

## Freedom of Thought

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

## Freedom of the Society

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

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



# THE THEOSOPHIST

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## THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

# An Unending Path

TIM BOYD

IN her short article, “Practical Occultism” H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) made a point of distinguishing between the theosophist and the practical occultist. She said:

It is easy to become a Theosophist. Any person of average intellectual capacities, and a leaning toward the metaphysical; of pure, unselfish life, who finds more joy in helping his neighbour than in receiving help himself; one who is ever ready to sacrifice his own pleasures for the sake of other people; and who loves Truth, Goodness, and Wisdom for their own sake, not for the benefit they may confer — is a Theosophist.

These are the qualities of the theosophist that she enumerates, none of which require membership in an organization.

Practical occultism, on the other hand, is of a very different nature. She said that even within the TS there are few practical occultists. With that as a background, we come to the theosophical approach. So we necessarily find ourselves asking questions. It is not unusual for someone who becomes associated with the TS to ask: “Where should I begin?” What is it that can and should be studied?

The practice of the theosophist is threefold: study, meditation, and service. If we look at J. Krishnamurti’s *At the Feet*

*of the Master*, it says that we are to study, but study first that which will most help us to help others. We are encouraged to think for ourselves: What is it that helps us help others? How do we study that, and where do we find it?

I interact with theosophical members and groups around the world, and it can be surprising the areas that theosophists choose for the focus of their study. For some, their study focuses on the understanding or cultivation of the psychic realm. This is an aspect of the human constitution that seems to have attracted the attention of many. In whatever we study, we make a choice, and to deepen we must persist over time. So it is best to choose wisely, especially in the beginning, as one small step in the wrong direction over time will take us far away from the direction that we originally intended.

The purpose of our study is to elevate the mind so that we can see clearly. An example might be the experience of going up to a mountain peak. There are many ways to reach the peak, but at the top we find before us a vision of the patterns and appearance of the Earth below. We call it “below” because for the moment we are viewing it from the mountain top, but it is the Earth where our day-to-day lives take place. In those mountain top

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experiences we have a clear vision of what is below.

We may think of it as unfortunate, but whatever peak experience we have, whether it is actually standing on a physical mountain, or the elevation that occurs occasionally in meditation, eventually we have to come down. When we do, we find ourselves once again engaged in our normal activities, living under the influence of the personality that we have cultivated over a lifetime. In that peak experience we may have thought we could escape the personality's controlling influence, but it is not that easy. So we have this experience of clearly seeing, but are left to guide ourselves by the memory of what we have seen. It is no longer visible in the same way, but we do remember, and within us there is a knowledge that cannot be taken away.

There is a meditation teacher who has become quite well known in the West who commented that "after the ecstasy, come the dishes". After these peak experiences we are back washing dishes, taking children to school, going to the workplace, but, hopefully, somehow we do it differently, we have changed.

In our theosophical approach this elevation is cultivated in the process of study, meditation, and service. From our perspective it would be well to have a complete teaching, something that develops us as holistically as possible. In the writings of HPB she refers to the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism, and to one particular approach — the Lam Rim, or The Graded Path to Enlightenment, a body

of wisdom teachings specific to Tibetan Buddhism.

Lam Rim is thought of as a complete package, so that there is a stage in these teachings suited to whatever one's level of unfoldment may be. From the perspective of this tradition, there are three different levels of practitioners: those of a smaller scope, a medium scope, and then the great scope.

The smaller scope is for the person who is simply seeking relative relief of their suffering. For them the scope of their vision cannot yet conceive of a purpose or possibility beyond finding happiness within this life and the ever-repeating wheel of samsara. They want happiness now, and perhaps a better rebirth in another life in a family with more wealth or authority.

The medium scope is directed to those practitioners who have seen the folly of this repetitive cycle of suffering, and seek liberation from it. This is the path of the Pratyeka Buddhas. The path of personal liberation from samsara, from the realm of suffering, is the middle path.

Then there is the great scope, the path of those who choose to become like the Buddha, the Bodhisattva path. "May I attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings", is the Bodhisattva Vow. This is akin to the theosophical approach to the wisdom path.

In our theosophical literature there are profound teachings that have been given by wise beings that address the many levels of our being. Some of these texts are very short. Much like sutras, these

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texts are compact, leaving it for us to expand. Even with the Lam Rim teachings there is the large body of teachings, approximately 1,000 pages; an abbreviated version of about 200 pages; and an extremely abbreviated version, which is about 2 pages. But each version connects a student to a body of wisdom teachings.

With theosophical teachings we have *At the Feet of the Master*, which speaks about four qualifications leading to a serious entry into the path of discipleship: discrimination, desirelessness, good conduct, and the overarching one — love. In the absence of all others, if we have cultivated the capacity for genuine love, it clears the way. We have *The Voice of the Silence*, which is dedicated to “the few”, and intended for a deeper level of unfoldment.

Then we have *Light on the Path*, with its various admonitions. The first part of the book talks about all of the things we must “kill out”. Various desires must be killed out before we move on. After this phase the book talks about those things that we must desire. “Desire possessions above and beyond all else” is one of those, but it says they are possessions of an inner nature. It is similar to the language and ideas expressed in H. P. Blavatsky’s (HPB) “Diagram of Meditation”, where she speaks of “acquisitions” and “deprivations”. The idea is of moving progressively from the attachments of the desire world, going more and more inward. It closes with the section on “seeking”, what it is that we seek — “Seek out the way” — and *how* we seek that way.

In the final verse, after having killed out harmful desires, cultivated proper desires, and sought the way, then we are told to stop: “Don’t do anything.” The last phrase in the book is to stop and look for the flower to bloom after the storm. The point is made that not until the storms of life have shaken us to our roots, does the flower bloom. These are complete theosophical teachings that can guide us along the way from entering the path all the way to enlightenment, if we can make the connections from these abbreviated expressions to their source.

A brief view of HPB’s “The Golden Stairs” gives a similar picture. On a superficial level it could be just a statement of practical virtues. The first step of these stairs is “a clean life”. Obviously to have a clean life is a good thing, and if it only meant that, it is good enough for many. But we are encouraged to look more deeply. What is meant by “cleanliness”? Is it the fact that there is no tint or stain on the shirt we are wearing? Is it that the floor in our home is free from dust? That is certainly an aspect of cleanliness, but is there more to it?

What are the more important elements? There are other clothes we wear and dwellings we inhabit — the personality — which can also become unclean. Perhaps it is pointing us in this direction. What are the thoughts and emotional states that we cultivate and allow ourselves to be bathed in? To what degree do we relish the reports of the news about all of the various troubles on the Earth? To what degree do they disturb us? What

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do we allow to enter our consciousness that either sullies, or cleanses it? A clean life is more than just a series of habits.

The second stair is “an open mind”. What does it mean to have an open mind? What is the quality of openness? We think of ourselves as having a mind — “my mind”, separate and independent from all other minds. But the capacity to think at all derives from a universal mind, present everywhere, within which there are an infinite number of centers of awareness. We identify and claim a little corner of that universal mind and call it “mine”. This is the nature and quality of a mind that is not open.

In her Diagram of Meditation HPB begins by addressing the open mind. She says that the *very* first thing we must do is to conceive of Unity. At least at the conceptual level we are advised to make efforts to comprehend the meaning of Unity — Oneness, interdependence, non-separation. Without this foundation we are not moving toward genuine meditation. Openness is an understanding of Unity that goes beyond the merely intellectual.

We do not need to defend our consciousness from expansion, from deepening awareness, or from contrary points of view. Openness is not just being able to read the ideas of communists along with conservatives, or to respond to the questions of young people as well as those who are older and more settled. To be open is to be free from resistance to experience that takes us beyond limits we have accepted and imposed upon ourselves.

The next of the Golden Stairs is “a pure heart”. Purity and cleanliness seem to be similar. In normal thinking, when we clean something enough, we might call it “pure”. Purity probably has nothing to do with cleanliness, except that as we become clean, we become able to perceive purity. Purity is really a state of being unalloyed — not mixed. Pure gold has nothing else in it, and because all the other elements that are combined in impure things diminish the special quality that purity reveals. For example, with pure gold, we can take a piece of it the size of a coin and hammer it so thin that it could cover the floor of a room; with impure gold it would be impossible. Pure gold does not tarnish; electricity flows through pure gold without interruption.

These are a few incomplete thoughts on the teachings that we have been given. It is a sign of the great wisdom of the people who have given them, that they are expressed in such a way that they are potent at whatever level we find ourselves. Whether we are beginners or mature practitioners, these teachings feed us at our level of need. Our part in the process is to be aware that they are without limit. While it might be easy to become satisfied with the crumbs that we are able to digest at this moment, our role is to elevate, to try to look more deeply.

Invariably what we find is that as something opens within us, those exact same teachings speak to us in a very different way; that is the beauty of it. It is an unending path, and we are unendingly supported at every step of the way. ✧

# The Real Crisis — I

J. KRISHNAMURTI

THE present world crisis is of an extraordinary nature; there have been probably few such catastrophes in the past. This present crisis is not the usual kind of disaster that occurs so often in the life of man. This chaos is worldwide; it is not Indian or European but stretching out into every corner of the world. Physiologically and psychologically, morally and spiritually, economically and socially, there is disintegration and confusion. We are standing on the edge of a precipice and wrangling over our petty affairs. Few seem to realize the extraordinary character of this world crisis, how profound and vastly disturbing. Some, realizing the confusion, are active in rearranging the pattern of life on the edge of the precipice and, being themselves confused, are only bringing more confusion.

