



THE THEOSOPHIST

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

Who am I?

RADHA BURNIER

WHO am I? is a question that could be asked by anybody, and most people will immediately say: 'I am so and so, was born to so and so, had my schooling in such and such a school, I have been working as an officer in a reputed organization for many years, or I am proficient in such and such a subject'. This kind of answer which is the most common we can expect is easy, and it is the story of what the physical man or woman was and did.

But the trouble is, that the physical person is only a part of the real person. What is the real person will remain intact; most people hope that they will be alive after the death of the body. If the body dies the feelings and emotions do not necessarily die, although people who are grossly materialistic think that is the end.

The emotions can be of various kinds including attachment to or repulsion of certain people. Besides the physical existence, one could experience jealousy or depression, or elation and contentment. It all depends on what the person has experienced. There are numerous feelings, some of which are of course temporary, but others may be lasting; and the person still has the lasting feelings, good or bad. They have to be worked out, which

perhaps can happen to him or her in another life, provided we think of Life as consisting of different conditions which one experiences.

Similarly, the thinking process will include many things, and emotions and thoughts may be mixed up in an irretrievable way. The thoughts may be, let us say, concern for members of the family, or they may be thoughts of suspicion with regard to some persons. But leaving aside all such thoughts about food, about livelihood and so on, there are thoughts that do not have a basis in experience, in the past life. These thoughts may be of some scientific evaluation which we think of as ordinary; or the thoughts may be of people, whether a person is nice or not, is useful or is a vagabond — there can be many thoughts of such a kind. But there are also thoughts of a more personal nature. Mathematicians may think of a problem of which nobody else except for a few mathematicians, are conscious. So thoughts can range over a vast area, some real, some imagined, some foolish, some useful, etc.

These thoughts and feelings are real to the average person. The average person has to work out his likes and dislikes of

Summary of a Convention Lecture, Adyar, 30 December 2010.

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the physical environment, ups and downs, and mental images. This needs another incarnation. So he passes from what we call this world to another. It is a long journey which everybody has to go through until he or she begins to realize that most of the ideas pertaining to physical life, and also to our emotions and thought worlds, are unnecessary. In fact we feel empty and aimless when we do not have thoughts. But are we really empty, or do we imagine so?

Let us try to understand what happens even for a few moments when one is very much alive, but with no thoughts. Then one is merely watching, listening, receptive to whatever may come. Then we begin to see and know inwardly many things, which we do not normally even think about for a short time; or if we do, it is only by way of a casual observation. When the mind is not working on the many things that absorb it, and is watching silently, unagitated, it begins to see what has never been seen before. An old face still looks beautiful, because behind the wrinkles and other signs of age the person sees a life, an individuality with great possibilities. Or he may see the leaf of a tree lying on the ground and it is like seeing a whole world of beauty, of qualities of life, which we had never known of as existing.

Then we may give attention to what the Vietnamese teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, points out: 'We have a great many stems linking us to our Mother Earth. There are stems linking us with the clouds. If there are no clouds, there will be no water for

us to drink. We are made of at least seventy percent water, and the stem between the cloud and us is really there. This is also the case with the river, the forest, the logger, and the farmer. There are hundreds and thousands of stems linking us to everything in the cosmos, and making it possible for us to be. Do you see the link between you and me? If you are not there, I am not here. This is certain. If you do not see it yet, please look more deeply and I am sure you will. I asked the leaf whether it was frightened because it was autumn and the other leaves were falling. The leaf told me, "No. During the whole spring and summer I was completely alive. I worked hard to help nourish the tree, and now much of me is in the tree. I am not limited by this form. I am also the whole tree, and when I go back to the soil, I will continue to nourish the tree. So I do not worry at all. As I leave this branch and float to the ground, I will wave to the tree and tell her, 'I will see you again very soon'."

'That day there was a wind blowing and, after a while, I saw the leaf leaving the branch and float down to the soil, dancing joyfully, because as it floated it saw itself already there in the tree. It was so happy. I bowed my head, knowing that I have a lot to learn from the leaf.'

We do not know whether the author of these words is fully aware of the depths of what he says.

Let us look at what Krishnamurti who had no intention of impressing anybody had to say: 'Pure love does not require an object of affection. It is like the shining of

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the sun. It shines on all. As when the sun rises he floods the world with his own beauty and brings out in every leaf and flower all the delicate shades of colour; so that the pure love that streams forth from the heart of a liberated man sheds its tender light on everyone; and in the light of that love, all the hidden beauty of character, all the strength and beauty of thought and feeling are revealed to the loving eyes of perfect love. But such a love means an utter absence of likes and dislikes. There is neither attraction nor repulsion. The expression of such love must necessarily be as varied as the human beings who receive it.

‘Be really in communication with nature, not verbally caught in the description of it, but be a part of it, be aware, feel that you belong to all that, be able to have love for all that, to admire a deer, the lizard on the wall, that broken branch lying on the ground. Look at the evening star or the new moon, without the word, without merely saying how beautiful it is and turning your back on it, attracted by something else, but watch that single star and new delicate moon as though for the first time. If there is such communion between you and nature then you will commune with man, with the boy sitting next to you, with your educator, or with your parents. We have lost all sense of relationship in which there is not only a verbal statement of affection and concern but also this sense of communion that is not verbal. It is a sense that we are all together, that we are all human beings, not divided, nor broken up, not belonging to

any particular group or race, or to some idealistic concepts, but that we are all human beings, we are all living on this extraordinary, beautiful earth.’

So the eyes may be seeing something, but the mind sees very much more, and this may extend very far. We do not know how far because we have not experienced something similar ever before.

Merely giving attention, without thinking of something or the other about what was intended, is not an easy thing. We have become so accustomed to invent or presume with our thoughts things that we see or do not see. In fact the mental process goes on and on even when we are sleeping. Deep sleep without any thoughts is not easy to come to for grown-up people. Children of course may not have complicated thoughts; when they sleep they sleep. But that is not so with people who have numerous mental attractions and observations during their lifetime. But even for a few minutes, if a person watches quietly without inwardly saying something or the other about what he is seeing, he begins to see more and more of what is not usual. For example, when seeing a leaf, a fruit, a face of someone, he begins to see what is usually not taken notice of. The world is full of unnoticed things, including trees, animals, birds and the sky.

When a person looks fully at any of these things that are around, or as fully as possible, without coming to conclusions, ideas and so on, he sees what most people do not. A tree may be in front of one’s house, which one may be ‘looking at’ all

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the time, but it takes on a new life when seen with real eyes — eyes which are not affected by thoughts of previous things. So the whole world of Nature appears different, including human beings which we think are the only important things to care for. Therefore the statement in Sanskrit — *Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram*, truth, goodness and beauty. When a person is awakened he sees differently; what he sees is true.

This is not only relevant to seeing what exists in Nature; of course, in Nature we see things we like and others which we do not. But real seeing means there are no likes and dislikes, particularly when we see other human beings with whom there is daily contact. One may have prejudices against a black man, or a white one, but all such prejudices vanish and do not exist.

This is made clear by some paintings which show ordinary things like a face or a shape, but there is a light which comes through them. It is what makes for great art. Beethoven seems to have said that he listened to music which others could not hear, for it came from another sphere, and he tried to bring it down to the physical level. Some of his great works struck people because of the newness in them. The same is true of all great art in any country — that it brings down to the

ordinary level something extraordinary from finer worlds and spheres.

If we could only see the reality, every face, every human being would appear different because one sees not only what appears to the average onlooker, but the greater reality underneath, hidden behind the outward appearance. An uncultured, simple person is seen not only as he is, but also as what he will be — a beautiful being, full of light and wisdom. This is the future. Clear eyes see this, and that is why we call such people with such eyes, seers.

What is beyond all this? There, perhaps one can see the enlightened beauty, goodness and truth everywhere, but not in infinite proportion. The enlightened perceivers, the real seers, are not living in time. They will see the past, present and future as a glorious reality, where everything of the past is lighted up in a way we do not understand. There is a wonderful time before all of us, and we have to work towards that. Those who are not aware to that extent see only something of the past and the present, but the enlightened people see everything also as it will be. When we see the bud of a beautiful flower, we already have in our mind's eye what it will become, and we care for the bud, nourish it and look after it till it comes into its own.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

Matthew, 6:22

The Heresy of Separateness

PATRIZIA MOSCHIN CALVI

‘Together we stand, divided we fall.’ (Pink Floyd, *Hey You*)

‘*Omnia munda mundis*’ (Titus 1:15)

TO begin with, I would like to quote the following inspiring words from *The Voice of the Silence*: ‘If through the Hall of Wisdom thou wouldst reach the Vale of Bliss, disciple, close fast thy senses against the great dire heresy of separateness that weans thee from the rest.’ The feeling of separateness belongs to the lower levels of manifestation and, unfortunately, the only reality we take into consideration is this level of our sensorial perceptions.

However, what we see is not what really is, but just something influenced by what we are, a reality seen through a kind of individual screen: for example, if Gautama Buddha entered this room he would not see a hundred people but a hundred Buddhas. It is worthwhile to point out how this statement significantly affects even our inner work as well as its quality and action on our essence. It is always useful to remember that we interpret everybody and everything through our state of consciousness, that is, we create our own reality, influencing our thoughts, words and actions; and that,

beyond all the events and situations that we observe and which strike us, there are deeper levels of life and truth.

As spiritual seekers, a leap in awareness is needed as we have to be fully aware that we are first of all ‘souls’, powerful and invisible, and that, therefore, we have to consider not just our material aspect, so limited and limiting even on a perceptive level.

From a Theosophical point of view, our existence itself on this planet gives us the opportunity to walk that path along which spiritual gifts come to maturity, to understand that spirit and matter are one thing and transcendent qualities already belong to everyone as far as we are aware of them and able to unveil them.

All this has to be seen as a sign of that absolute wisdom which, recognizing the oneness of the Universe with everything in it, affirms that there is no separateness within the WHOLE and that misery and sorrow come from our lack of full understanding.

Hence, there is not only the necessity

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of our identifying ourselves with the vehicles of our personality (level of physical body, astral or emotional level and lower *manas*) but also the effort to go beyond the known which constantly generates illusions, towards the Valley of Beatitude, away from 'the great dire heresy of separateness that weans thee from the rest'.

Therefore, let us pay special attention to the aspect of *māyā*, which limits and stops our experiences within the known, whereas the vastness of the unknown permeates us without our becoming aware of it.

Māyā is the Self which veils itself, just as every differentiated unity is like this through its illusory cycles; it is in its substance, one with the Supreme and Unique Spirit.

The mystifying veil which covers everything involves all of us and our confusing values with their superfluities that lead us to revise, distort, choose and relativize perceptions of the mind, through our sensory system, to maintain and perpetuate the sense of separateness.

As Theosophists, breaking the veil of *māyā* might mean taking responsibility to find the true Self, our essence, to be as we are, to put an end to our subtle illusions that separate us from the Whole, pursuing that bright dawn which has always been ours.

Paraphrasing *Light on the Path*, it can be stated that the 'spirit of brotherhood', the light of the world, the only one which illuminates the Path, lives within us. However, if we are not able to discern it

in ourselves, it is no use looking for it somewhere else, perhaps blaming others for its lack in them. It also exists beyond us and when we reach it, we would have lost ourselves.

Generally, in individual development, the first materialized thing is the cooperating spirit, which, giving value to mutual relationships among all human beings, creates links, synergies, harmonic and fruitful collaborations at a social level. Then, thanks to 'mature' relations, we become aware that the divine principle resides within all of us.

Then every action becomes impersonal for the benefit of all human beings, purifying thoughts and feelings which then move vertically, as we live the burning flame of unselfishness in a never-ending expansion and perpetual search of the Good of Wholeness. Making our reflections now topical, let us consider, according to the Theosophical literature, the necessity to bring some groups of people to embodying together not only to realize mutual karmic relations but also to learn to work together for one great single aim. Of course, that is meant also for us, here and now. The value of working together is greater than the accomplishment of a project because it gives origin to subtle yet powerful synergies from whose loving vitality the divine *buddhi* light will arise, which is the spiritual man's burning energy. And when the *buddhic* vehicle develops and insight reaches the physical brain, it will grant wisdom and perfect knowledge.

According to the Ancient Wisdom,

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love is the most important of all attributes and it begins with an attitude of goodwill, friendship towards others, understanding, and all good impulses aimed at helping people on the path towards happiness. A universal disposition may develop from that personal feeling.

The Maha Chohan wrote in a letter dated 1881: 'It is not the individual and determined purpose of attaining oneself Nirvāna (the culmination of all knowledge and absolute wisdom) which is, after all only an exalted and glorious *selfishness*, but the self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead on the right path our neighbour, to cause as many of our fellow creatures as we possibly can to benefit by it, which constitutes the true Theosophist.' It is a simple statement of brotherhood, yet a deep one, and also a model for our own life.

I am not an eminent scholar, a scientist, a philosopher, a priest. I am a normal person but my lecture will turn out well or badly according to your friendly or hostile attitude. Why? What is that force, so powerful and unique, capable of accomplishing such a miracle?

Dear brothers, within our organization we have developed great capabilities of finding common aspects among religion, philosophy and science but we have to find common aspects also among ourselves. Brotherhood is our challenge, our mission.

'Brother' comes from the Latin word *frater* corresponding to the Sanskrit *bhrathru* and it is probably from its root *bhar*, meaning to bring, to sustain, to

support, that the word originates (and from there the German *bruder* and the English *brother*) with the meaning of 'sons of the same father'. The Greek word is *phratèr-phrator*, that is member of a tribe. So we share a common membership and origin, ties which are far more important than any blood ties because they make us equal on a higher level, the spiritual one, allowing us to be on the same wavelength when working together and to express our own potential.

H. P. Blavatsky used to say in 1888 that the Masters cannot do much if the members of the Theosophical Society do not share thoughts and feelings.

What is Brotherhood if we are not able to realize all our so-called wisdom? Knowledge and words are not Theosophy, they do not have any value, any right of citizenship, we do not have any right to pronounce or express them; divine light does not reach the human soul while man allows his lower nature to dominate him. Our knowledge is like sheets of paper: Brotherhood is needed to hold them together in order to avoid dispersion.

Are we still able to feel we are all one? This is the challenge the Theosophical Society is experiencing at this historical period of time. Are we aware of this? Do we think of ourselves as brothers, sons of the same father, that is belonging to the same family and so working together?

Our Theosophical Society, now more than ever, needs unity and solidarity so that, while we act accordingly to perfect harmony's laws, it can allow everybody who wants to, to serve in the best possible

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way. To flourish, the Theosophical Society has to grow from inside but the maturity and awareness level of the whole association depends on the contribution of every single member, on his individual consciousness, abnegation and unselfishness. Basic and absolutely fundamental concepts such as Universal Brotherhood without any distinction cannot be violated intentionally without taking into consideration the consequences on a metaphysical level, without fully understanding the damage caused by that lack of harmony, to that subtle though powerful net that unites all of us.

All of us are the Theosophical Society, but what is our state of mind, what is the enthusiasm we use every day to renovate our bonds of love with Life and the Masters, what is our attitude towards other brothers, the inner growth that allows us to work positively and proactively for the good of our fellowship, knowing we are all on a kind of probation as members of this association? The most important thing is to pursue together, united, the aim of Universal Brotherhood without distinction and I believe the only way we have to get out of the *impasse* consists in making constructive suggestions and offering comprehension and loving care; all this will enable our group to move forward solemnly and harmoniously with the support of our personal strength, united in our positive, pure and fraternal intentions, thoughts, words. We are not just an association; brotherhood without distinction is a requested task; we are the Knights of Brotherhood and nobody will

ever spoil this wonderful wholeness with its common aims as profound and ancient as Eternal Wisdom.

The Theosophical table is the round table par excellence where everybody is *primus inter pares* (first among equals) and is considered only according to his spiritual values. If we realize that no leaf has its equal; that Nature has given every human being unique, inimitable qualities to develop, and if we — luckily — differ from each other, the great challenge is to gather all beings under one single flag, that of Truth.

Jiddu Krishnamurti said in his conversation with the Jesuit father E. Schallert: 'Because you see, after all, what is important in living is unity, harmony between human beings. That can only come about if there is harmony in each one; and that harmony is not possible if there is any form of division inside or outside, externally or internally.'

