

*Text of Resolutions passed by the
General Council of the Theosophical Society*

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.

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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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Cover Picture: The TS Founders, H. P. Blavatsky and H. S. Olcott, with J. A. Unwalla (standing) and Damodar K. Mavalankar, at 'Crow's Nest', Bombay (Mumbai), 1881.

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On the Watch-Tower

RADHA BURNIER

The human mind

The exploits of the human being in the present day require brilliant reasoning and mathematics of a very high order. But at the same time, what could be more irrational than continuing to produce nuclear weapons when we know what the results of their use may be? We know that not only the place where they use these weapons, but the whole earth is going to be affected by any nuclear war. Yet hardly any country wants to stop.

What could be more irrational than what we are doing to the earth itself? Despite knowing the consequences of our actions, we go on doing the same thing. One of the lesser problems perhaps is the amount of rubbish that is being created all over the world, but we adopt ways of increasing rubbish. Irrationality and reasoning powers exist side by side, and we can ask ourselves what is the problem with our thinking that we can go on with such absurd contradictions. Scientists say that thousands of species are becoming extinct all the time because of human activity; there are innumerable creatures which have an important role, perhaps even an unknown role, in maintaining the ecology of the earth.

We know, for example, that bees help us by pollinating flowers. But do we know that we cannot survive without lowly bacteria? There was a very instructive article in the *Smithsonian* magazine a few years ago, in which it was said that bacteria are necessary for fertilizing the earth, making our digestive system function, disintegrating corpses, etc. Prof. Louis Thompson says there are millions of creatures dying every day, but we do not know what happens to them. He says he does not know himself, but they are helped to disappear quickly. All this happens because of other creatures who are continually aiding us by their existence. If diversity of life decreases rapidly, as it seems to be doing now, nobody knows what will happen to the earth.

What is the problem with the human mind which is doing all these things like reducing diversity, producing more and more nuclear weapons, and so on, which seem to be ways of self-destruction? They say that the human being is the only species which destroys for no reason at all, including parts of its own species. No creature, I believe, other than man, indulges in wanton destruction. This is one of the peculiar characteristics of being human, for these

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activities do not really help man. We seem to be doing very strange things, if we think about it carefully. So can we try to trace the possible reasons for this kind of behaviour and attitude? Is there an imbalance?

One cannot help thinking that this imbalance is within our mind. Excessive mental activity must be one of the reasons why things have gone wrong. Many of us do not see very much, even when our eyesight is sharp and clear in our youth and middle age. We look at various things with what are called 'unseeing eyes', because so much is going on in the head. One may pass through an extremely beautiful garden, and may not be aware of the beauty, or be aware of it only at some moments. We may talk to a person for half an hour and not be able to see that something is troubling that person. We may not be able to say what sort of distress it is; it may be poverty, or it may be a psychological problem to face.

Even a conversation between two people may leave each one with only a partial appreciation of what the other person said. When they are hearing someone else speak, most people are thinking of what to say next, so they do not listen. We may pass through a garden and not hear the sound of birds or see the breeze passing through the leaves, even when we think we hear and see. In a beautiful passage Krishnamurti wrote:

If you look at a leaf, look at it fully, and then you see all the colours, the beauty of the shape, the texture, everything. And if you look at the clouds, a leaf falling, people,

everything, carefully, attentively, then you realize how much you do not see.

Our senses are suppressed by the activity of the mind. Most of it is due to silly distractions of different kinds interfering with what is before us.

Reduced feelings

The mental activity also reduces feelings, for example of sympathy. A few million people today are dying of hunger, or dying slowly of malnutrition. We hear about it, but we do not really feel it. It becomes a piece of news and we soon forget about it. Even while talking or reading about it, the mind may wander off to something else — what one may have to buy while next shopping, or some other triviality. Thoughts create much disturbance and dull our perception. They also suppress subtler, finer feelings of different kinds; for instance, the moral side — not in the traditional or conventional way, but just knowing what is not right, and what is not helpful.

The Lord Buddha spoke about right thought, right speech, right action, and so on. In what does the rightness consist? It is a big subject by itself, but he briefly used a word which means 'well-being' not merely of oneself, but of other people, the environment, of everything. So it is a kind of skill one has to learn, to live the right kind of life. People do such appallingly unethical things because they do not know what will bring about the welfare of others or of the world. To know what is good and what is not good is very difficult, thus

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the saying: 'The way to hell is paved with good intentions.' But if our brain is not distorted, if we really care about the good of others, we will come to know about it, which is what the Buddha may have spoken about.

Excessive thinking has suppressed our capacity to respond to what is not at the visible level. One wonders why, when thousands of people saw apples and other things fall, if they were asked, why does the apple fall, they would have answered, 'It is God's will'. An irrational reply. Only Newton was able to see the connection between all falling objects, which he stated in terms of the law of gravitation. Some of the outstanding discoveries in science are said to have come out of this flash of perception. But true thinking seems to come in the way. Some scientists have described how they work on a certain problem for years, and have no answer, but one day, suddenly, when they stop working on that problem, the answer flashes out.

We may be surrounded by the beauty of the earth or of a place which is profoundly peaceful. But the awareness of that beauty can be reduced by mental activity or even completely lost, depending on the mind. This could be a reason for the lopsidedness in human activity. Not only does the thinking capacity suppress and obstruct sensory awareness, feelings, and moral and aesthetic perceptions, but they are also factors which reduce the capacity to think logically.

How does the mind see clearly?

The *Yogasutra-s* of Patañjali mentions

one of them, ill health, among others. As we know, when a person's body becomes unhealthy, the mind does not work properly. For example, a person who was always kind, hospitable, and loved serving others, lived to an extreme old age. Towards the end, she seemed to lose all those qualities. This and various other things can happen because of the bodily condition. In ancient India, in the *Bhagavadgitā*, for example, it is said that certain types of food produce restlessness, distraction, aggressiveness, and others create inertia, laziness, unwillingness to exert oneself, and so on. To have a calm, logical mental capacity one may require to eat the right kind of food.

Krishnamurti had some interesting ways of responding. He did not seem to have anything with buffalo milk in it; he liked only cow's milk to be used in his food, if at all. When asked what was wrong with buffalo milk, he simply said: 'Look at the animal!' The animal is heavy, it likes wallowing in muddy pools, and is generally slow. If you eat that kind of food, you will absorb something of those qualities. Meat-eating has never been recommended for people who want to be awake and alert, because influences that are in the animal body — violence, ferociousness, and so forth — to some extent hinder when absorbed.

What we drink is also important. For example, a person addicted to alcohol sooner or later has his thinking capacity impaired. There are also emotions which affect the clarity of a person's mind. In the Indian tradition, it is said that every

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person's enemies are within him, not outside — the enemies being anger, greed, vanity, and so on. It is important to be aware of this. What the Buddha called the 'flames' burn inside.

The mind is in better condition when it sees all this. In religious schools, they teach the need to remain calm, take things as they are, and not invent ways to increase one's dissatisfaction. Greed causes people to destroy the environment. In the present day, the power of money has overcome modern society, and irrationality exists even though the mind has become proficient in some ways. The body, feelings, mental capacity, the ways in which one acts and relates to everything, are interconnected. When thought becomes much clearer, logical, and sensitive to the needs of others, the other person is helped, and it also clarifies one's own mind. But if we feel emotional and anxious, then it is not possible, because self-centred attitudes obscure the mind.

If we study the pure and impure mind, or the clear and obscure mind, it is like the sun when it is covered by clouds, which seems not to give light and warmth. But the sun is always there and if the clouds dissipate, it shines again. So this vast mind which gives some kind of intelligence to almost every creature, is everywhere, but it gets obscured by personal, egotistic desire.

If all desire can be dropped, you will, according to certain teachers, be

illuminated. Let go of everything to which you have attached yourself inwardly, subtly. You do not have to throw away your furniture, but do not hold on to anything. You may use the words 'I' and 'mine' without feeling possessive or attached to anything. One simple way of putting it is: 'I am going to take a shower now, but it need not mean that I feel attached to the body.' So although for convenience one can use a certain type of language, the feeling of personal desire and all the complications which arise out of it, should be dropped. Then the mind is able to think, clearly, logically, and sensitively. It is said that the impure mind is the desire mind, and the pure mind is desireless.

How is the mind to be so clear that it realizes what is or is not important? In *At the Feet of the Master*, it is pointed out that one of the qualifications for discrimination is clarity of vision. If one is very attached to things which are not lasting, disappointment is certain, and perhaps also suffering. We do not realize that there are psychological conditions which can be broadly classified as suffering. Thus letting go is suffering, but attachment is also suffering, because sooner or later you have to let go. Many of the things which we consider to be pleasures are in fact the sources of pain, and one must be aware to realize this. If we can be aware of this, deeply in the heart, the mind will not lose its common sense, its clarity. ✧

Olcott and Blavatsky: Theosophical Twins

An Essay in Archetypes

JOHN ALGEO

We used to speak of ourselves as the Theosophical Twins. [ODL 1.9:141]¹

HENRY Steel Olcott's reference to Helena Blavatsky and himself as 'Theosophical Twins' has depths that are not immediately apparent. On the surface, it seems to be just a statement that they were alike with respect to Theosophy. However, the expression evokes an archetypal reference as well. These remarks are an essay, or attempt, to explore that evocation by considering four things: first, the nature of archetypes; second, the extent and meaning of the archetype of the Twins; third, how that archetype applies to Olcott and Blavatsky; and finally, how it applies as well to all of us.