This catastrophe has not come into being through some action of chance; it has been created by each one of us — by our everyday activities of envy and passion, of greed and the craving for power and domination, of competition and ruthlessness, of sensate and immediate values. We are responsible for this appalling misery and confusion, not another

but you and I. Because you are thoughtless, unaware, wrapped up in your ambitions, sensations and their pursuits, wrapped up in those values that are immediately gratifying, you have created this immense, engulfing disaster. . . . You are responsible for this chaos, not any particular group, not any individual, but you.

Why has man, who has lived for thousands and thousands of years, come to such misery and conflict? . . . If you put aside the easy explanations of overpopulation, lack of morality — which goes with technological knowledge and this lack of direct communication — what then is the fundamental reason, the fundamental cause of this misery? Why is it that in a country like this [India] that has had the tradition of goodness, kindness, of not killing, of not being brutal . . . why is it and whence is it that something has gone totally wrong?

Because in the ancient days there were a group of people who were free from ambition and authority, from the bondages of greed and ill will, it helped to guide society away from spiritual and moral degradation. The larger the group, the greater the security of the society,

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**J. Krishnamurti** (11.5.1895-17.2.1986) was a philosopher, speaker, and writer who had a major impact on 20th-century thought. From his talks and writings from 1934 to 1985, KFI, 2020.



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of the State and, for this reason, only one or two countries, like India, have survived. Because there are very few people who are not caught up in the turmoil of the world, you are in an extraordinary crisis.

There is the sorrow of disease, there is the sorrow that man feels in complete isolation. There is the sorrow of poverty when you see all these poor, ignorant, hopeless people. There is sorrow when you see all the animals of the world being killed, destroyed, butchered in laboratories.

It is odd that we have so little relationship with Nature. We never seem to have a feeling for all the living things on the Earth. If we could establish a deep, abiding relationship with Nature, we would never kill an animal for our appetite; we would never harm, vivisection a monkey, a dog, a guinea pig for our benefit. We would find other ways to heal our wounds, heal our bodies. But the healing of the mind is something totally different. That healing gradually takes place if you are with Nature.

When we lose contact with Nature, we lose contact with each other. When you lose contact with the birds, the shy and timid quail, then you lose contact with your child and the person across the street. When you kill an animal to eat, you are also cultivating insensitivity which will kill that man across the border. When you lose contact with the enormous movement of life, you lose all relationship. Then you — the ego with all its fanciful urges, demands,

and pursuits — become all-important, and the gulf between you and the world widens in endless conflicts.

When you look around you, not so much in the human world as in Nature, in the heavens, you see an extraordinary sense of order, balance, and harmony. Every tree and flower has its own order, its own beauty; every hilltop and every valley has a sense of its own rhythm and stability. Though man tries to control the rivers and pollutes their waters, they have their own flow, their own far-reaching movement. Apart from man, in the seas, in the air and the vast expanse of the heavens there is an extraordinary sense of purity and orderly existence. Though the fox kills the chicken, and the bigger animals live on the little animals, what appears to be cruelty is a design of order in this universe, except for man. When man does not interfere, there is great beauty of balance and harmony.

The crisis is there. The crisis is not in the world, it is not the nuclear war, it is not the terrible divisions and the brutality that is going on. The crisis is in our consciousness, the crisis is what we are, what we have become. . . .

Therefore the important thing . . . is self-knowledge. Without understanding oneself, there cannot be order in the world; without exploring the whole process of thought, feeling, and action in oneself, there cannot possibly be world peace, order, and security. Therefore the study of oneself is of primary importance, and it is not a process of escape.

*(To be continued)*

# The Life of Buddha and Its Lessons — I

HENRY STEEL OLCOTT

THE thoughtful student, in scanning the religious history of the race has one fact continually forced upon his notice, namely, that there is an invariable tendency to deify whomsoever shows himself superior to the weakness of our common humanity. Look where we will, we find the saint-like man exalted into a divine personage and worshiped for a god. Though perhaps misunderstood, reviled and even persecuted while living, the apotheosis is almost sure to come after death: and the victim of yesterday's mob, raised to the stage of an intercessor in heaven, is besought with prayer and tears, and placatory penances to mediate with God for the pardon of human sin.

This is a mean and vile trait of human nature, the proof of ignorance, selfishness, brutal cowardice, and a superstitious materialism. It shows the base instinct to put down and destroy whatever or whoever makes men feel their own imperfections; with the alternative of ignoring and denying these very imperfections by turning into gods men who have merely spiritualized their natures, so that it may be supposed that they were heavenly incarnations and not mortal like other men.

This process of euhemerisation, as it is called, or the making of men into gods and gods into men, sometimes, though more rarely, begins during the life of the hero, but usually after death. The true history of his life is gradually amplified and decorated with fanciful incidents, to fit it to the new character which has been posthumously given him. Omens and portents are now made to attend his earthly avatār: his precocity is described as superhuman: as a babe or lisping child he silences the wisest logicians by his divine knowledge: miracles he produces as other boys do soap-bubbles: the terrible energies of Nature are his playthings: the gods, angels, and demons are his habitual attendants: the sun, moon, and all the starry host wheel around his cradle in joyful measures, and the earth thrills with joy at having borne such a prodigy: and at his last hour of mortal life the whole universe shakes with conflicting emotions.

Why need I use the few moments at my disposal to marshal before you the various personages of whom these fables have been written? Let it suffice to recall the interesting fact to your notice, and invite you to compare the respective

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Henry S. Olcott (2.8.1832 – 17.2.1907) journalist, lawyer, and co-founder and President of the Adyar Theosophical Society from 1875 until his death in 1907.

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biographies of the Brāhmanical Krishna, the Persian Zoroaster, the Egyptian Hermes, the Indian Gautama, and the canonical, especially the apocryphal, Jesus. Taking Krishna or Zoroaster, as you please, as the most ancient, and coming down the chronological line of descent, you will find them made after the same pattern. The real personage is all covered up and concealed under the embroidered veils of the romancer and the enthusiastic historiographer. What is surprising to me is that this tendency to exaggeration and hyperbole is not more commonly allowed for by those who in our days attempt to discuss and compare religions. We are constantly and painfully reminded that the prejudice of inimical critics, on the one hand, and the furious bigotry of devotees, on the other, blind men to fact and probability, and lead to gross injustice.

Let me take as an example the mythical biographies of Jesus. At the time when the Council of Nicea was convened for settling the quarrels of certain bishops and for the purpose of examining into the canonicity of the hundred more or less apocryphal gospels, that were being read in the Christian churches as inspired writings, the history of the life of Christ has reached the height of absurd myth. We may see some specimens in the extant books of the apocryphal New Testament, but most of them are now lost. What have been retained in the present canon may doubtless be regarded as the least objectionable. And yet, we must not hastily adopt even this conclusion, for you know that Sabina, Bishop of Heracha, himself

speaking of the Council of Nicea, affirms that “except Constantine and Sabinus, Bishop of Pamphilus, these bishops were a set of illiterate, simple creatures, that understood nothing”, which is as though he had said they were a pack of fools. And Pappus, in his Synodicon to the Council of Nicea, lets us into the secret that the canon was not decided by a careful comparison of several gospels before them, but by a lottery. “Having”, he tells us:

. . . promiscuously put all the books that were referred to the Council for determination *under* a Communion table in a church, they (the bishops) besought the Lord that the inspired writings might get up on the table, while the spurious writings remained underneath, and it happened accordingly.

But letting all this pass, and looking only to what is contained in the present canon, we see the same tendency to compel all Nature to attest to the divinity of the writer’s hero. At the nativity a star leaves its orbit and leads the Persian astrologers to the divine, and angels come and converse with shepherds, and a whole train of like celestial phenomena occurs at various stages of his earthly career, which closes amid earthquakes, a pall of darkness over the whole scene, a supernatural war of the elements, the opening of graves and walking about of their tenants and other appalling wonders. Now, if the candid Buddhist concedes that the real history of Gautama is embellished by like absurd exaggerations, and if we can find their duplicates in the biographies of Zoroaster, Shankarāchārya and the other real personages of antiquity,

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have we not the right to conclude that the true history of the Founder of Christianity, if at this late date it were possible to write it, would be very different from the narratives that pass current? We must not forget that Jerusalem was at that time a Roman dependency, just as Ceylon is now a British, and that the silence of contemporary Roman historians about any such violent disturbances of the equilibrium of Nature is deeply significant.

. . . The doctrine of Buddha and its effects are to be judged quite apart from the man, just as the doctrine ascribed to Jesus and its effects are to be considered quite irrespectively from his personal history. And, as I hope I have shown the actual doings and sayings of every founder of a faith or a school of philosophy, must be sought for under a heap of tinsel and rubbish contributed by successive generations of followers.

Approaching the question of the hour in this spirit of precaution, what do we find are the probabilities respecting the life of Śākya Muni? Who was he? When did he live? How did he live? What did he teach? A most careful comparison of authorities and analysis of evidence establishes, I think, the following data: (1) He was the son of a King. (2) He lived between 6 and 7 centuries before Christ. (3) He resigned his royal state and went to live in the jungle, and among the lowest and most unhappy classes, so as to learn the secret of human pain and misery by personal experience; tested every known austerity of the Hindu ascetics and excelled them all in his power of endurance;

sounded every depth of woe in search of the means to alleviate it; and at last came out victorious, and showed the world the way to salvation. (4) What he taught may be summed up in a few words, as the perfume of many roses may be distilled into a few drops of attar: everything in the world of matter is unreal; the only reality is the world of Spirit. Emancipate yourselves from the tyranny of the former; strive to attain the latter. The Rev. Samuel Beal, in his *A Catena of Buddhist Scriptures from the Chinese* puts it differently. "The idea underlying the Buddhist religious system is," he says, "simply this: all is vanity. Earth is a show, and Heaven is a vain reward." Primitive Buddhism was engrossed, absorbed by one thought, the vanity of finite existence, the priceless value of the one condition of Eternal Rest.

