

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



THE THEOSOPHIST

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Cover: Morning prayer after the *aarti* (Hindu religious ritual) part of the puja at Assi Ghat, Varanasi

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The Theosophical Society is responsible only for official notices appearing in this journal.

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.

11th World Congress Opening Address

TIM BOYD

ALL Theosophical World Congresses by their very nature are important events. At a superficial level they are wonderful: we meet with fellows from around the world, some of whom we have known over many years. Always there are new acquaintances and friends that we make at these events. This time it is being held in Singapore with all of its many interests and activities. But, these events have a deeper significance.

This is the 11th World Congress to be held during the Theosophical Society's 143-year history. The first one was in 1921, in Paris, France, and was addressed by Annie Besant. Since that time, nine other Congresses have taken place all around the world: in Europe, North America, South America, Nairobi, Kenya, Australia, but never until today, have we had a Congress that has taken place in the largest, most populous continent in the world — Asia. So our presence here is not just important, it is historic.

Almost everyone in the world today is aware that Asia's star is rising. How that rise takes place is of great importance. Every impetus toward a sense of universality, a recognition of the oneness of the human family, that can be instilled into

this movement does not go unmerited; it is not lost. To have this Congress in Asia is significant. But we are not just anywhere in Asia; this is a specific place with a very unique character — we are in Singapore.

Since taking on the position of TS international President, I discovered a number of things that I did not previously know. One such piece of information was that by virtue of being TS president, I was also the head of the International Theosophical Centre (ITC) in Naarden, the Netherlands. One result of that fact has been that every year, at different times, I find myself in Naarden at that centre, participating in various international activities and aspects of the work.

The Netherlands is a remarkable country for many reasons, but perhaps most remarkable because it is a country that should not even exist. The dictates of Nature would say that any country that is on the seashore that is below the level of the sea, should not exist! But for whatever reason, the consciousness of the people of that nation, for more than 1,000 years, has said that Nature will neither dictate their survival, nor their proven capacity to thrive as a nation. So 1,000 years of learning to

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work with Nature, to understand the ways of water, have created dry land where there was none and fresh water where previously there were salty seas.

Singapore is a very young nation; in fact on 9 August we are going to be here to celebrate the 53rd anniversary of its founding. Though for different reasons, much like the Netherlands, this is a nation whose viability has been extremely unlikely. This is not just my personal opinion. In the words of the founding father of this nation, Lee Kuan Yew: “Singapore, as a nation, should not exist.”

None of the factors for the founding of a viable nation were present when Singapore began. It was a country whose population was not homogeneous, composed of different ethnic backgrounds—Indian, Chinese, European, the native Malay people, all mixed together, with different religions and no common language. A little island with very limited natural resources in 1965, saying “We are going to be an independent nation”, was an idea fraught with danger and most likely a prescription for failure.

Winding the clock forward 53 years, we are here for our World Congress in a nation that has become a model to the world not only of the heights of financial success, but of the possibilities for religious tolerance and cooperation, harmony among different races, cultures, and people—a people who adopted a common working language so that *everyone* could begin on the exact same page. It is remarkable!

For the TS, whose focus is the recog-

nition of the unity of the human family, it is appropriate that our Theosophical World Congress is taking place in a nation that has become a model of that focus. In the Netherlands they overcame the *forces of Nature* that seemed to doom that nation’s survival. In Singapore it was the forces of *human nature* that would have spelled failure for what we now know to be a glowing success.

There are many people in the world today who would say that the possibility of the Unity, or Brotherhood of Humanity, is also such a doomed and unlikely idea. Fortunately there is an ever-increasing minority of those who have a vision of something that does not yet exist in the world except in very small pockets, and who have committed themselves to the persistent, long-term work required to make it the reality, in this material world, that it always has been in the inner world. As participants in this Theosophical movement, this is the work that is before us. We are the sixth generation since the beginning of this Movement, so a new emphasis for this work falls to us.

In ancient times there was a great figure in the spiritual history of humanity—Appolonius of Tyana. He lived around the time that Jesus is said to have lived. He was a great man in many ways, but he was known for his capacity to take objects—stones, talismans, amulets—and charge them with a spiritual energy. It is said that he placed these talismans in a variety of places around the world in order to activate a consciousness in those areas. Sometimes it would be placed in

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anticipation of a future time. J. Krishnamurti did similar things at Adyar and elsewhere.

In many ways our task is similar — to magnetize the thought atmosphere of this place and plant it here as an ongoing active force. Our time together to do this work is brief — only five days. During this time, if we are fortunate, alert, and aware, there is something we have the potential to accomplish. It is not something that we can force, but we can *allow* for that which is always in the background to make its presence known, we can allow for a harmony to arise among us.

To the extent that we can cultivate this openness with each other and with those Great Ones who *always* stand behind this Movement ready to make their presence known through any avenue that is made available to them, we have the opportu-

nity for such a presence to pervade this gathering. We have the potential to invite a future, radiant with their energies, here in Singapore, and within each one of us, something that can last when ultimately we part, and go our, only seemingly, separate ways.

These are thoughts that we should keep in the background of our minds during our time together. The way that it has been expressed before is that wherever there are even two or three people that gather together in the name of a deeper, more resonant presence, then that presence makes itself known, in ways that we do not need to control, or even to know. Our task is to focus on the harmony that is already present, and allow it to appear during this time to influence our comings and goings, and the life of the Society. ✧

NOTICE

International President's Term of Office

On 1 August 2018 the Government of Tamil Nadu issued an Order (see next page) exempting the office of the international President of the Theosophical Society (TS) from the provisions of Section 15(4) of the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act. By virtue of this Order, the TS President's term continues to be seven years, as provided for in the international TS Rules and Regulations. The Order further states that the exemption is retrospective, so that the actions of all TS Presidents are exempted going back to the date the Act came into being.

Tim Boyd
President



ABSTRACT

Societies – Registration Department - Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975 – “Theosophical Society” (Reg.No.2/1905), Adayar, Chennai – Exemption from the provisions of section 15(4) of the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975 – Granted – Orders - Issued.

COMMERCIAL TAXES AND REGISTRATION (M1) DEPARTMENT

G.O.(Ms).No.98

Dated: 01.08.2018

விளம்பி, ஆடி-16,

திருவள்ளூர் ஆண்டு-2049

Read:

1. Representation from the Theosophical Society, dated 23.10.2017.
2. From the Inspector General of Registration, letter No.26193/11/2015, dated 11.04.2018.

ORDER :

In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 54 of the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975 (Tamil Nadu Act 27 of 1975) the Governor of Tamil Nadu hereby exempts the “Theosophical Society” (Reg.No.2/1905), Adayar, Chennai from the provisions of Section 15 (4) of the said Act with regard to extension of the term of office of President as indicated in the bye law, with retrospective effect from 22nd April, 1978.

(BY ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR)

Ka.BALACHANDRAN
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT

- To
- ✓ The Theosophical Society, (Reg.No.2/1905) Adayar, Chennai.
(Through the Inspector General of Registration, Chennai-28)
 - The Inspector General of Registration, Chennai-28.
 - The District Registrar, Chennai(South).
(Through the Inspector General of Registration, Chennai-28)
 - The Office of Hon'ble Governor, Raj Bhavan, Chennai-22.
 - The Chief Minister's office, Chennai-9.
 - The Special Personal Assistant to Minister for Commercial Taxes, Chennai-9.
 - Stock file/Spare copies.

//Forwarded by order//

C. Anand
1/8/2018
SECTION OFFICER.
[Signature]

Applied Theosophy

HENRY STEEL OLCOTT

IF the Fellows [members] of the Theosophical Society [TS] are to apply their Theosophy to the affairs of life, it must be through the Society, and as individual units of the whole — not as isolated individuals. It is well known that in metaphysics two and two do not make four but five, and that the fifth is frequently by far the most important part of the sum. The same idea is expressed in the fable of the bundle of sticks: tied together they are unbreakable, singly they can be snapped with ease. Union or unity adds certain qualities and powers that were not there before, and the vehicle in which these powers reside is the unit which is added to the number of the sticks by tying them together. It is this mystic individuality, “the sum total”, that gives strength to all societies and congregations of men, and becomes the real dominating power, to which all contribute some of their force and which stands behind every unit and lends its whole strength to it. Without it a Fellow of the Theosophical Society [FTS] would be as powerless as any other isolated man or woman in the community. With it behind

him an FTS is a power in proportion to the unity and singleness of purpose of the Society to which he belongs. Who speaks when a priest of the Roman Catholic Church utters a command? *The united power of the Church of Rome*. Who speaks when a disrobed priest says something? *A non-entity*. Who speaks when the Judge, the General, the Statesman open their mouths? “The State” — the tremendous and often tyrannical personality that comes into life and action when the units that composed it are bound together, through organization, by a common will and a common purpose.

