



THE THEOSOPHIST

VOL. 145 NO. 1 OCTOBER 2023

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Note: Articles for publication in *The Theosophist* should be sent to: <editorialoffice@gmail.com>

Cover: In their book *Thought Forms* C. W. Leadbeater and Annie Besant included illustrations of the thoughts we generate, in terms of colors and forms, and also in forms created by the effects of music. The form in this issue's cover is the effect of a chorus singing "Ave Maria" by Charles Gounod and J. S. Bach, the highest point of the form rising fully six hundred feet above the tower.

This journal is the official organ of the President, founded by H. P. Blavatsky on 1 Oct. 1879. The Theosophical Society is responsible only for official notices appearing in this journal.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Founded 17 November 1875

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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.

Effort and the Spiritual Path

TIM BOYD

NO effort that we make is wasted. If we look back to the founding of the Theosophical Society (TS) 148 years ago, it was something new. It came into existence on 17 November 1875 with a purpose. It was a small group of highly motivated, committed people who desired some exposure to what came to be called Theosophy, also known as the Ageless Wisdom.

Often “Ancient Wisdom” is the language used to describe this tradition. While not incorrect, Ancient Wisdom is only a subset of the unchanging Wisdom tradition which was renewed in 1875. It is said that periodically there are messengers that are sent from the great hierarchy of the world to renew humanity’s connection with the Ageless Wisdom. Today we are the beneficiaries of the fact that H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) was available at that time.

There were many great people who allied themselves with this Theosophical work. The core ideas in the Ageless Wisdom tradition have been known for millennia. Our human tendency is that, over time, we have a habit of trying to institutionalize truth and wisdom. At our present stage we need forms that we can grasp — doctrines, rituals, rules — so we continually engage in this process of

clothing the wisdom with ever-deepening layers of our own limited understanding. The end product of engaging in this process over a long period of time is the religions of the world, each with so many different ritualized approaches to understanding. Aspects of all these approaches are valid, but prevent access as much as they invite it.

HPB came into this scene to talk about some very old ideas, but to give a new emphasis and perspective. This most recent expression of the Ageless Wisdom has now become our inheritance. There are people I have known over my lifetime who had very active parents or grandparents who during their lives put enormous thought and effort into developing large fortunes. Then they passed that wealth on to the next generation. I have seen it happen that an heir who had no involvement or appreciation of the creation of that wealth, squanders it.

There are also those who have taken their inheritance and have magnified it for future generations. We are in that position. When the TS was formed 148 years ago, it was trying to bring into being an understanding of certain critical concepts that were deemed of utmost importance for the future growth of the human family.

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In what many regard as the most important of the Mahatma Letters, The Mahachohan's letter, the basis for the TS's formation and future work is outlined. Briefly stated, the idea in that letter was that humanity at that time, the late 1800s, had reached an impasse. Two currents of thought were pulling humanity in different directions. In that letter they were described as follows:

One of these currents of thought was described as "degrading superstition". It was embodied in religion's domination of the thought process — the idea that we are told by some intermediary between us and Spirit/God what is true, and we obey without thinking. The second was described as "still more degrading brutal materialism" — the idea that this is a solely material universe, commanded by physical forces only; that we are living in a mechanistic Universe which precludes Spirit or unseen powers. That way of thinking was advanced by the science of the time.

These two poles of thought were pulling humanity apart. The Mahachohan's letter identified a need for a third way that could introduce humanity to the essential Unity of all religions, and could move scientific exploration into the realm of consciousness.

The main difficulty with scientific thinking has been that consciousness is not measurable as yet. There is no doubt that consciousness has an impact on matter, but only the effects of consciousness are measurable.

If we look at it now, the work of the TS was like a gardener planting seed ideas

in the soil of the consciousness of global humanity, and they tried. The TS was formed to plant certain key ideas in the ground of human consciousness. Much like seeds which in their beginning bear no resemblance to the fully matured plant, these seeds begin as concepts. As they become understood and internalized, with growth and maturity they grow far beyond the realm of mere thought. Movements, cultures, new approaches to civilization, even the "cornerstone, the foundation of the future religions of humanity" were the intended harvest of the profound ideas the TS introduced. The key concepts are few in number. Among them are:

1. We are multidimensional beings. In the theosophical approach we talk about seven planes of existence. Everybody knows that it is not rare to think of ourselves as functioning on many levels. But the idea that those levels range from "Highest Spirit" to "basest matter" and can be understood, functioned in, and integrated within us was an offering to humanity.

2. We are self-responsible beings. We are not dictated to by fate or determined solely by birth. Self-responsibility is a capacity of any human life. We can influence the direction and unfoldment of our own consciousness, the nature of its expression, and impact on this world. Once we become convinced of this possibility, we try to take responsibility for the thoughts we think, for the quiet that we cultivate within our own being, and how that affects the world as a healing activity.

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3. There is no empty space. This is an idea with which we are familiar at a rudimentary level. Today almost everybody has a cell phone in their pocket or purse. Most of us are aware that at every moment of every day, at any place in the world, radio band signals both surround us and pass through us. According to our phone's coding it receives the signals and translates them into conversation. Though rudimentary, this is a form of intelligence that surrounds us. The larger idea is that there are expansive systems of intelligence within which we live, move, and have our being.

Spiritual Evolution. At the time of the TS's founding, Darwin's ideas of evolution and natural selection were gaining traction in the scientific community, but the Ageless Wisdom tradition's idea of spiritual evolution was unrecognized. The suggestion that the unfoldment process was not merely isolated to forms, but also applied to consciousness was something unconsidered in the West. That the possibility of the unlimited expansion of human consciousness, as well as the existence of Masters of the Wisdom, Avatars, Enlightened Beings, Messiahs, was a natural outcome of the process of spiritual evolution, is another seed idea that Theosophy reintroduced.

These were difficult ideas to communicate to the unexposed Western world 148 years ago. The TS founders and others who followed in their wake devoted their lives to it. They sacrificed comfort, traveled far from home in difficult conditions, in order to make it possible that

others, whom they would never know, would never meet, would have the opportunity to unfold this Wisdom Tradition at ever deepening levels. Those others, toward whom their life's efforts were directed, are you and me.

A basic principle of gardening is when a seed is planted, if it is properly nurtured, there comes a time of harvest. With time and proper attention, the hidden qualities of the seed unfold, and its fruits become available. Around the world, every moment of every day, there are groups of people, who have been influenced by these seed ideas, forming a network of consciousness, taking responsibility to embrace a larger role than just "me".

Almost everybody is "me"-focused, but unless we are determined to remain asleep, refusing to open our eyes, everybody knows we are in an interconnected and interdependent world. Even though we tend to look to others, governments, leaders, to take responsibility, each one of us has it within our power to do what it is that we are here to do. It may not be something that shows up in the news reports, but drop by drop an ocean is formed. At a certain point the tide becomes irresistible.

We are at a moment where the all-encompassing value of these teachings that comprise the Ageless Wisdom are being recognized. In HPB's *The Key to Theosophy* the question is asked: What is the purpose of the TS? In answering the question, she says that it is to "make it known that such a thing as Theosophy exists". The TS's purpose is to make it

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known that there is potential for inner unfoldment, for arriving closer to the peace that everybody wants for their own lives and for the world. We can choose to expose ourselves to this knowledge.

This exposure has consequences. One of them is that we cannot pretend that we are merely leaves blown by the winds of circumstance. That is no small thing. Too many people would prefer to complain than to act. A deeper understanding removes the refuge of denial. So, if the false comfort of ignorance is something one requires, then one needs to

tread lightly with this Ageless Wisdom.

Experience of the wisdom is what is asked for. As surely as we interact with it, it will come. The essential focus of this work is self-transformation. Within each one of us there is something profound. We are aware of it, but it is somewhere at the periphery of our awareness. We all have experiences of something greater inhabiting our thought or inhabiting a moment. But it only becomes transformative as we allow for an ever-growing presence of that soul consciousness. ✧

Whether our efforts are, or not,
favored by life,
let us be able to say,
when we come near to the great goal,
I have done what I could.

Louis Pasteur

Annie Besant — A Great Occultist

SHIKHAR AGNIHOTRI

I WOULD like to share a few incidents, events, and insights about that aspect of the life of Annie Besant which not only permeated but also, was the source of inspiration and guidance, in every other aspect of her life. It was the exposure to this dimension of life that gave Annie Besant a completely new and broader vision of life.

We all know that Dr Besant passed through several phases of life — housewife, propagator of atheism, trade unionist, feminist leader and Fabian Socialist before coming in touch with H. P. Blavatsky (HPB). And all of these roles were her way of removing the suffering of the poor, the helpless, and the downtrodden. But how did it all change?

In her own words:

Such was the bearing of the Theosophical teaching . . . , as laid before me by H. P. Blavatsky, and when I urged, out of my bitter knowledge of the miseries endured by the poor, . . . **she bade me look beyond the moment**, and see how the suffering must come back and back with every generation, unless we sought to remove the roots of wrong.

“I do not judge a woman,” she said, “who has resort to such means of defence in the midst of circumstances so evil, and whose ignorance of the real causes of all this misery is her excuse for snatching at any relief. But it is not for you, an Occultist, to continue to teach a method which you now know must tend to the perpetuation of the sorrow.”

I felt that she was right, and though I shrank from the decision . . . yet the decision was made. I refused to reprint the “Law of Population”, or to sell the copyright, giving pain, as I sadly knew, to all the brave and loyal friends who had so generously stood by me in that long and bitter struggle.

We all know that Besant was described as a Diamond Soul. Just like the light shines from every facet of a diamond, the divine light shone out from every aspect of her personality, be it as an outstanding orator of her time, a champion of human freedom, an educationist, a philanthropist, or an author with more than three hundred books and pamphlets to her credit.

The aspect of her life which we all are aware about is that of being a great

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occultist. But very often the word “occult” is surrounded with doubt and prejudices. Such doubts and suspicions are completely misplaced if we understand the real meaning of WHAT IS OCCULT.