1. Archetypes

Like much else in Western thought, the concept of archetypes goes back to Plato. Plato posited the existence of ideal forms, of which all the objects of this world are but poor copies or reflections. Plato's archetypal ideal forms are absolutely real and unchanging. Their reflections in our world are only

relatively real and impermanent. Presumably, there is an archetypal tree, of which all oaks, pines, palms, elms, and so on are only partial and imperfect reflections. However different those particular trees may seem from one another, they all share the quality of 'treeness'. Those particular varieties of trees are all types of the archetype of the Tree.

Plato's theory of archetypes relates to, and may have developed from, his concern with analysing language to discover Truth. If we talk about trees — and if we group oaks, pines, palms, elms, etc., within that category — 'treeness' must exist apart from particular trees. Otherwise our talk has no basis in reality and philosophy (in so far as it consists of analysing language for truth) is vacuous.

The Swiss psychologist Carl Jung updated and internalized the archetypes. Jung maintained that they are contents of our collective unconscious mind, developed over the evolutionary ages through the experiences of our ancestors.

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He believed them to be the common property of our species and, as contents of the unconscious, not to be directly accessible to the conscious mind. Instead, Jung thought that the unconscious archetypes are powerful energies that manifest in the conscious mind through dreams, visions, symbols, and so on.

Archetypal manifestations vary in their nature from one culture to another, but in every culture they are recognizably related to their common unconscious source. Thus, there is a Great Mother archetype that manifests as Isis in Egypt, Kwan Yin in China, the Venus of Willendorf in stone-age Austria, the multi-breasted Diana of Ephesus, the Virgin Mother Mary in Christianity, Sophia in Gnosticism, Kālī in Hinduism, and so on. Different cultural manifestations focus on different aspects of the common unconscious archetype, so may appear superficially quite different, but they all share some central, core quality; in the case of the example just cited, that quality is ‘motherliness’.

Jung developed his theory of archetypes to explain how some of his patients could dream or doodle complex symbolical images that are essentially the same as those in ancient alchemical manuscripts, which they could not possibly have known. He posited an aspect of the human mind of which we are not directly conscious, but which we inherit from our ancestors, just as we inherit the physical features of our bodies.

Plato’s and Jung’s archetypes are clearly related concepts, but they are also

clearly different concepts. What, however, is a Theosophical understanding of the concept of archetypes? It is a basic Theosophical teaching that every outer shape is modelled on an inner form. What things are is not imposed on them from outside, but develops from their inner natures.

In addressing the question of how species come to be different from one another (a question raised and answered by Charles Darwin), H. P. Blavatsky refers to ‘the occult fact of the differentiation of species from the primal *astral root-types*’ (*SD* 2:737). The term *astral* used here does not have its later, more specific meaning of ‘emotional’, but rather means ‘inner’ or ‘subtle’. These astral (or inner) root-types are the archetypes. Blavatsky goes on to elaborate:

Whatever . . . ‘natural selection,’ etc., etc., may effect, the *fundamental unity of structural plan* remains practically unaffected by all subsequent modifications. The ‘Unity of Type’ common, in a sense, to all the animal and human kingdoms, is . . . a witness to the essential unity of the ‘ground-plan’ Nature has followed in fashioning her creatures.

What Blavatsky is saying here is not unlike what present-day geneticists are saying. Although Darwinian natural selection explains how species come to be different, all species of all living creatures are built according to the same ‘fundamental unity of structural plan’. Today scientists have identified that ‘structural plan’ as DNA, which is

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the molecular basis of all heredity. It is Nature's 'ground-plan', according to which the physical forms of all creatures are fashioned.

A related Theosophical understanding is set forth in the following passage:

Thus every mortal has his immortal counterpart, or rather his Archetype, in heaven. This means that the former [the mortal] is indissolubly united to the latter [the immortal], in each of his incarnations, and for the duration of the cycle of births; only it is by the spiritual and intellectual Principle in him, entirely distinct from the lower *self*, never through the earthly personality. (*CW* 14:51)

Here Blavatsky is talking about what are usually called our personality and our individuality. And she refers to our individuality as our 'Archetype'; it is the immortal 'spiritual and intellectual Principle' in us, which is manifested or reflected in our mortal 'earthly personality'. Just as Nature has an archetypal 'ground-plan' according to which all living things are fashioned, so we individually have an archetype, our immortal 'spiritual and intellectual Principle,' which is reflected in and expresses itself through our mortal 'earthly personality', or rather our series of successive earthly personalities.

This concept of our individuality as our archetype is expressed also in the wonderful creation myth of the Anthropogenesis volume of *The Secret Doctrine*. Stanza 17 of that series from the Book of Dzyan recounts the making of the human

constitution by a committee (with typical committee indecision and ineffectiveness). The committee enthusiastically begins its work. The Lunar Fathers give us our form, on which the Earth moulds a body. The Sun gives us our vitality, and certain Dhyāni-s (or meditators) give us a 'mirror' of our body (also called an astral or inner shadow). A son of the fire god gives us our passions and animal instincts. Those gifts are the basis of our earthly personality. Then, however, it is pointed out that human beings also need 'a mind to embrace the universe'. But, alas, none of the committee can supply that. So evolution has come to a standstill.

Suddenly, however, saviours appear like Lone Rangers on white horses. They are the *mānasaputra-s* (a term that means 'mind-children'); they are the offspring of cosmic intelligence, and incarnate into the mindless earthly personalities. These *mānasaputra-s* are our individualities, our archetypes, the real 'us'. Our personalities, which we usually think of as ourselves, are actually only the partial and imperfect reflections of the absolutely real and permanent archetypes, which are our individualities. As Blavatsky says elsewhere:

Occult philosophy teaches us that the human mind (or lower *manas*) is a direct ray or reflection of the Higher Principle, the Noëtic Mind. The latter is the re-incarnating Ego which old Āryan philosophers call *Mānasaputra*, the 'Sons of Mind' or of *Mahat*, the Universal Cosmic Mind. (*CW* 12:411)

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So, Theosophically speaking, archetypes are the inner or 'astral' (that is, subtle) realities, of which outer forms are only the temporary expressions. With respect to us human beings, our outer earthly personalities are only the types or expressions of our inner, archetypal individualities.

2. The Archetype of the Twins

Among the many archetypes that get expressed all over the world in mythologies, literature, legends, and other ways is that of the Twins.² Now, the archetypal Twins are not always embodied as identical genetic twins in the world's symbolic writings. Instead, the archetype may be expressed as ordinary siblings or friends or, for that matter, enemies. The archetype may be expressed by two persons, related by blood or not, who share certain characteristics. And such shared characteristics justify those persons being thought of as two beings who have been 'twinned', that is, closely associated or matched.

More particularly speaking, there are two types of archetypal Twins: Cooperating Twins and Contending Twins. Perhaps the best-known examples of the Cooperating Twins are the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux. (*Dioscuri* is a Greek term that might be translated as 'divine boys'.) Castor and Pollux were half-brothers, both sons of Leda; but they had different fathers. Castor's father was Leda's husband, Tyndareüs, king of Sparta. Pollux's father, however, was the god Zeus, who had taken a fancy to Leda

and visited her in the form of a swan. As a result of their different paternities, Castor was mortal but Pollux was immortal; yet they were brothers and firm, fast friends. They grew up together; they sailed together with the Argonauts to find the Golden Fleece; together they hunted the Caledonian boar.

Eventually, however, Castor, the mortal brother, was killed in combat, and his immortal bother, Pollux, was desolate. So Pollux went to his father Zeus and begged that he might share his immortality with his mortal brother. He proposed that they be together forever, half the time in Hades, where dead mortals went, and half the time on Mount Olympus, where the gods dwelt. Zeus was so moved by this sign of fraternal loyalty that he put both boys into the heavens as stars, where they still shine brightly in the constellation of Gemini, the Twins.

Other examples of Cooperating Twins are not hard to find. Another prominent example are the Hindu Ásvin-s, twin horse gods who are almost certainly historically related to the Greek Dioscuri (the Hindus and the Greeks being two peoples with closely related cultures). A Hebrew pair are David and Jonathan. (Remember that archetypal Twins need not be genetic twins or even related, but may instead be soulmates.) Recent examples are the biological twins Fred and George Weasley in the Harry Potter series of books. Some cooperating twins are much like each other: Fred and George Weasley are examples. Others contrast sharply in some way. Thus, of the

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Dioscuri, Castor is mortal and Pollux is immortal.

Contending Twins are also widespread. The most famous Western examples of the archetype are Cain and Abel, of whom Cain, a farmer, slew his brother Abel, a herdsman. A similar pair consists of Romulus and Remus, twins suckled by a wolf. Romulus set out to found the city of Rome, but when Remus made fun of his early efforts, Romulus killed him. In Iran, Ahura Mazda, the 'Wise Lord', emanated two spirits: Spenta Mainyu and Angra Mainyu, the Holy Spirit and the Destructive Spirit, who are at eternal odds with each other. In Egypt, Osiris is killed and his body is mutilated by his evil twin, the god Set. The contention need not be violent: in the case of biblical Mary and Martha, Mary is studious and theoretical, whereas Martha is service-oriented and practical. Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is unusual in that the contending twins are different aspects of the same person, a theme also used in Ursula LeGuin's *Wizard of Earthsea*, in which Geb and his Shadow are the same entity. The best known example of Contending Twins in current literature are Harry Potter and Voldemort, who are not even of the same generation, but who share parts of their souls and bodies with each other and so are literally soulmates and blood brothers.

