

THE VAHAN.



A VEHICLE FOR THE INTERCHANGE OF

THEOSOPHICAL NEWS AND OPINIONS.

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Members and others are invited to send opinions and questions on Theosophical subjects, notes on current Theosophical literature, reports of activities, cuttings of general interest from papers, etc., for insertion in the VAHAN to W. R. OLD, Gen. Secretary British Section T. S., 19, Avenue Road, Regent's Park, London, N.W.

March 1, 1891.

NO. 7.

Pranayama.

It can hardly be other than useful, in the interest of those who may have taken the aphorisms of Patanjali, dealing with this subject, in too literal and exoteric a sense, to repeat the paragraph from Professor Dvivedi's Treatise on the Raja Yoga, quoted in *Lucifer* for January, which runs as follows:

"The expulsion of the phenomenal from consciousness is the real *rechaka* (blowing out the breath retained in the lungs); and the conviction "I am *Brahma*" is the real *puraka* (the drawing in of the breath); and then the immovable concentration on that very conviction is the real *Kumbhaka* (the retention of the breath in the lungs for some time). This is the real course of *Prânâyâma* for the enlightened, whereas, for the ignorant it consists in torturing the nose."

For the comfort, however, of those misguided ones who may have been "torturing their noses" in all good faith by deeply drawn inspirations, expirations, etc., it may be added that their pains are not entirely thrown away, though they may not thereby have advanced materially the highest aims they had in view.

In another work which, in the same number of *Lucifer*, deservedly receives a high meed of praise, namely, *Nature's Finer Forces*, by Rama Prâsad, M.A., the learned author thus speaks of the physiological effects of the practice in question. (P. 161):

"The next method" (for the restoration of the balance of the *etatwas*) "is *Prânâyâma*, deep expiration and inspiration. This, too, conduces to the same end and in the same way. The drawing of deep breaths in and out, has, to some extent, the same effect as running

and other hard exercise. The heat that is produced burns down certain elements of disease which it is desirable should be burnt. But the practice in its effects differs for the better from hard exercise. In hard exercise, the *susumna* begins to play, and that is not good for physiological health. *Prānāyāma*, however, if properly performed, is beneficial from a physiological, as well as from a mental point of view. The first effect that is produced in *prānāyāma*, is the general prevalence of the *prithivi tatwa*. It is unnecessary to remind the reader that the *apas tatwa* carries the breath lowest down, and that the *prithivi tatwa* cannot but be introduced, and the general prevalence of this *tatwa*, with the consequent golden tinge of the circle of light round our heads, can never fail to cause fixity of purpose and strength of attention."

This is not all the author has to say on this point, nor even the most interesting portion of his discourse, but it will suffice.

Even Western physicians are aware of the good effect of deep inspirations of air, and singers practice this exercise with benefit. Note that it is very important not to raise the shoulders when drawing in the breath, otherwise only the upper portion of the lungs will be affected. It is the lower portion nearest the diaphragm that needs to be inflated, and this part, in ordinary breathing, is seldom or never filled with air, consequently the venous blood it contains is not fully oxydized.

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC.

Part II of "The Babel of Modern Thought," is the editorial of the February number of *Lucifer*. The general text of these two editorials has already been noticed, and one or two points may now be presented more specifically. The general proposition that the *ancients*, (using the term in its widest sense) knew all that we now know of natural law, and a great deal more besides, is one which is oftenest denied; nor is the proof altogether an easy one to bring home to the *orthodox* mind. Because we do not find specific mention of modern applications, such as railways and telegraphs; because we do not find ancient telescopes or telephones, it is generally denied that any knowledge of what is now termed *science*, existed in ancient times. Yet we do find references to many things which modern science has not yet accomplished, such, for instance, as a common use of vessels for navigating the air. Moreover, if the applications and apparatus did not exist, in addition to an intimate acquaintance with the laws of nature, how could the ancients have left such a record as the Great Pyramid, whatever may be the age ascribed to that monument? The immense blocks of granite of which the interior chambers are formed, are put together with such accuracy that the finest knife cannot be