If I have the temerity to prefer my own definition of the spirit of Buddha's doctrine it is because I think that all the misconceptions of it have arisen from a failure to understand his idea of what is real and what is unreal, what worth longing and striving for and what not. From this misconception have come all the unfounded charges that Buddhism is an atheistical, that is, a grossly materialistic, nihilistic, negative, vice-breeding religion. Buddhism denies the existence of a personal God — true. Therefore, and notwithstanding all this, its teaching is neither what may be called properly atheistical, nihilistic, negative, nor provocative of vice. I will try to make my meaning clear, and the advancement of modern scientific research helps in this direction.

## The Life of Buddha and Its Lessons — I

Science divides the universe for us into two elements: matter and force; accounting for their phenomena by their combinations, and making both eternal and obedient to eternal and immutable law. The speculations of men of science have carried them to the outermost verge of the physical universe. Behind them lie not only a thousand brilliant triumphs by which a part of Nature's secrets have been wrung from her, but also more thousands of failures to fathom her deep mysteries.

They have proved thought material, since it is the evolution of the gray tissue of the brain, and a recent German experimentalist, Professor Dr Jäger, claims to have proved that man's soul is "a volatile odoriferous principle, capable of solution in glycerine". Psychogen is the name he gives to it, and his experiments show that it is present not merely in the body as a whole, but in every individual cell, in the ovum, and even in the ultimate elements of protoplasm. I need hardly say to so intelligent an audience as this that these highly interesting experiments of Dr Jäger are corroborated by many facts, both physiological and psychological, that have been always noticed among all nations; facts which are woven into popular proverbs, legends, folklore fables, mythologies and theologies, the world over.

Now, if thought is matter and soul is matter, then Buddha, in recognizing the impermanence of sensual enjoyment or experience of any kind, and the instability of every material form, the human soul included, uttered a profound and scienti-

fic truth. And since the very idea of gratification or suffering is inseparable from that of material being — absolute SPIRIT alone being regarded by common consent as perfect, changeless and Eternal — therefore, in teaching the doctrine, that conquest of the material self, with all its lusts, desires, loves, hopes, ambitions and hates, frees one from pain, and leads to Nirvāna, the state of Perfect Rest, he preached the rest of an untinged, untainted existence in the Spirit. Though the soul be composed of the finest conceivable substance, yet if substance at all — as Dr Jäger seems able to prove, and ages of human intercourse with the weird phantoms of the shadow world imply — it must in time perish.

What remains is that changeless part of man, which most philosophers call Spirit, and Nirvāna is its necessary condition of existence. The only dispute between Buddhist authorities is whether this Nirvānic existence is attended with individual consciousness, or whether the individual is merged in the whole, as the extinguished flame is lost in the air. But there are those who say that the flame has not been annihilated by the blowing out. It has only passed out of the visible world of matter into the invisible world of Spirit, where it still exists and will ever exist, as a bright reality. Such thinkers can understand Buddha's doctrine and, while agreeing with him that soul is not immortal, would spurn the charge of materialistic nihilism if brought against either that sublime teacher or themselves.

*(To be continued)*

# The Practice of Meditation

VICENTE HAO CHIN, JR

## 1. The Purposes of Meditation

There are two purposes of meditation:

a. To have tranquillity in daily life.

b. To attain self-transcendence or the spiritual life.

Before we can attain the second one, we must first attain daily tranquility, which means having inner peace amid all the duties, pressures, and problems in life. That is the reason why many corporations are sending their executives to meditation training even if they are not interested in spiritual life. The purpose is to make them less stressed at work and be more effective in life.

In choosing the meditation method that we can adopt with confidence, we need to familiarize ourselves with two things: (1) The levels of human consciousness; and (2) the study of time-tested methods in meditation that have been used for thousands of years that have proven to be effective in attaining serenity and transcendence.

## 2. The Levels of Human Consciousness

Understanding the levels of human consciousness is essential to the appreci-

ation of the purposes and processes of meditation. The lower levels are known to everyone, while the higher ones are validated by the collective experiences of mystics of many cultures through the centuries. Thus, this knowledge is not based on particular dogmas of religions, although spiritual traditions affirm them.

Universal Consciousness	The state achieved by a few: Union in Christianity, Nirvana in Buddhism, and Fanah in Islam.
Spiritual Consciousness	Known and validated since ancient times. Now part of scientific exploration.
Mental	These three levels are within the experience of the average person.
Emotional	
Physical	

◆ The existence of transpersonal consciousness or spiritual consciousness is now part of scientific studies in psychology (transpersonal psychology).

◆ The highest level is the Universal Consciousness or Ātma. Its attainment leads to the cessation of the personal ego.

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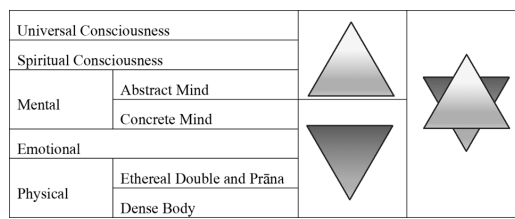
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## The Practice of Meditation

The self melts away, and there is a consciousness of universality or non-duality.

The mind has two levels: concrete and abstract. The concrete mind thinks with colors, shapes, or words. But the abstract or subtle mind thinks without images. It understands concepts or essences without having to use pictures. These two levels are the arena of meditation.

On the physical level, there is also a division: the dense part and the ethereal part, including *prāna*. These are relevant to meditation because they are sources of disturbance.



The division between the lower and higher mind is the crucial dividing line between what we may call the higher self and the lower self, also called the individuality and the personality. The three upper levels — the higher mental, spiritual and universal consciousness — are symbolized by an upright triangle, while an inverted triangle represents the lower mind, emotional and physical levels. These two are the higher and lower nature of a human being. The higher self is not fully developed in an average human being.

On the other hand, the lower self is highly active, but is usually filled with conditionings or habits that conflict with one's higher self. But when the lower self is purified and cleansed of conditionings

that are incongruent to one's higher principles, then it can blend very well with the higher nature. This fusion is symbolized by the interlaced triangles or the six-pointed star, the symbol of the integrated human being. Thus, the practice of meditation consists of not only awareness of our mind, but also the retraining of our lower self as well as the progressive awakening of our higher faculties.

### 3. Time-Tested Methods

Another factor in choosing a method of meditation that will be effective is to study the various approaches that have been tried over the centuries. This is a part of the study of comparative mysticism. The best known methods are those of yoga, Zen Buddhism, Theravada methods, Transcendental Meditation (TM), and Christian contemplative practices. Many researchers have scientifically tested these techniques for their effect on stress, calmness, the capacity to focus, brain wave production, and so on.

But more important is the role of meditation in nurturing and deepening spiritual consciousness among dedicated practitioners. Among these methods, those in the East have the most extensive accumulated experiences and insights.

All these meditation practices have stages that serve specific purposes in bringing about tranquility. The best classification is found in the *Yoga Sutras* by Patanjali written more than two thousand years ago and which remains a standard meditation guide today. It identifies two phases of the practices that are essential: concentration

## The Practice of Meditation

(*dhāraṇa*) and meditation (*dhyaṇa*). These methods were adopted in Buddhism and became *Ch'an* Buddhism in China and Zen Buddhism in Japan.

Most of them use mantras, names, or counting of breath. In the Theosophical Society, we avoid methods that are associated with any religious tradition; hence the best is to use the counting method.

### 4. The Practice of Meditation

The two levels of the mind are the levels where we practice meditation. There are, therefore, two essential stages in meditation practice. The first is the taming of the lower mind, and the second is the sustenance of awareness of the higher mind when the lower mind is no longer noisy. The first stage of meditation is concentration, and the higher step is meditation itself.

In the practice of meditation, therefore, we have to undergo two stages of proficiency. To practice this, we must do some preparations for a few minutes.

- ◆ The body must be relaxed. This is done consciously by being aware of any part of the body that may be uncomfortable or tense.
- ◆ When the body is fully relaxed, then we will notice that the emotions also become quiet and peaceful.
- ◆ Next, we must be aware of our thoughts. We do not reject them. We also do not entertain them. Just be mindful that they are coming and going.
- ◆ After being aware of our thoughts, we will notice that our consciousness has a space. We cannot determine its bound-

aries, but this space contains all thoughts, memories, images, ideas, perceptions.

### 4. Stage 1: Disciplining the Lower Mind

When we start the practice of meditation, we must first tame the noisy habits of the lower mind, like the taming of a wild horse. It is simple and quite natural. First, we become aware of our natural cycle of breathing.

- ◆ Then as we breathe in, we mentally say “one”.
- ◆ As we breathe out, we mentally say “two”.

(You can change the “one” and “two” to whatever you wish, such as a mantra or a name you revere. It is not important. This is just an object for us to focus on. Later we will not need the counting or the mantra.)

For those who find that they have difficulty in maintaining “one” and “two” because they keep on getting carried away by thoughts, you can use another way:

- ◆ When you breathe in, mentally say “one”.
- ◆ When you breathe out, say “two”.
- ◆ Breathing in, say “one”.
- ◆ Breathing out, say “two”.
- ◆ Keep on counting up to 50 when you are breathing out.
- ◆ If you forget what number you are in, then just go back to “one”.