It is necessary to learn again to understand, to unify and not to divide, to accept everyone and everything, to distinguish what gives us freedom from what keeps us imprisoned in unawareness, as the whole is more than the sum of its parts. If we stand together we are irresistible.

Being united does not mean we cannot be different, as differences are indeed great resources and rich opportunities — our contribution, as individuals, to the One. I believe we have to start working together again silently, confidently, bearing in mind we are a whole 'soul', strong and of high capacity, able to collaborate and achieve universal

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harmony. 'Breaking points' such as the present ones remind us of our responsibilities, asking us for a leap in awareness. In these present, chaotic and confused times, stars can still arise.

This process is similar to the graceful, involuntary work of oysters which, irritated by grains of sand, create pearls. It is a way of behaviour that offers proactive, creative answers, that goes directly to the heart of Life, of Truth, allowing us 'to walk through the room of Wisdom to reach the Valley of Beatitude'.

Jiddu Krishnamurti affirmed:

Truth can come to you only when your mind and heart are simple, clear, and there is love in your heart, not if your

heart is filled with the things of the mind. When there is love in your heart, you do not talk about organizing for brotherhood, you do not talk about belief, you do not talk about division or the powers that create division, you need not seek reconciliation. Then you are a simple human being without a label, without a country. This means that you must strip yourself of all those things and allow truth to come into being, and it can come only when the mind is empty, when the mind ceases to create.

It is the only way to live up to Life's wonderful harmony, to be true *peregrini in itinere*, authentic Knights of the Order of Brotherhood without Distinction. ✧

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

Psalm 51:10,11

The TS on Probation

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

ANYONE who has studied even the rudiments of the history of the Theosophical Society will realize that the circumstances leading to its inception were far from ordinary. For example, the decision to form the TS preceded, by almost a century, the meeting of HPB and Col. Olcott at the Eddie farmhouse in Chittenden, Vermont. It was made by the Adepts and their Teachers as shown by evidence presented in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (Letter 22). Probably due to the nature of their involvement with the beginnings of the TS the fledgling body had to be put to the test of probation as the following passage shows:

On 17 November next the Septenary term of trial given the Society at its foundation in which to discreetly 'preach us' will expire. One or two of us hoped that the world had so far advanced intellectually, if not intuitionally, that the Occult doctrine might gain an intellectual acceptance, and the impulse given for a new cycle of occult research. Others — wiser as it would now seem — held differently, but consent was given for the trial. It was stipulated,

however, that the experiment should be made independently of our personal management; that there should be no abnormal interference by ourselves. So casting about we found in America the man to stand as leader — a man of great moral courage, unselfish, and having other good qualities. He was far from being the best, but . . . he was the best one available. With him we associated a woman of most exceptional and wonderful endowments. Combined with them she had strong personal defects, but just as she was, there was no second to her living fit for this work. We sent her to America, brought them together — and the trial began. (Letter 45)

Here it is suggested that the Society did not undergo only that initial 'probation' but that it has been subjected to a series of similar tests, some of which have shaken it to its very foundations.

The option of receiving him or not as a regular chela — remains with the Chohan. M. has simply to have him tested, tempted and examined by all and every means, so as to have his real nature drawn out. This is a rule with us as inexorable as it is disgusting in your Western sight, and I

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could not prevent it even if I would. It is not enough to know thoroughly what the chela is capable of doing or not doing at the time and under the circumstances during the period of probation. We have to know of what he *may* become capable under different and every kind of opportunities. (Letter 74)

From the point of view of the Adepts probation is a process of testing and examining an individual — or a group of individuals — ‘by all and every means, so as to have his real nature drawn out’. The implication here is that before the Adepts can work with someone the true nature of that individual needs to be exposed. No wonder Sinnett and Hume protested at this as a form of invasion of privacy. But the Adepts are not guided in their work by worldly considerations or conventions. As their ultimate aim is the complete regeneration of the human consciousness, they can only accept the help of those individuals who have purged themselves, to a great degree, of selfishness and self-centredness. Perhaps the influence of the Adepts causes a light to shine into the nooks and corners of the human soul, bringing out into the open motivations and attitudes which were hitherto lurking in the dark. It is not difficult to envisage how unpleasant and uncomfortable such a process can be.

The Mahatma, in the above-mentioned quotation, also explains a very important point: ‘It is not enough to know thoroughly what the chela is capable of doing or not doing at the time and under the

circumstances during the period of probation. We have to know of what he *may* become capable under different and every kind of opportunities.’ The process of probation aims at establishing what our truest motivations are. *Light on the Path* speaks about the ‘giant weed of self’ while saying that it has grown through ages of evolutionary development. One who is serious about Theosophical work cannot afford to ignore such a deep-rooted force. It needs to be exposed, seen for what it is and expunged. And this is the process of probation. It is definitely not for the faint-hearted.

It may be easier to understand such a process at an individual level. But what does it mean to state that the TS, as an organization, may have undergone periods of probation? The following quote throws some light on this question:

I may tell you no news if I say that it was Mr Hume’s attitude when the *Eclectic* was formed that caused our chiefs to bring Mr Fern and Mr Hume together. The latter reproached us vehemently for refusing to take in as chelas — himself, and that sweet, handsome, spiritual and truth-aspiring boy — Fern. We were daily dictated laws, and as daily taken to task for being unable to realize our own interests. And it will be no news though it may disgust and shock you, to learn that the two were brought into the closest relationship in order to bring out their mutual virtues and defects — each to shine in his own true light. Such are the laws of Eastern *probation*. (Letter 101)

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One of the great evolutionary opportunities the TS offers to its members is to bring 'them into the closest relationship in order to bring out their mutual virtues and defects — each to shine in his own true light'. Perhaps this is the real test of brotherhood, namely, to work with people as they are and not as we want them to be. Anyone who has had to work in a committee, at whatever level, will perhaps be able to testify that this is one of the great challenges a worker has to face. In this, like in many other situations in life, if there is a real degree of self-understanding and self-effacement, working with others becomes much more possible and harmonious.

The Sanskrit word *ahamkāra* denotes 'the conception of one's own individuality, self-consciousness, the making of self, thinking of self, egotism, pride, haughtiness'. It describes a very potent tendency that has laid down roots within the human consciousness for millennia, and that tends to remain hidden in the context of superficial social interactions. But an institution which has as its first and most important Object Universal Brotherhood without distinction, has to inevitably challenge its members by drawing out the multifaceted expressions of this 'giant weed of self'. Otherwise, how can the TS be a true 'regenerating practical Brotherhood' as it was meant to be according to the Adepts' plans? In the following quotation one of them presents in greater detail how far-reaching and serious the process of probation can be:

. . . we allow our candidates *to be tempted* in a thousand various ways, so as to draw out the whole of their inner nature and allow it the chance of remaining conqueror either one way or the other. . . . The victor's crown is only for him who proves himself worthy to wear it; for him who attacks *Māra* single-handed and conquers the demon of lust and earthly passions; and not *we* but he himself puts it on his brow. It was not a meaningless phrase of the Tathāgata that 'he who masters *Self* is greater than he who conquers thousands in battle': there is no such other difficult struggle. If it were not so, adeptship would be but a cheap acquirement. . . . Only those who can look ahead at the far remote consequences of things are in a position to judge as to the expediency of our own actions, or those we permit in others. What may seem present bad faith may in the end prove the truest, most benevolent loyalty. Let time show who was right and who faithless. One who is true and approved today, may tomorrow prove, under a new concatenation of circumstances a traitor, an ingrate, a coward, an imbecile. (Letter 92)

The end of probation signifies the mastery of self, at least up to a point, in the sense that one will not allow petty personal reactions to interfere with the Masters' work. They include self-centred motives and thoughts. As long as we react personally we are unfit to help them in their undertakings. But as the above-mentioned passage reveals, other tests may lie ahead for until the giant weed

The TS on Probation

of separateness is not completely and irreversibly destroyed even the minutest particle of selfishness may flare up and throw us off course. Constant vigilance is therefore required of every candidate to Theosophical work.

There have been a number of serious crises in the history of the TS. The Coulomb conspiracy was one of them and its ramifications continue to this day, when a number of publications still consider as true the conclusions of the Hodgson Report. The Judge Case was another difficult moment for the Society as a whole, perhaps not well handled by all concerned at that time, but certainly one that dispensed tests to all and sundry during those intensive years of 1894 and 1895. The Leadbeater Case of 1906 completely divided the Society and represented a very grave test for Annie Besant even before she was elected President in 1907. The level of vituperation generated at that time seems to continue unabated outside the TS, with a number of writers maintaining that the Society never recovered from that crisis. However, the statistics of Dr Besant's period of Presidency eloquently prove that view ill-founded.

The recent Presidential elections had the contours of another crisis, somewhat serious, in which polarization again divided members in different continents. Perhaps there are some members who may regret what they said or wrote during that period. I know I do. However, there are signs that for many members their dedication to what the Society

stands for is deeper and stronger than circumstantially polarized views. The awareness that the TS has a very important unfinished task to perform is much more important than personal views we may entertain. However, we must continue to be vigilant for, as long as we are human, tests will come, sometimes sent by those who know much better than we do, as the following passage shows:

Whosoever has sown the seeds of the present tempest, the whirlwind is strong, the whole Society is reaping it and it is rather fanned than weakened from Shigatse. You laugh at *probations* — the word seems ridiculous as applied to you? You forget that he who approaches our precincts even in thought, is drawn into the vortex of probation. (Letter 131)

The Book of Job in the Old Testament presents the story of a devout and dedicated man, who was put through the fires of probation. Everything he had was taken away from him, even the people and things he loved most. But however horrific his loss was, he did not lose his faith in God, the Supreme Existence. Here is one of Job's soulful moments of contrition, in which he confesses that the harsh trials he had undergone helped him to see more clearly:

I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear, and

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I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me.' I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (42:1-6)

If life's ordeals help us to see better and to understand more clearly, the period of probation — if we are found worthy to be drawn into it — may help us to realize that the only thing that really matters is to help the Masters' plan for a regenerated humanity. In her article 'The New Cycle',

published in *La Revue Theosophique* (March 1889), HPB stated that 'In its capacity of an abstract body, the Society does not believe in anything, does not accept anything, and does not teach anything.' Aware of these sobering remarks by our great Founder, I would like to conclude with a prayer: The Soul of the TS belongs to the work of the great Masters of the Wisdom, which is the ending of fear, the ending of division and the ending of sorrow. ✧

Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fullness; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
The perfect, clear perception — which is truth.

A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Binds it, and makes all error; and, to know,
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without.

Robert Browning
Paracelsus

Theosophists in Truth

N. SRI RAM

THE following observations from myself, spoken to a gathering at Adyar, may be of interest to our readers:

These are, of course, days which are very, very critical for the world as a whole, and there is little that any one of us can do to help our fellow human beings who are caught in this crisis. All that we can do is to live in such a way, have such thoughts and feelings, as will make us centres of peace, illumination and strength to others. If we live such a life, we are doing what is most needed at present.

There is the time-honoured idea, at least in India, that even without going round to various places, without making any great noise or splash, without ostensible activity, one can help the world potently from where he is, by his thoughts and by an attitude of mind in which his attention and interest are centred in the good of his fellow human beings and upon those truths which are fundamental and essential for our living, which spell out that good. In the old days there were people who, it is said, performed *tapas*, which means austerity, for the world's welfare, sometimes in order to accomplish a specific great deed. I feel it would be well for all of us to live and work in that

spirit of selflessness and dedication, a life of beautiful and sweet simplicity, not self-mortification. We need to concentrate on those things which are really worthwhile, and not fritter away our energy and interest on all kinds of matters which are essentially of trivial significance.

If all of us in the Society prepare ourselves in that way for whatever work we may be able to do, if we strive to live a life of greater purity, more light and sweetness, more brotherliness in a very real sense, not sentimentalism, we will be better and more effective Theosophists. A Theosophist is a man who has a feeling of friendliness in his heart, who seeks truth, and does not chase nor is satisfied with illusions. He is a person whose real interest in life is to make life more beautiful, better and happier for all concerned. Anyone who satisfies these conditions is a real Theosophist, whether he is a member of the Theosophical Society or not.

Many of us are members because we want to help this great organization which exists for a supremely altruistic purpose, altruism in a deep, true and extended sense. The Society does not exist for our own edification, much less for our

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amusement or glorification; it exists in order that each one of us may lend his strength, give of his light and whatever capacity he may have, to make the world a better place in which to live; better not merely from a physical point of view, but with a more spiritual climate, a rarer, more vital atmosphere where all kinds of delicate and wonderful things can grow.

HPB, our great Founder, has said that towards the hundredth anniversary of the Theosophical Society one might expect a fresh spiritual impetus. It is to be hoped that her prophecy will come to pass. But then, what is important is not merely to hope for something great to happen, but to prepare ourselves in such a way that if there is anything beautiful happening, whether now or then, we are open to it, are able to enter into that beauty and convey it to those with whom we come into contact. We are not called upon to do anything heroic in an outward sense, much less to indulge in heroics of any sort; what we have to do is to be steady where we are, like a candle, not blown by any breeze, which throws its beams in a place of darkness, so that we bring illumination

and cheer in the places where we happen to be. If we can be like that lighted candle with its steady flame going upwards all the time in pure aspiration — you might call it prayer — then we will really have proved ourselves Theosophists in truth, as we are now Theosophists in name.

We should all be able in the times ahead to do more and better than we have done hitherto; not by any kind of feverish activity — of course everyone has to be active in his own way — but by such action as is wise, beneficent and of deep spiritual import. We may do a small thing and that little thing may be a gesture which conveys a very great deal. It may have an extraordinary significance, even though it may be a slight little act; or we may do a multitude of things, make an inordinate amount of noise, a lot of raging, tearing propaganda to convince others that we are doing better than we really are. But all that would be just so much sound and fury which dies down, leaving things much as they were. It is always truth and its action which counts, not make-believe, truth in what we think, feel and act. It is the truth that is deeply within us which matters most. ✧

Do good for its own sake; for the good of your spiritual peace.

The Buddha

The Founding of the Modern Theosophical Society

JESSE D. ALTO

ANYONE who reads Theosophy will see that the vital part of its teachings deals with the evolution of the soul of man, which goes from grade to grade towards the perfection of Adeptship. Theosophy is literally translated as Divine (Theos) Wisdom (Sophia). The Society was founded with the exalted purpose of promoting the spiritual regeneration of man. The aim is to change the heart and mind of mankind and prepare them for the next higher step in human evolution. The universal brotherhood was introduced as a necessary base for the promotion of its high aim, namely the radical transformation of man, his whole nature, mode of conduct and future. Now, one hundred years later, this idea of universal brotherhood is accepted verbally, but not in practice. Many of us accept this universal brotherhood as a motto to be realized in due course.

Theosophy is known also as Kabbalah, Sufism, Tao Hsueh, and Divine Wisdom. Like science, Theosophy deals also with direct experience and often of a more subjective and qualitative nature. Theosophy offers reasons for life left untouched by either religion or science.

It holds that the universe is unified, orderly and purposeful, that matter is the instrument for the evolution of life, that thought is a creative power which we can learn to use effectively, and that experience of both joy and suffering is the means by which we grow in character, compassion, power and wisdom.

Theosophists agree generally to the basic ideas and ideal of Theosophy, but they are free to reject any of them and to interpret all of them according to their own lights. This does not mean however that one should assert his point and argue against the ideas of others where they contradict his. Other ideas are measured by their own light. What binds us is not a common set of ideas but a common search for truth. Hence we must seek out the way on our own, verify for ourselves those ideas we intuitively feel are true. And on the path, we need to find our own truth and live our life accordingly. To be a Theosophist, one must only subscribe to the three Objects of the Theosophical Society. These are:

To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without

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distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.

To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.

To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.

According to H. P. Blavatsky, there were theosophists and theosophical schools for the last 2000 years, from Plato down to the medieval alchemists. It was again re-introduced in 1875 by the two most revered Masters of the Wisdom through their outer agent Madame Helena P. Blavatsky, and assisted by Col. Henry Olcott, William Judge and others in New York, USA. The main headquarters of the Society was subsequently transferred to the present International Headquarters located in Chennai (formerly Madras), India. The Society's broad basis accepts into its membership all who profess the idea of Universal Brotherhood, who are interested in promoting investigations into comparative religion, science, and philosophy and who are keen to understand the psychic and occult nature of man; 'to oppose materialism and theological dogmatism by demonstrating the existence of occult forces unknown to science, in nature, and the presence of psychic and spiritual powers in man, at the same time enlarging the views of the spiritualists by showing that there are other agencies at work in the production of phenomena besides the 'spirits' of the dead. Superstition and the premature

development of the occult forces had to be exposed and avoided' (H. P. Blavatsky, *The Original Programme of the Theosophical Society*).

