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Cover: "The Theosophical Society, 150 years, 1875-2025", sacred geometry Artwork by artist and poet Joma Sipe. Panel in gold ink and crystals on black canvas, 90 x 70 cm, 2025 (Illuminated Version). **<www.jomasipe.com>** (See text corresponding to this image on p. 9 of this issue.)

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Founded 17 November 1875

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

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

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

Next Steps — II

TIM BOYD

RATHER than speak in a theoretical manner, I prefer to address the Next Steps from the point of view of my own experience and that of my co-workers at Adyar. Let me give you two quotes that might season our conversation. The first is from the Mahatma Letters: "We *advise* — never *order*. But we *do* influence individuals."

The second quote is from Rumi: "Like a fresh idea in an artist's mind, you fashion things before they come into being." I would like to talk about how our next steps relate to the experience of connecting with those forms that have been fashioned, which have yet to come into being, which are awaiting our cooperation to appear. What I would really like to share with you is some thoughts on the "How to . . ." of this process.

In *The Key to Theosophy* H. P. Blavatsky says that the TS was founded "to make it known that such a thing as Theosophy exists". It is an idea that I used to think was rather strange. What is the power in simply making it known that something exists? Over time it has become clearer to me that there is a transformative power inherent in the Ageless Wisdom, and that connecting with it, on any level, has the capacity to inhabit and transform us. The "how-to" part of transformation is often where we find ourselves casting around for advice and direction.

Outside of my office in Adyar there is a sign originally placed there by Annie Besant, it says: "Work for Adyar, the Masters' Home". It is a wonderful reminder of the nature of the place. In all that we have tried to do at Adyar, we have worked with a "Master plan". Saying such a thing conjures up images of graphs, diagrams, five-year plans, and executive planning sessions, but that is not what I mean. It was not that kind of a plan. Initially our "plan" was not for combinations of specific projects or improvements. Our thinking was that behind the TS stand those who brought it into being. Before it came into the world it was one of the "fresh ideas" in the mind of the Masters. It was the "Master" part of the plan that was the focus of our attention and our efforts. The question for us was: How do we focus our energies and intention to connect with that which is already "fashioned", but awaiting an opening to bring it into being?

Along that line, let us share a little story. A person once came to a great spiritual master to ask a question: "Master, what

Talk delivered at the 12th World Congress of the TS, Adyar, held in Vancouver, Canada, on 25 July 2025.

can I do to help you?" The question was brief. The answer was briefer: "What can you do?" Our attempt to answer that question was the starting point for what we have been trying to do at Adyar. It is also a starting point for meaningful and engaged spiritual living. Twelve years ago, when our contribution to the work began, faced with the conditions of the "Masters' home", it became clear that maybe Adyar was not yet ready to be declared the energetic center for the planet Earth, but there were things within our reach that could be addressed. There were people living at Adyar, many of whom had devoted themselves to this work over a lifetime. Twelve years ago, it was a simple fact that, when it rained, 80 or 90 percent of the people who were living there had to get a bucket to catch the rain dripping inside of their homes. Our response? We fixed the leaks. It was not an "aha!" moment, or some profound spiritual awakening. It was our engagement in a simple process of "What can I do?" I can fix leaks. It was not about luxury. It was about a fundamental regard for one another.

Our campus was in dire need of attention. We asked ourselves the question: if someone were to invite a great person to visit, would they welcome them with dishes in the sink, with the floor unswept, with the bed unmade? As soon as the idea of Adyar as a home to a sacred presence becomes rooted in your thinking, you see things differently. Care, cleanliness, beauty, restoration, and mutual concern for each other became our priorities. As we worked with the obvious, we started to find that other opportunities, previously unseen, presented themselves. The question always was: "What can I do?"

Soon we started thinking about reenvisioning the way that some of our existing activities function. Just one example: As theosophists we have a love, respect, and concern for *all* life. Part of that reflected itself in the work of the Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary (BMAD) on the TS Adyar campus. In Chennai, as in the rest of India, there are many stray animals who encounter injuries, disease, and other physical trauma. Years ago, a dispensary was started to care for them, but over time that effort had declined. What remained was well-meaning theosophists with no training in veterinary medicine, unskillfully trying to do something that we thought of as good. As we focused our attention on BMAD, before long I was introduced to a young man, twenty-five years old. He was passionate about animal care, but had never run a clinic. As we talked it became clear that his commitment and clarity could attract what was needed to raise the level of the clinic. We decided to give him a try. As it turned out, he was brilliant! His organizational skills and his vision for animal care was exceptional. That activity, which was dying, is now, without question, one of the best activities of its type in southern India. The person required to meet the need appeared. The things that had been fashioned that had not yet come into being started to appear. They dropped in as various different ideas that became ensouled by people.

All across the Adyar campus similar things were happening. Our Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School was founded more than 130 years ago by our first international President, Colonel Olcott. One day while sitting by the Adyar River he encountered a group of kids who should have been in school. When he asked why they were not, he discovered that, because of their status in India's caste system, they were of a group of people who were not allowed to be educated. There was no school anywhere for them. Olcott being Olcott, founded the school specifically for these kids who had been denied any access to education. But the school was at a crisis point. Which way do we go? What can we do? We struggled, we thought, we worked, we tried. Before long another remarkable person was directed to our doorstep, who took on this project and has enlivened every aspect of the school.

We started to reenvision things we were already doing. It started to mount. The TS Archives were housed in the Headquarters building. In 2015 Chennai experienced historic flooding. The waters in the Adyar River, bordering the Headquarters Building, quickly rose. As a precaution we had to remove everything from the archives and bring it upstairs to the President's office. If the water had risen another couple of inches, the historical records of the TS would have been destroyed. So, what could we do? We repurposed a space in our Adyar Library and Research Center, away from the river, and created a climate-controlled, modern archives. That arrangement was a commonsense response to changing weather conditions. But there were other issues we had to first see, then address. Over the years we had adopted a fortress mentality with our archives although there were people around the world asking for access to our archival material. Because in our past experience not all of them had portrayed the TS, or its leaders, in the way we preferred, we had become distrustful and had closed our doors to scholars. The history of the Theosophical Society pervades the history of modern India. In our archives we have a wealth of material on Gandhi, Annie Besant, Rabindranath Tagore, as well as artists, spiritual icons, and leaders of movements in places around the world. Our response was to develop policies, not to hide from the world, but to give access to those scholars who found it sufficiently meaningful that they wanted to take their time and their research funds to explore the TS's varied history. Now there is not a day that goes by without authors, scholars, and academics around the world consulting our archives to write papers, dissertations, and books, related to the history of the TS and its impact on the world.

I am not going to walk you through the list because it is constantly growing. But many of these things initially were clearly impossible for us to do. A number of crises of a substantial nature have also arisen that challenged aspects of the organization's function. In such situations what do you do? You do everything that

you can, yet there are times when whatever we can do is not enough. In all such cases invariably, a moment has come where from some unexpected direction some person appears as an answer to the need. It happens time and time again, to the point where it becomes an expectation. We live in a responsive universe and the agents and agencies of the universe respond to need that is genuine. So, part of the process we have engaged in is the creation of ever-deepening levels of need, and the response has been continuous.

Traveling and visiting with members around the world, I am asked a variety of questions. One that I have been asked is: "Have you ever received a letter from the Masters?" Because the questioner was looking to hear about a piece of paper, some physical sign of contact, my answer would be some variation of "No, I never got one of those letters. At least not yet. But I haven't checked my mailbox today!" Today I answer that question very differently, because at this point my experience and my way of seeing has shifted. Asked if I ever received a letter from the Masters, today my answer would be not only "Yes", but "Yes, I have received many. But none of them was on a piece of paper." There was no red or blue ink involved in my reception, but I have received letters, that I have been able to read, that even now are being written. Those letters have come in the form of people — many of them are sitting here in this hall.

They are people precipitated into our midst who came in answer to needs within this Theosophical Movement. Planted in the right soil, given the necessary resources, I have watched how they have grown in ways that I am sure they could not have imagined. They have been the avenue through which things that have been fashioned before they come into being have appeared in the world.

My mother is 106 years old. Sometimes I have to remind myself of what has she seen in her lifetime. She was born at the end of World War I, in the Great Depression she was in college, she was an adult in World War II. She has seen people landing on the moon, the rise of computer culture and social media, the Civil Rights movement in the US and all that came before and after it. At 106, your siblings, every person that you grew up with, the vast majority of your relatives and associates are gone. Recently she and I were watching some gloomy news report on television. We turned it off and were talking. I asked her: "Mom, with all of this depressing news, are you hopeful for the future?" If I had been asked, I would have needed to give it a moment's thought. Of course, I would say "yes", but as more of a "long-range" hopefulness. Her response was immediate: "Yes, I'm hopeful." My next question was, "Why?" Again her answer was immediate: "Because always there are positive people appearing in the world." Having seen all that she has seen, her experience of more than a century tells her this is a hopeful time, because the positive people suited to this moment's need will always appear.

If we are looking for some instructions on a piece of paper, we are missing the point. Our dependence on physicalized expressions blinds us to the all-important activity going on in our midst. What we are waiting for is to *be* that letter, to be guided by our own intention and intuition to that place where we find ourselves planted, taking root, and growing into the expression of a waiting possibility. At this point I have seen it time after time. We can expect it. Things may look challenging, dark, but it is coming. The mail has not been delivered yet.

