death. I do not now regard your brother as an enemy." And the third, speaking in the language of a state, Rama says: "I accept you Vibhishana" (who is the brother of Ravana, coming, surrendering himself). "I, Rama, accept you because you have come for sanctuary; I believe that those who come seeking sanctuary should be given it." So, even a state has a moral witness inside.

Today, the United States has a position on immigration. Myanmar, the home of the Buddha, has sent hundreds of Rohingyas out of Myanmar. Repatriates and refugees from Sri Lanka have come to India. And on the borders of India and Pakistan refugee relocation was one of the bitterest trails of history. The conscience of our communities, of our nations, has been ignored by states, but no less by society, by individuals.

In 1984, when there were riots in Delhi the victims of which were Sikhs, a large number of people came to help them, gave them shelter, like a state would, in their homes, gave them succour. But an even larger number did not. Did I do anything? I did not; I was in Chennai. Did I do anything when similar things have happened in my vicinity? I have not. That is the reality of conscience. We have examples of the conscience working; we have examples of the conscience sleeping; we have both. So, where does this picture of inhumanity and humaneness refract into a pattern? Does it?

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I have no thesis to share, and no antithesis to propagate. I am sharing a few thoughts with all of you in the knowledge that Theosophy and theosophists have been enquiring into the link between creation and created, between morality and human life, between spirituality and the greatest product of spiritual thought, namely, philosophy.

All of you are doing that, on a scale that is probably unprecedented. The conscience is incapable of dying; it cannot die; but the conscience is also incapable of security and safety. It is being undermined and sabotaged by each one of us, not just by society, by dictators, by tyrants, but by each one of us, *all* the time.

One should not trivialize something as serious as the conscience by saying: “Conscience cannot die, but it is always in an emergency ward.” I should not give that medical analogy for two reasons: one is that the conscience is too serious a subject to be placed at the feet of an idle metaphor; and the other is that somebody or anybody who is in an ambulatory crisis and in a theatre of emergency is not meant to be used metaphorically. But you know what I mean. The conscience of humanity, the conscience of human beings, is in peril, and its being in peril is not meant to make us alarmed; it is meant to make us reflect.

The template of crime has changed. If the mind is a witness to human imperfections, to human foibles and follies, it is not aided by a fixed penal code. That template keeps changing. Yesterday’s so-called crimes are not today’s so-called crimes. Yesterday’s so-called sins — a

word that I dislike with intensity, “sins” — are no longer regarded today as sins.

But supposing the judge, the moral witness who is also the jury and the judge, was to be told: “You have no code, you have no law, you have no template before you to find the person guilty or not guilty. Go only by your own conscience.” Will the judge vacate her or his seat? No! A conscientious judge does not need those templates. This is not a legal court; this is a moral court, and that judge will say: “I still have something in me, my inner core, my monitor, which tells me right from wrong, that line I know where it lies, and I will judge this case by that.”

That is where we are today as individuals, as society, and as the international community of states where there is a constant flux, where laws are changing, disappearing, where the penology of states is changing, but where something in the human conscience, in the human consciousness, remains alert and alive.

I want to conclude by an analogy which is so well known as to be almost trite. Today, the lines of crime and punishment have blurred. There are such things as the Afghan War document and the Iraq War log. There are things that the United States has done of which that country could be deeply embarrassed by; but then comes Julian Assange. He hacks, breaks into what is supposed to be completely secret, and exposes that crime. A thief who breaks into your house and steals your money is a thief of your money. But if a person breaks into a record that shows you to be evil, is the person who has created

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the evil culpable, or is the person who has used the methods of interception secretly culpable? Crime exposing crime, we do not know, in our situation today, right from wrong.

We are living in an age of doubt, where uncertainty has become standard, where verities have faded, where belief has been undermined, and faith is in retreat. Ours is, above all, the age of doubt; it is an age of questioning. And so, 25 years ago, if somebody was speaking here on the subject “Is Conscience Dead?”, that person would have either said, “Conscience is dead” or “Conscience can never die”. But today, all I can say is, “Conscience is in peril, and we do not know”.

Today, crime from crime, horror from horror, Tennyson’s great lines — among many lines of Tennyson which are great — ring true: “There lives more faith in honest doubt, than in half the world’s creeds.” But honest doubt is one thing, lurching in doubt is another, and we cannot lurch in doubt. We must remember this above all: the ability to distinguish right from wrong is ingrained in us, is part of our chemistry for reasons which we cannot fathom, from childhood to any stage in age. That is something we cannot afford to lose. Yes, conscience is not dead!

Therefore, what do we do? Just examine in ourselves, the one fundamental which distinguishes us from all other creations, which we hold captive to us, over which we seem to want to exercise colonial and imperial power. Hunger, sleep, fear, and lust are common to all living beings,

perhaps excluding plant life. The only thing that distinguishes the human from other living beings — the human who has all these four — is a sense of responsibility.

Today, we may not have a Hitler amongst us, though we have many with Hitlerian instincts. Today we may not have a President who is going to drop a nuclear bomb on our heads as easily as was done in 1945, though the bombs exist. But in the way we have completely committed our planet to a future of self-annihilation by greed — and sheer greed is the biggest dulling of the collective conscience that can be imagined — today, perhaps, more than war, is the possibility of collective suicide. We in the sylvan atmosphere of the Theosophical Society may be unaware, or temporarily unaware of the fact that water is disappearing from access; and by water I mean the water that we would give to our children and grandchildren. The soil on our earth, technically called topsoil, is disappearing.

The biggest squandering of the moral witness of our times is that of our responsibility towards this planet. Our conscience has all but died, when it comes to our awareness of what we are doing to our own future, and that is horrifying. Patricide is known, regicide is known, suicide is known, but the murdering of unborn children is the stain on our times, which no conscience can permit. But our conscience today is being witness to it. Speechless as it is, powerless as it is, but whether it is hopeless or not, is in the hands of all of us, including myself. ✧

Death and the Higher Spiritual Path

WILLIAM WILSON QUINN

True philosophers make dying their profession.
Socrates (*Phaedo*)

Introduction

“Forewarned is forearmed” (*prae-monitus praemunitus*) is an adage that applies as well to the metaphysical transition between death and rebirth, as to anything else. This ancient adage, when combined with another integral to the core doctrine of the *philosophia perennis* — being “remember that you shall die” (*memento mori*) — impels those wayfarers who tread the higher spiritual path to undertake a deep and serious study of this transition from death to rebirth while incarnate and competent, using the available tools at their disposal. Such a deep and serious study may be more accurately described both as a practical necessity, and further as a virtual *preparation* for undertaking this journey through the post-mortem states when that time arrives.

