

## 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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## CONTENTS

Presidential Address <i>Tim Boyd</i>	5
Purification and the Higher Spiritual Path <i>William Wilson Quinn</i>	19
Karma and Destiny <i>Raghavan N. Iyer</i>	25
Pathless Land <i>Clemice Petter</i>	32
The Three Propositions <i>David Grossman</i>	37
International Directory	40

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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.

# Presidential Address

To the 146th International Convention of the Theosophical Society  
Online from 27 to 30 December 2021

**G**REETINGS friends! I would like to welcome you all to this opening of the 146th Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society (TS). It is a very good thing to be together in this virtual manner once again.

Many of you will know that 2020 was a historic year for the TS in that it was the first *ever* fully virtual Convention of the TS in, at that time, its 145-year history. Conditions did not permit for a physical gathering even though during the courses of World Wars we somehow managed to have a physical gathering. But last year was different, it was historic!

When the history books of the future are written, 2020 will be a very exceptional year for humanity, and for human history, a watershed year, a tipping point. There are a lot of ways that we can describe it; there are many perspectives on it; but it is very clear that during that year something profound changed. There are many ways to interpret it, but from an Ageless Wisdom perspective, or even just from a level of a keen sort of observation, it is clear that there was something new. Through this pandemic that we are still experiencing, a global recognition was forced upon us of our interdependence without regard for financial status, educational level, race, caste, religion, sex, or color.

No one stood outside of this shared human experience of a pandemic. Of course, it was largely a fear-based recognition for the safety of our loved ones and of ourselves — but it was recognized. Alongside of this particular global recognition issue, it seems as if there has been another rising recognition of a global sense of human responsibility for a planet that is simultaneously drowning and burning, resulting from the effects of human choices, human-induced environmental conditions over a period of time.

Now we are seeing what could be called “predictable”, but dire, consequences or effects on the environment. There is a recognition that in spite of our past behaviors humanity does not stand outside of Nature. We are not separate from it, above it, or immune to the natural world. This is a dawning recognition, again, imposed upon us by the effects of global patterns that we are witnessing of weather shifting, and the models that have been developed to track their potential results. This is something new. The isolation, or separation, that we have fostered in our behaviors as nations and as individuals are at least coming into question. It is a very important moment of how we, as a human family, will respond — that remains to be seen.

Sometimes, as individuals, the slightest glimpse of a truth is life-changing, direction-changing. But sometimes the sense is that the demands of truth, having seen

## Presidential Address

something that is too demanding, make people respond differently, and then maybe distract themselves from what they have seen. In the words of T. S. Eliot: “We are distracted from distraction by distraction.” So these are some of the possibilities.

H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), one of the Founders of the Theosophical Society, made an important statement in discussing the power of truth. She said: “There is no more fatal fallacy than ‘The truth will prevail by its own force. It has only to be seen to be embraced.’” The fact, as she presented it, is that “The desire for truth exists in very few minds, and the capacity to discern it in fewer still.” If one believes that this is a correct analysis, it means that for us members of the TS who believe in the motto of the Society that “there is no Dharma [or religion, or any system of thought] higher than Truth”, there is a role for anyone among us who feels that there is value in seeking truth.

This is because it places a certain responsibility on us not only to seek for truth, but when some realization of the nature of a truth, or of truth comes to us, also to suffer it, to respond to its demands, and not go back to sleep. This is a serious need in the world and it is a duty for those who are so inclined.

From the perspective of this year’s Convention and its theme, the role for us is to live more fully, to live in the now, to learn, to see, and to accept the challenges of the inner life. With that as a prelude, at this time I would like to request you all to rise while I pronounce the traditional invocation to the Great Ones for beginning this Convention:

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

At this point I declare this 146th Annual Convention  
of the Theosophical Society open.

\* \* \*

In **Europe**, the 3 Lodges of the Theosophical Society (TS) in **Austria** offered weekly lectures throughout the year. Study subjects were based on classical theosophical teachings and related subjects. Lectures were regularly placed on their website. In August some members attended the summer school of the

German TS (Hartmann group). They also received the tri-annual magazine, *Adyar*, from the German Section of the TS. In March 2021, the annual meeting was held and the executive committee was elected. The incumbent Organizing Secretary, Mr Albert Schichl, was re-elected.

The National President of the **English**

## Presidential Address

Section, Mrs Jenny Baker, reports that the work of the Section and the TS in **Wales** was conducted online due to Covid-19-related restrictions. The Sunday evening lectures dealt with theosophical and related subjects, including “Theosophy and Archetypes”, “A Secret History of Consciousness”, “Living Theosophy”, and “Journey of Self-transformation”, by home-grown as well as international speakers. Talks and study groups were online until recently, when physical meetings were permitted, to the relief of members who missed the warmth of personal contact. All classical theosophical books were studied as well as the Kabbalah. The White Lotus Group for unattached members ran a series of talks during the year. There has been an increase of interest in the Section’s website, and YouTube and Facebook pages. Two online Diplomas in Theosophical Studies continue with global participants. A higher diploma is planned for next year. Lodge and Centre officers met online, three times a year. A monthly newsletter was also sent out. A biannual magazine, *Esoterica*, went to all members and public bodies and institutes.

A recent survey of the members indicated that most came to the Society via family or friends, and they valued the Society for the theosophical teachings, its freedom of thought, and being able to be with like-minded people. Their greatest interests were the spiritual quest, Theosophy, and esoteric philosophy. The majority preferred physical meetings to virtual ones.

In **Belgium** some groups restarted meetings online whereas some had none till September, when physical meetings could start again. The online meetings were helpful for participants from other countries speaking Dutch and French. A new website, <ts-belgium.be>, was launched in August, and a Dutch translation of *The Miracle of Birth* by Geoffrey Hodson was published. The annual general meeting was held online in June. The stained glass project continues. The loss of three long-standing members contributed significantly to the fall in membership.

The **Finnish** Section has 19 Lodges and a study centre. In September the annual general meeting was held peacefully in Helsinki after a delay due to the pandemic. The main event of the year was the Summer School in July in Kreivilä, with the theme “Yama and Niyama the Ethical Basis of the Spiritual Path”. Another event in Kreivilä was a course on “Music the Great Medicine of Humankind”. In **Estonia** the local lodges arranged the Estonian Summer School with the theme “Daily Life within a Changing World”. They also had a winter seminar in Tartu in January and an autumn study camp in Aegvidu in August. Other activities continued mostly online: regular Lodge studies, public lectures, seminars, and courses around the country. *The Evolution of the Higher Consciousness* by Pablo Sender was translated into Finnish and 300 copies were published.

Activities in the **French** Section were diversified and enlarged. All activities

## Presidential Address

took place online. Monthly public lectures by French-speaking speakers from Europe and further were much appreciated. Bi-monthly courses and meditation sessions attracted a core of interested participants. A new online study group on the Mahatma Letters was created together with the Belgian Section. Another one, dedicated especially to new members, on fundamental theosophical ideas, was launched in autumn 2021 with the idea of eventually developing it into an online Lodge. The national convention took place in July. The Section's general online presence has grown, including Facebook, YouTube, and weekly e-newsletters. This has allowed more audience from several French-speaking countries to take part in the programmes and to attract new members. Although the bookshop was closed, clients were able to order books online, by phone, or by post. The library, also closed, yet received occasional visits from readers. The monthly magazine, *Le Lotus Bleu*, was published both in electronic and hard-copy form.

The **German** Section has seven Lodges and three study centres. The Northern and Southern German Autumn Meetings in 2020 were allowed to take place despite Covid-19, and members were happy to meet again. However the Spring Meeting had to be cancelled again. The main event was the Summer School in July, and the General Assembly with elections. Summer School was online, modeled on the international convention, and was good training for the 2021 online Convention in December. The book,

*The Silent Way*, by Wellesley Tudor Pole, was gifted to members for home studies. The magazine, *Adyar*, continues to be published thrice yearly.

There are eight Lodges and one study centre in the **Greek** Section. Since November 2020 joint Lodge meetings and lectures were conducted online. A dozen meetings took place with an average attendance of 30 members. A study group on *The Secret Doctrine* also had online meetings. Foundation Day, White Lotus Day, and Adyar Day were also celebrated online. The Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater book, *Talks on the Path of Occultism*, vol. II (commentary on *Light on the Path*) was translated and published in Greek, and vol. III (commentary on *The Voice of the Silence*) is being proof-read. The magazine, *ILISOS*, was published every three months.

Due to the passing away of János Szabari, the former Presidential Representative of the TS in **Hungary**, an extraordinary general assembly meeting was held to elect his successor. A regular meeting was conducted in the autumn. The one Lodge has about 2/3 of the 29 members and the rest are unattached. A member has started promoting Theosophy in neighboring Slovakia. All 14 public lectures were given online. White Lotus Day was also celebrated this way. A YouTube channel, "The Hidden Side of Our World", was maintained with over 100 videos and 2,000 registered viewers. Addition of more videos is in progress. Publicity for programs and events is done through Facebook. The translation of

## Presidential Address

*At the Feet of the Master* was published and John Sell's *Practical Spirituality* is planned to be published next year. Two new books published were H. P. Blavatsky's *The Key to Theosophy* and Vic Hao Chin's *The Process of Self-Transformation*. A total of 37 theosophical books are available in Hungarian. A new website has been set up with 170 downloadable translations of theosophical literature.

The Summer School in **Iceland** could not be held this year again and only a limited number of public meetings, Friday lectures, and Saturday meditation meetings could be held. The attendance was restricted to 20 people. The annual theosophical journal, *Gangleri*, is published with 160 pages and 350 subscribers and with the front cover having a Nicolas Roerich painting. The bookshop and library with over 5,000 titles are open just before the Friday lectures. The website <[www.lifspekifelagid.is](http://www.lifspekifelagid.is)> contains all information on the Section, its history, activities, events, lectures, and articles by various authors, and so on. There are now nine active Lodges. This year the Section is 100 years old and the celebrations are planned for next year after renovating the headquarters. The annual general meeting was held in December.

