

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



THE THEOSOPHIST

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

Cycles and Longing

TIM BOYD

IN the first chapter (Proem) of *The Secret Doctrine* (SD) H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) makes a couple of important statements. One of them consists of three fundamental propositions. Her assertion is that a clear apprehension of these three fundamental ideas is a prerequisite for an understanding of the overarching occult system of thought. In brief the fundamental propositions are:

(1) The one Absolute reality, said to be unthinkable and unknowable.

(2) Periodicity, or the cyclic nature of everything.

(3) Karma and Reincarnation “the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul . . . through the Cycle of Incarnation (or ‘Necessity’) in accordance with cyclic and karmic law.”

I would like to examine **the second** of these Propositions, which relates to “**periodicity**”, more familiarly called “**cycles**” — in Nature, within ourselves, and cycles of consciousness. The fact that something is described as “fundamental” or as a “law” should be more of a motivation for us to ask questions than to sit back and accept.

What is it about cycles that make them so fundamental? Anyone who gives even the slightest attention to this matter will be very familiar with cycles as they impact

us individually. Every day we wake up in the morning, every night we go to sleep. Sleeping and waking links with the broader cycle of the Earth’s rotation on its axis resulting in day and night. Within our own body there are circadian rhythms, our “biological clock”, that correlate with this greater cycle of day and night. From the physiology of the body’s organs right down to the individual cells, there are interlinking daily rhythms. Seasons come and go, and come again.

The idea of pointing our attention in this direction is that the process of consideration links us with the greater body of Ageless Wisdom teachings. We tend to think of these cycles as repetitive. It is the nature of cycles that they repeat. Sometimes we become fixed in our understanding such that we see day and night, or sleeping and waking, as an ongoing fixture of reality.

The ancient Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, made the statement that “No man ever steps in the same river twice”, for the reason that each time we put our foot in the river not only are the waters composing the river not the same, but the person stepping into the river has changed. This idea of cycles should cause us to think of change. Although they are repetitive,

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they are not static. There are three things that HPB says are eternal — space, duration (from which we derive our understanding of time), and motion. Movement and its corollary, change, are eternal.

In Buddhism there is a strong emphasis on understanding *samsāra*, the cycle or wheel of birth, death, and rebirth, we are trapped in by virtue of our ignorance. Life after life it repeats and we experience similar self-caused sufferings. But, it, too, is not static. As we recognize the possibility for enlightenment we enter a different, more expansive cycle, beyond our current capacity to understand.

HPB's purpose in presenting these three fundamental propositions was so that we could properly introduce ourselves to the system of thought that underlies occultism, which involves more than thinking. Confinement in the realm of thought severely limits our interaction. We can be knowledgeable without being wise. So for our purposes, particularly as members of the Theosophical Society (TS), what draws us here is some deeper purpose than mere acquaintance with a system of thought, however vast it may be. The question arises: What is it that not only leads us to this system of thought, but which transforms such a system into a spiritual path? What is the catalyst that transforms knowledge, even of the highest type, into something more?

In the language of mystical traditions there is a term that comes up time again and again. Within us the catalyst that moves us toward some requested, even demanded, union with our source is

“longing” — sometimes expressed as aspiring or yearning. The great mystic Rumi made the statement: “I could have never known what love is had I never felt this longing.” He was not talking about romantic love, but about the love of the Divine Beloved — the mutual love flowing between the lover and the Beloved. Our sense of separation is the beginning point. We know our connection exists, but somehow the linking thread has become weak.

In the Christian Bible there is a beautiful story that talks about the journey of the soul, the story of “The Prodigal Son”. It is the story of the soul moving from a state of oneness, to incarnation, and then the return, enriched by experience, to a state of oneness.

The key moment in the entire story occurs when the soul, which has travelled from its Divine home to the Far Land of incarnation in flesh, awakens from its deep involvement and fascination with all things worldly, and remembers the “Father’s House”, the condition of being united. Remembrance and longing initiate the journey of return. Longing for that seemingly lost or diluted sense of union with our source, expresses itself as a spiritual path, or genuine religious living.

These are some of the ways that we see the influence of this catalyzing factor of longing. I do believe that very often what moves us into this theosophical setting is a keen awareness of that quality within ourselves. Over time we allow what begins as a flame to be dulled down to an ember.

In *Light on the Path*, Mabel Collins

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addresses the quality of longing. First she says, (1) “Desire only that which is within you”; then, (2) “Desire only that which is beyond you.” The two seem to be incompatible! Then she says, (3) “Desire only that which is unattainable.” We are asked to think about these graded steps. To clarify the idea of the unattainable it says: “You will enter the light, but you will never touch the Flame.” If we persist, listen, and actually hear, ultimately we “will enter the light”, but its source is unattainable.

As a final point she speaks about the nature of “asking”. We are told to ask, to request deeper wisdom, deeper connection. She says that people are always asking for something. It is the nature of being human to want and to ask for it. Mostly such requests go unrealized,

because the request is made with the mind only. It is not made from the deeper sense of longing. She says that to ask in a genuine way is to feel “a hunger within”, a yearning of spiritual aspiration. When we ask in this manner we are responding to a soul hunger that requires nourishment. The hunger is our aspiration to move in the direction of spirit.

Light on the Path begins with the admonitions to “Kill out ambition”, “Kill out desire of life”, and “Kill out desire of comfort”, then goes on to list the many things and many ways that we *must* desire. One deals with personality, another one with reality.

To end with HPB’s Proem in *SD*: “Such are the basic conceptions on which *The Secret Doctrine* rests.” ✧

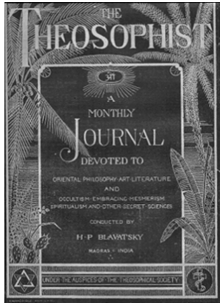
*** This visible universe of spirit and matter, they say, is but the concrete image of the ideal abstraction; it was built on the model of the first divine idea. Thus our universe existed from eternity in a latent state. The soul animating this purely spiritual universe is the central sun, the highest deity itself. It was not himself who built the concrete form of his idea, but his first-begotten; and as it was constructed on the GEOMETRICAL figure of the dodecahedron [Plato: “Timaeus”], the first-begotten “was pleased to employ twelve thousand years in its creation”.**

H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, vol. I, Science, ch. X, The Inner and Outer Man. A Fragment of Hermias, p. 342.

* This text relates to artist Mr Joma Sipe’s image on the cover of this issue and the cover caption on p. 3.

The Hidden Side of *The Theosophist* — I

MARY K. NEFF



(Originally published in *The Theosophist*, October-December 1929. Quotations from *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* are from its first edition (1923), T. Fisher Unwin Ltd, London. Quotations from *The Letters from H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett* are from its first edition (1925), Theosophical University Press, Pasadena, California.)

When, in the last quarter of the last century, the Masters moved to come into more direct contact with the world, in order to stem the tide of materialism which threatened to overwhelm it and to guide the equally threatening tidal-wave of spiritualistic phenomena into safer channels, various means and personalities were chosen for the purpose.

They began their direct teaching through Mme Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, who, attracting to herself Col. [Henry Steel] Olcott and a small nucleus of seekers after the occult in New York, founded

the Theosophical Society in 1875. The network of this teaching had spread by correspondence and controversy in the Press (chiefly the Spiritualistic Press) about America, to England, France and Germany, and to Corfu, Greece, before the two Founders left the United States to settle in India in 1879.

Now that both East and West were involved in the field of endeavour, a journal was the fittest means of communication; for the correspondence of the Founders had reached unwieldy proportions. And so on October 1, 1879, THE THEOSOPHIST came into existence. Colonel Olcott tells the story of its genesis in his Diary thus:

July 4, 1879. Consultation which decided us to issue THE THEOSOPHIST at once.

9th. Corrected proof of the Prospectus of THE THEOSOPHIST.

15th. Had visit in body of the Sahib! Sent Babula to my room to call me to HPB's bungalow, and there we had a most important private interview. Alas! how puerile and vain these men make one feel by contrast to them.

Ms Mary K. Neff (7 Sept. 1877– 10 Dec. 1948) was an American theosophist of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, Chennai, India, a lecturer and historian. After teaching for fifteen years in Akron, Ohio, she traveled extensively in India, learning Hindi and Urdu, followed by eight years in Australia.

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31st. Wim[bridge] made design for the cover of THE THEOSOPHIST.

Aug. 22nd. Evening. With HPB revised articles for THE THEOSOPHIST.

Sept. 2nd. Wim began engraving heading for THE THEOSOPHIST.

11th. Workmen fitting up Theosophist Office in the new compound.

20th. Ran off first form (8 pages) today. Much pleased with the paper; think it will find public favour and secure many subscriptions.

27th. Made up last form today; and now all difficulties having been surmounted — as it were — we will make our periodical bow to the world from our own rostrum.

