

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover: Mosaic of Jesus the Christ in Hagia Sophia, an ancient basilica (537 AD) turned into mosque (1453), and since 1935 a secular museum in Istanbul, Turkey

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

Tim Boyd's Address to New Members

(5 JANUARY 2018)

I would like to welcome our new members and say that it is a pleasure to see young friends joining our Theosophical Society (TS). Those of you who associate themselves with it have their own thoughts about what it is that seems to resonate with you sufficiently for you to say: "This is something that I want to be a part of." These are the things that you should not forget as you grow in your time and membership, study, and experience. At this beginning point everything is fresh and new, the motivating force is alive and you feel it. Like anything else, with time, sometimes you start to forget, and some of the aliveness of this moment can drop away.

The main thing that the theosophical effort relates to is a very deep quality of memory. If there is something that has moved inside of you which has brought you in this direction, it is some deeper power that you have gotten in touch with. Within each of us there is a life that is hidden. Because we have so many activities and so many demands it just gets covered over. At some point during our life we say: "Yes, I *will* yield to this thing that, like 'The Hound of Heaven' seems to always be pursuing me."

What the TS offers, which is very different from other movements that I am aware of, is a complete view — the most grand context of who we are, what the nature of this Universe in which we reside is, and what the basic values for right behavior are. It also offers something that you will not find *anywhere* else, which is the freedom for you to arrive at your own conclusions and your own experiences.

There are certain things that are said and taught, but the most important among all of them is that we are participants in the One Life. If nothing else, focus on that. Where you see signals of unity, oneness, brotherhood, and cooperation in your own world, focus on it.

The mind works in a strange way; once you start to become *aware* of something, somehow you start seeing it everywhere. I know people who apply that principle in the opposite direction, where they become fearful, they are afraid of the dangers lurking in the world. For people of that kind, who have allowed their mind to exercise this tendency in the wrong way, they are trapped in a life of fear, because everywhere they look, they think there is something that can harm them.

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To look and to see where unity exists is the *opposite* way, which lends itself to an experience that will be called a happy life, a life that has the capacity for a deepening understanding. See where it is in your own behavior, your own thoughts, that invites unity; and you start to find that there are certain very broad principles that you can experiment with. Any approach of this sort has very limited value unless it is something that *you* can demonstrate for yourself. If it is something that you have to be told, or where your belief is required, it has severe limitations. The Theosophical Society is not an organization for believers. The idea is that *you* will come to know, through your own self-effort.

So, where and how does unity come about? There are two little words that contain very big ideas that you might want to explore. Wherever you find something you can describe as love, you find unity. If two people are involved, the two people become one; if it is a family, the family becomes one; if it is a nation, that nation is one within your heart; if it is humanity, then it is one. This is the broad teaching, and it is something that *can* be experienced. You might discover for yourself that some of these things are only apparent to you in silence.

Your own efforts to cultivate the experience of silence will yield huge rewards. It is only when the chattering mind and always-grasping desires get a little bit quiet that something else appears. Even in this room, while I am talking, there is another talking going on, the birds

are speaking, and so is the breeze. If we get a little bit quieter, you can hear the beating of your own heart. But it is all going on beneath our awareness because we are just shouting with our minds. Quiet, and ultimately silence, will open doors and vistas, and when these doors start to open, you will find it is in that process that the things you study become verified. The things that were previously concepts or ideas, *now* you find, by your own experience, to be truths. Maybe it is not truth the way you understood it as an idea, but it is something that then you can refine for yourself. This is the approach, and it applies at any stage of life.

As new members, these are some of the ideas that I want to bring to your attention. As the years go on, you will develop your own ways of looking at Theosophy. There will be aspects of it that will be much more deeply appealing to you, and those will be the things that you will expand. But ultimately love and compassion open the door, and the practical application of those two keys is found in the field of service. Sometimes our view of service becomes a problem, because if you are serving, it is you and the other, there is still some separation. But you do not have to label as service the conscious compassionate actions that you take, they will make for unity.

Having been once a new member, I consider myself fortunate that I did *not* come from a theosophical family. I would have felt very fortunate if I had, but it was not given to me. I had to find Theosophy; and in finding it the blessing was that

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I did not encounter it from the point of view of a home training; for me it was completely fresh. Certainly there are great advantages to having Theosophy in the home from birth, but that was not the advantage I was given. I was given a different advantage.

Experiment, try. It is part of trying that you fail. You will make a thousand mistakes, but as long as you make a thousand and one efforts, you will get on. It is a long, long process. Theosophy deals with not just this life. The fact that it has some attraction to you shows that this is not your first exposure to it; many lives lead up to a moment such as this. Sometimes we are renewing a connection we have had in the past, but which has escaped us until this moment in our lives. You are renewing something. When I first joined the Society, the image of a golden chain with many links was described to me. Each one of us becomes a link in this golden chain, *all* of us connected together.

As time goes on, and as you deepen in your own experience, you may find yourselves sitting in this place talking to others; that is one of the things which also happens. I consider myself very fortunate to be here at this point to water the seed that has already come to life inside of you. Life in its fullness is contained in

that seed, but it does not look anything like what you grow to become. This is the wonder that will awaken within all of you — what it is that your self-effort will bring about.

The fact that you can count on the support of the people who surround you in this hall today is a wonderful thing. You can draw on it in their presence or in your own solitude, it is always there. Beyond that, the Society, with all of its membership, comes into being in response to a pattern that we feel, but do not see. The pattern is projected by great beings, the Masters of the Wisdom, the Mahatmas standing behind this Theosophical Movement. Attention to the subject of the Masters can be seen as a simple thought, but it can attract great help, particularly if you persist. Think of this connection, because it is where the direction, the guidance, and the genuine help for this Movement comes from.

Again, it is a blessing to be here with you, to welcome you into this body of fellow members, brothers and sisters, and to wish you every good thing as you pursue your membership. As you deepen in your own happiness, which will certainly flow from this choice that you have made to set foot in a certain direction, stay with it as you feel it at this moment. Do not forget. ✧

Let no man set up a popery instead of Theosophy, as this would be suicidal and has ever ended most fatally.

H. P. Blavatsky
Letter to the Second American Convention 1888

Annie Besant: The Revolutionary

P. KRISHNA

MRS Annie Besant was an extraordinary woman. Born in 1847 as Annie Wood, in an average middle-class family in London, she faced circumstances far more hostile to a young girl than those that prevail in India today. Despite that, it is incredible all that she achieved in one lifetime, both in England and in India, by virtue of her qualities and dedication to truth, justice and fairness. Her life is an inspiration for all of us never to feel disheartened by adverse circumstances in life.

Annie's father was "keenly intellectual and splendidly educated; a mathematician and good classical scholar, thorough master of French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese".¹ He had migrated from Ireland to make a living in London. Her mother was a traditional Christian housewife. She was only five years old when her father passed away. In order to earn a living, her mother ran a boarding house for schoolboys. She had neither the time nor the means to educate Annie, so a family friend, Ellen Marryat, offered to look after and educate the child. She soon discovered that Annie

was smarter and more intelligent than all her classmates!

As was the custom then, at the young age of 19, Annie was married to a priest of the Anglican Church named Frank Besant and went to live with him. For a few years the marriage was happy, and they had two children; then differences developed. Annie saw that in the church the priests and fathers talked about love and compassion, but they paid a lot of attention to rich donors and ignored the poor people. She could not tolerate this hypocrisy and refused to attend the church sessions. For a clergyman's wife not to attend Mass was not acceptable. She published short stories and articles and was paid for them by some magazines, but her husband would not let her keep the money. Such differences led to quarrels and eventually to a legal separation in 1873. Annie took her daughter to live with her mother and the boy stayed with his father.

She saw how women were being treated merely as breeding machines and not permitted to practice birth control or family planning. She wrote

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articles protesting against it and developed a friendship with Charles Bradlaugh, an atheist and free thinker who had founded the National Secular Society. He supported her in her protests and they reprinted an old pamphlet describing birth control methods which was distributed free among the public in 1877. As a result, she was charged with obscenity and arrested.

Due to the publicity of the case the pamphlet sales jumped 200 times. Annie appealed, argued her own case in court, and was released. She then lectured on birth control all over the country and wrote her own pamphlet on "The laws of population", establishing the Malthusian League. She wrote articles against the Christian church and in favour of atheism. This caused her husband to file a court case against her saying he did not want his daughter to be living with her mother, as she was an atheist. The Court ruled in favour of her husband, so both her children were taken away from her.

In 1879 she joined the University of London to learn science and passed all the examinations for a Bachelor of Science degree. Yet she was denied the degree because one professor on the board objected to her "immoral views". However, she had acquired enough proficiency in science to begin teaching in a school.

In 1880 she became attracted to socialism and differed with Charles Bradlaugh, who was a liberal. So she became a member of the Fabian Society and the Socialist Democratic Front and struck a friendship

with the Irish playwright and political activist, Bernard Shaw. She wrote articles advocating prison reform, abolition of capital punishment, and demanded fair wages for labourers. In 1887 she agitated at Trafalgar Square against unemployment. The day became known as "Bloody Sunday". Once when she was agitating on the streets for women's rights, she requested Bernard Shaw to join her. He wrote: "Annie, I can write articles about it but I cannot join you on the streets!" It is said that she lost her respect for him and said: "Oh, you're just an armchair critic!"