Given Covid-19-related restrictions, no physical meetings took place during the year in the TS in **Ireland**. All members were provided with online study notes, messages, and uplifting quotations. Information received, especially regarding online meetings, from Adyar, the

European School of Theosophy, TS in the Philippines, Krotona Institute School of Theosophy, and TS in Russia were passed on to members to link into their online meetings. During lockdown new members joined via information from their website: <[theosophyireland.com](http://theosophyireland.com)>. Members have experienced a closeness and kinship with many countries worldwide due to the shift to online mode.

**Italy** still has the largest membership in the European region, with 794 members in 26 Lodges and 16 study centres. General Secretary Antonio Girardi reports that activities were still heavily conditioned by Covid-19 regulations. Nonetheless, online communication made it possible not only to get the regular work done but also to develop new initiatives and contacts due to the growing interest in the Society's activities. The website attracted over 6,000 visits and over 4,000 people received a monthly newsletter. The web presence includes information on Facebook, Instagram, and a YouTube channel that livestreams and hosts recordings of events. The books published in Italian during the year were *Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy* (Ianthe Hoskins), *The Secret Doctrine Summary* (H. P. Blavatsky), *Esoteric Buddhism* (A. P. Sinnett), *Through the Gates of Gold* (Mabel Collins), and *At the Feet of the Master* by J. Krishnamurti. The 106th National Congress planned for June was held online in December on the theme, "Theosophy and Education: from Maria Montessori to the Present". The Ascona Theosophical Seminary,



## Presidential Address

a collaboration between the European Federation and the Swiss Section was held online in March. White Lotus Day was celebrated online with the Ukrainian Section. The 107th National Congress took place in September 2021, on “Theosophy and the Initiatory Journey: A Path to Freedom”, with 80 people present in person, and also via live broadcast. The “Introductory Course on Theosophy and the TS” had great appeal and three sessions were organized for 90 participants. The new online initiative, “Wednesdays with the TS”, offers an interview lasting 1.5 hours, followed by a Q&A session. About 15 interviews were organized with around 100 people, including the international President of the TS, Tim Boyd.

The TS in **Russia** has held 52 online meetings over the past year, 9 of them were attended by international TS speakers. A weekly meditation course began its work in September 2020. The National Congress was held along with Brazilian theosophists. It was the first and a very successful experience of cooperation in such a big event. The annual All-Russian Conference was held in the spring of 2021. During this year, 9 round tables on theosophical topics were held with offline and online participants. The translated Russian version of *The Theosophist* continues. Every Sunday there is a webinar on *The Secret Doctrine* by H. P. Blavatsky. Nine theosophical books have been published in Russian. For the first time The School of Wisdom was held with Greek theosophists. The summer meeting "The Path of Discipleship" was

organized with the help of Ukrainian and Indian theosophists and with inter-national TS speakers from India. The Siberian Theosophical Center in Maka-revka gathers theosophists for its semi-nars twice a year. Social networks are developing. There are weekly online meetings on organizational subjects, opened for all TS members in Russia.

The year presented many challenges both for the TS in **Scotland**, with its three Lodges and one study centre, and for humanity as a whole, due to the ravages of Covid-19, which transcended all the boundaries erected by humanity: political, national, economic, or in the form of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour. They feel it is now time for theosophists, and humanity as a whole, to respond to the Aquarian exhortation of realizing human interconnectedness as an aspect of the One Life and to conduct all affairs accordingly. The physical limitations were overcome by holding meetings online, which, to a certain extent, served to perpetuate the sense of community and pursuit of the Society’s objectives. Even so, there is no substitute for the psychic energy, social cohesion, and spiritual inspiration generated by physical meetings. The members are all greatly looking forward to the resumption of the normal Lodge activities.

The quarterly magazine of the **Swedish** Section, *Tidlösvisdom (Timeless Wisdom)*, was distributed freely to all members. Most of the planned activities had to be cancelled due to Covid-19. Two groups met online to study H. P. Blavatsky’s *The*

## Presidential Address

*Secret Doctrine* and Wallace Slater's *Raja Yoga*. There were also three online lectures on the Mahatma Letters, Alice Bailey, and "How Real Is Reality?" The usual mini-schools in autumn and spring and the summer school held jointly with the Finnish Section had to be cancelled. Foundation Day on 17 November, and White Lotus Day on 8 May were also celebrated online. Apart from a short break, the bookshop was kept open two days a week. All the library books were catalogued. The TOS group continued its support to "Mango Tree", a school project in Goa, India, for children living in the slums.

In the TS in **Switzerland**, group meetings continued regularly, some weekly and some monthly. Activities were not affected and no member felt isolated during the Covid-19 related lockdown period due to the usage of online meeting tools in all the three languages. The European seminar was held online and the lectures were available on the Italian Youtube channel in collaboration with the European Federation and Italy. The activity in the Italian part of Switzerland is now stable and consolidated, the German one is expanding, and the request of some participants to create a group for Lausanne/Geneva bodes well. Face-to-face meetings have resumed in some groups and weekly headquarters meetings are also expected soon.

The **Africa, East and Central** Section comprises **Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia**. Some Lodges were unable to have any meetings while some had

reduced attendance. Online talks organized by various groups of the TS world were useful for interested members to continue their studies and keep in touch with TS activities. Due to the time difference, talks from the Philippines and India were preferred. But, the Internet being very expensive, many members could not join these sessions due to lack of infrastructure. Online talks from around the world are most likely to attract young members to Theosophy, and hope-fully, development of IT technology will pick up soon in Africa. Office-bearers were elected for the next three years. The introduction of group discussions on pre-announced topics has had a good response, especially from young members.

In the **Indo-Pacific** region, the new President of the **Australian** Section, Stephen McDonald, who succeeded Linda Oliveira after her many years of devoted service, was inaugurated in January 2021. Many Lodges and groups continued with innovative, online methods to communicate and do the work of the TS, such as e-bulletins to augment the regular paper newsletters and programmes, live online lectures and study groups, and website resources for home study. After many years at their old home, the Melbourne Lodge of the TS moved to a new building, which includes a bookshop, comprehensive library, and spacious meeting rooms. An opening ceremony was held on White Lotus Day, attended by the National Secretary, the National President, and a full house of members and friends.

In **Bangladesh** there is one Lodge

## Presidential Address

having weekly study circle meetings of different groups based on categories such as Egyptology, Theosophy and Rosicrucianism. Besides the studies and discussions, service activities are done by the Lodge such as distribution of rice and blankets for the poor. Moreover, two books have been published, one on Theosophy and the other on Rosicrucianism. The members practise social work everyday in their jobs.

The **Indian** Section, with the largest membership in the international Society, has 9,039 members (443 of them life members) in 480 Lodges and 13 study centres. A positive result of Covid-19 was the evolution of online lectures resulting in both an increase in audience attendance as well as the discovery of new speakers, many of them young theosophists. The new college building was completed with an additional capacity of 300 students, and there are plans to expand the scope of courses offered to the management and education streams. The Besant Education Fellowship managed two schools in the Section's headquarters campus. An in-person meeting marked the celebration of Dr Annie Besant's birth anniversary, whereas Foundation, Adyar, and White Lotus Days were celebrated in online meetings. After giving the opportunity for life members to confirm their presence for continued membership, 745 out of 1,188 were dropped due to lack of response. This contributed significantly to the overall membership drop of about 14% from the previous year.

The 129th National Convention was

conducted online in December on the theme, "Awareness Transforms Life", chaired by Vic Hao Chin, Jr, former General Secretary of the TS in the Philippines, and a master of the subject. The first Public Lecture in memory of Radha Burnier, the 7th international President of the TS, was held on 30 October, with the keynote address, "Radhaji: Glimpses of Her Life and Influence", attended by 90 global participants. The 97th Easter Conference (originally called South Indian Conference) was held online in April with 250 registrants (68 from outside India), on "Theosophy and J. Krishnamurti". The consensus was that, far from being contradictory, Krishnamurti's teachings were an affirmation of Theosophy. Of the 16 Federations, seven held online annual conferences and three in person. One was the Telugu Federation's centenary celebrations planned for March 2020, which had to be deferred and was held one year later. There were 100 delegates and 150 members of the public participating.

The annual study camp was conducted online, directed by Ven. Olande Thero, on "Mindfulness, the Heart of Buddhist Meditation", with 100 participants. No study camps could be organized at the popular Himalayan study centre at Bhowali. Over 80 study classes were held online on *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* and other theosophical books. Numerous special lectures, seminars/workshops, and other programmes were conducted in English and Hindi, mostly by over 15 national lecturers. Overall, propagation of Theosophy was the highest in de-

## Presidential Address

ades due to the extensive use of online media. The TOS continued its activities like women's empowerment, subsistence and treatment support for Covid-19-affected economically disadvantaged families, cyclone relief, and so on.

There are 239 members in 9 Lodges in the **Indonesian** Section. The General Secretary, Mr Widyatmoko Nekara, reported that there were weekly regular studies of Patanjali's *Yogasutras* and J. Krishnamurti's *At the Feet of the Master* for members only, and periodical independent studies led by guest speakers on various topics. Yoga and meditation sessions were also conducted on a weekly basis, led by a member. White Lotus Day was celebrated within the Section on 9 May and jointly with the Indo-Pacific Sections on 8 May, the latter organized by the TS in the Philippines. There was also an online year-end casual meetup for New Year 2021.

The **New Zealand** Section comprises 12 branches and 4 study centres. The keynote event during the year was the national annual convention held in January on "Awakening Compassion, Deepening the Connection". The following regular events were also held during the year: The School of Theosophy on "The Spiritual Path in Daily Life: Exploring *The Mahatma Letters*"; and two Immersion Weekends in October 20 and July 21, on "Exploring Pathways of Unfolding Awareness" and "Reincarnation Explored", which surveyed the principal keynotes underlying the Ancient Wisdom and encouraged deepening awareness and insight for par-

ticipants. One-day seminars were conducted at various branches/study centres focusing on core foundations of Theosophy. A free, top-rated, online course, made up of six short videos exploring theosophical perspectives on the Divine Wisdom, was made available on <udemy.com>, and has over 600 subscribers. Two regional events sponsored by the Section were held giving an opportunity for branches to get together to take stock and share.

