

Freedom of Thought

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasize the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher, or writer, from H. P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties. The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise the right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.

Freedom of the Society

The Theosophical Society, while cooperating with all other bodies whose aims and activities make such cooperation possible, is and must remain an organization entirely independent of them, not committed to any objects save its own, and intent on developing its own work on the broadest and most inclusive lines, so as to move towards its own goal as indicated in and by the pursuit of those objects and that Divine Wisdom which in the abstract is implicit in the title 'The Theosophical Society'.

Since Universal Brotherhood and the Wisdom are undefined and unlimited, and since there is complete freedom for each and every member of the Society in thought and action, the Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organization.



THE THEOSOPHIST

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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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.

The Choice to be Whole

(Based on a Public Lecture given during the 147th International Convention of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai, formerly Madras, India, 4 January 2023)

TIM BOYD

I WOULD like to talk about Choice and Wholeness, and, of course, we cannot discuss wholeness without discussing fragmentation. Recently I found myself in a conversation with a highly educated and accomplished person. She was talking about how our lives are controlled by our genetics. Her point was that lurking in our genes are all sorts of conditions such as cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, and so on, and that in many ways these conditions dictate the course and direction of our lives.

It was an interesting point of view. I asked her: “Do you really believe that?” The answer was “Yes”. Although we did not pursue it much further, my response was: “Well, if this is in fact what controls our lives, we should hope that nothing is hiding in our genetics.” “Ignorance is bliss” was the response.

One of the reasons that the Theosophical Society (TS) came into existence has been to plant certain powerful and necessary seed thoughts in the consciousness of humanity — so they may grow, spread, and take life in our shared

mind atmosphere. These are ideas like the unity of all life, the multi-dimensional nature of the Universe and of ourselves, that there is no such thing as empty space — a thought that could also be expressed as “omnipresent intelligence”.

We dwell not only among the forms of consciousness that continually surround us, but also within a greater consciousness, a greater whole, within whose “body” we participate. The biblical statement is “we live, move, and have our being” within that greater whole. Spiritual evolution is another idea that was absent from popular discourse, but is now present because of the work of pioneering minds in the Theosophical Movement.

Today one of those key seeds that I would like for us to go into is the concept of Self-Responsibility. Near the conclusion of the excellent little story book *The Idyll of the White Lotus* by Mabel Collins, there is the enunciation of Three Truths. The last one addresses the idea of self-responsibility. It’s a strong statement: “Each man is his own absolute

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lawgiver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself, the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.” The idea of self-responsibility is that each one of us is responsible for our self-unfoldment and our self-awareness.

An obvious objection to this point of view would be that we really do not have control over many of the circumstances in our lives. People do in fact get cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure. People find themselves engulfed in wars and violence of various types. At the moment the global focus is mostly on Ukraine and Russia, but there are 40 other wars going on as we sit here now. So the circumstances in which we find ourselves are not necessarily under our control. So then, what justifies this idea of being our own “absolute law giver”?

There was a man who lived through World War II. He was a Jewish psychiatrist in Austria who along with his family was swept up by the Nazis and sent to the concentration camps. His name was Viktor Frankl. Prior to the war he had been doing a great deal of research and had a theory of human behavior that he was trying to flesh out. When he was taken from his home to the concentration camp, the one thing that he brought with him was the thesis that he had been working so hard to complete. Of course, when he arrived at the camp everything that he brought was taken from him, and the next three years he spent in concentration camps — a witness to an environment of cruelty, limitation, and brutal degradation.

After the war Frankl wrote a book that many people regard as the greatest book written during the 20th century titled *Man’s Search for Meaning*. In the book he distilled his ideas about choice — ideas tested in the difficult environment of the concentration camp. His central idea was that the most important thing that we have in our lives is a sense of meaning, and he designated three specific areas from which this meaning is derived.

The first is purposeful work — the work we do in the world, our employment, our jobs. Our connection to a work gives us a sense of meaning. We mean something to others and the work we do gives meaning to us. I have known many people who on losing a job somehow lose direction. Something about their purpose for being here seems to be taken away.

The second source of meaning Frankl talks about is love and relationships. It is one of the most powerful sources of meaning for all of us. I can remember 25 or 30 years ago, my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. My father and I were in the hospital while she waited to be taken to surgery. He was keeping up an appearance of strength, but when my mother was taken away for her surgery, he turned to me and said: “Son, if anything happens to your mother, I won’t last long!” It is not a sad story, she made it through and just celebrated her 104th birthday, but it was an example to me of the importance of loved ones and relationships as a source of meaning.

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The third source of meaning is of the utmost importance, not only because it specifically applied to his situation in the concentration camps in Germany. This source of meaning can be described as one's attitude in the face of suffering. The point Frankl made was that "Everything can be taken away from someone except one thing, the last of the human freedoms — the capacity to choose our attitude in any set of circumstances." This is what was tested and proven in his concentration camp experience. Every one of us faces challenges during the course of our life. But this capacity to derive meaning regardless of circumstances defines the expanse of our power to choose, and of each person to be their own "absolute law giver". Ultimately, no matter how dark it may seem, no matter how difficult it may be, choice remains.

I have known people who have been in the highly negative environment of prison, who while there developed their desire and capacity to help others, who chose to do great work in this most difficult setting. Self-responsibility places the conditions that we generate into our own hands.

Now, what do we mean when we speak of Wholeness? From the perspective of the Ageless Wisdom, it is rooted in the idea that there is a universal consciousness. In the case of the human being, Spirit, or this universal consciousness, becomes progressively shrouded and filtered until we get to the point that we sit here now, firmly convinced of our indivi-

duality and separation. Convinced for the very good reason that everything that we see and do appears to confirm it.

So we let ourselves become fragmented. Many of us here this evening come from different countries and communities. We are divided into genders, religions, races, castes, and so forth — all of those differing aspects that have been impressed on us, that we have learned to cling to, express through, and claim to be our own. It is the problem of *identity*. At our core is the undivided universal consciousness, but we find ourselves fragmented into a multiplicity of competing identities that blind us to this core reality.

Not only are we self-divided along lines of nationality, and so on, somehow we have managed to alienate ourselves from the natural world. It is a fact that since 2009, we are living on an urban planet. Since then more people live in cities than in rural settings, so we have become quite cut off from the natural world. This has effects. Some years ago there was a study done at the University of Michigan in the USA. It got a lot of attention, I believe, because of its catchy title: "How the city hurts your brain." The way that the study was set up, it confirmed some things that we probably already know.

For the study there were two groups, and each was administered a number of psychological and memory tests. After some time both groups were told to take a break and then return to continue the testing. One group was instructed to take a walk down Main Street. So they had to

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deal with the stop lights, the city buses, shops, restaurants, pedestrians, and so forth. The other group was told to take a walk in the nearby park — a quiet space filled with trees and flowers.

When the two groups returned to do the testing, they found that the test results and cognitive abilities of the “Main Street” group had diminished substantially. When the “Walk in the Park” group came back, their test scores increased greatly. In another study it was found that for people living in urban low income housing projects, even something as simple as having a view of a tree from the window affected the level of domestic violence in various apartments in the building. The fact that Nature is healing and restorative, and that cities are less so, was one of the things that was confirmed in this study.

In addition to the stable energy patterns of the natural world, from time to time we can feel it as inhabited by greater intelligences. I can remember a number of years ago, a group of us from the TS in America went on a tour to Tibet. One of the ideas that was normal and accepted in that part of the world was that the mountain tops were special, even sacred, because they were inhabited by great beings. Anytime we would be driving near one of the mountain tops, prayer flags would be everywhere, and our Tibetan guides encouraged us to greet the beings of the mountain called Lhas.

Each time we would come over the top of a mountain ridge we would all shout “ki ki sol sol lha gelo”, which simply

means “happiness, happiness, blessings, blessings from the Lhas” — the devas of the mountain. This idea that Nature is inhabited and filled with intelligence is prevalent throughout the world. That contemporary humanity has chosen to cut itself off from this experience is another cause of our fragmentation.

This journey that we have undertaken from undivided, Universal Consciousness to our present state has been described as the Pilgrimage of Necessity — an out-going path, or in Sanskrit, *pravṛttimārga*. On that path, we find ourselves moving ever more deeply into our association with matter, ever more deeply convinced of the genuineness of the limitations of material reality.

There are a number of beautiful stories that speak to this “pilgrimage” in the scriptures of the world. One of my favorites is the story of the Prodigal Son, who has everything living in his father’s house but who leaves in order to make his own way. It is the story of the soul, the son who leaves the house of the father, goes to a faraway land, and along the path squanders all of his wealth.

This is *our* story. We (the Spiritual Self) leave the house of undivided consciousness and begin a journey of “descent”, becoming clothed in layer after layer of ever more dense material — not by any conscious choice, it is the pilgrimage of necessity, a sacred journey. We wander and ultimately find ourselves far, far away from that undivided state that was a home to us. We feel as if we are far away,

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even though always, it is fully present within and around us.

There comes a point when the son, or the soul, who has wandered so far, has an awakening moment. In the Bible story he has wandered so very far, and now finds himself in what, in Biblical times, was the most degraded employment. He has to feed the swine. To further complicate matters, and to drive home the point, the story says that there is a famine in the land, and the son becomes so hungry that he would eat the food that he was feeding to the swine. It is really just a description of our condition, living in material bodies, feeding ourselves on a material food, and feeling ourselves as separated.

But there comes a moment when we awaken, and when we do what was once an outgoing journey becomes a journey back home. We begin the *nivṛtti mārga*, the journey of return. This is the most important part.

With our awakening comes the awareness that we have the capacity to take these matters into our own hands. In HPB's Three Fundamental Propositions, found in her *magnum opus*, *The Secret Doctrine*, she describes that what begins as us being pushed, impelled by Nature, with the dawning of awareness transforms "to self-induced and self-devised efforts". We choose to become proactive in our own unfoldment.