On the family front she faced another grave situation. Her mother was very old and dying and she was looking after her. Being a devout Christian her mother wanted a Christian priest to give her absolution before she died. Her mother insisted that Annie must be present during the ceremony but the priests all refused, as Annie was an atheist. With great difficulty Annie found a liberal-minded priest who knew her and sympathized with the work she was doing to help the poor and the marginalized. He agreed to come and administer the absolution to her mother in the presence of Annie though she was an atheist:

So Dean Stanley came that afternoon, all the way to Brompton, and remained talking with my mother for about half an hour, and then set himself to understand my own position. He finally told me that conduct was far more important than theory, and that he regarded all as

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“Christians” who recognized and tried to follow the moral law of Christ.²

In 1888, Annie led the match girls’ strike demanding fair wages and terms for young girls working at a match factory. She won against the management and became famous. That was the origin of the labour union movement in Britain. In 1889 she led the London Dock Strike and formed a workers’ union to obtain fair wages for them. She wrote against injustice in British colonies in Ireland, Egypt, and Afghanistan, and demanded Irish Home Rule and modern socialism.

She stood for election to the London School Board and won by a huge margin, becoming the first woman on the board, and writing on that occasion: “See the wheels of destiny; they took my children away from me and now I am in charge of all the children in London!” She campaigned for free public education, free meals for the children of the poor, and free health examination in elementary schools.

Annie was one of the greatest public orators and earned her living by working as a journalist. In the course of her work she was asked to review a new book entitled *The Secret Doctrine* by Madame H. P. Blavatsky, one of the founders of the Theosophical Society. She was fascinated by what she read and realized that atheistic materialism was a narrow-minded philosophy and there were much larger vistas to life with which she was quite unacquainted. So she sought a meeting with the author of the book. That

meeting with Madame Blavatsky led to her joining the Theosophical Society (TS) and committing her life to work for it. Her supporters like Bradlaugh, Shaw, and the Fabian socialists were stunned.

She studied Theosophy and started lecturing about her new interest. She was sent to participate in the first Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 and represent the Society. There she met and heard Swami Vivekananda speak on Hinduism and befriended him. That same year she visited India for the first time and toured the country to deliver lectures at various centres opened earlier by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel H. S. Olcott. She made new friends and was fascinated by Indian culture, philosophy, and way of life. She decided to come back and settle in the TS in Varanasi. There she learnt Sanskrit and translated the *Bhagavadgītā* into English.

Soon after settling down in Varanasi Mrs Besant started new avenues of social reform and took up the following causes:

1. Women’s rights and education

She noticed that in those days very few parents sent their daughters to school since they did not want them mixing with boys. She started several schools and colleges for girls, not only in Varanasi but in some other parts of India as well. In England she had fought for women’s right to vote and participate in government. She advocated and encouraged the same in India. She had great respect for the character and temperament of women in India, but she wanted

them to be treated as equals and have the same rights, education, and opportunities as men.

2. Revival of Indian religions & culture:

She found that Indians had mostly forgotten their rich religious traditions and were blindly aping the Western culture introduced by the British rulers. She gave lectures on India's rich religions and pointed out that the essence of all religions was the same and they differed mainly only in their methods of worship and the forms of ritual. She called Theosophy the wisdom religion which respected people of all religions. These lectures were later published by the Theosophical Publishing House as a book entitled *Seven Great Religions*.³ She not only tried to revive Indians' pride in their own culture but to alter the education promoted by the British Government to one based on Indian culture and philosophy. For this she started in 1898 the Central Hindu College in Varanasi, which did not take any government grants and had its own atmosphere and methods of education. Later, when she found that Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya wanted to create a university with similar ideals, she gifted the whole college to him and it became the nucleus of the Banaras Hindu University.

3. Theosophy and occultism

In 1894 in London, Mrs Besant made friends with a fellow-theosophist named C. W. Leadbeater, who was clairvoyant and had other occult powers. He helped

her to become clairvoyant and together they conducted occult investigations of the universe, matter, thought-forms, and the history of humankind. In 1907, when she became the President of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, Madras (now Chennai), she invited him to join her and in 1908 they jointly published a book entitled *Occult Chemistry*.⁴ In it they described their investigations of the structure of various chemical elements. They stated in it that they mentally made themselves smaller than the smallest atoms in the material in front of them and were writing what they actually "saw".

Their findings did not agree with those of science at that time and were discarded by the scientists. Later, with the development of elementary particle physics and quantum mechanics, many parallels were found between their findings and those of modern physics. A theoretical physicist named Stephen M. Phillips published a book⁵ in 1980, comparing their results with those of modern science.

After the death of Colonel Olcott in 1907 Mrs Besant was elected President of the TS and she made Madras her headquarters for the rest of her life. She had the reputation of being the most brilliant exponent of Theosophy both as an orator and as an author. She brought about a transformation of the religious life in India and untiringly worked for a radical change in social conditions. She gathered around her a band of idealistic Indians and foreigners to work for the regeneration of the country.

It was Mrs Besant who started the Boy

Scouts movement in India. During her tenure the Theosophical Society grew enormously both in size and in membership throughout the world. She passed away in September 1933 and, as per her wishes, was cremated on the grounds of the Theosophical Society in Madras.

4. The World Teacher Project

Madame Blavatsky had predicted with her Occult powers that the Maitreya Consciousness, which in the past had reincarnated on Earth as the Buddha and Jesus Christ, was going to reincarnate again to give a new interpretation to religion for the modern age of reason and science. She said it would come this time in an Asian body and function as a world teacher, revealing truths far greater than any she herself could perceive. It is said that she told her close followers that the purpose of the TS was to work for the coming teacher and his teachings.⁶ Mrs Besant and C. W. Leadbeater believed in this prophecy and were looking for a suitable boy through whom the Maitreya consciousness could function.

In 1909, their choice fell on a thirteen-year-old boy named J. Krishnamurti, whose aura was perceived by Leadbeater to be completely free from any trace of selfishness.

They confirmed this through contact with their masters and then announced publicly that Krishnamurti was going to be “The Vehicle of the World Teacher”. Mrs Besant legally adopted Krishnamurti and his younger brother Nityananda as her sons, in order to bring them up and

prepare Krishnamurti for the role of the world teacher. She was so confident of this prediction made on the basis of their occult powers that she established a new organization, independent of the TS, called “The Order of the Star in the East” and made Krishnamurti its Head in 1911. Some senior theosophists and friends felt she was deluded and resigned from the TS or openly disagreed with her; but she did not change her mind. Later developments have borne out her faith and prediction. In 1925 when she considered the World Teacher had manifested through Krishnamurti she announced it in London in her public lectures entitled, “The Coming of the World Teacher”. She never wavered in her resolve till her death. In this connection it will be worth mentioning that Mrs Besant reminded her critics of Madame Blavatsky having “regarded it as a mission of the TS to prepare the world for the coming of the next great Teacher, though she put that event perhaps half a century later than I do”.⁷

Mr Sanjiva Rao, a close associate and disciple of Besant, has mentioned in his book *Letters of Wisdom* that she could leave her body at night and travel on other planes to meet her Masters and receive divine messages.⁸

5. The Home Rule Movement

Mrs Besant was unhappy with the unjust way in which the British government in India treated Indian citizens. “In 1916 she launched the Home Rule Movement, and branches of the Home

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Rule League were established so widely that the consciousness of even the rural people was awakened to the need for independence. This led Gandhiji to remark: "It is Dr Besant who has awakened India from her deep slumber."⁹ In 1917 the British government interned Mrs Besant for her "anti-national activities". Gandhiji wrote demanding her release from prison. Upon her release, "the Provincial Congress Committees recommended Annie Besant as the President of the ensuing Indian National Congress". Besant and Gandhi worked together for a few years but serious differences soon developed regarding the means to be adopted for the agitation against the British Government.

When Gandhiji was preaching non-cooperation and civil disobedience, Mrs Besant wrote to him: "You are teaching indiscipline to the people; you may get independence a few years earlier by these methods but it will not remain worth getting." He replied, "We are using these methods against the unjust British government, we will not use them against our own government." She replied back saying: "You may understand this but the people will not." She was also against Gandhiji using students in his political agitations. She said they are immature minds and their job is to study, it is unfair to use them for this purpose. She felt only constitutional means should be employed with full respect for the law, that only right means lead to right ends. These differences grew and she resigned from the Congress. Before coming to India she had

strongly supported the Home Rule Movement for the independence of Ireland, which was also then under British Rule.

