

## Freedom of Thought

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

## Freedom of the Society

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

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



# THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover: Tree of Life sculpture depicting the history of mole and Talavera pottery of Puebla, Mexico.  
On display at the Museum of Artes Populares, Mexico City — Alfonso Castillo

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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.

# The Importance of the Center

TIM BOYD

WITH the passing of time the idea of the “center” has taken on a greater importance for me. All of us have some idea of what we mean when we use the word “center”, but depending on what we are discussing, its meaning can be quite nuanced. As members of the Theosophical Society (TS), we are aware of the first and primary Object of the TS: “To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity.” A nucleus is the central, most important part of any organism, system, or organization. It is that center which directs the activity and growth of whatever body it belongs to.

Annie Besant spoke of the Theosophical center in Adyar as “The Masters’ Home”. So there is an element of history and interaction with different people, consciousnesses, that has flowed through this place, and continues to flow. At any moment there are people there, and others around the world, sending their thoughts and energies to Adyar; is *that* the center? One of the things that becomes clear is that each of the above-listed components is involved in this centrality, but no single one of them constitutes that center. Even when we put all of them together, the whole somehow exceeds all of its parts combined. So, where is the

center? Is it something identifiable in the way that we would like to think these components can be identified? Can we point to it?

All of us hold an idea, an image, of who and what we are. Without giving the matter much thought, we point to our bodies in conversations where “I” and “me” are prominent. When in Tibet I was impressed with the way that Tibetans point to themselves in conversation. Westerners tend to point to their chest; Tibetans point to their nose. No matter where we point, we have this concept of some identifiable unit that is “me”.

The human body is composed of trillions of cells, and each is an independent life with its own agenda, involving its nutrition, reproduction by cell division, creating a climate and environment that is hospitable to its life. As many human cells as there are in the body, there are even more individual cells that are bacteria. These are literally colonies of cells, living within the body, but not part of the human organism. In terms of the number of cells within the body, we are more bacteria than we are human. These independent life forms participate in the processes of human life. Cells form themselves into larger organisms, and

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each organ has a specific consciousness. The heart does not function like the liver; the kidney does not function like the lung; they all have a particular expression and consciousness.

There is no “I” that can be in any way described or understood through merely physical processes; it is impossible. So it is a process of consciousness. Nowadays we are able to transplant organs. In the USA organ donors have notices placed on their drivers’ licenses that give permission to donate their organs in case of accidental death. The notices are there because transplants need to be done quickly, before the cells in the organs start to die. Today there are about 3,100 heart transplants every year. Something that occurs with a significant number of transplant patients is that they experience changes in their personalities, outlook, likes and dislikes, and so on. These are not rare incidents.

There are transplant patients who, before the operation had a pure diet, and after it, suddenly, they only want to eat “junk food”, or they experience other changes in food preferences. I read about a person who had a heart transplant and used to have a non-vegetarian diet, who all of a sudden became a devout vegetarian. The patient found out that the donor of the heart used to run a vegetarian restaurant. Generally these facts are kept from the recipients, who are only told the gender, race, and age of the donor.

There are also people who after having had a heart transplant began having dreams about a person with a certain

name and appearance, who later they discovered was the donor. A particularly remarkable case was an eight-year-old girl who received a heart transplant from a ten-year-old boy who had apparently been murdered. After the operation she was plagued with terrible nightmares about the murder, and her parents took her to a psychiatrist. She could remember the person, what they were wearing, what they said, to the point that they were able to track down the actual murderer of the boy and convict him!

The organs within the body possess a certain distinct consciousness. Under normal circumstances the organs work cooperatively. There are diseases such as cancer, which involve the unregulated growth of cells. With cancer, normal cooperation and rhythm breaks down. If it progresses far enough, it interferes with the functions of other organs and we die. So the product of the cooperative effort among these varying levels and streams of consciousness is what we tend to point to and call “I”. But even that is not enough, because there is a higher center that we could describe as “soul”, the genuine “I” center, the central orchestrating principle, which at some points takes possession of this body.

When we think about a kingdom, there are people who build the roads, collect taxes, and go out and fight the wars; and what does the king or queen do? You could say they do nothing, but that is not correct. Basically, they sit and all else takes place around them, moving out from this central consciousness. In our

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case it is this “I” center, which is rooted in something that maybe we will be able to consider.

*The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben has some profound insights about the consciousness of trees and the forest network. The author notes that in the forestry industry, the whole object is to provide conditions for trees to develop a great deal of mass so that they can be cut down in eighty years or so, and then get the wood. So forestry, by its nature, moves against real forest growth and promotes the individual isolated tree. It always wants to have space. What the author observed is that the individual tree may grow fast, but its life is much shorter than the other trees in the forest.

When trees have an infestation of caterpillars, for example, they can produce a pheromone, a chemical odor that will attract the predators for this specific caterpillar! The scent goes out and little wasps gather and have a feast on the caterpillars attacking the trees. Trees also communicate through their roots. Much as with us, the life beneath the surface is much broader than what we see above. All the roots within a forest are interconnected. In fact their network of communication is so far-reaching and swift like the internet, that the author coined the term “wood-wide web”. There are fungi that are not part of the tree, but they are related to the roots, and there are all of these growths within the fungi that pass messages from rootlet to rootlet beneath the earth.

When we think in terms of *one* tree,

it indicates an ignorance of the fact that there is no such thing as *a* tree. Much like the cells within our bodies, each tree is part of a greater life within which all of these organisms participate, draw their life, and gain their identity.

What is the center? In *The Secret Doctrine*, H. P. Blavatsky describes the human being as very complex. The shorthand way of expressing it is that we are highest spirit and lowest matter linked by mind. This human project comes into being where three streams of evolution meet: the spiritual, intellectual, and physical. Where they meet, there we have a humanity. She describes it as: “Each of these three systems has its own laws and is ruled and guided by different sets of the highest Dhyanis, or ‘Logoi’. Each is represented in the constitution of man, the Microcosm of the great Macrocosm; and it is the union of these three streams in him which makes him the complex being he now is.” (I, 181) The union of these three streams of the directing and guiding intelligences associated with each stream, and the hierarchies of beings which function within those intelligences, is what makes us human beings.

Naturally, we are complex. When we speak of the physical realm we tend to believe that we know what it is. Probably what we know is the mere surface. We are told that throughout the universe there are “black holes”. Their physicality is beyond our comprehension. They are so dense, that at a certain level, where matter starts to move into that hole, even light cannot escape. What we think of as

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matter in our world, composed of atoms with a huge space around the nuclei, with electrons circling around, in the black hole *that* is also condensed to where there is no space in between these particles. Such density and physicality are utterly incomprehensible to us, but this is ultimate physical reality.

We also tend to think that we know something about spirit from the fleeting experiences that we have, where the mind becomes illumined by the light of the universal soul, or *buddhi*, from time to time. This is our glimpse into the world of spirit, but it is beyond our present capacity to grasp. All these elements are part of the process that we point to and declare: “This is me.” Even when we simply eat a meal and digest it, we think of it as “my digestion”. But the same intelligent process is going on throughout the human kingdom. It is not an isolated phenomenon. It is an intelligence operating through every one of us. We are so convinced of what HPB described as “the heresy of separateness”, that we model systems for *all* of our relationships on the conviction of being separate from each other and from all other things.

A beautiful little book by James Allen called *As a Man Thinketh* has a poem in the beginning. It reads in part, “We think in secret, and it comes to pass, environment, is but our looking glass.” The book is about our process of thought, and it is non-secrecy, and non-separateness. In the Mahatma Letters the process is described as every thought of a man being emanated, passes into the inner

world and becomes an active entity. How? by associating itself with an elemental — one of the semi-intelligent forces of Nature. It survives as an active intelligence, a creature of the mind’s begetting. A good thought is perpetuated as an active beneficent power, and an evil one as a malevolent demon — all within the shared atmosphere of thought.

There are lines from one of the letters of the Masters of the Wisdom which talks about our process of thinking. It was the first letter that was sent to A. O. Hume. The idea it expresses is quite powerful, and worth consideration: thoughts are perceivable by others. It reads: “Man is continually peopling his current in space with a world of his own, crowded with the offspring of his fancies, desires, impulses, and passions; a current which reacts upon any sensitive or nervous organization which comes in contact with it.” This describes a process that is shared. We think of the mental capacity as somehow individual. We project our perception of reality as a separated universe with separate beings functioning independently, and we operate that way. But every thought attracts to it that which makes it more active in the world and gives it a sustained life.

Just on a normal level, these are things that we are quite aware of. In Nature there are smells, colors, sounds, etc that attract specific creatures. The fragrance of certain flowers attracts the bees, the butterflies, and so forth. The smell of garbage attracts different things, flies, maggots, and so on. All life forms are

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attracted to different things. This is normal, natural world knowledge. In spite of this awareness we carry an odd conviction that the laws of the natural world that we witness from day to day, somehow change when we go to the unseen world. This is not true. If the Mahatma is correct, our thoughts are attractive. According to what kinds of thoughts we think, each one of us ends up “peopling” our current in space. We have a “crew” of thoughts that follows us everywhere we go, continually influencing one another.

Anyone who has spent time around someone who is depressed or angry, can feel it. Their thoughts and emotions react on us. Similarly, those of us who have been around someone who is inspired, uplifted, feels empowered.