28th. Up at 5.30, to find printer and make certain changes ordered by the revered Old Gentleman late last night.

29th. Preparing for the birth of the paper.

30th. Waiting. Evening. The first 400 copies of the THE THEOSOPHIST were received. Welcome, stranger.

Oct. 1st. All hands busy, pasting and directing wrappers, making city and country lists, sending *peons* to deliver in the city, receiving congratulations, and taking new subscriptions.

3rd. Order about the paper received, signed by Serapis. First word from him in some time.

The next year [1880] still another channel of communication was opened between the Masters and the world when, at Simla, Master Koot Hoomi [KH] began correspondence with Messrs Sinnett and Hume; for, though the latter proved futile, the former embodied the

instructions he received in *The Occult World, Esoteric Buddhism, Karma*, and so on, which books being printed in England and arousing much comment in the English and Continental Press, spread a knowledge of occult philosophy in Europe, as THE THEOSOPHIST was doing more particularly in India and The United States.

To return to the particular channel under consideration, note how at its very inception three Masters, at least, had a hand: “the Sahib” (Master Morya), “the revered Gentleman” (Master Jupiter, the Regent of India, called also the Rshi Agastya), and Master Serapis. The proprietary interest of the Brotherhood in the journal is implied in Master Morya’s statement regarding misrepresentation of the Adepts in Hume’s pamphlet, *Hints on Esoteric Theosophy*:

If we wanted anything about our lives and work to be known, is not the *Theosophist* columns open to us? Why should we dribble facts through him, to be dressed for the public meal with a curry of nauseous doubts and biting sarcasm fit to throw the public stomach into confusion.¹

Their policy in regard to the magazine may be gathered from a statement made by Master KH in October, 1882:

Whatever the personal views of the two Founders, the journal of the Society has nothing to do with them, and *will* publish as willingly criticism directed against Lamaism as against Christianity. . . . The *Theosophist* making room as willingly for hymns on the Lamb as for slokas on the sacredness of the cow. . . . M. [Morya] thinks that the

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Supplement ought to be enlarged if necessary, and made to furnish room for the expression of thought of every Branch, however diametrically opposed these may be. The *Theosophist* ought to be made to assume a distinct colour, and become a unique specimen of its own. We are ready to furnish the necessary extra sums for it.²

That the Masters were not too well satisfied with the earliest volumes appears in some of their comments; thus in February, 1881, Mahatma KH says:

The British President [of the TS] labours under the most original ideas about us, whom he persists in calling “Yogis”, without allowing the slightest margin to the enormous difference which exists even between “Hatha and Rāja Yoga”. This mistake must be laid at the door of Mrs B. [Blavatsky] — the able editor of *The Theosophist*, who fills up her volumes with the practices of diverse Sannyāsis and other “blessed ones” from the plains, without ever troubling herself with a few additional lines of explanations.³

And again he says:

So, while a better selection might have been made for the *Theosophist* in the way of illustrative anecdotes, as, for instance, well authenticated historical cases, yet the theory of turning the minds of the phenomenologists into useful and suggestive channels, away from mere mediumistic dogmatism, was the correct one.⁴

While in the autumn of 1881, at the opening of the magazine’s third year, he still more emphatically remarks:

I am anxious that the journal should be more successful this year than it has been hitherto.⁵

To accomplish this improvement, it would seem that the Masters determined to take a more active part in the production of the magazine. In December 1881, we find Master Morya writing to Mr Sinnett:

My object is . . . [to] help the journal by infusing into it a few drops of real literary good blood. Your three articles are certainly praiseworthy.⁶

And in March 1882, Mr Sinnett, then editor of *The Pioneer* of Allahabad, was adjured by Master KH, half seriously, half humorously, and altogether quaintly:

Neglect then not, my good Brother, the humble, the derided journal of your Society; and mind not either its quaint pretentious cover, nor the “heaps of manure” contained in it — to repeat the charitable and to yourself the too familiar phrase used often at Simla. But let your attention be rather drawn to the few pearls of wisdom and *occult truths* to be occasionally discovered under that “manure”. Our own ways and manners are, perchance, as quaint and as uncouth — nay, more so. . . . Many of us would be mistaken for *Madmen*, by your English gentlemen. But he who would become a son of Wisdom can always see beneath the rugged surface. So with the poor old Journal. Behold its mystically bumptious clothing, its numerous blemishes and literary defects, and with all that cover the most perfect symbol of its contents: the main portion of its original ground, thickly veiled, all smutty and as black as night,

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through which peep out grey dots, and lines, and words, and even — sentences. To the truly wise, those breaks of grey may suggest an allegory full of meaning, such as 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 who knows how many of those who, undismayed by its unprepossessing appearance, the hideous intricacies of its style, and the other many failures of the *unpopular magazine*, will keep on tearing its pages, may find themselves rewarded some day for their perseverance! Illuminated sentences may gleam out upon them at some time or other, shedding a bright light on some old puzzling problems. Yourself, some fine morning while poring over its crooked columns with the sharpened wits of a well-rested brain, peering into what you now view as hazy, impalpable speculations having only the consistency of vapour — yourself, you may perchance perceive in them the unexpected solution of an old, blurred, forgotten "dream" of yours, which *once recalled* will impress itself in an indelible image upon your *outer* from your *inner* memory, to never fade out from it again. All this is possible and *may* happen; for our ways *are* the ways of "Madmen".⁷

Mr Sinnett's earliest efforts at theosophical journalism had been made a few months previously, perhaps in the three articles found so "praiseworthy" by Master Morya. He was now entrusted with a piece of work which is noteworthy as being the first attempt to indicate the

position of Theosophy on the subject of evolution. The issue of December 1881 published an article on "The Theosophists" by Gerald Massey. He had been impelled to write it through noting quotations from THE THEOSOPHIST made by M.A. Oxon (Stainton Moses) in the Spiritualistic journal, *Light*, for September 17th. Mme Blavatsky in her capacity of editor added a note by way of reply, which is nearly twice the size of the article itself. Master Morya was not satisfied with a certain portion of her note:

The ring of doubt in the sentence, "If the Theosophist were also an evolutionist", forces us to become painfully aware of the fact that Mr G. Massey is no reader of THE THEOSOPHIST — if he has ever seen it. Otherwise he could not have been ignorant of the fact that two-thirds of the members of the Theosophical Society are "evolutionists", and that their Journal is preeminently so.

The Master wrote to her, quoting the above passage of her prepared note and remarking:

You do not seize the meaning at all. Ask Mr Sinnett to do this for you; he'll see what the man means and answer him. . . . Let him then who acquitted himself so neatly of one thing do this one likewise, and so oblige his

"illustrious" friend

M.⁸

Such a veto of her explosive retorts by her Master or Mahatma KH was not infrequent, and once elicited from her the exclamation,

I begin to think our Brothers chicken-

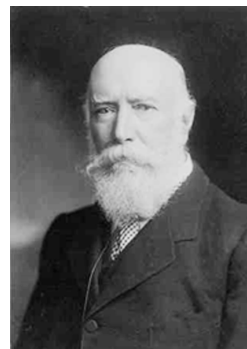
The Hidden Side of *The Theosophist* — I

hearted for refusing to make the most of my war-like disposition.⁹

The version which appeared in print in THE THEOSOPHIST (Mr Sinnett's) is as follows:

“If the Theosophist were also an evolutionist,” says Massey, “perhaps he would be able to fix the fleeting forms of his vision, and perceive some of the spirits of Man's predecessors on the earth.” If the European scientists, whose fancy has for the first time been caught within these last few years by the crude outlines of an evolutionary theory, were less blankly ignorant of all that appertains to the mysteries of life, they would not be misled by some bits of knowledge concerning the evolution of the body, into entirely absurd conclusions concerning the other principles which enter into the constitution of Man. But we are on the threshold of a far mightier subject than any reader in Europe who has not made considerable progress in real occult study is likely to estimate in its appalling magnitude. Will any . . . make an effort to account, even in the most shadowy and indistinct way, for the history of the six higher principles in any human creature during the time when his body was being gradually perfected, so to speak, in the matrix of evolution? Where and what were his higher principles when the body had worked into no more dignified shape than that of a baboon? . . . or, to go a step back in the process, how account for the presence of the animal soul in the first creature with independent volition that emerges from the half-vegetable condition of the earlier forms?

Is it not obvious, if the blind materialist is not to be accepted as a sufficient guide to the mysteries of the universe, that there must be some vast process of spiritual evolution going on in the universe *pari passu* with the physical evolution?