In some cases, twins who might seem to be contending end up as cooperating. The Babylonian epic of *Gilgamesh* provides an example. Gilgamesh is a great

king of the city of Uruk. He represents civilization, order, and cultivation. Enkidu is a disorderly wild man who lives among animals and roams in the wilderness. Enkidu attacks Gilgamesh, who is his opposite in almost every way, but in the resulting contest, Gilgamesh wins by strength and strategy. Order and civilization (represented by Gilgamesh) overcome disorder and primitiveness (represented by Enkidu). Enkidu, however, is so impressed with Gilgamesh's prowess that he admires the victor, so the two swear an oath of mutual loyalty and become bosom friends for the rest of their shared lifetimes. The replacement of armed opposition by brotherly embrace is found also in the stories of King Arthur and Lancelot and of Robin Hood and Little John.

Most examples of the archetypal Twins consist of pairs whose members are of the same sex. But there are also instances of co-sexual twins. In Greek myth, Apollo and Artemis, the god of the sun and the goddess of the moon, are twin offspring of Zeus and the Titaness Leto. Japanese myth has the world (or at least the islands of Japan) created by a brother-sister pair: Izanagi and Izanami. An old standby of children's literature, the Bobbsey Twins books, describe the adventures of two sets of twins, each consisting of a brother and sister: older Bert and Nan and younger Flossie and Freddie. A more recent pair who are discovered to be twins are Luke Skywalker and Leia Organa of *Star Wars*.

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In addition to the twins mentioned above, both cooperating and contending, others are to be found in the myths of West Africans, Mayans, Navajos, Canaanites, Sumerians, and other cultures. Why are twins so widespread in literature and myth? Jungianly speaking, we might say that twins represent the sense we have of a difference between our ego selves and some 'other us'. The other may be a shadow figure or a better Self; a mask or an anima / animus.

Archetypically speaking, the Twins are two aspects of us. If we wish to transform ourselves, we must first recognize who we are. Such recognition is greatly aided by myths and stories. For all archetypes are us. By observing their interaction, we learn who and what we are, and, most important, we learn how we can change. The archetype of the Twins also helps to define our relationships with other human beings: either cooperating or contending. Cooperation and contention are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, as in the myth of Gilgamesh and Enkidu, ideally contention leads to fraternal cooperation. All human relationships involve both contention and cooperation. What is needed is a balance between those opposites. And that observation brings us to Olcott and Blavatsky.

3. Olcott and Blavatsky as Twins

Archetypes have a way of expressing themselves, not just in myths and literature, but also in people's lives. In *Old Diary Leaves*, Henry Steel Olcott, referring to Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

and himself, famously declared: 'We used to speak of ourselves as the Theosophical Twins (*ODL* 1.9:141).' That declaration has been taken as the motto of this article. What does Olcott's declaration mean? What can we conclude, from his own words, that he intended by the declaration? And what difference does it make? Those questions are the subject of the rest of this article.

With regard to ends and commitments, Olcott and Blavatsky were embodiments of the Cooperating Twins. And that is doubtless what Olcott had in mind when he penned the line used as the motto above. But Olcott and Blavatsky were sharply different in other ways, and those differences sometimes led to their being embodiments of the Contending Twins. That combination of cooperation and contention is quite normal in human interrelationships.

Olcott and Blavatsky were alike in their total commitment to the work of the Masters. Blavatsky's lifelong devotion to the Masters was the theme of everything she did. Of Olcott, the Master KH wrote:

Him we can trust under *all* circumstances, and his faithful service is pledged to us come well, come ill. . . . Where can we find an equal devotion? He is one . . . who may make innumerable mistakes out of excessive zeal but never is unwilling to repair his fault even at the cost of the greatest self-humiliation; who esteems the sacrifice of comfort and even life something to be cheerfully risked whenever necessary; who will eat any food,

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or even go without; sleep on any bed, work in any place, fraternize with any outcast, endure any privation for the cause. (*ML* 5, 17)

It was in such faithful service, devotion, and sacrifice that Olcott and Blavatsky were twins. They were the two chief founders of the Theosophical Society and the two chief framers of what modern Theosophy was to become — Blavatsky on the inner theoretical side and Olcott on the outer applied side. Olcott says of their relationship:

She was the Teacher, I the pupil; she the misunderstood and insulted messenger of the Great Ones, I the practical brain to plan, the right hand to work out the practical details. Under the Hindu classification, she would be the teaching Brāhmin, I the fighting Kshattriya; under the Buddhist one, she would be the Bhikshu, I the working *Dyākyā* or laic. (*ODL* 4.2:22-3)

Neither the Theosophical Society nor Theosophy would be what it is today if it were not for the joint work of these ‘Theosophical Twins’. There existed

an indestructible focus of vitality in the quenchless enthusiasm of the two friends, the Russian woman and American man, who were in deadly earnest; who never for a moment harboured a doubt as to the existence of their Masters, the excellence of their delegated work, or the ultimate complete success that would crown it. . . . The one thing we felt more and more as time went on was, that we two could absolutely depend upon each other for

Theosophy, though the sky itself should crack; beyond that, all depended upon circumstances. (*ODL* 1.9:141)

The twinship of the two friends involved more than shared ideals. A psychic connection also united them. An example of that connection was recounted by Olcott in describing a dreadful fire that occurred near Adyar while HPB was in Europe:

A fearful tragedy occurred . . . in the People’s Park, Madras, during the days of the [December 1885] Convention; some three or four hundred persons were burnt alive in a panic that seized them when some palm-leaf shops and fences accidentally caught fire at a People’s Fair that was in progress. The reason for my mentioning it is that the wave of agony that it created in the Astral Light reached HPB in her lodgings in Belgium, and threw her into the greatest excitement about our safety. . . .

This is a most instructive psychological phenomenon. The ‘wave of agony’ of which I spoke touched Adyar, of course, first of all, being so near, and from me passed on to HPB, with whom I was spiritually so intimately connected. . . . [Similarly] when she died in London in 1891, I was made aware of it in Sydney, NSW. We used to call ourselves ‘twins’, and twins we were so far as community of sympathies within the lines of our work was concerned. No great wonder, considering how we had worked together! (*ODL* 3.23:343-5)

At times, efforts were made by others

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to drive a wedge between the twins. But their commitment to each other and to the Masters overcame all such efforts. In the course of one such divisive effort in 1887, Blavatsky wrote to Olcott from England, and Olcott reports her message:

She begs me, on the score of the 'real, more than fraternal affection' she has for me, her 'internal, not external, loyalty' to me as her 'colleague, chum, and coworker in Master's work', to break up the Indian part of the conspiracy. In another letter she writes: 'I love you more than anyone on earth save Master, my friendship and brotherly affection for you are eternal; and if you believe me capable of going back on you, let alone the TS, then — you are a ____.' Her use of the word 'eternal' has a deeper meaning than appears on the surface, as those who have traced back the mutual relations of us two in past lives (both men in them all) will understand. Suffice it to say that this is not the first time that we have been closely associated in the evolutionary paths of our two entities. (*ODL* 4.2:24)

Disagreements arose between Olcott and Blavatsky on several occasions. Those disagreements were partly fomented by people in Europe who admired Blavatsky and wanted to break the ties with Olcott and Adyar. They were partly the result of a conflict between external and internal authority that was brought to a head by Blavatsky's intention to form an Esoteric School answering to her alone. In 1888, Olcott took ship to England, intending to put down what he judged to be an

incipient insurrection. On board ship, he received a letter from the Master KH, which included the following:

HPB has next to no concern with administrative details, and should be kept clear of them, so far as her strong nature can be controlled. But this *you must tell to all*: — *With occult matters she has everything to do*. We have *not* abandoned her; she is *not* 'given over to chela-s'. She is *our direct agent*. I warn you against permitting your suspicions and resentment against 'her many follies' to bias your intuitive loyalty to her. In the adjustment of this European business, you will have two things to consider — the external and administrative, and the internal and psychical. Keep the former under your control and that of your most prudent associates, jointly: *leave the latter to her*. You are left to devise the practical details with your usual ingenuity. Only be careful, I say, . . . when some emergent interference of hers in practical affairs is referred to you on appeal, [to discriminate] between that which is merely exoteric in origin and effects, and that which beginning on the practical tends to beget consequences on the spiritual plane. As to the former you are the best judge, as to the latter, she. (*LMW* 1.19,46)

The Master's comment defines, as well as anything can, the respective spheres, responsibilities, and mutual interaction of the two 'Theosophical Twins'. However, their mutual interaction is more than merely a historical fact. It is also the reflection of an archetypal reality.

4. The Theosophical Twins and Us

The archetypal Twins stand for the relationship each of us should have with others. All of us are twins. We are as closely related with one another as it is possible to be — physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. When we interact with one another, we will sometimes have conflicts, just as Olcott and Blavatsky did. But if we are inspired by the wise example of Gilgamesh and Enkidu, we will transform our conflict with one another into cooperation, and our cooperation will be the stronger and wiser for growing out of friendly conflict. That is precisely what happened in the lives of Olcott and Blavatsky. It is what needs to happen in the lives of each of us as we interact with our fellows.