(Concluded)

Cover Image Description

I AM so honored to be part of the amazing celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Theosophical Society with the design of the cover of this issue of *The Theosophist*.

The whole picture is in the form of an arch and at the center is the seal and motto of the Theosophical Society, "There is No Religion Higher than Truth", including the Ankh and the Aum. Above it is the photo of H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), from her first book, *Isis Unveiled*. Also from this book, the main Isis Goddess figure seated on a sphinx, with a long veil and holding a tyet (also known as the girdle of Isis) has been used, at the bottom left and right of the picture. The figure of "Adonai", also from *Isis*, appears at the top left and right corners in a six-point star.

At bottom center of the picture is HPB's personal signet ring, with her astrological and Kabbalistic signs, representing Leo, Virgo, the Hebrew letter "shin", the swastika, the coronet of the Countess, the Ouroboros, the double triangle or Solomon´s Seal, and the letters "EB", standing for Elena Blavatsky.

The Tetraktys of Pythagoras occurs within an ouroboros, a little above HPB's head on both sides, with the ten dots replaced by the Tetragrammaton, the four-letter Hebrew name of God.

Above the Tetraktys on both sides are the letter "A", for Alpha (without the Omega, implying that the Theosophical Society has no end. Also, the Sanskrit word "SAT", used by HPB on her signet ring, are shown on the outer side of each Tetraktys.

Joma Sipe, cover image artist and poet.
(See cover caption on p. 3 of this issue)

150 Years of Theosophy

MICHAEL GOMES

IT started so casually. A small group of people meeting on a late summer evening in New York City in September 1875. They had gathered to hear George Henry Felt talk about "The Lost Canon of Proportion of the Egyptians", the subject of a book he was hoping to raise subscribers for. Some in attendance found it dull. "A dry dissertation on geometry and ancient mathematics" was how one of those present remembered it.[1] When someone in the audience listed some of the achievements of the ancients and queried if the speaker had achieved this, Felt replied that he had managed to make visible the creatures of the elements through chemical means by the formula of the ancients. Col. Henry S. Olcott, who was present, saw an opportunity and wrote a note to Mme H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), who was seated across the room, suggesting the formation of a society to study this sort of thing. She nodded her assent, and he rose and proposed the suggested organization.

The next day, 8 September, sixteen people gave in their names in support of the proposed endeavor. At the second meeting on 13 September, the name of the Theosophical Society (TS) was decided on, and by the third meeting the by-laws were read out. At the 30 October meeting, the officers were elected, with Olcott as President and Blavatsky as Corresponding Secretary. The Preamble to the by-laws defined the organization as follows:

> **The title of the Theosophical Society explains the objects and desires of its founders: they seek "to obtain knowledge of the nature and attributes of the Supreme Power and of the higher spirits *by the aid of physical processes*."**[2]

On the evening of 17 November, Olcott gave his inaugural address as President of the Theosophical Society and this date is usually given as its foundation but, as we have seen, its organization was in process long before this. The speaker who inspired the founding of the Society, though he had promised much, delivered nothing, and the group floundered. When Olcott gave his anniversary address on 4 October 1876 (not 17 November), there was little of encouragement to report, and after the meeting of 15 November 1876, the Theosophical Society ceased holding meetings and the rented hall was given up due to diminishing attendance, and there are no further entries in its Minute Book, and the Society's business was carried on by the Council.

Michael Gomes is Director of the Emily Sellon Memorial Library in New York City. He was presented with the Subba Row Medal this year at the Vancouver Congress for his body of work on Theosophy and HPB.

During this formative period when the TS was being organized, HPB had left the city and gone to upstate New York, where she began work on her first book, *Isis Unveiled*, and it is through it, published in 1877, that the idea of the Theosophical Society circulated, for it was dedicated to the TS. *Isis* is little read by theosophists today; it requires too much of a commitment and mental acuity, but it was well known in the 19th century by members and non-members alike. It is the book that *The Secret Doctrine* cites the most, along with the Bible and Puranas. Having had to read the book a number of times and abridge it for publication, I can sum it up for you: "There is a road, steep and thorny, beset with perils of every kind — but yet a road; and it leads to the Heart of the Universe." Her thesis is that there was an anciently universal wisdom religion common to all humanity; modern religions are distorted echoes of this and can only be understood using the keys that this Wisdom Tradition supplies. But unlike previous attempts at reconstructing this tradition, she reveals that its practitioners are still in the world and can be approached.

With nothing happening in America, Olcott and Blavatsky decided to leave for India at the end of 1878. It came about this way: Olcott says that one night after their work on *Isis Unveiled* (this must be on the page proofs of the book in the summer of 1877), he was sitting in his bedroom having a cigar when out of the corner of his eye he saw the glimmer of a tall figure in white. It was his teacher, and their conversation provided the impetus for Olcott to consider going to India. He does not give the date but on 16 July 1877, the Council of the TS met for the only time that year to vote to allow the President to transfer the headquarters of the TS to any country he may at the time be residing in. Before leaving, the figure unwound his turban and left it with Olcott as proof of the reality of the encounter. The turban can still be seen at the Headquarters at Adyar during the annual International Convention. It is in remarkably good condition for a piece of fabric from 150 years ago.

Olcott and Blavatsky arrived in India on 17 February 1879. Olcott says that when they landed, he touched the ground. He noted in his diary: "The long awaited moment comes at last, and I am face to face with my spiritual kinsmen." Olcott would make India his home for the rest of his life and would die at Adyar on 17 February 1907. The years ahead were ones of dynamic growth. By 1885 there were over 100 branches throughout India and Sri Lanka, with only half a dozen in the rest of the world. With this expansion came controversy, which the Society managed to navigate safely, but led to HPB's leaving India in 1885 never to return.

The publication of A. P. Sinnett's *The Occult World* (1881) with its opening words, "There is a school of Philosophy still in existence of which modern culture has lost sight", and its sequel, *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883), the adherence of public figures such as Annie Besant,and the appearance of Blavatsky's *Secret*

Doctrine, caught the public's attention in the West. It would usher in a new era of social activism.

A few months before the publication of *The Secret Doctrine* at the end of 1888, Mme Blavatsky issued a memorandum stating her intention to activate an Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society, where members would commit themselves to live "a clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect, and a brotherliness for one's co-disciple", that would lead them on the path to the ashram of the Masters. Her reason for this was that TS had "proved a dead failure on all those points which rank foremost among the objects of its original establishment".[3] It had failed to form the required nucleus. And she provided a letter from the Masters stating that the Society was now "a soulless corpse. . . . Out of the three objects the second alone is attended to."[4]

Olcott felt that this move was a violation of the Society's neutrality by showing preference for one school of thought over another. He left Adyar by the next steamer to deal with the situation personally in London. Off the Italian port of Brindisi, he returned to his cabin to find a letter from the Master. He was advised to leave the internal work to her, while he dealt with the external and administrative. This is a difficult letter to dismiss as part of a preplanned fraud for it references his mood moments before: "Just now, on deck, your thoughts about her [HPB] were dark and sinful, and so I find the moment a fitting one to put you on your guard."[5]

The movement's emphasis shifted to character building as a means of spiritual development and a way of effecting social change. The Doctrine of the Eye, posited as "head learning", was contrasted with the Doctrine of the Heart, which would give soul wisdom. In spite of the *entente cordiale* between Blavatsky and Olcott, tensions continued to develop, till by 1890 he was offering to resign as president of the Society in favor of her assuming the office, and she countering resignation if he did this. HPB's death on 8 May 1891, solved a lot of problems and created new ones.

Soon after her passing, charges were brought against W. Q. Judge, one of the three main Founders of the TS, who was General Secretary of the American Section, and Vice President of the Society, for using the names and handwritings of the Masters. A judicial inquiry was called in London to take evidence and advise the President. It was decided that any statement by the committee, one way or the other, would seriously jeopardize the neutrality of the Society in matters of belief and the case was tabled. Documents collected for the inquiry were leaked to the London press, which produced a series of sensational articles. During the December 1894 Annual Convention at Adyar, the Indian Section passed a resolution asking for Judge's removal as Vice President. The European Section would take up the matter at their convention of July 1895. If passed, the outcome was guaranteed.

At its April 1895 Annual Convention, the Theosophical Society in America

declared its autonomy from the Adyar International Headquarters and not subject to its jurisdiction. Olcott responded by cancelling the charter of the American Section and its Lodges, and the membership of those who had voted for such action. Judge died the next year at the age of 44. The movement he had created was then led by Katherine Tingley, who moved its headquarters to Point Loma, California, where it flourished into the 1940s. Col. Olcott died on 17 February 1907, at Adyar, and Annie Besant was elected as President by a majority.

Olcott had rechartered the American Section in 1895, and several lecturers from the English Section toured across the country in an effort to revive the Section. Annie Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater were particularly well received. Leadbeater was pressured to resign for advocating masturbation to boys as a prophylactic while in America. But after being elected as President in 1907, Besant readmitted Leadbeater a year later. This caused some furor and a number of members, especially in England, resigned, including G. R. S. Mead.

Leadbeater, now resident at Adyar, discovered a scrawny Hindu boy whom he predicted would become the vehicle of a great teacher. Jiddu Krishnamurti's family moved into the Adyar compound, and he was subjected to a rigorous regimen of nutrition and exercise. As part of his instructions Krishnamurti produced *At the Feet of the Master*, a small book of guidance on approaching the spiritual life. It was enormously popular and circulated the ideas of the Besant-Leadbeater period.