Conclusion

I do not know of a single woman, anywhere in the world, who has done more for the transformation of human society than Mrs Besant. Any one of the above contributions would suffice for her to be listed among the great public figures of the world, but she made so many and in such diverse fields. She not only led an exemplary personal life herself, she also fought for social transformation wherever she saw injustice, discrimination or exploitation, irrespective of whether it was in England, India, or Ireland. When Radha Burnier asked Krishnamurti for his opinion about Annie Besant, he told her: "You have no idea of her capacity for love." When Krishnaji was asked to say a few words of tribute after her death in 1933, he said: "Dr Besant was our mother. She looked after us, she cared for us but one thing she never did: she never told us to do this or not to do that. She left me alone. In saying this I have paid her the highest tribute."¹⁰

Today her ideas may seem a normal part of civilized life but the fact that she fought for all these 150 years ago, in the 19th century, was truly revolutionary! She was totally devoted to the quest for truth not merely as philosophy, but she put the truths into action the moment she perceived them. Indeed, she wrote that the only epitaph she wanted on her tomb was, "She tried to follow Truth". ✧

Annie Besant: The Revolutionary

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Our one great danger, as HPB [Madame H. P. Blavatsky] recognized, is the danger of getting into a groove, and so becoming fossilized in the forms of belief that many hold today . . . The Society is intended, always has been intended, to be a living body and not a fossil, and a living body grows and develops, adapting itself to new conditions . . .

Nothing could be more fatal to a Society like ours than to hallmark as true, special forms of belief, and look askance at anyone challenging them . . . If the Society is to live far into the future, as I believe it will, it must be prepared to recognize now, quite frankly and freely, that our knowledge is fragmentary, that it is partial, that it is liable to very great modifications as we learn more and understand better . . .

Generations far into the future, ourselves in new bodies, will still be extending the limits of the unknown; we do not want our limbs to be fettered then by appeals to our present researches, exalted into scriptures, used as walls to bar our onward progress then.

Annie Besant
Adyar Pamphlet No. 36, 1913

To Grow as the Flower Grows

N. SRI RAM

THE disciple has to kill out another manifestation of his personal self — the hunger for growth. We want not only to live but to grow, to become, to achieve. But our growth should be unconscious growth, like that of a flower, natural and effortless. If we try to force it according to our own notions we are projecting a goal from our present position, and so we shall not be very different from what we are now. But if we leave the picture to take shape by itself we are not making the future out of our present ignorance. Do not let us be concerned with our growth. Growth, development, expansion is the law of life, so let us leave it alone. We cannot raise ourselves to a higher level by pulling up the soles of our feet.

When we understand that our selfish isolation from others is the cause of our unhappiness (and it is important that we do) we can begin, as Aphorism 1.8 [*Light on the Path*] says, to “grow as the flower grows, unconsciously, but eagerly anxious to open its soul to the air”. The “air” is the eternal, the timeless. In practice, the problem is resolved when we no longer seek to attain things. When the mind withdraws

from them, its interest turns automatically to higher things so that we now begin to understand and appreciate them.

What we are able to give ourselves inwardly and completely to, even for a moment, is the eternal for us, otherwise the word “eternal” like the word “absolute” is just an abstraction. When there is something to which we can abandon ourselves without any notion of self our life begins to be changed, for we have contacted the Real as we know it. This contact becomes an opening for the entry of forces which have hitherto lain dormant. It is only a beginning, but when once it has been started it goes on; the stream continues to flow, and what has been done cannot be undone.

It is only at this point that the aphorisms in *Light on the Path* can be understood. Until now they may have seemed unreasonable; the language perhaps sounded overwrought and the counsel impossible or undesirable. (What many people want, of course, is advice that will enable them to live with their feet in both worlds!)

Grow as the flower grows, unconsciously, but eagerly anxious to open its soul to the air. So must you press forward to open

N. Sri Ram was the fifth international President of the Theosophical Society from 1953–1973. Excerpt from a talk on Mabel Collins’ *Light on the Path*, reprinted from *The Way of Wisdom*.

To Grow as the Flower Grows

your soul to the Eternal. But it must be the Eternal that draws forth your strength and beauty, not desire of growth. For in the one case you develop in the luxuriance of purity; in the other you harden by the forcible passion for personal stature. (1.8)

We must give our attention and interest to those things which are beautiful, true, and good. Perhaps those wonderful words make us feel as if we are taken somewhere into the upper air and left there, knowing not what to do. But these achievements are best developed on earth. We open our soul to the Eternal by not being concerned with personal advancement, importance, or stature, but by allowing ourselves to be fashioned by Nature.

The way to live the spiritual life with the greatest possible ease, as well as success, is to be as little concerned with ourselves as possible. We can arrive at this attitude when we attain the conviction that there is absolutely no need to be worried about anything. Things will take their course; we shall be what we are, for there is something into which each of us *must* develop in the very nature of things. Why be concerned with this miserable self, with the desire to be this or that, wondering whether we are making progress, worrying about what will happen to us after death? Let the whole thing alone.

We may be concerned with anything in heaven or on earth provided we do not project ourselves into it. Then we shall find that what we are interested in unfolds its story to us, imparts a message to us. Look at a tree, the flight of a bird; look at some human phenomenon, at any

situation in life. If you, as a self, are not there, but merely a consciousness that listens, that is interested, that looks deeply, that is prepared to receive whatever comes, you will find that even the simplest manifestation tells you something of the mystery of life.

We keep our interest on these truths to the extent that we understand them to be true; we keep our minds on the great perfections or virtues because they are so sublime; we keep them on helping the one who happens to be with us at the time because it is a beautiful thing to sympathize and give help. If our help is spontaneous and natural, our giving will be significant and spiritual.

As one note follows another, it is the movement that constitutes the music, not the individual notes. Similarly, it is possible to live our life unconcernedly and naturally and this is how it should be.

Some ask about their soul. But why bother about it? If the soul is immortal, it can never die; if it is not, then let it perish. These things take care of themselves, and any concern about ourselves is really a fetter. When we realize this, we just take life as it comes; we go for a walk to the beach and observe what we meet on the way; we come home, and if there is some duty to be done, we do it. We do not trouble ourselves about the future or about the after-death life.

To live in this way is not irresponsible, for it arises out of a deep realization of the truth of things, out of a mature understanding. We are able to live in this way because we are willing to trust ourselves to the Law. ✧

Giordano Bruno — An Apostle of Theosophy

CLEMICE PETTER

IN 1548, in Nola, Italy, the wife of a soldier, Giovanni Bruno, gave birth to a boy who they called Filippo Bruno. When eleven years old the boy was sent to Naples to be educated. At the age of seventeen Filippo changed his name when joining the Dominican Order of Friars. It was the custom in those days to change one's name when entering a religious order. To honor his metaphysics tutor, Giordano Crispo, with whom he studied since the age of fifteen, Filippo Bruno became Giordano Bruno, and was ordained as friar at the age of twenty-four. While being distinguished for his astonishing memory abilities, Bruno's taste for the forbidden books and freethinking would soon get him into trouble; however, he stayed within the Dominican Order for eleven years.

In those days, the Vatican created an index of forbidden books and those who dared to read them were labeled heretics. During his trial, many years later, Bruno said that proceedings were taken against him twice during those years as a Dominican friar, once when he took away all

the images of the saints remaining only with the crucifix, and when recommending a controversial text to a novice. And when he learned that a forbidden pamphlet, with his handwritten notes had been discovered, and an indictment was being prepared, he fled leaving behind his religious habit.

From then onwards Bruno traveled all over Europe as a wandering philosopher. He used to proofread in order to earn enough for his daily expenses, and he also delivered lectures at universities and arenas where scholars used to meet. His memory abilities impressed kings, queens, and many eminent figures who soon became his friends. It was because of those friendships that it was possible for Bruno to publish his theories. In his own words:

I got me such a name that King Henry III summoned me one day to discover from me if the memory which I possessed was natural or acquired by magic art. I satisfied him that it did not come from sorcery but from organized knowledge; and, following this, I got a book on memory printed, en-

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titled *The Shadows of Ideas*, which I dedicated to His Majesty. Forthwith he gave me an Extraordinary Lectureship with a salary.

(William Boulding, *Giordano Bruno: His Life, Thought, and Martyrdom*, 1916)

A friend said about Bruno: “he . . . strong, sad man, who thinks for himself, and stands alone.” (Ibid.)

Bruno denied the idea of a center of the Universe. He stated that the Universe is infinite and without a center, that God is in everything and everywhere, that there are innumerable worlds in the Universe, that in those worlds there are living creatures, human beings being but one among infinite forms of creatures in infinite universes, and that God has no preference for any of his expressions and all living creatures have the same right to live, all being the expression of God. Bruno also denied the core Catholic doctrines such as eternal damnation, the Trinity, the virginity of Mary, and the divinity of Christ, and openly talked about reincarnation, which he called the transmutation of the Soul.

For him God was life itself. Different from the established belief of those days in the Western world, which saw God as an authoritative figure, passing judgment right and left, Bruno described God as the all-pervasive energy that shines within every creature. He also said that the Earth is alive, it has a soul, and that in the same way as our bodies are made of bits of the Earth, our individual soul comes from the Spirit of the Earth; and that the Holy Spirit is in fact the Spirit of the planet.