The archetypal Twins also stand for two aspects inside each one of us. One aspect is our higher individuality, our ‘Archetype’, and the other aspect is our lower personality, the reflection in time and space of that individual ‘Archetype’. Our personality’s empirical and pragmatic mind has everything to do with the external and practical in our lives, just as

Olcott did with the administrative affairs of the Society. Our individuality’s intuitive and noetic mind has everything to do with the internal and spiritual in our lives, just as Blavatsky did with the spiritual affairs of Theosophy. These two aspects of our nature, personality and individuality, are, as it were, our Olcott and Blavatsky — both necessary and indispensable, but each properly in charge of its own distinct sphere in our lives.

Olcott and Blavatsky, the ‘Theosophical Twins’, are part of history. But as reflections of a historical, archetypal reality, they are also part of us. This is true because, as the Emerald Tablet says: ‘What is Below is like what is Above, and what is Above is like what is Below, for accomplishing the wonders of the one thing.’ The ‘one thing’ is the conscious realization of the unity of all existence: of our lower and higher selves, of each of us with every other, of all of us with the One Reality that underlies all existence. In that realization are wonders indeed. And to achieve that realization, we can do no better than follow in the archetypal footsteps of the ‘Theosophical Twins’. ✧

Notes

1. References to H. S. Olcott’s *Old Diary Leaves* (ODL) are by volume, chapter, and page(s). Reference to the *Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (ML) is to the chronological edition by letter number and page. Reference to *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom* (LMW) is by volume or series number, letter number, and page.

2. For orthographical convenience in this text, when ‘Twin’ refers to the archetype, it is capitalized; when ‘twin’ refers to embodiments of the archetype or to genetic twins, it is lower case. In quotations, the original spelling is preserved.

The Perennial Question according to Colonel Olcott

BETTY BLAND

DEFINITIONS of Theosophy, though numerous, revolve around a few core issues. What are the key tenets of this system of ideas without dogma? If there is no dogma, then how can it be defined? Yet being without dogma, does this system rely on a particular author or group of authors' writings? And if it does, how can that be non-dogmatic? These are the kinds of questions that Theosophists ask of themselves, and that they have to field



Col. Henry S. Olcott circa 1863
while serving in the US army

in answering the questions of other seekers. Even in our non-dogmatic Theosophy there have been major splits over which authors should be studied. The question in essence is, 'What is Theosophy?'

Although this question is perennial, a new cycle of exploration has arisen in recent years as the winds of time move us further from our historical origins. If the Theosophical Society is to remain true to its mission, while at the same time relating clearly to the modern idiom and circumstance, what should we teach? How can we approach our studies so that they remain true to our foundations and yet continue our mission of open-minded exploration?

Theosophy has been variously defined as the 'perennial philosophy', 'hidden wisdom', or 'ancient wisdom', implying that it refers to an underlying truth that is not limited to a particular religion, culture, or era. I prefer the term 'ageless wisdom', because it speaks to the idea that there is a wisdom that spans all times. Considering this idea of a wisdom that is relevant regardless of time or circumstance, let us explore

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how we might define the teachings of Theosophy.

The idea of dogma is usually associated with a faith tradition and refers to a specific teaching or structured set of beliefs from which one cannot stray without the risk of being labelled a heretic. The dictionary defines dogma as an established opinion, especially an authoritative tenet. This is the very attitude that is the antithesis of Theosophy. Although Madame Blavatsky brought the body of Eastern teachings to the West, she was adamant in cautioning people against blind belief. She said:

Moreover, the very *raison d'être* of the Theosophical Society was, from its beginning, to utter a loud protest and lead an open warfare against dogma or any belief based upon blind faith. (*CW*, X, p. 160)

Colonel Olcott, whose centenary we are celebrating this year, particularly addressed this question in his paper on 'Applied Theosophy' (Adyar Pamphlet No. 143 — originally published in *The Theosophist*, June 1889). Although he continued with a discussion of the Three Objects, his most emphatic point was that Theosophy is the result of inquiring minds. He says that:

It is a mistake to imagine that what is known as Theosophy at present has been learned from the writings of the ancients; it is *an* independent growth in the modern mind which to many appears spontaneous, because they cannot discern whence the seeds come. Theo-

sophy, like man himself, has many different sources. All Science, all Philosophy, all Religion, are its progenitors; it appears when the seed of an enquiring spirit is dropped into a personal soil sufficiently unprejudiced and altruistic to give it nourishment.

He further speaks of the process of Theosophy which is crucial to the organization of the Society:

What the Society has hitherto done — its great merit in the eyes of some, and its terrible fault in the estimation of others — is *to make people think*. No one can for long belong to the Theosophical Society without beginning to question *himself*. He begins to ask himself: 'How do I know that?' 'Why do I believe this?' 'What reason have I to be so certain that I am right, and so sure that my neighbours are wrong?' 'What is my warrant for declaring this action, or that practice, to be good, and their opposite bad?' 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 man. 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 Fellows abstain from dogmatizing, must keep it on an altogether higher plane.

And Colonel Olcott goes on to speak

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of the power generated in the world of thoughts by all the fellows of the Society banding together in this mutual effort to discern truth and to thereby affect their total philosophy and approach to life. This inner power of the Society works in the subtle realms of mind and spirit and permeates the mental atmosphere of the world, creating beneficial influences the source of which remains a mystery. Emphasizing the importance of the contributions of the individuals to that body of knowledge and influence that we know as Theosophy, he continues:

If this, however, were all there were in the Theosophical Society, it would never have become the well-known, by many much esteemed, and, in certain quarters, roundly abused, institution that it is. The fact is that those who join the Society bring into it their knowledge and their activity, and the reputation of the Society has been built up by the individual efforts of its Fellows. Take away *Isis Unveiled; The Secret Doctrine; Light on the Path; Esoteric Buddhism; Theosophy, Religion, and the Occult Science*, and half a dozen other works, together with Theosophical magazines — all of them distinctly due to personal effort — and what would be left of the renown or notoriety of the Society? Since, however, the Theosophical Society is composed of its Fellows, and is what its Fellows make it, to say all that is in no way to disparage the Society, any more than it would detract from the beauty or utility of a coral island in the South Seas, to say that

it owed its existence to the individual labours of the little lives that raised it from the bottom of the ocean. It is a mass of coral cells certainly, but it is something more — it is a coral Island, with an added individuality of its own.

Olcott's statements above make us realize several things. First, although we do have our foundational materials which set the tone and direction of our inquiries, there should be a continuing openness to receive and create new writings that build on the Theosophical foundations and attitudes. Theosophy does not stop with a few early writers.

In addition, Theosophy is more a process and attitude than it is a specific set of teachings, and it is an organic entity that depends on the good intentions and skill-sets of each one of its members. As each member brings talents to add to the whole, it is imperative that each member have an involvement that creates a dynamism in participation in the world around us, and attracts the highest minds. Theosophy was never intended to be an empty intellectual exercise.

Considering the process and attitudes that are specifically Theosophical, I would like to connect these with what Olcott called the two passive of the Society's three Objects. He gave this designation to our Object of comparative studies and that of exploring Nature and our latent powers. Each of these revolves around amassing an interior accumulation of knowledge. But that knowledge must be based on one's own experience and

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reason, totally devoid of blind faith. While maintaining a connection with the collected body of knowledge from teachers whom we respect as having direct experience, we are always called upon to think for ourselves. We have to learn to differentiate between those things that we know for sure (which can be very little) and those things which fit logically into the scheme of things but which may require new interpretations. The latter we should hold with a mind open to other possibilities.

The combination of these Objects — the study of religion, philosophy and science; and the exploration of the laws of Nature and latent powers of humanity — naturally translates into a search for understanding the meaning of life. They incorporate all areas of human inquiry into our world and humanity's efforts to understand and relate to it. So Theosophy involves an intense interest in and exploration concerning life's meaning, purposes, and processes, carried out with an attitude of open-mindedness and reason.

The Society's first Object, which Olcott calls the active object, ties the integrating bow around the entire endeavour. Everything that is thought or expounded upon must be in harmony with and result in an expression of brotherhood among men and women. Far beyond any flippant view of unity, the idea must penetrate to the very core of our being and dislodge any previously held prejudices or sense of one's own superiority above others. Herein lies a major distinctive factor of Theosophy.

One may be able to think grand thoughts about how altruistic one is, but to guard against the natural tendency to want to be a little more advanced, a little better, a little smarter, or more important than those around us is a far more difficult task.

Both Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky and their teachers were adamant that altruism is the foundation of Theosophy; that the Society was not founded to tickle the intellect or promote the glamour of psychic abilities. Rather it was to guide humankind between the twin hazards of a materialistic attitude on the one hand and a gullible and superstitious attitude on the other. Thus would humanity recognize the realities of its own potentialities and free itself from the bondage of blind belief, while yet being in touch with that inner core which inspires and unites us all.

This middle course of open-minded inquiry, totally immersed in a compassionate attitude, would steer Theosophy to become the cornerstone of the new world religions. Note that I do not have the hubris to declare that the Theosophical Society will itself be fully recognized in its role as new understandings of the pathway of spiritual unfoldment develop. Theosophy is not to be a religion but it should encourage each member to seek the inner life through whatever spiritual practices provide inspiration. Evidence abounds that Theosophy has provided the leavening for expanded understanding and inner connections. This role is even more critical in our new environment of global terrorism —

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based on blind fanaticism and certainly no sense of altruism for one's neighbour.