In 1929, at a gathering in Holland, Krishnamurti dissolved the Order of the Star in the East that had been started to prepare the world for the coming world teacher, telling his audience that "Truth is a pathless land" which no individual or organization could provide. He continued to lecture around the world for almost sixty years, establishing educational centers in India, England, and America.

The effectiveness of Theosophy's message was tested by two world wars, a financial depression, and new cultural and social revolutions. After Annie Besant's death in 1933, her long presidency was followed by two of her stalwarts, Englishman George Arundale, who had worked with her at Benares Central Hindu College, and C. Jinarajadasa, a Sri Lankan pupil of Leadbeater's, who was a popular lecturer and writer for the Society. They were succeeded by N. Sri Ram, another colleague of Annie Besant and its first Indian president, who carried the Society into the 1950s and 1960s.

For over thirty years, Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater had been a source of guidance for the Theosophical Society. Without their leadership members had to place the Society on a new footing, and it began a new era, moving increasingly away from outer authorities to more on inner reliance. This can be seen by the presidents that succeeded Sri Ram: John Coats, an Englishman, who was elected president after Sri Ram's death in 1973, and Radha Burnier, Sri Ram's daughter,

after John Coats', death in 1980. She would become the longest serving president of the TS — thirty-three years. Her presidency would see the return of Krishnamurti to the Adyar Headquarters, a very symbolic event in the eyes of theosophists, and an increased emphasis on the responsibility of members in working out their salvation with diligence.

After Radha Burnier's death in 2013, members elected Tim Boyd, President of the American Section, as International President. Since Tim Boyd is still with us, I defer writing about him to actually having the chance to interview him in person and hear what he has to say about some of the challenges and achievements of his presidency.[6]

Reviewing these 150 years of Theosophy, we can see certain aspects arise that help define a period. Its original impetus in 1875 was a move to investigate the unexplored mysteries of Nature and powers latent in the individual, so one could provide verification and not mere acceptance. Yet this was not enough to form a nucleus around. *Isis Unveiled* was the first esoteric text to reorient the Western gaze to the East, especially India. If ancient Egypt was the nurse of humanity, India was its cradle. This attitude was reinforced in one of the earliest letters received in India from the Mahatmas: **"Tracing our lineage through the vicissitudes of Indian civilization to a remote past, we have a love for our motherland so deep and passionate, that it has survived even the broadening and cosmopolitanizing effect of our studies in the hidden laws of Nature."** Further in the letter, the writer remarks: **"We are convinced that the degradation of India is largely due to the suffocation of her ancient spirituality; and that, whatever helps restore that higher standard of thought and morals must be a regenerating national force."**[7] In India, the Theosophical Society developed its objects, much as they still stand:

First **— To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed or color.**

Second **— To promote the study of Aryan and other Eastern literature, religions and sciences and vindicate its importance.**

Third **— To investigate the hidden mysteries of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.**

Further identification with India came when Annie Besant sold her home in London and moved to Benares (Varanasi). She became a devoted Indophile, adopting Indian dress and customs. N. Sri Ram, who worked with her, felt that "She saw the ideal behind the actual, even when the actual had deteriorated."[8] Her first effort in India was in the field of education, feeling that Indian students should be taught according to their ancient ideals. She started the Central Hindu College to fulfil this goal. It became the basis of the present Benares Hindu University. She moved into Indian politics, starting numerous Home Rule Leagues advocating for greater rights for Indians. She was in-

terned by the British government as a threat to British stability in India. And, of course, she introduced the world to J. Krishnamurti. It is doubtful that any of these attempts developed the way she wanted.

After Besant's death, Krishnamurti, groomed to be the World Teacher, was evicted from the headquarters at Adyar. As he remarked, "I never left the Theosophical Society, the Theosophical Society left me." He continued lecturing and writing, making his home in Ojai, California, where he would die in 1986 at the age of 90. He actively advocated for Radha Burnier to become president of the Theosophical Society, and when she was so elected, he visited the Society's headquarters for the first time since the 1930s. Constantly questioning our assumptions about the spiritual life, Krishnamurti's voice would have been an asset to the TS, especially at a time when, as Rohit Mehta observed: **"We are . . . entering a psychological phase in the understanding of Theosophy. In this age a psychological approach and presentation of Theosophy have become imperative. Man's problems have become greatly intensified at the psychological level. He wants to know whether Theosophy can help him deal with these problems."**[9]

In 1975, hundreds of theosophists from all around the world gathered in New York to commemorate the Society's centenary. There was a wave of expectancy. Many felt that new guidance would be given, and its intention fulfilled. Had this not been the promise offered to us by its founders? But though many met, and much discussion occurred, no new impetus was given. No message from the Mahatmas came.

In this context, Boris de Zirkoff, the compiler of the *Blavatsky Collected Writings* series, in his presentation at the 1975 New York gathering, while warning of the dangers of commercialism and psychism for the movement, articulated the way ahead. **"There is a hidden wisdom in the world, a wisdom not apparent to the eyes of men. There is a secret path which leads to that wisdom, and it starts at the very root of your own heart. There is a secret method of living, a course of life, a code of conduct, which provides the necessary conditions for treading that path, and enables one to reach the hidden wisdom and make it their own.**

"These three: the hidden wisdom to be attained, the path which leads thereto, and the method of living — are the main keynotes of the message which HPB proclaimed to the world."[10]

Aspiring to these ideals, we would keep that "link" that HPB told us about, unbroken. But if we would not pursue these directives in an exoteric way, we must keep before us the esoteric aspect.

Annie Besant, after her election as President of the TS in 1907, was asked about judging the Society's success by external standards such as attendance and membership numbers. Her answer is telling, and I close with her words, as exemplifying the difference between the exoteric and esoteric approach, one,

results driven, the other intent orientated. **"You cannot measure the growth of a society merely by the number of people that come into it, but the spread of the ideas for which it stands. Now compare the world of 1875 with the world of thought today in regard to all religious, intellectual and scientific questions, and you will find a great revolution has taken place. The ideas that in 1875 were thought absurd and ridiculous are now becoming commonplace amongst all well-informed people. The growth of Theosophy — and that to me is the most important part of our work — is very great; its ideas are spreading everywhere and are being echoed everywhere."** [11]

And this was in 1907. How far we have come since that time! Theosophy's ideals of universal brotherhood, regardless of race, creed, caste, sex or color, have become part of the moral compass of our time; it spurred an appreciation of Eastern religions, and percolated through the art, music, and literature of the twentieth century, producing a cast of colorful figures along the way who are uniquely theosophical and still manage to captivate and inspire. ✧

Endnotes

1. Henry J. Newton, quoted in "Theosophy's Origin Exposed", *The New York Herald*, 10 November 1895, Sec 2, p. 6.

2. *Preamble and By-Laws of the Theosophical Society* (New York: Theosophical Society, 1875), p. 5.

3. H. P. Blavatsky, "Preliminary Memorandum", *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 12 (Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 1980), p. 489.

4. *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, First Series (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1975), Letter 47, p. 101. (Sixth Edn, 1988, Letter 60.)

5. *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, First Series (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1975), Letter 19, p. 45. HPB was in London at the time.

6. Tim Boyd was elected International President of the Theosophical Society in 2014 and is in the midst of his second term in the office. He has stressed practical applications of Theosophy and under his administration the Adyar headquarters has become an active center emphasizing social, cultural and educational programs.

7. First Letter of KH to A. O. Hume, 1st Nov. 1880, Appendix I, *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, edited by Vicente Hao Chin, Jr. (Manila: TPH, 1993), p. 469.

8. N. Sri Ram, "The Other India", in *In Honour of Annie Besant: Lectures by Eminent Persons, 1952–88* (Varanasi: Indian Section, Theosophical Society, 1990), p. 287.

9. Cited by Dudley Gower in his *The Reign of the Spirit*, the Blavatsky Lecture for 1957 (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1957), p. 25.

10. Boris de Zirkoff, "The Dream that Never Dies", *The Theosophist*, vol. 97 (January 1976), pp. 217–18.

11. Besant, *Theosophical Lectures and Answers to Theosophical Questions* (Chicago: The Rajput Press, 1907), pp. 109–110.

Continuing the Legacy: Our Work for the Future

PABLO SENDER

THIS year marks the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Theosophical Society — a milestone well worth celebrating. Not many modern organizations can claim an unbroken existence of a century and a half. But beyond the historical achievement lies a deeper, more esoteric significance to this date.

In *The Mahatma Letters*, Master KH refers to a cyclical "centennial attempt" in which the Mahatmas make a concerted effort "to open the eyes of the blind world"[1] and to "help on the spiritual progress of Humanity in a marked and definite way."[2] According to these teachings, such efforts occur during the last quarter of each century. The founding of the TS in 1875 represented the centennial effort for the nineteenth century.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, H. P. Blavatsky explained that this centennial effort was a recurring rule among the Mahatmas, suggesting that humanity could expect a "new torch-bearer of Truth"[3] during the final decades of the twentieth century. Annie Besant, however, later stated that while Blavatsky was referring to the general rule, circumstances surrounding the twentieth century were exceptional. Besant maintained that, unbeknownst to those outside the Masters' circle at the time, a different plan had been set in motion — one centered on J. Krishnamurti as the vehicle of a special work. Consequently, no new messenger should be expected to appear in 1975. This deviation from the customary centennial effort was due to the closing of major cosmic and historical cycles toward the end of the nineteenth century, including the first 5,000 years of the Kali Yuga and the transition from the Piscean to the Aquarian age.