The Theosophical Society is Founded

1. To give to humanity certain deeper truths of life needed for taking the next step in human evolution.
2. To instil certain universal guiding principles like Brotherhood into the minds of people in general, so that it may become possible to usher in a better world order.
3. To provide agents in the outer world who understand the Plan in a general way and can thus consciously cooperate with the Elder Brethren in the work that They are doing for the betterment of the human race. (Dr I. K. Taimni, *Principles of Theosophical Work*)

Dr Taimni goes on to say: the founding of the Theosophical Society is part of a definite move to lift a corner of the veil on life's deeper mysteries by Those who hold the keys to these mysteries that have been hidden from humanity. Probably, the time has come when humanity has to be given a chance of direct cooperation with the Elder Brethren who, unknown and unrecognized, have for ages guided and nurtured it and brought it to the present stage of evolution. The cooperation can be a definite reality and a force in the direction of progress only as the truths of the Ancient Wisdom permeate world thought and bring about

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the required fundamental changes in the life and outlook of the average man. Just now, the Theosophical Society is a small nucleus in the world of such men who are trying to understand these truths and are preparing themselves consciously or unconsciously for this common work with their Elder Brethren, now and in the future. As the Society grows and the greater influence brings more favourable conditions in the world for the reception of these truths, it may be expected that the Elder Brethren will give a more direct lead in the affairs of the world and it will thus become possible for us to move rapidly and smoothly to our destined goal, human perfection.

Dr Taimni further states: The Theosophical Society is not quite like other Societies scattered throughout the world, in which a group of people come and work together to attain a definite object. It has a definite work to do, the study and dissemination of truths concerning the deeper problems of life. And it has another and a far more important function, that is to serve as a direct agency in the work of the Elder Brethren for the regeneration of the world. The Theosophical Society is not a mere academic body but a direct instrument of the Elder Brethren through which they expect to bring about definite changes in the world with the knowledge and cooperation of its members. This fact of the vital connection of the Society with Those who are the real Guides of humanity lends a peculiar dignity to our work, bordering almost on sacredness, and provides the

majority of its active members with that inspiration and enthusiasm that is necessary in a work of this kind. It enables them to stand firm and remain unaffected by the periodical crises that come in the Society and sometimes shake it to its very foundations. They feel on such occasions that their loyalty to the Great Ones and the universal principles of which they are the embodiments, transcends any differences that may happen to arise with regard to the methods of work, and therefore whatever happens, they should not desert the great Cause that the Society represents. The broad Plan is there, and each member can plan his own work carefully and carry it out to the best of his abilities, knowing that whatever its shortcomings are, it will somehow be utilized in the much larger work that the Elder Brethren are doing ceaselessly for the upliftment of mankind.

The General Aim of the Society

The following passages are taken from Dr I. K. Taimni's *Principles of Theosophical Work*: To know exactly what we want in any undertaking is a prerequisite of success. A Theosophical worker should have sufficiently clear notions of particular objectives he may be aiming at with respect to the general aim of the Theosophical Society in its work in the outer world. Theosophical workers are aiming at changing the thoughts and attitude of people in the world so that humanity may be able to take the next step in evolution and may be able to lay the foundation of the future steps ahead, near or far, as the Elder Brethren consider

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necessary. The main problems facing humanity at the present time lie in the wrong habits of thought and perverted attitudes all round. There is ignorance in the world regarding the Plan and methods of evolution, and the forces of prejudice, conservatism, and selfishness and greed are still dominant. There is ignorance of man's true spiritual nature, ignorance of natural laws and of the higher life to be attained by everyone if not soon, then in some future life.

Firstly, Theosophy gives us the broad plan of evolution and thus enables us to determine easily which movements and trends are in the right direction and therefore to be helped, and those in the wrong and therefore to be opposed. Secondly, Theosophy provides us a direction in which we have to move, to take steps in the reconstruction of the world in every field applying our general knowledge to the current problems of every conceivable nature. Thirdly, Theosophy provides vast amounts of information of a scientific nature regarding the world we live in and our place in the scheme of things, enabling us to see all events and things in their proper perspective and to devise correct and effective means for gaining the ultimate end, human perfection. Theosophy is that Eternal Wisdom which alone can guide us in evolving a true and noble civilization that will endure and be free from those ugly and painful features which disfigured the so-called modern civilization.

The vast majority of mankind is not aware of this subtle connection between

the outer conditions prevailing in the world and that govern such conditions. We should realize this fact and see the great necessity of disseminating these truths in the outer world until they permeate its thought atmosphere and bring about the necessary changes in the outlook of the common man. So we see that the dissemination of these truths of Eternal Wisdom is the primary function of the Theosophical Society and a duty incumbent upon all its members throughout the world. The dissemination of the Eternal Wisdom should be partly intellectual and partly spiritual. It must affect our hearts to some extent and bring about those subtle changes inside, which reflect themselves in changes of attitude and ways of looking at things. Mere knowledge or even acceptance of a truth is not enough. It must affect the deeper layers of consciousness if it is to produce any tangible effect on life.

We should work silently and unobtrusively and make the influence of our ideas felt indirectly to a great extent. The influence of our ideas should not appear as an imposition from without, but as a natural evolutionary growth from within. We should be concerned with the causes of evils that we seek to remove and deal only in a secondary manner with the effects that flow from these primary causes.

As one of the Mahatmas said:

The origin of every evil, whether small or great is in human action, in man whose intelligence makes him the one free agent in nature. It is neither nature nor an

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imaginary Deity that has to be blamed, but human nature made vile by selfishness.

The extract from Dr Taimni's book continues thus: If we deal only with the effects and not pay attention to the causes, we shall never succeed in overcoming the problems although we may be able to remove temporarily the outer manifestations. All great spiritual teachers always go to the source of evil and the problems of human sorrow and suffering. They do not offer mere palliatives, but show the path that eliminates the cause of sorrow and suffering to arrive permanently at a state of enlightenment that transcends the afflictions of the lower life. The Theosophical Society is an organization with a spiritual basis to adopt the spiritual way of tackling the difficult and complicated problems we find everywhere in the world. Its members should seek to go deep into these problems and try to discover the underlying causes of evils they want to eradicate. It is not a philanthropic body in the ordinary sense of the term although it exists exclusively for promoting the welfare of humanity.

Where Do We Begin

To be a good server, one must first purify and harmonize his lower selves. A Taoist saying attributed to Lao Tzu reads:

If you want to awaken all of humanity, then awaken all of yourself. It means we must purify and harmonize the physical, emotional and mental vehicles and awaken them and be one with the Higher Self. Truly the greatest gift you have to give is

that of your own self-transformation.

Mrs Radha Burnier, the International President of the Theosophical Society, said that external events are products of the internal state of consciousness. Society cannot change without changing individual human consciousness.

A student of Comparative Philosophy said: 'If we do not share our clarity of understanding, then we impart our confusion.' We must study and understand our true spiritual nature and as such a part of the whole. We are intricately bound together, and any kind of enlightened religious understanding of life recognizes this fact. The highest form of awakening is Buddhahood that has a single clear focus: the deliverance of all beings drowning in the ocean of *samsāra* (illusion; continuous births and deaths). Plainly, tremendous implications are enshrined in any individual self-transformation. It is not merely a private business, for there is always more at stake than one's personal inner peace and well-being. The other beings that he touches in life are also affected. If the planet is polluted and this earth is dying, is it not because humans are sick? We are, on the whole, simply not integrated.

Theosophy teaches mutual-culture before self-culture to begin with. Union is strength. It is by gathering many Theosophists of the same way of thinking into one or more groups, and making them closely united by the same magnetic bond of fraternal unity and sympathy that the object of mutual development

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and progress in theosophical thought may be best achieved. (H. P. Blavatsky, *The Original Programme of the Theosophical Society*)

Among others, the common goal in this mutual culture may be harmlessness and unity in diversity of action, common quest for truth, clarity of understanding and non-argumentation to opposing views, non-attachment to the fruit of action and non-covetousness.

Self-culture leads the student to purification of his lower vehicles, that is the physical, emotional, and mental faculties so that the Higher Self will be able to discipline and control them. The student should remain calm and contented within any situation he finds himself in, learning from the experiences the situation has provided him, and offering all to the Higher Self.

To Help Promote the Cause of the Society

As earnest seekers of the Ancient Wisdom, we must continue our study and gain clarity and understanding, as written in books on Theosophy, like *At the Feet of the Master*, *The Voice of the Silence* and *Light on the Path*. Some students will also be interested to read *The Secret Doctrine*, *Isis Unveiled*, and other books written by Dr Annie Besant, Charles Leadbeater, C. Jinarājadāsa, Geoffrey Hodson, I. K. Taimni and N. Sri Ram, to help deepen understanding and comprehension of the Eternal Wisdom. We should continue to seek by study of the Divine Wisdom; acknowledge, accept and

apply the lessons learned in our daily life, and finally share what we have learned with those willing to listen and learn.

Lodges and Study Groups must regularly hold their stated meetings with a syllabus of studies and assigned discussions on topics previously agreed upon. Interlodge meetings should be held at regular intervals and also visits by members and officers of other Lodges to promote bonding, cooperation and unity among the members of the Society. The Lodge meetings should promote harmony and unity of the members as an expression of wisdom, which unites as opposed to intellectual argumentation, which divides.

Challenges Ahead

In the early years of the Theosophical Society, some members questioned the propriety of collecting membership dues from members. Some consider the annual dues a form of taxation and therefore unbrotherly. The Society has to pay for the cost of newsletters, postage, telephone bills, power bills, office supplies, travel fares and accommodation of Theosophical lecturers, and many other necessary maintenance expenses to keep the operations of the Society going. The Society has also created a Foundation to administer and supervise Theosophical schools and other projects of the Theosophical Order of Service. The amount collected from members as dues is barely enough to pay for fixed operating expenses but the Society has to continue the work and pay the expenses from the voluntary

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contributions of some members. More financial assistance is needed for worthwhile projects to help propagate the teachings of Theosophy.

Often, Theosophists argue about the manner in which Lodge meetings are conducted and the arguments that ensue on issues discussed during the meeting. Mrs Radha Burnier said: 'Let brotherly love guide you. You may differ as much as you like in opinions, but you must not let it lead to any sort of ill feeling or any sort of conceit in your superior discernment in being able to see what to you is the right path. Let us stand together in Brotherhood and carry on our work, whatever work that may be. There is plenty of time later on to argue what this means and what that means. Everything that divides is contrary to the laws of compassion and Universal Brotherhood. Left to their own understanding, people will come to the truth about everything in due time.'

The Theosophical Society has a global mission to spread the teaching of the Ancient Wisdom to help regenerate mankind. The national Sections, Lodges and Study Groups should converge in this mission and continue the work founded by the Masters of the Wisdom. Let us all aspire to become co-workers of the Masters of the Wisdom. One should be one-pointed and dig out the knowledge within himself to be more efficient in the service that is the way for him at present of serving God and the cause of humanity.

After one hundred years of the reintroduction of Theosophy, more and more seekers are attracted to the ancient teachings of the East. How much the teachings can be disseminated so that more will be attracted to join the Society and become earnest seekers and co-workers of the Masters of the Wisdom is a challenge to the Society that needs serious study and planning. ✧

O you mad and miserable people, since you cannot grasp foreign things through anything but yourselves, how will you ever grasp outward things, when you have lost the inner ones? Why do you seek goods far away, as foreigners, when they are near, or rather within yourselves?

Marsilio Ficino

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

BUT now thou askest me how thou mayest destroy this naked knowing and feeling of thine own being. For peradventure thou thinkest that if it were destroyed, all other hindrances were destroyed; and if thou thinkest thus, thou thinkest right truly. But to this I answer thee and I say, that without a full special grace full freely given by God, and also a full according ableness on thy part to receive this grace, this naked knowing and feeling of thy being may in nowise be destroyed. And this ableness is nought else but a strong and a deep ghostly sorrow . . . All men have matter of sorrow; but most specially he feeleth matter of sorrow that knoweth and feeleth that he *is*. All other sorrows in comparison to this be but as it were game to earnest. For he may make sorrow earnestly that knoweth and feeleth not only what he is, but that he *is*. And whoso felt never this sorrow, let him make sorrow; for he hath never yet felt perfect sorrow. This sorrow, when it is had, cleanseth the soul, not only of sin, but also of pain that it hath deserved for sin; and also it maketh a soul able to receive that joy, the which reaveth from a man all knowing and feeling of his being. . . .

This sorrow . . . must every soul have and feel in itself (either in this manner or in another), as God vouchsafeth to teach his ghostly disciples according to his good will and their according ableness in body and in soul, in degree and disposition, ere the time be that they may perfectly be oned unto God in perfect charity — such as may be had here, if God vouchsafeth.

The Cloud of Unknowing

The Origin and Development of Language

SHARMILA S. PARULKAR

‘WOULD a universal language aid Universal Brotherhood?’ is the question.

Volapük (corrupted from English and meaning ‘World-Speak’) was invented in 1879 by Johann M. Schleyer, a priest of Constance, Baden. This language is partly original and partly made up of words of European origin, mainly English. It was in great vogue and by its tenth year about one million people were using it. At its third congress in 1889, held in Paris, everyone including the waiters spoke it. After this triumph, it began to decline rapidly chiefly through internal dissensions. So much for Volapük.

The history of international languages is an interesting one. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* tells us what a difficult task it is to construct one. The first attempt was made by Dalgarno in 1661 and was called ‘Ars Signorum’. The next was by Wilkins in 1668 and was called ‘Real Character’. Neither of these was a success because the ground for such a language had not been prepared, but it is interesting to note that Wilkins’ sketch of phonetics is still considered valuable. After this came Esperanto, widely known by 1907 — an artificial language designed as a medium

for persons of all nations, its vocabulary enriched by new words as they were needed.

There may have been other attempts to create a universal language but let us see what Theosophy has to say on the subject of language in general.

First of all we have to understand the importance of sound; and language is, of course, a collection of sounds. HPB tells us that, in the Sanskrit, as also in the Hebrew and in the alphabets of all other languages, ‘every letter has its occult meaning and its rationale; it is a cause and an effect of a preceding cause and a combination of these very often produces the most magical effect. The vowels especially contain the most occult and formidable potencies’ (*The Secret Doctrine*, I.94). Further, we read that ‘SOUND, for one thing, is a tremendous Occult power; it is a stupendous force, of which the electricity generated by a million of Niagaras could never counteract the smallest potentiality when directed with occult knowledge. Sound may be produced of such a nature that the pyramid of Cheops would be raised in the air, or that a dying man, nay, one at his last

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breath, would be revived and filled with new energy and vigour.’

For Sound generates, or attracts together, the elements that produce an ozone, the fabrication of which is beyond chemistry, but within the limits of Alchemy. (*SD*, I.555)

The last statement leads us into deep waters, and such study and reflection on Sound and Language will be needed if we want to understand the relationship between the two.

Mantra-s are an example of the potency of sound and *mantrika śakti* is defined as the ‘power, or occult potency of mystic words, sounds, numbers or letters’ in the Vedic mantra-s. HPB says that ‘the influence of melody is one of its ordinary manifestations’ (*SD*, I.293). Further, ‘the spoken word has a potency unknown to, unsuspected and disbelieved in, by the modern “Sages!”’ Why? ‘Because sound and rhythm are closely related to four Elements of the Ancients’; and because ‘such or another vibration in the air is sure to awaken corresponding powers, union with which produces good or bad results, as the case may be’ (*SD*, I.307).

What about language itself? Languages ‘have their phases of growth, etc., like all else in nature’ (*SD*, II.662). They ‘have their cyclic evolution, their childhood, purity, growth, fall into matter, admixture with other languages, maturity, decay and finally death’ (*SD*, II.199). HPB says that ‘Language is certainly coeval with reason, and could never have been developed before men become one

with the informing principles in them — those who fructified and awoke to life the mānasic element dormant in primitive men’. And elsewhere she states that the whole human race was at one time of one language, taught to it by Divine Instructors.