The occult comes from the Latin word *occultus* “hidden, secret” and is simply “the knowledge of the hidden”. So, basically whatever that is hidden from our physical senses is the OCCULT WORLD. The individual who has the capacity of probing in those realms of consciousness obviously becomes an Occultist. The third objective of the Theosophical Society (TS) is an indication towards that. To investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.

But Annie Besant was not always an occultist although she had great potential. Let me take you to the time that led her on to the journey of manifesting this potential and becoming a great occultist.

In her *An Autobiography* Annie Besant writes:

Since 1886 there had been . . . [a] growing . . . conviction that my philosophy was not sufficient; that life and mind were . . . more than I had dreamed. Psychology was advancing with rapid strides; hypnotic experiments were revealing unlooked-for complexities in human consciousness, strange riddles of multiplex personalities, and, most startling of all, vivid intensities of mental action. . . . Fact after fact came hurtling in upon me, demanding explanation I was incompetent to give. I studied the obscurer sides of consciousness, dreams, hallucinations, illusions, insanity. Into the dark-

ness shot a ray of light — A. P. Sinnett’s “Occult World”. . . . I added Spiritualism to my studies, experimenting privately, finding the phenomena indubitable, but the spiritualistic explanation of them incredible. The phenomena of clairvoyance, clairaudience, thought-reading, were found to be real. . . . I experimented in various ways suggested in them, and got some (to me) curious results. . . . By the early spring of 1889 . . . I finally convinced myself that there was some hidden thing, some hidden power, and . . . had grown desperately determined to find at all hazards what I sought. . . . Filled with an intense . . . longing to solve the riddle of life and mind, I heard a Voice that was later to become to me the holiest sound on earth, bidding me to take courage for the light was near.

Proving that inner voice to be true, about 15 days later, Annie Besant finds herself writing the review of the two volumes of *The Secret Doctrine* by H. P. Blavatsky. While going through the book she realized that her long and tiring search was over and the very Truth was found. And that is why in her review she made it clear that there is very much more to be known than our present faculties can grasp; that there is nothing supernatural. “The powers we possess are not supernatural, they are latent in every human being, and will be evolved as the race progresses.”

After writing the review she wanted to meet HPB and described her first meeting conversation with her as a general one, no word of occultism. Soon after

joining the TS, she expressed to HPB the desire to be her pupil. Annie Besant writes: “Her [Madame Blavatsky’s] stern, set face softened, the unwonted gleam of tears sprang to her eyes; . . . she placed her hand upon my head. ‘You are a noble woman. May Master bless you.’”

And thus, started Besant’s journey to being a great occultist.

There were two other incidents that convinced the Countess Wachtmeister that Annie Besant could be a possible successor to HPB. One day she saw Mrs Besant “enveloped in a cloud of light — Master’s colour. He was standing by her side with his hand over her head”. She rushed to Madame Blavatsky and narrated what she had seen. Madame Blavatsky confirmed the truth of the incident. At a lecture to workmen, she saw the Master by Mrs Besant’s side and felt that she spoke with an eloquence not noticed before. While living with Madame Blavatsky, Mrs Besant spent some time every evening with her to receive occult teachings.

As a result of this when HPB wrote an introductory note to W. Q. Judge for Annie Besant’s travel to USA in 1891, she described her as, “the soul of honour and uncompromising truthfulness . . . unselfishness and altruism is Annie Besant’s name . . . It is only a few months she studies occultism with me in the innermost group of the ES and yet she has passed far beyond others . . .”

We all know how at the suggestion of Mr A. P. Sinnett, Mrs Besant and Mr C. W. Leadbeater started looking

at chemical elements with their clairvoyant sight and the results of their observation appeared for the first time in *Lucifer*, November 1895. Later these investigations were made in more detail and published as *Occult Chemistry*.

Realization

I have sometimes wondered lately whether, had I met her then or seen any of her writings, I would have become her pupil. I fear not; I was still too dazzled by the triumphs of Western Science, too self-assertive, too fond of combat, too much at the mercy of my own emotions, too sensitive to praise and blame. I needed to hear yet more deeply the depths of human misery, to feel yet more keenly the lack of wider knowledge and of clearer light if I were to give effective help to man, ere I could [bow my head] [or] [push my pride aside] to crave admittance as pupil to the School of Occultism, ere I could put aside my prejudices and study the Science of the Soul.

Message to others

In her autobiography Annie Besant writes:

This same path of knowledge that I am treading is open to all others who will pay the toll demanded at the gateway — and **that toll is willingness to renounce everything for the sake of spiritual truth, and willingness to give all the truth that is won to the service of man,** keeping back no shred for self.”

Annie Besant’s contribution as an occultist is magnificent and we can go on talking about many more things. But her

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greatest gift to humanity, I feel, is something that could not have come out without her having been a great occultist, a person who saw the hidden interconnectedness and working in Nature. This is the Universal Invocation that she coined in 1923, a potent mantra that every time it is pronounced, creates a magnetic effect of uplifting everyone's consciousness:

O hidden life, vibrant in every atom,
O hidden light, shining in every creature,
O hidden love, embracing all in oneness,
May each who feels himself as one with

thee, Know he is therefore one with every other.

Undoubtedly, Dr Annie Besant was a great occultist, during whose presidency the Theosophical Society not only touched its peak in terms of number of members, assets, and influence on the world, but also accelerated India's freedom movement. Therefore it does not seem at all a coincidence that when we celebrated 175 years of Annie Besant's birth, it was also the 75th anniversary of India's independence. ✧

When it becomes the most natural thing in the world to enjoy mystic meditation, one is always seeking every opportunity to get back to that fundamental current of ideation. Everything else is merely a veil, distracting and concealing, falsifying, and often alas, tragically inverting the truth of the Oneness of all life. Therefore many sages speak about there being only one true human being in any solar system in any period of manifestation. All seemingly separate human beings are merely atoms within that one being.

The immensity of this can be understood by thinking of the billions of cells in the human body, that virtual universe or cosmos which each soul carries on the physiological plane. Yet, most people are not aware of it most of the time, and are merely leaning back upon Nature's cycles, trusting to Nature's compassionate toil in keeping the vast cosmic computer working.

To be able to insert oneself into the unity of Nature and human life consciously and deliberately, and to do it joyously and with total consecration, self-abandonment, and self-abnegation at the root, destroys at the source all thought which gives rise to false and delusive desire, which can only trap one in time, making one captive to bondage, illusion, and delusion.

Raghavan N. Iyer
The Gupta Vidya, III, pp. 418-19

Testimony Concerning the Mahatmas

DAMODAR K. MAVALANKAR¹

THE criticisms upon Mr Sinnett's book, "The Occult World", force upon me the duty of testifying from personal experience and knowledge to the fact that those whom we call our "Brothers of the First Section" (also known as the Masters or Mahatmas) of whom "Koot Hoomi Lal Singh" is one, and who possess the so-called "miraculous" powers, are real and living beings.

It is not belief with me but knowledge, for, if I have seen one of them, I have at least seen about half a dozen on various occasions, in broad daylight, in open places, and have talked to them, not only when Madame [H. P.] Blavatsky (HPB) was in Bombay but even when she was far away and I here in Bombay. I have also seen them at times when I was travelling (for instance in Ceylon [now Sri Lanka]). I was taken to the residences of some of them and once when Col. [H. S.] Olcott and Mme Blavatsky were with me. I know "Koot Hoomi Lal Singh" personally and have seen and conversed with him when Mme Blavatsky was here, as also when she was far away.

I had the moral certainty concerning

the existence of the Himalayan Mahatmas long before I heard of the name of the Theosophical Society (TS), nay, even before it was formed in America in 1875. In my childhood I had a very dangerous illness, and doctors gave me up for lost. While my relatives were every moment expecting my death, I had a vision which made such a deep impression on my mind that I could never forget it. Then I saw a certain personage — whom I then considered to be a Deva, that is, God — who gave me a peculiar medicine; and curiously enough, I began to recover from that time. Some years after that, while I was one day engaged in meditation, I saw the identical personage and recognised him as my Saviour. Once more He saved me from the clutches of death.

It was some years after this last occasion that the founders of the TS came to India; and within a few months I joined the Society. Since then, I have witnessed several phenomena, both in the presence and absence of Madame Blavatsky, in the company of others or while alone. These several accounts have from time to time been published in *The Theosophist* over

Damodar K. Mavalankar was born in September 1857 in Ahmedabad and went to Tibet in 1885. A chela (disciple) of Mahatma Koot Hoomi, he was international Secretary of the TS Adyar for several years and helped H. P. Blavatsky as managing editor of *The Theosophist*, founded in 1879.

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my own name. There are several other occurrences not so mentioned, which I wrote about in private correspondence to theosophical friends in London and New York.

I may here add that some time after I joined the Society, I saw several Mahatmas, both in their astral form and physical bodies, one of whom was the Mahatma Koot Hoomi, known as Mr Sinnett's correspondent and the author of the letters published in *The Occult World*. And when I saw him, I at once identified him with the majestic Power I had seen in my youth thrice: He who had saved my life twice and appeared once during my meditation. I have got several letters from him and others; and all those, written by the same person, whether received by me direct or through anybody else, bear the same handwriting. Latterly, since They have chosen to give me verbal instructions, I have been receiving very few written communications.

Before joining the Society, as well as after, during Madame Blavatsky's absence as well as her presence, under a thousand and one different circumstances, I have received several letters for myself or for others from different Mahatmas, have seen them, talked to them, heard their voices, and seen several kinds of phenomena.

In a village in Ceylon in May 1880, HPB, Col. Olcott, and myself were the only three persons that stopped one night, the rest of our party having gone to a further place. We were all busy there initiating people and forming a branch

of our Society till about 12 in the night. HPB and Col. Olcott went to bed at about 1. As we had to stay in the village only one night, we had got down in the Rest House where comfortable accommodation can be had only for two travellers. I had therefore to lay down in an arm-chair in the dining room. I had scarcely locked from inside the door of the room and laid myself in the chair than I heard a faint knock at the door. It was repeated twice before I had time enough to reach the door. I opened it and what a great joy I felt when I saw the Master again! In a very low whisper, he ordered me to dress myself and to follow him.