Do this exercise for at least 20 minutes each day.

One of the significant effects of this practice is that it gradually develops a substratum of consciousness, which we may call “peripheral awareness”. While we are engaged in anything in daily life, there is an awareness in the background of our



## The Practice of Meditation

mind that makes us aware of things that we have not noticed before.

For example, previously, when we get angry, our consciousness is fully absorbed in anger. We are carried away by it, and we may express the anger in destructive ways. When the peripheral awareness is developed, however, something is added. We may still get angry, but this time we are aware that we are angry, including tension in the body, heat around the ears, strong heartbeat, and so forth. When we are aware, we are no longer hijacked by the emotion. We have the option to watch and become calmer. This peripheral awareness grows and becomes more permanent as we continually practice meditation. It is the link between meditative awareness and daily life.

### 5. Stage 2: Meditation Proper

When we have practiced the taming process with breathing and counting, we will notice that after a few weeks, the mind will become calmer and quieter. During meditation, stray thoughts do not pop up anymore, even when we no longer do the counting. Note that the counting of breath is just a tool, not meditation itself. H. P. Blavatsky wrote that counting breaths will not bring us absolute tranquility. This is evidently true, and it will have to be dropped at some point in the practice. But it is a useful time-tested tool to quiet the monkey mind at the beginning.

When the noisy habits of the mind have ceased, we enter into the second stage of the practice, which is awareness of our mind without trying to tame it. There is

no longer any counting, and we are aware of the space of consciousness, especially the subtle thoughts that are formless. This is meditation proper, or *dhyāna*. *Dhyāna*, said the *Yoga Sutras*, is the uninterrupted flow of thought on an object chosen (III,2).

The critical element in this stage is sustained awareness. There will now emerge many kinds of thoughts from the subconsciousness and the subtle level. We notice them but do not identify with them. It is during this stage that we must seriously attend to the inner and outer conflicts that we have: our habits, attitudes, values, relationships, attachment, ethics, and so on. When these are not integrated, then we will continue to be bothered by them.

These disturbances come from the activities, concerns, and preoccupations of our daily life. We will discover that success in the practice of meditation involves our entire life process, not just sitting down for 30 minutes. We must review our whole philosophy of life and our values in life and remove contradictions in our behavior, habits, livelihood, attitudes, and so forth.

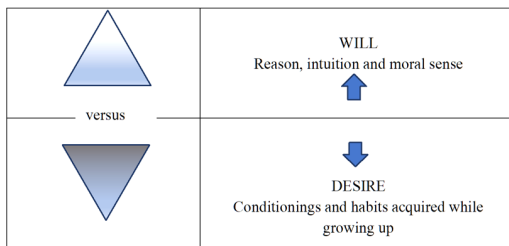
### 6. Integration with the Personality and Daily Life

As mentioned above, the conditionings of the personality must be retrained so that there will be no conflict between the higher and lower nature. The realizations or perceptions of the higher self become the principles which we would like to live by. We want them to become the guiding truths in our life. This

## The Practice of Meditation

recognition or affirmation is our higher will, which is different from the desires or habits that we have acquired while we were growing up.

This stage will accentuate the life-long conflict between the higher and lower nature, the battle between Will and desire. For most people, it is the desire that wins. But for people aspiring for maturity and the spiritual life, the Will must reign supreme. H. P. Blavatsky wrote that the duty of every theosophist is “to control and conquer, *through the Higher, the lower self.*” (*The Key to Theosophy*, Sec. 12)



Meditation strengthens the inner Will because the higher values become clearer to oneself in moments of silence. At the same time, when one becomes aware of the urges and manifestations of the lower personality, the energies of the emotions get released and start dissipating, thus weakening those habits. When this higher nature becomes dominant, then it will be the primary factor that leads to the attainment of our highest destiny, which is self-realization.

Hence in the practice of meditation, we must not neglect to re-educate our lower triangle or personality so that it becomes obedient to the higher will. This is not easy, especially when one grows older, and

the habits have been deeply ingrained already.

### 7. Ending the Meditation

In concluding the meditation, end gradually with a transition toward regular activity, such as in the following manner:

- ◆ Continue to be aware of the space of the consciousness;
- ◆ Then be mindful of the sounds around us;
- ◆ Be mindful of our body and feelings;
- ◆ Open the eyes and be aware of the surroundings, but still aware of the inner space;
- ◆ When we are about to move parts of our body, be conscious that we are about to move and be aware when we move them.

### 8. Stage 3: The Higher Stages

When our meditation practice has deepened enough, then we will note that we begin to be in touch with a higher level of consciousness, which we call *Buddhi* in Theosophy. It is the faculty of intuitive perception, *prajñā* in yoga and Buddhism, or the contemplative consciousness in Christianity.

This faculty enables us to see the deeper essence of things. In time, the higher mind will be influenced by this spiritual faculty, making it more intuitive. Madame Blavatsky calls such a mind *manas-tajasi* or the Radiant Mind, the mind illuminated by the *Buddhi*. A practice that is relevant to this stage is the “Diagram of Meditation” given by Blavatsky to her pupils.

After years of practice, we may find that we are ready to enter into a deeper stage

## The Practice of Meditation

of meditation, which is the awareness of the ego or self. Who is this meditator? Who am I? Who is this thinker? Where do these thoughts come from? There is a famous enlightened yogi, Ramana Maharshi, of South India, who taught a deep meditation method called *vichāra*, which means “self-inquiry”. It just continues to ask, “Who am I?”

This is one of the deepest levels of meditation, but it requires that one is already able to quieten the mind, on both the higher and lower levels.

### 9. Summary

To summarize the processes involved in the practice of meditation, let us study this chart that refers to the functions and

characteristics of each of the levels of consciousness (see chart below).

The Theosophical Society must actively promote the regular practice of meditation not only to its members but also to the general public. It can be done weekly for 1-1/2 hours. The meditation practice can be done in 20-25 minutes, followed by a talk on aspects of meditation, plus, if desired, a question-and-answer period.

Meditation is an essential practice for everyone, regardless of whether one is interested in spirituality or not. By being inwardly aware and developing self-mastery, meditation redirects one’s life destiny. It is the key to true inner peace, social peace, wisdom, and spirituality. ✧

Level of Consciousness	Characteristics	Approaches
Universal Consciousness	No sense of ego	Unstructured awareness meditation, no words, self-inquiry (“Who am I?”)
Spiritual consciousness	Intuition, spirituality	
Higher Mind	Concepts, intentions, ideas	2nd stage: Meditation proper; continuous flow of consciousness on any chosen object of attention
Lower Mind	Jumping “monkey mind”	1st stage of meditation: concentration or counting of breath
Emotions	Anger, fear, depression, resentment, hurt, and so on	Self-awareness process to release suppressed energies
Ethereal Double and Prāna	Tension, Stress, Instability	Abdominal breathing, Scanning Process, Prānāyāma
Physical Body	Pain and Disease	Healthy living

# HPB and the Forerunners of the New Art — I

EDUARDO J. GRAMAGLIA

*Theosophy became the school toward which artists and seekers could look for a radically other description of the world and man.<sup>1</sup>*

## **Blavatsky and Abstract Thought**

This article seeks to reveal a not-too-often touched-upon feature of H. P. Blavatsky's (HPB) contribution to the world of thought: she will be considered as a source of inspiration for the artists of the 20th century, a few of whom will in turn be revealed as forerunners of the New Art.

HPB, a talented pianist herself<sup>2</sup>, who had received lessons from Ignaz Moscheles, a noted pianist-composer of the 19th century<sup>3</sup>, had not the highest opinion of the direction art was taking, as her sharp article "Civilization, the Death of Art and Beauty" bitterly shows.<sup>4</sup> In an almost relentless allocution, she claims that the selfishness and materialism of modern civilization had led to the annihilation of art and of the appreciation of the truly beautiful. She denounces the "scarcity of remarkable pictures" in art galleries, and a lack of imagination in artists, whose "ideas of female beauty of

form . . . [are] based on the wasp-like pinched-in waists of corseted, hollow-chested and consumptive society belles".

Civilization had "rung the death-knell of the old arts", and the last decade of the 19th century was summoning the world "to the funeral of all that was grand . . . and original in the old civilizations". Not even her contemporary — and acclaimed composer — Richard Wagner was spared from her criticism of the "new ways": his handling of the "most sacred truths" (namely, the way he uses old myths in *Parsifal*), was for her "a sheer debasement, a sacrilege, and a blasphemy"<sup>5</sup>. Only scarce and scattered hints, however, did she give of what was meant to take place in the following, the bloodiest of centuries, which the famous historian Eric Hobsbawm rightly called "The Age of Catastrophe"<sup>6</sup>; but the extent to which her legacy contributed to inspire poets, thinkers, and artists during the following century cannot be overrated. This legacy

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## HPB and the Forerunners of the New Art — I

she never claimed as her own, but “*his that sent her*”<sup>7</sup>.

In the realm of poetry, the keenest and younger intellects of the century are said to have been influenced by *The Secret Doctrine*.<sup>8</sup> Some, like William Butler Yeats, even belonged to the Esoteric Section<sup>9</sup> of the Theosophical Society. George W. Russell was an avid reader of *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, as was James Joyce, whose *Ulysses* derived much material from HPB’s works.