HPB tells us that ‘it is almost certain that the great linguistic families pass through three stages’ (*SD*, II.662). And she enumerates these stages.

In the first stage, all words are roots and merely placed in juxtaposition, creating what are called radical languages.

Next, we reach the stage when one root defines another and becomes what is called a ‘determinative element’. This is the stage of agglutinative languages.

Finally, this determinative element unites into a whole, with the formative element, and we have inflected speech.

So far this agrees with what science teaches about the origin of language, but here it stops, for it has no idea where the original roots come from. Therefore, we have to see what Theosophy has to say about the potentiality of forming roots.

‘Monosyllabic speech, we are told, was used by the first approximately fully developed human beings at the close of the Third Root-race . . . after their separation into sexes, and the full awakening of their minds. Before that, they communicated through what would now be called “thought-transference”, though, with the exception of the Race called the “Sons of Will and Yoga”. . . thought was but very little developed in nascent physical man, and never soared

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above a low terrestrial level. . . . Language could not be well developed before the full acquisition and development of their reasoning faculties. This monosyllabic speech was the vowel parent, so to speak, of the monosyllabic languages mixed with hard consonants, still in use amongst the yellow races which are known to the anthropologists' (*SD*, II.198–99).

It is necessary to know a little more about the early races, for a study of language cannot be properly undertaken without taking into consideration the evolution of man and of the races.

The agglutinative languages were spoken by the Fourth (the Atlantean) Race. In time, they, too, decayed and are now used only by a few aboriginal tribes.

The next stage is that of the inflectional, highly developed languages by the Fifth, our Race. The root of Sanskrit, the mystery tongue of the Initiates of the Fifth Race, was the first inflectional language. The Semitic languages are 'the bastard descendants of the first phonetic corruptions of the eldest children of the early Sanskrit' (*SD*, II.200). This brings us down to the present day, and we can trace, if we take the trouble, the source of our modern European languages, through Latin and Greek, to Sanskrit.

We can summarize thus the stages of the development of speech:

1. The First Race was speechless.
2. The Second Root Race communi-

cated by chant-like sounds composed of vowels only.

3. During the second half of the Third Race, after the sexes had separated and mind was awakened, speech developed. This speech was, at first, monosyllabic.

4. The Fourth Race developed what is known as 'Rākshasi Bhāshā' — the language of demons.

5. In the Fifth Root Race our modern languages were developed.

What of the future language, then? It is said that 'the Sanskrit language will one day be again the language used by man upon this earth, first in science and in metaphysics, and later on in common life'. Sanskrit words have for some time been appearing in the literature and the press of the day, as we can see for ourselves. Sanskrit, HPB says, is 'the language of the gods because it can convey metaphysical ideas and early cosmogonical ones'.

Should we, then, rush out to learn Sanskrit? It would not do any harm, but until such time as there is more knowledge of the Ancient Philosophy, and more students of Theosophy to become familiar with such Sanskrit terms as are to be found in their books, it might be better to be more careful in the use of words in our own languages, to use them accurately, to be quite sure of their meaning, and to see that the ones we do use are helpful, not harmful, full of kindness and goodwill.

Leave out my name from the gift if it be a burden, but keep my song.

Rabindranath Tagore

Adyar Day, 2010

S. RAMU

TODAY is another good opportunity to ponder on the significance of Adyar Day and the noble legacies of the President-Founder Col. H. S. Olcott. Adyar Day is celebrated on 17 February every year in memory of Colonel Olcott. All human beings, including saints, are helped by being inspired and motivated from time to time because inspirations we receive once may wear off over time. For the same reasons, today is also a good opportunity to recall and rejoice in Col. Olcott's contributions to the Theosophical Society in particular, but more importantly, to humanity in general. The Theosophical Society, its Adyar Library, innumerable institutions in Sri Lanka and the Olcott Memorial High School stand testimony to his glorious contributions.

The lyrics of the Tamil song with its simple tune, sung by the charming Olcott School children at the commencement of their procession with the decorated picture of Olcott, inspired me to deviate from my speech for a short while to translate a few lines for the benefit of those who do not know Tamil. The song praises and thanks Olcott for his work by saying: Those on earth will never forget to be grateful to you for getting them Theosophy that is

praised on the earth and in the sky (*ākāśa*); you are a philanthropist that came to India from a place that is thousands of miles away to give us the wisdom that helps us tread the right path; as a philanthropist, you are on par with the great Tamil kings known for their charity. The song goes on to say that H. S. Olcott is our father figure and preceptor. (In the Vedic tradition, one's father is considered the first preceptor followed by the guru-preceptor who is a kind of godfather.) The song ends with a commitment to the great cause espoused by Olcott, H. P. Blavatsky, Annie Besant and others, and an urge to work hard towards the well-being of all.

What is the significance of Adyar Day? It cannot be understood without understanding the significance of Adyar itself, because Olcott Day was renamed as Adyar Day, for good reasons, about eighty-five years ago.

Adyar, the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society, continues to be a special place for many of our members. With the serene beauty of its gardens, it has become a sacred refuge for stray animals, weary walkers and members desiring to understand more about

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Theosophy and the Society. Walking through the gates of Adyar, people coming from the city often feel as if they are walking into a different world. The atmosphere changes. Stillness is felt within and without but the within also gets spiritually charged. It is obvious why the Founders chose these particular grounds for their headquarters. Even though the estate is now surrounded by the noise and chaos of the city of Chennai, within Adyar's gates there remains a quality of beauty that is rare to find. Breathing is the most vital function of a living organism and the Adyar gardens are called the lungs of Chennai city. Of course, the lungs should be clear without any serious disorder. The Garden Department has an onerous responsibility and it deserves every support and encouragement so that the flora and fauna are nurtured well and the more-than-a-century long reputation of Adyar remains high.

Originally, 17 February was known as Olcott Day, the day of the Founder's passing in 1907. Members gathered at the place where Henry Steel Olcott was cremated, saying a few words in gratitude and offering flowers to the memorial built in his honour. How did Olcott Day become Adyar Day? During the Convention of the Theosophical Society held at Benares (Varanasi) in 1921, a suggestion was made by Madame I. de Manziarly that each national Section should set apart one day each year, to be called Adyar Day, on which, every branch should take a collection to go towards the upkeep of Adyar and to support the international

work generally. In 1922 the first informal celebration of Adyar Day was held throughout India and thereafter, Adyar Day became a regular annual function at all the centres.

17 February has much more significance. It is not only the date Olcott passed away, but the date also marks Giordano Bruno's being burnt at the stake, Charles W. Leadbeater's birth and J. Krishnamurti's passing to peace. I also understand that on Adyar Day in 1925, the Foundation Stone of Blavatsky Lodge in Sydney was laid by C. W. Leadbeater.

On the contributions of HPB to Theosophy and HSO to the Theosophical Society, Annie Besant said:

HPB gave to the world Theosophy. H. S. Olcott gave to the world the Theosophical Society. Each was chosen by the Masters. Which brought the greater gift?

It is obvious, each one needed, and benefited from, the other. Even if Theosophy is more important than the Theosophical Society, it would not have been possible for HPB to carry out her mission without Olcott — without his leadership, strength, stability, enthusiasm and energy. He was the body and HPB the soul of the work of the Theosophical movement. Their team work was an example of a right relationship of co-disciples dedicated to serve an organization and humanity. A. Schwartz, a former Treasurer of the Society says: 'I wonder whether newer members realize how much the Society owes to its President-Founder,

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what courage, hard work and self-sacrifice were needed to start and guide the Movement, how his organizing capacity was indispensable to HPB for the spreading of her teachings' (*Reminiscences of H. S. Olcott*, TPH, Adyar). Events like Adyar Day help in creating awareness of such great contributions amongst new members.

For some, Olcott is almost an unknown Theosophist, somewhat less known than H. P. Blavatsky and Annie Besant or even Leadbeater. He does not come forth as a personality, because he put much of that aside for practical and tangible work. Olcott was important to the work in ways we may never understand fully, as necessary as HPB.

What kind of man was Olcott? I quote A. Schwartz again: 'The memory of Colonel Olcott calls up the picture of a unique personality, striking in appearance, a born organizer, independent, open-minded, large-hearted, of a lovable and joyous disposition, possessing in a remarkable degree the qualities which eminently fitted him for the office of President of the Theosophical Society . . . His genial ways and real friendship for the people endeared him to them.'

His effective leadership and charitable disposition were the two greatest and essential qualities for someone to be head of an organization. He founded schools for children deprived of education through poverty and social class. He was a man who cared much and had great concern for the welfare of humanity. He started and established five schools in Madras

(Chennai) in just twelve years. The last school was created in 1906, one year before his death.

Col. Olcott saw the unity of all beings, was indifferent to varieties of forms and transcended the limitations of apparent separateness. As a direct outcome of his untiring lecture tours in harsh circumstances throughout the length and breadth of India and Sri Lanka and his interactions with people there, these two countries awoke to the sense of their heritage, and began to realize what they have to learn and teach from the treasures of their past.

A remarkable social reformer and philanthropist, Col. Olcott sacrificed everything that was personal to the cause of the economically and socially underprivileged section of humanity. He worked ceaselessly for uplifting the downtrodden and the oppressed in the field of education and social acceptance. He worked not only in India but also in America, Europe and the eastern countries. His service in Sri Lanka is worthy of special mention; his efforts gave rise to the establishment of more than two hundred schools in Sri Lanka without having a single one named after him. He declined every honour that came his way and chose to remain a silent and unnoticed servant of mankind. In the corporate world and other administrative functions, some people are acclaimed as silent performers, who go about their work sincerely without throwing tantrums, in contrast to others who make a big fuss over small work to draw attention to themselves. There is something to be learnt from Olcott — to work

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for the promotion of the organization and not for self-promotion. Olcott was American by birth and truly a world citizen at heart. He is still honoured in several countries.

He realized the necessity of a good library and established the great Adyar Library. He wisely and with great vision founded this institution to last over a century. Olcott was able to write for the future an objective history of the formation and growth of an organization he presided over. The six volumes of his *Old Diary Leaves* are a delight for anyone interested in the early work of the Society. His wit and sense of humour are evident in his writings. He declares that the fire of Theosophy that engulfed many minds was started when he offered a light to Madame Blavatsky's cigarette! His acquaintance with Blavatsky began in smoke. Not surprisingly, it took some time for the Society to come clear of that much-misunderstood cloud of smoke that came from Blavatsky's mouth and nostrils. I would discourage men here from offering a light to a woman smoker lest another great movement is started!

In my business management courses, in the early 1970s, we used to do an exercise called SWOT — an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. When students were confused between opportunities and strengths; and similarly between threats and weaknesses,

the professor said threats and opportunities are generally in the external environment; and strengths and weaknesses are generally internal. He also said, if you perceive internal threats, your organization is doomed. Let us hope Olcott's great legacy is not under internal threat, i.e. threat from within!

Olcott was a man of great courage and strength who looked to the future with a pioneering spirit. Again and again he was able to meet the challenges facing him and the Society.

Col. Olcott was fond of saying that he had been bidden by his Master to be the doorkeeper of the Society. His dharma as the Great Ones told him was to organize and keep alive the 'body' through which the teachings could come to the world. He was true to this dharma. We have the Adyar headquarters and the organization of the TS — because Olcott fulfilled his dharma. In 1906, one year before his death, Olcott established the last of the five schools in Madras (Chennai). There is an old saying of profound wisdom that a society prospers when an old man plants a tree knowing fully well that he will not live to benefit from the shade and fruits of the tree when it is grown. This is his legacy to us. Keeping the organizational interest above personal interests at all times, may we work together in such a way that we deserve this legacy, and in the true spirit of Adyar Day. ✧

**We seek, inquire, reject nothing without cause, accept nothing without proof:
we are students, not teachers.**

Henry Steel Olcott, Inaugural Address, 17 November 1875

Books of Interest

THE SECRET DOCTRINE COMMENTARIES: *The Unpublished 1889 Instructions* by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, transcribed and annotated by Michael Gomes, I.S.I.S. Foundation, The Hague, 2010.

Theosophy needs to be stated afresh for every generation. Theosophy itself is timeless truth, but the generations change, and so also must the presentation of timeless truth if it is to speak to new generations. Besant, Leadbeater, Arundale, Jinarājādāsa, Sri Ram, and still living spokespersons have done and continue doing just that. Nevertheless, the basis of all Theosophy was set forth long ago by the Masters, Olcott, and Blavatsky.

Helena Blavatsky, in particular, is the spiritual mother of us all. So her own comments on and explanations of her masterwork, *The Secret Doctrine*, are invaluable guides to the timeless truths of Theosophy. Shortly after the 1888 publication of her masterwork, HPB held regular meetings with some of her students to deal with matters arising from their study of the *SD*. A stenographer took notes at those meetings, and records of the first twelve such meetings, after editing for clarity and coherence, were published as *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*. Until now, the full transcriptions of those early meetings and no records of later ones have been generally available.

Now, Michael Gomes, one of our

premier Theosophical historians, has produced a full and accurate edition of the 1889 discussions. It takes the place of the old *Transactions*, which are neither complete nor adequate because they formalize the discussion, thereby disguising the spontaneity of exchanges. This new edition deserves a place next to *The Secret Doctrine* itself on the bookshelf of every serious student. It also merits the attention of even casual readers who want to know what *The Secret Doctrine* is about.

This new edition also makes for charming reading: the banter and interchanges among the participants are often humorous and indicate the easy relationship they shared. For example, at one point HPB grows exasperated at the many disorganized questions put to her by the all-male group: ‘You are the most inquisitive people I ever met. If it were not your unmentionables that protect you, you would all be Mother Eves, every one of you! You are the most inquisitive people I ever saw in my life, and you are the most impertinent. You cannot come and ask one thing after another. Tuesday after Monday, Wednesday after Tuesday, and so on. You want to jump from Monday to Saturday and from Saturday to Halifax. Upon my word, I have no patience’ (p. 516). Similarly, Bertram Keightley asks HPB, ‘Can you give us some more definite idea — e.g. an analogy on the physical plane — of what is meant

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here by “Cosmic Desire” which “evolves into absolute Light”?’ HPB begins her response with a joke on herself: ‘Now there is a question for a modest young woman.’

It is, of course, impossible to cover adequately here the content of the 653 pages of transcriptions in this volume. The book’s 23-page index will help the curious to find many of the important topics covered in the instructions: both general, ordinary ones as well as specifically Theosophical ones.

Dreams

For example, the ordinary subject of dreams has fascinated human beings from our earliest days. The Greek epic *Odyssey* talks about true dreams that come through gates of horn and false dreams that come through gates of ivory. Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio* concerns a true, prophetic dream and incorporates Pythagorean philosophy. The Judeo-Christian Bible is full of dreams. Chaucer’s ‘Nun’s Priest’s Tale’ talks about the difference between and the causes of true and false dreams, the latter being the result of indigestion or the like. In more recent times, Freud wrote about dreams as unconscious expressions of psychological problems, and Jung thought they were efforts to resolve such problems. In *The Secret Doctrine*, dreams are mentioned only twice and both times incidentally; the *SD Commentaries*, however, include extensive and insightful discussions of them.

We learn in the *Commentaries* that in sleep, if the higher mind is also inactive (or sleeps), the automatic activity of the

cerebellum (or back brain) may be consciously remembered as dreams (pp. 42, 52–3), which are the false dreams coming through the gates of ivory. These dream emanations of the cerebellum are ‘instinctive feelings which . . . are just recollections of what took place’ (p. 53). ‘The average person dreams what is perfect nonsense, dreams of digestion [as Chaucer wrote], of nervous disturbances [as Freud thought], etc.’ (p. 55).

However, there are other ‘dreams that really are [true] dreams’ (p. 55); ‘those dreams . . . that really have something in them [being true dreams coming through the gates of horn] are produced by the vision of the higher Ego’ (p. 53). ‘I said to you here that it is when we do not dream about anything [derived from the physical plane] that we dream the most. Not only that, but we act the most, and we live on an entirely different plane from this one, and our life is a thousand times more active. Our existence, rather, is a thousand times more varied: and it would be a nice thing if we could bring it back. . . . There . . . you are not separate from any man in creation, as your mind is not separate from the ALL’ (pp. 80, 82). Consciousness in Devachan is that of such a dream that is blissful and timelessly present (p. 25).

