



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover: Adyar garden beauty after May showers – Marja Artamaa

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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.

Nature and Our Role

TIM BOYD

EVERYBODY, from a child to the most elderly person, has a clear sense of the meaning and value of Nature. No book or course of study is required. If you consult the dictionary the definition would be some variation of: 'Nature is the phenomena of the physical world taken collectively; it is everything except human beings and their creations.' This is a problem because it is an accurate statement of the current state of human consciousness: there is *us*, and then there is *all that is* with its processes and cycles.

Many of the world's religions, particularly in the Western world, promote the idea that humanity's role is to have dominion over Nature. In the hands of a 'developed' humanity this is not a bad thing. To exercise control is an ideal situation when it is done from the perspective of a higher consciousness. A corollary religious concept is that as human beings our role in relationship to Nature is that we are 'stewards' of Nature.

Given the relatively undeveloped stage of our current humanity, these ideas become interpreted very strangely. Dominion becomes domination; stewardship becomes ownership. A steward is one to whom the responsibility for caring and attending is assigned, over a household,

passengers on a train, and so on. Our relationship to the natural world has become quite strange. As the imagined owners of all that is, we find ourselves in an abusive relationship to the very thing that supports our life and to which we are inextricably linked.

Even if it is not a conscious thought, everybody recognizes the value of the natural world. It is a universal value. Just like everybody wants kindness, honesty, and so on, everyone wants and values Nature. Even a person who makes his living by polluting the environment wants to buy a home near a pristine beach or a pure mountain top. The reason is that, even on a superficial level, we recognize that when we are in the presence of the natural world certain things happen inside of us. There is a sense of calm, a relaxation response that everybody tends to feel. There is also the possibility for the kind of inspiration spoken of by those who have had mystical experiences throughout history. In general, those experiences have been connected to times when they were in touch with the natural world. We all know this.

Because the patterns of Nature are very different from the human patterns, they have a profound effect on our emotions

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and thoughts. The great difference between the energetics of Nature and human creations is that the natural world is stable, not fluctuating according to moods, whims, or unpredictable events. We know today that tomorrow the sun will rise. A person in Chicago just sent me photos of a tree in my backyard; right now the flowers are coming out on the tree, because, once again, it is the month of April. And this April, as last April, as in all Aprils in human memory, this has been the pattern — it is regular, unwavering, harmonious.

Even on those occasions when we experience what we regard as aberrations in the natural pattern, still they bring themselves into balance. Almost thirty five years ago, a huge cataclysm — a natural event — took place in the United States of America. In Washington State, Mount St Helens, which had been an inactive volcano for as long as anyone had been alive, suddenly came to life. It was being watched over a period of time because it was known that something was getting ready to happen. When it did erupt, the media of the world had gathered and were able to record it. When it did finally explode the entire north face of the mountain blew out. They had time-lapse photographic recording of a regular-looking mountain, then a rising bulge, a further bulge, and then the explosion that went out for miles around. Everything that was in the area became blackened with soot. Every living thing for miles around died immediately. All the human constructions that seem to confirm our

power and permanence were immediately destroyed: bridges, railroad tracks, roads, houses, everything disappeared in a matter of moments.

I flew over that area two or three years after the eruption, and I had never seen anything like it. For miles around the epicentre of the explosion it seemed as if I was looking at the surface of the moon. Everything was grey — nothing was living or moving in that space. The most remarkable thing was that, before the eruption, densely populated forests had been surrounding the mountain, but all the trees were laid low. Seen from above, every tree, wherever it was in relation to that explosion, had lain down with its base pointed towards the place that this natural force had exploded into the world. Eighty-foot trees were laid down as if a child had thrown toothpicks. The level of destruction was unimaginable.

Ten years later I happened to fly over the area again. It was unrecognizable. New green life had sprouted up, animals had repopulated the place in numbers that had not been there before, plants were growing much more luxuriantly because the volcanic ash that had been added to the soil made it richer than it had ever been. The process that had interrupted all living things, now brought them back in profusion. This is the natural world.

Nature features prominently in theological teachings. In the Proem of H. P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* we have the three Fundamental Propositions. HPB strongly encouraged students to have a grasp of these Propositions before

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attempting a deeper consideration of the teachings. The first Proposition is concerned with the Absolute, the second with Cycles, and the third speaks about the fundamental Unity of all souls with the Over-Soul, and about the obligatory pilgrimage of the soul. This third Proposition deals with Nature.

For anything that acquires an individuality, which is to say, for each of us, there is a process which, in the language of the third Fundamental Proposition, begins by 'natural impulse', which is then followed by 'self-induced and self-devised' efforts. Natural impulse is what brings us first to the capacity for individualization. We have read and heard it spoken of, but what does 'natural impulse' actually mean? What this Proposition says is that at the early stages in our development the main influence that brings about our unfoldment is being impelled, or driven, by the natural world. It is not yet the stage where we are making the choices that align us with these processes. At the early stages in the development of our consciousness we find ourselves feeling as if we are under attack from the natural world and we must defend ourselves. So we react. It is this reactive stage that initiates the development of consciousness.

The above is illustrated in the life of the Buddha. The legend tells how the process leading Siddhartha to become the Buddha culminated when he was still a prince in the luxurious home of his kingly father. The story speaks of how the prince made three journeys beyond the walls of the kingdom because he wanted to see

the world outside. His father — who had protected him from the experience of anything that was not youthful, vibrant, and alive — made sure that the streets were cleared of any poor people, that along his route there would be no sign of anything that was dirty, old, or infirm, so that his son could go out and not be tempted to turn his eyes away from the princely life.

On the first day he went out in his chariot and he saw a person who was sick, weak, and with sores on his body. He had never seen anything like it. So he asked his charioteer what 'that' was, and the answer was that it was a sick person. His next question was: 'If that is a person and I am a person, will that happen to me?' And the answer was 'Yes, it happens to all human beings.' 'Take me back to the castle', the prince said. The trips were repeated over two more days. The second day he went out and saw an old person with a cane, bent over, moving very slowly, with whitened hair and lines that had grown into his face. He had never seen anything like that and asked again. He got a similar answer: 'You too will experience this if you are fortunate enough to live long.' The third time out he saw a corpse, and it was the first time he had encountered it. Same answer: 'You too will die.'

These are the events that are said to have impelled Siddhartha, the prince, unto the path that led him to becoming the Buddha. These natural cycles of sickness, old age, and death were the very things that he felt were the source of the fears of all humanity, and were the basis for a defensive mentality that did not allow for

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a deeper experience of what Nature could reveal. *The Voice of the Silence* focuses on the stage where we have decided that our efforts will be self-induced, that we will devise the means by which we are going to encounter this world and unfold our consciousness. In this little book, it says 'Chafe not at Karma, nor at Nature's changeless laws'. The beginning of the opening to a deeper understanding of the natural world is at the point where we cease resisting, defending; where we stop reacting to the changeless cycles of Nature.

Necessarily, we are a part of Nature, not separate from it. All of its processes are in action in us at every moment. It is not something that resistance affects. The only thing it affects is the state of our own consciousness and of being ill-at-ease and dis-eased. Disease comes from our resistance to what is inherent. So 'Chafe not at Karma, nor at Nature's changeless laws' is the point at which we begin.

We are part of Nature, but at the same time we are *more* than Nature. This is where it becomes a bit complex.

In one of the Mahatma Letters, it is said that 'We believe in MATTER alone, in matter as visible Nature and matter in its invisibility.' That Letter goes on to say that 'Matter *is* Nature'. Prakriti *is* Nature. The human being is the combination of spirit, or Purusha, and of matter, or Prakriti — spirit and Nature are linked by a mind with the capacity to embrace the universe. Even though we are part of Nature our role is fundamentally different from any other creation in the natural world. As we under-

stand it and embrace it, *that* is when we actually unfold. This is the path that *The Voice of the Silence* and the teachings of the Mahatmas try to illustrate and inspire us to realize.

Nature is always in a stage of becoming. At every moment it is creating new forms that are more responsive to the developing and unfolding consciousness. It creates forms, destroys them, and creates anew. Nature has a direction; it does not go backwards. It is continually evolving forms that are suitable to the new stage of growth. This kind of understanding opens a certain path for us as human beings who see the value of a spiritualized expression. The path is described in *The Voice of the Silence*: 'Help Nature and work on with her, and Nature will regard you as one of her co-creators and make obeisance.' It will obey. It is very clear, which is not to say easy. The path for us is one of first understanding Nature, recognizing our inseparable role within it, then helping in its unfoldment.

The theosophical path is different from other approaches to the spiritual life in a very important way. For many approaches the important feature is variously described as enlightenment, liberation, or salvation. But salvation is a personal goal. Obviously it sheds benefits on all beings, but the goal is motivated by personal attainment. This is not alien to the theosophical approach; it is a part of it. But the approach of the person who has embraced the theosophical way is one of discipleship towards the goal of lifting some of the heavy karma that the rest of humanity

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experiences; towards trying to help the opening and becoming of the rest of the natural world. That is a very different path than simply trying to get off the 'wheel' of samsara.

