THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover: "*Tree of Life*" — Trees and Sacred Geometry Series — Chestnut I (Illuminated Version), 2022, 30x40cm, by Portuguese artist and poet Joma Sipe. **<www.jomasipe.com>** (See more details about this image on p. 29 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.

Presidential Address

To the 150th International Convention of the Theosophical Society (TS)
(*In-person & on Zoom from 31 December 2025 to 4 January 2026*)

ON behalf of all of the members and staff here at Adyar, I would like to welcome you all, and those who have joined online, to this 150th International Convention. For 150 years we have been gathering like this. Each wave of theosophists has benefited from this special meet, and the energies that radiate from this time together have been a blessing to the world. Please rise and let us turn our attention to those Great Ones whose work this Society was founded to assist.

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

It is a pleasure to declare this 150th Annual Convention of the TS open.

THE major event and strong focus of the year's activity was the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Theosophical Society (TS). Throughout the year at Adyar, and around the world, an attempt has been made to assess the TS's history and impact on global culture. One significant event crystallized this moment. Every seven years (approximately) we hold a World Congress in different parts of the world. In 2018 the first Asian World Congress (not including India) was held in Singapore. Seven years have passed and this year we returned to the North American continent, where the TS was founded in 1875. Hosted by TS Canada, almost 400 members from around the world gathered in Vancouver, British Columbia, for the five-day celebration. An additional two days were devoted to the Theosophical Order of Service gathering.

The World Congress was a multi faceted event with programs by members across the generational spectrum. One of the Canadian contributions was the prayers and program by Canada's "First People" — Native American spiritual offerings. Another highlight was the world premiere of the feature-length documentary film, *One Fire*, in the works for two years. Written and Directed by TS Finland member, Terhi Ahava, it was a high-level, professionally produced, exploration of the TS's history and its influence has exerted on global culture. Tracing its impact across time and continents, it brought together the views of authorities in the fields of music, art, religion, spirituality, politics, and history. It also includes a musical score written specifically for the film. The film has

had theatre screenings in several countries, and on 17 November, the Foundation Day of the TS, it was released on YouTube. Although it was released only three weeks prior to the time of this writing, it already has had more than 100,000 views!

There have been many noteworthy activities at Adyar. In early 2024, we launched the **Adyar Eco Development (AED)** project as a conscious effort to adopt a more thoughtful stewardship of the natural treasure that is the Adyar campus. The partnership on this project with Pitchandikulam Forest Consultants, led by Joss Brooks from Auroville, has progressed over the past year as a centre of restoration ecology, and hands-on environmental education. Since unveiling the project to the delegates at the 149th Convention, the team has quietly gone about transforming pockets of the campus into beautiful, healthier spaces for contemplative immersion and learning. A charming bamboo germination shed was added to the nursery adjoining the Great Banyan Tree, to nurture the precious seedlings being collected from across the campus. Hundreds of native saplings continue to be planted in various parts of the campus, including lesser-known medicinal herbs, as well as "sacred grove" species, emblematic of the region's native flora, rooted in the community's culture. Restorative care was provided to special trees around the campus, including a venerable, but afflicted, giant baobab behind the Olcott Cottage. Spaces around the campus have been revitalized and made more accessible through thoughtful land-scaping work. Beautiful granite benches were set up near the Adyar Theatre, and the nearby pond refreshed with white lotuses, too-long absent from the home of the Masters. The children of Olcott School were provided new, inviting places to enjoy their meals, with granite benches set up near the kitchen. More Kadapa stone artworks and carved sculptures now grace the gardens and pathways, thoughtfully placed for quietly revealing themselves to delighted passersby.

The new "Blue-Green Centre" in the Sapota Orchard behind Olcott School, was finished just in time for the beginning of the new academic year. The delightful and extremely functional classroom, as well as the team of environmental educators in it, sprung into immediate action. The team, worked in tandem with school teachers, planning and designing programs and activities that weave hands-on, immersive experiences in the natural environment around the Centre with engaging classroom discussions. The team has quickly bonded with the children of both Olcott School and Adyar Theosophical Academy, engaging them in a range of activities highlighting the complexity and interconnectedness of life around us. The educators also worked closely with students in Olcott School, encouraging the formation of a "Ministry of Design" that overlooks the care of the campus, while instilling in the children a sense of belonging and conscious responsibility. Looking ahead, the team has been actively working towards more collaborations and partnerships with schools, educators, ecologists, community workers, artists and funders. Projects are already

underway in and around Olcott Bungalow, as well as considerable land-scaping work in the Olcott School campus. The scope of AED's work to invoke deeper connections to the consciousness in a shared ecology is seemingly limitless.

The Art Project initiated by the **Blavatsky Museum of Arts** marked a turning point this year, successfully completing the conservation and restoration of 100 paintings, that began two years ago. German museum-quality glass was used for 25 of them to ensure their longevity and enhance the viewer's experience. This included the iconic work of Nicholas Roerich, *The Messenger*, which prompted the establishment of the museum in 1925. To prepare for the Museum's centenary, a booklet, with thirty historical items from our collection was published. Also, the museum space was renovated. For climate control, dehumidifiers were used. A new display arrangement was completed, and thirty silver and bronze items were also restored. In external activities, the Art Project was presented at the World Congress, and a visit was organized to the Vancouver Art Gallery's vaults to view the paintings of Lawren Harris, a famous theosophist artist from the early 20th century. Lastly, the artist residency was relaunched after more than a century with Christine Ödlund and Fredrik Söderberg from Sweden. Their presence on the campus has been vivid, and the outcome of their time in Adyar can be seen in their exhibition during the Convention.

The **Adyar Library & Research Centre** (**ALRC**) is in its final stages of automation. It enables (i) quick search of books or manuscripts, (ii) secure storage and retrieval and (iii) backup of all data. Koha is an open-source software used in libraries around the world. Here it has been introduced to manage library memberships and our database of over 150,000 book titles and 20,000 paper & palm-leaf manuscripts being digitized. Manuscripts are scanned or photographed and stored in computers. Regular backups are taken of all data using a sophisticated system. An IT Section was created to support this.

The **Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School** (**OMHSS**) has had significant upgrades over the past year. In conjunction with the Shiv Nadar School, a track and field facility was constructed. A Blue-Green Centre was also built and is now fully staffed and operational, serving as an eco-educational hub in the area. The Centre was inaugurated in April.

The **Adyar Theosophical Academy** (**ATA**) enrollment continues to expand, adding a new grade level each year, currently up to 8th grade. As a result, the school has outgrown its current location in the repurposed Theosophical Publishing House (TPH) and Vasanta Press buildings. In October we broke ground for the new school campus on the Kirby Gardens area of the Adyar campus and should be ready for the next academic year.

* * *

The Work around the World

In the **EUROPEAN** region The TS in **England & Wales** promoted theosophical teachings through its Headquarters and 21 Lodges and Centres, offering educational and spiritual opportunities via Sunday lectures and study courses on karma, the after-death states, and *The Secret Doctrine*. The Foundation and Higher Diploma Courses had 71 enrolments from the UK and overseas. The August Summer School, themed "Awakenings: Journey to Inner Peace", had over 40 participants for lectures, study groups, and Blavatsky Lecture delivered by Wayne Gatfield. The quarterly magazine *Esoterica* remained a key publication while major progress was made on the new website, improved member services, and the digitisation of historical audio lectures, now reaching 770 archived titles. Archives are undergoing professional cataloguing, and membership stands at 513, with 122 Associates. Regular Trustee and National Council meetings are held and the Headquarters is being planned to be relocated from London.

The TS in **Finland**, experienced an active year. The year's highlight was a summer school in Kreivilä on "Karma, Depth Psychology, and Reincarnation Memory" along with a symposium on Self-Knowledge. Many members participated in EFTS and WFYT meetings in Naarden. The Helsinki headquarters offered regular Sunday lectures streamed online, and celebrated Foundation Day and Adyar Day, while 17 Lodges across Finland and Estonia held study sessions, seminars, and public courses. Additional events included a spring seminar on "Three Doors" and the TOS Christmas festival supporting charitable projects in Adyar. The Section used *Teosofi* magazine, YouTube, SoundCloud, Facebook & Instagram.

At the TS in **France**, bi-monthly hybrid courses and online meditation sessions continued to attract participants, alongside public lectures, seminars, and celebrations of Founders Day, Adyar Day, and White Lotus Day. International collaboration remained strong through an online Mahatma Letters study group with the Belgian Section and participants from Spain, while another group supported new members in foundational theosophical studies. The highlight of the year was the National Convention, themed "The Quest for Wisdom Shapes Our Future," marking the 150th anniversary of the TS and featuring Angels Torra Buron, General Secretary of TS Spain. A historical exhibition and a baroque concert enriched the event. Outreach expanded through Facebook, YouTube, and newsletters, engaging younger members. Editions Adyar broadened its catalogue and audiobooks, archival digitisation progressed, renovations continued at the Paris Headquarters, and Le Lotus Bleu will shift to six issues in 2026.

The TS in **Germany** experienced an active program, highlighted by the Summer School in Tann-Lahrbach, marking

the Society's 150th anniversary. Regional gatherings flourished, including the South German Meeting featuring Qi Gong, cosmic dance, and thematic talks, and a Northern German weekend meeting at the Baltic Sea. Lodges and study groups met regularly, complemented by a monthly online meeting that connects members nationwide and strengthens local group work. TOS activities continued through healing groups, animal-care initiatives, and peace meditations. Publications included *Adyar* magazine.

In **Greece**, TS members were active throughout the year. All Lodges held lectures, study meetings, and celebrations aligned with the Society's three Objects, while new groups were founded, including the DRIS Study Centre in Ioannina (2024) and the Blavatsky Lodge (2025). The TSG organised a rich programme of seminars, conferences, sacred-site visits, and an art exhibition by Panos Tsagaris, attracting about 180 visitors and linking esotericism with contemporary art. Activities also included seminars on Theosophy, Karma, and Reincarnation; excursions to Delphi, Daveli Cave, and the Temple of the Egyptian Gods; and several one-day conferences and workshops. All issues of *Ilisos* focused on the TS's 150th anniversary, with a revised *Voice of the Silence* forthcoming. Plans include a digital library, while a key highlight was the successful renovation and modernisation of the headquarters and an enhanced digital presence.