The other night Dr James Tepfer talked to us about three great people and the profound influence they exerted on humanity: Abraham Lincoln, Dwight

Eisenhower, and Nelson Mandela. They exemplified a powerful quality of consciousness that exuded from them, affecting their environment and time. His term for it was "Human Magic". We have all experienced this at some level. All of us have had the experience of being with a cheerful person and feeling uplifted, or with someone who is depressed and feeling drained.

A number of years ago I attended a conference called "The Soul of Service". It was a gathering of spiritually oriented service organizations. Some truly powerful people from a variety of service fields came together for this meeting, and some of the more prominent ones gave talks. One of the featured speakers was the doctor responsible for bringing into being the legal structure that made hospice, end of life care, universally available in the United States — a truly monumental accomplishment.

She was not involved in the political world, but the value of the hospice movement forced her to interact in that sphere. In her talk, she spoke little about politics. She told a few stories about the winding path that brought hospice to prominence. Mostly she described herself as a person who believed in the power of prayer. She said that her constant prayer was: "Lord, put your hand in mine, so that when I touch others it may be your hand that touches them."

We met and spoke a little, and for reasons known only to her, she asked me to accompany her in what turned out

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to be a round of discussions with doctors' and nurses' groups. During those meetings various health professionals would ask her hospice-related questions and suggest ideas for administering the process. On multiple occasions she turned to me and asked my opinion. I felt distinctly out of my depth, but would offer up my view.

The Soul of Service conference was a very busy event. The planners had set aside a little meditation room — slightly dark, with plants and trickling water sounds. At one point during the course of the conference I felt I needed to check into this room to sit down and relax for a few minutes. When I walked in, the room was empty except for the doctor, who was sitting with her eyes half closed, I assumed in meditation or prayer. I sat down on the other side of the room with the intention to simply breathe and relax. Hardly had I closed my eyes than I found myself transported into a deep stillness, and a most exalted experience came over me. I do not know how long I sat there, but eventually I rose and left the now empty room.

When the conference came to an end I asked the doctor if I could take a photo of her. She said, "No, come over here and take a picture with me." Standing side by side for the photo she leaned over and said: "Tim, when we were in the meditation room I was praying for you. Did you feel it?" It was only then that I realized the nature of my meditation room experience. I share this as an example of the "human magic" Dr Tepfer spoke of. From time to time we experience this magic

with others. It is magnified when we find it within ourselves and commit to it.

As people who are involved in a spiritual approach, sometimes we feel ourselves, if not at odds with contemporary science, at least somewhat intimidated by the force and apparent certainty of scientific theory and revelations. What we need to remember is that true science is not based on the conclusions of its current practitioners, but on the Scientific Method. In the Scientific Method theories are tested and validated, or not, according to empirical data. What is observed in experimentation either confirms a theory, points to the need to refine it, or demonstrates that the theory is invalid.

The great difficulty for anyone who views Consciousness as a primary component of reality is that the scientific community chooses to ignore, dilute, or materialize it. The great successes of contemporary science come from its exacting and precise examination of the material world — the world that can be examined through the five senses and the tools that extend the reach of those senses. Reductionism is the term that is often applied to this limiting view within the scientific community. Scientism is another term for the almost religious confinement of reality to the material realm.

In the world of spiritual traditions, the same scientific language and approach has been applied throughout time. Take the example of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, he is fond of saying that each one of us

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has access to the greatest laboratory possible, better than any we will find at the Indian Institute of Technology or Harvard University, the laboratory of our own consciousness. HPB, when describing what is Theosophy, said that it is the accumulated wisdom of the ages, tested and verified by generations of seers.”

This is pure scientific language. It is tested, empirical data is derived, and it is verified. The difference is that the science that we know today is based on the five senses. And those five senses are limited to the examination of the material world. The science of the Ageless Wisdom traditions was brilliant in that it included an additional sense, a sixth one. It is not based on solely the conventional organs of knowledge — the ear (hearing), nose (smell), tongue (taste), skin (touch), and eye (sight). The seers and sages of old added the mind as a sixth organ of knowledge, or sensation. With the addition of the sixth sense of human consciousness the capacity for experimentation increases enormously, as does the reality that this level of science can explore.

In this expanded field of a science which includes consciousness, great theories have been put forward. Take one. In the first verse of the Dhammapada, the sayings of the Buddha, a theory is presented. It says: “All that we are is the result of our thoughts. It is founded on our thoughts. It is made up of our thoughts.” This is a theoretical statement intended to be confirmed or denied by experimentation. In this theorem thoughts

are described as the substance involved in the experiment — like the chemicals, or molecules of material science.

The next part of that same verse outlines the experiment for us to undertake. The experiment is described in this way: “If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, sorrow follows him like the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the cart.” To the extent that we can isolate and observe our angry, evil, unkind thoughts, is this something that is provable? If it is, then the theory can be accepted and factored in to the way we live our lives. If not, then the theory needs to be refined or rejected.

A second experiment described in this verse is: “If a person speaks or acts with a good thought, then happiness follows, like a never departing shadow.” These statements involve a different order of science, but in keeping with the Scientific Method, they are testable. It is the science of the intuition and of the mind, but science nonetheless.

These are just some ideas — choice, wholeness, our responsibility to experiment and find truth for ourselves. Ultimately, we do have a responsibility. If we had to name it, the responsibility might be called something like: we are responsible to know, and to know deeply.

The great sage, Kabir, who is beloved by Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs made the statement: “What Kabir talks of is only what he has lived through. If you have not lived through something, it is not true.” We are quick to quote the truths and the

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expressions of others. But until it becomes something that is rooted in consciousness through our own personal experience, then it is a second-hand truth, lacking vitality. We have a responsibility to know deeply. We have a responsibility to ignite. For each one of us who has any association with these truth teachings, the idea is that we draw in ever closer to them. We warm ourselves at the hearth of these teachings. And ultimately, we commit and become inflamed by them.

This is the only way that the world changes. And with that, we have a hope for our shared future.

One of the great things we gain from moments such as this is the harmony that we occasionally experience together. In these moments we have the opportunity to be of use to those Great Ones who can only work through a harmonious body. Through us their blessings can reach into the world in ways that we do not know and that we do not need to know. ✧

Meditation will only be useful and worthwhile if we are really serious about finding ourselves, or if we are “searching for our selflessness”, or “for that which is illusive within”.

If we are in earnest to find that truth — not for our own satisfaction, but in order to help other people who have not found it yet — then it is well worthwhile to study meditation and to practice it.

But if our motivation is not pure, it will just be a waste of time, for it cannot be used to serve any worldly aims such as the obtaining of pleasure or power.

Venerable Professor Samdhong Rinpoche
Buddhist Meditation
Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar

Practical Wisdom for Today's World

LINDA OLIVEIRA

WISDOM has its own exceptional qualities which require a true meeting of mind and heart. Like water which inevitably flows into the ocean, wisdom also flows into all aspects of life. After directing some attention outwards towards the contemporary world and some brief observations about ecology, we will consider several profoundly ecological perspectives which are inherent in the fabric of Theosophy.

The Contemporary World

Let us begin with where we are placed here and now, the world environment in which we find ourselves at this point in human history. According to Hindu scripture, at present we are incarnated during Kali Yuga, an immensely long period according to ancient Indian teachings (432,000 years). This era is said to be marked by conflict, materialism, and egotism, being a vast period of material advance and spiritual darkness. This is something we can verify easily for ourselves, for what predominates in the world when we direct our gaze outwards? We do see much conflict, suffering of all

kinds, a pandemic, a climate crisis, the perennial competition for power, the devastation of war, egotism in various forms, along with an enormous emphasis on all things material.

Indeed, the *yuga-s*, a substantial subject in themselves, featured in several places in H. P. Blavatsky's (HPB) writings. She wrote:

The world moves in cycles, which proceed under the impetus of two mutually antagonistic and destroying Forces, the one striving to move Humanity onward, toward Spirit, the other forcing humankind to gravitate downward, into the very abysses of matter.¹

The contrasting forces of the spiritual and the material are brought to light daily in the life of one who is seriously interested in the workings of the Divine.

In *The Secret Doctrine*, while explaining the esotericism of the Rig-Veda, HPB mentions:

[Divine] aspirations are no more general but have become abnormal through a general spread of *Ahamkāra* (the feeling of Egotism, *Self*, or I-AM-NESS) and ignorance.²

Mrs Linda Oliveira, former international Vice-President of the TS, was also National President of the TS in Australia and editor of their magazine, *Theosophy in Australia*, for many years. Based on a talk given for the School of the Wisdom during the International TS Convention on 1 Jan. 2023.

Indeed, narcissism has been identified as a phenomenon of our time, being an extreme form of egotism.

It is remarkably easy to blame others for the plight of the world, but the most basic principle of Theosophy is the fundamental, abiding, unshakeable Unity of all existence. It follows that existence is therefore one entity, not the mass of apparently unrelated and separate beings that enter our awareness through the exterior senses. We are all aspects of, and participants in, this One Life, even if we feel ourselves to be apart or isolated at times. This core Truth of our existence has large implications. For one thing, we all bear responsibility as individuals for the state of the world, both materially and spiritually. And many ecologically minded people care deeply for the natural world.

Ecology and Related Thought

Ecology itself concerns the relationship between living organisms, including humans, and their habitats. We each have a relationship with the environment around us in numerous ways, including our natural surroundings. Various related fields have emerged from ecology. For example, “spiritual ecology” refers to the intersection between religion and spirituality and the environment. Its practitioners fall into three categories:

1. scientific and academic,
2. spiritual or religious environmentalism, and
3. religious or spiritual individuals who relate strongly to the environment.³

Much literature on this is available.