Alfred Percy Sinnett

This brief outline, or rather mere indication, of Man's *spiritual evolution* evidently met with the approval of the Master. The next year, in the October and November issues, Mr Sinnett sketched “The Evolution of Man” in *Fragments of Occult Truth*, Nos. IV and V, which were later embodied in *Esoteric Buddhism*. Another effort to deal with spiritual evolution was made in *Man: Fragments of Forgotten History*, published in 1885; but it was only many years later, when the public was more ready to “digest and assimilate” it (in the Master's phrase), that this statement was really elaborated, first by Mrs Besant in *The Pedigree of Man*, and later jointly by Mrs Besant and Mr Leadbeater in *Man: Whence, How and Whither?*

Not only was the able editor of India's most prominent Anglo-Indian daily thus giving his aid to their journal, but a number of the Masters themselves became

contributors. The years 1882 and 1883 are specially rich in these hidden treasures, those of 1882 being mostly from the pen of Mahatma Koot Hoomi, who seems to have exercised a constant and varied supervision, from proofreading to furnishing the material for articles and the substance for replies to enquiring or controversial letters, when not writing them himself. Thus, HPB writes to Mr Sinnett:

KH was so kind as to dictate to me last night nearly all of my answer to Massey.

This answer appeared in THE THEOSOPHIST of August, under the title of “*Isis Unveiled* and the Theosophists on Reincarnation”. Evidently it did not meet with Mr Sinnett’s approval; for we find Master KH remarking:

I am sorry you do not find *her* answer, written under my direct inspiration, “very satisfactory” . . . [And later] . . . Both yourself and C. C. M.[assey] were unjust to Upasika and myself, who told her what to write; since even *you* mistook my wail and lament at the confused and tortured explanations in *Isis* (for its incompleteness no one but we, her inspirers, are responsible).¹⁰

Again, commenting on Sinnett’s

Fragments of Occult Truth, No. V, on Devachan, he writes:

You are wrong in pandering to the prejudices and preconceptions of the Western readers . . . Hence my orders to a chela to reproduce, in an appendix to your article, extracts from this letter and explanations calculated to disabuse the reader, etc. [There are Appendices A, B, C and D.]¹¹

Master Morya was one of the “Brothers” who aided in the work of publishing THE THEOSOPHIST. For instance, on one occasion he interposed his strong hand when the attacks on his chela became too severe. On March 3, 1882, he wrote to Mr Sinnett:

There never was a woman more unjustly abused than H[P]B. See the infamous insulting letters she was sent from England for publication against herself and us and the Society. You may find them undignified perhaps. But the “Answers to Correspondents” in *Supplement* are written by *myself*. So do not blame her. I’m anxious to know your frank opinion on them. Perhaps you might think she might have done herself better.¹²

(To be continued)

Endnotes

1. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, p. 260.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 317, 319–20.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
8. Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett, p. 364
9. *Ibid.*, p. 364.
10. *The Mahatma Letters*, pp. 183 and 172–3.

Re *Isis*, the Master says: “She obeyed our orders, and wrote, purposely *veiling* some of

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her facts . . . In *reality* there is no contradiction between that passage in *Isis* and our later teaching. . . . It was at the beginning of a new cycle, in days when neither Christians nor Spiritualists ever thought of . . . more than two principles in man — *body* and *soul*, which they called Spirit. . . . It was HPB who, acting under the orders of Atrya, . . . was the first to explain . . . the difference between . . . *psyche* and *nous* . . . — soul and spirit. . . . And, as there happened such a war over it, endless polemics and objections to the effect that *there could not be in man two souls* — we thought it was premature to give the public

more than they could possibly assimilate, and before they had digested the “two souls”; and thus the further subdivision of the trinity into seven principles was left unmentioned in *Isis*. . . . ‘You will write so and so, give *so far* and no more,’ she was constantly told by us when writing her book . . . It really ought to be *rewritten* for the sake of the family honour.” — which it was, as we know, in *The Secret Doctrine. Ibid.*, pp. 289, 290, 130.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

The path to the heart of the universe is one and yet different for every human being. The meaning is that every human being himself is that pathway — that pathway which is builded of thought and consciousness and of the fabric of your own being. It is builded of the stuff of Nature’s heart.

There is a long road; it is also broad. It is the road whereon you have nature’s streaming current of energy with you, and following this road you will reach perfection in due time; but this is the road of long-enduring slow evolution, moving ahead little by little in each life, through the incalculable ages.

G. de Purucker
Golden Precepts of Esotericism
3rd & revised ed., 1979
Theosophical University Press, Pasadena, California

The Mystery of the Ego — II

RAGHAVAN N. IYER

IF life after life every time one starts to negate and encounters the void, one flees back into the world, a pattern is established which cannot be sustained indefinitely. Suppose that such an individual comes into contact with beings who have gone through the void and see no difference between the void, themselves, and all other beings. Such Men of Meditation do not entertain any emotions below the level of cosmic Eros, and they do not engender any thought currents except those in the context of *mahat*, the universal mind.

Contact with such beings is an immense opportunity, but also an immense challenge, an instrument of precipitation. The entire riddle of the entrapment of consciousness, when moved from the general plane to a particular person, can only be solved by the individual. The perspective can be given, the metaphysical maps provided, but each person must examine why he or she is in a particular condition in terms of memories, feelings, or ideas. By keeping in the forefront of awareness a conception that is larger than any habitual view of self, and with the

assurance that there are those who have been able to resolve for all what individuals find so difficult to resolve for themselves, each will be helped.

In the end, each must plunge into the stream. All must engage in individual self-study, asking again and again, “What is important to me? What am I prepared to let go? Have I the courage to die and be reborn?” A person who is in earnest will, without losing a sense of proportion and humour, set aside periods in which to take specific steps in the direction towards the Path. This centres upon what H. P. Blavatsky called the mystery of the human ego, of each human being.

The need for self-study bears directly upon the discovery of the thread of individual continuity, the *sutrātman*. This thread of consciousness in every person is only an aspect of the monadic essence of which one is a ray. It is what makes of a person a monad, a particular being, or an individual, separate only in the functional capacity to reflect the universal. Every human being is a unique lens capable of self-consciously reflecting universal light. If that is what all individuals

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are in essence, when they are manifesting through personalities bound up with name and form and involved in the world of differentiated matter, they become caught up in a psychic fog that obscures the clarity of the monadic vision of the true meaning and purpose of the pilgrimage of life.

Nevertheless, in that fog there remains a residual reflection of what the monad in its fullness knows. This is what may be called the golden *sutrātmic* thread within every human being. The thread is activated during deep sleep, but during waking life it cannot very easily be activated. It is involved in the baby's first cry at birth, and is glimpsed at the moment of death. It can be self-consciously activated in meditation. The true, sacrificial meaning of the Theosophical Movement is to give human beings in waking life points of contact with what they truly know themselves to be in deep sleep, and to do this in a manner that can give to each the strength of a collective affirmation.

“To live and reap experience, the mind needs breadth and depth and points to draw it towards the Diamond Soul. Seek not these points in Maya's realm.” The golden thread can only be lit up as a constant basis of light by each one individually. Every person must clean out the mirror-like mind which gathers dust while it reflects. Each person by self-study and self-examination helps to mitigate the obscuration of the golden thread-light which is broken up into details, lost in the externals, caught up in particular events, through memories looking backwards

and through wish-fulfilment producing unreal psychic states. All must banish this obscuration on their own. In the end, however, one cannot activate that golden cord, as Plato called it, without the exhilaration of self-transcendence.

Paradoxically, when you are truly yourself, you forget yourself. To be calmly engaged in the manifestation of the golden thread is to increase awareness of all other beings and the whole of life. Self-study, then, has further depths of meaning. When a person in a period of true contemplation has a vision of the *sutrātmic* Self, brought down from above and enriching consciousness through the activation of divine thought, then suddenly there will be a kickback arising from the resistance of the lesser self. One will painfully discover that the mind cannot stay for very long on a sufficiently abstract and impersonal level, and that the heart cannot continuously hold that which is the collective misery of humankind and bear love to all beings. It falls back to lesser concerns.

Self-study becomes a way of studying the lesser self with firmness and honesty, together with a sense of humour towards the ridiculousness of the lesser self, the impostor that shuts out the richness and potentiality of the Self. True self-study takes the form of studying those periods of waking life where there is a forgetting and therefore a denial of the Self. Self-study is a way of minimizing the propensity to forget and the need for too many reminders, and above all, safeguarding against the need to have one's knuckles rapped by admonitions that

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come from the life process. To choose one's reminders rather than have them come from outside is to adjust the ratios of moments of time that are well spent to those that are wasted through being caught in forgetfulness of the golden thread. These wasted moments constitute the tragedy of the crucifixion of the Christos.

The more one finds this happening, the greater the necessity to get to the root of the problem. Self-study can never be made the object of schemata because it must vary for every individual, and any person may find that repeated efforts yield only limited results. There may be particular moments when there is a brilliant flash, and one sees through so much in the masquerade, that one is freed. But this is something about which no general rules can be made because it involves the interaction of complex variables and the emanations of consciousness in the life of every individual, and so it constitutes part of the mystery of the ego itself.

