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***Cover*:** This image represents a "Tree of Life" in Jewish, Christian, and Hermetic Kabbalah. It consists of 10 circles, or nodes, symbolizing different archetypes and 22 paths connecting the nodes. The columns symbolize pillars representing moral and other values. Mr Joma Sipe is the Portuguese artist/poet of this "illuminated" sacred painting. <jomasipe.com>

This journal is the official organ of the President, founded by H. P. Blavatsky on 1 Oct. 1879. The Theosophical Society is responsible only for official notices appearing in this journal.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Founded 17 November 1875

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

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

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

Presidential Address

To the 149th International Convention of the Theosophical Society (TS)
(*In-person & on Zoom from 31 December 2024 to 4 January 2025*)

I AM happy to warmly welcome all the delegates here at Adyar and those online around the world to open this 149th International Convention with us. I wish you a fruitful and inspiring time during the Convention programs and related events on our campus. Let us now turn to those Great Ones whose compassionate care and blessings our Society has enjoyed for all these years. Please rise:

May those who are the embodiments of Love Immortal
bless with their help and guidance this Society,
founded to be a channel for their work.
May They inspire it with their Wisdom, strengthen it
with their Power, and energize it with their activity.

It is a pleasure to open this 149th Annual Convention of the TS.

This year the Theosophical Society (TS) will celebrate its150th anniversary since its founding. Although it is only in recent years that a formal Mission Statement was developed — "service to humanity" along the TS's specific lines has been the goal of all activities. The role of those of us privileged to live and work here at the Adyar headquarters has been to establish this place, called by Annie Besant "The Masters' Home", as a radiant example of important possibilities. We try to function as a laboratory for transformation — individual and societal. In all that we do our focus is on elevating the functioning of this organization in our attempt to communicate the Ageless Wisdom, the process of spiritual self-transformation, and the unity of all life.

The TS has never been a large organization, but the power that brought it into being and continues to maintain it has made it possible to profoundly impact global culture. In the well-known words of anthropologist, Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful people can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Anything truly important, worthy of a full commitment of one's efforts, is long-term and cannot be fully realized in one's lifetime. As with those who came before us, our continuing attempts to refine the effectiveness and sustainability of the work we do here will be our gift to an as yet undefined future, certainly full of challenges, but nourished by the seeds we are planting now.

Adyar is an extremely active centre, so it will not be possible to list the many accomplishments of our various departments. The TS's first president, H. S. Olcott, made a priority of the Library and the Gardens — knowledge and beauty. This year we can begin our report with these two.

Under the leadership of Swami Chitghanananda, who has spearheaded the digitization process since its beginning, the **Adyar Library and Research Centre (ALRC)** has moved to the Koha software platform. Koha is an open-source integrated library system (ILS), used worldwide by public, school and special libraries, but also in some larger academic libraries. The digitization of our 45,000 palm leaf manuscripts continues under his direction. The Library has been revitalized under the cooperative leadership of Librarian, Jaishree Kannan, Director, Dr Radha Ragunathan, and Swamiji. A Sanskrit beginners' course for staff and residents has been introduced by Dr Radha Raghunathan. The course has a dual intention: to heighten awareness of the richness of Sanskrit; and to train Library staff to a higher competency in working with the palm-leaf manuscripts. The monthly "Libraries as Communities" programme continues to draw readers and visitors.

The TS Adyar campus is described as one of the two "Lungs of Chennai" for the effects of its green space. The **Adyar Eco-Development** (AED) project aims to harness the deep natural and spiritual energy of the TS campus to inspire community wellness, ecological consciousness and a lasting collective movement towards living sustainably in harmony with Nature. The long-term aim is modeling, educating, inspiring and sustaining community action to restore our shared environment. A **Blue Green Centre** is being established in the Olcott Bungalow which will be a knowledge repository and training centre and a part of the Blue Green Network, offering students, community members and partners opportunities to learn, collaborate and conduct research in ecological restoration.

The **Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School** (OMHSS) is a full-fledged school with students from KG to Grade 12, founded in 1894. Now in its 130th year, it caters to the underprivileged children and first-generation learners of the community. Under the leadership of school Director Sashikala Sriram and Principal Lalitha Rajamani, the school has upgraded and empowered its teachers. The students are taught to face challenges and achieve success in whatever field they are pursuing. Through the generosity of an individual donor an entirely new, first-class building with six classrooms has been constructed. Another is scheduled for this year. Also, in conjunction with AED, a Blue Green Centre, a dedicated building for environment and ecological education, is being built. The Olcott School is planned as the hub for community-based eco-education.

The **Adyar Theosophical Academy** (ATA) marked its sixth academic year since its founding with notable progress in holistic education, infrastructure, and student engagement, currently catering to 201 students from Nursery to Grade 7. As the physical requirements for its expanding number of classes grows, a beautiful suite of new classrooms was established by repurposing space in the nearby Vasanta Press building. Construction work has already begun on what will be the school's entirely new campus in the "Kirby Gardens" portion of the TS campus.

Under the direction of Erica Geor-

giades, the **School of the Wisdom** (SOW) has become a global activity of the TS. During the course of the year, five on-campus courses were offered, and an expanded selection of online classes, including five courses in English and three in Spanish. More than 500 members participated.

There is a line item in our accounting books titled "**Lily's Projects**". Over the years Sections and members around the world have made significant donations for a range of projects initiated and overseen by my wife, Lily Boyd, such as providing new sewing machines for the Vocational Training Centre, reopening and outfitting the hostel for OMHSS boys, renovation of the Ponniamman Temple near the main gate, and others. This year with the assistance of TS New Zealand she installed the pathway leading to the Adyar Theatre, a new playground for the kids at our Social Welfare Centre, and a renovation of the Liberal Catholic Church.

The **Art Conservation Project & Blavatsky Museum** at Adyar has works from artists around the world. Currently our conservation project is focused on around 100 works primarily derived from the modern Indian art movement propelled by the Bengal School, Tamilian painters, and the portrait paintings of the acclaimed Australian painter, Florence Ada Fuller. The restoration of the painting collection within TS Adyar is set to be a catalyst to revive the interest in art in the theosophical community while inspiring artists to visit and create artwork on campus. This project not only showcases the cultural and spiritual contribution of the TS to art in India, but also preserves the cultural heritage of the TS and India. Theosophy has had a historical influence on the evolution of new artistic movements. On one hand, *Thought Forms* (1905), a book co-authored by Annie Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater, anticipated all the 20th century abstraction movements in the West. On the other hand, TS in Adyar had significant exchanges with the modern Indian art movements that unfolded in the first half of the twentieth century through the efforts of its members.

The **Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary** (BMAD) continues to grow annually, treating over 20,000 outpatient cases, performing 400+ major surgeries, and conducting 2,500+ animal birth control procedures each year. The shelter admits over 900 critical inpatients, including road accident victims, abandoned animals, and those with severe illnesses like cancer. This year marked the expansion of its diagnostic facilities with a new biochemistry machine and the transformation of the old Scouts' camp into a wildlife unit for injured urban wildlife, complete with enclosures, a surgery unit, and treatment areas. BMAD's efforts have been recognized by the Animal Welfare Board of India and the Tamil Nadu State Board for Animal Welfare. Led by its Director Shravan Krishnan BMAD has become the foremost centre of its type in Southern India.

The work of many people and departments make it possible for the seamless function of the Convention. Most of it takes place in the background. I thank all of our departments, staff, and volunteers for making this event possible.

The Work around the World

In the **AMERICAS,** the TS in **Central America** has one Lodge and one study centre. This year, the study focused on *The Masters and the Path* by C. W. Leadbeater, exploring the teachings on the role of spiritual masters and their influence on the path of discipleship. Additionally, an introductory course on Theosopohy, based on HPB's *The Key to Theosophy* was offered through the Google Meet app, providing participants with a comprehensive overview of theosophical principles and teachings.

The TS in **Argentina** remained focused on the Lodges' fulfillment of the Three Objects, emphasizing the unique value of face-to-face meetings. Over the year, eight books were edited and printed in Spanish, including works by N. Sri Ram, H. P. Blavatsky, and Annie Besant, while three titles were re-edited, such as *Evolution of the Higher Consciousness* by Pablo Sender. The Society's YouTube channel expanded to 472 videos with over 4,500 subscribers, and a national virtual course was introduced in areas without Lodges. Two major events took place at the San Rafael Theosophical Centre: the 57th Summer School in February, focused on "Anthropogenesis", with 76 attendees, and the Winter School in July on "Karma". Additionally, in October a weekend program titled "Searching for the Meaning of Life" was held in San Lorenzo, engaging members from various regions in deep study and reflection on *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett.*

The TS in **Bolivia** focused on strengthening fraternal bonds, studying core texts, and expanding outreach. The Society now has six branches in La Paz and Cochabamba, and centres in Santa Cruz, Tarija, and Oruro. Several study groups met regularly to discuss texts like *Meditations on the Occult Life, Human Regeneration, Self-Culture,* and *The Secret Doctrine*. National workshops and lectures covered a wide range of topics, including karma, the divine plan, and life after death. Key events included a national workshop on *The Voice of the Silence*, and workshops on "Change and Regeneration", as well as visits from prominent international speakers like Enrique Reig and Isaac Jauli. Additionally, yoga classes were offered, and the Dora Crespo Occult Library is in the process of being digitized for international access. Public talks and introductory courses were also part of the outreach efforts, helping to engage new members and the wider community in Theosophy.

Throughout this period, the TS in **Brazil** modernized its online presence by redesigning its website and enhancing its social media platforms. A new video production department enabled the creation of engaging and visually refined content. Two major events marked this period: the 43rd Summer School, themed "The Meaning of Life and the Art of Living" held in Chapada dos Guimarães, and the 30th International School and Winter Seminar, focused on "Theosophical Education and Spiritual Transformation" at the Theosophical Institute of Brasília, drawing significant participation both onsite and online. Weekly online study groups continued to

explore works like *The Key to Theosophy*, *The Mahatma Letters*, and *The Secret Doctrine*, fostering deep engagement among members. The TS further advanced its mission through a comprehensive program of hybrid and online studies, meditation sessions, public lectures, and specialized courses, such as the second "Online Introduction to Theosophical Thought" course. The "Pedagogy of Self-Transformation" course advanced the Theosophical Schools in Brazil Project, preparing for the country's first one in 2025. The Besant Educational Association introduced a hybrid edition of its Classical Yoga Teacher Training Course, while the TOS launched humanitarian initiatives and projects promoting vegetarianism. Additionally, the TPH celebrated a productive year, releasing new titles and planning future publications. Centers like the Raja Theosophical Center focused on infrastructure and member recruitment, while international efforts emphasized Theosophy's expansion in Russia and Africa, and global unity. These initiatives underscore the Society's dedication to spiritual education, service, and outreach.