It is this added increment, and this only, that gives to the TS its extraordinary, and to many, unaccountable, power. Weak in numbers, contemptible in organization, distracted by personal jealousies, subject to constant endeavours on the part of ambitious individuals to break it up into pieces which they can distribute among themselves, the TS is a power in the world notwithstanding all the assaults that are made upon it by outsiders and the disintegrating influences within. Why?

Col. Henry Steel Olcott (2 Aug. 1832 – 17 Feb. 1907) was the Founder-President of the Theosophical Society from 1875–1907. This is an extract from ch. 1 of his *Applied Theosophy and Other Essays*.

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Because upon a plane higher than the physical the Fellows are united and strong. They are united in their ideas of the purpose of life and of the government of the Universe, in other words, they are strong in that they are individual cells composing the body called the Theosophical Society, as it exists in both the physical and the spiritual worlds.

Quarrel as they may among themselves, be as small and provincial as they choose, the Fellows of the Society cannot help contributing their little quota of theosophical ideas of that united whole idea which is the spirit of the TS, and therefore its very life and real self. And those who attack the Society are frequently its supporters; for they attack it on the external plane, while, unknown to themselves, and in spite of themselves, they support it upon the plane where its real life is passed, for those who are its enemies are generally ignorant of its true nature, and are frequently themselves imbued with eminently theosophic ideas and aspirations, which nourish the Society on the ideal plane, and constantly tend to draw those in whom they exist, more and more in the direction of the TS in its materialized form on earth.

If then the real power of Theosophy in the world is exercised in the realm of thought; and if the direction in which that power is exerted is a natural consequence of the growth of certain ideas in the minds of those who carry out the objects of the Society, it stands to reason that the gigantic evils of our modern world must be

attacked with immaterial weapons and in the intellectual and moral planes. How can this be accomplished? Simply by perceiving the fact, understanding it, and acknowledging it. Then the actual work will be accomplished quietly, almost silently, and apparently spontaneously, just as the great reforming work of the Society is now being accomplished — by individuals who, while contributing to the strength of the TS, draw from it in return a force that gives to their utterances an importance and a power which, had they spoken as isolated individuals, and not as Fellows of the TS, their words would not have had.

There does not, and cannot, exist the slightest doubt as to the direction in which the power of the Theosophical Society would be applied in practical things. If the tendency of Fellowship in the Society is to develop certain habits of philosophical thought, its tendency is even stronger to give rise to definite ethical views and moral principles. However much and bitterly the Fellows of the TS may disagree as to the duration of Devachan or the number and viability of the Principles in man, or any other point of occult doctrine, it would be hard to get up a dispute among the brethren as to the evil of intemperance, or the abomination of cruelty, or about any other of the crying sins of our times. Not only is that the case, but they would all give the same reasons for their detestation of these evils, reasons founded on their theosophical ideas and principles. ◇

Humanity Evolves, Not the Individual

RADHA BURNIER

Is the theosophical outlook evolutionary, believing that we are going forward to some kind of culmination?

Slowly. Our scale of time does not apply. If you apply it, you cannot show that this is a fact, because every now and again humanity seems to descend into barbarism.

The followers of Sri Aurobindo believe that humanity is evolving. Philosophers such as Ramana Maharshi and J. Krishnamurti, however, believe that the moment a person becomes fully conscious or self-aware, there is no evolution, since while evolution is located in time, enlightenment is not.

That is also the theosophical point of view. Evolution is for humanity in general. Human consciousness is gradually growing in understanding. If you take the individual, even all of humanity, there is no evolution. Theosophical books make it very clear that evolution is related to the material part of the human being, and the human body is the result of a long

biological evolution. As for consciousness, it is only the unfolding of what is already there.

Does Theosophy hold that there is no evolution of consciousness?

Yes. There is only an unfolding of the potential which is already latent. This is particularly clear in the case of the individual — probably true even of humanity . . .

But according to Theosophy, we all are going higher at our own pace, and eventually we can all become masters.

Yes, that is true.

Isn't that evolution? However, Krishnamurti and Ramana Maharshi say that at the point when you are aware there is no time, you become immortal, but in a different sense.

True. Krishnamurti said that, and I have no doubt there is truth in it. You step from one dimension into another. There is no time present there. And the other dimension is not the result of this time. But there

Mrs Radha Burnier (15 November 1923 – 31 October 2013) was the 7th international President of the Theosophical Society (1980–2013). Excerpts from her interview with Makarand Paranjape, professor of English, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India, published in *Life Positive*, March 1997 issue.

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is the great question: why does it not happen to everyone? Why is it that practically nobody gets it? There are very few, because a maturing process has to take place. Because, to use their own terminology, the death of the old has to happen, the past has to be dispensed with. We can say, it is like a fruit which matures under the sun. At one point it drops; but if it has not come to that point, it does not happen. And with those rare souls like Ramana, it may be the result of many centuries of past births.

So you are reconciling the two. It appears that Theosophists are getting attracted to Krishnamurti; it is almost as if he were returning to Theosophy. Being reabsorbed. His works are studied carefully in study camps in the TS. Is the schism ending?

Reabsorption is not the right word. Members of the Society have become more open to what he was saying and it was rather profound. These are questions which are not easy to answer because they are too subtle. For example, in the reminiscences of Sydney Field, he quotes Krishnamurti as saying that reincarnation is a fact, but it is not the truth. Now, Ramana Maharshi makes a similar remark. He says that there is reincarnation when there is ignorance. But what is ignorance? Ignorance is seeing things as they are not. You see the rope as a snake. Then you may become aggressive, want to kill it or run away from it. You are frightened; all sorts of emotions, thoughts, arise out of that. When you see the thing as it is, then all this does not happen.

That is the other dimension, when you see the whole universe, with its significance, its beauty — then there is no problem. Reincarnation is the problem, or part of the life-cycles of those who were in the state of ignorance. But that whole field of ignorance is illusion and therefore it is not real. So reincarnation also is not real.

It is a fact, it is not the truth.

Yes.

From the relative point of view so many things appear to be true, but from the absolute point of view . . .

This is why Buddhists and Hindus spoke about the two truths: there are things which are true from their relative point of view and which have no place at all from the absolute point of view. One of the great difficulties in understanding Krishnamurti is that he spoke always, or almost always, from the absolute mind. Ramana did not.

Ramana had commented that what Krishnamurti advocates — that there is no guru and all that — is OK only for a few. But the rest do need guidance up to a point. When we start distinguishing between illusion and reality, then the guru is seen as internal, no longer seen as embodied. But until that point, guidance is necessary.

So did Krishnamurti, if one understands him rightly. If he believed that no guidance was necessary, why did he speak at all?

He said, when he answered that question,

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that it is just an outpouring of love, of giving . . .

But that is not a contradiction because he could have loved and kept quiet. He did not, because he realized that speaking helped people to wake up a little. But what he was dead against was dependence on the guru. Or imagining that by going to X, Y, or Z, something is going to happen to you. He was against that, against authority, blind belief. It is the spiritual intelligence, *viveka*, which has to awaken in the person.

Is it not ironic that the Theosophical Society [TS], which in its very charter upholds the freedom of belief, became rigid at a certain point?

It had; and all kinds of strange beliefs also existed, so we are very thankful that Krishnaji helped people to shake it all off, and I think it is to the credit of the Society that it pulled itself out of that. I think my father (N. Sri Ram) was largely responsible for that when he was the 5th president of the TS. If he had opposed it head on, there would have been a very strong reaction. But he was able to turn people's minds to the open approach of Krishnamurti, to inquiry, to using one's intelligence, in a very tactful, gentle sort of way, so that people did not know that they were learning to think in a different way. In Tamil there is a proverb: "It's like putting a needle into a banana; you don't know that it is going in."

The history books do not acknowledge the role played by Theosophy in India's awakening, in the freedom movement,

even the fact that the Congress [political party] was started at the behest of some members of the TS. Why has this neglect come about?

I think that one reason was the clash of Annie Besant's ideas and Mahatma Gandhi's. She became very unpopular. She was a great heroine after she was released from confinement in Ooty and people carried her in a procession and threw flowers on her; and then almost overnight they were willing to abuse her and throw stones at her. But she was magnificent — she said: "I am glad that you Indians have given up your subservient attitude to a white skin, and that you have the courage to say such things to me."

As Gandhiji's movement grew and he became successful, I think the public conscience went through a long period of regarding Annie Besant and the TS as negligible factors. But later, a few people like C. Rajagopalachari (the first Indian Governor-General) could see that she was farsighted, that in fact the kind of things which were done in the name of civil disobedience had broken down the respect of law. This is what she was most against and also against using raw, immature students for political purposes. She said young people must learn to think first before acting, and they had not come to that stage yet.

Krishnamurti once said that Annie Besant had done more for India's freedom than anybody else.

He had great respect and love for her.

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Theosophy attracted some of the best minds of India, but today most people have not even heard of the TS. What are your plans for the Society?