The need for such preparation by the wayfarer is due to the consequences of navigating this transition well, or of failing to do so, either of which can have an impact on one’s future spiritual journey through subsequent incarnations. The “available tools” referred to are, at the

least, the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and the corresponding writings on death and the post-mortem states by the Adepts Morya (M.) and Koot Hoomi (KH), and by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB). This is because *both* these doctrines are expressly predicated on a synthesis of (i) karma, and (ii) periodicity (reincarnation). “The Law of KARMA”, wrote HPB, “is inextricably interwoven with that of Reincarnation”.¹

The Tibetan *Bardo Thödol*

The Tibetan sacred treatise called the *Bardo Thödol* (Tibetan *bar-do thos-grolchen-mo*), whose literal translation is “The Great Liberation through Hearing”, was first entitled *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* in 1927 by W. Y. Evans-Wentz. Yet the *Bardo Thödol* is only one in a corpus of numerous similar texts and treatises on the traditional Tibetan Buddhist practices of death and dying. In the English translation published in 2005 under the auspices of the 14th Dalai Lama and titled *The Tibetan Book of the Dead, First Complete Translation*² (*TBD*), the contents include *fourteen* chapters on

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Vajrayāna Buddhist texts that deal with practices and methods to be employed at the time of death or shortly thereafter. These texts focus on attaining liberation from rebirth; failing that, they discuss attaining a propitious rebirth in a new body. The *Bardo Thödol* is but *one* among these fourteen chapters, *all* of which comprise the *TBD*.

Bardo is a Tibetan term meaning a “gap” or an “in-between,” which *TBD* translates as “intermediate state” within the context of the surviving consciousness of a recently-deceased, excarnate person. The three intermediate states or *bardos*, that are the subject of the *Bardo Thödol* and pertain to dying and being excarnate in the post-mortem states, are (1) the moment of death (*chi-kha'i bardo*), (2) experiencing Reality (*chos-nyid bardo*) (through interaction with the 100 peaceful and wrathful deities), and (3) experiencing the process of rebirth (*srid-pa bardo*).

The *chi-kha'i bardo* is said to cover the time from the cessation of breath to the end of “the time it takes to eat a meal”, and is comprised of *two* separate opportunities to recognize the “inner radiance”. The first of these refers to recognition by the deceased of the “inner radiance of the ground” — also translated as “luminosity” or “clear light”, an all-pervasive white light. Where the deceased recognizes it and *understands* that it is the essence of his or her own conscious awareness, he or she achieves liberation from the wheel of death and rebirth (*samsāra*) in that moment of recogni-

tion. The second of these opportunities is recognition of the “inner radiance of the path”, or “second inner radiance”. At the moment of death the deceased enters into a swoon state devoid of all exterior sensory input during the time in which the first inner radiance appears. If the opportunity to recognize the first inner radiance is missed, then after the vital energy and consciousness of the deceased leaves the body, he or she momentarily regains conscious awareness and becomes lucid. In this instance of extraordinary lucidity, between the passing of the first inner radiance but before the “bewildering experiences related to past actions have arisen”, that is, the advent of the 100 peaceful and wrathful deities of the second *bardo*, the deceased has another opportunity in this second inner radiance to attain liberation.

The second or *chos-nyid bardo* commences after the deceased has failed to achieve liberation in the first *bardo*. *TBD* refers to this *bardo* as “experiencing Reality”, and during this phase “the bewildering apparitions, [which are the products] of past actions, emerge”.³ These apparitions — the 100 peaceful and wrathful deities — appear amid “sounds, lights, and rays of light”, often evoking emotional or passionate reactions in decedents. First to appear are the 48 peaceful deities, most in the form of the “five enlightened families”, and each family also represents a “realm”, of which there are six altogether. The last to appear are the 58 wrathful deities and, pursuant to the classic pattern of polarity, appear as

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a converse or mirror image of the peaceful deities. For the deceased, the objective of these frightful confrontations is to avoid both *aversion* and *attraction*. In confronting these deities, the deceased must avoid these two contrary reactions and dispassionately recognize the opportunity for liberation being offered. But most important, the deceased must recognize that these “apparitions” are their *own* psychological projections that arise as consequences of their past actions in the incarnation prior to death.

Finally, at the commencement of the third or *srid-pa bardo* the deceased has effectively become the transmigrant, since the process of dissolution of lower principles that death brings has placed the transmigrant in *its* (no longer his or her) unobstructed and genderless “mental body”. At this stage, the transmigrant is in the *bardo* of rebirth, where two goals confront it: first is to avoid rebirth by blocking all entrances to wombs leading to a new incarnation and, should it fail in that goal, then second is to select a womb that will provide a propitious rebirth.

As to the first goal, the text provides various methods and techniques to block entrances to wombs. As to the goal of selecting a womb for rebirth, the text advises that the best family into which to be reborn is one “. . . where the mother and father are deeply devout.” Here the transmigrant is exhorted to think: “[O]nce I have taken on a body which is blessed with the merit of being able to act on behalf of all sentient beings, I shall [dedicate myself to] acting on their behalf!”⁴

With this invocation of the *bodhisattva* ideal, the transmigrant is ready to re-enter corporeal existence.

Writings of M., KH, and HPB on the Post-Mortem Transition

There is no single monograph in the corpus of esoteric writings by HPB or her teachers M. and KH that deals exclusively with the transition from death to rebirth, and that would substantively correspond to *TBD*. Nonetheless, for those inclined to undertake a deep and serious study of this transition, multiple references to this subject appear in their published letters and treatises which, when collected and compiled, provide clarity to the journey of the transmigrant through the post-mortem states. While it is not feasible to identify and describe this sizeable compilation here, it is important to identify two indispensable elements of the post-mortem transition without which little clarity can be achieved.

The first of these is a discussion of the seven “principles” of the human being, specifically including the composition of the three immortal surviving principles that actually make the journey from death to rebirth (the spiritual Monad or Ego), and the interaction of four higher or subtle principles in the intermediate states, the outcome of which determines the course of this spiritual Monad / Ego. The second of these two elements is a seminal paragraph written by KH which encapsulates the essence of the post-mortem journey, or transition, and upon which the esoteric perception of this

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subject is based. (See the KH paragraph on the next page.) Regarding the seven principles, without which the post-mortem transition cannot be clearly understood, a comprehensive statement was made by M.:

Thus the *body* of man is wedded to and remains for ever within the body of his planet; his individual *jivatma* life-principle, that which is called in physiology *animal spirits* returns after death to its source — *Fohat*; his *linga shariram* will be drawn into *Akasa*; his *Kamarupa* will recombine with the Universal *Sakti* — the Will-Force, or universal energy; his “animal soul” borrowed from the breath of *Universal Mind* will return to the Dhyanchohans; his sixth principle — whether drawn into or ejected from the matrix of the Great Passive Principle must remain in its own sphere — either as part of the crude material or as an individualized entity to be reborn in a higher world of causes. The seventh will carry it from the *Devachan* and follow the new *Ego* to its place of rebirth.⁵

Unpacking this statement, the higher principles of the human being are described by reference to the Vedantic formulation of five constituent *kośas*, or “bodies” (alternatively translated as “sheaths” or “vehicles” or “envelopes”) of the human being, as found in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*. We may add to these translated terms the word “principles” for the three higher *kośas*, principles being the term of choice for HPB and the Adepts. Referred to as the “higher triad”, the

highest three *kośas* or principles may be termed the *ātma*, *buddhi*, and *manas*. The Vedantic *kośas* of *ātma-buddhi-manas* align exactly with the three higher principles of HPB, KH, and M., and these writers consistently follow the numerical order in their writings that the *ātma*, *buddhi*, and *manas* are the seventh, sixth, and fifth principles.

