

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Editor: *Mr Tim Boyd*

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Founded 17 November 1875

President: Mr Tim Boyd

Vice-President: Dr Deepa Padhi

Secretary: Ms Marja Artamaa

Treasurer: Ms Nancy Secrest

Headquarters: ADYAR, CHENNAI (MADRAS) 600 020, INDIA

Vice-President: ivp.hq@ts-adyar.org

Secretary: secy.hq@ts-adyar.org

Treasurer: treasury.hq@ts-adyar.org

Adyar Library and Research Centre: alrc.hq@ts-adyar.org

Theosophical Publishing House: tphindia@gmail.com // www.adyarbooks.com

Editorial Office: editorialoffice@gmail.com, Website: <http://www.ts-adyar.org>

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.

O Hidden Light

TIM BOYD

RECENTLY I was invited to say something about the second verse of the Universal Invocation, “O Hidden Light shining in every creature.” As with most members of the Theosophical Society (TS), it is a verse with which I am quite familiar. Since the earliest stages of my membership and throughout my association with the TS, I have continually encountered it. At the TS international headquarters in Adyar and throughout the Indian Section every meeting begins with it, and many groups around the world take the same approach. The entire invocation is:

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

The first three lines are constant in all languages and settings. The last two lines are occasionally altered to read, “May *all* who feel themselves as one with Thee, know *they* are therefore one with every other.” Many people feel that the masculine “himself” is needlessly exclusive.

Just to give a little background: in 1923 Annie Besant was asked to compose a meditation for a meeting of a group within the TS. She recalled, “I wrote them a few lines for daily repetition, morning and evening, as I did not feel I could write a meditation. . . . Meditation seems to me to be a very individual thing, . . . the most

I could do was to suggest a theme.” In the process of writing the prayer/invocation she said it “chanted itself”. The “theme” she suggested for the group’s use has since gone on to become a mantra used in personal practice across languages and borders.

Extended exposure to anything has a twofold effect; over time it — whether a person, a place, or even words of power — becomes familiar to us. The danger is that familiarity can lead to taking things for granted. In the case of the mantra, it can become mere words repeated from habit with little attention to the power that originally attracted us. Repetition without awareness can actually have a dulling effect. However, it is the nature of powerful things that their power is not fully dependent on our wholehearted involvement. Annie Besant described the effect of the Universal Prayer in this way: “It sends forth successive waves of colour, pulsing outwards from the speaker, if rhythmically intoned or chanted, whether by the outer or the inner voice, and if some thousands would send these out over successive areas, we might create a very powerful effect on the mental atmosphere.” The mantra also has an effect on the one chanting it. Although full attention and involvement magnify its effects, repeated, regular exposure unconsciously deepens our connection.

It is a normal experience in moments

O Hidden Light

of crisis that forgotten prayers from one's were no atheists in the trenches. Men who in undisturbed moments cursed the idea of the Divine, found themselves reciting the prayers from their youth out loud — pleading for Divine protection.

When I was a child, my family visited the Vatican. There were many impressive sights, but one made a lasting impression. In St Peter's Basilica there is a bronze statue of St Peter, founder of the church. It is an ancient statue that dates to the 13th century. He is seated giving the sign of blessing with his right hand and holding the keys to heaven in his left. His right foot is slightly extended. Over the centuries it has been the custom of many of the faithful who enter the church to bow and to kiss his foot. The result has been that the metal of the foot is worn smooth and thin. The sandal and toes of the left foot are clearly articulated, but the right is smooth and uniform. The lips are some of the most delicate parts of the body, but the softest wears away the hardest over time. Words of power, engaged with over time have the effect of thinning the veil that separates us from our deeper potentials.

So, what is the light that is “shining in every creature”, and why is it described as “hidden”? In spiritual traditions throughout history light is regarded as the active principle of Spirit. In the Bible “Let there be light” marks the beginning of the creation process. Enlightenment is the result of removing the barriers to that light. In the legend of the Buddha, when he had his experience of enlightenment the first people who saw him could not make out

his form. They were blinded by the light emanating from him. Medieval paintings of the Christian saints always show them with a halo of light around their heads. It is both a stylistic choice and an accurate depiction of what is seen in the presence of holy people.

In *The Voice of the Silence*, H.P. Blavatsky is more specific. “All is impermanent in man except the pure bright essence of Ālaya [the Universal Soul]. Man is its crystal ray; a beam of light immaculate within, a form of clay material upon the lower surface. That beam is thy life-guide and thy true Self, the Watcher and the silent Thinker, the victim of thy lower self.” Essentially, light is the nature of our being and it is hidden by the “lower self” — the “form of clay material”. In the same way that something can be covered by a thin sheet, or a heavy blanket, or even buried deep within the earth, the light that is our being is obscured by the density of our personalities. In the fairy tales of many cultures, stories are told of buried treasure, often protected by fierce creatures. The hero's task is to defeat the guardians and bring up the treasure. The protecting beings are the fragments of our personalities that guard and enable the continuing dominance of the separative ego — all of the doubts, self-centered thoughts, negativity, and personal desires that prevent access to the “true Self”. At the human stage of the hero's journey, the conscious activity of revealing the Hidden Light is possible. Spiritual self-transformation is the name for it. This revelation leads to the perception of the same light in all things.

O Hidden Light

In the Mahatma Letters, the statement is made that each one of us is “continually peopling his current in space with a world of his own, crowded with the offspring of his fancies, desires, impulses, and passions, a current which reacts upon any sensitive or nervous organization which comes in contact with it in proportion to its dynamic intensity. The Buddhist calls this his “Skandha”, the Hindu gives it the name of “Karma”, the Adept evolves these shapes consciously, other men throw them off unconsciously.” To the extent that our “peopling” process is unconscious and desire-based the appropriate karmic response follows.

In the opening of the little book *As a Man Thinketh*, by James Allen, there is a poem. A portion of it reads, “He [Man] thinks in secret, and it comes to pass: Environment is but his looking-glass.” Many people lament the conditions of their lives, giving no thought to their role in creating those conditions. It would be naive to suggest that it is possible for anyone to control all of the influences in their life. The weather, vast social and economic conditions, natural disasters, cultural pressures, and wars are just some of the things that sweep across millions of people regardless of the quality of their individual thoughts and actions. Although each person plays a part with their infinitesimal contribution to the collective thought current, beyond the personal karma we create our

capacity to affect the whole has limits.

The basis for the powerful effect of mantra is not only that it awakens sleeping latent potentials, but that it connects us to the one real source of power. Unity, oneness, brotherhood, interdependence, interconnection, even inter-being are words used to describe this source. The motto of the Theosophical Society, “There is no Religion (Dharma) higher than Truth”, is another indicator of that source. The power of the Universal Prayer is rooted in the fact that we live in a responsive universe. This is the reason it is also called the Universal Invocation; literally we invoke, we “call upon”, the Hidden Life, Light, and Love. In the stillness of our minds, the quiet of our hearts, we call out; we recognize the transformative presence of a shared Universal Soul and feel ourselves “as one” with it. What begins as an act of imagination, over time and with proper attention, becomes our life experience. We come to know in a way that goes beyond mere intellect that we “are one with every other”.

There is an ancient mantra that is quoted at the opening of J. Krishnamurti’s first book, *At the Feet of the Master*. It is known as the *pavamāna* mantra. Much like the Universal Prayer, it is a calling out for the experience of the Real.

From the unreal lead me to the Real.

From darkness lead me to Light.

From death lead me to Immortality. ✧

Brotherhood is an ideal better understood by example than precept!

Paramahansa Yogananda

Contemporary Science: Facts, Ideas, and Questions — I

RAJARAM NITYANANDA

I MAY be a mature scientist but I am just a beginner in Theosophy and have read the fundamental objectives. Any scientist can certainly relate to the objectives which refer to science and to the laws of Nature. Here, you will get a lot of science, a lot of laws of Nature, but suitably adapted to this theosophical audience. These are very wide, universal, human concerns. One reason to revisit science is that there has been a lot of progress since the Society was founded and, in fact, major progress in the 21st century. This is true in the area of astronomy which I am most familiar with, but more so perhaps in the area of biology and the evolution of life on Earth.

Science is beginning to answer questions like “where does our planet come from”, “are there others like it”, and “given a planet, are we going to get life on it”. We can even ask: “Given life on a planet, is it going to produce theosophical societies, conventions, and so on?” One reason for looking at things on

an astronomical scale and on a planet-wide scale is, it gives us a proper feel for where we are situated and how unique we, as humans, may or may not be in the universe.

Another practical reason for looking at science is that it gives rise to technology, and technology shapes and dominates our world, whether we like it or not. Of course, without technologies like the internet I could not even have prepared this lecture, and at this point let me acknowledge the source of many of the pictures I will be showing you — the famous Wikipedia. But there is another darker side to technology and one has to keep track of it for human welfare. Even someone who is anti-technology has to look at it, at least in the spirit of “know thy enemy”.

I will start with a dose of astronomy, tracing where planets like ours come from. Then I will turn to biological evolution in general, and in particular the last tiny bit of some 300,000 years where we

Dr Rajaram Nityananda is Simons Visiting Professor of Physics at the Int'l Centre for Theoretical Sciences, Bangalore, a wing of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. This article is based on the Theosophy-Science Lecture delivered at the Theosophical Society Adyar, Chennai, on 1 January 2024.

as human beings have sprung. Then we will move to the basic physical laws. These are deceptively simple — a few equations which can be written down on a sheet of paper. A famous inventor of one of those equations wrote them down and said the rest is chemistry. But clearly it is a giant step: to go from the basic laws to the real world we see around us. It is an enormous task and one should not underestimate this work, simply because it does not carry the “fundamental” label. That is why we need concepts like complexity, structure, order, which help us to go from basic laws to the real world. Some things may be just too complex for us to grasp. Finally, we move to technology and what it is doing to us.