The work of the TS in **Pakistan** is going on well in Karachi city. The TOS is working in full swing. They maintain the nurses' training supported by the UN. The Jamshed Memorial School functions in the TS building in the mornings, with classes from Montessori up to Class 5, with about 600 students. The Minwalla Montessori Institute for training underprivileged teachers functions in the School in the afternoons. The 150th birth anniversary of Dr Maria Montessori was celebrated. Schools with grants from the TS in New Zealand, Australia, and other donors are functioning well. Teachers impart Montessori Training to the underprivileged at home. Jamshed Memorial Library is open for children and the general public. Members' meetings are held online. Two senior members passed to eternal light.

The **Philippine** Section joint Lodge meetings continued every week, including speakers and participants from other countries, providing interaction among participants who normally would not and could not have an in-person meeting. The online template was also a model for other

## Presidential Address

Sections and Lodges to emulate. Guided Meditation was facilitated by Vic Hao Chin every first Sunday of the month. Midweek Meditation sessions were conducted every Wednesday, targeting beginners and the public. Sessions were rotated among member volunteers, being also a training ground for facilitating meditation for Lodges. From November to February two online Self-Transformation seminars were conducted. An online Introductory Course on Theosophy was held every Sunday from February to April. A 5-session “Studying the Bible from an Independent Viewpoint” was facilitated by Vic Hao Chin from June to July. An intermediate course on “The Mahatmas, The Path of Discipleship, and Initiation” was facilitated by Rosel Doval Santos. The National Convention was held online in November on, “The Relevance of Applied Theosophy in Our World Today”. The Visayas-Mindanao Federation regional convention was held on August on: “Reason, Intuition, Awareness: Pathways to Right Action”. An year-end joint Lodge gathering in December became a 3.5-hour Christmas extravaganza with worldwide participants. FreeSpace Youth group (<facebook.com/freespacemanila>) had regular monthly online talks covering popular subjects among the young. The *Theosophical Digest*, *The Philippine Theosophist* newsletter, and *Peace Ideas* continued to be published. Correspondence courses continued.

The national headquarters of the TS in **America**, founded in 1886, has a 3,371 membership. Although the main

building was closed to the public, the outreach has expanded during the year, owing to the hard work of the staff at the national headquarters and the increased online presence of seekers attending programs, viewing YouTube videos, and visiting <theosophy.wiki>. The philanthropy department formed in September 2020 was successful in garnering support beyond expectations.

Though the H. S. Olcott Memorial Library and the archives department remained closed to the public, they continued to provide services via phone, email, and post to researchers, members, and the general public. The online archive collection has doubled, especially audio recordings. Digitization of papers, microfilm, and slides continued. Theosophy Wiki website had over a quarter million users from over 200 countries. The IS/IT department enabled staff to work from home with minimal disruption. They also used the opportunity to research / fix / upgrade the website, security system, and so on. The audiovisual department produced over a hundred new video titles, many of them of meditation programs, for distribution through YouTube, Facebook, the Library, and the TSA and Quest Books websites. The Bookshop had a challenging year due to the pandemic closures, but it enabled the redesign of the interior for better visitor access, and some catch-up work.

Most local groups and national speakers shifted to online mode for meetings and presentations, and it is highly likely that it will remain popular even after in-

## Presidential Address

person meetings are allowed. The prison program continues to draw new mentors and prisoners. The TPH in Wheaton has been creating audiobooks to augment the existing print, Internet, and video content. The public programs department streamed and later made available the recordings of 36 weekly lectures and 38 online workshops attended by over 1,600 viewers via YouTube. Also 23 online classes of four to six weeks duration were offered, with over 1,000 people participating. The Summer Convention was held online. The marketing department has increased Facebook users by over 60%, and YouTube subscription has crossed the 100,000 mark.

*Quest* has adopted full-color format starting with the summer 2021 issue, enhancing the magazine's visual beauty. The main fundraising ad has been given a prominent position in it. Also a new *Quest* Facebook page has been added with themes of sacred art, science, spirituality, and the world's esoteric traditions. The buildings are expected to be open to all by fall 2021, and personal retreats can be arranged at the national headquarters.

Although 20 members resigned from the **Argentinian** Section, 15 new members have joined. Now the Section has almost exclusively online activities due to Covid-19 restrictions. All 17 Lodges and 7 study groups continued with their meetings online. Public lectures and meditation sessions for the general public were also done online with an average attendance of about 100 people. The online introductory course continued, and

of the 150 people who started, 32 qualified for the certificate. The advanced course that started in August continues with 130 participants. Three titles were edited in Spanish during the year: *Esoteric Instructions* by Blavatsky, *Reflections on the Ageless Wisdom* by Joy Mills, and *Theosophical Talks* by Juan Viñas. The Section also worked with the Inter-American Theosophical Federation to produce a weekly program of lectures in Spanish. It is hoped that physical meetings will start soon.

A new Presidential Representative for **Bolivia**, Ms Juana L. Maldonado, was appointed in July. Earlier, the General Assembly was held in October. Various online lectures and talks were delivered organized by the Section. All five Branches and two study centres had online meetings. A new quarterly magazine was launched in September. TOS has been given a new impetus. It supported two welfare centres: a home for low-income mothers and their children, and a temporary shelter for visitors who come from rural areas for medical treatment.

The TS in **Brazil**, with 32 Lodges and 24 study groups, celebrated its centenary in November with a week of lectures, cultural events, photography exhibition, and a theosophical presentation. A commemorative book, *Theosophy, the Truth of All Ages: 100 Years of the TS in Brazil*, was launched. The 40th summer school was held online with over 210 participants at the end of January on "Spiritual Wisdom for Life Transformation". The International Theosophical School and Winter

## Presidential Address

Seminar was held online on “Science and Spirituality”, with 338 participants, including from other countries. Also two virtual national programs were launched, “Online Groups of Theosophical Studies” and “Virtual Study Groups with Books”, continuing activities unhindered. The Library has a new system and videos were made available on a TV channel and a website <[sociedadeteosofica.org.br](http://sociedadeteosofica.org.br)>. A program that includes lectures for managing depression and preventing suicides is in place in partnership with the University of Brasilia. TPH published 6 books during the year. *Sophia* magazine entered its 17th year, and 4,000 copies are distributed via newsstands.

At present the TS in **Central America** is in the form of two Lodges and a study center with a total of 11 active members, though they are undergoing major financial problems. Activities aimed at the diffusion of Theosophy include a directed course on *The Secret Doctrine*. Due to the pandemic, the Lodges did not have the opportunity to meet for study sessions. They participated in the 2021 triennial congress of the Inter-American Theosophical Federation and in the election of the new president and executive committee. Both Lodges have begun to use video conferencing with the purpose of spreading theosophical knowledge.

The **Cuban** Section, founded in 1905, has a membership of 576. The Annual Convention was not celebrated, due to Covid-19 prohibitions for meetings during the year. Regular meetings and activities will begin in November 2021. Due

to reasons concerning the economic regime, Branches, Lodges and individual members, have been unable to have virtual meetings; so the Section did not have the usual meetings and studies. A couple of chat groups devoted to theosophical studies and information via Facebook continued. The digital magazine, *Revista Teosófica Cubana*, continued as usual.

Two Lodges and a study group make up the Presidential Agency in the **Dominican Republic** under the guidance of Presidential Representative, Mrs Magaly Gracia de Polanco. Multiple batches of the “Introductory Course in Theosophy” were conducted. The “Intermediate Course”, Part 1, was also held, and Part 2 is in progress. The study of HPB’s *Isis Unveiled* and J. Krishnamurti’s *At the Feet of the Master* was completed and HPB’s *The Key to Theosophy* is in progress during the weekly sessions. In-person meetings are planned from October 2021. There were also conferences on “The Fathers of Humanity” in April and “An Approach to Consciousness According to Science and Theosophy” in July.

The two Lodges in **Peru** together had seventeen online public talks during the year. They also offered two courses online: “Basics of Esoteric Philosophy” during February to April and “Basic Course of Theosophy” in March. Lodge meetings were also held online throughout the year. There is a meditation group which held eight meetings during the year. In addition, frequent attenders of public meetings (called sympathizers)

## Presidential Address

were invited for separate meetings for more interaction and eventually 70% of them became new members. Foundation Day, Adyar Day, and White Lotus Day were celebrated as usual. Mrs de Polanco is also Presidential Representative for the TS in **Puerto Rico**. She reports that some of the three Lodges have resumed physical meetings while the online mode is still being used. In October, the Agency participated in the seminar, "Seek Your Refuge Only in the Eternal", as part of the Magna School of Theosophy's work for the Spanish-speaking community in the Americas. Regular Lodge work has been going on and recent study topics include *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* and I. K. Taimni's *Self-Culture*. The TS building is under repair and the library is being organized.

The **international Vice-President**, Mrs Deepa Padhi, was invited to chair the 129th Indian Section Convention in December. The Virtual Centre for Theosophical Studies had organized a TOS symposium in February where she was a panellist. She was invited in April by the Philippine Section, in their joint Lodge meeting on "Women's Empowerment", to speak on "Helping Women Discover Their Wings". The 56th annual conference of the Utkal Theosophical Federation in September on "Humanity and Beyond" had her as the chief guest. She also gave a talk on 30 October in the first Radha Burnier memorial public lecture, organized by the Indian Section, on "Radha Burnier and Practical Theosophy".

At the **International Headquarters**

of the TS in Adyar, Chennai, India, the Administrator of the **Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA)**, Mrs Sonal Murali, reports that the second academic year continued online due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, and started its third year in June with 130 students from Nursery to Grade 4. The anniversary was celebrated online with President Tim Boyd as the chief guest. At the crux of the ATA student/teacher interaction is transformative learning. A typical day begins with "circle time" when children bring to the table what they would like to share and build on via organic conversations. Arts and crafts in many forms continue to be explored, whether Form Drawing or Mandala Art. During the year, a successful link with Nature and its wonders was achieved for children from home through Nature Journaling. Language acquisition in Tamil and Hindi grew steadily using games, stories, and music. Theatre classes instil skills like good communication, coordination, and group work.