The **Hungarian** TS had a year of consistent educational and community activity, centred on monthly public lectures exploring theosophical perspectives on themes such as death, fear, healing, myth, and the divine feminine. In honour of the 150th anniversary, a new series of reading-discussion events using classic texts was launched. Lectures were launched on YouTube and White Lotus Day was duly observed. Numerous articles were translated while members contributed original writings too. Lodge meetings addressed consciousness studies and the societal impact of AI. The Society revived its Healing Group, organized community events, and participated in cross-border collaborations.

The TS in **Iceland** reported a year of steady activity supported by strong member collaboration, with its newsletter *Mundiflari* published thrice and its journal *Gangleri* continuing toward its centenary. Meeting activity remained robust, with weekly study sessions, full-moon meditations, thematic discussions, and monthly programs on fairy tales and archetypes, alongside a highly attended gathering in Akureyri. Membership numbers shifted but engagement across lodges remained active. The affiliated life-view society expanded quickly, performing ceremonies and significantly improving the Society's financial position. Facilities were upgraded through repairs, new furnishings, and enhanced communication efforts planned.

The TS in **Ireland** welcomed new members this year, many of whom found the Society through its website. There was strong nationwide participation at the

17th and 18th All Ireland Conventions, enriched by international greetings and gifts of *The Voice of the Silence*. Phoenix Lodge continues in-person meetings, while Belfast Lodge, facing higher venue costs and dispersed membership operates mainly online. Members received regular study notes and news, with opportunities to join talks and meditations from abroad. In future, the focus will be on studying *The Voice of the Silence*.

This year the TS in **Italy** experienced a dynamic programme of activities. Events included a Silent Retreat on the *Bodhisattva Vows*, lectures by Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu, participation in the European School of Theosophy, and representation at the 149th International Convention in Adyar. National highlights were the Ascona Theosophical Seminar, the well-received *Music and Theosophy* programme in Milan, and the 111th National Congress in Ferrara, marking the TS's 150th anniversary with the premiere of a historical docufilm on the Italian Section. Two bimonthly journals — *Edizioni Teosofiche Italiane* and *Rivista Italiana di Teosofia* — were launched in print and digital formats, supported by audio versions from younger members. Digital outreach expanded through the website, newsletter, social media, and a YouTube channel with over 235 videos. The TOS further strengthened its humanitarian work.

In **Norway** the TS continued its work through the Strommen Local Group's monthly meetings with 8–15 participants attending either in person or online. A major highlight was the public celebration of the Society's 150th anniversary, marked by a well-attended lecture at the Literature House in Oslo on 3 May, featuring speakers Andreas Mikael Isberg and Eva Moberg. The board also organized an anniversary dinner, lecture, and discussion on 15 November, continuing efforts to expand its theosophical activities.

The TS in **Portugal** elected a new executive board for the 2024–2029 term and continued organising well-attended public programmes both in-person and online. Three sessions were offered monthly, featuring talks, dialogues, and discussion groups, with active participation from Lodges and Study Groups. Efforts to strengthen outreach continued through the renovation of its website, continued publication of newsletter, and greater use of social media.

The 2024–2025 period in **Russia** was marked by a series of major national gatherings — the Annual Russian Congress in Moscow, the Kémerovo Conference, the Anahata Lodge Conference, and the 15th Siberian Seminar in Makáryevka — all attracting members and the public from across the country. Further events were held in Belarus, Biysk, and other cities for White Lotus Day and Blavatsky commemorations. Online activity included Saturday Lecture Programs, Sunday "Foundations of Theosophy" classes, the 500th meeting of *The Secret Doctrine* webinar, meditation sessions, and weekly youth-group meetings. The final volume of W. Q. Judge's *Collected Writings* was printed; the biannual magazine *Modern Theoophical Thought* expanded into audio; and the Teopedia project launched the "Legacy of HPB" in

preparation for her bicentennial in 2031.

In connection with the TS in **Scotland,** membership remained steady. Their Glasgow Lodge had commenced the study of *The Ocean of Theosophy* by W. Q. Judge. Younger members became active within the WFYT. The highlight of the year was a talk by Trān-Thi-Kim-Diêu titled "The Invisible World and Us". This was held in Edinburgh when the EFTS Executive Committee held their meeting there.

Coming to the TS in **Slovenia,** its work was executed via five Lodges, two Study Centres, and a weekly national online program that offered 33 lectures with meditation and discussion. Lodges Surya, Dawn, and Blavatsky remained active, and national meetings brought members together to study works by Taimni, Blavatsky, Besant, Krishnamurti, Tim Boyd, and others. All the Memorial Days were celebrated, and in-person and online introductory courses reached over 250 participants. The digital magazine, *Theosophical Thought*, continued publication.

The TS in **Spain** continued its regular study through Branches and Study Groups, offering in-person and online conferences, inter-Branch meetings, and its three annual national events: the Silent Retreat, the Iberian Conference, and the Summer School. The HPB Institute expanded training for future speakers, while the Section contributed to the Inter-American platform. A major milestone was the inauguration of the new National Headquarters, and participation in the 12th World Congress in Vancouver. The TOS supported Ukraine, with projects like children's and rehabilitation centres. Online activities grew with monthly meetings.

The TS in **Sweden** had a steady and active year, offering study weekends, courses, public lectures, meditation meetings, and a well-used bookshop and lending library, along with an active Eco-Book Group. Online engagement expanded through frequent Zoom meetings, a growing YouTube channel, and wider use of social media. Members participated in themed study programmes and international activities, including European and global schools of Theosophy. The Section continued TOS humanitarian support in India and Sumatra, marked an academic exhibition at Södertörn University, published *Tides of Wisdom*, and maintained stable membership throughout the year.

The TS in **Switzerland** remained active across the four cantons. From its Ascona headquarters, it hosted the European Seminar, held the Annual General Meeting, and continued weekly study meetings, while the Monte Verità retreat centre offered study spaces, vegan cuisine, yoga, and access to a rich theosophical library. Ascona also hosted major European events. The Geneva Lodge, after its 2024 renovation, held weekly meetings. The Zurich Group met monthly to study *The Key to Theosophy*. In Lugano and Cazis, groups held regular study programs, online meditations, and community activities.

Despite the ongoing war, the TS in **Ukraine** continued its work through its seven Branches and an Interregional Study Center, for 103 active members. The year's

main events included the 20th Convention on the "Universal Mind", White Lotus Day, the Day of the Messenger of Light, and 150th anniversary celebrations. TSU significantly expanded its public outreach through an online lecture series "Theosophy for the Interested", its website, and social media. It also hosted the online School of the Wisdom "Mahatmas' Letters", continued scientific research in its Science Group, organised dozens of round tables through the Department of Education, and published multiple issues of *Svitoch*, *News of TSU*, *Theosophy and Science*, and the almanac, *Living Theosophy*. The TOS carried out more than 90 humanitarian actions supporting refugees, hospitals, children, animals, and war-affected communities, while weekly meditations and study groups strengthened unity and collaboration across all branches.

In the **AFRICAN** region, The **East & Central African** Section, comprising Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia, maintained steady membership numbers. Nairobi and Kitwe Lodges introduced more interactive meetings, like Nairobi's "Group Discussions", which improved participation. Nairobi Lodge held regular weekly talks, including a presentation on Chaos Theory, and hosted Group Discussions on topics such as Stress & Awareness, Karma, Adaptability, and Humility. Dar-es-Salaam Lodge continued strong TOS work, Nile Lodge met regularly and Kitwe Lodge saw renewed interest. Screening of *One Fire* was held for the 150th Foundation Day of the TS.

The TS in **South Africa** reported a membership increase but nation-wide financial strain, have made Lodge attendance difficult, with Germiston and Mozambique Lodges struggling to function. Pretoria's rented venue is now attracting more members. Johannesburg and Cape Town continued to function well. The Section is also expanding its online presence.

At present in the **AMERICAS**, the TS in **Central America** has a Lodge and a Study Centre. The Teotl Lodge and the Blavatsky Study Centre focused their yearly work on the systematic study of key theosophical texts — *The Masters and the Path* (C. W. Leadbeater), *Theosophy* (Annie Besant), and *The Key to Theosophy* (H. P. Blavatsky) — along with a monthly introductory course on Theosophy led by Bro. Rafael Arévalo using *Theosophy Explained* by Pavri. Regular study gatherings were held and an initiation for new members was done at Teotl Lodge in February 2025. Activities in El Salvador and Nicaragua continued.

The National Council of the **Argentine** Section emphasized Lodge work in fulfilling the Three Objects, and the value of in-person meetings, proposing two-year introductory courses for sympathizers. Four books were edited and printed in Spanish — *The Initiate Life*, *Talks on the Path of Occultism* (complete edition), *The World of Theosophy*, and *Seeking Wisdom* — and reissued four others, *The Secret Doctrine* (Vol. 1), *Esoteric Instructions*, *The Key to Theosophy*, and *The Seven Dimensions of Being*. Its YouTube channel expanded. A national virtual Theosophy course was offered through classrooms, serving regions without Lod-

ges. Two major gatherings were held at the Theosophical Center in San Rafael: the 58th Summer School in January and the Winter School in July. The General Secretary also visited Lodges giving public lectures and fostering fellowship and fraternity.

In **Bolivia** the year was marked by active work centred on study, research, and dissemination across all branches and centres of the TS. Branches held regular weekly meetings studying core texts by Taimni, Blavatsky, Jinarajadasa, Hodson, Barborka, Hal, etc, while members also offered national and international lectures. Significant activities included the Ordinary Assembly, a national workshop on "Study, Meditation and Service", a joint seminar with Argentine colleagues, and an extensive tour of workshops by Dr Isaac Jauli. Public lectures were held weekly. Commemorative dates such as Foundation Day, Adyar Day and White Lotus Day were observed across Lodges. The Dora Crespo Library completed its cataloguing.