Colonel Olcott personified these ideas in the thirty-two years he dedicated to Theosophy. When he performed healings, it was to help free the Buddhist community from the clutches of Christian priests who were using superstitions about healings in order to win converts, and it was inspired by a deep compassion for disabled and sick people whom he encountered. Coming so soon from the background of a Yankee Protestant, he exhibited an open-mindedness and a keen intellect for analysis and synthesis, as evidenced by his *Buddhist Catechism* — the first unified expression of the principles of Buddhism.

Theosophy brought back dignity for the Buddhists and respect for their teachings and practices. It also valued Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam,

and many other faith practices. Through the Theosophical approach, which provides a deep appreciation of the unitive principle and inspirational aspects of all religions, we can begin to lay the cornerstone of fellowship beyond all boundaries and work towards the supremely important edifice of world peace.

Wherever he travelled and taught, the Colonel was moved by a sense of brotherhood for all people and a deep interest in their needs and ideas. The Colonel embodies the Theosophical method or attitude of engaged intellect and open-minded exploration into the true meaning and nature of life. His entire focus sprang from a genuine humility and compassion for all. What better teaching could there be? This is no dogma, but an attitude, a way of life. We might say that 'Theosophist is' (or should be) as Col. Olcott was. ✧

If the real power of Theosophy in the world is exercised in the realm of thought; and if the direction in which that power is exerted is a natural consequence of the growth of certain ideas in the minds of those who carry out the objects of the Society, it stands to reason that the gigantic evils of our modern world must be attacked with immaterial weapons and in the intellectual and moral planes. How can this be accomplished? Simply by perceiving the fact, understanding it and acknowledging it. Then the actual work will be accomplished quietly, almost silently, and apparently spontaneously.

H. S. Olcott

Damodar K. Mavalankar

MARY ANDERSON

CONCERNING the career of Damodar K. Mavalankar, we shall consider his early life and his family, his discovery of Theosophy and work for the Theosophical Society, how he found his Guru, and how he went to Tibet and was sorely missed at Adyar. Concerning his attitude and his advice on various matters, we shall refer to his devotion to Mme H. P. Blavatsky (both pictured here in 1882), his defence of Theosophy, his advice on the work of the Society, and his attitude towards different religions and religion in general.

Damodar was born in September 1857 in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, to a wealthy Brāhmin family and received a good upbringing in the Brāhmin tradition as well as an excellent English education. As a child and again as a young man, when seriously ill, he had a vision of a glorious personage who healed him.



Reading Mme Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* some years later was to him a revelation. He wrote:

It is no exaggeration to say that I have been a really living man only these few months; for between life as it appears to me now and life as I comprehended it before, there is an unfathomable abyss. I feel that now for the first time I have a glimpse of what man and life are — the nature and powers of the one, the possibilities, duties, and joys of the other. (*Damodar and the Pioneers of the Theosophical Movement*, Sven Eek, p. 5)

When he joined the TS on 3 August 1879, some of his family also joined. But, travelling with Mme Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott in Sri Lanka, he took Pansil and declared himself a Buddhist. He refused to return to caste, and members of his family who had joined the Society

Miss Mary Anderson is international Secretary of the TS and lectures widely in several languages. This talk was given at an Inter-Lodges Meeting on 30 September 2007 at Adyar, celebrating the 150th anniversary of Damodar K. Mavalankar's birth.

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resigned and even became hostile to it.

Damodar had bitter words to say about the caste system:

I consider it every man's duty to do what he can to make the world better and happier. This can proceed from a love for humanity. . . . I must first begin by working for my country. And this I could not do by remaining in my caste . . . the observance of caste distinction leads one to hate even his neighbour, because he happens to be of another caste. I could not bear this injustice. . . I respect a man for his qualities and not for his birth. (ibid., p. 142)

On becoming a member, Damodar immediately began to work for the Society. He was Assistant Secretary and then Joint Secretary before becoming Secretary. Col. Olcott wrote that Damodar 'laboured night and day without ceasing' (ibid., p. 20). He was also Business Manager of *The Theosophist*, himself contributing many articles. He engaged in a voluminous correspondence, often giving good advice. His lengthy correspondence with William Quan Judge in New York shows his great patience, as Judge poured out his heart in his misery at having no direct contact with higher Beings or Masters.

His letter to an American member who seemed to wish to contact the Masters contains wise advice:

In one sense the real Mahatmas may be said to be almost everywhere, although they may not take cognizance of everything. But at the same time they cannot

help giving their attention to where the magnetic attraction draws them; and hence to come under the notice of the Mahatmas depends upon oneself. . . . If we want to rise higher, we must produce the necessary conditions . . . constantly disassociating ourselves from the lower desires, etc., which chain us to our narrow personality, and . . . transferring our consciousness to the *Divine Ātmā*, and its vehicle (the 6th and 7th principles), by incessantly cultivating within ourselves the highest aspirations . . . a feeling of *unselfish philanthropy* is an essential necessity. (ibid., pp. 451-2)

We shall revert to some of his advice and answers to the questions of correspondents.

His contacts with his fellow workers at Adyar were not always harmonious, although his own attitude was friendly and conciliatory. He defended the President, Col. Olcott, against 'vile insinuations' directed against the latter. He once apologized humbly to Mr A. P. Sinnett for having unwittingly offended him. Dr Franz Hartmann and others showed unaccountable enmity to him. He inevitably clashed with the Coulombs, who swindled and betrayed Mme Blavatsky and the Society. The latter finally repudiated the Coulombs, but not before they had done great harm. Damodar summarized the Coulomb affair in masterly fashion in a letter to Mme Blavatsky.

Damodar felt an irresistible urge to find the Great Being who he knew was his Guru and who had cured him when

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he was a sick child, who had appeared to him in visions, and with whom also he had correspondence. He indeed visited his Guru in Tibet for the first time in 1883, disappearing while with Col. Olcott at Jammu in Kashmir. Col. Olcott wrote: 'In less than three days he returned, a changed man, "seemingly robust, tough and wiry, bold and energetic in manner; we could scarcely realize that he was the same person"' (ibid., p. 9)

He developed certain psychic faculties, being able to travel outside his body. He became an intermediary for the Masters, able to transmit their letters, as did Mme Blavatsky. His Master gave him good advice on many occasions, for example:

Do not feel so disheartened! . . . No need for that. . . Do not accuse yourself and attribute the abuse lavished upon . . . to your imaginary crimes. Abuse! I tell thee, child, the hissing of a snake has more effect upon the old eternal, snow-covered Himavat, than the abuse of backbiters, the laugh of the sceptics, or any calumny on me. Keep steadily to your duty, be firm and true to your obligations, and no mortal man or woman will hurt you. (ibid., pp. 485-6)

He was on another occasion encouraged in very sensible words:

The higher spiritual progress must be accompanied by intellectual development on a parallel line. You have now the best opportunities for doing that where you are working. For your devotion and unselfish labour, you are receiving help, silent tho' it be. (ibid., p. 528)

Due to unremitting hard work and the various problems he had with coworkers in Adyar, Damodar's health had deteriorated and, following his first visit to Tibet in 1883, he finally left Adyar permanently for Tibet on 23 February 1885, travelling via Calcutta, Benares, and other places. He left behind a small pocket diary of his journey. According to Colonel Olcott, this diary was

the last written trace of this devoted, high-minded, enthusiastic young Brāhmin, whose record since joining HPB and myself at Bombay is one of unbroken energy and unfaltering zeal in the cause of humanity. A nobler heart never beat in a human breast, and his departure was one of the hardest blows we ever received. . . . He had almost broken down his constitution by incessant official work. . . . Yet, with undaunted courage, he undertook the hard journey across the Himalayas, indifferent to the biting cold, the drifted snow, the lack of shelter and food, intent upon reaching [his] Guru. (ibid., pp. 15-16)

He was sorely missed in Adyar. In his presidential address at the 1887 Convention, Col. Olcott referred to 'our ever-beloved Damodar, who laboured night and day without ceasing as our Secretary' (p. 20). An unsigned note appeared in *The Theosophist* of January 1888:

The President finds very great difficulty in getting a suitable person to fill the vacancies in the Recording Secretaryship and Assistant Treasurership. Besides

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personally appealing to a number of well-known Theosophists, he has even advertised in the Madras papers and sent copies to the Secretaries of Sections. The duties of the desk require a man of special qualifications. He should be versed in bookkeeping; have a good knowledge of English, and of one or more South Indian vernaculars, if possible; be of known good character and an interested supporter of Theosophy. A second Damodar is what is really wanted; can anybody find such a worker? If not, let us have the next best man as quickly as possible. (ibid., p. 20)

After his departure, there was a rumour that he had died en route. But this was not the case, and the following announcement was made:

We have positive news as late as 7 June that he has safely reached his destination, is alive, and under the guardianship of the friends whom he sought. The date of his return, however, is yet uncertain, and will probably remain so for a long time to come. (ibid., p. 17)

And indeed, he never returned. Letters were received from him, but none have been preserved.

He had to undergo severe trials in order to work out the karma of 'questionable doings' in which he had engaged in the past, probably in past lives. Mme Blavatsky wrote: 'The poor boy . . . has no happy times now, since he is on probation and this is terrible (ibid., p. 534).' Such probation, such severe trials are intended to bring out the weaknesses of

the would-be chela, so that they can be faced and overcome.