At the back of the Rest House is the sea. I followed him as he commanded me to do. He brought me to the back door of the place and we walked about three quarters of an hour by the seashore. Then we turned in the direction of the sea. All around there was water except the place we were walking upon which was quite dry! He was walking in front and I was following him. We thus walked for about seven minutes when we came to a spot that looked like a small island. On the top of the building was a triangular light. From a distance, a person standing on the seashore would think it to be an isolated spot which is covered all over by green bushes. There is only one entrance to go inside. And no one can find it out unless the occupant wishes the person to find the way.

After we reached the island, we had to go round about for about five minutes before we came in front of the actual building. There in a little garden in front

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we found one of the Brothers sitting. I had seen him before in the Council Room and it is to him that this place belongs. Master seated himself near him and I stood before them. We were there for about half an hour. I was shown a part of the place. How very pleasant it is! And inside this place he has a small room where the body remains when the *Spirit* moves about. What a charming, delightful spot that is! What a nice smell of roses and various sorts of flowers! I wish I were permitted to visit that place again if I should go to Ceylon another time. The half hour was finished and the time for our leaving the place was near. The master of the place whose name I do not know, placed his blessing hand over my head and I marched off again. We came back near the door of the room wherein I was to sleep and he suddenly disappeared there on the spot.

Also, in Ceylon I was taken to a certain place where the Masters have their Council. After that I saw the Master twice or thrice alone on the same business. Happy were those moments when alone at midnight we thus had conversation! Nothing or nobody to disturb us! We were to ourselves during that time. I was taken also to two other places: one of them is near Colombo, a private house of the Master and the other one near Kandy, a library. I can now think only of four places where I was taken while in Ceylon.

One evening after dressing myself for dinner on the steamer on our way back to Bombay from Ceylon, I took out from my trunk my coat to be put on after dinner. As is my habit, I examined its

pockets and put it on my bed. The dinner table was exactly opposite my cabin so that I could easily see anyone going in or coming out from there but I saw none.

After we finished our dinner, I went in and put on the coat. Without thinking I put my hands into my pockets as I usually do, and lo! in the right hand one I felt some paper while, when I first examined it, there was nothing inside. I took it out and to my surprise I found a letter addressed to Mme Blavatsky. I took it nearer to the light. The cover was open and on it were written in red the words: "For Damodar to read." I then read the letter and saw that it was about the same business.

Thinking all the time of this matter I lay down in my bed. Absorbed in deep thought I was startled on the sound of footsteps in the cabin which I had locked from inside. I looked behind and there was the Master again and two others! What a pleasant evening that was! Speaking of various things in regard to knowledge and philosophy for about half an hour! Those were the happiest moments in my life! But that was only for that time and I determined to make myself worthy of enjoying it always!

Having returned from our trip to Ceylon, HPB and Col. Olcott left Bombay on 27 August 1880 for Simla and other places in the North on the business of the Society and I was almost alone at the Headquarters. Mr and Mme Coulob also stayed and have been staying with us but they are not much interested in these matters. I worked

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all alone in HPB's compartments and there not a single soul came to disturb me.

On the evening previous to my birthday (in September) I went as usual for dinner in the evening. After dinner we removed to the verandah in HPB's Bungalow. A sudden peculiar sensation came over me and the brilliant moonlight reminded me of my trip to _____ where Col. O. and I were magnetized.

Presently Mme C. heard footsteps in HPB's room, and somebody trying to open the cupboard. I did not hear any such thing, but I did not dare go in as HPB before her departure had told me not to do so, in case I should hear any noise or voices there. For the same reason, I prevented them from trying to enter there as they wanted to do for fear there might be something wrong. After some time, all that stopped and both of them went to bed.

I went into my writing room the window of which opens into the verandah where we were sitting after dinner. And just above the table in front of the clock was a big triangular note. When I left the room for dinner there was nothing there as I always, when going in or coming out, referred to that clock, and if it had been there before I could not have seen the figures on the clock and consequently should have noticed it before. I took it up and opened it and inside was a triangularly folded cap which the fakirs and the people in Northern India wear. Inside was written: "To Damodar." It is a gift I shall always preserve and have it still.

After that I very often received communications from the Masters and oth-

ers by post or in some mysterious way.

Then one day at about 2 in the morning after finishing my work I locked the door of the room and lay in my bed. Within about 2 or 3 minutes I heard HPB's voice in her room calling me. I got up with a start and went in. She said, "some persons want to see you", and after a moment added: "Now go out, do not look at me." Before however I had time to turn my face, I saw her gradually disappear on the spot and from that very ground rose up the form of the Masters.

By the time I had turned back I saw two others dressed in what I afterwards learned to be Tibetan clothes. One of them remained with the Master in HPB's room. The other one I found seated on my bed by the time I came out. I saluted him and asked him if he had any orders to give. He said: "If there are any, they will be told to you, without being asked."

Then he told me to stand still for some time and began to look at me fixedly. I felt a very pleasant sensation as if I was getting out of my body.

I cannot say now what time passed between that and what I am now going to relate. But I saw I was in a peculiar place. It was the upper end of Kashmir at the foot of the Himalayas. I saw I was taken to a place where there were only two houses just opposite to each other and no other sign of habitation. From one of these came out "Koot Hoomi". It was his house. Opposite him stops Master Morya. Brother Koot Hoomi ordered me to follow him.

After going a short distance of about half a mile we came to a natural sub-

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terranean passage which is under the Himalayas. The path is very dangerous. There is a natural causeway on the River Indus which flows underneath in all its fury. Only one person can walk on it at a time and one false step seals the fate of the traveller.

Besides this causeway there are several valleys to be crossed. After walking a considerable distance through this subterraneous passage, we came into an open plain in L_____k. There is a large massive building thousands of years old. In front of it is a huge Egyptian Tau. The building rests on 7 big pillars in the form of pyramids. The entrance gate has a large triangular arch. Inside are various apartments. The building is so large that I think it can easily contain twenty thousand people. I was shown some of these compartments.

This is the Chief Central Place where all those of our Section who are found deserving of Initiation into Mysteries have to go for their final ceremony and stay there the requisite period. I went up with my *Guru* to the Great Hall. The grandeur and serenity of the place is enough to strike anyone with awe. The beauty of the Altar which is in the centre and at which every candidate has to take his vows at the time of his Initiation is sure to dazzle the most brilliant eyes. The splendour of the Chief's throne is incomparable. Everything is on a geometrical principle and containing various symbols which are explained only to the Initiate. But I cannot say more now as I come now under an obligation of secrecy which Koot Hoomi took from me there.

While standing there I do not know what happened but suddenly I got up and found myself in my bed. It was about 8 in the morning. What was that I saw? Was it a dream or a reality? If a reality, how could I traverse the whole of the Himalayas even in my astral body in so short a time? Perplexed with these ideas I was sitting silent when down fell a note on my nose. I opened it and found inside that it was not a dream but that I was taken in some mysterious way in my astral body to the real place of Initiation where I shall be in my body for the Ceremony if I show myself deserving of the blessing. My joy at that moment can be easily conjectured than described.

On 19 April 1883 at the Theosophical Society (Madras [now Chennai]), Narasimhalu Chetty and myself were seated on a chair quite close to Mme Blavatsky's bed, fanning her and talking together, so as gradually to induce sleep in her. Then for a few minutes we were talking about some caves and so on.

Suddenly Mme Blavatsky gave a start and exclaimed: "I feel Him." She enjoined on us strictly not to leave our places, nor to get excited, but remain where we were, without moving an inch, one way or the other, and be perfectly calm and quiet. Suddenly she asked for our hands and the right hand of each of us was held by her. Hardly two minutes had elapsed when we saw the Master Morya coming from the screen-door of Mme B.'s bedroom and approaching her.

His manner of walking was so gentle that not a footstep, not the slightest sound, was audible; nor did He appear to move,

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by his gestures. It was only the change of position that made us see He had come nearer and nearer. He stood exactly opposite Mme B. — not quite an arm's length from us. We were on this side of the bed; He on the other.

I have seen him often enough to enable me to recognize him at once. He then bent over the bed. His usual long white coat, the peculiar *pagri* (turban), long black hair flowing over the broad shoulders, and long beard — were as usual striking and picturesque. He was standing near a door the shutters of which were open. Through these the lamp-light, and through the windows which were all open, the moonlight, were full upon him. And we being in the dark, that is, having no light on our eyes — we being turned against the windows through which the moonlight came — could see distinctly and clearly.

He held and put his hands twice over Mme B.'s head. She then stretched out her hand which passed through his — a fact proving that what we saw was a Mayavi Rupa (apparitional body), although so vivid and clear as to give one the impression of a material, physical body. She immediately took the letter from his hands. It crumpled, as it were, and made a sound. He then waved his hands towards us, walked a few steps, inaudibly and imperceptibly as before, and disappeared!

Narasimhalu at once recognised him, so distinctly and close did he see him. It appears that in 1874 Master Morya was in Madras, and both his brother Subbiah Chetty and Narasimhalu saw him, al-

though they knew nothing more. What made an impression then upon their minds was the fact of his sudden disappearance before their very eyes. Narasimhalu swears that He is the same person he had seen in 1874.

Mme B. then handed the letter to me, as it was intended for me. Inside were instructions from my revered Guru. Never shall I forget last night's experience; so clear, vivid and tangible it was!

At Lahore in late November 1883, I was visited by Mahatma Koot Hoomi in body, for three nights consecutively for about three hours every time, and in one case, even went to meet him outside the house — re-entering the house with him, offering him a seat, and then holding a long converse with the Master. Moreover, He who I saw in person at Lahore was the same I had seen in astral form at the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society, and the same again whom I, in my visions and trances, had seen at his house, thousands of miles off, to reach which in my astral Ego I was permitted, owing, of course, to his direct help and protection.