The mortal or lower four of these seven principles, the “lower quaternary”, do not as easily lend themselves to comparisons with either of the Vedantic concepts of *kośa*, described above, or to *śarīra*, also translated as “body”, of which there are three. The exceptions to this are the *sthūla-śarīra*, the gross physical body, which is the first of the septenary principles, and the *linga-śarīra*, an ethereal counterpart of the physical body composed of *ākāśa* and the second of the septenary principles. The third of the principles, composed of *fohat* energy, is referred to as *jivātma* or “life principle” by HPB, KH, and M. Similarly, the fourth lower principle is referred to as the *kāma-rupa*, and is the center of desire, emotion, and volition.

The fifth principle — *manas* or mind — is bifurcated between the lower mind of ordinary thoughts, and the higher mind of abstract and/or spiritual thought. In esoteric literature these two aspects of *manas*, sometimes referred to as *rupa* (lower) and *arupa* (higher), are separated by a pivotal divide known as the *antahkarana*. For our purposes, it is necessary to understand that for most during the post-mortem journey the *arupa*,

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the higher mind — or in any event the highest portions of it — “joins” the sixth and seventh principles — *buddhi* and *ātma* — and together these three form the spiritual Monad, the immortal surviving element of the human being that reincarnates.

The seminal paragraph written by KH, which encapsulates the essence of the Adepts’ and HPB’s views of the post-mortem journey, is a short version of their expanded doctrine:

“Bardo” is the period between death and rebirth — and may last from a few years to a kalpa. It is divided into three sub-periods: (1) when the *Ego* delivered of its mortal coil enters into *Kama-Loka* (the abode of Elementaries); (2) when it enters into its “Gestation State”; (3) when it is reborn in the *Rupa-Loka* of Devachan. Sub-period (1) may last from a few minutes to a *number* of years . . . ; Sub-period (2) is “very long”, as you say, longer sometimes than you may even imagine, yet proportionate to the *Ego’s* spiritual stamina; Sub-period (3) lasts in proportion to the good KARMA, after which the *monad* is again reincarnated.⁶

While it does not align with the three *bardos* of the *Bardo Thödol* in notable ways, this doctrine does divide the post-mortem transition into three segments, which KH calls “sub-periods”.⁷

Facing Oneself in Death, and the Consequent Need for Preparation

What we experience during our incarnate existence — the sum of our actions

and choices — necessarily affects our excarnate experience in the post-mortem transition. In both the *Bardo Thödol* and the theosophic doctrine, the decedent passes through a process or test of *facing* itself, facing the effects of its past actions and choices. In the *Bardo Thödol*, this is the confrontation of our own psychological projections in the form of peaceful and wrathful deities in the *chos-nyid bardo*. In the theosophic system, this is the confrontation of which KH speaks when describing

. . . a “death” struggle between the Upper [6th and 7th principles] and Lower [4th and 5th principles] dualities. If the upper duality wins, the sixth, having attracted to itself the quintessence of *Good* from the fifth . . . follows its divine *elder* (the 7th) into the “Gestation” State; and the fifth and fourth remain in association as an empty *shell* . . .⁸

The outcomes of these confrontations are never certain, and each differs. For this compelling reason, the wayfarers treading the higher spiritual path should not fail to incorporate, as an integral part of their pre-mortem daily yoga, a deep study of the art of dying and of transitioning the post-mortem states utilizing these or similar practices:

♦ *A daily planting of the germs or seeds in our pre-mortem consciousness that will assist in post-mortem existences.*

First, in this regard, KH wrote that a decedent must have enough “spiritual spoil” within the *manas* to enter *devachan* — the third “sub-period” — because if

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“. . . the spiritual spoil from the fifth will prove too weak to be reborn in Devachan . . . it will there and then reclothe itself in a new body . . .”⁹ Thus for a probationer or aspiring *chela* to include in his or her daily meditation a visual image of the *guru*, or memorizing the rules in *Light on the Path*, and so on, any time spent in *devachan* would necessarily include recollection of such images or texts there. Second, as to any spiritual achievement carried into the subsequent incarnation, M. wrote: “Man has his seven principles, the germs of which he brings with him at his birth.”¹⁰ Therefore, the more *conscious* planting of truly spiritual “germs” or seeds wayfarers effect in their current incarnation, the more likely these will reappear in *devachan* or, in subsequent incarnations, in mature forms.

♦ *The effect of one’s thoughts at the moment of death, and need for sustained mindfulness of the possibility of one’s death at any time, being memento mori.* KH wrote that at the moment of death, “That impression and thought which was the strongest naturally becomes the most vivid and survives so to say all the rest which now vanish and disappear forever, to reappear but in Devachan.” Elsewhere he states, in the same vein, that “. . . we create ourselves our *devachan* as our *avitchi* while yet on earth, and mostly during the latter days and even moments of our intellectual, sentient lives.”¹¹ Thus, at the moment of death, either to be un-mindful or to be in a mental state of panic or anger or self-pity, is to cast that shadow over both one’s transition through

the post-mortem states and even over one’s next incarnation. However, when the moment of death is foreseen, greeting it with calm awareness and spiritual grace is to cast a sacred light over what lies ahead, and can only benefit the wayfarer’s further progress.

♦ *Adapting the Tibetan practice of p’howa as a universally applicable esoteric system of practicing the art of death and dying.* TBD’s chapter on “Consciousness Transference: Natural Liberation through Recollection”¹² explains the practice known widely in Vajrayāna Buddhism as *p’howa*. This text encourages regular practice and training in *p’howa* during one’s incarnate life, from birth to death. The training is technical, and includes methods that bear close similarities to the yogic practices of *prānāyāma*, or the control and regulation of the breath, and *kundalinī* yoga, pertaining to the activation and control of the primary plexuses or *chakras* associated with the *nādīs* or channels of subtle energy within the physical body. The objective of *p’howa* is consciousness transference immediately prior to the moment of death, into one of the *kāya* states¹³ of Buddha consciousness, effecting liberation from the wheel of death and rebirth.