There is another profound statement by HPB: “Whatever plane our consciousness may be acting in, both we and the things belonging to that plane are, for the time being, the only realities.” (I, 40) When we are angry, we live in a bad and hostile world; when we are sad, people talk about the world going gray. The positioning of our consciousness along the spectrum of possibilities determines what we see as real at any moment. The possibility to elevate or move that center from something that is base or self-oriented to something more expansive, should be of interest to us.

How do we change our plane of consciousness? There is a little book titled *Think on These Things* by J. Krishnamurti. This title goes back to St Paul in the

New Testament. He made the statement that whatever is true, good, beautiful, think on these things. It is an advice not given lightly, having a profound potential to affect our consciousness. This is one of the core understandings of the Ageless Wisdom.

There is a simple idea, variously expressed, but many of us are familiar with it, that the center of our being is a spark, a divine spark from an eternal flame. This spark is in every way identical to the flame from which it has emanated, but it is small, it has not quite come fully to life. This whole process of spiritual practice — study, meditation, service — that we engage in, is one of first becoming aware of the spark, and then fanning it into life. In this fanning process it will grow to a greater flame, and then the separation that we feel and perceive ceases to exist when the spark unites with the flame. This is a core idea worth considering. An awareness of the spark, the divine presence within us, even if just for a moment, opens something powerful within us.

We may have profound spiritual experiences from time to time. When they happen, some people do not know how to understand them. Often little puddles of water form on the seashore. Each one of us is like one of those puddles. We have our limited content. If the puddle sits there long enough the water gets stagnant. But from time to time this puddle is washed over by a wave from the sea, and for a moment, this isolated small body of water disappears, and its consciousness



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suddenly becomes oceanic. We share in the vision and experience of the limitless body of which we are temporarily a part. Then the water goes back, the wave always goes away, and what is left is a puddle in the exact same shape as before. Nothing is changed with its shape or size, but everything is new. Our body does not change; we have the same family, the same friends, the same look, everything is the same, but nothing of importance remains the same with these sorts of experiences.

This type of potential for upliftment that we have, and that comes through often, we should “think on these things”. There is a thought in religious traditions that the Father in Heaven is that source from which the soul that is the essence of our being has emanated. The Lord’s Prayer begins: “Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be Your name . . .” Just the mention and the thought of “Your name” brings an upliftment that is described as holy, as the potential for a deeper level of contact with something that we are not separated from; but we need these reminders.

In HPB’s Diagram of Meditation she begins by saying: “First conceive of UNITY by Expansion in space”. It is a challenging statement. Unity cannot be grasped in any concept, but we are asked to try. One of the necessary com-

ponents of a concept of the Divine, the ultimate unity, is that it is without limits, endless, boundless. Our nearest conception is the idea of “space”, which is all-encompassing, without any limitations. Our effort at “expansion in space” necessarily extends us beyond our normal condition. There is a poem that says: “Our reach should exceed our grasp, for what’s a Heaven for?” What we reach for must necessarily exceed what is our capacity to grasp.

Unity, “Think on these things”, who am I, what is the center? Whether we look for it outside or within ourselves, ultimately, we find that there is no cut-off point where one person ends and the other begins. The process we are engaged in is a human process, not an individual one. Humanity functions as yet another organ within the divine body. As humans we are not the “be-all”, “end-all”. We have a role in the divine economy. Where we end is unknowable. Where we begin is untraceable. In every way, *all* things are linked together.

Universal Brotherhood is not just about people, it is the nature of reality — *all* things are interdependent. Everything is interconnected. When we talk about a center, it might be good to recall the expression: “God is a circle whose center is everywhere, whose circumference is nowhere”. Think on these things. ✧

**The heavens beyond are great and wonderful, but greater yet and more wonderful are the heavens within you.**

Sri Aurobindo

# Development and Use of Will on the Spiritual Path

WILLIAM WILSON QUINN

“... *there is no Impossibility to him who WILLS.*”<sup>1</sup>

H. P. Blavatsky

THOUGH the exact date is uncertain, sometime around 1883, S. Ramaswami Iyer, a South Indian and accepted chela of Mahātma Morya (M.), wrote to his guru with the following question: “Will it be for my good, and will it assist me in the development in me of my clairvoyant and clairaudient powers, if I, every morning between 4 and 6 a.m., keep a pin of iron before me and try to move it by my will power?” The response to his chela’s question was: “TRY; it can do no harm, and may assist. M.”<sup>2</sup> It is likely that for those unfamiliar with esotericism, the image created in their minds of Mr Ramaswami sitting at a desk in the early pre-dawn hours intently focused on a pin and trying to move it about, might evoke a sense of bemusement, if not comedy. Yet for those students of the esoteric doctrine who are serious aspirants determined to ascend the higher reaches of the spiritual path, including

the possibility of initiation into that august company of those known as Adepts, and their chelas, the development and use of the will is no laughing matter. Rather, it is, along with the development and use of the intuition, an indispensable condition for further progress along that spiritual path.

In terms of available materials on the development and use of the will, they could fill a book-length work, so in what follows this sizeable subject must be compressed into its most pertinent and succinct formulation, with the objective that it may be found practically useful. Accordingly, a brief discussion at the outset is needed to place “will” in its universal or cosmological context, and to observe its imprint in manifestation, or formal creation, including its appearance in the composition of the human being. Thereafter the discussion focuses on two principal uses of will on the spiritual path. Though one could term these two uses in various ways, *omission* and *commission* are as instructional as any. Thus, will, used in the sense of *omission*,

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or as self-control, first controls and then eradicates (omits) the desires, passions, and attachments of the Outer Person that impede the sacred ascension of the Inner Person and access to the higher reaches of the spiritual path. Will, used in the sense of *commission*, can create, by means of its limitless power, tangible results in virtually all the planes of Nature, including the mundane. This use of will as commission, however, carries with it a solemn caveat of strict karmic consequences for the serious spiritual aspirant wherein he or she must always carefully avoid injecting any *personal* goal, desire, or ambition that clouds or contaminates this use of will.

### The Universal Context of Will, or Willpower

In defining the term “will”, H. P. Blavatsky wrote: “In metaphysics and occult philosophy, Will is that which governs the manifested universes in eternity. *Will* is the one and sole principle of abstract eternal MOTION, or its ensouling essence.” In the same definition, HPB — then discusses the form and process of its manifestation. “Like all the rest,” she adds, “the Will is *septenary* in its degrees of manifestation. Emanating from the one, eternal, abstract, and purely quiescent Will (*Ātmā* in *Layam*, [or the Universal Spirit in homogeneous substance]), it becomes *Buddhi* in its *Alaya* state [the Universal Mind in the human being], descends lower as *Mahat* (*Manas* [Universal Intelligence, producing the conscious ego]), and runs down the

ladder of degrees until the divine *Eros* becomes, in its lower, animal manifestation, *erotic* desire. Will as an eternal principle is neither spirit nor substance but everlasting ideation.”<sup>3</sup> It is clear from this definition that will, as a subject of inquiry, includes the totality of theosophic metaphysics from creation and everlasting ideation to the use of its power by individuals both to overcome the multiple temptations of earthly life and to effect actual results, from the ordinary and routine to the production of occult phenomena.

Elsewhere, will is described by M. as “. . . the Universal *Śakti* — the Will-Force, or universal energy . . .”<sup>4</sup> and by Mahātma Koot Hoomi Lal Singh (KH) as a central part of the “all-pervading supreme power” which “. . . is exactly matter, whose life is motion, will, and nerve power, electricity”. He follows his description with this useful aphorism: “*Purush* [spirit] can think but through *Prakṛti* [matter].”<sup>5</sup> These descriptions of will, taken together, provide that nothing exists in the manifested universe that does not involve or implicate will in some degree or other, on every level of existence. And significantly, HPB equates will even to the “organic frames of their bodies” — those of “animated beings” — and their “voluntary actions”, among other things. She thus articulates the connection between the vast macrocosmic principle of will and its microcosmic or *human* modality, which includes direct application of will to contingent circumstances. The creative power that also engenders these

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circumstances, or phenomena, is by this fact alone, HPB asserts, that which makes it “. . . identical with what we find in ourselves and call — WILL.”<sup>6</sup>

### The Use of Will as Omission

“Will power” and “will force” are both terms of strength, which denote through “power” and “force” that, once harnessed and controlled by the resolute wayfarer on the higher path, this power is real and can be enormous, depending upon the strength of the wielder of such will. Solely for purposes of clarity, will has already been bifurcated into types or uses, or what can amount to using will both as a shield and as a sword, provided that in using the latter it must be used by the wayfarer only to protect and help others. Thus, the use of will as omission is effectively its use as a shield, defending against and permanently repelling (omitting) the relentless onslaught of “. . . furies called Doubt, Skepticism, Scorn, Ridicule, Envy, and finally Temptation — especially the latter; . . .”<sup>7</sup> with which one living in this material world is confronted daily. These “furies”, so named by KH, are among the impediments that confront aspirants for probation and even chelaship under an Adept that must, by the force of their individual wills, be eradicated in order for the wayfarer to proceed farther along this path.