Needless to say, understanding the character of Nature is an endless task. On a human scale, the sense of what Nature

is and what our interaction with it needs to be, must move beyond the limits of current thinking. As we find ourselves experiencing some realization of the character of Nature and of our own role, it necessarily spreads to others. This is part of our function within the economy of Nature. ✧

One of the strange things about living in the world is that it is only now and then one is quite sure one is going to live forever and ever and ever. One knows it sometimes when one gets up at the tender solemn dawn-time and goes out and stands out and throws one's head far back and looks up and up and watches the pale sky slowly changing and flushing and marvelous unknown things happening until the East almost makes one cry out and one's heart stands still at the strange unchanging majesty of the rising of the sun — which has been happening every morning for thousands and thousands and thousands of years. One knows it then for a moment or so. And one knows it sometimes when one stands by oneself in a wood at sunset and the mysterious deep gold stillness slanting through and under the branches seems to be saying slowly again and again something one cannot quite hear, however much one tries. Then sometimes the immense quiet of the dark blue at night with the millions of stars waiting and watching makes one sure; and sometimes a sound of far-off music makes it true; and sometimes a look in someone's eyes.

Frances Hodgson Burnett
The Secret Garden

There is No Religion Higher than Truth

WAYNE GATFIELD

THE above statement is the motto of the Theosophical Society, but what does it mean? In her article 'Is Theosophy a Religion?' H. P. Blavatsky gives a theosophical interpretation of religion:

It is perhaps necessary, first of all, to say, that the assertion that 'Theosophy is not a Religion', by no means excludes the fact that 'Theosophy is Religion' itself. A Religion, in the true and only correct sense, is a bond uniting men together — not a particular set of dogmas and beliefs. Religion per se, in its widest meaning, is that which binds not only all HUMANS, but also all BEINGS and all things in the entire Universe into one grand whole. This is our theosophical definition of religion.

Of course not many of the followers of the world's great religions have any real understanding of this, and so build walls instead of bridges and argue over trifling matters, and are willing to cause untold suffering to others in the name of these great beings who tried to teach us love and tolerance. Looking at it in the true light, it seems inconceivable that the teachings of a highly evolved Spiritual

teacher can be twisted by the human mind into their complete opposite — but sadly that is what happens.

In *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* KH has some very direct things to say about God and religion. He certainly does not mince his words on this. It may seem rather harsh in some ways, but given the way things have gone regarding the exoteric or dogmatic religions, it gives us food for thought. This is a small extract from Letter 10 where he says:

We deny God both as philosophers and as Buddhists. We know there are planetary and other spiritual lives, and we know there is in our system no such thing as God, either personal or impersonal. Parabrahm is not a God, but absolute immutable law, and Iswar is the effect of Avidya and Maya, ignorance based upon the great delusion. The word 'God' was invented to designate the unknown cause of those effects which man has either admired or dreaded without understanding them, and since we claim and that we are able to prove what we claim — i.e., the knowledge of that cause and causes we are in a position to maintain there is no God or Gods behind them.

Mr Wayne Gatfield is President of Bolton Lodge, English Section of the Theosophical Society.

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KH is not denying the fact that there is a Divine Presence that can be experienced and felt within and around us, but he is saying that the concept of God is generally mistaken. Theosophy teaches that there is a hierarchy of spiritual beings that helped to shape humanity into what it is today on all levels and also will help us to become what we are in essence. We can understand that when KH says that there are no God or Gods he refers to the exoteric or anthropomorphic ideas of God. Later on he adds:

And now, after making due allowance for evils that are natural and cannot be avoided, — and so few are they that I challenge the whole host of Western metaphysicians to call them evils or to trace them directly to an independent cause — I will point out the greatest, the chief cause of nearly two-thirds of the evils that pursue humanity ever since that cause became a power. It is religion under whatever form and in whatever nation. It is the sacerdotal caste, the priesthood and the churches. It is in those illusions that man looks upon as sacred, that he has to search out the source of that multitude of evils which is the great curse of humanity and that almost overwhelms mankind. Ignorance created Gods and cunning took advantage of the opportunity. Look at India and look at Christendom and Islam, at Judaism and Fetichism. It is priestly imposture that rendered these Gods so terrible to man; it is religion that makes of him the selfish bigot, the fanatic that hates all mankind out of his own sect without rendering him any better or more moral for it. It is belief

in God and Gods that makes two-thirds of humanity the slaves of a handful of those who deceive them under the false pretence of saving them.

Those are very direct and potent words. However if we look at them carefully we can see that what he says is true. Most of the wars we have had over the centuries have arisen as a result of orthodox religion, and religion has caused so much suffering and turned nation against nation. This kind of religion is man-made, it has little to do with the original impulse given out by the Spiritual Beings that initiated it. These beings, whether Gautama Buddha, Krishna, Jesus, or Mohammed had given us some insight into our Spiritual Nature. They wanted to help us to awaken our benumbed souls to an appreciation of what we truly are as Spiritual Beings on a human journey and to help us to see that we all share the same Divinity and therefore to overcome the great dire heresy of separateness that weans us from the rest (*The Voice of the Silence*).

As HPB wrote earlier, true religion should be a bond that unites, not separates as it does now. Christianity is split into countless sects, most disagreeing with certain ideas or teachings of other sects; Islam has warring sects and that is just within their own religion, towards other religions they are often inimical or, even if tolerant, still believe their religion to be superior. Only the mystics who are able to soar above the illusions of this world have seen that there is only one reality behind all of this, but even they, when returning to their lower mind intellects,

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have couched their experiences in the language of their own religion. HPB says of the Theosophical Society:

It is a brotherhood of humanity, established to make away with all and every dogmatic religion founded on dead-letter interpretation, and to teach people and every member to believe but in one impersonal God; to rely upon his (man's) own powers; to consider himself his only saviour; to learn the infinitude of the occult psychological powers hidden within his own physical man; to develop these powers; and to give him the assurance of the immortality of his divine spirit and the survival of his soul; to make him regard every man of whatever race, colour, or creed, and to prove to him that the only truths revealed to man by superior men (not a god) are contained in the Vedas of the ancient Aryas of India. Finally, to demonstrate to him that there never were, will be, nor are, any miracles; that there can be nothing 'supernatural' in this universe, and that on earth, at least, the only god is man himself.

This may seem to contradict in some ways what KH was saying as she talks about an impersonal God. But to repeat what I said earlier, what she and KH are saying is that there is no such thing as an external God as all is ONE in the final analysis. As she says that the only god is man himself.

So what is this Truth that the mystically inclined have firsthand knowledge of? Can this Truth be defined? Can it ever be expressed in human language?

If we wish to live a truly spiritual life we need to learn the art of synthesis — to be able to extract the essence of all that we study as the swan is said to be able to extract milk from water in the Indian legend. If we want to know the Truth we must first understand that words cannot encompass it. HPB says in her article 'A Few Thoughts on Some Wise Words From a Wise Man':

In our humble opinion, the only 'Essentials' in the Religion of Humanity are — virtue, morality, brotherly love, and kind sympathy with every living creature, whether human or animal. This is the common platform that our Society offers to all to stand upon; the most fundamental differences between religions and sects sinking into insignificance before the mighty problem of reconciling humanity, of gathering all the various races into one family, and of bringing them all to a conviction of the utmost necessity in this world of sorrow to cultivate feelings of brotherly sympathy and tolerance, if not actually of love. Having taken for our motto — 'In these Fundamentals — unity; in non-essentials — full liberty; in all things — charity,' we say to all collectively and to every one individually — 'keep to your forefather's religion, whatever it may be — if you feel attached to it, Brother; think with your own brains — if you have any; be by all means *yourself* — whatever you are, unless you are really a bad man. And remember above all, that a wolf in his own skin is immeasurably more honest than the same animal — under a sheep's clothing'.

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The Universal law is that of harmony, everything is harmonious, even that which seems disharmonious in a universal sense is only transformation symbolized by the God Shiva in Hinduism. Karma is merely a law of adjustment. Many people mistakenly equate it with religion or some kind of punishment. It is just a scientific law that restores any break in the harmony of the universe — as said it is the Universe readjusting and restoring its harmonious state.

Once we grasp that, we realize that the task we have before us is to assist always in this restoration of harmony. That is why we are told to love, because love in the true sense is harmony, as is compassion. In a footnote in *'The Voice of the Silence'* HPB writes:

This 'compassion' must not be regarded in the same light as 'God, the divine love' of the Theists. Compassion stands here as an abstract, impersonal law whose nature, being absolute Harmony, is thrown into confusion by discord, suffering, and sin.

As said at the beginning, true religion is that which binds not only all men, women, beings but all living things throughout the universe. This is the process that we are trying to assist on the journey. That is the real living truth in nature. We are all ONE inwardly — we share the same life, the same Spirit and everything we do and think affects everything else.