♦ *Recognition of correspondences between one’s daily meditation and one’s dreams, and the “death struggle” of the four higher principles in kāma-loka.* Preparation to confront oneself in this post-mortem death struggle can first be undertaken in one’s daily meditation. This correspondence with the post-mortem states

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is through the wayfarer's mental focus on stilling the lower principles (Lower Self / Outer Person), and centering the consciousness in the higher principles (Higher Self / Inner Person), and thereby achieving a deeper meditative state. Both these tensions reflect the classic death struggle illustrated in pre-modern artistic depictions of St George and the Dragon. Wayfarers whose daily meditations include such recognition, even for a moment, will have closely anticipated the death struggle between the 4th/ 5th and the 6th/ 7th principles of which KH speaks that occurs in the post-mortem states. Similarly, they may wish as a daily routine to recall and scrutinize their nightly dream events, and the interplay between "sweet" dreams and nightmares, these too being another correspondence to and preparation for this post-mortem death struggle.

Conclusion

It is not an overstatement to assert that

practice of the art of dying and death, of *memento mori*, is one of various methods of *yoga* ("union"). For the ordinary person, such a practice is invaluable; for the wayfarer treading the higher spiritual path, it is indispensable. There do exist other, more thaumaturgic, approaches to dying and death — that of a *tchangchub*, for example, described by KH as ". . . an adept who has . . . become exempt from the curse of UNCONSCIOUS transmigration . . . and instead of re-incarnating himself only after bodily death . . ."14 can transfer his consciousness into a new body at any time, repeatedly if necessary.

But such methods must be left to the highest initiates. What is of greatest importance for most ascending the higher spiritual path is to learn to "die before you die", and so prepare oneself for a post-mortem process whose successful navigation will necessarily affect the direction of one's continued initiatic journey. ✧

Endnotes

1. Blavatsky, H. P., *The Secret Doctrine*, Los Angeles: The Theosophy Company, 1947, p. 303.
2. Coleman, Graham and Thupten Jinpa, eds., *The Tibetan Book of the Dead, First Complete Translation*, New York: Penguin Books, 2005.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 234.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 299.
5. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (chron. ed.), Quezon City, Philippines: Theosophical Publishing House, 1993, p. 119 (Letter No. 44).
6. *Ibid.*, p. 194 (Letter No. 68).
7. For a fuller explanation of this doctrine, see, "The Transition from Death to Rebirth, Part II," in Georgiades, Erica, ed., *Memento Mori Study-book*, Pescia, Italy: EuST, 2018, p. 35.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 193 (Letter No. 68).

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9. Ibid., p. 213 (Letter No. 70-C).
10. Ibid., p. 120 (Letter No. 44).
11. Ibid., p. 209 (Letter No. 70-C).
12. Coleman, G. et al, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead, First Complete Translation*, p. 199. See, particularly, the instructions set forth on pages 202–204.
13. These are *nirmānakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, and *dharmakāya*, all post-liberation states.
14. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 75 (Letter No. 20).

***I know who you are and the love that
Lives there in your open heart.
I know of the sharing that you have
To give so you can receive.
There is a secret hidden
From the bygone days,
That is to be yourself,
Truthful to your still heart.
Everything that is secret
Is of your knowledge.
Love thyself; give the gift
That is also given to you.
Love everyone who comes to you
In search of love,
Because only love is what you are
And only love can you share.**

Joma Sipe
Soul of Light: Works of Illumination
Message 6, p. 125

*This message corresponds to the image on the cover of this issue.

Evolution of the Higher Consciousness: An Interview with Pablo Sender — I

JOE HASIEWICZ

THIS interview with Pablo Sender about his book *Evolution of the Higher Consciousness: An In-Depth Study into H. P. Blavatsky's Teachings* is primarily focused on a deeper exploration of the *practices* described in the second part of the book.

Joe Hasiewicz: Can you tell us a little about the two sections of *Evolution of the Higher Consciousness (EHC)* — Theory and Practice as well as provide some background?

Pablo Sender: In one of her *Esoteric Instructions*, Blavatsky (HPB) said that before we can learn about our higher nature, or spiritual dimension, we must attain a good knowledge of our lower nature, or personal dimension. Therefore, in these Instructions, she began by teaching about the lower nature and how it relates to the higher. Unfortunately, she died before being able to go more specifically into the teachings about the higher nature. Of course, she had written much about this topic throughout her career, so I traced everything that I could find that came from her pen on the higher nature.

HPB said that, for the spiritual life to be

effective, two things are important — a philosophy and a practice. For this reason, I was not only interested in presenting the metaphysical aspect of the subject, but also the practices that she suggested in connection with it. The first part of *EHC* examines who we really are from the perspective of the esoteric philosophy. The second part provides a practical approach, including exercises that can be used in daily life, based on these teachings.

JH: Tell us about how you researched Blavatsky's writings and how you were able to extract what you needed. For example, in her Instruction No. 2¹ she talks about the esoteric correspondences between planets of the solar system and parts of the body — for example, Mercury, the right eye, that of wisdom — and then follows with a description of the Kabbalistic equivalent. She then continues in the following paragraph with a sentence that you quote in *EHC*:

When the individual consciousness is turned inward, a conjunction of *manas* (mind, or the human soul) and *buddhi* (spiritual soul) takes place.²

Mr Joe Hasiewicz is President of the Wheaton-Olcott Lodge of the TS in America (TSA). This interview was held on 19 July 2018, at a public meeting of the Lodge in the TSA Headquarters, Wheaton, Illinois.

After which she continues talking about how this conjunction becomes permanent as their spiritual ego in those who are spiritually regenerated.

Here is this quote which you used, buried in the midst of much contextual information having to do with esoteric correspondences. My question is about your process: how did you go about extracting information that seems to be encoded in a way, and then presenting it in a more systematized format?

PS: I think that Blavatsky's rather short teaching career was mainly like an outpouring of a wealth of esoteric information. She could not afford to spend much time arranging the teachings in a polished and organized way. Moreover, she said that it was the work of the student to generate a system out of what she had written. For this book, I traced everything I could find about the higher Principles, and then arranged the information in a systematic way. I made a point to present the original quotes along with my explanations, because I think it is essential to bring her own words to the reader. Due to her style of writing, there can be a great amount of information condensed into a single paragraph. In the book, I explain what I think are the main points in a quote, but much would be lost if I were to just present my own thoughts.

JH: Your book is a valuable resource which can help an interested individual in exploring these inner territories. Speaking for myself, having read your book, and then going back through the

original sections in HPB's writings, has helped me to better understand her work. Previously, I had approached her work directly and it was indeed a little daunting. Earlier, you had mentioned that she gives out pieces of information, and that it is up to the students to systematize them. Is this a practice that you recommend, or would beginning with a more systematic approach be more effective?