These and other related “furies” of the human psyche, or character, are extraordinarily powerful. As a strong wind directs and steers fallen leaves, these furies often effectively direct and steer

the lives of most human beings who are either unaware of or unconcerned with the existence of an initiatic path of spiritual unfoldment. Moreover, in the case of a probationer or even a new chela, all of these “furies” do not diminish in number or strength. Rather, as a *consequence* of probation or chelaship, these furies become re-energized and hyperactive — bigger and bolder — so that the strength of self-will needed to defend against them must necessarily be correspondingly greater, owing to the fact that both the struggle — and the stakes — for these aspirants have reached a new level of gravity. These furies or desires which, to name but a few, consist of attachments to material comfort, sensate pleasures, prestige, and hunger for wealth or power within the outer world, are the agents of the metaphoric “Dweller” on the threshold between mortality and immortality, corresponding here to the Outer Person and the Inner Person. These agents mercilessly assault the wayfarer, who by using only his or her will, can shield himself or herself from the subtle deceits and overt aggression that are among the methods of the Dweller to preclude the wayfarer from progress on the higher spiritual path. “For he who hopes to solve in time the great problems of the Macrocosmic World and conquer face to face the Dweller, taking thus by violence the threshold on which lie buried Nature’s most mysterious secrets, must Try, first, the energy of his Will power, the indomitable resolution to succeed . . .”<sup>8</sup>

These last four words bear repeating,

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because they comprise a succinct and useful definition of “will”, whether used in the sense of omission or commission. “Indomitable resolution” is *resolve* that entertains no doubt, no room for failure. When the wayfarer resolves to cease or refrain from engaging in any activity inimical to his or her higher spiritual development — such as envy of those who have more; acquisition of wealth or excess property; scorn for those with whom he or she disagrees; desire for recognition or fame; or temptation by pleasures from unhealthy foods to easy money to sexual misconduct — and that resolution is endowed with a complete absence of doubt that it will succeed, then the wayfarer has wielded his or her will (in the sense of omission) in a way that should “conquer face to face the Dweller”. Doubt is poison to the use of will, and to one’s resolve, invariably maiming or destroying the will’s objective.

Before turning our attention to the use of will in the sense of commission, a final and important thought needs to be added to the discussion of the use of will in the sense of omission. This thought comes in the form of a warning from HPB, and concerns the difference between (i) deflecting or suppressing these “furies” within us, and (ii) eradicating them altogether. Perhaps as an antidote to what she saw as illegitimate curiosity about certain schools of *tantra* of her time — a curiosity that has only grown with time in our own era — she warned as follows about how best to deal, and not to deal, with one’s desires and animal passions on the spiritual path:

There are those whose reasoning powers have been so distorted by foreign influences that they imagine that animal passions can be so sublimated and elevated that their fury, force, and fire can, so to speak, be turned inwards; that they can be stored and shut up in one’s breast, until their energy is, not expanded, but turned toward higher and more holy purposes . . . For this purpose they will not struggle with their passions nor slay them. They will simply, by a strong effort of will, put down the fierce flames and keep them at bay within their natures, allowing the fire to smoulder under a thin layer of ashes.<sup>9</sup>

Such deflection or suppression of these passions is, finally, a mistake, she argued. “It is only when the power of the passions is dead altogether,” wrote HPB elsewhere, “and when they have been crushed and annihilated in the retort of an unflinching will; when not only all the lusts and longings of the flesh are dead, but also the recognition of the personal Self is killed out and the ‘Astral’ has been reduced in consequence to a cipher, that the union with the ‘Higher Self’ can take place.”<sup>10</sup> Let the wayfarer be on notice, then, to realize that use of the will in omitting the “furies” from his or her constitution is comprised of more than simply suppressing or deflecting them with a shield as a warrior of old might have deflected arrows and clubs, but rather that these furies must be omitted from his or her inner constitution *forever*, with no chance of reappearance, by having been annihilated in the fiery retort of the will.

## Development and Use of Will on the Spiritual Path

### The Use of Will as Commission

Unless comatose or otherwise similarly afflicted, every living human being uses will in the sense of commission every day, simply to do the most basic and ordinary things. Before these things are accomplished, the individual must decide or elect to do them, and then put forth some degree of will, or energy, to carry out this decision — this thought. The same ordinary process of using will also includes the wayfarer, though he or she may, in ascending the higher reaches of the spiritual path, begin to use the will in a more *extraordinary* process of commission — as would a true *bodhisattva*. As to this wayfarer, and to all those becoming proficient in the occult sciences, the use of will in this sense takes on an entirely new and vastly expanded dimension.

In addition to other terms describing this extraordinary process, one may also refer to the expanded dimension of this use of will as *magic*. “Paracelsus,” wrote HPB, “teaches that ‘determined will is the beginning of all magical operations. It is because men do not perfectly imagine and believe the result, that the (occult) arts are so uncertain, while they might be perfectly certain.’”<sup>11</sup> KH wrote that “Imagination as well as will — creates.”<sup>12</sup> As a function of the Intellect, the imagination must create as perfect an image or idea as possible that, upon its infusion by will power, acts as a sort of receptacle energized and so engendered by that will power, whereby it becomes a “creation.” If, however, this image or idea of the

Intellect is imperfect, or if there is any doubt in the mind of the operator infusing it that it can achieve its desired effect, then it will likely fail altogether, or become a dysfunctional creation (or outcome) that may cause its creator difficulties, depending upon the degree of imperfection or doubt.

While both the ordinary use of will as commission and the extraordinary use of will as commission (that may be called magic) are used in ascending the higher reaches of the spiritual path, it is the latter upon which we are focused here. Speaking precisely to this point, Djual Khul wrote in a letter to a chela about the operation of what he termed “Will-Essence”, how it is “. . . transmitted from the operator to his objective point”, and that “. . . you perhaps scarcely realize how everyone is practically, albeit unconsciously, demonstrating this law every day and every moment. Nor, can you quite realize how the training for adeptship increases both one’s capacity to emit and to feel this form of force.”<sup>13</sup>

Such increased capacity to emit this “force” or, alternatively stated, to utilize magic, was among the abilities HPB developed further in her training. The production of various occult phenomena by HPB in the earlier years of her mission, such as the telekinetic precipitation of flowers and letters and teacups, for example, ultimately resulted in adversity in her later years, and formed the basis for excoriation of her character as fraudulent, as alleged in the report of the Society for Psychical Research published

## Development and Use of Will on the Spiritual Path

in 1885. HPB came to believe that such phenomena adversely impacted her mission, even though there was never any selfish or spiritually unethical motive in her use of will to produce these occult phenomena. But the unintended consequences that later unfolded in their wake illustrate the care that must be taken in using the will in this extraordinary way, even where the motives generating its use are pure and even compassionate.

The use of will as commission can be put to at least two extraordinary purposes: one operating on extrinsic objects and activities, and the other operating on the will of other beings. Where limited by being used only for the welfare of humanity and never oneself, the first of these purposes would clearly be consistent with the role of wayfarers, and with the roles of those who might teach them. Even where an aspirant fails in such a use of will, if the motive behind this use were selfless and compassionate, the result would not be irremediable. The same, however, cannot be said of using one's will to control that of another. Speaking of the accepted rules of the order to which he belongs, KH stated that "We never try to subject to ourselves the will of another."<sup>14</sup> This because it is forbidden to Adepts by their own "... wise and intransgressible laws to completely subject to themselves another and a weaker will — that of free born man. The latter mode of proceeding is the favourite one resorted to by the 'Brothers of the Shadow', the Sorcerers. . . ."<sup>15</sup> Similarly, HPB decried those who "...

send up waves of willpower for selfish or unholy purposes . . ." which she described as "... abomination, and spiritual sorcery."<sup>16</sup>

### Conclusion

It should be evident in light of the above that opposite consequences await him or her who misuses the will in the ascent to the higher reaches of the spiritual path. This fact is all the more important because of increases in the will's power that may occur in training along this path involving the development of certain of the primary chakras. Preferable is letting these force centers develop naturally and synchronistically, or through supervised training by a guru qualified to do so, corresponding to initiatic advancement of the individual on the spiritual path. In stark contrast to this method are those individuals motivated solely by a personal goal to develop these force centers as siddhis, thereby acquiring occult powers. It may be true that the power of one's will can be greatly increased on one's own through the unsupervised practice of methods like kundalini yoga, which may be an irresistible temptation for some. But where such a practitioner who is not completely selfless and spiritually pure prematurely forces open these chakras for the purpose of attaining occult powers, it almost always amounts to a recipe for self-destruction. When such powers are forced too soon, it takes only the smallest fugitive grain of self-interest in an otherwise purified character to enable

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sliding backward downhill in self-benefit on a slippery slope to sorcery, like a small snowball rolling downhill that results in a tremendous avalanche.

Either as omission or commission, the use of will is unavoidable for everyone alive, whether one pursues a normal or routine life, or an esoteric and extraordinary life ascending the summit to spiritual truth. As a practical matter, then, the wayfarer of this latter category may safely begin the development of will as omission, first by a rigorous and pitiless self-examination to identify his or her own deficiencies (“furies”), or impediments, to further spiritual growth. Having once identified such deficiencies, and perhaps beginning with lesser ones in order to gradually build confidence, let him or her then bring one by one *all* these furies to heel, and thereafter eradicate them altogether. In this endeavor, the risks are small and the reward great.