The TS in **Brazil** experienced an active and meaningful year, marked by expanded educational activities, broader public outreach, and strong member engagement. National and international schools, seminars, retreats, and congresses were held as in-person, hybrid, and online formats, encouraging wide participation. Free introductory courses, regular lectures, and weekly study groups explored core theosophical teachings, meditation, universal laws, brotherhood, and the integration of science, philosophy, and spirituality. Digital outreach expanded through live broadcasts, recorded content, and increased use of social media. Activities at the national headquarters included public lectures, movement practices, and an active bookshop. Youth initiatives grew through seminars, gatherings, and nature-based programs, fostering study, service, and leadership. Affiliated organizations continued educational, publishing, and humanitarian work, reaffirming the Society's commitment to service, spiritual growth, and universal brotherhood.

The TS in **Canada** successfully hosted the 2025 World Congress in Vancouver, welcoming almost 400 participants and received positive feedback. It continued the fortnightly Sunday meetings with national and international speakers and strengthening connections with Lodges in Calgary, Edmonton, and Toronto. The Section is focusing on French-language conferences, a White Lotus event, as well as English-language lectures and study sessions, alongside ongoing Lodge activities. Studies included works like *Evolution of the Higher Consciousness*, *Approaching the Secret Doctrine*, *Death and the Afterlife*, *Spiritual Beliefs in Human Prehistory*, and *L'Homme, Dieu et l'Univers*.

The TS in **Chile** reported an active year marked by new members joining through public activities and work carried out under the annual motto "Urgent Discernment for Responsible Actions". Lodges — Arundhati, Amor, and Santiago — held regular weekly study meetings, and presentations on texts such as *Self-Culture* by I. K. Taimni, *Talks on the Path of Occultism*, and *The Art of Living*. The Education Department expanded public

and member training through in-person and online introductory Theosophy courses, with over 250 participants nationwide, resulting in notable interest in joining the Society. Workshops for members, including "Letters from the Masters" and the "Integral Theosophy Course" for newcomers continued actively.

The TS in **Costa Rica** maintained consistent activity across its four Lodges. Each Lodge continued its study programs, covering core texts by Blavatsky, Taimni, Krishnamurti, Barborka, Hall, etc., and several Lodges strengthened internal participation and inter-member collaboration. Special events, including Annie Besant Day, Founders Day, Adyar Day and White Lotus Day were organized jointly with Lodges. The Presidential Agency offered a well-received Summer School led by Isaac Jauli, launched an online *Secret Doctrine* study group for newer members, and created a daily meditation group for world peace.

The **Cuban** Section held its Annual Convention on 18–19 January on the theme "150th Anniversary of the TS". In Havana, Lodges maintained their meeting schedules; Saturday Lodges relied on participants from the Elementary Course of Theosophy. Sunday Lodges continued meeting, with one shifting from weekly to biweekly. Outside Havana, two of the four Lodges were unable to function due to severe material hardships, including unpredictable electricity, while the others continued with weekly meetings and celebrated Adyar Day, White Lotus Day, and Founders' Day. Studies across the Section focused on works by I. K. Taimni, Radha Burnier, selections from *The Theosophist*, and topics such as Christianity, Masonry, the *Vedas*, the *Bhagavadgita*, and the *Bhāgavata Purana*. In Havana, the Society's commemorative dates were observed.

The TS in the **Dominican Republic**'s highlights for the year included active educational, spiritual, and service-oriented work across its theosophical Lodges. Key events featured celebrations such as White Lotus Day and preparations for the Society's 150th anniversary, alongside a robust program of courses and workshops covering *Practical Theory*, *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Bhagavadgita*, and *The Letters of the Masters*. Seminars were held on themes like life after death, astrology, karma, and the deeper meaning of Christmas. Service initiatives included weekly healing rituals and financial aid to needy families. A new board of directors was elected for 2025–2027. The Nueva Aurora Lodge reported completion of its study of *The Seven Rays*, ongoing study of *The Divine Plan* and a total of 23 active members.

The TS in **Peru** offered seventeen public online talks during the year through its HPB and Verdad Lodges, and availability of online theosophical programmes. Lodge Verdad was studying Esoteric Christianity since March 2025, meeting both online and once a month in person. The Section held its traditional celebrations — Foundation Day, Adyar Day, White Lotus Day, and Christmas — exclusively online. Membership now stands at 30, following two lapses and one new member.

The TS in **Puerto Rico** carried out a full year of activities through its three active

Lodges — Universal Flame, The Voice of the Silence, and Sophia — which collaborated to offer monthly public lectures. They also hosted study workshops that encouraged deep learning and fraternity. Each Lodge pursued study programs, including Fundamentals of Esoteric Philosophy, the writings of Blavatsky, and *The Letters of the Masters*. The centennial of its building is in 2027.

The **United States of America** experienced a productive year highlighted by a successful Summer National Convention and the launch of a campaign to restore the historic L. W. Rogers building. Archival digitisation expanded and led to the building's inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Audiovisual, marketing, and IT teams greatly increased digital outreach, producing nearly 300 online programmes and significantly expanding audiences across YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Vimeo, and the Section's website. Maintenance crews completed key repairs and grounds improvements, supporting events such as TheosoFest, hybrid workshops, and yoga and meditation classes. Quest Book Shop strengthened its role as a public gateway to Theosophy and assumed TPH distribution. Publications thrived, with themed issues of *Quest* magazine and the release of *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky*, Vol. II. Across all departments, including the Prison Mentorship Program, staff and volunteers worked collaboratively to expand outreach and support the Section's mission with dedication and compassion.

During 2024–2025, the TS in **Uruguay** focused on continuity, study, and adaptation to post-pandemic conditions. Activities continued in mixed and in-person formats, with study programs on key theosophical texts and ongoing practices. Major commemorations were observed, outreach expanded through social media, and service efforts supported animal shelters. Organizational decisions addressed infrastructure needs through relocation planning.

Concerning the TS in **Venezuela** we have reports that its two Lodges, Blavatsky and Fraternity, continue to meet every Sunday morning. During the year, members celebrated White Lotus Day and the 149th Foundation Day. Their study program included talks by C. W. Leadbeater and Annie Besant on J. Krishnamurti's *A los pies del maestro*, and *Teosofía Explicada* by P. Pavri. Meetings also featured collective meditation for world peace. The year was noteworthy for its strong focus on offering introductory teachings on Theosophy, exploring universal laws, and emphasizing the principle of brotherhood as a central part of their work.

In the **ASIA-PACIFIC** region, in the year 2024–25, the TS in **East & South East Asia** reports a year of steady growth and active theosophical work across Singapore, China, Malaysia, Japan, and Myanmar. **Singapore** maintained its regular program of weekly talks, study classes, commemorative events, and meditation activities. The **Chinese** Project Team contributed the most significant expansion, offering frequent online lectures, reading groups, daily publications, major translation efforts, and its first in-person gathering of members. **Malaysia's** Selangor

Lodge continued weekly public talks, meditation sessions, and introductory Theosophy courses, while **Japan** held online study and discipleship meetings. Although no report was received from **Myanmar**, over-all membership for the region increased notably, reflecting ongoing outreach, expanded educational initiatives, and strengthened collaboration among lodges dedicated to advancing theosophical study and service.

The **Australian** Section saw steady membership growth and a strong program of national activities, highlighted by the 2025 National Convention in Hobart, which featured an inspiring keynote by environmentalist Bob Brown. The Springbrook retreats — including "Within You is the Light" and the Australian School of Theosophy's "Completely Whole Now" — were especially well received. Access to educational and research resources continued to expand through the restoration of the Union Index, improvements to OPAC and the Liberty app, and ongoing development of the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives. Effective governance and international and national presence from the National President, National Council, and Executive Committee supported TS centres across the country. Lodges, Branches, and Certified Groups reported strong community involvement. The highlight of TOS work was participation in the exceptional 5th International Conference in Vancouver.

The year 2024–2025 was highly active and significant for the **Indian** Section of the TS, marked by strong membership growth and expanded educational initiatives. A historic delegation of 98 members attended the 12th World Congress in Vancouver for the Society's 150th anniversary, the largest from any country. Key administrative developments included Banaras Hindu University's approval of a Theosophy course, resolution of land-related cases, and compensation received for acquired land in Salem. The Dr Radha Burnier Award was presented to N. C. Krishna for his long and dedicated service. National and international lecturers travelled widely, sharing teachings on self-knowledge, meditation, spiritual regeneration, the Mahatma Letters, global brotherhood, and applied Theosophy. Online activities such as weekly lectures, study groups, and YouTube channels including *Theosophy India* significantly expanded outreach. Publications remained strong, with *The Indian Theosophist* issued monthly in English and Hindi, alongside books, translations, and digital newsletters. Service and educational work continued through the Theosophical Order of Service, colleges, hostels, and schools, while new outreach in several states fostered fresh study groups and Lodges.

From October 2024 to September 2025, the **Indonesian** Section delivered an extensive range of programs and discussions. Regular member studies included *At the Feet of the Master* and *The Inner Life*, while independent discussions explored topics such as AI and ChatGPT, death, dogma, Wayang (puppet) symbolism, *Bharatayuddha* (*Mahabharata*), truth and falsehood, and Wahdatul Wujud (Unity of existence in Sufi doctrine).

Weekly Saturday Talks addressed planetary catastrophe, contemplation, spiritual emergence, natural laws, and initiation. Two "Basic Study" batches and a long-running meditation program, "A Yoga of Light", strengthened ongoing education. "Inspiring Talks" highlighted the history of Theosophy across Java, and a hybrid Solo Lodge event with Rekha Nahar (Philippines) focused on service and future development.

The **New Zealand** Section experienced significant growth and renewal, marked by the opening of a new Lodge Hall in Christchurch, the transition of Orewa Lodge into an Affiliated Centre, and revitalised activity across Study Centres. National programmes — including the Summer Convention, School of Theosophy, Immersion Weekend, and speaker development initiatives — were well attended. Sixteen members represented New Zealand at the World Congress and TOS Conference in Vancouver during the Society's 150th anniversary celebrations. Centres continued to expand their study offerings. Ongoing assistance was provided to Adyar's art restoration work. Many Lodges updated their constitutions to meet new legal requirements, and publications such as *Theosophia* remained widely appreciated for their quality and range of contributions.