Spiritual teachings from sources like the Ashtavakra gita and the Diamond sutra state that we cannot really comprehend

Truth if we hold on to any concepts whatsoever. It is only when we transcend concepts that we can get a deeper appreciation of Truth, because it is way beyond any form of conception. We can get some understanding of secondary things that go on in this universe like rounds and races, the constitution of man, and the planes of being, karma, and reincarnation, but of course these are events that take place in the realm of concepts. They come into being due to limited views, essential to our lives as unenlightened beings but ceasing to exist for the illumined soul. It is said that for the Masters even the after-death state of Devachan does not exist, as they have transcended the realms of illusion, and that is a higher state of being than we are in at the moment in general.

Once we are free from conceptualization we can see people and things as they really are without the veil of preconceptions. We tend to impose our own world view on to others and see them as we would like them to be, rather than how they actually are in reality.

In 'Practical Occultism' HPB gives hints as to how we should proceed on the path:

Meditation, abstinence in all, the observation of moral duties, gentle thoughts, good deeds and kind words, as goodwill to all and entire oblivion of Self, are the most efficacious means of obtaining knowledge and preparing for the reception of higher wisdom.

Of course we must adapt these things to our own particular journey and not

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make the mistake of creating a new level of dogmatism. We need to approach these teachings in an intelligent way and to try to understand how such practices can lead us to a deeper appreciation of TRUTH though there is no fixed definition of truth nor any guarantee that what we might think of as a final truth is just another doorway to yet another set of relative truths. What we are trying to become is truly human, to develop the qualities in us that make us human. We should strive always to see the best in everyone and as the *Dhammapada* tells us, to work on correcting our own faults and to overlook the faults of others. The essential thing is to see ourselves in others and to try to do unto others as we would want them to do to us.

It is very much a do-it-yourself job — we can take in advice from various sources,

but we tread the path using our own self-devised efforts. The Japanese Haiku poet Santoka Taneda said that ‘my pilgrimage is into the depths of the human heart’. That is the way that we are all following in reality. Religions tend to externalize the journey, whereas in reality it is a totally internal transformation. What prevents us from understanding the true meaning of Religion are our conditioned thoughts. More and more in society we are learning to rely on externals — we put our trust in computers and other machinery. Society in general has a very narrow view of what it is to be human and indeed what constitutes a human being. In Theosophy we offer a much wider view of what we are as humans, and hopefully how to adjust our lives so as to live under the guidance of our Higher Self and thus take control of our Spiritual Progress. ✧

OFFICIAL NOTICE

CONVENTION 2015 – 16

In accordance with Rule 46 of the Rules and Regulations of the Theosophical Society, the Executive Committee has determined that the 140th international Convention of the Theosophical Society will be held at the international Headquarters, Adyar, Chennai, India, from 31 December 2015 to 5 January 2016.

Marja Artamaa
International Secretary

Theosophy and the Need for Ideals in the Modern World

SVITLANA GAVRYLENKO

IN my brief presentation, I would like to focus your attention on two main theses:

◆ First, since ancient times, the concepts of ideas and ideals have been in focus of numerous teachings and philosophies. This included a need for ideals which would be able to help mankind in successfully developing as a highly humanistic civilization.

◆ Second, the ideas and ideals presented in the Theosophical teaching introduced to the world by H. P. Blavatsky contain important tools for fostering the establishment of the principle for a new human civilization. The implementation of this concept is an important task entrusted to the Theosophical Society by its real Founders.

The Theosophical Doctrine proclaims the intelligent nature of the creative forces of the manifested world which are fully compliant with the philosophic tradition of the ancient world. H. P. Blavatsky describes the Universe unfolding as follows:

From the Unknown One, the Infinite TOTALITY, the manifested ONE, or the periodical, Manvantaric Deity, emanates;

and this is the Universal Mind, which, separated from its Fountain-Source, is the Demiurgos or the creative Logos of the Western Kabalists, and the four-faced Brahma of the Hindu religion. In its totality, viewed from the standpoint of manifested Divine Thought in the esoteric doctrine, it represents the Hosts of the higher creative Dhyan Chohans. Simultaneously with the evolution of the Universal Mind, the concealed Wisdom of Adi-Buddha — the One Supreme and eternal — manifests itself as Avalokiteshwara (or manifested Iswara), which is the Osiris of the Egyptians, the Ahura-Mazda of the Zoroastrians, the Heavenly Man of the Hermetic philosopher, the Logos of the Platonists, and the Atman of the Vedantins. (*SD*, v. 1, Stanza 5, sl. 2)

This manifested Divine Wisdom is called ‘Mahat’ by HPB. Further, she underlines the following:

MAHAT is the first product of Pradhana, or Akasa, and Mahat — Universal intelligence ‘whose *characteristic property* is Buddhi’ — is no other than the *Logos*, for

Mrs Svitlana Gavrylenko is Organizing Secretary of the TS in Ukraine. Talk delivered at the international Convention, Adyar, 30 December 2014.

Theosophy and the Need for Ideals in the Modern World

he is called 'Eswara' Brahma, Bhava, etc. . . . He is, in short, the 'Creator' or the divine mind in creative operation, 'the cause of all things.' He is the 'first-born'. . . (SD, v. 1, Stanza 7, sl. 5)

In the *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, HPB calls Mahat:

the Divine Ideation in active (creative) operation, and also 'the one *impersonal* Great Architect of the Universe'. (Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge, pages 21 and 50. (<<http://www.phx-ult-lodge.org/Transactions.htm>>)

Mahat, in the Esoteric interpretations, is in reality the Third Logos or the Synthesis of the Seven creative rays, the Seven Logoi. Out of the seven so-called Creations, Mahat is the third, for it is the Universal and Intelligent Soul, Divine Ideation, combining the ideal plans and prototypes of all things in the manifested objective as well as subjective world. (Ibid, page 15: <<http://www.phx-ult-lodge.org/Transactions.htm>>)

In the Instructions to her inner group, HPB continues:

The third Logos, Mahat, becomes Manas in man, Manas being only Mahat individualized, as the sunrays are individualized in bodies that absorb them. The sunrays give life, they fertilize what is already there, and the individual is formed. Mahat, so to say, fertilizes, and Manas is the result. (*The Secret Doctrine*, Cambridge University Press, digitally printed version, 2011, p. 560)

Thus, each Man, who is also a Microcosm, has a potential of Divine Ideation.

This knowledge per se is not new, but is presented in a new interpretation. The same was also taught by Plato (427-347 BC). Plato's teaching about ideas is expounded in many of his works, namely in his dialogues: *The Republic*, *The Symposium*, *The Phaedo*, and so on.

Plato divides all things in existence into two spheres: first, eternal and self-existent ideas (general concepts), and second, temporal, short-term and non independent things which belong to the sense-perceptible world. Ideas exist with no relationship to the world of physical matter; ideas evolve earlier than thoughts about material things. Ideas are the forms of things which we are dealing with in our daily life. Ideas are eternal, unchangeable, unlimited. Ideas are born from the concepts of Oneness. 'Oneness' is the self Goodness.

In the dialogue 'The Phaedo', Plato speaks about something that by itself is beauty, goodness, greatness.

According to Plato, those who are consistently walking up the stairs of contemplation of beauty will see something beautiful, amazing by its own nature:

He who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a Nature of wondrous beauty — a Nature which in the first place is ever-lasting, not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning; secondly, not fair in one point of view and foul in another, or at one time or in one relation or at one place fair, at

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another time or in another relation or at another place foul, as if fair to some and foul to others, or in the likeness of a face or hands or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, or existing in any other being, as for example, in an animal, or in heaven or in earth, or in any other place'. (<<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/symposium.html>>)

Such a description is already sufficient to identify a set of important features of Plato's notion of the 'idea'. These features include the following: objectivity, un-relatedness, independence from all sense-perceptions, and from all preconditions and limitations associated with time and space etc. Plato's beautiful 'eidos' or 'idea', in Plato's specific understanding of this notion, is a true and real entity which exists beyond sense-perception and can be perceived only by the mind.

According to Plato, the definition of the 'idea' includes: 1) a cause, concept, guideline principle, thought as a source of objective reality, its nature and relationships; 2) a pattern used by the Demiurge to create the material world; 3) a goal which is considered to be the highest goodness thus sought for by all beings.

Following Carl Gustav Jung, modern psychology uses the term 'archetype' which is derived from two Greek words: 'arche' (the beginning) and 'typos' (form, pattern). Philosophers in late antiquity used this term to describe a prototype, an idea. Jung used this term to describe certain innate universal preconscious psychic dispositions which are the components of the collective unconscious.

Theosophy comprises numerous ideas needed to develop a new understanding of the world. These include, first of all, the idea of evolution, in its highest exalted spiritual sense, as described in the stanzas of Dzyan and comments to them. Then the ideas of Spiritual Hierarchy, of the Fundamental Unity of All Existence and of the One Life embracing all the Universe. And the Great Hermetic Axiom:

As is the Inner, so is the Outer; as is the Great, so is the Small; as it is above, so it is below; there is but ONE LIFE and LAW; and he that worketh it is ONE. Nothing is Inner, nothing is Outer; nothing is Great, nothing is Small; nothing is High, nothing is Low, in the Divine Economy.