As taught and exemplified by Socrates, philosophic self-study during life is an integral part of a continual preparation for the moment of death. A fruitful source for study and reflection is the *Bhagavadgītā*. Robert Crosbie suggests, in his remarks on the eighth chapter, that there is a real danger that fruits of effort will not carry over to the next life. The measure of difficulty in truly availing oneself of the teaching is identical to that involved in becoming immortal. Those for whom the teaching becomes a reality are able to reverse the false image given by the *māya* of the life process and by the moulds of

interaction of men in terms of the reality they assign to the finite, the ever-fleeting, and the false. They are able to reverse it so completely that they see with the eyes of pity and participate in the illusions of those with a constant inward awareness of *mahat* and cosmic Eros.

Such individuals display an existential consciousness of immortality which goes beyond external tokens and marks, beyond forms, words, and concepts. It is that consciousness which ultimately must become the basis by which one thinks, and therefore by which one lives, and each one must cultivate this independently. Few individuals will reach that point in life before the moment of death where they have gained the power to slay their lunar form at will.

After death every human being has to linger in a state in which there is a purgatorial dissipation of the lunar form made up of illusions, fears, and anxieties engendered during life. All of these constitute the substance of what people call "living" and "the self", and to dissipate them in life means to have periods where one can see right through oneself. Most human beings are blocked in this because they have developed the tendency of seeing through others more than they see through themselves.

On the Path, one is not concerned to see through anything in anyone else, without an appropriate compassion that can only be real, if based upon knowledge gained by having broken through comparable illusions in oneself. One must first build into daily life an awareness that

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negates illusions, sifting, and selecting between what is quintessential and what is not in every experience. Until this becomes a steady current, one is not going to be able to dissipate the lunar form at will before death, but for those who have done this, dying is like the discarding of clothes. Life in the ordinary sense has no hold over them and therefore their coming into the world is not involuntary.

This is very difficult for most human beings to understand. As they go through a painful process of acting in one direction, reacting in another direction, they may suddenly hope that by some confession or ritual they can wipe out the past, but since that is impossible, the wheel of life is extraordinarily painful, monotonous, and meaningless for them. They keep being propelled back into life, repeating the same oscillations of illusion. This is graphically described by Plato in the Myth of Er.

There is a sense in which conventionally good people choose the life that they envied. If their goodness is caught up in appearances, they are going to be misled by external trappings. To be above the realm of appearances is to see to the very core of life, to see the essential justice of all things; and to be able to handle such insight one will need true compassion. To exemplify this authentically and continuously is in fact to be able to ceaselessly negate one's own self and to see that self as being ultimately linked up with every other being on every plane. At its root it is nothing; it is not conditioned, it is not in the process, it is beyond.

This is a long and difficult process, but given the mystery of the ego, people do not really know why they failed in the past when they made such attempts and they have no right to despair in advance. They do not know, through what seem to be small steps taken with integrity, that great results might accrue to them. Sometimes the first earnest steps may be taken very late in life. Fortunate is the man who begins this very early in life. But whether early or late, it can be tested in relation to reduction of fears and an elevation of all encounters with other beings.

The Theosophical Movement seeks to maximize the opportunity for human beings to gain strength, support, inspiration, and instruction in working upon the maintenance of conscious continuity of awareness. That awareness helps them to develop an eye for essentials in daily life, enabling them to distinguish the ever-lasting from the ever-fleeting and not to mistake the ephemeral for the enduring, not to mistake appearances and forms for archetypal realities.

To do this again and again and to make it ultimately a line of life's meditation is the only constructive way in which a person can prepare for the moment of death. This is to put the issue in psychological terms. It could also be put in terms of the sound that a human being can utter at the moment of death. That sound can be chosen only in a limited sense, because the whole of life is going to determine a dominant thought and feeling, and these will determine what sound is uttered at the moment of death. The line of life's

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meditation is reflected in the particular aperture in the human body through which the life-current withdraws. A very wise being who looks at a corpse will see straightaway through which orifice life departed, and hence will know a great deal about the consciousness of the soul.

The wisest beings during life gather up all their energies, like the shy and watchful tortoise, into that which is within and above them. At the moment of death they will have a sublime gnostic experience which is an affirmation of immortality, a joyous discarding of all awareness of conditions. Having put themselves beyond conditions, they are able to experience not only immortal longings, but through the continuity of unconditioned cosmic Eros and through the continuity of an unconditional awareness of *mahat*, they experience spiritual freedom.

This detachment may look at times austere, but it is combined with an inexhaustible compassion and immense vitality. If they live right, without being caught in the process, every burden lies lightly upon them. They are constantly stripping away even as other men are draining themselves in the gardens of illusion. They

constantly affirm, on behalf of all, the Upanishadic invocation: “Lead me from the unreal to the real. Lead me from darkness into light. Lead me from death to immortality.” When one can make a positive inner affirmation of the Divine within, this becomes a potent current of thought and feeling, energy and life.

Without words, all one’s actions will convey to others a sense that, behind the games of life, there is a deeper reality of pure joy in which there is dignity to every individual. As a preliminary training in making this invocation, every night before going to sleep one should renounce all identification with the body and the brain, with form, with all likes and dislikes, with all memories and anticipations. One should invoke the same affirmation upon rising, as well as at other chosen times, and spontaneously whenever possible. If it is to be meaningful in the context of a universe governed by the boundless ideation of *mahat*, or spiritual consciousness, and suffused by the beneficence of cosmic Eros, this invocation must be made not only for oneself, but for all.

(Concluded)

Saith the pupil:

O Teacher, what shall I do to reach to wisdom? O wise one, what, to gain perfection?

Search for the paths. But O Lanoo, be of clean heart before thou startest on thy journey. Before thou takest thy first step, learn to discern the real from the false, the ever-fleeting from the everlasting. Learn above all to separate head-learning from Soul-wisdom, the “eye” from the “heart” doctrine.

H. P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*

Daily Steps towards Brotherhood — II

PAVEL MALAKHOV

The Value of Unity¹

A lack of mutual understanding is, quite often, the reason why people cannot unite. Sometimes, we find it difficult to find a common language with another person. It would be a good thing to learn to speak in such a manner that others can understand us at once. But often misunderstandings can be easily overcome if you consider the words of our opponent in the right context. In this regard, any collective action will be useful, as it will allow us to better understand the way other people think. Yet, we find it difficult, sometimes, to find a common language, because we are too greatly attached to our own contexts, to the prevailing images and concepts, to certain meanings of words and interpretations of concepts.

In similar situations, we need to find such examples of a more universal language that could allow us to overcome the rigidity of thinking. Here *mathematics* can come to our rescue, taken as a universal language, strict and logical, for describing the world. Unemotional and concise, it often enables us to bypass differences and reach a consensus. Yet,

mathematics, too, has its own paradoxes to resolve for which we need to deepen our understanding of the subject, and find a suitable context in which a mathematical expression can be given without contradictions. Reflection on some of these paradoxes will be fruitful not so much for the development of logic, but for the strengthening of brotherhood feelings among people. How is this possible? Let us consider the idea based on the following examples. Refer Table 1.

The expression $1+1=2$ is clear to everyone and most likely will be accepted by everyone without objection as reliable. But we can write another expression: $1+1=3$. True, it seems to contradict the former, but only because it is considered in the former context. Yet, as soon as the latter expression is given in a different context, it turns out to be true as well. For example, it can describe a family in which parents give birth to a child. In this context, the expressions $1+1=4$, $=5$, and so on, will also be true, depending on the size of the family.

Another context where the expression $1+1=3$ is also true would be the evolution of the universe: with the emergence of

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Table 1

Expression	Context
1+1=2	Things and objects – an ordinary computation method.
1+1=3	A family; a birth of trinity out of duality.
1+1=10	The interior (threefold) world and the exterior (sevenfold) world give rise to the tenfold Universe.
1+1=∞	The interweaving of spirit and matter forms an infinite world; the relationship between two people can develop infinitely.

duality (spirit and matter, 1+1) there immediately arises a third aspect of the universe — a relationship between them, which can be interpreted as force, *fohat* or consciousness — depending on the interpretation key applied. Also, the interweaving of spirit and matter gives all the 10 aspects of the world (3 of which express the internal nature, and 7 express the external), which means that the expression 1+1=10 will also be true. As we proceed to apply the same cosmogonic key and expound the idea of differentiation of the One Principle through duality, trinity, and so on *ad infinitum*, we come to the validity of the expression 1+1=∞.

The same expression 1+1=∞ can be given in a different context. Mutual relationships between two persons can develop infinitely if both keep in mind the plus sign between them, expressing the idea of complementing and increasing one by means of the other. In this context, a plus is a process, not a one-time action.