As to the development of will as commission — excluding entirely subjugation of the will of another — considerably more caution should be used by the wayfarer. This enters the realm of magic, where rushing headlong into this arena without being fully qualified is tantamount to navigating a minefield blind-

folded. The risks here are greater, and though if done properly the rewards for others — for humanity — may be commensurably greater, this use of will might best be left for those who are prepared; that is, for those who have mastered their Outer Person by force of will as omission. Let us not forget that Mr Ramaswami, in entering the practice of the use of will as commission by focusing on moving about a pin, was under supervision of an Adept as an accepted chela. His guru would exemplify, as HPB wrote, a perfect mastery of both the use of will as omission and commission, and be “A man of profound knowledge, exoteric and esoteric, especially the latter; and one who has brought his carnal nature under subjection of the WILL; who has developed in himself both the power (siddhi) to control the forces of Nature, and the capacity to probe her secrets by the help of the formerly latent but now active powers of his being. . . .”<sup>17</sup> This is the sacred paradigm to which all on the higher reaches of the spiritual path ultimately aspire, particularly as it pertains to the use of the will, which must be developed — carefully, gradually, and lovingly — to continue ascending toward this spiritual tier of reality. ✧

### Endnotes

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3. Blavatsky, *Theosophical Glossary*, London: Theosophical Publishing Co., 1892, p. 370.



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9. Blavatsky, *Practical Occultism*, Adyar: TPH, 1972, pp. 45–46.
10. ———, pp. 50–51.
11. ———, *Theosophical Glossary*, p. 370.
12. Barker, p. 37.
13. ———, p. 106.
14. Jinarājādāsa, 1st Series (7th Ed.). Adyar: TPH, 2011, p. 123.
15. Barker, p. 59.
16. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, London: Theosophical Publishing Co., 1889, p. 68.
17. ———, “Chelas and Lay Chelas,” *Collected Writings*, vol. IV, p. 607.

**The heart is the king, the most important organ in the body of man. . . . The heart is the centre of spiritual consciousness, as the brain is the centre of intellectual. But this consciousness cannot be guided by a person, nor its energy directed by him, until he is at one with Buddhi–Manas [the higher spiritual counterparts]; until then it guides him — if it can. Hence the pangs of remorse, the prickings of conscience; they come from the heart, not the head. . . . The psycho-intellectual man is all in the head with its seven gateways; the spiritual man is in the heart.”**

*The Secret Doctrine*, III, 582

# Self-Preparation

NANDITA KULDIP

OUR Masters and the pioneers of the Theosophical Society (TS) have given us guidance in a very clear and direct way on the subject of self-preparation in books like *At the Feet of the Master*, *Light on the Path* and *The Voice of the Silence*. But unless I question my subjectivity I cannot truly engage myself in these perennial teachings. Thus, despite the objective truths offered in these classics, whatever has been said becomes dogmatic. Trying to speak today from my own level of being is an opportunity for me to be in the question.

In the context of the given topic, which is “Self-Preparation: An Important Aspect for Theosophical Work”, first of all we need to understand what is meant by theosophical work. Using theosophical literature to understand what theosophical work is, we can see that the central point of the whole system is self-preparation in order to serve the higher purpose of life. Therefore one can say, self-preparation is the underlying purpose of all aspects of theosophical work.

Self-preparation and serving the objectives of the Society could be a simulta-

neous process. At the same time without working on ourselves we cannot serve the objectives of the TS, and therefore great emphasis has been laid upon self-preparation in theosophical literature, directly or indirectly.

Being members of the Theosophical Society seems to suggest that we have understood the need to serve the higher purpose of life, and hence we are preparing ourselves. But on a close examination of ourselves, we might find that under one guise or another we manage to serve our personal selves only, and nothing greater. We may have become indifferent to the usual masks of people in ordinary life and may be feeling privileged having become part of the supposedly intelligent community; but, without responding to the higher call that we are here for, being merely a member of the TS becomes yet another mask.

If we can spare an honest look into ourselves, we will see that we hardly want to work on ourselves. A closer examination shows that even having a wish to work on ourselves is not that easy. The wish to prepare ourselves arises when we

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**Mrs Nandita Kuldip** is a member of the Indian Section of the TS. Talk given at the International Convention, Adyar, 3 January 2017

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are awakened by some accidental shock which can be anything. It can be the extraordinary beauty of Nature or separation from loved ones. The way I respond in different situations also can produce great shocks. Anything which seems to suggest the futility of our existence, our beliefs, our dreams can be a shock. One can see that one's engagement in life is not a conscious choice. We are controlled by habits and life circumstances in which we are lost.

In the moments of a shock, one can be confronted with one's nothingness or one can get identified with a much expanded view of life; therefore, either way, ordinary life becomes irrelevant and one begins to seek the extraordinary. When one is faced with the necessity of having a real existence which cannot be threatened by external circumstances, everything changes.

But we cannot remain dependent on accidental shocks to arouse the wish to prepare ourselves. We need to create the conditions in order to organize our efforts. We need to see the necessity of belonging to a community where people work in the same direction. That is precisely the reason we are here in the Theosophical Society.

Having reached here though is just the first step towards our search for meaningful life and it does not guarantee that we will climb the ladder of evolution straightaway from here. Rather, it becomes deceptively easier to go into slumber, for one stops getting the shocks one gets in ordinary life, which are necessary to

keep oneself awake. It is like when one becomes aware of real self-love, there is also a danger of becoming a narcissist. Organizations can also serve like buffers or shock absorbers because of their mechanical outer form. Therefore it becomes necessary to remain conscious of the right conditions in order to prepare ourselves.

We must understand that our organization exists in life on two different levels. The level which alone has a true meaning is that of our search with all the conditions it requires. The other level is the official or outer aspect which is only a cover, nothing more, but it can help us pursue our preparation without disturbance. This distinction seems easy to understand but in fact it is not. This official side, organized to meet the image and routine required by life, keeps reclaiming its rights and tends to impose its structure on our inner search, that is, to impose a form that responds in no way to its true order of values.

It is very easy to get trapped in the outer form, for its daily routine seems to suggest that we are doing theosophical work. Intellectual activities that involve writing articles and delivering lectures are part of the theosophical life, but these activities should not serve only the personality. The activities which are meant to help us in our search should not be reduced to mere personality development tools. Otherwise we may end up feeding only the mask, thus keeping ourselves occupied with the outer form only. One can speak on brotherhood and yet be

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completely unconscious of the relationship with others.

The Theosophical Society is such a beautiful open platform for like-minded people to come together in order to lead a meaningful life. Unlike other organizations there is no authority in terms of imposing any dogma. Sometimes this openness also starts serving the negative side of the self. Since there is no authority in the form of dogma to follow — in terms of inner search — we lose the sense of community and become isolated while performing just official duties and conforming to the outer form only.

As there are no leaders and no followers in the TS in the dogmatic sense, questioning and listening become very important in order to live the teachings of Theosophy. I must learn to know my own limitations, and to recognize when others understand better. The attitude of directing others or being directed by others, judging or criticizing, does not have any place in the Society. Coming together on the theosophical platform means entering into an order which cannot be imposed by egocentric existence.

How can we create the right conditions for self-preparation unless we come together with a sense of community and with unity? What is needed is the conscious relation with others, sustained by vigilance and sacrificing the ordinary self in order to prepare together. We come together because we feel the necessity to become conscious of ourselves. So long as I am what I am — that is, think as I think and feel as I feel — I will know

nothing true, nothing real. I need to become conscious of my usual ways of thinking and feeling that conditions all my actions. It is only in my relation with others that I can see my reactions.

One wonders to what extent can one learn from another? We cannot see ourselves very easily on our own. There is a saying, “Be ye mirrors to one another”, and this seeing oneself in others is apparently prescribed as a “way” in different teachings. Surely it is obvious to us that we all need one another. We should also remember that we are not after all special in terms of our place in the cosmic scheme of things. Unless one sees this, it becomes terribly difficult not to feel oneself to be different from others. It is much more important to know that we are human beings than that we are “this particular” human being. To feel oneself as ordinary is the one safeguard against many different enemies that come from our own egoism. Anyone who really thinks that he or she is ordinary and genuinely feels it, is protected from many harmful forces. One way of feeling ordinary is to really be aware that we are all in the same boat. We all share the same human condition.

But that can never be enough. In order not to deviate I must recognize in myself a hierarchy of levels. If we can bear seeing ourselves eaten up by different forces all the time then maybe we can also see that ordinarily there is no choice in life. But we can consent to serve as food on a more conscious level; we can consent to become food for higher forces. We will be

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eaten up anyway. However, choice is possible. Either we give ourselves to a higher consciousness and we partake of that level of consciousness, or we let ourself go and we partake of a lesser consciousness. The whole of life consists of feeding, exchange, transmission of substances.

Michel Conge, a Frenchman, has said:

We are to serve life in both directions; toward what is below and toward what is above. Downward, automatically and inescapably; upward, consciously and voluntarily. However, the upward movement is not actually possible if I remain in my fragmented state. As long as serving is not voluntary, nothing can change.

Unless we become conscious of our situation and manage to free ourselves from the illusion of running our own

lives, and controlling everything around ourselves, that is, as long as we continue to believe we can manipulate, direct, sort out our little universe, and conquer whatever comes our way, we cannot prepare ourselves for the higher life.

I would like to conclude with the words of René Daumal, a French poet and surrealist:

I am dead because I lack desire;  
I lack desire because I think I possess;  
I think I possess because I do not try to give.  
In trying to give, you see that you have  
nothing;  
Seeing you have nothing, you try to give  
of yourself;  
Trying to give of yourself, you see that you  
are nothing;  
Seeing you are nothing, you desire to  
become;  
In desiring to become, you begin to live.