It is noteworthy that HPB’s treatment of dreams is consonant with a long tradition about dreaming. With respect to most of our ordinary dreams, what HPB says is commonsensical: they are just the consequences of physical or psychological experiences we have had during our

waking state. But she also recognizes a totally different order of dreaming, which derives from a higher level and reflects a different order of existence: a communication from our higher selves to serve as an inspiration to our future actions.

Fohat

On the other hand, the specifically Theosophical subject of fohat is dealt with extensively in both *The Secret Doctrine* (with nearly two columns of references in its index) and in the *Commentaries* (with more than a score of references, many of multiple pages). The term is not in general English dictionaries, but *The Theosophical Glossary* calls it Tibetan and defines it as a ‘term used to represent the active (male) potency of the Śakti (female reproductive power) in nature. The essence of cosmic electricity’.

In the *Commentaries*, HPB distinguishes between an eternal fohatic principle, which she calls ‘the Śakti or Force of the Divine’, and its periodical manifestation as fohat proper, which she equates with the creator god Brahmā (p. 139). However, because Brahmā (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver), and Śiva (the destroyer) are all one — a functionally diverse trinity — fohat is also both constructive and destructive, as well as vitally preservative (p. 373). It is the energetic force that produces manifestation: ‘Fohat . . . means also the self-moving and that which forces to move. . . . This is the real, long translation of the word, Fohat’ (p. 432).

As the moving, creative force, fohat is

likened to the Greek Eros, ‘that universal force of attraction which causes particles to congregate, combine, and correlate, and to produce a triad. Well, that creative force is our Fohat, who neither creates, nor does he produce anything *per se* and by himself, but in virtue of his action, elements, as well as beings, seek to unite in polarity; from which unison results life’ (p. 517). After an extended elaboration on this subject, Bertram Keightley enthused: ‘What you have said there is very good, and it is a great deal more than you have said anywhere in *The Secret Doctrine*.’ To that somewhat backhanded compliment, HPB replied in kind: ‘But I thought you stood there over me when I was writing.’ Her response seems to reflect the fact that the Keightleys, to whom she had shown a draft of *The Secret Doctrine*, had insisted she revise it before publication and is another example of the banter that characterized the sessions on which the *Commentaries* report.

The identification of fohat as the ‘essence of cosmic electricity’ in the *Glossary* (as cited above) appears to be a metaphor using ‘electricity’ to represent the ‘active principle’ or ‘life’ of the cosmos (pp. 248–51). HPB calls fohat ‘the synthetic motor power of all the imprisoned life forces’ (p. 293) and ‘the universal force of life’ (p. 301), that is, the power that brings together all embodied vital forces. She also says, ‘Fohat is the symbol of universal unpolarized electricity [embracing both ‘centripetal and centrifugal forces’]’ (p. 430). Metaphors are inevitable in talking about these matters.

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Fohat is also said to be like threads, the knots in which are the sun and other bodies of the solar system (p. 240), a metaphor that may suggest contemporary string theory in physics. HPB anticipated a great deal that science after her time has come to recognize.

Fohat is also said to act consciously (p. 300), which we might understand as meaning, not 'as a person', but 'with a purpose' in contrast with automatically. However it is also called 'a personification of Mahat', which the Glossary defines as the 'first principle of Universal Intelligence and Consciousness'. HPB clearly states the centrality of fohat to manifestation: 'Fohat is everything, he is the life principle, the vital air we breathe. He is in all the elements. Fohat is the symbol of the root of manifestation . . . the root and soul of motion. . . . Fohat is simply a force in nature. . . . Fohat you have in your blood, every one of you. Fohat is the primal motor of everything, from the beginning of the Manvantara' (p. 361).

Conclusion

The forgoing two examples, sampling what the *Commentaries* have to say about dreams and fohat, illustrate only imperfectly the richness of this volume. In addition to such specific discussions, it contains general observations about life, such as the following comment by HPB, which reflects exactly a judgement of Siddhartha Buddha: 'I do not think I have ever met a truly happy man. To everyone life is a burden, there is something they

cannot find — any interior satisfaction, or peace of mind. I have never met one man yet who was perfectly satisfied' (p. 540).

The discussions also are rife with instances of bantering, several already quoted above; others pop up throughout the volume. For example, once when HPB became weary of the questions put to her, as she frequently did, she responded, 'Can I say to you anything better? What cross-examiners you are.' William Kingsland objected, 'Not *cross!*' to which HPB replied, 'No, *cross-examiners*' (p. 222). The exchange plays on the ambiguity between those who 'cross-examine another' and those who 'examine another crossly'. Such playful use of language is frequent. So is HPB's realistic, if overly modest, self-assessment. For example, at one point, HPB corrects at length an error of wording in *The Secret Doctrine*, and Walter Old (Sepharial) responds, 'We shan't complain so long as it draws forth so much intelligent instruction. Even mistakes give rise to intelligent interest.' HPB replies, 'My dear ladies and gentlemen, if I knew English, I would hold meetings. I have not got the talent for the gab. If I could only put into Olcott's head that which I know, or have his eloquence (because he speaks beautifully), I could do something' (p. 429).

This edition is what is now called a 'keeper' (i.e., one suitable for or worth keeping). Indeed, it is an invaluable addition to our stock of classic Theosophical books. JOHN ALGEO

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

Who am I?

RADHA BURNIER

WHO am I? is a question that could be asked by anybody, and most people will immediately say: 'I am so and so, was born to so and so, had my schooling in such and such a school, I have been working as an officer in a reputed organization for many years, or I am proficient in such and such a subject'. This kind of answer which is the most common we can expect is easy, and it is the story of what the physical man or woman was and did.

But the trouble is, that the physical person is only a part of the real person. What is the real person will remain intact; most people hope that they will be alive after the death of the body. If the body dies the feelings and emotions do not necessarily die, although people who are grossly materialistic think that is the end.

The emotions can be of various kinds including attachment to or repulsion of certain people. Besides the physical existence, one could experience jealousy or depression, or elation and contentment. It all depends on what the person has experienced. There are numerous feelings, some of which are of course temporary, but others may be lasting; and the person still has the lasting feelings, good or bad. They have to be worked out, which

perhaps can happen to him or her in another life, provided we think of Life as consisting of different conditions which one experiences.

Similarly, the thinking process will include many things, and emotions and thoughts may be mixed up in an irretrievable way. The thoughts may be, let us say, concern for members of the family, or they may be thoughts of suspicion with regard to some persons. But leaving aside all such thoughts about food, about livelihood and so on, there are thoughts that do not have a basis in experience, in the past life. These thoughts may be of some scientific evaluation which we think of as ordinary; or the thoughts may be of people, whether a person is nice or not, is useful or is a vagabond — there can be many thoughts of such a kind. But there are also thoughts of a more personal nature. Mathematicians may think of a problem of which nobody else except for a few mathematicians, are conscious. So thoughts can range over a vast area, some real, some imagined, some foolish, some useful, etc.

These thoughts and feelings are real to the average person. The average person has to work out his likes and dislikes of

Summary of a Convention Lecture, Adyar, 30 December 2010.

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the physical environment, ups and downs, and mental images. This needs another incarnation. So he passes from what we call this world to another. It is a long journey which everybody has to go through until he or she begins to realize that most of the ideas pertaining to physical life, and also to our emotions and thought worlds, are unnecessary. In fact we feel empty and aimless when we do not have thoughts. But are we really empty, or do we imagine so?

Let us try to understand what happens even for a few moments when one is very much alive, but with no thoughts. Then one is merely watching, listening, receptive to whatever may come. Then we begin to see and know inwardly many things, which we do not normally even think about for a short time; or if we do, it is only by way of a casual observation. When the mind is not working on the many things that absorb it, and is watching silently, unagitated, it begins to see what has never been seen before. An old face still looks beautiful, because behind the wrinkles and other signs of age the person sees a life, an individuality with great possibilities. Or he may see the leaf of a tree lying on the ground and it is like seeing a whole world of beauty, of qualities of life, which we had never known of as existing.

Then we may give attention to what the Vietnamese teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, points out: 'We have a great many stems linking us to our Mother Earth. There are stems linking us with the clouds. If there are no clouds, there will be no water for

us to drink. We are made of at least seventy percent water, and the stem between the cloud and us is really there. This is also the case with the river, the forest, the logger, and the farmer. There are hundreds and thousands of stems linking us to everything in the cosmos, and making it possible for us to be. Do you see the link between you and me? If you are not there, I am not here. This is certain. If you do not see it yet, please look more deeply and I am sure you will. I asked the leaf whether it was frightened because it was autumn and the other leaves were falling. The leaf told me, "No. During the whole spring and summer I was completely alive. I worked hard to help nourish the tree, and now much of me is in the tree. I am not limited by this form. I am also the whole tree, and when I go back to the soil, I will continue to nourish the tree. So I do not worry at all. As I leave this branch and float to the ground, I will wave to the tree and tell her, 'I will see you again very soon'."

'That day there was a wind blowing and, after a while, I saw the leaf leaving the branch and float down to the soil, dancing joyfully, because as it floated it saw itself already there in the tree. It was so happy. I bowed my head, knowing that I have a lot to learn from the leaf.'

We do not know whether the author of these words is fully aware of the depths of what he says.

Let us look at what Krishnamurti who had no intention of impressing anybody had to say: 'Pure love does not require an object of affection. It is like the shining of

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the sun. It shines on all. As when the sun rises he floods the world with his own beauty and brings out in every leaf and flower all the delicate shades of colour; so that the pure love that streams forth from the heart of a liberated man sheds its tender light on everyone; and in the light of that love, all the hidden beauty of character, all the strength and beauty of thought and feeling are revealed to the loving eyes of perfect love. But such a love means an utter absence of likes and dislikes. There is neither attraction nor repulsion. The expression of such love must necessarily be as varied as the human beings who receive it.

‘Be really in communication with nature, not verbally caught in the description of it, but be a part of it, be aware, feel that you belong to all that, be able to have love for all that, to admire a deer, the lizard on the wall, that broken branch lying on the ground. Look at the evening star or the new moon, without the word, without merely saying how beautiful it is and turning your back on it, attracted by something else, but watch that single star and new delicate moon as though for the first time. If there is such communion between you and nature then you will commune with man, with the boy sitting next to you, with your educator, or with your parents. We have lost all sense of relationship in which there is not only a verbal statement of affection and concern but also this sense of communion that is not verbal. It is a sense that we are all together, that we are all human beings, not divided, nor broken up, not belonging to

any particular group or race, or to some idealistic concepts, but that we are all human beings, we are all living on this extraordinary, beautiful earth.’

So the eyes may be seeing something, but the mind sees very much more, and this may extend very far. We do not know how far because we have not experienced something similar ever before.

Merely giving attention, without thinking of something or the other about what was intended, is not an easy thing. We have become so accustomed to invent or presume with our thoughts things that we see or do not see. In fact the mental process goes on and on even when we are sleeping. Deep sleep without any thoughts is not easy to come to for grown-up people. Children of course may not have complicated thoughts; when they sleep they sleep. But that is not so with people who have numerous mental attractions and observations during their lifetime. But even for a few minutes, if a person watches quietly without inwardly saying something or the other about what he is seeing, he begins to see more and more of what is not usual. For example, when seeing a leaf, a fruit, a face of someone, he begins to see what is usually not taken notice of. The world is full of unnoticed things, including trees, animals, birds and the sky.

When a person looks fully at any of these things that are around, or as fully as possible, without coming to conclusions, ideas and so on, he sees what most people do not. A tree may be in front of one’s house, which one may be ‘looking at’ all

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the time, but it takes on a new life when seen with real eyes — eyes which are not affected by thoughts of previous things. So the whole world of Nature appears different, including human beings which we think are the only important things to care for. Therefore the statement in Sanskrit — *Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram*, truth, goodness and beauty. When a person is awakened he sees differently; what he sees is true.

This is not only relevant to seeing what exists in Nature; of course, in Nature we see things we like and others which we do not. But real seeing means there are no likes and dislikes, particularly when we see other human beings with whom there is daily contact. One may have prejudices against a black man, or a white one, but all such prejudices vanish and do not exist.

This is made clear by some paintings which show ordinary things like a face or a shape, but there is a light which comes through them. It is what makes for great art. Beethoven seems to have said that he listened to music which others could not hear, for it came from another sphere, and he tried to bring it down to the physical level. Some of his great works struck people because of the newness in them. The same is true of all great art in any country — that it brings down to the

ordinary level something extraordinary from finer worlds and spheres.

If we could only see the reality, every face, every human being would appear different because one sees not only what appears to the average onlooker, but the greater reality underneath, hidden behind the outward appearance. An uncultured, simple person is seen not only as he is, but also as what he will be — a beautiful being, full of light and wisdom. This is the future. Clear eyes see this, and that is why we call such people with such eyes, seers.

What is beyond all this? There, perhaps one can see the enlightened beauty, goodness and truth everywhere, but not in infinite proportion. The enlightened perceivers, the real seers, are not living in time. They will see the past, present and future as a glorious reality, where everything of the past is lighted up in a way we do not understand. There is a wonderful time before all of us, and we have to work towards that. Those who are not aware to that extent see only something of the past and the present, but the enlightened people see everything also as it will be. When we see the bud of a beautiful flower, we already have in our mind's eye what it will become, and we care for the bud, nourish it and look after it till it comes into its own.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

Matthew, 6:22

The Heresy of Separateness

PATRIZIA MOSCHIN CALVI

‘Together we stand, divided we fall.’ (Pink Floyd, *Hey You*)

‘*Omnia munda mundis*’ (Titus 1:15)

TO begin with, I would like to quote the following inspiring words from *The Voice of the Silence*: ‘If through the Hall of Wisdom thou wouldst reach the Vale of Bliss, disciple, close fast thy senses against the great dire heresy of separateness that weans thee from the rest.’ The feeling of separateness belongs to the lower levels of manifestation and, unfortunately, the only reality we take into consideration is this level of our sensorial perceptions.

However, what we see is not what really is, but just something influenced by what we are, a reality seen through a kind of individual screen: for example, if Gautama Buddha entered this room he would not see a hundred people but a hundred Buddhas. It is worthwhile to point out how this statement significantly affects even our inner work as well as its quality and action on our essence. It is always useful to remember that we interpret everybody and everything through our state of consciousness, that is, we create our own reality, influencing our thoughts, words and actions; and that,

beyond all the events and situations that we observe and which strike us, there are deeper levels of life and truth.

As spiritual seekers, a leap in awareness is needed as we have to be fully aware that we are first of all ‘souls’, powerful and invisible, and that, therefore, we have to consider not just our material aspect, so limited and limiting even on a perceptive level.

From a Theosophical point of view, our existence itself on this planet gives us the opportunity to walk that path along which spiritual gifts come to maturity, to understand that spirit and matter are one thing and transcendent qualities already belong to everyone as far as we are aware of them and able to unveil them.

All this has to be seen as a sign of that absolute wisdom which, recognizing the oneness of the Universe with everything in it, affirms that there is no separateness within the WHOLE and that misery and sorrow come from our lack of full understanding.

Hence, there is not only the necessity

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of our identifying ourselves with the vehicles of our personality (level of physical body, astral or emotional level and lower *manas*) but also the effort to go beyond the known which constantly generates illusions, towards the Valley of Beatitude, away from 'the great dire heresy of separateness that weans thee from the rest'.

Therefore, let us pay special attention to the aspect of *māyā*, which limits and stops our experiences within the known, whereas the vastness of the unknown permeates us without our becoming aware of it.

Māyā is the Self which veils itself, just as every differentiated unity is like this through its illusory cycles; it is in its substance, one with the Supreme and Unique Spirit.

The mystifying veil which covers everything involves all of us and our confusing values with their superfluities that lead us to revise, distort, choose and relativize perceptions of the mind, through our sensory system, to maintain and perpetuate the sense of separateness.

As Theosophists, breaking the veil of *māyā* might mean taking responsibility to find the true Self, our essence, to be as we are, to put an end to our subtle illusions that separate us from the Whole, pursuing that bright dawn which has always been ours.

Paraphrasing *Light on the Path*, it can be stated that the 'spirit of brotherhood', the light of the world, the only one which illuminates the Path, lives within us. However, if we are not able to discern it

in ourselves, it is no use looking for it somewhere else, perhaps blaming others for its lack in them. It also exists beyond us and when we reach it, we would have lost ourselves.