A Science Hub was launched for students to actively engage in experimenting, designing, and querying. This is not to omit school events like creating music, Science Day, and Annual Day with plays and songs. Teachers had regular, skill and knowledge upgradation programmes in areas like systems thinking, stages of development, multiple kinds of intelligences, non-violent communication, and contemplation of the core question: "What is education for?"

The Officer-in-Charge of the Surendra Narayan **Archives**, Ms Jaishree Kannan,



## Presidential Address

reports that no researchers could visit the Archives during the pandemic, but there were fifteen research scholars using its resources online. Their requirements were catered to by scanning or copying the materials available. The 17th of February 2022 will mark the beginning of the centennial year of the Archives, and they are gearing up for this important landmark by having a year-long programme starting with the International Convention 2021.

In the Adyar **Museum**, Dr Bernd Jesse continued his valuable voluntary work. The Venkatachalam Collection consists of over 100 early 20th-century paintings and Hindu bronzes, in various states of preservation. Cleaning and identification of these artifacts is in progress. Photographing these items has consumed more time than previously thought, so the immediate focus is on the more prominent pieces. This includes several other items in the display room as well.

The **Theosophical Publishing House** reports that during the year, book sales were Rs. 1.8 million with royalties accounting for Rs. 0.8 million. This was lower than earlier years due to the Covid-19 disruption and also to some options for e-books rather than the printed version. Still, 44 book titles, many of which were out of stock, were reprinted; 22 book titles were scanned and converted to the soft-copy format. Subscribers to *The Theosophist*, a monthly, were 864, of which 612 were Indian. The quarterly *Adyar Newsletter (ANL)* had 372 subscribers (256 in India). Apart from the periodi-

cal, **Vasanta Press** continued to print titles ordered by TPH and Adyar Library. They also printed 9 book titles, 11 issues of *The Theosophist*, and 4 issues of *ANL*.

The **Theosophical Order of Service (TOS)** is present in 36 of the 59 countries where the TS is active and has several outreach avenues, per Ms Nancy Secrest, TOS Secretary. The *TOS: in-touch.on-line* e-newsletter is published quarterly. The website is <international.theoservice.org> and the Facebook link is <facebook.com/tosinternational>. Covid-19 created restrictions, but ironically allowed many more people to interact via online talks accessible worldwide. Online activities were held from India and the Philippines. Due to retirement, new Directors were elected in Argentina, Mexico, and Bolivia. A large donation was received from TOS England for Covid-19 relief in India, used to distribute food and household articles in several cities. Face masks, hand sanitizers, and oxygen tanks were some items distributed for Covid relief. A few Adyar employees were also helped with medical costs or replacement of loss of spousal income due to the lockdowns. Many TOS groups around the world helped those who needed food, medical, education and other assistance. Regular projects were mostly maintained. Assistance with various women's issues, educational and scholarship efforts, and youth involvement remained central issues for many groups, along with animal welfare, and humanitarian assistance. Also, almost all countries have healing groups.

TIM BOYD

# Purification and the Higher Spiritual Path

WILLIAM WILSON QUINN

## Introduction

It is of no use either to deny or defend the fact that the Adepts and other high initiates of the ancient Order to which Morya (M.), Koot Hoomi (KH), and H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) belong are reclusive and, accordingly, are reticent to interact with the transient world and its inhabitants. This is because their *self-described* reclusivity and reticence are undeniable and, moreover, are in no need of being defended. In line with these preferences, the Adept KH also declared that the “motto” of his Order is “To dare, to will, to act, and remain silent.”<sup>1</sup> It is pursuant to these aggregated facts of reclusivity, reticence, and silence that HPB says of the initiates of this Order that “No true adept will on any consideration whatever reveal himself as one to the profane.”<sup>2</sup>

While this Order has its “adamantine” laws and rules, which the Adepts repeatedly emphasize in their writings, reclusivity and reticence are not *de jure* requirements among these rules. Rather, they are *de facto* necessities based on certain basic principles of “sacred science”, which are neither judgmental nor biased. These

principles often manifest as natural phenomena, such as sympathetic vibration. Moreover, we know through their writings that, structurally, this ancient and venerable Order is hierarchical, and that the hierarchy of its initiate-members is based on criteria such as seniority, mastery of will force, and degrees of initiation attained, among others. We also learn from their writings that the higher the initiate in this order, the greater the reclusivity and reticence he or she may need to adopt for interactions with the transient world. As KH tells us, “. . . the greater the powers of the Adept, the less he is in sympathy with the natures of the profane who often come to him saturated with the emanations of the outside world, those animal emanations of the selfish, brutal crowd that we so dread — the longer he was separated from that world . . . the purer he has himself become . . .”<sup>3</sup>

But though the Adepts are reluctant to enter the world of the “brutal crowd”, they often allow their advanced *chelas* to “work in the world” on their behalf, to further their mission of the enlightenment of humanity. In speaking about leaving

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## Purification and the Higher Spiritual Path

their *chela*-s to fight their own battles, KH wrote that Adepts may “. . . have to do so occasionally with higher and *initiated chela*-s such as HPB, once they are allowed to work in the world, that all of us more or less avoid.”<sup>4</sup>

### The Labors of the Gurus

Such statements of “avoidance” — of reclusivity and reticence — appear in multiple places in the writings of these Adepts, and no attempts to hide or deny these self-described and clearly admitted preferences were ever made by them. “*Our ways are not your ways,*” wrote KH to his *chela* Laura Holloway. “We rarely show any outward signs by which to be recognized or sensed.”<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere he wrote to A. O. Hume: “Be it as it may, we are content to live as we do — unknown and undisturbed by a civilization which rests so exclusively upon intellect [*manas*].”<sup>6</sup>

Yet these discretionary preferences and behaviors of reclusivity and reticence by the Adepts and high initiates are neither arbitrary nor capricious. As was mentioned above, there are sound metaphysical or sacred-science reasons for them based on the Adepts’ extraordinary levels of physical and psychic purification, brought about by advanced levels of spiritual development. In addition to sympathetic vibration and the law of correspondence, these sacred-scientific reasons also have to do with: (1) the efficiency of the expenditure of their spiritual energy; (2) working within an unpolluted psychic environment that is conducive to producing the very best

results; and (3) avoiding the need to constantly guard or protect themselves in the conduct of this work.

As Morya forcefully stated, “Please realize the fact that so long as men doubt [our existence] there will be curiosity and enquiry . . . but let our secret be once thoroughly vulgarized, and not only will skeptical society derive no great good, but our privacy would be constantly endangered and have to be continually guarded at an unreasonable cost of power.”<sup>7</sup> One need only conjure a mental image of today’s harassing “paparazzi” to acknowledge the truth of this assertion.

Stated succinctly, among the foremost reasons for the reclusiveness, reticence, and silence of the Adepts and high initiates of the Order is to ensure the efficiency and efficacy of results of the work they do for humanity, primarily through their spiritual powers. None of this work can be done efficiently while expending “an unreasonable cost of power” to fend off avaricious and selfish curiosity, as Morya declared. And this strict conservation of spiritual energy is more than a consensus view of an obvious truth: it is a rule of their Order, stated in these terms and emphasis by KH, who wrote of “. . . the RULE that forbids our using one minim of power until every ordinary means has been tried and failed . . .”<sup>8</sup>

Inextricably related to the need for the highest efficiency and efficacy of their labors achievable in their pristine isolated environments, like the flip side of the same coin, is the added difficulty for highly purified Adepts to work in the mire

## Purification and the Higher Spiritual Path

and psychic pollution of the transient world they prefer to avoid. It is not that they are *unable* to do this, but more that they are *unwilling*, for cogent and justifiable reasons. One need only imagine a champion swimmer who swims quickly across a mountain lake of the purest water when, upon reentering the lake to swim back, he finds its contents have mysteriously turned into thick sugarcane molasses. How quick or efficient by comparison would be his return swim in those conditions, and how much greater an expenditure of energy? This aquatic physical metaphor has a metaphysical correspondence, being the purified Adept laboring in the toxic psychic miasma of the transient world as described in what follows by HPB, who minces no words:

Sometimes, under very favourable conditions they [Adepts] may approach an individual devoted to occult research, but this happens rarely; for even he, pure though he be, is wallowing in the world's corrupt *ākāśa* or magnetic aura and contaminated by it. To his inner self it is as stifling and deadly as the heavy vapor of carbonic oxide to his physical lungs. And, remember, it is by the inner, not the outer, self that we come into relations with Adepts and their advanced *Chela*-s. One would not expect to hold improving conversation with a besotted inebriate, lying in a state of swine-like stupefaction after a debauch; yet it is quite as impracticable for the spiritualized Mahatma to exchange thoughts with a man of society, living daily in a state of *psychic intoxication* among the magnetic fumes of its carnality, materialism, and spiritual atrophy.<sup>9</sup>

If this description by HPB is insufficient to convince anyone who would question it, any such doubts should be assuaged by a first-hand account of an Adept. KH retired from the outer world for several months in 1881–82 to take another advanced initiation (referred to by Morya as entering *Tong-pa-ngi*, a Tibetan term for “void”) in a remote location in the Himalayas. After returning to his former labors around March of 1882 in a highly purified state, he found the readjustment painful. He wrote that “Since my return I found it *impossible* for me to breathe — even in the atmosphere of the *Headquarters*! M. had to interfere, and to force the whole household to give up meat; and they had, all of them, to be purified and thoroughly cleansed with various disinfecting drugs before I could even help myself to my letters.”<sup>10</sup> Given the reclusivity, reticence, and silence they usually observe, and the distance they prefer to keep from psychic pollution, all in order to do their work with maximum efficiency and efficacy, Adepts should not be made to suffer the strain of sacrificing these preferences in order to train *chela*-s — yet at times they do. When that occurs, what then do *chela*-s owe in return?