It is not an easy thing to resolve simply by planning because it involves a change in attitude. People must realize that Theosophy is practical wisdom. If you simply sit somewhere and discuss the nature of the unity of life, or still worse, what happens in the astral planes — all these things may have their value in their right place, as Krishnaji used to say, but ultimately, they must find an application not only in the individual's life, but also in the different fields of human activity. I think for too long people have neglected this. What is the relevance of the fundamental principles of Theosophy to life as we see it everywhere? I think that is one of the main causes for this decline. And secondly, an organization tends to crystallize. Madame Blavatsky first saw it and mentioned it as early as when she wrote *The Key to Theosophy*.

So, I have known Lodges where a bright intellectual, young or old, comes in, shows interest. But they have a standoffish attitude and approach. They want to take the role of the teacher. This kind of thing is deadly. I think it should be much more open. This happens partly because people do not do enough work, I mean internally, and they are afraid that the newcomer will ask questions that they cannot answer. If one cannot answer, the best thing is to be humble and say: "Sorry, I don't understand, but we can enquire into it together."

What is your assessment of the functioning of the TS worldwide?

It isn't entirely satisfactory but it isn't entirely unsatisfactory either. Much more energy has to come into it.

One of the original aims of the TS was to retrieve the lost wisdom of the West, not only of the East. We do see an increasing number of Westerners turning toward the spirit, going away from materialism, but they are not necessarily turning to Theosophy. So why is it that in the West people are turning to Sathya Sai Baba or to Osho?

That is simple to answer. Whether it is the West or the East, the conditions of life are much more stressful. The world has become so organized that the individual feels alienated to a greater or lesser extent. Everything is more difficult although life is far more comfortable. Relationships are breaking down, young people don't feel a deep sense of belonging, many of them don't know what their life is about and they want to cling to something. The Society does not offer anything to cling to. Krishnamurti has been all the more remarkable because he does not offer anything, and yet so many people are attracted to what he says, which is a very hopeful sign for the world. But if you think of Sai Baba or Buddhism or something, you find that they do hold on to something, some figure, or some text . . .

As a crutch?

Most people want that.

Don't you think it has some temporary

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use?

Maybe. As long as a person does not feel he can stand up on his own; but it had better be a good crutch!

Rather than some drug, or some other form of dependence, or violence as an outlet?

Quite right. And addiction nowadays is terrible. Alcoholism has increased, also this preference for something unreal. Now they speak of virtual reality. But it is total unreality. In fact, the world of our consciousness is unreality because we do not see rightly. We have created this Internet or TV, or whatever it is, and we prefer that to seeing the actual world. It is a strange thing that so many people like a plastic, or artificial, flower almost more than a real flower, or a drama on the screen when there are so many dramas happening just next to us.

This revolution in information technology

believes that it is going to bring the world closer, because everyone will be connected, and space and time will shrink through the Internet. What kind of impact is that going to have on human consciousness? I mean, what resources do we have in our spiritual traditions to face the challenges of tomorrow?

You can lead people into terrible illusions, can you not? Because suppose I sit at a great distance and converse with you and believe I have a relationship with you, it may not be a real relationship at all. I do not think hours of that can make up for actually meeting with somebody, even for a few minutes. In fact, the kind of silent relationship which is affection, really caring, and so on, may disappear.

But don't you think that the TS should also modernize with the times?

Yes. We are beginning to do that. ✧

All of us who are Theosophists should be constantly examining our own attitudes, motives, the way we speak and act, and all kinds of inner reactions which take place even without our knowledge. It is only in that way that one can come to the truth or achieve that transformation which is labeled the Path. Treading the Path means bringing about a complete change in oneself, and that can be done only through one's free intelligence, by being objective with regard to oneself, and in no other way. In order to be objective, one has to be aware of all that is taking place in oneself.

N. Sri Ram
Seeking Wisdom

Tribute to Surendra Narayan

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

FORMER international Vice-President of the Theosophical Society, Mr Surendra Narayan, passed away at 2.40 pm on 22 November 2017 at his New Delhi home, surrounded by his family.

He was elected Vice-President of the TS in 1979, having been nominated by the then international President, John Coats. Following Mr Coats' passing in December 1979, Surendra Narayan presided over the ensuing election and was nominated again as Vice-President by Mrs Radha Burnier, the new International President, and retired from the post in December 1995.

His presence, experience, and wisdom during those years at the international Headquarters were truly invaluable. Professionally he had worked as the Chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes, Government of India.

On many occasions he would contribute to the editorial comments, "On the Watch-Tower", in *The Theosophist*. The essential keynote of his writings and his work for the Society was that Theo-

sophy must be made into a living force in one's life.

He was quiet, self-effacing, gentle, but was capable of taking firm action when circumstances required. He helped me during my years of service at Adyar by helping me to understand that getting stirred up about events in life is not really worthwhile.

I tried to keep in touch with him after his retirement and after I left Adyar in 1996. In 2010 I paid him a visit in New Delhi and we reminisced about those years we worked at Adyar. It was extraordinarily moving to see how his eyes were shining when he shared with me his absolute conviction that the Elder Brethren were still close to the TS, in spite of its many difficulties.

The Theosophical Society owes him a profound debt of gratitude for his lifetime of dedication and unselfish service. I feel the loss of a mentor, a gentle guide, and a shining example of a life in which Theosophy found a complete and profoundly beneficent abode. ✧

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Theosophical Knowledge of the Eye, Images, and Reality

ROBERT A. PULLEN

FOR one who pages through H. P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine (SD)*, it is almost impossible not to be impressed by the incredible amount of knowledge that this work has to offer. Its fragments can be found in old legends and philosophies around the world — behind the veils of exoteric religions, woven into religious traditions, and expressed in the symbolism of old cathedrals, temples, and other religious structures. Religion has always played an important role for many peoples, in ancient times as well as in the present day.

In Blavatsky's *SD*, all of this knowledge is put into perspective against the background of the origin of human existence in relation to the evolution of life as a whole on planet Earth. The book also paints a picture of the forces behind its writing: human beings who were (and are) able to possess such knowledge through special training. That knowledge exists, not only in a tangible and transferable form as in Blavatsky's work, but also as a living proof of what a human

being is able to know and be if he has completely aligned his life with the flow of the inner nature and the natural laws associated with it.

Blavatsky called her contribution to her magnum opus “the string that ties the flowers together”; the bouquet was handed to her by her teachers, two adepts from the Brotherhood of Wisdom and Compassion, who possessed unimaginable knowledge of the evolution of the Cosmos and humanity on our planet from the earliest of times. That knowledge cannot easily be compared to any ordinary information. It is not available to us in known history — except in a veiled and mythological form — and surpasses the boundaries of the material world known to us. It paints a picture of the relationship between Time, Space, and Duration of the Cosmos in such an authoritative manner that no normal human being is capable of countering it with valid arguments, no matter how well educated or intelligent one is. It is the authority of people, almost Buddha-like,

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with cosmic consciousness in the true meaning of the word.

The extraordinary knowledge that one finds in *SD*, if one devotes oneself to studying it, has a likewise extraordinary effect. The spectrum that unfolds itself regarding the evolution of Man and the Cosmos, uncovers a primordial memory in the consciousness of people. It is like being confronted with something that one has known long ago, but that has deeply sunk into one's memory. In essence, studying this book is studying one's deepest Self, because we are all inextricably linked with all cosmic processes.

The images that are invoked by study are archetypical ground patterns that we, as evolving beings, have experienced from the beginning of time. We see and read the history of our own souls. This leaves an indelible impression on our consciousness and invokes all sorts of cosmic memories. Once that link has been established, this connection sets free elevated feelings and thoughts inside us. We have recognized the parental home of our soul, and we want to go back to where we came from. From that point on, we want to let others also know this and to share our insights with those who are open to our views. In fact, we want to share this with the entire world, with all people.

Doing so, however, is a very lengthy process. We cannot release the human collective of this world from its materialistic cocoon; it must redeem itself. What is possible is for us to proclaim uninterruptedly the knowledge of the laws of Nature in various forms, to see

to it that this knowledge is available in its purest form at all times. But we can never convince someone else. One has to convince oneself.

A good question to ask would be: What is understood by proclaiming the special knowledge that is found in *SD*? Reprinting standard reference works, offering lectures, organizing study groups and courses? Is that enough? No, it is not. Spreading Theosophy is a combination of two things. One is transferring knowledge, as is being done already, while constantly evaluating whether this is being done in the most efficient way.

The other, and most important thing, is the way we live and how we are visible to others through our acts and thoughts, which are a reflection of a theosophical attitude to life. For that purpose, we must lead a disciplined life. Many personal flaws must be unlearned and replaced by virtues such as patience, kindness, empathy, and compassion. It is of the utmost importance that we impose this discipline only on ourselves, and not on others.