PS: When I teach about *The Secret Doctrine*, for example, I have this ambivalent feeling that, on the one hand, I may help some people to approach these teachings; but on the other hand, I may deprive them of doing the work which is going to stimulate their own wisdom. Annie Besant was clear about this when she said that today we have people with good memory, but who are not good thinkers.³ This is because in modern education, information is presented as clearly and completely as possible; as a result, people do not learn how to think or figure things out because their reasoning abilities are less exercised.

That said, our lives today are so busy that we need some help in the form of books, articles, or programs that present these teachings more systematically. According to Robert Bowen,⁴ Blavatsky does not condemn these explanations provided that people understand that they are only for beginners. This means that all these explanations, no matter how deep the subject matter may be, are meant for us to *begin* the exploration, *not to end it*. We tend to think that knowing what a book says is the end of the journey, but it

is not — it is only the beginning. We should never give up on doing our own work. Once you have a relatively clear intellectual idea of some subject, go back to the teachings, to the quotes, and try to perceive these things for yourself — otherwise, you will just accumulate knowledge.

JH: The next topic that I would like to explore is that of *manas taijasa*, or radiant mind. You talk about it in the Practice section of *EHC*.

PS: Blavatsky says that *buddhi* is the source of wisdom in us. However, if it is not “connected” to *manas*, the mind, this wisdom remains only a *potentiality*. In the case of the Mahatmas, the union of *manas* and *buddhi* is permanent, and therefore they are wise and can see the *essence* of everything that they perceive. This is not the case in most of us. However, as HPB says, we can have moments in which *buddhi* and *manas* “commingle”. This is *manas taijasa*, which means *manas* illumined by *buddhi*. There is a certain attitude in daily life, along with specific practices (meditation, exercises of self-knowledge, and so on), that can stimulate this state.

JH: Is purity of life also involved?

PS: Yes, certainly. In fact, Blavatsky says that wisdom does not come from books — it comes from purity of life. The reason being that wisdom (*buddhi*) is already within us, but the self-centered personality acts as a veil. If the veil is removed, then wisdom can naturally express itself. The problem is that it is difficult to just live purely. Our minds have grown so com-

plex that they are always in the way. Perhaps in the past, Jesus saying “love thy neighbor” was enough for people to try; but today, we must convince the mind that leading a pure life is important.

JH: Of course, growing up, I was familiar with Jesus’ saying, “love thy neighbor”, but I would ask, “Why? What happens if I don’t?” So, for me, a philosophy was necessary to help illuminate the meaning of such a phrase. There are two practices that you describe in the second part of *EHC* that I would like to focus on. The first is *self-examination*, the second is *self-observation*.

PS: Blavatsky explains that when *manas* is focused on the outside, we are lost in the world, but when the mind turns around and looks inward, there is a conjunction between *manas* and *buddhi*. She talks about two different ways of looking inside.

The first practice involves self-analysis (today we would probably call it “self-inquiry”) where the mind examines itself from the point of view of the higher nature. This implies an effort to realize, at least to some extent, that we are not the personality but the eternal universal self — which is the source of pure awareness, wisdom, and compassion. The first part of the book aims at helping us gain this realization. Then, we proceed to examine the personality, using as a gauge the virtues mentioned in different spiritual traditions, because those virtues are part of our true nature.

In the second practice, the mind turns onto itself, but goes beyond self-analysis.

Here, there is an awakening to our divine nature, which cannot be reached by any mental process. In this case, we are talking about a state of pure witnessing — perhaps what Krishnamurti calls *choiceless awareness*.

JH: With respect to the second practice, HPB talks about “the awakening to consciousness of the Divine nature of man”,⁵ but she also talks about acquiring a “knowledge of *things in themselves*”.⁶ The two quotes seem to be referring to different levels of consciousness. How would you relate them to the practice of self-observation?

PS: Blavatsky explains that the higher mind, especially when it is illumined by *buddhi*, has the ability to see “things in themselves”. This is a phrase used by Immanuel Kant. He would say that when we perceive something through the senses we only get the outward appearance of it, and not its real essence. In this view, we can never know “things in themselves”. In her writings, HPB indicates that this is true only at the level of the personality, while our divine nature is able to see things in their true essence. So, I think that these two quotes refer to the same idea, because to see the “thing in itself” implies that the divine nature is awake in us.

JH: There is a third phrase, found near the end of Chapter VIII, “the awakening to the *theosophia*”, how does that phrase differ from the previous two?

PS: I don’t know that it is different. The term “Theosophy” comes from two Greek words, *theos* and *sophia*. We can translate

this as “divine wisdom”. Blavatsky says in an article that the true *theosophia*, the true divine wisdom, is that of the soul. This wisdom comes when *buddhi* awakens, which happens when it unites with *manas*. I think all these references are alluding to the same process.

JH: In Chapter VIII, “The State of Manas Tajasa”, section, “The Illumined Mind”, you write: “To accomplish this [union of *manas* (mind) and *buddhi* (soul)] is the aim of every genuine spiritual tradition and their proposed practices.” Can you talk about some of the approaches that other spiritual traditions take to accomplish this union? How are they like, or different from, the theosophical?

PS: In one of the letters from Blavatsky’s teachers, they say that the aim of all their initiations and struggles is to be able to position their consciousness in *buddhi*. Ātman is universal, omnipresent, and admits no consciousness as we know it. It seems that the highest seat of individual consciousness available for a human being is what we call *buddhi* and from there we can perceive the universality of Ātman. Once you understand how this is attained, you begin to realize that this is the purpose of purification, prayer, and meditation (in their deeper aspects), and so forth. Christian mystics would place a stone in their shoes so that each time they felt the discomfort caused by the stone, they remembered God. All such practices seem to be an attempt at raising consciousness to the contemplation of the Divine.

(To be continued)

Evolution of the Higher Consciousness: An Interview with Pablo Sender — I

Footnotes

1. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. XII, Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House (TPH), 1987, p. 545.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Annie Besant, *The Inner Government of the World*, TPH, Adyar, Chennai, 1976, p. 44.
4. Robert Bowen, one of Mme Blavatsky's students, questioned her about the study of *The Secret Doctrine*. His notes were later published as *Madame Blavatsky on How to Study Theosophy*.
5. *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. VIII, Wheaton, IL: TPH, 1960, p. 108.
6. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, Wheaton, IL: TPH, 1993, p. 330.

To bring the superconsciousness into manifestation on the physical plane, it is necessary — in the early stages — to reduce the brain to inactivity, to render the sense-organs unresponsive to physical impacts, and, by expelling the conscious entity from the body, reduce that body to the state called trance. Trance is but the sleep-state, artificially or abnormally induced; whether produced by mesmeric, hypnotic, medicinal, or other means, the result is the same, so far as the physical body is concerned. But the result on the other planes will depend entirely on the evolution of consciousness on those planes. . . . Trance may also be produced by action from the higher planes, as by intense concentration of thought, or by rapt contemplation of an object of devotion, inducing ecstasy.