In **Canada,** the CTA continued its biweekly meetings, primarily focused on the seminars by Pablo and Michele Sender, with Pablo joining the final Zoom session for a recap and Q&A. The organization enhanced its online presence through its website, Facebook, and YouTube, hiring an expert to optimize results. The CTA fostered connections with unaffiliated lodges in Toronto and Vancouver, inviting them to the 2025 World Congress, and celebrated the chartering of a new Lodge in Calgary, bringing the total to six. Across Canada, members studied a range of theosophical texts, including *The Secret Doctrine*, the *Bhagavadgitā*, and works by I. K. Taimni, Pablo Sender, and Annie Besant.

The TS in **Chile** conducted its activities during the year ending 30 September 2024 under the motto "Practical Brotherhood: A Path to Peace". Public events included six lectures and introductory courses on Theosophy, both in-person and online, resulting in increased engagement and twelve new members. Lodges such as Arundhati, Amor, and Santiago held regular meetings, focusing on texts like *The Key to Theosophy* by H. P. Blavatsky and *The Science of Yoga* by I. K. Taimni, along with hosting public lectures. The Education Department, led by Ana Gloria Bustos, organized workshops, study groups, and a public lecture series, with notable attendance. Efforts to digitize the library and remodel its space were supported by generous donations of equipment and books. A new regional study group was established following online courses for participants outside the capital, and promotion via social media platforms further broadened outreach.

The **Colombian** Section actively engaged in both virtual and in-person activities across its Lodges. Spinoza, Sol (Ecuador), and Luz Lodges operated exclusively online, while Arco Iris Lodge combined formats, attracting members from Argentina and Spain, and Medellín Lodge hosted in-person sessions. Efforts to expand study groups focused on Bogotá and extended to Medellín, Pasto, Palmira, and Ecuador via virtual platforms. Key studies included *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Key to Theosophy*, and I. K. Taimni's *Man,*

God and the Universe, fostering comparative exploration of theosophical themes. Plans are underway to reactivate the Brahma Vidya School and Theosophical Dissemination Fund in 2024, including introductory courses and expanded outreach. The group, "Encounters with Krishnamurti", continued virtually, with support for in-person meetings at the headquarters. The magazine *Selección Teosófica* was distributed virtually, promoting comparative studies and aiming for future physical editions. Catalina Isaza Cantor and Armando Motta Zapata played key roles in international and regional theosophical activities, contributing to lectures, workshops, publications, and youth initiatives. The Society advanced its mission through sustained efforts in dissemination and study on local, national, and international levels.

The activities of the TS in **Costa Rica** during the year showcased dedication to study, teaching, and fraternity despite challenges. The Virya Lodge celebrated 120 years of continuous work, held 46 sessions (14 virtual), and continued studying key texts such as *The Key to Theosophy* and *The Seven Schools of Yoga*. The Shakti Lodge conducted a 10-week "Introductory Course to Theosophy" on *The Key to Theosophy* and fundamental teachings. Dharma Lodge focused on the study of texts like *Light on the Path* and *At the Feet of the Master*, alongside community-building activities, like an excursion. Helena Blavatsky Lodge studied works by H. P. Blavatsky and others, emphasizing topics like "Anthropogenesis" and "The *Pāramitā-s*", and hosted study sessions for *The Mahatma Letters*. Special celebrations such as Annie Besant Day, Founders Day, and White Lotus Day were organized collaboratively with Lodges. The Presidential Agency facilitated events like the Winter School on self-transformation and study groups exploring practical applications of theosophical teachings. Despite membership decrease, the Lodges maintained stability and worked to foster fraternity, while emphasizing the process of self-transformation and Theosophical dissemination.

Due to very serious social and economic crisis in **Cuba**, the Cuban Section has been undergoing many difficulties to perform its duties and work.

The Atma Lodge of the TS in the **Dominican Republic** celebrated significant events, including White Lotus Day and the initiation of new members, while participating in activities with the Inter-American Theosophical Federation. Courses such as "Theosophy for All", workshops on myths and consciousness, and the ongoing study of the "Compendium of *The Secret Doctrine*" were highlights. Notable seminars like "Internal Life" and lectures by Dr Isaac Jauli and others focused on self-knowledge, meditation, and theosophical teachings. Weekly healing rituals, the study of key theosophical texts, and collaborative efforts with Nueva Aurora Lodge advanced their mission to explore and disseminate theosophy. The Nueva Aurora Lodge complemented these efforts with their study of Ernest Wood's *The Seven Rays* and Geoffrey A. Barborka's *The Divine Plan*, alongside monthly talks and weekly gatherings to promote theosophical studies. With 24 active members, they continued to collab-

orate on virtual and in-person initiatives to broaden the reach of their teachings.

The **Mexican** Section operates through Lodges and Study centers both in-person and via Zoom, enabling participation across the country and beyond due to Mexico's large geographical size and the limited number of centers. These Lodges focus on various topics, including *The Secret Doctrine* (facilitated by the Lodges Damodar, Morya, and HPB), *The Bhagavadgitā. Evolution of Higher Consciousness* by Aura, *The Ocean of Theosophy* by Jantepusi, and various esoteric studies by Tonanzi, Shiva, and Luz de Oriente. Despite challenges such as health issues among members and leaders, activities have continued, including weekly theosophical talks, a workshop on "Karma and Relationships" led by Dr Isaac Jauli, and the "School of Theosophy" in October 2023 on "The Nature of the Mind", facilitated by Mexican speakers. These events were recorded and shared on platforms like YouTube and Facebook. Communication is maintained through multiple channels, with special recognition to the OTS in Mexico, for its contributions.

The TS in **Puerto Rico** focused on reviving physical attendance at Sunday conferences, organizing events like Founders Day, Adyar Day, and White Lotus Day, and hosting a workshop on "Evolution of the Higher Consciousness". Efforts were made to improve facilities, including reorganizing the library and repainting. Despite challenges in regaining post-pandemic participation, both regions are progressively fostering in-person engagement. Study lodges have shown satisfactory results, and there is ongoing collaboration between the two centres. Additionally, the Society is supporting the establishment of a new Lodge in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, with the hope of expanding its mission in Central America.

The past year for the TS in **Uruguay** was marked by a gradual return to normality, prompting reflections on potential post-pandemic approaches to study and outreach. Activities included a return to foundational studies such as *Karma* and *Dharma,* both by Annie Besant, Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*, and the initiation of Rudolf Steiner's *The Wisdom of Fairy Tales*. A Chi Kung Master resumed in-person classes open to members and sympathizers. The Society also engaged with conferences and courses from Spanish-speaking Sections, reinforcing its theosophical studies and outreach efforts.

The TS in **United States of America** (TSA) had a productive year, highlighted by its successful Summer National Convention with a record 239 attendees and a new extended program format. The TSA terminated its relationship with Far Horizons camp and the closure of the Ozark Theosophical Camp. Despite this, significant progress was made at Olcott headquarters, such as becoming a level II arboretum after planting 50 trees and completing various infrastructure upgrades. The TSA's various departments achieved notable milestones: the Archives expanded their collections and continued digitization projects, while the Audio-visual Department produced 178 new online programs. IT enhanced the organization's digital infrastructure, and the National Secretary initiated new mem-

bership programs, increasing engagement through classes and study centres. Departments like Maintenance, Marketing, and Public Programs expanded outreach and activities, including hosting a hybrid Summer National Convention and the popular TheosoFest, attended by about 3,000 people. Quest Bookshop saw growth in revenue and services, while *Quest* magazine maintained its high-quality publication standards. The Theosophical Publishing House transitioned its Quest Books imprint to Red Wheel/Weiser, focusing on core theosophical publications. Supporting departments, such as Accounting, Housekeeping, and Information, ensured smooth operations, while the dedicated staff contributed significantly to TSA's mission. The TSA remains committed to advancing Theosophy through unity and compassion.

In **Venezuela,** the TS celebrated the 146th Foundation Day on 20 November 2022, and White Lotus Day on 26 May 2023. The Blavatsky and Fraternity Lodges meet every Sunday from 11 am to 1 pm, maintaining the same schedule for efficient use of space and time. During the year, members studied *A los pies del maestro* (*At the Feet of the Master*), *La voz del silencio* (*The Voice of the Silence*), and *Luz en el sendero* (*Light on the Path*). Efforts focused on spreading theosophical thought, including an exchange with the Sao Paulo brothers. On 23 August 2023, Juan Carlos Sanchez presented a master conference, "*The* Theosophical Society*:* Two Centuries of Evolution", at the Pythagorean Lodge in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Weekly meetings also include collective meditations for world peace, fostering fraternity and philosophical study.

In the **ASIA-PACIFIC** region, the **East and Southeast Asia** Presidential Agency reported steady growth for the year ending 30 September 2024, primarily due to the remarkable expansion of the Chinese Project Team under the Singapore Lodge. While **Singapore** maintained a robust schedule of weekly Lodge meetings and study sessions, it also accommodated new Chinese Associate Members. **China** achieved a significant growth, with members now spanning 21 provinces and multiple regions, municipalities, and cities. Activities in China included monthly lectures, reading clubs, meditation sessions, daily blog publications, and the translation of ten theosophical books. This year also marked the first in-person meeting of the Chinese Project Team during the grand opening of Singapore's new premises. Malaysia, Japan, and Myanmar also contributed to the Agency's activities. The Selangor Lodge in **Malaysia** hosted regular talks, reading sessions, and meditation gatherings. In **Japan**, online study sessions were held three times a month alongside the publication of a quarterly newsletter, and the membership increased. No report was received from **Myanmar** due to ongoing turmoil. Despite regional challenges, the Agency continues to focus on outreach and theosophical education, leveraging technological advancements and collaborative efforts across countries to promote the Society's principles and teachings.