To call upon others, we should set a right example ourselves, silently. It is maybe even more important that we learn to develop love for all life around us. Everything is an expression of the divine on a certain level of consciousness, even so-called dead matter. Everything has its own *dharma* and karma. One can find support for this truth by reading the statements of Jesus in the "Sermon on the Mount", of Krishna in the *Bhagavadgitā*, and of Buddha in the *Dhammapada*. Those are works that truly touch the heart.

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No matter how well-prepared a lecture is, actually being an example of that of which we speak highly is always the best message we can convey because it has a living appeal. The great teachers behind Blavatsky's work, the Mahatmas, were and are the best example of this. Everyone who has seen their portraits is deeply impressed by the great dignity and spiritual power they express. They are living examples for all who want to align their lives with cosmic law and wish to commit themselves to the necessary conditions and training. However, the teachings of the eye and of the heart must be balanced. Both are essential to get to the whole, to understand, and to live according to theosophical principles.

However, truth, as such, can never be found in any doctrine, because everything that is expressed through thinking, in speech, writing, or any other outward expression is always a restriction, even a mutilation, because it is dualistic. Even if, as Blavatsky told her students, "one imagines that one is going to get a satisfactory picture of the constitution of the Universe from *SD*, one will get only confusion from its study. It is not meant to give any such final verdict on existence, but to LEAD TOWARDS THE TRUTH."

In other words, *this* work was written to develop intuition, not to cultivate "theosophical professors". Per Blavatsky:

It is worse than useless going to those whom we imagine to be advanced students and asking them to give us an "interpretation" of the *SD*. They cannot do it. If they try, all they give are cut-

and-dried exoteric renderings which do not remotely resemble the TRUTH. To accept such interpretation means anchoring ourselves to fixed ideas, whereas TRUTH lies beyond any ideas we can formulate or express.

(H. P. Blavatsky, *An Invitation to The Secret Doctrine*, Theosophical University Press: Pasadena, California, USA; Robert Bowen, *Madame Blavatsky on How to Study Theosophy*; or Ianthe Hoskins, comp., *Foundations of Esoteric Philosophy*, Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai, India.)

Studying *SD* therefore means that ultimately we should give up the images that we develop concerning the evolution of the cosmos during our process of spiritual unfoldment, because no image that we develop can ever express or come close to REALITY. That gives another dimension to studying *this book* and asks for another approach to these potent writings.

Whatever we learn from *The Secret Doctrine*, we must ultimately reject every image that we create about it, because when we finally enter the worlds and spheres that are discussed in it, no image will correspond to those we will have constructed with our thinking capacity. Our thinking and our images serve only as a bridge to lead us into the worlds in which no form exists, the *buddhic* region, beyond thinking, where time, space, and duration congregate in an everlasting now, unveiled, the experience of the universe as *Tat Tvam Asi*, "You are THAT", the ultimate *experience* of UNITY of EVERYTHING that exists. ✧

Prayer: Its Nature, Types, and Efficacy — I

LILY CHONG

The Nature of Prayer

Let us have a good understanding of what is meant by prayer. Do all of us pray without exception? Can anyone say that they never pray? This brings us to the definition of prayer. What is prayer? Can we say that it contains generally a petition to an external agency for help of some kind? Indeed, it is interesting to note that the word “prayer” is derived from the Sanskrit *praśna* (to question), and the German *fragen* (to ask); so that its original and proper meaning can be only a definite request.

When do we pray? Some of us offer prayers everyday, and this may consist of certain salutations and affirmations, the recitation of certain prescribed mantras, and so on. But would it be correct to say that we always end up by asking for something? We pray for health, to get that new job, to win the lottery, and so forth. Also, is it not true that very often we pray only when we are in trouble? Why do we pray? Is it not because man instinctively knows that there are so many forces greater than him that he cannot control and influence, and that perhaps out there, there

may be agencies and powers that can help if he were to pray fervently enough?

There is another important reason for prayer — the religious spirit is strongly attached to it, and finds its very life in prayer. Yet even the religious person sometimes feels uneasy as to the rationale of prayer — did the founders of the great religions ever in any way encourage their followers to pray to them? No! Also, are we not told that we cannot change our destiny or karma, or, as some would say, is the petitioner altering the will of Him “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning”? (James 1:17) Yet he finds in his own experience and in that of others that prayers have been answered — a definite sequence of a request and fulfilment!

Many of these do not refer to subjective experiences, but to hard facts of the objective world. A man has prayed for money, and the post has brought him the required amount; a woman has prayed for food, and food has been brought to her door. In connection with charitable undertakings especially, there is plenty of evidence of

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help prayed for in urgent need, and of quick and liberal response.

On the other hand, there is also plenty of evidence of prayers left unanswered, of the hungry starving to death, of the child snatched from its mother's arms by disease, despite the most passionate appeals to God. Any true view of prayer must take into account all these facts. Nor is this all. There are many facts in this experience which are strange and puzzling.

A prayer that perhaps is trivial meets with an answer, while another on an important matter fails; a passing trouble is relieved, while a prayer poured out to save a passionately beloved life finds no response. And what about when countries go to war — each side of course will pray for the destruction of the enemy's armies. Or when two women tussle for the affection of one man — each will pray to her God to win her man — who will win? It seems almost impossible for the ordinary student to discover the law according to which a prayer is or is not productive.

Different Types of Prayer

The first thing necessary in seeking to understand this law is to analyze prayer itself, for the word is used to cover various activities of the consciousness, and prayers cannot be dealt with as though they form a simple whole. Let us therefore look at the three different types of prayer: A. Petitions for definite worldly advantages, for the supply of physical necessities — prayers for food, clothing, money, employment, success in business, for recovery from illness, and so on.

B. For help in *moral and intellectual difficulties*, for spiritual growth, the overcoming of temptations, strength, insight, or for enlightenment.

C. Lastly, there are the prayers that ask for nothing, consisting in meditation on or adoration of the divine Perfection in intense aspiration for union with the divine — the ecstasy of the mystic, the meditation of the sage, the soaring rapture of the saint. This is true communion between the Divine and the human, when one pours oneself out in love and veneration for THAT which is inherently attractive, compelling the love of the heart.

Next, we should examine the question of who or what forces are there which can answer prayers. In the invisible worlds there exist many kinds of intelligences which can help to answer petitions for help. These are what we call invisible helpers.

Invisible Helpers

Human beings are themselves constant creators of invisible beings or thought forms. The vibrations of their thoughts and desires create forms of subtle matter. These have specific purposes because their only life is the thought or the desire which ensouls them. We thus create an army of invisible servants who range through invisible worlds seeking to do our will.

Then there is the kingdom of angels or devas, which is a subject all by itself. Some of these intelligences are mighty spiritual powers and accessible to human requests; others are very limited beings, inferior in consciousness to humans and

amenable to the human will. These are what we may call the Nature Spirits. This occult side of Nature is a fact, recognized by all religions. The whole world is filled with living things invisible to physical eyes. Invisible worlds interpenetrate the visible, and crowds of intelligent beings throng round us on every side.

Further, in the invisible worlds there are human helpers, who work there in their subtle bodies while their physical bodies are sleeping, whose attentive ear may catch a cry for help. Often, if devas or astral helpers showed themselves, they would be mistaken by the petitioner for the holy person or angel to whom he had prayed, and there are many stories which illustrate this. C. W. Leadbeater, for example, had been taken, under such circumstances, for a saint, as was also a junior helper who was with him on the occasion. Annie Besant, too, has more than once been regarded as an angel by those whom she was assisting.

But fortunately for the many thousands who are constantly pouring forth their souls in prayer — in the blindest ignorance, of course, but still in perfect good faith — there is something else to depend upon. Sri Krishna tells us in the *Bhagavad-gītā* how all true prayers come to him to whomsoever they may have been ignorantly offered.

There is a consciousness wide enough to comprehend all, which never fails in its response to any earnest effort in the direction of an increased spirituality. And this is the ever-present, ever-conscious Solar Logos himself, potent and re-

sponsive at every point of his realm. He knows everything because he is that all-pervading, all-embracing, all-sustaining Life and Love in which we live and move. Every vibration in the universe, which is his body, touches his consciousness, and draws responsive action.

Myriads of intelligences are the agents, but it is the Solar Logos who knows and answers. Nothing can be so small as not to affect that delicate omnipresent consciousness, nothing so vast as to transcend it. We are so limited that the very idea of such an all-embracing consciousness staggers and confounds us; just as a mosquito might find it hard to know the consciousness of Pythagoras!

But even a scientist like Prof. Aldous Huxley, in a remarkable passage, has imagined the possibility of the existence of beings rising higher and higher in intelligence, the consciousness expanding, until they reach a stage as much above the human as the human is above the beetle. That is not a flight of scientific imagination, but a fact. There is a Being whose consciousness is present at every point of his universe, and therefore can be affected from any point. That consciousness is not only vast in its field, but extremely acute and therefore more responsive than a more limited consciousness.

