The Theosophist

MAY 2025
Rs 10
English Monthly



THE THEOSOPHIST

VOL. 146 NO. 8 MAY 2025

CONTENTS

Rare Efflorescence p. 5
Tim Boyd

The Story of Giordano Bruno—IV 8
Annie Besant

Conversations with Buddhist Monks and Nuns 12
Pedro Oliveira

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky: A Biography—II 19
Kirk Gradin

Together We Are One 27
Wayne Gatfield

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom (Rabindranath Tagore) 30

Science and Free Will: Is Free Will an Illusion? 31
Tapio Joensuu

We are Powerful Creators: A Reflection on the *Pratyabhijñâ-hrdayam* 36
Kamala Nellen

International Directory 40

Editor: *Mr Tim Boyd*

Note: Articles for publication in *The Theosophist* should be sent to: **<editorialoffice@gmail.com>**

Cover: Irises from the Krotona Institute of Theosophy gardens in Ojai, California. Their purple hue symbolizes wisdom, and the light blue color faith and the power of hope. Photographer: John Greisen, board member of the TS in Portland, Oregon; facilitator with the TS in America's Virtual Study Center; and creator of the Intagram page, @theosophy_station.

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

President: **Mr Tim Boyd** *Vice-President:* **Dr Deepa Padhi**
Secretary: **Ms Marja Artamaa** *Treasurer:* **Ms Nancy Secrest**

Headquarters: ADYAR, CHENNAI (MADRAS) 600 020, INDIA
Vice-President: ivp.hq@ts-adyar.org
Secretary: secy.hq@ts-adyar.org
Treasurer: treasury.hq@ts-adyar.org
Adyar Library and Research Centre: alrc.hq@ts-adyar.org
Theosophical Publishing House: tphindia@gmail.com // www.adyarbooks.com
Editorial Office: editorialoffice@gmail.com, Website: http://www.ts-adyar.org

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

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

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

Rare Efflorescence

TIM BOYD

THE Mahatma Letters were not written with the intention that one day they would be published. In fact, it was the express desire of the Masters that they *not* be published. From their perspective, the letters were an incomplete attempt to address specific issues in the growth and unfoldment of A. P. Sinnett, and of the Theosophical Society (TS) at that time. The sense was that such a partial expression of the wisdom teachings would only serve to confuse. In the letters, it was suggested that H. P. Blavatsky's (HPB) *The Secret Doctrine* (*SD*), when written, would provide a more complete view of their philosophy and point of view. The *SD* was published and, years later, so were the Letters of the Masters. Although many people objected to their publication at the time, they have become a treasure for those of us who have come after.

A brief quote from one of those letters, written by the Master Koot Hoomi (KH), talks about spiritual unfoldment:

> An Adept is the rare efflorescence of a generation of inquirers; and to become one he must obey the inward impulse of his soul irrespective of prudential considerations of worldly science and sagacity. (*ML*) Letter No.2, chron. ed.)

There is no doubt that KH had an extensive vocabulary and would use it in his writings. Our job is to "unpack" his words. The quote is a very brief statement not only about the nature of an Adept, but also about the path that leads to this state, and the conditions that must be addressed. All that in one sentence. An Adept, according to HPB, is described as: "A person whose physical, mental, moral, psychic, and spiritual organization have been developed to the highest, the uttermost level." We think of this as the Masters of the Wisdom. In the very long run, over evolutionary expanses of time, all of humanity will ultimately attain to that level of unfoldment. Hastening that unfoldment is the focus of the theosophical teachings.

So, what is meant by the "rare efflorescence"? Another way of saying it is, the rare flowering of a generation of inquirers. All the kingdoms of Nature have their highest expressions. In the plant kingdom, it is the flower. In the mineral kingdom, precious metals and jewels are the highest expressions. For human beings, its flowering is the Adept, but this flower grows out from the soil of "a generation of inquirers". From a normal point of view, an inquirer is any person who asks questions. Normal types of questions are looking for information or knowledge

about some subject. But there is a deeper meaning than that. Not everybody who asks a question is focused on the path toward adeptship. It is the nature of the question, and more so, the nature of the process of *questioning* that identifies the type of inquirer to which the Master refers in his letter.

There is a *form* of inquiry that is not about talk, or getting answers. It involves a meditative process of looking deeply, which reveals answers, but also reveals deeper questions. This inquiry process is not merely about quizzing somebody about something. It is something more. In the little book, *Light on the Path*, there are three passages that speak directly to inquiry. The first passage tells us that at an advanced stage of the path, we must "Inquire of the earth, air, and water of the secrets they hold for you".

The statement is made that at the stage of the path where such a question is relevant, we have already cultivated the inner senses to be able to ask and perceive. Earth, air, and water are elements, foundational components of life. They exist in both visible and invisible states, and could be said to be the perceptible aspects of an exalted intelligence specific to each one. The inquiry is not intended to be made of simply the visible expression. It is not being suggested that one stand and inquire of a glass of water, or a lighted candle for its secrets. This has to be interpreted in order to engage in the process, but it can only be meaningful to one who has unfolded the capacity to ask and to hear.

The book goes on to say: "Inquire of the Holy Ones of the Earth of the secrets they hold for you." Again, we have to ask ourselves what that means. Who are the Holy Ones of the Earth? Is this talking about the Masters or some other level of "Holiness". Clearly, there are Holy Ones to whom we direct our inquiries, and who hold some secret that is not yet revealed within our consciousness. The final inquiry is "Inquire of the inmost, the One, of the final secret which it holds for you through the ages". When the Master speaks about a generation of inquirers, this is the inquiry from which the adept, the rare flower, arises.

One of the ideas expressed in this brief quote is that this path involves attention to the "inward impulse of the soul". In the process of becoming there is a necessary obedience to the prompting of the soul. Obedience involves submission to another who is in some way superior to oneself. In this case, it is the soul.

The child submits to the will of the parent, the ruled to the will of the ruler. The inward impulse of the soul is that voice that comes to one who is on this pathway toward Adeptship, who finds a way to hear, and then to listen.

So what is the inward impulse? The soul, the Higher Self, has a theosophical definition — that amalgam of higher mind (*manas*) and intuition (*buddhi*). That combination does not die with each death, but continues taking on body after body in future lives. The soul has certain qualities and predispositions. As we become sensitive to the impulses of the soul, and

as we find that they are in harmony with a deeper growth, we learn to submit. Where we see an indication of unity, we move in that direction; where there is peace and compassionate activity, we are impelled. At a certain stage of our unfoldment, we find ourselves pushed to move in those directions, to connect ourselves with expressions of soulful living. On the path to adeptship we first learn to perceive, then move inward in response to the impulse of the soul. In HPB's "Golden Stairs", it is expressed as "A willing obedience to the behests of Truth".

The advice from the Master closes with a caution. One must engage in this unfoldment process "irrespective of prudential considerations of worldly science and sagacity." It is asking a lot to say that one must proceed without taking the strong voice of worldly science into consideration. While we cannot disregard the voice and achievements of the scientific community, we have to acknowledge its limits. The view of contemporary science on this process of unfolding consciousness (an acknowledged, but scientifically incomprehensible component of being) and soul, whose very existence is scientifically unsupportable, cannot be a factor in this "flowering" process. It is common sense advice. One's car mechanic has definite knowledge, and may claim to know all there is, but you don't consult him for advice on brain surgery.

Although it is compact, the Master's advice is strong. We do not really understand this flowering process. Certainly, we do not control it, but hints on how we can engage in it are valuable, if not for our present state, maybe for the future. It is an advice about a profound freedom which requires what J. Krishnamurti described as "freedom from the known". ✧

You were told that the path to Occult Sciences has to be trodden laboriously and crossed at the danger of life; that every new step in it leading to the final goal, is surrounded by pitfalls and cruel thorns; that the pilgrim who ventures upon it is made first to confront and *conquer* the thousand and one furies who keep watch over its adamantine gates and entrance — furies called Doubt, Skepticism, Scorn, Ridicule, Envy, and finally Temptation — especially the latter; and that he who would see beyond had to first destroy this living wall; that he must be possessed of a heart and soul clad in steel and of an iron, never failing determination, and yet be meek and gentle, humble and have shut out from his heart every human passion that leads to evil. Are you all this?

Mahatma Koot Hoomi
Daily Meditations, 1949, 1st ed., p. 86

The Story of Giordano Bruno — IV

ANNIE BESANT

[The stories of Hypatia (published three months ago) and Bruno (begun two months ago) were written by me when I was a sceptic, to complete the series which have been reprinted here. These two martyrs fascinated me much in the past — AB]

THE struggle of uncertainty was long; but at last the yearning for Italy, the home-sickness, triumphed, and Giordano Bruno set his face Italianwards. He travelled through Switzerland, paying a brief visit to Zurich, and then, crossing the Alps, saw stretching below him, in their autumnal glory, the sunny plains of the Italy he had loved and left. He turned his steps first to Padua, unable to resist the temptation of raising his voice for science in that famous town, whose University had on its roll the most illustrious names of Italy.

His audacity struck his friends with terror: "It is said that the Nolain (Bruno)," wrote Acidalino from Bologna — to Forgacz, Baron de Gimes, then in Padua, "is living and teaching among you. Is it so? What can that man be doing in Italy, whence he was forced to flee? I am astonished, stupified, and cannot believe the rumor true, well authenticated as it is."

A storm soon gathered round the intrepid heretic, and Bruno fled to Venice; and in March, 1592, we find him established in the palace of Giovanni Mocenigo. Here for about two months he dwelt in safety, pouring out for his pupil the treasures of learning he had acquired. Often and often, as they passed silently in their gondola along the narrow waterways, they conversed freely on the controverted questions of the day, on the Copernicus theory, on the authority of Rome in matters of science.

Often as the stars shone down from the cloudless sky, Bruno gazing at them would dazzle his companion with his dreams of other inhabited worlds and of the manifold life in endless forms distributed over the endless universe. Little did he guess that those views of his, spoken freely in friendly converse, were repeated day after day by his pupil's lips into the ear of a dark-browed confessor, who later, in a parlor of the Inquisition, met his fellow-priests, and took counsel

---

Dr Annie Besant (1 Oct. 1847 – 20 Sep. 1933) was international President of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, from 1907 to 1933. Reprinted from *The Theosophist*, Jan. 1910, p. 512.

with them how Bruno might be betrayed unto them that they might put him to death.

The September moon shone broadly over Venice, and Bruno stood leaning lazily against one of the columns which stood at the foot of the broad white steps of the Mocenigo Palazzo, its base washed by the waters of the Blue Adriatic Sea. In the glorious prime of his manhood, in the gracious beauty of his strength and vigor, he leaned there, gazing with those deep eyes of his at the ripples as they danced in the moonlight, at the brilliant full-faced moon hanging in the shimmering air. "How good life is; how beautiful Nature is;" he mused, with a smile on his lips. "Yet fools talk of hell-fire, and curse their brothers, under this serene expanse, amid this infinitude of worlds."