In retrospect, Besant's insight appears to have been correct. No outstanding figure emerged toward the end of the twentieth century bearing a fresh message from the Masters. There was, however, a noticeable upsurge in spiritual interest and a popularization of esoteric ideas under the broad banner of the "New Age" movement. Although much of this current has been superficial and self-centered, it nonetheless helped to familiarize the public — at least in terminology — with theosophical concepts.

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This article is based on a talk given at the Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai, on November 17, 2024.

References to karma, reincarnation, the aura, the evolution of consciousness and so on became commonplace in popular culture, appearing in television programs, newspapers, and literature. While such widespread awareness of spiritual teachings is seldom accompanied by a deep understanding of them, it remains valuable that these ideas have entered the cultural vocabulary.

Since the 1970s, another significant development has occurred within academic circles. Several universities have established chairs and research programs in what is termed "Western Esotericism", providing scholarly study of esoteric traditions, including Theosophy. This interest has been primarily historical and interpretative rather than spiritual, but it nonetheless marks an important recognition of Theosophy's influence on modern culture and its enduring relevance. This November marks the midpoint of the centennial cycle for the twenty-first century. In other words, fifty years remain before the next great effort takes place around 2075.

H. P. Blavatsky made it clear that the TS's ability to participate in such an effort depends upon whether it "lives true to its mission, to its original impulses".[4] It is therefore timely to reflect — both individually and collectively — on how we might prepare ourselves and the Society to serve as effective channels or instruments for the Masters' forthcoming work.

When we examine the purposes of the TS, we can distinguish between what might be called its *exoteric* and *esoteric* missions. The exoteric aspect is clearly expressed in the Society's three Objects, which outline its outward work in the world. Yet, behind these declared aims lie deeper, esoteric purposes for which the Society was founded. One of them, which Annie Besant often emphasized, is that the TS was established to assist in the inception of a new evolutionary cycle — the emergence of what is termed the Sixth Sub-Race.[5] This refers to the birth of a new civilization, characterized by a higher mode of thought, feeling, and collective life. Such a change, by its very nature, unfolds slowly. The seeds of this transformation are already being sown, though its influence will not become prominent for several centuries.

In the present cycle, associated with the Fifth Sub-Race, competition is the prevailing law. Evolution in this closing phase took place through struggle — through market competition, rivalry, and the survival of the fittest. The lower mind, or *manas*, in its concrete aspect, dominated the development of the Fifth Sub-Race. Hence the extraordinary growth of science and technology, and the intellectualization of nearly all fields of inquiry. Even philosophy, once regarded as a sacred discipline and a way of life, is now largely treated as an abstract and purely intellectual pursuit.

The next evolutionary cycle — the Sixth Sub-Race — will be characterized by cooperation rather than competition, and by the predominance of intuition over the lower mind. It is important, however, to clarify what is meant by *intuition*. This is not the instinctive or emotional "gut feeling" often called intuition in ordinary

speech, which belongs to the realm of the psychic. The intuition referred to in theosophical teaching is a *spiritual intuition* — the direct perception of spiritual truths arising from the activity of *Buddhi*, the faculty of spiritual discernment and wisdom.

Annie Besant emphasized that the TS was founded to help prepare humanity for this new, more spiritual mode of consciousness. Even the organizational structure of our Society was designed to foster the qualities required for the coming civilization. For example, the TS has no gurus or absolute authorities; instead, it is composed of Lodges or Groups in which members must cooperate, share responsibility, and arrive at decisions collectively. This cooperative form of governance is a deliberate training ground for the future society of the Sixth Sub-Race — an age in which leaders will no longer stand above the rest as commanding forces, but will work among their peers, inspiring collaboration and unity of purpose.

The principle of *freedom of thought* likewise is calculated to foster the awakening of intuition. The lower mind thrives when gathering and systematizing concepts, often clinging to them as absolute truths. Intuition, by contrast, needs the perception of wholeness and interrelation; it can only unfold in an atmosphere of intellectual and spiritual freedom — where inquiry is encouraged, diverse viewpoints are considered, and truth is sought through direct insight rather than dogmatic assertion.

Because humanity as a whole is not yet capable of operating from this higher perspective, these very principles sometimes make the TS appear inefficient. A Lodge directed by a single, dedicated leader — much like a parish or *sangha* — could indeed function with greater administrative efficiency than one governed by a group of untrained volunteers who must balance their work in the Society with family and professional obligations. Yet such a structure would defeat the purpose of the TS as a field for experimentation and practice in cooperative self-governance.

Similarly, most spiritual organizations exist to disseminate the teachings of a single founder or authoritative source. The TS, however, is not a "Blavatskian" organization; it recognizes no author, or group of authors, as officially theosophical. Its field of exploration is broad and includes the comparative study of many traditions in the light of the Ageless Wisdom. Undeniably, it would be easier and more efficient to propagate a fixed body of teachings but, here again, efficiency is not the highest goal of our Society. As stated before, the freedom to explore, discern, and discover truth for oneself are the necessary conditions for the intuitive civilization that lies ahead.

This is not to justify the inadequate running of our groups. It goes without saying that we should aim to make the TS as effective and well-organized as possible. I believe there are meaningful improvements we can pursue to broaden our reach and operate more efficiently. Yet in doing so, we must remain vigilant not to compromise the core principles that

form the Society's esoteric foundation.

For example, in the present age of the Fifth Sub-Race, humanity still tends to look for external authority — leaders who promise certainty and security in the midst of life's uncertainties. Were the TS to present one of its leaders as a stereotypical guru, offering comforting teachings and simple assurances, our Lodge premises would no doubt be full. Yet such popularity would come at a great cost. It would reinforce the very tendencies the Society was meant to challenge.

The change that the TS aims to produce is inherently slow and difficult, and the temptation to conform to external standards of "success" can be strong, particularly in a world that measures achievement by numbers, visibility, and popularity. But the vitality of the TS depends not on outward acclaim, but on its fidelity to the inner purpose for which it was founded.

One of the esoteric purposes of the TS, then, is to help establish that way of life based on spiritual perception that will eventually become characteristic of the Sixth Sub-Race. Yet, if we are to assist the world to move in that direction, we must first undergo such transformation within ourselves. I suggest that this work of spiritual regeneration constitutes a vital part of our preparation for the next centennial effort.

Earnest students of Theosophy should inquire how the teachings can be approached not merely as an inspiring *philosophy* of life, but as a dynamic and transformative force in daily living. If we can make personal experiments on these lines and develop coherent systems for applying theosophical principles to self-transformation, we may gradually render the TS a fit instrument for the Masters' work when the time for the next impulse arrives.

In my view, all theosophical teachings aim at awakening *Buddhi*, the faculty of spiritual intuition. Even the most abstruse works, such as Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, are intended to stimulate this faculty. We can even draw practical guidance for daily life from this profound text, as I endeavored to show in my book *Approaching "The Secret Doctrine"*. However, to extract such living wisdom from our literature, we must learn how to relate to the teachings in a new way.

The early generations of Theosophists emphasized what might be called the occult or esoteric dimension of the teachings. Figures such as H. P. Blavatsky, Annie Besant, and C. W. Leadbeater and others devoted much of their energy to elucidating the great metaphysical framework of Theosophy. Later, through the work of Jiddu Krishnamurti and theosophists such as Rohit Mehta, N. Sri Ram, and Radha Burnier, the focus shifted toward self-knowledge and the art of spiritual living.

Yet, this emphasis should not lead us to imagine that study can be dispensed with altogether. In today's spiritual landscape, many seekers yearn for easy answers — some mantra to repeat, a special breathing technique, a particular physical exercise, or a simple method of meditation promising quick enlightenment. While such practices may serve certain limited purposes, they cannot, by them-

selves, carry us far along the path of real spiritual development.

The theosophical tradition, in harmony with many other ancient teachings, holds that the fundamental problem of humanity is spiritual ignorance. Accordingly, the essential remedy lies in the cultivation of spiritual wisdom — the study, assimilation, and embodiment of universal truths. Without this inner illumination, no external practice can take us far. Even meditation, when pursued from the standpoint of the personal self and motivated by personal gain, becomes an obstacle rather than a means to transcendence.

Modern theosophical teachings have been articulated by a remarkable line of individuals. H. P. Blavatsky, Annie Besant, C. W. Leadbeater, George Arundale, C. Jinarājadāsa, Geoffrey Hodson, and others were, in my view, genuine occultists. By this I mean people able to raise their consciousness to higher planes, perceive directly those subtler realities, and return to the physical plane retaining in their memory what they had experienced on those lofty planes. Such attainment is exceedingly rare. Few modern spiritual movements can claim even one leader of this stature, let alone several. This fact suggests that the TS was founded to transmit to humanity a profound esoteric knowledge, and it would be unwise to be negligent about this extraordinary map of the inner life entrusted to us.

Yet, sincere aspirants do not merely study the map — as fascinating as this contemplation may be. They use it to guide their own steps along the path — translating knowledge into living wisdom. It seems to me, then, that one of our tasks in this latter half of the centennial cycle is to bring together the two complementary aspects of the path:

i) A profound study and mastery of the theosophical teachings.

ii) An earnest spiritual application of these principles in daily life and spiritual practice.