In those instances, with my psychic powers hardly developed yet, I had always seen him as a rather hazy form, although his features were perfectly distinct and their remembrance was profoundly graven on my soul's eye and memory; while now at Lahore, Jammu, and elsewhere, the impression was utterly different. In the former cases, when making *pranām* (salutation) my hands passed through his form, while on the latter occasions they met solid garments and flesh.

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Here I saw a living man before me, the same in features, though far more imposing in his general appearance and bearing than him I had so often looked upon in the portrait in Mme Blavatsky's possession and in the one with Mr Sinnett.

At Jammu again, where we proceeded from Lahore, I had the good fortune of being sent for, and permitted to visit a sacred ashram where I remained for a few days in the blessed company of several of the much-doubted MAHATMAS of Himavat and their disciples. There I met not only my beloved Gurudeva Koot Hoomi and Col. Olcott's Master Morya, but several others of the Fraternity, including One of the Highest.

The place I was permitted to visit is in the HIMALAYAS. I saw him in my own *sthula śarira* (physical body) and found my Master identical with the form I had seen in the earlier days of my Chelaship. Thus, I saw my beloved Guru not only as a living man, but actually as a young one in comparison with some other sadhus of the blessed company, only far kinder, and not above a merry remark and conversation at times.

Thus, on the second day of my arrival,

after the meal hour I was permitted to hold an intercourse for over an hour with my Master. Asked by him smilingly, what it was that made me look at him so perplexed, I asked in my turn: "How is it MASTER that some of the members of our Society have taken into their heads a notion that you were 'an elderly man', and that they have even seen you clairvoyantly looking like an old man past sixty?"

To which he pleasantly smiled and said, that this latest misconception was due to the reports of a certain Brahmachari, a pupil of a Vedantic Swami in the NWP [North West Provinces] who had met last year in Tibet the chief of a sect, an elderly Lama, who was his (my Master's) travelling companion at that time. The said Brahmachari having spoken of the encounter in India, had led several persons to mistake the Lama for himself.

As to his being perceived clairvoyantly as an "elderly man", that could never be, he added, as real clairvoyance could lead no one into such mistaken notions; and then he kindly reprimanded me for giving any importance to the age of a Guru, adding that appearances were often false, and so on, and explaining other points. ✧

Endnote:

1. This online document has been collated from several articles and letters written by Damodar K. Mavalankar in the book, *Damodar and the Pioneers of the Theosophical Movement*. An earlier "edition" of this book can be found online at *Damodar: The Writings of a Hindu Chela* <theosociety.org/pasadena/damodar/dam-hp.htm>. Some of these articles are also online under Mavalankar's last name in The

Blavatsky Archives <blavatskyarchives.com/compitems3.htm>.

The extracts given above have been transcribed from the original articles but some material has been silently deleted. The text has also been somewhat edited with some explanatory words, phrases, and sentences added from time to time to the original text to make the overall narrative more easily read. The additions have *not* been placed in brackets.

Pythagorean Harmonics: Sacred Number and the Golden Verses — II

KIRK GRADIN

II. The Life of Pythagoras

No great teacher ever incarnates or manifests except in proper conditions, and these are always hidden and always involve a few. . . . Pythagoras spent a long time — twenty-two years — studying the Egyptian Mysteries, taking a projection of himself and letting it share all the ailments of the age. When he was ready to begin his work, he allowed people to see veiled appearances and partial expressions. His unmanifest and invisible Self, by its very nature. . . . can never be seen except by the light of the eye when the golden thread which is in every human being has been extended.¹²

We begin in the only proper place to begin: the center point, the sacred *omphalos* of the oracle at Delphi, the most important shrine in all of ancient Greece. Built around a sacred spring as early as 1400 BC, it was revered throughout antiquity as the metaphorical center of the cosmos. People came from all over Greece and beyond for divine guidance, to have their deepest questions regarding fate and

future answered by Pythia, the oracular priestess of Apollo at Delphi.

According to Iamblichus, Pythagoras' father to be, Mnesarchus, had gone on a business trip to Delphi and consulted the oracle there as to the nature of his return trip. Much to his surprise, Mnesarchus was told that "his wife was new with child and would present him with a son who would surpass all others . . . in beauty and wisdom, and that he would be of the greatest benefit to the human race". Mnesarchus was shocked. In honor of what he considered to be a divine gift, he chose the name for his son to be "Pythagoras".

In the orthodox Christian version of the garden of Eden, the serpent is made out to be the origin of evil. While there are diverse aspects to the symbol, in many traditions around the world and even in the words attributed to Jesus the serpent is a symbol of wisdom: "Be ye wise as serpents and innocent as doves."¹³ In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates describes the condition of the soul prior to its

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unwilling fall into the body as being in the company of the gods and sharing in their transcendent knowledge. In a work entitled *De Anima*, Iamblichus makes an additional distinction. There is a special category of soul which does not lose its god-like wisdom, divine affinity, and purity of character upon descent into the body, but rather descends in order to purify, teach, and aid mankind and the entire material realm. This special category of soul, is frequently symbolized by the python, snake, or dragon. Such serpents (*nagas*), were gods of wisdom¹⁴ referring to Masters and Adepts of various grades and hierarchies. From the seven-headed Sesa upon which Vishnu rests¹⁵ to the *pythian* oracles of the ancient Mediterranean, “the serpent symbolized divine Wisdom and Perfection, and had always stood for psychological Regeneration and Immortality”.¹⁶ In ancient Greece, *pythios* was also an epithet of Apollo, the god of the Sun.

Thus, it was under the aura of prophecy and sanctity that Pythagoras was born in 570 BCE on the island of Samos in the North Aegean Sea, one of the most important political, cultural, and mercantile centers at the beginning of the Classical period of Ancient Greece. According to Iamblichus, from the time he was a young lad, Mnesarchus took care that his son should enjoy the best possible education, including study under those sages considered “illustrious” for their wisdom “in sacred concerns”. Even as a youth “his aspect was so venerable, and his habits so temperate” and whole-

somely disciplined, that he was honored by those who taught him and “attracted the attention of all who saw and heard him speak”, for “an inimitable quiet marked all his words and actions”. Even as a child, it appears Pythagoras was given credit for being under divine inspiration and it was “reasonably asserted by many that he was the son of a God”.¹⁷

From the outset, we are told, he undertook his studies with exceptional zeal and interest, such that they engrossed “the whole of his attention” until his eighteenth year. Foreseeing that the tyranny of Polycrates would impede his education, Pythagoras then covertly departed for Miletus, where some of the greatest sages of Hellenistic culture resided. “He successively associated with each of the philosophers residing there in a manner such that they all loved him, admired his natural endowments, and admitted him to the best of their doctrines.” It was Thales, considered one of the seven greatest sages of the ancient Greek world, who, admitting that the understanding which Pythagoras displayed exceeded that of his own, insisted that he should seek instruction under the priests of Memphis and Thebes in Egypt, who were the “source of his own reputation for wisdom”.¹⁸

Pythagoras’ travel and his relentless search to extend his learning is legendary. By sea, he stopped in Sidon (modern Lebanon), where he is said to have met and conversed with the most learned hierophants and to have been initiated into “all the mysteries of Byblos and

Tyre”, the centers at that time of ancient Phoenicia, a culture already many thousands of years old. Told by the wise Magi there that their Mysteries had originated in Egypt, he set out again — hoping to find “monuments not made of stone but of erudition still more genuine, beautiful, and divine”.¹⁹

Iamblichus tells the story of the sea voyage Pythagoras took to Egypt. Sailors docked on the shore near Mount Carmel were surprised to see a lone man descending leisurely down the formidable rocky precipices from the summit of that sacred mountain to arrive at their boat. Saying nothing more than “Are you bound for Egypt?” he was allowed to board, the sailors thinking they might make a great profit by selling him into slavery. For two nights and three days however, Pythagoras sat silently and upright in the same spot on the boat without food, drink, or sleep. Moreover, contrary to their expectations, the voyage proceeded so smoothly and peacefully, “as if some deity had been on board”. Upon arriving at Egyptian shores, the sailors reverently assisted him to disembark, raised before him a temporary altar, and left him on a firm beach with abundant fruits from their storage.²⁰

Pythagoras spent twenty-two years traveling from sanctuary to temple, seeking every form of learning and science the priests had to offer. He was put through their most rigorous tests which he unflinchingly mastered. This resulted in him being initiated “in no casual or superficial manner in all the mysteries

of the Gods”. Porphyry states that the Egyptians taught him geometry, sending him to the most revered priests in various cities. The Phoenicians taught him numbers and proportions; the Chaldeans, astronomical theorems, “divine rights and worship”.²¹ The Magi in Persia taught him the mysteries of light; while by the Hebrews he was instructed in numeric symbology and cosmology. In Babylon, Pythagoras is reputed to have visited Zoroaster, “the Chaldean”, who taught him the path to purity. Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and others also mention that Pythagoras was instructed by the Brahmins of India, where he absorbed their secret teachings regarding astrology and sacred geometry, and was called *pitar guru*, “father-teacher”, by them.

On his return to Samos, he was recognized by the older inhabitants and invited to impart his knowledge publicly. Pythagoras was willing, says Iamblichus, but the method of teaching he wished to introduce was “a symbolical and mathematical” one, similar to the manner in which he had been instructed. Because of this he found few who were willing to take up the required disciplines. He visited the holiest sanctuaries and all the known oracles, though himself a veritable fount of oracular wisdom. He dwelt for some time in Crete and Sparta to learn their laws. He is said to have established a school in Samos and fashioned a cave adapted to the practices of his philosophy in which he spent the greater part of his nights and days, “ever busied with meditation, philosophical

and scientific research”. This is where he “unfolded a complete science of the celestial orbs, founding it on arithmetical and geometrical demonstrations”.²² His fame spread to all Greece, so that the best students visited Samos on his account. While the Samians continually implored him to take part in public affairs, they had little interest in education of this sort. Seeing that Italy contained the “greatest number of the most scholarly men” he moved to Croton, “the noblest city in Italy”.