The moon-rays floated across the water, until the side of the canal which skirted the Mocenigo Palazzo lay in darkest shadow. None could see a gondola that slid swiftly and silently in till it lay at rest in the dimness beyond the steps on which Bruno lounged in his careless restful case.

"How beautiful life is without the Gods," he murmured. "Mighty universal mother! calm, serene, changing amid changelessness; marvellous in beauty; glorious in majesty; would they have me blaspheme thee that I might worship their puny fancies? O Eternal Beauty!" and he sprang to his feet, stretching out his arms to the infinite expanse; "O boundless space! How could I live without thy fetterless freedom? How could I exist without thy radiant. . . ."

The melodious voice rang out in its joy into the sweet evening air, and as its music rose a grating sound was heard. See! that shadowed gondola is at the steps; masked figures spring out and stain the moonlight with their darkness; a black cloak is flung over the sunny head and stifles the harmony of the glorious tones into a gasp that is like a death-rattle; the eyes have looked their last on the freedom of the dancing wavelets; never again shall those arms stretch out fetterless towards the boundless blue. Giordano Bruno is in the grip of the Inquisition, and never again, O noble soldier of Liberty, shall thine eyes range in freedom over the glory that had sunned thee from thy birth, and had become incarnate in the radiance of thy shadowless joy in life.

* * * * * * *

It is dark, drear and damp in that low chamber where Bruno lies, a grim circle round him. He is naked, and he lies on a frame, his ankles and his wrists bound tightly, and the sunny head thrown back; dauntless are brow and lip; fearless the bright brave eyes; and see that figure, crouching in the shadow; it is Judas; it is Giovanni Mocenigo, who has betrayed him to his doom.

"Come forth, Giovanni!" croaked a voice through the darkness. "Reveal the blasphemy thou hast confessed."

Judas was dragged within the range of those star-bright eyes, and shrank and cowered under their light; his lips muttered, but could not speak.

"Nay, let the lad go!" rang out the sweet full tones in their ancient music, shaming

the harsh echoes of the cell. "Let the lad go; poor boy! he knows not what he has done. I make his confession for him. I have lifted one corner of the veil that hides the mighty mother from her children. What need to torture a child when you are set to murder a man?"

"Blasphemer! Heretic! The rack shall teach thee faith," foamed the masked inquisitor beside him, and at a sign the wheels turned, and the pulleys creaked, and under the fearful strain the sweat of agony streamed from the naked body, and brow and lips were written with intolerable pain.

"Now, heretic, recant! Now pray for mercy to the God thou hast blasphemed, to the Church thou hast abandoned. Apostate monk, confess thy master! Recant thy heresies, and even now mercy is thine."

"Truth that I have worshipped, keep me true," fell from the white lips, gasping in their pain. And the bright head fell back, and merciful nature drew the veil of a swoon over the awful agony.

The torturers lifted the strained body from the rack, and cast it, senseless, into a dungeon far beneath the level of the waves that lapped against the castle walls. And, O children, for six years Giordano Bruno lay, for truth's sake, in that cell! No sunlight ever touched him; no friend's voice ever reached his ear; no smile ever met his aching eyes; no book cheered his loneliness; no pen was granted to his numbed and wearied hand. He was buried living in the tomb. Such mercy gave the Christian to the man who dared to think.

* * * * * * *

Eight years have passed, six in the tomb at Venice, and two since in Rome. The last two have been passed in controversy, and something of the old delight in strife has awakened in the long stifled breast. But is this Bruno? The sunny hair has bleached in the darkness of the Venice dungeon; the bright eyes are bleared when the unused sunlight touches them; the strong limbs are bent and weak as those of an old man. The Christians have starved and tortured his life out of him. The heretic is old in the prime of his manhood.

But now the eight years' martyrdom is nearly over. For the last time he stands before his judges. He is excommunicated as atheist; he is declared contumacious and irreconcilable; he is handed over to the civil officers, to be punished "without the shedding of blood" — grim formula of hypocrisy that doomed the heretic to the awful agony of the stake.

Then sprang Bruno to his feet; they had forced him to his knees to listen to his sentence. Once more rang out clear the voice whose music had been harshened in the dungeon: "I think that you pronounce that sentence with more fear than I feel in hearing it." And head erect, and face well-nigh joyful, he walked steadily from the hall.

Eight days' grace was yet given him in which to recant and deny the truth he believed; but Bruno had not taught all through Europe, and borne eight long years of dungeon pain, to turn recreant now to his mistress Truth. The 17th February dawns, and the day of his death is here. To the Campo die Fiori they take

him through a howling, fanatic crowd, composed in great part of pilgrims; they have clad him in the sulphur-coloured garb of heresy, hideous with pictured devils and flames and crosses, but the dress cannot mar his dignity as he walks calmly on, his eyes bright, his forehead serene, his step firm and steady; a priest pushes forward and presses on him a crucifix, but Bruno turns away his head and will not touch it; they bind him to the stake, and no word opens his lips; the flames rise around him; but no cry escapes from him; to the end he is as serene as though he felt no agony, and the last glimpse the crowd catches of his face, before the flames sear it, shows it calmly proud as ever; and now the smoke and the fire surround him, and Giordano Bruno is gone for evermore.

Gone? Ah! Not so! Bruno lives while men can honour courage, and love can reverence the memory of a noble heart. He died, but from his stake rings out the message he left, which may fitly form his epitaph:

TO KNOW HOW TO DIE IN ONE CENTURY IS TO LIVE FOR ALL CENTURIES TO COME.

(*Concluded*)

A TRUE WARRIOR

A frame of adamant, a soul of fire,
No dangers fright him, and no labors tire;
O'er love, o'er fear, extends his wide domain,
Unconquered lord of pleasure and of pain.
No joys to him pacific sceptres field,
War sounds the trumpet, he rushes to the field.

Anonymous

Conversations with Buddhist Monks and Nuns

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

THE Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines the word tradition as "a belief, custom, or way of doing something that has existed for a long time among a particular group of people; a set of these beliefs or customs." The longer a tradition lasts, the more likely that it may betray its original impulse. The Latin verb *tradere* is part of the etymological meaning of the word tradition. But it also informs the etymology of the word treason. The theatre of tradition is always the human mind, its asymmetries, contradictions, and its search for the significance of existence.

Madame Blavatsky referred to Theosophy as the "Wisdom Tradition", a Wisdom which has been preserved at the very core of several religious traditions, yet transcending them in its identity with Truth. However, she left a warning regarding the approach to Wisdom within the Theosophical Society (TS):

> Every such attempt as the Theosophical Society has hitherto ended in failure, because, sooner or later, it has degenerated into a sect, set up hard-and-fast dogmas of its own, and so lost by imperceptible degrees that vitality which living truth alone can impart. You must remember that all our members have been born and bred in some creed or religion, that all are more or less of their generation both physically and mentally, and consequently that their judgment is but too likely to be warped and unconsciously biased by some or all of these influences. If then, they cannot be freed from such inherent bias, or at least taught to recognise it instantly and so avoid being led away by it, the result can only be that the Society will drift off onto some sandbank of thought or another, and there remain a stranded carcass to moulder and die.

The Buddhist tradition also faced a number of challenges. It has been suggested that sometime after the passing of the Buddha several sectarian groups came into existence, and that it was necessary for a great philosopher, Nagarjuna, to enter the fray and show the essence of what was the Buddha's teaching. His Holiness the Dalai Lama regards him as the greatest reformer in the Buddhist tradition. Nagarjuna maintained, like the Buddha, that all views are empty.

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

Consider, for example, the dialogue between the Buddha and the wanderer Vacchagotta. The Buddha refused to be drawn into speculative views:

> "Then does Master Gotama hold any speculative view at all?"
>
> "Vaccha, 'speculative view' is something that the Tathāgata has put away. For the Tathāgata Vaccha has seen this: 'Such is material form, such its origin, such its disappearance; such is feeling, such its origin, such its disappearance; such is perception, such its origin, such its disappearance; such are formations, such their origin, such their disappearance; such is consciousness, such its origin, such its disappearance.' Therefore, I say, with the destruction, fading away, cessation, giving up, and relinquishing of all conceivings, all excogitations, all I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit, the Tathāgata is liberated through not clinging."
>
> (*Majjhima Nikāya* (72.3), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha — A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*, translated by Bhikkhu Nānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2009.)

In the course of my work for the Theosophical Society, I have been fortunate to meet Buddhist monks and nuns in whom the Buddhist tradition was not only alive but reached depths of wisdom and compassion.

During my work for the Indo-Pacific Federation of the TS (2001–2006), I was able to visit Sri Lanka a number of times. These visits included addressing audiences at the different TS centres on that Island, meeting TS members, but also visiting places of historical significance, in particular those associated with the work of our President-Founder, Col. Henry Steel Olcott, who is still regarded as a champion of the Buddhist cause in Sri Lanka.

In Badulla, in 2003, a south-eastern Province of the country, I was taken to visit a senior Buddhist monk, Sumanawanse, who lived within the compound of a Buddhist temple (*pirivena*), which also included a Buddhist school. When we arrived at his cottage we were told to wait as the monk was meditating. He was a senior teacher of monks but had to retire for health reasons. His demeanor was quite peaceful, his face benign and glowing with spiritual practice.

I was invited to ask him a question, through an interpreter. "In the West there is much interest in vipassanā meditation, and some people pay a great deal of money for such practice. What is your definition of vipassanā?" Since then, I have learned that to ask a question to a wise person involves being prepared for the deconstruction of one's worldview.

He replied: "Vipassanā is to look at oneself intelligently. When you look at yourself intelligently there is no self, and therefore no problem. But when you look at yourself unintelligently, there is a self and therefore problems."

I could not ask him any more questions that morning. His reply was so important and delved so deeply into the nature of both self and spiritual practice, that made

any further questioning unnecessary. But, as it turned out, we would have more conversations next year, in 2004.

In the Footsteps of the Founders

In Galle, I was taken to the Wijayananda Buddhist Temple and compound for an interview with the Head Priest, Ven. Gnanavisuddhi Maha Thero. He showed me a number of books from his library about Col. Henty Steel Olcott (HSO) in both English and Singhalese, including Stephen Prothero's *The White Buddhist: the Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott*; Howard Murphet's biography of HSO (with its revised title of *Yankee Beacon of Buddhist Light*), plus, of course, HSO's *Old Diary Leaves*. There is a statue of Olcott in the central area of the town. I noticed a feeling of great warmth and affection for the Colonel here.

I was then taken to the hall in the old building (1867) where the Founders of the TS, H. P. Blavatsky, and H.S. Olcott, took Pañchasîla and became Buddhists, on 19 May 1880. There is a bust of Olcott in an alcove, and below it a reproduction of his handwriting attesting to having taken Pañchasîla together with HPB in that hall.

I was also taken to the temple in which there is a large and dignified statue of Lord Buddha. Among the many paintings on its walls, depicting episodes in the Buddha's life as well as some of the Jataka Tales, one caught my eye. It shows HPB and HSO sitting on the floor, with hands joined at their chest, before five Buddhist elders. It depicts the moment in which they actually took Pañchasîla. An emotional thought occurred: "They were here. They were here!"