Generally, in individual development, the first materialized thing is the cooperating spirit, which, giving value to mutual relationships among all human beings, creates links, synergies, harmonic and fruitful collaborations at a social level. Then, thanks to 'mature' relations, we become aware that the divine principle resides within all of us.

Then every action becomes impersonal for the benefit of all human beings, purifying thoughts and feelings which then move vertically, as we live the burning flame of unselfishness in a never-ending expansion and perpetual search of the Good of Wholeness. Making our reflections now topical, let us consider, according to the Theosophical literature, the necessity to bring some groups of people to embodying together not only to realize mutual karmic relations but also to learn to work together for one great single aim. Of course, that is meant also for us, here and now. The value of working together is greater than the accomplishment of a project because it gives origin to subtle yet powerful synergies from whose loving vitality the divine *buddhi* light will arise, which is the spiritual man's burning energy. And when the *buddhic* vehicle develops and insight reaches the physical brain, it will grant wisdom and perfect knowledge.

According to the Ancient Wisdom,

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love is the most important of all attributes and it begins with an attitude of goodwill, friendship towards others, understanding, and all good impulses aimed at helping people on the path towards happiness. A universal disposition may develop from that personal feeling.

The Maha Chohan wrote in a letter dated 1881: 'It is not the individual and determined purpose of attaining oneself Nirvāna (the culmination of all knowledge and absolute wisdom) which is, after all only an exalted and glorious *selfishness*, but the self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead on the right path our neighbour, to cause as many of our fellow creatures as we possibly can to benefit by it, which constitutes the true Theosophist.' It is a simple statement of brotherhood, yet a deep one, and also a model for our own life.

I am not an eminent scholar, a scientist, a philosopher, a priest. I am a normal person but my lecture will turn out well or badly according to your friendly or hostile attitude. Why? What is that force, so powerful and unique, capable of accomplishing such a miracle?

Dear brothers, within our organization we have developed great capabilities of finding common aspects among religion, philosophy and science but we have to find common aspects also among ourselves. Brotherhood is our challenge, our mission.

'Brother' comes from the Latin word *frater* corresponding to the Sanskrit *bhrathru* and it is probably from its root *bhar*, meaning to bring, to sustain, to

support, that the word originates (and from there the German *bruder* and the English *brother*) with the meaning of 'sons of the same father'. The Greek word is *phratèr-phrator*, that is member of a tribe. So we share a common membership and origin, ties which are far more important than any blood ties because they make us equal on a higher level, the spiritual one, allowing us to be on the same wavelength when working together and to express our own potential.

H. P. Blavatsky used to say in 1888 that the Masters cannot do much if the members of the Theosophical Society do not share thoughts and feelings.

What is Brotherhood if we are not able to realize all our so-called wisdom? Knowledge and words are not Theosophy, they do not have any value, any right of citizenship, we do not have any right to pronounce or express them; divine light does not reach the human soul while man allows his lower nature to dominate him. Our knowledge is like sheets of paper: Brotherhood is needed to hold them together in order to avoid dispersion.

Are we still able to feel we are all one? This is the challenge the Theosophical Society is experiencing at this historical period of time. Are we aware of this? Do we think of ourselves as brothers, sons of the same father, that is belonging to the same family and so working together?

Our Theosophical Society, now more than ever, needs unity and solidarity so that, while we act accordingly to perfect harmony's laws, it can allow everybody who wants to, to serve in the best possible

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way. To flourish, the Theosophical Society has to grow from inside but the maturity and awareness level of the whole association depends on the contribution of every single member, on his individual consciousness, abnegation and unselfishness. Basic and absolutely fundamental concepts such as Universal Brotherhood without any distinction cannot be violated intentionally without taking into consideration the consequences on a metaphysical level, without fully understanding the damage caused by that lack of harmony, to that subtle though powerful net that unites all of us.

All of us are the Theosophical Society, but what is our state of mind, what is the enthusiasm we use every day to renovate our bonds of love with Life and the Masters, what is our attitude towards other brothers, the inner growth that allows us to work positively and proactively for the good of our fellowship, knowing we are all on a kind of probation as members of this association? The most important thing is to pursue together, united, the aim of Universal Brotherhood without distinction and I believe the only way we have to get out of the *impasse* consists in making constructive suggestions and offering comprehension and loving care; all this will enable our group to move forward solemnly and harmoniously with the support of our personal strength, united in our positive, pure and fraternal intentions, thoughts, words. We are not just an association; brotherhood without distinction is a requested task; we are the Knights of Brotherhood and nobody will

ever spoil this wonderful wholeness with its common aims as profound and ancient as Eternal Wisdom.

The Theosophical table is the round table par excellence where everybody is *primus inter pares* (first among equals) and is considered only according to his spiritual values. If we realize that no leaf has its equal; that Nature has given every human being unique, inimitable qualities to develop, and if we — luckily — differ from each other, the great challenge is to gather all beings under one single flag, that of Truth.

Jiddu Krishnamurti said in his conversation with the Jesuit father E. Schallert: 'Because you see, after all, what is important in living is unity, harmony between human beings. That can only come about if there is harmony in each one; and that harmony is not possible if there is any form of division inside or outside, externally or internally.'

It is necessary to learn again to understand, to unify and not to divide, to accept everyone and everything, to distinguish what gives us freedom from what keeps us imprisoned in unawareness, as the whole is more than the sum of its parts. If we stand together we are irresistible.

Being united does not mean we cannot be different, as differences are indeed great resources and rich opportunities — our contribution, as individuals, to the One. I believe we have to start working together again silently, confidently, bearing in mind we are a whole 'soul', strong and of high capacity, able to collaborate and achieve universal

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harmony. 'Breaking points' such as the present ones remind us of our responsibilities, asking us for a leap in awareness. In these present, chaotic and confused times, stars can still arise.

This process is similar to the graceful, involuntary work of oysters which, irritated by grains of sand, create pearls. It is a way of behaviour that offers proactive, creative answers, that goes directly to the heart of Life, of Truth, allowing us 'to walk through the room of Wisdom to reach the Valley of Beatitude'.

Jiddu Krishnamurti affirmed:

Truth can come to you only when your mind and heart are simple, clear, and there is love in your heart, not if your

heart is filled with the things of the mind. When there is love in your heart, you do not talk about organizing for brotherhood, you do not talk about belief, you do not talk about division or the powers that create division, you need not seek reconciliation. Then you are a simple human being without a label, without a country. This means that you must strip yourself of all those things and allow truth to come into being, and it can come only when the mind is empty, when the mind ceases to create.

It is the only way to live up to Life's wonderful harmony, to be true *peregrini in itinere*, authentic Knights of the Order of Brotherhood without Distinction. ✧

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

Psalm 51:10,11

The TS on Probation

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

ANYONE who has studied even the rudiments of the history of the Theosophical Society will realize that the circumstances leading to its inception were far from ordinary. For example, the decision to form the TS preceded, by almost a century, the meeting of HPB and Col. Olcott at the Eddie farmhouse in Chittenden, Vermont. It was made by the Adepts and their Teachers as shown by evidence presented in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (Letter 22). Probably due to the nature of their involvement with the beginnings of the TS the fledgling body had to be put to the test of probation as the following passage shows:

On 17 November next the Septenary term of trial given the Society at its foundation in which to discreetly 'preach us' will expire. One or two of us hoped that the world had so far advanced intellectually, if not intuitionally, that the Occult doctrine might gain an intellectual acceptance, and the impulse given for a new cycle of occult research. Others — wiser as it would now seem — held differently, but consent was given for the trial. It was stipulated,

however, that the experiment should be made independently of our personal management; that there should be no abnormal interference by ourselves. So casting about we found in America the man to stand as leader — a man of great moral courage, unselfish, and having other good qualities. He was far from being the best, but . . . he was the best one available. With him we associated a woman of most exceptional and wonderful endowments. Combined with them she had strong personal defects, but just as she was, there was no second to her living fit for this work. We sent her to America, brought them together — and the trial began. (Letter 45)

Here it is suggested that the Society did not undergo only that initial 'probation' but that it has been subjected to a series of similar tests, some of which have shaken it to its very foundations.

The option of receiving him or not as a regular chela — remains with the Chohan. M. has simply to have him tested, tempted and examined by all and every means, so as to have his real nature drawn out. This is a rule with us as inexorable as it is disgusting in your Western sight, and I

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could not prevent it even if I would. It is not enough to know thoroughly what the chela is capable of doing or not doing at the time and under the circumstances during the period of probation. We have to know of what he *may* become capable under different and every kind of opportunities. (Letter 74)

From the point of view of the Adepts probation is a process of testing and examining an individual — or a group of individuals — ‘by all and every means, so as to have his real nature drawn out’. The implication here is that before the Adepts can work with someone the true nature of that individual needs to be exposed. No wonder Sinnett and Hume protested at this as a form of invasion of privacy. But the Adepts are not guided in their work by worldly considerations or conventions. As their ultimate aim is the complete regeneration of the human consciousness, they can only accept the help of those individuals who have purged themselves, to a great degree, of selfishness and self-centredness. Perhaps the influence of the Adepts causes a light to shine into the nooks and corners of the human soul, bringing out into the open motivations and attitudes which were hitherto lurking in the dark. It is not difficult to envisage how unpleasant and uncomfortable such a process can be.

The Mahatma, in the above-mentioned quotation, also explains a very important point: ‘It is not enough to know thoroughly what the chela is capable of doing or not doing at the time and under the

circumstances during the period of probation. We have to know of what he *may* become capable under different and every kind of opportunities.’ The process of probation aims at establishing what our truest motivations are. *Light on the Path* speaks about the ‘giant weed of self’ while saying that it has grown through ages of evolutionary development. One who is serious about Theosophical work cannot afford to ignore such a deep-rooted force. It needs to be exposed, seen for what it is and expunged. And this is the process of probation. It is definitely not for the faint-hearted.

It may be easier to understand such a process at an individual level. But what does it mean to state that the TS, as an organization, may have undergone periods of probation? The following quote throws some light on this question:

I may tell you no news if I say that it was Mr Hume’s attitude when the *Eclectic* was formed that caused our chiefs to bring Mr Fern and Mr Hume together. The latter reproached us vehemently for refusing to take in as chelas — himself, and that sweet, handsome, spiritual and truth-aspiring boy — Fern. We were daily dictated laws, and as daily taken to task for being unable to realize our own interests. And it will be no news though it may disgust and shock you, to learn that the two were brought into the closest relationship in order to bring out their mutual virtues and defects — each to shine in his own true light. Such are the laws of Eastern *probation*. (Letter 101)

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One of the great evolutionary opportunities the TS offers to its members is to bring 'them into the closest relationship in order to bring out their mutual virtues and defects — each to shine in his own true light'. Perhaps this is the real test of brotherhood, namely, to work with people as they are and not as we want them to be. Anyone who has had to work in a committee, at whatever level, will perhaps be able to testify that this is one of the great challenges a worker has to face. In this, like in many other situations in life, if there is a real degree of self-understanding and self-effacement, working with others becomes much more possible and harmonious.

The Sanskrit word *ahamkāra* denotes 'the conception of one's own individuality, self-consciousness, the making of self, thinking of self, egotism, pride, haughtiness'. It describes a very potent tendency that has laid down roots within the human consciousness for millennia, and that tends to remain hidden in the context of superficial social interactions. But an institution which has as its first and most important Object Universal Brotherhood without distinction, has to inevitably challenge its members by drawing out the multifaceted expressions of this 'giant weed of self'. Otherwise, how can the TS be a true 'regenerating practical Brotherhood' as it was meant to be according to the Adepts' plans? In the following quotation one of them presents in greater detail how far-reaching and serious the process of probation can be:

. . . we allow our candidates *to be tempted* in a thousand various ways, so as to draw out the whole of their inner nature and allow it the chance of remaining conqueror either one way or the other. . . . The victor's crown is only for him who proves himself worthy to wear it; for him who attacks *Māra* single-handed and conquers the demon of lust and earthly passions; and not *we* but he himself puts it on his brow. It was not a meaningless phrase of the Tathāgata that 'he who masters *Self* is greater than he who conquers thousands in battle': there is no such other difficult struggle. If it were not so, adeptship would be but a cheap acquirement. . . . Only those who can look ahead at the far remote consequences of things are in a position to judge as to the expediency of our own actions, or those we permit in others. What may seem present bad faith may in the end prove the truest, most benevolent loyalty. Let time show who was right and who faithless. One who is true and approved today, may tomorrow prove, under a new concatenation of circumstances a traitor, an ingrate, a coward, an imbecile. (Letter 92)

The end of probation signifies the mastery of self, at least up to a point, in the sense that one will not allow petty personal reactions to interfere with the Masters' work. They include self-centred motives and thoughts. As long as we react personally we are unfit to help them in their undertakings. But as the above-mentioned passage reveals, other tests may lie ahead for until the giant weed

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of separateness is not completely and irreversibly destroyed even the minutest particle of selfishness may flare up and throw us off course. Constant vigilance is therefore required of every candidate to Theosophical work.

There have been a number of serious crises in the history of the TS. The Coulomb conspiracy was one of them and its ramifications continue to this day, when a number of publications still consider as true the conclusions of the Hodgson Report. The Judge Case was another difficult moment for the Society as a whole, perhaps not well handled by all concerned at that time, but certainly one that dispensed tests to all and sundry during those intensive years of 1894 and 1895. The Leadbeater Case of 1906 completely divided the Society and represented a very grave test for Annie Besant even before she was elected President in 1907. The level of vituperation generated at that time seems to continue unabated outside the TS, with a number of writers maintaining that the Society never recovered from that crisis. However, the statistics of Dr Besant's period of Presidency eloquently prove that view ill-founded.

The recent Presidential elections had the contours of another crisis, somewhat serious, in which polarization again divided members in different continents. Perhaps there are some members who may regret what they said or wrote during that period. I know I do. However, there are signs that for many members their dedication to what the Society

stands for is deeper and stronger than circumstantially polarized views. The awareness that the TS has a very important unfinished task to perform is much more important than personal views we may entertain. However, we must continue to be vigilant for, as long as we are human, tests will come, sometimes sent by those who know much better than we do, as the following passage shows:

Whosoever has sown the seeds of the present tempest, the whirlwind is strong, the whole Society is reaping it and it is rather fanned than weakened from Shigatse. You laugh at *probations* — the word seems ridiculous as applied to you? You forget that he who approaches our precincts even in thought, is drawn into the vortex of probation. (Letter 131)

The Book of Job in the Old Testament presents the story of a devout and dedicated man, who was put through the fires of probation. Everything he had was taken away from him, even the people and things he loved most. But however horrific his loss was, he did not lose his faith in God, the Supreme Existence. Here is one of Job's soulful moments of contrition, in which he confesses that the harsh trials he had undergone helped him to see more clearly:

I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear, and

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I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me.' I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (42:1-6)

If life's ordeals help us to see better and to understand more clearly, the period of probation — if we are found worthy to be drawn into it — may help us to realize that the only thing that really matters is to help the Masters' plan for a regenerated humanity. In her article 'The New Cycle',

published in *La Revue Theosophique* (March 1889), HPB stated that 'In its capacity of an abstract body, the Society does not believe in anything, does not accept anything, and does not teach anything.' Aware of these sobering remarks by our great Founder, I would like to conclude with a prayer: The Soul of the TS belongs to the work of the great Masters of the Wisdom, which is the ending of fear, the ending of division and the ending of sorrow. ✧

Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fullness; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
The perfect, clear perception — which is truth.

A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Binds it, and makes all error; and, to know,
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without.

Robert Browning
Paracelsus

Theosophists in Truth

N. SRI RAM

THE following observations from myself, spoken to a gathering at Adyar, may be of interest to our readers:

These are, of course, days which are very, very critical for the world as a whole, and there is little that any one of us can do to help our fellow human beings who are caught in this crisis. All that we can do is to live in such a way, have such thoughts and feelings, as will make us centres of peace, illumination and strength to others. If we live such a life, we are doing what is most needed at present.

There is the time-honoured idea, at least in India, that even without going round to various places, without making any great noise or splash, without ostensible activity, one can help the world potently from where he is, by his thoughts and by an attitude of mind in which his attention and interest are centred in the good of his fellow human beings and upon those truths which are fundamental and essential for our living, which spell out that good. In the old days there were people who, it is said, performed *tapas*, which means austerity, for the world's welfare, sometimes in order to accomplish a specific great deed. I feel it would be well for all of us to live and work in that

spirit of selflessness and dedication, a life of beautiful and sweet simplicity, not self-mortification. We need to concentrate on those things which are really worthwhile, and not fritter away our energy and interest on all kinds of matters which are essentially of trivial significance.