During 2025, the Karachi TS in **Pakistan** actively promoted universal brotherhood, interfaith harmony, education, and service. Key initiatives encouraged dialogue, empathy, and inclusivity, while participation in international theosophical gatherings strengthened global connections. Ongoing support for service programmes benefited communities through education, training, and development, reflecting its commitment to compassionate action and the practical application of theosophical ideals.

The **Philippine** Section reports a year of extensive Lodge and Study Group visits by its General Secretary across Cebu, Bohol, Bacolod, Iloilo, and Davao, prioritizing service activities such as children's outreach, book reading, and community engagement. Cebu visits helped revive Lodge work and the launch of the Satsang Book Club. In Bohol, activities were conducted with Golden Link College teachers, while meetings in Bacolod, Iloilo, and Davao focused on strengthening and reactivating Lodges. Collaborations, such as a youth camp in Davao and literacy programs with the Baguio City Public Library, supported the formation of the Cosmic Wisdom Study Group. Connections with Malaysia and ongoing support for Golden Link College capped a productive year.

At the **INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS** IN ADYAR, the **Adyar Library and Research Centre (ALRC),** presented an exhibition titled "Kanjur and Tanjur: The Holy Books of Tibetan Buddhism", during the 149th International Convention, which was very well received. The Library also hosted a two-day seminar on science-based Indian Knowledge Systems and celebrated the successful completion of a Sanskrit course by the staff. The "Libraries as Communities" program continues to grow with increasing public participation.

I have already talked about **Adyar Eco Development** and the **Blavatsky Museum of Arts** at the beginning.

The **Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary** experienced a year of strong growth and consolidation, reinforcing its role in compassionate veterinary service. Clinical services expanded to meet community needs, supported by dedicated veterinary professionals and volunteers. Diagnostic capacity improved with upgraded equipment, and a modern operation theatre strengthened animal birth control efforts. Continued emphasis on sterilisation and responsible pet ownership advanced long-term welfare goals. New facilities enhanced care for animals across multiple species, reaffirming BMAD's commitment to animal welfare and community responsibility.

The **Olcott Education Society** continued during the past year to uphold its steadfast commitment to the holistic development of members of deprived communities through its educational, social, and vocational initiatives. Guided by the vision of Col. Olcott, the **Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School** provided free, quality education to 375 students, supported by meals, counselling, scholarships, and a wide range of academic, cultural, and sporting activities, while also integrating digital literacy, STEM learning, and environmental awareness via the AED team. The **Social Welfare Centre** nurtured early childhood education for 25 children through Montessori-based learning, health initiatives, eco-awareness, and nutrition. The **Vocational Training Centre** empowered women through tailoring and weaving skills, fostering self-employment and entrepreneurship. Together, these units sustained a compassionate legacy of education, dignity, and service.

The **School of the Wisdom (SOW),** welcomed about 200 members from more than 30 countries during the year ending September 2025, offering sessions, both on the Adyar campus and through select online sessions. Under the guidance of the Director, Erica Georgiades, online sessions were intentionally reduced to encourage deeper learning, placing greater emphasis on in-person classes that cultivate focused study, meaningful dialogue, and genuine human connection. Participants repeatedly shared that the unique spiritual atmosphere of Adyar — its sacred grounds, historic landmarks, and vibrant community — deepened their experience far beyond intellectual learning. The year's programme included "The Transformative Power of *The Secret Doctrine*" with Dr Pablo and Michele Sender; "Los Pilares de la Sabiduría Eterna" with Marcela Pardella and Eduardo Gramaglia; "Practicing Spiritual Teachings in Our Daily Life" with Dr Ravi Ravindra; "Insights into the Mahatma Letters" with U. S. Pandey; and the online course "Science and Occult Science" by Dr Edi Bilimoria. Inspiring campus tours were conducted for each batch by Shikhar Agnihotri.

The **Surendra Narayan Archives** reported a steady year, receiving regular requests from TS members and global scholars for documents, photographs, and related materials. During the Convention, the Archives presented an exhibition —

HPB's Paintings, Satirical Sketches and Doodles — warmly appreciated by the delegates. Members of the TS and the broader Adyar community anticipate the forthcoming book by Dr Geetha Jaikumar, on the early Adyar campus.

The **Theosophical Order of Service** (TOS) reports active presence in 38 of the 59 countries where the TS operates. The website is being fully redesigned. Social channels, like Facebook and an upcoming Instagram account, are being reorganized to strengthen future communication. Leaderhip changes took place in England, Italy, France, and Canada following retirements and the passing of long-time coordinator Atma Trasi. Several national Sections launched initiatives, such as support programs for differently abled children and an eye-donation campaign in India, student sponsorships in Kenya, environmental outreach in the USA, and assistance for children's publications in New Zealand. Reports received highlight continued dedication to women's issues, education, youth engagement, animal welfare, humanitarian aid, and the widespread activity of healing groups. A major milestone was the 5th International TOS Conference in Vancouver, featuring President Tim Boyd, keynote speaker Vic Hao Chin, Jr, and presenters from 11 countries, whose talks are available on the World Congress website.

The **Theosophical Publishing House** increased its sales during the year, supported by its reprinting of fifty-nine, previously out-of-stock titles to ensure full availability during the 149th Convention. Two significant books were published for the Vancouver World Congress: *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings: Russian Serials* compiled by Michael Gomes and *On the Verge of Wisdom* by President Tim Boyd, both of which sold out beyond pre-orders. As of 30 September 2025, the journal subscriptions were: *The Theosophist* — India 633, overseas 52 and *Adyar Newsletter* — India 224, overseas 73. A steep rise in overseas postal rates caused many print subscribers to cancel.

The **World Federation of Young Theosophists** continued to expand its global work following the election of a new international board. A rich programme of spiritual study and community engagement was sustained through regular study groups on key theosophical texts, astrology sessions, and ongoing discussion series. Additional activities included panel discussions, creative poetry evenings, and a growing podcast collection. Recordings of lectures and study sessions were made available through the WFYT YouTube channel, extending global access to its work. Two international gatherings were held during the year, strengthening international connections and shared learning among participants from many countries. Outreach and communication continued to grow through the redesigned website, <wfyt.org>, as well as active engagement on WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. With a steadily expanding worldwide membership, WFYT continues to foster study, creativity, and connection among young theosophists while preparing for future international gatherings.

Tim Boyd

150 Years of Theosophy: A Journey of Light and Brotherhood

DEEPA PADHI

THIS year we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Theosophical Society (TS) — a movement which has carried the light of truth, wisdom, and brotherhood across generations and continents.

A hundred and fifty years ago in 1875, three remarkable souls gathered in New York — Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (HPB), Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, and William Quan Judge. They were driven not by the ambition to create another sect or creed or religion but for a noble ideal — to awaken the human unity and the spiritual potential within every being.

After the Society was founded, they adopted a motto that has since become immortal: "*satyāt nāsti parodharma* — There is no religion higher than Truth." It is not just a motto. It reminds us that Truth is greater than all dogmas, and blind beliefs.

We all know that the TS was built upon three great objectives which is timeless and universal in purpose:

1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour. In this context, HPB wrote in *The Key to Theosophy*: "The Society was founded to teach men to see the truth by tearing away the veils of dogmas and prejudices." Distinctions based on race, creed, gender, caste and colour are nothing but dogmas and prejudices of human ignorance.

2. To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science. Annie Besant had said: "There is no antagonism between science and religion, between reason and faith. Each is but a different path leading to the same summit of truth."

3. To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man. HPB wrote in *The Secret Doctrine*: "Man is God in the making." This statement affirms the divine potential within every human being — that is, the capacity for wisdom, compassion and transformation. These three objects were revolutionary and remain so. They are as relevant in 2025 as they were in 1875.

The Light of Wisdom Moving to India and the Theosophical Movement

In 1879, Blavatsky and Olcott arrived in India, the ancient land of spiritual

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wisdom. Here they found not only inspiration but also a home for their ideals, for their vision. They called Adyar "*deva-bhumi* (land of the gods)". By 1882, the headquarters of the TS was established at Adyar, Madras (now Chennai) — a sacred meeting place where East and West joined hands in spiritual fellowship.

Blavatsky, the mystic philosopher, wrote in *The Voice of the Silence*: "Before the soul can see, the harmony within must be attained, and fleshly eyes be rendered blind to all illusion." These words still remind us that inner peace and outer harmony are inseparable.

Today is the day to remember all our leaders — the International Presidents of the TS — with a brief note on their major contributions.

1) Henry Steel Olcott (1875–1907)

The founding President was instrumental in the establishment of the Theosophical Society and the headquarters at Adyar, Chennai. Olcott's practical vision led him to start a school for underprivileged children, now named "Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School", in Adyar.

2) Annie Besant (1907–1933)

When she joined the Society in 1889, a new chapter began. An orator, reformer, visionary, and champion of women's empowerment, she brought immense energy to Theosophy, especially in India. She saw in Theosophy not only a philosophy, but a way of life — a harmony of thought and action, meditation and service. Under her leadership, Adyar became a beacon of education, reform, and national awakening. She founded schools and colleges including the central Hindu College in Varanasi, which later became the Banaras Hindu University.

3) George Sydney Arundale (1934–1945)

Under his presidency, the Society placed greater emphasis on education and encouraged cultural revival, notably Indian classical dance, which went on to become the Kalakshetra Foundation. His wife Rukmini Devi Arundale was also an ardent theosophist and her spirituality was expressed through dance forms.

4) C. Jinarājadāsa (1946–1953)

A Sri Lanka-born theosophist and prolific writer, he brought about global outreach and the foundation of the School of the Wisdom at Adyar.

5) Nilakanta Sri Ram (1953–1973)

His twenty-year presidency marked a shift from external phenomena to the inner transformation of Consciousness — the ethical dimension of Theosophy. He emphasized the humanizing, transformational work of the Society.