The TS in **Australia** experienced significant growth and revitalization in 2023–2024. Key highlights included a visit by

me, speaking at the Australian Convention in Perth and touring several TS Lodges, energizing the community. The development of a National Strategic Plan aims to increase membership by 5% over the next three years, with a special focus on engaging young Theosophists. The national journal, *Theosophy in Australia*, underwent a redesign under new editor Walter Mason, and the Springbrook TS Education and Retreat Centre in Queensland appointed new managers to support its sustainable growth. Additionally, the Executive Committee appointed various committees, including those for Education, Finance, and the Retreat Centre, to better support the Section's ongoing activities. The National Headquarters and TS centres across Australia continued to thrive with volunteer support and new initiatives.

The January 2024 National Convention in Perth, themed "The Wisdom Traditions, The Great Teachers, The One Life", received positive feedback and set the stage for the 2025 Convention in Hobart. The Education and Training Committee continued to oversee programs such as the University Prizes in Perennial Philosophy, while the Campbell Library expanded its collection with key additions. Digital resources were enhanced through the Online Public Access Catalog and regular Zoom study sessions. Local Lodges and groups across Australia hosted diverse educational events, with highlights including a "Death Cafe" in Melbourne and meditation retreats in Brisbane. The TS in Australia remains dedicated to its mission of promoting spiritual understanding, supported by the commitment of volunteers and the broader community.

The TS in **India** achieved significant milestones during the year ending 30 September 2024. The most notable accomplishment was winning a long-standing legal battle regarding the ownership of a 17-acre property in Varanasi, a process initiated in 2018. This success, secured after overcoming legal and personal threats, reinstated the Indian Section's rightful claim to the land after 117 years. Membership growth was another highlight, with a net increase of 1,275 members, bringing the total to 13,506. The abolition of admission fees and annual dues contributed significantly to this growth. Online lectures on theosophical topics, including 103 sessions organized by Pradip Mahapatra, gained widespread participation. Additionally, the fourth "Dr Radha Burnier Award for the Theosophist of the Year" was presented to S. G. Sanath Kumar for his lifelong contributions to Theosophy.

The Section's infrastructural and administrative initiatives also progressed. A temple was completed near the Rohit Mehta Hostel, and work on an amphitheatre is underway. The Bharat Samaj Temple, made of marble, will be consecrated in October 2024. Additionally, land adjoining the ropeway station was leased, generating revenue, and a large property was leased for redevelopment with provisions for the Section's bookshop and dispensary. Publications remained a priority, with monthly issues of *The Indian Theosophist* in English and Hindi, and a quarterly e-newsletter, *Insight*, gaining regular circulation. Members are preparing for the 12th World Congress in Vancouver, with 104 participants finalized. Despite

some ongoing legal challenges, such as compensation claims for land acquisition in Varanasi, the Indian Section continues to thrive, focusing on outreach, infrastructure, and strengthening its spiritual and educational initiatives.

The past year in the **New Zealand** Section was marked by both challenges and significant accomplishments, reflecting a commitment to theosophical values and spiritual inquiry. Despite instances of disharmony, progress was made in program development, drawing renewed interest and new members. A key highlight was the January 2024 Summer Convention in Christchurch, focusing on the theme of the soul's journey.

The new hall in Christchurch symbolized resilience, rising from the earthquake-damaged building of a decade ago. The School of Theosophy in April, led by Australian speaker Barry Bowden, garnered positive feedback, and his subsequent nationwide tour further enriched members' experiences. Events like the Immersion Weekend and Theosophical Sundays offered diverse opportunities for study, while framed presentations of the Society's Three Objects were distributed to centers. The Section also made contributions to Adyar's art restoration and infrastructure projects. Despite a slight membership decline, the Section, now re-registered under new legal requirements, continues to support its ten branches and affiliated centers with dedication.

In **Philippines** during this period, the Section transitioned away from pandemic-era online activities while continuing Mid-week Meditation sessions to train facilitators and engage the public. The first in-person National Convention since the pandemic was held in November 2023 in Cagayan de Oro, themed "Wisdom in Action: Catalyzing Theosophical Growth", with 50–60 attendees, despite a strong earthquake. Other key events included onsite public talks in January 2024, White Lotus Day with international online participation, the Visayas-Mindanao Federation Convention in June 2024 in Bacolod amidst a Kanlaon volcano eruption, and an August Self-Transformation Seminar at the national headquarters.

Efforts to improve technology and communication included the launch of "Wisdom with Ferdz", a bimonthly discussion group aiming to produce a publication for Lodges. Youth engagement was vibrant, with members participating in international events, while TOS activities expanded with Golden Link College opening a new campus in Bulacan. Lodges like Manila, Rizaliana, and Godea celebrated milestones, with Godea Lodge marking its 31st anniversary through seminars, a vegetarian buffet, and outreach. Publications such as *The Philippine Theosophist*, *Theosophical Digest*, and *Peace Ideas* continued, while dormant Lodges were reactivated, and hybrid setups were tested to expand participation.

In **AFRICA, the East and Central African** Section comprises of **Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania**, and **Zambia**. Over the years, the Section has faced a decline in attendance and theosophical activities due to economic challenges, political instability, and poor governance, particularly in Kenya. The Blavatsky Lodge, Mumbai (established in 1880), has historic ties with the Lodges in East Africa,

fostered by shared travels and interactions, such as C. Jinarajadasa's notable visit to Mombasa. This relationship was recently renewed when Arni Narendran of Blavatsky Lodge visited Nairobi Lodge in June 2024, emphasizing good-will and collaboration. However, the Covid pandemic exacerbated attendance issues, as elderly members faced health and technological barriers, limiting participation in both physical and online meetings. Efforts to attract younger members have been challenging, with economic pressures and organizational struggles hindering the Lodges' growth and sustainability. The Lodges' activity levels vary, with Nairobi, Kitwe, and Nile Lodges holding regular or semi-regular meetings, while Dar es Salaam Lodge has remained inactive except for its TOS contributions. Mufulira Lodge continues to host the Annual Public Speaking event.

The **South African** Section has faced challenges in recovering to pre-2020 attendance levels at Lodge meetings, though efforts to maintain consistent participation have resulted in an average of 12 members per meeting. A strategic meeting of Lodge Presidents and Section Committee members in January 2024 focused on ways to grow the Lodges, but while new attendees occasionally join meetings, this has not yet translated into new memberships. The Section retained all existing members during the past year, and hopes are pinned on a new website to attract broader interest. Despite the impact of local political and economic decline on daily operations, the Section has enhanced its theosophical content and placed greater emphasis on the practical applications of the teachings for daily and spiritual living.

In **EUROPE,** TS **Austria** faced significant challenges, including the closure of the Vienna Lodge "Alcione" on 6 October. Currently, there are two active Lodges in Austria. The Blavatsky Lodge in Graz has stabilized after a period of decline, with a new board working effectively, while the Johannes Lodge in Linz remains a small but active group. Weekly lectures and bimonthly study groups for young people are organized, along with three annual study weekends in Ulrichsberg. Since 24 March 2024, the leadership has emphasized a return to core theosophical works and the three objectives of Theosophy. The recent difficult experiences have helped foster a deeper understanding of true brotherhood, and there is a strong commitment to fraternal exchanges with other theosophical groups, particularly in German-speaking countries. The future of the organization looks promising.

In **Belgium** Lodges maintained regular activities, including publishing newsletters, organizing in-person and hybrid meetings, and hosting national events such as White Lotus Day, Founders Day, Adyar Day, and Annie Besant Day. Study groups regularly explored works by authors like Annie Besant, Krishnamurti, Taimni, Rohit Mehta, and Aryel Sanat, while healing and peace meditations were conducted in collaboration with the Belgian TOS. The year's highlight was the visit of International President Tim Boyd and Lily Boyd, who met with Belgian members at the Brussels headquarters for an informal yet meaningful discussion on brotherhood before continuing their European tour.

In **England & Wales,** the TS continues its mission through its Headquarters and 21 Lodges and Centres, offering various educational and spiritual opportunities. Headquarters organized 21 online Sunday evening talks covering diverse topics such as "The Life and Influence of HPB" and "Realising the Undescended Self". Lodges and Centres offer study groups focused on core texts such as *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Bhagavadgītā*, and *The Key to Theosophy*, with talks on subjects like Meditation, Karma, and the Tao-Te-Ching. The White Lotus Group also hosted 21 fortnightly sessions, deepening members' understanding of Theosophy. In addition to regular talks, two major events were held: the Trans-Pennine Conference, focusing on "Man's Spiritual Journey", and the Summer School, which delved into "The Mystery of Life and Death". Both events were highlighted by inspiring talks, including the prestigious Blavatsky Lecture given by Petra Meyer on "The Mystery of Life and Its Cyclic Evolution". The Society continues to produce its quarterly magazine *Esoterica* and offers online diploma courses in Theosophy. Although membership slightly declined, interest in the Society's teachings has grown, as reflected in the increasing engagement with its website and social media. The Society remains dedicated to promoting brotherhood and the oneness of life during challenging times.

The TS Section in **Finland** held its annual general meeting on 25 May, leading to the election of a new board on 30 June, with Janne Vuononvirta returning as General Secretary. A highlight of the year was the summer school in Helsinki, focusing on the *Mahatma Letters*. Members participated in various international theosophical events, and public lectures were hosted weekly at the Helsinki headquarters. The Section consists of 17 Lodges, which organized numerous lectures, study days and seminars. Kreivilä celebrated its 70th anniversary. Publications included recordings of lectures, a quarterly magazine, and new editions of the *Mahatma Letters* in Finnish and Estonian.

At TS **France**, bimonthly hybrid courses, online meditation sessions, and public lectures continue to engage participants. Founders Day, Adyar Day, and White Lotus Day were celebrated with active members and public supporters. A study group on *The Mahatma Letters*, in collaboration with the Belgian Section, attracts participants from Spain and beyond, while another group helps new members establish a foundation in theosophical teachings. The year's highlight was the National Convention, featuring me, speaking on "Living Spiritually in a Chaotic World". Members appreciated the opportunity to engage directly in a private session. TS France's online presence grew significantly through social media, YouTube, and newsletters, attracting younger audiences and inspiring many new members. Editions Adyar expanded its book offerings and introduced subscriptions to *The Theosophist* and the *Adyar Newsletter*. The TS library remained active, hosting researchers, while archival efforts focused on restoring French membership records. *Le Lotus Bleu* magazine, published ten times a year in print and digital formats, saw an increase in sub-

scribers due to successful promotions.