Annie Besant
A Study in Consciousness

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

Two gentlemen from Ambala (the Punjab) had been here [Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, India] for a few weeks. Just before taking leave of Sri Bhagavan one of them asked how he should remove the spiritual drowsiness of his friends or of other people in general.

Maharshi: Have you removed your own “spiritual drowsiness”? The force which is set up to remove your own “drowsiness” will also operate in other centres. There is the willpower with which you can act on others. But it is on a lower plane and not desirable. Take care of yourself first.

Devotee: How to remove my own “drowsiness”?

Maharshi: Whose “drowsiness” is it ? Enquire. Turn within. Turn all your enquiries towards search for Self. The force set up within you will operate on others also.

Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi
13 December 1935

Two Streams — One Fountain

CECIL MESSER

DARK and fathomless, yet crystal clear, the river is pregnant with diverse streams. Sunlight penetrates its depths and nourishes the continuity of movement, which is life. Its borders are forbiddingly lush with varieties of old and new growth. Let us remove our shoes and occasionally get our feet wet as we walk along the banks of the streams of thought of two most illustrious men. The first, Siddhārtha Gautama of the Śākya tribe, who two and a half millennia ago became the Buddha, the enlightened one; and the second, Jiddu Krishnamurti, or Krishnaji, who was a seer of our time. Through exploration, may we approach that fountain source. The Buddha and Krishnaji share a striking similarity in their approach to the spiritual life. But our primary focus is not on the men themselves, but on the light coming through them.

Both the Buddha and Krishnaji had a most extraordinary passion for inquiry. Because of his compassion for the suffering of humanity, Gautama searched for the truth with indomitable determination and perseverance prior to his enlightenment. Neither the Buddha nor Krishnaji

claimed exclusive possession of the Truth. The Buddha urged people to discover it for themselves. Once a group of Brāhmana-s asked the Buddha about his attitude towards their ancient holy scriptures, handed down by unbroken oral tradition, which they believed to be the only Truth. He answered by asking if there was any Brāhmana who personally knew that the ancient scriptures alone contained the truth. After a long caucus, the Brāhmana-s admitted they could not find a single one. The Buddha responded:

Then it is like a line of blind men, each holding on to the preceding one; the first one does not see, the middle one also does not see, the last one also does not see. Thus, it seems to me that the state of the Brāhmana-s is like that of a line of blind men. (*Chanki Sutta*, No. 95, of *Majjhima-nikaya*)

Was there a twinkle in the Buddha's eyes when he answered them?

Krishnaji invited his listeners to participate in the inquiry. He said:

We are taking the journey together, perhaps affectionately, hand in hand — two

Mr Cecil Messer, former President of the Ojai Valley Theosophical Lodge and retired NASA scientist / engineer, taught many classes at the Krotona School of Theosophy on meditation and religious traditions. He is author of several related articles and books. Reprinted from the Feb. 2002 issue of *The Theosophist*.

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friends amicably examining the complex problem of life, neither of them leader or guru, because when one sees actually that our consciousness is the consciousness of the rest of mankind, then one realizes that one is both the guru and the disciple, the teacher as well as the pupil, because all that is in one's consciousness. That is a tremendous realization. So as one begins to understand oneself deeply, one becomes a light to oneself and not dependent on anybody, on any book or on any authority, including that of the speaker. (*Network of Thought*, Amsterdam, 19 Sep. 1981)

To return to the question, “Do the ancient holy scriptures contain the truth?”, the Buddha never answered it directly. He explained that to be attached to a certain view is a fetter to understanding the truth. To illustrate, he told his well-known story of the raft:

A man on a journey came to a large river blocking his way. Since there was danger on this shore, he built a raft and crossed over safely to the other shore. Thinking of what a great help the raft had been, he decided it would be good to carry the raft on his back for the rest of the journey.

Later on, after explaining a particular doctrine on cause and effect, the Buddha said:

Even this view, which is so pure and so clear, if you cling to it, if you fondle it, if you treasure it, if you are attached to it, then you do not understand that the teaching is similar to a raft, which is for crossing over, and not for getting hold of and carrying on one's back. (*Chanki Sutta*)

Both the Buddha and Krishnaji stressed the necessity for freedom from authority. The Buddha taught: “One is one's own refuge, who else could be the refuge?” He urged each human to work out his or her own emancipation from the wheel of bondage “for man has the power to liberate himself from all bondage through his own personal effort and intelligence” (*Dhammapada*). He also emphasized that no teaching should be accepted because of tradition, appearance in holy scripture, agreement with one's personal views, or trust in an authority. Only when one has recognized the wholesomeness of the teaching should it be accepted.

Similarly Krishnaji said:

Truth has no path, and that is the beauty of truth — it is living. A dead thing has a path to it because it is static, but when you see that truth is something living, moving, which has no resting place, which . . . nobody can lead you to — then you will also see that this living thing is what you actually are — your anger, your brutality, your violence, your despair, the agony and sorrow you live in. In the understanding of all this is the truth, and you can understand it only if you know how to look at those things in your life. . . . There is no guide, no teacher, no authority. There is only you — your relationship with others and with the world — there is nothing else. (*Freedom from the Known*, ch. I)

Both men discovered their way to liberation and pointed to it. But they left us with the responsibility of marshalling our courage, plunging into unknown

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waters and swimming to the other shore.

The Buddha founded monasteries and established rules of conduct for the monastic life. Perhaps this was to establish the ground for the next stage of human development, addressing the needs of people at different learning levels from kindergarten to university, and Krishnaji's task was to address the needs of the graduates. The Buddha and Krishnaji are like explorers who, on returning from their journey to the mythical city of Ver, respond to a group of inquirers who want to know how to get there. The Buddha described the necessary precursory requirements in the form of the Noble Eightfold Path, which begins with right understanding. Then he talked about some features of the journey such as the Four Noble Truths, and about signposts marking the dangers on the way, such as attachment to the idea of a separate self. He also pointed out that each inquirer must realize that there is no paved road to Ver. Krishnaji seems to have assumed that inquirers had been on many journeys and were fairly well prepared. Therefore he did not offer techniques. So he emphasized the impediments along the way, illusions, subtle and alluring. He too stressed that the inquirer must make the effort and that truly there is no paved road to Ver.