Thus, these examples of rigorous

mathematics enable us to see how important context is for resolving contradictions. Any spoken or written word is a mere form used to express a thought, behind which one has to recognize the thought itself.

Acting Together or Alone — What Is Better? What Stands in the Way of Unity?

It is a widely known maxim that together you can do more than alone. Yet, the peculiarities of some people give reverse examples (see Table 2 further below).

1) Some people are **stubborn**, unwilling to meet halfway, negotiate, or seek a compromise. Obviously, you cannot get very far with them as they are just unable to take part in simple joint actions.

2) There are also people who are so **destructive** that taking them on a team will paralyze or destroy the activities of everyone else. These are primarily cynics, pessimists, and nihilists, for whom there are no authorities or bright sides in life. These are extinguishers of fires and initiatives.

3) Attempting to unite with a **fanatic**

or a **narrow-minded** person is complicated by the fact that such people do not accept anything that goes beyond their understanding and beliefs. Any dissent is perceived by them not as an addition, but as an encroachment on authorities and commonly accepted principles. Uniting with such people is possible only at the expense of narrowing your own worldview and limiting your own scope of actions.

4) Interaction with complete **egoists** and **introverts** (if the possibility of such interaction happens) is also unproductive. Such people are thoroughly useless to those with whom they associate. Their own progress may be quite high, but their benefit to others is just nought.

5) Some people are so **obscure social enigmas** that it is not clear altogether what might come out of communicating with them. The way they think and motivate their actions are so confusing that they make it difficult to plan and work together. They are referred to as “playing some deep game”. Sometimes, it is not clear whether you can find a common language with them at all, or even establish common grounds with them. They can fail you, disrupt joint plans, they do not keep their promises, constantly making some kind of excuse for avoiding working together.

Is it possible and useful to express brotherly feelings towards all of the above categories? What is the use of associating with such people? How can our interaction with them help us, them, or others?

Perhaps, these are questions that should remain open to us for a lifetime, since, every now and then, we will encounter

people who have the above qualities to a greater or lesser extent. That is what the world will be like until it becomes perfect, that is, for a very long time: and if we are to use theosophical terms — to the end of time, in the literal sense.

However, the following few thoughts can come to our aid in order to find more or less suitable answers to these questions, according to each case.

- Am I myself free of the negative qualities I see in others?

- Fate brings us together with those who can help us improve ourselves most effectively.

- Our inner circle, for example, our family and friends, is what acts as the most powerful catalyst accelerating the process of our self-transformation.

- The interior nature of each person is good, kind, and perfect. Only, some individuals have these qualities concealed rather deeply for the time being so that many still need special conditions for the qualities to manifest themselves in full. Yet, this state will become a natural condition of all mankind some day.

- One should not impose on others or force anybody to do anything — any process takes its time. This applies both to how we treat others and how we do ourselves.

- It is only our lower nature, our personality, that is inclined to be upset, annoyed, or offended, while our higher and real self, our individuality, does not experience negative emotions, feelings and states.

- Everything changes over time.

We must also admit that, quite often, most of us need rest — a break not only from

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Table 2

Expression	Context
$1+(-1)=0$	A stubborn, wayward person. If, in the presence of different points of view, it is not possible to find a compromise, the union will be fruitless.
$10+(-1)=0$	A destructive cynic, pessimist, and nihilist. Taking such an individual on a team can paralyze or destroy the activities of everyone else.
$1+0.1=0.1$	A narrow-minded fanatic. Uniting with such people is possible only at the expense of narrowing your own worldview and limiting your own scope of actions.
$1+0=1$	An egoist or introvert, focused on his own Self. Individuals of this type are unable to share or spend time or any material, emotional, or intellectual resources on others.
$1 + 1 = 1 + \int_0^1 dx \int_{-x^3}^{\sqrt[3]{x}} \left(3x^2y^2 + \frac{50}{3}x^4y^4 \right) dy = ?$	Social enigmas playing a deep game. The unpredictability of their actions complicates cooperation: it is not clear whether a person of this kind can be relied upon, whether he will follow the agreement.

our work and communication, but also from our efforts towards self-improvement. Therefore, whenever we feel we are about to lose our temper or explode, it would be useful to remember that it is impossible to solve all issues and problems at once. Sometimes the right decision would be not to press ahead, but to wait, not to

force, but to bypass, not to overcome, but to submit. Just as steel is tempered via temperature fluctuations, so our aspirations should be tempered by activity fluctuations.

As the proverb goes, haste makes waste. If we find ourselves unable to get through to someone, we should leave this person alone for a time. If we see that

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Table 3

Expression	Context
$1 + \infty = \infty$	The possibilities of any of us are limited, but when united with others, they increase to infinity.
$0 + \infty = \infty$	We become omnipotent even if, initially, we know nothing and cannot do anything.
$\frac{\sin\left(\frac{17}{9}\pi\right)}{\sqrt[5]{714}} + \infty = \infty$	All our unsightly sides, sharp corners, and roughness are smoothed out and corrected as we strive to unite with others.
$\frac{\sin\left(\frac{17}{9}\pi\right)}{\sqrt[5]{714}} + \infty = 1$	To achieve wholeness and completeness, one has to contain in himself the diversity of the world in its entirety.

we cannot get rid of some of our weaknesses, we should switch our attention to cultivating our strengths. The main thing is to keep moving and prevent gusts, breaks, cracks, burnouts, and so forth, including in our relationships with other people. Then these relationships will only grow stronger, even if we keep away from each other for a while. Such a position would allow us to keep the focus on brotherhood, even in difficult and hostile times.

Arguments in Favour of Unity

Whenever we talk about the need to strive for brotherhood, we do not wish to emphasize the fact that all people belong to the human race or the planet. This indisputable fact would inspire but only a few people to fraternal relations. Some other facts and arguments are needed in order to realize not only the necessity of such relations, but also their usefulness and practicality. What exactly are these arguments? This question,

perhaps, will also always remain open, since the answer to it largely depends on a number of reasons: our maturity (biological, psychological, mental, and spiritual), our outlooks, our reasoned social position, the books we read, the people we meet, the failures or successes we experience, and it may depend just on our moods.

Following the chosen scheme, we will examine several considerations on this subject, expressed mathematically and taken in the appropriate contexts. Due to the symbolism of mathematics, the proposed expressions can likewise be given in other contexts, which everyone can choose according to their taste (see Table 3).

Argument 1. The benefit of any association lies in overcoming both internal and external restrictions. The abilities of any of us are limited, but when united with others, they increase invariably. In their ultimate state, when we reach

universal unity, these abilities will expand to infinity.

Argument 2. Even if we know nothing and cannot do anything, even if we consider ourselves useless grains of sand, by uniting with others, we grow and increase by the size of those we join. Gradually, by identifying ourselves with the group we operate in, we come to realise that we are not as helpless, weak, and insignificant as we previously thought and what we have done in cooperation is quite tangible and significant. Further on, we may discover that our small group is actually part of some larger group, and as we begin to identify ourselves with the latter, we move on to the realisation of the fact that there are still greater and far more significant results and achievements to which we have contributed. Thus, by expanding our identification with others, we gradually become omnipotent, but with one qualification: the personal aspect of this omnipotence disappears, since the “I” becomes “we” at this level. Moreover, this transformation occurs gradually and painlessly in the process of our involvement in the common work.

An employee of any large enterprise provides a good example of the 1st and 2nd arguments. He, following this path, can go through the following stages of transforming his perception of himself: individual — department — division — enterprise — national industry — national economy — international industry — humanity.

Argument 3. It is not always that we represent an integral person, or, speak-

ing mathematically, we are not always equal to one. Worse, our complex and contradictory inner nature does not even allow us to understand what exactly our state is equal to at every given moment. However, our aspiration to be useful to others will help us in resolving this issue — not so much in understanding our true value (this may come as a concomitant result), but in realising that our incompleteness is not fatal, incorrigible, or final while association with the rest will contribute to make us more complete.

All our unsightly sides, sharp corners and roughness are smoothed out and corrected as we strive to unite with others. Zooming in always results in small details falling out of view. Thus, by expanding the scope of our interests and activities, we naturally get rid of personal shortcomings. By dedicating our lives to the interests of others, by shifting our focus from the personal to the public, we gradually get rid of everything personal, including personal shortcomings. This would be a smoother and less painful way for us to get rid of them than a direct fight against them and suppression by willpower.