Fifty years ago, we had no direct evidence of any planetary system other than our own. There is the so-called Copernican principle which warns us against thinking we are unique — we know there are a huge number of stars like the Sun. It was reasonable to assume that some of these stars had planets around them but astronomers did not have the tools to find those planets. That situation has changed radically. The number of known planets — all kinds, but even earthlike planets — keeps increasing as more and more telescopes are turned towards more and more stars. So, I have just picked at random a particular planetary system which is not ours. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TRAPPIST-1

It has this fancy name “Trappist-1”, but that is just the sense of humor of astronomers and has nothing to do with

the monastic order of that name. It comes from the acronym of a telescope used to discover the planet. There are seven planets going around the central star in this system. The evidence comes in two forms. When a planet crosses the surface of a star, when viewed from a distance, the light from the star will dim a little bit. For example, if we were far away from the solar system and located in the right place, when Jupiter crosses the Sun the light from the Sun would come down by a factor of 1% that astronomers can measure, and this would happen every twelve years. This is called the transit method. If we are not in that plane we will not see the transit, but astronomers have a simple solution. They observe millions of stars, so for some of them, they will be lucky and pick up the transiting planets. This by itself will tell us how big the planet is, but not how much it weighs. Both are needed to calculate its density and tell if it is made of rock or ice.

Another method is to measure the motion of the central star. We know a planet orbits a star because the star pulls on the planet and the planet pulls on the star with exactly the same force. The star is far heavier; so it moves in a tiny orbit, compared to the planet. The planets move at the rate of kilometers per second but the central stars move at speeds measured in meters per second. Once we can detect these tiny movements of a star, we can pick up all the planets around that star, each pulling in its own way. Thus, we know that there are seven planets around this particular star. I will not go

into the evidence in such depth for many of the other stories that I will be telling you, but believe me, there is a lot of confirmation. Scientists are not a monolithic group; so, if one group claims something, five other groups will try to disprove it, and then, if it still survives, you can probably believe it.

Stars live in galaxies. Now, we have gone up a great deal in scale. The distance from the Earth to the Sun can be measured by the amount of time it takes light to travel, about eight minutes; the nearest star Proxima Centauri is just over four light-years away; and our galaxy, the Milky Way, is a hundred thousand light-years across — that is the kind of scaling up we encounter. <wikipedia.org/wiki/Galaxy>. On zooming outwards, there are a large number of such galaxies, called a cluster, and many millions of years for light to cross this system. <wikipedia.org/wiki/Galaxy_cluster>.

Let us zoom out even further. One of the nice things about astronomy is that as you look farther and farther away, you are not only doing geography but also history because the light that you see now left that place billions of years ago to reach you.

Alfred P. Sloan was a rich American gentleman who kindly contributed money for a 2.5-metre telescope which started work in the year 2000 and still going strong. Hundreds of astronomers, a consortium of universities, came together. Instead of looking at individual objects, this telescope looks at every object in

one-third of the whole sky. For a large collection of such objects, one has the direction and the distance, and can plot them in three dimensions. Each dot in this picture, <mapoftheuniverse.net>, is a galaxy.

So, you are now looking at the Universe on a scale of two billion years. You can see the distribution of galaxies is not uniform — there are large empty regions, separated by crowded regions, with strange shapes called filaments and walls. This pattern is now fairly well understood. There is a computer simulation called the FLAMINGO — again a flamboyant name given by scientists who worked very hard, putting all the physics they knew of these galaxies into a computer, how they attract each other and so on, to see if it would generate these patterns <tinyurl.com/mpjt89p4>. By and large the simulation reproduced what is observed.

What were the assumptions that they made about the formation of galaxies and what was the basis for those assumptions? That is there in this picture of the whole sky in radio waves, <tinyurl.com/28a2jr75>, and now we are zooming back some thirteen billion years. One of the remarkable discoveries of the late 20th century is that if you look at radio waves of a few millimeters' wavelength, you are seeing them directly from when the universe was a thousand times smaller, from every direction in the sky. The colors on this picture are just a code, representing how strong they are. The strength of the radio waves is measured

by temperature — the reds are regions of higher temperature and the blues of lower temperature. The deviations seem large but actually they are extremely small. The average temperature is three degrees above Absolute Zero. What is shown is the deviations which are 100,000 times smaller. This observation shows that at that time, there were no stars, no galaxies, just, almost uniform gas with tiny excesses and deficiencies of matter and of temperature. That is the information that goes into the computers and then gravity does the rest, pulling in matter where there is a small excess, removing it from where there is a deficiency, and creating the huge contrasts that we saw in the earlier Sloan picture — voids surrounded by denser regions of galaxies.

Now, enough of cosmology. Running these pictures in reverse, we come from the hot, dense, early universe, to our planet, our home. Actually, this is our home in more than one sense, because this picture, <tinyurl.com/yysu9zn2>, taken from Chandrayaan-2, shows Africa, the home of humanity. There is good evidence that the Earth was formed about four and a half billion years ago, and that some object maybe the size of Mars collided with it and pushed out some material which became the moon. Of course everything was extremely hot, extremely inhospitable to life, and in particular the atmosphere did not have oxygen. What is the first evidence of life we have? This picture, <wikipedia.org/wiki/Stromatolite>, is a section of a rock called a stromatolite, found today in

various saline pools in Australia. They are clearly of biological origin. You can actually see the organisms which form the layers, in currently living stromatolites. So, one assumes the fossil also harboured life, even though we do not see the organisms. People have learned how to find the dates of these things. This one is 3.5 billion years old, so only 1 billion years after the Earth was formed. The evidence is indirect, but it is the best we have for the date of the first life.

The next picture is the famous “Tree of Life” <evogeneao.com/en/learn/tree-of-life>. The root of the tree represents the first living thing, a common ancestor for all life. The outer part is the present epoch, and along that are arranged different kinds of life. On one side, we start with bacteria and keep moving to more complex forms till on the other side we have mammals and humans. Every moment of time is represented by a layer in this tree. As we go away from the root, we see more diverse organisms coming in. The fish start only some 370 million years ago, which is quite small compared to 3.5 billion years. Before that there were no fish. So, there was something which gave rise to the fish.

In this and succeeding diagrams we will see lines moving outward which represent some form of life. Sometimes the lines branch out which means different species are formed. Sometimes the lines end which means those species go extinct. This is based on the fossil record, and more recently on DNA. So, let us zoom into the immediate past. A mere

250 million years back you get birds, mammals, and so on.

Now, let me draw attention to this line at 66 million years ago where you see two things happen. You see the mammals suddenly increasing in number and then you also see many lines coming to an abrupt end — the dinosaurs. This is called a mass extinction. There were earlier mass extinctions, but in this case, we do know that it was caused by an astronomical event.

Our solar system has many smaller bodies, asteroids or even rocks of a few kilometres in size or smaller. Some of their orbits could cross that of the Earth. Of course, for a collision they also have to be at the same place in the orbit as the Earth which does not happen very often fortunately; but it does happen. Sixty-six million years ago, one of these hit the Earth <wikipedia.org/wiki/Cretaceous-Paleogene_extinction_event>.

There is ample evidence in a crater off the coast of Mexico. All kinds of changes in minerals in the appropriate layer of the geological record all over the Earth tell us that this event did occur and the fossil record says the dinosaurs came to an abrupt end. This is what made it possible for the mammals, and ultimately us humans, to appear. This raises the question: if this completely contingent event had not happened, would we be here? Some other organisms might have been here calling themselves “we”. This is an interesting, well-established connection between astronomy and biology. Many people are reconstructing it in exquisite

detail. After the impact, for fifteen years the entire atmosphere was full of dust; plants could not grow; and of course, whatever ate the plants and the rest of the animals in the food chain could not survive.

Let us zoom in still more to the extreme tip of the “Tree of Life” diagram, right after the mass extinction. We have the monkeys, the apes. We have the new-world monkeys and the old-world monkeys, which were separated by the drift of the continents. We started talking of billions of years, then hundreds of millions, then millions, now we are down to hundreds of thousands of years. Let us say 300,000 years and this is our human family tree.

What is interesting is that up to around 30,000 years ago, our cousins the Neanderthals were still there. They have entered popular culture as some kind of rough, uncivilized cavemen. Recent evidence shows that that is not quite correct. They had art in their caves. This is recent enough to find fossils to extract DNA, we can compare the DNA across different samples, so there is a wealth of information. There is the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Germany, which carries out studies of this kind. We also see some lines crossing over from Neanderthals to our line and with some percentage written on them, say 1.6%. It is firmly established that there was actual interbreeding. They were not a different species in the sense of crossing a horse and a donkey and getting mules, where mules are not

fertile. In this case it is very clear that the Neanderthals' and our genes were mixed, and the offspring were fertile.

Then, in the 21st century, yet another branch of this family tree was found called Denisovans, derived from fossils found in the Denisova Cave in Siberia. Interestingly, Denisov is not the paleontologist who discovered them but a monk who meditated in the cave. Perhaps he chose it because it was peaceful and undisturbed, as were the fossils there. It is amazing that just finding a fragment of a finger and extracting DNA and then comparing it with other DNA, scientists could construct this tree.

The best analogy I can give is the way that linguists reconstruct a tree of languages. Linguists can take two languages today, look at their vocabulary, the grammar, and say how close they are to each other. They can then define a kind of distance between the languages, then take the close pairs, and find what is common to them. It usually points to an ancestor language which may have gone extinct. In historic times we would have records of that as well. Then they look at the next level of ancestor languages compare them in terms of distance and keep going. In fact, in the case of languages, many Indian languages have been traced to something called Proto-Indo-European (PIE). But that is not the only family. In fact, the Tamil language belongs to a different family whose origin we do not fully know.

