

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.



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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.

Inaugural Address to Dr Annie Besant's Birthday Celebration

TIM BOYD

ORDINARILY, on the 1st of October, in Adyar we would have a meeting in the Hall at the Headquarters' Building. Our residents and some friends of the Theosophical Society (TS) would be in attendance, but that would be all. Yet, on this day in 2020, due to what many think of as the negative circumstances of this pandemic, we find a very positive benefit. We have been forced to adapt to a technology which is bringing us together in different ways globally. I am sure if Annie Besant were alive today, this would be a technology that she would be using to its utmost. Today I will only say a few words, because we have other speakers who will add to the image of this great soul.

I have had the pleasure on numerous occasions to speak about Annie Besant for extended periods, and it is remarkable that however many times I revisit her life there is always some new facet of it that reveals itself. Today I would like to briefly focus on an aspect that is particularly important to me about the way she lived her life.

She was an idealist — a dreamer of enormous dreams — but what comes

across in such a pronounced way is her profound practicality. Many of us dream dreams, and that is as far as it goes. She was a person who was able to materialize those dreams in the physical world. That is something for which she deserves great respect.

All of us know something about Annie Besant and the arc of her life. She was born in Ireland, and with her family she went to live in England. The early passion in her life involved the Church. She was a deeply devout Christian in the first part of her life. From Christianity she went to atheism and free thought, and was just as deeply involved. From those, her view evolved to social activism and organizing — the need to help the suffering people that she saw in the world. She ended up as an avowed socialist. In the second half of her life she embraced Theosophy and the life of the spirit. These are diverse, seemingly conflicting backgrounds that you would not think would fit together into *any* one life, but for her it was a building process. By the time she arrived at the phase where spirituality was so important, she had developed many different skills that she brought to this work.

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Many of us know people whose approach to the spiritual life seems to draw them away from addressing the responsibilities of shaping a better world at the level of social and political institutions, righting so many of the wrongs that exist in the world. Annie Besant's approach was the opposite. She is quite well known for having said: "Let our spirituality be judged by our effect on the world." The spirituality she advocated and exemplified was not some closeted or distanced spirituality. She was an organizer, a builder of institutions, and she established communities all around the world.

One of the features of her life in India, in Europe, and in the United States of America (US) during her theosophical career involved the purchase, acquisition, and gifting of land and buildings, which she found to be central to the work that she did. The great Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi was able to become a university because she founded, bought the land, and built the buildings for the Central Hindu College. She then gifted the College in order to facilitate the creation of Banaras Hindu University.

After founding the Young Men's India Association in response to the need to train leaders for an Indian nation which did not yet exist, but for which she was strenuously advocating, she personally paid for the construction of the great Gokhale Hall in Chennai. It became a focal point for speeches by her, Gandhi, and other great souls in the Indian Independence Movement. She deeply believed, that properties, land, and buildings, were

required for the development of a complete social network capable of impacting the world in positive ways.

Her TS work drew on an even more expansive vision. She was focused on the development of magnetic centers by creating "colonies" of individuals and families who, through their conscious approach to living together, could influence the magnetic currents of the world by developing what she described as "a feeling of true Brotherhood". This was Brotherhood in action, not merely in theory.

As international President of the TS, a good deal of my time in a "normal" year, would find me in Adyar. The Adyar campus has been there since 1882, when the TS Founders, H. S. Olcott and H. P. Blavatsky, first came to the place. It began as 26 acres of land. In 1907, when Col. Olcott passed and Annie Besant became President, she immediately took it upon herself to expand that campus. In less than four years she had increased the campus to almost ten times its previous size, becoming 253 acres. So Adyar became able to invite and support students from around the world to a place where residents could live and work together toward this end of creating a new world based on a vision of Brotherhood.

It was not just in India that she was so active. Just outside of Amsterdam 40 acres of wooded land was donated to Annie Besant. She gave it for the use of a variety of theosophical endeavors. The Liberal Catholic Church has roots there, the Esoteric School of Theosophy, the

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Round Table, the Theosophical Society, and also a residential center. Over time that place has developed into the International Theosophical Center (ITC), the TS's European headquarters. This was yet another one of her "colonies".

In the United States she was deeply involved in the acquisition and growth of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy. From August 1926 to April 1927 Annie Besant made her next-to-the-last tour of the US. It was at this time that she initiated what was to be her last land-based community project, and perhaps her most profound vision. During those months, in addition to attending the Congress of the Theosophical Society in America, held in Chicago, she travelled to the really tiny community of Ojai, California (about 80 miles north of Los Angeles). At that time J. Krishnamurti had a small home in the upper Ojai Valley, where he was living. She had an opportunity to look at the land there.

While she was looking, on one particular day, she had a vision for the place. Based on that vision she arranged for the purchase of 520 acres. Ojai was a sleepy little community. Except for the theosophists who were coming to visit Krishnamurti, it was sparsely populated. In describing her vision she said that this spot was something that would develop into a cradle of the coming new civilization, which she felt would begin in America. At that time she was eighty years old. She named the place "Happy Valley".

These are her words about what she envisioned as a possibility: "Education

will be fourfold, embracing (1) the health, growth, and evolution of the physical body, (2) the emotions, (3) the mind, and (4) the unfolding of the spirit as Will, Wisdom, and creative activity. The Foundation would include a school. Later, I hope, a college, which will include literature, science, arts, and manual occupations. The trades admitted must not include any which are connected directly, or later, we hope, even indirectly, with the killing of animals. Beauty is the result to be aimed at in all human works as in Nature's works."

She added: "There will be spaces set aside for playgrounds for adults as well as for children, agriculture, planting orchards of fruit trees — orange, lemon, peach, apricot, grapes — walnuts, almonds, beekeeping, will be the principal avocations open to the settlers in that area." She said that "carpenters, plumbers, masons, and so on, would also be needed", and closed by saying: "Such is a rough sketch of the beginning of the life in the Happy Valley. As it opens and grows, it will be richer and fuller, for we shall need writers, musicians, painters, sculptors, actors, all who make life beautiful, to create with us a cherished home."

These are her words describing her vision for an area which at that time was comprised of just a few farmers and their walnut trees. In hindsight it is remarkable to look at how Ojai has developed. Some of you have been there, and you are aware. It is a small community, but this small place is loaded with such a

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variety of spiritual communities and spiritual activity: the Krishnamurti Foundation of America, Meditation Mount, and Meher Mount are there, the Theosophical Society is there, and many other churches, temples, and houses of worship. The orange trees, lemon, peach, apricot, grapes, everything she talked about, now grow in abundance. It is a remarkable vision!

When she talked about a cradle of a new civilization in America, that was a very long-range vision. But out of her purchase of that land, out of the vision which she communicated for others to translate into reality, has come a beautiful and thriving community, renamed as the "Besant Hill School of Happy Valley" in 2007. As time goes on who knows how

and where that cradle of the new civilization will appear. We will have to wait and see.

Annie Besant was a visionary, but a practical visionary who did not just dream dreams, but who found ways to translate those dreams into reality, to give form to something as yet unseen, but which will be of benefit to the planet and certainly to the work of the TS. She is a great example for all, but for someone like me, who occupies the position she once did, and sits in the office that once was hers, it is humbling. I am happy for the opportunity to have shared these few thoughts about a practical idealist who has been among us, who has led, and who has influenced this world in remarkable ways which are still fulfilling themselves. ✧

Postscript

For additional information about the Besant Hill School of Happy Valley, you may visit the Besant Hill website link: besanthill.org/about/history-heritage/.

Those who dwell, as scientists or laymen, among the beauties and mysteries of the Earth are never alone or weary of life. Whatever the vexations and concerns of their personal lives, their thoughts can find paths that lead to inner contentment and renewed excitement in living. Those who contemplate the beauty of the Earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of birds, the ebb and flow of the tides, the folded bud ready for spring. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of Nature — the reassurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.

Rachel Carson
The Sense of Wonder

A Houseboat Journey with HPB

HENRY STEEL OLCOTT

IN all our years of intercourse HPB [H. P. Blavatsky] and I had never been so closely drawn together as on this boat journey on the Buckingham Canal [in Madras (now Chennai)] — a famine-relief work that fed thousands of starving peasants during a tragical epoch of the Duke of Buckingham's Governorship of Madras. Hitherto we had lived and worked in the company of third parties, whereas now we two were alone in a *budgerow*, or small houseboat, with our servant, Babula, and the coolie crew as our sole companions while the craft was in motion.

Our quarters were cramped enough, to be sure. At either side of the small cabin was a locker covered with a mattress; the lid arranged to lift on hinges, the inside forming a huge chest for storage of one's effects. Between the two lockers — each a bed by night, a chest of drawers by day — was a portable table which, when not in use, could be folded up and hung from the ceiling. A lavatory, a small pantry with shelves, a cooking platform outside, behind, with a broken earthen pot-bottom, laid on sand, for fireplace, and some few indispensable cooking utensils, a large jar for drinking

water, and our camp table-furniture completed our domestic arrangements and sufficed for our wants.