**... a person is a theosophist, not merely in name but by having made the Theosophical truths inseparable from his innermost nature, as his shadow can never be separate from himself, then he is all the time communing with Archetypal Ideas. Since each Archetype is an embodiment of the eternally True, the eternally Good and the eternally Beautiful, the true theosophist slowly grows in these aspects of Divinity.**

C. Jinarajadasa

# A Path to Unity

NANCY SECREST

I was recently asked by a fellow member of the Theosophical Society for my definition of Unity. Higher concepts such as Unity are not really describable in words, although we may try using them. Sometimes a picture will come to mind instead, and we can capture something of the concept by describing the picture, and that is what I did in reply.

A television series called “Deep Space Nine” came to mind. It was staged on a space station. The space station’s security officer was a man named Odo. Odo was a unique individual, the only one of his kind as far as anyone knew — a changeling. He had the ability to shape-shift from his natural gelatinous form, a blob if you will, into anything he wished — a person, a dog, a chair or an ant — it did not matter. One theme that ran throughout the series was Odo’s search for his people and his home world. After all kinds of challenges, Odo and the space station crew finally encountered some shape-shifting beings like Odo. They were of the ancient race called the Founders. Everyone knew of the Founders. Their superior knowledge and abilities were

legendary on many worlds. They were revered, but no one had ever seen them. Odo had at last found his family. The Founders told him that he and others had been sent out on a mission many years before, but he had never returned. Somewhere along the line Odo had forgotten his mission and where he came from. He is taken back to their home world where he and the Founders are transported onto a large rock that protrudes from the gelatinous sea that makes up the rest of the planet. From there they each change back into their natural gelatinous state and return to the whole, to the Unity that is their world. They become again, as *The Secret Doctrine* puts it, “an indivisible part of the integral whole.” Each body merges into the sea to join with all others as completely as possible, to become one Being again. To me this story depicts our journey from and to Unity. It shows that we carry that sense of Unity deeply within us always, whether we are aware of it or not.

Does this story not remind us of the much-quoted final line of Sir Edwin Arnold’s beautiful work, *The Light of*

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**Mrs Nancy Secrest** is the International Secretary of the Theosophical Order of Service. Talk delivered at the International Convention, Adyar, 3 January 2017.

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*Asia?* “The dew-drop slips into the shining sea”.

Among the materials that the educator, Maria Montessori, prepared for elementary school children, there is a chart showing water evaporating off the ocean like children climbing a high hill, and then, the children are blown over the land, sliding down again as water droplets, as if in an endless joyous game.\* Is that not a lovely picture? It is sort of like a child climbing up and sliding down a slide over and over again. They take such joy in it. Once again we find the image of a journey or even a dance toward Unity.

The Third Fundamental Proposition of the *Secret Doctrine* speaks of the evolution of the Monad, called Soul or “Pilgrim”, whereby each incarnation builds upon the last until the Monad ultimately returns to its source, Universal Spirit, as an indivisible part of the integral whole. This evolutionary process is “the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul”, and our time here on this earth “a temporary appearance”. And, it says to us that while we are each an indivisible part of that whole, we can still make “a temporary appearance” here on this earth thereby explaining our incarnations as human beings, animals, plants, or minerals.

Blavatsky taught that the Ancient Wisdom emphasizes the unity of all life, the Oneness that surpasses all else. The First Object of the Theosophical Society, “To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour”, speaks to the actualization of Universal

Brotherhood. We can talk about Unity in a mundane sense and often that is how we mean it when we say Brotherhood of Humanity, as it is easier to understand our being brothers and sisters while we are incarnate in physical bodies as separate beings. As theosophists we know from the teachings of Blavatsky and others that Unity — true Unity — is so much more than mere brother or sisterhood. I suggest that Annie Besant knew this when she formed the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) in February 1908. We have been told that duty was foremost to Annie Besant. I imagine that as an activist she saw a sea of faces before her all blended into what I will call a “sea of sorrow”, a mass of suffering humanity. Others saw this too and wanted to use their “temporary appearance” on this earth to do something about it. Thus the TOS was *born* from a sense of Unity. We serve others to ease their suffering, to exemplify Brotherhood, to foster that same sense of Unity in ourselves and others until we all return to the source, the realization of true Unity.

A former teacher of mine who has now departed this life, Harry Van Gelder, used to say: “Love is the realization of Unity.” It stands to reason then that once we realize the nature of Unity, if only for an instant, we know true love as well — love in its purest form. I think it is actually this love for the other parts of ourselves, other sentient beings, that motivates us to be of service to those who suffer, and we all suffer, do we not? Through service in this mundane world

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we are expressing pure love for our brothers and sisters and for ourselves. Service takes many forms: smiling at a stranger who appears to be having a bad day, caring for a sick relative, friend, or neighbor, knitting teddy bears for children who need a friend to hug, providing mobility aids or prostheses to those who cannot get around without them, assisting refugees or victims of natural disasters whose lives have been completely disrupted, giving care to abandoned or mistreated animals, healing the earth through biodiversity and other approaches, working toward better, safer treatment of women or providing quality education to children, especially one based on theosophical values. Each step along this path of service brings us closer together, closer to realizing the Unity of which we speak.

At the highest levels of our being we are already there because, like Odo from the TV series “Deep Space Nine”, it is out of Unity that we entered this incarnation. It is our natural state. I began by talking about explaining difficult concepts with the use of pictures, and told you Odo’s story.

I now have another story, our story of unity, to tell you. Once upon a time, somewhere in the vastness of eternity, a meeting was held. Those who met were beings who had gained knowledge and wisdom through repeated incarnations as human beings, each with its pleasures and pains, struggles and challenges. As a result, these elders had proven themselves worthy of helping others to do the

same. They met this day to separate those from their midst whose turn it was for human incarnation and to send them off on this next step in their pilgrimage. This was because each of their kind was obliged to walk through all of the kingdoms of Nature, and learn the lessons of each before being allowed to return for eternity to their natural place as part of the “integral whole”. Those who were to set off today were headed for a “temporary appearance” as human beings on earth.

Upon leaving, each was given a gift, a mirror. One of the elders handed a mirror to each fledgling soul. “Look into the mirror,” the elder said. “See your true self and remember it.” The candidate did as instructed, and the elder repeated this process with each one.

Another elder took the mirror from the candidate, shattered it and handed back the pieces. This process, too, was repeated with each one. “Your job,” the elder told them all, “is to put the mirror back together so that you can once again see your true self. Until you do, your reflection will be skewed and illusion will reign. You will carry this mirror throughout all of your human incarnations, sometimes fitting pieces together and sometimes making mistakes and shattering the pieces still further. It will take many incarnations, but eventually you will succeed in restoring the mirror to its wholeness. Its seams will disappear, your reflection will be clear, and you will be ready to return to us and to take your place, this time with knowledge and wisdom, as part of the “integral whole”.



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Our separateness is like the pieces of a shattered mirror. We are on this journey together. Each of us is a part of the other, brothers and sisters on this plane of existence, this earth, each struggling in our own way. Service to other suffering beings can help us to put that mirror together again. As mentioned earlier, one of my teachers said that “love is the realization of Unity”. If we see ourselves in others, if we recognize the family resemblance as brothers and sisters, if we realize *that Unity*, then love is the natural result, a pure love that binds the shattered pieces together seamlessly.

As I have already said, service can take many forms. I am often asked: “Where do I begin?” My answer is: “Grow where you are planted. Start from wherever you are.” If you are responsible for caring for a family, serve them with as much love and care as you can. Branch out to help neighbours and friends. Those who are able can incorporate community services, perhaps in a small

way, perhaps taking the lead. We each have our strengths and our skills; identify and use them to serve those who suffer. Remember our younger brothers. Include Nature, animals, plants, minerals, and the earth itself. Adopt a lifestyle of harmlessness. Along the way, we will be restoring our shattered mirror. Once it is whole we can see ourselves again for who we really are. We can see the *māyā* of this earth for what it is — distraction, diversion, or amusement and recreation — delusions all, but valuable delusions that provide the lessons we need to find our way home.

Theosophy speaks to the Oneness of all life. Through selfless service we help to heal suffering humanity. We draw attention to the woes of the world, and lead by example in the effort to ease suffering and right wrongs. In the process, we help ourselves. We grow spiritually as we become more and more open to seeing the unity of life wherever we look. ✧

\* Wylie, Winifred, “Montessori and the Theosophical Society”, *Quest*, vol. 93, No. 2, March-April 2008.

**Nothing of that which is conducive to help man, collectively or individually, to live — not “happily” — but less unhappily in this world, ought to be indifferent to the Theosophist-Occultist. It is no concern of his whether his help benefits a man in his worldly or spiritual progress; his first duty is to be ever ready to help if he can, without stopping to philosophize.**

*Collected Writings*, vol. XI, p. 465 (October 1889)  
H. P. Blavatsky

# History of Humanity: Key to the Mystery of Nature

SHIKHAR AGNIHOTRI

AS a student of Theosophy I am aware of the vastness and the depth of this subject. I do not pretend to discuss in a few pages that on which H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) has written her magnum opus *The Secret Doctrine (SD)*, which includes principles of the Universe and Man, the evolution of Root Races, the formation-dissolution of the Globes, and how evolution proceeds on the Globes. Each of these topics needs a separate study to even understand the basics.