It is also relevant here to mention eco-philosophy. Just as the aim of traditional philosophy is *Sophia*, or wisdom, the aim of eco-philosophy is “ecosophy”, or ecological wisdom. This field has been described as an “ongoing, comprehensive, deep enquiry into values, the nature of the world and the self”.⁴ The late eco-philosopher, Dr Henryk Skolimowski, remarked that we need to change the *whole* structure of our consciousness, which is programmed towards manipulation and mechanistic thinking, resulting in an instrumental treatment of people and nature.⁵ For him, living more effectively in the world therefore demanded a complete metamorphosis of consciousness.

Selfishness in its numerous manifestations has a causal relationship with an instrumental treatment of life, that is, the employment of other life forms for our own advancement or pleasure. In contrast, the quality of mind which emerges when consciousness mutates has sometimes been referred to as a pure mind. Dr Skolimowski referred to it as the “reverential mind”. We will consider reverence further on.

Theosophy

Turning now to Theosophy, or Divine Wisdom, is not some kind of ultimate object outside of us; rather, we can think of it as our true state of being, obscured much of the time by the layers and complexities of our own make-up. This Wisdom has the potential to alter the quality of our consciousness, improve our relationship with our inner and outer

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environment, and express itself ever more fully in the way we live.

Some students may find themselves so caught up in technical aspects of theosophical teachings, that these occupy their minds above all. The teachings are in many ways full of wonder. They are the important scaffolding upon which it is possible to gain an orderly, deep, and universal perspective on life at all levels. They can help us understand why we are the way we are, and the possibilities of glorious human heights yet to be scaled.

However, can the teachings actually bring about meaningful change in those who have a deep longing to become fully Self-Realised? Neither they, nor any other being, can do this for us. For such a mutation of consciousness requires self-observation, along with a commitment to refashion and refine ourselves. Indeed, the dedication to a complete metamorphosis is the greatest of human journeys, the culmination of numerous incarnations, and it demands that we infuse ourselves with certain qualities that are likely to work against lifetimes of conditioning.

If I could isolate just three essential perspectives emerging from theosophical teachings which can help each of us to live more effectively in the contemporary world, they would be:

1. Unselfishness (an antidote to egoism and narcissism, which embraces qualities such as *ahimsa* and negates conflict).

2. Simplicity (an antidote to the excesses of desire reflected in habits such as rampant consumerism, which extends greater kindness to the planet and the other lives upon it).

3. Reverence (an antidote to an instrumental treatment of people and Nature, which upholds the sacred dignity of all life).

Unselfishness

One of the Holy Ones made some significant comments about unselfishness during our Society's early years:

The first object of the TS is philanthropy. The true Theosophist is a philanthropist "not for himself but for the world he lives".⁶

This is a breathtakingly lofty ideal. So we can pose some relevant practical, personal questions:

For how much of the day do I live for myself?

For how much of the day do I live for the world?

Do I care deeply for the world?

If so, am I doing something about it?

Am I prepared to give of my own time, spiritual energy and resources to help uplift the world in some way?

Am I consciously considerate of the animal kingdom, as well as the planet's resources, through my personal habits?

The answers to such questions may reveal much and even cause us to rethink certain ways in which we live.

A further comment was:

Selfishness and the want of self-sacrifice are the greatest impediments on the path of adeptship.⁷

For many individuals who are attracted

to the ideal of the Spiritual Path, there may be a conditional desire to tread the Path, in the sense that they are not willing to be sufficiently selfless, or to sacrifice very much. It may be quite easy to live in one's comfort zone, hoping that through a basically good life one will attract the attention of the Holy Ones. Perhaps we live in the world more selfishly than we think, without even realising it. We may prefer to give of ourselves to others when it is convenient for us. On the other hand, though, our higher evolution into pure, Self-Realised beings tends to require frequent inconvenience.

It is significant that unselfishness brings with it the clarity of a far broader perspective on life which is unsullied by personal judgements, preferences, and concerns. It is a truly beneficent force, because it cascades into many of the finest qualities such as doing no harm (*ahimsa*), kindness, consideration for others, awareness of the suffering around us, compassionate action, sending beneficial thoughts to others, a spirit of helpfulness, and so forth.

Simplicity

And what of simplicity? We can be reminded of some pearls from Bro. N. Sri Ram, the Society's fifth International President:

Real simplicity . . . springs out of the elimination of all that is superfluous, all encumbrances and hindrances, retaining only the essentials of value.⁸

Retaining those essentials which are of value relates strongly to the first of the

qualifications for the Path which were brought to the world in the little gem, *At the Feet of the Master*: discrimination, or *viveka*. We can understand this quality as spiritual discernment, which helps us to realise what is truly important in life and what is not; what is excessive and what is reasonable in terms of how we live daily in a deeply materialistic world.

Viveka also applies to what we choose to feed our minds in this age of global interconnection with its high volume of information. For example, electronic communication and modern technology need to be used appropriately; they cannot replace the fullness and richness of direct relationship with other beings, and with our environment generally. Wise discernment helps us to know what is good for the mind and what is not, what is ultimately essential for us in this life and what is not. As Dr Robert Ellwood has observed:

The important thing is that one set up priorities based on the reality of the spiritual as well as the material side of Nature, and strive to be truly natural in a muddled world.⁹

The establishment of self-determined areas of priority in our lives becomes a key enabler of a simpler, clearer, and more meaningful existence.

A discerning return to simplicity in various ways can help to arrest fragmentation. At a practical level, we will inevitably have individual approaches to this. Wants and needs vary between individuals and cultures. What one society regards as a need can be regarded as a

luxury elsewhere. What is relatively simple for one person may be too complex for another.

Furthermore, we may reduce the number of our possessions, but this may not necessarily reveal a simple nature. J. Krishnamurti once said:

Simplicity of the heart is of far greater importance and significance than simplicity of possessions. To be content with a few things is a comparatively easy matter. To renounce comfort, or to give up smoking and other habits, does not indicate simplicity of heart.¹⁰

He observed that to put on a loin cloth in a world that is taken up with clothes, comforts, and distractions, does not indicate a free being. Therefore, simplicity resides not so much in the physical circumstances we create around us, but in the quality of our consciousness. One could regard a simple heart as a selfless state of consciousness in which there are very few personal wants, and which is open and alert to the needs of others because such a quality of being is filled with universal love.

Overall, if we can make our lives somewhat simpler, it stands to reason that we will have more energy for whatever work we need to do in this incarnation, bringing to each task a greater measure of attention. Paradoxically, there can be an increase of abundance in life when there is more simplicity. For example, our minds continually generate ideas and explanations, which in turn tend to create new ones. Indeed, overly complex mental activity can spoil the immediacy of our

experience. It is not without reason that meditation has been advocated in various traditions.

Some of the greatest human beings lead, or have led, remarkably simple lives. In an illumined, reverential mind, quality takes precedence over a life which is driven by various manifestations of quantity, including consumerist excesses. This is not to suggest that we get rid of all our possessions. We have our individual needs, and everyone's situation is different. It is beneficial to consider, though:

- ◆ how much in this physical world is actually enough, compared with what is excessive for each of us;

- ◆ the potential merit of learning to think more independently, instead of being caught up within various complex global mental clouds of humanity which are not spiritually beneficial; and

- ◆ the value of learning to be quiet, and the effect this can have on our relationship with our inner and outer environment.

In general, it is worthwhile to give consideration to the potential advantages of greater simplicity and less complexity in life, according to our individual circumstances; and to discover the difference between a busy, complex life on the one hand, and a more simple, peaceful, yet abundantly full life on the other.

Reverence for all Life

I have suggested that there are three main perspectives deriving from Theosophy which can help us live more effectively in the contemporary world: the

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first two were unselfishness and simplicity. According to the teaching, this *yuga* is the Age of Kali, driven by human self-centredness, heavy material emphasis, and complexity, a long era during which the spiritual is much less prominent in the world than it is in other *yuga*-s. Theosophy highlights our Divine origins; therefore a perspective of reverence has an important part to play here as well.

The treatment of the planet's resources and other people instrumentally — that is, for one's own advancement and comfort, and without an appreciation of the Divinity within all of life reflects a shallow and uncaring life. Taken to extremes, it leads to spiritual bankruptcy. On the other hand, reverence is a redemptive quality of the mind — accompanied by an expansive movement of the heart.

The development of the mind is clearly prominent during our era. It has reached impressive heights. Yet a more hardened mind ultimately needs to be illumined and softened if it is to become reverential, which is when more far-reaching change can occur. The flowering of reverence is a truly beautiful thing. Such a mind venerates life and is infused with inner radiance. It is less concerned with the complexities of self-centredness, and more concerned with other life forms.

It can be inferred that the matter within a pure or reverential mind moves in a flowing, wave-like manner, without numerous external intrusions, and that it

embraces a profound level of richness and simplicity. It is a mind which apprehends the sacredness in all and does not waste energy on trivial things. Reverence needs to be nurtured in order for us to become whole. Where there is reverence, the seeds of conflict do not exist. The more we deepen our experience and conviction of the sanctity of all life, the more we will enable the blossoming of the glorious being we are destined to become.

We do find pockets of light during Kali Yuga, in the form of individuals who embody much compassion and wisdom, along with other spiritual qualities. Despite the daily challenges of our present world period, there are still many scattered souls in incarnation around the planet who actively work for good in their various spheres of life. Such individuals do not simply succumb to the excesses of our times; rather, they have the discernment and the skill to live within this material age without losing sight of their divine roots.