His work for Theosophy has been summed up as follows:

Damodar's significance to the Theosophical Movement lies not merely in his consistent hard work, or in his intelligent defence of the embattled Society, but primarily in the fact that he set a standard for Theosophic conduct. Of the seventy odd Theosophists who presented themselves for discipleship Damodar was virtually the only complete success. (ibid., p. 21)

Damodar recognized and prized the qualities of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, who reintroduced Theosophy in our day and age. Of his devotion to Mme Blavatsky, Olcott wrote:

No child was ever more obedient to a parent, no foster-son more utterly selfless in his love to a foster-mother, than he to HPB: her slightest word was to him law; her most fanciful wish an imperative command, to obey which he was ready to sacrifice life itself. (ibid., p. 4)

He had complete faith in her. He wrote to a correspondent:

I am exceedingly grieved to find that you doubt 'Upasika'. . . We may doubt 'Upasika' now, and, when she is no more, then, perhaps, we may regret our ingratitude, and our having lost the only chance that was ever conceded to us degenerate Hindus by the OCCULT WORLD Take time by the forelock

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and don't let us lose this golden opportunity. (ibid., p. 301)

He had great respect for HPB's utter honesty and unselfishness, as exemplified in the following quotation from a letter to a newspaper:

I remember some Anglo-Indians wondering how Madame Blavatsky could have permitted the publication of *Hints on Esoteric Theosophy* No.1, wherein her weaknesses are exposed. My only reply is that it is because she is not hypocritical, and freely acknowledges her faults. . . . She never claimed to be infallible, and in her practical life is exemplified the fact that she fully recognizes the importance of the adage 'to err is human'. (ibid., pp. 464-5)

Damodar also defended Theosophy and the Theosophists. For example, in reply to a correspondent, probably a theologian, who asked why a shower of rice is not brought down by an Adept in times of famine, Damodar writes: 'I ask him why the God, whom he believes to be merciful, sends down a famine' (ibid., p. 422). He also defended the TS when it was attacked:

It is because the Theosophical Society does not rest upon personalities but upon the *idea* — the chief power being furnished by those great humanitarian philosophers — that all our coworkers are free from one danger — that of . . . personal ambition — which so often spoils what might otherwise be a good work of many a religious and social reformer. (ibid., p. 445)

Damodar rectified various errors and inexact statements in newspaper reports, on one occasion giving a good lesson to reporters:

In spite of the facts . . . readily accessible to every earnest enquirer, it published a para[graph] prejudicial to the interests of our Society, containing almost as many false statements as the lines it contained. And when I replied, my reply was not heeded! Does it consider as unreliable any information coming from persons intimately connected with the movement which it criticizes? Or did it think a statement of facts concerning our Society would be unpalatable to the readers? It only shows then, as I said in my letter, that newspapers seem to *follow*, unfortunately they are too impotent to *lead*, public opinion. (ibid., pp. 463-4)

Apart from defending the Society, Damodar's letters to individual enquirers and members often contained, as already mentioned, useful lessons and information on Theosophical subjects. Writing to Judge on God and the universe, he states:

I am a Pantheist and not a Theist or a Deist. I believe that the whole Universe is God. You must however well understand that the word 'God' does not convey to me any meaning attached to that word by the Westerns. When I say God, I understand it to be Nature or Universe and no more To my mind there is no possibility of the existence of an extra-cosmical Deity As far as I can understand, there can be but one

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Infinite Existence and not two. Call it either Matter or Spirit, anything you like, but it is one and the same. . . . Can you draw anywhere a line between the two? (ibid., pp. 65-6)

His words on what 'Real Knowledge' is are of timeless value:

True perception is true knowledge. Perception is the capacity of the soul; it is the sight of the higher intelligence whose vision never errs. And that can be best exercised in true serenity of mind. . . . In short — as the Hindu allegory has it — 'It is in the dead of night that Kṛṣṇa is born.' In Occultism, Kṛṣṇa represents the Christ Principle; the Ātmā of the Vedāntin-s, or the seventh principle. . . . In the dead of night, that is, when there is complete physical and mental rest, . . . perfect quiet and peace of mind. (ibid., pp. 515-6)

Concerning Yoga, Damodar makes the following clarifications:

The true *Yogi* does not study Occultism for the purpose of acquiring powers. . . . *Siddhi-s*, however high they may be, are yet within the domain of illusion. Every student, even a tyro, of occultism knows that the acquisition of *Brahmavidyā* is dependent entirely upon the development of a feeling of universal love in the mind of the aspirant. (ibid., pp. 370-1)

Damodar also wrote about the functioning of the Theosophical Society and its Lodges:

The chief idea our Society seeks to

spread as far and wide as possible is 'The Universal Brotherhood'. This has been the dream of all good men since time immemorial. . . we have made the dream possible of realization. . . . This is the chief duty of any Branch of our Society. . . . Our branches. . . do well to devote their special attention to the study, each of some special branch of knowledge which will further the union of the East and the West. It is for you and your Branch to decide what special subject you will select to help on the Cause. (ibid., pp. 175-6)

He has the following advice for a Lodge President:

And now I have to say that it will be your duty as the President of the Branch to see that the Objects of the Society have been carried out as far as possible, and that there is harmony and union among all the Brothers. (ibid., p. 177)

Damodar writes about the karma of the Theosophical Society:

All its doings are *its Karma*. . . . And who will dispute the fact that that Association has been acquiring an immense amount of good *Karma* by its beneficent work of increasing human happiness by promoting knowledge and by uniting together different people into one bond of an Intellectual Brotherhood? (ibid., p. 381)

He had much to say concerning the failure and the narrow-mindedness of the Christian missionaries and their 'nominal conversions'. He speaks of

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so-called 'converts' to Christianity:

The only sign of recognition of their being Christians is that in addition to various caste-marks they suspend, moreover, a cross around their necks, and add the name of *Jeshu* to their list of Gods and Goddesses! And such are the *generality* of converts whose large numbers swell the reports of the Missionaries. (ibid., p. 231)

Referring to the doctrine of hellfire as awaiting non-Christians, Damodar remarks:

If there is none [no salvation] for those who could not trust to Christ for Salvation, since they were unaware of his existence, I ask whether this is not an additional proof in favour of my statement that not only does Christianity rest upon blind faith, but that it is the most cruel and heartless of all the religions. (ibid., pp. 244-5)

On the other hand, in all fairness Damodar respects the teachings of Jesus, which, however, he points out, are also found in other religions. He suggested that

since there were so many persons in Christian lands who are not true Christians, the missionaries ought to work there instead of coming out, unasked,

here where good people of our own religions can surely take care of themselves and of the bad ones. (ibid., p. 246)

In a letter to a newspaper, he mentions the blind faith exacted by Christianity, as opposed to the appeal to reason made by Buddhism. And replying to a critic of Yoga (and, by implication, Hinduism), Damodar points out that

the true *Yogi* does not study Occultism for the purpose of acquiring powers. . . . The attainment of *Mukti* is the very identification of the *Jivātmā* with *Paramātmā*, the universal spirit, which manifests itself in ALL — which can never be accomplished except by one's putting oneself en rapport with Nature through a cultivation of the feeling of unselfish Philanthropy. (ibid., pp. 370-1)

Finally, concerning religion in general, Damodar makes the following statement:

We maintain that the highest ideal of love is to be found only in *Brahmavidyā* or Esoteric Theosophy; our ideal of love being a perfect union with the All by an utter abnegation of the self and by ardent sleepless endeavours for the good of all sentient beings — even the brute creation. (ibid., p. 375) ✧

The entire executive management [of the Theosophical Society] is in the hands of the Founders, and our Teachers give us advice only in rare exceptional cases of the greatest emergency.

Damodar K. Mavalankar

The Future of the Media — Part II

(Besant Lecture, Adyar, 27 December 2006)

N. S. JAGANNATHAN

IT is time to turn from the larger structural aspects of the communication media of our times to the informational and intellectual contents of what they deliver. In the jargon of our times, we shall move from the hardware of the business of communication to its software. Over the years, there has been a gradual change in the perceptions of the providers of the products of the media about what their consumers want.

Any speculation about the future of the media has to start with its present status and immediate past. Without going too far back and confining ourselves to what has happened since Independence, it is obvious there have been significant changes in perceptions of what constitutes news. There have always been serious newspapers and frivolous ones but in more recent times, even serious newspapers have succumbed to trivia and sensationalism. The readership of the two kinds was well defined. *The New York Times* proclaims on its masthead that it is concerned with 'All the news fit to print'. But perceptions of what is fit to print itself have changed even in serious newspapers.

On the other hand, the *Daily Mirror* of London, once the most popular tabloid of its time with several times more circulation than serious newspapers like the *Times* of London prided itself on having more 'nudes than news'.

Older generations of readers complain that this particular distinction between serious and frivolous papers has almost disappeared. They are disconcerted by the contents and salience of the newspapers today. Used to a tone of high seriousness bordering on dullness in the newspapers they had grown up with and become addicted to, they feel that even these newspapers have become increasingly trivial in their preoccupations and frivolous in the manner of presentation. Apart from pictorial extravagances of half-clad women that have increasingly become a regular feature of even serious newspapers, what has come to be known as lifestyle journalism has become a major preoccupation of our papers. Even a perfunctory analysis of our papers would show the increasing preponderance of fashion and high life and what is called celebrity journalism. What once used to

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be derided as 'third page trivia', gossip and innuendo about the goings on in the haut monde and the peccadilloes of film stars are no longer the monopoly of the tabloids.