Argument 4. There are many people who constantly feel they miss something to feel truly integral. Interaction with other people, in this event, will help one to complete the missing elements, properties and qualities. In this way, we can restore our integrity, achieve this feeling, become a unit or a single whole. If we lack concentration, in a team with a focused and purposeful person we will be able to complete the work we have

begun. If we do not have enough intellectual power to understand some issue, by associating with a person endowed with this quality we can gradually receive answers in a form we clearly understand. If we lack warmth and tact, by uniting with those living in such an atmosphere, we will certainly begin to melt and our coarse, rough, and angular forms will gradually begin to acquire a more stream-lined, attractive, and harmonious look. Thus, we will gradually begin to acquire a sense of wholeness, and this feeling itself will grow more and more while manifesting in us as it will pass through a different understanding of ourselves as:

I — We — All

and, accordingly, through the following perceptions of ourselves:

1. *Self-sufficiency*, integrity of oneself, but not understood as something separate from everything else, but rather as having everything necessary for a full-fledged existence and activity.

2. *Involvement* — I am a part of something bigger, each of us depends on the other and influences the other. Absolute independence is fundamentally impossible, we constantly and invariably — consciously or unconsciously, whether we want it or not — change each other because we are in one bundle, atoms of one molecule, cells of one organism.

3. *All are one* — throughout the world, there is only one movement, dissected by time into different streams, the essence of which does not change. The energy that sets them in motion remains the same,

since it has one source. Likewise, the general direction of movement remains unchanged for all, despite the turbulences and deviations caused by free will.

All the above arguments reflect the idea of merging an individual with infinity — an idea that frightens many, since this state is understood as a loss of individuality, one's complete disappearance or final death. But those who have progressed much further than we have in this direction say that we have nothing to fear. The cyclic law will not fail to provide us with such a period of unconscious existence; it may be a night's sleep between two days, an afterlife between two incarnations, a *pralaya* between two *manvantaras*, and so on; but it is the same law that will certainly return us to conscious *individual* activity.

Each of us has a separate body, separate feelings, and separate thoughts. Although each of their individual elements may resemble a great deal those present in another person, even though each of these elements may be far from unique in itself, every combination of them is still unique. And *it will always remain our individual objective* to find ways for this unique combination to be used in the interest of some useful work done within the framework of *our common* evolution.

Proceeding from Reflection to Action

A human being is understood, first of all, as a rational consciousness. Consciousness, like intelligence, is movement. Movement may be fast or slow, going in the right or wrong direction. Yet,

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by hook or by crook, the process of transformation is on the go permanently. Therefore, if we manage to tune ourselves into cooperation, if we find the necessary motivation for ourselves and involve ourselves in activities for the benefit of other people, we will then significantly accelerate our own development, thereby saving ourselves from unnecessary or erroneous movements.

Of course, our primal focus must be on improving ourselves: correcting *our own* shortcomings and developing precisely *our own* strengths is the safest way,² but if, while doing so, we will also prove able to find such ways of interacting with another person that will help him to overcome his shortcomings and change in a positive sense greater (or faster) than in a negative one, the effectiveness of our activity will increase significantly. The improvement of each individual will lead to the benefit (in the literal sense) of the world, of mankind at large, since the whole consists of parts, and an improvement in any part means an improvement in the whole.

The connection between a human being and humankind is mutual. This is something one must always keep in mind. The latter (mankind) can find existence

only through the manifestation of the former (a person), which, from a practical point of view, means that we cannot aspire towards the universal brotherhood as long as we ignore those close to us or try to get rid of them. “We cannot” not in the sense that this cannot be avoided (as it is precisely the ignoring of the neighbour that occurs at the first stage of our striving for the ideal), but in the sense that it is the people next to us who create exactly the working environment we need for the implementation of our aspirations. It is through them that our goal can be achieved.

We must add, in this regard, that no true achievement is possible unless we are *involved* in the work. Reflection and theory are just where the human journey begins. Actually, its full implementation should take place on all planes of our existence, which means that along with a deeper awareness of our ideals, we must be active to translate them into life. Therefore, each one striving for brotherhood, self-improvement, and desirous to help others should take part in joint projects and meetings. Only by doing so can we identify our strengths and weaknesses, know ourselves better, and transform ourselves ultimately. ✧

Endnotes

1. See this *MTT* issue [No. 2022-1 (13)], article “The Creating Power of Ego-ship” to read more about this and the role of altruism in self-development.
2. Based on the round-table discussion “Practical Value of Theosophists’ Unity” at the National Theosophical Congress 2021. During debates, quite a number of interesting and diverse opinions were voiced by the participants.

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

By what path will you lead the Buddha
of infinite range of perception, the Pathless One,
whose conquest of passions cannot be undone,
into whose conquest no one in this world enters?

By what path will you lead the Buddha
of infinite range of perception, the Pathless One,
in whom there is not that entangling and poisonous craving
which leads one astray (to another state of birth)?

Those wise ones who are absorbed in meditation,
who take delight in the inner calm of renunciation,
such mindful and perfectly awakened ones
even the devas (gods) hold dear.

Difficult is it to be born as a human being;
difficult is the existence of mortals;
difficult is the hearing of the Sublime Truth;
rare is the appearance of the Enlightened Ones (Buddhas).

Dhammapada: Wisdom of the Buddha
The Enlightened One — Canto XIV, verses 179 to 182
— trans. Harischandra Kaviratna

The Olcott Panchama Free School — II

GEETHA JAIKUMAR

Religious Instruction

To prevent the missionaries from making inroads into the Pariah community by getting them to convert to Christianity, Col. Olcott, whose researches revealed that originally the Pariahs were Buddhists, helped those who wished to go back to their original religion again. He also ensured the secular nature of the schools by having prayers from the major religions in the assembly every morning. The celebration of the important festivals of the different faiths also ensured both tolerance and respect for all religions among the children. This again was another first among schools in India at that time.

Paucity of Funds

Imbued with great fervor and spirit of service and undeterred by the extreme paucity of funds, the management of the schools attempted to do much with the little available to them as is narrated in the 1911 Report:

We try to do everything in as inexpensive a way as possible, with such materials as the pupils might easily get in their homes. In the dry sand on the ground the first letters and drawings are formed; clay, as found in the nearest pond, is modeled into

the shape of various familiar objects; waste paper is utilized for the “papier-mache” work; with pieces of ordinary charcoal left over from their fires, the children make their drawings on common white or brown paper; with cheap, coloured powders bought in the bazaar, they are shown how to mix colours in such a way as to produce quite artistic effects in their brushwork; out of small cloth samples received from some of the shops, they are taught how to make little pincushions, bags, pen wipers, and needle books, while the larger pieces get transformed into many coloured coats and jackets, which they afterwards wear with great pride. In two of the schools where there are no mistresses, the sewing, is taught by the masters, who had first to be taught themselves. The vegetables which the youngsters have cultivated themselves in the school gardens, they take home with great glee and many a one tries to turn an empty little patch of ground near his home into a flower garden.

There was little school furniture, a few benches for the bigger ones while others sat on the sand or on sample pieces of oil cloth received from one of the shops or on small leaf mats which they themselves had plaited.

Dr Geetha Jaikumar, who retired as an Associate Professor and Principal of a Women’s College in Chennai, has also for many years managed and edited magazines related to the TS and Theosophy, including the *Adyar Newsletter* and *Wake Up India*. She is currently doing research at the Adyar Archives.

The Olcott Panchama Free School — II



Kindergarten exercise at Tiruvalluvar School

The schools relied totally on donations made by theosophists from all over the world who were moved by the plight of the Panchamas and the Colonel's valiant attempt to improve their lot. Special mention should be made here of the financial support provided by Mr A. Schwarz, who became the Secretary-Treasurer of the Schools in 1908, and quietly contributed varying sums from Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000 annually — totalling up to nearly half a lakh of rupees, a huge sum in those times — to meet the ever present deficits. He also reconstructed the building of the Olcott Panchama School (where the Social Welfare Centre is presently located) at his own cost and this was inaugurated by Dr Annie Besant on 1 October 1928, her 81st birthday. And nowhere does he say anything about his generosity. The deficits are met — that is all. But then, without his generosity, these schools might have ceased to exist long ago.

Commitment of the Teachers

This entire educational venture would not have borne fruit without the dedication and sincerity of the teachers. If the plight

of the children was pathetic, the condition of the teachers was lamentable. Poorly paid, as the funds available were meager, nevertheless they had to put in long hours and work with dedication, putting aside their own problems for the moment, as they concentrated on helping to educate the children, as needy as themselves.

The teachers had to take care not only of themselves but also in many cases, large families. Many lived outside the city limits, where rents were cheaper and land more easily available to put up their own mud huts. Then the teacher had to be neatly dressed and had other minor expenses arising out of his position, which a coolie, for example, had not. While it was tough to make ends meet even when the going was smooth, matters became well-nigh impossible when there was illness or death in the family and the consequent additional expenditure. Most ended up borrowing from the local moneylender at usurious rates of interest which pushed them and their family into a life of indebtedness and servitude.