The introduction of Theosophy to the modern world by HPB, too, has infused much-needed light into the world during this challenging age. And Theosophy is deeply ecological. Its teachings point to the possibility of a sacred relationship with our environment in its entirety — not just everything we see around us outwardly, but also that interior environment which exists deep in the recesses of our very being and links us, profoundly, with the entire universe. ✧

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Endnotes

1. H. P. Blavatsky, *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. XII, the Theosophical Publishing House (TPH), Wheaton, 1980, p. 418.
2. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Volume II, TPH, Adyar, 1979, p. 614.
3. <environment-ecology.com> — accessed 18 December 2022.
4. <environment-ecology.com> accessed 13 January 2023.
5. Dr Henryk Skolimowski, “Philosophy, Dharma, Ecology”, paper for World Environment Congress, year not known.
6. Katherine A. Beechey, *Daily Meditations: Extracts from Letters of the Masters of the Wisdom*, TPH, Adyar, 1949/1984, p. 6.
7. Ibid.
8. N. Sri Ram, *Thoughts for Aspirants*, 2nd Series, TPH, Adyar, 1974, p. 81.
9. Robert Ellwood: *Theosophy a Modern Expression of the Wisdom of the Ages*, TPH, Wheaton, 1986, p. 203.
10. Krishnamurti, J., *Commentaries on Living*, First Series, TPH, Wheaton, 1973, ch. 13.

Is it possible to be free? Is it possible as we are — conditioned, shaped by every influence, by propaganda, by the books we read, the cinemas, the radios, the magazines — all impinging on the mind, shaping it — is it possible to live in this world completely free, not only consciously but at the very roots of our being? That, it seems to me, is the challenge, is the only issue. Because if one is not free there is no love — there is jealousy, anxiety, fear, domination, the pursuit of pleasure, sexually or otherwise. If one is not free you cannot see clearly, if there is no freedom, there is no sense of beauty. . . .

If this is the central issue, for each one of us, and nothing else, because unless one is free you cannot see what is truth, unless there's complete freedom inwardly, love becomes a pleasure-pain; unless there is complete inward sense of freedom, not given by another, not as an idea, not as a something to be aspired to, then there is no fear of death. . . .

But if to you that is not the main interest, that is not the main challenge — but whether if you ask is it possible for a human being to find God, truth, love and all the rest of it — how can you find anything if you're not free? How can you explore, take a voyage, if all the things that you have accumulated through generation after generation, that burden you carry with you, all the fear. So it seems to me that is the only issue, and, is it possible for human beings — you and I — for us to be really free?

J. Krishnamurti
Public Talk 2, Saanen, Switzerland
09 July 1968

The Hidden Side of *The Theosophist* — III

MARY K. NEFF

THERE is one among these footnotes of Master Koot Hoomi [KH] which is of peculiar significance, because its author had recently experienced what he describes. This note deals with Initiation and the Initiator, treating the subject chiefly from the Christian and Jewish points of view, but adding:

To this day, the Initiation *beyond* the Himalayas is followed by the temporary death (from three to six months) of the disciple, often of the Initiator.

Now in September 1881, the Master KH had notified his two “lay *chelas* [disciples]”, Sinnett and Hume, that “very soon I will have to leave you to yourselves for the period of three months”.¹

As a matter of fact, they were not left to themselves; for Master Morya [M.] took over their correspondence, and his letters reveal a glimpse of the wonderful experience through which Mahatma KH was then passing, and still more of the exquisite relationship existing between the two Masters. He writes:

When his [KH’s] “retreat” was decided

upon, in parting he asked me: “Will you watch over my work, will you see it falls not into ruins?” I promised. What would I not have promised him at that hour!² At a certain spot not to be mentioned to outsiders, there is a chasm spanned by a frail bridge of woven grasses and with a raging torrent beneath. The bravest member of your Alpine Clubs would scarcely dare to venture the passage, for it hangs like a spider’s web, and *seems* to be rotten and impassable. Yet it is not; and he who dares the trial and succeeds — as he will if it is right that he should be permitted — comes into a gorge of surpassing beauty of scenery, to one of *our* places and to some of *our* people, of which and whom there is no note or minute among European geographers. At a stone’s throw from the old Lamasery stands the old tower, within whose bosom have gestated generations of Bodhisatwas.³ It is there where now rests your lifeless friend — my brother, the light of my soul, to whom I made a faithful promise to watch during his absence over *his* work. . . .⁴

Koot-Humi went to see him (as he is his

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chela) before going into Tong-pa-ngi [The “Void”] — the state in which he now is . . .⁵

Not having the right to *follow* KH, I feel very lonely without my boy.⁶

I would not have even the desert wind listen to a word said at low breath against him who now sleeps. . . .⁷

1883 still finds Master KH extremely active in carrying on THE THEOSOPHIST. On 2 February, he writes to Mr Sinnett:

I am specially anxious — on M.’s account — that the Journal should be made as much as possible a success and should be circulated more than it is now in England.⁸

Again, he says of Lillie’s *Buddha and Early Buddhism*:

I will have it slightly reviewed by Subba Row or HPB, furnishing them with notes myself.⁹

And later in the year, when Sinnett had gone to England, he urges him to contribute:

If you find time to write for *THE THEOSOPHIST* and can induce someone else, as Mr Myers, for instance, you will oblige me personally.¹⁰

On 22 August 1883, Col. Olcott joined Mme Blavatsky at Ootacamund, the hill-station of Madras [now Tamil Nadu, India], where she had been staying some little time at “the Retreat”, the home of Major-General Morgan. He tells how delighted she was to see him after his prolonged lecture tour, and how she worked off some of her excitement by

keeping him up that night till 2 a.m., reading proofs and correcting her MS. He says:

Part of her work was the taking from dictation, from her invisible teacher, of the “Replies to an English F.T.S. [Fellow of the Theosophical Society]” which contained among other things the now oft-quoted prophecy of the direful things and many cataclysms that would happen in the near future, when the cycle should close. That she was taking down from dictation was fully apparent to one who was familiar with her ways.¹¹

Writing to Mr Sinnett from Ootacamund, Mme Blavatsky says:

I wish your “London Lodge” new members would not write questions necessitating such ample answers. Why, bless you, only the half of the “Replies” fill up a whole form of the September *THEOSOPHIST*! and fancy the pleasure. It is *I* who had to copy most of the “Replies”, written half by M., half by either chelas or handwritings that I see for the first time, as no printer the world over could make out M.’s handwriting. It is more red and fierce than ever! And then I do not like them a bit, the “Replies”. Where’s the necessity of writing three pages for every line of the question, and explaining things that after all none of them, except yourself perhaps, will understand? Science, science and science. Modern physical science be hanged! And the October number having to devote 15 columns perhaps to answering the rest of the Questions and *Objections* by “an English F.T.S.” M. ordered Subba

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Row to answer his objection on the date of Buddha's birth and Cunningham's fanciful dates. . . . Holy shadow! And who is Mr Myers that my big Boss should waste a bucketful of his red ink to satisfy *him*? And He won't; see if He does. For Mr Myers will not be satisfied with negative proofs and the evidence of the failings of European astronomers and physicists. But does he really think that any of the "adepts" will give out their real esoteric teaching in *THE THEOSOPHIST*?¹²

And again, writing in September, she remarks:

As M. says, "Remains to be seen how Mr F. V. [should be W.] Myers will receive the Replies" — whether he will not be the first one (and if not he, then other members) to call them ignorant fools, illiterate Asiatics "with a small Oriental brain" as Wyld expressed it — wanting to make believe, I suppose, that his Jesus was an Anglo-Saxon Āryan. I say that these Replies to "an English F.T.S." are time lost; they will not accept the truth, and they occupy half of every number of *THE THEOSOPHIST* that comes out, crowding out other matter . . . I am really sorry. . . . It does seem wisdom thrown out of the window. Well, their ways *are* mysterious.¹³

These "Replies" were published as follows: August: DEVACHAN: Memorandum, with three "Replies":

1. The Real and the Unreal,
2. Dream Life,
3. The Various States of *Devachan* [a state intermediate between two Earth lives].

Master KH says of them:

Again and once more, an attempt has been

made to dispel some of that great mist that I find in Mr Massey's *Devachan*.¹⁴

And HPB, in an editorial note attached to them, says that they come from three different sources.

September: SOME ENQUIRIES SUGGESTED BY MR SINNETT'S *ESOTERIC BUDDHISM*:

1. Do the Adepts Deny the Nebular Theory?
2. Is the Sun Merely a Cooling Mass?
3. Are the Great Nations to be Swept Away in an Hour?
4. Is the Moon Immersed in Matter?
5. About the Mineral Monad.
6. Sri Sankarāchārya's Date and Doctrine.

It is of these [the answers to these questions] that HPB stated, they were "written half by M., half by chelas or handwritings I see for the first time". . . .

It is in "Reply VII" that the prophecy occurs which was mentioned by Col. Olcott. It will be of interest:

We are at the end of a cycle — geological and other — and at the beginning of another. Cataclysm is to follow cataclysm. The pent-up forces are bursting out in many quarters; and not only will men be swallowed up or slain by thousands, "new" land appear and "old" subside, volcanic eruptions and tidal waves appal; but secrets of an unsuspected Past will be uncovered to the dismay of Western theorists, and the humiliation of an imperious science. . . . We are not emulous of the prophet's honours; but still, let this stand as a prophecy.

In all these "Replies to an English F.T.S." there is much important matter, and it would be well if they were to be incorporated into Mr Sinnett's *Esoteric*

Buddhism as an Appendix. With the exception of those dealing with Devachan, the “Replies” were reprinted in *Five Years of Theosophy*, and so made available to the general reader.