Both the Buddha and Krishnaji were primarily concerned with the human predicament, with finding a way out of the morass of confusion and darkness in human life. But what is it to be a human being? Who or what am I? The Buddha

says: "Remember that there is within man no abiding principle whatever, and that only the learned disciple who acquires wisdom, in saying 'I am', knows what he is saying." (*Abhidharma-kośa-vyākhyā*). It is said that one reason for the Buddha's refusal to answer questions about a self that reincarnates is that he felt metaphysical discourses were irrelevant to resolving the human predicament, that they led to getting lost in a "wilderness of opinions". Perhaps a deeper reason is implied in Krishnaji's words when he was pressed for an answer on the subject of reincarnation: Reincarnation is a fact, but it is not truth. He asked:

Is there anything permanent in you? The moment you say there is a permanent soul, a permanent entity, that entity is the result of your thinking, or the result of your hopes, because there is so much insecurity, everything is transient, in a flux, in a movement. So when you say there is something permanent, that permanency is the result of your thinking. And thought is of the past, thought is never free — it can invent anything it likes! (*Awakening of Intelligence*, ch. 2: "Relationship")

From his own stream, N. Sri Ram said:

When we have completely forgotten ourselves and when there is no "I" or "me", what acts must be what exists in us beyond the limitations of the self, and that is a different kind of action from a different state of being. We might use the words "spiritual self", but these words can be misunderstood. When we use the word "self",

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we think of ourselves, as we are, this entity who has his particular ideas, his possessions, his tastes and wants; it is this “I” which is to become spiritual. But perhaps this “I” ceases to exist, disappears completely, and some other nature comes into manifestation. (*Unpublished Material*)

The Buddha’s First Noble Truth is the universality of *dukkha* as the lot of all sentient beings. The surface meaning of *dukkha* is suffering, and includes pain, illness, grief, despair, and so on. Proceeding deeper, the fact of inevitable change or impermanence is seen: every pleasure, every joy, everything dear, every attachment is transitory and therefore results in suffering after it is lost or ceases to be. Approaching the core through tearful eyes, we begin dimly to perceive the heart of *dukkha*, the Buddha’s view that we are totally conditioned entities imprisoning ourselves by the notion of a separate self. This aspect of *dukkha* is the “great delusion”. It is the sense of I-am-ness, characterized by a feeling of separation both from other persons and from the thoughts and feelings that comprise us, hence an ever-present underlying anxiety, a feeling of incompleteness, of imperfection, a state of perpetual discontent. At this crux, the Buddha’s teaching and Krishnaji’s primary focus come closest, a point of existential concern where individual responsibility finds its foremost task.

Krishnaji was deeply aware of the dominance of this illusory conception of the self and it is a recurring theme throughout his work:

The birth of a new baby is not the indication of something eternal. Life comes and goes. There is death, there is suffering and all the mischief that man can make, and this movement of change, decay and birth is still within the cycle of time. . . . In this trap of time man has been caught. (*Meeting Life*, “The River”)

The root cause is the “self”, the “me”, the “ego”, the personality put together by thought, by memory, by various experiences, by certain words, certain qualities which produce the feeling of separateness and isolation; that is the root cause of disorder. (*The Flame of Attention*, Brockwood Park, 4 Sep. 1982)

One must be careful not to encapsulate Krishnaji’s teachings in a summary, for that would convert them into “eye doctrine”. Because of the holographic nature of his teachings, one only needs to study a small piece to get the gist of the whole.

In the beginning of his transformation process, it is said the Buddha tried all the various traditional yogic meditation practices aimed at the development of mental concentration or one-pointedness of mind leading to the highest mystical states. Tradition says that he not only successfully accomplished these practices, but that he became expert at reaching the very highest levels of samadhi. However, the Buddha came to recognize and repudiate these mystical states as being mind-created and conditioned. He perceived that they do not liberate, nor do they lead to insight into Reality. But through such efforts the Buddha discovered the medita-

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tion practice known as Vipassanā, “insight into the nature of things, leading to the complete liberation of the mind, . . . to Nirvana” (*Satipatthāna-sutta*). Vipassana is a form of mental culture based on the practice of mindfulness and attentiveness. He taught several forms of this practice including:

- ◆ Awareness of in-and-out breathing;
- ◆ Mindfulness of all physical activities;
- ◆ Awareness of feelings and sensations and how they arise or disappear;
- ◆ Attentiveness to the condition of the mind; and
- ◆ Deep inquiry into spiritual subjects.

Several features of the Buddha’s approach harmonize with Krishnaji’s views on meditation. Krishnaji says:

We have to enquire first what it means to be aware, what it means to concentrate, and what it means to attend. Because all this is implied in meditation — to be aware, to be conscious of your environment, to be aware how you talk, . . . how you speak to another, how you treat another; as you are sitting there, to be aware of your neighbour, the colour of the coat, the way he looks. Without criticism just be aware. That gives you great sensitivity, empathy, so that your body is subtle, sensitive, aware of everything that is going on around you. (*Mind without Measure*, “The Meaning of Daily Living”)

On attention, Krishnaji says (*ibid.*):

If you understand the nature of awareness and concentration, then what is attention?

If you are attending now completely to what is being said, in that attention there is no centre as the “me”. Then when you are attending so deeply, the brain becomes quiet, naturally. There is no chattering, there is no control. . . . In meditation there is no controller, there is no activity of will, which is desire. Then, the brain . . . becomes utterly quiet, silent. It is not the silence cultivated by thought. It is the silence of . . . supreme intelligence. In that silence comes that which is not touched by thought, by endeavour, by effort. It is the way of intelligence which is the way of compassion. Then that which is sacred is everlasting. That is meditation.

To whom did the Buddha and Krishnaji speak? At first, the Buddha was concerned that his new discovery was too difficult for people to understand; but then he saw that people had different degrees of purity of heart and keenness of intelligence. So he chose to share his insight. Krishnaji also expressed concern about whether anyone really understood his teachings. But he too chose to share. Perhaps neither made a choice. For if one actually sees the truth, then no further process of choosing is necessary. The right course is immediately evident and the right action is effortless.

At the heart of the Buddha’s teaching is universal love and compassion for all living beings. Far beyond the mere concept is the reality. “Compassion is no attribute. It is the Law of laws — eternal Harmony” (*The Voice of the Silence*, v. 300). He taught that attention to the truth

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of suffering as we experience it ourselves leads to wisdom. Attention to the suffering of others leads to compassion. The depth of this wisdom and compassion is proportional to the quality of the attention.

Once, a recently widowed woman came to Krishnaji for consolation. She told him of her deep sorrow over her husband's death. Unexpectedly, and to her initial consternation, Krishnaji began to speak to her about the nature of attachment and depen-

dence on another for comfort, how love has nothing to do with these. Later, as she went away, her tears had dried and there was a sparkle in her demeanour. Another time, another recently widowed woman came to Krishnaji with grief in her heart. While she told him of her deep sorrow and despair over her husband's death, he said no word, but simply held her hands in his. Thus they quietly sat until her tears too had dried. ✧

Knowledge has not helped human beings to be more happy, peaceful, or loving. Therefore there is no point in our seeking another form of knowledge, which we call theosophical. Theosophy must not be made into a theory, a set of concepts. It must be the truth which transforms, makes us loving, caring, tender in our relationships, as we are when we look at the hidden beauty of the flower. A flower is not a good illustration because it is too easy to feel the beauty of a flower, at least at the superficial level. It is much more difficult to see the beauty that is everywhere else — in the maimed, in the deprived, in all kinds of people, and all the things which we treat with callousness or indifference. Our concern is with the truth that transforms, frees the mind of its self-centredness, and not with sterile knowledge.