With these teachings, it is not difficult to understand Bruno’s tragic fate. He was found guilty of heresy by the Roman Catholic Church, and because he did not deny his theory, he was burned at the stake on 17 February 1600. It was a jubilee year. Rome was full of pilgrims from all over Europe; those few who could read, may have seen a small notice informing that an obstinate heretic from Nola was sentenced to death, being the author of horrendous opinions, to which he adhered even after being indoctrinated by theologians for seven years in the prison of the Holy Office.

Intolerance, dogmatism, superstition, and fundamentalism were, are, and will always be the stumbling blocks for the inner progress of man. The Church was sure about the Universe and knew all about God. There was nothing to be discovered further. It was all settled, rituals and prayers all known. To be saved, one should follow the pattern and never question, because to question, was also considered heresy! But Bruno could not keep his discovery to himself, it was much too important to be kept quiet, and it was with a childish naivety that he cried out his vision of a Universe without a center and the unity of life.

It was because of his daring spirit that life has changed tremendously, science progressed, and today, the arrogance of those who “know it all” has no longer a place in it. Instead of starting with assertion, today science starts with questioning, doubting. In the same way religion has to change, we need to question, to doubt in

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religious matters too, because the new generation does not accept old dogmas and rituals. It is a global phenomenon that the youth is rebelling and does not accept the old, well-defined ways of religion.

In the same way that science changed and saw the truth about the outer universes, religion needs to explore into the truth about the inner universes. Man accepted doubt in the scientific field, but still cannot let go of dogmatic, assertive ways of thinking when it comes to religion. The human psyche is constantly changing, and now it has come to a point where it demands a complete change in the way we understand and live religion. It is our job, as members of the Theosophical Society, to introduce the scientific mind to religion, a mind that is free to explore, that knows how to doubt, that thinks for itself, and a heart that knows love and compassion.

The Light that Bruno brought was to shine over science and religion, it was not meant to separate them; in fact, if understood, it would have made them one. While science took up the challenge, it changed; religion withdrew and has seemed incapable of taking the next step, which is to question its dogmas and beliefs. As a result of this obstinate religious view, we have created a world which is becoming more and more brutal, and religious fanaticism and fundamentalism are growing. It is a danger to the survival of the human race itself.

Bruno was not a scientist, nor was he an astronomer, and in his days, there was not a single tool available to observe the

sky, stars, or planets. All he had were two eyes, a clear mind with courage to doubt the established beliefs, and insights that would lay before his inner eyes the entire Universe. Life walked naked before him, neither Mother Nature kept secrets from him, nor did the Father, the Holy Spirit. Bruno was the beloved Son, nourished in worlds where thought cannot reach.

Giordano Bruno, the Apostle of Theosophy, the torchbearer of Truth, he lived and died for it. Even when imprisoned by the Inquisition, where tortures were known and justified as the way to help the sinner to purge his sins against the Holy Office, Bruno never changed his theory. At the end, when the inquisitor was about to pronounce his death sentence, it is said that he addressed the judge saying: "Perhaps your fear of passing judgment on me is greater than mine in receiving it."

Today, on 17 February 2018, more than four hundred years since that horrendous day, we have gathered to celebrate Adyar Day. It seems important to remember that Adyar came into being to prevent that kind of atrocity from happening again. Adyar is an oasis of Light in the dark midst of a materialistic world, a place where torchbearers of Truth should be welcomed and encouraged to help us to question and doubt.

To keep the Light shining through the years to come is a tremendous responsibility and by no means an easy task. It requires hard work on our part; it demands everything from us, and it takes our own life to come to the core of peace and silence that rests in the heart of Adyar.

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Today we remember that tragic time in the history of humanity — almost 800 years of terror in the name of what was called God. The Inquisition started in the 12th century and came to an end in the 19th, somewhere between 1813 and 1825. The Inquisition started in order to fight evil, and it became the evil it intended to fight. This is a law of Nature, which was taught by J. Krishnamurti and the Buddha.

Krishnaji said: “Surely, that thing which you fight, you become. If I am evil, and you fight me with evil means, then you also become evil, however righteous you may feel.” The Buddha said: “Hatred does not cease through hatred at any time. Hatred ceases through love. This is an unalterable law.” Knowing all this, one wonders: what if the Church had listened to Bruno? If human beings could learn from each other? If humility had a place in Man’s heart? If we could let Love flower instead of feeding fear? What a different world we would be living in today!

Then we cannot help to question ourselves: are we ready to support the Apostles of Theosophy? those who stand against the stream, who bring a message that cannot be understood by the majority of the people of their days? This is because Truth does not compromise, it has no friends or enemies, it offers nothing, and it takes everything from us. It takes

the very ground from under our feet.

Are we in the position of thinking for ourselves and standing alone? Adyar Day is the day when we celebrate the life of those who had the dignity to stand for Truth; to live and die for it. Adyar was born to be a home for those who carry the light of Truth in a gloomy world of illusions and ignorance, for the friends of this light are those who, even though standing alone, they walk together because they understand.

If we can learn from the mistakes of yesterday, and do not repeat them over and over again, then it may be possible for us, human beings, to live in a different world. In some years ahead, people may look back; and standing here, in this very place, the headquarters of a society that stands alone — that stands for Truth, nothing but Truth — remember the day when we learned from our mistakes and moved on, the day when we learned to listen, to love, and to let go of certainties and dogmatic ways of thinking. It will be on that day, when the motto of this Society, “There is no religion higher than Truth”, will be honored and Adyar will flourish spreading its perfume of wisdom scent all over our beloved Earth.

It is up to us to make it happen, to keep the flame of this Light, the light of Adyar, alive and perpetuate a home for Truth. ✧

All things are in the Universe, and the Universe is in all things: we in it, and it in us; in this way everything concurs in a perfect unity.

Giordano Bruno

Meditation, Self-Study and the Therapeutics of Speech

JONATHAN COLBERT

THIS talk has a bit of a fancy title. What we are calling attention to is the art of reaching *within* and *above*, to express in our everyday lives the Healing Magic of Speech. The Therapeutics of Speech, then, like all Beneficent Magic, is top down, from above below. What got me thinking along these lines is when I first started reading *Hermes*, a Theosophical journal edited by the late Raghavan N. Iyer, from 1975 to 1989. In the inside of the front cover, it says, “HERMES is consecrated to the sounding of the keynote of Brahma Vach, and the shedding of its pristine light on the path of spiritual self-regeneration in the service of humanity.” There are, of course, many synonyms for Theosophy: *Theosophia*, Wisdom Religion, *Brahma Vidya* and *Gupta Vidya* to name but a few. But I have always been intrigued by the term, *Brahma Vach*, as a synonym for Theosophy. *Brahma Vach* is the primordial latent sound and light in *Parabrahm*. Sounding the keynote of *Brahma Vach* in our lives, then, is making Theosophy a Living Power through the Magic of Sound.

Speaking of magic, you never know

whom you are going to meet, seemingly by chance, on the way to a spiritual place such as Adyar. Virginie Schwartz from France and I found ourselves together in a careening car at night in Chennai, after being picked up at the airport by our able guardian angel, Christopher. I asked her if she had ever been to India before and she said, “yes, to Northern India”. Being myself deeply interested in the ancient temple-university of Nalanda, I asked Virginie if she had ever heard of Nalanda. Very enthusiastically she said that she had. This was a wonderful feeling of connection for us as we had both realized that the other was appreciative of such an important part of what is now known of Tibetan Buddhism. We both had come across numerous places where, in his writings, His Holiness the Dalai Lama had mentioned that if you want to understand the foundations of his philosophy you should study what he calls the Seventeen Pandits of Nalanda. Nalanda is where Nagarjuna taught and expounded on *sūnyatā*, the doctrine of emptiness and interdependence. Likewise, Shantideva, who expounded on *The Way of the Bodhi-*

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sattva, was also an important teacher at Nalanda. The Dalai Lama is giving us a clue as to how we can, ourselves, be a little more like a Buddha of Compassion: by learning about and more importantly, *meditating* on the deep foundations of Buddhist philosophy. The Dalai Lama has said that, when he first came to Dharamsala as a refugee and as a very young man, he spent the better part of a *decade* meditating on the profound relationship of emptiness and compassion, *śūnyatā* and *karuna*. We understand that even to this day, when he awakens at 2:30 in the morning, this profoundly deep meditation is part of his practice. Think of the healing the Dalai Lama releases into the world through the power of Meditation, Self-study and Healing Speech.

The *Gayatri mantra* calls upon us to meditate in all three worlds — the terrestrial world of duty, the astral world of feeling and the celestial world of the divine — on that which is highest, nourishing and healing. It is a basking in the splendor, brilliance, and excellence of this Universal Source. The invocation of the *Gayatri mantra* is a prayer that all of humanity will become receptive to the divine healing of the invisible, spiritual Sun. A *mantra* is a collection of words, which, when sounded, create certain vibrations in the air and in the ether. Words are powerful. Each one of them is alive. Each word is a living messenger. The surest proof of the godlike potency in each man or woman is his or her ability, through the sacred gift of Speech, to in-

voke these living messengers that we call words, to create something that is truly magical. The use of words, depending on one's motive, mental tonality, and quality of inner life, can be of tremendous help to our brother and sister human beings. As is pointed out by HPB in *The Secret Doctrine*, "The Word (*Verbum*) or the speech of every man is, quite unconsciously to himself, a BLESSING or a CURSE." If the caliber of a civilization can be measured by how it *uses words*, how can we view our society?