6) John B. S. Coats (1973–1979)

He carried forward the international work of the Society during a period of global change, continuing to build connections across national Sections.

7) Radha S. Burnier (1980–2013)

A deeply respected leader, she guided the Society for over three decades and enriched its publication and research work (including the Adyar Library and Research Center). She nurtured youth programmes and championed a vision

of Universal Brotherhood with no barriers. She promoted vegetarianism, animal welfare, environmental awareness as a part of theosophical living. During her time and on her invitation, J. Krishnamurti visited Adyar after decades, trying to bring together different spiritual traditions.

8) Tim Boyd (2014–present)

The current President brings the theosophical vision into our contemporary global context — emphasizing service, youth engagement, interfaith dialogue and the practical application of theosophical principles in our rapidly changing world. He believes in translating spirituality into action. Under his presidency, the TS has initiated new projects like the Blue-Green Centre in the Adyar campus inaugurated in April 2025, which focuses on experiential environmental education for students. Also, the Adyar Theosophical Academy was established providing holistic education to the children.

As we reflect on this distinguished line of leadership, we recognize that each President inherited and expanded the heritage of their predecessors. Together, they form a living chain of continuity, hope, and purpose. All of them teach us that the theosophical ideals remain ever-relevant, even as the world changes.

We cannot speak of Theosophy's later years without mentioning the name of J. Krishnamurti, the boy discovered by the Society in 1909 who later became the world teacher of a new era. He declared: "Truth is a pathless land. You cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect."

Relevance of Theosophy today

As we celebrate 150 years of this great movement, we must ask what does Theosophy mean today? In a world torn by division, Theosophy's first object — Universal Brotherhood — is not just relevant, it is very much essential. When HPB outlined the first object she was not speaking of an ideal — she was laying down a necessity for the survival of human civilization itself.

Annie Besant said that true Theosophy belongs to no religion, yet belongs to all. This simple truth calls us to rise above sectarianism and to recognize the divinity in every being. Theosophy also offers a bridge between science and spirituality, between reason and intuition.

Our modern age is one of wonderful achievements: science has penetrated to the heart of matter, communication has made the world a global village, and artificial intelligence now rivals human reasoning. Yet beneath all this lies the fragmentation of human spirit. Man has reached the moon, but has not yet found peace on earth. In every sphere — politics, religion, environment, education — we see divisions, confusion and conflict. The very progress that should liberate us often binds us further in restlessness and competition.

Here lies the relevance of Theosophy. It calls on us to remember that behind the diversity of forms, there is an eternal unity. It teaches that the essence of life is one — expressed through countless manifestations.

When we truly perceive this unity, our experience of life changes. We

begin to see the sacredness of all beings and compassion becomes natural, not just superficial. Brotherhood becomes a fact in consciousness, not an ideal of speech.

Modern humanity is materially rich but spiritually impoverished. Today, most people live with comfort and convenience, yet feel an emptiness, a void inside that no possession can fill up. Now the human soul is hungry for meaning in life, connection with the Higher Self, understanding of its own divine nature. Theosophy answers these questions by pointing inward. It proclaims that man is not a body having a soul — he is a soul using a body. Theo-sophical teachings remind us that consciousness is the fundamental reality of the universe, and that evolution is not only physical but spiritual — a journey of awakening from ignorance to enlightenment.

Theosophy does not ask us to abandon the modern world, but to spiritualize it — to bring inner awareness into our daily living, our relationships, our professions and our communities. When science explains the outer laws of matter, and Theosophy explores the inner laws of consciousness, the two can meet in harmony. This synthesis of the unity of science, religion and philosophy — is perhaps the greatest need of the day. In an age of artificial intelligence and material progress, it reminds us that "knowledge without wisdom is dangerous, and power without compassion is blind".

Theosophy and service to humanity

Annie Besant, the torchbearer of the Society once said" "Theosophy is the mighty work of evolution, helping all beings towards self-conscious divinity." This statement is the essence of theosophical service. Theosophy does not merely ask us to study or to believe — it calls us to serve. For the highest worship of Truth is the service of all beings.

Service in the theosophical sense, is not charity done from a sense of superiority but the natural expression of love that is born from the realization of unity. In fact, when we help another, we help ourselves — for there is no "other".

Theosophy places great importance on altruism or selfless service to others. It is not just a moral recommendation — it is central to spiritual growth. Altruism is a transformative spiritual practice which helps in reducing selfish motives, cultivating humility, opening of *buddhi* which is essential for higher consciousness, and reducing karmic patterns driven by selfish desires. Selfless service creates beneficial karmic results, not just for the individual but also for the world. H. P. Blavatsky, Annie Besant and other theosophical writers repeatedly taught that the First Rule of discipleship is Service.

Theosophy sees human evolution as collective — not merely individual. Humanity can progress when individuals help uplift those who suffer. Only compassionate actions can save divisions. Selfless service is not optional in Theosophy — it is the "heart of the path, heart of the movement". Theosophists promoted holistic education and equal rights for women that remain vital today.

In our modern times, when humanity focuses on ecological crisis, social inequalities, and moral confusion, the theosophical attitude of "selfless service" becomes the healing force. Wherever there is kindness, understanding, and compassion, there is Theosophy.

Theosophy and the Future

Now as the Society steps into its 150th year, the question before all of us is not merely how to preserve its teachings but how to live them. Theosophy cannot remain in books, Lodges or intellectual discussions alone — it must be translated into action in our daily life. Every member, every Lodge, every Federation must become a living centre of light. Today, let us ask ourselves:

1. Are we living as examples of the Universal Brotherhood we proclaim?
2. Do our Lodges, Federations and Sections radiate the atmosphere of harmony, openness, and love? Do we get that feeling?
3. Are we in our personal lives, embodying the spirit of Theosophy — in thought, word and action?

If each one of us becomes a centre of peace, light, and love, then human society as a whole will become a luminous network of Consciousness.

As we look back on these 150 years, we see not only the story of an organization but the evolution of a spiritual movement that continues to illuminate lives across the world. From Adyar to Amsterdam, from Varanasi to Vancouver, the flame of Theosophy has inspired seekers, scholars, reformers and visionaries. In fact, its strength lies in its simplicity — the recognition that the Truth is One, Humanity is one, Consciousness is One.

This 150th year should remind us that Theosophy lives not in books or buildings, but in every act of understanding, every gesture of kindness and every search for truth. Let us live Theosophy in our thoughts, in our speech, and in our service to the world. ✧

The greater the progress towards deliverance,
the less this [Ego] will be the case, until, to crown all,
human and purely individual personal feelings . . .
all will give way, to become blended
into one universal feeling, the only true and holy,
the only unselfish and eternal one — Love,
an Immense Love for humanity — *as a Whole*!

Master Koot Hoomi
From *Daily Meditations*
Compiled by Katherine A. Beechey, p.18

Mahatma Gandhi, Theosophy, and the Brotherhood of Religions — I

NINGTHOUJAM SOMOKANTA SINGH & ELANGBAM GIRANI SINGH

ABSTRACT

A massive amount of interpretations of various religious thoughts have been generated today. Sometimes, these interpretations may lead to interreligious conflicts or undermine entire religious systems. However, the theosophical interpretations of religion are reasonable and serve as a moral guide for contemporary society. The theosophical doctrines are more rational and pragmatic in keeping up with the current pace of social change. On the other hand, the subject of Mahatma Gandhi's religious thought is currently gaining importance in the field of Theosophy. His religious thought neglects the fundamental causes of religious egoism but promotes the ideals and morals of Truth.

His universal foundation and essential tenets of religion offer insights into moral behavior and faith in spirituality for humanity. Gandhi carefully synthesized the most sublime elements of various religions to form his own unique religious thought, which is closely related to and influenced by theosophical elements. His ideas about treating all religions equally are arguable, but theosophically, they are far more applicable. This article will explore Gandhi's understanding of religious thought and investigate his perspective comprehensively from the theosophical standpoint.

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi was born to a devout Vaishnavite Hindu family of Kathiawar. His birthplace is historically an eclectic environment of various religions and is also the heartland of Jainism in India. From his early days onward, Jainism and Buddhism taught him the values of truth, love, non-violence, oneness of all life, and humanity. He does not eschew such a religious environment and sees them as a unique common nature of Truth. He is a truth-seeker who avoids ego, pride, and those who harbor hatred. His religious thoughts and experiments shaped his entire philosophy and principles from a young age.

While he studied in England, he read many religious texts and joined the Theosophical Society. He met Madame H. P. Blavatsky in the Blavatsky Lodge in London. The influence and the better attachment to the Theosophical Society

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in England are a turning point in the development of his religious thought. However, his religious thought is characterized by a broad familiarity with the means of finding Truth, which gives him a theosophical nature. His religious thought did not favor any particular religion and was mainly inclined towards Theosophy.

Gandhi believed that man is a combination of the divine and the brute created by God. The divine and the brute force within each person are always in balance, but overcoming the brute force is indispensable to advancing society steadily and morally. His religious ideas impart knowledge of the Truth and provide guidance on how to harness the divine force and counteract the savage force for self-realization and self-awareness. Additionally, he believes that all religions share a common moral foundation derived from a single God, and that God is the ultimate Truth itself. Gandhi acknowledges himself to be a religious person as well as a theosophist because truth and nonviolence are inherent in his nature and the foundation of his religious thought.

Theosophical Insights into the Concepts of Religions

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's book, *The Key to Theosophy*, mentions that Theosophy is a response to the crassly materialistic theories and general dissatisfaction with the artificial theology of various Christian churches, as well as the daily increasing number of conflicting sects. It is an ever-growing perception that the creeds are so obviously self-contradictory and mutually contradictory, and make unverified claims. The natural mistrust of conventional religions is only strengthened by their complete failure to preserve morals and to purify society and the masses. The conviction on the part of many, and knowledge by a few, is that there must be somewhere a philosophical and religious system which shall be scientific and not merely speculative.