The TS in **Germany** held its main event, the Summer School, in July at Tann-Larbach, with Frank Henkel presenting "Dead and Dying" via Zoom. The event featured lively discussions, Qi Gong exercises, and a scenic excursion to Wasserkuppe. Future Summer Schools will be held in autumn to coincide with the 150th anniversary celebrations in Vancouver. In addition to this, regular group meetings and monthly online sessions continue to attract members from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, with growing participation due to high-quality speakers. Membership has slightly decreased to 128, and members remain active in various TOS-related activities. *The Adyar Magazine* is published thrice a year, and German authors within the TS, including Peter Michel, Anja Schreiber, Gabrièle Franklin, Manfred Ehmer, and Katarina Michel, continue to contribute their works to meetings and online platforms.

In **Greece,** the TS elected Erica Georgiades as the new General Secretary. All Lodges conducted lectures and study sessions focused on the Society's core objectives, celebrating Foundation Day, White Lotus Day, Adyar Day, and the Summer Solstice. Fundraising for headquarters renovations in Athens led to upgrades to the lecture hall, kitchen, refectory, and library, with further improvements needed. The Society also renovated an apartment for rental in central Athens. The Greek Theosophical Publishing House updated its offerings, including a revised edition of *Practical Occultism* and plans for other major publications. The magazine *Ilios* is now distributed electronically. Portuguese artist Joma Sipe designed a new membership certificate, and a key focus of the new General Secretary is encouraging in-person interactions at TSG events. The Society mourned the passing of former General Secretary Alexandros Bousoulengas on 11 August 2024, holding a memorial service in his honour.

The TS in **Hungary** conducted monthly public lectures on theosophical topics, such as the "Mystery of Buddha" and *Occult Chemistry*, which were recorded and shared on YouTube. White Lotus Day was observed in remembrance of HPB. Articles from *The Theosophist* were translated into Hungarian for Lodge meetings and uploaded online, while significant translation efforts included *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, Series I* and re-translations of *The Science of Yoga* and *The Masters and the Path*. A reprint of *The Voice of the Silence* was arranged due to demand. Daily "Good Morning" messages continued, drawing from texts like *The Conquest of Illusion*. Community events included a year-end dinner and a team-building gathering. The Hungarian TOS faced challenges due to aging members, economic pressures, and difficulty attracting younger members, leading to its dissolution after 14 years, though the Virtual Healing Group remains active.

In TS **Iceland, t**he highlight of the year was the celebration of its 100th anniversary, marked by a gathering at their house in Reykjavík. They also hosted several successful musical events focused on mystical music, fostering a sense of unity among attendees. Weekly Friday lectures covered various theosophical topics and personal experiences, attract-

ing an engaged audience. Numerous other gatherings were held with great success, alongside the initiation of renovations on the house, which will continue in 2025. Additionally, a new website, <lifspekifelagid.is>, though incomplete, was launched, designed for registrations, payments, and article publication.

New members of TS in **Ireland** have primarily joined through their website and had a warm welcome with basic TS materials. On 18 May 2024, the 17th All Ireland Convention was held successfully in Dublin, with attendees from all four provinces of Ireland. The theme, "Practical Theosophy and the Joy of Service", was presented by Organising Secretary Marie Harkness, followed by Q&A and refreshments. The Belfast and Phoenix Lodges held regular meetings with meditations, inspiring talks, and study discussions based on TS texts. This year, they plan to experiment with Zoom meetings for more accessibility. Members received regular study notes on core texts such as *Letters on Basic Theosophy*, *The Voice of the Silence*, and *The Bhagavadgitā*. Overall, it was a successful year.

This year the **Italian** Section's theosophical work was successful, with a blend of in-person and digital activities. Two new books in Italian were printed, and a conference on "Economy, Society, and Care in Human Relationships" took place in Vicenza during the Festival of Relationships. A Silent Retreat in Abano Terme was held, and an Italian delegation attended the 148th International Convention in Adyar. The 2024 Theosophical Seminar in Ascona had significant participation, and Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu gave a lecture in Milan. I visited in June, and the Young Theosophists continued their translation work and podcasts. The Italian Theosophical Society's website attracted significant interest, with over 150 new entries and regular updates. The monthly newsletter has over 3,900 active users, and the Society's social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube continues to grow, with the YouTube channel reaching over 4,000 subscribers. The "Wednesdays with the TS" initiative was successful, consistently attracting 60"100 participants. The Society maintains strong connections with the international Theosophical Society and European Theosophical Federation, with active members on key international committees. The work of the TOS has expanded, and the Italian Section remains committed to the principles of Theosophy and Universal Brotherhood.

In the **Netherlands,** the TS and the International Theosophical Centre (ITC) at Naarden collaborated closely this year, organizing a variety of events through a unified Activities Committee. Highlights included thematic days like the Autumn Day on "Karate-Do" and *The Secret Doctrine* and the workshop on "End-of-Life Care", which drew significant interest. A Youth Conference and Young Theosophists Day focused on engaging younger participants, while the Dutch Language Summer School and Introductory Day catered to local members with accessible content. The Annual Members Meeting marked a leadership transition, with Ingmar de Boer succeeding Wim

Leijs as General Secretary. Meditative retreats, traditional Friends' Days, and presentations on topics such as yoga philosophy enriched the year's offerings, emphasizing inclusivity and deeper exploration of theosophical principles.

The only active local group of the Theosophical Society in **Norway** is the Stroemmen Local Group, with a few solitary members also affiliated. After a period without Zoom availability, the local group has resumed offering meetings online. Regular meetings were held throughout the year, covering various subjects and speeches.

The TS in **Portugal** maintained its regular activities throughout the year, including celebrating traditional commemorative days significant to its history. Both in-person and online sessions were held, with at least three well-attended public sessions monthly, offering a variety of formats such as public talks and discussion groups. The Portuguese Section's website remained a key resource for information about its history and activities, complemented by a regularly published newsletter and increasing engagement through social media platforms. Lodges and Study Groups also continued their work consistently, fostering participation, collective inquiry, and efforts to attract new members and supporters.

The TS in **Russia** achieved significant milestones, including achieving the status of a Regional Association on 17 November 2023. This achievement reflects years of collaborative effort by members across the country. The Society organized four key events combining online and in-person participation: the All-Russian Congress in Moscow, the Conference in Kemerovo, the Forum in Smolensk, and the Seminar in Makaryevka. Each event highlighted unique themes such as Practical Theosophy, Universal Intelligence, and Spiritual Health, featuring lectures, roundtables, and cultural activities. Additionally, online programs flourished, with weekly lectures, studies of foundational texts like *The Secret Doctrine*, and international collaborations. The Russian School of the Wisdom continued to explore *The Mahatma Letters*, while the Light of Truth Lodge held roundtable discussions on diverse theosophical topics. The Society advanced its digital initiatives, enhancing the Theopedia online encyclopedia with translations, comparative studies, and resources related to H. P. Blavatsky's works. Publications included restored editions of *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan* and *Gems from the East*, alongside preparations for the final volume of W. Q. Judge's *Collected Writings*. A project featuring daily short videos of aphorisms was completed and new media channels on YouTube, Telegram, and other platforms expanded outreach. Through these endeavours, the Society maintained its focus on education, research, and dissemination of theosophical teachings, fostering a vibrant community across Russia and beyond.

The membership in **Scotland** remained stable. Whilst there was a very slight fall, interest in Theosophy in the Glasgow area is increasing and it is hoped that our membership shall increase over the next two years. After a short recess, Glasgow Lodge has resumed their regular theosophical study group. Organising Sec-

retary, Gary Kidgell, gave a presentation entitled "Theosophical Principles and the Spiritual Path" followed by group discussions at the AGM. The three Lodges and the study group are functioning well, providing talks and study/discussion groups for members.

Theosophical Society in **Slovenia** (TSS) has five Lodges and two study centres. One of the Lodges, directly attached to Adyar, joined the Society last year and became the fifth Lodge. The work takes place at the theosophical meetings in the Lodges and also meetings once a week via the Zoom platform. This mode is preferred for the future so that members from all Lodges can attend the meetings (31 meetings have been held). All Memorial Days were organized and celebrated at the Society level. The birthday of Annie Besant was celebrated via Zoom and all the others were celebrated with physical gatherings. TSS issues the magazine *The Theosophical Thought*, for now, only in digital format, and also has its own website <teozofskodrustvo.si>.

The **Spanish** Section this year had the privilege of hosting the international President during the last week of June, alongwith regular activities such as public lectures, courses, seminars, and meditation retreats. Members attended public lectures in Arjona and Madrid, with opportunities to meet and discuss the work of the Society. The Sister Section of Portugal organized an online conference titled "Theosophy in Times of Uncertainty", with good participation from both countries, enhanced by simultaneous Spanish translations of all lectures. In December, the 17th edition of the retreat in Málaga, conducted by Trān-Thi-Kim-Diễu, focused on the four Bodhisattva vows, inspiring and enriching many participants. Additionally, Pablo Sender spoke on the practical aspects of studying *The Secret Doctrine*, with nearly a hundred attendees at the School.

The TS membership in **Sweden** is slowly increasing. They had an active year with various activities, including four issues of the magazine *Tidlös Visdom* (Timeless Wisdom) sent to all members. They organized open-house events in January and September 2024 and a range of study groups and courses on Theosophy, Raja Yoga, and *The Secret Doctrine*. Notable lectures included topics such as the spirituality of Nicholas Roerich's paintings, the body-mind problem, and mysticism within Christianity. Member gatherings included Foundation Day, White Lotus Day, and a Christmas party. Study weekends and a summer school featured guest lecturers and focused on subjects like Esoteric Christianity and meditation. The bookshop in Stockholm operated regularly, with monthly book presentations. Online activities are also robust, with an active website, Facebook group, and YouTube channel for spreading lectures. Additionally, the Swedish Section continues to support the Mango Tree school project in Goa, India.