According to Nichomachus, upon arrival in Croton, his first oration drew two thousand to a great auditorium. A community of six hundred formed, wrote Iamblichus, who received from Pythagoras “laws and mandates as so many divine precepts, without which they declined to engage in any occupation”. By his discourse and countenance, they were spontaneously moved “not only to philosophical study, but to an amicable sharing of their worldly goods, whence they derived the name of *Cenobites*”.²³ (Greek for “common life”)

Iamblichus also relates how Pythagoras profoundly influenced the body politic in Italy and Sicily by inspiring them with a love of liberty and “a disdain for all that engendered oppression and discord”. He assisted in the liberation of cities from slavery and helped to establish just laws in order to root out partisanship and discord. He advised men, women, and children, and his words were embraced in a manner similar to that of an oracle, for by his character, his temperance,

paternal affection, and insight he so impressed and “was celebrated by those whom he addressed”.

Pythagoras described the entrance of men into the current life as resembling the progression of a crowd to some public spectacle. Some are influenced by the desire of dominion, others for glory, others for riches and luxury.

But the most pure and unadulterated character, is that of the man who gives himself to the contemplation of the most beautiful things, and whom it is proper to call a philosopher. . . . the survey of all heaven, and of the stars that revolve in it, is indeed beautiful when the order of them is considered. For they derive this beauty and order by the participation in this first, intelligible essence. But that first essence is the nature of number and reasons (i.e., productive principles) which pervades through all things, and according to which all these (celestial bodies) are elegantly arranged and fitly adorned. And wisdom indeed, truly so called, is a certain science which is conversant with these first beautiful objects . . . divine, undecaying, and possessing an invariable sameness of subsistence; by the participation of which other things also may be called beautiful. . . . The attention therefore to erudition is likewise beautiful, which Pythagoras extended, in order to effect the correction of mankind.²⁴

With this aim, Pythagoras unfolded to the Greeks all the disciplines, theories, and researches “as truly invigorate the eye of the soul and purify the intellect from the blindness introduced by studies of a

different kind”, so as to enable it to perceive the true laws, principles, and causes of the universe.

But besides all this, the best polity, popular concord, community of possessions among friends, the worship of the gods, piety . . . legislation . . . silence, abstinence from eating the flesh of animals, continence, temperance, sagacity, divinity, and in one word, whatever is anxiously desired by the lovers of learning, was brought to light by Pythagoras. On all these accounts . . . he was (everywhere) transcendently admired.²⁵

Iamblichus illustrates how the power of his influence to teach and admonish also extended to other kingdoms of Nature. The story is told of a bear which had severely injured the inhabitants of a village. Pythagoras approached and spoke to the bear and compelled it by oath to no longer touch or injure. Thereafter, the bear was never again seen attacking any animal or human. Once when speaking of birds as messengers of the gods, he is said to have brought down an eagle that was flying overhead who allowed Pythagoras to gently stroke it, and then flew away.

Pythagoras is said to have spoken of his own previous lives in a convincing manner. He not only taught the doctrine of reincarnation, but sought to awaken in others a knowledge of their former lives and of their immortal existence. How did he do such a thing?

To begin with, he was clearly an Adept who had mastered the use of speech as a seemingly magical, transformative faculty. Without doubt, this not only involved the

tonal and evocative qualities of his elocution, but the taping of higher noetic currents expressed through direct insights, logic reasoning, and a spiritualized, laser-like intellect addressing the hidden dimensions of Elemental nature, the needs of the age, as well as specific persons listening. Like the Buddha, Pythagoras taught “in all three worlds”.²⁶ The veils of time and space obscuring karmic causes and how they may be fundamentally affected had been penetrated. “For when he extended all the powers of his intellect, he easily beheld everything, as far as to ten or twenty ages of the human race.”²⁷ Pythagoras was centered “in the sublime symphonies of the world, he alone hearing and understanding . . . the universal harmony and consonance of the spheres, and the stars that are moved through them, and which produce a fuller and more intense melody than anything effected by mortal sounds”. Through such profound Self-knowledge, words become mantram, creative catalysts — purificatory, edifying and elevating — serving divine purpose.²⁸

Pythagoras also employed ambrosial music, “voice and lyre . . . melodies and rhythms”, as a form of psychic healing, to quiet and beneficially correct thought, feeling, and action. Music was a divine medicinal art governed by archetypal number and proportion. In the right hands, it had the power to subdue “despondency and lamentation” and other “irrational and passionate elements of the human psyche . . . such as sorrow, rage, and pity, absurd emulation and fear, and all-various desires,

angers, and appetites” thus purifying “the intellective power” from “the tumult and . . . the waves . . . of a corporeal nature”. Among the deeds of Pythagoras is one where he used music to prevent inflamed and irrational youthful passions from rashly carrying out deeds that would have created nothing but suffering for themselves and their victims. At a higher level, among his disciples, odes and songs were used prior to sleep in order to purify the reasoning power from “the perturbations and noises to which it had been exposed during the day”. Likewise, in the morning, by songs of another kind, they “liberated themselves from the torpor and heaviness of sleep”.²⁹

In addition, Pythagoras encouraged and promoted through numerous moral and mental disciplines, what Iamblichus calls the “purification of the *dianoetic*” faculty (the discursive, thinking, and reasoning energy of the soul), made mild, tranquil, sustained, and elevated. Ignorance being the most noxious of all evils, such disciplines fused sacred number sciences with the philosophical, musical, and spiritual, and included “trials of the most severe and various nature”. All admonishments and restraints had to be accepted unreservedly and all learning undertaken with a level of enthusiasm, altruistic dedication, and “inexhaustible avidity” that a depraved or intemperate nature would not be able to endure.

This would be aided by proper diet, the avoidance of alcohol, continence in speech, moderation in sleep, and

“an unstudied contempt of, and hostility to glory, wealth, and the like . . .” Each must learn to manifest “an unfeigned reverence towards those to whom reverence is due, a genuine similitude and benevolence to those of the same age and towards their juniors”, and “in conformity with the amity which pervades all things to friendship and converse with the Gods, both when awake and asleep.” For it was through such studies and disciplines that “the corporeal passions” (what the Buddhists call the afflictive emotions), which normally have their uncontrolled and fixed abode within us, are removed with “fire and sword and all the machines of discipline”.³⁰

By all these inventions, therefore, he divinely healed and purified the soul, resuscitated and saved its divine part, and conducted to the intelligible³¹ its divine eye, which, as Plato says, is better worth saving than ten thousand corporeal eyes; for by looking through this alone when it is strengthened and clarified by appropriate aids, the truth pertaining to all beings is perceived.³²

Not all who applied were received for admission, until Pythagoras “had made a trial of them and judiciously examined them”. This included inquiries as to the manner in which they associated with their parents and relatives; the careful observation of their “unseasonable laughter, their silence, and their speaking when it was not proper”; the desires they displayed, those with whom they associated and their manner of conversing with them. He also examined how

each used their leisure time, the subjects of their joys and griefs, their mode of walking and of all bodily movement. Pythagoras was a master of physiognomy and could determine the hidden features and karmic history of individual character, “the unapparent manners of the soul”, by the external features and inclinations of the bodily frame.

When Pythagoras had thus made a trial of some one person, he then suffered them “to be neglected for three years” to test their love of learning and their spite for honor. After this came five years of silence, “the subjugation of the tongue being the most difficult of all victories”. And, it was during this probationary time that “the property of each was disposed of in common and was committed to the care of those appointed for this purpose”.³³

For those who could not endure this eight-year trial, all assets would be returned to them doubled, and they would be released from the community of seekers. Those who were undeterred, cleansed, and uplifted by it, based on “the judgement he had formed of them . . . and the modesty of their behavior”, then became “Esoterics” who were permitted to both hear and see Pythagoras himself “within the veil”. Even then, all disciples did not receive the same doctrines, but were distributed into different classes according to their respective merits and capabilities. Some were thus named “Pythagoreans”, other “Pythagorists” and of the first, these were also divided into two genera: the *Acusmatici*, from *akousma*: “oral precept” or “oral instruction”, and the *Mathematici*,

those who learned “the why” by demonstration and discipline. Both groups were committed to vows of silence regarding the “divine dogmas” imparted to them.³⁴

H. P. Blavatsky helped to make clear why the rigors of approach and strict demarcations made by the wise is no capricious or elitist policy. It is done for the protection of each individual and on behalf of humanity. Approaching the most restrictive “inner chambers” of a true Master or Guru in order to uncover the “hidden mysteries of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man” is the most difficult thing a human being can do. One forces forward in his or her own being the more gradual evolution and course of development that humanity will experience over millions of years. By doing so, one “rouses and lashes to desperation every sleeping passion of his animal nature.”³⁵ One is “not only called to face all the latent evil propensities of his nature, but, in addition, the whole volume of maleficent power accumulated by the community and nation to which he belongs”. It is therefore said that he is as one who has “forced his way into a guarded enclosure, and has from that moment to fight and conquer — or die.”³⁶ HPB knew of many such candidates in her own day who insisted on “chelaship” only to quickly succumb to immorality, egregious reversals, and blatant transgressions of the most basic moral preconditions.

According to Iamblichus, Pythagoras’ end arrived as an outcome of the jealousy of would-be candidates. “Cylon the

Crotonian”, a citizen renowned for his wealth, sought as an elderly man to be accepted into the school. Once rejected, he and his friends “exercised violent hostilities against Pythagoras and his disciples”, down to the last known ones. Those students who were not discovered retired deeper into secrecy in order to preserve and pass to future generations what Pythagoras had taught.