Looking at the branching of the DNA tree, we have people starting in Africa, a

lot of them staying on there, one branch goes west to Europe, one comes east, part of it going as far as the Pacific Islands [<cdn.sci.news/images/enlarge/image_1624_2e-Neanderthals.jpg>](https://cdn.sci.news/images/enlarge/image_1624_2e-Neanderthals.jpg). This tree is constructed by comparing DNA samples from humans today. We can even assign approximate dates to these branchings because DNA does not remain the same; it mutates and we get so many changes every thousand years — there is a molecular clock. There is a lot of confidence built into tools like these now, because of consistency checks.

This tree has some relevance to the aims of the Theosophical Society. There were words, like “race”, used in the statement, based on the knowledge at that time. In modern biology there is no clear notion of race. If you actually look at the genes there was enormous mixing, which is why we can actually trace this tree. Of course, there are obvious differences, but the obvious meaning of someone being taller with fair skin is simply that they lost the genes which protected them against skin cancer in the tropics because they did not need them anymore. Also, maybe there was a population of cattle herders who had the genes to digest milk, hence a selective advantage, and grew taller. Many of us do not have it — we are lactose intolerant. So, this is our pedigree as human beings and it is also true that we were probably responsible for the extinction of the Denisovans and the Neanderthals, and maybe the climate to some extent, we do not really know.

This point of shared origins is so

important that I will bring in one of the other discoveries of genetics. I have taken these lines from Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

Adam the goodliest man of men since born
His sons; the fairest of her daughters Eve.

Milton seems to be implying that Adam had only sons and Eve had only daughters which is not correct, but we know what he meant.

In a specific sense, this is actually genetically true, there are things passed only from father to son, and things which only travel from mother to daughter. Of course, genes are mixed between mother and father, by and large. But some of them are not mixed. There is the Y-chromosome that makes one a male, and gives the hoarse voice, baldness, the need to shave, and so on. So that is transmitted strictly on the paternal line.

Interestingly, there is also a set of genes, which travel along the maternal line. These are not the ones in the nucleus of the cell, but located in the mitochondria which are all over the cell — they are the energy powerhouse of the cell. They are in the egg cell, but the sperm does not have any. The sperm is just a piece of DNA optimized for swimming

to the egg. The mother does pass on the mitochondrial DNA to her sons, but it cannot go any further. It is therefore inherited entirely through the daughters. Now, there is a molecular clock in mitochondrial DNA. We can look at a population, make these pairs, make a tree, and trace these lines back. If we travel backwards, along the tree, these lines converge. When a woman has two daughters, both get her mitochondrial DNA, which keeps mutating as they go down the line. So, as we go back, these lines keep merging and they seem to merge to one point — we do not know who that is — but she is called “Eve”, who possibly lived 70,000 years ago, according to this molecular clock. Isn't it interesting that the genes for the energy source — *śakti* if you like — travel down the female line?

A similar exercise with the Y-chromosomal DNA shows that “Adam” lived maybe 120,000 years ago. There were surely other people, men and women, living at that time, but their mitochondrial DNA or their Y-chromosomes did not come down to the present. So that is more evidence of the shared origins of all humans on this planet.

(To be continued)

Albert Einstein: "God does not play dice."

"The Lord is subtle, but not malicious."

Niels Bohr: "Einstein, stop telling God what to do."

Notable Features of *The Voice of the Silence*

DAVID P. BRUCE

“Few and precious are the words which the lips of Wisdom utter.”

—*Proverbial Philosophy*

HOW many books are still being read one hundred years after their initial publication? During 1889, when *The Voice of the Silence* (*VOS*) made its appearance, it was just one of several thousand books being published. Now, the number of books published each year approaches one million, but the *VOS* is still in print and still being read. Any book with *that* kind of staying power *must* have an enduring message.

Despite its longevity, it does not seem to be getting the attention it deserves. Perhaps this is not so surprising. After all, it dwells in the overarching shadow of its big brother, *The Secret Doctrine*, and its big sister, *Isis Unveiled*. That relationship is analogous to the scant attention paid to the short stories of Herman Melville. Nearly everybody has read — or heard of — his dramatic novel, *Moby Dick*, which has been adapted to the silver screen in films featuring actors John Barrymore (1930) and Gregory Peck (1956), just to name a couple. But who is aware that Melville wrote a number of short stories, which one writer claims

“represent some of his finest work” and which reveals “a writer of consummate skill operating at the height of his powers”?¹

We could say the same thing about the *VOS*, since it displays the accomplished literary skill of HPB and contains some of *her* finest work. Ergo, it is my hope that this article will encourage those who have not read it to make their acquaintance with this small but significant book. For those already familiar with it, perhaps they will take a second or even third look, and rediscover the sublime beauty and subtle wisdom that are expressed throughout.

Before discussing specific features of the *VOS*, I need to make a few points about books in general.

A Book as a Friend

Considering that nearly a million books will be published in 2024, it seems odd that people are reading less these days than did those of previous generations. Fifteen years ago, I discussed this phenomenon with a professor who had been teaching classes using theosophical books for over twenty years. He confessed that his stu-

David P. Bruce served as the national secretary of the TS in America during 2010–2023, as well as the director of education during 2003–2010. He is the author of *Serving a Higher Purpose* (Quest Books).

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dents, unlike those of years earlier, were showing up for class without having read the assigned reading material. When students show up for class having read the assigned material, it allows for dynamic and stimulating discussions. When students show up for class not having prepared, the material has to be spoon-fed to them and the discussions are almost a waste of time. We thought that this deplorable situation might be due to the burgeoning popularity of the video format. Today, two decades later, I have no doubt. As far as substantive books are concerned, people are reading far less than they were several decades ago. My personal view is that videos are a wonderful medium of communication, but they will never supplant books. Yes, videos have obvious benefits that books do not possess, but the same can be said for books.

C. Jinarājādāsa, a former president of the Theosophical Society (1945–53), as well as a popular author and international speaker, expressed the importance of books in his life. At the time this was written, the word “man” was universally understood to be inclusive of both genders:

One of the happiest experiences of an educated man is the constant looking back on authors who have inspired him. Therefore the truly educated man is a lover of books and surrounds himself with books. Each book is a voice of a guide and a friend; and so to possess books is to be rich in friendship. I say “to possess books”, not merely to have them on the shelves. The distinction is obvious, and need not be expatiated upon.²

This idea of a book as a friend is not

new. It has been around for a long time. Moreover, in some ways books can be better friends than people: they won’t suddenly turn on you, desert you, or deceive you. One writer from a previous era gave lyrical expression to that sentiment:

A good book is the best of friends, the same today and forever.

To draw thee out of self, thy petty plans and cautions,

To teach thee what thou lackest, to tell thee how largely thou art blessed,

To lure thy thought from sorrow, to feed thy famished mind,

To graft another’s wisdom on thee, pruning thine own folly.³

Bibliophiles know that reading can become an end in itself if one is not careful. With so many books published each year but limited time for reading, some measure of discernment is needed. Before Gutenberg invented the printing press in 1440, books were written laboriously by hand. It was a slow, painstaking process; the amount of reading material was miniscule by today’s standards. Yet, even fourteen centuries before Gutenberg’s time, the Stoic philosopher Seneca offered this advice to a friend who enjoyed reading:

People who spend their whole life traveling abroad end up having plenty of places where they can find hospitality but no real friendships. The same is the case with people who never set about acquiring an intimate acquaintanceship with any one great writer, but skip from one to another, paying flying visits to them all.⁴

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The final point about books in general is found in the famous dictum of Francis Bacon: “Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.”⁵ Bacon’s analogy comparing reading to eating is effective: one provides nourishment for the body, the other for the mind and soul. How might his dictum apply to theosophical books?

To “taste” a book is to read it partially or infrequently. Examples might be reference books such as H. P. Blavatsky’s (HPB) *Theosophical Glossary* or Geoffrey Barborka’s *Glossary of Sanskrit Terms*, the *Theosophical Encyclopedia*, or the *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*.

A book that is to be “swallowed” is one that can be read quickly, and for which a single reading might be sufficient. It may be informative and interesting, but it does not require deep reflection or intellectual effort. Some examples might be *The Inner Life* by C. W. Leadbeater, *The Astral Body* by A. E. Powell, *The Dawning of the Theosophical Movement* by Michael Gomes, and Howard Murphet’s biography of HPB, *When Daylight Comes*.

The third group, according to Bacon, includes those few that should be “chewed and digested”, namely, those having substance and depth, and which are best read slowly and deliberately; to these the reader may return again and again without having exhausted the treasures found within its pages. Books such as *The Divine Plan* by Barborka, *Light on the Path (LOP)* by Mabel Collins, or *The Secret*

Doctrine (SD) by HPB come to mind.

What Bacon is telling us through his analogies is that not all books are to be read in the same manner. Just as in dining, where one does not confuse the appetizers or dessert with the main course, the discerning reader does not conflate books that serve only to whet the palate or provide easy pleasure with those capable of providing sustained nourishment over a period of years. The *VOS* is indeed such a book. It can serve as a true friend, your lifelong companion, gently pointing out your faults and shortcomings, as well as serving as a wise and patient counselor, providing guidance and inspiration during times of darkness and confusion.

Dedication

Some books have a dedication page, which usually warrants no more than a cursory glance. Authors often use it to pay tribute to a spouse, a loved one, or a role model. The dedication in L. Frank Baum’s *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* reads: “This book is dedicated to my good friend & comrade: My Wife.” Sometimes the author uses it to express gratitude, as in Sylvia Cranston’s *The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky*: “To all my friends, both near and far, who helped in the preparation of this book.”

An exception to the rule would be the dedication found in *LOP*, which reads: “A treatise written for the personal use of those who are ignorant of the Eastern Wisdom, and who desire to enter within its influence.”