When a fair wind blew, a sail was raised and we glided before it; when adverse, the coolies jumped ashore, and, with the towline passed over their shoulders, dragged us along at the rate of perhaps three miles an hour. In another boat followed some of our best and kindest Madras colleagues, among them that golden-hearted old man, P. Iyaloo Naidu, Retired Deputy Collector, whose acquaintanceship was a privilege, whose friendship an honor. Our destination was the town of Nellore, a two-days' journey by water.

As we had not started [for Nellore] until 7 p.m. (3 May 1882), and the moon was almost full, it was a sort of fairy voyage we were making on the waveless, silvery water. No sound broke the silence, after once leaving the city limits, save the occasional yelps of a pack of jackals, the low murmur of our boat-coolies' voices, talking together, and the lap-lapping of the water against the boat.

In place of glass sashes, there were hinged venetian blinds, with hooks to

H. S. Olcott (2 August 1832–17 February 1907) and **H. P. Blavatsky** (12 August 1831–8 May 1891) were the main Founders of the TS (along with W. Q. Judge). From *Old Diary Leaves*, series 2, ch. 23, 1895.

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fasten them to the overhead deck-beams at pleasure, and through these a gentle night breeze blew cool, and brought us the smell of wet rice-fields. My colleague and I sat, enchanted with the scene and refreshed by the grateful and unaccustomed rest from our life of excitement and publicity. We talked but little, being under the witchery of the night, and went to our beds with the certainty of a refreshing sleep.

Wafted along by the breeze of the southwest monsoon, our boat sailed steadily throughout the night, and morning found us well on our way. At an early hour we tied up at the bank, for the coolies to build their fire and cook their curry and rice; our people in the other boat joined us, I went for a swim, and Babula cooked us a capital breakfast, which our colleagues, because of their caste prohibitions, could not share. Then on once more, the boats as noiseless as spectres.

HPB and I occupied the whole day with arrears of correspondence and editorial writing for *The Theosophist*, with occasional breaks for conversation. Of course, the one theme for us was the condition and prospects of our Society, and the probable ultimate effect on contemporary public opinion of the Eastern ideas we were spreading. In this respect we were optimists in the same degree, no shadow of doubt or difference crossing either of our minds.

It was this ever-potent, overmastering feeling of confidence that made us so indifferent to calamities and obstacles which might have otherwise brought us

to a standstill fifty times during our career. It may not be gratifying to some of our present colleagues, yet it is strictly true, that our forecasts dealt with the coloring of modern thought with theosophical ideas far more than with the possible extension of the Society throughout the world; of that, we had practically no expectation.

As, when leaving New York for Bombay, we did not even dream that the Society might cover India and Ceylon with Branches, so now, on that silently moving boat, we gave no thought to the possibility of its creating a popular agitation that would plant its branches and create its centres of propaganda throughout America and Europe, to say nothing of Australasia, Africa, and the Far East. Why should we? To whom could we look then? Where were the giants fit to carry such a heavy load on their shoulders?

This was but in 1882, remember, and outside Asia there were but three Branches of the TS in existence (not counting the New York centre, which had not been reorganized). The London Lodge and the Corfu (Ionian) Branch were inert bodies. Mr Judge was away in South America for a silver-mining company (I believe I am right about the date), and nothing like an active propaganda had been organized in the United States. We two old people in the boat were practically managing the thing alone, and our field was the East; and as HPB showed no more prophetic gift than myself at the time, we talked and worked and built our foundations for the great future that neither of us foresaw.

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How many of the present multitude of Fellows of the Society would give almost anything to have had the close intimacy I enjoyed with my friend on that boat journey! What made it all the pleasanter and more profitable was that she was in good health and spirits, and there was nothing to mar the charm of our companionship; otherwise, I might almost as well have been a cage-companion of a hungry lioness at the Zoo; one of us must certainly have gone ashore and walked, or shifted into Iyaloo Naidu's tender! Dear, lamented friend, companion, colleague, teacher, chum: none could be more exasperating at her worst times, none more lovable and admirable at her best. I believe we have worked in lives before, I believe we shall work in lives to come, for the good of humankind.

This open page of my Diary, with its but few fragmentary notes, brings back to memory one of the most delightful episodes of the theosophical movement, and I see a picture of HPB in her shabby wrapper, sitting on her locker opposite me, smoking cigarettes, her huge head with its brown, crinkled hair bent over the page she was writing on, her forehead full of wrinkles, a look of introverted thought in her light blue eyes, her aristocratic hand driving the pen swiftly over the lines, and no sound to be heard save the liquid music of ripples against the boat's sides, or the occasional rub of a coolie's naked foot on the roof above us, as he moved to tighten a rope or obey some order of the helmsman. . . .

[After a lecture,] editorial work, and

admissions to membership, in the evening a delegation of the most learned Pandits of the district came and put us questions; and at 11 p.m. we formally organized the Nellore TS. A second lecture on 9 May, more admissions of candidates, and more writing finished up our business at Nellore, and we then moved on to a canal station called Mypaud, whither the boat had been taken to save eighteen miles of canal travelling.

Our writing and talks were now resumed and in due course we got to Padaganjam, the limit of canal navigation in the hot season, and the place whence, to proceed on to Guntur, our ultima Thule, we had to take palanquins and *jampan*s, or carried chairs. They did not turn up until the following day, and as the coolies had to rest, we did not start until just before sunset.

Our caravan consisted of four palanquins and one *jampan*, which, added to the baggage-porters, made our coolies number fifty-three persons. We soon came to a ford [shoal] where a river had to be crossed, and the performance made me laugh heartily and HPB to swear. The water was so deep that, to keep our palanquin floors dry, the bearers had to balance the thick poles on their heads, to lift us high enough. Before entering the water they stripped naked, all but their *langooti*, or breech-clout [loin-cloth]. Picking their steps with greatest caution and sounding with their staves, they went in deeper and deeper until the water came up to their armpits. I politely led the way so that HPB might

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know if I was drowned, and turn back.

It was a ticklish experience to sit there motionless, so as not to destroy the balance of the round pole resting on my six coolies' heads, and, fancy what a mess I and my papers would be in if one of the men made a misstep; however, one travels to gain experience, so I lay on my back as still as possible. When in midstream I began to hear the sound of a familiar voice from the next palanquin, and presently HPB began shouting at me that these men would surely upset her. I shouted back that it didn't matter, as she was too fat to sink and I should fish her out. Then she began to use weighty objurgations at me, with occasional diversions at the coolies, who, not understanding a word, kept on their way as before. At last we reached the opposite shore and my colleague rested herself by getting out and walking about, and, after a few cigarettes, had forgotten her recent troubles. . . .

[Back at Nellore, on the way back to Madras,] a great Brahmin pandit of the Vedantin school came to see us that evening, evidently with the sole object of showing up our ignorance; but in us two old campaigners, especially in HPB, with her wit and sarcasm, he got more than he bargained for, and in a couple of hours we were able to expose to the company present his intense selfishness, vanity, and bigoted prejudices. Our victory cost us something, however, for I see a post scriptum note in my diary that he subsequently showed himself "our active enemy". Good luck to him and to all the

noble army of our "enemies"; their hatred never did them the least good nor the Society the least harm. Our ship does not sail on the wind of favor.

Seventeen letters, three articles for the *Theosophist*, and the reading of a pile of exchanges kept me fairly busy the next day until evening, when I lectured on "Aryan Wisdom". The next day was like it, and the next, until we — at 5 p.m. — took bullock carriages for Tirupati, seventy-eight miles away, and the nearest station on the Madras Railway. In that scorching weather it was a hot and tedious journey, but it ended at last, and so did our waiting time of twelve hours for a train, and the train journey to Madras, which we reached in due course and were met and escorted by friends to our former bungalow.

In my travels over India and Ceylon I had been observing places, people, and climates, with a view to selecting the best place for a permanent Headquarters for the Society. Liberal offers of houses, free of rent, had been made us in Ceylon, and, certainly, the island presented a most charming appearance to one seeking an Asian home; but several considerations, such as its isolation from India, the cost of postage, [and so on] . . . overweighed its loveliness and led us to choose India in preference. Up to the present time, however, no good property had been offered us, and we had made no definite plans.

On 31 May, however, we two were begged by Judge Muttuswamy's sons to go and look at a property that was to be had cheap. We were driven to Adyar, and

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at the first glance knew that our future home was found. The palatial building, its two riverside smaller bungalows, its brick-and-mortar stables, coach house, godowns (storerooms), and swimming bath; its avenue of ancient mango and banyan trees, and its large plantation of casuarinas (one of the cone-bearing trees) made up an enchanting country residence, while the price asked — Rs 9,000 odd, or about £600 — was so modest, in fact, merely nominal, as to make the project of its purchase seem feasible even for us.