The TS in **Switzerland** experienced a dynamic year in 2024, with activities spanning four Swiss cantons. Highlights included the inauguration of the renovated Geneva Lodge, now a hub for international and academic conferences, and notable events such as the European Seminar, the International Theosophical

History Conference, and retreats in Ascona. Study meetings continued across Lodges in Ascona, Geneva, Lugano, and Zurich, covering classical theosophical texts and diverse themes like meditation, literature, and spirituality. Public lectures and conferences, including visits by international figures, fostered interest in Theosophy, with Geneva's new premises becoming a focal point for gatherings. Cross-collaborations, such as the partnership with the Archivio Luigi Pericle, further enriched the society's cultural and educational offerings. Regular meetings, public outreach, and international participation underscored a collective commitment to theosophical principles and universal brotherhood.

The work of the Society in **Ukraine** took place on a regular basis, taking into account the special conditions of the war. It has 7 Branches and one Inter-Regional Study Center. Unfortunately, contact with members living in Crimea, Yalta, has been completely lost. The work has been done mainly online for almost 5 years, but the General Secretary has visited Branches and conducted seminars in Kyiv, Zhyto-myr, Dnipro, Odesa. All working groups had regular meetings. The TOS works most actively, in cooperation with TOS centers of other countries of the world. This year the TOS Secretary from Spain, Mr. Alejandro Bueno Lantero, visited TS in Ukraine. Gratitude to all for the support to Ukraine. There is an active all-Ukrainian public theosophical lecture hall, school of lecturing skills, scientific group, and department of education. Social networks are being actively developed. Four electronic magazines are published, one of which — translations of articles from the *Adyar* magazine — was launched this year.

At the **INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS IN ADYAR,** the **Adyar Library and Research Centre** continues its work with notable progress, including the adoption of the Koha software under Swami Chitghanananda's guidance. The library currently houses 139,707 books, including 3,473 rare titles. During the International Convention 2023, it hosted an exhibition commemorating Mrs Radha Burnier's birth centenary and the 10th anniversary of her passing, featuring her photographs, writings, and translations. The Library has been revitalized, and a Sanskrit Beginners' course for staff and residents will soon be introduced by the Director, Dr Radha Raghunathan. The monthly "Libraries as Communities" programme continues to draw readers and visitors. The schedule of speakers and topics included:

- Dr Chitra Madhavan on "Gems of Indian Architecture and Sculpture".
- Dr Ambika Kameshwar on "Natya: An Exploration".
- Panel Discussion moderated by K. Jaikumar with previous session speakers.
- Nancy Secrest on "Altruism, Compassion & Service".
- Malathi Pandurang on "Aesthetic Practice in the Art of Ikebana".
- Angelika & Sriram on "Natya Yoga".
- C. N. Sethuraman on "The Hidden Life".
- Jaishree Kannan on "Adyar Library – A Treasure Trove".

Additional speakers and topics are planned for the coming year, ensuring

continued engagement and learning opportunities.

The **Adyar Theosophical Academy** (ATA) marked its sixth academic year with notable progress in holistic education, infrastructure, and student engagement, catering to 201 students from Nursery to Grade 7. The year was enriched by interdisciplinary approaches through workshops, innovative projects, field trips, and cultural celebrations. Milestones included transforming the Vasanta Press godown into classrooms and a laboratory, and plans for a new school building at Kirby Gardens. ATA's dynamic programs included "The Time Traveller's Odyssey", a social studies event bringing history alive through themes like the Mesozoic Era and Indus Mela, and "Wonderscape", an exhibition showcasing student projects during the International Convention. Cultural events like "Umang" celebrated artistic expression through traditional dances and plays, while field trips and overnight stays at Auroville and Agastya Science City emphasized sustainability, science, and traditions. Experiential learning flourished with STEM workshops, robotics, and practical initiatives like crocheting and biodegradable packaging, fostering critical thinking and teamwork. ATA's fifth anniversary featured student performances and a session with a NASA engineer, while Independence Day celebrations included a musical tribute to rivers. Heritage festivities like Krishna Jayanthi and Onam immersed students in Indian culture through crafts and culinary activities. Teacher development was prioritized through workshops on child protection, gender sensitization, AI in education, and storytelling, complemented by interactions with global educators to refine ATA's theosophical education approach. Rooted in experiential learning, cultural appreciation, and environmental responsibility, ATA continues to inspire curiosity, creativity, and a sense of global citizenship in its students.

The **Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary** (BMAD) continues to grow annually, treating over 20,000 outpatient cases, performing 400+ major surgeries, and conducting 2,500+ animal birth control procedures each year. The shelter admits over 900 critical inpatients, including road accident victims, abandoned animals, and those with severe illnesses like cancer. This year marked the expansion of its diagnostic facilities with a new biochemistry machine and the transformation of the old Scouts' camp into a Rs 1,500,000 wildlife unit for injured urban wildlife, complete with enclosures, a surgery unit, and treatment areas, ensuring separation from domestic animals to prevent the spread of zoonotic disease. A major achievement was the rescue and successful rehabilitation of Spot-billed Pelicans during the Ennore oil spill in collaboration with the government. BMAD's efforts have been recognized by the Animal Welfare Board of India and the Tamil Nadu State Board for Animal Welfare.

The **Blavatsky Museum**'s 2024 activities focused on the restoration of paintings, both framed and unframed, many of which had not been displayed in years. To accommodate this meticulous work, additional space was prepared on the ground floor of the Headquarters Build-

ing, where the old Archives area and some neighbouring rooms were cleared and repurposed for restoring canvases, water colours, and so on. Key steps included photographing the paintings' backs to document signatures, repairs, and inscriptions, as well as consulting experts for sensitive paint restoration. Questions about the origins and historical context of some works remain under study. A significant milestone was the relocation of delicate paintings to a new storage space equipped with modern air conditioning, offering a serene and secure environment for these treasures. Additionally, all museum rooms now feature an advanced alarm system, combining enhanced security with improved accessibility.

The **School of the Wisdom (SOW)** offered five on-campus courses from October 2023 to September 2024, and an expanded selection of online classes, including five courses in English and three in Spanish. In October 2023 "The Higher Spiritual Path", was led by Dr William Wilson Quinn. In November, Dr Jayandra and Dr Luitgard Soni explored "Jainism and its Context in Indian Philosophy and Literature". January 2024 saw Prof. Ravi Ravindra teaching "Love and Death in Great Spiritual Traditions", followed in February 2024 by Prof. C. A. Shinde with "Spiritual Self-Transformation and Three Streams of Evolution". Enriching the programmes, Shikhar Agnihotri led a "Contemplative Walk through Nature and History" at the Adyar Campus for participants, while Jaishree Kannan facilitated chanting workshops.

The online English classes offered included "The Living Wisdom of *The Voice of the Silence*" with Erica Georgiades in March/April; "The Yoga-Sũtra as a Science of Self-Knowledge: A Theosophical Approach" with Dr Ricardo Lindemann in May; "The Quest for Truth: Integrating Science, Philosophy & Religion" with Prof. P. Krishna in June; and "Examining the Buddha's Teachings" with Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu in September. Spanish language online classes comprised "Las Dimensiones del Trabajo Teosófico" ("Dimensions of the Theosophical Work") with Otavio Ernesto Marchesini in January 2024; "La Muerte y Después, Desde Otra Perspectiva" ("Death and Beyond, From a Different Peerspective") with Ángeles Torra Burón; and "Meditación, un Encuentro con La Paz Interior" ("Meditation, an Encounter with Inner Peace") with María Mengelt and Georgina Téllez Salazar in May and June respectively.

The **Surendra Narayan Archives** hosted a well-researched, interesting exhibition "The Spirit of Adyar, 'A Journey into the Past'" during the 148th International Convention at Adyar. Many delegates visited the Archives and took time in reading and also enjoying the interesting photographs that were displayed. It attracts genuine, interested scholars both from India and abroad. The scholars are provided the necessary documents and photographs.

The **Theosophical Order of Service** operates in 36 of the 59 countries where the TS is active, fostering service through humanitarian, ecological, and educational initiatives. While the *TOS: Intouch* e-Newsletter has been on hiatus, plans are underway to resume it, alongside

updates to the TOS website and increased activity on its international Facebook page. Preparations are ongoing for the 5th International TOS Conference, to be held in July 2025 at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. This year, the TOS mourned the loss of two dedicated leaders: B. L. Bhattacharya, former TOS India Director, and Hamid Mayet, TOS Pakistan President. Notable new initiatives include the Odisha TOS's paper-plate industry to provide employment, Akola TOS's distribution of solar lamps to a village without electricity, and the Spanish TOS's establishment of a foundation to finance sustainable projects. Ongoing efforts include support for Ukrainian refugees, disaster relief in India and Bangladesh, women's empowerment, education, youth engagement, animal welfare, and ecological projects, with healing groups active in almost all countries. TOS members remain committed to HPB's teachings in *The Key to Theosophy*, embodying active altruism through their selfless service to humanity and all living beings.

The **Theosophical Publishing House** reprinted 89 out-of-stock titles during the year ended September 2024, ensuring that all 336 book titles were available for sale. As is customary during the Convention, well-received by the delegates, who appreciated the added convenience.

Since its revival in 2022, the **World Federation of Young Theosophists** has engaged young members globally through study groups, meditations, and creative initiatives. Programs include book discussions on *At the Feet of the Master* and *Practical Occultism*, weekly meditation sessions, and a monthly Astrology Study Group. Writing remains a cornerstone, with newsletters, articles, and a magazine showcasing members' reflections. WFYT has also launched a leadership program for preparing young theosophists for Lodge roles and a children's book featuring member-contributed art. Key gatherings include the 2023 Youth Gathering in Adyar, which marked WFYT's centennial with workshops and discussions on Annie Besant's *The Spiritual Life*, and the 2024 gathering in Bhowali, India, where 26 participants explored core theosophical concepts under the guidance of Shikhar Agnihotri. In October 2024, the WFYT elected its 2024–2026 Board: Beth Vaughan (England and Wales), Elmer Overdevest (Netherlands), Francis Lim (Singapore), Leo Ta (Australia), Merike Martsepp (Estonia), Stephanie Guinevere Vargas Cuellar (Bolivia), and Vighnesh RVS (India). The Board, publicly introduced in November, is focused on sustaining projects and expanding membership, now at 220 active members. ✧

A Theosophical View of War and Violence — I

JOHN ALGEO

HOW do Theosophists view war and violence? Or, perhaps more telling, how do Theosophists *respond* to war and violence?