### The Duty of *Chela*-s

If the first duty of a probationer or newly accepted *chela* ascending the higher spiritual path could be reduced to a single word, that word might well be “purification”. This is because a sort of chasm exists between the purified and spiritualized environment within which

## Purification and the Higher Spiritual Path

the Adepts live and work, and the correspondingly lower environment of the transient world in which the probationer or newly accepted *chela* typically lives, even if within an ashram or monastery.

Putting aside momentarily the delicate process of synchronizing the personal electromagnetic “frequencies” between *guru* and *chela*, it should not be for the Adept to have to adapt to the lower environment or world of the *chela*; it should be for the probationer or newly accepted *chela* to strive in adapting to the higher spiritualized environment of the Adept and other high initiates. And this is done by a conscious, unremitting and resolute process of *purification* leading to a refinement of his or her electromagnetic energies. KH stated simply that “. . . we invariably welcome the new comer; only, instead of going over to him he has to come to us.”<sup>11</sup> “To come to us” is another way of saying that the *chela*-s must become fit, or qualified, for entry into that higher psychic environment by attuning their spiritual magnetic emanations to those of the Adepts and their world. Especially in these ominous times, this is not an easy task.

While this process of spiritual purification can be described as a task, it is more than that. It is a law, or duty, inherent in the time-honored tradition of the *guru-chela* relationship at this level of higher spiritual development. HPB cites the “Laws” of Upasana, or *chela*-ship: “From Book IV of *Kiu-ti*, chapter on ‘the Laws of Upasana’, we learn that the qualifications expected in a *chela* were: (1) Perfect physical health; (2) Absolute mental and physical purity . . .”<sup>12</sup> On

the higher spiritual path this process of “absolute” purity, or purification, has two discrete modes: that which should be acquired and integrated by the wayfarer, and that which should be avoided.

As to the first of these modes, KH listed basic practices that have been undertaken by spiritual aspirants since time immemorial. “Fasting, meditation, chastity of thought, word, and deed; silence for certain periods of time to enable Nature herself to speak to him who comes to her for information; government of the animal passions and impulses; utter unselfishness of intention, the use of certain incense and fumigations for physiological purposes . . .”<sup>13</sup> More can certainly be added to this list of largely physical purification practices, such as following a plant-based diet, daily exercise, proper hygiene, and a regimen of *hatha yoga* including both normal *āsana*-s and the cleansing practices known as *shatkarma*-s, which consist of six whole-body techniques. For guidance in undertaking a corresponding regimen of absolute mental purification, the most accessible for the wayfarer are the rules set forth in the book, *Light on the Path*.

As to the second of these modes, or that which should be avoided, the list is even longer, especially for those living in the West. For the wayfarer on the higher spiritual path, the process of physical purification includes avoidance of the basic somatic distractions, such as poor diet and/or habitual overeating, sexual misconduct if not sexual relations altogether, and the use of intoxicants like alcohol and drugs — such as opiates —

## Purification and the Higher Spiritual Path

that constrict or contract the consciousness. One might also add here the avoidance of *all* related addictions or addictive behaviors that affect the body.

By contrast, avoiding the psychic impediments to absolute mental purity is generally more difficult for the wayfarer than avoiding profligate physical behaviors. These impediments include, in the words of KH, “. . . furies called Doubt, Skepticism, Scorn, Ridicule, Envy, and finally Temptation — especially the latter . . .”<sup>14</sup> One could add to this list the psychic impurities of avarice, dishonesty, egotism, mendacity, and the lust for power, recognition, or fame, all of which are wholly incompatible with ascending the higher spiritual path, to say nothing of *chela*-ship. These are the types of moral or mental human foibles that not only invariably lead one to physical activities that ought to be avoided, but they invade the mind and often haunt one’s meditation as inner monologues or dialogues with others, and as vitiating daydreams.

These two modes of purification — what to acquire and what to avoid — and whatever other means may be employed to effect purification, must ordinarily be applied during the wayfarers’ period of probation before accepted *chela*-ship. Probation is normally a period of seven years, and throughout this time the probationers must face the challenges of absolute purification on their own, since as KH notes, “. . . until he has passed that period, we leave him to fight out his battles as best he may . . .”<sup>15</sup>

The reason for this degree of reticence once again reaches back to the issue of a higher spiritualized environment of the Adepts, which in turn impels their preference to wait until the pupil is sufficiently purified before direct interaction between *guru* and *chela* can commence. This interaction involves a sensitive process of synchronizing the personal electromagnetic frequencies between *guru* and *chela*. “[I]n each case,” wrote KH, “the instructor has to adapt his conditions to those of the pupil, and [for the Adept] the strain is terrible, for to achieve success we have to bring ourselves into a *full* rapport with the subject under training.”<sup>16</sup> It took that long even for one of the Founders to achieve, for as KH further notes, “Olcott’s magnetism after six years of purification is intensely sympathetic with ours — physically and morally is constantly becoming more and more so.”<sup>17</sup>

### Conclusion

For the Adepts, the field of electromagnetic emanations surrounding an aspiring *chela* — his or her aura — is not an intellectual construct, but rather an empirical reality. The more pure and less polluted that aura is, the greater the chance of further interaction with the Adept. But as in the case of Henry Olcott, it took at least six years, and that was with the constant tutelage of his *guru*, Morya. In most such cases, as KH pointed out, “The process of self-purification is not the work of a moment, nor of a few months, but of years — nay, extending over a series of lives.”<sup>18</sup>

## Purification and the Higher Spiritual Path

Regarding the present state of the spiritual evolution of humanity, the impulses that guide its course are in full tension. The modern world appears to be a creature that stubbornly refuses either to save or even to help itself. Everywhere we witness dislocation, political tumult, incertitude, fear, and suffering on a vast scale. A visible and ever greater mass inversion of principles and values is afoot — too often good now yields to evil, truth yields to falsehood, sustainable stewardship yields to exploitation, and so on. These inversions come with a heavy price, which we pay in global chaos and pollution, including pandemic diseases. The wayfarer on the higher spiritual path who recognizes the immediate need is duty-bound to help reverse this trend. The most effective way for the wayfarer to accomplish this is by aligning himself or herself with the Order of Adepts and high initiates. And the *only* way this can be done is through a rigorous and

sustained process of self-purification.

At stake is nothing less than whether humanity will soon become so spiritually unfit as to decimate its own multiple habitats — physical and metaphysical — on this globe by refusing to yield to the evidence and probity of spiritual evolution and unconditional love. Whether humanity will be able to succeed in reversing this trend may in part depend, correspondingly, on whether enough probationers and newly accepted *chela*-s are of sufficient fitness, or purity, to join the herculean struggle to reverse course toward the light. If not, then among the consequences humanity faces is one announced by KH: “If, for generations, we have ‘shut out the world from the Knowledge of our Knowledge’, it is on account of its absolute unfitness; and if, notwithstanding proofs given, it still refuses yielding to evidence, then will we at the End of this cycle retire into solitude and our kingdom of silence once more.”<sup>19</sup> ✧

### Endnotes

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9. *H. P. Blavatsky*, vol. V, p. 291.
10. Chin, Jr., p. 138.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
12. *H. P. Blavatsky*, vol. IV, p. 607–08.
13. Chin, Jr., p. 73.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 422.
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16. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
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# Karma and Destiny

RAGHAVAN N. IYER

*It is the Spiritual evolution of the inner, immortal man that forms the fundamental tenet in the Occult Sciences. To realize even distantly such a process, the student has to believe: (a) in the ONE Universal Life, independent of matter (or what Science regards as matter); and (b) in the individual intelligences that animate the various manifestations of this Principle. . . .*

*The ONE LIFE is closely related to the one law which governs the World of Being — KARMA. Exoterically, this is simply and literally “action”, or rather an “effect-producing cause”. Esoterically it is quite a different thing in its far-fetching moral effects. It is the unerring LAW OF RETRIBUTION.*

H. P. Blavatsky

*The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 634

**K**ARMA is the universal law of the One Life in all its myriad manifestations from the cosmic to the atomic, spanning eternity and the present in each moment. Every evolving intelligence encapsulated in matter is unerringly subject to the ceaseless effects of Karma and must conform itself, at first unconsciously and then freely, to its inexorable decree of universal harmony. The doctrine of Karma unveils the metaphysical key to the mysteries of authentic human choice, free will, and divine destiny, but it can be comprehended only when applied with buddhic insight to the large experiences and small events of life on earth.

To discern the karmic meanings of the complex details of daily life, whilst experiencing the elusive mystery of incarnation, one must begin with the vibratory

rates of the simplest thoughts and feelings, words and deeds, linking them to levels of motivation, states of consciousness, fixity of mind, and fidelity of heart. Each thoughtful or thoughtless impulse of the inner nature magnetizes one’s environment through the activity of the organs of the outer vestures, invoking exact compensation and ethical retribution.

There is nothing mechanical in the karmic adjustment of magnetic differentials; it is an inward and moral process, an integral aspect of a continual choice between spiritualization and materialization. The distinction between distributive and collective Karma, like the difference between the raindrop and the storm, exists within a larger process of essential unity. Humanity and its units, its races, nations, tribes and individuals, embody

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**Prof. Raghavan N. Iyer** (10.3.1930–20.6.1995) was educated at Oxford and taught at UC Santa Barbara (SB) for over 20 years. He also co-founded the United Lodge of Theosophists in SB. From *Hermes*, March 1985, and *The Gupta Vidya*, vol. I (2020), published by Theosophy Trust Books.



## Karma and Destiny

a vital energy and share a common destiny which none may resist or repel. The eternally patient and compassionate teacher of humankind, Karma, sternly instructs each and all in the supreme lesson that there is no individual enlightenment or welfare apart from sacrificial service to every sentient being, collectively constituting the One Life.

This pivotal principle, the substratum of free will and destiny, may be understood in terms of the choice between the *manvantaric* star of one's individuality and the personal star of a single lifetime. Throughout all possible variations in personal destiny over myriad lifetimes, this choice must be made again and again. The clarity and direction of one's choices in previous lives shape the fabric of circumstances from which one chooses in this life and future lives.