We accordingly decided to take it, and in due course this was effected by the noble help of P. Iyaloo Naidu and Judge Muttuswamy Chetty, the first of whom advanced part of the money and the other secured a loan of the rest, on very easy terms. An appeal was at once issued for subscriptions, and within the next year I had the satisfaction of being able to pay it all off, and receive the title deeds. The cheapness of the price is accounted for by the fact that the opening of the railway to the foot of the Nilgiri Hills brought the lovely sanitarium of Ootacamund within a day's ride of Madras, which caused the high officials to spend half the year there, and threw their grand Madras bungalows on a market without bidders.

What I paid for "Huddleston's Gardens" was about the price of the old materials if the buildings should be torn

down. In fact, that was what was to have happened if we had not turned up as buyers just when we did. We stopped a week longer at Madras, during which I lectured twice, and more new members were admitted, and on the 6th of June we took train for Bombay. More than fifty friends, with flower gifts, saw us off, and prayed us to hasten our return to take up our permanent residence among them. At 11 a.m., on the 8th, we reached Bombay, and found many friends assembled to meet us and see us home.

People glibly speak of Madras as "the Benighted Presidency"; and as being insufferably hot. The fact is, however, that as regards climate I prefer it above the others, and as to Sanskrit Literature and Aryan Philosophy, it is the most enlightened of the Indian Presidencies; there are more learned pandits in the villages, and the educated class, as a whole, have been less spoilt by Western education.

In Bengal and Bombay there are more *litterateurs* of the class of Telang and Bhandarkar, but I cannot recall one equal to T. Subba Row, of Madras, in bright genius for grasping the spirit of the Ancient Wisdom. And his being at Madras was one of the causes of our fixing upon that Presidency town for our official residence. Although he is dead and gone, yet we have never regretted our choice, for Adyar is a sort of Paradise. ✧

Abstention from doing every kind of evil, accomplishment of what is good, to be with a mind that is being purged: this is the instruction of the Buddhas (the Enlightened Ones)

Dhammapada

Krishnamurti and Theosophy

P. KRISHNA and RADHA BURNIER

P. Krishna: I have read that Madame H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) and Mrs Annie Besant both said that Theosophy is not a religion; it is *the* religion. They also called it the wisdom-religion. So I would like to begin our dialogue by asking ourselves: what is the essence of Theosophy?

Radha Burnier: It is not only Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant, but also many prominent members of the Theosophical Society who came after them, who have said that Theosophy is a word which is easy to translate but difficult to define. Let us look at the word itself: “Theo”-“sophy”. “*Sophia*” means “wisdom” [in Greek]. It is very difficult for us who are unwise people, who do all kinds of foolish things, who suffer, who do not enjoy a sense of bliss that belongs to the wise, to say who is wise or what wisdom is; we really don’t know. Then there is the word “*theos*”, which can be translated as “divine”; therefore the meaning of the two words together is “divine wisdom”.

Sometimes it [Theos] is translated as God. That depends on what we mean by God. Again, it is a very doubtful kind of

word, because God means anything from a stone that you put there to worship to something which cannot really be put into words; you have to know it in your heart. So “divine” is in a way a better word. “Theosophy” is divine wisdom in that sense. The question is, who knows it? There are many people who think they know something of Theosophy, but it is a very, very doubtful statement because Theosophy can be known by the wise to some extent; perhaps it can never be known fully until there is liberation from the state of ineptitude which is there in a human being. Only then a person may be considered as a true theosophist by others. He would never himself say “I am a theosophist”, because all his words have no relevance to the real thing.

PK: So if we want to probe deeper into that, we must probe both into what is the possible meaning of “divine” and what is the possible meaning of “wisdom”, knowing full well that a projected meaning given by our own mind may not represent the real. Instead of defining positively what wisdom is, shall we approach it negatively because, perhaps,

Prof. P. Krishna is a Trustee, Krishnamurti Foundation India. **Mrs Radha Burnier** (1923–2013) was the seventh international President of the TS Adyar (1980–2013). Dialogue held at the Indian Section of the TS, Kamachha, Varanasi, on 29 March 2008. Published in *The Indian Theosophist*, July 2008.

it is easier to say what wisdom is not? Would you say that a mind that is caught in illusion, which means caught in images made by itself, by its imagination, cannot possibly be wise since it is not in contact with the real?

RB: This really brings one to see, first of all, the fallacy in saying that Theosophy is a true realm. It is very commonly said among people who are very serious about this. That is, there is a Theosophy which we have to come to know throughout our life, perhaps we have to know it minute by minute, as we live our life; but there is also the Theosophy which states in words the essence of what we consider it is. There is a fallacy in this because each person who writes about Theosophy, or speaks about it, may think that what he says or writes about, expresses in words what is really inexpressible. The question is, does he really express it at all? To what extent does he express it? This is the great question. Perhaps nobody can really express it, but certain fundamentals connected to what is Theosophy in the real sense of the term may be put into words. But it is very difficult to say the words I use really express those truths.

PK: I understand this difficulty in expressing and communicating a truth, because the expression is done through words which have loaded meanings and different meanings for different people. Those are the difficulties of communication. Say, I have perceived something deeply and want to communicate it to you. How do I do it? That is the difficulty of expression

and communication. And your ability to perceive what I have perceived is subject to the difficulty of your ideation and your mind projecting things about it and all that which we have discussed in the last few days. But are there not eternal truths about humanity, about human consciousness, which are universal? Just as scientists would say that truths about Nature are not completely known to us, but they *are* universal. You may not fully understand gravitation or how gravitation operates, but it cannot be different for one human being and another human being, so there is a truth out there. Our difficulty is first, how to come in contact with it, to become aware of it, to perceive it as the truth and then at the second level, how to express it, how to communicate it. So in science we use the universal language of mathematics and find it to be useful. But essentially we are positing that there are truths about Nature which are universal, which are operative, which are eternal, which are not fully known, which we call laws of Nature, and we are attempting to discover them.

Could we say a similar thing about Theosophy: that there is a body of universal and eternal truths which are not just to be known but also to be perceived, being fully aware of the fact that truth itself is not an idea or an intellectual concept, but a fact. Only that person actually perceives the fact, who comes in direct contact with it — in the sense of seeing the truth and not ideating about it. Could one say that Theosophy is this universal, eternal body of truths, perhaps

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both about matter as well as about consciousness, since Theosophy includes science, and from time to time wise human beings in different cultures, who have been able to shed their barriers of individuality, what we call liberation, have come deeply in contact with those truths, and from that perception tried to communicate them, someone in poetry, someone in prose, someone through stories?

As you said, it is indescribable because the description is through the word and the words are associated with images, whereas perception is beyond words and images. So when the sage speaks, it conveys images and concepts to the mind of the listener, who has then to break through them to come upon perception; otherwise he does not perceive the truth, which is the greatest difficulty in communicating truths. But stepping aside from this difficulty of communication, would you say that there is a body of eternal truths which is universal, which is accessible to any human being who is willing and able to shed his images, his limited individuality, and who therefore sees through that part of his being which is universal, which we may call the human being, as distinct from the individual personality?

RB: I think this is a much more subtle, elusive kind of seeing than we realize. In science much has been said about how you can see the same thing as a wave and a particle. You know that the thing is both a wave and a particle, or it seems so. You presume that when you see the particle it is also a wave, but that is only

a presumption, because you cannot see the two aspects at the same time. I think the difficulty is that a thing appears not only as a wave and a particle.

When we say we perceive a truth it refers to only some part of the truth. This is the difficulty in expressing the truth. It is so subtle a thing, or so it seems to me, that you cannot put it into words, therefore you cannot express it. When somebody who has had some idea of a truth from time to time tries to convey it to other people, he may be right up to a point. He himself has to realize that he may be right up to a point but not all the way; and this is difficult to realize because the truth, as it appears at a time, is very real to the person concerned. It seems as if the whole of truth is expressed in that form but it is not, it may express itself in a different form at a different time.

PK: Because it may be only one aspect of the whole.

RB: Yes, only one aspect of the whole. Based on this fact it is said that even the wisest of people, (I do not know if it is correct or not), has a great deal in his consciousness. (This word “consciousness” is a doubtful word, but I use it.) He has a great deal there which can be put into words, but very much more which cannot be put into words at all. So how is he to communicate it, he cannot. If you take Krishnaji [J. Krishnamurti] for instance, I am convinced that he knew many things in detail and also in principle which he could not communicate, but there was

something in him and what he said which could communicate to people what they needed perhaps at that time, I do not know, but there was also something else which suggested that there is a whole world of meaning which we had to find out for ourselves.

PK: Yes, he has stated explicitly that there is much more than what we see, which is unfathomable, indescribable, and that he is not going to attempt to describe it. He is only pointing out the barriers which we could shed if we perceive that the barriers are self-created and brought about by superficial thinking; so that the window is open. But that is only the beginning of exploration, before that, one is not even exploring the truth, one is only exploring the very limited space of what one could call the conditioned thought.

Unless one breaks through that barrier it is no use talking about the vast, the immeasurable and all that, because this limited mind is always going to translate that perception into the known, which would therefore be false. The scientists have also realized this fact even with respect to such a simple thing as physical reality, not talking about consciousness at all, which is far more complex and intricate, and of which they understand nothing or almost nothing. They cannot even define what consciousness is though they use it to do their science!