Our gracious host, the Head Priest, invited us to his house for tea. As he asked us to sit down, I chose a cane chair near me. When I did sit down the chair collapsed under my weight. A young Dutch novice whispered in my ear: "You have left your mark in this place."

When the time came for us to leave the compound, I thanked the Head Monk for his kindness and hospitality (we had a sumptuous lunch). As the van I was traveling in went through the gates of the compound, I left with a lump in my throat.

More Conversations with a Buddhist Monk

Visiting Badulla again, in 2004, I had the opportunity of another visit to the senior Buddhist monk Sumanawanse, whom I had met last year. The subject of our conversation, done through an interpreter, was the stages on the path (*mārga*): *sotāpatti*, *sakṛdāgāmin*, *anāgāmin*, and *arhat*. They are mentioned in theosophical literature. He mentioned the well-known notion of the "fetters" (*samyojana*) and said that progress from one stage to another is by getting rid of a number of "fetters." One of the central fetters is the sense of self (*sakkāyadhitti*). He said this is the most serious impediment to one treading the path.

Many years ago, at Adyar, Radhaji, in one of her talks, mentioned the parable of the householder, used by the Buddha in one of his instructions to his disciples. The parable can be found in George Grimm's book *The Doctrine of the Buddha — The Religion of Reason and Meditation*

(Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, Varanasi, Patna, 1982).

One night, very late into the night, the householder hears knocks on the door. When he opens it, he sees a stranger, a weary, dusty, and very tired man, who says to the householder: "Sir, I have been travelling for many days. I am very tired and hungry. If you could provide me with some food and a place to sleep, I will leave in the morning."

The householder looked at him and decided to give him food and accommodation for one night. In the morning, the householder's family met the stranger and liked him. The householder then decided to allow him to stay for three more days, a week, two weeks, a month, two months, indefinitely.

On a certain night the stranger entered the householder's room with a knife and killed him. The Buddha mentioned that the stranger is the sense of the separate (lower) self in us. Radhaji mentioned that we tend to behave as if this self is not dangerous but when there are crises and the self flares up, we can see how destructive it can be. Friendships, relationships, and even institutions can be destroyed by the separate self.

A number of traditions suggest that many negative tendencies lurk inside the self: pride, vainglory, suspicion, anger, hatred, and selfishness in its many forms. These wreak havoc in the world. *Theologia Germanica*, one of the classic texts on Christian Mysticism, says: "So long as a man is seeking his own good, he does not seek what is best for him, and will never find it."

Sumanawanse said the *anāgāmin*, (non-returner) is free from *tanhā*, the thirst for experience which is the source of suffering" (*dukkha*). "There is suffering but no sufferer." Almost incomprehensible to me, he said that even the *anāgāmin*, has fetters to deal with, even when they are necessarily of a subtler nature. One of them is ignorance (*avijjā* in Pali or *avidyā* in Sanskrit).

I then asked him, "Are there Arhats alive today?" He answered, "Possibly, but it is very difficult to verify it. It is a universal truth that no Arhat would say that he himself is an Arhat." "An Arhat", he added, "is free from the illusions created by the sense of self (*sakkāyadhitti*)."

Unlike in our first encounter, my questions became slightly bolder. "When do you think Maitreya-Buddha will manifest himself in the world?" His answer was quite remarkable. "Maitreya-Buddha will manifest when the present world is 'destroyed' and after a new cycle of life begins, either on this or another planet."

Was he referring to another Round?

"Is the Bodhisattva Maitreya in physical incarnation now," I ventured to ask. (He differentiated between Maitreya-Buddha and Bodhisattva Maitreya.) He said, "Yes."

"Do you have any idea of the place where he would be living now?", I continued. "Bharatha" (India), he said. He made it clear that these were just his views, and he did not claim the authority of any traditional Buddhist text in support of them.

While on a visit to the Selangor TS

Lodge, in Malaysia, during one of my lecture tours in Southeast Asia, I met a Buddhist nun who attended my talk at the Lodge. She was carrying a copy of Aryel Sanat's book *The Inner Life of Krishnamurti*. In a conversation, she told me that one of her teachers said to her that there are Arhats alive in the forests in the northern part of Burma. No names were given.

Almost twenty years ago I was invited to teach a class at the Krotona School of Theosophy in Ojai, California. I had been a resident student there in 1983, which was a turning point in my life.

On a Sunday, when no classes were held, I was offered by a fellow-Theosophist to go on a drive around the Los Angeles area. One of the sites we visited was a Buddhist temple on the outskirts of Los Angeles. It was a big complex, with many statues of the Buddha and also his Bodhisattvas. Prominent among them was Kwan Yin, the Mother of Mercy and Compassion.

While there I asked a Buddhist nun: "What is the meaning of the name Kwan Yin?" She sat down and explained it to me. Her answer stayed with me all these years.

She said: "Kwan means to hear. When we hear the suffering of the world, we hear it through our background of 'noise': too many thoughts, reactions, anger, desire, and so on. But when Kwan Yin hears it, she does out of a state of complete emptiness. Her response, then, is boundless compassion."

On my very last visit to Sri Lanka, in 2006, I was taken to visit the Maligakanda Buddhist Temple in Colombo, which Col. Olcott used to visit many times, for his work with Ven. H. Sumangala in connection with the Buddhist revival movement in Sri Lanka. On that visit I was asked to present my question to a 96 year old venerable Buddhist monk. My only question was: "Is the Bodhisattva Maitreya in a body or outside a body at the moment?" This very elderly monk, with his eyes shining, replied: "It is difficult to say. That Light is there but the world is in darkness and cannot see it." The selfless dedication of these senior monks and nuns has made the Sanga a vessel for that compassionate Light.

The Ven. Samdhong Rinpoche

What Sumanawanse said earlier about Maitreya-Buddha reminded me of what the Ven. Samdhong Rimpoche had told me in a conversation in Sydney, in 2001, during the World Congress of the Theosophical Society, with International Headquarters at Adyar, of which he was a guest lecturer. He is a very distinguished Tibetan Buddhist scholar and author of a number of books. He is also a former Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government in exile, and a past Director of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, Varanasi. Rinpocheji also served as Chairman of the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies.

I was having breakfast at one of the colleges of the University of New South Wales, where the World Congress was being held, when a Vietnamese member approached me and asked me to accompany him and the Ven. Samdhong Rinpoche to the Indian Consulate in Sydney, for he needed to renew his

Identity Permit. I was rather desolate to know that a Tibetan, living in India since 1959, did not have a passport. I suggested to the Vietnamese member that we should leave early in order to avoid heavy traffic. However, when we did arrive at the Consulate it was closed and we had to wait for one and a half hours. That allowed us time for a conversation with Rinpocheji. When the Consulate eventually opened, we took Rinpoche to the reception. There he was informed about the fee he had to pay. When he attempted to reach a pocket in his robe, my Vietnamese friend immediately paid the fees. He looked at me and Rinpocheji and said: "Good karma! Good karma!" The lady at the counter smiled, and so did Rinpocheji.

One of the questions I asked him was: when would Maitreya-Buddha manifest in the world? Rinpocheji said that according to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, Maitreya-Buddha would manifest in the world in a million years from now, but that there would be partial manifestations before the full manifestation would take place. These partial manifestations would prepare humanity for future teaching. I asked him if Krishnamurti could be seen as one of such manifestations and he said, "Yes".

He also said that in this age, Kaliyuga, there is individual clarity and collective darkness and that in the next age, Satya Yuga, there will be collective clarity but individual darkness, for these two poles must always be together. He also said that no one achieves Nirvana as a man or a woman, and much before that very lofty stage is reached, these two aspects of the human being would have been blended into one.

On being asked about the existence of the Mahatmas, he said that Tibetan people are aware that Mahatmas exist, but since they do not attract attention to themselves, it is very difficult to recognize them, which seems to be consistent with passages in the book *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett.*

Dawn at the Ganges River

My lecture tour of 2004, which began in Sri Lanka, took me eventually to India, and Varanasi, where I conducted a study class at the Headquarters of the Indian Section of the TS. Both His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Ven. Samdhong Rinpoche had addressed audiences in that Centre. It was at a place located eight kilometers from Varanasi, Sarnath, that the Buddha delivered his first sermon. While at Varanasi I visited the famous Ganges, for which I had to get up at 4 a.m.

My guide was a 65–year–old worker at the TS international headquarters, Rama Adhar. He walked fast. For the past 27 years, he has walked to the Ganges daily. On the way to the river, we found many people bringing their offerings, including entire families. When we reached the river, much before dawn, what I saw is very difficult to describe with Western eyes, so I will borrow Indian ones and attempt the impossible.

Above the river that flows calmly and effortlessly lies a vast sky. The river reflects the sky, and incredible as it may seem, the sky reflects the river. The sky over the Ganges seems to be a river

of pure space (*ākāśa* in Sanskrit). River and sky form a complete and indivisible oneness. Seeing this puts an end to all mental chattering.

"Ganges" is the name given to it by the British. The Indians call the river "Ganga," and it is regarded as a Goddess. The river is a living temple. "Ganga is our Mother," one of them tells me. The ritual they perform at its steps (*ghats*) involves body, soul, and spirit, for they actually dip into it several times. Ganga is a Mother that welcomes all her children, both the living and the dead.

It is utterly impossible to describe the feeling one has at its steps. The experience is so overwhelming that it does not seem to leave anything behind it to describe. Perhaps holiness could come closer to it. The whole place seems to be completely suffused with a profoundly benign spiritual power.

On the way back, there was little talk. In my heart, I carry the experience that India is an endless connection with the Eternal, whom Indians call Brahman, literally meaning "vastness". This Vastness, without beginning or end, is profoundly Feminine, a Mother that nourishes, heals, inspires, renews, and accepts all unreservedly. As I walked back to the TS Headquarters of the Indian Section, I felt small, very small.

In the *Majjhima Nikāya* (25.10), the Buddha alludes to speculation about his death:

> But they then came to hold views such as 'the world is eternal' and 'the world is not eternal' and 'the world is finite' and 'the world is infinite' and 'the soul and the body are the same' and 'the soul is one thing and the body another' and 'after death, a Tatāgatha exists' and 'after death a Tatāgatha does not exist' and 'after death, a Tatāgatha both exists and does not exist' and 'after death a Tatāgatha neither exists nor does not exist.' That is how those recluses and brahmins of the third kind failed to get free from Māra's power and control.

In Mahayana Buddhism, Māra is regarded as "the King of the destruction of good works". The source of the Buddhist tradition is a consciousness completely free from every mind-engendered notion, from the web of thought, from the notions of me and mine, from every view, every assumption. In it, there is no distinction between understanding and compassion, wisdom and love, insight and helpfulness. It holds the entire world in its boundless love and is one with everything that lives. In its incomprehensible depths, it is an ever-present saviour, rescuing all sentient beings from the darkness of *samsāra* (aimless wandering). ✧

Compassion is not merely an emotion, but a deep intelligence and love that encompasses all living things. It is the denial of the "me" and requires a freedom from attachment and the ego.