Through a number of members inspired to undertake this integration — testing it in their personal life and sharing their discoveries with others — the TS can generate a definite movement in the consciousness of humanity toward the awakening of intuition. This impulse would draw to the Society the increasing number of seekers that will be attracted to that higher call.

The TS possesses all the essential elements to serve as a powerful instrument in the hands of the Masters of the Wisdom, and we are privileged to share the opportunity of helping make the Society strong, vibrant, and mature, so that it may fulfill its sacred purpose. ✧

Endnotes

1. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, chron. ed. edited by Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, Letter No. 136 (ML-65)

2. *The Key to Theosophy*, "Conclusion".

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. The theosophical teachings about Root-Race are not about ethnicity, but about evolutionary cycles that the whole of humanity goes through.

Adyar: The Multiverse

CATALINA ISAZA-CANTOR & SHIKHAR AGNIHOTRI

WARM greetings to all of you who gathered for the 12th World Congress of the Theosophical Society (TS), Adyar, India, held from 23-27 July 2025 in Vancouver, Canada. We are deeply honored and grateful to join you, beyond all distances, in this shared space of unity and aspiration, though physically apart, we feel closely connected in spirit.

We are now especially glad to speak about the extraordinary place that is Adyar — not only the physical headquarters of the Society, but a living, breathing centre of light, silence, and inner work. While some of you have had the opportunity to visit this special place at different times, we would like to offer a glimpse of its beauty for those who have not — and perhaps, who knows, plant the seed for a future visit.

What if a place could be many places at once? What if one location held layers of time, purpose, and presence — visible only to those who stop and truly look? When we speak of Adyar, we often refer to it as the headquarters of the TS. But Adyar is more than an administrative centre or a physical space. It is, in many ways, a multiverse — a convergence of worlds, traditions, and inner dimensions; it is a living organism that, while firmly maintaining its essence, is constantly changing and evolving. Adyar is more than a location; it is a living crossroads where East and West meet — not only in history, but in spirit. Founded by pioneers like Madame H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) and Col. H. S. Olcott, its legacy continues to evolve through each visitor who walks its paths and adds to its quiet, unfolding presence. The footsteps of the past echo alongside the silent movements of the present day.

Adyar has its own logic, rhythm, and atmosphere. It is not static, it does not stagnate; instead, it interacts differently with each person who has the opportunity to visit it. To live, work, or even spend time in Adyar is a rare opportunity for inner transformation. For many members of the TS, the name "Adyar" becomes familiar long before setting foot there — through stories, readings, photos, or the words of fellow seekers. Over time,

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this distant place becomes a heartfelt aspiration.

Symbolically, Adyar is the home of all members of the TS around the world, and it has been so since the beginning, as Col. Olcott reminds us in his *Old Diary Leaves*:

> Newcomers were enchanted by the house and the gardens, and especially by the homely atmosphere of the residence. I always tried to give visiting members the impression that they were not my guests [but] co-owners returning to their own home. HPB and I always followed that conduct.

In this way, a deep connection is formed with the TS headquarters — this house — and, as Annie Besant used to say, with the Masters, its inner Founders. Radha Burnier reminded us that after many years of searching, the Founders found here the inner and psychic conditions suitable for a headquarters that would also serve as a spiritual centre, from which the forces of the Great Beings could radiate outward, and from which higher influences would accompany every letter, word, book, and teaching spoken or written from Adyar.

Thanks to a group of Indian friends who immediately resonated with the teachings brought by these two foreigners, they were led to the very place that today houses the main building of the Theosophical Society. When HPB and HSO visited what was then known as the Huddlestone Gardens, she exclaimed: "Master wants this purchased."

For Olcott, Adyar felt like a kind of paradise:

> We knew we had found our future home [it] seems like a fairy palace... Returning to Adyar was always an exquisite moment, and none of the faraway countries I travelled through ever seemed so pleasant and peaceful as Adyar (Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*).

And to Besant, Adyar was simply: "The most homely place."

In Olcott's time, Adyar was not meant for students — but only for the small team needed to manage the Society's affairs. It was Besant who changed that. She made it possible for students to come, study, and help with the work, expanding the estate from 27 to 258 acres in just four years, fulfilling the wish of her teacher, Blavatsky.

At first, only a few members came from Lodges abroad. But as Theosophy spread, more people arrived to serve. Once proper accommodations were what had been a trickle became a steady stream. To meet this growing need, some of Adyar's most iconic buildings were constructed — including the Leadbeater Chambers, the first concrete structure designed in India. Today, thanks to the vision of our current President, the Blavatsky Bungalow, the Chambers, New Quadrangle, and other key spaces have been beautifully restored — blending heritage and comfort, and ensuring that Adyar remains vibrant and welcoming for generations to come.

Adyar today is more than an administrative headquarters — it is a living home and spiritual family for those who reside and work here. With visitors and

volunteers from across India and around the world, it becomes a place of meetings and reunions — of this life and perhaps others — where the path can be walked in shared communion.

It is also home to beings of all kingdoms: rare trees, plants, animals, and insects living together in harmony. Here, the First Object of the Theosophical Society — "to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour" — is felt across all levels of existence.

This shared space, built day by day, becomes a source of uplifting vibrations for the world. Jinarājadāsa, the fourth President, spoke of its *pedagogical* value — a place where Nature and sacred symbols reflect unity, forming a "forest brotherhood" in which all beings evolve together. Adyar, he said, is "a vision of hope for humanity".

Adyar is more than a place — it is a living presence, filled with voices that gently guide us inward, toward the quiet knowing of the heart. Known as the "Home of the Masters", Adyar speaks across planes of existence, through trees, silence, and wind — in a language deeper than words, the language of the soul.

One sacred space within it is the Garden of Remembrance. Originally consecrated by Annie Besant on 17 May 1917 as the future site of Suryashrama, a temple for the Order of the Brothers of Service (comprising of individuals of the highest intellectual and moral integrity, who pledged unconditional obedience to herself, the chief of the Order), the garden took on a different destiny. After Besant's passing in 1933, her ashes were interred there, followed by those of C. W. Leadbeater the next year. On 20 September 1935, the site was formally dedicated to their memory during the Society's Diamond Jubilee.

To those who listen with deeper perception, Adyar still speaks. Its spaces offer not just beauty, but silent guidance — waiting patiently for us to pause, perceive, and receive.

> There are usually many devas in Adyar. We have many great advantages here, where the Masters come so often. There is an encouragement from these Beings that some feel in one way and others in another. Glorious influences surround us — but their effect depends on our receptivity. . . . Of all this, we can receive only what we are in a condition to receive — nothing more. For one wise enough to take advantage of it, a stay in Adyar is a rare opportunity — but what we make of that stay depends entirely on ourselves. (C. W. Leadbeater, *The Inner Life*, Series 2)

The Adyar campus is more than a headquarters — it is a historic site, a Nature sanctuary, and a spiritual haven recognized by many in Chennai. Ask a driver to take you to the *adayār ālamaram* — the Adyar Banyan Tree — and they will know where you mean. This majestic tree has become a living symbol of Adyar's multiverse: its aerial roots reach into many realms, sheltering and connecting,

much like the Society's mission itself. Though its original trunk has vanished, it continues to flourish through countless offshoots — a powerful image of life's persistence, transformation, and silent strength. In the Indian tradition, the banyan tree symbolizes eternal life, with roots in the infinite and branches in the material world. The *Bhagavadgitā* (15.1) speaks of it as the tree of wisdom, visible only to the seeker. At Adyar, it came to represent Divine Life and Wisdom. C. W. Leadbeater described its subtle form as occasionally taking on a noble human presence, visible to the clairvoyant eye.

Adyar speaks through such metaphors. It is not only rich in history but alive with Nature and spirit. As a protected biosphere, it is home to trees, birds, and sea winds — but it also carries an invisible charge: the presence of the Masters, sacred rituals, deep questions, and aspirations. Here, trees seem to listen, stones seem to remember, and silence invites awakening.

Living in Adyar is also the rare privilege of inhabiting a paradise in the heart of what is now the bustling metropolis of Chennai. Our international headquarters is one of the city's two major green lungs. Those fortunate enough to live here experience two worlds at once:

- One, outside the Campus, is filled with the noise, smells, and intensity of 21st-century urban life;
- The other offers a natural atmosphere that soothes the mind, eyes, and soul, encouraging inner reflection.

It is a place where one feels in the world, but not of the world.

Adyar is a spiritual multiverse, where diverse streams of wisdom flow side by side. Within its grounds, Theosophy embraces many paths — not as separate expressions, but as rays of one Light. No single voice claims the whole; instead, a harmonious symphony invites seekers to explore, reflect, and weave their own inner synthesis.

Just days after arriving in Madras, Col. Olcott delivered his first public talk — a powerful message on the common foundation of all religions. In a land of immense spiritual diversity, and during a time when traditional paths were under threat, his words resonated deeply. Rather than promote conversion, he sought to awaken in people a renewed connection to the heart of their own spiritual heritage — a vision closely aligned with the Society's second object.

And along those lines, to help preserve and share this legacy, Olcott founded the Adyar Library. Today, it holds more than 45,000 manuscripts, including rare works in ancient languages like Pali and Sanskrit. By 1967, the collection had grown so vast that a new building was added, establishing it as one of the world's major repositories of sacred texts. Under the guidance of President Tim Boyd, the Adyar Library and Research Centre continues to evolve, embracing digital innovations while honouring its ancient roots.