Theosophy shows the determined effort of so many earnest apprentices to reach the Truth, at whatever cost and wherever it may be concealed. It searches for various reasonings without ignorance or hatred of the other, and selfishness is essentially disturbed by these reasonings. It prefers the greatest Truth to an easy-going, unexacting lie, and requires the sacrifice of one's smallest comfort.

The power of mental inertia is great in anything that does not promise immediate benefit and reward. The unfamiliar character of theosophic teachings lies in the highly abstruse nature of the doctrines. Some of them flatly contradict many of the human vagaries cherished by sectarians, which have eaten into the very core of popular beliefs. Great personal effort and purity of life are exacted of those who would become the disciples of the inner circle.

Also, such an entirely unselfish code appeals to a minimal number of people. From these, it will be easy to perceive the reason why Theosophy was doomed to such slow, uphill work. It was essentially the philosophy of those who suffered and had lost all hope of being helped out of the mire of life by other means. "The history of any system of belief or morals,

newly introduced into a foreign soil, shows that its beginnings were impeded by every obstacle that obscurantism and selfishness could suggest." [1]

On the other hand, the ideas of religion are deeply intertwined with the concept of God. The belief in the existence of a supernatural ruling power, the creator and controller of the universe, and the spiritual nature of something is most acceptable to both theists and theosophists. Without God, religion is meaningless and must be disregarded as a terrible error, an affront to human dignity, and a roadblock to human advancement. The environment is also essential for human advancement because it provides for all the necessities of humans, including clothing, food, and shelter. Thus, religion emerges in human consciousness due to the growth of human intellect and remarkable environmental circumstances.[2]

However, religion believes in spiritual beings, higher things or matters. Its characteristics include separating sacred and profane objects and believing in gods or other supernatural beings. It is also a ceremonial practice centered on holy items and a moral code that is thought to have been approved by the gods. Religious emotions conceptually related to the gods, such as awe, a sense of mystery, remorse, and adoration, are often evoked in the presence of sacred items and during ritual practices.

Religions have various traditions and viewpoints to operate their respective religion. In Hinduism, the idea of performing Vedic rituals became crucial to the evolution of Hindu tradition. Dharma, a term used in Vedic rituals, can be roughly translated as duty. It is the duty to fulfill obligations owed by one's family and social group, as well as to carry out the ritual activities described in the Vedas. Both ceremonial and moral behavior of humans are included in this idea. Dharma eventually gained broader applicability, with particular emphasis on caste responsibility and upholding social order. It provides the means for sin purification as well as the possibility of a recompense.[3]

According to Buddhism, every living thing has Kamma or acts, which are their own inheritance, innate cause, kin, and haven. Beings are classified into low and high states by Kamma. A person will not last long among humans if they harm life, hunt, or belittle living things. A person will get several illnesses if they have a habit of hurting other people. A jealous person will be helpless if they envy the success of others. A person will be impoverished if they do not donate to charity due to greed.

A person who is obstinate, conceited, and honours those who do not deserve it, due to his conceit and disrespect, will be of poor birth. A person will be ignorant when born among people who lack of curiosity if he does not approach the learned and the virtuous and ask them what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong, what should be done and what should not be done, what leads to one's prosperity and what leads to one's demise.[4]

According to Jainism, everyone's intrinsic spiritual potential is hampered by the harm the world inflicts on souls, which exist in embodied form at all

levels of existence. By renouncing the social world and its material concerns, one can reduce this violence and eventually attain relief from rebirth by calming the body's sensations and minimizing activity as much as possible. Thus, Jain teachings emphasize the value of Ahimsa or nonviolence for all living things and have a distinctly austere vernacular. Additionally, throughout Jainism's history, vegetarianism has been a significant indicator.[5]

The concepts of deliverance, salvation, and redemption are central to Christianity. As a result of his ascetic liberation and conscious oneness with God, man gained salvation and became divine. Jesus uses the phrase "Kingdom of God" without conventional national and secular connotations. He claims that while sin, Satan, and demons are rendered helpless, God's mighty power provides the poor and miserable with life. In the Kingdom of God, individuals have a personal relationship with God, and the outcome is a world where people are morally and spiritually revitalized. People ought to believe in the Kingdom of God, which is Jesus himself. They believe this will pave the way for God's reign, which aims to bring humanity into the Kingdom of God.[6]

Islam's core tenet is summed up by saying that it signifies submission or resignation to God's will. Its ultimate aim is total surrender to Allah's will and commandments. Every believer's primary goal is to gain the favor of the one all-powerful God via unwavering obedience. God or Allah is almighty and all-willing. All living things including humans and animals are powerless in his grasp. Some have claimed that the Islamic understanding of man's relationship to God is the outcome of divine servitude. Islam's eschatological notions include hell, paradise, the final judgment, and the resurrection of the dead. Prophet Muhammad's moral and civilized teachings were utterly distinct from the religious ideas and social structure that predominated in his immediate surroundings.[7]

Religion is essentially a set of guidelines for upholding human morality and promoting unity. Regardless of one's own activity, it enforces the need to conduct oneself morally. It is the means to find the truth as Theosophy does. Religion encourages people to embrace the worst outcomes calmly and remain steadfastly committed to morality. The moral life is the foundation of religion and Theosophy. Both exhibit a persistent tendency to speculate in an attempt to unravel the mystery of life. Beyond the domain of naturally occurring humans, it tends to assume the existence of intangible personal agency. They arise in an attempt to harmonize with an external power. The emergence of Theosophy or religion in an individual typically occurs when moral life is beginning to awaken and the tensions between the ego and the altruistic will are at their highest.

Theosophical Insights of Gandhi's Religious Thought

Mahatma Gandhi states in his *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* that he joined the Theosophical Society in 1889 at the Blavatsky Lodge in London, where he met Madame

Blavatsky and Annie Besant introduced by the two theosophists, Archibald and Bertram Keightley. As per their suggestion, he also read many religious books related to Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Jainism, among others. Additionally, he read theosophical books, including Madame Blavatsky's *The Key to Theosophy* and Mrs Besant's *Why I Became a Theosophist*. This shows that Gandhi's religious thought is closely aligned with and influenced by Theosophy. It appears to be a blend of Theosophy and religion because Gandhi consistently believed in God and Truth, which are also central to Theosophy. He used religion only as a means of finding the Truth and did not signify any particular religion in his pursuit of it. Therefore, religion and Theosophy are closely intertwined from the perspective of Gandhi's religious thought.

(To be concluded)

Endnotes

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Trees of Life and Sacred Geometry

The Sacred Geometry of a Tree is connected with the Sacred Geometry of the Cosmos, its sap, leaves, flowers and fruits belonging to a dimension similar to that existing in the Universe, in its stars, planets and constellations. Trees have always been linked to Mysticism in their symbolic representations, such as the Tree of Knowledge or the Tree of Life.

Says H. P. Blavatsky in her *Theosophical Glossary*, 1892, page 312: "From the Highest antiquity trees were connected with the gods and mystical forces in Nature. Every nation had its sacred tree, with its peculiar characteristics and attributes based on natural, and also occasionally on occult properties, as expounded in the esoteric teachings."

Joma Sipe

(See cover caption on p. 5 of this issue)

Esoteric Vegetarianism: A Worldview Reflected in the Diet — II

PAVEL N. MALAKHOV

NOW that we have considered the common source from which all beings arise, our indissoluble interconnectedness with them, and their distinctive characteristics, let us turn more closely to a concept that is of particular importance for *esoteric* vegetarianism — namely, that of killing.

Killing

The concept of "killing" concerns not only food but is a broader matter of worldview.

Up to a certain point, consciousness — both individual and collective — develops through embodiment in form. Each embodiment or incarnation has its own potential and the corresponding span of time for the realization of that potential. To sever the link between consciousness and its form is to deprive it, for a time, of the opportunity for growth, thereby delaying its progress. Moreover, the more highly developed the being, the greater the harm caused by its killing, for its very existence, its organism, and its activity bring into interaction a multitude of less developed beings and thus contribute to their evolution.

Killing is the premature termination of the life cycle. In its energy and vitality, the body could have continued to exist longer. By design and according to its individual task, it *was meant* to endure longer. The life impulse is imparted at birth and may be compared to potential energy, which must be fully transformed into kinetic energy — or, in other words, expressed in action.

Incarnation is a necessary stage of development, essential for the gaining of experience. For a physical body to come into existence at all, evolution required vast stretches of time and preparatory work. It was built gradually, beginning with simple and ethereal states and culminating in the complex and gross organism of the present human form.

It must also be borne in mind that, according to the cyclic law, evolution will inevitably *continue* its course along the returning arc toward simplification and refinement, at which point the physical body will cease to exist. This means that those who have not completed their gathering of experience on the physical plane will be compelled to wait for the

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Mr Pavel N. Malakhov, former Presidential Representative of the TS in Russia, made a presentation based on this article at the Russian National Theosophical Congress of November 2021. First published in *Sovremennaya Teosofskaya Mysl*, 2019, No. 2(8).

next great cycle, when evolution once more turns its spiral movement toward the solidification of forms. Only then will they be granted the opportunity to resume their evolution. Thus, by killing beings, we may delay their development for a very long time.

But let us return to the present, where physical bodies are an integral part of full development for minerals, plants, animals, and human beings. Let us consider how the concept of "killing" is revealed in connection with each of them.

We have already touched upon the killing of minerals and plants. Neither is truly killed when consumed as food. Yet in a broader context we do in fact destroy vast numbers of plants — not so much by eating them, but through the development of the food industry: forests are burned for agricultural purposes, fields are planted with monocultures. As a result, countless plants are displaced from their natural habitats and are indeed destroyed. Our civilization also kills great numbers of plants by altering humidity, light, or the composition of air and soil, although this is not directly related to their use as food. In the case of animals, however, when they are consumed, the concept of "killing" applies in its full sense.

In the animal, the astral body as a principle is already fully developed. It possesses all the same properties as the human astral body. Accordingly, the life cycle of the animal and its post-mortem state are very similar to those of the human being.