This all-pervading Life is everywhere, utilizing as channels all the embodied lives to which He has given birth. Sometimes devas or angels are directed to render aid, at other times human helpers working in their astral bodies in the astral or mental planes. These beings offer the necessary

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channels, act as the motor nerves of his body, and bring about the required action.

But what about some of the other invisible beings to whom we commonly direct our prayers? What about the founders of religions? Whether a very strong thought directed towards them would reach them or not would depend upon the line of evolution which they have since followed — in fact upon whether they still remain in touch with this Earth or not. If they were still within reach, and if such a thought did reach them, it is probable that if they saw that it would be good for the thinker, they may direct some of their pupils who are still upon Earth to respond.

But of course, those who understand would not trouble the exalted ones with their petty problems, knowing full well the magnificent far-reaching work done for evolution by the Great Ones on higher planes; they would realize that any kind of help that one required could be given by someone nearer to his own level. It is similar to not wasting the time of great university scholars in helping kindergarten students learn the alphabet.

With regard to the saints of religions the position is different. The ability to hear prayers will depend upon their position in evolution. The ordinary saint, who is simply a good and holy man, will of course take his heaven-life as usual, and will probably take a long one. His life on the astral plane would likely be short, and it is only during that time that it would be possible for a prayer to reach him and attract his attention. But it is by no means

certain that the prayer would attract his attention, for he would naturally be fully occupied with his new surroundings. If during that time it did so reach him, no doubt he would do anything that he could to satisfy the petitioner.

If he has entered upon his long rest in the heaven-world, he would be entirely beyond any possibility of being disturbed by earthly things; yet even in such a case a prayer to him might bring some results. Such a man would almost certainly be pouring out a constant stream of loving thought towards humanity. This thought would be a real and potent shower of blessing, helping people spiritually. There is no doubt that those who earnestly pray to that saint would come into rapport with him and would therefore draw down upon themselves a great deal of that force, although the saint would not even be aware of it.

If the saint were sufficiently advanced to have entered upon a special series of births rapidly following one another, the case would be different again. He would then be all the time within reach of Earth, either living on the astral plane or in incarnation upon the physical, and if the prayer were strong enough to attract his attention when he was out of his body, he would probably give any help in his power. Of course, if he were at that time in a physical body, he would not even be able to hear it, unless he was at that time within hearing distance of the petitioner.

(To be continued)

Consciousness, Contemplation, Commitment: The Future is Now

MARCOS L. B. DE RESENDE

THE theme of the 11th World Congress of the Theosophical Society (TS) held in Singapore is truly an invitation for action. It is for that reason that it is up to us to discover what kind of action is expected of us.

In the 21st century humanity is caught up in a struggle, is at war, in permanent competition, not only on an individual basis, but also collectively. In our globalized and technological world, with material facilities never before imagined, poverty, hunger, and inequality among people, and nations still occur on a high scale. Suffering not only comes from the absence of satisfaction of material needs, but also from greed and attachment to what is transitory by nature. Ignorance about the goals and purposes of life in motion is a source of fear and selfishness. Aggression towards Nature, with the devastating breakdown of the ecological balance, has never been so ominous.

The disharmony among humans, visible all over the world, derives from this existential ignorance. We can say, without any doubt, that life manifests itself for the

awakening of consciousness. It seems difficult to perceive the presence of consciousness in matter. But when quantum physics proves that the conduct of the observer modifies the behavior of subatomic particles, we can notice consciousness at previously unimagined levels.

In the interesting book *The Secret Life of Plants*, the American authors Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird refer to the experiences of Cleve Backster, who was an outstanding expert on lie detection. Backster, by placing electrodes of his galvanometer on the leaves of a plant and, after he had lit a match, coincidentally detected unexpected movements on the apparatus. From then on, several scientific experiments were done proving the presence of consciousness in the plant kingdom and even cooperation among plants.

In the animal kingdom there is clearly a manifestation of consciousness. Although their lives are primarily regulated through instincts, animals show affection, anger, jealousy, and even small flashes of intelligence in the most evolved species.

Human consciousness, based on

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thought, has generated modern life, which is one of harsh competition, brutality, violence, and selfishness. Humanity is suffering greatly, but not because of the lack of technological knowledge that could eliminate the hunger and misery still existing today. There is also psychological suffering arising from the existential ignorance, about who we are and the fear of what lies in the future.

It is not difficult to see that life as a whole aims at evolution, which occurs throughout manifestation as an increase and expansion of consciousness at all levels, stages, and realms. From the densest mineral to the highest Dhyān Chohan, life has the same purpose: the progressive and unlimited awakening of consciousness. In the elemental realms, in which gradual densification occurs towards the material world, the path is quite the opposite, generating the strong tendency of obscuring perception and consciousness in self-conscious beings.

There is no other way. Either we awaken in wisdom, or we become submerged in existential ignorance. The beginning of all wisdom is the realization of knowing that we do not know. Free from all accumulation that holds and limits the movements of consciousness, we must maintain the urge to decipher, to discover, to see, and to understand by ourselves. When we think we know, by not looking attentively at any question through a new and even deeper observation, we stop learning and become stagnant.

It is up to us to inquire, as human beings, where the limits of our conscious-

ness lie, and what action may arouse our awakening to ever wider horizons of understanding in infinite progression. The word “contemplation”, which presumes careful and impartial observation with an empty mind, seems to hold the key to an ever-deepening understanding of the mysteries of existence, resulting in an openness to an unlimited dimension.

René Descartes’ celebrated phrase, “I think, therefore I am”, gave the tone of a whole era denoted as “Cartesian”. But it no longer represents the vanguard of human consciousness. The world created by thought is filled with comparisons, judgments, pursuit of profit, and fear. Do this to get that — this is the way thought proceeds, which is so common and necessary for material achievements, but always tends to take advantage.

When applied to the relationship of the human being to him or herself, or to other human beings, society, or Nature, thought becomes a source of division and selfishness, resulting in conflict. The world created solely by thought is a world of brutality, wars, competition, greed, selfishness, and comparisons that generate the false notions of superiority and inferiority.

From the activity of thought alone, not enlightened by something subtler, rigid mental pictures and even dogmas arise, as well as greed, which causes accumulation of wealth for the “happy” few, causing great needs for many. Just read the newspapers or observe the business world, with the ambition and greed which so much characterizes that environment. Comparison and competition, generating

material wealth which is not sufficiently shared, creates cold, calculating, inhuman, and even perverse human beings.

It is only through inner stillness that one can discover the tone of right action in any situation of life. For it to occur, it is required that we harmonize our emotions by the perception and understanding of desires and fears. With the natural silencing of the mind by the contemplation of one's own thoughts and the careful and serene observation of all that goes on in the subjective and objective worlds, clarity of action arises.

Contemplating ourselves, others, relationships, and life in its wise movements, leads to the awakening of consciousness in geometric progression. When the human being ceases to act by impulse, fear, feelings of inferiority or superiority, search for fulfillment and satisfaction, perceiving the set of interests and images created by the ceaseless movement of one's own thoughts, *buddhi* or wisdom begins to unfold, serene, wise, affectionate, intelligent, and benevolent.

Contemplating the infinite removes the focus from self-consciousness, which is the center of personal interests. Contemplating what is finite impartially, without the bundle of typical preferences, demands, and aversions, allows the personal life to become better organized in a natural way, subtly, without worrying about it, or neglecting it.

We must realize that when desires arise, the subtler mind, which is able to grasp the fundamental truths, becomes obscured. When we let go of desires,

allowing them to turn less imperative, with detachment from their satisfaction, the mind becomes clear again. Humanity needs individuals with clear and lucid minds who realize the purpose of existence and dedicate their lives to accomplishing that purpose. The Masters of the Wisdom live to help human beings to come to this awakening. However, they cannot do it by themselves, except by sowing the seeds that can sprout in the consciousness of each individual, since, as said in the *Mahatma Letters*, "enlightenment must come from within".

We should not utilize the common mind, used for material and practical things, to seek enlightenment. Our work consists of purifying, softening, and smoothing our mental body without compromising fundamental principles, not allowing it to be corrupted. It ought to be an instrument for questioning, but it should never be attached to the answers it may have, taking them as ultimate and absolute truths. The mind needs to be clear, light, and sharp to serve larger purposes, not created by itself, but by *buddhi*, that creative energy that only manifests itself when thought is quiet. Learning how to use this marvelous mechanism of thinking as an efficient tool for something that is subtler and therefore wiser, is the challenge for human civilization.

We can only serve the higher powers by understanding ourselves, transcending the mental patterns we have adopted, so that *buddhi* can perceive truth directly. Consequently, we can be a light for the darkened human consciousness, always

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realizing that we are not better than anyone else. This service and dedication to the cause, following the path of self-knowledge, requires commitment, not to another person, church, or institution, but to our deepest nature, which lies in that dimension of wisdom that presents itself when our thoughts quiet down.