In the Society's main hall, a quiet circle speaks volumes. Sculptures and symbols representing eighteen spiritual

traditions creates a space where unity becomes palpable. Figures such as Krishna, the Buddha, and Christ stand not as representatives of separate faiths, but as reminders of a shared human quest for truth. Each form, each gaze, echoes the same human yearning for the eternal.

To one side, a plaque commemorates the founding dates of national Sections of the TS. To the other, a modest museum honours wisdom through images of Minerva and Saraswati. At the centre stand the statues of Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott — co-founders of the Society — and under Blavatsky's statue is buried some of her ashes, a quiet testimony to her continued presence.

It was in this very hall, in January 1925, that a seed was planted. Nicholas Roerich, the renowned Russian painter, arrived at Adyar bearing his masterwork, *The Messenger*. In a simple yet moving ceremony, residents gathered around the veiled painting. After music and a brief introduction, Roerich unveiled the artwork and dedicated it to Blavatsky:

> In this Home of Light, let me present this picture of *The Messenger*, dedicated to Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, as the nucleus of a future Blavatsky Museum of Arts whose motto shall be: *Beauty is the garment of Truth.*

With those words, a vision was born. The painting itself became more than art — it became a mark of that moment, of that offering, and of the dream that continues to unfold at Adyar: to hold beauty, truth, and service in a single breath.

A distinctive feature of Theosophical spirituality at Adyar is the presence of places of worship built across the estate, reflecting its universal and inclusive character:

- Bharata Samaj Hindu Temple — A Temple of Light — completing its centenary this year.
- A Buddhist Temple (1925).
- A Liberal Catholic Church dedicated to St Michael and All Angels (1937).
- A Mosque (built in 1937).
- A Co-Masonic Temple (foundation stone laid in 1909).
- A Zoroastrian Temple (1927).
- A Sikh Temple (built in 1978).

The temples of Adyar, along with the study groups and gatherings, embody the Society's second objective: to encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy, and science as a form of spiritual service. These are spaces of thoughtful inquiry, where diverse traditions meet in a shared spirit of understanding.

Adding a quiet, timeless presence to the campus are the five granite trilithons — ancient temple gateways brought by Olcott in 1905 from Old Chandragiri. Carved with scenes from Hindu mythology and weighing several tons each, they stand as living symbols of continuity, linking the sacred past with the evolving present.

From its beginnings, Adyar has been a place where spiritual vision and service to the world go hand in hand. Adyar's influence extends far beyond its grounds. In Chennai and beyond, acts of service and community engagement reflect the deeper values nurtured on the estate — where inner transformation naturally

flows into outer action. Some centres date back to the Society's founding; others have grown with time. Early theosophists played an active role in India's cultural, social, and political life — a legacy that continues today.

As the third President George Arundale once affirmed: "We must be active on all planes we can contact." That spirit lives on — through education, social outreach, and the ever-present effort to bring spiritual wisdom into daily life.

The Social Welfare Centre offers free daycare to around 100 children aged 3 to 5, while the Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary (BMAD) tirelessly rescues and rehabilitates injured and homeless animals, providing meaningful opportunities for volunteer work — especially in this post-pandemic time.

Founded by Colonel Olcott in 1894, the Olcott Memorial School continues to offer free education to underprivileged children. During the pandemic, a campaign ensured students could learn online through donated tablets. Its newly constructed building was inaugurated by President Tim Boyd during the last convention.

Part of the TS, the Vocational Training Centre (VTC) established in 1999 offers free courses for women in skills like weaving, tailoring, and embroidery, helping them gain employment or become self-employed. It also occasionally runs short courses, such as electrician training for ex-students of the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School (OMHS).

The Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA) brings theosophical education to life — rooted in empathy, non-competition, and inner freedom. Even online, its approach fosters deep sensitivity and clear perception. It is worth recalling that Maria Montessori began her pioneering work in Adyar, inspired to create a form of education that cultivates the soul to transform the world from within.

The newly conceived Adyar Eco Development (AED) project envisions Adyar as a centre for deep learning, healing, research, and creation — honouring its natural and spiritual energy. Through educational programs, workshops, Nature walks, and community engagement, AED aims to transform how we live with the Earth. Its long-term goal: a clean, swimmable Adyar River and an ecologically vibrant catchment area that nourishes the city.

Adyar also carries a legacy of artistic inspiration. The ongoing Art Restoration project revives its global collection — not just preserving works, but inviting new generations of artists to engage with Adyar as a space for living creativity.

Throughout the year, Adyar remains active with gatherings such as the International Convention, the School of the Wisdom (SOW), the South India Conference, the Workers' Training Camp, the TOS Conference, and the Adyar Library Seminars — each enriching the community through service and inquiry.

Two newer initiatives that have gained wide attention are:

- Libraries as Communities (LAC), which features themed monthly book

displays and talks to deepen public engagement with the Adyar Library and Research Centre.

- Wisdom for Living (WFL), that hosts talks by individuals from across all fields of human endeavour — from business and the arts to ecology and science — who share how they bring spiritual insight into everyday life.

Adyar also hosts the World Federation of Young Theosophists (WFYT), a vibrant space with immense potential for global youth engagement.

Yet beyond all this movement and service, Adyar remains something more. It is also a space of stillness — a place between worlds, where outer work is quietly held by inner silence. In its quiet halls and shaded gardens, Adyar does not offer answers — it offers openings. As Krishnamurti once said, "Truth is a pathless land" — and somehow, that pathlessness finds a home here.

Adyar is a place we approach with the best we have to offer. In return, it offers space for reflection, inner growth, and quiet transformation. But that transformation depends on our readiness — for, in truth, most people find in Adyar what they bring with them.

This is perhaps why many describe coming to Adyar as a pilgrimage. It invites us to live a clean and conscious life, to expand the mind, purify the heart, awaken the intellect, and refine our spiritual perception. Like The Golden Stairs (a set of instructions given by HPB for steady progress in the theosophic life), this journey offers glimpses of the Temple of Divine Wisdom — present in all things, if we are attentive enough to see it.

To truly "read" Adyar — its hidden corners, its silent metaphors — we must draw on intuition and live the Doctrine of the Heart, that inner compass which helps us discern and listen to the Voice of the Silence.

Living here becomes a gradual unfolding: a path shaped by love, conviction, patience, courage, inner strength, and deep gratitude. That is why Adyar is one and many at once — offering each person a unique message, a chance to serve, and a personal journey of self-discovery.

Adyar's quiet strength lies in humble service and unseen work. Each soul who passes through adds to its unique spiritual atmosphere — a flame of hope for the world. As the heart of the Theosophical Society, Adyar reflects how we, as theosophists, live the teachings and embody them in life.

In this sense, Adyar is a multiverse — a circle whose circumference is nowhere, and whose centre is everywhere. When we live Theosophy from where we are, we bring Adyar's centre into our own hearts.

As Krishnamurti once said:

> Adyar is, and always has been, a spiritual oasis . . . though not all can go there, its very existence gives hope and strength to others.

There is something intangible about Adyar — a quiet presence that makes it unlike any ordinary place. It is a sanctuary

where one may rise toward the divine or confront one's inner shadows — always with the possibility of transformation.

Adyar exists to support humanity's next step in evolution. Through karma yoga, bhakti yoga, and jñāna yoga, it helps awaken not outer powers, but love, compassion, detachment, and true service.

Known as the "Home of the Masters", Adyar nourishes minds, inspires hearts, and sustains the global theosophical family. The forces that emerge here quietly radiate outward, keeping Theosophy alive and transformative.

But as students of the inner life know — what is visible is only a glimpse. Adyar's deeper work happens in silence, far beyond what can be measured.

This is why Theosophy must stay engaged with the world through education, service, and social action, as Besant and Olcott once did. As C. Jinarājadāsa said:

> Adyar lives and works for the world. Thrice blessed are those whose karma grants them the privilege — and responsibility — of coming to Adyar, and truly blessed if they receive what Adyar has to give.

Adyar is not just a place, but a field of consciousness, a symbolic multiverse where each seeker experiences a unique inner journey, a heart that beats across time and soul. To walk here is to walk within. To look at Adyar is to look into the mirror of the inner cosmos.

And as we celebrate 150 years of the Theosophical Society, it remains a living symbol of its mission: a beacon of wisdom, unity, and service. ✧

Man is a spiritual being — a soul, in other word —
and that this soul takes on different bodies
from life to life on Earth
in order at last to arrive at such perfect knowledge,
through repeated experience,
as to enable one to assume a body fit to be
the dwelling-place of a Mahatma, or perfected soul.
Then, they say, that particular soul
becomes a spiritual helper to humankind.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

150 Years and Counting

TIM WYATT

IT was a curious combination of spiritualism — and, strangely, smoking — which unleashed a powerful new esoteric current onto a world hungry for explanations beyond the remit of hard science and ossified religions.

In the autumn of 1874, Madame Helena Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Olcott were independently investigating spiritualist phenomena at the farmstead of the Eddy Brothers in Chittenden, Vermont, in the United States. Blavatsky was continuing years of occult study across five continents. Olcott, a lawyer-cum-journalist, had been commissioned by the *New York Daily Graphic* to write articles about this rural sensation. As an army officer he had formerly investigated corruption during the Civil War as well as the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

One afternoon Olcott went outside to smoke a cigar where he met Madame Blavatsky and offered her a light for her hand-rolled cigarette. It proved to be a hugely significant meeting resulting in a lifelong friendship and a movement which would change the world. From then on, the pair were inseparable sharing a deep interest in occult ideas and the mysteries of life.