With the killing of an animal, only the connection between the physical body and the higher ethereal bodies is destroyed. Without this link the physical body cannot live, and therefore it immediately begins to disintegrate. The other bodies, however, retain their connection with the source of life; their store of vital energy does not vanish but is compelled to unfold on the more ethereal planes.

To clarify the difference between the post-mortem states of a human being and an animal, it must be added that the absence of reason in animals plays its part. Death before its natural time leaves both human and animal in the astral body until the arrival of natural death. Thereafter the animal proceeds to its next incarnation, while the human being begins to reap the fruits of his mental activity: first passing into purgatory (*kāma-loka*), then into heaven (*devachan*), and only after the exhaustion of the energies of all the thoughts and desires experienced during the last incarnation does he enter another birth.

At this point two conclusions may be drawn: (1) the killing of an animal delays its development for the span allotted to that species — which, in the case of what may be called "food" breeds, ranges from several years to several decades — and for this delay the killer and all who share in it will inevitably bear responsibility under the immutable law of karma; and (2) the premature death of a human being has consequences of far greater duration, since he remains in the disembodied state for several hundred, or even several thousand, years. For this reason life in incarnation is exceedingly precious.

Beyond the act of killing itself, all its

circumstances are of significance: whether it was done out of necessity for survival or as a hunt for pleasure; whether death was swift or the animal was tormented; whether we felt compassion or took delight in the act. Every circumstance of our deed is taken into account, and may greatly aggravate or, on the contrary, mitigate our own fate.

Choice

The death of any being before its time deprives it of the possibility of further development — or more precisely, slows it down, compelling it to wait for the next incarnation. But in the human kingdom there exists yet another kind of death: **moral death**, which acts even more tragically. It casts a person backward, forcing him to come to an understanding of compassion and universal interconnectedness through *additional* personal suffering.

Questions of morality or ethics arise through the very existence of *choice*, which in turn is the direct consequence of the activity of our mental principle. Yet this principle is twofold: on the one hand, we strive to grasp the laws of the universe and incline toward refined and *synthetic* thought; on the other, we seek to secure *our own* livelihood, comfort, and advantage. The first aspiration belongs to the higher mind (intelligence); the second, to the lower mind (intellect). Both aspects of mental activity are natural and necessary for us, but the priority between them shifts as we mature, and in the course of full development it must be directed toward the higher concepts and ideals.

Of course, intellectual activity of the lower mind has its place as well: through it we survive and secure the body's safety. Yet the truly human task is the cultivation of our higher nature, and this calls for wisdom and purposiveness. When these are brought to bear, the concerns of mere survival become secondary, or even irrelevant. The lives of the great Teachers of humanity vividly illustrate this: personal survival or comfort played no part in their mission. Their foremost duty was to assist others in their inner growth; and if this required hardship, or even the sacrifice of life itself, they faced it unflinchingly. Such conduct shows the supremacy of the higher principle of Intelligence within them. Their choices were shaped not by personal inclination, but by what most effectively served the evolution of humanity.

The same perspective can be applied to food. Why do we eat? If it is only to survive, then it matters little whether another being must be killed for that purpose. But if our actions are guided by broader and deeper considerations, mere survival ceases to be the decisive criterion.

To sum up, let us restate the essential points. When we consume animals for food, we break into their life-cycle and delay their further development. To kill a human being for one's own survival would weigh still more heavily upon our destiny. By contrast, when we partake of fruits, leaves, stems, or flowers, we do not interrupt the life of the plant: even when deprived of part of its body, it continues to grow and unfold. In many cases, even the partial removal of a root will not destroy

its vitality. A plant can truly be killed only when, as the saying goes, it is "rooted out" — that is, when every root is pulled up and no possibility of new growth remains. The vegetable kingdom itself — its very name bound up with the idea of vegetation — betrays its peculiarity: its appointed task is *unending growth.*

The task of the animal kingdom is of another order: the *cultivation of the organs of perception.* Hence the growth of every animal organism comes to a halt at a definite stage, and the creature turns instead to adaptation — securing its survival as an individual and the continuance of its species.

With the distinctive traits of plant and animal life in view, we are able to choose our food with a fuller awareness. *Choice* itself is, in truth, an *instrument of human growth* — of the human being as an individual, and of humanity as a class of beings. No such instrument was present in the kingdoms of Nature that came before our own.

Alcohol

In a letter to her sister, V. P. Zhelikhovsky, H. P Blavatsky spoke of the place of vegetarianism in the theosophical movement in these words:

> In our [Theosophical] Society every member must become a vegetarian, abstaining from meat and from wine. This is one of our foremost rules. It is well known what a pernicious effect the vapours of blood and of alcohol have upon the spiritual side of human nature, fanning the animal passions into a raging flame.

We have already considered the distinctive properties of blood; let us now turn our attention to alcohol.

Although nearly all forms of alcohol are prepared from plants, they nonetheless run counter to the philosophy of true vegetarianism. Outwardly this may seem a contradiction, but from the esoteric standpoint it is no contradiction at all: the refusal of alcohol flows naturally from an understanding of the deeper meaning of nourishment — its aim and its mode of operation. Alcohol must be set aside, for it retards and distorts the growth of consciousness, just as do other narcotic substances.

In its broader philosophical sense, the vegetarian system of nourishment implies not merely the consumption of plant-based foods, but the cultivation of a wholesome diet — one that does no harm either to the environment or to the human being. It embraces all levels of our sustenance.[5] Alcohol, however, disrupts the nourishment of the mind, unsettles the nourishment of the senses, poisons the physical body, and estranges us from our spiritual nature — thus inflicting harm upon all four planes of our being.

Nourishment on All Planes of Being

Some, in the name of ascetic discipline, restrict their diet to the simplest tastes, believing that variety is a form of indulgence. Yet *variety is a necessary and integral part of evolution* itself. We come to know the world through taste just as surely as through sight, hearing, or any other sense. A diversity of flavours in our food is essential for a deeper and more refined perception of life. To limit

oneself to a single taste would be like looking at the world through glasses of one fixed colour, or listening to music composed of only a single note.

For the same reason, we also need variety in our feelings and in our thoughts. But here, too, discernment is essential. Just as physical food may contain poisons, so too there are poisons on the emotional and mental planes. We must develop the capacity to recognize them, so as not to be harmed by base emotions or harmful ideas — just as we take care not to be poisoned by spoiled food in daily life.

The diagram below, "Nourishment on Various Planes", illustrates examples of how the different levels of our being can be sustained.

Expenditure of Energy

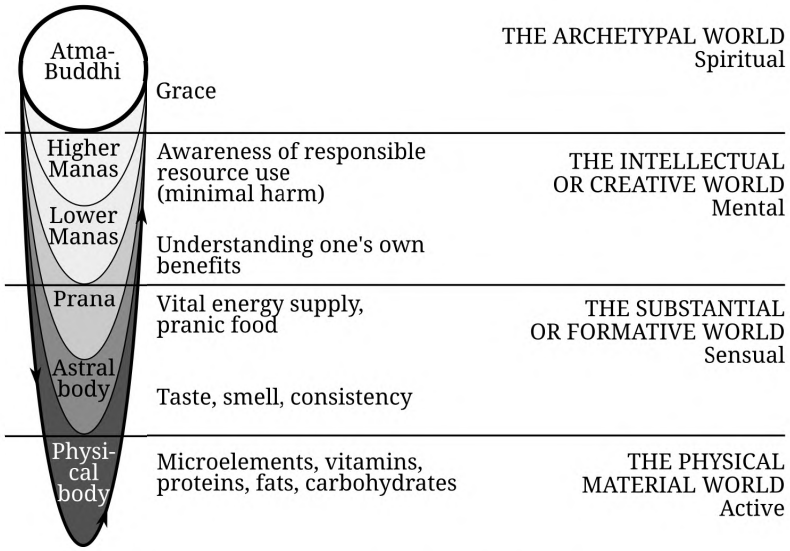
In broad outline, the task of nourishment can be reduced to two main functions: the supply of building material and the supply of energy. Let us look more closely at the latter. Above all, it should be noted that nourishment itself — its regularity and its richness — depends on the expenditure of energy. A large, and perhaps the larger, part of our energy is spent in resistance, in overcoming, and in opposing something.

On the **physical** level: the breaking down of heavy elements, the cleansing of the body of waste products, and also resistance to people who oppress us or compete with us.

On the **emotional** level: the balancing of emotions, the transformation of negative impressions, the suppression of negative reactions.

(*To be concluded*)

Nourishment on Various Planes



Endnote: [5]See the article, "Forms of Nourishment", *MTT* 2022–1 (13).

Desire: Blessing or Culprit?

KAMALA NELLEN

WHEN I read the William Buck version of the *Mahabharata*, the great Indian epic which has the *Bhagavadgitā* in the middle, I became depressed. It is an easy-to-read version so I quickly came to the end. The great war was the result of a grand desire by Duryodhana to be the sole king of Hastinapura and he went to great lengths to take what he wanted no matter the cost to anyone else. Subsequent to his selfishness, each character in that story was bound in some way by desires that arose from engaging with Duryodhana's desire. The Pandavas did win the war at the grim cost of nearly every soul's life in Aryavarta. Almost all the kingdoms and tribes in Aryavarta, which was the name for the whole of the Indian sub-continent, participated in the war and only 10–12 key figures survived.

It is a tragic story of desire incorporating the golden teaching of Lord Krishna to Arjuna of how to successfully navigate this journey called life. The deep sadness I felt by the end of this reading was the result of seeing that the great saga ends with each of the Pandavas dying in ordinary ways. There is no mention of anyone escaping the wheel of time. Even after Krishna has so meticulously explained to Arjuna how to traverse this world without being caught by it, at the end of his life Arjuna forgets what he has learned. Duryodhana, the instigator of the war, is welcomed into heaven as a great warrior. Lord Krishna, who is beyond the pull of karma, perishes from an arrow shot into his heel while sleeping in the forest. No samadhi is described, as we know happens for a great spiritual Master. It seems all end up in heaven but none of the heroes is said to have overcome the wheel of time to merge into the Absolute. It hit me with force how hard it is to get off the wheel of time to attain liberation, even with the grace of a Master. I was in despair after so many decades of my own rigorous spiritual practices under my Master.