It may seem that such a question is needless. After all, the first of the eight parts of yoga is *yama* — a list of five moral prohibitions; and the first of those five is *ahimsa* — harmlessness, non-violence. Theosophy is the yoga of the West, and the very first step in yoga is nonviolence. That would seem to take care of that. But does it? When two Theosophists meet, there are likely to be at least three opinions between them.

What exactly is a nonviolent response to violence? What is a harmless response to harm? Is it doing nothing? If not, what do we do? How does nonviolence apply in specific cases? Consider the following hypothetical, but by no means impossible, situations and decide how you think you would respond in each situation, given a very limited range of possible responses. Place yourself imaginatively in these circumstances and answer honestly.

FIRST, let us suppose that you are walking down the street in a big city late at night. You are alone. Suddenly out of the shadows steps a very large man who shoves you against the wall of a building and says with a threatening tone of voice, "Give me your money. All of it." You instinctively take a few steps to the right to get away, but he follows and pulls a knife, saying, "Now!" As you are fumbling for your wallet, suddenly you realize that now directly behind the man is an uncovered manhole. If you quickly give him a push, he will fall into it, and quite likely be badly hurt. What do you do? (a) Do you give the mugger your money? (b) Or do you push him into the manhole?

SECOND, suppose you are a policeman walking down that same city street at midday when you see a chimpanzee that has escaped from a local pet shop. The street is full of pedestrians, and the chimpanzee — obviously in a state of intense agitation — is attacking some of the people. It has already bitten several of them. What do you do? (a) Do you get on your walkie-talkie and call for the animal

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Dr John Algeo (12 Nov. 1930–13 Oct. 2019) was President of the TS in America (1993–2002) and international Vice-President of the TS (2002–2008). In 2014, he was awarded the Subba Row Medal for significant contributions to theosophical literature. Published in *The American Theosophist*, Vol. 70, October 1982.

detail to come with tranquilizer darts? (b) Or do you pull out your revolver and shoot the chimp?

THIRD, suppose you are a physician. One of your patients is a young woman who is pregnant, in her fifth month. Earlier in her pregnancy you prescribed a drug which she took for some time. Now you have discovered that the drug has side effects, hitherto unknown, that can damage a fetus. Tests reveal that the fetus is indeed malformed. The woman requests an abortion. What do you do? (a) Do you refuse to perform the abortion? (b) Or do you perform the abortion?

FOURTH, you are still a physician. A woman in her mid-twenties and in excellent health comes to you. She is in her fifth month of pregnancy, but unmarried. She says that she is unwilling to have a child and requests you to abort the pregnancy. She is sexually active, uses birth control only sporadically, and has had abortions before. What do you do? (a) Do you refuse to perform the abortion? (b) Or do you perform the abortion?

FIFTH, you are driving your automobile in very heavy traffic. You are stopped at an intersection by a red light. There is a long line of cars behind you. Another car from the rear of the line drives forward on the shoulder of the road and pulls up on your right. That car edges forward, and the driver clearly intends to cut in ahead of you.

The light turns green. What do you do? (a) Do you let the other driver cut in ahead? (b) Or do you step on the gas in your car to prevent the other car from cutting in?

SIXTH, you are the President of the United States. The Island of Guam has been attacked and captured by a Far-Eastern power which claims it has rightful title to that island on historical grounds. The present inhabitants of the island overwhelmingly want it to remain an American protectorate, but the Far-Eastern power is on the island and in military command of it. They have also rejected any discussion of the sovereignty of the island and have declared that the only issue they will discuss is how to evacuate those islanders who want to leave. What do you do? (a) Do you begin setting up evacuation procedures? (b) Or do you order the US military forces to prepare for an invasion of the island?

SEVENTH, you are Director of the FBI. A terrorist has hidden an atomic bomb on the island of Manhattan. It is set to detonate within a few days unless he is paid several million dollars, ten friends of his who are in jail for terrorism are released, and safe passage to Libya is arranged for all of them. The FBI has the terrorist in custody, but has no leads on the location of the bomb. One of your subordinates suggests that there is only one way to discover the location of the bomb: subject the terrorist to physical torture. What do you do? (a) Do you wait, hoping that the terrorist will have a change of heart? (b) Or do you tell your subordinate to try physical torture?

EIGHTH, you are the mother of a newborn child. Your child has been kidnapped by a terrorist group and is being held hostage for the release of political prisoners — other terrorists in jail. The leader of the terrorist group has been

caught, but refuses to reveal the whereabouts of the others or of the baby. The FBI tells you that they have no clues, but are considering the use of "pressure" — that is, physical torture — to discover where the kidnappers have the baby. What do you do? (a) Do you ask them not to use physical violence on the kidnapper? (b) Or do you tell them you hope they will do whatever is necessary?

NINTH, you are a member of a branch of the Society to which a new person has applied for membership. The person is a member of the Ku Klux Klan and of a political party organized along Nazi lines and affiliated with the Klan. He says he intends to continue his membership in the Klan and the neo-Nazi party, but that also he is in sympathy with the three objects of the Society and sees no conflict between these memberships. You are asked to vote on his admission to the Society. What do you do? (a) Do you vote to admit him? (b) Or do you vote to deny him admission?

TENTH, you are a member of a jury that must sentence a convicted murderer. This is his fifth conviction of murder. Twice he killed during the course of armed robberies. Once he was a hired killer. Once he killed a fellow inmate in prison. This time he murdered a kidnap victim. Your choice is to vote for life imprisonment, with automatic review for parole in ten years, or for the death penalty. What do you do? (a) Do you vote for life imprisonment with possibility of parole? (b) Or do you vote for the death penalty?

Although these problems vary greatly in seriousness and in their possible consequences, none of them is necessarily a clear-cut moral issue. They are concocted (some more than others) and the possible responses were deliberately limited to two for each problem — an unreal limitation in most situations. However, not all Theosophists agree on how they would, or should, respond in such dilemmas. These problems, like most of those we face in day-to-day life, are not simple choices between right and wrong, between good and bad, but are rather choices between two or more options, none of which is clearly satisfactory. If life is a banquet, too often we find that the menu consists only of dishes all of which give us indigestion.

There is a newspaper cartoon called "Kudzu", about a teenaged boy in a small Southern town, who is trying to find his way about in a confusing and frustrating world. His chief advisor is a preacher of uncertain denomination who aspires to be spiritual counselor to the rich and powerful, but hasn't made it. One day young Kudzu, as the boy is named, complains, "Life is hard, Preacher!" The preacher responds, "Kudzu, son, life is a test and you've got to be prepared." "Oh," answers Kudzu, "I'm prepared for the test, Preacher . . . but I prepared for true-false and it's turning out to be multiple-choice!" That is exactly our problem. We would prefer that our tests in life all be true-false, with a clear choice between good and evil, right and wrong, peace and violence. Instead the tests are all multiple-choice, with directions that read: "Choose the best response." Only none of the options seems quite right.

How does Theosophy help in such

dilemmas? How does it help us to see problems of war and violence? In H. P. Blavatsky's *Key to Theosophy* (section 3), the inquirer asks, "Have you any ethical system that you carry out in the Society?" and the Theosophist answers:

> The ethics are there, ready and clear enough for whosoever would follow them. They are the essence and cream of the world's ethics, gathered from the teachings of all the world's great reformers. Therefore, you will find represented therein Confucius and Zoroaster, Laotze and the *Bhagavad-gita*, the precepts of Gautama Buddha and Jesus of Nazareth, of Hillel and his school, as of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and their schools.

The ethics of all the great reformers and schools can be summed up simply in the Golden Rule. In whatever words it is expressed, it is the basis of ethical action and hence also of our response to violence: Deal with others as you would have them deal with you. (The Rule is sometimes phrased in the negative — Do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you — and is then called the Silver Rule. People have argued about which form of the Rule is better. There is also what might be called the Brass Rule — Do unto others before they do unto you.) The Golden Rule is usually expressed in some such exoteric form. The esoteric form of the rule, however, might go something like this: There are no others, so whatever you seem to do to another you actually do to yourself. That esoteric form of the rule follows from the third Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*: "The fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over-Soul." If you and I are indeed one, identical with each other through our identity ultimately with the Ground of all being, then how could I ever want to harm or do violence to myself? All beings desire their own well-being. I must therefore wish for you what I wish for myself, since we are one.

The Golden Rule can also be summarized in the single word *ahimsa*. In dealing with our fellow beings, who are ourselves under another guise, we must be harmless, nonviolent — that is, deal with them as we would have them deal with us, or as we would deal with ourselves. But does nonviolence always mean doing nothing, just passively observing what others do? Not necessarily. There are times when *ahimsa* must be very active. Indeed, there are times when it is required to do what might look like violence and harmfulness.

Think about children. Being kind to a child is not necessarily permitting it to do whatever it likes, whenever it likes. A child who has no restrictions, no rules, no penalties for infringements is not a happy child. In fact, it will be an emotionally disturbed, ill-behaved, and thoroughly unhappy child. Children want and need to know the limits of acceptable behavior, and they will test those limits to discover them — to find out what they *really* are, as opposed to merely what they are *said* to be.

The parent who punishes a child that has violated the limits of acceptable behavior is not engaging in an act of violence, but, on the contrary, is practicing the Golden Rule, and thus *ahimsa*, at a

higher level. In *The Key to Theosophy* (section 12), HPB, while discussing self-sacrifice as the highest standard of behavior, added:

> We say, however, that self-sacrifice has to be performed with discrimination; and such a self-abandonment, if made without justice, or blindly, regardless of subsequent results, may often prove not only to have been made in vain, but even to be harmful. One of the fundamental rules of Theosophy is, justice to oneself — viewed as a unit of collective humanity, not as a personal self —justice, not more but not less than to others; unless, indeed, by the sacrifice of the oneself we can benefit the many.

It is the same with *nonahimsa* and the Golden Rule. They have to be applied with discrimination, to be sure that one is truly being nonviolent and is truly dealing with others as one would actually want to be dealt with.