inserted between the joints. The astronomical knowledge displayed in its construction, its perfect orientation, and the mathematical accuracy and proportion of its parts, bearing relation as they do to the quadrature of the circle, and to the size of the earth, are so extraordinary, compared with our modern achievements, that Professor Piazzi Smyth, who, being orthodox, has to deny the wisdom of the ancients, finds the only alternative is the theory that it was the divinely inspired work of God! Turning, however, from specific applications, to more general principles, we are met by this difficulty: that the knowledge of the laws of nature was considered *sacred* by the ancients, and was only taught to the masses in the guarded language of symbology and allegory. To our modern scholars and orientalists these appear to be mere "fables," as indeed it was intended that they should, to those who were spiritually blind. It is the key to these "fables" which Theosophy now presents; nor can even the Greek philosophers, not to go any further back, be understood without it. Thus the Editor of *Lucifer* points out, that while, possessing this key, we may easily recognize modern scientific "discoveries" in the works of Democritus, Lucretius, Anaxagoras, Pythagoras, Plato, and a host of others; yet the works of Euclid are alone honoured to-day, perhaps because one cannot juggle as easily with mathematics and figures, as with symbols and words."

Turning from science to religion and philosophy, the same is true. Orthodoxy will ever "strain at the gnat, and swallow the camel"; and as we find the allegories and fables of the Bible accepted as literally true, while the same teachings wrapped up in a different form, or *re-veiled* (not *re-vealed*) in another manner, are despised and *rejected*. The whole subject is of the deepest importance as bearing on the teachings of Theosophy; and these two articles in *Lucifer* should be well studied by those who are called upon to defend the basis of their faith.

Following up this subject, the second and concluding article on "Theosophy and its Evidences," by Mrs. Annie Besant, should be noticed. It deals with the literary and historical evidences as to the existence of the *Secret Doctrine* in all ages. In particular, as bearing upon the record of the Old Testament. Some quotations from Maimonides and Origen are of the plainest possible import. Origen, who, as a Church *Father*, ought to have some authority, says: "What man of sense will agree with the statement that the first, second, and third days, in which the evening is named, and the morning, were without sun, moon, and stars, and the first day without a heaven? What man is found such an idiot as to suppose that God planted trees in Paradise, like a husbandman? . . . I believe that every man must hold these things for images, under which a hidden sense lies concealed." And it is this "hidden sense" which Theosophy teaches

as the *Secret Doctrine*. "It is this body of doctrine that we assert is in the hands of the Masters of Wisdom, heirs of the great Hierophants of the Past, and that we allege is still to be reached by those who are strong enough to take on themselves the old obligation of the Neophyte: *To know; to dare; to will; and to keep silent.*"

"The Idea of Re-birth," by "C. C. M.," is an article dealing with a book of the same title, by Miss F. Arundale. The article itself is a valuable contribution to the pages of *Lucifer*, on this subject; while the book should be brought to the notice of all, as a most valuable addition to the literature which is gradually forcing a recognition, on the modern world, of this fundamental doctrine of the ancient Wisdom-Religion.

The Path for February, contains a continuation of the article on "Mount Meru," already noticed.

"India a Storehouse for Us," is an important article bearing upon the second of the declared objects for which the Theosophical Society was formed. It appears also that the American Section is about to make a special effort to carry out this object by the formation of an *Oriental Department*. It is proposed to procure articles or translations relating to Eastern religions, philosophies, literature, folk-lore, social customs and observances, from competent Hindus, Parsees, and other Asiatic members, and persons; and to distribute in pamphlet form, monthly or oftener, free to all Branches and Members. The Hindus are peculiarly reticent to aliens, and will often go to great trouble to throw them on a false scent, as witness the celebrated case of the Biblical narratives supposed to have been found in the Puranas, and other Sanskrit books, by Lieutenant Wilford, and Sir Wm. Jones. It is doubtful, even to-day, whether the correct texts of the Vedas, Puranas, etc., are those which have come into the hands of our Oriental scholars. The Theosophical Society, however, has won the confidence of the Brahmins, and Pundits; and it is likely that through the new Oriental Department of the American Section, much valuable information will be available which could not otherwise be obtained.