If all of us in the Society prepare ourselves in that way for whatever work we may be able to do, if we strive to live a life of greater purity, more light and sweetness, more brotherliness in a very real sense, not sentimentalism, we will be better and more effective Theosophists. A Theosophist is a man who has a feeling of friendliness in his heart, who seeks truth, and does not chase nor is satisfied with illusions. He is a person whose real interest in life is to make life more beautiful, better and happier for all concerned. Anyone who satisfies these conditions is a real Theosophist, whether he is a member of the Theosophical Society or not.

Many of us are members because we want to help this great organization which exists for a supremely altruistic purpose, altruism in a deep, true and extended sense. The Society does not exist for our own edification, much less for our

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amusement or glorification; it exists in order that each one of us may lend his strength, give of his light and whatever capacity he may have, to make the world a better place in which to live; better not merely from a physical point of view, but with a more spiritual climate, a rarer, more vital atmosphere where all kinds of delicate and wonderful things can grow.

HPB, our great Founder, has said that towards the hundredth anniversary of the Theosophical Society one might expect a fresh spiritual impetus. It is to be hoped that her prophecy will come to pass. But then, what is important is not merely to hope for something great to happen, but to prepare ourselves in such a way that if there is anything beautiful happening, whether now or then, we are open to it, are able to enter into that beauty and convey it to those with whom we come into contact. We are not called upon to do anything heroic in an outward sense, much less to indulge in heroics of any sort; what we have to do is to be steady where we are, like a candle, not blown by any breeze, which throws its beams in a place of darkness, so that we bring illumination

and cheer in the places where we happen to be. If we can be like that lighted candle with its steady flame going upwards all the time in pure aspiration — you might call it prayer — then we will really have proved ourselves Theosophists in truth, as we are now Theosophists in name.

We should all be able in the times ahead to do more and better than we have done hitherto; not by any kind of feverish activity — of course everyone has to be active in his own way — but by such action as is wise, beneficent and of deep spiritual import. We may do a small thing and that little thing may be a gesture which conveys a very great deal. It may have an extraordinary significance, even though it may be a slight little act; or we may do a multitude of things, make an inordinate amount of noise, a lot of raging, tearing propaganda to convince others that we are doing better than we really are. But all that would be just so much sound and fury which dies down, leaving things much as they were. It is always truth and its action which counts, not make-believe, truth in what we think, feel and act. It is the truth that is deeply within us which matters most. ✧

Do good for its own sake; for the good of your spiritual peace.

The Buddha

The Founding of the Modern Theosophical Society

JESSE D. ALTO

ANYONE who reads Theosophy will see that the vital part of its teachings deals with the evolution of the soul of man, which goes from grade to grade towards the perfection of Adeptship. Theosophy is literally translated as Divine (Theos) Wisdom (Sophia). The Society was founded with the exalted purpose of promoting the spiritual regeneration of man. The aim is to change the heart and mind of mankind and prepare them for the next higher step in human evolution. The universal brotherhood was introduced as a necessary base for the promotion of its high aim, namely the radical transformation of man, his whole nature, mode of conduct and future. Now, one hundred years later, this idea of universal brotherhood is accepted verbally, but not in practice. Many of us accept this universal brotherhood as a motto to be realized in due course.

Theosophy is known also as Kabbalah, Sufism, Tao Hsueh, and Divine Wisdom. Like science, Theosophy deals also with direct experience and often of a more subjective and qualitative nature. Theosophy offers reasons for life left untouched by either religion or science.

It holds that the universe is unified, orderly and purposeful, that matter is the instrument for the evolution of life, that thought is a creative power which we can learn to use effectively, and that experience of both joy and suffering is the means by which we grow in character, compassion, power and wisdom.

Theosophists agree generally to the basic ideas and ideal of Theosophy, but they are free to reject any of them and to interpret all of them according to their own lights. This does not mean however that one should assert his point and argue against the ideas of others where they contradict his. Other ideas are measured by their own light. What binds us is not a common set of ideas but a common search for truth. Hence we must seek out the way on our own, verify for ourselves those ideas we intuitively feel are true. And on the path, we need to find our own truth and live our life accordingly. To be a Theosophist, one must only subscribe to the three Objects of the Theosophical Society. These are:

To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without

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distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.

To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.

To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.

According to H. P. Blavatsky, there were theosophists and theosophical schools for the last 2000 years, from Plato down to the medieval alchemists. It was again re-introduced in 1875 by the two most revered Masters of the Wisdom through their outer agent Madame Helena P. Blavatsky, and assisted by Col. Henry Olcott, William Judge and others in New York, USA. The main headquarters of the Society was subsequently transferred to the present International Headquarters located in Chennai (formerly Madras), India. The Society's broad basis accepts into its membership all who profess the idea of Universal Brotherhood, who are interested in promoting investigations into comparative religion, science, and philosophy and who are keen to understand the psychic and occult nature of man; 'to oppose materialism and theological dogmatism by demonstrating the existence of occult forces unknown to science, in nature, and the presence of psychic and spiritual powers in man, at the same time enlarging the views of the spiritualists by showing that there are other agencies at work in the production of phenomena besides the 'spirits' of the dead. Superstition and the premature

development of the occult forces had to be exposed and avoided' (H. P. Blavatsky, *The Original Programme of the Theosophical Society*).

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1. To give to humanity certain deeper truths of life needed for taking the next step in human evolution.
2. To instil certain universal guiding principles like Brotherhood into the minds of people in general, so that it may become possible to usher in a better world order.
3. To provide agents in the outer world who understand the Plan in a general way and can thus consciously cooperate with the Elder Brethren in the work that They are doing for the betterment of the human race. (Dr I. K. Taimni, *Principles of Theosophical Work*)

Dr Taimni goes on to say: the founding of the Theosophical Society is part of a definite move to lift a corner of the veil on life's deeper mysteries by Those who hold the keys to these mysteries that have been hidden from humanity. Probably, the time has come when humanity has to be given a chance of direct cooperation with the Elder Brethren who, unknown and unrecognized, have for ages guided and nurtured it and brought it to the present stage of evolution. The cooperation can be a definite reality and a force in the direction of progress only as the truths of the Ancient Wisdom permeate world thought and bring about

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the required fundamental changes in the life and outlook of the average man. Just now, the Theosophical Society is a small nucleus in the world of such men who are trying to understand these truths and are preparing themselves consciously or unconsciously for this common work with their Elder Brethren, now and in the future. As the Society grows and the greater influence brings more favourable conditions in the world for the reception of these truths, it may be expected that the Elder Brethren will give a more direct lead in the affairs of the world and it will thus become possible for us to move rapidly and smoothly to our destined goal, human perfection.

Dr Taimni further states: The Theosophical Society is not quite like other Societies scattered throughout the world, in which a group of people come and work together to attain a definite object. It has a definite work to do, the study and dissemination of truths concerning the deeper problems of life. And it has another and a far more important function, that is to serve as a direct agency in the work of the Elder Brethren for the regeneration of the world. The Theosophical Society is not a mere academic body but a direct instrument of the Elder Brethren through which they expect to bring about definite changes in the world with the knowledge and cooperation of its members. This fact of the vital connection of the Society with Those who are the real Guides of humanity lends a peculiar dignity to our work, bordering almost on sacredness, and provides the

majority of its active members with that inspiration and enthusiasm that is necessary in a work of this kind. It enables them to stand firm and remain unaffected by the periodical crises that come in the Society and sometimes shake it to its very foundations. They feel on such occasions that their loyalty to the Great Ones and the universal principles of which they are the embodiments, transcends any differences that may happen to arise with regard to the methods of work, and therefore whatever happens, they should not desert the great Cause that the Society represents. The broad Plan is there, and each member can plan his own work carefully and carry it out to the best of his abilities, knowing that whatever its shortcomings are, it will somehow be utilized in the much larger work that the Elder Brethren are doing ceaselessly for the upliftment of mankind.

The General Aim of the Society

The following passages are taken from Dr I. K. Taimni's *Principles of Theosophical Work*: To know exactly what we want in any undertaking is a prerequisite of success. A Theosophical worker should have sufficiently clear notions of particular objectives he may be aiming at with respect to the general aim of the Theosophical Society in its work in the outer world. Theosophical workers are aiming at changing the thoughts and attitude of people in the world so that humanity may be able to take the next step in evolution and may be able to lay the foundation of the future steps ahead, near or far, as the Elder Brethren consider

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necessary. The main problems facing humanity at the present time lie in the wrong habits of thought and perverted attitudes all round. There is ignorance in the world regarding the Plan and methods of evolution, and the forces of prejudice, conservatism, and selfishness and greed are still dominant. There is ignorance of man's true spiritual nature, ignorance of natural laws and of the higher life to be attained by everyone if not soon, then in some future life.

Firstly, Theosophy gives us the broad plan of evolution and thus enables us to determine easily which movements and trends are in the right direction and therefore to be helped, and those in the wrong and therefore to be opposed. Secondly, Theosophy provides us a direction in which we have to move, to take steps in the reconstruction of the world in every field applying our general knowledge to the current problems of every conceivable nature. Thirdly, Theosophy provides vast amounts of information of a scientific nature regarding the world we live in and our place in the scheme of things, enabling us to see all events and things in their proper perspective and to devise correct and effective means for gaining the ultimate end, human perfection. Theosophy is that Eternal Wisdom which alone can guide us in evolving a true and noble civilization that will endure and be free from those ugly and painful features which disfigured the so-called modern civilization.

The vast majority of mankind is not aware of this subtle connection between

the outer conditions prevailing in the world and that govern such conditions. We should realize this fact and see the great necessity of disseminating these truths in the outer world until they permeate its thought atmosphere and bring about the necessary changes in the outlook of the common man. So we see that the dissemination of these truths of Eternal Wisdom is the primary function of the Theosophical Society and a duty incumbent upon all its members throughout the world. The dissemination of the Eternal Wisdom should be partly intellectual and partly spiritual. It must affect our hearts to some extent and bring about those subtle changes inside, which reflect themselves in changes of attitude and ways of looking at things. Mere knowledge or even acceptance of a truth is not enough. It must affect the deeper layers of consciousness if it is to produce any tangible effect on life.

We should work silently and unobtrusively and make the influence of our ideas felt indirectly to a great extent. The influence of our ideas should not appear as an imposition from without, but as a natural evolutionary growth from within. We should be concerned with the causes of evils that we seek to remove and deal only in a secondary manner with the effects that flow from these primary causes.

As one of the Mahatmas said:

The origin of every evil, whether small or great is in human action, in man whose intelligence makes him the one free agent in nature. It is neither nature nor an

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imaginary Deity that has to be blamed, but human nature made vile by selfishness.

The extract from Dr Taimni's book continues thus: If we deal only with the effects and not pay attention to the causes, we shall never succeed in overcoming the problems although we may be able to remove temporarily the outer manifestations. All great spiritual teachers always go to the source of evil and the problems of human sorrow and suffering. They do not offer mere palliatives, but show the path that eliminates the cause of sorrow and suffering to arrive permanently at a state of enlightenment that transcends the afflictions of the lower life. The Theosophical Society is an organization with a spiritual basis to adopt the spiritual way of tackling the difficult and complicated problems we find everywhere in the world. Its members should seek to go deep into these problems and try to discover the underlying causes of evils they want to eradicate. It is not a philanthropic body in the ordinary sense of the term although it exists exclusively for promoting the welfare of humanity.

Where Do We Begin

To be a good server, one must first purify and harmonize his lower selves. A Taoist saying attributed to Lao Tzu reads:

If you want to awaken all of humanity, then awaken all of yourself. It means we must purify and harmonize the physical, emotional and mental vehicles and awaken them and be one with the Higher Self. Truly the greatest gift you have to give is

that of your own self-transformation.

Mrs Radha Burnier, the International President of the Theosophical Society, said that external events are products of the internal state of consciousness. Society cannot change without changing individual human consciousness.

A student of Comparative Philosophy said: 'If we do not share our clarity of understanding, then we impart our confusion.' We must study and understand our true spiritual nature and as such a part of the whole. We are intricately bound together, and any kind of enlightened religious understanding of life recognizes this fact. The highest form of awakening is Buddhahood that has a single clear focus: the deliverance of all beings drowning in the ocean of *samsāra* (illusion; continuous births and deaths). Plainly, tremendous implications are enshrined in any individual self-transformation. It is not merely a private business, for there is always more at stake than one's personal inner peace and well-being. The other beings that he touches in life are also affected. If the planet is polluted and this earth is dying, is it not because humans are sick? We are, on the whole, simply not integrated.

Theosophy teaches mutual-culture before self-culture to begin with. Union is strength. It is by gathering many Theosophists of the same way of thinking into one or more groups, and making them closely united by the same magnetic bond of fraternal unity and sympathy that the object of mutual development

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and progress in theosophical thought may be best achieved. (H. P. Blavatsky, *The Original Programme of the Theosophical Society*)

Among others, the common goal in this mutual culture may be harmlessness and unity in diversity of action, common quest for truth, clarity of understanding and non-argumentation to opposing views, non-attachment to the fruit of action and non-covetousness.

Self-culture leads the student to purification of his lower vehicles, that is the physical, emotional, and mental faculties so that the Higher Self will be able to discipline and control them. The student should remain calm and contented within any situation he finds himself in, learning from the experiences the situation has provided him, and offering all to the Higher Self.

To Help Promote the Cause of the Society

As earnest seekers of the Ancient Wisdom, we must continue our study and gain clarity and understanding, as written in books on Theosophy, like *At the Feet of the Master*, *The Voice of the Silence* and *Light on the Path*. Some students will also be interested to read *The Secret Doctrine*, *Isis Unveiled*, and other books written by Dr Annie Besant, Charles Leadbeater, C. Jinarājadāsa, Geoffrey Hodson, I. K. Taimni and N. Sri Ram, to help deepen understanding and comprehension of the Eternal Wisdom. We should continue to seek by study of the Divine Wisdom; acknowledge, accept and

apply the lessons learned in our daily life, and finally share what we have learned with those willing to listen and learn.

Lodges and Study Groups must regularly hold their stated meetings with a syllabus of studies and assigned discussions on topics previously agreed upon. Interlodge meetings should be held at regular intervals and also visits by members and officers of other Lodges to promote bonding, cooperation and unity among the members of the Society. The Lodge meetings should promote harmony and unity of the members as an expression of wisdom, which unites as opposed to intellectual argumentation, which divides.

Challenges Ahead

In the early years of the Theosophical Society, some members questioned the propriety of collecting membership dues from members. Some consider the annual dues a form of taxation and therefore unbrotherly. The Society has to pay for the cost of newsletters, postage, telephone bills, power bills, office supplies, travel fares and accommodation of Theosophical lecturers, and many other necessary maintenance expenses to keep the operations of the Society going. The Society has also created a Foundation to administer and supervise Theosophical schools and other projects of the Theosophical Order of Service. The amount collected from members as dues is barely enough to pay for fixed operating expenses but the Society has to continue the work and pay the expenses from the voluntary

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contributions of some members. More financial assistance is needed for worthwhile projects to help propagate the teachings of Theosophy.

Often, Theosophists argue about the manner in which Lodge meetings are conducted and the arguments that ensue on issues discussed during the meeting. Mrs Radha Burnier said: 'Let brotherly love guide you. You may differ as much as you like in opinions, but you must not let it lead to any sort of ill feeling or any sort of conceit in your superior discernment in being able to see what to you is the right path. Let us stand together in Brotherhood and carry on our work, whatever work that may be. There is plenty of time later on to argue what this means and what that means. Everything that divides is contrary to the laws of compassion and Universal Brotherhood. Left to their own understanding, people will come to the truth about everything in due time.'

The Theosophical Society has a global mission to spread the teaching of the Ancient Wisdom to help regenerate mankind. The national Sections, Lodges and Study Groups should converge in this mission and continue the work founded by the Masters of the Wisdom. Let us all aspire to become co-workers of the Masters of the Wisdom. One should be one-pointed and dig out the knowledge within himself to be more efficient in the service that is the way for him at present of serving God and the cause of humanity.