D. H. Lawrence conceived *The Plumed Serpent* under the idea of the Central Sun as the soul of all things; and according to Tom Gibbon, T. S. Eliot’s work reveals “an occult correspondence between the structure of the human body and the structure of the universe”.<sup>10</sup> Gibbons admits that both *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*, are based upon the occult doctrine of correspondences. The name of H. P. Blavatsky appears in “A Cooking Egg”, a poem of 1920, in which Eliot confesses his wish of being instructed by Madame Blavatsky “in the Seven Sacred Trances”.

However, it is in the world of — Art mainly painting and music — that the influence of *The Secret Doctrine* can more clearly be seen. Nicholas Roerich hardly needs any introduction, as he is widely known for his labor as peace-maker, archaeologist, and especially painter. Both he and his wife Helena were engaged in the translation of *The Secret Doctrine* into Russian. Helena is also known as the writer of the Agni Yoga series. Nicholas, really a “Messenger of Beauty”, as he has been called, painted

around 7,000 inspired canvasses, and was also a prolific writer. Many distinguished writers called him “the greatest artist of his time”; in addition to the perfection of his artistic mastership, his creation carried to humanity spiritual messages enveloped in all the irresistibility of the new beauty. It was said that the spiritual aspect of his work is unforgettably imprinted in the consciousness of the best leaders and thinkers of his time.<sup>11</sup>

As many other artists who — in different regimes — could no longer tolerate restrictions on their efforts, and moved by the theosophical belief that there is more to the world than what is seen with the eye, he undertook to strip away the non-essentials and create a unique language of color, in which *simplicity* was the key.<sup>12</sup> He increasingly gave less prominence to humans, and more to the forces of Nature, and Nature itself. It was not man, but man’s *place in the universe*, that he favored.<sup>13</sup>

Behind real art, there is always *thought*. In a way, HPB foresaw that the gap between “thoughtful art” and that which is the product of the increasing materialism of the age, would reach its peak in the following century. But aside from our personal opinion on 20th-century art (occult students are too prone to adhere to a “golden-age standpoint”, which postulates that all which is *good* and beautiful inevitably belongs to the distant *past*), it is undeniable that *a great leap into abstraction was taken in this century*.

It may seem evident that, as evolution

## HPB and the Forerunners of the New Art — I

proceeds, the consciousness must shift increasingly into the awareness of that which is *not* form and — most particularly — into the realm of the abstract, that which is — so to say — “abstracted from form” and *focused in itself*. And few know that it was *The Secret Doctrine* that enabled Wassily Kandinsky to take his revolutionary leap into abstraction. Hilton Kramer, in his article for the centenary of this painter’s birth in 1866, indicated that Kandinsky “needed a theoretical framework for carrying the painting beyond the realm of representation”.

Kandinsky himself, in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, admits having been inspired by the Russian occultist. Furthermore, in a footnote, Kandinsky names HPB’s *The Key to Theosophy*; although Dr Laxmi Sihare, in *Oriental Influences of W. Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian*,<sup>14</sup> clearly admits that it was in fact *The Secret Doctrine* that the famous painter had especially focused on, most particularly the statement: “It is on the doctrine on the illusive nature of matter and the infinite divisibility of the atom that the whole science of occultism is built on.”

This — according to Sihare — had clearly been a decisive factor which led to the elimination of material objects in the paintings of the abstract painters of the 20th century. This was supported by Kandinsky’s own words, as recorded by himself in his autobiography:

The destruction of the atom to my soul was equal to the destruction of the world: suddenly the heaviest walls collapsed. I would not have been surprised if a stone had be-

come invisible in front of my eyes. Science . . . was but an illusion, an error. . . .<sup>15</sup>

Kandinsky was not the only artist who became deeply interested in Blavatsky. The search for more universal values, and most especially, *the meaning behind meaning*, drove the most highly regarded founder of the abstract art, Piet Mondrian, into the ranks of the Theosophical Society in 1909.<sup>16</sup> Martin James (*Art News*) particularly points to Oriental and Neo-Platonic ideas as lying behind these artists work.<sup>17</sup> “The ideas relevant to Mondrian’s discussion were proliferated in numerous texts and lectures undertaken by Madame Blavatsky”, states Professor Robert Welsh in his article “Mondrian and Theosophy”, featured as the opening contribution in *Piet Mondrian Centennial Exhibition*, published by the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1972.<sup>18</sup> According to Welsh, in his triptych “Evolution” (see next page), Mondrian “specifically alludes to the Theosophical Doctrine of Evolution as a determining factor in the history of art. . . .” He comments:

Evolution is no less than the basic tenet in the cosmological system predicted by Madame Blavatsky. . . . This cosmology is analogous to Hindu and other mythologies which stress a perpetual cosmic cycle of creation, death, and regeneration.

The influence of Blavatsky in modern art was especially signaled by the catalog accompanying an exhibition in Los Angeles on *The Spiritual in Art*

## HPB and the Forerunners of the New Art—I



*Piet Mondrian's triptych "Evolution"*

and *Abstract Painting 1890–1985*,<sup>19</sup> at the end of which a large picture of HPB is found, together with a two-page article on Theosophy. This stated categorically that her work had widely promoted occult teaching in modern times, popu-

larized ideas about *reincarnation* and *karma*, and encouraged the comparative study of religion, as well as the thought that the essential teachings of the great religions are one.

*(To be continued)*

### Endnotes

1. *An Art of Our Own: The Spiritual in Modern Art*, Roger Lipsey (quoted by Sylvia Cranston, *The Extraordinary Life and Influence of H. P. Blavatsky*, p. 484).
2. Caldwell, Daniel, *The Esoteric World of Madame Blavatsky: Insights into the Life of a Modern Sphinx*, p. 1.

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3. This suggests that HPB might have considered earning a living as a professional pianist. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves* I:458. See also: Cranston, p. 43.
4. *Lucifer*, vol. VIII, no. 45, 1891, pp. 177-186. *Collected Writings*, Vol. 13, p. 177.
5. “From Keshub to Maestro: Wagner via the Salvation Camp”, *The Theosophist*, vol. IV, no. 5, 1883. *Collected Writings*, vol. IV, p. 333.
6. Hobsbawm, Eric, *The Age of Extremes*, Part I: “The Age of Catastrophe”.
7. The quotation from John, 7:16, (“My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me”) introduces the “Anthropogenesis” volume of *The Secret Doctrine*.
8. *Ireland’s Literary Renaissance*, Ernest Boyd.
9. Cranston, p. 465.
10. Gibbon, Tom, *Rooms in the Darwin Hotel*, p. 134–35.
11. *At the Threshold of the New World*, Helena Roerich, p. 198.
12. Drayer, Ruth, N. and H. Roerich, *The Spiritual Journey of Two Great Artists and Peacemakers*, p. 30.
13. Id. p. 31.
14. Cranston, p. 485.
15. Sihare, p. 25. Quoted by Cranston.
16. Frank Elgar, *Mondrian*, p. 88. Quoted by Cranston.
17. Cranston, p. 487.
18. Id., p. 487.
19. Cranston, p. 494.

**\*Our Father, bless our eyes today. We are your messengers, and we would look upon the glorious reflection of your Love which shines in everything. We live and move in You alone. We are not separate from your eternal life. There is no death, for death is not your Will. And we abide where You have placed us, in the life we share with You and with all living things, to be like You and part of You forever. We accept your Thoughts as ours, and our will is one with yours eternally.**

“Love’s Reflex”  
*A Course in Miracles: Lesson 163*

*\*This text corresponds to the image on the cover of this issue. For more information, see the cover caption at the bottom of p. 3 of this issue.*



# An Esoteric View of Pandemics

PABLO SENDER

IN this article, we will explore the subject of epidemics from the point of view of esoteric philosophy. The first fundamental idea to bear in mind is that the Earth and humanity are intimately connected, so that planetary and human activity are constantly reacting on each other, be it epidemics, pandemics, or natural disasters. Franz Hartmann expressed this principle as follows:

Man is not a being whose existence is separated from Nature, but an integral part thereof. . . . The elemental forces of Nature act upon his soul; and the influence of the universal spirit radiates to his centre. Likewise, man reacts upon the whole. . . . His emotions produce currents in the soul of the world, giving rise to new causes in the invisible realm, which again react upon the physical plane. (*Magic, White and Black*)

Today, we are aware of the interconnection between human activity and the planet on a physical level, but theological teachings extend this on to the inner planes. Our psychological activity (thoughts, emotions, motivations, and so forth) can produce unsuspected physical

effects. As Hartmann continues to explain:

His imagination may create thought germs, that may in the course of time find expression in physical forms, his passions may give rise to epidemic diseases, his collective and accumulative energies lead to convulsions in Nature, and if harmony is restored in the universal Man, Nature will be restored to harmony. The discords in Nature are produced by imperfect humans.

(*Magic, White and Black*)

How can our psychological activity produce planetary phenomena that affect humanity collectively, such as epidemics and natural disasters? To understand the occult foundations of this we need to examine the concept of the “astral light”.

## Astral Light

H. P. Blavatsky wrote about a correlation observed by seers between epidemics and the activity in the “astral light”:

How often have powerful clairvoyants and adepts in mesmerism described the epidemics and [illnesses]. . . as their lucid vision [clairvoyance] saw them in the astral light. They affirm that the “electric waves” were in violent perturbation, and

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## An Esoteric View of Pandemics

that they discerned a direct relation between this ethereal disturbance and the mental or physical epidemic then raging.