But, to try to do justice to the subject, the following chief objectives are aimed at, using statements from *The Mahatma Letters (ML)* and *SD*, as appropriate:

1) To reaffirm the fact that the history of humanity is not a mere history of the physical body of humans.

2) To assert logically that the ultimate mystery of Nature is UNITY. That everything in this existence has come forth from ONE COMMON SOURCE and that SOURCE is present in each and every atom.

3) To show, in the words of HPB, that the occult side of Nature has never been approached by the science of modern

civilization, and consequently indicating the limitations of modern science by giving a few examples related to the evolution of Man.

4) Finally and most importantly, to encourage among ourselves the study of *ML* and *SD* in our lodge meetings, study camps, and seminars so that our outlook towards daily life gets a new vision and the spiritual movement may be given a new impulse.

Ever since the mind became active, there are a few fundamental questions which constantly baffled human beings. And those questions, as everyone may be aware are related to the origin of the Cosmos and the evolution of Man. And various answers to these questions have been proposed by different religions, by philosophies of different eras, and latest by modern science.

On the one hand there are religious and philosophical explanations which are mostly allegorical and symbolical, both of which are based more on faith and individual realization. On the other hand, we have the theories given by modern

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**Mr Shikhar Agnihotri** is a National Lecturer of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society. Talk delivered during the National Seminar at Amravati on December 2016.

## History of Humanity: Key to the Mystery of Nature

science, which does not have clarity or a proper perception of the truth about the above-mentioned questions, although it claims to do so. It is in such an arena that Theosophy enters, which not only puts forward a theory with logical explanations to the evolution of the Universe and Man, but also makes a humble effort to show the path to modern science, so that modern-day scientists, leaving aside their pride and prejudices, can take the hint and work along the same lines as very clearly mentioned by the Masters:

*ML*, Letter No. 18 (*ML-9*) — If, for generations we have “shut out the world from the Knowledge of our Knowledge”, it is on account of its absolute unfitness; and if, notwithstanding proofs given, it still refuses yielding to evidence, then will we at the End of this cycle retire into solitude and our kingdom of silence once more. We have offered to exhume the primeval strata of man’s being, his basic nature, and lay bare the wonderful complications of his inner Self — something never to be achieved by physiology or even psychology in its ultimate expression — and demonstrate it scientifically. . . . It is we who were the divers and the pioneers, and the men of science have but to reap where we have sown. It is our mission to plunge and bring the pearls of Truth to the surface; theirs — to clean and set them into scientific jewels. And, if they refuse to touch the ill-shapen oyster shell, insisting that there is [not], nor *cannot* be any precious pearl inside it, then shall we once more wash our hands of any responsibility before humankind.

Although, due to erroneous beliefs, it seems that Man-God and Nature, are separate entities without any connection, one being the Creator and the other being the creation, but by observation we know that there is a Law of Correspondences working throughout this Cosmos, the principle of “As above so below” (*yathā pinde tathā brahmānde*). And this is the key to the whole philosophical wisdom of the East. The ancient spiritual scientists (*rishis*) realised that Man is the microcosm and the Universe is the macrocosm, and if the whole constitution of Man is realized then the mystery of Nature can also be understood. Maybe that is why the Delphic Oracle says, “Man, know thyself”. For that matter every esoteric doctrine emphasises knowing oneself.

Unlike what modern science says about the origin of the Cosmos from the Big Bang (quantum equations question the validity of the Big-Bang theory), or of Man from Ape, the Mahatma describes the working mystery of Nature:

*ML*, Letter No. 44 (*ML-13*), Answer 1 — Nothing in Nature springs into existence suddenly, all being subjected to the same law of gradual evolution. Realize but once the process of the *maha* cycle, of one sphere and you have realised them all. One man is born like another man, one race evolves, develops, and declines like another and all other races. Nature follows the same groove from the “creation” of a universe down to that of a mosquito. In studying esoteric cosmogony, keep a spiritual eye upon the physiological

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process of human birth; proceed from cause to effect establishing as you go along, similarities between the birth of a man and that of a world. In our doctrines you will find necessary the synthetic method; you will have to embrace the whole — that is to say to blend the *macrocosm* and microcosm together — before you are enabled to study the parts separately or analyze them with profit to your understanding. Cosmology is the physiology of the universe spiritualized, for there is but one law.

Like a doctor has to first study about the whole body and then go for specialization, so also one has to have a holistic or integrated approach towards life if one wants a solution to a problem. Emphasizing on taking an integrated approach instead of a fragmented one, the Mahatma says:

*ML*, Letter No. 44 (*ML-13*), Answer 4 — The evolution of the worlds cannot be considered apart from the evolution of everything created or having been on these worlds. Your accepted conceptions of cosmogony — whether from the theological or scientific standpoints — do not enable you to solve a single anthropological, or even ethnical problem and they stand in your way whenever you attempt to solve the problem of the races on this planet. When a man begins to talk about creation and origin of man, he is butting against the facts incessantly. Go on saying: “Our planet and man were created” — and you will be fighting against *hard facts* forever, analyzing and losing time over trifling details — unable

to ever grasp the whole. But once admit that our planet and ourselves are no more *creations* than the iceberg now before me, but that both planet and man are . . . *states* for a given time; that their present appearance — geological and anthropological — is transitory and but a condition concomitant of that stage of evolution at which they have arrived in the descending cycle — and all will become plain.

Thus to know the history of humanity we cannot limit ourselves just to the history of the physical body. It is the Traveller who was, is, and ever will be, that we need to know about. To understand that, we need to find the answers to two fundamental questions, “Where am I?” and “Who am I?” or, in other words, the history of the Cosmos and that of humanity.

But before we find out what Theosophy says about these questions, let us see what modern science has to say about it, especially about Man.

Modern science has not yet been able to give a satisfactory theory of evolution of humanity or the Universe. There is a very good reason for that, namely, modern science only considers the evolution of the form and it refuses — at least most of the scientists until now — to acknowledge the “consciousness” aspect of evolution. That is why Darwin’s theory of evolution, taught in schools as the truth (which we all have studied), is unable to clarify the question of evolution. But thanks to HPB, Theosophy came to the rescue of humankind not only from

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religious bigotry and superstition, but also from the biased materialistic approach of modern science.

I do not say this because I am a member of the Theosophical Society (TS), definitely not. HPB gives fully logical and scientific arguments questioning Darwin's theory of evolution which is just a theory, only partially correct, and not the complete truth. The full set of her arguments are too numerous to be discussed here, so I would like to share just a few of them from *SD*, vol. II (not verbatim):

Q1. It is evident, especially from the most fundamental principles of Darwinism itself, that an organized being cannot be a descendant of another whose development is in inverse order to his own. Consequently, man cannot be considered as the descendant of any simian (ape-like) species whatsoever. As de Quatrefages says in *The Human Species*, p. 111, "In the ape the temporal sphenoidal convolutions (bones on the side of skull), which form the middle lobe, make their appearance and are completed before the anterior (bones on the front of the skull) convolutions, which form the frontal lobe. In man, on the contrary, the frontal convolutions are the first to appear, and those of the middle lobe are formed later." Thus, in accordance with these principles, man cannot be considered as the descendant of any simian type whatever.

Q2. Natural selection: It is a major misconception (a mere device of rhetoric to credit "natural selection" with the

power of originating species. It is a convenient phrase for describing the mode in which the survival of the fit and the elimination of the unfit among organisms is brought about in the struggle for existence. So, it is a pure myth. *The real question is what cause — combined with secondary causes — produces the "variations" in the organisms themselves?* Many of these secondary causes are purely physical, climatic, dietary, and so on. But beyond this, a deeper principle has to be sought for. *The terms used by materialists such as "spontaneous variations" and "accidental divergence" are self-contradictory in a Universe of "matter, force, and necessity".* Mere variability of type, apart from the supervisory presence of a quasi-intelligent impulse, is powerless to account for the stupendous complexities and marvels of the human body. Drs Eduard von Hartmann and Ernst Haeckel have exposed the insufficiency of the Darwinists' mechanical theory.

Q3. Midway point: Purely secondary causes of differentiation offer no real explanation of the "whence" of the "ancestral types" which served as the starting point for physical development. The truth is that the differentiating "causes" known to modern science only come into operation after the physicalization of the primeval animal root types, out of the astral. Darwinism only meets evolution at its midway point — that is to say when astral evolution has given place to the play of the ordinary physical forces with which our present senses acquaint us.

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But here also the Darwinian theory, even with the expansions attempted, is inadequate. The underlying “cause” of physiological variation in species is a sub-conscious intelligence pervading matter, ultimately traceable to a *reflection* of the Divine and Dhyani-Chohanian wisdom.

Q4. Chance or future plan: What is evolution? A scientist would say that the act of unfolding, the process of growth, of a flower from a bud, is evolution. Yet, the bud must be traced back through its parent plant to the seed, and the egg to the animal or bird that laid it; or at least to the speck of protoplasm from which it expanded and grew. And both the seed and the speck must have the latent potentialities in them for the reproduction and gradual development, the unfolding of the thousand-and-one forms or phases of evolution, through which they must pass before the flower or the animal are fully developed. Hence, a future plan, if not a design, must be there. Moreover, that seed has to be traced, and its nature ascertained.

What is it that guides the force or forces so unerringly in this process of evolution?