It is to be regretted that the VAHAN has not space enough even to mention many articles in current Theosophical literature, which are of great interest and importance. All that can be done is to notice a few points which bear more particularly upon the objects of the Society, and the basis of Theosophical teachings in literature and science.

The *Prasnattora* is the title of the new monthly journal of questions and answers, issued for free distribution to members of the Indian Section T. S. It takes its name from two Hindu words, *prasma*, a question, and *uttara*, an answer. The questions dealt with in the first

number have reference to meditation, the object of earthly existence, collective Karma, the reason of Hindu caste-system, and the method of purifying different articles from foreign magnetism; the answers to these, given by various members, showing considerable thought and aptitude. The Editorial duties are performed by Brother Bertram Keightley, the General Secretary of the Indian Section, in his usual efficient style.

The journal consists of sixteen pages, and is printed in English.

Members of the British Section who desire to study the most important Theosophic questions from the standpoint of Eastern philosophy as expounded by native pundits and Theosophists, may obtain the *Prasnottara* at the cost of 2/6 per year. Orders and subscriptions should be addressed to the General Secretary, British Section, T. S.

THE ENQUIRER.

QUERY.—*What is a Bodhisattwa?*

ANS.—A Bodhisattwa is one of the seven hierarchies of the Buddhas. The Bodhisattwas are the emanations, or sons of the Dhyani-Buddhas. Thus in *Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 52, we read that the Dhyani-Chohans or Dhyani-Buddhas are the “Anupadaka,” *i.e.*, parentless. They correspond mystically to the Human Buddhas and Boddhisattwas, known as Mânushi-Buddhas, *which they illuminate*. These latter (Bodhi-Sattwas) are also called the Vâjra-Sattwas, *i.e.*, diamond-soul, once they are merged in Atma-Buddhi.

This is further explained on p. 571, vol. 1, S. D., where the Dhyani-Buddhas are said to emanate, or create from themselves, by virtue of Dhyana, celestial selves—the *superhuman* Bodhi-Sattwas. These latter, incarnating at the beginning of every human cycle on earth (*i.e.*, in the Fourth Round) as mortal men, become occasionally, owing to their personal merit, Bodhi-Sattwas among the Sons of Humanity, after which they may reappear as *Manushi* (human) Buddhas.

QUERY.—*In the “Voice of the Silence” p. 31, it is said:—“Fix thy Soul’s gaze upon the star whose ray thou art.” Reference to Glossary reads thus: “Every Spiritual Ego is a ray of a ‘Planetary Spirit’ according to Esoteric teaching.” Please explain.*

ANS.—The seven planetary spirits are the Dhyani-Buddhas, or the Brahmanical Manasaputras, the sons of Mâhat, or the “mind-born.” They are the seven hierarchies of the Human Spiritual Egos, under one or other of which every Manasic entity is included, and from which it emanates. The Lower Manas, or Human Soul, which

informs every terrestrial personality in the series of reïncarnations, is a ray from its Higher Ego, and through it is linked to its particular Planetary Hierarchy. In connection with this, read the foregoing statement regarding the Bodhisattwas, and turn to p. 706, *Theosophist*, August, 1886, where the following information is given:—"Every Buddha meets, at his last Initiation, all the great adepts who reached Buddhahship during preceding ages; and similarly every class of adepts has its own bond of spiritual communion which knits them together in a properly organized fraternity. The only possible and effectual way of entering into any such Brotherhood, . . . is by bringing one's self within the influence of the spiritual light which radiates from one's own Logos, . . . such communion is only possible between persons whose souls derive their life and sustenance from the same divine ray, and, as seven distinct rays radiate from the 'Central Spiritual Sun,' all adepts and Dhyān Chohans are divisible into seven classes, each of which is guided, controlled, and overshadowed by one of the seven forms, or manifestations of the divine wisdom." (*Vide Secret Doctrine, vol. 1, pp. 576-7*).