But even with regard to our conception of physical reality — matter, time, space and energy — they have realized that what we can conceive of is limited

by our own experience, which in turn is limited by our senses. For example, we never see the connection between space and time though they are connected in a way which we are not capable of perceiving because in our experience space and time have always been two distinct separate entities.

For instance, they say space is curved, but it is very difficult for us to imagine that. So, they have long ago forsaken what were earlier taken for granted and called self-evident truths, such as two parallel lines will never meet. They say it is only true in a certain type of flat space which you are aware of; but real space is not like that, it is curved. If you draw two parallel lines on a sphere they will meet like two longitudes meet at the North Pole and the South Pole. So our conceptions even about physical reality are very limited and they are now saying ‘don’t trust your conception because your conception is limited’. For example you can never really explain to a man who has been blind from birth what colour really is.

What is really an electron? They say we do not know really. It helps us to make a model of an electron like a billiard ball and call it a particle and that explains certain behaviours; and it also helps us to have a model of it as a wave as that explains some other part of its behaviour. But these are just conceptual models assisting us in finding out what it is and the truth is that it is both! That ultimate truth I am not able to conceive of because I have never seen an entity which is both

a particle and a wave. They say our conceptualization has limitations, therefore do not use it too far, use mathematics instead! Mathematics is a kind of universal language which has been repeatedly tried out and found to apply in Nature.

Like there are these physical limitations, there are also intellectual limitations. I see a parallel between the limitation experienced in doing science and the limitation of thought which Krishnaji is pointing out in the religious quest. We think only in terms of the known, and the known is so limited; therefore thought can never grasp the unknown.

There are vast truths out there which can only be perceived when you free yourself of this imprisonment, when you get out of this prison of the known. Freedom from the known is not the ending of the known, but non-dependence on the known. We have given tremendous importance to that little bit of known and are all the time wanting to interpret everything in terms of the known, and that blocks the unknown from being perceived. Real progress in science has also come from paradigm shifts which were the result of deep insights into the unknown, going far beyond conventional thinking.

RB: What is the known may be an illusion. What is known to me may not be known to a person whose consciousness is much more subtle and peaceful and vast, and so on. Even what is known changes form all the time, so it becomes very difficult to understand a universe where everything is changing according

to the level of our perception. If there was a person who could see the whole thing, then only will he be seeing the truth. But in saying that, I feel there is a mistake because I may not be aware of my limitation. So what is the known, what is the knowable, and what is the unknown? These are all deep questions which always remain.

PK: In fact it is important to realize that we are part of a great mystery and that the mystery is very deep and scientists are only trying to penetrate one aspect of it; but there is much more which remains a mystery. It extends, perhaps, far beyond what we are even aware of. Often in our pride, in our knowledge, we lose our awareness of the mystery.

RB: That brings us back to the objects of Theosophy. If you take the second object of the Theosophical Society, it speaks about philosophy, science, and religion. Let me leave philosophy out of the picture for the moment and take only science and religion. If you go deeply into science (which you have done but I have not) then from what I have read, as one goes deeper and deeper into science, one comes upon a religious feeling of beauty, unity, wonder and mystery which is akin to the feeling of the real man of religion.

By that I mean not a person who is a man of religion, according to Hinduism or Christianity or Buddhism or whatever, but one who has gone beyond all these forms and has come to a much vaster and deeper perception of the unity and totality

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of existence, an element which we cannot express in words but which has a sacredness, a holiness that can be felt. That thing is there beyond all the speculations of science and the forms of religion. When you go that deep, then the findings of science may correspond to what is known to true religion. I feel that there is a reality which is both science and religion, which can be felt and perceived but not expressed or communicated.

PK: It has to be because both matter and consciousness are part of a single reality: consciousness exists and so do matter and energy. Science may not be able to explore very deeply into consciousness, since it is not measurable. Their investigations are limited to what is measurable, so they are still struggling to understand the nature of space, time, matter, and energy. But their picture is bound to be incomplete because they have left consciousness out of it. The scientist uses his consciousness to do science but his science cannot tell what he is using! I am here reminded of the words of Schrodinger, the scientist who discovered wave mechanics, which was a precursor of the quantum mechanics of today.

He was also a philosopher who had deeply studied the Vedanta. He was not a religious man, he was a scholar. His personal life was in shambles but intellectually he was a giant. He said something quite profound which I would like to share with you: "I consider science an integrating part of our endeavour to understand the one great philosophical question which embraces all others:

Who are we? I consider this not one of the tasks but *the* task of science, the only one that counts."

To answer that question we have to answer what is the body, its origin, its components, its form and function. But not only that, we must also explain the awareness and consciousness which operate in that body, the way they arise and function and so on. Schrodinger regarded both science and Vedanta as a part of philosophy and he could see that it was necessary to integrate the two and not separate them. Otherwise you will always get a partial picture of life and reality. For instance, in the world of the physicist there is no need for life, they treat it as an accidental happening which they do not understand.

But let me come back to Krishnamurti and Theosophy. The Theosophical Society was created with the motto that Truth is the highest religion, and since Theosophy in its true meaning is not a new religion, but the essence of all religions, or the wisdom religion, this demands that we come in contact with the eternal truths beyond all religions and beyond all forms. Now if that is the essence of Theosophy, as expressed in our motto, is that not what Krishnamurti is asking us to do all the time? He is saying you must understand yourself, break through your conditioning, only then you will have a true perception, without that you cannot come upon the truth. So I do not see any division between what Theosophy in its essence is asking us to do and what Krishnamurti is advocating as necessary for us to do.

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RB: Yes, I think, we do not know what Theosophy is or what Krishnaji is talking about, therefore difficulties arise. It is obvious when one contacts people in the Theosophical Society and the people in the Krishnamurti Foundation who are not members of our Society, that they are going on a line which Krishnaji himself would consider fallacious, because when you confuse the superficial with the essential there is bound to be illusion and conflict. Just as in science one can perceive the same thing as a wave and a particle here, too, different people perceive things differently, creating contradictions where none really exist. People get carried away by those superficial differences and it becomes difficult for them to remain conscious of the fact that opinions are not very important things; it is the truth which is important.

PK: But ignorance as illusion or imagery is common to all humankind. So what difference does it make, whether the ignorance of a man is of the Christian variety or the Krishnamurti Foundation variety or the theosophical variety? The importance is of breaking through that and going beyond it, so why distinguish?

RB: We think there is a difference. Someone who has dabbled in Krishnamurti, (I am deliberately using that word) feels that he knows what is truth and what is not truth better than other people.

PK: But the truth is something that cannot be known! We said earlier that the truth cannot be known, it cannot be described.

RB: Similarly, the theosophists think

they know what Theosophy is or what the truth is. It becomes a way of making things secure in one's own life. This prevents one from being free in the mind, about the importance of which Krishnamurti spoke repeatedly. Many theosophists also spoke about the need to be completely free to listen to somebody, to see that illusion arises when belief becomes strong.

PK: It is extremely important, I feel, to remain aware of this danger in oneself because one has basically the same consciousness as other human beings out there. And the human consciousness has repeatedly made the same mistakes whether it is the Christians or the Buddhists, the Hindus or the theosophists, or the people in the Krishnamurti Foundations. I do not see too much difference. A man like Jesus touches something very deep; we do not know how he touches it, but it comes upon a profound deep state of consciousness which is based on love, compassion, or whatever word you want to use. From that state he tries to communicate that truth and speaks the words which are there in the Sermon on the Mount; but the followers bring down that truth, create a church, a religion, saying "do this and don't do that".

It is the same among the Hindus, they have not discovered the truth expressed in the Upanishads or the Vedanta. They keep doing various simplistic performances without coming into contact with the truth. One finds the same in Buddhism; what is going on today in the name of Buddhism is a far cry from the truth

which the Buddha taught. So one must remain aware of this danger in oneself, having seen the potential of all people in the world to bring down the truth into the familiar and then concentrate on the familiar because that is easy. It becomes an ego process, seeking to feel secure. The idea that I am progressing gives one a good feeling. It becomes a barrier to the perception of the truth because your energies are now dissipated in all kinds of superficial activity, which is not seeing at all.

RB: It is important to realize that the path itself is a metaphor; it does not really refer to a path with a beginning and an end. It has no beginning because everything belongs to that and it has no end. I am reminded of something in the Mahatma letters about the Master KH. (Whether one believes in the Masters or not is not relevant here.) He goes into some kind of a Samadhi because he is due to go on a longer journey inwardly and needs to be undisturbed at the physical level. There is a reference to that in *Light on the Path*. It says that when you have finished this journey and everything which is of the animal nature has come to an end, then you will realize that the path goes endlessly much farther. Now to think of that path as having no end in itself implies a continual state of being with a capacity for unlimited learning which has nothing to do with collecting knowledge of the ordinary kind.