Fearing . . . lest the name of philosophy should be entirely exterminated from man-

kind, and that they should on this account incur the indignation of the Gods, by suffering so great a gift of theirs to perish, they made an arrangement of certain commentaries and symbols, and likewise, collected together the writings of the more ancient Pythagoreans, and such things as they remembered . . . with a strict injunction not to give them to any one out of the family. This mandate, therefore, was for a long time observed, and was transmitted in succession to their posterity.³⁷

(To be continued)

Endnotes

12. *The Gupta Vidya*, II, R. N. Iyer, “Pythagoras and His School”, p. 135.
13. *Matthew*, 10:16.
14. *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. ii, p. 26 fn.
15. *Ibid.*, vol. i, pp. 403–410.
16. *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 73.
17. *Iamblichus’ Life of Pythagoras*, translated by Thomas Taylor in 1818 (Limited Traditions International, Ltd, 1986), pp. 4–5.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 7–9.
21. *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library*, compiled and translated by K. S. Guthrie (1987), p.124.
22. *Iamblichus’ Life of Pythagoras*, p. 12.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 10–13.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 28–29.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
26. Similar affirmations are found in numerous extant Buddhist texts.
27. *Iamblichus’ Life of Pythagoras*, p. 35.
28. See *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. i, pp. 292–293,

- for a list of the divine capacities (*Shaktis*) mastered by the Yogi united with the Light and Sound of the Logos (*Daiviprakriti*). In particular: “(6.) MANTRIKA-SAKTI. The force or power of letters, speech or music. The *Mantra Shastra* has for its subject-matter this force in all its manifestations. . . . The influence of melody is one of its ordinary manifestations. The power of the ineffable name is the crown of this *Sakti*.”
29. *Iamblichus’ Life of Pythagoras*, pp. 59–61.
 30. *Ibid.*, pp. 35–37.
 31. The “intelligible” of Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy is the realm of true knowledge, of abstract, universal Ideas, the unchanging realities or “Forms” of which all visible things are shadowy and transitory reflections. See Plato’s *Republic*, bk 6.
 32. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
 33. *Ibid.*, pp. 37–41.
 34. *Ibid.*, pp. 41–42.
 35. “Chelas and Lay Chelas”, H. P. Blavatsky, *Supplement to The Theosophist*, July 1883.
 36. “Chelas”, H. P. Blavatsky, *The Theosophist*, Oct. 1884.
 37. *Iamblichus’ Life of Pythagoras*, p. 130.

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

HOW far reaches the power of our thoughts? When we have lost persons who are very dear to us, will our thoughts reach them after their death?

Yes, indeed. Love knows no barriers either of space or time, for it is the very cement of the universe which holds things together, and therefore is Nature's fundamental law, and is the universal bond of union among all things. Love is all-penetrating. It will not only eat away the obstinacy of the stoniest of the human hearts, and dissolve the substance of the most adamant of human minds, but it will slowly infuse its life-giving warmth everywhere. Nothing can bar its passage, for it is the very life-essence of the universe.

Love, impersonal love, will reach even the dead, that is to say, the nobler part of those who have passed on, and will help them in the sense of comforting them. Love is protective; and the more impersonal it is, the higher it is and the more powerful.

G. de Purucker (1874–1942)
Questions We All Ask, vol. 4, p. 125

Stanza 1 of *The Secret Doctrine* and the Path of Self-Realization

CATALINA ISAZA CANTOR

I WOULD like to present an overview of the first Stanza of H. P. Blavatsky's (HPB) *The Secret Doctrine* (*SD*) in light of the path of self-realization. Studying the *SD* provides a broad and deep vision of the universe and thus of ourselves, for "as is the Inner, so is the Outer; as is Above, so is Below; there is but ONE LIFE".

To study *SD* is a transcendent experience bordering the poetic-mystical and the frontier of the intelligible. Words are limitless to express what we read in it. Nevertheless, within the limitations of language and my understanding, Let us share some reflections on it. The word "DZYAN" is interpreted as contemplation or knowledge through meditation. Therefore, an attitude of deep contemplation is fundamental to approach its understanding.

It has been mentioned that the Stanzas give an abstract formula of Cosmic Evolution that can be applied *mutatis mutandis* (all necessary changes having been made), to *all* evolution: to that of our tiny Earth, the Chain of Planets of which the Earth forms one, to the Solar Universe to which

that Chain belongs, and so on, in an ascending scale. So, by taking forward this study, we can try not only to understand the cosmos, macrocosm, and microcosm, but what is vital for humanity, our inner nature and the possibilities of our dharma and service as members of the Theosophical Movement, and as responsible and conscious human beings on this Earth.

One of the keys to reading *SD* mentioned by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) is intuition, through a purified and open mind. HPB points out in the Proem: "It must be remembered that all these Stanzas appeal to the inner faculties rather than to the ordinary comprehension of the physical brain." I believe that any study we undertake must transcend the mere intellectual complacency of the concrete mind and that it will only make sense if the insight of its deeper meaning can be made a lively expression in our existence and relationship with the world and others. Master KH said:

The truths and mysteries of occultism constitute . . . a body of the highest spiritual importance, at once profound and practi-

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Stanza 1 of *The Secret Doctrine* and the Path of Self-Realization

cal for the world at large. Yet, it is not as a mere addition to the tangled mass of theory or speculation in the world of science that they are being given to you, but **for their practical bearing on the interests of mankind.** (*The Mahatma Letters*, chron. ed., Letter No. 12/ ML 6)

Through study-meditation, we can transcend the Doctrine of the Eye towards the Doctrine of the Heart, resulting in the possibility of its practical application through service and a real self-transformation. In applying cosmos-related teachings to the human being, we can use *SD* as a spiritual trainer. We should undertake its study keeping in mind what *The Voice of the Silence* warns us about:

Be of clean heart before thou startest on thy journey. Before thou takest thy first step learn to discern the real from the false, the ever-fleeting from the everlasting. . . . to separate head-learning from soul-wisdom, the “Eye” from the “Heart” doctrine. (II.111) Look inward: thou art Buddha. (II.116)

HPB gives us *The Secret Doctrine* to raise our consciousness to the *buddhic* plane. By deeply meditating upon each one of its stanzas, we can develop our higher mind and the higher dimensions of ourselves. Only through intuition can we glimpse something to enlighten us.

Stanza 1, THE NIGHT OF THE UNIVERSE, presents the state before manifestation, *maha pralaya*, in which there is no differentiation, as mentioned in the first Proposition: “An Omnipresent,

Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable PRINCIPLE, on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception. . . . It is beyond the range and reach of thought, ‘unthinkable and unspeakable’.” (vol. 1, p. 14)

And in the commentary to Stanza I, *śloka* 9, we read:

Man, unable to form one concept except in terms of empirical phenomena, is powerless from the very constitution of his being **to raise the veil that shrouds the majesty of the Absolute. Only the liberated Spirit is able to faintly realize the nature of the source whence it sprung and whither it must eventually return. . . . The Finite cannot conceive the Infinite.** (vol. 1, p. 5)

It is impossible to unravel the hidden meaning of what we read unless we meditate on it and reach a state of self-purification. The deepest truths cannot be expressed in words, they must be experienced, the abandonment of all sense of self-importance is necessary, **we must become one with the teaching.**

Analogous to what the first Stanza describes, it is essential to put our senses and our mind into a state of *pralaya* so that “understanding” can come into our being. Meditate on it deeply and be in a state of eternity and universal sense in which the mind can be silent. A state of mind without prejudices or judgements, a clean and pure mind.

“The First Stanza describes the state of the ONE ALL during *Pralaya*, before the first flutter of reawakening manifesta-

Stanza 1 of *The Secret Doctrine* and the Path of Self-Realization

tion. . . . Such a state can only be symbolized; to describe it is impossible.” (Proem, vol. 1, p. 21). This Stanza describes the state of non-being for there is no manifestation yet: that ABSOLUTE (*Parabrahman*) that Non-Being, the One Be-ness, is the only reality. There is no existence yet, for to exist implies being outside of IT (*ex* means outside).

Existence is circumscribed to the vehicles of manifestation with which we are identified. As long as we focus on the personal self — I feel, I am, and so on — we will never leave the human level and realise the divinity within us: “The idea of ‘Eternal Non-Being’, which is the ‘One Being’, will appear a paradox to anyone who does not remember that we limit our ideas of being to our present consciousness of existence”, says the commentary on *śloka 7*. (vol. 1, p. 45)

It is a complex thing to grasp that state from the point of view of manifestation, but if we strive in study and meditation, we can gradually remove the veils. Let us look at some ideas derived from each of the nine *ślokas* and its relevance to the path of self-realization.

Śloka 1 says: “THE ETERNAL PARENT (SPACE [*PARABRAHMAN*]) WRAPPED IN HER EVER-INVISIBLE ROBES, HAD SLUMBERED ONCE AGAIN FOR SEVEN ETERNITIES.” The commentary mentions: “Space is the *one eternal thing* that we can most easily imagine, immovable in its abstraction and uninfluenced by either the presence or absence in it of an objective Universe. . . . the causeless cause of both Spirit and Matter.” (vol. 1, p. 35) Everything else is in

a state of *pralaya*, unmanifested. It is the plain disc before the point.

The invisible clothes are the seed of matter and had slumbered again because it is a cyclical process. There is something vastly higher and unknowable from which we come and to which we are destined to return. From the point of view of self-transformation that gives us the hint that there is something bigger than us, a Divine plan to which should aim to consciously contribute and work. It gives us the hint that there is something else beyond that seen and perceived by our limited senses. It gives us the motivation to go further to try to remove the veils and grasp even a glimpse of that Absolute.

When stated that “TIME WAS NOT, FOR IT LAY ASLEEP IN THE INFINITE BOSOM OF DURATION”, as in **śloka 2**, it refers to a timeless principle, that there is no sense of time, only a continuous “experience” of the now, in which one transcends all consciousness. It simply is. *Light on the Path* says: “Live neither in the present nor the future, but in the Eternal. This giant weed [of self] cannot flower there.” As stated in the commentary of *śloka 2*: “The present is only a mathematical line which divides that part of eternal duration which we call the future, from that part which we call the past.” Both are an illusion.