(*Isis Unveiled*, vol. I, p. 278)

In consonance with Hartmann's statement that our psychological activity generates "currents in the soul of the world", Blavatsky describes how clairvoyants observe a kind of "astral storm" in the Planet whenever there is an active epidemic in the world. So, what is this astral light? Blavatsky defined it as:

The invisible region that surrounds our globe, as it does every other [planet], and corresponding. . . to the *linga śarira*, or the astral double, in man. A subtle essence visible only to a clairvoyant eye.

(*Theosophical Glossary*, p. 38)

Theosophical teachings postulate that there are seven aspects or "Principles" to any system in the cosmos, whether it is a galaxy, a planet, or a human being. The second Principle, called *linga śarira*, is an ethereal field that surrounds our physical body. Changes in the etheric field affect our physical organization. Similarly, the astral light is the *linga śarira* of the planet, and its activity can affect the physical plane.

Blavatsky continues her definition of the astral light, quoting Eliphas Levi, who was a priest and occultist before her time:

Eliphas Levi calls it [the astral light] the great serpent and the dragon from which radiates on humanity every evil influence. This is so, but why not add that the astral light gives out nothing but what it has

received; that it is the great terrestrial crucible in which the vile emanations of the Earth (moral and physical) upon which the astral light is fed, are all converted into their subtlest essence, and radiated back intensified, thus becoming epidemics — moral, psychic, and physical.

(*Theosophical Glossary*, p. 38)

The astral light is a source of influences which manifest in the form of epidemics, accidents, and natural disasters. This is why Eliphas Levi would identify the astral light with Satan. However, this is only half of the story. As we have seen, those evil influences are fed into the astral light in the first place by the mental, emotional, and physical activity of human beings. Thus, the astral light acts as a vehicle of expression of the collective karma generated by us.

In her "Esoteric Instructions No. IV", Blavatsky identified the specific sub-plane within the astral plane (or astral light) that accumulates evil impressions:

[The 4th sub-plane] . . . is the worst of the astral planes, *kāmic* [desire-bound] and terrible. . . . Here are strewn the seeds of epidemics of vice, of cycles of disasters, and general catastrophes of all kinds that happen in groups — a series of murders, of earthquakes, of shipwrecks. (*Blavatsky Collected Writings* [BCW], vol. 12, p. 663)

### Thought forms

The next question to examine is how human psychological activity can affect this astral light. Mahatma KH, one of Blavatsky's teachers, explained in the 1880s

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that thoughts are not merely subjective images in our minds, but actual forces that can behave as an entity: “Thoughts are things — [they] have tenacity, coherence, and life — . . . they are real entities.” (*Mahatma Letters*, #18, p. 66 / #9, p. 49, Barker ed.)

Theosophical teachings postulate that there are more types of matter than the physical variety we are familiar with. Thus, we have subtler forms of matter such as “astral” (or “emotional”), “mental”, and others, which can only be seen by a clairvoyant. C. W. Leadbeater said:

Our feelings and thoughts generate definite forms in the matter which they respectively affect, and . . . these forms follow the thoughts and feelings which made them. When those thoughts and feelings are directed towards another person, the forms actually move through space to that person.

(*The Hidden Side of Things*, p. 369)

Our “private” psychological activity produces external thought forms, which are set free to influence people or places, travelling through the astral and mental planes, but they can also act in a different way. As Annie Besant stated:

When a person sends out a thought form, it not only keeps up a magnetic link with him, but is drawn towards other thought forms of a similar type, and these congregating together on the astral plane form a good or evil force, as the case may be, embodied in a kind of collective entity. (*Karma*)

Thought forms of a similar type tend to

coalesce, attracted by magnetic affinity. The aggregation of these thought forms can become a powerful influence — for good or ill:

When people generate a large number of malignant thought forms of a destructive character, and when these congregate in huge masses on the astral plane, their energy may be, and is, precipitated on the physical plane, stirring up wars, revolutions, and social disturbances and upheavals of every kind, falling as collective karma on their progenitors and effecting widespread ruin. . . . Epidemics of crime and disease, cycles of accidents, have a similar explanation. (*Karma*)

We can see now how, by generating negative thoughts and feelings such as hate, anger, intolerance, and so forth, we are sowing the seeds of future epidemics, accidents and natural disasters. (It is important to keep in mind that not all natural disasters are produced by human activity — some of them are just part of the cycles of Nature.)

### Elementals

There is one more piece to the puzzle that we need to consider in order to understand the mechanics of how our psychological activity generates physical effects. We have seen that thoughts create forms, and these forms, if of a negative character, are accumulated on the astral light. Fortunately, this works in the case of good thought forms too. If we encourage feelings of love and compassion, this benevolent energy is also

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accumulated on higher planes, in what we can call a “repository of goodness”, which acts in beneficent ways to help human evolution.

But how do these non-physical forms produce an effect on the physical plane? To describe this, we need to introduce the idea of “elementals”. Mahatma KH explained:

Every thought of man, upon being evolved, passes into the inner world and becomes an active entity by associating itself . . . with an elemental; . . . one of the semi-intelligent forces of the kingdoms [of Nature]. It survives as an active intelligence, a creature of the mind’s begetting, for a longer or shorter period proportionate with the original intensity of the cerebral [or mental] action which generated it. Thus, a good thought is perpetuated as an active beneficent power; an evil one as a maleficent demon.”

(*Mahatma Letters* Appendix I, 472)

The thoughts we generate do not merely create an empty form — they attract an elemental force of Nature. Elementals possess a very rudimental form of consciousness, although lacking intelligence, as we understand the term. W. Q. Judge described them as follows:

An elemental is a center of force, without intelligence, without moral character or tendencies, but capable of being directed in its movements by human thoughts, which may, consciously or not, give it any form, and to a certain extent intelligence.

(BCW, vol. 9, p. 104)

When we act, feel, and think, we attract elementals whose energies have

an affinity to the particular activity we are engaged in. Thus, the thought form we generate is “ensouled” by elementals, which use it as a “body” for the expression of their energy. It is important to realize that the elementals involved in this do not have the ability of choosing one action or the another — it is the quality of our thoughts which attract them that gives them a direction for their activity.

The number of elementals attracted depends on the intensity of our thoughts and feelings. Blavatsky stated:

[The elemental world] is automatic and like a photographic plate, all atoms continually arriving at and departing from the “human system” are constantly assuming the impression conveyed by the acts and thoughts of that person, and therefore, if [a person] . . . sets up a strong current of thought, he attracts elementals in greater numbers. (BCW, vol. 9, p. 105)

Now we can understand the whole process of how our thoughts generate epidemics and other natural disasters. In a previous quote, Annie Besant stated that similar thought forms tend to congregate, forming a kind of collective entity. She continued her description as follows:

When this collective entity, as I have called it, is made up of thought forms of a destructive type, the elementals ensouling these act as a disruptive energy and they often work much havoc on the physical plane. A vortex of disintegrating energies, they are the fruitful sources of “accidents”, natural convulsions, storms, cyclones, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods. (*Karma*)

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In the theosophical view, all natural activity on the physical plane (from the blooming of a flower to the eruption of a volcano) is guided from the inner planes by the intelligence of celestial beings, or devas, which use elementals as the *forces* to produce the desired results. Thus, elementals have the ability to produce effects on the different planes. When thoughts congregate to create this “collective entity” mentioned by Besant, the forces of many elementals are aggregated and become able to create global effects such as epidemics or natural disasters. It is important here to keep in mind that not all natural disasters are produced by human activity — some of them are just part of the cycles of Nature.)

This knowledge is very important, because it gives us the means to address epidemics and other sources of collective suffering at their very root, instead of being doomed to try and cope with the effects, as modern science does.

The lessons Theosophy teaches are important ones, the human being *is* his brother’s keeper, and the only permanent protection against plagues and calamities lies in the purification of the thought plane. It is a simple problem of cause and effect. If every person purifies his own thought sphere, the astral light will eventually be cleansed. (P. M. Johns, *Epidemics from a Theosophical Standpoint*, *The Theosophist*, Jan. 1893)

The theosophical message, then, is that there is an ecology of the mind as there is one of Nature. With every thought

and emotion we entertain we are polluting or purifying the mental and emotional atmospheres. Of course, we cannot suddenly decide not to harbor negativities — reducing the “psychological pollution” we produce is a life-long endeavor, and the theosophical tradition offers a wealth of theoretical and practical teachings to learn how to purify and master our minds. This is in fact a central part of the theosophical life.

### Our attitude

Let us end by taking a look at the part that our attitude plays when we are dealing with an epidemic. Annie Besant indicated:

Diseases spread, and the thoughts of fear which follow their progress act directly as strengthened of the power of the disease; magnetic disturbances are set up and propagated, and react on the magnetic spheres [and the aura] of people within the affected area. (*Karma*)

As we have seen, collective diseases are more than a physical manifestation, and have their roots on the astral plane. The fear generated by people going through an epidemic spreads on that plane, making them more susceptible to the illness. For this reason, it is very important to try to stay calm and maintain a sense of poise and confidence while we are going through these difficulties. On these occasions, governments and health organizations tend to instill a degree of fear, because many people cannot act correctly otherwise. Those interested in

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these teachings, however, should be able to act in a responsible way without being pushed by fear. Let us remember that we are constantly expressing what we are. By working on our composure and sending goodwill to the environment and others we can become invisible helpers in the different crises we face.

This attitude, by the way, will also make us stronger against the illness. As Leadbeater said:

The person who has no fear of contagious disease is less likely to be infected by it than the man who is always in terror of it. Any clairvoyant who watched the conditions produced both in the astral body and in the etheric part of the physical vehicle by nervousness and fear will easily understand why this should be, and will see the immunity of the fearless person is explicable on purely scientific grounds.