J. Krishnamurti

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky: A Biography — II

(11 August 1831 – 8 May 1891)

KIRK GRADIN

3. The Founding: 1873–1879

Shortly after returning to Europe, HPB received orders to again go to New York. She left the following day, but gave up her first-class ticket to purchase four steerage tickets in order to rescue a destitute woman and her two children. This must have been a nightmarish two-week excursion below deck on rough seas. Arriving in New York on 7 July 1873, she established herself, earned a simple living, and began to meet the people most deeply involved in the examination of spiritualistic phenomena. This marked the beginning of a six-year stay in America and led to her meeting Henry S. Olcott and William Q. Judge in 1874.

This first meeting altered Judge for life and profoundly affected the Theosophical Movement. Having seen "the lion's glance, the diamond heart of HPB," Judge spent many evenings learning from her. From midnight to 4 am, he wrote, were ". . . glorious hours spent in listening to the words of those illuminated Ones who came . . . when all was still, and talked . . . by the hour . . . watching or instructing us".

H. P. Blavatsky's involvement with spiritualistic groups in her early days in America is often misrepresented. At that time, Spiritualism was the rage in both Europe and America. Seances were held even in President Lincoln's White House. On the one hand, HPB knew that psychic phenomena could help to awaken modern science to the reality of hidden planes and latent capacities in human nature. On the other hand, she and Judge repeatedly point out in their writings how spiritualistic phenomena are misunderstood by the spiritualists themselves, and that mediumistic practices have long been known in the East as necromancy, a form of black magic, gravely dangerous and positively ruinous to moral and spiritual development.

In July of 1875, HPB's scrapbook indicates that "Orders received from India

---

Mr Kirk Gradin has been an Associate of the United Lodge of Theosophists in Santa Barbara since 1979, has written many articles for *VIDYA* magazine and other publications, given multimedia presentations in diverse theosophical venues, and co-founded *Studio Vach*, a series of podcasts and videos on core themes of Theosophia.

direct to establish a philosophi-religious Society and choose a name for it — also to choose Olcott." Others have tried to take credit for the name, but seven months earlier she had first used the term "theosophy" in a letter to Professor Corson of Cornell University (Cranston, 117) as a system which would disclose to humanity "the deepest depths of divine nature and show them *the real tie which binds all things together*".

In the first two years of its existence, the Theosophical Society (TS) attracted little public attention, though HPB received a continuous flow of visitors from around the world at her home, nicknamed "the Lamasery". Olcott wrote, "The social distinctions of our visitors were left outside our threshold; and the rich or poor, Christian, Jew, or Infidel, learned or unlearned, our visitors received the same hearty welcome and patient attention . . . HPB was so great an aristocrat as to be at ease in the highest society and so thorough a democratic altruist as to give cordial hospitality to the humblest caller."

She also began an extraordinary output of writing, publishing articles released to the local press, while also working intently upon her first book. Having learned to read and write English under her Guru in Tibet, in three years she wrote and published a 1,200-page two-part volume: *Isis Unveiled, a Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology.* Though she was restricted from giving out many theosophical doctrines contained in her later work, the book is said to have "ignited an intellectual fervor" and had a profound impact in America and England. The first edition of 1,000 copies sold in 10 days and dozens of editions have been printed since. Judge accompanied her when she signed the contract for its publication. "When that document was signed," he later wrote, "she said to me in the street, 'Now I must go to India.'"

According to Dr Edward Conze, a Buddhist scholar and translator of *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, the year 1875 marked an event of great importance. Prior to that, European civilization seemed immensely strong, and even the educated in India, Ceylon, and Japan felt they had no option but to adopt the Western system. Christian missionaries looked forward to speedy mass conversions. However, the founding of the Theosophical Society and its activities, Dr Conze wrote, "accelerated the influx of knowledge about Asiatic religions" to the West, and "restored self-confidence in the wavering minds of the Asiatics themselves". Theosophists from Russia, America, and England, he said, "appeared among the Hindus and Ceylonese to proclaim their admiration for the ancient wisdom of the East".

4. Unity and Brotherhood in India: 1879–1885

HPB continued her unceasing foundational labor in India. In 1889, she wrote:

> When we arrived in India, in February 1879, there was no unity between the races and sects of the Peninsula, no sense of a common public interest, no disposition to find the mutual relation between the several sects of ancient Hinduism, or that between

> them and the creeds of Islam, Jainism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. . . . Social and religious, as well as material and physical differences, were breeding race hatreds, sectarian and social antipathies that seemed insurmountable . . . Ten years have passed and what do we see? . . . throughout India unity and brotherhood have replaced the old disunity, one hundred and twenty-five Branches of our Society have sprung up in India alone, each a nucleus of our idea of fraternity, a centre of religious and social unity.

She goes on to list the many specific influences the Society and its members have had on Indian culture — the formation of the Indian National Congress, the revival of the non-sectarian strains of Hinduism and Buddhism, advances in educational practices where students are made more aware of their ancient ancestral teachings and their scientific basis, and a general revival of interest in Sanskrit language and scholarship. "The key to all our successes," she wrote, is what she called Occultism, "our recognition of the fact of the Higher Self — colourless, cosmopolitan, unsectarian, sexless, unworldly, altruistic — and the doing of our work on that basis." For it is only that sacred affirmation and appeal to the intuition that can touch the heart, "sweep away the old barriers", and turn "the rulers of nations away from selfish war and schemes of conquest".

In 1883 alone, in writing articles for *The Theosophist*, she added over 700 pages to her eventual fourteen volumes of collected writings. The Society by now had a broad international impact with centers in every developed country. Its growing success was also marked by the appearance of real *chelas* like Damodar K. Mavalankar and Bhavani Shankar. It was evidenced by the growing acceptance of Eastern philosophy and comparative religion in the West and a renewed self-respect of native Buddhists, Hindus, and other Eastern traditions of their own sacred texts and lineages. At the same time, the spiritual impulse of esotericism also attracted the dark side of human nature.

All great spiritual teachers or moral reformers challenge the narrow judgments and prejudices that lie deep within the human psyche. The esoteric wisdom which H. P. Blavatsky was commissioned to bring into the world was at the same time a severe blow to any thought form or personality which was stagnating, sectarian, claustrophobic, or in any way detrimental to the tidal wave of philosophical mysticism, and altruism arising within humanity. Opposing forces were many, from the proud and stalwart sectarians of many traditions, from Orientalists and less perceptive scholars, from Spiritualism and materialistic science, but also from those whom she personally aided and helped the most.

Some of the most surprising and undermining attacks came through the gossip and slander, suspicions, jealousy, and ambitions of students, so-called "helpers", and colleagues within the Movement. On invisible planes, no doubt the battle was most severe. It was not the Indian climate, explained her Master, that adversely

affected her health, but the forces which labeled her as a fraud and undermined her moral and mental credibility, thus throwing repeated shadows over the proper fruition of her incarnation. For those who accepted the inevitable trials, however, the benefits were inestimable, as Countess Wachtmeister, who lived with Blavatsly during the final years of her life, revealed:

> I have never seen her treat two persons alike. The weak traits in everyone's character were known to her at once, and the extraordinary way in which she would probe them was surprising. By those who lived in daily contact with her the knowledge of *Self* was gradually acquired, and by those who chose to benefit by her practical way of teaching progress could be made. But to many of her pupils the process was unpalatable; for it is never pleasant to be brought face to face with one's own weaknesses; and so many turned from her, but those who could stand the test, and remain true to her, would recognize within themselves the inner development which alone leads to occultism.
>
> (Cranston, 293)

Around New Year's Eve in 1882, a stranger visited HPB at the India headquarters at Adyar. From the man's background one would think him unlikely to pursue an audience with her. His name was R. Jagannathiah, an educated native, an author and contributor to *The Philosophic Inquirer*, a secular journal. He was both a confirmed atheist and member of the National Secular Society of England, and had carefully prepared himself for his meeting with HPB by formulating the most difficult and insoluble questions he could muster.

He was first introduced to her by Damodar K. Mavalankar in the meeting hall of the main building at the Adyar center. She was seated in a chair and surrounded by a small group of students. Jagannathiah wrote of that fateful encounter:

> The first impression she made on me was that she was not of this earth, as she had a pair of glowing but terrible eyes, under the arch of strongly-marked eyebrows. She was a woman in body, a man in speech, earthly in appearance, celestial in reality. . . . "Ah!" exclaimed she, "I expected that you would come to me some day." I asked her how she could expect me, since she was a Theosophist and I am an atheist. She asked Mr Damodar to fetch her scrapbook, and showed me some cuttings from my lectures on "Kapila, Buddha and Shankara," and said that she was carefully reading my contributions to *The Philosophic Inquirer*, which she appreciated, as they breathed a spirit of enquiry after Truth. As secularism was insufficient to satisfy my higher aspirations, she reasonably concluded that I would go to her for further light on the problem of problems — the mystery of life and death.

Jagannathiah was stunned. HPB asked him what he wished to inquire about. One by one, he put his questions forward.

To my great astonishment she took up

question after question and answered each most elaborately and satisfactorily. She occupied nearly three hours [that day] in solving my questions. The array of facts she cited in support of her forcible and incontrovertible arguments, historical, philosophical, and scientific, confused my poor intellect.

The whole audience was spellbound. And one peculiar point in her answering I cannot afford to omit. Her mastery of the various subjects was such that in her answer all the side-questions were anticipated and disposed of once for all. On the second and third day we were thus occupied for hours in the presence of the same audience; as the interest daily increased in proportion to my more and more difficult questions and her most able and satisfactory answers . . . On the third day, after answering the questions, on which I spent much thought and care, mustering all the force of my atheistic knowledge and learning, she cheerfully asked me if I had anything more to say. Readily and unreservedly I answered that "my stock was exhausted", and this afforded food for laughter for a few minutes to the whole company.

My idea was that Theosophy was something like the many religions of the world, and that HPB's knowledge and ingenuity might be a little more than those of the ordinary student. Emboldened by this hasty idea, I "went to shear but returned shorn". Glad was I to be defeated by her, for my defeat was an immense gain to me, as she opened my eyes to the slippery ground on which I then stood. In three days she shattered my seven years' knowledge of atheistic theories. . .

This giant of intellect, wisdom, and might, asked me what I thought of Theosophy, and if I would join the Theosophical Society and help the movement, if I were convinced of the truth of Theosophy. She founded the Theosophical Society, she said, under the orders of her guru, an Indian Mahatma, a Rishi, and came to disseminate a knowledge of Brahma-Vidya, the Wisdom-Religion. But to her regret many an intelligent and learned Hindu kept aloof from the movement and looked with some suspicion on her for her Western origin and alien race.