The present moment is therefore that *present* given to us to make the most use of by living in awareness instant after instant. J. Krishnamurti would say that “in the present is the whole of time”. So, if all the time is contained in the present, there is a responsibility from our side to decide

Stanza 1 of *The Secret Doctrine* and the Path of Self-Realization

how to experience that present and what to seed it with. If we continue being violent or greedy, or anything else in the continuing moments of our present, that is what we are giving to the world. In the same way, if we live in the awareness of the present moment, we will be immediately generating a change that can impact the whole.

Time is but a mental construction; it needs consciousness to be perceived. At the zero point, prior to manifestation, there is no consciousness, no time. In the union, in the eternal present, the non-being, what remains is something that our senses cannot even imagine, in contact with the primordial, in which “UNIVERSAL MIND WAS NOT, FOR THERE WERE NO AH-HI (celestial beings) TO CONTAIN (hence to manifest) IT”, as mentioned in *śloka 3*.

During the long night of rest, when all the existences are dissolved, the “Universal Mind” remains as a permanent possibility of mental action. *śloka 4* says: “THE SEVEN WAYS TO BLISS (Moksha or Nirvāna) WERE NOT. THE GREAT CAUSES OF MISERY (Nidāna and Māyā) WERE NOT, FOR THERE WAS NO ONE TO PRODUCE AND GET ENSNARED BY THEM.” There was no one to produce them because there was no duality, no desire, and no limitations of matter inherent in manifestation.

“DARKNESS ALONE FILLED THE BOUNDLESS ALL, FOR FATHER, MOTHER, AND SON WERE ONCE MORE ONE, AND THE SON HAD NOT AWAKENED YET FOR THE NEW WHEEL, AND HIS PILGRIMAGE THEREON.” This statement of *śloka 5*, is expressed in the Bible as: “In the beginning . . . the

raging ocean that covered everything was engulfed in total darkness.” (Genesis 1–2)

Everything had ceased to exist: “THE SEVEN SUBLIME LORDS AND THE SEVEN TRUTHS”, as mentioned by *śloka 6*, “HAD CEASED TO BE, AND THE UNIVERSE, THE SON OF NECESSITY, WAS IMMERSSED IN PARANISHPANNA (absolute perfection, or Paranirvāna, Yong-Grub in Tibetan), TO BE OUT-BREATHED BY THAT WHICH IS AND YET IS NOT. NAUGHT WAS.” A state, where there are no expectations, desires, seeking of blessings or escape from suffering, and therefore the child of necessity was immersed in absolute perfection. There were no causes. The third fundamental proposition of the Proem reminds us that “the Secret Doctrine teaches: . . . the obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul . . . through the Cycle of Incarnation, (or ‘Necessity’), in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic Law.” (vol. 1, p. 17) But this gives us the hint that, once the pilgrimage ends, “the child of necessity” will no more exist and the being will merge with absolute perfection.

Śloka 7 says: “THE CAUSES OF EXISTENCE HAD BEEN DONE AWAY WITH; THE VISIBLE THAT WAS, AND THE INVISIBLE THAT IS, RESTED IN ETERNAL NON-BEING — THE ONE BEING”. The causes of separateness have been removed, the vehicles with which we identify ourselves no longer exist, there is a state of non-being, that of spiritual realization: “ALONE, THE ONE FORM OF EXISTENCE STRETCHED BOUNDLESS, INFINITE, CAUSELESS, IN DREAMLESS SLEEP; AND LIFE PULSATED UNCONSCIOUS IN UNIVERSAL SPACE, THROUGHOUT THAT ALL-PRESENCE, WHICH IS

Stanza 1 of *The Secret Doctrine* and the Path of Self-Realization

SENSED BY THE ‘OPENED EYE’ OF THE DANGMA [PURIFIED SOUL]”, declares *śloka 8*.

It is a form of existence that is full, a state of non-knowledge that goes beyond any state of mind, a perfect state of Being. And this could be the answer when the Stanza concludes asking: “BUT WHERE WAS THE DANGMA WHEN THE ALAYA OF THE UNIVERSE (*Soul as the basis of all, Anima Mundi*) WAS IN PARAMĀRTHA (*Absolute Being and Consciousness which are Absolute Non-Being and Unconsciousness*) AND THE GREAT WHEEL WAS ANUPĀDAKA?” (*śloka 9*).

Dr I. K. Taimni compares this state of the Stanza 1 to the number zero containing all numbers, an Ultimate Principle which is a harmonic synthesis of all opposites and integrates all principles, qualities, and so on. Zero is the numerical sign of null value, the number of nothingness. Nothingness is indivisible.

From zero comes the one. Before manifestation there is the disc, and then comes the point in the centre, which is the number one, the beginning of manifestation: The “first” necessarily presupposes something which, as per occultism necessarily derives from the “Causeless Cause”. If all existence is derived from the Omni-present Principle through the Unity Centre or *laya* Centre, the essential practice of the spiritual life must be a perception of the unity manifested in all life and harmonious behaviour in accordance with it.

Any serious study undertaken of any passage of *The Secret Doctrine* involves

a transformation of the self and, in that sense, is immensely practical because it urges us to unfold our higher mental faculties and prepare our being for access to higher mysteries. In the commentary of *śloka 5* we read:

How far we discern the light that shines in darkness depends upon our powers of vision. What is light to us is darkness to certain insects, and the eye of the clairvoyant sees illumination where the normal eye perceives only blackness. (vol. 1, p. 41)

The Light of Asia (Book the Eighth) says:

OM, AMITAYA! . . .

The Books teach Darkness was, at first of all,

And Brahm, sole meditating in that Night:

Look not for Brahm and the Beginning there!

Nor him, nor any light.

Shall any gazer see with mortal eyes,

Or any searcher know by mortal mind,
Veil after veil will lift — but there must be
Veil upon veil behind.

We must use intuition to lift veil after veil. And as written in the Commentary of Stanza II, *śloka 1*:

It is only “with a mind clear and undarkened by personality, and an assimilation of the merit of manifold existences devoted to being in its collectivity (the whole living and sentient Universe),” that one gets rid of personal existence, merging into, becoming one with, the Absolute. ✧

Why Meditation?

CECIL MESSER

WHEN embarking on the spiritual search, we may be drawn towards a symbol of that which is beyond our reach. The silhouette of a distant mountain top, shrouded in mystery, framed in the dawn of a rising sun, beckons with hidden promise. It holds in trust a secret and sacred jewel of meaning. Our inquiry into meditation approaches this mountain, the way to which is obscured by the mist of unknowing. There are ways of cutting through obstacles and breaking out of our chrysalis of self-absorption and entering the clear light. The caterpillar is instinctively compelled to find a quiet place to begin its process of pupal envelopment. But it is only after it dissolves itself and sheds the cocoon that the glorious butterfly emerges. We too must dissolve our ego-clinging and shed our self-cherishing to liberate the luminous nature of our mind.

The mirror of meditation will be applied to peer into perennial questions: “Who am I?” “What is the nature of my relationship as the meditator to meditation?” “What is the role of listening and studying, followed by reflection and

action in my quest?” These activities are within the realm of thought and time; yet:

“Is not meditation beyond thought and time?”

“Is a ‘system of meditation’ a trick of the conditioned mind, another conundrum?”

“Is there a way of preparing the field of my mind and heart that will enable the right receptivity for meditation?”

Meditation practice facilitates the process of empowering a totally different kind of intelligence, free of conditioning, to naturally arise. The seed of this new intelligence is conceived and nurtured in the womb of meditation.

To approach these questions, perennial wisdom teachings affirm there is a way. A personal and intimate relationship with meditation is its key feature. A proper reception for the teachings is an open mind — the essential condition for hearing and communing with truth. Study and reflection provide understanding at the level of intellect and meditation practice deepens it into the continuum of heart and mind. The grace of meditation

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Why Meditation?

then marks our mode of appearance in the world. Meditation is a rare state of consciousness primarily concerned with the process of naked awareness rather than the contents of thoughts and memories. It has been given many names such as: “samadhi,” “trance,” “rapture,” and “enlightenment.” Meditation — delicate and ephemeral — is like a hummingbird hovering nearby, tantalizing and immune to grasping. Approaching tentatively with loving confidence brings joyful engagement.

Like developing a masterpiece of music or painting, meditation practice relies on unfolding inner qualities of love and compassion to achieve clarity. Masterpieces are distinguished by their transcendent qualities beyond the applications of mundane skills. Pertinent qualities will be nurtured throughout our journey. As an art, meditation cannot be taught; nevertheless, its practice can be learned. From the power of Beethoven’s passionate love and practice of music, his inner listening flowered into the creation of a sonata. Similarly, our meditation practice can yield the sacred fruit of luminosity. The art of meditation practice is our most important vocation. Just as the breath is fundamental to the sustenance of our body, meditation is vital to the nourishment of our spirit. Meditation practice is the sword that pierces the veil

of self delusion and loosens our attachment to ego driven concepts. It clears the clouds of poisonous emotions and blesses us with the direct perception of reality.

Meditation is a transcendental yet natural experience of being fully awake in pristine awareness wherein the world is recognized as it is in its primordial purity. It is beyond the limitations of conditioned conceptual mind. Perhaps we have come close to the experience of meditation in one of those rare moments when our mind abided calmly. Attention was totally present as the self slept in the background. Meditation may have taken the form of an insight beyond thought or an ecstatic feeling of joyousness beyond pleasure — like unexpectedly coming upon the vista of a rainbow. It momentarily graces us with its presence before dissolving back into the empty sky. Its beauty lingers as a fleeting afterglow of gratitude.

Transcending the complicity of ego cherishing and concept clinging, the truth born of meditation is inherently genuine. If we come upon a truth, we may marvel at its beauty and profundity; but unless it becomes our ground of being, it is merely cosmetic. Our journey culminates with immersion into the authenticity of our own insights — the true baptism of fire that transforms our mind and heart. ✧

Books of Interest

THE MAHATMAS AND THEIR CHELAS IN INDIA. Compiled and edited by Daniel H. Caldwell. Blavatsky Study Center, Blavatsky Archives <blavatsky archives.com>, 2020, Hardcover, USD \$16.45, 160 pp., 15x23 cm.