That fabric might be a refined tapestry in which may be etched the mystic emblems of the pilgrimage of the soul, or a coarsely knotted cloth of confused dreams and missed opportunities. Psychologically, there is the wayward choice between two voices: one is the voice of illusion and delusion, of the senses and of the separative personal consciousness which cannot embrace a holistic perspective encompassing many lives; the other is the voice of Krishna-Christos, the voice of God in man which speaks in the universal language of the soul.

There is a direct relation between one's recurrent choices in regard to these voices, and one's readiness, in the realm of action, to ally oneself with Krishna, standing luminously alone, or his innumerable adversaries. In the Mahabha-

rata war fought on Kurukshetra, the field of external encounters, individuals are constantly making, mostly unconsciously, or with partial self-consciousness, fateful choices between Krishna and his armies. This archetypal choice was offered by Krishna to the depraved Duryodhana, who rejected Krishna in favour of the armies trained by him, reflecting short-sighted empiricism. When Arjuna was offered the privilege of having Krishna as his charioteer, he happily and willingly chose Krishna, even though he did not fully fathom the invisible stature of Krishna, let alone his cosmic splendour.

Philosophically, the Mahabharata war is emblematic of the inevitable ethical and spiritual struggle to which every human soul is irreversibly committed by the fact of *mānasic* awareness, traceable to the sacrificial descent and benediction of the solar ancestors over eighteen million years ago. Each chooses, Krishna teaches, according to his lights, whatever seems best. Thereby the subtle threads of one's self-devised destiny are fused, and one must pass below the throne of Necessity without looking back, like the pilgrims in the Myth of Er, to live out and learn from the karmic results of one's choice. Recorded by the Lipikas, engraved in one's vestures and reflected in surrounding circumstances, this destiny rises up to meet the soul at every turn in life. Yet, though it is "written in the stars", destiny does not preclude the risks and possibilities of further choice.

Only, the closer the union between the mortal reflection MAN and his celestial PROTOTYPE, the less dangerous the ex-

## Karma and Destiny

ternal conditions and subsequent reincarnations — which neither Buddhas nor Christs can escape. This is not superstition, least of all is it *Fatalism*. The latter implies a blind course of some still blinder power, and man is a free agent during his stay on Earth. He cannot escape his *ruling* Destiny, but he has the choice of two paths that lead him in that direction, and he can reach the goal of misery — if such is decreed to him — either in the snowy white robes of the Martyr, or in the soiled garments of a volunteer in the iniquitous course; for, there are *external* and *internal* conditions which affect the determination of our will upon our actions, and it is in our power to follow either of the two.

*The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 639

Even if through past actions one is destined to suffer miseries at the hands of various agencies, the power of choice remains. It is a constant factor throughout all the vagaries of karmic precipitation. As Plato taught, the gods are blameless for the inward condition of the soul in every situation, and each sufferer must choose between either preserving purity of consciousness or becoming stained by the iniquities of unthinking reaction, mental violence, and a refusal to take responsibility.

Choices are not random. Collectively, they show a tonality and texture which traces the line of life's meditation, the dominant choice over a lifetime. This choice depends upon the degree of discernment of the different types of external and internal conditions surrounding the soul. Externally, there are myriads upon myriads of elemental centres of intelligence already imprinted by the

thoughts, feelings and acts of individuals, past and present, embodied and disembodied. They are drawn to each person and respond to the rationalized desires of the lower self, thus giving seeming substantiality to the entrenched delusion of personal existence based upon likes and dislikes.

Those who are extremely weak-willed from the standpoint of the soul and excessively self-willed in the eyes of others have fostered the deceptive notion that they are forging their own path in the world, whereas in truth they are only acquiescing through compulsive reaction in their lunar destiny. Alternatively, there are internal conditions which include the solar potency of pure ideation of the Monad, the immortal *buddhi-manas* which is capable of sustaining a strong current of selfless meditation. The range and richness, continuity and depth, of such meditation depend upon mental calm, unconditional compassion, and spiritual fearlessness. On the noumenal plane, thought, motivation, and volition are indeed inseparable.

Authentic mystical states arise from the fusion of the deepest aspirations, the finest feelings, and the strongest affirmations of meditation within the solemn stillness of the sanctuary of the soul. Daily renewed in deep sleep, consecrated at dawn and dusk, and invoked with humility before sleep, the inward vision of universal good may be made into a continuous current through the potency of a Vow. In time one can silence the lower mind at will, altering the polarity of the nervous system, and ponder the karmic meanings and lessons inherent in

## Karma and Destiny

the events and opportunities of each day. Thus reaching beyond any limited sense of identity and in the oceanic calm of one's true selfhood, one may listen to the voice of God within the heart, the daemon honoured by Socrates and Gandhi. For a trained mystic who has learnt to give Nature time to speak, the inner voice can become the ever-present *chitkala*, the benediction of Kwan Yin, as a constant guardian.

For the average person, whose highest vestures are veiled by the *samskaric* residues of past actions and present vacillation, the inner voice cannot be heard and the prebirth vision of the soul is forgotten. Yet, they may be mirrored dimly in the muddled personal mind as vague and chaotic recollections, as feeble and faltering notions of some essential reform to be made in life, or some sacrificial act of goodness to be offered in the service of others. Through inconstant flickerings along the invisible spinal cord, there may be sporadic resolves to renew the most precious moment one can recall from early childhood or from fleeting contact with the benevolent current of past teachers.

In a variety of ways, even if only fitfully and imperfectly, every person can receive help from internal conditions which can release the spiritual will. The greater the fidelity, the selflessness, and self-assurance with which one cleaves to these inner promptings of the immortal soul, the more instantaneously they light up the immediate task at hand. Above all, the more they are heeded, the less the effort needed to sustain continuity. With the same certitude, the opposite conse-

quences follow for those who foolishly ignore or flaunt this inner guidance for the sake of enhancing the delusive sense of personal self-importance.

But even the most spiritually impoverished human beings are sheltered by the invisible protection of the Divine Prototype, and therefore even amidst the muddle and froth of psychic fantasy there is a concealed thread of truth. Wise and loving friends might be able to recognize and strengthen it. A true spiritual teacher could help to sift the wheat from the chaff, quicken the inward process of alchemical transmutation, and show the pathway to Divine Wisdom.

As the One Law of spiritual evolution, Karma is more generous to each and every human soul in need of help than the niggardly thinking of the nihilistic can envisage. It is neither a doctrine that is so abstruse and remote that it cannot be related to the present moment, nor is it nearly as inflexible and hostile as claimed by those who have gratuitously declared a vote of no confidence in themselves and in the human race. Far from precluding the idea that each human being has a unique and inherently significant mission on this Earth, the Law of Karma actually ordains that every single person has a divine destiny which he or she alone can and must fulfil.

There is an authentic dignity and beauty, a profound meaning, to the uniqueness of the divine presence in and around every human soul. The sacredness of individual choice was affirmed as the basis of human solidarity by the inspired fore-runners of the Aquarian Age, those luminaries who initiated the Renaissance

## Karma and Destiny

and the Enlightenment in Europe. If the prospect has not yet smiled upon all, this is because too many have laboured under the dead weight of traditional theology or secular fatalism.

Those who believe in *Karma* have to believe in *destiny*, which, from birth to death, every man is weaving thread by thread around himself, as a spider does his cobweb; and this destiny is guided either by the heavenly voice of the invisible *prototype* outside of us, or by our more intimate *astral*, or inner man, who is but too often the evil genius of the embodied entity called man.

*The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 639

The heavenly voice of the invisible Prototype is heard and felt, without any external tokens of empirical certitude. In the life of a good and simple person, who makes a mental image of Christ or Buddha, Śiva or Krishna, that voice may seem to come in a form engendered by the ecstatic devotion of the individual who has purity of heart. Many thousands of people all over the world belong to the invisible fraternity of fortunate souls who, having made a fearless and compassionate invocation on behalf of a friend or relative in distress, suddenly heard a vibrant voice of authoritative assurance and sensed an aureole of light soon after.

This voice may appear to come from outside oneself, and, paradoxically, that other voice, the voice of the intimate astral, all too often the evil genius of man seems to originate within. When it speaks, it aggravates the confusions of the com-

pulsive persona, inducing the hapless listener to rush into mindless activity. When the heavenly voice speaks to the depths of one's soul, it has a calming influence and allays the anxieties of *kāma-manas*. There is a natural soul-reticence to tell others about the heavenly voice, and a grateful concern to treasure its words in silence.

However well-intentioned, anything that is allowed to pass through the matrix of the psychic nature risks distortion and generates a smoky obscuration that acts as a barrier to further guidance and pro-founder help from the Divine Prototype. What begins as unthinking indiscretion soon becomes delusive, and unless promptly checked, culminates in abject servitude to the astral shadow. Then, deceived by this simulacrum, the shadow of oneself outside the path of dharma, one is drawn in a direction that may be contrary to one's true destiny. This abdication from the soul's self-chosen task in the course of evolution may initially be imperceptible but the choice of destinies remains as long as the two voices can be heard.

Both these lead on the outward man, but one of them must prevail; and from the very beginning of the invisible affray the stern and implacable *law of compensation* steps in and takes its course, faithfully following the fluctuations. When the last strand is woven, and man is seemingly enwrapped in the network of his own doing, then he finds himself completely under the empire of this *self-made* destiny. It then either fixes him like the inert shell against the immovable rock, or carries him away like a feather in a whirlwind raised

## Karma and Destiny

by his own actions, and this is — KARMA.

*The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 639

One cannot continue to listen to the voice of delusion until one finds oneself trapped in the self-woven meshes of despair, and then hope to be suddenly and vicariously saved. Recognition of the futility of seeking vicarious salvation is no reason for inertia or fatalism. One should never underestimate the potency of *tapas* and true repentance. Sages alone are in a position to judge the karmic ratios and curves of any person and they never dismiss the hope of self-redemption for a single human being. They understand the practical import of the Bodhisattva vow, which is rooted not in wishful thinking but in the essential nature of the soul.