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When we examine the books of H. P. Blavatsky, the dedication page, like that of *LOP*, warrants more than a quick glance, because it reveals something significant about the book and its intended audience:

◆ *Isis Unveiled*: “The Author dedicates these volumes to the Theosophical Society which was founded at New York, AD 1875, to study the subjects on which they treat.”

◆ *The Secret Doctrine*: “This Work I dedicate to all True Theosophists, in every Country, and of every Race, for they called it forth, and for them it was recorded.”

◆ *The Key to Theosophy*: “Dedicated by ‘HPB’ to all her pupils, that they may learn and teach in their turn”.

In the first case, there is no question as to the target audience. In the second case, the audience is potentially much broader. We know that mere membership in the Society, according to HPB, did not make one a true theosophist. Also, the phrase “for they called it forth” suggests those many thousands of truth seekers, not only from her day, but from bygone eras as well, who saw little of value in the pronouncements of dogmatic religion and materialistic science, and who sought truth and wisdom from alternative sources. “For they called it forth” should not be taken literally. It is not like some committee submitted an official request to the sages for enlightenment. Figuratively, the “calling forth” alludes to the sincere striving and seeking for truth, which the unknown personages behind the veil certainly were

aware of. In the third case, the meaning of the word “pupils” is open to interpretation. Did she have in mind just those pupils with whom she had direct and personal contact? Or was she thinking of the students of future generations who were yet to be born?

By contrast, the dedication from the *VOS* is terse and enigmatic: “Dedicated to the Few”. Why only “the few”? Why not the Theosophical Society, as was the case in *Isis*? Why not “all True Theosophists” as was the case in the *SD*? Or, at the very least, why not dedicate it to her pupils, as she did in *The Key to Theosophy*? HPB provides one answer in the preface where she said that the book was intended for “the few real mystics in the Theosophical Society”. That answer, however, is unsatisfactory. While a mystic might understand the *VOS* on a much deeper level than the ordinary person, it is highly implausible that HPB would have published a book for such a small audience. Rather than hazard an alternative explanation, the wiser course may be to leave it up to readers to draw their own conclusions.

Comparisons

A frequent conversational topic among families is noting the difference in temperament and personality between siblings. Children sharing the same parents, the same home, and the same environment often exhibit distinct differences, despite their commonalities. Similarly, the literary offspring of HPB’s prolific pen provides occasion for drawing such contrasts. Speaking figuratively, if the *SD* (published

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1888) is the big brother to the *VOS* (1889), we can say that *Isis Unveiled* (1877) is the big sister. Both were substantial in scope, substance, and sheer physical size.

When *Isis* first entered the New York literary scene, she created quite the sensation among the intelligentsia. Her panoramic view of the esoteric tradition was spacious, all-encompassing; her style meandering, even labyrinthine; her subject matter sprawling, like the endless skylines of Houston and Phoenix.

The *SD* presents a bold and magnificent narrative as to the origin of the universe and of mankind. The framework for this epic narrative is provided by the archaic *Stanzas of Dzyan*, supported and amplified by voluminous — and sometimes obscure — commentary provided by HPB, as well as by unknown personages beyond the veil. While the language of *Isis* is linear and often discursive, the *SD* often seems baroque with its numerous footnotes and citations, and byzantine with its complex syntax.

In comparison to its big sister and big brother, the *VOS* is diminutive in size, containing just over 300 verses. Judging by appearance, however, is misleading. Yes, it is a small book of approximately 300 verses, but what elegant and powerful verses they are! What it lacks in breadth, it makes up for in depth. HPB's use of figurative language and poetic imagery is not ornamental or contrived, but an integral part of poetry of the highest caliber — evocative, suggestive, inspirational, and memorable. Since I have opined elsewhere⁶ on the poetical aspects of the

VOS, further comment would be redundant. Leaving familial personifications behind, let us consider some of the notable features of the *VOS*, beginning with its purpose.

Purpose

Some books are written for entertainment, as with *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan*. It contains short fictional stories by HPB, the purpose of which was to entertain. Some books are written for instruction, for example, *The Key to Theosophy*. In fact, this was the *only* instructional book ever written by HPB. Some may ask, what about *The Secret Doctrine*? What kind of book is it? John Algeo has characterized it as a *heuristic* book, namely, a book of discovery.⁷ Finally, there are books whose sole purpose is to inspire. Such a book is the *VOS*. Its message is directed to the heart, not to the intellect. Its purpose is not to furnish information, but to provide inspiration. It is a profound and deeply moving guidebook for those who wish to tread the path of altruism in service of humanity.

Buddhist Precepts

Some have likened the *VOS* to a precious jewel. That, indeed, it is! Just as an elegant gem is set in a ring or a pendant, the *VOS* is set within the tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. This is not to suggest that it puts forth a comprehensive statement of Buddhism, but only that it features certain of its aspects such as *dhāraṇa* (intense concentration), the *pāramitā-s* (supreme virtues), the Doc-

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trine of the Eye, the Doctrine of the Heart, the Path of Liberation, the Path of Woe, and so on.

The Buddhist canonical literature is vast and could fill not only volumes, but entire libraries. It falls into two main groups, each with its own characteristics: *sutra-s* and *śāstra-s*. The sutras are the earlier works, discourses said to be given directly by Gautama himself, or in some cases, by his disciples speaking with his approval or under his guidance. The sastras, historically speaking, are the later works. These treatises expound certain doctrinal aspects of Buddhism, and were written by the great founders and exponents of its various schools. Considering that the *VOS* contains Buddhist teachings, one might wonder if it would fit either category. Think about it for a second. It cannot be a sutra, as it was written over two thousand years after the death of Gautama. On the other hand, it is devoid of the analytical and expository style found in the sastras. A plausible answer is found in an article titled “Paradox and Poetry in *The Voice of the Silence*”:

The *Voice of the Silence*, though it does not claim to be the utterance of a Buddha, is nevertheless akin to the *sutra* rather than to the *śāstra* group of texts. Like the longer and more celebrated discourses, it seeks more to inspire than instruct, appeals to the heart rather than to the head. . . . It belongs not to the literature of information, the purpose of which is to augment knowledge, but to the literature of power, the aim of which is to move. So important is a clear understanding of the difference

not merely between the kinds of effect they are calculated to produce and the organs upon which they are intended to act, that, according to *The Voice of the Silence* itself, the disciple at the very outset of his quest is admonished, “Learn above all to separate Head-learning from Soul-wisdom, the “Eye” from the “Heart” doctrine.”⁸

Fragments

Authors commonly partition their works into chapters. Blavatsky did that in *Isis Unveiled*. Sometimes a book is divided into sections, as is *The Key to Theosophy*. Still others, particularly longer works, are apportioned into “books”, as in Plato’s *Republic*, Montaigne’s *Essays*, St Augustine’s *Confessions*, and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. In terms of its structure, the *VOS* has three parts which are designated by the term, “fragments”. What was her reason for choosing such an unusual term?

We must first realize that the *VOS* is a translation of an ancient text, not an original work by HPB. She makes this clear in the first sentence of the preface: “The following pages are derived from *The Book of Golden Precepts* . . .” According to her, it contained some 90 short treatises, and of those she memorized thirty-nine, only three of which comprise *The Voice of the Silence*. Therefore, *VOS* is a small part, or fragment, of a much larger work.

The reader may ask, why translate only three fragments? Why not the thirty-nine that she had memorized? She explains that they could not be “given to a world too selfish and too much attached to the

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objects of sense to be in any way prepared to receive such exalted ethics in the right spirit". That answer may not satisfy the profane, but if they would consider how seldom the ethics given by Jesus in "The Sermon on the Mount" have been put into practice, her answer is plausible and believable.

Epithets

If the *VOS* were to be adapted as a theatrical performance, only a small cast would be required — the Teacher and the pupils. During the entirety of Act I (Fragment I), the only spoken words are those of the Teacher. Visualize the pupils sitting quietly, listening attentively. They do not speak until Act II (Fragment II), when they chime out in unison:

Shalt not thou, Master, of thine own mercy
reveal the Doctrine of the Heart? (vs. 102)⁹

For good measure, the stage director might add some offstage voices, somewhat like a Greek chorus of old, which would function as an unseen narrator. These invisible voices would precede the words of the pupils (vs. 102):

And now, O Teacher of Compassion, point
thou the way to other men. Behold all those
who, knocking for admission, await in
ignorance and darkness to see the gate of
the Sweet Law flung open! (vs. 101)

An interesting feature of the dialogue in the *VOS* is the use of sobriquets, or epithets. An epithet is a word or phrase used to describe an attribute or quality considered characteristic of a person. Two examples from popular culture: Superman is known as "the man of steel",

while Batman is referred to as "the caped crusader". In the *Bhagavadgītā*, Krishna refers to Arjuna by various epithets, including "conqueror of sleep", "slayer of demons", and "scorcher of the foe".

In the *VOS* the teacher uses over three dozen epithets when speaking to his pupils: disciple (5), ignorant disciple (18), weary pilgrim (22), Walker of the Sky (40), slayer of thy thoughts (85), Yogi of success (89), Master of Samādhi (98); devotee (117), thou of patient heart (149), Shrāvaka (197), daring pilgrim (251), candidate for trials passing speech (264), fearless warrior (273), and others. These monikers add a dramatic element to the spoken lines, but their inclusion is not just for stylistic reasons. They reveal something significant about what it means to be a *chela*, or disciple.