Are you enchanted by the early years of the Theosophical Society in India? For many readers of H. S. Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves*, *The Mahatma Letters*, and other sources from those times, Indian Theosophy in the 1880s may seem almost magical. One peruses descriptions of minor miracles like the multiplication of cups, Masters mysteriously appearing and disappearing, and letters from them no less intriguing, as they manifest in curious ways. Amid all of this, there is the excitement of being part of a new movement which, if successful, could change the world for good. And this movement was, in the belief of its adherents, the work of those same Mahatmas who dwelt on a higher plane than ordinary humankind.

Here, in another of Daniel H. Caldwell's invaluable books on primal Theosophy, are collected seven accounts by early Theosophists of Indian descent of their quests for, and interaction with, those sublime teachers. We have here "The Existence of the Himalayan Mahatmas" by Damodar K. Mavalankar, "My Travels to see the Mahatmas" by R. Casava Pillai, "My Encounters with Master M." by

S. Ramaswamier, "My Personal Knowledge of Mahatma KH" by Mohini M. Chatterji, "The Mahatma KH in My Dreams and Visions" by C. Ramiah, "My Experiences with the Mahatmas" by Bhavani Shankar, and "Personal Memories of HPB and the Masters" by G. Soobiah Chetty.

While for the most part these texts have been published before, some are in now-obscure books and journals, and all have been skillfully edited, sometimes compiled from different originals, and occasionally enhanced with explanatory phrases. These remarkable narratives are here easily accessible for your reading pleasure as well as edification.

And pleasure they are! If you want sitting-on-the-edge-of-your-chair adventure, discovery, and enigma, look no further. D. K. Mavalankar, to take one example of many, tells of being present when the Master Morya came into Mme Blavatsky's room and approached her. "His manner of walking was so gentle that not a footstep, not the slightest sound, was audible; nor did He *appear* to move." The visitor put his hands twice over HPB's head. "She then stretched out her hand which passed through his [hand] — a fact proving that what we saw was a *māyāvi rupa* (apparent body), although so vivid and clear as to give one the impression of a material physical body." The Mahatma

Books of Interest

gave her a letter, “then waved his hands towards us, walked a few steps, *inaudibly and imperceptibly as before*, and disappeared!” (pp. 13–14)

Recitations like this are only part of this readable volume. *The Mahatmas and Their Chelas in India* is really two books in one, for the seven narrations are followed by seven appendices old and new averaging about ten pages each, on relevant, and inevitably fascinating, topics. There is Charles Johnson’s “Madame Blavatsky Speaks About the Mahatmas”, Daniel H. Caldwell on “Where Was the ‘Ravine in Tibet?’” famously pictured and described in C. W. Leadbeater’s *The Masters and the Path*, Laura C. Holloway-Langford’s “The Portraits of the Mahatmas” about those no less impressive renderings of KH and M. by the young German artist Hermann Schmiechen, A. P. Sinnett on “Mme Blavatsky and the Mahatmas”, and finally three useful compilations, “Adepts, Masters and Mahatmas: Their Knowledge of Spiritual Facts by Personal Experience and Observation”, “Master KH on Concentration and Union with the Higher Self”, and at the very back of the book a most helpful bibliography, “Suggested Reading about the Mahatmas and Their Letters”.

What is the takeaway from this fascinating piece of work? Above all, as mentioned before, we can appreciate anew the feeling on the part of those early Theosophists that something fresh and significant had just come into the world,

with its magisterial creators and mentors still around and ready to communicate. One could see, touch — or not touch — them. One could receive their direct words, wonders, and writings. It is always thrilling to be a part of the beginning of a new wave that may rise high upon the beaches of this old world, and which bears with it some energies that have not been felt so immediately for a long time.

Today, of course, Theosophy and the Theosophical Society are no longer new, at least compared to much else around us, and sometimes the problem is likely to go too much in the other direction, with excessive deference to theosophical tradition. Here is where this book of Daniel H. Caldwell can switch on a new light. By re-emerging ourselves in the mystic and dramatic world of early Theosophy, we may be able to convince ourselves that ours is *still* the world of the 1880s on the inner planes. Though some things have changed, the theosophical message — and inner experience — is *still* new and bright as a cluster of 100-watt bulbs. Moreover, the outer world still needs the truths of our three principles, above all the universal brotherhood of humanity, as much as ever. May *The Mahatmas and Their Chelas in India* be a beacon today of the ever-new theosophical worldview as it continues to arouse an inner glow and shine out into an oft-dark world.

Robert Ellwood
American academic, author,
and expert on world religions



Theosophical Work around the World

International Gathering of Young Theosophists in ITC, The Netherlands

As reported by Catalina Isaza Cantor, a participant and member of the organizing Committee for the youth gathering, this event was held from 9 to 15 June 2023 in a magical place outside Naarden, the Netherlands, the International Theosophical Centre. A group of luminous souls from 21 different countries met again from the multiple dimensions of their fascinating beings. Attending as our guest was Mr Kurt Leland, member of the Theosophical Society (TS) in the USA. The theme for the meeting, “The Path of Cooperation and the Spiritual Life”, harmonized perfectly with the setting for Kurt to share his knowledge about spiritual co-operation in the visible and invisible worlds. From the literature of authors such as Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, he motivated us to inquire in a serious and profound way about the third Object of the TS: “To investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in humankind.” Through talks, constant interaction, and guided tours within the beautiful campus of the Centre, it was possible to broaden horizons, discover new facets of our own path, and strengthen ties.

We also had moments of mutual learning with workshops on self-compassion, art, storytelling, theosophical work, and a mantra session facilitated by other young

members. Our dear international President, Tim Boyd, and his wife, Lily, visited us, and Tim and Kurt gave us an afternoon of spontaneous sharing with each other, like two friends meeting again after a long time with the younger members of the family.

The sense of togetherness and co-operation was also reflected in the evenings of games, sharing our stories in the twilight and, most of all, in our volunteer work. While some went to beautify the Centre’s garden and some of its facilities, others stayed in the kitchen preparing meals with an international touch: the body was also nourished by the food prepared and served with love in community.

In the midst of forests and a sacred atmosphere, we managed to build an environment of co-operation, solidarity, union, mutual growth, and brotherhood. With the guidance of “Uncle Kurt” it was possible to explore and continue to unveil the mysteries that lie beyond the unsuspecting gaze of the human eye. A “white and sweet force” was created that inhabits us and impels us to share with those who cross our path all that was possible to rediscover, unlearn, and learn.

We are not the same after Naarden. In my heart I feel that we have a clear mission: not to let the flame that guides us go out; to be light, to love, to feel compassion for all those around us; and to contribute so that the world becomes

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Volunteers of the International Gathering of Young Theosophists at the kitchen of the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden, the Netherlands



Session with Kurt Leland



Some children at the Gathering with international President Tim Boyd and his wife Lily



Panoramic view of the group

Theosophical Work around the World



Stall at the Exhibition on Eco-friendly Products and Alternatives to Plastic



Mr Tim Boyd and Dr J. Radhakrishnan IAS, Commissioner, Chennai Corporation



Children displaying their bags made during the “Let’s Echo the Eco” art and craft activities for environmental conservation



Participants of the “Reconnecting with Mother Nature” event

Theosophical Work around the World

more like what we lived together during that encounter, and every being on earth can enjoy a similar happiness. When I think about this meeting two words come to my being: gratitude and completeness.

“Reconnecting with Mother Nature” — MTF, India

The Madras Theosophical Federation (MTF) of the TS in India organized a symposium with the theme “Reconnecting with Mother Nature” on 27 August 2023. It started with an art-and-craft programme for children titled “Let’s Echo Eco”, where over 40 children participated. This was planned and co-ordinated by the Vasanta Youth Lodge of the MTF. The members meticulously planned and executed each activity including invitations design, artwork, and providing refreshments on a large scale. They were assisted by several young volunteers associated with the TS, Adyar, led by Upasika Maithreya, R. V. Yugesh, and Harish.

As part of this event, there was also an exhibition on alternatives to plastics. Several startups and established market players set up their stalls offering a variety of eco-friendly products. Mr J. Radhakrishnan IAS, Chennai Corporation Commissioner, who delivered the keynote address, visited the stalls exhibiting products that were eco-friendly and worthy alternatives to plastic. He also spent time with the children and appreciated their creative artwork.

The MTF president, Mr Vinay Kumar Patri, welcomed the gathering. Then Mr Radhakrishnan spoke on the importance of solid waste management, and the need to reduce and eliminate the usage of plastics, or at least segregate them such that the mounting landfills of Perungudi and Kodungayur in Chennai can be ameliorated. He offered interesting anecdotes from his personal experience, illustrating how the government cannot on its own succeed in this endeavour without the co-operation of each and every citizen.

Other speakers on the occasion were Dr Indumathi M. Nambi, Professor, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, and Mr P. Natarajan, Chief Volunteer, Namma Ooru Foundation. They all laid stress on effective solid waste management, segregation at source, and embracing alternatives to plastic. Ms Janani Venkitesh and Ms Saranya were much appreciated for their services in spearheading the participation of so many organizations providing alternatives to plastics in the exhibition, at short notice.

The international President of the Theosophical Society, Mr Tim Boyd, also graced the occasion with his valuable insights. The meeting was closed with a vote of thanks by Ms H. Sripriya, Treasurer of MTF.

Recent Appointments

Mr Otávio Machesini, an attorney, was elected as National President of the TS in Brazil effective 27 July 2023, succeeding Mr Sergio Carvalho de Moraes, Jr. ✧

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Some issues of *The Theosophist* are now available online and can be read and/or downloaded from:

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Edited by Mr Tim Boyd, 'Olcott Bungalow', The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai (TS),

Published by Mr S. Harihara Raghavan, 'Arundale House', TS, and Printed by Mr V. Gopalan, 'Chit Sabha', TS, at the Vasanta Press, TS, Besant Garden, Besant Avenue, Adyar, Chennai (Madras) 600 020, India, on behalf of the President, The Theosophical Society.