PK: I think Krishnaji has expressed the same thing in somewhat different words

when he says that freedom is at the beginning of learning, not at the end. Because you do not begin to learn so long as your perceptions are being distorted by the ego process, by the individual colouration that it gives to that perception. Therefore you cannot perceive the truth. So if perception of the truth is learning, then that learning cannot go deep until you are free; but that freedom, in my view, is not a fixed point that has to be attained. The possibility of perceiving the truth undistortedly always exists in human consciousness. That is why it is possible even for a conditioned person to have a glimpse of the truth. For example, even a very cruel emperor, Ashoka, could get a deep insight and change completely after the Kalinga war. So the ego does not completely debar all capacity for insight.

RB: That is why I also feel that a human being has this capacity for pure awareness through which he gets a glimpse of the real, but he tends to translate that in terms of the old whole pattern of his conditioning which is the known. He has to extricate himself from that limitation and perceive through his true consciousness. People like Krishnaji, I think, were born in order to help human beings come out of their limited conditioned state of individuality and realize that there is something much vaster, more beautiful which they are missing because they remain confined to the world of their own thoughts.

PK: This means to me that what Krishnaji rebelled against in 1929 or 1933, somewhere during that period, was not the

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essence of Theosophy but the tendency towards encrustation, treating Theosophy not as an enquiry but as some new form of belief or some new body of knowledge which one accepts, as had happened in all other religions. He must have seen the danger of that and he revolted against that, wanting to bring it back to the quest for what he called a religious mind — not a Christian mind or a Hindu mind.

There is only one religious mind. And as a theosophist one has to go beyond all the superficial forms and come upon the true religious mind with wisdom, love, compassion, truth, beauty, and the ending of all violence. I would like to quote here what he said about the scientific mind and the religious mind: “The religious mind has no beliefs; it has no dogmas; it moves from fact to fact, and therefore the religious mind is the scientific mind. But the scientific mind is not the religious mind. The religious mind includes the scientific mind, but the mind

that is trained in the knowledge of science is not a religious mind.”

RB: The true theosophical mind is both scientific and religious in that sense.

PK: We do not have to dislike any religion or condemn it or anything like that. It is just an incidental fact that we are born into it. There are good things in it, there are superficial things in it, and there are superstitions. We have to go beyond that. I do not have to remain limited to that, or be attached to it and defend it. It may have helped me in childhood to grow but it does not have to limit me in any way in my exploration of what is true and what is false.

RB: So a truly theosophical life is one which allows you to grow in truth, to discover greater and greater wisdom and [to be a] spiritual being.

PK: We can end it here.

RB: Yes. ✧

The seeds of Wisdom cannot sprout and grow in airless space. To live and reap experience the mind needs breadth and depth and points to draw in towards the Diamond Soul. Seek not those points in Maya's realm; but soar beyond illusions, search the eternal and the changeless *Sat*, mistrusting fancy's false suggestions.

H. P. Blavatsky
The Voice of the Silence

The Yoga of Theosophy

PABLO SENDER

THE word “Theosophy” derives from the Greek *theosophia*, which is a combination of the terms *theos* (gods, or God) and *sophia* (wisdom). This term can be translated as “wisdom of the gods” (or God), “wisdom in things divine”, or “divine wisdom”, the latter being the preferred translation in the modern theosophical movement. A true theosophist, therefore, is a person endowed with wisdom. This wisdom, however, is not “human”, that is, it is not the result of experience, study, and memory. It is an inherent faculty of the divine aspect of human nature, which at this point in evolution is latent in most people.

The term “yoga”, according to Pānini, a 6th-century BCE Sanskrit grammarian, can be derived from either of two roots — *yujir yoga* (to yoke), or *yuj-samādhau* (to concentrate). In the context of the *Yoga-Sutras of Patañjali*, the root *yuj-samādhau* is considered by traditional commentators as the correct etymology. Yoga as concentration implies the gathering of the attention to focus it on a single object of contemplation.

Yoga as *union*, however, is a very

appropriate meaning in the context of Theosophy, since the purpose of theosophical teachings is to help the aspirant to unite, first the lower and higher consciousness, and then the latter with the universal. Ultimately speaking, this union is accomplished by developing a *spiritual* knowledge or perception of the fundamental unity of all existence.

With these definitions in mind, the yoga of Theosophy can be described as a path to the unification of our individual consciousness with the universal, by means of awakening the divine wisdom that is latent in every one of us.

The Goal and the Means

In most spiritual traditions, the aim of the spiritual efforts is to gain personal salvation, be this Heaven, Nirvana, or Liberation. In the theosophical context, however, the aim is not personal. The reason for this is based on the fundamental teaching that individual selves are not “real”, but are temporary reflections of the One Self. As H. P. Blavatsky, one of the founders of the Theosophical Society, wrote:

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There is but ONE SELF in all the infinite Universe, and what we humans call “self” is but the illusionary reflection of the ONE SELF in the heaving waters of Earth. True Occultism is the destruction of the false idea of Self, and therefore true spiritual perfection and knowledge are nothing else but the complete identification of our finite “selves” with the Great All. It follows, therefore, that no spiritual progress at all is possible except by and through the bulk of Humanity. It is only when the whole of Humanity has attained happiness that the individual can hope to become permanently happy — for the individual is an inseparable part of the Whole.¹

Since our personal self is but a fragmentary expression of the universal self, to aspire for the salvation of a fragment while the other fragments are still in the dark is nonsensical. It is like thinking that a finger can be perfectly healthy when the rest of the hand is sick.

What, then, is the motivation of an individual, for him to tread the spiritual path? As we know, the blind cannot lead the blind, or problems cannot be solved at the same level as the problem exists. In other words, to be able to help, we have to be beyond the need of help. The aim of theosophical practice at the level of the individual is to break free from the illusion of separateness, not to enjoy any kind of personal bliss, but because only then can we really help all other expressions of the One to realize Truth.

Let us now examine some general features of this approach. The first point to mention is that the yoga of Theosophy

is a holistic path. Because human experience is part of a complex and multi-leveled process of evolution, no “tricks” such as chanting a particular mantra, visualizing a particular colour, tapping some part of the body, or having faith in a particular person can fulfil human destiny. According to this yoga, the practice must involve the whole field of human endeavour. As can be read in *Light on the Path*:

Seek out the Way. . . . Seek it not by any one road. To each temperament there is one road which seems the most desirable. But the way is not found by devotion alone, by religious contemplation alone, by ardent progress, by self-sacrificing labour, by studious observation of life. None alone can take the disciple more than one step onwards. All steps are necessary to make up the ladder.²

We all have natural inclinations. Some may be intellectual, others devotional, others attracted to practical matters, and so on. We all tend to think that a certain kind of activity, because it feels natural to us, must constitute *the* path. But even though a certain approach may always be predominant in us, the theosophical yoga prescribes that we should make efforts on all aspects of the spiritual life, so that our growth is well-rounded.

Another important feature of this yoga is that its practice must happen, not in retirement — isolated from society, but in the midst of our daily life. Eastern traditions tend to see life merely as an illusion. It is obvious that something illusory is

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devoid of value. If, ultimately speaking, embodied life has no intrinsic value, then retirement from it seems a natural course of action for those who want to discover Truth.

The theosophical view is different. It agrees with the fact that, fundamentally, life is an illusion. But it is not *merely* an illusion. Life is the training ground by means of which the divine spark may unfold all its potentialities. From a certain point of view, we could say that life is a kind of simulation software or virtual reality for the training of the soul. The primary aim of the embodied soul, then, is not to attain liberation, but to evolve. Once the necessary growth is accomplished, liberation naturally ensues because the virtual reality is not needed any longer. From this perspective, daily life is not opposed to the spiritual practice, but becomes its field of action.

A Two-fold Work

What are the aims of this spiritual practice? According to the theosophical view, although the ultimate source of everything is One principle, the manifested universe is pervaded by duality.³ Spirit and matter, consciousness and body are the two aspects of the One, and if we are going to realize this One Self, we need to bring both aspects of our manifested being “in tune” with the Ultimate Reality. For this reason, the yoga of Theosophy aims at working on two aspects: 1) The unfolding of consciousness, and 2) the purification of the vehicles of consciousness.

1) In the theosophical view, human beings are said to be a microcosm, that is, an expression and reflection of the universe.⁴ This means that in human beings are present (at a lower degree) all the elements, forces, states of consciousness, and possibilities that exist in the cosmos. However, when we look at present humanity, it is hard to recognize this fact. The reason for this is that most of the divine possibilities that are expressed in a Master of the Wisdom are still latent in human consciousness.

Thus, an aim of the yoga of Theosophy is to stimulate the unfolding of the powers in consciousness — first the spiritual ones (which express in our lives as what we call wisdom, love, joy, peace, compassion) and then the psychic ones. This allows the spiritually awakened person to become a co-worker of Nature, aiding in the process of evolution.