HPB vs H. P. Blavatsky

The habit theosophists have of referring to Helena Petrovna Blavatsky as HPB is not just for the sake of efficiency, whereby one reduces nine syllables and twenty-three letters to just three. There was a mystery about her that nobody could quite fathom. In the preface to his book *The Real H. P. Blavatsky*, William Kingsland observed:

The personality of H. P. Blavatsky was a very remarkable and complex one. It was in fact a perpetual enigma even to those who know her most intimately.¹⁰

G. de Purucker echoed this observation in *H. P. Blavatsky, the Mystery*:

H. P. Blavatsky was a great psychological mystery to the world of average men. She was a great psychological mystery even to

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her followers . . . even to those who thought that they knew her best.¹¹

In her personal copy of the *VOS*, was a most curious inscription: “HPB to H. P. Blavatsky with no kind regards.” Some editions have included a facsimile of this odd inscription. With no kind regards? What kind of backhanded compliment is that? What could it possibly mean?

In the 1939 Jubilee Edition of the *VOS*, there is a facsimile reproduction of that inscription. The word “no” is underlined for emphasis. Again, what could this apparent show of ingratitude possibly mean? Included with the text of the Jubilee Edition were notes and commentary by Arya Asanga who explained

the incongruity as an “autograph in HPB’s own copy of *The Voice of the Silence*, expressing the regret of one who is conscious how the spoken word falls short of the Silent Voice”.

Closing

We live in a world of agitation, violence, discord, and endless distractions. Noise is so ubiquitous that some people even feel uncomfortable in its absence. If we would aspire to hear the “soundless sound”, the Voice of the Silence, we must learn how to withdraw from the cacophony of the world and begin by heeding this simple advice from the poem “Desiderata” by Max Ehrmann: “Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence.” ✧

Endnotes

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3. Martin Tupper, *Proverbial Philosophy: A Book of Thoughts and Arguments*, Series I, “Of Reading”, 1838, p. 79, <archive.org> (accessed 28 Mar. 2024).
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5. Francis Bacon, *Essays*, ed. Brian Vickers (London: Folio Society, 2002), pp. 178–79.
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7. John Algeo, *Getting Acquainted with The Secret Doctrine* (Wheaton: Theosophical Society in America, 2007), p. 3.
8. Bhikshu Sangharakshita, *Paradox and Poetry in The Voice of the Silence* (Bangalore, India: Indian Institute of World Culture, 1958), pp. 10–11.
9. References to numbered verses are from the 1982 Adyar Centenary Edition.
10. William Kingsland, *The Real H.P. Blavatsky: A Study in Theosophy and a Memoir of a Great Soul* (London: John M. Watkins, 1928), p. vii.
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Krishnamurti: Ninety Years of Theosophical Ripples — I

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

Be what he may, once that a student abandons the old and trodden highway of routine, and enters upon the solitary path of independent thought — Godward — he is a Theosophist; an original thinker, a seeker after the eternal truth with “an inspiration of his own” to solve the universal problems.
(H. P. Blavatsky, “What Are Theosophists?”, *The Theosophist*, October 1879)

We seek, inquire, reject nothing without cause, accept nothing without proof:
we are students, not teachers.
(H. S. Olcott, Inaugural Address, 17 November 1875)

WHEN he was fourteen years old, the young Krishnamurti came to live in a house adjoining the Theosophical Society (TS) compound at Adyar, together with his father, Narayanaiah, and his brother Nityananda. Once, while playing at the Adyar beach with other boys, Krishnamurti was noticed by C. W. Leadbeater (CWL), a well-known member of the TS and trained clairvoyant, residing at Adyar. This was around April 1909. He told Ernest Wood, his secretary at that time, that he had seen a boy on the beach with an extraordinary aura, without a particle of selfishness in it. CWL then said that the boy would become a great teacher and orator. Wood asked him: “As great as Annie Besant?” CWL reply: “Much greater.”



The young Krishnamurti, 1910, age 14

When Mrs Besant came back from her world tour that year she met the boys and confirmed that the young Krishnamurti

Mr Pedro Oliveira is a former Education Coordinator of the TS in Australia. He served at Adyar in the early 1990s as international Secretary, and later as Head of the Editorial Office.

would become the vehicle of the World Teacher, the Bodhisattva Maitreya. Then followed a period of preparation, which included physical exercise, studies, proper diet, and so on. As a preparation for his first initiation, Krishnamurti memorized the lessons given to him by his Master at night and wrote them down. They were later published as the book *At the Feet of the Master*, which has run into many editions in many languages. It has helped thousands of people around the world to understand the nature of the spiritual path and how to begin to tread it.

Thanks to Besant, Krishnamurti and his brother Nitya were educated in England and became an inspiration to many members of the TS as well as others. She established the “Order of the Star in the East” in January 1911 as an international organization to prepare the world for the arrival of the World Teacher. Krishnamurti eventually grew into an independent young man and started to reassess his perceived role as the vehicle to the World Teacher. On 3 August 1929, he dissolved the Order in Ommen, the Netherlands. That decision of his sent ripples across the theosophical world.

In one of my many conversations with Radha Burnier, former President of the TS, she mentioned the circumstances surrounding Krishnamurti’s departure from Adyar. Dr Besant had a flat built for him on top of the Russak Wing, adjoining the Headquarters Building at Adyar. It was her wish that he would live in that flat for life. After his death, at every International Convention of the TS,

besides visiting Besant’s room and the Museum and Archives, delegates also had been visiting Krishnaji’s flat. It has a wonderful view of the Adyar River flowing towards the sea.

Once after returning from a trip, possibly in India, Krishnaji went to his flat only to find the door locked, and two suitcases containing his clothes outside, plus a note instructing him to leave Adyar. This incident may have happened sometime between Krishnaji’s last visit to Besant in May 1933 (she would pass away on 20 September) and 29 December 1933, when Krishnaji was invited to come to Adyar by the Vice-President of the TS, A. P. Warrington, and give a series of talks. He was associated with Adyar since 1909, when his father, G. Narayanaiah, brought him and his brother Nityananda to live in a nearby house. Krishnaji’s forced departure from Adyar represented one of the numerous fault lines between him and some theosophists.

It is unnecessary to go into the details of the historical event of the dissolution of the Order of the Star as they have been the subject of numerous books, essays and articles. A number of them carry an ideological bias in favour of Krishnamurti, while showing a clear bias against the TS. What seems to be necessary is to dwell on the reactions by well-known theosophists to what happened in Ommen in August 1929, for they helped to create ideological fault lines contributing towards a quasi-orthodox mindset which still exists today.

In 2008 I had the opportunity of interviewing the late Rt Rev. Christopher

Bannister, a former Regionary Bishop of the Liberal Catholic Church in Australia. When he was a teenager in Sydney he used to visit The Manor, in Mosman, and came to know Bishop Leadbeater and the other members of the household, including Dora van Gelder, later on Dora Kunz. He told me that after Krishnamurti dissolved the Order and left the TS, many members in Australia also left the organization. As a result, between 1929 and 1931 the Society lost around 15,000 members worldwide. Its membership at the end of 1928 was 45,000. Bannister said:

I remember, clearly, that they built the Star Amphitheatre at Balmoral, in Sydney, and I was there for the laying of the foundation stone, which Bishop Leadbeater did. Afterwards Krishnamurti, when he was in Sydney, gave a series of afternoon talks there. I went to one of them, and I remember distinctly thinking at the end of the talk, “I wonder if you are the World Teacher”, because what he said didn’t appeal to me on that level at all. With a lot of things, you know, I was the same, I still am. But a lot of people had pinned all their hopes on this clairvoyant revelation and when it was proven to be wrong, they said, “Well, probably everything else that was said is wrong, too”, and off they went.

His views probably reflected the attitude of many of those who left the TS at that time, but also some of those who stayed and became critical of Krishnamurti.

Geoffrey Hodson

One of Krishnamurti’s critics was Geoffrey Hodson (1886–1983), a well-

known author, clairvoyant, and lecturer on Theosophy for many decades. He wrote a number of popular books, including *The Kingdom of the Gods*, *The Pathway to Perfection*, *The Miracle of Birth*, *Basic Theosophy*, among many others. N. Sri Ram, the fifth President of the TS, invited Hodson to conduct the School of the Wisdom at Adyar a number of times, and his talks there were included in two volumes: *Lecture Notes of the School of the Wisdom*, vols. I and II, published by TPH Adyar.

A number of posthumous books by him were also published, including his personal diary, *The Light from the Sanctuary*, compiled by his wife Sandra Hodson, in which, among other things, he declares his occult status on the Path. He also wrote a small book, *Krishnamurti and the Search for the Light*, published by St Alban Press, Sydney, in 1935. This book was and still is accepted by many of Hodson’s admirers as containing the most reliable view of the relationship between Krishnamurti and the TS. In the introduction to his book Hodson establishes the ground for his personal — and strong — criticism of Krishnamurti:

Krishnamurti is the personification of simple-mindedness. He is sincerity incarnate, and is clearly inspired with a selfless desire to lead humanity to its own light. He concentrates on individual self-knowledge, individual perfection and enlightenment. Up to now he has seemed to ignore, even to deny, the value of the path of action, of deliberate self-training, study, and ministrations to the world.

Krishnamurti's utterances are an extraordinary blend of rare flashes of transcendental wisdom, penetrating intelligence, incomprehensibility, prejudice, intolerance and vituperation. In these chapters I offer some thoughts upon his various teachings.

I am moved to do so partly because after arrival in Australia I became aware of the influence of the teachings of Krishnamurti upon the membership of the Theosophical Society. One Lodge had just sustained severe losses in the resignation of some of its most talented and promising students.

Interested to know more about Mr Hodson's annoyance at Krishnamurti and his teaching, I asked, a number of years ago, one of the stalwarts of the Australian Section of the TS at that time, the late Shirley Macpherson, about her views on the subject. She, who had joined the TS in 1936, smiled and said that Geoffrey Hodson lived in Auckland, New Zealand, and used to lecture throughout Australia in practically all its Lodges on a regular basis. He was a charismatic speaker and as a result of his talks a number of people would join the Society.