Of course there are exceptions to this generalization. There are still newspapers that take their role as the fourth estate of the realm seriously. It would be invidious to give examples. The extent of trivialization varies from paper to paper depending upon their antecedents and the attitudes of current owners. Earlier, newspapers had their roots in the value systems of pre-Independence years and had a certain reticence about private and public morals. Many of their owners were men of consequence in the public life of the country with close relations with the political leaders of the time. Some of them were directly or indirectly involved in the struggle for Independence. Secondly, they were distant figures in the newspaper offices, leaving it to the editors to deal with the professional part of the paper. Moreover the editors of those days had an independent and public standing of their own with their own lines of communications with the ruling elite of the times. They also had formidable intellectual credentials that the owners, not always so well endowed, respected.

The situation is now markedly different. The most significant single change is the ascendancy of the managerial wing of the newspaper business and the consequential devaluation of the status of the editor. There is much anecdotal evidence of this transformation. There is an increasing control over the editor's discretion in

editorial matters, not just by the proprietor but by the business wing of the newspaper. It is true that there has always been a certain ambiguity in this grey area of mutual relations between the professional and business wing of a newspaper organization. But in the perception of the public, the editor was always the public face of the paper. Most readers knew the name of the editor but few knew or cared about the name of the owner. In recent years, however, this particular façade has worn thin. The interesting thing is that this reversal in the pecking order is not something that has occurred imperceptibly — at least in some papers it is part of the managerial philosophy, publicly flaunted by the proprietors.

One reason for the change in content and style of presentation in our newspapers that the older generations miss is the dramatic change in the country's demographic profile in recent decades and with it the configuration of the readership of newspapers. According to the 2001 census, 53.82 per cent of the Indian population is below the age of 25 and about 30 per cent of it is in the age group between 10 and 25. It is the literate among these that constitute, in the jargon of our times, the core consumer target of the media today. No newspaper that wants to survive can afford to ignore the needs, tastes, desires, and aspirations of this potential readership.

It is also necessary to take into account the incredible increase in the range and variety of knowledge available to this young and eager public living in what

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McLuhan called the 'Global Village'. Even as recently as fifty years ago, the things that a man calling himself reasonably well informed and intellectually curious had to master were of a manageable proportion. In stark contrast, the older generation of today feels appallingly illiterate when face to face with the new areas of knowledge, such as electronics, computer science, biotechnology, and all the new abracadabra of acronyms and arcane information. Any newspaper mindful of this demographic salience of its readership has to change its menu of news. It has to target niche audiences with special coverage of developments in science and technology, economic affairs, industry, commerce, stock market goings, and, above all, sports and leisure activities. In all candour, providing analytical information in these areas was most perfunctory in the newspapers of the fifties and earlier.

In other words, newspapers today have to come to terms with the reality of a world that has undergone profound changes in external circumstances, in beliefs, in notions of private and public morals, in attitudes to right and wrong and the sacred and the profane and, above all, in access to new ideas and experience. This has torn down ancient taboos about inviolable norms. It is hardly to be expected that newspapers could be exempt from these changing mores of the society we live in. Globalization is thrusting commerce-driven hunger for vicarious experience of once-

forbidden sensations on members of societies that had internalized a more austere code of thinking and feeling. Even as the media has put an exciting new world of knowledge within everyone's reach, it has also facilitated unrestricted exposure to the trivial and titillating. It is no secret that the internet is polluting the air with pornography, hard and soft. Gresham's law of bad money driving out the good is inexorably in operation in the frontierless new world of instant transmission of knowledge and experience. In an unequal competition with its rival medium, the print medium is seeking to provide its own brand of gratification of the senses.

It is time to turn to the more positive aspects of the outlook for the media. Traditionally, the best newspapers of the world have always performed their duties as the watchdog of the public interest with courage and enterprise. Governments, big business, and multinational corporations all have shameful secrets to hide and it has been the duty of the public media to bring them into the open for the public to judge for themselves. This duty of the Press was memorably expressed by Delane, the editor of the *Times* of London in the early nineteenth century. When the government of the day complained bitterly about 'rowdy' newspapers delighting in scandalmongering with scant regard for 'national interests', Delane said in resounding terms: 'It is no part of the duties of the Press to share the burdens of statesmanship. Its first and last duty is

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to obtain the most accurate intelligence and by immediately publishing it, make it the property of the public.’ And he added for good measure: ‘The Press lives by disclosure.’

This is the Brahma Sutra that recent Indian journalism has taken to its heart with gusto. Older generations that are disconcerted by all this muckraking should remember that there is much in public life that ought to be brought into the open. This is in the best traditions of Indian journalism itself. James Augustus Hickey, the rumbustious editor of the English Weekly *Bengal Gazette*, founded in 1880, universally considered the first modern newspaper in India, was a constant thorn in the flesh of the then Governor General Warren Hastings, relentlessly exposing the venalities of the government of the day. He lost out in this unequal battle with authority, was sent to jail, and finally died a penniless man, but has since become an icon of fearless journalism.

This adversarial role of the Press is well recognized in all practising democracies of the world, including India, which, to its infinite credit, has inscribed it in its constitution. Unlike in the US Constitution, Freedom of the Press is not specifically mentioned in the Indian Constitution, but the Supreme Court of India has repeatedly held that the fundamental right to the Freedom of Expression listed in the Indian Constitution includes Freedom of the Press, and that is the settled law of the country. Fortified by this judicial endorsement, the Indian media has been exercising it energetically, much to

the chagrin of those inconvenienced by it.

Over the years, this concept of the freedom of the Press has been sat on its head. A social rather than an individual right has become the key, and the concept of the ‘people’s right to know’ has bred exposé journalism. This is very much in the news these days with ‘sting operations’ using hidden cameras, catching venalities of various kinds in the act. This has become even more common with the advent of the audio-visual media. The ethics of such intrusive journalism will always be a subject of intense controversy, involving as it does the conflict of interests between an individual’s right to privacy and the society’s right to know of the shenanigans of their rulers. When MPs take money for doing their duty or secret deals are struck by men in authority, does not the public have a right to know of them? Perhaps the ethics of such exposés will depend on particular instances.

The concept of the freedom of the Press, particularly in its aspect of the public’s right to be informed of what their rulers are up to, has recently been put to one of its tests by the American invasion of Iraq and its sequel. The American media was particularly caught up in the conflicting demands of ‘patriotism’ and independent journalism. It has on the whole behaved with exemplary commitment to the public’s right to know the truth, both before and after the invasion. It has exposed the administration’s lies about hoards of weapons of mass destruction stashed away by Saddam and the shocking cruelties inflicted in prisoners’ camps

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such as Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. In the entire murky business of American involvement in Iraq, the behaviour of the American media has been in the best traditions of independent journalism.

Returning to the Indian situation, the positive aspects of fearless exposures of corruption in high places and misuse of authority and greater democratization of what is news that is fit to print have already been mentioned. But what are the negative features of current Indian journalism that concern the older generation? What are the changes for the worse that have occurred in the generality of newspapers in recent years? In a recent article, Mr B. G. Verghese, one of the most respected editors of the earlier era, gave a formidable list of these infirmities. Qualifying his remarks as the bunching of only the worst features of the median newspapers, he said that the majority of even the better newspapers are guilty of 'Dumbing down of serious reportage and analysis; trivialization of news and events; sensationalism and prurient coverage; invasion of privacy; trial by the Press, resort to rumour, gossip and innuendo without verification; disregard for fair and balanced reporting, not issuing corrections when in error; denial of the right to reply; editorializing in news, conjecture in place of facts; lazy journalism marked by shallow writing, inadequate research, patent ignorance of background and context; editors demoted and market-savvy managers having taken over, and sound-bite journalism.'

Whew! What a formidable indictment

from one who is well known for his sobriety! Quite obviously, this is the worst-case scenario and a deliberate provocation for a much needed introspection by his professional peers.

Like much else in Indian life, Indian journalism has changed enormously in the last fifteen or twenty years. Today's journalism has different perspectives, concerns, values, parameters, and pre-occupations. There is far greater diversification of interest in reporting and analysis. On the flip side, at the institutional level, there has developed an attitude of mind that is sometimes referred to as the 'commoditization of newspapers'. Some of the 'sins' listed by Verghese arise from this transformation. It is the result of a mindset that treats newspapers as a product to be marketed like any other item of mass consumption, with no regard to its unique attributes. This has undermined the 'public character' and unique status of newspapers as a vigilante of the public interest.

At the professional level, there is a growing ennui, weariness, and even cynicism about the normative role of the Press in public affairs. The Indian political system, like political systems elsewhere, seems to have internalized sleaze and corruption in public life. No consequence seems to follow, at least in India, to serious charges of offences under the criminal law of the country levelled against the high and mighty. In their own mandatory affidavits filed at the time of contesting the elections, 119 members of the current Parliament had admitted that they had

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some case or other pending against them. A moral miasma of unresolved guilt seems to have settled over our political life. Politicians accused, and even charge-sheeted, of grave offences under the criminal law remain in a limbo of indeterminacy, neither exonerated nor convicted. They are no longer marginalized in public life. Indeed even persons released on bail continue to be ministers on the specious ground that they are innocent until they are convicted by the highest court in the land.