2) Since consciousness cannot be expressed except through an appropriate vehicle, it is not enough to unfold consciousness. The second aspect of this work, in Annie Besant’s words, is: “self-purification, the purification of the lower nature, until every part of it vibrates perfectly in harmony with the higher.”⁵

Purification of the personal vehicles of consciousness is necessary so that they can respond harmonically to the unfolding consciousness, able to express its divine powers on all the different planes. Thus, the yoga of Theosophy includes a work of purification of the mental, emotional, and physical bodies:

a) Purification of the mental body is attained

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by stimulating in the aspirant an interest for the higher, by opposing the tendency to restlessness and developing a habit of calmness, and by training the mind to focus on the present moment.

b) The work on the emotional body includes the gradual purification of desires, moving from the craving for physical objects on to artistic or intellectual pursuits and interests, and from this to focusing on spiritual goals. Along with this, there must be a movement from self-interest to a universal one. In H. P. Blavatsky's words: "When desire is for the purely abstract — when it has lost all trace or tinge of 'self' — then it has become pure."⁶

c) Finally, the physical body must be purified from grosser materials by encouraging a pure diet and pure life. For this reason, a serious aspirant to follow this yoga should work to gradually adopt a diet that avoids the consumption of recreational drugs, alcohol, and meat, as well as any excesses in daily life.

Three Pillars and One

How is the aspirant going to proceed on this path? In theosophical literature one can find frequent references to three aspects of this discipline: 1) study, 2) meditation, and 3) service. However, for this list to be complete, we need to add a fourth aspect; one that is always present in the literature, although frequently in an implicit form — that of self-transformation.

1) Study has several purposes and dimensions. Most of us are raised with a paradigm based on mundane values and

aims. But these are frequently useless to a spiritual life, when not opposed. One first goal for the study of spiritual literature is to help us gain a perspective of life that is conducive to spiritual living. A second effect of theosophical study is that, by applying our minds to abstract and spiritual matters, the mental and emotional bodies are put into alignment and purified. Also, an interest for higher things is awakened in our consciousness. Another important aim of study is the learning about the path and how to tread it. But there are also other dimensions of study that transcend the books. Study must include our everyday experiences, so that we can distill the spiritual meaning of them, as well as the study of ourselves by means of self-examination.

2) Meditation can be regarded as consisting of two aspects. One is the "sitting" meditation, in which we take some time in our day to isolate ourselves from the environment and look inwardly. This practice ensures that we spend some time to focus on higher things, away from the worries and petty interests of daily life, so that our consciousness becomes comfortable with non-material pursuits. Meditation also serves to bring harmony to the emotional and mental bodies, as well as to awaken higher states of consciousness that are, at first, inaccessible in the midst of the busyness of life.

The second aspect of meditation is, again, our daily life. The state of focus and awareness that we begin to cultivate during our sitting meditation

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has to be gradually extended to our life, so that the whole living becomes a form of meditation. By means of this endeavour, the insights and states of silence and harmony that may be attained in meditation can have a bearing throughout our day.

3) Service, as we have seen, is the ultimate *motivation* for a theosophist's efforts to awaken the *theos-sophia*, or divine wisdom, in him. In addition to this, service is also an essential *means* to tread this path. Study and meditation may become self-centered. A person may be very serious in practicing these disciplines because he or she wants to attain personal liberation from suffering.

According to the theosophical view, however, a person can go only so far if his motivation is self-centered. The very fact that he is striving for his own sake reinforces the mistaken idea that he is separate from the rest. This will obviously prevent him from attaining a state of union with the Ultimate. By making service a part of our lives, we will gradually transcend self-centeredness and begin to live a life where our actions are guided by the greater good.

Service constitutes any action or thought that is done for the welfare of others. It is not limited to feeding the hungry or helping the homeless. These activities are good and useful but, in addition to this, a theosophist should aspire to nurture more than the body. An important field of service is to nourish the mind and souls of people by helping them to better understand life and

themselves. The study of theosophical teachings and the effort to live them are very important foundations for spiritual service. Only by acquiring knowledge and developing wisdom can we "point out the way — however dimly, and lost among the host"⁷ we may be.

4) Finally, "self-transformation" is the endeavour to purify and train the lower vehicles of consciousness while we face the challenges of living, as well as the effort to put into practice the insights that we gain in our study and meditation. It is only then that we begin to use daily life as our training ground.

The Occult Path

The work described so far must be done by the aspirant's own devices, so that he becomes an individual able to stand on his own feet. Even though the Theosophical Society was founded to guide him in this endeavour, *Life* is the great guru in this part of the journey. But once he has attained a level of growth that qualifies him for a further step, and as long as his work is being done for the welfare of humanity, he will enter the occult path under the guidance of one of the Masters of the Wisdom.

This path has been described in theosophical literature in books such as *The Masters and the Path* by C. W. Leadbeater, *The Path of Discipleship* by Annie Besant, and others. An elaboration of the qualifications necessary to become a disciple of the Masters can be found in *At the Feet of the Master* by J. Krishnamurti, which constitutes a good

The Yoga of Theosophy

example of the high ideal put before the aspirant that begins to practice the yoga of Theosophy. This path, however, should not be consciously sought out. It will inevitably present itself to the soul that is ready for it — in this or in a future life. On this path the efforts demanded will be greater, the challenges faced harder, the commitment needed deeper: because he will enter this path as an upright human being and exit it as a saviour of humanity. And this cosmic transformation is no easy matter.

Final Remarks

What has been described here is only

the backbone of the yoga of Theosophy. The actual practices can be found all over the theosophical literature. If Theosophy is to become a positive influence for the spiritual growth of humanity, it is necessary that at least the more serious members of the Theosophical Society make definite efforts to live the theosophical teachings — to the extent that they can at the present moment. This alone produces the alchemical transmutation of knowledge into wisdom. Then, they will have something more powerful than words to share. Then, they will become factors of transformation. ✧

Endnotes

1. H. P. Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, vol. 11, pp. 104–105.
2. Mabel Collins, *Light on the Path*, Part 1, Rules 17, 20.
3. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 15.
4. Ditto, p. 274.
5. Annie Besant, *In the Outer Court*, lecture 1.
6. H. P. Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, vol. 8, p. 129.
7. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, Fragment 2, verse 156.

*** This universe was foreordained by the eternal and changeless Law that causes the periods of rest and activity — the “Days and Nights of Brahma”.**

H. P. Blavatsky
The Secret Doctrine

* The image on the cover of this issue was preceded and inspired by the above quote. Please see cover caption on the Table of Contents.

On True Friendship

JAMES E. TEPFER

WHEN your spirits need a lift, think of the virtues and talents of those around you — one’s energy, another’s modesty, the generosity of a third, something else in a fourth. Nothing is so inspiring and uplifting as the sight of these splendid qualities in our friends. Keep them always in mind.

— Marcus Aurelius

Gandhi once commented that the notion of “best friends” was somewhat suspect. Special friendships tend to reduce themselves to the lowest common denominator. The first victim in the devolution of an initially meaningful bond of friendship is truth. Candor is gradually lost due to the fear of hurt feelings and the prospect of losing an intimate companion over telling unpleasant truths. Alas, loyalty to truth is all too easily replaced by quasi-mindless loyalty to a person. For this reason, Gandhi felt that it is better to try and befriend everyone one encounters than to cultivate a special “best friend”.

The British psychiatrist, Garth Wood, similarly noted in his controversial book, *The Myth of Neurosis*, that the most effective therapy for most people is “moral therapy”. He argued that there are, in reality, only two authentic forms of psychosis that

require the help of a psychoanalyst or a psychiatrist: schizophrenia and manic-depression. Beyond that, most felt needs for therapy arise out of the normal challenges of living and are usually best solved by consulting someone that one knows and trusts. Such a person can be a “true friend” without necessarily being a “best friend”. Wood characterized a “true friend” as one who has earned our confidence and can be fearlessly truthful when needed. Such moral forthrightness is an act of love and is the opposite of “enabling”, that is, of indulging rationalizations and excuses for wrong actions.

At a more fundamental level, the Greek sage, Pythagoras, gave advice on friendship that Gandhi would undoubtedly have endorsed. In Pythagoras’s profound teachings-for-contemplation, he states:

Of all the rest of mankind, make him thy friend who distinguishes himself by his virtues. Always give ear to his mild exhortations and take example from his virtuous and useful actions. Refrain, as far as you can, from spurning thy friend for a slight fault, for power surrounds necessity.

The Golden Verses (Pythagoras)

Pythagoras’s teaching sets the wise preconditions for true friendship. He holds

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On True Friendship

that the basis of all friendship is virtue or character — not shared beliefs, personal charisma nor popularity. “Virtue”, in a Pythagorean sense, is strength of character, the knowledge and power to act justly, with self-restraint and with consummate kindness. When we genuinely admire a person of virtue, we are in actuality “participating” — to some degree — in the supernal qualities of that individual. A virtuous person inspires us and, out of that inspiration, we conceive a sincere wish to emulate him or her. We feel an inner urge to reshape our personality until it is worthy of right relationship with the luminous divine in our friend as well as within ourselves.