We live in an "Information Age", but alas, in a time of little real communication. Intimate, meaningful, beneficent speech, infused with loving kindness — like Silence — is all too scarce. People paying magnanimous tribute to one another is almost unheard of nowadays. The full-throated celebration of the virtues of others — like my friend Jan Nicolaas Kind does in his online journal, *Theosophy Forward*, when he writes about the contributions of great theosophists to the theosophical movement — is a rarity. These kinds of tributes to great souls, harkening back perhaps a million years to the Golden Age times of the *Ramayana*, serve to kindle a mini Golden Age, right here and now in what we call the *Kali Yuga*. The beautiful thing about what Jan does is, when he salutes exemplary theosophists; he does not care much through *which* theosophical organization they have done their important work. It could be someone who is in the Theosophical Society, or the Theosophical Society Point Loma, or the United Lodge of Theo-

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sophists — or someone totally independent of any of these organizations.

Sensing that there must be a deep mystery in the simple utterance of words, we ask: how might the true, Healing Magic of the Word be restored? How are we to become responsible trustees of the sacred gift of Speech? Theosophically, words, especially the *tonality* with which they are spoken, have far-reaching effects. What, then, of the *causality* that is *behind* our tonality of Speech? Is there a way of tapping into the causal realm of our own natures, a realm that is behind the reactive and the compulsive; to a part of ourselves that is higher and prior to the bundle of skandhas that constitutes our personal nature? You would think that the simple answer might be, “Of course! Study Theosophy!” After all, Theosophy says that we are all one and that we should treat each other like brothers and sisters. Yet, is that enough? We know that simply studying something is different than being able to reliably *practice* it. It is one thing, for example, to know something about music and quite another to be able to play it masterfully on a fine instrument.

Something is needed, then, that has to do with going within, something that comes from Silence, rather than from more words. One has to go to a place within where one can be very honest with oneself, without being condemning or self-accusatory. *Can* the personality analyze itself? Or is *that* just the brain-mind in a closed loop? According to Patanjali, the way to get beyond the brain-mind bundle of tendencies in the per-

sonality is through meditation. Now, do certain phenomenon occur within the brain when meditation occurs? Indeed, they do. This has been demonstrated by brain-scan imagery, for example, of certain Tibetan Buddhist monks, both in meditation and in periods between meditations. However, according to Theosophy, something is going on in meditation that is also higher than, and independent of, the physical brain.

Meditation is a stabilizing of consciousness within the practitioner, beginning with mindfulness and, at all stages requiring mindfulness. It involves bringing to a point one’s whole consciousness, on a seminal idea or a mantric phrase, and focusing on it with reverence and unconditionality. “The point in the heart grows luminous”, it says in one of the Upanishads. It is possible, by activation of the higher centers within, to penetrate to the hidden kernel of whatever subject or object we are contemplating. By going to the timeless essence of an idea or a theme, we are going to a realm beyond the past or the future, to a region beyond the description of words. Less and less do we need to hold our minds to a seed idea because we are now established within a meditative current, allowing consciousness to expand while staying in that nourishing current. The soul then looks directly on ideas as formless spiritual essences from within without, from above below.

It is from this high Himalayan plateau, with its rarefied, life-giving atmosphere that we can obtain a wider vision. The lower personality is reduced to a zero. The Higher Self is recognized as the Self

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of all. From the fertile fields of unity is born a sense of solidarity with and compassion towards all sentient life. Moreover, much as all human beings are spiritually grounded in the deep sleep state of *sushupti*, Meditation grounds us in the *atma-buddhi-manas* triad within and above the personality. Through this vertical integration, individualization is made possible through universalization, thus strengthening and deepening independent thought. Having surveyed and assimilated this exalted plateau of Insight, we are now ready to begin the slow descent. It is in the descent, as many mountain climbers know, where some of the most difficult part of the journey takes place.

It is at the stage of meticulous descent from the heights of Meditation that we are most capable of honest self-study — from above below. We can see tendencies in our nature with clarity, compassion and insight. We take ownership of our doubts, our incongruences, our personal pride, and so on. Knowing that the faults and foibles that we possess are part of the human condition, we are grateful to have such a clear perspective from this higher vantage point. We are truly in a position to put ourselves in the shoes of others. From this foundation of fearlessness, we can go into the dungeon of the psyche and seek out the demons, and, embracing the challenge, we have the strength to encounter them with courage. Our karma becomes our *dharma*. We are truly in a position to help others. For this reason, the daily discipline of Meditation and the hard work of honest self-study is an act of service, no less than any kind

of service. There is a saying: “If you clean the inside of the bowl, the outside will take care of itself.”

Meditation is not always easy. The minute we start doing it, we notice that the mind immediately starts to go off on a tangent. As Krishna says in the *Bhagavadgitā*, we need to simply put the mind back on our subject or object of focus. If we need to do this again and again, then that is okay. By meditating every day (at the same time every day) we can train the sheaths of the soul, which include the brain. Through Meditation and self-study, upon waking, and at other points in the day, and over weeks and months, our line of life’s meditation is enriched. As we become more established in this practice, a noticeable continuity of consciousness emerges, bringing about radical healing from above below — from the Krishna-Christos within and above, down into the vestures below thus healing the astral wear and tear of fragmented, compulsive consciousness. Sometimes we can notice this most in clear relief, when, for whatever reason, our daily Meditation and self-study is interrupted for a day or two or longer. We start to notice that something is missing. The hum of our consciousness isn’t quite the same. But, again, not to worry, the idea is to re-establish the current by making corrections and beginning again.

Pythagoras taught that we should “examine all things well, leaving [ourselves] always to be guided by the understanding that comes from above, and that ought to hold the reins.” Facilitating this vertical integration of consciousness, connecting

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the above with the below, is the Pythagorean review: when preparing for sleep, recall the events of the day at least three times. We can ask ourselves, what went well, what went wrong, and how could I have done better? We are surveying not only the external events, but also what was the tonality of the day, most easily detected by what was spoken, by ourselves and by others. After all, karmically, the most significant events of the day are those wherein we have an array of choices. This is where the karma of Speech comes in — timing, tonality, words chosen. Mindful assimilation strengthens the *antahkaranic* bridge between the indestructible and timeless Higher Triad within and the temporary vestures of the lower personality.

Meditation and self-study in this way become a way of life, a tropism, a trajectory — a line of life's meditation and self-study. Meditation, here, is not a selfish, escapist flight to an otherworldly *nirvana*. It is a grounding of our everyday consciousness in the truest, most durable, spiritual part of our nature. Nor is Self-study a narcissistic self-analysis, or any form of utilitarian activity. Self-study, here, is more of an honest survey of one's motives, and a fearless self-questioning of how one could do better in the service of others. Compassion is the link bridging these two seemingly different practices. There is a fearless sifting, refinement and alchemical transformation in the field of motive. Fully comprehending the motive of *why* we do the things that we do, and say what we say, or omit to do so, is primary to practicing the first-person empiricism

of the Art and Science of Healing Speech.

It is in Silence that the healing takes place on the inner vestures, from which can be expressed the Healing Speech that we sound out in the world. In Meditation, we learn of ontological plenty. In the world of the unmanifest, there is no scarcity. Looking at the night sky in a place of low humidity, perhaps in the desert or on a high mountaintop, we can see thousands, if not millions of stars with the naked eye, let alone the exponential magnitudes of stars that can be seen and “heard” with scientific equipment. Just so, are there magnitudes of fullness to be discovered in inner space. By experiencing the joyous world of ontological plenty through the inner ascent, we are seeing how Nature works and how, over what *we call* eons of time, she unfolds from the deep unmanifest state of *pralaya*, to the manifest world of *manvantara*.

Why are we given the metaphysics of *The Secret Doctrine*? To analyse and categorize them? To engage in ego trips? To show off about how we can remember which page in a book they are discussed on? We think not. The teachings of *The Secret Doctrine* concern a path of Self-transformation and Self-regeneration in the service of humanity. As is pointed out in *The Voice of the Silence*, “To live and reap experience the mind needs breadth and depth and points to draw it towards the Diamond Soul.” The profound metaphysics we are given in *The Secret Doctrine* are aids in spiritual mountain climbing. The Teachings are not to be understood mechanically. They are to be applied universally, through analogy

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and correspondence, the Ariadne's Thread of intuition. Walking this inner path, a path of walking alone, but of gratitude in our hearts for the teachers and of insight gained in the service of all, the Teachings come alive.