I readily responded that I would join, and work and die for the sacred Cause, so long as a spark of life existed in this body. I have been (so) working . . . ever since, always alive to the sacredness of my promise to HPB who opened my eyes and enlightened my ignorance. She turned my attention to the precious and lustrous gems of knowledge lying deep in the oriental mines of wisdom. Very kindly and moththerly advice she gave me in bidding me read the Upanishads, which were Schopenhauer's "solace in life and solace in death". (Cranston, 239)

5. Metaphysics and Ethics, the Keynote Outpouring: 1885-1891

The noetic and buddhic literary outpouring that occurred in the final six years of H. P. Blavatsky's life is astounding by any standard. *The Secret Doctrine: the Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy,* was already being composed

on board ship as HPB left India for Europe. It was evident to those close to her and insisted upon by HPB herself, that her work was being copiously but remotely edited, overseen and mostly dictated by the two Masters who stood behind her. Through her tireless labor, both the metaphysical and ethical foundations of universal brotherhood at the heart of the spiritual mysteries kept secret for milelennia were now being offered to the public for the first time in the English language.

> It is needless to explain that this book is not the Secret Doctrine in its entirety, but a select number of fragments of its fundamental tenets. . . The aim of this work may be thus stated: to show that Nature is not "a fortuitous concurrence of atoms", and to assign to man his rightful place in the scheme of the Universe; to rescue from degradation the archaic truths which are the basis of all religions; and to uncover, to some extent, the fundamental unity from which they all spring; finally, to show that the occult side of Nature has never been approached by the Science of modern civilization.
>
> *The Secret Doctrine*

H. P. Blavatsky explains that the series of books, from which both *The Voice of the Silence* and *The Stanzas of Dzyan* (forming the basis of *The Secret Doctrine*) are derived, was originally taken down in Senzar, a language still unknown to modern linguists. They are a record of the words of divine beings, who dictated it to the "Sons of Light", in Central Asia, roughly one million years ago. Like a mighty river of celestial light, the greatest Initiates of every na-tion were carrying forth a knowledge passed down eons before, by god-like beings present even at the dawn of the first Races of our globe.

And it is from this radiant stream, she explained, that all the historically known sages have branched off. An unbroken lineage of Masters of the Wisdom stood behind the mystery schools of ancient Egypt and Greece, behind Krishna, Buddha, Pythagoras, Jesus, and many others. "*Dzyu*", she wrote, inherited by the whole of humanity "dealing with eternal truths and primal causes" is "the expression of the collective Wisdom of the Dhyani-Buddhas". Phonetically she related *Dzyan* to *Djan* or *Jnana* meaning "to reform one's self by meditation and knowledge", by means of which a second or inner birth is possible.

> The twelve *Stanzas of Dzyan* on anthropogenesis, like the seven *Stanzas* on cosmogenesis, are accompanied by interwoven Commentary and supplemented by elaborate elucidations of myth and symbol, of science and philosophy. To gain a clear comprehension of the overall framework is difficult partially because it was meant to be difficult. There are numerous blinds, overlapping statements and various interlocking classifications which use terms differently in distinct contexts. There is a code language in *The Secret Doctrine,* which is meant to arouse Buddhic intuition and to nullify the tendency of lower

Manas to consolidate categories, classifications, and even concepts. (R. N. Iyer)

The publication of *The Secret Doctrine* in 1888 was quickly sold out and a new edition printed. One year later, it was followed by *The Voice of the Silence*, fragments of a much larger esoteric treatise HPB had memorized and translated from Dravidian Telugu. Here, portions of the sublime ethics of the Bodhisattva Path, previously only revealed through initiation, were brought to the West in evocative poetic verse, rich in multidimensional meaning.

It was in her final years in London that she also met the mystic, artist, and author George William Russell and Mohandas K. Gandhi, who both subsequently became Associates of the Society. Russell's genuine empathetic charisma, transporting use of language and self-sacrificing heroism inspired and endeared him to both the aristocrats, the creative minds fueling the Irish Renaissance, and the rural poor of Ireland. Despite his own literary outpouring, at the end of his life he credited everything to "the atmosphere" created by HPB and W. Q. Judge. Gandhi, a 21-year-old law-school student at the time, was awakened to the importance of the *Bhagavadgitā* by theosophists and later spoke of *The Key to Theosophy* as one of the central influences upon his life and thinking.

In her culminating activity, just two years before passing, HPB established a headquarters for the international Esoteric Section of the Society in London. It was modeled on the Trans-Himalayan tradition of probationary chelaship, designed to support and nourish the public work, to maintain the centrality of Masters, and to prepare a committed nucleus of students for the rigorous discipline, trials and demands of the practical embodiment of the Bodhisattva ideal in the service of humanity. That ideal is succinctly summed up in *The Voice of the Silence*: "To live to benefit mankind is the first step."

The Messenger who would succeed her in the final 25 years of the 20th century was predicted in several places in her writings, most notably and specifically in the last pages of *The Key to Theosophy*, also published in 1889. The *Key* became her final, briefest, but most accessible summary of the philosophy and the nature of the modern theosophical Movement.

Markedly different from her previous volumes, the central components of *Theosophia* are laid out in a dialogue between herself and a Western student who possesses little or no exposure to esoteric philosophy. For the English-speaking beginning student, no finer or more reliable introduction to the Teaching and its nomenclature can be found anywhere.

After her passing, W. Q. Judge, her most faithful disciple and truest friend, pointed to the future in this summarizing eulogy:

> Her aim was to elevate the race. Her method was to deal with the mind of the century as she found it, by trying to lead it on step by step; to seek out and educate a few who, appreciating the majesty of the Secret Science and devoted to "the great

orphan Humanity", could carry on her work with zeal and wisdom; to found a Society whose efforts — however small itself might be — would inject into the thought of the day the ideas, the doctrines, the nomenclature of the Wisdom Religion, so that when the next century shall have seen its 75th year the new messenger coming again into the world would find the Society still at work, the ideas sown broadcast, the nomencla-ture ready to give expression and body to the immutable truth, and thus to make easy the task which for her since 1875 was so difficult and so encompassed with obstacles in the very paucity of the language, obstacles harder than all else to work against. ✧

**In the intuition there is a flash of direct knowledge,
but now the great structure of the intellect has been built up
through intervening ages and by its means the intuitive
knowledge can descend to our daily life in full consciousness.
Without that structure, without the intellect as instrument,
the thinker within would not be able to interpret
his vision in intelligible language to his fellows;
the artist may be ever so great but
he needs an instrument to play on.**

J. J. van der Leeuw,
The Conquest of Illusion

**Reason is the clumsy weapon of the scientists —
intuition the unerring guide of the seer.**

H. P. Blavasky,
Isis Unveiled, I

Together We Are One

WAYNE GATFIELD

> THOUGH but a minority of our members are mystically inclined, yet, in point of fact, the key to all our successes is in our recognition of the fact of the Higher Self — colourless, cosmopolitan, unsectarian, sexless, unworldly, altruistic — and the doing of our work on that basis. To the secularist, agnostic, and socialistic scientist, such results would have been unattainable, nay, would have been unthinkable. Peace societies are utopian, because no amount of argument based upon exoteric considerations of social morals or expediency, can turn the hearts of the rulers of nations away from selfish war and schemes of conquest.
>
> ("Our Three Objects" — H. P. Blavatsky)

Nor can this be achieved by organised religion but only by cultivating an awareness of our Higher Self and also the recognition of it in others regardless of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.

The title of this article is taken from a quote of the Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. It is deceptively simple and yet holds a wealth of inspiration and hope for humanity. When we look above at the quote from H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) we are made aware of the solution to the problems in the world today. Theosophy throughout the ages has always promoted the teaching of the Oneness of all things and the fact that outer differences are transitory and therefore illusory in the long run. It also gives the answer as to why the world is in such turmoil, because generally society has little conception of Oneness and conflict is caused by a misunderstanding of the true nature of life. Peace will never be reached by diplomacy or social means as these still promote separateness, as does organised religion. There has to be some common bond that links everyone and everything on this planet and beyond. The Higher Self transcends all differences and conceptual views and is the same in everyone, beyond the illusions that divide.

Ephesians 4:31–32 says: "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you". To do this is easier if we are aware that everyone is Divine and that "Christ God" is the Spirit that we all share and not a separate being. It is the same as the Buddha nature. "Look inward, thou art Buddha" says *The Voice of the Silence* by HPB. It is not saying we will become Buddha but that we are already Buddha or enlightened at this very moment now.

Mr Wayne Gatfield is President of Bolton Lodge of the Theosophical Society in England, a National Speaker, and author of many theosophical articles in various journals.

As Jesus says in the "Sermon on the Mount", forgive not "until seven times; but until seventy times seven". We must be aware of the limitations of human nature and the powerful negative effects of the Age of Kali that we are living through at the moment. Forgiveness can be a powerful way to clear away the "bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander" that was mentioned in the quote from Ephesians. We can forgive ourselves for past transgressions and resolve not to do the same again. We learn by our mistakes and by trial and error. If we have the right attitude, everything we experience can help us to grow spiritually.

It may be very hard to forgive certain people for things they have done, but does *not* forgiving them do any good? It creates bitterness and spreads "bad blood" throughout a world that is crying out for love and peace. Egotism rules, why else would someone crave a position of power and use that position to control and subjugate the population? Why is it often the case that the wrong person is placed in charge of a country and proceeds to promote violence and war against other countries? Why do they support the stockpiling of deadly weapons instead of using their power to spread love and peace amongst nations? Why are those who advocate peace often assassinated? Why do certain people and organisations in general fear peace? These are questions that need to be answered if we want to understand human nature as it is and find ways to help humanity become more spiritually oriented.

The lower self craves excitement. That is why people get involved in various sports and activities, but it is only in peace and silence that we hear the promptings of the Higher Self. There is time for both, but as we progress spiritually, we feel the need for more sedate times when the body rests, but there is more activity going on within.

The main point is to begin to see ourselves as we truly are. Indoctrination has made us rely on someone or something external, whether it is a limited conception of a "God", the government, or someone we believe to be superior to us. The Truth is that we can take advice and we can have pointers given to us by others, but we have all that we need for the journey within us. Robert Crosbie, the founder of the United Lodge of Theosophists, writes:

> For practical purposes: if we are developing the child-heart; if we are learning to love things beautiful; if we are becoming more honest and plain and simple; if we are beginning to sense the sweet side of life; if we are getting to like our friends better and extending the circle; if we feel ourselves expanding in sympathy; if we love to work for Theosophy and do not ask position as a reward; if we are not bothering too much about whether we are personal or impersonal — this is travelling on the path of impersonality.
>
> (*The Friendly Philosopher*, Page 127)

That is a wonderful way to look at life. There is so much doom and gloom being spread around today that it is good to start to sense the "sweet side of life". Of course, we may realise, that for millions in war zones and deprived areas this may be very difficult to do, but for those who are able to, there is the opportunity to at least add a little positivity to the world,

some gentleness, and some compassion.

To love things beautiful is also very important. Truly beautiful things are glimmerings from our spiritual nature and to love them is to have some "intimations of our immortality", as the poet William Wordsworth puts it. It speaks to the "child heart" in us, but there is also a sensual "beauty" that appeals to our lower principles. We have to discover what it is that helps us to become more gentle, loving, and caring, and what extends our circle of friends on the spiritual path.

Violence does not solve anything. It is totally alien to our spiritual nature; it is a man-made reaction to certain situations that is based upon the limited, materialistic view most people have of life. The true purpose of an enlightened way of life is to reduce suffering and to heal the world with loving kindness.