Pythagoras (and Gandhi too) encourage us to not only befriend and emulate the worthy, but to beware of spurning them for slight faults. While we can visualize perfection — especially moral perfection — we live in an imperfect world. Faults and mistakes are intrinsic to growth — and

so is self-correction. Thus, it is better to think in terms of perfectibility rather than perfection. For that reason, perceived mistakes or even minor character flaws of those we befriend become an opportunity for learning, not for judging or “sitting in the seat of scorers”. Life is a school and we learn and grow from faults as well as from virtues.

In the most universal sense, the true friend is anyone and everyone that is worthy of spiritual and moral admiration. They are recognized heroic individuals who Pythagoras celebrates as “full of goodness and light”. We might never personally know these heroes and heroines of the spirit. They might be only historical figures like Lincoln, Gandhi and Anne Frank. Or, they might be inspiring legendary figures such as Rama or King Arthur of the Round Table. No matter. Once we invite the virtuous into the welcoming cathedral of our minds, they can become, to us, “the best of friends”. ✧

**I'm a success today because I had a friend who believed in me and
I didn't have the heart to let him down.**

Abraham Lincoln

The Seven Rays in Context

RAFAEL MARQUES DE ALBUQUERQUE

I HAPPENED to have contact with the concept of the seven rays before I had any notion of what Theosophy was. It is not surprising, since this idea became very popular amongst New Age groups that emerged in the 20th century, often placing the seven rays more in the spotlight than the Theosophical Society does. The concept sounds easy to understand: human beings — as well as other creatures — are divided into seven broad categories, with psychological and spiritual consequences. It helps spiritual seekers to understand themselves, and to construct a sense of diversity regarding spiritual approaches. However, since I first heard of it, I had a feeling of incompleteness. Something seemed to be missing in the explanations about the seven rays, and it made me intrigued.

After searching for a while, the famous book from Ernest Wood published in 1925, *The Seven Rays*,¹ came to my hands. It presented a version that was, to me, the most organized and intelligible system. Yet, the autobiography of the same author — entitled *Is This Theosophy?*² — confirmed my initial intuition that

there was more about the seven rays than its surface. The concept seems to hold considerable esoteric depth. In other words, its hidden meanings are vital. This conclusion motivated me to conduct some research on its history, seeking a wider perspective.

Blavatsky is the obvious author to understand the roots of the modern version of the seven rays. She affirms this concept is found in different religions, especially in their more esoteric traditions. She wrote, in the *Secret Doctrine*, published in 1888:³

There are seven chief groups of such Dhyāni-Chohans, which groups will be found and recognized in every religion, for they are the primeval SEVEN RAYS. Humanity, occultism teaches us, is divided into seven distinct groups and their subdivisions, mental, spiritual, and physical.
(p. 573)

Research on the history of the seven rays in the religious scriptures would be a different line of research. However, my interest in the last years and in this article was in the concept of the seven rays in

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the theosophical movement and in the New Age groups that emerged later. Thus, Blavatsky's writings are an obvious starting point. In one of her most explicit quotes in this behalf, she wrote:³

The star under which a human Entity is born, says the Occult teaching, will remain forever its star, throughout the whole cycle of its incarnations in one manvantara. *But this is not his astrological star.* The latter is concerned and connected with the *personality*, the former with the INDIVIDUALITY.

The "Angel" of that Star, or the Dhyāni-Buddha, will be either the guiding, or simply the presiding "Angel", so to say, in every new rebirth of the monad, *which is part of his own essence*, though his vehicle, man, may remain forever ignorant of this fact. The adepts have each their Dhyāni-Buddha, their elder "twin-Soul," and they know it, calling it "Father-Soul," and "Father-Fire." It is only at the last and supreme initiation, however, that they learn it when placed face to face with the bright "Image".
(p. 572–573)

From this quote and others, we can conclude the rays are related to our connection to one of the seven primeval spiritual ancestors, to whom we share some of our essence. She also suggests that it is common for people to remain ignorant of the identity of their rays, and that it is revealed in advanced stages of the spiritual path — in the supreme initiation of adepts. From this, we can infer the reason why Blavatsky did not elaborate this

topic in her writings. She did not explain which are the identities of each of one the seven rays, possibly because this kind of knowledge was secret and, perhaps, of little use, unless the disciple reaches advanced stages of spiritual growth.

She mentions the concept several times in her writings, using different words (angels, rays, stars, spirits, Dhyāni-Buddhas or Chohans, lamps of fire burning before the throne, and so on) to the point that sometimes it is difficult to be sure when she is talking about the seven rays or an analogous idea. Either way, she did not give us details about it, and it seems the topic remained clouded for some decades.

There is reason to believe, however, the seven rays remained as a significant teaching in the oral tradition of the advanced students of the Theosophical Society. We can find mentions of it, for instance, in the esoteric writings of T. Subba Row, an advanced disciple of the masters and contemporary to Blavatsky. Those writings were only published decades after his death. In fact, it supports the claim that the seven rays were kept only for advanced students, as he wrote:⁴

The Voice comes to you all of a sudden when you do not expect it, and gives you important directions. It is when a man is getting near Adeptship that it comes. It tells you the inmost nature of your own Logos, points out from what Ray you have sprung and tells you what Ray you are to proceed to.
(p. 534)

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Every Initiate must find out his own Ray. Up to the time of the sounding of the Voice the mode of procedure is common to all people. The special directions for each particular Ray are given by the Voice.

(p. 535)

From his description, we can associate other writings with the concept of the seven rays, such as *Light on the Path*⁵, published in 1885. In its 20th aphorism, it is said “seek it [the way] by making the profound obeisance of the soul to the dim star that burns within. Steadily, as you watch and worship, its light will grow stronger. Then you may know you have found the beginning of the way”; and in its comment: “When you have found the beginning of the way the star of your soul will show its light.”

Considering those explanations, it becomes clear why the teachings of the seven rays were not publicized. They become relevant in a specific moment in the spiritual journey, probably very far to reach for most of humanity. Besides, when it manifests, the disciple begins the stage in which directions come more clearly from within rather than from books — in a sense, elaborating the matter in books would be pointless. In my research so far, it seems the details of this matter remained occult from the public during the 19th century.

My assumption was that Ernest Wood’s book from 1925 was the first to explain the details of this matter, but I was mistaken. When I was the librarian of the English Section’s Nottingham Lodge,

I came across a curious book, *The Seven Rays of Development*⁶, by Arthur H. Ward, published in 1910 by the Theosophical Publishing Society in London. It is the first public writing I know of that explains one by one the seven rays, and it presents a version that reminds us of the descriptions that became popular a few decades later.

Respectively, the rays were named as those of (i) power, (ii) healing, (iii) action, (iv) devotion, (v) knowledge, (vi) imagination, and (vii) discipleship. The reader who is familiarized will recognize differences from what is widely known today, but the similarities are enough to perceive both versions are related. I have no clue of how much impact this concise book by Ward had in its time, and no theosophist I talked to seems to have ever heard of it, or its author. The most intriguing part of the book, however, is the description of how the author gained access to this knowledge. He said:

... several friends and myself, working independently, got into communication with the other side, and obtained some information of an interesting nature with regard to past births, after-death states, our different ways of growth, and such matters. Many of the ideas tentatively put forward in the following papers were arrived at in this way, and I have been told in the course of a communication that I “understand the question of the Rays of Development correctly”. (p. 7–8)

In other words, the author claims he got access by psychic means — each of

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his friends researching independently — later receiving a confirmation on whether the information obtained was correct. The disciple investigates a matter with her or his intuition, and the master confirms. This method of occult learning is not new in the Theosophical Society. A previous episode of the same method can be seen when one of the Masters wrote to A. P. Sinnett:⁷ “Though I am obliged to withhold information about many points, yet if you should work out any of the problems by yourself, it will be my duty to tell you so.” (ML, no. 14). In other words, once the seeker manages to sort out by herself some occult knowledge, the Master may manifest as to confirm her discovery. This detail from Ward’s introduction would go unnoticed, but it is noteworthy because a similar episode would be reported in another book, fifteen years later, in 1925.

There is, however, another book worth mentioning before 1925. The famous theosophist, Alice Bailey, published *Letters on Occult Meditation* in 1922.⁸ According to her, the Letters were received between 1919 and 1920, written by the mysterious Tibetan Master who is commonly identified as Djwal Khul. In his meditation instructions, the ray of each person should be taken into consideration in order to establish her practice. Although his descriptions of each ray in the letters are brief, we can find the definition that would later become popular; the rays were associated, respectively, to (i) power, (ii) love-wisdom, (iii) intelligent activity, or adaptability, (iv) harmony,

(v) concrete knowledge, (vi) devotion and (vii) ceremonial magic. Alice Bailey would write extensively about the same version of the seven rays in the 1930s and 1940s, probably becoming the most known reference regarding this theme.

The seven rays described by Bailey and her teacher are possibly the most known versions, today. They are iconic of a meaningful difference when compared to earlier writings. Although in the quotations of the seven rays from the 19th century they are secretive and reserved for a particular — and quite advanced — stage of the spiritual path, in the 20th century the rays became a more accessible concept. They were associated with temperaments and personality traits, becoming a tool for self-knowledge to regular seekers — both in a mundane perspective and in spiritual progression. It helps one to understand her own mission in this lifetime and so on.