The literary labours of the Masters for *THE THEOSOPHIST*, though extensive, seem to have been mere incidents in their busy lives. We get occasional glimpses into the state of things from their correspondence; for example, Master KH explains to Mr Sinnett:

Writing my letters, then, as I do, a few lines now and a few words two hours later; having to catch up the thread of the same subject, perhaps with a dozen or more interruptions between the beginning and the end, I cannot promise you anything like Western accuracy.¹⁵

Under more favourable circumstances, he writes:

The abundance of MSS. from me of late shows that I have round a little leisure; their blotched, patchy and mended appearance also shows that my leisure has come by snatches, with constant interruptions, and that my writing has been done in odd places, here and there, with such materials as I could pick up. But for the RULE [“since the palmy days of the ‘impressions’ and ‘precipitations’ (*Mahatma Letters*, Chron. Ed., Letter No. 117 (ML 93, pp. 424–5)] that forbids using one minim of power until every ordinary means has been tried and failed, I might, of course, have given you a lovely “precipitation” as regards chirography and composition. I console myself for the miserable appearance of my letters with

the thought that, perhaps, you may not value them the less for these marks of my personal subjection to the wayside annoyances which you English so ingeniously reduce to a *minimum* with your appliances of sorts. As your lady once kindly remarked, they take away most effectually the flavour of miracle, and make us as human beings more thinkable entities — a wise reflection for which I thank her.¹⁶

Once upon a time it was Mr Sinnett’s letter which was subjected to “wayside annoyances”. It happened after this fashion, as related by the Master:

I cannot close without telling you of an incident which, however ludicrous, has led to something that makes me thank my stars for it, and will please you also. Your letter, enclosing that of C.C.M., was received by me on the morning following the date you handed it over to the “little man”. I was then in the neighbourhood of Pari-Yong, at the gun-pa of a friend, and was very busy with important affairs. When I received intimation of its arrival, I was just crossing the large inner courtyard of the monastery. Bent upon listening to the voice of Lama Tondhub Gyatcho, I had no time to read the contents.

So, after mechanically opening the thick packet, I merely glanced at it, and put it, as I thought, into the travelling bag I wear across the shoulder. In reality though, it had dropped on the ground; and since I had broken the envelope and emptied it of its contents, the latter were scattered in their fall. There was no one near me at the time, and my attention being wholly absorbed

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with the conversation, I had already reached the staircase leading to the library door, when I heard the voice of a young *gyloong* calling out from a window, and expostulating with someone at a distance.

Turning round I understood the situation at a glance; otherwise your letter would never have been read by me, for I saw a venerable, old goat in the act of making a morning meal of it. The creature had already devoured part of C.C.M.'s letter, and was thoughtfully preparing to have a bite at yours, more delicate and easy for chewing with his old teeth than the tough envelope and paper of your correspondent's epistle. To rescue what remained of it took me but one short instant, disgust and opposition of the animal notwithstanding — but there remained mighty little of it!

The envelope with your crest on had nearly disappeared, the contents of the letters been made illegible — in short, I was perplexed at the sight of the disaster. Now you know *why* I felt embarrassed: *I had no right to restore it*, the letters coming from the “Eclectic”¹⁷ and connected directly with the hapless “Pelings”¹⁸ on all sides. What could I do to restore the missing parts!



Pari-Yong monastery, mentioned by Master KH in his letter to Mr Sinnett (photograph of 1903, Wikimedia Commons)

I had already resolved to humbly crave permission from the Chohan to be allowed an exceptional privilege in this dire necessity, when I saw his holy face before me, with his eye twinkling in quite an unusual manner, and heard his voice: “Why break the rule? I will do it myself.” These simple words, *Kam mi ts'har* — “I'll do it”, contain a world of hope for me.

He has restored the missing parts and done it quite neatly too, as you see, and even transformed a crumpled broken envelope, very much damaged, into a new one — crest and all. Now I know what great power had to be used for such a restoration, and this leads me to hope for a relaxation of severity one of these days.

Hence I thanked the goat heartily; and since he does not belong to the ostracised Peling race, to show my gratitude I strengthened what remained of teeth in his mouth, and set the dilapidated remains firmly in their sockets, so that he may chew food harder than English letters for several years yet to come.¹⁹

Very humorously the Master describes an occasion of special dearth of materials:

Time is precious and material (I mean writing material) is still more so. “Precipitation”, in your case having become unlawful, . . . and I, being far away from home, and at a place where a stationer's shop is less needed than breathing air, our correspondence threatens to break very abruptly unless I manage my stock in hand judiciously. A friend [Djwal Khul] promises to supply me, in case of great need, with a few stray sheets, memento relics of his grandfather's will, by which he disinherited him and thus made his

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“fortune”. But as he never wrote one line but once, he says, for the last eleven years, except on such “*double superfin glacé*” made at Thibet, as you might irreverently take for blotting paper in its primitive days, and that the will is drawn upon a like material — we might as well turn to your book at once.²⁰

In another instance, the first part of a letter was written on thin rice paper, while the remainder was on rough parchment-like material. It would seem that Master M. sometimes suffered from the same lack of literary tools, for he once wrote to Mr Sinnett:

My writing is good, but the paper rather thin for penmanship. Cannot write English with a brush though; would be worse.²¹

The remark about his writing being good is a bit of humour; for he often laughs at his writing, and describes a particularly atrocious penman as “a calligrapher and scribe of my kind”²². He once told Mr Sinnett, when the latter had been thinking much about him,

You . . . made my snake-like signature . . . haunt me even in my sleep.²³

At another time he exclaims:

My message in a feigned hand, when I am at dead loggerheads with my own!²⁴

However, he took himself in hand in the matter of penmanship; for later he writes:

I trust you will not find much difficulty — not as much as hitherto — in making out my letter. I have become a very plain writer since he [KH] reproached me with making you lose your valuable time over my scrawlings. His rebuke struck home, and as you see, I have amended my evil ways.²⁵

The Editor, or rather the Founders, had their difficulties too, which HPB feelingly depicts for Mr Sinnett’s benefit in a letter in September 1883, when he had been contemplating the founding of a new daily to be called *The Phoenix*:



H. P. Blavatsky

Do you forget that you are addressing two European beggars with two Hindu other beggars to help them in the management, and not the rich *Pioneer* with lakhs behind it? I would like to see *you* undertake the management and editing of *Phoenix* with two pence in your pocket; with a host of enemies around; no friends to help you; yourself — the editor, manager, clerk, and even *peon* [messenger] very often; with a poor half-broken down Damodar to help you alone for three years, one who was a boy right from the school bench, having no idea of business any more than I have, and Olcott always — seven months in the year — away! . . . Why, we have made miracles in rearing up, alone, and in the face of such antagonism, paper, Society and business in general. . . . Please remember that while you, in the midst of all your arduous labours as the Editor of *The Pioneer*, used to leave your work regularly

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at 4, after beginning it at 10 a.m. — and, went away either to lawn tennis or a drive, Olcott and I begin ours at 5 in the morning with candle-light, and end it sometimes at 2 a.m. We have no time for lawn tennis as you had, and clubs and theatres and social intercourse. We have no time hardly to eat and drink.²⁶

And when later Damodar was taken to the Master's Ashrama, she exclaims in despair:

And now what *shall* we do in the office *without* Damodar? Ye gods and powers of Heaven and Hell, we didn't have work and trouble enough! Well, well, Their Will be done, not mine. . . . ✧

Endnotes

1. *The Mahatma Letters*, Chron. Ed., Letter No. 21 (ML 27, p. 206).
2. Djwal Khul reveals the magnitude of this promise in his remark: "M. Sahib's only hatred in his life is for writing." (*Ibid.*, Chron. Ed., Letter No. 37 (ML 37, p. 250)); and it is echoed in the sigh with which Master M. says: "I close the longest letter I have ever written in my life; but as it is for KH, I am satisfied." (*Ibid.*, Chron. Ed., Letter No. 29 (ML 29, p. 228)).
3. Compare: "Unless one had become in the interim a Bodhisatwa, an Arhat." (*Ibid.*, Chron. Ed., Letter No. 104 (ML 25, p. 198)).
4. *Ibid.*, Chron. Ed., Letter No. 29 (ML 29, p. 219).
5. *Ibid.*, No. 25 (ML 73, p. 375).
6. *Ibid.*, No. 26 (ML 102, p. 439).
7. *Ibid.*, No. 28 (ML 74, p. 375).
8. *Ibid.*, No. 104 (ML 25, p. 201).
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, Chron. Ed., Letter No. 117 (ML 93, pp. 428–9).

11. *Old Diary Leaves*, Vol. II, p. 466.
12. *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter No. 23, p. 46.
13. *Ibid.*, Letter No. 27, p. 59.
14. *The Mahatma Letters*, Chron. Ed., Letter No. 111 (ML 59, p. 339).
15. *Ibid.*, No. 85B (ML 24B, p. 186).
16. *Ibid.*, No. 68 (ML 16, pp. 115–6).
17. Simla Eclectic TS
18. Tibetan for "foreigners".
19. *The Mahatma Letters*, Chron. Ed., Letter No. 92 (ML 54, pp. 320–1).
20. *Ibid.*, No. 15 (ML 8, pp. 33–4).
21. *Ibid.*, No. 46 (ML 12, p. 70).
22. *Ibid.*, No. 34 (ML 39, p. 253).
23. *Ibid.*, No. 42 (ML 43, p. 259).
24. *Ibid.*, No. 118 (ML 96, p. 431).
25. *Ibid.*, No. 46 (ML 12, p. 68).
26. *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter No. 27, p. 57.

We leave it to our menials — the *duggpas* [or "Red Caps", a left-hand path Tibetan sect] at our service — by giving them *carte blanche* for the time being, and with the sole object of drawing out the whole *inner* nature of the *chela* [disciple] most of the nooks and corners of which would remain dark and concealed forever, were not an opportunity afforded to test each of these corners in turn.

Master Koot Hoomi, *Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 232

On Courage: *Om Tat Sat* — II

MARGARET BOVE STURMAN

KARMA is implacable in all circumstances and will inevitably be active in present or future incarnations: the repressors of Muslim women and women in general, will, in their turn, be repressed; the infibulator of female babies will eventually be violated; the abortionists will experience the pain of being aborted; the persecutors based on race distinction will be likewise persecuted.

One easy way to help dissolve a little of the karma pervading the globe and also the karma of souls entrapped in the astral plane, is to offer our transitory but, at the same time, necessary pains (for example, toothaches, injections, arthritis, minor ailments, or injuries) sending them into the ether in order to alleviate the heavy global karma. It really works and, in this way, even though in pain, one can be useful with very little effort — just sending good thoughts — for example: “Light and Love to the World.”