How do these highly spiritual ideas, these highest intelligent entities who guide our evolution influence us, how are they reflected in our life, how do we perceive them? Each of us bears a small part of this Deity. It is our *manas*, our mind, the mind principle of our being which H. P. Blavatsky calls individualized Mahat.

Thus, our *manas* is capable of perceiving and producing ideas, though only at its own level. And our *manas* is performing this activity very successfully all the time. These are our human ideals with all their exalted and not fully exalted attributes and characteristics.

IDEAL is a multidimensional concept which embraces the following notions:

- ◆ the highest degree of importance of the thing;

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- ◆ the best and most accomplished state/condition of any event;
- ◆ individually accepted standard (recognized example) of something which, as a rule, is associated with personal qualities and abilities;
- ◆ most common, universal and, as a rule, absolute concept of what is good and proper;
- ◆ perfection of human relationships;
- ◆ a social order that ensures perfect human relations;
- ◆ best example of an ethical person with high standard.

We can consider the ideal of the universal Brotherhood of humanity to be one of such exalted ideals; it is based on the idea of unity of all beings. And this is a main object of the Theosophical Society.

Our ideals impact our life, shape our values, priorities, aspirations and objectives. Wise men have remarked as follows:

- ◆ According to Mahatma Gandhi, the important value of the ideal is that it is moving off as we approach it.
- ◆ Ukrainian philosopher Grygory Skovoroda said that a goal of a man is to acquire the highest virtues.
- ◆ Famous writer Leo Tolstoy said that good is the highest goal of our life. Whatever our concept of good is, our life is nothing but urge to good.

Finally, while talking about ideas and ideals, we should surely mention that beautiful images of our Masters are cherished in the heart of each Theosophist, providing us with an example of personified implementation of our ideas about

human virtues, and perfect human being. We are striving to reach these great images. Our Masters' minds are open to higher spheres of perception, which is described by them as follows:

It is not physical phenomena but these universal ideas that we study, as to comprehend the former, we have to first understand the latter. They touch man's true position in the universe, in relation to his previous and future births; his origin and ultimate destiny; the relation of the mortal to the immortal; of the temporary to the eternal; of the finite to the infinite; ideas larger, grander, more comprehensive, recognizing the universal reign of Immutable Law, unchanging and unchangeable in regard to which there is only an ETERNAL Now . . . (*ML* No. 6, Barker ed.)

The essence of work conducted by the Masters on a mental plane is to transfer ideas through the flow of inspiration to those receptive souls who are capable of shaping the ideas to become human ideals. It is just this work that the Theosophical Society was initiated to do by the Masters themselves. They strove to identify and bring together into this Theosophical Society potential co-workers able to perceive and transfer to all humanity the ideas that are urgent from the evolutionary point of view and required for further implementation of the evolutionary order. H. P. Blavatsky was very good in describing this, as we can see in the article 'Madame Blavatsky on the Views of the Theosophists':

'All the great and noble characters, all

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the grand geniuses — the poets, painters, sculptors, musicians — all who have worked at any time for the realization of their highest ideal, irrespective of selfish ends — have been Spiritually inspired; . . . working consciously . . . for the elevation and spiritualization of mankind. We believe that everything in material life is most intimately associated with Spiritual agencies'. (*The Spiritualist*, London, February 8, 1878, pp. 68-69: <http://www.katinkahesslink.net/blavatsky/articles/v1/y1878_006.htm>)

However, selfless is the labour of high spiritual workers of the highest mental plane, the success and effectiveness of this work depends on us, on human beings for whom this work is being carried out. Specifics and difficulties of this process are explained by Master KH in his letter to A. P. Sinnett:

How am I to give expression to ideas for which you have as yet no language? The finer and more susceptible heads get like yourself, more than others do, and even when *they* get a little extra dose it is lost for want of words and images to fix the floating ideas. Perhaps, and undoubtedly you know not to what I now refer to. You *will* know it one day — patience. To give more knowledge to a man than he is yet fitted to receive is a dangerous experiment. (*ML*, L. No. 49)

Nevertheless, the establishment of the Theosophical Society (TS) was also a part of such an experiment. The TS was created in order to bring together people

ready to serve humanity, and the nature of such a service should be specific and reflect the readiness of people to cooperate with Masters in introducing new ideas to the world and in developing new, purer and more exalted ideals.

Today's world is still caught up in materialistic world views. It is governed by pragmatic motives, and the priority of spiritual values has not been recognized yet. Success is interpreted as ability to manipulate people in order to achieve selfish goals. Moral criteria have deteriorated and are distorted. Information space is saturated with delusions and illusions. All the above provide an evidence of the extreme pressing need to introduce pure exalted ideals into the world. This is a social aspect of the service provided by the TS to the humanity, because these are the ideals that give direction to an individual as a system of his/her innate motives. Human ideals are expressed as personal incentives and motives that reflect personal aspiration to copy and follow the example regarded to be the highest model.

In 'Some Practical Suggestions for Daily Life', HPB spoke about the task before a theosophist to strive to become rather than to seem, thus enabling him to continually approach closer to his aim:

He will not, however, reach this point without a struggle, nor will the real progress that he is conscious of making fill him with conceit or self-righteousness; for if his ideal be high, and his progress towards is real, he will be the rather

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humiliated than puffed up. The possibilities of further advancement, and the conception of still higher planes of being that open before him, will not dampen his ardour, though they will surely kill his conceit. It is just this conception of the vast possibilities of human life that is needed to kill out *ennui*, and to convert apathy into zest. Life thus becomes worth living for its own sake when its mission becomes plain, and its splendid opportunities are once appreciated. The most direct and certain way of reaching this higher plane is the cultivation of the *principle of altruism*, both in *thought* and *life*. Narrow indeed is the sweep of vision that is limited to self, and that measures all things by the principle of self-interest, for while the soul is thus self limited it is impossible for it to conceive of any high ideal, or to approach any higher plane of life. The conditions of such advancement lie *within* rather than without, and are fortunately made independent of circumstances and condition in life. The opportunity therefore is offered to *everyone* of advancing from height to height of being, and of thus working with nature in the accomplishment of the evident purpose of life. (<<http://hpb.narod.ru/DailyLife.htm>>)

The Key to Theosophy says:

The true Theosophist must put in practice the loftiest moral ideal, must strive to realize his unity with the whole of humanity, and work ceaselessly for others.

These renewed ideals will help in-

dividuals and a whole society to develop new relationships with the outer world, with each other and with nature. New relationships will pave the way to new life priorities and values which in turn will succeed in altering at first the direction of our mentality, and then, the expression of this mentality in our deeds. And then, the outer world will change.

It is precisely the practical application of Theosophy. A veteran of modern theosophical movement, Joy Mills, wrote in an article:

The practicality of Theosophy lies to the extent to which we have permitted Theosophical Ideals to work upon us in clearing up our perceptions so that we may see things whole and unobscured.

So, by guiding our mind towards ideals of exalted beauty, nobleness, justice and dignity, we are purifying our mind and enabling the original divine ideas to be imprinted in our consciousness. Thus we foster our enlightenment and transformation, and make ourselves capable of transferring these ideas to other people, and changing ourselves to serve as an example and a carrier of exalted ideas and ideals.

To conclude, I would like to quote one of HPB's suggestions for daily life:

There is no more valuable thing possessed by any individual than an exalted ideal towards which he continually aspires, and after which he moulds his thoughts and feelings, and forms, as best he may, his life. ('Some Practical Suggestions for Daily Life') ✧

On Relationship, Part IV — Weaving the Sacred

RAPHAEL LANGERHORST

IN previous parts of this article we have looked at our personality and divine nature, contrasting them and seeing the need to disentangle our mind from restlessness, passions, and desires — the source of conflict, and instead turn our awareness towards our higher divine principles, our eternal self.

Harmony

How does disharmony arise in life? Investing our energy on separated identities, naturally leads to conflict. The problem is not in the separation, but in seeing our selves as separated entities; there is no such self! Of course our life confronts us with ‘you and me’ — and ‘others’. That is not the problem, but issues arise out of the belief that we actually *are* these entities, that we identify with these material garments. Such identification leads to self-glorification of our personality, vainly trying to affirm its reality, which involves constant fear of loss (of that self-identity) — and the need to separate ourselves from others, which is achieved through conflict (so we un-

consciously generate conflict). Of course we do not realize that we separate ourselves from others, yet, as separated personalities, we live by contrast, identifying our selves just because of being different from others. But contrast, and our involvement with it, means conflict and thus suffering. This is especially so because we live in this our self that suffers as a result of our selfishness.

How can there be harmony with such a variety and differences in life and beings? In fact, there is no difference in all life, if we can but see the life in all. That is why it is necessary to establish our link to the Buddhi principle, which is the only way to realize universal unity, with wisdom and understanding as a consequence of such awareness. Only our entanglement in Kāma-Manas, the illusive self-will and desire-driven mind, enslaves our freedom and subjects us to restlessness, making us slaves to fancy circumstances.

Yet, being truly aware of the one Life in all, we may overcome all the seeming polarities — not by annihilating them, but

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by seeing the universal essence in what appears as opposites in the manifested world. This removes our entanglement and gives freedom, so-called liberation. We can then conduct our life without getting lost in petty self-delusion.