Soon afterwards Blavatsky's secret guides — The Masters — issued orders for her to break with the spiritualists and form a society to promote ancient occult ideas to a modern world. These were those timeless principles underpinning religions, science, and philosophy.

A year after that initial meeting on 17 November 1875, the Theosophical Society (TS) was formed in New York City by Blavatsky, Olcott, a young Irish lawyer, William Judge, and others.

The early days of the TS coincided with the revival of a wider occult tradition in Britain, Europe, and America with the emergence of numerous secret societies and orders practising ritual and ceremonial magic.

But there was a problem. Many early adherents of the Society were more interested in sensational phenomena, parlour tricks, and the materialisation of objects than in studying deep esoteric truths.

Although the Society did not live up to early expectations and its support quickly tailed off, branches were formed overseas in London, India, Ceylon, and Corfu. And for the remaining sixteen years of Blavatsky's life the Society grew rapidly continuing to gain traction.

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Blavatsky continued to attract attention from the curious and chattering classes.

Theosophy does not readily subscribe to notions of chance, luck, or random accident. This initial meeting had been no mere fortuitous concurrence of personalities. It was a planned event designed to offer fresh spiritual perspectives to a world in need of more panoramic and persuasive explanations for the mysteries of life and the secrets of death.

The Masters later confided in their precipitated communications that Blavatsky — despite her clear personality flaws — was the best vehicle they had discovered after a century-long trawl of possible candidates to disseminate these new revelations.

Without ever being an evangelising mass movement, theosophical ideas have mysteriously permeated and shaped popular consciousness to such a significant degree that many are now fully embedded in contemporary mainstream thought. These ideas have had a significant influence on modern art, culture, science, architecture, sociology and indeed consciousness itself.

The irony, of course, is that although Blavatsky earned the well-deserved monicker of Godmother of the New Age, the vast majority of people have never even heard of her and if they have, it was that she was a charlatan and fraudster.

Like all organisations, nations, and civilizations the TS has been through a number of clear cycles of activity. The century and a half of its existence can be divided into three distinct fifty-year periods.

From 1875 until 1925 the Society blossomed in fits and starts, attracting leading luminaries of the day — scientists, artists, writers and assorted free-thinkers and influencers. It grew into a worldwide body with tens of thousands of members worldwide. Its message seeped slowly and invisibly into popular thought.

From 1925 until 1975 — its centenary — the Society stabilised and formed strings of Lodges in dozens of different countries.

The past fifty years have proved to be something of a paradox. While theosophical ideas continue to resonate with many who do not even know what Theosophy is, in some countries membership has progressively declined and Lodges have closed their doors. However, elsewhere the Society has remained vibrant and dynamic.

One perpetual and perplexing question asked in my European homeland (especially where the age profile of members tends to be sixty-plus) is: "What can we do to attract more young people?" There are varying responses to this.

In the modern digital age it is quite clear that 19th-, or even 20th-century communication methods are no longer relevant or effective. Cyberspace is the new arena and we cannot conquer it with a quill pen, and inkpot. Nor is the language of that bygone era likely to intrigue and entice the young minds of today. We must speak in tongues people can understand — not jargon.

They say that necessity is the mother of invention and ironically, the Covid

pandemic of 2020 perversely proved to be an important catalyst in encouraging theosophists to find innovative ways of interacting. People could no longer meet physically. So, we discovered Zoom, Skype, and other platforms. And we began using them.

In the intervening years interesting new networks have formed. The purely local structures of the past have morphed into national and even international online gatherings. Things have become more outward looking. More than ever before, theosophists have begun mingling with similar-minded people they may well have previously ignored. That exclusivity of the past has eroded.

Inevitably these online meetings do sometimes lack that special dimension afforded by meeting in the flesh, but like it or not digital interactions are not only here to stay but may prove to be the very bedrock of future activities.

These new ways mean that I can hook up with theosophists — be they a Brazilian chemist, Greek archaeologist, or Indian musician — without having to fly to Rio de Janeiro, Athens, or Chennai. The world can come into my front room.

Expressing timeless truths in ways understandable today is essential to the theosophical future. More and more people — in and out of the Society — are engaged in this in imaginative ways. And this, I suggest, is the way ahead — especially if we wish to impart our ideas needed as much in 2025 as they were 150 years ago. ✧

All of us have to get rid of our own Ego, the illusory apparent *self*, to recognize our true self in a transcendental divine life. But if we would not be selfish, we must strive to make other people see that truth, to recognize the reality of that transcendental self, the Buddha, the Christ, or God of every preacher.

The Maha Chohan

Insight into Human Nature: The Part Contains the Whole

VIBHA SAKSENA

THE milestones marking the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Theosophical Section and 150th anniversary of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, (TSA) and many more to come, are all milestones on the path to a vision, a vision that is taking shape by concentrated effort from multiple quarters, human and superhuman. It is the vision, mission, and actions that drive the future.

Vision, Mission, and Action

The vision of the TS for the spiritual progress of humanity is rooted in universal brotherhood. The vision recognizes the higher purpose of Man. The roadmap to this vision translates into our mission: it is our journey of spiritual self-transformation by an increasing realisation of the Ageless Wisdom. Driven by the knowledge of the ageless teachings, our actions, as in living a theosophic life and making it known that such a thing as Theosophy exists, determine the extent to which the mission is accomplished and vision is realized.

The actions of every single person on Earth contribute their fair share to the future of the whole humanity. And so, even when one person stops using plastic or starts using a bicycle or shows compassion and generosity in dealing with others, he is playing a role in shaping the future; however subtle. On the other hand, leadership of organizations and countries have an unmistakable, noticeable impact on the lives and future of people. Their decisions and actions have far-reaching effects on the future.

Real Welfare

The real value of action lies in whether it is in the interest and welfare of all mankind. The intellectual progress of man has brought about exponential advance in science and technology. No doubt the world has benefited by automation, increased productivity, improved healthcare, economic growth, connectivity, and much more. But at the same time, Man's fears about the misuse of technology, artificial intelligence taking over human intelligence, the adverse impacts on the environment, geo-political warfare, ethical

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and social concerns, and more, are not unfounded; many are already coming true in our own times.

The reason is obvious: spiritual evolution of man has not kept pace with his intellectual growth. Naturally, the vision of nations and actions of individuals are lacking, in that they are largely self-centred; their mission seems to be "me first". So how can we change the future?

Law of Karma

Theosophy teaches that our universe is governed by natural laws. Our present actions carve our future just as past actions have shaped the present. This is the great "Law of Karma" in operation; the law of cause and effect.

Actions, desires, emotions, and thoughts, all constitute the karma of Man; the karma of a population of 8 billion plus on this planet. These vibrations, partly absorbed and partly reflected by the astral light surrounding the Earth, reign back on the physical plane resulting in all kinds of situations in which man finds himself in the present world. So, to usher in a better tomorrow, our current actions should change. We know that actions are driven by our nature and the values we hold. So an insight into our real nature is the gamechanger for the future.

Divinity of Man

The ageless teachings have always pointed to the divinity of man as his innermost essence. The concept that God created humans in his own image, is a central tenet in both Christianity and Judaism. The Vedas of Hinduism hold *Brahman* as the one supreme Reality and declare the truth of Man through the "great statements" or *mahāvākya-s* such as:

ayam Ātma Brahman — "This self is *Brahman*"

tattvamasi — "That thou art"

aham brahmāsmi — "I am *Brahman*"

Likewise, Tibetan Buddhism conceals the reality of man in the ancient formula and mantra: *"Om Mani Padme Hum"*.

No doubt there are individuals waking up to their higher nature and manifesting it by degrees; yet collectively, humanity is barely one step above its animality and far removed from its divinity.

Mental Spectrum

The spectrum of Man's mental consciousness is so vast that, driven by instinct and self-centeredness, he can remain an animal-man, or driven by logic and reason he can progress to being a humane-man, or driven by wisdom, compassion, and insight into his real nature, he can awaken to the possibility of a divine-man.

Everyone is motivated into action by this vast scale of mental consciousness, right from global leaders to ordinary citizens. And its outcome determines the state of the world and conditions we live in.

So, to be the architects of a great future world, we necessarily need to grow out of our narrow mental moulds and grow into our higher, wholesome nature; and this we need to expedite, because with every "today" we are shaping our "tomorrow", which is coming to us as our future "today".

Those Who Know

A Master of Wisdom said:

In all the world there are only two kinds of people —

Those who know, and those who do not know;

And this knowledge is the thing which matters.[1]

The Ageless Wisdom gives us an insight into the septenary nature of Man. This knowledge is the thing which matters. It is revealed from time to time, in parts, by Great Masters.

Knowledge Is Eternal

Knowledge is eternal because the trinity of Knower, Known, and Knowledge has its source in Unity which is eternal; Unity is the Absolute Reality. During evolutionary cycles, this divine knowledge periodically becomes concealed and again revealed, thus marking the golden ages and dark ages in evolution.

Monad

But even when concealed, knowledge is never completely lost. It remains in the custody of the perfected men and the great spiritual Masters whose minds have touched the Monadic consciousness; for Monad is the Knower. Monad is *Ātma* manifesting through the vehicle, or *upadhi*, of *buddhi*. Monad is the Light of *Ātma*, it is knowledge itself, which is within the heart of every man. The influence of this knowledge is exerted upon man through the *mānasic* principle or the Mind.