*(Some Glimpses of Occultism)*

Science has discovered that fear affects the immune system, but it does not know about its effect on the ethereal counterpart of the physical body (*linga śarira*) and on the emotional body. Calm confidence generates a steady radiation that acts as a shield. This, of course, does not mean that if we are not afraid we are completely immune to the illness. There are always karmic elements involved in all of this, but a confident attitude certainly helps us being stronger and better prepared to deal with what karma may bring.

Admittedly, staying calm in a time of crisis is not easy, especially for people

inclined to the spiritual life, because they are growing more sensitive to influences coming from the inner planes. In Annie Besant's words:

As we evolve our astral bodies, they not only receive more impressions from the astral plane but pass them on more to the physical body, and so we find a mood of great depression coming over us for which we cannot in any way account. Now very often such a mood is simply an overshadowing from the astral plane with which we have really no more to do ourselves than the stream which is shadowed by the cloud has directly to do with the cloud. . . . People, for instance, who feel strongly about public matters, who are deeply interested in the welfare of large numbers of their fellowmen, would feel very heavy depression sometimes from public calamities which are impending or going on at the time. *(On Moods)*

This is true at any time, and especially so in times of crisis. Our astral body responds to the unrest on the astral plane and this impression is sent to the physical body, so that we feel the sadness, fear, anger, or any other emotion that may be predominant there. People who care about humanity tend to be much more susceptible to this, so these times are more challenging for them. It is important that those who are compassionate be aware of this and use their willpower, love, and poise, so that they do not fall victims to the general gloomy atmosphere. How can we do this? Annie Besant gives us some tools:

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What, then, can a person do when a mood of this sort comes along? The only way I know of meeting those is by the clear definite recognition of the law [of karma]; the feeling that nothing can come to us or to others which is not within the law; the feeling that whatever comes is working to a good purpose and for a good end, the intense inner conviction . . . [to] deliberately train ourselves to accept it and live through it. (On Moods)

For this, it is helpful to meditate on the fact that all these calamities which — from the point of view of the physical plane — seem so bad, are actually working for the evolution of the souls. It is best to keep in mind that even if the

bodies die, the souls are eternal. We have died many times in the past, and will die many times in the future, but everything that happens has the purpose of helping the soul to realize its divine nature. Thus, suffering is a blessing in disguise. This does not mean, of course, that we should be indifferent to people's suffering, or that we should not try to help. As Annie Besant said, a clear understanding of this helps us maintain our poise, so that we are more effective in whatever assistance we can lend, either on the physical or the inner planes. This is why the study of theosophical teachings is so important — the understanding gained in times of peace becomes a source of support in times of crisis. ✧

**I wear a mask and use it not to protect myself, but to protect others. I am free because now I can read or re-read all those amazing books I hardly touched because I told myself there was no time. For sure, free I am, because I concluded that the pandemic is *climate change in a pressure cooker*. I feel free because I could go inward, . . . while trying to connect with all the goodness that still surrounds us on this planet. . . .**

**I am free, because at this time in my life I am inexplicably forced to have a better look around me, recognizing that the only way out means that we do have to work intensively to form that *Nucleus of Universal Brotherhood* in order to serve this planet and its inhabitants in a truly “sustainable” manner. . . .**

**Observing the current battle between Light and dark . . . I had to think of the words of Anne Frank who, in her darkest hour and stripped off all her freedom, wrote in that impressive diary: “I keep my ideals, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart.”**

Jan Nicolaas Kind  
From “Being free . . . (really)”,  
*Theosophy Forward*, 20.5.2020

# Current Superstitions

DARA EKLUND

IN this scientific age we moderns assume we are free from superstition. Yet we hold an abiding trust in technology which amounts to blind faith in hedonistic experimentation. Is not this a current-day superstition? While genetic engineers are trying to develop unicorns from goats, have we not witnessed a deepening cleft in basic wisdom and perception? Our kids “mouse” around computer screens for pre-packaged information with not a clue on how to synthesize it. We have faith that more children will learn to read, blind to any of the supposed founts of values they unconsciously tap into!

One of the most pervading superstitions today is that man is all-powerful over Nature. Until recently DDT and other pesticides were designed to produce great harvests, with little thought as to the atmosphere or the table health of the consumer. Now scientists have genetically altered tomatoes and other produce for long-lasting and “attractive” market value. Aside from the obvious results of “Alar” (a plant growth regulator) poisoning and contamination of feed, we see the imbalance wrought from generations of such experimentation in the nemesis of devastating storms, droughts, and newly detec-

ted viruses. Great forests have been denuded and scientists began warning a decade ago about the Earth’s depleted ozone layer. Now we find skin cancer risk at all-time highs in certain geographical zones.

When foresters in Sweden replaced native forests with quick-growing lodgepole pines, diverse trees and their natural biomes were forever gone. Is it not superstition to ignore the insects and plants known to those climes and inject non-native plants into the environment indiscriminately? Is it not superstitious that poor beasts should be fattened by dead parts from their fellow species? Is it any wonder when they die of “mad-cow disease”? Is not genetic engineering producing freaks of Nature rather than rapidly evolved creatures? Are not those so-called “elevated” brains, those robots conjoined with living brain tissues now being experimented with, the zombies of the future that H. P. Blavatsky warned about? Indeed, what is a human with all organs replaced, other than a zombie!

We are sadly creating the very worlds we build in science-fiction movies, time-warping man’s destiny into “outer space”. With great fascination, we contemporaries

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Mrs Dara Eklund was a long-term nonsectarian theosophist and assistant editor of Boris de Zirkoff’s compilation of *H. P. Blavatsky: Collected Writings*. From *Theosophy World*, July 1996.



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observe plants and trees confined to outer space arboretums and solariums, while men are constantly “managing” space stations’ sophisticated technology, or repairing the monstrous intestines thereof. About the only color, we find, other than the electronic screens they monitor, is in the weird and often grotesque masks entitling them to represent extraterrestrial beings, or in their entertaining holographic memory decks. The once-healthy belief in the possibility of other worlds and timelessness has led only to a superstition that we can forever extend our exploitation to other worlds and galaxies. Fortunately enough, in science fantasy, we at least have inter-galactic councilors to help maintain justice; and the good guys still triumph (unlike in most TV thrillers)!

On the social scene we have seen the beauties of cultural diversity, accompanied by an upheaval of current superstitions and myths regarding so-called “body-language”. To a Westerner it is honesty to look someone directly in the eyes. To an Easterner it is immodest and a sign of disrespect. An American may wrongly accuse an Oriental of dissimulation by thinking his downcast eyes are hiding something. If a Vietnamese crosses his arms in front of his chest it is because he signifies his total attention and respect to a speaker. To the body-language specialist, folding the arms means “I don’t care to listen to you”, or “I’m blocking you out”. . . . What is politically correct for one group is not for another, and if we wish to make

brotherhood more than a superstition, we have to gain wisdom as well as good-heartedness. . . .

An old superstition which crept into theosophical lectures and literatures following second-generation presentations, is that the God idea is a plank in Theosophy’s platform. H. P. Blavatsky wrote constantly to downplay reliance on a personal deity, and presented a philosophy of life in which man relies on the Divinity within. In a discussion of “Devachan” (Blavatsky *Collected Writings*, vol. V, p. 89) an initiate wrote: “A warp of anthropomorphism seems to run through the entire woof of European metaphysics. The heavy hand of a personal deity and his personal ministers seems to compress the brain of almost every Western thinker. If the influence does not show itself in one form, it does in another.”

In certain segments of the theosophical movement, rituals are still to be found. It matters not if these stem from Christianity or Shamanism, or Sufism. The hunger for ritual still abounds. Perhaps present-day theosophists are not content with devotional readings and meditations which involve aspiration and willpower (not prayer) to the “father-within”.

Is it not time to reassess our departure from the precepts which drew upon the ideas of Man’s nature as Plato and Blavatsky presented them, rather than embrace the religious superstitions based on the idea of an anthropomorphic God? Can we say we are free from superstitions while still clinging to these? ✧

# Listening to Adyar: A Vibrant Centre with Multiple Voices

CATALINA ISAZA CANTOR

IT is a pleasure and an honour to celebrate Adyar Day in Adyar itself, the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society (TS), and to be able to share some thoughts about the deep imprint that this place generates. Living and working in Adyar (and even visiting the place for a period of time) are not only great pleasures but also opportunities for transformation. Once one becomes a member of the TS, the name Adyar becomes familiar thanks to anecdotes from other members, documentaries, writings, images, and so on. Once we begin to learn more about the place, a deep affection for it is born, as well as a yearning to visit this sanctuary some day.

Symbolically, Adyar is the home of all the members of the TS around the world. The connection with the place is given because it represents the centre of our institution, the home of the TS and of the Masters, the inner Founders of the TS. Radha Burnier reminded us that after looking for many years, the Founders were finally able to found here the right

inner and psychic conditions for a headquarters which would be at the same time a spiritual centre from which the forces of the Great Ones would spread abroad and the higher influences would go with every letter spoken or written here.

Adyar represents as well, for those who have the privilege to live and work in this headquarters, the possibility of extending the family's boundaries. In this wonderful place there is an international family from various corners of the world and India: volunteers and those coming for the different events throughout the year (in non-pandemic times, of course). Adyar is, therefore, a place of encounters and reunions of this and other lives; it is the opportunity to tread a path in full communion in a spiritual community.