My Teacher told us the spiritual journey is a razor's edge; even those who are close to final attainment can slip and fall. One story he told was of an eminent yogi who, when the god of Death, Lord Yama, came to take him, multiplied himself into twenty-one identical forms to trick Death. Lord Yama paced up and down the lineup, yet he could not find the real man. Finally he muttered aloud how impressed he was that they were indeed identical but that he saw only one tiny flaw. The real fellow jumped

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out of the line to protest and Yama snatched him up. The ego is indeed a slippery thing.

Of course, the great personalities in the Mahabharata are all mirrors of you and me. We humans are susceptible to the ego and to desire. Even with serious study and practice, we forget as Arjuna did what we have learned. And some who have great spiritual attainment can fall.

My spiritual Master gave me the name Kamala many decades ago and I have long pondered the English meaning that was attached to it: desireless love. I have kept that name for well over forty years, knowing that great Masters never do anything superfluous; so it is the perfect reminder to me, who has desire after desire. I see it as a call to overcome desires or recast them so I can attain liberation. I remember that the way is a razor's edge.

Kashmir Shaivism tells us that the power of creation, which arises from desire, is one of the fivefold powers of God; we know these powers are also within us. Desiring and creating are God-given. Yet the Masters tell us that holding desires and acting upon them inevitably lead to pain and sorrow. I have a friend who has been chasing a Grammy award as a composer for years now. He has been consumed with it to the point of leaving all his friends behind and it is hard on us who are his friends! Whether he receives it or not, in the middle of the chase he had a heart attack and had to take a long period of time away. I chased working with elite athletes for decades and went all over the country offering lectures, giving podcasts and writing articles, as well as going door to door, only to find people that lifted my material and never credited me. I ended up in a heap, without recognition or money. The silver lining is that I have gone so much deeper in my spiritual work and have experienced joy in this spiritually prosperous and lasting journey and I can help others as well.

Even if we do receive what we desire, it can end in despair. We have seen people in high places marry someone they adore and feel is the answer to their dreams, only to find, that person loves another and it ends in an ugly divorce and great sorrow. On it goes. Indeed, all this desiring keeps us from the serenity and happiness that we think desires fulfilled will bring us. Desires pull us out of our natural state of joy, yet we chase them because it is natural to us. What a conundrum — a real brain-twister!

The Masters tell us we do have the choice to let whatever happens happen and let desires pass through our minds, not moving toward them or away from them, not attaching importance to them. The great ones admonish us: Your house is on fire! Wake up! This is because desires lead us to birth after birth. Contemplating this fact is enervating for the most fervent seeker. What a mountainous terrain to climb! We desire, we create, we follow our desires, and we live in misery as we chase after them. The solution is to free ourselves from pain and suffering by not holding onto or pursuing desires. How can we do this?

We follow the guidelines set down by the Masters to help us escape from the

prisons we create for ourselves. My Teacher urged us to walk through life as if through a beautiful garden, simply observing it, enjoying the pleasurable yet not holding onto any of it, accepting the painful without running from it or taking action toward retribution for what we see as wrongs. We are urged not to take any action at all about what happens to us or others along the way. We have all made the mistake of holding on to something pleasurable when it is time to let it go. I remember a good friend saying: "I have to have another piece of chocolate cake; the first was so good!" Or we try to hold onto a relationship that ends, or a job, or a lifestyle. We want to take away a friend's suffering by inserting some solution we think is right and good. In short, we try to play God.

The sticky part of desires held in the mind or followed is that they lead to *karma*. Karma refers both to actions performed and to the consequence of actions performed over time. I wanted my son to be a drummer when he was in the womb and indeed he has become a very talented professional drummer. This is the power of desire. I will add that he is happy, yet I wonder what he might have been if I had remained free of wanting for him. My parents encouraged me to play piano and love music as well as to dance, which was my chosen profession, yet they condemned me for the life I chose. I always felt "less than" when around them.

The Yoga scriptures tell us that in the central subtle channel in the body, the *sushumna*, is a vast collection of lifetimes of desires. These desires are stored and unbeknown to us as to when, they pop up when they will. Have you ever met someone you felt you have known forever and a great friendship immediately falls into place. Then there is the glittery mirage we see as the possibility of getting more money, a bigger house, a fancier car, and fame, which, as we are told over and over, will make our lives wonderful. Off we go in conquest only to end in a heap, exhausted by our efforts. And we wonder why does one person fall into vast sums of money and great acquisitions? It is the result of karma. A parable my Teacher recounted to us was of a man who was told he could have all the land he wanted between sunrise and sunset. He took off running as fast as he could at dawn the next day. At the end of the day, he got six feet under. So goes desire.

We see clearly that the karma we go through can be painful or pleasurable. The call is to stay alert to avoid stepping further into karma. This is why the great Masters tell us to let whatever happens happen, and not to try manipulating any of it, so we do not create more karma from wishing things were different, or acting to change what is. Instead we are urged to accept and restrain ourselves from acting.

What we can do is choose to practice gratitude for whatever comes and whatever goes, no matter what it is. I personally like to remember what a gift it has been to have had a pleasurable situation or relationship, as well as what I have received from a difficult situation or relationship when it has concluded. We desire and we are afraid we will not get what we want, or

we might lose what we have. We eventually come to see that getting what we want is only the beginning of wanting more. Everything happening in our lives today is the result of desire and the collision of billions of humans' desires around the world. We are indeed living in a confused mess.

Krishnamurti explains in *Happy Is the One Who Is Nothing — Letters to a Young Friend*:

> . . . how important it is [for us] to be innocent, to have an innocent mind. Experiences are inevitable, perhaps necessary; life is a series of experiences, but the mind need not be burdened with its own accumulative demands. . . .
>
> Things may not be easy but the more one asks of life, the more fearful and painful it becomes. . . .
>
> In the understanding of desire, the whole problem of fulfilment ceases. Desire is effort to be, to become, and with an ending to becoming, the struggle to fulfill vanishes.

On the path of Yoga, to accept that what happens, as the result of karma we have created and now are experiencing, is crucial. We undertake spiritual practices to burn away impending karma as well as to help us let go of current desires and to help us bear what is already under way. We learn to accept the pairs of opposites such as praise and blame without complaint or the desire for retribution. We are left with peace and joy; this is who we really are.

The Good News about Desire

There is one kind of karma we can and ought to embrace on the spiritual path: *punya karma*. These are actions or deeds that bring merits or blessings to ourselves and others. When we carry out acts of compassion, charity, and kindness, when we serve a Master, we accrue *punya karma*. My Guru always said serving a Master is money in the bank!

Further, the Yoga scriptures condone one kind of desire: ***mumukshutva***, the deep longing for the state of perfect joy, for union with the Absolute. If we must desire, let us desire the longing for liberation. Let us endeavor to create *punya karma* and *mumukshutva*!

How Do We Avoid Creating More Karma?

In Abhinavagupta's *Tantraloka,* it is said that "any act performed under the auspices of the ego — that is, with the sense 'I am the one who's doing this' — becomes the seed for another action for which we are accountable in the future. This is the law of cause and effect that is the heart of the doctrine of karma, and it applies equally to all acts, irrespective of their results, their quality, or their relationship to *dharma,* right action." — *The Splendor of Recognition* (translation of the *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayam* of Kshemaraja), Swami Shantananda, p.187)

We make one choice after another each leading us to yet another choice. It takes a change in the understanding of karma for us to shift to asking that the events of the day unfold according to God's will, not ours, and to accept that the results are outside of our purview, and so to remain humble concerning any outcomes. We may feel that our desire to

pursue a certain career is our choice and we go down that path without considering if it really suits us and we create more karma. We might instead take time to consider our response to an urge to do something before doing it. This brings up the question: How much free will do we actually have? My Teacher once said: about 3%; and that is in how we respond to what happens to us.

In the *Bhagavadgitā*, in the chapter entitled "The Yoga of Renunciation", Lord Krishna clearly states to Arjuna that in offering our actions first to him, we do not amass karma and we keep the ego at bay. To me, this is reminiscent of Jesus recognizing: "Of myself I can do nothing . . . but the will of the Father who hath sent me."

If we look closely at the *Pratyabhijñā-hṛdayam*, we find *ahambhāva*, the pure "I am" is "the merging of the object in the subject. This is the resting place, the perfect freedom, the supreme causal agent, and the supreme creative power, because it involves the dissolution of all desires." (*The Splendor of Recognition*, pp. 145–6.)

I used to love attending some of the contemplative meditation practices that James Finley gave at St Monica Church in Santa Monica, CA, USA. In the quiet, after we slowly walked, he would softly repeat this beautiful passage from Psalm 46 in the Old Testament: Be still and know that I am . . . Be still and know . . . Be still . . . Be. I would experience a very sweet, deep silence in holding this awareness. I also love to contemplate this essential self in me as *sat*, pure existence that is all pervasive, without beginning or ending, beyond time — that I am this all pervasive, infinite existence. This takes me into a beautiful sensitivity.

It is heartening to learn that we have practical tools from the texts of Yoga and the Masters who have imbibed these great teachings to help us reframe our relationship with desire. There are beneficial desires. We can choose also to cheerfully accept unsavory karmas, we can fully enjoy good karmas as long as they last, and we can open our hands and let go of all of it when it is time to leave us. We can allow for the merging of the object in the subject when we meditate.

It is hard to let go of a beautiful idea or dream and we do not have to! We simply first offer it to God, through a prayer. In fact, I have developed the habit of first offering every want and all I intend to do during the day to God, before going forward from the start of the day to the end. This to me is a beneficial habit to develop. Then we free ourselves from "doership" and the web of karma. We surrender all actions to God, knowing all results will be what karma dictates, and in this way we remain at peace. We can celebrate with joy that we have the pleasurable as long as we have it. We can let painful experiences pass without letting them send us into waves of despair; we endure them, doing what we can with situations while reminding ourselves these unfortunate turns will come to an end. In reminding myself of all this wisdom from the Masters, I return to my peaceful state. ✧

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