The theosophical movement promotes this object in the form of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity regardless of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour. The quote that was used at the beginning of this article gives the truly practical way to go about this. It is by uniting all living things under the aegis of the Higher Self and putting aside the seeming differences generated by the "great dire heresy of separateness that weans us from the rest." (*The Voice of the Silence*).

Confucius stated that if we do not develop "fellow feeling" then we are no more than manikins. If we want to succeed in helping humanity, even in a very humble way, we need to take the stance of being Spiritual Beings. At first this may be just an intellectual understanding, as this is how we begin most undertakings; but then we should begin to study, meditate, and practice in whatever way helps us to awaken a growing awareness of our Higher Self. All the work we do in the world should have that idea at the back of our mind constantly. For the majority of people the idea of a Higher Self never enters their consciousness and for many others it remains an intellectual concept. To actually take the stance of the Higher Self is a rarity in modern society. Yet all of us have the opportunity to become what we are beyond the labelling. To realise our true potential and that we are not creatures of a day but immortal beings and denizens of eternity.

There is a process of awakening, a "divine discontent" with the status quo and a desire to seek permanence in the midst of the inner and outer changes that we all go through. Change is often accompanied by suffering, once we become aware of our impermanence, and before we have realised our immortality, there may be a period when we go through a "dark night of the soul", when we become downcast as a result of all our material goods and earthly thoughts not providing the sustenance that we need. Our physical mortality becomes very apparent and we cry out to our Higher Self to reveal our true nature. The cry may be conscious or unconscious at first but in time we are given the option to take our progress in hand and forge our own destiny. We do not do this alone but in company with our fellow pilgrims on the path to enlightenment. True Spiritual Friendship is needed.

Together we are One. ✧

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been
broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out
from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving
stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that Heaven of freedom, my Father,
let my country awake.

Rabindranath Tagore
7 May 1861—7 August 1941
"Where the Mind Is without Fear"

Science and Free Will: Is Free Will an Illusion?

TAPIO JOENSUU

Introduction

For a theosophist, it is essential to study and follow the truth, as the motto of the Theosophical Society asserts: "There is no religion higher than Truth." It is important to be aware of the state of modern science on subjects relevant to Theosophy, and to find unbiased interpretations. Free will and its limitations are pivotal in achieving a high ethical destination for human beings and for the universe.

Some neuroscientists and philosophers have vigorously denied free will or even free choice. In addition to philosophical and logical arguments, the reason for the lack of free will is considered the results of empirical neuroscientific studies.

However, even a slight acquaintance with the neuroscientific and experimental psychology literature on free will is enough to conclude that the scientific explanation of free will is far from conclusive: it is absurd, even arrogant, to claim that science has explained free will as an illusion. Today, there is not even the means to scientifically study the mechanisms of the brain so that essential brain changes caused by past experiences can be reliably taken into account in studying free will.

I discuss the arguments against free will by examining Sapolsky's (2023) book, *Determined — Life Without Free Will*, and Libet's (1983) classic experiment on free choice. Finally, I will explain why the question of free will is essential to Theosophy.

Free Will Requires Consciousness

The existence of free will requires consciousness, which itself is complex. As an experience, consciousness is subjective, a world real only to the experiencer. It is essential to remember that the biochemistry and electrochemical functioning of the brain, as measured by instruments, measure molecules and electrochemical quantities, not consciousness as we experience it. In neuroscientific studies, "neuronal correlates of consciousness" refer to the consciousness-related brain functions.

According to the neuroscience of consciousness, most brain activity is unconscious. The emergence of consciousness is a slow process compared to the millisecond activity of the nerves. The

Tapio Joensuu is a retired medical doctor with a PhD in medical science. His areas of interest are neuroscience, consciousness research, stoicism, and Theosophy. He is a member of the Finnish Rosy Cross, part of Finland's theosophical movement. Web site: <www.tapiojoensuu.fi>.

information content of consciousness is minimal compared to the information content of neural networks.

Consciousness requires many simultaneous or near-simultaneous activities of the brain's neural networks. To study the freedom of the will or the absence of freedom of the will, the conditions for the existence of consciousness must be fulfilled. It should be noted that free will may be unconscious in terms of perception, mental inference, or action at the time of the occurrence of these activities.

Even without scientific support, anyone can give numerous examples of the implementation of free will. For example, under free will, one may decide to develop talents and inclinations which, with practice and repetition, can be realized, for instance, in playing a musical instrument or performing in a sport. In his book, Sapolsky does not deny the sense of free choice and free will but maintains that it is an illusion. On the other hand, Theosophy's apprehension of free will is grounded on theosophical literature and, ultimately, individual cognition and experience (which science regards as subjective).

Sapolsky presents several scientifically valid factors that restrict freedom of will and assumes that restrictions on freedom can also be found outside the cases studied (extrapolation of research data). In explaining human actions and thoughts, Sapolsky starts from a mechanical model of cause and effect, in which every phenomenon has a cause, even if it cannot always be proven. It is a question of determinism: certain causes inevitably lead to certain consequences.

The model advocated by Sapolsky does not recognize an independent actor. Free will requires self-control, intelligent thinking, planning and rational choice, and the ability to execute a decision without moment-to-moment conscious control. In particular, it should be noted that a random decision is not a decision of free choice. One must be able to justify a decision to be free. Neuroscientific research should be able to distinguish what happens in the brain during free and non-free action.

Readiness Potential and Free Will

The typical argument for the "free will illusion"-concept is that the brain decides first, and the conscious mind follows. This view is based on Libet et al.'s (1983) research on the links between EEG (electroencephalography) and the random timing of the performance of a study subject. In Libet's study, a readiness potential was observed in the brain waveform before the subject made a conscious decision (as interpreted by the researchers) to move their hand. Fried et al. (2011) conducted a similar study on the relationship between the timing of the intention to move the hand and the activation rate of individual nerves in the central frontal lobe. These areas were already known to be associated with the preparation of movement execution. As a result, the conscious intention to move the hand followed after at least 264 neurons exceeded the firing rate threshold. From the point exceeding the threshold

value, predicting when the subject would become aware of their intention to move the hand was possible.

Have these studies overruled free will? The answer is a resounding "no". And there is no need for complex and difficult-to-understand explanations. In the case of free will, the basic question is: "Do I move my hand?". If the answer is: "I do not," and the hand remains motionless, then free will has been achieved. Suppose the answer is: "Yes," and I plan to move it soon during the laboratory examination. In that case, I have set the action to occur anytime soon during the examination. In this case, the movement is not a matter of free will but of timing when I will move the hand. Because there is no significance to me when my movement will occur, the incident is the creation of a random (stochastic) event.

Notably, this cannot be classified as an event within the concept of free will since it is a stochastic event. In this case, the awareness of the intention to move comes only afterward because there is always preparatory, unconscious electric activity in the brain before the action of moving the hand. Research shows that the emergence of consciousness is slow: it requires the cooperation of several brain regions. The decision to move has been taken in the past, before the study measurements (!); the research design only examines the random timing of the moving process and the speed at which consciousness emerges. Libet's and Fried's studies are thus not about free will but the random timing of free will decisions, the unconscious preparatory processes of moving and becoming conscious of these processes.

The study by Maoz et al. (2019) is noteworthy. It shows that a meaningful choice is not associated with a readiness potential in the EEG, in contrast to a random choice. The research result, therefore, liberates the considered decision of the independent and conscious self as separate from the decision of an action taken randomly by neurons and thus returns the actor's decision-making power to their choices. In random selection, the selection is caused by the accumulation of random activations of neurons (fluctuation), indicating that the selection is random (stochastic) (Ref 4. and 5.).

Determinism and Ethics

Does believing in determinism and the consequent lack of free will make us tolerant?

Sapolsky sets out several ethical virtues that follow from abandoning free will. These include striving for equality, ending moral indignation and feelings of superiority, being lenient towards perpetrators, changing one's mindset, and wanting to understand the behavior of others. I find it satisfying that Sapolsky advocates ethical virtues and psychological balance. However, in reading Sapolsky's book, I was surprised at his train of thought and that he could even imagine that ethical and psychological virtues can be attributed to the belief in determinism!

High ethics, I have understood, emanate precisely from the conscious pursuit of these high ends. I have understood the

renunciation of moral superiority, irritation, and inequality to follow precisely from the decision to renounce them. I consider the tranquility of mind due to, for example, the fact that I can or at least try to influence its attainment. If I did not have the opportunity to change things myself, I would fall into depression, reluctance, and laziness.

In my view, the virtues Sapolsky presents arise from free will, not from determinism. Of course, Sapolsky is correct that many medical, genetic, social, psychological, and ecological factors reduce free will, but they do not eliminate it. Human beings are still free agents, at least to some extent. From a theosophical point of view, the fundamental nature of being is love, which becomes visible in the altruistic service of others. Consequently, one is ultimately free only within this framework, acting out of the core principle of love.

Summary of the Scientific Interpretations of Free Will

Whether we consider ourselves free agents or prisoners of determinism matters. If we want to stare ourselves blind to all possibilities other than the factors limiting our free will, we may end up wanting to interpret the results of scientific research as supporting only this particular possibility.

The readiness potential of EEG has received disproportionate attention in the study of free will. Confusion has been caused, among other things, by the lack of understanding of what free will means. It is not a random decision or action but an explicitly deliberate one. The autonomous agent is central to understanding free will. In Theosophy, this autonomous agent is ultimately understood as the immortal higher Self.

Free Will and Theosophy

The counterarguments against the lack of free will presented in this article are derived from scientific research and analysis of such results in the light of the philosophy of science. In other words, this is an attempt to justify free will in terms of science itself. Why is this important also from a theosophical perspective?

First, I believe that this article is in line with the second object of the Theosophical Society: to encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy, and science. Second, the question of free will and the nature of consciousness are intimately intertwined. The reigning paradigm in science is that the brain produces consciousness. When one also maintains that free will is an illusion, there is no room for a spiritual worldview such as Theosophy. This could eventually exclude Theosophy or any spiritual philosophy from mainstream culture by making them irrelevant.

The theosophical perspective of free will is based on the Higher Self, or the individual, which is immortal. On the other hand, the lower self, or personality, does not have unlimited free will since it is bound by many restrictions due to karma and skandhas, the features one brings into life in each incarnation. Still, Theosophy maintains that personality

has a freedom of choice and can appeal to the Higher Self to receive more light. To do this, one has to wake up and become a truth seeker. In a higher sense, free will is possible only after one has attained a connection to one's Higher Self and has learned to align one's will with that of the Higher Self. ✧

References

1. Libet B, Geason C A, Wright E W and Pearl D K (1983). *Time Of Conscious Intention To Act In Relation To Onset Of Cerebral Activity (Readiness-Potential): The Unconscious Initiation Of A Freely Voluntary Act. Brain.* Sep 1982; 106: 3: 623-642. Libet's original study on free will and brain processes that inspired extensive criticism and extensive further research. < https://academic.oup.com/brain/article-abstract/106/3/623/271932?redirectedFrom=fulltext&login=false.>

2. Fried I, Mukame R and Kreiman G. (2011) Internally Generated Preactivation of Single Neurons in Human Medial Frontal Cortex Predicts Volition. Neuron 2011; 69: 3: 548-562. <https://www.cell.com/neuron/fulltext/S08966273(10)010822>

3. Maoz U, Yaffe G, Koch C and Mudrik L (2019). *Neural precursors of decisions that matter – an ERP study of deliberate and arbitrary choice.* eLife *2019*; 8: e39787. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6809608/>.