We are then able to see the harmony in all, the larger picture, and the symphony that life at large really is on its flow towards divine citizenship. However, at the same time we become aware of the cause of suffering, not just intellectually but through awareness of the life in bondage, out of compassion. The more we are able to overcome our suffering by realizing our own divine identity, we begin to share the suffering of the world at large, which still lies in chains, unaware of its own purpose and glorious destiny. This is not out of sentimentality or glorifying our own self, but by seeing the larger self, we take on that burden, and thus continue our suffering, not driven by our desires, but realizing the unity of all and our divine duty. This, in particular, is the path of any true Theosophist, uplifting humanity towards conscious divinity. And this background may serve as a basis for a higher purpose in our own personal relationships, to have us play our part in the divine symphony, conducted by the One in all.

Love

What do we seek? Unity or separation? Ultimately we become what we seek — is it life or is it death that attracts us? Investment in polarities drives towards separation and makes us slaves to these

polarities. Both attraction and repulsion are bondage, and as long as we live in these polarities, our relationships will be tainted by both, attraction and repulsion, ever changing, like the tides.

The unity that we seek, if so, is not found in the world of polarities, or in the ever changing, or in the fleeting. Unity is in awareness.

Love, being the most fundamental essence of our existence, reflects into all our aspects. Even sexuality is such a reflection, yet a reflection on the path of unconsciousness that we have come from and which keeps us bound to a lower form of existence in polarities, making us blind to our higher qualities as long as we are slaves to its influence and expression. Only through the link to Buddhi are we — living in our personalities still — capable of finding love as the same essence in all manifestation. This becomes genuine love, most profound and real, beyond the fleeting and ever-changing. In fact it is, finally, love that opens our mind to the divine reality in our self. As part of humanity at large love is also the quality that stirs divinity in all fellow beings. As such, we are called to commune with others — love in our heart, wisdom in our mind, freedom in our soul and purity in our body — in order to re-establish together our divine home, thereby finding our true fulfilment.

We find an interesting footnote regarding love in *The Secret Doctrine*, Volume III, p. 265:

The same author had (as Occultists have) a very reasonable objection to the modern

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etymology of the word ‘philosophy’, which is interpreted ‘love of wisdom’, and is nothing of the kind. The philosophers were scientists, and philosophy was a real science — not simply verbiage, as it is in our day. The term is composed of two Greek words whose meaning is intended to convey its secret sense, and ought to be interpreted as ‘wisdom of love’. Now it is in the last word, ‘love’, that lies hidden the esoteric significance: for ‘love’ does not stand here as a noun, nor does it mean ‘affection’ or ‘fondness’, but is the term used for Eros, that primordial principle in divine creation, the abstract desire in Nature for procreation, resulting in an everlasting series of phenomena. It means ‘divine love’, that universal element of divine omnipresence spread throughout Nature and which is at once the chief cause and effect. The ‘wisdom of love’ (or ‘philosophia’), meant attraction to and love of everything hidden beneath objective phenomena and the knowledge thereof. Philosophy meant the highest Adeptship — love of and assimilation with Deity. In his modesty Pythagoras even refused to be called a Philosopher (or one who knows every hidden thing in things visible; cause and effect, or absolute truth), and called himself simply a Sage, an aspirant to philosophy, or to Wisdom of Love — love in its exoteric meaning being as degraded by men then as it is now by its purely terrestrial application.

And a few pages further, in the first sentence of the text on p. 271, we find:

This Self, the highest, the one, and the

universal, was symbolized on the plane of mortals by the Sun, its life-giving effulgence being in its turn the emblem of the Soul — killing the terrestrial passions which have ever been an impediment to the re-union of the Unit Self (the Spirit) with the All-Self.

Thus we see that higher form of universal love as the fundamental basis of our existence. It is our awareness of this one universal self within all, which ultimately brings us freedom from our bondage to our terrestrial passions.

Freedom

What is freedom to us? Is it indulgence into the despotic desires of Kāma-Manas? Is it doing whatever we wish, not bound to any duty? Such is indeed slavery! But what do we want anyway? Who are we at all? And what is our duty really? We cannot be free, or have freedom, if we do not even know who *we* are. Thinking we are our body enslaves us to lust and sensuality, leading to ultimate destruction. Thinking we are our emotions enslaves us to wrath and fear, leading to endless suffering. Thinking we are our thoughts enslaves us to greed and pride, leading to bondage in separation. Freedom starts with knowing the one self in all.

Within the heart of every form and every fragment of every form exists the rhythmic beat of the one life, the controlling power of the one thought and the cohesion of the one feeling, which is love divine.

Geoffrey Hodson,
The Supreme Splendour, p. 31

The Sacred Bond

We cannot separate from life at large, or we shall lose our self in isolation (Avichi). The one universal divine essence reflecting into each of us is calling us home, in unity. Being entangled in this material existence we have to become aware of our common essence despite the diversity of expression, thus finding our self in every other. This leads to peace, genuine love, understanding and freedom, knowing the divine in each of us.

Progressing into material existence is separating our identities, and following that path into matter we experience ourselves in conflict with each other, while unaware of our actual and eternal unity within, our divine self. It is our challenge as human beings to rebind our existence to our immortality. This we can ultimately only achieve together, as each of us is reflecting, to the degree of our purity, certain aspects of that universal self and truth.

It is in this domain of experience, unconscious of our divinity, the battlefield of human nature, where we have to become aware of our mutual responsibility. Life is one, and we cannot escape it unless we seek our own destruction — not recommended. Humanity at large is that fabric of life that we weave constantly as we conduct our part of this larger symphony. At the end of Mabel Collins' *Light on the Path*, there is a small text

to be found on Karma. It is highly recommended to read this to see the beauty of the mutual responsibility and actuality of weaving that supreme splendour, that sacred bond, out of love divine, our immortal essence.

Epilogue

We find our own responsibility as well as opportunity to establish that sacred bond of love in our own relationships as part of that greater unity, uplifting humanity beyond destructiveness, blind desires, and passions. As such, knowing ourselves as ultimately immortal and divine, it is in our hands and hearts to establish freedom, reflecting through our immaculate garments the light within onto the world without — leading to universal brotherhood and weaving the fabric glorious, the sacred bond, love out of love divine.

It is our own love for love itself that draws us to our source. This divine longing needs nourishment at first, until we become drunken with eternity, which finally enables us to disentangle our mind from the terrestrial by the awareness of the higher. That we can find in ourself and in others alike, and it is That which is our ultimate source of immortal love, wisdom, understanding, bliss, and eternal unity.

(To be continued)

Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.

George Bernard Shaw

Service in Today's World

NANCY SECREST

ANNIE BESANT founded the Theosophical Order of Service in February 1908, six months after becoming president of the Theosophical Society. Why? because members asked her for a way 'to organize themselves in various lines of service in order to actively promote the first object of the Society: "To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity regardless of race, creed, sex, caste or colour".' That is what is said in the provisional constitution she published in the February 1908 issue of the *The Theosophist*.

But, there is more to it than that. It was because she herself was deeply committed to service as an integral part of the theosophic life. Annie Besant had been a social activist for many years before becoming president of the TS. She worked for the betterment of the poor: for better working hours and labour conditions, safer working conditions, and women's suffrage. We all know the stories about Annie Besant and others working on behalf of the 'match girls', children, and young women who sold matches on street corners to earn a few pennies. The

fight concerned the dangerous chemical used in the match factories — phosphorous — which gave rise to 'phossy jaw' amongst the factory women. Their jaws were simply eaten away by the daily presence of the phosphorous.

Duty was foremost to Annie Besant. Her writings often speak of duty, altruism, and selfless service. In her autobiography, written in 1886, she wrote: 'Deeper and deeper into my innermost nature ate the growing desire to succour, to suffer for, to save.' Service was indeed important to Annie Besant. Her presidential address of 1907 asked the question:

What of our practice? . . . our lodges should not be contented with a programme of lectures, private and public, and with classes. The members should be known as good workers in all branches of beneficent activity. The Lodge should be the centre, not the circumference, of our work. To the lodge for inspiration and knowledge; to the world for service and teaching.

In February 1908 Mrs Besant founded the Theosophical *Society* Order of Service. (That name remains the same today.

Mrs Nancy Secrest is the international Secretary of the Theosophical Order of Service. Talk delivered at the international Convention, Adyar, 29 December 2014.

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It is only in common usage that the word Society is dropped and we say TOS). Three months later, Mrs Besant published the article written by a Master of the Wisdom, and printed by HPB in an early number of *Lucifer*, that inspired her to form the service arm of the Theosophical Society. Following is the keynote of that article:

The problems of true Theosophy and its great mission are, first, the working out of clear, unequivocal conceptions of ethics, ideas, and duties, such as shall best and most fully satisfy the right and altruistic feelings in humans; and second, the modelling of these conceptions for their adaptation into such forms of daily life, as shall offer a field where they may be applied with most equitableness . . . Theosophy must be made practical. (*The American Theosophist*, Feb. 1942, p. 39).