Some pitiable cases came to the knowledge of the Superintendent, Ms Kofel. For example, one man's father had by degrees contracted a debt of Rs 117 which the son was obliged to take upon himself. So out of his Rs 13 salary he had to pay Rs 7 per month interest; his wife, two children and himself had to live on Rs 6. No wonder after a while all this told on his general appearance.

Another's father died leaving a debt of Rs 85. The creditors were on the spot and would not allow the body to be

removed until the son had bound himself over to discharge his father's debt on their own conditions, and that they were not light ones can easily be imagined. Most times the teachers would not inform the management of their distress. It was only when one noticed their worn looks and questioned them, or when they were pressured by a creditor, that they would come out with their tale of woe and appeal for help.

It might be remarked that these money affairs had no direct bearing on the functioning of the schools. Yet they were significant because when people are underfed and weighed down by a crushing burden of debt, it is difficult for them to do justice to their work. Constant efforts were therefore undertaken by the School management to collect funds to enable them to give a better wage to the teachers and other staff.

Teachers' Training

As most of the teachers were not particularly proficient in academics, a weekly class for their instruction was held and model lessons on different subjects were frequently given. Once a year some public demonstration lessons, called "The Teachers' Institute" were held in one of the schools over several days; these were attended by several supervisors and teachers from various districts, as ordered by the Educational Department, which realized the value of this training.

Introduction of Scouting

In 1916 Mrs Besant started the Boy Scout movement in the Schools and a beginning was made with a patrol of ten

boys from each school. The movement proved to be extremely popular and was invaluable in building character and discipline, and also in promoting a spirit of helpfulness and selfless service. Filled with scout spirit and eager to be useful and render assistance wherever possible, the scouts acquitted themselves commendably on a number of occasions.

At the TS Adyar Headquarters, the scouts and older students of the school were given ample opportunity to display their scouting spirit. They served as volunteers during the international Conventions held in the campus, and also during the Great Diamond Jubilee Convention, and acquitted themselves very creditably. During the big temple festivals in Mylapore, the scouts assisted the police in maintaining law and order, earning praise from them.

There is a heart-warming story narrated in the 1925 Annual Report of the TS about one of the Olcott School scout, a Panchama, who had taken to a vegetarian diet, since he felt that to lead the life of a scout according to the Sixth Scout Law, namely that a scout should be kind to animals, he should not be eating animal food. The boy even took the trouble to convince his parents and the whole family became vegetarian! This small incident speaks volumes about the influence of scouting in the moulding of character and fostering of the spirit of service and unselfishness in children.

Developing a Sense of Self-Worth

Apart from various quantifiable achievements, there were others which defied measurement but were equally if not more important, in contributing to the

The Olcott Panchama Free School — II

upliftment of the Panchama community. In spite of being reduced to an abject state of misery by poverty, illiteracy, and social ostracism, the Olcott Panchama Free Schools were able to rehabilitate a class of totally downtrodden people, restore their dignity and sense of self-worth, and thus humanize them. This possibly was the most significant achievement of the educational venture started by Col. Olcott.

Felix Layton, former Principal and Correspondent of the Schools, writes about some interesting incidents which happened during his time there, in a pamphlet brought out in 1970 to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Olcott Harijan Free Schools.

He narrates how the introduction of mass drills and physical demonstrations boosted the self-respect and pride of the children in themselves and their school. And when uniforms were finally obtained for these performances, the joy of the children in washing, ironing, and caring for them was a joy to behold. One of the greatest boosts to student morale came in 1963 when this team won the Governor's Trophy, on Republic Day, for the best parade and drill display in Madras.



Olcott students doing rhythmic exercises

After this success, photos of the drill team with the Governor of Madras appeared in all the Madras newspapers, but the thrilled students also wanted to be photographed with Mr Sri Ram, then President of the TS, along with their trophy. Elaborate preparations were made and when all was ready Mr Sri Ram was called and took his place and the "picture was taken". Two or three more shots were taken to ensure that a good picture was obtained. The assembly broke up, and Mr Sri Ram had left, when suddenly the photographer gave a gasp of horror and exclaimed: "I forgot to put film in the camera!" Such experiences, devastating at the time, make very good stories later.

Mr Layton also tells an amusing story about the daily medical visits to the school by one Dr Sherin Dorab during the course of which she prescribed and administered simple treatments, referring the more serious cases to the hospitals. Early in her experience she could not understand the reason for the sudden epidemic of acute cough among the children. Then she realized that her cough medicine was sweet and appetizing!

The School had earned a name for the skill and talent exhibited by its students in the various crafts which were taught to them. The 1937 Annual Report of the Theosophical Society mentions that on 17 February, in connection with the Founders' Day celebration, a week-long Art and Craft Exhibition was held which was organized, managed, and conducted entirely by the members of the Olcott Students' Union, and proved to be a great

eye-opener not only to the teachers but also to the children, of their capacities and talents. It was so well appreciated that H. H. the Maharaja of Travancore asked the students to showcase the demonstration and exhibition again in his direct presence at his palace at Adyar — a rare honour which came as a shot in the arm for the students whose confidence in their capabilities increased by leaps and bounds.

An Atmosphere of Joyousness and Freedom

Schools in those days tended to be grim and formidable affairs, with students constantly gripped with the fear of being disciplined by the teachers for major or minor infringements. Corporal punishment was common and the adage “spare the rod and spoil the child” was the norm. The Olcott Panchama Free Schools however, swam against the tide of that time, adopting a truly revolutionary approach to education. Col. Olcott gave strict instructions to the teachers to be kind, loving, and compassionate, and the Superintendents of the Schools like Ms Sarah Palmer, Ms Kofel, Ms Court-right, and others who succeeded them, adopted this as the guiding principle in the running of the schools. The freedom enjoyed by the children, the total absence of fear, coupled with a zestful happiness and curiosity to learn was so remarkable that this was repeatedly mentioned in the reports of the school inspectors who made mandated, periodic visits to the schools.

Though strained finances proved to be a major obstacle, the management and teachers attempted to do whatever they

could to give the children small treats which they enjoyed immensely. They took them on hikes to nearby places and organized camps which were eagerly looked forward to by the children. Mr Felix Layton narrates how one day, when the tide was low and the sea calm and safe, a party was organized to go to the beach to swim. Before going in, a head count revealed the presence of 103 students. Afterwards another count revealed 104! A boy from the nearby fishing village had joined!

Occasionally, with financial help from well-wishers, it was even possible to take small groups to places like Mysore. This was a thrilling experience as many had never travelled beyond Madras city. With sponsorships from generous donors and friends, it was possible to celebrate the birthdays of the Founders and other theosophists by giving the children a sumptuous meal which they thoroughly enjoyed. Through these and other ways, an attempt was made to bring some joy into the lives of the children whose stark poverty on the home front made for a depressing scenario.

Conclusion

The success of Colonel Olcott’s attempt at bringing about social reform can be gauged by the fact that many high caste Hindu parents who earlier would not have wanted their children to have any contact with Harijan children, started sending them to the Olcott Harijan Free School, as is reported in the 1936 Annual Report of the Theosophical Society.

Since its inception in 1884, the Olcott

The Olcott Panchama Free School — II

Schools had been steadily gaining prominence over the years through the many pioneering initiatives introduced and excellence in education. So much so, that many eminent persons who visited the Schools, including Mr J. Krishnamurti, Mme Maria Montessori, Ministers of Education, Judges, and School Inspectors, had all pronounced it as a model institution whose practices were worthy of emulation by other schools.

In conclusion, it seems appropriate to quote from a very insightful biography of Olcott penned by Howard Murphet, titled *Hammer on the Mountain*, which narrates the almost super-human struggle and turbulent periods which marked the life of Olcott, both in establishing the Theosophical Society and in bringing about much needed

social reform. To quote a small passage:

... the Colonel's hammer on the mountain — symbolic of his whole theosophical work — set loose the rocks that started an inexorable landslide. The very names by which these people were known have vanished. We no longer hear of Untouchables, Outcastes, Pariahs. The first name change was to Panchamas, and then through the compassionate vision of Mahatma Gandhi they were called Harijans (Children of God). What a difference! The new name represents a new outlook, a new conscience toward these people.