However, Miss Macpherson said, in the intervening years Krishnamurti would also visit Australia and give talks in different places. During his talks Krishnamurti would say: "Question everything!" As a result, a number of those who had joined the TS would resign or allow their membership to lapse. She said that it was this which infuriated Hodson.

It is interesting to note what C. W. Leadbeater (CWL), highly regarded by

Hodson as a true theosophical teacher, had to say about Krishnamurti. This was included in CWL's book review of Sir Cyril Scott's *The Initiate in the Dark Cycle by His Pupil*, published in *The Australian Theosophist*, August 1933, p. 123, with the title "Has Krishnaji Failed?":

The point which is arousing some controversy is that he has a good deal to say about Krishnaji also, with much of which I cannot agree, though there is some truth in it. He seems to think that Krishnaji has failed in his mission, has been largely left to himself, and will soon be superseded by a female teacher, who is to draw the whole world into her train. I do not know anything about this lady, but I do not consider that Krishnaji is a failure. I admit that some of his statements have been inaccurate, a little fanatical, and not always tactfully put; but he is doing a difficult and important piece of work to the best of his ability.

Geoffrey Farthing

Geoffrey Farthing (1909–2004) was a distinguished member of the Theosophical Society in England and its one-time General Secretary. He was a member of the Executive Committee of the European Federation for a number of years. Mr Farthing was also a director of the European School of Theosophy. He co-founded, in 1974, with Christmas Humphreys and Graham Nicholas, the Blavatsky Trust. He was awarded the Theosophical Society's highest award, "The Subba Row Medal" in 1996 for his outstanding contribution to theo-

sophical literature. His books include *Deity, Cosmos, and Man; Exploring the Great Beyond; Theosophy — What It Is All About; When We Die; Life, Death, and Dreams; Theosophy, the Wisdom Religion; After Death Consciousness, and Processes*; among others.

In his manifesto to the General Council of the TS (1996), Mr Farthing stated, among other things, “The Society has its own special message to promulgate. This message only exists in the writings of HPB [H. P. Blavatsky] and in the Mahatma Letters. This message in its completeness (as far as it was given out) is unique.” He further urged:

The eradication of the “make-believe” Leadbeater influence — in all departments including literature, and severance from the Society of all other organizations, i.e., the Liberal Catholic Church and Co-Masonry. [The TS was never officially or corporately connected with any of these two organizations, although some of its members were under the policy of Freedom of Thought. — PO].

A thorough examination of all literature purporting to be “theosophical”, and a brave declaration, and no further promotion, of any which is not wholly consonant with the original teachings.

This is no proscription; but all books, purporting to be theosophical which strictly are not, should be clearly labelled or marked that they are the author’s views on the subject and not necessarily authentic. Members are, of course, free to read what they like but they can be warned, if not guided. In any Theosophical Society library or bookstore the “authentic” classics (HPB/the

Masters) and works properly consonant with them should be clearly distinguished, i.e., separately displayed, from “personalized” views, expositions, and/or explanations, clearly marked and given prominence in displays, on book lists and in catalogues.

The following was the official response of the General Council of the TS to Mr Farthing, at its meeting in December 1996:

The consensus was that freedom of thought necessarily implies a wide horizon of thought and perception. Belief that the writings of HPB and the Mahatma Letters constitute the only source of the message the TS should promulgate cannot be imposed on members, as such limitation goes against the grain of that freedom of thought. Each one must have the freedom to decide what best helps understanding of oneself and provides inspiration to work for the ideal of human progression and perfection.

In his manifesto, Mr Farthing makes a number of statements about Krishnamurti, his discovery, and upbringing. We include some of them below with my brief responses within brackets.

Those who had his upbringing and education in hand, notably CWL and Dick Balfour-Clarke, were very much second-generation theosophists. Krishnaji therefore probably never knew anything of the HPB/Masters’ teachings.

[Krishnamurti himself has said that he was not fed Theosophy. The only book Annie Besant asked him to read was the King James Version of the Bible in order to improve his English. He underwent physical training under C. W. Leadbeater, including exercises and diet, but he, by his own admission, was never indoctrinated.]

Krishnamurti: Ninety Years of Theosophical Ripples — I

It is also very doubtful whether Krishnaji himself ever had a first-hand “Master” experience although he did describe once having seen three Masters in a vision. Had he had a real experience, however, he could neither have forgotten it nor thereafter have doubted their existence and later have repudiated them.

[As Radha Burnier, who knew him well, said (see part III of this article) he was in contact with the Masters throughout his life. He even said that they had told him when he was going to die. But Krishnamurti repudiated the ideology created around the Masters’ names, including of individuals who were claiming, publicly, successive “initiations”. He called that a “circus”. There are descriptions of lofty states of awareness in his Notebook, which sometimes he refers to as “Benediction” or the “Sacred”.]

Furthermore, as Krishnaji’s teachings of freedom, self-reliance, non-dependence on authority and institutions, and so on, are all virtually in proper accord with the “Master” Theosophy, there would not have been any reason for him to repudiate it, nor his connection with the Society.

[Again, he repudiated the ideology created around the Masters’ names, not their essential sacredness.]

His loss was that he never became acquainted with the sea of theosophical knowledge which would to a large extent not only have justified his views but provided him with relevant data for use in his teaching, e.g. the difference between the personality and the individuality, the essential idea of Unity, and, had he been interested, the proper nature of the Self, the total cosmic structure and processes.

[Those who studied his teachings without prejudice have said that there are real theosophical depths in what he says. He spoke about the need to see conditioning for what it is; the sacred unity of all life; Nature as a vast self-regenerating process; about the complete ending of thought and a boundless field of sacred silence.]

The second coming of the Christ was at that time (1920s) being regarded as imminent whereas, according to the Masters and theosophical teaching, such a “second coming”, i.e. the advent of an Avatar, was not expected for millennia. In any case the severance of the Society from the Masters made such a “coming” into it extraordinarily unlikely.

[A highly respected Tibetan Buddhist lama, the Ven. Samdhong Rinpoche, once told me, in Sydney, in 2001, that according to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, Maitreya Buddha will manifest in a million years from now. But, he said, between now and a million years there would be partial manifestations. When put the question, “Was Krishnamurti a partial manifestation?”, his answer was “Yes.”]

In any case in the nature of Karma his upbringing and earthly surroundings would have all been in proper accord without the interference of CWL.

[Krishnamurti told a number of people over the years that if CWL had not discovered him he would be dead. While in school, prior to April 1909, he was being whacked on the head with a cane by his teacher every day. He was also malnourished and had lice in his hair.]

The “finding” of Krishnaji, his upbringing and then adoption as a vehicle for the Lord

Maitreya was virtually the culmination of the “split” from “Master” Theosophy.

[Many students who consider HPB’s teachings, together with the Mahatma Letters, as the only authentic sources of real Theosophy, have declared that the departure of HPB from Adyar, in March 1885, represented the end of the Masters’ influence in the TS with Headquarters at Adyar. However, Col. Olcott, whose loyalty to the Masters and their work cannot be questioned, recorded this in his diary for 1892 (*Old Diary Leaves*, Fourth Series 1887–1892, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1975, p. 442): “Just before daybreak, on the 10th of February [1892], I received clairaudiently a very important message from my Guru [Mahatma M.]: its impressiveness was enhanced by the fact that he told me things which were quite contrary to my own belief, and hence it could not be explained away as a case of auto-suggestion. He told me: (a) That a messenger from him would be coming, and I must hold myself ready to go and meet him; (b) That the relationship between himself, HPB, and myself was unbreakable; (c) That I must be ready for a change of body, as my present one had nearly served its purpose; (d) That I had not done well in trying to resign prematurely: I was still wanted at my post, and must be contented to remain indefinitely until he gave me permission to abandon it; (e) That the time was not ripe for carrying out my scheme of a great International Buddhist League, and that the Mahā-Bodhi Society, which I had intended to use as the nucleus of the scheme, would be a failure;

(f) That all stories about his having cast me off and withdrawn his protection were false, for he kept constant watch over me, and would never desert me.”]

Ommen Star Camp, August 1925

The following passages are taken from *The Herald of the Star*, Vol. XIV, No. 9, September 1925. This magazine was the organ of the Order of the Star in the East of which J. Krishnamurti was the Head and Annie Besant was the Protector. The statements took place during the August 1925 camp of the Order in Ommen, the Netherlands. They are reproduced without any comments. It is not difficult to understand why they may have played a crucial part in Krishnaji’s future decision of dissolving the Order as most of them reveal a form of belief-centred attitude regarding the work before the Order and the TS. Another extraordinary feature in some of the statements is that some of the speakers seem to be speaking on behalf of the Order, of the Masters, and superior Adepts, and even of Krishnaji himself, who was not there. He was in Ojai, California, nursing his brother J. Nityananda, who was suffering from tuberculosis and who would eventually die in November that year, when Krishnaji was on his way to Adyar.

From Dr Besant’s address:

Then He will choose, as before, his twelve Apostles — a significant number, “the twelve” — and their chief, the Lord himself. He has already chosen them, but I have only the command to mention seven who have reached the stage of Arhatship, which

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seems to be the occult status for the small circle of his immediate disciples and messengers to the world. The first two, my brother Charles Leadbeater and myself, passed that great Initiation at the same time, together because of our future work together, at the time that I became President of the TS. Our younger brothers here, who were living through the stages, as it were, of discipleship, at certain points have passed the four great Initiations, and others were welcomed a little later by the King as among his Arhats, and one will be a few days later. They are, first: one whom you know, I think, well, that disciple of beautiful character and beautiful language, C. Jinarajadasa, who must be known to very many of you, and to know him is to love him. My brother Leadbeater and myself were of course present at this Initiation, and also at that of Krishnaji and welcomed the new additions to our band. Then my brother, George Arundale, whose consecration as Bishop was necessary, as the last step of his preparation for the great fourth step of Initiation; and my brother, Oscar Kollerstrom, not so well known, perhaps, to you, but beloved for his character and his wisdom by all who know him well, as I am thankful to say I do; and then one whom I have called my daughter Rukmini Arundale, this Indian girl of a

glorious past, will be one in a few days, who, hearing the call of her Master very, very early in life, will be the Rishi Agasthya's messenger to the women and young ones in India, taking up a large part of the work there I have been carrying on for years. Young in body, yet she is old in wisdom and in willpower; "child of the indomitable will" is her welcome in the higher worlds.