And Mrs Besant wrote:

In those who cannot be happy while others are miserable; in those whose meals are rendered bitter by starvation of the poor; in those whose luxury is a burden because of the want of the miserable — in those will you find the builders of the new civilization, those who shall sacrifice that others may be happy.

Even so, the TOS was not everyone's cup of tea, and that is all right. In the TS, just as each is free to pursue study in his or her own way, we are each also free to serve in our own way.

Those who joined the Order got to work immediately, forming leagues that

focused on particular societal issues. For instance, in India a 'League for the Abolition of Child Parentage' was formed that opposed early child marriage. There were anti-vivisection leagues, leagues to protect mentally deficient children and children in general, leagues for slum improvement, and to teach Theosophy to prisoners. There were at least sixty-one recorded leagues around the world by 1910.

The world was a busy place in those early years of the TOS. The North Pole was reached in 1908 and the South Pole a couple of years later. The first airplane flight was made across the United States. It took eighty-four (84) days. The first flight across the English Channel happened that year as well. The World Congress for women's rights opened in Amsterdam. King Edward VII of Great Britain met with Emperor Franz Joseph to advise Germany against aggressive (anti-British) policies and there were race riots in Springfield, Illinois, in the United States. In 1910, the 13th Dalai Lama fled Tibet from Chinese troops to British India, and Gandhi supported the African People's Organization's resolution to declare the day of arrival of the Prince of Wales in South Africa as a day of mourning. This was in protest against the South Africa Acts disenfranchisement of Indians, Coloureds, and Africans in the upcoming Union of South Africa. Also, in 1922, Portugal approved women's suffrage.

My idea, when I looked up all these things, was to show the differences between service in 1908 and the early years,

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and service today. When Annie Besant founded the TOS vast numbers in the populations of England and other countries suffered under the weight of horribly long work hours, meagre wages, child labour, oppression of women and those of other races or ethnicities, crime and war or the threat of war. The newly formed TOS leagues worked to alleviate the suffering caused by these and other societal woes.

In 1927, Max Wardell became the Chief Brother of the International TOS and restructured the organization. The concept of leagues was dropped in favour of departments. Some countries today continue to have 'departments' but most simply have 'projects'. It does not really matter what we call it as long as the work gets done.

In July of 1938, in an attempt to ensure that the work did indeed get done, the *American Theosophist* dedicated a page of its publication each month for the use of the TOS. It was called 'Theosophy in Action: TOS Bulletin Board'. Its initial message began:

This page, given for Theosophical Order of Service use, is to be a 'Bulletin Board' for calls to work. Anyone can send in a call and everyone is urged to answer and help with as many calls as he or she can. Individuals and lodges are urged to strive to give aid to as many as possible.

Some Sections continue this tradition today. New Zealand, for example, reserves two pages of its publication for reports on its TOS work.

The world has changed since 1908, in part due to the efforts of members of the TS and the TOS who have focused on service as spiritual action, lived the first Object and made it practical. The citizens of many countries in today's world enjoy shorter work weeks, better wages, better health care, housing, educational opportunities and religious freedom than our forebears. The work continues. You just heard a talk given by Mrs Usha Shah of Nairobi, Kenya, where some of these basic rights have yet to be realized, and Dr Deepa Padhi shared with us the work being done in Odisha region to help stop violence against women, and to ensure that women share equally in basic human rights. This is an issue that still needs attention all over the world. But, all in all, in many places the world is a better place today than in years and centuries past.

Yesterday you heard a talk given by Mrs Diana Dunningham Chapotin in which she told us that,

Because the media bring almost instantly into our living room reports of acts of great violence committed on the other side of the globe, we have the impression that the world is an increasingly dangerous place to live in. In fact individual and collective violence has been steadily declining over the past thousand years. The number of wars and the number of deaths through war all over the world has been going down for many centuries proportionate to the number of people on earth.

She said that while 'we need to be careful of statistics . . . it can be reliably said that

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today's citizens are far less at risk of being killed or subjected to violence than a century ago, and far, far less at risk than a thousand years ago'.

It is also true that because of media, such as television, radio, and the internet with email and social media access virtually at our fingertips, the planet seems a much smaller place. In preparing for these talks and our trip to Adyar, Diana, Deepa, Usha, and I were in touch pretty much constantly via the internet. Just fifty years ago it would not have been possible for four people from France, Africa, India, and the USA to communicate so readily and with such speed. I am finding for myself that as the world gets smaller in this way, it is easier to see that we all share the same basic needs and have the same basic rights to shelter, food, clean water, opportunities to provide for ourselves and our families, human dignity, respect, justice, freedom, and the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment.

The smaller the world becomes for us and the easier it is to connect with each other, the more we understand each other. The more we understand each other, the more apparent the oneness of all life becomes to us. We realize that we are one people, and ultimately we will realize that we are one Person — we are One. When we look at it this way, we realize that by serving others we serve ourselves. We realize that service work goes beyond feeding the body or the mind. It is a spiritual path that, when trodden consciously and selflessly, serves the giver as much as the receiver.

Yesterday, Diana went on to tell us of the greatly increasing number of charitable groups in the world today and that 'it is clear that there is tremendous growth in citizenly concern and involvement in reversing the direction in which we are headed on this planet'. The TOS has been a part of that 'involvement' since 1908. Today the TOS is active in thirty Sections of the Theosophical Society doing humanitarian work based on spiritual concepts. I would like to share some of that work with you this afternoon, to put a 'face' on the service performed by TOS Sections internationally.

To begin with, you may not know that the TOS has a UN committee. It is interesting to note that while not a spiritual organization, the United Nations' stated third purpose corresponds greatly with the Theosophical Society's first object, as it 'seeks to achieve international co-operation, promote human rights, and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.' The TS and TOS have supported the UN since its inception in 1945 as well as its predecessor the League of Nations. In fact, Annie Besant became one of the first members of the League of Nations Union in England. The TOS's UN committee produced a brochure, printed in October 2011 outlining the support shown to the UN by every TS president since Annie Besant. This is the first in a series of brochures the TOS-UN committee hopes to publish. Support for the UN is also shown through local TOS celebrations on UN Day. In the past several

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years, our Spanish language coordinator, Fernando Pérez Martin, has published thirty four issues of a newsletter about the UN's actions.

One of the service areas shared in common by the TOS and the UN is the promotion of peace. In the Philippines, conflict resolution and self-transformation workshops are being given for the military. And, recently, the TOS in France delivered hand-knitted teddies to the TOS in Ukraine for distribution to children displaced by war. We have many groups who run peace meditations.

Natural disasters, like war, can displace many people. Unlike other TOS projects that may be limited in scope to the group's local area, disaster relief is a concern that we tend to respond to on an international level. In recent years, the TOS worldwide has responded by raising funds to help with clean-up efforts, rebuilding and supplying food and water to those displaced by natural disasters, such as the earthquakes in Chile and Haiti a few years ago. The Hungarian TOS 'adopted' a flood-affected village with the blessings and support of the town's municipal officers. There was international response to the Kenyan feeding program initiated by Usha Shah and the Nairobi TOS in the face of an acute food shortage. The TOS there went on to drill a borehole to provide fresh water to a village in the district of Kitui east of Nairobi. They also installed solar lighting for the town. Last year when super typhoon Yolanda hit the Philippines many TS and TOS Sections responded with donations to sustain the victims and

rebuild their homes. TOS members in the Philippines also gave extensive, outstandingly well-organized hands-on assistance. Teddies knitted by English, Italian, and French TOS members made their way to many children affected by some of these disasters. Most recently, the international TOS sent a donation to the TOS in India towards rehabilitation work after the flooding in Jammu and Kashmir and for Cyclone Andhra relief.

TOS groups worldwide work on a large variety of social service projects. Many of them focus their attention on providing or supporting schools, particularly those that teach the children theosophical concepts and virtues. Helping children is close to the hearts of many theosophists. Of course, the largest and most successful of these efforts is the Golden Link College. The Golden Link School, established by the Theosophical Order of Service in the Philippines, has been providing transformational education for less privileged children since 2002. Eighty-five percent of the student body is on scholarship. The school is regarded as a model of Theosophy in action throughout the theosophical world. Besides teaching core academics, the school teaches meditation and focuses on developing character, integrity and self-confidence in its students. At college level, courses in Theosophy are part of the core curriculum. These qualities of character will be communicated to others throughout the students' lives with the potential of causing positive changes in the world that promote peace

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and harmony. The TOS in Pakistan provides home schools for girls who would otherwise not be able to get an education. Members there are strong in their resolve to continue with their various programmes unimpeded.

The TOS in Finland supports the work of the Olcott Memorial Higher Secondary School and the Social Welfare Centre at Adyar, Chennai, India, and one of our newest TOS Sections, in the Dominican Republic, recently supplied books to needy children. Many other TOS groups, particularly in India, run schools or educational programmes for children, and TOS members around the world sponsor the education of many hundreds of others.