Dr A. Bourges, member of the Paris Anthropological Society at its meeting called “Evolutionary Psychology: the Evolution of Spirit, etc.” reconciles entirely the two teachings, namely, those of the physical and spiritual evolutions. He explains the origins of the variety of organic forms, made to fit their environments with such evident intelligent design, by the existence and the mutual interaction of two principles in (manifest)

Nature, the inner conscious principle adapting itself to physical Nature and the innate potentialities in the latter.

The insuperable difficulty at the very foundation of the evolution theory, is that no Darwinian is able to give even an approximate definition of the period at which and the form in which, the first man appeared.

Hence the esoteric teaching is absolutely opposed to the Darwinian evolution, as applied to man and partially so with regard to other species.

But as the saying goes, the wise people of old knew that it is not just what we are able to see but also a vast deal of existence that we do not see, which actually is the root of all what we see. And hence in their doctrine of evolution they included both the aspects, evolution of form, and un-folding of the higher consciousness through the more evolved form, thus explaining the source of everything the Mahatma says:

*ML*, Letter No. 44 (*ML-13*), Answer 4 —

You will easily understand what is meant by the “one and only” element or principle in the universe and [symbolized by] that *androgynous*; the seven headed serpent *Ananta* of Vishnu, the *Nag* around Buddha — the great dragon eternally biting with its *active* head its *passive* tail, from the emanations of which spring worlds, beings and things. . . . Man has his seven principles, the germs of which he brings with him at his birth. So has a planet or a world. From first to last every sphere has its world of effects, the passing through

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which will afford a place of final rest to each of the human principles — the seventh principle excepted. The world No. A is born; and with it, clinging like barnacles to the bottom of a ship in motion, evolve from its first breath of life the living beings of its atmosphere, from the germs hitherto inert, now awakening to life with the first motion of the sphere. With sphere A begins the mineral kingdom and runs the round of mineral evolution.

And while explaining how a globe forms, the Mahatma says:

*ML*, Letter No. 67 (*ML-15*), Answer 1 — Drawn by its “chemical affinity” [?] to coalesce with other like atoms, the aggregate sum of such united atoms will in time become a man-bearing globe after the stages of the cloud, the spiral and sphere of fire-mist and of the condensation, consolidation, shrinkage and cooling of the planet have been successively passed through.

Also pointing out the limitation of our concrete mind which is so used to think in terms of physics rather than metaphysics, the Mahatma says:

*ML*, Letter No. 67 (*ML-15*), Answer 1 — The great difficulty in grasping the idea in the above process lies in the liability to form more or less incomplete mental conceptions of the working of the one element, of its inevitable presence in every imponderable atom, and its subsequent ceaseless and almost illimitable multiplication of new centres of activity without affecting in the least its own original quantity.

It is obvious that such a statement of fact cannot be perceived by the mind but only by intuition just like the aphorism in the *Iśāvāsya Upanishad*,

*om purnam-adah purnam-idam  
purnāt-purnam-udachyate |  
purnasya purnam-ādāya  
purnam-eva-avaśishyate ||*

meaning:

Om, that is complete, this is complete,  
From completeness comes completeness.  
Taking completeness from completeness,  
Completeness indeed remains.

It is hard to conceive, but an appropriate example of this seemingly mysterious fact is provided by Nature itself — the miracle of the birth of a child from its mother. The mother is complete, the child is complete, and when the complete is taken away from the complete, still the completeness remains. What a marvellous way of Nature to give us an indication of how it works.

Explaining the difference, regarding such working of forces (or rather force) which is not in direct sympathy with the proposed laws of modern science, the Mahatma says:

*ML*, Letter No. 67 (*ML-15*), Answer 1 — The force there is not transformed into something else, as I have already shown in my letter, but with each development of a new centre of activity from *within* itself multiplies ad infinitum without ever losing a particle of its nature in quantity or quality. Yet acquiring as it progresses something plus in its differentiation. This

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“force” so-called, shows itself truly indestructible but does *not* correlate and is *not* convertible in the sense accepted by the Fellows of the RS [Royal Society], but rather may be said to *grow* and *expand* into “something else” while neither its own potentiality nor being are in the least affected by the transformation.

Later in the letter Mahatma says that this force is known in different philosophies by different names such as Fohat, *śakti*, *swabhavat*, *ādi-buddhi*, or infinite life. And this infinite life is present everywhere. Very often we just say it, but here the Mahatma explains it logically by giving the example of rocks:

*ML*, Letter No. 67 (*ML-15*), Answer 1 — Thus will you see that in this day on this present earth in every mineral, etc., there is such a spirit. I will say more. Every grain of sand, every boulder or crag of granite, *is* that spirit crystallized or petrified. You hesitate. Take a primer of geology and see what science affirms there about the formation and growth of minerals. What is the origin of all the rocks, whether sedimentary or igneous? . . . Now sedimentary and igneous rocks are composed, the former of sand, gravel and mud, the latter of lava. We have then but to trace the origin of the two. What do we find? We find that one was compounded of three elements or more accurately three several manifestations of the *one* element, earth, water and fire; and that the other was similarly compounded . . . out of cosmic matter — the imaginary *materia prima* itself one of the manifestations (6th

principle) of the one element. How then can we doubt that a mineral contains in it a spark of the *One* as everything else in this objective Nature does?

And those who are familiar with Sanātana Dharma can easily make out that this esoteric knowledge of “one life everywhere” was brought to exoteric religion in the form of worshipping almost everything from rivers, trees, mountains, stones, birds, animals, and humans. It is still being followed but no longer with the original idea. If the original reason behind it was reverence for the One Life, now it is based more on greed or mere ritual. If it was still based on reverence, we would not pollute rivers in the name of religion, cut trees to grab more land, kill animals for religious festivals/sport/fashion/food, or waste natural resources. Instead of taking care of our environment out of sensitivity and reverence, now it is mostly done because some astrologer tells me to feed fish or a cow, or worship a tree, because that will help my business or career prospects. But if we learn to live in harmony with our environment all else will become simple.

Now let us see what Theosophy has to say about “Who am I?”

All of us must have heard the saying “God made man in his own image” being used literally or symbolically in most of the faiths. Initially maybe it was properly understood but somewhere down the line when the mind came into play, it took a reverse turn and created God in his own image. And maybe that is why if we see



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the various gods in different religions, they are assigned human attributes of greed, anger, jealousy, flattery and so on, along with love, compassion and wisdom.

But if we go into the deeper meaning of this statement we see that the image of God is threefold. And only threefold because when something is manifested from the unmanifest it will always have three aspects. For example, if we take “zero” as unmanifest, then after differentiation it manifests itself as positive (+) and negative (-) which makes two, and the third aspect is the relation between the two, and thus came into existence the Trinity of different religions whether Father, Son, and Holy Spirit or Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheśa.

And thus in this threefold image of the Heavenly MAN, the spark of the Flame, the drop of the Ocean, we, the monads came into existence having the threefold powers of will, wisdom, activity. And we as monads have to take that “obligatory pilgrimage”, the journey through all the kingdoms of manifestation, gain experience and return consciously divine. But just as to cross each type of medium we need a different kind of vehicle suited for work in that medium, the monad in his descent, takes seven vehicles which are *ātma*, *buddhi*, *manas*, *kāma*, *prāna*, etheric double, and physical body.

And it is not that these principles are only acquired when we become human. They are always there, but in a sleeping state in the form of a seed, or in a potential form. And the monad descends passing

through the elemental kingdoms 1, 2, and 3, the mineral, the plant, and the animal kingdoms, finally entering the human kingdom. This evolution passes through the seven sub-races of the seven root races. during seven rounds, on seven chains, and going beyond the human to the superhuman kingdom, and finally becoming divine. As the Mahatma says:

*ML*, Letter No. 44 (*ML-13*), Answer 6 —

He starts downward as a simply spiritual entity — an unconscious seventh principle with the germs of the other six principles lying latent and dormant in him. Gathering solidity at every sphere . . . when he touches our planet he is but a glorious bunch of light upon a sphere, itself yet pure and undefiled.

And when A. P. Sinnett questions whether every mineral form, vegetable, plant, animal always contains within itself that entity which has the potential of becoming a planetary spirit, the reply comes, “Invariably; only rather call it the *germ* of a future entity, which it has been for ages.” And with that statement the Mahatma goes on to give the evidence of the history of humanity as the key to the mystery of evolution.

*ML*, Letter No. 67 (*ML-15*), Answer 1 —

Take the human foetus. From the moment of its first planting until it completes its seventh month of gestation it repeats in miniature the mineral, vegetable and animal cycles it passed through in its previous encasements, and only during the last two develops its future human entity. It is completed but towards the child’s

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seventh year. Yet it existed without any *increase* or *decrease* eons on eons before it worked its way onward, *through* and *in* the womb of mother Nature as it works now in its earthly mother's bosom. Truly said a learned philosopher who trusts more to his intuitions than the dicta of modern science, "The stages of man's intrauterine existence embody a condensed record of some of the missing pages in Earth's history." Thus you must look back at the animal, vegetable and mineral entities. You must take each entity at its starting point in the manvantaric course as the primordial cosmic atom already differentiated by the first flutter of the manvantaric life breath. For the potentiality which develops finally in a perfected planetary spirit lurks in, *is* in fact, that primordial cosmic atom.