Now, it is entirely a new thing that the names of people should be announced in this fashion, but there can be no hesitation to those who are his servants in carrying out the will of the Lord; it is not for them to judge, it is for them to obey. As He said, it may cause to us a certain amount of trouble and ridicule, but we are accustomed to that, and what matter? It matters nothing at all. The only thing that matters is the will of the King, and the doing service to his great Messenger, the Bodhisattva.

I left out one and must leave out another. Naturally, our Krishnaji was one, but he is to be the vehicle of the Lord. And the other is one who is very dear to all of us, as to the whole Brotherhood: Bishop James Wedgwood. He had borne his crucifixion before the seal of Arhatship was set upon him by his King. (pp. 307, 308)

(To be continued)

**Try and penetrate with our limited means the secrets of Nature
and you will find that, behind all the discernible concatenations,
there remains something subtle, intangible, and inexplicable.**

Albert Einstein

I Am Because We Are: A Dynamic Link

CATALINA ISAZA-CANTOR

WHEN I started thinking about interconnection, I realized that the first necessary step was to think less and feel or experience more. My daughter reminded me of this while reading her social studies book. She said to me: “Mommy, I wish I could live it, get into the book and learn first-hand.” Educators stress the importance of experience in order to introject learning. Since we are all constant learners on this journey, I think this applies to everyone, and those of us who tread the spiritual path should take it seriously.

Writing or talking about something does not guarantee that it will actually become effective in our lives. Even meditating and reflecting deeply on it, is not enough to bring true understanding. Deep reflection and meditation help us to internalize, but practice is needed. It is difficult to understand what, say heat, or anything else, is if it is held as something abstract. We can write the word, say it, and even talk about it, but if we have not felt the heat, any attempt to come close to expressing its true

essence will lack real meaning in our lives.

I set myself, then, to the task of trying to observe on a daily basis how I was living (if at all) the experience of interconnectedness. With Nature, for example, there was a “satisfying” result. It is hard not to look around (especially when you have the privilege of living in a place like Adyar) and almost instantly experience a connection with everything around you. There is a contemplation that transports oneself to a different state than the ordinary. And yet, it seems that this level of connection quickly fades when I find myself dealing with the challenges that Nature itself presents to me.

What do I feel when extreme rain or the strong wind of a cyclone takes over the scene? What when an insect that is not to my liking or that frightens me strolls around the walls of my house? Where does all that feeling of communion with Nature go when I feel fear, helplessness, or frustration because Nature does not cooperate with my plans as I expect?

Mrs Catalina Isaza Cantor is a long-term member of the TS in Colombia and a resident worker at TS Adyar. She is also secretary of the School of the Wisdom. Article based on a talk delivered on 04-01-23 at the 147th International Convention at the International Headquarters of the TS at Adyar, India.

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Perhaps that moment when I thought I had merged with the universe was more an experience of personal satisfaction, something close to an illusion. This is because there is still a huge degree of separateness and that feeling is still superficial, not part of a true sense of oneness.

Something similar happened with other aspects of my relationships. With people who are close to my affections it was not so complicated to feel that connection, especially when the relationship happens harmoniously and without disagreements. The same happened when any of them needed my help, even if this implied going out of my comfort zone.

Again, there is a feeling of self-complacency, either for the shared well-being or for the help I provide, which makes me feel useful. What happens, then, when one of my loved ones does not respond to my expectations? That feeling of well-being is affected. Where did all that “love” go? Actually, nowhere, it is still there because we are connected on a higher level, although we have forgotten this and believe we are separate entities.

The heresy of separateness is understood when we remember the septenary constitution of the human being. We act through bodies of seven planes of manifestation. Each of these has a denser or subtler type of matter and, as matter becomes subtler, it is more difficult for our mind and senses to perceive it. Given the present degree of evolution of most of humanity, we operate mostly between the physical, the emotional, and the lower mental; it is easier for us, by inertia, to iden-

tify with the manifestations of those planes.

When H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) presents the septenary constitution of the human being, she points out that the Atman, our highest principle, is not individual but collective, and it is present in all the other vehicles of consciousness. Let us remember the story in which Krishna, as a child, ate some sand and when his mother asked him to open his mouth, she saw the whole Universe in it, stars, planets, galaxies, all animate and inanimate creatures. The Self contains the All, therefore, this All also potentially exists in every human being, as the sunbeam is inseparable from the light of the sun.

However, due to the limitations of our senses, we live in a fragmented way we say “my atman” or “your atman”, when in reality Atman is simply that in which we are. Thus, the “you” and the “I” fade away and there remains only the Self, the universal love, which is the purest form of relating to each other.

But even if we focus only on the triad: body, emotions, and lower mind, the interconnectedness can be seen. We share similar emotions, shortcomings, and fears, and the unconscious realization of that is what leads us to perform acts of empathy. Those moments of empathy, and even those of antipathy, would not exist if there were not something in the other with which we identify and relate with, even if this relationship is, at first, somewhat superficial. If I can love or serve someone, the possibility of loving and serving everyone is latent. If many times I feel discomfort

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towards others, it is because in everyone there are possibilities of negative action and, perhaps, they are there to remind me, as part of that connection, that they are a mirror of my own shortcomings and that the immediate task is that of self-transformation. We connect here in that which makes us human.

But if we go deeper, we can connect as well in what makes us divine, without forgetting our humanity in the hurry to be gods. Our goal is to raise our state of consciousness and move from the concrete to the higher mind, to develop our Buddhist nature, the intuition, through which we can have a glimpse of that all-pervading unity. Here it is useful to remember the feeling of connection we spoke of at the beginning, which we can experience in the enjoyment of Nature or in moments of communion with other people.

This initial connection is a first step towards the realization that there is indeed a pure and great feeling that expresses itself in our being when we know we are one with everything. We can cultivate this germ by taking responsibility for our own process and observe thoughts, actions, words, constantly and consciously, so it reaches a point in which it is possible to maintain it even when circumstances are not so favourable and make the experience of interconnection vivid.

Interconnecting, from the technical point of view, it is to link two devices or systems together, so that something like water, electricity, signals, and so on can flow between them. For the system to

work, it needs to be connected to the network. Our first objective tells us about forming a nucleus of human kinship without distinctions of any kind. The kinship is a fact, our task is to activate and tune our personal systems with the Divine and connect with the network of the unity of life so it can flow. In the system of nature, for instance, if one link is affected, the network can collapse.

No matter how insignificant a component may seem, it has a necessary place in the whole. Let us remember the bees. Without them, plants and other forms of life could not exist, thus humanity would not survive. The violence against one part has a natural repercussion on the rest of the constituents and on the whole. It is the law of cause and effect that works on account of the interconnection. If we place ourselves as mere observers, “outside”, we are denying the very relationship and affecting the general equilibrium. Relationship means merging the subject with the object, to work for the welfare of the whole through right action. This is responsibility to oneself and to the world.

Per the Mahatma Letters: “Nature has linked all parts of her Empire together by subtle threads of magnetic sympathy, and there, there is a mutual correlation even between a star and a man.”

To participate in, to be with, rather than to observe, implies a dynamism that reminds us, as stated in the Proem of *The Secret Doctrine*, that the only absolute attribute of the one, eternal, indivisible life is the eternal and unceasing Movement. Nothing exists at all motionless in the

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Universal Soul, so nothing motionless can be Divine. We are united by a dynamic link that is awakened in action, in relationships of everyday life.

In technology there is the function of dynamic links of an application that work whether it is installed or not and provide the option to install it, so the app displays the content and can be used seamlessly. The link and interconnection is there, and we activate it and make it work in our lives by being active agents. Now, what can we do to download it and activate it?

◆ By service: Service is the ultimate way of dharma, by serving we forget ourselves and merge through pure love with the other. There is a poem by the Nobel laureate in Literature and theosophist Gabriela Mistral (from Chile), “The Pleasure of Serving”. Due to time constraints, I will quote only some extracts, but I highly recommend reading it fully:

All of Nature is a yearning for service:

...

There is joy in being wise and just,
But above all there is the beautiful,
The immense happiness of serving.

...

Do not limit yourself to easy tasks.

...

But don't fall prey to the error that only
Great tasks done can be counted as
accomplishments.

There are small acts of service that are
good ones:

...

Serving is not a labor just for inferior
beings.

God, who gives fruit and light, serves.
His name could be rendered thus:
He Who Serves.

◆ Through education: A theosophical transformative education for cooperation and not competence, for fraternity and not individuality. And in the lines of education, by working seriously for our self-transformation and setting the right example, getting to know how the world acts in the occult planes; so we can understand that in the children we have to nourish their good tendencies and make the bad ones die of starvation. And for that, we are meant to provide appropriate surroundings.

By fulfilling the real meaning of “educate” (*educere*), to bring out from inside, and not putting so much unnecessary knowledge in the minds of the children, as in conventional education. Children have that inner wisdom of the interconnection.

◆ Let us be collaborative partners in our homes, places of work, and so forth.

◆ Let us observe more the wonderful examples of interconnections given by Nature. Let us observe and act more, and think and talk less.