Notice to Members.

At a meeting of the Emergency Committee of the British Section, held on the 16th inst., it was decided that the Library and appurtenances of the British Section T.S., at 8, Duke Street, should be transferred to No. 17, Avenue Road, Regent's Park, N.W., those premises having been taken by a member of the Society to form an extension of the Headquarters at No. 19. The room which is placed at the disposal of the Section is upon the first floor, and measures 33 feet by 18 feet, being more than double the size of the room at Duke Street, and having a large double conservatory opening out upon the south side.

When completed, the new quarters will form a very attractive and comfortable resort for studious Theosophists, and it is the intention of the General Secretary to attempt the formation of a really complete library of Occult and Theosophical literature. For this purpose, any donations of suitable books, or money for their purchase, will be gratefully acknowledged if directed to the General Secretary. The times at which the new library will be open to members of the Society, will be given in the next VAHAN.

ACTIVITIES.

The General Report of the 15th Annual Convention of the T. S., held at Adyar, Madras, on December 27th, 28th and 29th, 1890, shows

the following interesting statistics of the growth of the Society, which place its increasing influence on record as a fact beyond dispute.

BRANCH CHARTERS ISSUED.

1875	1876	1877	1878	1879	1880	1881	1882	1883
...	1	2	2	4	11	27	51	93
	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	
	104	121	136	158	176	206	241	

The average number of Charters issued annually during the period from 1876, to 1890 inclusive, is sixteen; the number of Branches established in 1890 being 35. The Report shows a list of new books, on Theosophical subjects, published during the years 1889 and 1890 by the various centres, which gives a total of 82 works. We hope shortly to be able to place the full Report in the hands of our members.

LIVERPOOL LODGE.—On February 22nd, a Special Meeting of this Lodge was held for the purpose of hearing an address from Herbert Burrows, of London, who was visiting Liverpool. The meeting room at 17, Great George Square, was well filled with members and their friends. The chair was taken by Mr. Savage, who briefly introduced the lecturer, as one who was well known to them by name and work. Mr. Burrows took for his subject "Theosophy and the Problems of Life," and after conveying the cordial and fraternal greeting of the London Theosophists to the Liverpool brethren, he gave an hour's address, which was very warmly appreciated. Taking as his starting point the chaos which at present largely exists in many departments of Western thought, in science, philosophy, religion, and sociology, he showed the hopelessness of expecting, from the materialistic basis, any natural solution of the various life problems with which man is continually confronted, and then proceeded to give a clear exposition of Theosophical principles and beliefs, and of the real relation of man to the universe. The pertinent questions which were asked after the lecture by some of the strangers present, showed that the address had much impressed them. The hearty thanks of the meeting were given to Mr. Burrows for his lecture, with the hope that he could soon visit Liverpool again. The Lodge is now holding fortnightly meetings, and although Liverpool is a bad place to influence, solid if quiet work is being done.

Our indefatigable worker, Mrs. A. L. Cleather, has signified her intention of placing the whole of her private library, which includes all the best Theosophical publications, at the use of newly-enrolled

or intending members of the Theosophical Society. Those who are anxious to avail themselves of this opportunity should communicate by letter with Mrs. A. L. Cleather, 19, Gayton Road, Harrow.

A considerable amount of labour has lately been employed upon the grounds of the Headquarters in Avenue Road, which are rapidly assuming a neat and attractive appearance. If any of our country friends and members will help in this direction by sending us hampers of ferns, primroses, roots, pinks, carnations, polyanthi, or rose trees, they will be doing us a distinct service, by saving the further outlay of money, for which we shall be very grateful.

Country members who are in town during the Easter Vacation and who may be glad to attend the monthly *Conversazione* of the Blavatsky Lodge are requested to note that it will be held at Headquarters on Tuesday, April 7th, at 8 p.m. A cordial invitation is extended.

Duplicates of this number can be had by sending 2d. in stamps to the General Secretary. Annual subscription, 4/-



H. P. B. Press, 16 Townshend Road, N.W.