A lot of history is behind us but more importantly a lot of future is ahead of us. So, instead of going to the past discussing about root races I would prefer to look to the future, to prepare for what is

coming and that is to bring into activity our sixth principle or intuition or *buddhi*. And this is the reason why the Mahatmas have placed so much emphasis on developing intuition or the sixth principle because it is going to be one of the prime features of the coming sixth root race and the sixth sub-race of the fifth root race. The Mahatma says:

*ML*, Letter No. 67 (*ML-15*), Answer 2 —  
. . . Fathom the nature and essence of the sixth principle of the Universe and Man and you will have understood the greatest mystery in this our world — and why not, are you not surrounded by it? . . . The degrees of an Adept's initiation mark the seven stages at which he discovers the secret of the sevenfold Principles in Nature and Man and awakens his dormant powers.

And I do not think that anyone reading the above statement will miss to notice the similarity between the above statement and the objectives of the TS. ✧

### References

1. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett (ML)*
2. *The Secret Doctrine (SD)*

**What are we trying to practise every day? If our friendship depends on things like space and time, then when we finally overcome space and time, we've destroyed our own *brotherhood*! But overcome space, and all we have left is Here. Overcome time, and all we have left is Now. And in the middle of Here and Now, don't you think that we might see each other once or twice?**

Richard Bach

## *Looking For Each Other*

I have been looking for you, World Honored One,  
since I was a little child.  
With my first breath, I heard your call,  
and began to look for you, Blessed One.  
I've walked so many perilous paths,  
confronted so many dangers,  
endured despair, fear, hopes, and memories.  
I've trekked to the farthest regions, immense and wild,  
sailed the vast oceans,  
traversed the highest summits, lost among the clouds.  
I've lain dead, utterly alone,  
on the sands of ancient deserts.  
I've held in my heart so many tears of stone.

Blessed One, I've dreamed of drinking dewdrops  
that sparkle with the light of far-off galaxies.  
I've left footprints on celestial mountains  
and screamed from the depths of Avici Hell,  
    exhausted, crazed with despair  
because I was so hungry, so thirsty.  
For millions of lifetimes,  
I've longed to see you,  
but didn't know where to look.  
Yet, I've always felt your presence with a mysterious certainty.

I know that for thousands of lifetimes,  
you and I have been one,  
and the distance between us is only a flash of thought.

## Looking For Each Other

Just yesterday while walking alone,  
I saw the old path strewn with Autumn leaves,  
and the brilliant moon, hanging over the gate,  
suddenly appeared like the image of an old friend.  
And all the stars confirmed that you were there!  
All night, the rain of compassion continued to fall,  
while lightning flashed through my window  
and a great storm arose,  
as if Earth and Sky were in battle.  
Finally in me the rain stopped, the clouds parted.  
The moon returned,  
shining peacefully, calming Earth and Sky.  
Looking into the mirror of the moon, suddenly  
I saw myself,  
and I saw you smiling, Blessed One.  
How strange!

The deep blue sky,  
the snow-capped mountains painted against the horizon,  
and the shining red sun sing with joy.  
You, Blessed One, are my first love.  
The love that is always present, always pure, and freshly new.  
And I shall never need a love that will be called 'last'.  
You are the source of well-being flowing through  
    numberless troubled lives,  
the water from you spiritual stream always pure,  
    as it was in the beginning.  
You are the source of peace,  
solidity, and inner freedom.  
You are the Buddha, the Tathagata.  
With my one-pointed mind  
I vow to nourish your solidity and freedom in myself  
so I can offer solidity and freedom to countless others,  
now and forever.

Thich Nhat Hanh  
*Call Me by My True Names*

# Theosophical Work around the World

## **The President of India visits Adyar**

The Women's Indian Association (WIA) held its Centenary celebration in the Theosophical Society's Adyar Theatre on the 3rd of March 2017 in Chennai. Mrs Padma Venkataraman, President of the WIA, invited the Hon'ble President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, to inaugurate the function. The Hon'ble Governor of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, Shri Ch. Vidyasagar Rao, was one of the guests of honour. The celebration was for invitees only.

WIA was started at Adyar, Madras, on 8 May 1917. Some of its founding members were devoted Theosophists: Dr Annie Besant, Mrs Margaret Cousins, and Mrs Dorothy Jinarājadāsa. The WIA was the first organization to train women to shoulder responsibility in public services. It was also concerned with influencing government policy on women's suffrage and educational and social reforms. The leadership of Dr Besant provided an impetus to women to also think in terms of political freedom. In 1917, she pioneered the Home Rule movement in Tamil Nadu. The founders also supported compulsory primary education for girls and women's inheritance laws.

## **ITC Naarden Group Planning Meeting**

For five days in March, twenty-one Theosophical Society (TS) leaders from

all over the world, including thirteen General Council (GC) members, met at the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden, the Netherlands. This gathering had been called during the annual Society's GC meeting in December 2016 in order to provide a sustained opportunity to brain-storm and plan for the future of our Society. It was a far-reaching collaboration that focused on the mission and function of the TS, both internally and externally. Much time was engaged in considering the TS's historical and present strengths, also our weaknesses, and thinking in terms of current opportunities for broadening our influence in the world. The intention of the gathering was to develop plans and projects suited to our mission and needs.

Internally, a broad range of issues were looked at, including harmonizing the core teachings, developing teaching/training centres for the membership, a global online resource centre, and more. Externally, the focus was on greater resources for applied Theosophy, increasing membership, developing youth groups, meditation and stress reduction centres, and more.

At this point the planning is in a formative stage — a work in progress. Teams are being created to work on these projects. All participants left feeling energized and committed to the work ahead. Look to hear more soon.

## Theosophical Work around the World



Shri Pranab Mukherjee, President of India (*center*), inaugurating the Centenary Celebration of the Women's Indian Association (WIA) in the Adyar Theatre of the TS, Chennai, on 3 March 2017. On his right is Shri Ch. Vidyasagar Rao, Governor of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu; and on his left, Dr V. Saroja, Social Welfare Minister of Tamil Nadu. Also seen are Mrs Padma Venkataraman, President of the WIA (*far left*), and Mrs Bargavi Devendra, Honorary Secretary of the WIA (*far right*)



The President of India offering a flower tribute in front of Dr Annie Besant's portrait. She was the second international President of the TS and co-founder of the WIA in 1917

## Theosophical Work around the World



Mr S. Sundaram, former General Secretary of the Indian Section of the TS, speaks to members of the WIA, representing International President of the TS, Mr Tim Boyd



Ms C. Sudha, Secretary to the international President, Ms Marja Artamaa, International Secretary, and Mr S. Ram Kumar, newly-appointed General Manager of the TS Adyar, worked hard to help make the WIA's centenary celebration a success

## Theosophical Work around the World



Twenty-one Theosophical Society (TS) leaders from around the world, including thirteen TS General Council members, met at the International Theosophical Centre (ITC) in Naarden, the Netherlands from 4 to 8 March 2017 to brainstorm and plan for the future of the TS. The international President, Mr Tim Boyd, stands in the center (*with open black jacket*)





The international President, Mr Tim Boyd, and Mr Vic Hao Chin, Jr, former General Secretary of the TS in the Philippines, leading one of the sessions of the brainstorming and planning meeting held in the Ashrama Building of the ITC Naarden

## Theosophical Work around the World

### Young Theosophists

On 24 February, the II International Gathering of Young Theosophists took place in Brasília (Brazil). The General Secretary of the Brazilian Section received the following report from their organizing committee:

We were more than thirty young theosophists, mostly from Brazil, but also Argentina, Bolivia, Italy, the Netherlands, and Mexico. We had five days of intense theosophical activity. Our theme was “Diversity as a path towards universal brotherhood”, addressed from various perspectives. Diversity was discussed in the light of *The Secret Doctrine*, raja yoga, Hegelian philosophy, African-Brazilian religions, and more. We addressed some challenging topics, such as latent powers in the human being, sexual orientation, gender identity, the role of ritual in the spiritual life, and the process of facing our inner shadows. We also created friendship bonds between us which will hopefully last for decades, and we inspired the youth to engage more fully with the theosophical teachings. Perhaps from a higher perspective, we allowed some souls to say: “So this is your incarnation in the 21st century, nice to meet you again, my old friend”.

Such an event could not have happened without support. The organizing committee is a small group of young volunteers, and we needed help. We are very grateful to the Brazilian Section for their permanent support, as well as the many individual donations, mostly from

Brazilian theosophists. We are also very glad that the Italian and Bolivian Sections were able to financially support their young theosophists who needed such help to come, and the Theosophical Order of Service, England, who kindly offered financial support which could not be used this year. Adyar also helped us with advertising the event and contacting other Sections and theosophical units.

Although at the end we were deeply satisfied with the gathering, we are also aware that the event was less international than we expected. Unfortunately, very few Sections were able to send young theosophists. Many theosophical units have no means to sponsor travel costs for young theosophists to go to Brazil. Also, they may not have had young theosophists sufficiently dedicated or available. Hence, sending a young theosophist to our gathering can be challenging for many reasons.

So we decided to postpone the III International Gathering of Young Theosophists until 2019, and in 2018 we will have a national gathering focused on Brazilian youth. Hopefully, postponing the international event to 2019 will allow time for more Sections or units to find ways to send at least one young theosophist to the gathering by reaching out to them, offering them not only lectures, but also genuine dialogue, listening to what they have to say, trusting their potential, and encouraging them to meet with their peers and TS members, embracing diversity. We hope to meet again in March 2019. Save the date! ✧

## INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY

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