Radha Burnier
Human Regeneration

Theosophical Work around the World

Kerala

Mr Tim Boyd, international President of the Theosophical Society (TS), visited Kerala on 21 and 22 January 2019, in connection with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Sri Sankaracharya Sanskrit University, **Kaladi**, and Adyar Library Research Centre (ALRC). He was received in Kochi, by Dr M. A. Raveendran, President of the Kerala Theosophical Federation (KTF), Mr K. Dinakaran, Secretary KTF, and Dr T. K. Nair, former Secretary of TOS, India, and long-standing member of the Perinjanam Lodge.

On the 21st, Mr Boyd visited Thekkemadam, one of the residential homes given to a disciple of Sankaracharya, where Mr Boyd was ceremoniously received with the offering of a shawl. That day he also visited one of the oldest Catholic churches in Asia dedicated to the Holy Virgin. The Vicar of the Church took him to the Bible Tower, the tallest church tower in India and Asia, depicting the major events in the life of Jesus Christ with beautiful paintings, and containing Bibles in different languages from various parts of the world.

Early next morning, Mr Boyd visited the Sri Adi Sankara Keerthistambha Mandapam at Kaladi, the birthplace of Adi Sankaracharya, the first proponent of Advaita Vedanta. The eight-story monument symbolically represents the deities

(guardian angels) of the eight directions, the eight limbs of the Yoga of Patanjali, and the Eightfold Path of the Buddha. They also visited the ancestral house of Sri Sankara on the banks of the Periyar river, the resting place (samādhi) of his mother, Āryāmba, and the Sri Sarada Devi Temple.

At 10 am President Boyd was received at Sri Sankara Sanskrit University by the Registrar, Dr T. P. Raveendran, faculty members, and various Heads of Departments. (This University campus had just recovered from the devastating effects of floods in Kerala.) To the large audience, including the Vice-Chancellor, Senate members, professors, and students, Mr Boyd explained the relevance of Theosophy in the changing world scenario. He was also very impressed with their library, consisting of many manuscripts, including palm-leaf ones, in Sanskrit.

The signing of the MOU between the University and ALRC, which augurs well for joint publication of books, facilities for University research scholars in ALRC, and mutual cooperation in various ways, turned out to be a great event. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dharmaraj Adatt presided over the event and Dr Thomas K. Jacob, University Syndicate member, welcomed the President. Registrar Dr T. P. Raveendran, representing the University, and President Boyd, representing ALRC, signed the MOU. Dr M. A. Raveendran, Mr K. Dinakaran, Dr V. P. Viswakumar,

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a long-standing member of the Anna-poorni Lodge in Alleppey, Mr S. Sivadas, and Dr T. K. Nair were also present on the occasion.

The signing of the MOU and Mr Boyd's address to the University assembly had an excellent effect. The entire audience praised the major role played by the TS in the revival of Sanskrit and the great spiritual heritage of India, which has the underlying ideal of Universal Brotherhood and the Cosmos as a family. Mr Boyd's visit augured well for the theosophical activities in Kerala, and will be well remembered.

Odisha

The 54th Annual Conference of Utkal Theosophical Federation (UTF) and 17th Eastern India Conference of the TS and Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) was held during 9–10 February in **Bhubaneswar**. The theme of the TS conference was "Quest: From the Manifest to the Unmanifest", and that of the TOS was "Living is Giving". Ms Nancy Secrest, International Secretary of the TOS and international Treasurer of the TS, was the Chief Guest in both, and Dr N. C. Ramanujacharya was the Chief Speaker in the TS function. In the TOS session, Mr B. L. Bhattacharya was the Guest of Honour and Prof. Aditya Kumar Mohanty was the Chief Speaker.

Adyar Theosophical Academy

On 11 February there were about thirty friends and well-wishers in the Besant Gardens of the TS at Adyar attending a ceremony of dedication (puja) for the commencement of the construction work needed to renovate the building that will house the Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA), a centre for transformative education.

The ATA aims to prepare students for life in all its dimensions, imparting wholesome education in its true sense. It intends to promote an enlightened educational system that will incorporate the art and science of living wisely. ATA's vision is to educate and raise children to become competent, well-balanced, emotionally mature, socially responsible, morally upright, and spiritually sensitive individuals.

The first group of young volunteers to be the new teachers and administrators for this academy has already been enlisted, the recruitment process continues with enthusiastic vigour, and the architect and interior decorator are already at work. The Academy will be housed in the tranquil campus of Besant Gardens, surrounded by beautiful trees, in the building that is now occupied by the TPH, which is in the process of relocating to nearby quarters. Mrs Sonal Murali, a long-standing member of the TS, with many years of alternative education experience, has been entrusted with the task of setting up the Academy.

The right kind of education cultivates your whole being, the totality of your mind. It gives your mind and heart a depth, an understanding of beauty.

J. Krishnamurti
On Education

Theosophical Work around the World



International President of the TS Mr Tim Boyd, signing an MOU between the Adyar Library and Research Centre and the Sri Sankaracharya Sanskrit University, Kalady, on 22 January 2019. Signing for the University is their Registrar, Dr T. P. Raveendran



President Boyd having a Kerala-style lunch at the University in Kalady, Kerala

Theosophical Work around the World



Participants of the 54th Conference of the UTF and 17th Eastern India Conference of the TS and TOS, held on 9–10 February in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Sitting 3rd from the right is international Vice-President Dr Deepa Padhi and Mr B. L. Bhattacharya is to her right.

International Secretary of the TOS, Ms Nancy Secrest, is sitting in the middle (in pink sari), and Dr N. C. Ramanujachary is sitting 4th from the left



A ceremony of dedication (puja) at the start of construction work to renovate the building to house a theosophical academy in Besant Gardens of the TS campus at Adyar, Chennai. Among the 30 friends attending are, (*fr. r. to l.*): Dr M. Srinivasan, Ms Marja Artamaa, international Secretary,

Mr K. Jaikumar, General Manager of the TS, Mr V. Narasimhan, Mr V. Shanmuganathan, Mr S. Krishnamurthy (seated), Mr. V. Nagappan, and Mr Noman Millwala

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S. HARIHARA RAGHAVAN, *PUBLISHER*

A wise gardener will not claim that she can explain the life force contained within a seed. What she *can* explain, and has come to know deeply through extended practice and study, are the conditions of the soil required for the seed to express itself: the necessary amount of moisture, how to adjust the composition of the soil, and what is needed to protect the newly appearing seedling.

Tim Boyd
The Theosophist, "The Divine Seed"

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