Even if only at the moment of death, when the Divine Prototype assists in the separation of the principles, inner guidance is available in recognizing the true meaning of one's life. Long before the transition called death, there are precious opportunities in times of cool reflection, and during the nightly passage into *sushupti*, to strengthen the bond with the Higher Self. But these opportunities must be used wisely if one is to take hold of the plank of salvation — the immortal Monad — and not be carried off by the whirlwind of worldly distractions.

By bringing *buddhic* intuition to bear upon the necessary relations of past causes and present effects in particular situations, it is possible to extract karmic lessons from a ceaseless process of becoming which would otherwise appear

random, chaotic, or even trivial. Whilst it may seem easier to apply a general principle to a specific situation than to derive higher meanings from lower phenomena, it is important though difficult to show relevance, integrity, and proper timing in bringing the abstract to bear upon concrete contexts. These interrelated aspects of *buddhic* understanding, intimately connected with the Platonic teaching about the upward and downward dialectic, are mirrorings of Karma operating on the mental plane through cyclic time.

Both the seemingly subjective processes of thought and the apparently objective features of its activity are instantiations of the One Law. Metaphysically, it is the inseparability of spirit from matter that accounts for the immutability of law in Nature and the correspondence of modes of action between different planes of substance or matter. Nevertheless, there is a fundamental distinction between noumena and phenomena, between spiritual factors and physical forces, and this is connected with the crucial difference between the Akashic Divine Prototype and the astral form, the *man-vantaric* star and personal constellation of each incarnated individual.

The entire teaching of Karma is an elaboration of the truth of “absolute Harmony in the world of matter as in the world of Spirit”. We need to see the similitude of all things and the signature of the Divine in all the works of Nature. Anyone can appreciate the beauty of the sunrise and sunset or look at the night sky and sense the harmony of the heavens.

## Karma and Destiny

But in the West, since the days of Pythagoras and Plato, it was already known and commented upon by Cicero and Philo, that few could connect what they saw in the firmament with what was taking place around them on Earth, for too many people spend too much time in idle gazing, without looking from above below and from below above, bridging the gap between Heaven and Earth.

The benevolent and protective feeling towards the whole of humanity experienced by astronauts privileged to view the good Earth from outer space is a poignant pointer to the future. But it is not necessary to journey into outer space to gain a feeling for global welfare. Strong and mature men and women of universal culture can serve as witnesses to the human significance of the harmony of the heavens, and become attuned to the music of the spheres. Sensing in their own hearts the majestic harmony of the metaphysical world of spirit, they may recognize its mirrorings in the world of matter.

Karma either comes as an “avenging fury or a rewarding angel”. The distinction has nothing to do with externals, but rather with the inward spiritual impulse of one’s actions, which by their benevolent or selfish motivation, draw back upon the doer the blessings or curses of unerring destiny.

Yea — “Wise are they who worship Nemesis” — as the *chorus* tells Prometheus; and as unwise they, who believe that the goddess may be propitiated by whatever sacrifices and prayers, or have her wheel diverted

from the path it has once taken. “The tri-form Fates and ever-mindful Furies” are her attributes only on Earth, and begotten by ourselves. There is no return from the paths she cycles over; yet those paths are of our own making, for it is we, collectively or individually, who prepare them.

*The Secret Doctrine*, vol. 1, p. 642–43

The only prayer that is consistent with the religion of responsibility is the sacrificial invocation of the Higher Self on behalf of all humanity. Through growing gratitude for the gifts already received from parents and teachers, one may gain the courage and honesty to correct one’s freely chosen course. In time one can learn to insert oneself into the universal giving and receiving of that which is the heartbeat of sacrificial Karma. With greater intelligence and maturity, with more wisdom and discrimination, but above all, with a profounder benevolence for all living beings, one will enter into a richer sense of the citizenship of the world.

Nourished in the silence and solitude of meditation upon the One Light, one can exemplify a detached precision and effortless transcendence as a compassionate participant in the visible cosmos of beings who are sharers in collective Karma. In time one may sense the awesome stature of the *manvantaric* star of each individual abiding behind and beyond the panoramic changes induced by the personal constellations which provide opportunities to participate in the *samsāric* stream of individual and collective self-consciousness. ✧

# Pathless Land

CLEMICE PETTER

*Out beyond ideas of right and wrong, there is a field. I'll meet you there.*

Rumi

**J.** KRISHNAMURTI said: “I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my point of view, and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally.” It was difficult for people around him to understand or even to listen to what he was saying. The first time when we came in touch with his teachings, we did not understand what he meant when he said that Truth cannot be approached by any path. As most of us are used to follow, we think in terms of paths that will take us to what we are seeking. But Krishnaji brings a new perspective to everything we think we know.

The first thing to see is that whatever we think we know, in the field of the inner, or spiritual journey, cannot be Truth. This is because we try to explore the subtle, the inner world, with the same tools that we use in the gross material world. This is a common mistake that we make without realizing that before starting the journey within, we need proper equipment. When we go to a cold place we make sure that

we carry with us appropriate clothes for a cold climate. Similarly, before starting the inner, or spiritual journey, we need to understand what it means to set foot on the sacred land which no man can describe, simply because the inner world is one of silence, where words have no place and opinions only shut the door to it.

Most of us want the best of both worlds, we refuse to understand that one cannot live a spiritual life and at the same time be a worldly person. Maybe it would be important to go a little bit into what it means to live a spiritual life. Some people believe that what is spiritual to some may not be to others. This can be the case when we talk about opinions, but when it comes to real understanding, the realization of the spiritual world, there is no such thing as “me” and “you”, and therefore there is no different realization of Truth for different people. Every realized teacher taught the same thing in different ways, according to the time and language available during the lifetime of that particular person. Even though sometimes these teachings may seem different, most of

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## Pathless Land

those differences are created by interpretation, which is always bound to be a distortion of what was taught, therefore cannot be taken as final.

It is also important to understand why interpretations are bound to be wrong; we cannot see what the person saw and therefore we interpret it according to our background of beliefs and prejudices. Interpretations are like looking at something wearing muddy lenses, the mud will distort the perception of what we are trying to see, and so will prejudices and beliefs. Therefore one should always be aware of the danger of conclusions that some try to impose.

Another important aspect is to understand that we have to see for ourselves, and that a realized person is only able to point out that there is another way of life. But to live in a different way is completely different than to talk about it, or even to understand it. As long as we do not change and throw away all the lenses through which we look at life, descriptions have little or no value at all.

“Spiritual” means subtle, and good by nature — that which is whole, not divided. Therefore a spiritual life is about letting go of all divisions and sense of separation, which is created by the idea of “me” and “mine”. In order to live a spiritual life, the self-centered notion, which creates the ego, has to be understood.

When Krishnamurti says that there is no path to Truth, we feel lost because we are used to the idea that there are many paths and that we only need to choose one that appeals to us and we will finally reach

or achieve Truth. And the tendency of the mind is to jump from one extreme to the other, so we either turn our attention to following a path or embrace inattention.

What Krishnamurti is pointing to is that following a path or following somebody makes the mind dull, and that we need a sharp mind to see clearly. Therefore the movement is away from following, so that we can develop our capacity to look at life with our own understanding, however poor it may be. If we start from there, our mind starts to become alert, because we know that there is no one to tell us what to do, or what is right or wrong, we need to find out through our own perception.

This does not mean that we cannot listen to what others have to say, on the contrary, the capacity to listen is important in the process of understanding. Listening here does not mean following. It means that we are empty from conclusions and ready to consider, ponder over what is being said. The act of pure listening is not easy because we are loaded with preconceived ideas and formulations. A mind that thinks it knows is not open to learning.

Truth is one of those things that we hear people talking about but do not really understand what it means. When realized Beings talk about Truth, they are talking about the capacity to look at life with a free mind, with a mind that has no beliefs or illusions. They are not talking about a specific fact as being the Truth, but about a clear mind that is able to perceive what *is* without interpretations.



## Pathless Land

When the statement that Truth is a pathless land was first made, it was hard to understand that Truth is new at every moment, that there is no such thing as a stagnant truth. How can there be a path to something that is moving, changing every moment? A path, being a well-defined way that leads to a fixed, known place, cannot lead us to something that has no place and no concluding form — to the unknown. Being in constant movement, changing, it does not repeat itself. To be even more explicit, Truth is always here and now, the only problem is that we are not able to see it, because we refuse to look. On the other hand, a path is something that is taking us away from the present moment — it will lead us somewhere else in the future.

When we imagine finding Truth somewhere in the future, and for that we do all sorts of silly things, in fact we are moving away from it and will never see it. This seems a hard thing to understand. Either we see it now or we will not see it at all. Because, like Truth, life is in constant flow, never the same; we also change and can never repeat an experience, try as hard as we may, it is just impossible. If we consider all this, we will see that there can be no path to Truth.

What we can and should do is to concern ourselves with the clarity of the mind, with identifying the blocks that are obstructing the clear Sun from shining through and illuminating the world of darkness created by the lack of clear perception. To see the barriers erected by our own mind creates awareness, which brings

attention. This is not attention to something, but a state of attention that makes the mind alert, sharp. This alertness is vital to prevent new blocks from being built and in destroying existing ones.

In this process there is no following and there is no leaning on someone. It requires the strength to walk alone, not to be influenced by anybody, by no leader or teaching. This does not mean that we need to stop reading books or listening to teachings, but that we need to learn about ourselves in order to clear our perception. In order to learn about ourselves we need to learn how to look to what is going on in our own mind.

The mind is the instrument, through which we perceive what *is*, and if it is loaded with knowledge, we will perceive the world through that knowledge; therefore there is no direct perception. For example, if we believe in reincarnation, that belief is going to contaminate our understanding of life, but if we do not know if there is reincarnation or not, we do not assert that there is or there is not, and we are in a state that allows us to explore the matter and maybe find out the Truth about it. To believe or to deny is the same movement; in it we have come to a conclusion, and from that conclusion we act. Conclusions are the enemy of the state of mind in which learning is possible.

Another aspect that is important to consider is that a mind that is constantly concluding is looking for certainty and needs to be sure about everything. Such a mind is unable to see Truth; it becomes rigid, therefore unable to see and let go.

## Pathless Land

Conclusions are the desperate act of those looking for control, and they believe that by concluding and asserting they find security. What we do not see is that it is this need for control that is creating disorder in the world.