Mata Amritānandamayī (Amma), who embraces so many thousands throughout the world, endures the physical pain of innumerable hugs, offering the pain as a Utopia for the world, even though as a Great Soul, all pain could be avoided by her.

After inestimable eons of time and peace, we leave the safety and tranquility of the sacred and sublime, the out-of-the-world radiance and security of Devachan, to emerge altruistically into the chaos of planet Earth. We are all, at heart, heroic, and can joyously acknowledge that our courage existed even before we were born — it is impregnated within us and is brought forth at every reincarnation, well aware before birth of the process involved. The spiritual world is so beautiful that, in the brief moments of a near-death experience, there is no desire to return to Earth. This could also apply to spontaneous abortion when the decision to incarnate wavers.

The word courage originates from the Latin *coraticum* or *cor* (“heart”). From the love of the Heart we have decided to reincarnate as “lambs for the offering” and to face eventual difficult circumstances knowing that, whatever the apparent outcome, all will be well because, when the intentions are altruistic, the noble gesture will be absorbed into the harmony of the Universe.

There are times of despair when we are sad and would like a Shining Divine

Margaret Bove Sturman, member of the TS since 1986, practises alternative medicine in Naples, Italy.

On Courage: *Om Tat Sat* — II

Being to embrace and comfort us, comfort our sense of insecurity, reassure us and let us know we are not alone and are much loved for what we really are, with all our weaknesses.

We can console ourselves knowing that our Whole Being in its Pristine Purity is Love. Kosmic Love is the most powerful energy existing — the Creator, Sustainer, and Transformer of the Universe. We are Divine, Eternal Beings deriving from the Flame that does not burn and, as John Algeo, previous international Vice President of the Theosophical Society (TS), said: “ALL IS WELL.” When one is disseminating the Good, True, and Beautiful, it is difficult to have kinks in the armour. We are cherished, protected, safe.

There cannot be courage on a physical level without fear. The usual tendency of humanity is the fear of all types of pain — physical and psychological. Courage without fear is reckless and it is necessary to arrive at Illumination to become truly fearless when the universal, pervading Love embraces us all in Oneness. The great explorers, inventors, scientists, writers, philosophers, knew of the danger involved, but their courage overcame the fear and they never surrendered to despair.

An example of 1st and 7th Ray physical courage are the qualities of Edward Wilson, the explorer who died with Robert Falcon Scott in Antarctica on their way back from the South Pole:

First Ray – “undefeatable sportsmanship, resilient indomitability”. “Slog on, just slog on”, Wilson said to [his companion,] Oates,

when he knew himself doomed. The ideal: “To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.”

Seventh Ray: “the knightly spirit, stainless in honour, selfless in devotion”.

The world needs these people, not only as physical explorers and adventurers, but as spiritual explorers and adventurers as well. (*Light of the Sanctuary — The Occult Diary of Geoffrey Hodson*)

Another example of courage without yielding is of the mountaineers accompanying Edmund Hillary, the New Zealander, who, after having conquered Everest in the 1970s and lost his wife and daughter in a tragic accident, decided to undertake an expedition called “From the Ocean to the Sky”. Having completed the water navigation, the group arrived eventually on the mountainous ascent and unfortunately Hillary contracted lung edema and had to be taken very quickly to a lower mountain level. Information given specifies that the usual level of ascent and descent for mountaineers is 150/200 meters an hour, but for a professional 300 meters an hour is possible, 900 meters is extremely difficult and almost impossible. Hillary’s life depended on a rapid descent and his mountain colleagues made a remarkable descent of 1,000 meters in just 70 minutes! Hillary recovered and lived for many more years. He did a lot of charity for Nepal and constructed more than 30 schools for the Tibetan children.

H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) is an exemplary model of courage without yielding by

expounding in her writings (that is, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*) revolutionary ideas in the then bigoted 19th century. She was criticised and slandered in every way but, without resentment, said that “it was necessary to have the courage to remember tremendous past wickedness and humiliations and try to forgive them”. The Masters also said: “Courage is necessary to accept wickedness with ease, free from constraint, and know it is part of the growth of the Soul.” This is true Theosophy.

The whole area of a monastery built on behalf of the Karmapas outside Lhasa was razed to the ground during the reign of the 7th Karmapa (1454–1506), Chos Trag Gyamtso, and the Karmapa was urged by the ruler of Tibet, the 4th Shamor Tulku, Choskyi Trakpa, to punish the offenders, but with the compassion and wisdom of a Karmapa, he took no action and said that “the matter was well into the past”. He then serenely continued with his daily life of meditation and teaching. Quoting from Dante Alighieri (1265–1321): “*non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa*” (“don’t take notice of them, but look on and pass by”). (*Divine Comedy*, Inferno (Hell), canto III, verse 51)

This is the type of divine detachment necessary to confront pain and wickedness. The Dalai Lama, when interviewed regarding the situation in Tibet and the oppression of the Chinese, said he had compassion for them — the words of a Great Spiritual Being.

We can acknowledge our personal courage by incarnating in a physical body,

but the real heroes and heroines are those wonderful Beings of Light and Love who have decided with the whole of their essence to aid humanity along the path of liberation by returning to Earth and encountering the tremendous impact of human energies, incarnating continuously to teach and inspire.

The Bodhisattvas, with pure altruism, have refused eternal peace and bliss in order to work for the liberation of all beings. Remembering a theosophical seminar at Naarden in Holland: At the end of the session, during question time, reference was made to C. Jinarājadāsa’s book *First Principles of Theosophy*, p. 26. The question was asked if it could be possible to experience initiatic evolution rising through the insect, bird kingdom — a totally selfless, unimaginable sacrifice. No answer was given but a brother theosophist, no longer on the mortal plane, Phan Chon Ton, spoke out that the Lady Ascended, Master Kwan Yin, was said to have undergone this experience.

Compassionate Kwan Yin is the female personification of Avalokiteśvara, who is the Bodhisattva embodiment of Buddhahood and Spiritual Son of Buddha Amitabha (the Buddha of Infinite Light and Compassion). Avalokiteśvara will remain within the earthly sphere until “every blade of grass” has attained enlightenment. This is courage sublime. Ample information on Kwan Yin and Avalokiteśvara can be found in *The Secret Doctrine (SD)*, Vol I, 1880 ed., pp. 71–3, 136–8, 431, and 470–3.

Remembering the myth of the courageous Prometheus (initiativ wisdom in symbols) who every night had his liver torn apart by an eagle and then reformed for the next session, night after night, feeling the vultures of doubt and full consciousness gnawing at his heart (*SD*, Vol. II, 1880 edition, p. 244). Prometheus brought fire to humanity so man could proceed along the spiritual path, challenging tyranny for the sake of humankind, but at what a price and ordeal to voluntarily submit oneself to eon-long torture. The myth is allegorical, but hidden between the lines is the so-called purgatory/hell of the Scriptures (pangs of consciousness and remorse).

The Nirmānakāyas, Spirits of Great Sages from spheres on a higher plane than ours, voluntarily incarnate in mortal bodies to help the human race in its upward trend, whispering words of Wisdom to inspire humanity.

The Karmapas, the name meaning literally “he who incarnates the activity of all Buddhas”, embody with the intent to free all beings from suffering and lead them to the highest form of happiness. The first Karmapa to incarnate was Dusum Khyenpa (1110–1193), who has already intentionally incarnated 17 times in order to fulfill his commitment to the world and the teaching of disciples — 900 years of continual reincarnation. In his 4th incarnation as Rolpe Dorje (1340–1383) he had an important part in the birth of one of the most notable Tibetan schools, the Gelugpa School, Yellow Hat sect, to which the Dalai Lama belongs.

These wonderful Beings throughout their various incarnations are subject to the traumas of daily human life, with all the nasty illnesses of the Middle Ages and following centuries; they then necessarily die, being in a physical body, before re-incarnating again as Karmapa. The word “they” is used but actually it is the same Karmapa who has already incarnated 17 times from 1110 to 1193, with only one view in mind — to benefit humanity. The 17th and now existing Gwalwang Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, was born in Tibet on 17 [26?] June 1985.

Most of the human population, being in a physical body and no longer in a prenatal paradise, is unaware of the sacrifices made for them by the Divine Beings and face daily life in what Gurdjieff calls a “dreamy” state.

And so we come to daily life, courage on the physical plane, mundane courage, the courage we need every day. The list could be interminable, and courage is different for each personality, easy and trivial for some, difficult for another, depending on the particular circumstances and tendencies of the individual involved. Tendencies or inclinations can be carried forward from previous incarnations and are stored in the subtle bodies, then passed on by inhabiting the molecular level of the physical body, genetic tendencies predisposing towards a particular disease and a crystallized pattern of karma. Inclinations could also be responsible for homosexuality; after many successive incarnations in a male or female body, adjustment to a new sex-

uality may be extremely difficult.

Beginning can be with simple things — courage to give, lend, and share precious irreplaceable belongings with the knowledge either of losing them or having them returned broken or damaged. How many of us are “attached” to our belongings? Attachment is not necessarily financial or worldly, although more difficult for the wealthy; even a beggar can be attached to his cloak. The problem is the “attachment”. Giving and sharing uplifts the spirit of Brotherhood and the teaching of Buddha of non-attachment. It is the direct path to freedom.

Charitable courage is to be generous and gives according to possibility. Many Sikhs at the Golden Temple of Amritsar in India regularly give 10 percent of their earnings in donation to the temple, resulting in hundreds of free meals every day for the poor. “Golden Temple” could be interpreted as a GOLDEN HEART.

Courage needs to be transparently truthful and sincere in all circumstances, even to personal discomfort and embarrassment — no “white” lies. In AD 1100–1300 the Cathars, (religious group called the Perfect Ones), were diffused in the Mediterranean area. They lived a pure lifestyle with rigid moral discipline, including truthfulness. It was forbidden to tell lies with the risk of being expelled from the group. The Cathars rebelled against the dogma of the Catholic Church and were declared heretics by the Pope to be burnt. When they finally surrendered at Montsegur in southern France, some of them walked down the hill willingly

to the place of burning with a song in their hearts, the song usually sung by the Cathars. Upon reincarnation, signs of previous burning can sometimes be carried forward and seen on the new body.