Haridas Chaudhuri (*Mastering the Problems of Living*, pp. 138–139) tells a story that illustrates the need for discrimination in the practice of *ahimsa*:

> One time a holy man was passing through a village. Some youngsters warned him not to go too near a particular old tree in the hollow trunk of which a giant serpent lived. Every now and then the serpent would come out of its dwelling place and work havoc by killing a goat or biting an unwary child. To the amazement of the children, the holy man headed right toward that very tree. He bent low and seemed to whisper something to the serpent. As he resumed his journey, the youngsters gathered around him and wanted to know what he had told the serpent. The holy man said that he had given the serpent the motto of love (*ahimsa*). He said to the serpent, "Look, you monster, you have been committing terrible sins by killing and poisoning sacred living things. If you want to be saved, you must start practicing, right from to-day, the motto of nonviolence."
>
> The holy man left the village, and the news of his visit spread. The next day the youngsters found the serpent meek as a lamb. Pretty soon they gathered courage and began to handle him roughly. One day they played tug-of-war with him, pulling around a stick like a rope. Then one naughty boy swirled the snake and forcefully dashed him against the tree. After that they did not see the snake any more. Two weeks later when that holy man came back to the village, the boys reported to him the apparent death of the snake. When the holy man peeped into the hole of the tree, the coiled serpent, terribly emaciated, complained, "Look, sir, what your gospel of love has done to me. I am badly bruised and mutilated, and am about to die now." The holy man chided him by saying: "I told you not to bite any living creature. But why did you not hiss when you were attacked?"

There are times when we need to hiss, and perhaps even times when we need to bite.

(*To be continued*)

The Three Foundations

KRISTA UMBJARV

A foundation is often ignored before that which rests on it starts to shake. Literally and metaphorically, it concerns the foundation of our spiritual life. Regular maintenance, similar to that required on the structure of a construction, is necessary to, first, prevent a collapse, and second, to reinforce the whole building.

There are three foundations which seem so obvious that one might wonder why we are even talking about them. And yet their meaning is so profound that if we integrate their significance well into our lives, the whole outlook or paradigm will change and we will see the world completely anew. Marcel Proust expressed the same idea beautifully when he said: "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes." How do we have new eyes?

1. The Nature of Human Beings Is Divine

For most members of the Theosophical Society (TS), this is probably the first thing that they learn. A great number of books talk about this in one way or another. It is so deeply anchored in the teachings that it is expressed in the first two of the Three Truths mentioned in *The Idyll of the White Lotus* by Mabel Collins.[1] As members, we are so exposed to the idea that the question arises whether we see the divine nature of a human being as a truth because we are profoundly convinced of it or mainly because we have been so exposed to it.

The Buddha said that we should not believe what he said just because he, the Buddha, or the tradition, and so on, said it, but that we should investigate whether something is valid or not, and only when we are certain of its validity should we adopt it. Basically, we should not believe blindly by just being exposed to teachings, but we should investigate, reason, discern, and be profoundly convinced.

How can we know whether our nature is divine or not? When we have a good day and we feel good, it is easier to believe that the nature of human beings is something divine, pure, or higher. When difficulties arise in our life and we are experiencing a lot of afflictions or facing complicated people, it is more difficult to see it.

In some cultures, seeing the divine nature of human beings is more difficult than in others. In some, by nature, our *being* is not seen as enough: we must *do*

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something, be good, to earn the love of God, our family, and our community. Yet, even if we were to do the maximum that we are capable of, it would never be completely sufficient. There is always something lacking. "We, the low, ignorant, below here, will never touch the divine and will never be fully worthy of love." This is very common as a view even if it is not conscious and expressed verbally.

What has been found as a solution or remedy? Instead of looking into the whole process of our personality and trying to understand how it has put itself in place and is constantly sustaining itself, we cover it up and say to ourselves (or rather try to convince ourselves) that we are good, divine, and that we are the Higher Self. But all this is just a projection, just a cover-up.

We do not fundamentally believe nor are we fully convinced that essentially the nature of human beings is divine. And because we do not fundamentally believe it, we do not live from this viewpoint. We live from a point of view in which we consider ourselves as small and ignorant and then hope to be this something else, higher, and at the same time we fear that we are not. The more we hope and fear, the more there is a need to convince ourselves that our nature is divine, and the more we are living in a fragmented way because all this is just a projection. All the self-convincing that we may do, all the psychological methods that we might use will not work fully and completely, unless we understand how and why we see ourselves the way we do.

This whole process will completely collapse the day we understand the karmic process through which our personality has been created, and when we understand what is at work to enable this process to take place.

It is very easy to get lost in details and in various theosophical teachings, but when we look more deeply at what *The Secret Doctrine* by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) is teaching us, then, leaving aside all information about various philosophical systems, we can see that the whole book is a lesson on karma, pure and simple. It explains everything so elaborately that we might not realise it at first look, but it shows us how different levels of existence come about due to previously existing causes and how all these levels are interdependent and in constant interplay.

"As above, so below". In the same way we try to understand the teaching contained in *The Secret Doctrine*, we should try to understand the whole karmic process from our human microcosmic viewpoint. How does our being come about through the karmic process? How is it that we are the way we are? What is the nature of all our tendencies? Can all this be changed? Can all the afflictions be removed?

If we do not believe that fundamentally and profoundly all afflictions can be removed, then the situation is actually hopeless. It is like putting a band-aid on a rotting, non-healing wound, hoping that it would not stink too much, that it would not bother us too much, and that others

would not see or smell it. If our nature is impure and removing all afflictions is not possible, then fundamentally, our spiritual path is useless. Its only meaning would be to give some temporary relief while hoping that afflictions would not reappear too soon.

Pythagoras, HPB, and also Annie Besant suggested reviewing one's day, daily in the evening. It has a deep meaning that we can realise only when we start to practise this regularly. One beneficial aspect is that it helps the brain to process the information and experiences that we have had while awake, and hence our dreams can be meaningful in another way. But the more profound impact that comes from this practice is that little by little we learn to observe causality in our thoughts, feelings, and actions. We learn to see how one thing leads to another.

For instance, we will be able to notice how irritation and anger do not arise without a reason. If we can get over the thought that "this or that", meaning "something outside" irritated me, we will be able to notice how inside us there was a subtle process of escalation from a state of discontent to frustration, and then to irritation. If we are mindful, we can stop the whole process already in the state of discontentment or frustration and not get irritated or angry at all.

When we investigate how karma works, we will learn to see causes and conditions in work on more and more subtle levels. Reasoning logically, what is clairvoyance but the capacity to perceive causes and effects on subtler levels, in the same way that we can foresee on the physical level how one thing will lead to another thing?

Some people, already well-exposed to the teachings, might ask: why bother to ask all these basic questions and investigate whether we are divine or not? They might give the answer that they already feel they are divine. But *feeling* one is divine is not enough, we must be *convinced* of it down to the bone marrow, because there will be moments and events in life when we will feel we are anything but divine. It is at these moments that the conviction of being divine, that is created through reasoning and discrimination will help us to overcome our feeling of being anything but divine. Then the truth of the level of our understanding will shine clearly.

Do we believe more in the profound conviction or the feeling that seems so real and solid? If our conviction is stronger than our feeling, then we cease to believe blindly in our emotions and sensations and paradoxically, and (I weigh my words carefully saying this) come to the understanding that in a way it does not matter what we feel as we will see emotions as results that have come about due to prior causes and conditions. What matters are the causes that we create at this very moment. Of course, if there is no change, then the same thoughts and emotions that we experience now will ripen into the same ones in the future. This is the meaning of going around in the circle of samsara.

We have bound ourselves through a karmic process and come to believe that

we are small and ignorant, but we will also liberate ourselves from confusion through a karmic process. As said in the Bible, we are "children of God" (1 John 3:1). We do not become one, if it is not already our deepest nature. It is through doing what is right and loving one's brother and sister (1 John 3:10) that this deepest nature unfolds or becomes manifest.

2. There Is a Path

If we become convinced that fundamentally, human beings are divine and that it is possible to remove all afflictions then is there a path that leads to it? HPB said: "There is a road steep and thorny, beset with perils of every kind, but yet a road, and it leads to the very heart of the Universe." But what is this path, what are its different stages? Believing that there is a path without being convinced of it or knowing even in theory what are its stages, is not sufficient.

To really know whether there is a path and not just trust intuitively that something like this must exist, we must study. Not to study many books and be even more confused at the end without understanding what should be practised, but to study the general structure of the whole spiritual path.

In theosophical teachings, this path is often described from the standpoint of result, meaning explaining how spiritual unfoldment takes place through changes in and purification of our different vehicles. Understanding well the human constitution leads us to a kind of conviction about what we need to do. In theosophical books, we do not find check lists, saying that we have to do this or that and practise these things in this particular order. Why is it so? A characteristic of the TS is to bring together people from all backgrounds, and different cultures and inclinations, and hence it cannot prescribe what everyone must do and in what order. Sometimes this can be considered as a strength and sometimes as a weakness.

Yet, it does not mean there is no structure or that we should not try to understand it. It is left to our own discrimination to see what approach suits our tendencies the best.

The path, from the standpoint of "what we need to do and in what order", has been described in different philosophical systems, like Yoga or Buddhism, for instance. Patanjali's Eight-fold Path, Sankaracharya's *Vivekachudamani*, or the Buddhist teachings on *lamrim* (graded path) are just a few examples. Tsongkhapa has written several texts on *lamrim*, from a very short version of just fourteen stanzas, called "The Foundation of All Good Qualities" to *Lamrim Chenmo* (*Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*) that, in English, comes to three thick volumes.

If we learn the basic structure of the spiritual path, then all the teachings and practices will fall somewhere into this structure. We will know what they are for and, most importantly, knowing the path even theoretically will enable us to know where we are and what we need to do. If we do not know what to practise, we might hope and ask somebody else to tell

us and decide for us what we must do.

Asking advice and guidance is normal but hoping that somebody else would tell us what we have to do, is not what the theosophical teachings promulgate. It is like refusing to learn the lesson of discrimination and hoping that it will fall upon us through some divine grace. Discrimination is developed little by little through trying to take the right action and direction. Refusal to think, analyse, and reason only postpones our lesson. But when we try to think, we should also do it wisely, as the Master KH said in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*: "Think well."

If we are not convinced of the validity of the spiritual path and do not have trust in it, then our trust might be misplaced. Instead of trusting the path, we might be inclined to put our spiritual trust into another human being rather. Having models and guides in life is beneficial and something to strive for, but if the stress is rather on a person and not on the path, then the day we might find some mistakes in the model, we might not only become disillusioned of this person but of the spiritual path all together. In some cases, it might take decades for such disillusioned people to seriously come back to the spiritual path, if at all.