In Sweden, the TOS helps orphans and street children in Latvia. The Italian TOS is the major sponsor of an orphanage in India, and the TOS-USA helped to support Chushul Children's Home in Tibet until last year, when the children were moved to a state-run home by the Chinese government. In Kenya, the Nairobi TOS gives parties for children living in slum areas. The children are treated to an afternoon of food and fun and a little ice cream, as Usha told us yesterday.

Hopefully, none of the children got tummy aches or they might be in need of the TOS Healing Network. In many places around the world healing groups get together, usually weekly, to perform a ritual and a healing meditation that calls the Devas to assist in healing, or a peaceful transition from this life. Names of those in need of healing are submitted by family or friends, and are now shared inter-

nationally. Other medically-related TOS projects include the issuing of mobility aids which is the principal project of the TOS in India. One out of every 200 children born in developing countries suffers from a reparable congenital or rheumatic heart defect. The Heart Babies Project instituted by the Tanzanian TOS addresses this issue. Also, in Tanzania, the TOS youth started the first African branch of World Care Way (WCW), a charitable organization for youth dedicated to various social causes and environmental issues.

Animals deserve healing too, or so thought Ms Rozi Ulics of the TOS-USA who began an animal healing network there. The TOS in Hungary has followed suit. The TOS in Argentina has started its own animal shelter. And, in the spirit of ahimsa, several TOS Sections, including Portugal, Uruguay, and Hungary, teach vegetarian or vegan cooking classes, or have produced DVDs or vegetarian cookbooks. Interestingly, the TS in Europe produced an excellent vegetarian cookbook in 2003.

The TOS in France gave a seminar on a different kind of topic: burial, cremation and alternative funeral services. Michel Chapotin, who heads the TOS in France, presented a theosophical perspective on cremation to more than fifty participants in this predominantly Roman Catholic country where burial is the norm.

Another of the original departments of the TOS — Arts and Music — also provides avenues for service. In Australia a program on music and dance was

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recently offered by the Sunshine Coast TOS. The TOS in Brisbane also conducts an art show as a fundraising event. This year the TOS-USA gave support to Save World Art, an organization that is attempting to save some of the world's indigenous art forms from extinction.

In September 2013 the international TOS declared a worldwide focus on women's issues and asked TOS Sections to sign on to this commitment. Several Sections did sign on and are actively supporting women's safety, both outside and inside the home, education for women, equal economic opportunities and basic human rights. The especially fine work in gender issues of Dr Deepa Padhi and TOS Bhubaneswar in Odisha Region attracted significant support from TOS groups in other countries. Dr Padhi spoke of these issues this afternoon, but she did not tell you how they went to the then governor of the region and solicited his support to put up billboards to educate people about violence towards women in an attempt to stop it. Mrs Usha Shah told you that in Kenya, women are being taught various skills in order for them to help support themselves and their families. In the USA, the winter issue of our publication, *For the Love of Life*, has a women's issue theme with many fine

articles. The Olcott Education Society's Women's Vocational Centre, while not a TOS program, is a shining example of providing poor women with skills that will help them to be more independent and to help provide for themselves and their families. The Centre teaches tailoring and weaving.

And finally, the TOS right here in Chennai has been very busy providing clean drinking water at the TS estate at Adyar, and organizing complete, state-of-the-art medical check-ups for all employees here. The TOS Chennai has also organized eye checks, spectacles, and operations for thousands of needy residents in Chennai.

I want you to know that the international TOS is here to help and support you in your own service endeavours, whether in your private lives, within the TOS or the TS. The TOS has all kinds of resources available on its website and people willing to listen to you and share ideas. The TOS's whole reason for existing is to support the Theosophical Society's work in making Theosophy of transformative value in the world and in the life of the individual spiritual seeker. I ask the TS to take advantage of the TOS's potential, its enthusiasm, its energy. ✧

**Life's most persistent and urgent question is:
'What are you doing for others?'**

Martin Luther King, Jr

The Cycle of Life

I. The Sowing

What dost thou love, thou wild little soul?
'Tis woman I love, and a clinging kiss
On passionate lips is a lifetime's bliss.
Were I true to but one, my heart would tire;
So I light love's flame at many a fire.

II. The Reaping

What dost thou love, thou sad little soul?
Many a woman whom I loved and slew
With selfish passion, in the days that flew.
And, oh, how they scorn me, as we meet again!
Why need the reaping be such bitter pain?

III. A 'Little Child'

What does thou love, thou wise little soul?
Sunset and leaf, and the dews of the morning,
Roses and lilies the garden adorning.
Sweet is all nature, but sweeter my kind;
Where is my playmate, thou western wind?

IV. Finding 'The Kingdom'

What dost thou love, thou beautiful soul?
Glory of loving, glory of serving,
Strength to perform each task unswerving;
To live and to labour, dreaming of Thee,
To love and to serve through eternity.

C. Jinarājadāsa

Reflections

SURENDRA NARAYAN

AS a young man, one remembers to have come across a statement which said — God is in Heaven and all is well with the world. Over the decades, however, observing all that has been happening in the world, one sometimes feels like putting a question mark to that statement, for all is not well with the world today or at least does not seem to be so. There are diseases which cannot be controlled, much less cured, despite all the remarkable research in modern medicine; pollution has become rampant and pervasive, both in the environment and the human mind; global and local wars have erupted time and again; weapons of destruction are more deadly and more devastating; terrorism with its ruthless killings of innocent persons is assuming international proportions, and religious fundamentalism is raising its ugly head. There is more selfishness, leading to deprivation for the underprivileged and to ruthless competition in life, in national and international trade and commerce.

One sometimes wonders whether all this is not a pointer to the world moving towards darkness, decay and an end to all

that could represent basic human values of goodness and beauty in life. One begins to question — is this why the universe was created? Is there any purpose behind what is called, God's creation?

At this stage of questioning and doubt, comes to one's mind a statement one had come across in *At the Feet of the Master* many years ago — that God has a plan and that plan is evolution; that this plan is so beautiful, so glorious that once a person has seen it, he cannot help working for it, making himself or herself one with it. Recollection of this positive statement gives some comfort, revives some hope and one begins to seriously think further what is it all about; is there really a purpose, a plan behind this creation and what is our place and role therein?

A theosophist is an optimist and, therefore, explores further. As a result, he or she is able to discover many encouraging statements, many references to evolution, to the onward march of creation and of individual human beings, who are an indivisible part of that creation and therefore affect it by their attitudes and conduct in life. One finds that Madame

Reprint from *The Theosophist* September 1995. Mr Surendra Narayan is former Vice-President of the Theosophical Society, Adyar.

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Blavatsky and others, in their writings, have dwelt extensively on the divine plan for human progression and perfection. There are also statements to say that while this plan is orderly, it does not progress vertically; it moves in cycles or in spirals. It has been referred to as 'a tremendous gyratory progress'. In *The Secret Doctrine*, H. P. Blavatsky states that the whole order of Nature evinces a progressive march towards a *higher life* and that there is design in the action of the seemingly blindest forces. She then adds that the purpose of evolution, so far as human beings are concerned, is the spiritual evolution or unfoldment of the inner immortal being.

Looking at the index to *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, one finds about eighteen references to evolution. Letter No. 9 states at one point:

Propelled by the irresistible cyclic impulse the Planetary Spirit has to descend before he can reascend. On his way he has to pass through the whole ladder of Evolution, missing no rung, to halt at every star world as he would at a station.

This onward movement towards goodness and beauty has been referred to in the spiritual traditions in various ways. To mention only two:

The Muslim Sufi mystic, Jalaluddin Rumi, after tracing evolution from the mineral to man, proceeds further to a stage where 'I shall become what no mind ever conceived', and refers to it as a state of non-existence, where one ceases to be a separate entity and merges in conscious-

ness with the One and therefore sees all life as one whole.

The 'Revelation' to St John taken in a larger timeframe says:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them.

That the universe is not just a fortuitous concurrence of atoms, but seems to be imbued with, and guided and governed by a superior intelligence, is now being discerned by some of the modern scientists also. They marvel at the intricate homeostatic processes that regulate and control the chemical balance of the oceans, soils and atmosphere, the complex and yet finely tuned functioning of life in all its manifestations and the orderly movement of innumerable spheres in this vast cosmos. In a now well-known statement, Einstein mentioned that his religious feeling took the form of rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law which revealed an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all man's systematic thinking and acting was an utterly insignificant reflection. It seems to be sound common sense to infer that this superior intelligence or 'pervasive mind' that biologist George Wald speaks of, would not be functioning without a sensible purpose. That despite some apparent setbacks to this movement towards the

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true, the good, and the beautiful, it will go on unhindered is brought out in passages in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*. In Letter No. 48, the Mahatma refers to 'the streaks of twilight, upon the Eastern sky, at morning's early dawn, after a night of intense darkness; the aurora of a more "spiritually intellectual" cycle'. And in Letter No. 28, He asserts: 'Nor do we feel in any way concerned about the revival of our ancient arts and high civilization, for these are as sure to come back in their time, and in a higher form . . . Fear not; . . . The keepers of the sacred Light did not safely cross so many ages but to find themselves wrecked on the rocks of modern scepticism. Our pilots are too experienced sailors to allow us to fear any such disaster.'