When we look for a path to follow in order to come to Truth, we are looking for certainty, for a secure way. We believe that Truth can be approached with the same kind of mind that is expert in avoiding it. Every conclusion that we hold is a barrier erected against Truth. To be able to see clearly the first thing to realize is that we do not have clarity and need to find out where are the barriers preventing it.

For a long time we have believed that we need to do something in order to clear our mind; that we need to cultivate awareness, attention, and virtues in order to have clarity. Awareness, attention, and virtues are the byproduct of a clear mind. What we do not see is that those qualities cannot be cultivated like we cultivate grains in the field. And these have been our difficulties, because we want to enter the arena of the subtle, pliable, and holy field of peace and silence with the same crude and loud attitude that we apply in the gross material world. It is just impossible; it is like trying to keep an elephant in a glass house.

The need for understanding ourselves, how this feeling of a separate entity called “me” came into being, and how it maintains its structure is the first thing to realize. If this is not seen and understood, there is no possibility for clarity to come into being. Krishnaji also says

that to go far we need to start near. This is not difficult to understand, as walking starts with the first step. Either we take up this first step or there is no walk.

The starting point is usually the hardest one because it requires tremendous amount of energy to change direction and overcome inertia; being a hard task we try to avoid it and think that it is possible to jump to the destination. What we miss is something that Krishnaji also pointed out: “The first step is the last step”. Therefore there is no way we can avoid the hard work required in order to know ourselves.

Self-knowledge is required at every step and yet is the most avoided subject. Before Christ gave his teachings, more than two thousand years ago, the Greeks pointed out the utter importance of it, they said: “Man, know thyself and you will know the gods and the Universe.” But we avoid the advice given by every teaching that points in this direction. We cling to the idea that it is possible for us to be completely ignorant about the basics and yet be knowledgeable in the highest matters about life and the Universe. This is like a child who refuses to go to school and learn about the art of reading and writing, but wishes to become a scientist.

To look within and understand the workings of the mind is the beginning of wisdom. To see what we are, in reality, is hard and painful, but it is an unavoidable step that cannot be ignored by those who are tired of the things of the mind. The world created by the ignorance of our motives and hidden desires has to be

## Pathless Land

understood before we can honestly talk about peace on Earth and Brotherhood.

To talk about Love and Compassion and at the same time to be careless and unkind is a contradiction in which most of us are trapped. It is a law of Nature that ignorant people, those who do not know themselves, talk about what they need to understand, that which they fail to see in themselves. Rumi says: "Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself."

The wish to change the world comes from the lack of self-knowledge, the ignorance of the basics, which are our own ways and conflicts. Self-knowing is the first and last step on the way of wisdom. It brings down the walls of separation; the barriers that prevent Truth to shine through. Truth is not something away from our daily life, it is not something that we need to acquire, it is always here and now. Our difficulty

is that we are searching for it in the wrong places. We are like the man who lost his treasure in a dark corner and is looking for it in a place where there is light, because it is easier to search, but where it can never be found.

To face the fact that there is no problem in the world other than the ones created by the mind is of fundamental importance if we wish to start the journey that leads to freedom. To be free from the illusion of separation, which means the idea that we are different from the world, is the beginning of clarity. To see that we have created the present chaos in the world and that we are continuously adding to the world's misery is a tough pill to swallow. Truth is not about comfort, it does not compromise in order to fit in our hopes and expectations. Before one can realize Truth, all hopes and expectations need to be dropped. ✧

**Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or to coerce people along any particular path. If you first understand that, then you will see how impossible it is to organize a belief. A belief is purely an individual matter, and you cannot and must not organize it. If you do, it becomes dead, crystallized; it becomes a creed, a sect, a religion, to be imposed on others.**

J. Krishnamurti, 1929  
(When he dissolved the Order of the Star in the East organization.)

# The Three Propositions

DAVID GROSSMAN

THE Three Fundamental Propositions of *The Secret Doctrine* by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) are a kind of metaphysical doorway through which we can look into the mysteries of life. Each of us at one time or another asks in a heartfelt way: “Who am I? Where have I come from? Where am I going?” These kinds of questions most often arise when we feel ungrounded, or have had difficult events in our lives that we cannot easily navigate through. “Why did this happen to me?” “What did I do to deserve this?”

Or we see things happening in the world that seem so senseless such as the way humans often treat each other or why “bad things happen to good people”. If we remain floating on the surface of life, so to speak, it is not so difficult to feel the universe to be a random and meaningless endeavor in the final analysis. We need to drill through its opaque surface if we are to penetrate the facade of life.

The more formal disciplines that mankind has created to address the questions of life, and more specifically our lives, are Religion, Science, and Philosophy. All three in their own ways explore the general question, “What Is Truth?” But all too

often we mistake the facade for the vital substance, the phenomena for the noumena. If we stop a moment and think about it, we will see the forms of life, whether physical or thought forms, are constantly changing and are not reliable foundations for true knowledge.

Theosophy points out in the First Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine* that God, the source, “a boundless and immutable principle”, by definition is limitless, so any conception we have of what is essentially boundless is “Not It”. There is an underlying unity that binds us all together. We might define religion here, which is usually associated with the god idea, as our yearning for wholeness and Unity. Our deific essence is the source of hope and realistic optimism in that it dissolves that false sense of separateness and existential loneliness that people feel today more than ever, especially when we too often put such a large investment into ephemeral things.

The Zen Buddhist approach trains us to transcend the dualistic mind (lower *manas*) with paradox and seemingly “answerless questions” that evoke a higher set of faculties than the five senses

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## The Three Propositions

and the logical and linear modes of thinking with imagination, conscience, and direct perception and illumination from the “higher mind” (*buddhi-manas*): “What is the sound of one hand clapping”; “Show me your original face before you were born”; or in our own literature, “The Voice of the Silence”. These riddles help us abandon the lower mind and enter a state of more inclusiveness moving towards a fuller sense of unity. It manifests more as a feeling than a concrete thought, an awareness of oneness, a feeling of connectedness, a state of peacefulness. We might even call it love.

While religion tends to address the nature of what we call God, or the ultimate source of life, earthly and cosmic, science focuses more on how the universe works, in the sense that through observation, experiment, and testing we can gain knowledge about who and what we are and how we and everything in Nature came into existence.

Where science falls short is that it tends to be materialistic and does not consider, at least very often, those phenomena and strange observations that it cannot measure. Terms like mind, intuition, love, imagination, the cause and effect generated by moral/ethical states upon the physical universe are mainly out of the territory of traditional science. Of course there are always the “trail blazers” among the ranks but they are often not taken seriously and even ostracized for crossing the line.

Even the promising explorations into neurology and brain science seem too often to relegate everything a human being

displays from creativity and love to spirituality and a sense of moral/ethical correctness, to some configuration of “gray matter”. Science still has a lack of imagination when it comes to anything beyond the physical and what it cannot measure and quantify. And all too often there seems to be a lack of moral responsibility for what science “turns up”.

Considering all science has learned over the past couple of centuries, it is questionable if it has come any closer to explain the origin of man and his conscious faculties. It is even more questionable whether the scientific community has developed any sort of philosophy that acts as a moral compass of responsibility concerning the application of knowledge gained. We have managed through scientific application to create weapons of mass destruction, developed drugs such as opioids that have crept into and devastated people’s lives.

Somehow with all our sophisticated “modern” ways of living we have in short order polluted the air, depleted the soil, and poisoned the water to an alarming degree. Actually it is not real science that is to blame but our lack of moral imagination and foresight in terms of the application of scientific knowledge which often turns out to be half knowledge.

Theosophy points to the fact that man, the self-conscious thinker, is essentially at the center of all that happens on Earth. And so, too, man is the key to unlocking the mysteries of religion, philosophy, and science. The Hermetic axiom rings true in the very practical sense of “As above,

## The Three Propositions

so below”. We are the microcosm of the macrocosm; God is within; “Man Know thyself”. All the laws of Nature are within and we set them in motion. Each thought and subsequent action is a kind of mini “big bang” if you will. It is we who set the (our) universe(s) in motion. Theosophy proposes the law of periodicity working in and on all things at all times, unfolding as the law of cycles, that every living phenomena participates in, from the coming and going of the universe to the ongoing cycle of reincarnation expressed in the rotation of the seasons, the cycles we see so clearly in the vegetable kingdom and the cycle of reincarnation in man.

When we see the law of periodicity (Second Proposition), the various turns of a cycle (birth, growth, fruition, decline, death, and rebirth) working in our own lives, we will then be more capable of being conscious self-evolvers individually and collectively as expressed in the Third Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*. It is stated there that evolution is triple, physical, mental, and spiritual, interwoven and interblended at every point.

Philosophy has been defined in the following ways. Quite literally, the term “philosophy” means “love of wisdom.” In a broad sense, it is an activity we undertake when we seek to understand fundamental truths about ourselves, the world in which we live, and our relationship to the world and to each other. Theo-

sophically speaking, we might say that philosophy is first studying the laws and principles of Nature — physical, mental, and spiritual — and then self-consciously doing the work to evolve in the spirit of brother/sisterhood to fulfill the purpose of life over many lifetimes in order to reach conscious godhood and ideally work for the benefit of the whole. *Granted, that is a mouthful*, but it is the third proposition of *The Secret Doctrine* that gives us both purpose and direction in the journey that we call evolution. In the words of Seneca, “If you don’t know what port you’re bound for, no wind is favorable.”

If we accept the idea that the three fundamental propositions of *The Secret Doctrine* are all expressions of the One Life which work on and within the human being, we can then perceive the reality that man, the self-conscious thinker, is at the center of religion, science, and philosophy. Why the universe works the way it does will only be apprehended once we realize that we play an integral part in all of it.

In her theosophical primer, *The Key to Theosophy*, HPB poetically expresses the path of Theosophy this way: “For every flower of love and charity he plants in his neighbor’s garden, a loathsome weed will disappear from his own, and so this garden of the gods — Humanity — shall blossom as a rose.”

(1st ed., Section IV, p. 53)

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