Apart from being a meeting point for people from diverse backgrounds, Adyar houses beings from all kingdoms that live in harmony: plants of diverse origins such as the African baobab, the majestic banyan tree, insects and other animals, and plant species that can hardly be found

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**Catalina Isaza Cantor**, a long-term member of the TS in Colombia, has translated theosophical articles from various languages into Spanish for more than a decade, is the Editor of the TS in Colombia magazine, and assists with the administrative work of the Adyar Theosophical Academy.

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together all in one place. So the First Object of the Theosophical Society can be felt: “To form a nucleus of the universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, caste, or colour”, or nationality, at all levels of existence. At this headquarters, humans and beings from other kingdoms try to live in harmony and daily build a new dimension of reality and interaction, a source of good vibrations for the world.

Adyar is a space full of voices that lead us to the inner voice, a voice that is understood only if one looks with the eyes of the heart. “The Home of the Masters” speaks in the different planes of existence. Every corner and element says something in multiple languages, beyond the history of the place. Each space, if we open our most subtle perceptions promptly, is ready to give us some kind of advice and instruction:

There are usually plenty of them [devas] here at Adyar. We have many great advantages here, where the Masters come so frequently. . . . There is a stimulus from these Beings, which some feel in one way and some in others. . . . There are plenty of glorious influences all around us here, but their effect upon each one of us can be in proportion to our receptivity. We can take from all this just what we make ourselves fit to take, and no more. . . . To a man who is wise enough to take it, a stay at Adyar is an opportunity such as few people have ever had . . . ; but what we make of it depends entirely upon ourselves.

(C. W. Leadbeater, *Inner Life*, Series 2)

Perhaps that is why many say that the

experience of coming to Adyar is close to that of a pilgrimage. In this sanctuary we have the opportunity to inspire ourselves to live a clean life, open and expand the reaches of our mind, purify our hearts, enhance our intellect, remove the veils of spiritual perception, and daily emanate fraternal affection to all. It is a pilgrimage that leads us to glimpse that the Temple of Divine Wisdom (as in the “Golden Stairs”) is present in everything, if we pay attention.

To be able to read its corners, read the metaphors that are in each plane, we must approach from the intuition, putting into practice the Doctrine of the Heart, the great sieve that allows us to discern: we must hear first “the voice of the silence”. Adyar speaks through metaphors: The banyan tree, about 500 years old, remains in spite of the fact that its main trunk is no longer visible). Each one of its surrounding trunks represents the drive and force of life that perseveres and remains beyond adversity, represents the transformation in which we leave behind the past tendencies to be reborn again without losing our essence, but renewing ourselves. And in Adyar the river meets the sea, like at the end of the pilgrimage of our lives, our existence joins the whole, the infinite ocean of wisdom and perfection.

Living in Adyar represents, as well, the privilege of inhabiting a paradise located in the middle of the great metropolis that Chennai is nowadays, being one of the two great green lungs of this city, with a population of over 10 million.

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Those who have the fortune to live here, have the feeling of being able to be in two worlds at the same time: a world where the noise, the smells of a huge living city, and the rapid occurrence of events, remind us of the strenuous day-to-day life of great cities of the 21st century and, at the same time, a world where the natural atmosphere gives rest and inspiration to our minds, eyes, and souls. That gives a sensation of being *in* the world, not *of* the world.

And in the midst of that wholeness of Nature, temples of the main religions of the world, a library full of immemorial wisdom, a social welfare centre, an animal clinic, two schools, and many other places where it is possible to see the impact and importance that this headquarters has not only for the TS, but for Chennai. The Second Object of the TS is fulfilled with the existence of all these centres. The presence of the temples and a research centre, as well as the study meetings and gatherings of Lodges, makes it possible to encourage the comparative study of philosophy, science, and religion in the boundaries of this headquarters, showing us that, in the end, they have a common base.

One of those places is the Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA), a centre of transformative education, where tireless workers for the noble cause of education have built a place that illustrates the value of educating without fear or competition, with sensibility, empathy and openness (a theosophical education). It is a place where children full of inno-

cence and spontaneity show the potentialities of the seed that the child represents for humanity, the ability to be surprised, curious, and open, that we forget over the years while becoming adults. Those children inspire us to unlearn so many conditionings that prevent human beings from having a really open mind, an eager intellect and a perception of life without many veils and prejudices.

The vibrations of all these places together with those of all the people who work daily in pursuit of the theosophical cause, as well as all those great beings who have passed through this campus, form the mental and emotional atmosphere of Adyar, making it a vibrant centre, a burning flame of hope for the world. Leadbeater would say that in Adyar the environment does not put up resistance to our thought-forms, because we are all thinking more or less along the same lines: it is a place where one can think better thoughts than elsewhere. We are privileged to surround ourselves with that atmosphere.

Indeed, Adyar is the heart of the TS and, as a heart, it is responsible for pumping blood, vitality, to all members of the human body. It is a vibrant centre from which the invisible atmospheres of the other theosophical centres of the world are fed, and which also receives that food from every point where there is a serious and committed student.

Adyar, the “multiverse”, is like the sphere of the universe — that platonic metaphor according to which the universe is a sphere whose centre is everywhere

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and the circumference is nowhere. If we really live Theosophy from wherever we are, we can make that centre of Adyar move to any part of the circumference: let us remember that, as we go from the periphery to the centre, the sense of unity increases. As J. Krishnamurti said:

It is essential for the individual member and for the Society that Adyar, as a great spiritual centre, should be maintained worthy and dignified. The importance of this is so obvious that few can doubt it. Adyar is and always has been a spiritual oasis to which the weary traveller looks for comfort and repose. Though it may not be the privilege of each member in the Society to go there from the world of wilderness, yet the mere existence of such a centre gives hope and encouragement.

Indeed, as Radha Burnier reminds us, much of the work done by the TS cannot be measured, and that is why theosophists around the world have to keep contact with the world and not isolate themselves into an inward-turned community, so Theosophy can penetrate into the human consciousness in a variety of ways. The “Home of the Masters” is a spring of inspiration and guidance, refreshing the hearts of many generations of members and, as a vibrant centre, plays a big role in maintaining that unity and sense of universal brotherhood which characterizes the TS. It is from Adyar that insights flow continually, giving inspiration and making Theosophy a living, transforming power in people’s lives.

It has been said that the purpose of Adyar and the TS is to guide humanity to

take the next step in evolution. That has to be kept in mind for those who live in this vibrant centre. Adyar’s atmosphere is favourable and inspiring to carry out the work (through the yoga of action), to connect with the greater (through the yoga of devotion), and to expand the limits of knowledge and unravel all the mysteries of Divine Wisdom (through the yoga of knowledge). The place has the propitious magnetism so that, in the midst of our daily occupations of intellectual studies, and so on, we can discover the Doctrine of the Heart, the law that stands by erudition and teaches real wisdom.

Surrounded by this propitious atmosphere, we have the opportunity to investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in the human being (Third Object of the TS). As we go within ourselves, we realize that beyond supernatural powers like clairvoyance or others, this place inspires us to explore and develop the real latent powers we should be concerned about and focused on love, compassion, detachment, and service for humanity. C. Jinarājadāsa reminds us:

Adyar lives and works for the world. Thrice happy they, to whom karma gives the privilege [and responsibility] of coming to Adyar, and blessed indeed among their generation if they receive from Adyar what Adyar has to give them.

May we be aware, pure-hearted, and open-minded enough to receive what Adyar has to give. May we lead a life of service, efficient work, simplicity, and love, a truly theosophical life. ✧

## Lakshmi Narayan — In Memoriam

Mrs Lakshmi Narayan, 91, passed away peacefully at home with her family at her bedside in Santa Cruz, California, on June 30, 2020. For 25 years she served as head Librarian of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy in Ojai, California, since 1992. During her tenure, she assisted countless visitors from around the world coming to study, conduct research, and borrow books. Her extensive knowledge of the collection, friendly smile, and welcoming warmth prompted them to refer to her as “the face of Krotona”, and “Krotona’s goodwill ambassador”. She loved hiking, traveling, and sharing meals with friends. She was admired and loved by many who will greatly miss her lovely, gentle, unassuming nature. She lived at Krotona until late 2017, when she retired at age 89 and moved to Santa Cruz to live with her family.

Lakshmi was born in 1928 in Bhaga, Bihar, NE India, near Bodh Gaya, where the Buddha attained enlightenment. Women were then expected to marry rather than pursue a career, but her parents wanted *all* their children to be educated, so she attended a British boarding school for her early education. Later she attended Madras University, earning a Master’s Degree in geology in 1953. She worked in a geological survey lab in Calcutta for a few years, having the distinction of being the first Indian woman to become a working geologist!



*Lakshmi at the Krotona Institute Library*

Lakshmi married Sellapa Narayana-swami, a geologist and teacher, but was widowed in 1978 when he suffered a heart attack. After his death, she joined the Theosophical Society (TS) in Chennai, Adyar, India, serving in various capacities in the Adyar Library from 1980-85, and as head librarian since ‘82. In ‘86 she moved to the national headquarters of the TS in Wheaton, Illinois, to be closer to her son’s family and to work for the Olcott Memorial Library, where she served as head librarian from 1988-91.

Lakshmi is survived by her son, Umesh, her daughter-in-law, Philomena, and two grandchildren, Christopher and Michelle. Due to Covid-19, there was no public Memorial service. Condolences to her family may be sent in care of Mr Guru Prasad, 2 Krotona St, Ojai, CA 93023, Resident Head of Krotona Institute of Theosophy. ✧

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