Mind

This brings us to the consideration of the Human Mind and the Divine Mind. The ageless wisdom teaches that the Human Mind is a ray of the Divine Mind. Therefore, it is possible for the human mind to reach back and touch the divine mind. That is in fact the evolution we are heading towards. But coming back to the knowledge inherent in the Divine Monad, it arises as an ideation which is projected by the Divine Mind, manifesting the Universe.

As Above, So Below

Theosophy affirms "as above so below"; whatever holds good for the macrocosm, or the Kosmos, also holds good for the microcosm, or the human being.

But, the Human Mind, for the most part, comes under the sway of *kāma* or "desire". Forgetting the Monad, that is, his real nature, man becomes trapped in the illusion and attachment of the material universe. It comes as a surprise that knowledge is inherent in man, and yet, he is ignorant of his real nature. Is this not motivation enough for self-discovery?

Truth — One becomes the Many

In truth, there is only the one Divine Monad, and the Divine Mind is also one. They are projected as rays, like sun rays, into multiple containers; like one Sun being reflected in multiple pots of water. This is how the "One becomes the many".

The "many containers" are the individual human forms that are composed of the material/substance of the universe. The real man is a ray of the divine Monad and Divine Mind, that is, *Ātma-buddhi-manas* which is projected into these forms. So, the Divine Monad and Divine Mind are man's real nature, his divinity, into which he shall rise and shine one day.

But being individualized with distinct bodies, the human mind perceives itself as a separate being and forges identity with its container, that is, the body, and acts only in self-interest, thus concealing its own divine nature.

Spiritual Self-Transformation

Purification of mind brings about a spiritual self-transformation. The mind becomes elevated and is influenced by monadic consciousness and knowledge. The more the mind becomes purified, the more it disengages its identity with body and gravitates towards the divinity of the Monad. This is the aim of all spiritual disciplines.

Then the forgotten divine knowledge, inherent in the Monad, starts to arise within the mind as intuition and insight, which results in wisdom and compassion influencing the actions of man. Such spiritual self-transformation alone can lead to a lasting, harmonious future for mankind.

Reverse Engineering

As already mentioned: "The One Becomes the many." The Divine Logos or *Brahman* is the "One" and we humans are the "many". Self-transformation of the "many" can be likened to a spiritual reverse engineering for restoring our wholeness and experiencing oneness.

Wholeness

So, what is wholeness? The Divine is "Whole" because It is all inclusive; in it we live and move and have our being. It is our innermost essence; therefore, divinity is our wholeness. Being part of the universe, we are irrevocably connected with every other part, because each part contains the whole, which is our innermost divine essence.

Having said so, the next question is how do we experience oneness while the "many" still exist outwardly?

Oneness — Glass-Globe Experiment

I would like you to join me in an interesting thought experiment. Think of the objects and beings of the physical world as pictures painted on a transparent glass globe, fully covering it and illuminated by a lamp lit in the centre of the globe. This globe is the whole universe. Its surface is the physical plane on which you can spot your own personal self as a little picture and you can regard the pictures of all the other people and objects. Neither the glass globe nor the flame of the lamp inside is visible. Only the surface pictures are illuminated and visible. This is the equivalent of our present, physical worldview.

Now erase the pictures gently, making them lighter and lighter. At some point, the pictures become transparent enough to let the Flame and pictures be visible simultaneously. This is the moment of truth; the dawning of the realization that you were never the picture, but ever the Flame.

The radiance of the Flame fills the whole globe, illuminating the pictures on it.

The glass globe is the mind: individual under the surface of each picture, but one as the whole globe. Turning outwards, the mind regards the multiple pictures on the surface. Turning inwards, it becomes transparent and illumined by the radiance of the Flame. The Flame is the same for all the pictures, it is the

Ātma. Realizing this, the mind experiences inner oneness even while regarding outer multiplicity.

Paradise Lost; Paradise Regained

Approaching the future with this insight into the real nature of man, "paradise lost can turn into paradise regained". That is the future we have to shape here on this Earth.

But till such time that man is ignorant of his real nature and continues to act through his fragmented mental nature, the task of shaping a future paradise, is like asking a fish to climb a tree. One has to equip oneself to play the role of a future architect. And spiritual self-transformation is the first step. The incredible insight into man's wholeness — that each part contains the whole — is the beginning of self-transformation.

Thus equipped, our role in shaping the future is to serve as a catalyst for ushering in the age of harmony and ending the age of conflict.

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Reference

1. *At the Feet of the Master*, p. 6.

Will you, or rather they, never see the true meaning and explanation of that great wreck of desolation which has come to our land and threatens all lands — yours first of all?
It is selfishness and exclusiveness that killed ours, and it is selfishness and exclusiveness that will kill yours.

Master Morya
Daily Meditations,
by Katherine A. Beechey, p. 12

Meditative Mindfulness

CECIL MESSER

IN the fifth century BCE, at dawn in Bodhgaya as the third watch was ending, a man named Siddhartha Gautama attained full enlightenment. His first words upon awakening as a Buddha were:

> The nectar-like truth is revealed,
> Profound, serene, unfabricated,
> Luminous, timeless, self-secret,
> Non-conceptual, unconditioned.

These words point to the fruition of the process of becoming enlightened. While dwelling on Vulture Peak Mountain, the Buddha taught the primary qualities that awaken one to true enlightenment: the impartial attitude towards all beings; the altruistic frame of mind; the attitude of non-aggression; and the open mind that is receptive and holds no prejudice. The facts of our existential situation are that we are hardly awake and our minds are not normally quiet. To attain meditative serenity, the mind must be radically tamed by undertaking diligent training. Beginning with mindfulness practice as a method and subsequently conjoining it with insight meditation practice allows innate wisdom to unfold.

Meditative mindfulness (Skt., *śamatha*) is the practice of the fifth perfection (*pāramitā*), mindfulness, of the Buddha's basic qualities or great perfections teaching. The Dalai Lama teaches that mindfulness arises as the result of continuous attentiveness to an object of meditation until the mind stabilizes naturally. Ś*amatha* practice is a dualistic fixation on an object by a subject and is not contingent upon understanding the object's reality nor its status. Our state of meditative concentration becomes *śamatha* when our body and mind become pliable and at ease and rest in serenity. The full attainment of *śamatha* is characterized by the integrated feeling of well-being, clarity, and non-thought.

Mindfulness or meditative serenity is not a trance nor is it being spaced out. It is not an induced dull state of mind; it is an alert and undisturbed state of mind. It is not a mood of laxity and cannot be brought on by the use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, sex, or the euphoria of success. Mindfulness practice conditions our mind to receive wisdom, the sixth *pāramitā*, and is like the preparation of a tea service: the cup must first be clean and empty, and then paired to a fine saucer with napkin and spoon. It must be receptive but not too eager, anticipative yet unexcited — entirely ready for service. Gathering the

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service ensemble is like the meditation practice; the experience of the tea is the meditation.

Attaining enlightenment, is primarily a matter of transforming obstacles into opportunities and shedding our skin of delusion. We masquerade as a unique self but are actually a Buddha in disguise. Mindfulness practice is an integral part of the process of realizing our potential. If our coffee cup is soiled, there is no need to toss it in the trash or buy a new one, simply wash it to remove the dirt and stains. This works because the cup itself is inherently clean, the dirt and stains are temporary add-ons.

Right meditation practice also produces secondary benefits such as relaxation skills, calmness, improved relationships, and refreshing sleep. Many in-vogue mindfulness systems run counter to enlightenment because of their motivation to focus on self-interests. Athletes use mindfulness techniques to enhance their performance. CEOs and hedge-fund managers take mindfulness training sabbaticals to inflate their already excessive bank accounts. These are certainly effective in a materialistic sense but they also enhance ego clinging. For some, it may be more efficient and beneficial to take a day off and visit the beach, get a massage, have coffee with a friend, or enjoy a hot sauna.

Results of our actions depend on our goal and motivation. Right motivation is the altruistic aspiration for liberation from delusion, both for ourselves and others. The heart of the Buddha's teaching, the result of his insight, is the dharma of *bodhichitta*. In this context, the Sanskrit word "dharma" means both truth and duty. The Sanskrit word "*bodhichitta*" refers to the awakened mind of compassion. Thus, the dharma of *bodhichitta* is seeing the truth of the necessity for altruism in a world where all beings and actions are interconnected.

By closely observing the operation of the mind, we may notice thoughts and emotions flitting around like birds trapped in a closed room. During the meditation practice session in which we use our breath as the meditation object, if we try to extend it too long, it is common to become distracted by a profusion of thoughts and feelings. Nevertheless, noticing these distractions and returning to observing the breath is a sign of success and progress in our practice. All distractions may be viewed as friends of the practice.

The predominant habit pattern of our mind is entanglement with a cacophony of confused thoughts and emotions. Results of this entanglement range from the gross — explosive anger or terror, to the subtle — background noisiness or dullness. Within is a spectrum of attachment, anxiety, worry, hubris, bigotry, and ignorance. Meditation is seeing into this chaos of disorder. The meditative mind is quiet and reflective, like the limpid pool of a mountain lake, neither muddy below nor ripply above.

Enjoying the state of calm abiding is one of the skillful means for reflecting on reality and attaining wisdom. Prompted by the right motivation, serenity is attained through steady and moderate mindfulness practice. There is no danger associated with meditation practices that apply a common sense approach and employ mindfulness as a guardian. ✧

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