4. Bogler C, Grjjièiấ B and Hayes J-D (2023). *Clarifying the nature of stochastic fluctuations and accumulation in spontaneous movement*s. Front Psychol 2023; 14: 1271180. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10602783/#abstract-a.l.b.ttitle>.

5. Schurger A, Hu B, Pak J and Roskies A L (2021). *What Is the Readiness Potential? Trends Cogn Sci*. 2021 Jul; 25(7): 558-570. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8192467/#S1title>.

6. Sapolsky, R. (2023). *Determined: Life Without Free Will*. New York: The Bodley Head London. HB ISBN 9781847925534.

Acknowledgments

I thank Antti Savinainen, PhD, for compiling and editing this article from a longer original article and translating it from Finnish to English. Moreover, I thank him for writing the Free Will and Theosophy section.

The "Higher Ego" [or Higher Self] cannot act directly on the body, as its consciousness belongs to quite another plane and planes of ideation — the "lower" self does, and its action and behaviour depend on its free will and choice as to whether it will gravitate more towards its parent ("the Father in Heaven") or the "animal" which it informs, the man of flesh.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Collected Writings, vol. XII (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1980), 366-67.

We are Powerful Creators: A Reflection on the *Pratyabhijñā-hrdayam*

KAMALA NELLEN

I WAS listening to an audio reading from a speculative fiction book about the demise of the forests of the world, when a particular passage brought to my attention something I had been feeling for a long while. The protagonist had the feeling of being jarred and wanting to escape from the current world around her when she navigated any city or town she was in. That is my shared reality. Everywhere I go there are endless cement sidewalks, buildings, and strip malls, all along both sides of a street, a few straggly saplings in a median or one tree doing its best to reach away from the sidewalk by which it was planted because it has no space for its trunk to expand. Drivers frantic, honking, dodging crazily through lanes of packed traffic. They rush ahead at the peril of everyone else on the road. I see a string of birds clinging to electric wires overhead and wonder how it is for them to sit on so much voltage.

At my computer, I unknowingly have signed up for ads just from making a search for some item; my junk mail folder has a hundred emails to delete. When I type documents, words appear before I type them, words I don't want, so I have to erase them. I cringe at the invasion of my privacy. I cringe at the hardness of the world around me. I turn off the news because all I hear are angry voices blaming others for what is.

When did I buy into this insanity? How can I create an environment I love living in?

In trying to answer these questions, I have been reading a commentary on the *Pratyabhijña-hrdayam,*[1] an ancient Yoga text. This commentary elaborates on what the *Shiva Sutras* say:

> Everything is God (Consciousness). There is nothing else. Only our understanding sees it otherwise. All these billions of manifestations of the billions of people on Earth are nothing but the One showing up as billions of worlds. The individual whose nature is this all-pervasive Consciousness (God) in a contracted state, embodies the universe in a contracted form.[2]

Ms Kamala Nellen, formerly a professional dancer, has studied Yoga philosophy for over four decades. She is currently an author, coach, and Yoga teacher, and is the author of *Working In: The Elite Athletes' Guide to Working Out from the Inside.* <kamalanellen.com>; <coachingforchampionsllc.com>.

I see that my thinking has indeed been distorted: right/wrong, good/bad, evil/divine: According to Shaivism, my aversion is simply a contracted thought form of the Absolute. I can adjust my judgement, take a more humble approach, and recognize that nothing is better or worse than anything else; what is going on is simply the play of billions of *abhasas (*projections) tangibly manifested. They may not feel in sync with my own abhasas but all are equally God. I feel myself relaxing into a state of peace as I access this elevated understanding. It takes discipline to change our habitual understanding but we can do it. We can see any experience or belief as simply the play of Consciousness; not set in cement.

There is another teaching from Shaivism that is pertinent to this exploration. This is that God's power is fivefold, including creation, sustenance, dissolution or destruction, concealment, and the bestowal of grace. Each of these powers exists in each of us. It follows that each one of us is a powerful creator, sustainer of our abhasas, and we have the power to dissolve one creation, to pause and consider whether using specific words or actions will give the result we are seeking, and then the grace of inspiration comes in to illumine our minds, compelling us into another abhasa.

The Shiva Sutras tell us each person lives in their own creation. However, the Universe also has its abhasa which created and sustains the world — with love for the whole of its creation. Human selfishness has manipulated the natural order to try to fit our colliding abhasas. In working against God's abhasa of sustaining his creation with love, we have instead through selfishness and greed caused a great deal of pain and conflict. Those who have snatched power and dominate others without concern for the impact on the whole have made our lives, and Mother Earth's, very challenging.

Most of us have maintained the illusion that we have no power over what is and that some other person will fix it. But we are each also guilty of trampling over others to get what we think we need, while at other times we allow ourselves to be victims and do nothing because we feel powerless. We wring our hands and then boil over with our frustration. Our planet is certainly reeling in disarray. We experience and see around us horrific natural- and human-made disasters. So many people are in pain, angry, and acting out in a war against what we ourselves have enabled by giving our power away — unlike Nature.

The natural world is in communion with the Divine and there is order inherent in the Divine abhasa. Each created being in the natural world does that which God gave it to do, playing its part well. Even with the obstacles humans put in place that restrict the natural order, nature has its abhasas and rolls out what is the divine will, adapting and making adjustments.

In Nature there is a lot of noise and action just as we experience in our cities. For example, in Costa Rica, the jungle is so noisy at night that it is like being in the middle of a traffic jam in New York City! The natural world is very busy but

in Nature it all works together, each living thing following its given path with a willingness to surrender as needed. The unadulterated natural world is a thriving world — there is creation and sustenance. There is death and there is concealment. There is grace — the power of the divine restores what needs to be restored, such as new growth after a fire. After earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, and fires, Nature is resilient and comes back quickly and abundantly. The natural world follows God's will and God wants his world to thrive. When fire burns, trees give up their lives; when water runs, the earth gives it a path; when sunlight and water combine, plants grow. Even when humans lay cement over the earth, it does not complain or fight back. Instead we see tiny flowers growing out of a crack in a cement sidewalk. God wants to sustain its creation.

We know that humans are driven by self-centered thought. We encroach on Nature without concern. We now know that plants send out alarms for miles and they also cry. Something is terribly wrong when we give our abhasas so much significance, making ourselves the ultimate authority, thinking we have a better plan. The impact we humans have, whether for the good or not, is immense.

Of course, the result we have gotten from our current abhasas need not continue if we embrace the wisdom of Shaivism. Understanding that what we choose to believe and think creates how we feel and what we do, why not shift into right understanding. We can alter our actions; each of us can choose that which is beneficial to ourselves and to the whole. Each of us has the fivefold powers within and each one of us can change our world when we take hold of this power.

Start in your own life. Can you embrace tolerance and patience for what is, while having the courage to take a step in a direction that will give you more peace and joy in your own life? You can use your God-given powers to create order and harmony in your own life.

The wisdom of the Pratyabhijna-hrdayam helps us shift into seeing that whatever thoughts and beliefs we may be entertaining are just a play. When we understand rightly, we can loosen our grip on what we think is so important. We do not need to let our endless abhasas run our lives. We can discipline ourselves to create new ways of living. Instead of bemoaning in despair or surging ahead without considering where we are heading, when we stop and listen to what wants to happen, we can choose to live in a way that considers the whole.

The wisdom of these ancient texts can transform our actions when we have right understanding and when we act to benefit ourselves, others, and future generations. We can use our power to create peace within us, love for others, and joy to be a part of this great adventure called life.

You know what to do. Take the wisdom of the ancient sages to guide you. Take back your fivefold power. When we realize these ancient teachings are pointers to help us thrive, we can embrace them. letting them guide us. The rest of creation will thank us for taking a right-size place

in the world. We have the fivefold power and we have the power of will.

Thought is a contraction of an Intelligence that is much vaster and wiser than us with our contracted consciousness. It behooves us to listen. Start creating that which brings you peace, love, and joy. Each one of us can impact the world for good. We have this immense power within. God is waiting and watching. ✧

Endnotes

1. *The Pratyabhijna-hrdayam* is a commentary on the Shiva Sutras (the foundational text of Kashmir Shaivism) to help us understand the concise sutras.

2. *The Splendor of Recognition*, by Swami Shantananda, p.89, Sutra 4.

I, the One Lord,
through My Play of Darkness and Light
bring forth everything in sight.
All created things are but
sparks of My Divine Light.
A part of Me, of My infinite Self,
lies hidden in all things.