A life based only on desires and thoughts pushes us in many directions. It is easy to get lost in trivialities, idiosyncrasies, and tendencies of our psychological ego, as well as in the influences of our personal background and the society in which we live. The pressures and distractions of life easily divert us from this goal.

To grasp the opportunity that life offers us, to learn by teaching and to teach by learning — not theoretically — would require commitment. This learning process should develop through ever greater and deeper observation and understanding of life and its vast movement, so well described in theosophical literature. Commitment also requires loyalty to our sisters and brothers who serve the same cause and to all that exists.

Nobody approaches the Masters without directing their lives to the highest in their consciousness, thus fulfilling their dharma, or mission, in the best possible way. Why do we want to meet the Master? Why do we want enlightenment? If it is to serve personal and selfish purposes, we are walking on thin ice. We need to understand that life should lead to the awakening of consciousness.

In the human evolutionary stage in

which we find ourselves, this awakening is no longer being deceived by the tricks and desires created by thought pushing us into many wrong directions. When necessary, we must learn to direct our thoughts toward beneficial and elevated purposes, and also learn to calm them, so that the voice of the silence can manifest through us and help us find the way. Spreading light to other minds, through our own minds, according to the advice given by the Master, then becomes our mission. But without real and sincere commitment to our deepest nature, we have no way of realizing this, because the world can drag us into a wrong direction with a range of needs, pressures, and influences. The demands of our lower self can also drive us away from this path.

To follow this trail of service, we need to renounce the self; we need also to have love and compassion, perception of oneself, of others, and of the movement of life without judgment, with focus and commitment, as well as daily contemplation and right action. Krishnamurti told us that when the mind is clear, there is only one way to go: the right one. Will we be able to empty ourselves, silencing ourselves inwardly to allow the light of *buddhi* to clearly show the correct path at every instant and for every challenge that life presents?

The future is now because another time does not exist. This is the only true moment in which one can express life: the eternal active present. The future exists only in the divine mind and in our imagination, but life is always now. If we could

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let go or drop the idea of what *we think* should be to see clearly, and the best we can do now, then we would allow the divine mind to express itself through us, opening ourselves to superior influences to better execute our dharma, with more subtlety and refinement.

The mind, caught in the idea of the continuity of time, is not able to perceive the sacred, which is always present and can only be perceived in the now. Out of the cocoon of egocentrism, which can only be realized in the eternal active present, life has another energy. It is intense, creative, and it cannot be retained by thought or transported through time. Each new moment demands a new explosion of clarity, intensity, and energy, which can only occur in a mind that understands and empties itself.

As theosophists living in the 21st century we have the important mission of opening ourselves to the creative and regenerating consciousness which is always present in a dimension subtler than thought. This requires contemplation, free observation of both the subjective and objective worlds, careful attention, contemplating even the natural distraction, being conscious of it, without conflict. When one perceives inattention, one is already in a natural state of attention. Each time thought is lost in its infinite travels of projections, the perception of its movement without repression opens a new dimension of consciousness.

Our actions aimed at making a difference in the world, fulfilling what the Masters expect of us, must be clear,

beneficial, and transforming, not only on the personal level, but also in our private, professional, and spiritual life. All this can occur through the perception of the limitations of egocentrism arising from a life focused only on ourselves. It is not possible to transform the world without the transformation of each one of us.

Our theosophical literature teaches about what lies hidden in the cosmos. These teachings are useful on our journey. But it is not useful taking the teachings too theoretically by simply repeating them whilst in fact we do not know. We need to discover the reality they are trying to point us to, in order to come to our own understanding, by the perception of the coherence or incoherence of the teachings. As Shakespeare said, there is much more between heaven and earth than our vain philosophy supposes.

It is up to each one of us to discover Truth, to a greater or lesser extent, according to our abilities and intensity, and, most importantly, living by it. Everything in Nature is in its place. Nothing or nobody is better than anything or anyone else. Everything is in its own evolutionary moment. Where are we? Will we be able to realize that life serves the awakening of consciousness so that we can wake up from the material dream, even while we are still in our physical body, to live the spiritual life, here on Earth, with intensity and beauty?

Can we see that the source of life, from which all power of creation and regeneration flows, lies within ourselves, in the most recondite dimension of our being,

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which is subtler than thought? Will we be able to put our inner house in order to carry to the world the peace that surpasses all understanding? Can we make the inner light shine, anonymously, quietly and humbly, without considering ourselves better than others?

As stated earlier, the purpose of life is awakening consciousness. Can we dedicate ourselves to realize this purpose, internally committed, learning in the now together with our fellow seekers and those who are interested in Truth, sharing our best understanding into all directions? I think this is our mission, our dharma. That is why we are in the TS. It is the sacred meeting place, the institutional space in which generations of students meet to learn by teaching and teach by learning, igniting the light of consciousness, which is in every human being and can illumine the world. Shall we perform this dharma with the best of our abilities?

The TS cannot be transformed into a kind of church, according to personal beliefs of some of its members. It was not designed to be limited to any belief, however elevated and sublime, but to promote spiritual communion among people who wish to discover and understand for themselves the truth about life in all its manifestations and dimensions, hidden or revealed.

Without self-perception, self-knowledge,

we are always prone and vulnerable to falling into the traps of knowledge. They surface because of our arrogance in thinking that we know, when we are only bringing together a handful of intellectual information about life and the universe, reducing its vastness to mere cold concepts that lack the necessary transformative vitality.

Will we be able to keep the TS in the 21st century on the vanguard of the awakening of human consciousness, as it did in the past, in order to assist humankind with the evolutionary step that the moment demands, to alleviate the suffering arising from existential ignorance? Since the world is so troubled, Theosophy must now, more than ever, cease to be just a handful of intellectual concepts so that it can be a living wisdom that penetrates deeply into our daily lives, making us less self-centered, radiating affection, understanding, and harmony in all our relationships.

Let us take advantage of the wonderful karmic opportunity of working together in this Society, being a real and true fraternity, so that, internally united, our studies may promote free inquiry directed to Truth, and thus enlighten and raise the consciousness of all humanity. This is our commitment, our dharma, and we are united here to realize it, right now. ✧

Sentimentality is not love. I have a horror of sentimentality, for I have found it to be fundamentally selfish.

Clara M. Codd
Trust Yourself to Life

Toward a Psychology of the Gunas

JAMES COLBERT

THE *Mahabharata*, considered to be over 5,000 years old, is an epic poem. Its expansive panorama, reportedly composed of over 100,000 verses, symbolizes the journey of the soul, as indeed do other great epics such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the Gnostic *Pistis Sophia*, and the great Mesopotamian story of *Gilgamesh*, considered by some to be the world's oldest epic.

Within the *Mahabharata* is the *Bhagavadgītā*. The *Gītā* is a book not only cherished by adherents of all of the major philosophical schools of India, but is widely popular and can be found in many of the hotel rooms in India, just as the Holy Bible is found in the hotels of the West. There are now at least 300 translations of the *Gītā* from the ancient Sanskrit into English, starting with the first such translation by Sir Charles Wilkins in 1785. The *Bhagavadgītā* is a dialogue between Krishna, the teacher, and Arjuna, the pupil. It symbolizes the dialogue within each of us. The word "Arjuna" means "one who makes sincere efforts", and the word "Krishna" means "the center of consciousness".¹

The conflict starts with Arjuna laying down his weapons, as he does not want to kill those close to him. Arjuna's emotional reaction to the dilemma opens the dialogue to psychological interpretation, with Arjuna being the client and Krishna the therapist. Within the *Gītā* are descriptions of the gunas, which according to ancient Indian philosophy, are the qualities of the material of the universe. In other words, all matter and all existence is composed of three forms of energy at all levels — universal and psychological. They are named in Sanskrit: *sattva* (harmony); *rajas* (desire); *tamas* (stagnation).

The gunas represent vibratory rates in descending order, with *sattva* being closest to pure consciousness and *tamas*, furthest away.² Note: Could they represent as well the three components of matter from science: dark matter, dark energy and matter? Georg Feuerstein³ suggests they may correspond to the subatomic particles of protons, neutrons, and electrons. H. P. Blavatsky points to a correspondence to the Hindu pantheon of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva (Trimurti).⁴

Within the Indian philosophies (par-

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ticularly Sāmkhya) are found the original source of the gunas. In the Sāmkhya philosophy there are two divisions of eternity — *purusha* and *prakṛti*. *Purusha* is subjective spirituality (consciousness) and *prakṛti* is objective matter. In periodic cycles, subjectivity makes contact with objectivity (big bang theory?) leading to a path toward self-consciousness. In this process the components of materiality (the gunas) lose their equilibrium.⁵ A fascinating implication is that humanity's task of seeking greater and greater levels of consciousness, is a way to restore equilibrium.