Mystic poet Gerald Hopkins captures the certainty of a beneficent Presence thus, in one of his poems, 'God's Grandeur', quoted in an article by Elsie Hamilton in the June 1995 issue of *The Theosophist*:

There lives the dearest freshness
deep down things;
.....
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and
with ah! bright wings.

An important point that comes out in almost all the references to the divine plan for human progression and perfection is the stress invariably laid therein on the need for us, human beings, to cooperate consciously with that plan by rising above the separative self with its self-centred desires, and moving towards a life of

larger love, of service, and of dedication to the good of mankind.

Evolution is thus linked with our consciously seeking the welfare of the rest of mankind — indeed all life. In the *Bhagavadgītā*, one on the upward path of yoga is seen as working for the welfare of the whole world. Christ asks us to love our neighbours as ourselves. The Buddha laid stress on compassion — love all life like a mother who loves her child, her only child. The Buddhist teaching goes even further, for true Buddhists are expected to grow so much in selflessness and love for others that they renounce nirvana for oneself and seeks to labour on till all are able to attain that blissful state.

Nobody should, therefore, be led to believe that because evolution is bound to go on, one need not stir oneself and thus remain indifferent to the present-day ills of society, making no effort to correct the distortions that have surfaced in the life of the world. As Madame Blavatsky puts it, the burden of 'cooperative work with nature' has been cast on each one of us. Hence, the sluggards will lag behind, while the worst, she warns, 'the failures of Nature — will, like some individual men, vanish from the human family, without even leaving a trace behind'.

Mankind has been bestowed with freedom to think and act, but not the freedom to override or thwart the Great Will which moves to the good. Both mythology and history tell us that evil has never ultimately triumphed, and therefore, mankind's aberrations at any point of time, like those we observe in

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the world today, are only like flitting clouds in a vast sky; even like whirlpools, froth and foam on the surface of a large river which continues to flow on

inexorably towards its destination — to be one with the great ocean of bliss, from which it had risen originally as vapourous clouds. ✧

Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion.

Henry David Thoreau
Walden

White Lotus Day and HPB

GEETHA JAIKUMAR

MAY 8, known as White Lotus Day, is celebrated throughout the theosophical world to commemorate the passing of Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, also known as HPB, from the sorrows, pains, and tribulations of this world, to a state of greater Life, Light, and Love. She was Co-Founder of the Theosophical Society, and it was Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, her other Co-Founder, who gave the name to this Day, as lotuses bloom in profusion during this time of the year.

Madame Blavatsky was responsible for resurrecting the forgotten truths of the ancient wisdom tradition and presenting them in an understandable form to the modern world. This was an extremely difficult task, and her path was filled with hurdles, relentless opposition, slander, and ridicule. All of us whose lives have been touched by theosophy and theosophical teachings, owe her a great debt of gratitude. Without her unmatched courage and enormous self-sacrifice, the wisdom teachings would not have been revealed to us and our lives would have been much poorer as a result.

Madame Blavatsky led an extremely adventurous life, filled with interesting

and important incidents. Right from her childhood, she was clairvoyant and on many occasions saw the majestic figure of a Hindu in a white turban whom she called her Protector, since she believed he had saved her life on several occasions. Willful and headstrong, and striving for independence, 16-year-old Helena married Nikifor Blavatsky, the Vice Governor of Erevan, Russia, who was forty years old, in 1849. In less than three months, she left him and returned to her relatives.

Shortly after, Madame Blavatsky began more than 20 years of extensive travel all over the world. Between 1848 and 1875 it is reported that she went around the world three times in search of wisdom about the nature of life and the reason for human existence. She also spent a lot of time in Tibet, which brought her into contact with mystic traditions from all over the world. Since she travelled alone, this period of her life is difficult for her biographers to document. It is reported that only her father knew where his daughter was, and from time to time would send money to her.

In her Sketchbook, now in the Adyar Archives, Madame Blavatsky says that

Mrs Geetha Jaikumar is the Editor of *Wake Up India* magazine. Based on a talk given on 8 May 2015 at the Adyar Headquarters Hall.

White Lotus Day and HPB

she met her Teacher, Master M., in the physical body for the first time in Hyde Park, London, on her twentieth birthday. While in Paris, she received an order from her Master to go to New York where she subsequently met Col Olcott in 1874, who had decided to investigate and report the spiritualistic phenomena taking place at the Eddy farmhouse in Chittenden, Vermont, and thus began their unique collaboration to bring theosophy to the world.

Through her occult training, Madame Blavatsky had developed psychic abilities that allowed her to command the elementals through which she could perform many phenomena. From June 1876 until December 1878 she and Col Olcott lived in an apartment situated in New York City, known as 'The Lamasery'. This place became the unofficial headquarters of the newly formed Theosophical Society and a centre of attraction for people interested in Occultism, Kabbalah, and Spiritualism. Madame Blavatsky's first major literary effort, *Isis Unveiled*, was undertaken during this period. Later, apart from her magnum opus, *The Secret Doctrine*, and other theosophical gems like *The Voice of the Silence*, and *The Key to Theosophy*, she also wrote books of her extensive travels, *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan*, and *The People of the Blue Mountains*.

Madame Blavatsky and Col Olcott left London for India on 19 January 1879. They arrived in Bombay where they stayed for three years in a building on the top of a hill that they nicknamed The Crows Nest. On 23 April 1882 the Founders arrived

by ship to Madras. A week later they were taken to see a piece of property as a possible new Headquarters for the Theosophical Society. When Madame Blavatsky saw the Estate at Adyar, she declared the Master wants this purchased. In 1883 she passed most of her time editing *The Theosophist* (the main source of Theosophical teachings at the time) and answering correspondence.

After a stay of almost three years at Adyar, consequent to the fallacious accusations of the Society for Pyschical Research, she returned to Europe, where she spent her time very fruitfully. In April 1891, a very serious epidemic of influenza struck London and HPB too contracted the infection and after a few days, succumbed to her illness and passed to peace on 8 May at 11 a.m.

As G. R. S. Mead, HPB's last private secretary, said to a small assembly of officers, staff, and friends at her passing:

Much as we love and reverence our leader, our devotion to the work must not rest on the transient basis of affection for a personality, but on the solid foundation of a conviction that in Theosophy itself, and in it alone, are to be found those eternal spiritual principles of right thought, right speech and right action, which are essential to the progress and harmony of humanity.

We need to ponder over these words, which touch a chord deep within us, and see how each of us can make ourselves suitable instruments for spreading universal brotherhood, peace, and compassion. ✧



A well-attended seminar was held at the Lodge of the TS in Alicante, Spain, from 30 April to 3 May 2015, guided by the Chairman of the European Theosophical Federation, Miss Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu

Theosophical Work around the World



White lotuses were offered at the conclusion of the White Lotus Day function held on 8 May 2015 in the Headquarters Hall at Adyar to commemorate the passing of Madame H. P. Blavatsky

Theosophical Work around the World

Spain

A seminar was held at the Lodge of the TS in Alicante, Spain, from 30 April to 3 May 2015, guided by the Chairman of the European Theosophical Federation and General Secretary of the TS in France, Miss Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu. Around forty people came from all parts of the country to listen to her in-depth talks on 'Self-Realization'.

Among the highlights, the three attributes were explored as well as the three symbolic aspects of the Divine: SAT, CHIT, ANANDA, and creation, preservation, and destruction.

India

On 4 May, Buddha Purnima Day, which marks Gautama Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death, the international Vice-President, Dr Chittaranjan Satapathy, addressed the members of the Barabati Lodge, Cuttack, Odisha, and discussed the important teachings of the Buddha with them. He also visited the Cuttack Centre of the Krishnamurti Foundation in India on 17 May and gave a presentation on 'Where Theosophy meets Krishnamurti'.

Adyar

The passing away to higher planes by Madame H. P. Blavatsky on 8 May is

commemorated as White Lotus Day. This year the International Secretary, Ms Marja Artamaa, led the gathering on that day at Adyar in paying homage to HPB. Chairing the meeting she pointed out the significance of White Lotus Day and the symbolism attached to it. She reminded all in the audience about HPB's clarion call 'to keep the link unbroken'. Dr Geetha Jaikumar gave a short talk on the life of HPB, a summary of which is reproduced separately in this issue.

This was followed by readings from *The Voice of the Silence* by Prof. C. A. Shinde. The International Treasurer, Mr K. Narasimha Rao, read a chapter from the *Bhagavadgītā*. A few passages from *The Light of Asia* were read by Ms H. Sripriya. The meeting came to a close with offering of flowers at the feet of the Founders' statues.

Changes in Association and Agency

The Regional Association of Central America comprises Nicaragua and El Salvador. Mrs Beatriz Elisena Martínez Pozas has been chosen as their Organizing Secretary, following Mrs Ligia Gutiérrez S. The Presidential Agency of Bolivia has a new Agent, Mrs Guillermina Ríos de Sandoval, following Mrs Teresa Wayer de Núñez. ✧

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† Presidential Agency

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