Around the same time, interesting events were occurring in India and Australia. The precise year was not mentioned, but Charles W. Leadbeater described, in his 1925 book titled *The Masters and the Path*:⁹

Mr Cooper-Oakley and I and a Hindu brother were sitting talking on the roof at Adyar in the very early days, . . . and there came to us suddenly the Master Djwal Kul, who was at that time the chief pupil of the Master Koot Hoomi. . . . [T]hat day this question of the Rays came up. Mr Cooper-Oakley, in his characteristic way, said: “Oh, please, Master, will you tell us

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all about the Rays?" There was a twinkle in our Teacher's eye as he said: "Well, I cannot tell you all about them until you have reached a very high Initiation. Will you have what I can tell you, which will be partial and inevitably misleading, or will you wait until you can be told the whole thing?" . . . He said "I cannot tell you any more than that, for I am bound by certain pledges; but if your intuition can make out more I will tell you whether you are right." (p. 228–229)

According to him, the information given by the Master was the table he made available in his book, describing for each ray a general characteristic, a characteristic magic and the last religion. Leadbeater admits he could not fully understand the mysterious table, as the Master predicted. It is noteworthy the same pattern described by Ward regarding the method of occult learning based on intuition and confirmation of a master, as well as the indication of Master Djwal Kul as the source of the knowledge, converging to Bailey's claims.

The autobiography of Ernest Wood plays a key role in understanding this period. Wood was a dedicated theosophist, very close to Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater. He used to help them edit their books. During the writing of *The Masters and the Path*, Wood was in Australia helping Leadbeater, and he claims he wrote approximately half of the book himself. According to his autobiography, while they were writing the book, Leadbeater was surprised

by Wood's knowledge on the mysterious theme of the seven rays. Wood said: ²

He was much astonished and asked me where I got this knowledge of a rather obscure subject. I told him that before leaving India I had been now and then receiving what seemed to me like internal communications on this subject of the rays or types of men. Sometimes there had been a voice, but generally ideas had been, as it were, insinuated into my mind, quite distinctly with the feeling of the presence of an intelligence other than my own. In this way I had accumulated a quantity of notes on the subject. . . .

Late one night, as I was travelling along in an otherwise empty carriage on the elevated railway in Chicago . . . I saw, or thought I saw, the Master standing there; and he said "Do not be troubled about that information about the rays. It is quite correct. I gave it to you." When I had recounted this to Bishop Leadbeater, he said: "Well, we will not do any more of my work until you have written a book of your own on the seven rays." (p. 290-291)

If we consider, for the sake of this article's review, that Arthur Ward described the first detailed version of the seven rays accessible to the wide public, and Alice Bailey described the second, we could say Ernest Wood proposed the third. His exposition of the theme, strongly rooted in his knowledge on Hinduism, could be summarized by the main attribute and the work in the society for each ray, respectively: (i) freedom

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(government), (ii) union (philanthropy), (iii) comprehension (philosophy), (iv) harmony (interpretation), (v) truth (science), (vi) goodness (religion), and (vii) beauty (art). Personally, Wood's version has much of my appreciation. In fact, his version motivated me to undertake the research on the history of the seven rays, in order to formulate the lecture presented initially in Nottingham Lodge (UK) in 2014, and later in several cities in Brazil, as well as the writing of this article.

The concept of the seven rays described by the modern theosophical movement influenced various groups. During the 20th century, other writers described their own variations of the seven rays, in both the context of the Theosophical Society and others. With regard to the latter, there are authors such as Guy Ballard, leader of the "*I AM*" *Activity*, which emerged around the notion of the ascended masters during the 1930s. In the same line, Geraldine Innocence founded the *Bridge to Freedom* movement in 1951, and Mark and Elizabeth Prophet founded the *Summit Lighthouse* in 1958.

These are three examples of New Age movements that used the theosophical concept of the seven rays as a structuring foundation for their teachings. Typically, in addition to the psychological and spiritual dimensions, the teachings of those groups described many elevated spiritual beings, and the seven rays play a key role in organizing them in an ordered hierarchy. The colors of each ray — something Ernest Wood and earlier versions

ignored — became very relevant; even though the colors vary depending on the author. For the scope of this article, the descriptions of the rays in those and other New Age groups could be clustered as the fourth version of the seven rays.

One of the most relevant later writings associated with Theosophical Society on the matter was Geoffrey Hodson's book, *The Seven Human Temperaments*,¹⁰ published in 1952. His compact book makes the matter quite accessible, emphasizing the psychological implications of the rays rather than the esoteric tone we could find in the early writings.

He offers a very detailed table of correspondences, and from his writings one can tell he was also inspired by the table supposedly given to Leadbeater by Master Djwal Kul. This can be concluded by analyzing his correspondences between rays and religions, for instance.

However, it could be argued that his system as a whole looks more like Bailey's than Wood's. Curiously, Hodson vaguely mentions a few authors as the sources of the teachings he explains, including Blavatsky, Leadbeater, George Arundale, C. Jinarājādāsa and *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*. However, he cites neither Ernest Wood nor Alice Bailey. Hypothetically, Hodson might have wanted to emphasize members who were more accepted in the Theosophical Society at that time. Alice Bailey created her own *Arcane School* and Ernest Wood became quite critical of the expectations created around J. Krishnamurti in the 1920s, and left the

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Theosophical Society after he lost the election for international president in 1934.

In this article I outlined my own historical research on the seven rays, and it is surely limited to the material I could find. Rather than assuming this is the complete history, the study should be understood as an invitation for the reader to reflect on the intriguing episodes around the concept, perhaps to encourage one to believe there are still occult layers in the seven rays concept, and to wonder

about the truth behind the words. Hopefully, my historical notes allowed the reader to see how the concept of the seven rays departed from a mysterious notion for advanced students in the 19th century to become a key concept in the Theosophical movement and New Age groups in the 20th century, with many implications, both psychological and in how we understand the hierarchies of beings. History, one could argue, is a powerful tool to develop discrimination. ✧

Endnotes

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7. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, transcribed and compiled by A. Trevor Barker. Facsimile Ed., Theosophical University Press, 1992.
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**Shines the last age, the next with hope is seen,
To-day slinks poorly off unmarked between:
Future or Past no richer secret folds,
O friendless Present! than thy bosom holds.**

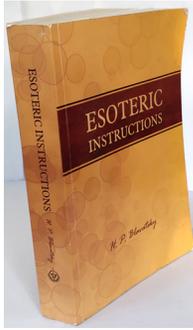
Ralph Waldo Emerson
"Heri, Cras, Hodie"

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

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 in 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

Books of Interest



ESOTERIC INSTRUCTIONS by H. P. Blavatsky, compiled with introduction and footnotes by Michael Gomes, Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai. 2015, 356 pp., INR 400.

Michael Gomes is a Theosophical Society (TS) historian and author of books like *The Dawning of the Theosophical Movement*, *HPB Teaches — An Anthology*, and others. This compilation is the result of his long years of study and research of H. P. Blavatsky's (HPB) teachings. The introduction begins with a quote by Annie Besant: "The Theosophical Society has never been a mere exoteric society. . . . It has been ever since its foundation a ladder, with its feet on earth but its top in heavenly places. Anyone stepping off the ground on to its first rung might climb upwards. . . . The obstacles to climbing lay in the incapacity of the member, not in the absence of the necessary steps."

The book consists of Instruction Nos. 1 to 3 and notes on some oral teachings. Instruction 1 unequivocally states: "As soon as anyone pledges himself as a 'Probationer', certain occult effects ensue. Of these the first is the *throwing outward* of everything latent in the nature of the man: his faults, habits, qualities or subdued desires, whether good, bad, or indifferent. . . . THIS IS AN IMMUTABLE

LAW IN THE DOMAIN OF THE OCCULT."

HPB adds: "The ancient occult axiom, 'Know Thyself', must be familiar to every student; but few if any have apprehended the real meaning of this wise exhortation. . . . You all know your earthly pedigree, but who of you has ever traced all the links of heredity — astral, psychic, and spiritual, which go to make you what you are? . . . Students are therefore warned that unless they are prepared to take everything in the spirit of truth and Nature, and forget the code of false propriety bred by hypocrisy and the shameful misuse of primeval functions, which were once considered divine — they had better not study esotericism."

In early 19th century the only spiritual book available in the West, especially in America was the King James version of the Holy Bible. After the advent of the TS in 1875 there was a sea change, and the West took a serious interest in the Eastern philosophies, religions, and sacred books, including the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The sacred syllable "OM" was made familiar to the Western world through HPB's books on Theosophy. This book also mentions the real meaning of the seven-syllable phrase, OM MANI PADME HUM.

The book has colour plates and diagrams to help the reader understand the teachings. Every serious student of Theosophy should read and follow the instructions given by the great teacher. ✧

K. DINAKARAN

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