From the perspective of our personalities we have three parts: active, passive, and balancing. Freud's id, superego, and ego would seem to reflect this same trilogy. From Wikipedia:

According to this Freudian model of the psyche, the id (*rajas*) is the set of uncoordinated instinctual trends; the superego (*tamas*) plays the critical and moralizing role; and the ego (*sattva*) is the organized, realistic part that mediates between the desires of the id and the superego.

Similarly, Dr Eric Berne's transactional analysis of the personality, consisting of Child (*rajas*), Parent (*tamas*), and Adult (*sattva*), could serve as Western psychology's three-part division.

Finally, Albert Ellis' ABC model of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) has a threefold classification. From Dr K. K. Agarwal, group editor-in-chief, *IJCP* (*Indian Journal of Clinical Practice*), "All the principles of Cognitive Behavior

Therapy (CBT) today are basically principles originated from the *Bhagavadgītā*". Later in this writing, a major focus on CBT will be made.

There is a difference between Eastern and Western psychology. Swami Rama (*ibid.*) lists one:

In the Indian system of psychology, the student is led beyond mental life. Mind in its totality should be understood, but it is more important to be aware of the source of knowledge, the center of consciousness, *ātman*.

There is also a major difference in the method of treatment. In the West it would be therapist and client. In the East it is guru and student. Feuerstein (*ibid.*) puts it clearly:

But whereas the guru's wisdom, at least in theory, sets the disciple free existentially, the therapist's wisdom only increases the analysis and understanding. In comparison with the Eastern teachings, it is not truly liberative.

Feuerstein adds that the guru helps deconstruct the false sense of self.

The magical number of three is found in many systems of philosophy, including Plato and Pythagoras: the triangular sides of the pyramids; the three Hindu divinities of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva; and the three parts of Christianity — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Rolf Sovik gives a good description of the gunas, and is repeated here:⁶

The essence of *sattva* is to act like a transparent pane of glass, allowing light

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— the light of conscious awareness — to reveal itself in the operations of the mind and in Nature. . . . *Rajas* is the energy of change. It is distinguished by passion, desire, effort, and pain. Its activity may cause movement either toward *sattva* (increased spiritual understanding) or *tamas* (increased ignorance). . . . Tamas conceals the presence of consciousness. It causes dullness and ignorance through its power to obscure. Its nature is heavy and dense.

The objective of the Eastern approach is to overcome suffering. Simply put, we all have different perspectives on material reality as we perceive through our own individual lens. This infers that all is illusion, as reality changes from person to person and over time, within ourselves. What we define as Reality in one part of our lives can be different in another part. Perceived Reality is always changing. Suffering is due to our individual perceptions and our attachment to different forms of identification (matter). The source of our true identities is in subjective spirituality (*purusha*). It is who we really are — spiritual beings reaching toward greater consciousness.

Identifying with material objects (*tamas*) or the seeming thrill of constant change and activity (*rajas*), limits self-definition. Finding harmony, balance, and joy (*sattva*) can lead to a more rewarding life. *Sattva* is closest to the source of who we are. Douglas Osto⁷ strongly gives this emphasis:

For Sāmkhya this is why we suffer; we

do not know who we really are, and because of this we identify with the world of experience and suffer the vicissitudes of finite existence. With true knowledge of reality we are able to transcend completely the limitations of finite existence.

What to do about all of this? Mikel Burley⁸ suggests:

Sāmkhya can be seen as a psychological tool to overcome suffering. Through rigorous philosophical and psychological analysis, a person can learn to detach or disassociate from the psychophysical entity, and realize witness consciousness.

His method is for the individual to determine and verbalize the situations one finds oneself in — and then we need to proclaim: “This is not me”. In other words, in the complications of relationships, work settings, and events — to disassociate the self in each instance. The self is a witness to the events but *identification* with the events *is released*. Osto gives a similar suggestion:

But herein lies the ultimate beauty of Modern Sāmkhya — you decide your level of involvement. Perhaps a death in the family, a breakup of a relationship, or a terminal illness is more than you can bear. Then dissociate from it. You are not your body or your mind. You are pure consciousness that transcends the material dimension. . . . “I” or “mine”, is able to redirect its attention away from phenomena and realize that its very existence is dependent on pure consciousness as the true source of awareness.

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Another method is given by Sat Shree in his excellent video, “Mechanism of the Gunas”.⁹ He describes the Gunas as gradations or vibrations from *sat* to *asat*. *Sat* being according to HPB’s *Glossary* (ibid): “The one ever-present Reality in the infinite world; the divine essence which is, but cannot be said to exist, as it is Absoluteness, Be-ness itself.” *Asat* simply means without *sat*, or the non-existent. Sat Shree designates it as a tone that is the source behind all creation. *Sattva*, being most pure, is closest to that which is created. The vibration more dense is *rajas* and even more, is *tamas*. There is a stepping down from spirituality to materiality. He offers that all of us cycle throughout the day through the three gunas. It is our task to recognize what vibrational rate (guna) we are in and gradually raise through the other two to *sattva*. *Sattva* represents harmony, joy, or acceptance. We need to construct our environments, relationships, and dietary intake toward harmony. All efforts lead toward the source of our being and bring us free from suffering.

We are suggesting here a third method. It would borrow from the other two and include CBT. This approach rests on the Buddhist assumption that all that we are comes from and is based on our thoughts. The way we perceive situations, according to us — is the *way things are*. Alter our perceptions and we can change the way we feel, and thus our behavior. The famous quote from Abraham Lincoln is relevant: “Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them friends?” This is changing our way of

thinking, the way we perceive the world.

Another assumption of this third method is that we are on a pilgrimage toward greater consciousness. Simply, the suffering we experience can lead to greater understanding. HPB, in her Third Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*¹⁰ states that this is our “obligatory pilgrimage”. This teaching suggests there is something pulling or pushing us toward meaning and purpose. The more we can experience the calling, the more our lives may have greater harmony (*sattva*).

In summary, the method might be described as a disidentification of the self from the *rajas* and *tamas* vibratory rates; a recognition of our own attachments to these with active efforts to gradually change; and the inclusion of cognitive behavior therapy, all based on the assumption of the great pilgrimage toward greater meaning.

Prior to ending this focus on the gunas we should recognize that few seem to have interest in a path toward greater understanding. As penned by Osto (ibid.)

few . . . would choose to give up all their worldly possessions, emotional attachments, erotic relationships, and family ties to pursue a transcendent state beyond space, time, decay, and death. However, what many people today want as much as the ancient Indian renouncers, is to live a life free from suffering, and attain some type of lasting happiness.

So true, but the *Bhagavadgītā* teaches us that in the course of our lives the purpose is to get beyond these attachments and follow the pilgrimage. ✧

Toward a Psychology of the Gunas

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The Blessed Lord Said:

The indestructible, the supreme is the Eternal (*brahman*); his essential nature is called SELF-Knowledge (*adhyatma*); the emanation that causes the birth of beings is named Action (*karma*). Knowledge of the Elements (*adhibhūta*) concerns my perishable nature, and knowledge of the Shining Ones (*adhidaiva*) concerns the life-giving energy (*puruṣha*, the male creative energy — the supreme *puruṣha* is the Divine Man, the manifested God); the knowledge of Sacrifice (*adhiyajna*) tells of me, as wearing the body, O best of living beings.

And he who, casting off the body, goeth forth thinking upon me only at the time of the end, he entereth into my being: there is no doubt of that. Whosoever at the end abandoneth the body, thinking upon any being, to that being only he goeth, O Kaunteya, ever to that conformed in Nature. Therefore at all times think upon me only, and fight. With mind (*manas*) and Reason (*buddhi*) set on me, without doubt thou shalt come to me.

Translated by Annie Besant
The Bhagavadgita

HPB: Freedom from Mental Bondage — II

JOE HASIEWICZ

Edison

In April of 1878, when Thomas A. Edison joined the Theosophical Society (TS), he signed a pledge of secrecy respecting its proceedings, investigations, and experiments as the Society had been compromised by the publication of false stories. As to the influence that occult science may have had on Edison's metaphysical views, an article published forty-two years after his joining, provides some insight. The 30 October 1920 issue of *The Scientific American*, contains an interview with Mr Edison concerning "Views on Life and Death".

Archibald Keightley made an in-depth comparison between that article and HPB's *The Secret Doctrine (SD)*, outlining nine points of similarity. Keightley's comparison was subsequently published in the *Theosophical Quarterly*, 1921, vol. 19, p. 132, in an article titled "*The Secret Doctrine* and Mr Edison". He compared Edison's views concerning subjects such as organic life, matter, the composition of life-entities, and the teachings given in *SD*, with comments on the similarities.

Thus, between the views which Mme Blavatsky put forward thirty-two years ago in *SD*, and still earlier in *The Theosophist*, as well as the thoughts expressed by Edison, there is a good deal of likeness. The idea of the life-entities is common to both; but *SD* further teaches the existence of many degrees of conscious, intelligent directors and ascending hierarchies who build up the vesture of man and, when the time comes, inform that vesture — hierarchies which are the builders of man and of every other form, on this world, as on every other world. Some of the points on which they agreed upon were that Life is indestructible; that our bodies are composed of myriads of infinitesimal entities, and that life-entities build according to a plan, for example, replacing damaged tissue from memory.