The very first courage necessary on a physical level is to “know oneself” — this is the greatest challenge and the most arduous. The Buddha said that one can win a thousand battles but the battle with the self is the most difficult. Krishnamurti also said “look within”.

It is not necessary to travel round the world and visit various gurus searching for something — that “something” is deep within us. On a spiritual level, the ultimate aim of courses, talks, seminars, and meditations is to raise the consciousness of the participants, allowing them to enter the beauty of their own soul by discovering their innate Divinity and Real Self.

Another situation needing endless courage is to work strenuously with many sacrifices in order to reach one’s aspirations in life, and then to have everything destroyed (earthquakes, floods, wars, pestilence, and so on). Finding the same enthusiasm to start again, confronting situations in circumstances that seem insuperable is very difficult. Krishna, in the *Bhagavadgītā*, said the same thing to Arjuna: “The greatest challenge is to do things that are then destroyed.” However, it is said that difficulties that cannot be overcome are never beyond the level of evolution of an individual.

Nikola Tesla (1856–1943), born in Croatia, was a physicist and electrical engineer. After years of struggle and

hard work, he made many discoveries, including the secret of electricity and invisibility (the Philadelphia Experiment in October 1943, when a US Navy ship disappeared and reappeared). Free electricity could have been available worldwide already in the last century. Everything was hushed up for materialistic and security reasons. Immediately, after Tesla died in January 1943, all research papers and documents were removed from his apartment by the American FBI — so much work on a physical level without recognition. Tesla died alone, penniless — his only consolation being his pigeons.

Many artists, musicians, and scientists are recognised for their merits after their departure from the physical plane but the masterpieces and discoveries created by them are a joy for ever and will be engraved in golden glory in the annals of Ākāṣa and the spiritual world. The great statues of Buddha destroyed in Afghanistan are still shining in their splendour in other dimensions. All positivity and noble deeds, when the physical heart stops beating, are taken to the causal plane and remain there as bright stars, never to be forgotten.

There is the moral courage of having to struggle for a living against the fearful odds and adversity interposed by the world. Especially women in certain countries are handicapped by the physical drawback of their sex, not having the same possibility of obtaining a livelihood available for men. Day in and day out, year after year, usually as housewives and

mothers, they conduct the same, daily routine, with a cheery face and smile, keeping their many psychological and physical sufferings hidden with a courage as great as that displayed by any statesman or notable figurehead.

The Theosophical Order of Service's (TOS) Women Empowerment Project gives economic help with scholarships to meritorious and needy girls in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India, enabling them eventually to make a valid contribution to society. At the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society (TS), Adyar, Chennai (formerly Madras), there is the Vocational Training Centre sponsored by the TOS, providing sewing machines and training for young girls so they can eventually earn a decent living. Any monetary aid donated to the TOS for charity purposes, is used by the TOS directly without the risk of it being dispersed by third parties or bureaucracy.

One of the most noble and courageous sacrifices that one can make on a physical level is to give one's life for another — the word sacrifice means to “render sacred”. The Divine Beings do this as a matter of routine reincarnating many times when they could remain in their state of sublime peace and ecstasy. There are “the unknown fallen heroes on the battlefield, becoming but blades of grass, which the Earth will yield, to be trodden by other footsteps in another time, the memory of the noble sacrifice being the only sign — a life given for another never to be known, to receive recognition only in the spheric dome”.

On Courage: *Om Tat Sat* — II

Remembering some of the many courageous sacrifices of times past: the young pilots of the Battle of Britain, in the Second World War, who gave their lives to defend freedom, being greatly outnumbered by the enemy; Donna Agora (Hypatia) AD 375–414, central figure in the Alexandrian School of Neoplatonism, one of the greatest pagan martyrs, massacred for her expression of Truth; Giordano Bruno, burnt alive, said to be a previous incarnation of Annie Besant; and many others.

The predominant qualities necessary to travel along the Spiritual Path are humility, simplicity, and courage. Charles de Foucauld (1858–1916), called the minstrel/minister of God, wrote in his diary at the hermitage founded by him high up in the Hoggar mountains at Assekrem, Algeria, the place of the magnificent violet sunset, that “God is so Great, because so small”. Scientifically speaking, the components of the atom bomb (so big) consist of tiny, minute sub-atomic particles (so small) resulting in an indescribable powerful energy.

Foucauld was a French aristocrat and ex-officer of the “*École Spéciale Militaire de Saint-Cyr*.” After a worldly, frivolous life, he became a priest and hermit, living with the desert Tuareg nomads in North Africa for many years. He translated the four Gospels and the French dictionary into Tuareg (2,028 pages) and championed the abolition of slavery. He was murdered in Tamanrassat in 1916 by the same Tuareg whom he so loved. (The Tuareg are called “blue men”

because the sun impregnates their skin with the colour of their clothing.)

Mother Teresa of Calcutta was as fragile as a flower petal, giving the impression of easily being carried away by a wisp of wind, but her inner strength, humility, simplicity, and courage were exceptional. “Living for others” was her way of life and, in her simplicity, a cup of tea resolved many problems.

Teatime is a typical English custom and even during World War II, amidst the continual bombing and chaos, the elderly civilian firefighters always had a pot of tea available for moments of distress. “Give her a cup of tea”, they would say after a tremendous bombing, “she has just lost her husband”. Tea is also a customary, soothing drink in North Africa when the nomadic Berbers at the end of the day sit around their fire in the midst of the desert and sip a cup of soothing, relaxing tea. The tea ceremony in China and Japan is a ritual and Indian hospitality offers a cup of welcoming, refreshing tea also in shops as a part of daily life. One could call tea a “Universal Remedy”, the description in the dictionary of PANACEA, from Greek “PAN” (Nature).

There are many other forms of courage, but the ultimate courage is to face the unknown when leaving the physical body. Quoting Hamlet in Shakespeare:

To be, or not to be — that is the question:
That the dread of something after death
The undiscover'd country from whose
 bourn [frontier]
No traveller returns, — puzzles the will, . . .

On Courage: *Om Tat Sat* — II

The courage to return home fearlessly
to the other side is found in the com-
forting prayer to the Buddha of Infinite
Light and Compassion, AMITABHA:

Thou who liveth within my heart,
Awaken me to the immensity of thy spirit,
To the experience of thy living presence!
Deliver me from the bonds of desire,
From the slavery of small aims,
From the delusion of narrow egohood!

Enlighten me with the light of thy wisdom,
Suffuse me with the incandescence of
thy love,
Which includes and embraces the darkness,
Like the light that surrounds the dark core

of the flame,
Like the love of a mother that surrounds
The growing life in the darkness of her
womb,
Like the earth protecting the tender germ
of the seed.

Let me be the seed of thy living light!
Give me the strength to burst the sheath
of selfhood,
And like the seed that dies in order to
be reborn,
Let me fearlessly go through the portals
of death,
So that I may awaken to the greater life:
The all-embracing life of thy love, the all-
embracing love of thy wisdom.



Kasar Devi Ashram, Kumaon Himalaya , India, November 1964

**You have to accept whatever comes
and the only important thing is
that you meet it with courage
and with the best that you have to give.**

Eleanor Roosevelt

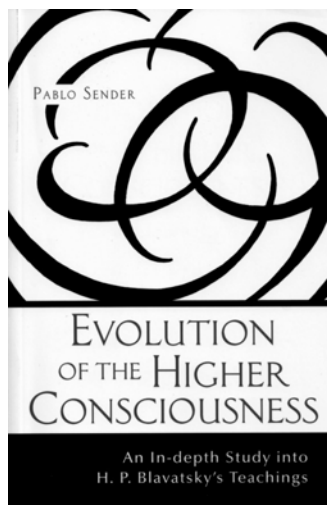
Books of Interest

EVOOLUTION OF THE HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS: AN IN-DEPTH STUDY INTO H. P. BLAVATSKY'S TEACHINGS, by Pablo Sender, PhD in Biological Sciences. Fohat Productions, PO Box 1043, Ojai, CA 93024, 201 pp., US\$24.95. <info@fohatproductions.com>; <fohatproductions.com>.

As profound as it is thought-provoking this book is an expertly crafted in-depth commentary about the teachings of Madame H. P. Blavatsky, specifically on the area of the higher consciousness.

The first of its two sections discusses several profoundly important concepts which relate to the constituents of Man as well as his Evolution. They range from the utmost abstraction that is the *ātman*, or universal spirit, which is quite frankly beyond the description of mere words, to the more easily understandable aspects of Man, such as *kāma-manas*, or the mind acting under the influence of the passional nature. Regardless of which concept he is describing, Dr Sender manages to masterfully break down these concepts, no matter how abstract, into relatable examples and analogues with an elegance and simplicity which have come to characterize his style of exposition.

One of the Mahatmas tells us: "Theosophy must not represent merely a collection of moral verities, a bundle of metaphysical Ethics epitomized in theo-



retical dissertations. Theosophy must be made practical." So any reader would be pleased to find out that practice is the title of the second section of this book. It discusses practical and useful ways of incorporating into our everyday lives the knowledge acquired from the first section. Specifically, to bring into contact the mental (*manasic*) faculty in Man with the universal soul (*buddhi*), with the eventual goal of attaining a permanent union between these two aspects as *buddhi-manas*. And to this end, Dr Sender elaborates a number of approaches to the spiritual life that the diligent aspirant would certainly benefit from by incorporating them into their routines.

Overall, this book does an excellent job at demystifying the incredible, yet often puzzling, wisdom of Madame Blavatsky.

Books of Interest

It cuts straight to the heart of her teachings and offers a complete pack-age in its two segments which perfectly complement one another. I would highly recommend it to anyone who is serious about treading upon the Path.