When we study and try to understand what the whole spiritual path is about, we will also learn to see how everything is so beautifully linked. How is it that in all systems ethics, be it the teaching on the Ten Commandments, *yama* and *niyama*, or *panchaśila*, are presented as the basis for contemplation and meditation? No system says that first we should try to meditate and then pay attention to our behavior. Why? Because through trying to observe ethical behavior, we already practise attention and mindfulness, not to mention stopping creating more heavy karma and obstacles for the spiritual path. If we see how one step leads to another one, we find the whole presentation of the path just wonderful. We learn to be grateful for those who have given us all these signposts so that we ourselves can light our lamp.

3. We Can Realise the Path

Now, if we are convinced that the nature of human beings is divine, that all afflictions can be removed, and that there exists a path that leads to it, the question left to be asked is: Can we do all this? Of course, there were the Buddha, Jesus, Shankaracharya and the Masters, but that was a long time ago. How can we be sure that we can and are able to realise the path, because all these wise people might have just been exceptional human beings, and we are just average?

If we talk about this life only, then probably we can say that we will not be able to realise the path in full, but what is more important now is to understand that we have this potential. We, as these particular human beings, with all the limitations and afflictions that we might carry with us, have the potential to remove all of them.

It is not that this spiritual path was realizable a thousand or a few thousand

years ago, but is no longer valid due to our time or social conditions, and so on. Some things might be easier, some more difficult, but even if we should consider the path more difficult, it does not mean impossible.

Fundamentally, nobody will be able to convince us that we personally are capable of change, but if we study the teachings and especially those on the human constitution and the Law of Karma and how it applies to the mind, we will come to this profound conviction that we can realise the path. It is just a question of time or rather of lifetimes.

If we go from this self-identification that we are small and ignorant to that we are divine and pure, then our "all-genius" ego might say that we are something special, that "I am divine". This is the moment to remind ourselves that in the same way that we are divine in our profound nature, all other human beings are divine too. We are not more divine or special, nor are we less divine or special than the others. From the standpoint of potential, we are just like everyone else.

So, we need to develop this profound self-confidence based on reason and understanding, not based on some bloated egocentric view of ourselves. We will find the way how to do this, like a scientist in a laboratory, the laboratory of our mind.

These are the three foundations, which can be understood on many different levels and to which we can regularly come back. If we understand them well and assimilate their meaning into our life, we will get "new eyes" and begin to see the whole world quite differently as we will discover something marvelous that is indescribable in words. ✧

Endnote

1. The Three Truths:

"The soul of man is immortal,
and its future is the future of a thing
whose growth and splendour has no limit."

"The principle which gives life dwells in us,
and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent,
is not heard, or seen, or smelt,
but is perceived by the man who desires perception."

"Each man is his own absolute lawgiver,
the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself;
the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment."

Elusive Ethics

TIM WYATT

BEING "ethical" is one of the buzzwords of the modern age. Businesses and organisations across the world all proudly claim to operate in ethical ways but this is often more virtue-signalling and corporate messaging than anything approaching reality. They talk the talk but frequently fail to walk the walk. More often than not it is about profit or personal gain and the ethics is just a vital part of the marketing strategy.

Let us be honest — these days ethics tend to be far more elastic than they ever were in the past. In some instances, they have become very fluid indeed. Morality continues to vanish down the same rabbit hole as other noble virtues such as truth, beauty, and duty. It is no longer essential and has been marginalised into increasing irrelevancy by a culture of immediacy hooked on gain and instant self-gratification.

This increasing absence of morality appears at every level from the planetary to the personal. No doubt there are a few commercial concerns and other enterprises with a lingering sense of morality. Certain individuals clearly do have high moral values but they remain a distinct minority. Despite its best efforts down the centuries — sometimes aided by the sharp prods of religion — humanity as a whole does not collectively enshrine an ethical outlook on the world.

When you consider the matter, humanity has a long "rap sheet" when it comes to bending or breaking moral codes subverted by what can be described as a hardwired animalistic impulse for confrontation and destruction. This is most blatantly evidenced by its perpetual forays into violent conflict at the slightest provocation and waging war as a universal panacea for just about everything from ideology to territorial gain.

War may have written the history books and been a key leitmotif of human development. It may have killed and maimed hundreds of millions down the generations. In the last century it became intercontinental.

But over the past three generations we have drifted into a potentially terrifying and hyper-technologised game of chicken with ourselves and the world. Instead of just the localised bloodshed of past con-

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flicts we have the means to unleash total global desecration and destruction, and maybe worse. Some people consider it nothing short of miraculous that these weapons have never been used in anger for almost eighty years.

Most soldiers in most armies throughout history have believed they occupy some moral high ground. They are right and their foes are wrong. Demonising their enemies convinces them that the means they employ, however horrifying, always justify the ends and their opponents get everything they deserve.

Morality has been degraded to the point that the very mention of the word makes many people snigger or smirk. It is largely viewed as an anachronistic and redundant relic from bygone times with as much relevance to the modern world as a quill pen and inkpot.

When morality is applied, it is far more flexible, debatable, and open to interpretation than it ever used to be.

Of course, moral standards vary not just among individuals but from society to society and age to age. History often shapes moral codes out of all recognition. What is sinful anathema for one culture, era, or religion is aggressively promoted or even worshipped as a towering virtue by another. The morality of the West has undergone a series of dramatic metamorphoses since the mid-twentieth century. The reasons for this are complex. But what we are left with is the quicksand of a shifting moral relativism driven largely by expediency.

Religions once ruled the roost. Many played their role in trying to impart fundamental moral principles to their followers — Hindu ethics, Christianity's Ten Commandments, and the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddhists. And yet all too often these religions have departed from the towering principles they encourage or impose. Their leaders and key influencers are by no means immune from any of this.

The role of some religions has been largely usurped by governments and politicians who are in turn in the pockets of megacorporations run by billionaires who believe their own version of morality should be imposed. Most plutocrats follow that "golden" rule: "He who has the gold *makes* the rules." Few of these hyperrich individiuals could be accused of being ethical although many would claim to be saviours.

By design or by accident, the resulting political and economic systems and the cultures they spawn have somehow undermined and corrupted many of those virtues once considered noble and essential. At best these structures and systems are amoral. We have strayed very far from the ethical superstructure devised by the moral philosophers of ancient Greece and their counterparts in other mighty civilizations.

Perhaps none of this is very surprising to the esoterically-minded. After all, we are in that darkest of bleak eras — the Iron Age or Kali Yuga — that hellhole of corruption and decadence which is alleged to eventually pave the way for the blossoming of a new golden

age when perhaps a greater morality will prevail.

While the vast majority of civilized people would wholeheartedly support the rule of law rather than allow an anarchic free-for-all, these laws are human laws — not divine, cosmic, and timeless. Many human laws are flawed, temporary, and created for short-term effect, whereas universal principles are not. Humanity, of course, is very adept at breaking both.

The theosophical movement enshrines morality as part of its genetic makeup and wisdom teachings. It is at the heart of its raison d'être. It comprises the very backbone of the Ageless Wisdom teachings and the DNA of the Perennial Philosophy. Of course, it would be a great untruth to suggest that everyone associated with Theosophy has always embraced the high standards it promotes. But the vast majority of theosophists see it as their duty to do the best they can to conduct themselves ethically and with self-responsibility.

But then many Christians, Hindus, Muslims, and members of other spiritual traditions fail to observe their own key edicts and allow personal ambition to prevail over loftier principles. Even moral philosophers sometimes behave immorally. And there is, of course, the persistent influence of those insidious dark forces which will always infiltrate and attempt to derail noble enterprises of all kinds.

Had we a more developed sense of morality it would be unthinkable to maim and murder one another in the name of nation, plunder, or ideology. It would be inconceivable to poison the skies, seas, rivers, and land with plastic and a vast spectrum of pollutants. It would constitute an outrage to fell forests, deplete resources, and strangulate Nature herself.

Any morality must extend beyond humanity itself into all other kingdoms of Nature — especially that living, sentient being, Gaia, who hosts us along with every entity she supports. Understanding our intimate interconnection with and dependence on every other kingdom of Nature, visible and invisible, must be the basis of any morality worth its name.

Without morality, there can be no real human progress beyond material acquisition and the adoration of wealth for its own sake. And we know what a cul-de-sac that is. Until we rediscover it we cannot reach our destined future. Perhaps when more people appreciate that their authentic identity is soul- and not body- based, maybe when more realise that they have Higher Selves, ethics may exert a greater influence.

I sincerely hope it is the case that morality can only be temporarily diverted and perverted, and that it cannot be permanently destroyed even in the most nightmarish hells humanity can create, such as death camps and war zones.

The hegemony of science has become a challenge to everyone's moral outlook. It would be easy to assert that science itself has no morality and the evidence is considerable. It creates technologies of death and needless consumption. Scientists funded by governments or the military conduct secret experiments on unsuspecting populations. Reward and

recognition along with weaponisation and commercialisation are the drivers of science.

Back in the early 1950s American nuclear scientists created an atom bomb many times more powerful than those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The plan was to test explode this device high in the atmosphere — even though there was absolutely no certainty about how devastating this might prove. Some scientists were worried that it might actually vaporise the entire Earth's thin layer of atmosphere. But they went ahead anyway and luckily for everyone it did not.

Scientists are just as responsible for death and destruction as the soldiers who wield the weapons they create. They may be cloistered away in secret, subterranean laboratories far from the battlefield. And yet they are the architects and indeed the true purveyors of death. They are as morally culpable as those who do the actual killing if not more so.

Warfare unquestionably constitutes the ultimate moral outrage. According to the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law there are currently (in 2024) 110 armed conflicts in the 195 countries of the world recognised by the United Nations.

In 2023 global military spending reached almost $2.5 trillion. That, by the way, is the figure 25 followed by eleven zeros. (It represents around $312 for every man, woman, and child alive.) It begs the question as to why humanity has to spend such vast amounts defending itself — from itself.

It also begs the question as to why it is as easy as it ever was to debase and deny that most basic moral edict: "Thou Shalt Not Kill". Deny this, the most basic of commandments embedded in most faiths, and you have no morality at all.

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Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable. Be honest and transparent anyway.

Mother Teresa

To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

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