In such a situation of systemic paralysis, the temptation is strong for the

Press to scale down its role to that of an uninvolved observer and pragmatic analyst, taking the amoral ambience as given, and getting on with their political analyses within the frame.

This is a temptation that should be resisted. Even if the Press were to modestly disclaim for itself a higher intrinsic moral excellence than the other institutions in the polity, it cannot abdicate its mandated roles as the conscience-keeper of the community. It is an ideal that Annie Besant practised in her journalism both as a contributor in England and an Editor in India. ✧



In Indian journalism she [Annie Besant] made a new departure not only in the sense of producing vivid literature, but in using it in the Western way for propaganda, realizing that the reiteration of ideas in different forms and in that intermission was the most potent means of creating and consolidating mass psychology and propagating new ideals.

C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar

Colonel Olcott's Selfless Life

PREETHI MUTHIAH

THE term 'selfless' does not mean an absence or negation of the self. It is used here to denote the ability to put the needs and happiness of others before one's own, working for the common good, irrespective of what one's personal needs might be. Thus 'selfless' is a generic term composed of different qualities. We will address a few of the qualities that make up a selfless person, interspersed with incidents from Col. Olcott's life.

J. Krishnamurti, in his speech dissolving the Order of the Star in the East, mentioned that the sole purpose of his teaching was to 'set man absolutely and unconditionally free'. One might ask, 'free to do what?' Perhaps to be oneself; or to do what is right, the doing of which is often hindered by the social and psychological conditioning one is introduced to early in life.

Col. Olcott's life contains many incidents where this quality is portrayed. With extreme risk to his own life, he went to Charlestown on 2 December 1859 to pay tribute to John Brown, who fought to abolish slavery in America and was executed for the same. Being an abolitionist himself, Col. Olcott

went to Virginia despite difficulties and many a time the danger of being discovered in a largely anti-abolitionist state.

Later, in 1862, and again at great risk to his life, Col. Olcott started investigating the widespread corruption then existent in the US Armed and Naval Forces. This ability to do what is right was also seen when he took up the cause of the Buddhists in Sri Lanka and elsewhere in Asia, demanding of the British ruling Government that they permit the indigenous peoples of these countries to be schooled in their own religion and culture. Back home, in India, he opened free schools for Panchama children, who at that time had no educational facilities.

Closely related to this trait is the ability to think for oneself rather than depending solely on another's interpretation of the Truth. This trait is apparent in the Colonel's investigations into the spiritualistic phenomena manifesting at the Eddy Farmstead; and, even earlier, in his refusal to accept blindly the beliefs and rituals of the Christian faith as practised then. As mentioned in the book *Hammer on the Mountain*, he could not accept the creed of his fore-

Miss Preethi Muthiah gave this talk during the South Indian Conference on 8 April 2007 at Adyar.

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fathers or of the established Church in general. This refusal eventually led to his divorce from Mary Eplee Olcott. He remained loyal to the Truth as he saw and understood it. As the Golden Stairs exhorts us to do when we say 'a willing obedience to the behests of Truth once we have placed our confidence in and believe that Teacher to be in possession of it', Col. Olcott always did what he thought was right, without counting the cost of standing by what he believed to be right, good, and true.

Of the Colonel's unswerving loyalty to the Truth, the Master KH has this to say in Letter No. 2 of *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (this of course is being said of both HPB and HSO):

Supposing you were to abandon all for the truth; to toil wearily for years up the hard steep road, not daunted by obstacles, firm under every temptation; were you to faithfully keep within your heart the secrets entrusted to you as a trial; had worked with all your energy and unselfishly to spread the truth and provoke men to correct thinking and a correct life — would you consider it just, if, after all your efforts, we were to grant to Madam B. or Mr O. as 'outsiders' the terms you now ask for yourselves?

It was truly this ability to stand for the truth that gave the Colonel the strength to lay the foundation for the Theosophical Society, a Society which was founded with the sole purpose of creating a nucleus of universal brotherhood in a world that was becoming increasingly material-

istic, ridden with superstition of every order, and rapidly moving towards what would later result in the two major World Wars, causing manifold destruction unheard of before those times.

It is often easier for us to believe the truth as we see it; it is, however, far more difficult for most of us not to enforce it on others. Would we not, all of us, want to believe that life reveals her secrets to us specifically? Yet one of the characteristics of a selfless person is that he does not seek to enforce his perceptions, views, attitudes, etc., on others. This quality is very evident in Col. Olcott, who could keep his views to himself when the time for revealing them was not appropriate. How easy would it have been for him to advise Madame Blavatsky against marrying Michael Betanelly. Betanelly begged HPB to marry him and Col. Olcott was totally against this, while HPB consented on the condition that the marriage should never be consummated. But the Colonel let her do as she deemed fit and HPB married Betanelly. This quality of respecting others' right to follow what is true for them marks the selflessness inherent in Col. Olcott.

Another quality that reflects selflessness is courageousness in the face of trials. To quote Christopher Paolini in his book *Eragon*: 'The real courage is in living and suffering for what you believe.' Or, as the Golden Stairs put it: 'A brave declaration of principles and a courageous endurance of personal injustice.' In the initial years, when the Society and its Founders were questioned by the

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members of the Society for Psychic Research, Col. Olcott stood firmly by what he believed in and for this he as well as HPB faced much ridicule from the SPR and the missionaries in particular, but also sometimes from the public. Such an act of courage is not possible to those of weaker resolve or with even a little care for personal comfort. Gossip and rumour of every kind had followed Col. Olcott ever since his meeting with HPB, but he stood firmly by his friend and co-Founder, by the Society they founded together, by the Masters whom he considered to be the inner Founders of the TS, and by the principles for which the Society stood. Notwithstanding the gossip that was sure to follow his decision to move into the flat above HPB's in New York City, the Colonel stayed there because his proximity to her was of importance to the great work in hand.

In a pamphlet entitled *HPB's Opinion of H. S. Olcott*, published in 1938, she has this to say of Col. Olcott's courageousness:

Thorny and full of pitfalls was the steep path he had to climb up, alone and unaided, for the first years. Terrible was the opposition outside the Society which he had to build; sickening and disheartening the treachery he often encountered within the headquarters; enemies gnashing their teeth in his face around; those whom he regarded as his strongest friends and coworkers betraying him and the cause on the slightest provocation. Still, where hundreds in his place would have collapsed and given up the whole undertaking in despair,

he, unmoved and unmovable, went on climbing up and toiling as before, unrelenting and undismayed, supported by that one thought and conviction that he was doing his duty towards those he had promised to serve to the end of his life. There was but one beacon for him — the hand that had first pointed to him his way up; the hand of the Master he loves and reveres so well, and serves so devotedly.

Elisabeth Severs, in her book *Some Noble Souls* published in 1910, mentions that Col. Olcott was never ashamed to testify to his beliefs. She also states therein that HPB was not always an easy colleague. Her vehement, nervous, excitable disposition and ardent temperament, her unconventionality, her strong method of expression, strewn the Colonel's path with many a thorn, but these idiosyncrasies did not shatter his devotion to the 'old lady'.

Col. Olcott put the good and welfare of others before his own. In the days when there were no convenient means of transportation such as we have today, he travelled all over the world in order to spread the message of universal brotherhood, universal love, and our divine origin, not once complaining about inconvenience or discomfort during his journeys to various lands.

The last quality I would like to bring to your notice that reflects a selfless personality is the ability to seek forgiveness and to forgive. It is well known that the Colonel had the fault of being tactless, but he was also quick to repair hurts and

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seek forgiveness for his wrongs. He was also willing to forgive others who did him wrong and to trust their better nature.

In the *Theosophical Review* of 1907, G. R. S. Mead, Recording Secretary of the Theosophical Society at that time, had this to say:

H. S. Olcott was a man of large heart, transparent honesty, wide tolerance and sympathy, of sunny disposition, even temper and optimistic temperament; he was free from malice and of a forgiving disposition, practical and possessed of a shrewd common sense generally; unselfish, devoted and self-sacrificing; persistent and determined, though ever ready to acknowledge an error and set it right.

In summary, the perfect example of selflessness that marked Col. Olcott's life is evident in his ability to live up to and suffer for what he believed to be true, just, and right; his respect for others' freedom to follow their own perception of that which is true, just, and right for them; his

courageousness in the face of many trials and tests; his loyalty to the Cause, to his friend and colleague, Madam Blavatsky, and to the Masters; his ability to put the needs and the good of others above his own; and his forgiving disposition.

I would like to end with the now well-known words from that little treasure, *At the Feet of the Master*, which are a significant pointer to the guiding beacon of Colonel Olcott's life:

Waiting the Word of the Master,
Watching the Hidden Light;
Listening to catch His orders
In the very midst of the fight;

Seeing His slightest signal
Across the heads of the throng;
Hearing His faintest whisper
Above earth's loudest song.

May our lives and journey be guided by these same words and thus be a fitting tribute to our President-Founder, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, whose life truly is a perfect example of selflessness. ✧

Our work requires the services of those who can be satisfied to labour for the next generation and the succeeding ones. . . . We welcome most those who are ready to trample underfoot their selfishness when it comes in conflict with the general good.

H. S. Olcott

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