* * *

Biodata:

Pablo Sender, PhD, joined the Theosophical Society (TS) in his native Argentina in 1996. He has lived and worked at the international headquarters of the TS in Adyar, Chennai, India, and at the national center of the TS in America. He is currently at the Krotona Institute of Theosophy in Ojai, California, where he works and resides.

An international speaker, he has presented programs and retreats in India, Europe, Oceania, and the three Americas, and writes for many Theosophical journals. Dr Sender has been a student of the teachings of H. P. Blavatsky for over twenty years. One of the world's leading Theosophical scholars, he also has a doctorate in biological sciences. This background enables him to present deep spiritual teachings in a way that is both precise and practical. Visit his website at <PabloSender.com>. ✧

THAVA RISHI

An active member of the TS in Singapore, is currently pursuing a degree in Physics and exploring the unity between Theosophical teachings and the Physical Sciences

Peace Societies are Utopian, because no amount of argument based upon exoteric considerations of social morals or expediency can turn the hearts of the rulers of nations away from selfish war and schemes of conquest. . . . The key to all our successes . . . is in our recognition of the fact of the Higher Self — colourless, cosmopolitan, unsectarian, sexless, unworldly, altruistic — and the doing of our work on that basis.

H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings
Vol . 11, p. 398

Theosophical Work around the World

International Convention and Youth Gathering, Adyar

After a couple of years of holding only online International Conventions due to the pandemic, approximately 475 in-person delegates and 240 online ones from more than 20 countries, attended from 31 December 2022 to 4 January 2023. This Convention was preceded by the in-person International Youth Gathering (YG), from 27 to 29 December 2022. The YG had 35 participants from 9 countries. The subject was based on the book *The Hidden Side of Things* by C. W. Leadbeater. Yoga discussion groups and cultural programs were also part of the program. It was an opportunity to make bonds and strengthen the work of the recently re-energized World Federation of Young Theosophists. Work groups were formed *in situ* producing a video that aims to help promote a campaign to clean our Adyar river that was launched during the International Convention.

On 31 December, the Opening session of the Convention, with the theme “Our Responsibility in the Interconnected World” was held at the Adyar theatre. The international President Mr Tim Boyd lighted the lamp, and prayers of many religions were pronounced as a reminder that the Divine Wisdom lies as the common background of all of them. Then greetings from various countries were read by the delegates on the dais and Mr Boyd gave

his Opening Address. A video showing the places where Theosophical activities were held around the world. This session was conducted by Ms Marja Artamaa, international Secretary, and Mrs Catalina Isaza-Cantor, resident worker at Adyar. Other international officers present on the stage were the Vice-President, Mrs Deepa Padhi, and Ms Nancy Secrest, Treasurer.

Five public lectures took place every day at 5.00 pm. From science to practical spirituality, including social awareness and deep philosophical aspects, the lectures provided a space for reflection and personal growth. Dr Manu Jaiswal, professor at the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, India, delivered the “Theosophy-Science Lecture” on “Science: How Far Can We Go?”, reminding us of the second Object of the Theosophical Society (TS) encouraging us to study comparative religion, philosophy, and science. A special guest from the United Lodge of Theosophists in Santa Barbara, USA, Dr James Tepfer, delivered a speech on “Individuation and Global Responsibility: The Subtle Magic of Lincoln, Eisenhower, and Mandela”. The worldwide-known Spiritual teacher Sri M, after being interviewed by the members of the World Federation of Young Theosophists, joined the audience at the Adyar Theatre. He brought up deep reflections on the “Wisdom of the Ancients” in a contemporary and accessible way. Next day, a lifelong member of the

Theosophical Work around the World

TS, professor Emeritus at the Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada, Ravi Ravindra, delighted the attendees with his simple yet deep lecture on “One Without a Second”. On the last day of the Convention, Mr Boyd talked on “The Choice to Be Whole”, eloquently reminding us that “Wholeness is a choice, a need, and the truth of who we are”.

Every morning of the Convention gave us the opportunity to listen to the insights of 24 more speakers who shared their thoughts in the form of panels, short lectures, and symposia. Mr Pradeep Gohil, national president of the Indian Section, gave a speech on “The Common Ground on which Responsible World Citizens Stand”, followed by the Director of the School of the Wisdom, Mrs Erica Georgiades, who spoke on the history of the School. Two symposia on the main themes of the Convention were held: Mr Shikhar Agnihotri (India), Mrs Vibha Saxena (India) and Mr Stephen McDonald (Australia) talked about Responsibility, and three young speakers, Mrs Catalina Isaza-Cantor (Colombia), Ms Sara Ortega van Vloten (Spain), and Mr Francis Lim (Singapore) shared their thoughts on Interconnection.

Interactive programs also took place. The TOS, represented by Treasurer Ms Secrest, held a TOS in India get-together. An interview was conducted by the Italian member, Mrs Patrizia Calvi, with Mr Douglas Keene (USA TS), and Mr Shraavan Krishnan (Animal Dispensary, Adyar) on “Service Across Communities for Humans and Animals”. The Panel on the

Convention theme consisted of a dialog amongst Vice-President Mrs Padhi, Dr Enrique Reig (President of the Inter-American Theosophical Federation), and Mr Narendra Shah (General Secretary of the TS in East and Central Africa). The program was enriched with the “Theosophical Quiz” conducted by former international Secretary, Mr Pedro Oliveira (Australia), who tested the participants knowledge about the story of the TS in a fun and relaxing way. A Q&A session was conducted by Mr Boyd based on questions by the attendees in which Mr Marcos Resende (Brazil), Mrs Linda Oliveira (Australia), and Mr Oliveira shared their answers with everyone. Informal group discussions also took place, led by volunteers and guided by specific questions on the main subject.

Parallel sessions happened at different venues of the campus: “Mini School of the Wisdom” on “Theosophy and Ecology: Practical Wisdom for Living in the Contemporary World”, with talks by Mrs Oliveira (former international Secretary and national president of the TS in Australia), Dr Radha Raghunathan (Adyar Library), and Mr Gohil; four Workshops, “Chanting” by Ms Jaishree Kannan (head of Adyar Archives), “Learning and Growing with Transformative Education” by Mrs Sonal Murali (Director of ATA), “Science and Compassion” by Mr Janne Vuononvirta (Finland), and the “World Music and Dance” by LEAP Boundary Breakers.

Other programs included a daily art exhibition by the Indian artist Shiva Ram,

Theosophical Work around the World



Opening of the Convention with representatives of the countries on the dais



PUBLIC LECTURERS:

Top (l. to r.): Dr Manu Jaiswal, India

Dr James Tepfer, USA

Sri M, India

Left: Dr Ravi Ravindra, Canada

Right: Tim Boyd, International President



Theosophical Work around the World



Above, Clockwise from Top Left: Pradeep Gohil; Erica Georgiades; Chanting by Chandrika Mehta; TOS India with Nancy Secret; Symposium by Francis Lim, Shikhar Agnihotri, Vibha Saksena, and Stephen McDonald **Below:** LEAP Boundary Breakers Choir, lead by Srinivas Krishnan



Theosophical Work around the World



Top Left: Interview of Douglas Keene and Shrvan Krishnan by Patrizia Calvi

Top: Classical Dancer Malavika Sarukkai



Left: Panel by Deepa Padhi, Enrique Reig and Narendra Shah



Left: Symposium, Isis de Resende introducing Catalina Isaza-Cantor, Francis Lim and Sara van Ortega

Bottom: Audience at the New Year's Day Concert by LEAP Boundary Breakers



Theosophical Work around the World



Top Row (l. to r.): Workshop speakers Jaishree Kannan, Radha Raghunathan, Janne Vuononvirta, Sonal Murali

Second Row (l.): At Social Welfare Centre, Tim Boyd, Lily Boyd, Charlton (Chally) Romero

Second Row (r.): Surendra Narayan's relatives at the Surendra Narayan Archives

Third Row (l.): Questions and Answers session by Tim Boyd, Marcos de Resende, Linda Oliveira, and Pedro Oliveira

Third Row (r.): Shikhar Agnihotri, the Convention Officer

Bottom Row: Young Theosophists gathered in front of the Buddhist Temple before the Convention



Theosophical Work around the World

another exhibition commemorating the School of the Wisdom centenary, Inauguration and exhibition of the Surendra Narayan Adyar Archives, and the Blavatsky Museum and the Display of Ancient Manuscripts were open for visitors. Various visits were also programmed to the Social Welfare Centre presenting a special program with Mr Chally Romero (TS Philippines) as the chief guest, and to the two schools of the campus: Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School, and the Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA).

On the last day of the Convention new members were welcomed by President Boyd. A plenary session took place during which Ms Elena Bessie (Italy) presented the World Federation of Young Theosophists and member

Fátima Martín (Spain) presented the video created by the group aiming to start a campaign to help clean the Adyar river.

During the Closing Ceremony, the Convention Officer, Mr Shikhar Agnihotri, delivered the vote of thanks highlighting the importance of team work of all the people involved in the Convention, who worked tirelessly and with focus before and during the event. Finally, Mr Boyd declared the Convention closed with heartfelt thanks to all the delegates with a blessing, and looking forward to meeting again next year.

Recent Appointments

Mr Richard Sell was elected as the new General Secretary for the TS in New Zealand, effective on 13 January, succeeding Mr John Vorstermans. ✧

The very air of Theosophy is charged with the spirit of enquiry. It is not the “sceptical spirit”, nor is it the “agnostic”. It is a real desire to know and to learn the truth, as far as it is possible for any creature to know it who is so limited by his capacities and so biased by his prejudices as is the human being. It is that which has raised the Theosophical Society above the level of all other aggregations or organizations of men, and which, so long as its members abstain from dogmatizing, must keep it on an altogether higher plane.

Henry Steel Olcott
Reminiscences of Colonel H. S. Olcott: by Various Writers
Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY

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