Let us activate that inward movement of self-transformation: an inner dynamism and a mutual cooperation that is ultimately a cooperation with the Divine Plan. That is the first and greatest act of love and service for humanity, because it allows us to move from the “I” to the “We”. If I am not connected to myself, how can I connect with others?

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Since everything is interconnected and in constant movement, individual and social transformation go hand in hand. Educational or political systems are transformed when we fundamentally change. The individual is of paramount importance and until we understand the total process of our own existence, no system can bring order and peace to the world.

It is said that someone has attained self-realization when the feeling of love and compassion for everything has been attained. Let us seek to develop the *bodhi-citta*, the eternal flame of immortal love, the desire to attain enlightenment in order to be of benefit to all sentient beings.

As it is written in the Commentary to Stanza 2, sloka 1 of *The Secret Doctrine*:

It is only “with a mind clear and undarkened by personality [a pure heart and

unveiled spiritual perception] . . .” that one gets rid of personal existence, merging into, becoming one with the Absolute.

This reminds us of the Upanishadic concept of cosmic family, a social and spiritual ideal to be lived. One is a relative, the other a stranger, say the small-minded. The sages believe that the whole world is one family, says the *Maha Upanishad*.

And let us not forget: we are not our desires, we are the Divine Will. We are not our knowledge and thoughts, we are Divine Wisdom. We are not our emotions and feelings, we are Divine Love. To follow the call of the Divine in us, is to follow the call of the truly human reflection of the Divine in all. Let us take this opportunity of being humans that has been given to us and cooperate responsibly with the Divine Plan. ✧

I dreamt that life was joy.
I awoke and saw that life was service.
I acted and, behold, service was joy.

Rabindranath Tagore

Practical Theosophy and the Joy of Service

MARIE HARKNESS

IT is important to have a clear understanding of what Theosophy actually is. What *is* Theosophy? It literally means Divine Wisdom, or Wisdom of the Gods. Radha Burnier, former International President (1980–2013) of the Theosophical Society (TS) stated:

Theosophy is not a kind of empty philosophy, or a new sect or religion, but has to do with learning about life and the realization of its beauty and its meaning. Those who work in this way . . . become a light radiating friendship and harmony, kindness and love in action towards all. If we study Theosophy and that does not lead to such a change in the quality of our relationships and our attitude, there is *something missing* in the way we understand Theosophy.

Annie Besant, another former International President said at a Convention lecture:

There is one thing which must be accepted by everyone who comes into the Theosophical Society and that is the existence of universal brotherhood as a law of Nature.

To profess Brotherhood is a small part of our work. Every member of the Society should be doing his utmost to live universal brotherhood, to carry it out in his ordinary everyday life, not only to use it as a great Light, a light thrown on the road of right thinking, but also to realize that brotherhood must embody itself in brotherly activity, if it is to be worthy of its name.

To join the TS one only has to subscribe to the three objects which are:

- ◆ To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour.
- ◆ To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy, and Science.
- ◆ To investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in humankind.

And accept the Mission statement added later:

- ◆ To serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realization of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual self-transformation, and the unity of all life.

Mrs Marie Harkness is the Organizing Secretary of the Theosophical Society in Ireland. Based on a talk given at the 17th All Ireland Convention in May 2024.

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The TS was started (Ancient Wisdom revised) in 1875. Under the watchful eye of the two main Masters overshadowing the Society since then — Master M. and Master KH — they brought together Madame H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) and Colonel H. S. Olcott, unlike in nature like ying and yang, worked very well together complementing one another. Olcott was more pragmatic whilst HPB was able to give full attention to the tomes she was instructed to write, often with inspiration from Higher sources.

Today all theosophists are expected to have an understanding of the terms “Karma” and “Reincarnation” — that one truly reaps what one sows and gets treated how one treats others, and what goes around comes around. All our actions are logged in the “Akashic Records”. Each theosophist through time realizes his/her own mission in life as it were, the reason for this earth life in general, and the golden opportunities available through belonging to the TS. Such a membership quickens one’s inner development through understanding, caring, and kindness to all others — to all streams of life, including animal and plant life. As one’s inner light through such service shines brighter and brighter, this draws the attention of the great Angelic Beings and the Masters of the Wisdom. No one appears on a white charger — but THEIR help, imparted wisdom and instruction comes from within — and one increasingly intuitively knows what one has to do, the next step along the way. There comes in time an increased sense

of knowing without analysis. One just KNOWS! “For when the disciple is ready, the Master is ready also.”

HPB once said, “A theosophist is as Theosophy does.” A theosophist worthy of the name grows daily in the sense of acceptance of what is, is non-judgmental; for example, the sun shines on all equally as it is in its nature to shine. The informed theosophist endeavours to live in the present moment, the past is gone, the future is ahead and unknown, but each present moment lived well makes beautiful memories and therefore there is no fear of the future. There develops in time an increasing understanding and compassion for others, of their frailties and behaviour, of realising this earth plane is a school of life.

It is the age of Kali Yuga, the most difficult of ages; yet to understand this and overcome means a swifter inner development, with higher help and encouragement. All humanity is at different levels of inner development and it is part of our task to gently encourage and be kindly to all who cross our path. It is believed that at a certain stage no words are necessary but one’s demeanour and one’s aura can work magic on others we communicate with. It is an ideal practice to see all others we meet at work, in shops, during the course of our daily lives, as Buddhas in the making. They all have that inner fire at their spiritual hearts; some are more clouded than others. It is believed that a kind word, help where needed, can rekindle that inner flame within each individual.

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A theosophist does not retaliate even when wronged as he/she knows that there IS a Universal law and universal justice — all in good time. Where we witness wrongdoing, we are expected to decry the action but not the person — his or her Light may be temporarily obscured.

In this way and practising as described, we are developing our compassion and understanding and during these efforts are partaking in a greater and higher service for humanity — for all realms of Nature.

As said earlier it has occurred to me to point out, as a reminder that we are presently living through the Age of Kali Yuga, the Iron Age, said to be the most difficult time to make inner progress with all the material distractions. We have now entered the Age of Aquarius, not only a new century but a new millennium. This is the age of the higher mind under a particular Master, and the focus is on raising of consciousness for all beings on planet Earth. As theosophists we have the golden opportunity to work at a totally different level making use of our developing “mind power”.

We are all too aware of the present litter problem facing many countries at this time such as the plastic menace and so on, and the harm done to animals and sea life as a result. But few have realized that there is a much greater toxic litter problem and infinitely more dangerous. This is on the lower mental plane, closest to earth. All the angry, resentful, warlike, revengeful, and negative thoughts gather there and unfortunately find a home.

They influence all those entertaining such thoughts, those of similar natures, thus strengthening the force of such thoughts, particularly during periods of national and worldwide unrest and warring between nations. That said, all noble, striving, understanding, and compassionate thoughts sent out into the ether find a home in and influence those with aspiring natures.

Thus such Light workers (let us call them that) are receiving higher help and higher thought, and greatly help those open, ready to receive, and with aspiring natures. The effect of such positive and higher thoughts serve to uplift all in the neighbourhood and beyond. That mainly is the golden opportunity given to all theosophists — to help counteract the negative with positive, loving thoughts. An easy statement to remember when projecting our thoughts is: “Send out blessings, not arrows!” If one advancing person can make such a difference, just imagine the uplifting and positive effect of the combined higher thought of a number of members!

So you can appreciate that altruistic work as theosophists is at different levels. The more such work is put into practice, the greater the chance of attracting the Masters’ help and receiving timely inspiration, intuitive thoughts, as and when needed. They frequently add their contribution, support, and force to such work. Also one’s inner development makes more significant progress. Master KH mentioned that one’s inner development is much greater than one can imagine in earth-plane consciousness.

Practical Theosophy and the Joy of Service

Your spiritual progress is far greater than you know or can realize, and you do well to believe that such development is *in itself* more important than its realization by your physical plane consciousness.

This is a tremendous service at another level, and greatly helps override and negate, through higher and combined strength, the unruly, vindictive, selfish, and warlike thoughts on the lower mental plane. Our efforts often are and can be influenced by the Highest Supreme Light filtered through the Masters of Compassion. Often such teachings and wisdom received is osmosed as it were into our brains during quiet time, meditation, or during sleep. We can also request that this may happen.

Theosophists striving to live their best life as each sees it, and somewhat aware of what has been discussed, are in a sense living at a higher level. As mentioned before, many such altruistic thoughts are reinforced by higher beings, thus making them much more effective. We must also keep remembering that all THOUGHTS MANIFEST. Omraam Aivanhov has advised us:

Connect with the Highest. Gradually you become so rich, so strong, that you will be able to help thousands of beings in the world — just through the “power of thought” — for borders are no barrier to waves.

Such higher noble service aligns one with the Highest Beings and knowing this encourages one along this Path and

fills each participant with an innate joy, knowing we are aligning ourselves with all that is noble and are able to assist all sentient beings on this planet. As one progresses in this way, the increasing inner Light radiates outwards blessing all and greatly helps uplift areas where negative, depressive thoughts and darkness prevails.

A quotation from *Light on the Path*:

For within you is the light of the world — the only light that can be shed upon the Path. If you are unable to perceive it within you, it is useless to look for it elsewhere. It is beyond you, because when you reach it you have lost yourself. It is unattainable, because it forever recedes. You will enter the light, but you will never touch the Flame.

From *The Voice of the Silence*:

Alas! when thou hast become like the fixed star in the highest heaven, that bright celestial orb must shine from out the spatial depths for all — save for itself; give light to all, but take from none.

Annie Besant, has written:

As service becomes our habitual attitude to everyone we meet, we shall gradually find that everyone is profoundly interesting and that the giving of service is the greatest joy in life.

And the final word from Rabindranath Tagore:

I slept and dreamt that life was joy.
I awoke and saw that life was service.
I acted and behold, service was joy. ✧

Service is Spirituality in Action.

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