By establishing an inner life where we experience the joy of Silence, we quickly see how being excessively talkative, is a frittering away of precious energy. A positive *reverence* for Silence — not just the absence of speech — is a deep well from which creative, Healing Speech, can be drawn. Just as it is by fearlessly facing death, that we can truly begin to live — so it is by becoming at home in the gestating potency of Silence itself, that each person can truly express the manifesting power of the *Verbum*. Each word uttered becomes a healing messenger of hope and grace. The organ of Speech is thus consecrated as a sacred instrument to dispense the regenerative therapeutic of a higher Logos. Krishna resides in the heart of every man and woman. Each person, offering a compassionate word of encouragement to a friend in need, can convey the medicinal melodies of the flute of Krishna with noetic timing, precision and beneficence.

An important discipline in the Therapeutics of Speech is to resist the constant pressure — induced in contemporary culture on the personality — to manifest, to assert itself, to put itself forward. A subtle form of asceticism in Speech, requiring an understanding of the potency of Silence and of Speech, is to resist the temptation to speak about something that

has precious potential when it is still in a tender, embryonic stage of development. What should an adult do if he or she is able to discern something spiritual, perhaps a quality of what we might call theosophical genius, in his or her own child — or in a child of a fellow student of Theosophy? By a sage-like Silence, we can protect the child's natural growth as he or she develops the strength needed to perform his or her natural, spiritual *dharma* in the world. Conversely, when we speak unnecessarily about a child's developing spiritual genius, we could bring about, through the precipitating power of the spoken word, unseen, detrimental forces around that child, what *The Voice of the Silence* refers to as the "jealous *Lhamayin* in endless space".

Non-violent speech comes from a place of profound appreciation, knowledge and wisdom regarding ends and means. Mohandas K. Gandhi was particularly attuned to thinking through questions of ends and means. What are my ends? What am I trying to achieve? And of critical importance, what are the *means* I wish to employ in order to achieve those *ends*? Are the means consistent with the end in view? In order to achieve peace and non-violence, can I, or *would* I even want to use violent means in order to gain what I *think* will lead to peace? There were many times that Gandhi had to shut down initiatives of civil disobedience because too many people were trying to take what they thought were shortcuts through the deployment of violence. It is the same with Speech.

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There are so many cases where our communication with others goes wrong and we can not figure out why, when our lack of Meditation and self-study on *thinking through* our inner assumptions about means and ends — are at the root of the problem. Compassionate, Healing Speech, then, comes from a sincere place in the heart. It has a way of infusing benevolence and harmony into any tense situation, no matter how potentially explosive. Not only is Compassionate Speech generally spoken with sensitive attention to harmony, tonality and resonance, but oftentimes it is also attended by a beautiful communication through the eyes. A benevolent Magician of Speech often tells stories, especially with humor in them. Abraham Lincoln, who could absorb, accommodate and harmonize fiercely diverse viewpoints, was famous for this art. With a little levity, he could raise discourse to a higher level.

Even as students of Theosophy, it is easy to often overlook the sheer power of the Spoken Word. Theosophically, Space is not empty. There is fullness in the seeming void. The theosophical term borrowed from Indian wisdom for the spiritual dimensions of Space, is *ākāśa*. HPB refers to the living atoms of the *ākāśa* as, the little “lives”, also as “elementals”. Like the depths of a great ocean, the *ākāśa* is teeming with shoals, schools and living currents of elementals. As such, not only do elementals live in and embody the essences of air, water, fire and earth, they are classified according to the preponderance within them of

the three gunas: sattva, rajas and tamas. Although they exist at a rudimentary level of consciousness, they are powerfully energized by the power of human thought. Each person’s mind is a living dynamo in the field of elementals. Every time we think a thought, we attract corresponding classes of elementals into our orbit. If we are coming from a place of truth and compassion, we attract higher, sattvic elementals. If we are attached to personal gain, we will attract rajasic elementals. If we are passive, wavering or apathetic, we will attract tamasic elementals. Our thought is never in a vacuum.

Speech is the expression, the Logos of our thought. If our thought attracts, dynamizes, and transforms the living atoms of Akashic Space — then Speech dynamizes Space *all the more so*. Pervading the entire universe is a single homogeneous Resonance. Call it the Word, Logos, *Verbum, Vach*. Call it Sound. Call it Tone. Or call it *Nāda Brahma*, Divine Resonance. This Divine Resonance is the vivifying power, the great awakener, stirring all the atoms and molecules, the little “lives” and elementals, into action in all the three worlds, terrestrial, astral and celestial. The whole evolution of matter from the invisible to the visible — depends upon Sound. Sound is what makes it all happen. Think of what the implications of this are in our Speech, especially in relation to Deliberate Speech, to Speech deeply rooted in Meditation and self-study. Call it, if you will, the Therapeutics of Noetic Speech, from above below, in the service of humanity. ✧

Three Truths and One Dharma — III

FERNANDO A. DE TORRIJOS

J. KRISHNAMURTI speaks of the importance of being aware without choice and without any system to which one conforms. He often asks: Can you look at a tree without bringing your knowledge of memory of it into that act, so that you see it as if for the first time? It is not easy for us to do so, as you will know if you try, because one's knowledge and memories are deeply fixed in the mind; the consciousness with which we started life has been modified in so many ways. But, by trying, one can see without the interposition of thought. As with the tree, so with other things. In looking at something, the attention must not be concentrated or restricted in such a way as to prevent seeing whatever relates to it or beyond it. One must see also the conditioning factors. If the will is not brought into the act of seeing, the attention will flow naturally, that is, without strain and not become overconcentrated. According to the Buddhist teaching, this practice of being negatively aware is really the only way, as it means directly experiencing the nature of the thing, and will open the mind to many

things, a new world, in fact — new, because the mind becomes new — and also, it perceives what it had not perceived previously. It sees all things alike without choice and in their true or inward nature, the good as the good, the evil as the evil, the beautiful as the beautiful, and the ugly as the ugly. The truth comes into the focus of awareness.

If a man does not have a sense of beauty, does not appreciate that which is truly beautiful, how does he get it? There are people in India, especially among those who make a cult of simplicity, who think that beauty is non-essential. It is a frill, connected with sex desire, vanity, opulence, and so on. But these ideas are all wrong. To fail to see beauty where it exists, whether in Nature or in man or anywhere else, implies an imperfect or veiled vision. To know real beauty, the soul should be purged of its impurities, its cravings for pleasure. The soul here means the psyche, the body of desire, not the spiritual soul which does not admit anything alien to its nature. Interest breeds attention, as we know; when we are interested we easily do things; but

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also, attention brings interest in its wake, and opens the way to insight. When we use the word “insight” how far does it reach? It must apply theoretically to all aspects of Existence and Being. When one’s vision is cleared of all hindrances and veils, we cannot tell what revelations will come to him. The Buddhist monks do not, as far as I know, think in terms of beauty but nevertheless it is an important aspect of life as Krishnamurti often points out. The constant awareness would not be an effort when one gets into the way of it, beginning with near and small things. It would become the basis of self-discipline as Col. Olcott indicates, a discipline which is neither rigid nor lax, nor ostentatious nor even proclaimed as such. You observe, learn, and act intelligently, avoiding the evils to be eliminated — those mentioned in the *sutta* (the text) — for instance, greed, anger and delusion.

In a state of mindfulness, you see a condition of greed or some other evil, say envy, in yourself. How will the mere seeing dispel it? One should perceive its nature, how it acts, and that is part of the clear comprehension that comes with attention which is not restricted. One must try to perceive all that there is to perceive about it. If one sees something ugly, it will not strike one as ugly, unless there is a sense of something different which one calls beautiful. The *sutta* on mindfulness says: “How does the monk contemplate the working of mind in mind? He comprehends the mind which has passion and that which has none, that which has hatred and that which has none, that which has

confusion and that which has none.” In other words, he sees the cloud against the sky and perceives that the cloud is not the sky; that is, the activities of the mind and the condition which they create are not basically the mind in its own proper state. This is discrimination between the Real and the Unreal, the changeless and the changeful.

When the mind not only reflects the forms of things but knows the beautiful as beautiful and the good as the good, that knowledge is the revelation of a subjective depth in itself, a depth in the quality of knowing. In what lies goodness? What it consists it might be as arguable as beauty is to an uncultivated man. But there is a test of goodness and beauty in the very nature of man when it has been reduced to its pristine and original condition, denuded of all the later formations and without any of the later complications. In other words, it is only a nature which has not been molded by desire that can see things as they are. Such a nature has an intuition of goodness as well as beauty and truth. Real intuition cannot be cultivated or forced. Intuition is not something that jumps out of a bag.

Why are greed, anger, and delusion singled out as the three principal evils? They are evil in a fundamental sense. What is greed? It consists in wanting more and more, the urge to enjoy, experience, and appropriate. Wanting more creates in one’s psychology a kind of siphon action. It wants more of drink, food and other physical sensations, praise,

importance, possessions, pleasure, and security. There are innumerable sensations by which the mind is captured and held. In this view, ambition is also based on greed. One may be ambitious to reign as a dictator or a king. The sensation of being crowned and anointed, of being set above everyone else, of receiving the homage of all around, of feeling one's will being instantly obeyed, is not this the basis of that particular ambition?