Shri Shiva Rahasya

Date	Section	General Secretary, etc.	Address	Magazine	Email address
1947	Africa, East and Central	Mr Narendra M. Shah	PO Box 14525. 00800, Westlands, Nairobi, Kenya	*The Theosophical Light*	narendrashahi999@gmail.com
1909	Africa, South	Mr Desmond Chapman	31 Streatley Ave, cnr.Lothbury Ave, Auckland Park, Johannesburg PO Box 91523	*The South African Theosophist*	tsinsa.gensec@telkomsa.net
1956	Africa, West	Dr K. A. Tutu	PO Box 720, Accra, Ghana	*The West African Theosophist*	katutu@gmail.com
1929	America, Central *	Mrs Beatriz Elisena Martinez Pozas	Colonia Universitaria Norte, Calle Julio Mejia, Poligono, E-7 Mejicanos, San Salvador, El Salvador		bemapo03@hotmail.com
1920	Argentina	Mr Leandro Cesano	Rivadavia 533, San Lorenzo, Provincia de Santa Fe	*Teosofía en Argentina*	secretaria@sociedadteosofica.org.ar
1990	Asia, East and Southeast †	Mr Chong Sanne	24 New Industrial Road, #03-09 INSPACE Singapore 536210	*Newsletter*	sanne@theosophyasia.net
1895	Australia	Mr Stephen Mcdonald	Level 2, 162 Goulburn St., Surry Hills, NSW 2010	*Theosophy in Australia*	pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au
1912	Austria *	Mrs Karin Waltl	Berghäusl 28, 4160 Aigen-Schlägl	*Theosofie Adyar*	info@theosophischegesellschaft.com
2013	Bangladesh †	Mr Subrata Chowdhury	Urban Gardenia, Flat 5B, House 45A, Road 3A, Dhanmondi, R/A Dhaka 1209		house_advocates@yahoo.com
1911	Belgium	Mrs Sabine Van Osta	Place des Gueux 8, B1000 Brussels	*Le Lotus Bleu*	info@ts-belgium.be
1965	Bolivia †	Mrs Maria Luisa Cabrera	c/Valdivieso Nº 541 Cochabamba	*Revista Teosófica Boliviana*	mlcp2@hotmail.com
1920	Brazil	Mr Otávio Marhesini	SGAS Quadra 603, N. 20, CEP 70200-630 Brasilia (DF)	*Sophia*	secretaria@sociedadeteosofica.org.br
1924	Canada *	Mr Robert Béland	1120 Chemin de la Rivière, Val David, . P.Q., Canada J0T 2N0	The Light Bearer	president.atcta@gmail.com
1920	Chile *	Mr Eric Alejandro Muñoz Concha	1761, 8370055 Santiago, Región Metropolitana	*Revista Teosófica Chilena*	sociedadteosoficachile@gmail.com
1937	Colombia †	Mr Armando Motta Zapata	Carrera 6, # 56-40, Bogotá (Chapinero Alto)	*Selección Teosófica*	stsgamoz@gmail.com
1997	Costa Rica †	Mrs Cecilia Calderón	San José, 1350, Costa Rica		cmaycalderon@gmail.com
2007	Croatia ▲	Mr Darko Majstorovic	Siget 11, 10000 Zagreb, Republic of Croatia	*Teozofija*	teozofija@teozofija.net
1905	Cuba	Mr Fidel Carrazana Macías	Apartado de Correos 6365, La Habana 10600		teosocuba.1@gmail.com
1987	Dominican Rep. †	Mrs Magaly Polanco	Calle Santa Agueda 1652 Les Chalet Col San Juan Puerto Rico Apartado 23 00926		polancomagaly@yahoo.com
1888	England & Wales	Mrs Jenny Baker	50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA	*Esoterica*	president@theosoc.org.uk
1907	Finland	Mr Janne Vuononvirta	Teosofinen Seura, Vironkatu 7 C 2, Fin 00170, Helsinki	*Teosofi*	ylisihteeri@teosofinenseura.fi
1899	France	Miss Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu	4 Square Rapp, 75007 Paris	*Le Lotus Bleu*	tsfr.office@gmail.com
1902	Germany	Mrs Manuela Kaulich	Hauptstr. 39, 93138 Lappersdorf	*Adyar*	theosophie-adyar@gmx.de
1928	Greece	Mrs Erica Georgiades	25 Voukourestiou St., 106 71-Athens	*Ilisos*	info@theosophicalsociety.gr
1907	Hungary †	Mrs Adrienne Nagyiday	H-1085 Budapest, Horánszky u. 27. fsz. 10	*Teozófia*	info@teozofia.hu
1921	Iceland	Mr Haraldur Erlendsson	PO Box 1257 Ingolfsstraeti 22, 121 Reykjavik	*Gangleri*	iceland.ts@gmail.com
1891	India	Mr Pradeep H. Gohil	The Theosophical Society, Kamachha, Varanasi 221 010	*The Indian Theosophist*	theosophyvns@gmail.com
1912	Indonesia	Mr Widyatmoko Nekara	Dsn. Parelegi no. 21, RT 02/ RW 09, Desa Purwodadi, Kecamatan Purwodadi, 67163 Pasuruan, Jawa Timur	*Theosofi*	indonesia.teosofi@gmail.com
1919	Ireland *	Mrs Marie Harkness	97 Mountsandel Road, Coleraine, UK BT52 1TA		marieharkness@yahoo.co.uk

1954	Israel ▲	... Mr Abraham Oron	... PO Box 9114, Ramat-Gan, Israel 5219002	... *Or*	**oravr@netvision.net.il**
1902	Italy	... Mr Antonio Girardi	... Viale Quintino Sella, 83/E, 36100 Vicenza	... *Rivista Italiana di Teosofia*	**sti@teosofica.org**
1997	Ivory Coast *	... Mr Pierre-Magloire Kouahoh	... Yopougon, 23 Rue Princesse B. P. 3924, Abidjan 23	... *Sophia*	**pm_kouahoh@hotmail.com**
1919	Mexico	... Mrs Juana Leonor Maldonado Ruíz	... Ignacio Mariscal 126, Col. Tabacalera Mexicana, Mexico, D.F. 06030		**teosofiaenmexico@gmail.com info@sociedadteosofica.mx**
1897	Netherlands, The	... Mr Ingmar de Boer	... Tolsraat 154, 1074 VM Amsterdam	... *Theosofia*	**info@theosofie.nl**
1896	New Zealand	... Mr Richard Sell	... 18, Belvedere Street, Epsom, Auckland 1051	... *TheoSophia*	**np@theosophy.org.nz**
1913	Norway *	... Mr Audun Solberg	... Knapstadveien 8, 1823 Knapstad		**organisasjonssekretaer@teosofisksamfunn.no**
1935	Orlando ▲	... Mr Carl Metzger	... 1606 New York Ave. Orlando, Florida, 32803-1838, USA		**TheosophicalSocietyCF@gmail.com**
1948	Pakistan †	... Mushtaq Ali Jindani	... Jamshed Memorial Hall, M. A. Jinnah Road, opp. Radio Pakistan, Karachi 74200	... *The Karachi Theosophist*	**mushtaqjindani@gmail.com**
1925	Paraguay ▲	... Sr. Blas Osvaldo Añazco López	... Eligio Ayala Nro. 1.833 e/ Mayor Fleitas y Gral. Aquino Asunción		**ramafraternidadSTparaguay@hotmail.com**
1924	Peru †	... Mr Julio Pomar Calderón	... Av Republica de Portugal 152, Breña, Lima 5	... *Búsqueda*	**sede-central@sociedadteosoficaenperu.pe**
1933	Philippines, The	... Mr Charlton Romero	... Corner P. Florentino and Iba Streets, Quezon City, Manila	... *The Philippine Theosophist*	**philtheos@gmail.com**
1921	Portugal	... Mr Carlos Guerra	... Sociedade Teosófica de Portugal, Rua José Estêvão, 10 B, 1150-202 Lisboa	... *Osiris*	**geral@sociedadeteosoficadeportugal.pt**
1925	Puerto Rico †	... Mrs Magaly Polanco	... Apartado 36-1766 Correo General. San Juan, Puerto Rico 00936-1766	... *Heraldo Teosófico*	**polancomagaly@yahoo.com**
2012	Qatar ▲	... Mr Lijo Joseph	. . . Crewing Officer, Teyseer Services Company P.O. Box 2431, Doha		**qatarblavatskylodge@yahoo.com**
2013	Russia *	... Mr Svyatoslav Lipsky	... Apartment 131, House 1135, Zelenograd, Moscow	. . . *Teosoficheskoe Obozrenie* (The Theosophical Review)	**secretary@ts-russia.org**
1910	Scotland *	... Mr Gary Kidgell	... Christine Gear 32 Newmains Road Kirkliston Edinburgh EH29 9AL	... *Circles*	**garykidgell@hotmail.com**
1992	Slovenia *	... Mrs Irena Primc	... Kajuhova UI 9, 3000 Celje	... *Teozofska Misel*	**irenaprimc3@gmail.com**
1921	Spain	... Mrs Angels Torra Buron	... Av. Vall d'or, 85-87 08197 - Valldoreix(Spain)	... *Sophia*	**presidencia@sociedadteosofica.es**
1926	Sri Lanka †	... Mr D. A. L. Wanigasekera	... 146 Anderson Rd, Dehiwala,	... *The Sri Lanka Theosophist*	**dumindawanigasekera@gmail.com**
1895	Sweden	... Mrs Birgitta Skarbo	... Karla Plan 5 B, 11460 Stockholm	... *Tidlös Visdom*	**teosofiska.samfundet.adyar@telia.com**
1910	Switzerland †	... Mr Andrea Biasca-Caroni	... Via Collina 19, 6612 Ascona, CH-6612	... *The Lotus*	**info@teosofia.ch**
1997	Togo *	... Mr Kouma Dakey	... S.O., A.R.T.T., BP 76, Adeta		
2013	Ukraine	... Mrs Svitlana Gavrylenko	... Office 3, 7-A Zhylianska St., Kiev 01033	... *Svitoch*	**org@theosophy.in.ua**
1886	USA	... Mr Douglas Keene	... PO Box 270, Wheaton, IL 60187-0270	... *The Quest*	**info@theosophical.org**
1925	Uruguay *	... Mr Ramón García	... Javier Barrios Amorín 1085, Casilla de Correos 1553, Montevideo		**st.uruguay@gmail.com**
1925	Venezuela †	... Mrs Nelly Nouel	... Romualda a Socarrás, Edif. de Oro Piso 12, Apto. 122 – Caracas		**nellynouel5@gmail.com**

Date refers to the date of formation * *Regional Association* † *Presidential Agency* ▲ *Lodge attached to Adyar*

The Council of the European Federation of National Societies: *Chair:* Mrs Sabine Van Osta, Place des Gueux 8, B1000 Brussels. **sabinevanosta.be@gmail.com**
Inter-American Theosophical Federation: *President:* Mr Enrique Reig, And. Nte 17 Villa Las Americas, San Andres, Cholula, Puebla, Mexico. **enriquereig@hotmail.com, fti.secretary@gmail.com**
Indo-Pacific Theosophical Federation: *President:* Mr Gerard Brennan, 42 Melbourne Street, Concord, 2137, Sydney, Australia. **president@ipf-ts.org**
Pan-African Theosophical Federation: *Chairman:* Mr Navin B. Shah, P.O. Box 14804.00800, Nairobi, Kenya. **<navinmeera@hotmail.com>.** Phone no.: +254 733-935525.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: EURO (€) AND RUPEE (₹) RATES

(Effective from 1 October 2024)

COUNTRY	THE THEOSOPHIST				ADYAR NEWSLETTER			
	ANNUAL		5 YEARS		ANNUAL		5 YEARS	
	Surface Mail	Air Mail	Surface Mail	Air Mail	Surface Mail	Air Mail	Surface Mail	Air Mail
India	₹ 100	-	₹ 450	-	₹ 25	-	₹ 100	-
North America, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, South Korea, European Union and other Non-Eastern European countries; the Middle East, and Pacific Islands.	-	€ 35	-	€ 170	-	€ 10	-	€ 45
All other Asian countries and Africa.	-	€ 15	-	€ 70	-	€ 5	-	€ 20
Russia, Poland, Eastern Europe, and CIS (former USSR States), Central and South America.	-	€ 25	-	€ 115	-	€ 5	-	€ 20

For Subscription contact: **E-mail: tphindia@gmail.com; Tel: (91-44) 2446-6613; Cell: (91) 8610365836**

From outside India pay directly through: **<editionsadyar.com>**

THE THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE, ADYAR, CHENNAI 600 020, INDIA

Some issues of *The Theosophist* are now available online and can be read and/or downloaded from: <ts-adyar.org/magazines.html>

Edited by Mr Tim Boyd, 'Olcott Bungalow', The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai (TS),
Published by Mr S. Harihara Raghavan, 'Arundale House', TS, and Printed by Mr V. Gopalan, 'Chit Sabha', TS, at the
Vasanta Press, TS, Besant Garden, Besant Avenue, Adyar, Chennai (Madras) 600 020, India, on behalf of the President, The Theosophical Society.