And though the mountain of prejudice still remains, who shall say that Olcott's brave hammer and mustard seed of faith did not start the disintegration that will eventually wash it away to the all-leveling seas? ✧

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ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-SEVENTH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Adyar

Theme: “Our Responsibility in the Interconnected World”

31 December 2022 to 4 January 2023

CONVENTION PROGRAMME

Friday, 30 December 2022

- 8.30 am General Council Meeting
3.00 pm Flower Ceremony by the Order of the Round Table

Saturday, 31 December 2022

- 8.30 am OPENING OF THE 147th CONVENTION
Prayers of the Religions, Universal Prayer
Greetings from the Sections, Associations, Agencies
Invocation and opening by the International President
- 9.30 am Report of Activities of the TS worldwide during 2021–22
Tim Boyd, *International President, TS Adyar*
- 3.30 pm RECEPTION
- 5.00 pm THEOSOPHY-SCIENCE LECTURE
“Science: How far can we go?”
Dr Manu Jaiswal, *Associate Professor at the Department of Physics,
Indian Institute of Technology Madras, India*
- 7.30 pm Ritual of the Mystic Star

Sunday, 1 January 2023

- 8.30 am SHORT LECTURES
“The Common Ground on which Responsible World Citizens Stand”
Pradeep Gohil, *National President of the TS in India*
“Brahmavidya Ashrama”
Erica Georgiades, *Director of the School of the Wisdom Adyar, Greece*
- 10.00 am SYMPOSIUM ON RESPONSIBILITY
“Realizing the Relationship”
Shikhar Agnihotri, *India*
“Knowing Being Doing”
Vibha Saksena, *India*

Convention Programme

- 10.00 am SYMPOSIUM ON RESPONSIBILITY (contd)
“Altruism and Regeneration: the Responsibility We Have for One Another”
Stephen McDonald, *National President of the TS in Australia*
- 11.00 am INFORMAL DISCUSSION GROUPS
- 1.00–3.00 pm INDIAN SECTION COUNCIL MEETING — I
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- 3.00–4.00 pm WORKSHOPS
Mini-School of the Wisdom
“Theosophy and Ecology:
Practical Wisdom for Living in the Contemporary World”
Linda Oliveira, *Former National President of the TS in Australia*
Chanting workshop
Jaishree Kannan, *Officer in Charge of Surendra Narayan Archives*
Science and Compassion workshop
Janne Vuononvirta, *General Secretary for the TS in Finland*
World Music and Dance workshop
Facilitators from LEAP Boundary Breakers
-
- 5.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE
“Individuation and Global Responsibility:
the Subtle Magic of Lincoln, Eisenhower, and Mandela”
Dr James Tepfer, *United Lodge of Theosophists, USA*
- 7.30 pm CONCERT TOGETHER
Global Rhythms Around the World
With facilitators and participants of the World Music and Dance workshop

Monday, 2 January 2023

- 8.30 am Devotional Meeting
Chandrika Mehta, *India*
- 10.00 am THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE (TOS)
Presentation by Nancy Secrest
TOS International Secretary, USA / Resident at Adyar, India
- 11.00 am TOS IN INDIA GET-TOGETHER
-
- 3.00–4.00 pm WORKSHOPS
Mini-School of the Wisdom
“Theosophy and Ecology:
Practical Wisdom for Living in the Contemporary World”
Radha Raghunathan, *Director (Sanskrit Studies), Adyar Research Centre*

Convention Programme

- 3.00–4.00 pm WORKSHOPS (contd)
Chanting workshop
Jaishree Kannan, *Officer in Charge of Surendra Narayan Archives*
Science and Compassion workshop
Janne Vuononvirta, *General Secretary for the TS in Finland*
Learning and Growing with Transformative Education
Sonal Murali, *Director of the Theosophical School of Academy*
- 5.00 pm BESANT LECTURE
“Wisdom of the Ancients”
Sri M, *Spiritual Teacher, Social Reformer, Educationist, Author,
and Global Speaker, India*
- 7.30 pm Theosophical Quiz
Pedro Oliveira, *Australian Section*

Tuesday, 3 January 2023

- 8.30 am INTERVIEW
“Service across Communities for Humans and Animals”
Mr Douglas Keene, *Vice-President of the TS in America* and
Mr Shravan Krishnan, *Coordinator of Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary*
Interviewer Patrizia Calvi, *Secretary of the TS in Italy*
- 10.00 am PANEL ON THE CONVENTION THEME
“Our Responsibility in the Interconnected World”
Deepa Padhi, *International Vice-President of the TS, India*
Enrique Reig, *President of the Inter-American Theosophical Federation, Mexico*
Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu, *Chairperson of the European Federation
of the TS, France*
Narendra Shah, *General Secretary for the TS in East & Central Africa, Kenya*
- 11.00 am INFORMAL DISCUSSION GROUPS

- 3.00 4.00 pm WORKSHOPS
Mini-School of the Wisdom
“Theosophy & Ecology:
Practical Wisdom for Living in the Contemporary World”
Pradeep Gohil, *National President of the TS in India*
Chanting workshop
Jaishree Kannan, *Officer in Charge of Surendra Narayan Archives*
Science and Compassion workshop
Janne Vuononvirta, *General Secretary for the TS in Finland*

Convention Programme

- 3.00 4.00 pm WORKSHOPS (contd)
Learning and Growing with Transformative Education
Sonal Murali, *Director of the Theosophical School of Academy*
-
- 5.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE
“One Without a Second”
Dr Ravi Ravindra, *Prof. Emeritus, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada*
- 7.30 pm CLASSICAL DANCE PERFORMANCE
Malavika Sarukkai, *Dancer-Choreographer-Mentor*

Wednesday, 4 January 2023

- 8.30 am SYMPOSIUM ON INTERCONNECTION
Catalina Isaza-Cantor, *Colombia, Resident at Adyar*
Francis Lim, *Member from TS in Singapore*
Sara Ortega van Vloten, *Member of the TS in Spain*
- 10.00 am QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
Tim Boyd, Marcos de Resende, Pedro Oliveira
- 12–2.00 pm INDIAN SECTION COUNCIL MEETING — II
- 2.00 pm ADMISSION OF NEW MEMBERS
- 3.00 pm PLENARY SESSION
Presentation of World Federation of Young Theosophists (WFYT)
Reports from the workshops
- 5.00 pm PUBLIC LECTURE BY THE PRESIDENT
“The Choice to Be Whole”
Tim Boyd, *International President, TS Adyar*
- 6.15 pm CLOSING OF THE CONVENTION
Tim Boyd, *International President, TS Adyar*
-

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Exhibitions daily at 1.30–3.00 pm

LIBRARY, CONFERENCE HALL — Art Exhibition by Artist Shiva Ram

LIBRARY DISPLAY — Old manuscripts and rare & old books

MUSEUM — Refreshed permanent exhibition

ADJACENT ROOM TO THE MUSEUM

— 100 years — Brahmavidya Ashrama and the School of the Wisdom

Theosophical Work around the World



Trần-Thi-Kim-Diêu (from right) with
Elena B. Campione and Sara Gencarelli (from left)



Italian TS member, Mr Enrico Stagni, served as interpreter for the
talks given by Ms Trần-Thi-Kim-Diêu at the Silent Retreat in Milan



General Secretary of the Italian Section of the TS Adyar, Mr Antonio Girardi (*standing, far right*), addressing participants of the Silent Retreat conducted by Ms Trần-Thi-Kim-Diêu (*first row, seating, far right*) in Milan on 8 October 2022

Theosophical Work around the World

Italy — Silent Retreat in Milan

A seminar day on the subject of meditation, masterfully conducted by Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu, outgoing Chairperson of the European Theosophical Federation (see Recent Appointments entry on this page), was held in the Milan premises of the Theosophical Society (TS) in Italy on 8 October 2022. The event was attended by 36 participants, booking all the available seats. The day was intense and harmonious, with alternating theoretical sessions and practical experiences, leaving ample space for dialogue between the speaker and the audience. In the delicate and valuable work of translation, Enrico Stagni and Elena Bessie Camplone alternated successfully.

All participants were given a canvas backpack with the emblem of the Theosophical Order of Service, a loving work of Sara Gencarelli and Tobia Buscaglione. Theosophical Order of Service (TOS), a loving work of Sara Gencarelli and Tobia Buscaglione. This inspired spontaneous fundraising for TOS activities. The Milan experience was the

forerunner to a new edition of the Silent Retreat planned for 2023.

Recent Appointments

Mrs Sabine Van Osta, General Secretary of the Belgian Section of the TS in Adyar, Chennai, India, was elected as the new Chair of the European Theosophical Federation on 7 October 2022. She will officially succeed Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu in mid-December.

Mr Leandro Cesano became the new General Secretary for the TS in Argentina on 8 December 2022, succeeding Mr Esteban Langlois, who served his Section well for two consecutive terms, or 6 years.

Mr Marko Kauppinen has been appointed as Acting General Secretary of the TS in Finland until their election takes place next year.

The Covenant Lodge, in Israel, which is attached to Adyar, elected Mr Abraham Oron as Lodge chairman on 20 Nov. 2022, succeeding Mrs. Bracha Elron, who asked to be relieved. ✧

This is a serious affair the [Theosophical] Society is engaged in, and . . . they [the members] should begin the work as seriously by making their own lives theosophical.

C. Jinarajadasa
Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom,
First Series, Letter 4.

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