Any kind of avidity for pleasure becomes a form of greed. A dog eats greedily. What causes it to do so? It is the pleasure in the sensation of eating, possibly whetted by hunger. Anger stands for various forms of repulsion, including the wish to destroy. There is also fear which is a form of repulsion, a cause of suffering and breeder of other evils, hatred, pretense, lying, and so on. You cannot really love anyone whom you fear. Also, perfect love casts out fear. When one seeks nothing for oneself, has killed out love for life and comfort (as says *Light on the Path*) one cannot have any fear. There is delusion in not perceiving all this, which creates a completely erroneous notion about oneself.

When you observe and act intelligently you achieve freedom from the tendency to follow the habitual grooves at whatever level; you judge freshly and act accordingly. You do not conform in spirit to any external rules but you conform socially or outwardly to the extent that you yourself judge to be good. *At the Feet of the Master* lays down control of mind as a necessary qualification. How to control

it? It is controlled through attention and understanding, not by force of will. The control comes naturally if there is earnestness of purpose. Though one cannot make another earnest, one can help him see the truth.

Right mindfulness, as well as right meditation, also means that state of consciousness which goes beyond thought, in which there is no thinking. But that will also come naturally.

It has been asked: "How does negative state help others even if it helps oneself?" It helps oneself because it means peace in oneself and helps perception. Should we not act then? The answer to this question is "Yes", but what we call action arises largely from the surface of our natures, from a limited perception, often a state of confusion, uncertainty and disturbance. When this condition is brought to an end, then there will arise action from a state of full comprehension, depth, and tranquility. The action that arises from that state which is negative from our present standpoint will be action that has great significance, positive in a fundamental sense.

Life is action at all levels. But the action that takes place in us is largely from entrenched ideas, through the meshes of memory. But there is the possibility of action from a basis that has been cleared of these obstructions. That is what is meant by making the mind negative, empty, and so forth. The negative state is not a state in which life ceases to flow, on the contrary, it is the ground or bed from which flow the freshest and

purest waters of life. The one Energy which is Life as it flows down from its unknown source possibly flows through or is characterized by howsoever we may regard it — a state of consciousness which is like an extraordinary meditation. This is symbolized by the Indian legend that the pure water of the heavenly Ganga is received by Śiva, the great yogi who is always in meditation, on his head, and then flows down and outwards into the world. He typifies a state of consciousness which is untainted and tranquil. It is the state in which that type of perception which has been called the “third eye” opens and perceives. It sees all things in heaven and on earth including things that “our philosophy does not dream of”.

Global consciousness

Sixty years ago, some of the more profound Buddhist teachings (especially the Tibetan) were unavailable in Western languages. All of that has changed, many of those texts have been now translated. Ancient texts that HPB was able to access directly or through clairvoyant perceptions during her trips to the East are now available; a great number of scholars and sages are teaching these topics in universities all over the world.

The Chilean neuroscientist, Francisco Varela, 30 years ago, extended an invitation to the 14th Dalai Lama to explore, with the use of the latest scientific instruments, what was happening in the brain when experienced meditators were engaged in practice from a dual or non-dual approach (karmic or gnostic sen-

sorium). This alliance between Western science and Eastern contemplative traditions gave origin to the Mind and Life Institute. This institution and the MBIs (Mindfulness-Based Interventions) are known and fully present all over the world. The initiative of a few scientists is awakening the interest of many other scientists, taking the cultivation of awareness, based on the teachings of the Buddha, to all corners of the world, initiating thousands of suffering individuals into the practice of mindfulness meditation and self-knowledge.

Is it this that the Mahachohan was suggesting at the early stages of the Theosophical Society? Here is the first paragraph of his letter to the members of the TS:

The doctrine we promulgate being the only true one, must, supported by such evidence as we are preparing to give, become ultimately triumphant as every other truth. Yet it is absolutely necessary to inculcate it gradually, enforcing its theories, unimpeachable facts for those who know, with direct inferences deduced from and corroborated by the evidence furnished by modern exact science. That is the reason why Col. HSO who works but to revive Buddhism may be regarded as one who labours in the true path of Theosophy, far more than any other man who chooses as his goal the gratification of his own ardent aspirations for occult knowledge. Buddhism stripped of its superstitions is eternal truth, and he who strives for the latter is striving for Theos-Sophia, Divine Wisdom, which is a synonym of truth.

Three Truths and One Dharma — III

What is the work to be done? One Dharma and three garments:

The first Dharma implies the understanding of the laws of the universe, an understanding that weaves the garment of the *dharmakāya*. To cultivate this perception, we need to open the sense of hearing, listening to the sound of silence through which everything comes to be. The path of the *śrāvaka*, the one who listens.

The second Dharma: the teachings of the Buddhas, the ethical and moral principles, at the beginning given to the *bhikkhus* (monks), to reflect and apply them. Their understanding weaves the garment of the *sambhogakāya*, the path of the *pratyeka*, the one who learns.

The third Dharma, is the cultivation of the

garden that was given to you at birth. The garden of your own dharma, your individual duties. The understanding of this comes to us through the cultivation of mindfulness, the clear perception that will awaken the heart, the compassion and wisdom located in the center of our being, weaving in this way the garment of the *nirmānakāya*. This is the path of the Bodhisattva, the one who teaches.

This cultivation of awareness, also known as mindfulness, is a well-defined path that leads from chaos to harmony, from the ordinary to the transcendent. This affirmation is based on my many years of experience teaching this program to the more vulnerable, and training health and education professionals.

(Concluded)

OFFICIAL NOTICE

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION 2018–19

In accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Theosophical Society, the 143rd international Convention will be held at the international Headquarters, Adyar, Chennai, India, from 31 December 2018 to 5 January 2019. The theme of the 143rd international Convention has been decided as: **Truth and Beauty — A Field Beyond.**

Marja Artamaa
International Secretary

What is Perennial Wisdom?

RABBI RAMI SHAPIRO

TWENTY-FIVE hundred years ago the Indian sage Siddhartha Gautama said, “Don’t believe anything second-hand. Don’t believe anything because it’s written in ancient books. Don’t believe anything because ‘everyone’ knows it’s so. Don’t believe anything because the sages proclaim it. Don’t believe anything because of habit. Don’t believe anything arising in your own mind, mistaking imagination for Truth. Don’t believe anything on the authority of your guru or priest. What you yourself feel is true, what you experience and see for yourself, what is helpful to you and others, in this alone believe, and with this alone align your behavior.” (*Kalama Sutra*, my translation).

With all due respect to both the Buddha and The Monkees (music band). I am a believer. I believe because what I have heard makes sense to me. I believe because what I believe appears not in one or two sacred books, but in almost all of them across time and cultures. I believe because what I believe seems to be what sages have taught for millennia in cultures both long dead and still thriving. I believe because what I believe seems

to arise in the heart/minds of gurus, rabbis, roshis, pastors, imams, priests, poets, scientists, swamis, and brilliant people of no rank or title, over and over again throughout human history. And because it does I trust it. And because I trust it I seek to find it in myself and for myself. This search seems beneficial to me: making me kinder and more just; which in turn makes my search of benefit to others beyond myself. And so it is to this that I align my behavior.

And the “this” I am talking about is called the Perennial Philosophy or Perennial Wisdom. I prefer the second term, because it is more concrete. Philosophy means the love (*philo*) of wisdom (*sophia*). It is not the love of wisdom that we will explore in this book, but wisdom, itself. This wisdom is called “perennial” because, just as a perennial flower cycles through periods of birth, thriving, death, and rebirth, so this wisdom keeps appearing and disappearing in almost every human civilization.

The Four Points of Perennial Wisdom

I take my understanding of Perennial

Mr Rabbi Rami Shapiro is an award-winning author, teacher, and speaker on the subjects of liberal Judaism and contemporary spirituality. This is the first of a series of essays on perennial wisdom.

What is Perennial Wisdom?

Wisdom from Aldous Huxley's introduction to Swami Prabhavananda's 1944 translation of the *Bhagavadgītā*. There he lays out what he calls the "four fundamental doctrines" of the Perennial Wisdom:

First: the phenomenal world of matter and of individualized consciousness — the world of things and animals and men and even gods — is the manifestation of a Divine Ground within which all partial realities have their being, and apart from which they would be non-existent.

Second: human beings are capable not merely of knowing *about* the Divine Ground by inference; they can also realize its existence by a direct intuition, superior to discursive reasoning. This immediate knowledge unites the knower with that which is known.

Third: man possesses a double nature, a phenomenal ego and an eternal Self, which is the inner man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul. It is possible for a man, if he so desires, to identify himself with the spirit and therefore with the Divine Ground, which is of the same or like nature with the spirit.

Fourth: man's life on earth has only one end and purpose: to identify himself with his eternal Self and so come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground." (Prabhavananda, Swami. *Bhagavadgītā*. New York: Signet Classics, 2002, pp. 14–15).

This is an excellent summary of Perennial Wisdom, but not necessarily

the most clear. Here is my version of the same four points:

Everything Is a Facet of the One Thing

Think in terms of white light shining through a prism to reveal the full spectrum of color perceivable by the human eye: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. Each of these colors is part of the original whole and cannot be separated from it — turn off the light source and the colors disappear. Now apply this metaphor to the world around and within you. Everything you see, think, feel, imagine, etc. is a part of and never apart from the same Source. We call this Source God, Reality, Brahman, Allah, One, Krishna, the Absolute, the Nondual, etc. The list of names is long, the reality to which they all point is the same.