Once we have taken the time to read, digest, and contemplate passages of *SD* and begin to assimilate the wisdom that is contained therein, then we begin to develop a deeper understanding within ourselves of the universe around us and the patterns within it. It is with this type

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of knowledge that we may prepare ourselves for a deeper exploration, as it appears that Einstein and Edison already did.

In her article, “Occult or Exact Science?” HPB writes: “Every new discovery made by modern science vindicates the truths of the archaic philosophy.”¹ And in *SD* she writes: “one by one facts and processes in Nature’s workshops are permitted to find their way into the exact Sciences, while mysterious help is given to rare individuals in unravelling its arcana.”

Mythology

Let us examine myth as another example of how HPB provides us with insight. Some of the current definitions of the word “myth” are: “a fiction or half-truth”, “a fictitious story, person, or thing”, or “a traditional, typically ancient story dealing with supernatural beings”. Definitions of this word seem to lean toward untruth rather than truth. When we come across something that is not a regular part of our worldview or that we do not have definitive proof of, typically our initial position is one of disbelief. This is the stance we take until proof is brought about. By leaning towards disbelief, we perhaps see ourselves as being more intelligent and pragmatic. It is sort of the opposite of children to whom most of us give license to indulge in “fantasies” and imaginary friends, and so forth. Then, when we become adults, we are advised to put away childish things. But by doing so, are we limiting our perspective and depriving ourselves of a richer view of Nature and the world we live in?

The word myth comes from the Greek *mythos* which means “story” and can be an “account or recital of an event or a series of events” or an “anecdote”, although in some cases it can also mean a “lie”. HPB teaches us that mythology is not total fiction, but contains within it a seed of truth. In *SD*, HPB writes of those “who find in every myth nothing save additional proofs of the superstitious bent of mind of the ancients”. And that:

She is one of those who feel convinced that no mythological story, no traditional event in the folklore of a people has ever been, at any time, pure fiction, but that every one of such narratives has an actual, historical lining to it.²

In *Isis Unveiled*, HPB refers to Plato saying: “As to the *myths*, Plato declares in the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedo* that they were the vehicles of great truths well worth the seeking.”³

If we are open to HPB’s (and Plato’s) thinking, and refuse to hold our mental doors shut, surely we will open ourselves to a richer perception and deeper appreciation of our world’s cultures, past and present, as well as the sources of their literature.

Spirituality — *The Voice of the Silence*

Even in her last works, HPB was working to free the mind of humanity of its shackles. In 1889, a spiritual work called *The Voice of the Silence* appeared, which was one of the last that HPB would see published. This work was derived from *The Book of the Golden Precepts*, an ancient work given to mystic students

in the East, which HPB likely encountered during her stay at a certain monastery in the Himalayas, where she spent a considerable amount of time during her travels throughout Tibet and Nepal.

With *The Voice*, she brought the light of Eastern wisdom, an esoteric doctrine referred to as the “Secret Heart”, to the West for the first time. In his introduction to the book, Boris de Zirkoff writes that it was intended as “a devotional text which would create the proper spiritual atmosphere in the mind of students and help them transform their thought into action, their aspirations into compassionate deeds”.⁴ Of this work, Annie Besant said: “It moves us, not by a statement of facts gathered from books, but by an appeal to the divinest instincts of our nature . . .”⁴ Annie Besant dedicated her book, *The Ancient Wisdom*, “with gratitude, reverence, and love to H. P. Blavatsky, who showed me the light”.

The Voice teaches us to move past the mind and seek for truth further within ourselves, saying that “the mind is the great slayer of the Real”, and that the “outer sound” should be silenced before one can actually discern the “inner sound” and understand the real. So she writes: “Let the disciple slay the slayer.”

The Voice is not without its endorsements. In 1920, the Japanese philosopher and teacher D. T. Suzuki, who brought Zen Buddhism to the West, wrote that he was amazed when he came across it for the first time at Oxford and sent a copy to his wife writing to her: “Here is the real Mahayana Buddhism.” In 1927 the

Ninth Panchen Lama⁵ wrote a message, or *sutra*, to accompany *The Voice* when it was published in English by the Chinese Buddhist Research Society in Beijing. Finally, the XIV and current Dalai Lama wrote the foreword to the 100th anniversary edition of this book in 1989.

Gandhi

Mohandas “Mahatma” Gandhi, the preeminent leader of the Indian independence movement in British-ruled India, who employed nonviolent civil disobedience and led India to independence, did not reach that position without HPB’s influence. His first contact with Theosophy came in 1889, when he was in London studying law. Up to that point Gandhi was very much interested in Western ways and wholeheartedly believed that Indians should become more like Englishmen. As Professor James D. Hunt remarks in his book *Gandhi in London*, “it was through Theosophy that Gandhi was induced to study his own heritage”, and eventually turned him to an altogether different direction and become the leader of the Indian independence movement. In his autobiography, Gandhi writes:

Towards the end of my second year in England I came across two Theosophists, brothers . . . They talked to me about the [Bhagavad] Gita. . . they invited me to read the original with them. I felt ashamed, as I had read the divine poem neither in Sanskrit nor in Gujarati.”⁶

The *Bhagavadgītā* became the most important book in Gandhi’s life. He af-

firmed that his philosophy of *ahimsā* (meaning harmlessness or peaceful non-resistance) was rooted in that scripture. He said: “I recall having read, at the brothers’ direction, Madame Blavatsky’s [*The*] *Key to Theosophy*.” He was introduced to HPB in 1890, but did not join the TS at the time. Pyarelal Nayyar, biographer and personal secretary of Mahatma Gandhi in his later years, wrote:

Towards the close of 1890 he was introduced to Madame Blavatsky. . . He read Mme Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine* and on March 26, 1891 he was enrolled as an associate member of the Blavatsky Lodge.

When Gandhi went to South Africa, he was in close contact with the TS in Johannesburg, where he had religious discussion and read from theosophical books. In 1895 he wrote: “I intend to spread as much as possible information about Theosophy.” Gandhi later explained to his biographer Louis Fischer: “Theosophy is the teaching of Madame Blavatsky. It is Hinduism at its best. Theosophy is the brotherhood of man . . .”

Death

In his 1989 article, “A Nineteenth Century Explanatory Scheme for the Interpretation of Near-Death Experience: The Transpersonal Model of Death as Presented in Madame Blavatsky’s Theosophy”, French author Dr Jean-Louis Siémons⁷ makes associations between more modern accounts of Near-Death Experiences (NDEs), by various authors and the writings of HPB. In the article,

Siémons writes that a century ago few facts about NDEs were known outside of accounts of “the panoramic vision of life” given by people rescued from drowning and accidents or those that occurred under certain pathological conditions. He credits HPB with having duly mentioned this in *Isis Unveiled* in 1877.

In the article, Siémons leans heavily on HPB’s writings as well other theosophical writings such as the *Mahatma Letters* and those of William Quan Judge to construct a sort of skeletal framework which he fleshes out by including accounts of NDEs and quotes from various sources outside of Theosophy. By combining and comparing these materials, Siémons creates a comprehensive and impressive model of the after-death processes, one that helps us see just a little further beyond the veil into Nature’s mysteries.

Conclusion

As may well be expected, the domain of Nature extends well beyond that of our earthly senses. HPB, from birth, had the capability to see far beyond the rest of us, and her teachers developed that sight further. She became a beacon of light illuminating the way so that the rest of us may begin to see our way forward.

In the preface to *SD*, HPB wrote:

These truths are in no sense put forward as a revelation; nor does the author claim the position of a revealer of mystic lore, now made public for the first time in the world’s history. For what is con-

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tained in this work is to be found scattered throughout thousands of volumes embodying the scriptures of the great Asiatic and early European religions, hidden under glyph and symbol, and hitherto left unnoticed because of this veil.

In a letter from HPB to Dr J. D. Buck, she writes: “I can only show the way to those whose eyes are open to the truth, whose souls are full of altruism, charity, and love for the whole creation and who think of themselves last.”

HPB gave us, if we are willing to use them, the tools necessary to loosen the

shackles of mental bondage in the form of ideas that help us look beyond the current worldview and unlock the mysteries of Nature. From these we can take what we need, what makes sense to us, and run with it. By example, she encourages us to open-mindedly challenge existing scientific beliefs, religious dogma and philosophies. But most importantly to look within ourselves and begin to understand the unity in who we are. So, how will we know if and when we are freeing ourselves of mental bondage — I think that our logic, intuition, and reason will tell us.



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6. Gujarat is a state in Western India, sometimes referred to as the “Jewel of Western India”.
7. Scientist and philosopher.

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