You Are That

Everything is a manifestation of God, everything. That means you. To know God is to know yourself; to know yourself is to know God. The quality of knowing I am talking about is not knowledge about something other than yourself, because you cannot be other than God, the only being there is. Knowing God is not knowing through theological speculations about God, it is knowing God directly, the way a ray of sunlight knows the sun. When you know God directly you know God as yourself, but — and this is a huge but — you do not imagine you alone are God. Knowing you are God is knowing everything else is God as well. And knowing that you and everything

What is Perennial Wisdom?

else are God, is knowing that there is no you or anything else, there is only God.

Absolute and Relative, and That Which Embraces Them Both

Imagine you are a wave on a vast shoreless sea. Imagine further that you come to realize that you and all the other waves of this sea are in fact nothing other than the sea waving, extending itself in time and space. You are still you — a wave — and yet so much more than you — the sea itself. Knowing yourself as wave is knowing the relative world, the world of seemingly separate beings. Knowing yourself as the sea is knowing the absolute world, the world of the One who is all these seemingly separate waves. But there is still another level of knowing, that is the unlabeled knowing that knows both sea and wave, that knows both the absolute and the relative. This knowing and the knower who knows it cannot be known; it cannot become the known; it cannot become an object. It is the eternal subject, the subject that cannot be made an object of knowing.

There is no name for this knower or this knowing. Any name would make it an object, and hence no longer the knower. This is where all language breaks down. Even the word “silence” is insufficient to describe what we are talking about here, because what we are talking about cannot be talked about, and hence cannot be described. And yet it is the truest Self, the truest you, the Eternal “I” beyond all temporary selves, God.

If this makes your head hurt, rest

assured you are not alone. Just ask yourself, who is it who knows your head is hurting? Damn! You almost had it.

Know God. No God.

It is popular today to speak of a purpose-driven life, or to speculate about why you are here. The answer provided by the Perennial Wisdom is simple: to know God in, with, and as all reality, or, more simply, to know yourself as God. This is like a wave waking up to the fact that it is nothing but the ocean in extension. This does not mean that you, or any given wave, are any less unique, precious, and worthy of utmost respect and dignity, only that all the rest of life is worthy of the same because all life is the same.

Knowing God as the Whole and the Part, and knowing that there is a knowing behind this knowing that is the Eternal I of which nothing can be said, frees you from imagining that any one Name of God is truer than any other Name. Krishna, Brahman, YHVH, Allah and the myriad other names of God are all God to the extent that these names point beyond themselves towards the Unnamed; and Krishna, Brahman, YHVH, Allah and the myriad other names of God are not God to the extent that they point only to themselves and their constituents.

Because you know all the names of God can be of value, you are free to explore the sacred literatures of the world to cull the wisdom they have to offer. Because you know that no name is exclusively God, you are free from having to surrender yourself to any one name or system

What is Perennial Wisdom?

of belief. This is the essence of what it is to be spiritually independent. You are open to wisdom from whatever system of belief it may come, and yet free from having to believe in that system as a whole in order to benefit from its wisdom.

The Five Questions

This is the first of six essays exploring the Perennial Wisdom. In doing so we will be drawing on the texts and teachings of many different religions. The challenge this presents is that you will get lost in the sea of texts and find no coherent lens through which to investigate them. To meet this challenge, we will examine the Perennial Wisdom through five existential questions at the heart of almost every spiritual quest: 1) *Who am I?* 2) *Where did I come from?* 3) *Where am I going?* 4) *How should I live?* and 5) *Why?*

Each essay will introduce and clarify one of the five questions, and then present a selection of teachings from a variety of religions that speaks to that question. My goal in offering these essays is not to draw you into a fixed wisdom tradition, but to draw out of you the wisdom that surpasses all tradition.

Perennial Wisdom is not the product of any specific system of thought or belief,

and can be found in all of them. And each time it is found, it is found to take on the flavor of the system in which it rests. Mistaking the flavor for the substance leads us to imagine differences where none exist. In these essays I deliberately mix texts and teachings from different traditions to allow each to deepen the wisdom revealed in the others, and to help you weave your own tapestry of truth out of these culturally diverse threads of universal wisdom.

My hope is that you will use my essays only as a doorway to the texts themselves. Read what I have to say. Agree or disagree with what I have to say. I am not selling you anything; I am simply sharing what I believe to be so. It is up to you to determine its value for yourself. But, do focus on the texts.

The first century rabbi Ben Bag-Bag said of Torah, the Teaching of Judaism: "Turn it and turn it for everything may be found in it." The same can be said of the texts we will be exploring. Turn them over in your mind, refer to them regularly throughout the day. See what they yield as you ponder them from every angle. Let them be a mirror to your own insight. My task is to entice you to peer into the mirror. Your task is to do the actual peering.

Sophia is the Supreme Spirit devoted to the good of all people . . . One who rises early, intent on finding her, will not grow weary of the quest, for one day he will find her seated in his own heart.

The Book of Wisdom of Salomon

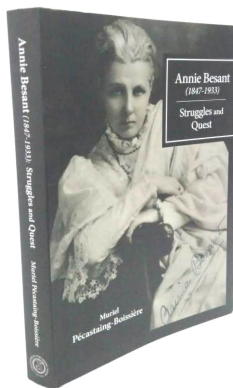
Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:25–33
(English Standard Version)

Books of Interest

Annie Besant's biography by Muriel Pecastaing-Boissiere, *Annie Besant — Struggles and Quest*, published by the Theosophical Publishing House, London,



in 2017, with the original published in French under the title *Annie Besant (1847–1933): La lutte et la quête* by Editions Adyar Paris, is a well-written historical account of Annie Besant's life. The Victorian society, and what was acceptable for a

woman according to it, shows the hardships in which Annie so bravely molded her destiny.

From a happy and protected childhood and adolescence to a youth of hard challenges, the reader is exposed to the deepest pains of a young woman who was overprotected by her mother, and to whom the world of a married lady was completely unknown when she left her mother's house as the wife of a man she did not love, who soon revealed himself as having no regard for his wife's feelings. As the author states:

In the 1893 version of her autobiography, Besant made more explicit reference to her wedding night: "Many an unhappy marriage dates from its very beginning, from the terrible shock to a young girl's sensitive

modesty and pride, her helpless bewilderment and fear." It is clear that Frank Besant imposed his husbandly rights on her without any regard for her ignorance, with the same brutal impatience that would thereafter characterize their relationship. This explains why Besant would become one of the very first Victorian women to dare to allude to marital rape in clear terms. In 1878, in an essay titled "Marriage, as It Was, as It Is, and as It Should Be: A Plea for Reform", Besant described in detail the past and present legal status of married women.

Step by step the birth of a fighter is narrated. The innocent, childish girl turns into a strong and unbreakable woman who fought for a world in which women are respected as human beings and they preserve the right over their body as well as their bank account. When she finally freed herself from that unfortunate marriage she had to face new challenges at every step of her long life. Her brother, who helped her with the divorce agreement, turned his back on her when she refused to follow his rules in order to take shelter in his house. Annie Besant was determined to speak and help those who had no voice, no rights and no one willing to reach out for them. She went from passionate devotion and religious faith to an ardent atheism. Disgusted with the inhumane treatment given to women and

Books of Interest

children in a society controlled by religion, she did not think twice to leave her faith, which was the dearest dream in childlike days. However, when meeting Madame Blavatsky she felt that what was missing in her own earlier experience of religion, was fulfilled by Blavatsky's teachings about the Universe and Man. Again, Besant left her dreams and convictions behind and joined The Theosophical Society. To let go of the old and be open to the new was Besant's strongest character trait, as shown in the book.

The book brings out a clear description of the steps undertaken by Besant, how it was natural and almost inevitable that, when meeting with the founder of a society that worked for the betterment of humanity with the motto "There is no Religion Higher than Truth", Annie Besant would be the most enthusiastic worker for the cause of Truth, to which she devoted long years of tireless service without forgetting the downtrodden with no voice. In India she fought

for the country's freedom, women's rights, for the end of child marriage, and education for girls, among others.

Annie Besant — Struggles and Quest is an important book for those who wish to know how one person can make a difference in a world that seems impossible to change. It is the account of the life of a woman who would not rest until she felt herself to be on the path of Truth.

The author, Dr Muriel Pecastaing-Boissiere, is a senior lecturer in British civilization (Victorian studies) at the English department of the University of Paris-Sorbonne. She is the author of *Les Actrices Victoriennes: Entre Marginalite et Conformisme* (2004), based on her doctoral dissertation on the social status of Victorian actresses. She is currently researching the underestimated links between the late-Victorian socialist movement, the contemporaneous fight for women's rights and the spiritual and occult revival.

Clemice Petter

Passion is rather a frightening thing because if you have passion you do not know where it will take you.

J. Krishnamurti

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