After one hundred years of the reintroduction of Theosophy, more and more seekers are attracted to the ancient teachings of the East. How much the teachings can be disseminated so that more will be attracted to join the Society and become earnest seekers and co-workers of the Masters of the Wisdom is a challenge to the Society that needs serious study and planning. ✧

O you mad and miserable people, since you cannot grasp foreign things through anything but yourselves, how will you ever grasp outward things, when you have lost the inner ones? Why do you seek goods far away, as foreigners, when they are near, or rather within yourselves?

Marsilio Ficino

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

BUT now thou askest me how thou mayest destroy this naked knowing and feeling of thine own being. For peradventure thou thinkest that if it were destroyed, all other hindrances were destroyed; and if thou thinkest thus, thou thinkest right truly. But to this I answer thee and I say, that without a full special grace full freely given by God, and also a full according ableness on thy part to receive this grace, this naked knowing and feeling of thy being may in nowise be destroyed. And this ableness is nought else but a strong and a deep ghostly sorrow . . . All men have matter of sorrow; but most specially he feeleth matter of sorrow that knoweth and feeleth that he *is*. All other sorrows in comparison to this be but as it were game to earnest. For he may make sorrow earnestly that knoweth and feeleth not only what he is, but that he *is*. And whoso felt never this sorrow, let him make sorrow; for he hath never yet felt perfect sorrow. This sorrow, when it is had, cleanseth the soul, not only of sin, but also of pain that it hath deserved for sin; and also it maketh a soul able to receive that joy, the which reaveth from a man all knowing and feeling of his being. . . .

This sorrow . . . must every soul have and feel in itself (either in this manner or in another), as God vouchsafeth to teach his ghostly disciples according to his good will and their according ableness in body and in soul, in degree and disposition, ere the time be that they may perfectly be oned unto God in perfect charity — such as may be had here, if God vouchsafeth.

The Cloud of Unknowing

The Origin and Development of Language

SHARMILA S. PARULKAR

‘WOULD a universal language aid Universal Brotherhood?’ is the question.

Volapük (corrupted from English and meaning ‘World-Speak’) was invented in 1879 by Johann M. Schleyer, a priest of Constance, Baden. This language is partly original and partly made up of words of European origin, mainly English. It was in great vogue and by its tenth year about one million people were using it. At its third congress in 1889, held in Paris, everyone including the waiters spoke it. After this triumph, it began to decline rapidly chiefly through internal dissensions. So much for Volapük.

The history of international languages is an interesting one. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* tells us what a difficult task it is to construct one. The first attempt was made by Dalgarno in 1661 and was called ‘Ars Signorum’. The next was by Wilkins in 1668 and was called ‘Real Character’. Neither of these was a success because the ground for such a language had not been prepared, but it is interesting to note that Wilkins’ sketch of phonetics is still considered valuable. After this came Esperanto, widely known by 1907 — an artificial language designed as a medium

for persons of all nations, its vocabulary enriched by new words as they were needed.

There may have been other attempts to create a universal language but let us see what Theosophy has to say on the subject of language in general.

First of all we have to understand the importance of sound; and language is, of course, a collection of sounds. HPB tells us that, in the Sanskrit, as also in the Hebrew and in the alphabets of all other languages, ‘every letter has its occult meaning and its rationale; it is a cause and an effect of a preceding cause and a combination of these very often produces the most magical effect. The vowels especially contain the most occult and formidable potencies’ (*The Secret Doctrine*, I.94). Further, we read that ‘SOUND, for one thing, is a tremendous Occult power; it is a stupendous force, of which the electricity generated by a million of Niagaras could never counteract the smallest potentiality when directed with occult knowledge. Sound may be produced of such a nature that the pyramid of Cheops would be raised in the air, or that a dying man, nay, one at his last

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breath, would be revived and filled with new energy and vigour.’

For Sound generates, or attracts together, the elements that produce an ozone, the fabrication of which is beyond chemistry, but within the limits of Alchemy. (*SD*, I.555)

The last statement leads us into deep waters, and such study and reflection on Sound and Language will be needed if we want to understand the relationship between the two.

Mantra-s are an example of the potency of sound and *mantrika śakti* is defined as the ‘power, or occult potency of mystic words, sounds, numbers or letters’ in the Vedic mantra-s. HPB says that ‘the influence of melody is one of its ordinary manifestations’ (*SD*, I.293). Further, ‘the spoken word has a potency unknown to, unsuspected and disbelieved in, by the modern “Sages!”’ Why? ‘Because sound and rhythm are closely related to four Elements of the Ancients’; and because ‘such or another vibration in the air is sure to awaken corresponding powers, union with which produces good or bad results, as the case may be’ (*SD*, I.307).

What about language itself? Languages ‘have their phases of growth, etc., like all else in nature’ (*SD*, II.662). They ‘have their cyclic evolution, their childhood, purity, growth, fall into matter, admixture with other languages, maturity, decay and finally death’ (*SD*, II.199). HPB says that ‘Language is certainly coeval with reason, and could never have been developed before men become one

with the informing principles in them — those who fructified and awoke to life the mānasic element dormant in primitive men’. And elsewhere she states that the whole human race was at one time of one language, taught to it by Divine Instructors.

HPB tells us that ‘it is almost certain that the great linguistic families pass through three stages’ (*SD*, II.662). And she enumerates these stages.

In the first stage, all words are roots and merely placed in juxtaposition, creating what are called radical languages.

Next, we reach the stage when one root defines another and becomes what is called a ‘determinative element’. This is the stage of agglutinative languages.

Finally, this determinative element unites into a whole, with the formative element, and we have inflected speech.

So far this agrees with what science teaches about the origin of language, but here it stops, for it has no idea where the original roots come from. Therefore, we have to see what Theosophy has to say about the potentiality of forming roots.

‘Monosyllabic speech, we are told, was used by the first approximately fully developed human beings at the close of the Third Root-race . . . after their separation into sexes, and the full awakening of their minds. Before that, they communicated through what would now be called “thought-transference”, though, with the exception of the Race called the “Sons of Will and Yoga”. . . thought was but very little developed in nascent physical man, and never soared

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above a low terrestrial level. . . . Language could not be well developed before the full acquisition and development of their reasoning faculties. This monosyllabic speech was the vowel parent, so to speak, of the monosyllabic languages mixed with hard consonants, still in use amongst the yellow races which are known to the anthropologists' (*SD*, II.198–99).

It is necessary to know a little more about the early races, for a study of language cannot be properly undertaken without taking into consideration the evolution of man and of the races.

The agglutinative languages were spoken by the Fourth (the Atlantean) Race. In time, they, too, decayed and are now used only by a few aboriginal tribes.

The next stage is that of the inflectional, highly developed languages by the Fifth, our Race. The root of Sanskrit, the mystery tongue of the Initiates of the Fifth Race, was the first inflectional language. The Semitic languages are 'the bastard descendants of the first phonetic corruptions of the eldest children of the early Sanskrit' (*SD*, II.200). This brings us down to the present day, and we can trace, if we take the trouble, the source of our modern European languages, through Latin and Greek, to Sanskrit.

We can summarize thus the stages of the development of speech:

1. The First Race was speechless.
2. The Second Root Race communi-

cated by chant-like sounds composed of vowels only.

3. During the second half of the Third Race, after the sexes had separated and mind was awakened, speech developed. This speech was, at first, monosyllabic.

4. The Fourth Race developed what is known as 'Rākshasi Bhāshā' — the language of demons.

5. In the Fifth Root Race our modern languages were developed.

What of the future language, then? It is said that 'the Sanskrit language will one day be again the language used by man upon this earth, first in science and in metaphysics, and later on in common life'. Sanskrit words have for some time been appearing in the literature and the press of the day, as we can see for ourselves. Sanskrit, HPB says, is 'the language of the gods because it can convey metaphysical ideas and early cosmogonical ones'.

Should we, then, rush out to learn Sanskrit? It would not do any harm, but until such time as there is more knowledge of the Ancient Philosophy, and more students of Theosophy to become familiar with such Sanskrit terms as are to be found in their books, it might be better to be more careful in the use of words in our own languages, to use them accurately, to be quite sure of their meaning, and to see that the ones we do use are helpful, not harmful, full of kindness and goodwill.

Leave out my name from the gift if it be a burden, but keep my song.

Rabindranath Tagore

Adyar Day, 2010

S. RAMU

TODAY is another good opportunity to ponder on the significance of Adyar Day and the noble legacies of the President-Founder Col. H. S. Olcott. Adyar Day is celebrated on 17 February every year in memory of Colonel Olcott. All human beings, including saints, are helped by being inspired and motivated from time to time because inspirations we receive once may wear off over time. For the same reasons, today is also a good opportunity to recall and rejoice in Col. Olcott's contributions to the Theosophical Society in particular, but more importantly, to humanity in general. The Theosophical Society, its Adyar Library, innumerable institutions in Sri Lanka and the Olcott Memorial High School stand testimony to his glorious contributions.

The lyrics of the Tamil song with its simple tune, sung by the charming Olcott School children at the commencement of their procession with the decorated picture of Olcott, inspired me to deviate from my speech for a short while to translate a few lines for the benefit of those who do not know Tamil. The song praises and thanks Olcott for his work by saying: Those on earth will never forget to be grateful to you for getting them Theosophy that is

praised on the earth and in the sky (*ākāśa*); you are a philanthropist that came to India from a place that is thousands of miles away to give us the wisdom that helps us tread the right path; as a philanthropist, you are on par with the great Tamil kings known for their charity. The song goes on to say that H. S. Olcott is our father figure and preceptor. (In the Vedic tradition, one's father is considered the first preceptor followed by the guru-preceptor who is a kind of godfather.) The song ends with a commitment to the great cause espoused by Olcott, H. P. Blavatsky, Annie Besant and others, and an urge to work hard towards the well-being of all.

What is the significance of Adyar Day? It cannot be understood without understanding the significance of Adyar itself, because Olcott Day was renamed as Adyar Day, for good reasons, about eighty-five years ago.

Adyar, the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society, continues to be a special place for many of our members. With the serene beauty of its gardens, it has become a sacred refuge for stray animals, weary walkers and members desiring to understand more about

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Theosophy and the Society. Walking through the gates of Adyar, people coming from the city often feel as if they are walking into a different world. The atmosphere changes. Stillness is felt within and without but the within also gets spiritually charged. It is obvious why the Founders chose these particular grounds for their headquarters. Even though the estate is now surrounded by the noise and chaos of the city of Chennai, within Adyar's gates there remains a quality of beauty that is rare to find. Breathing is the most vital function of a living organism and the Adyar gardens are called the lungs of Chennai city. Of course, the lungs should be clear without any serious disorder. The Garden Department has an onerous responsibility and it deserves every support and encouragement so that the flora and fauna are nurtured well and the more-than-a-century long reputation of Adyar remains high.

Originally, 17 February was known as Olcott Day, the day of the Founder's passing in 1907. Members gathered at the place where Henry Steel Olcott was cremated, saying a few words in gratitude and offering flowers to the memorial built in his honour. How did Olcott Day become Adyar Day? During the Convention of the Theosophical Society held at Benares (Varanasi) in 1921, a suggestion was made by Madame I. de Manziarly that each national Section should set apart one day each year, to be called Adyar Day, on which, every branch should take a collection to go towards the upkeep of Adyar and to support the international

work generally. In 1922 the first informal celebration of Adyar Day was held throughout India and thereafter, Adyar Day became a regular annual function at all the centres.

17 February has much more significance. It is not only the date Olcott passed away, but the date also marks Giordano Bruno's being burnt at the stake, Charles W. Leadbeater's birth and J. Krishnamurti's passing to peace. I also understand that on Adyar Day in 1925, the Foundation Stone of Blavatsky Lodge in Sydney was laid by C. W. Leadbeater.

On the contributions of HPB to Theosophy and HSO to the Theosophical Society, Annie Besant said:

HPB gave to the world Theosophy. H. S. Olcott gave to the world the Theosophical Society. Each was chosen by the Masters. Which brought the greater gift?

It is obvious, each one needed, and benefited from, the other. Even if Theosophy is more important than the Theosophical Society, it would not have been possible for HPB to carry out her mission without Olcott — without his leadership, strength, stability, enthusiasm and energy. He was the body and HPB the soul of the work of the Theosophical movement. Their team work was an example of a right relationship of co-disciples dedicated to serve an organization and humanity. A. Schwartz, a former Treasurer of the Society says: 'I wonder whether newer members realize how much the Society owes to its President-Founder,

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what courage, hard work and self-sacrifice were needed to start and guide the Movement, how his organizing capacity was indispensable to HPB for the spreading of her teachings' (*Reminiscences of H. S. Olcott*, TPH, Adyar). Events like Adyar Day help in creating awareness of such great contributions amongst new members.

For some, Olcott is almost an unknown Theosophist, somewhat less known than H. P. Blavatsky and Annie Besant or even Leadbeater. He does not come forth as a personality, because he put much of that aside for practical and tangible work. Olcott was important to the work in ways we may never understand fully, as necessary as HPB.

What kind of man was Olcott? I quote A. Schwartz again: 'The memory of Colonel Olcott calls up the picture of a unique personality, striking in appearance, a born organizer, independent, open-minded, large-hearted, of a lovable and joyous disposition, possessing in a remarkable degree the qualities which eminently fitted him for the office of President of the Theosophical Society . . . His genial ways and real friendship for the people endeared him to them.'

His effective leadership and charitable disposition were the two greatest and essential qualities for someone to be head of an organization. He founded schools for children deprived of education through poverty and social class. He was a man who cared much and had great concern for the welfare of humanity. He started and established five schools in Madras

(Chennai) in just twelve years. The last school was created in 1906, one year before his death.

Col. Olcott saw the unity of all beings, was indifferent to varieties of forms and transcended the limitations of apparent separateness. As a direct outcome of his untiring lecture tours in harsh circumstances throughout the length and breadth of India and Sri Lanka and his interactions with people there, these two countries awoke to the sense of their heritage, and began to realize what they have to learn and teach from the treasures of their past.

A remarkable social reformer and philanthropist, Col. Olcott sacrificed everything that was personal to the cause of the economically and socially underprivileged section of humanity. He worked ceaselessly for uplifting the downtrodden and the oppressed in the field of education and social acceptance. He worked not only in India but also in America, Europe and the eastern countries. His service in Sri Lanka is worthy of special mention; his efforts gave rise to the establishment of more than two hundred schools in Sri Lanka without having a single one named after him. He declined every honour that came his way and chose to remain a silent and unnoticed servant of mankind. In the corporate world and other administrative functions, some people are acclaimed as silent performers, who go about their work sincerely without throwing tantrums, in contrast to others who make a big fuss over small work to draw attention to themselves. There is something to be learnt from Olcott — to work

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for the promotion of the organization and not for self-promotion. Olcott was American by birth and truly a world citizen at heart. He is still honoured in several countries.

He realized the necessity of a good library and established the great Adyar Library. He wisely and with great vision founded this institution to last over a century. Olcott was able to write for the future an objective history of the formation and growth of an organization he presided over. The six volumes of his *Old Diary Leaves* are a delight for anyone interested in the early work of the Society. His wit and sense of humour are evident in his writings. He declares that the fire of Theosophy that engulfed many minds was started when he offered a light to Madame Blavatsky's cigarette! His acquaintance with Blavatsky began in smoke. Not surprisingly, it took some time for the Society to come clear of that much-misunderstood cloud of smoke that came from Blavatsky's mouth and nostrils. I would discourage men here from offering a light to a woman smoker lest another great movement is started!

In my business management courses, in the early 1970s, we used to do an exercise called SWOT — an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. When students were confused between opportunities and strengths; and similarly between threats and weaknesses,

the professor said threats and opportunities are generally in the external environment; and strengths and weaknesses are generally internal. He also said, if you perceive internal threats, your organization is doomed. Let us hope Olcott's great legacy is not under internal threat, i.e. threat from within!

Olcott was a man of great courage and strength who looked to the future with a pioneering spirit. Again and again he was able to meet the challenges facing him and the Society.

Col. Olcott was fond of saying that he had been bidden by his Master to be the doorkeeper of the Society. His dharma as the Great Ones told him was to organize and keep alive the 'body' through which the teachings could come to the world. He was true to this dharma. We have the Adyar headquarters and the organization of the TS — because Olcott fulfilled his dharma. In 1906, one year before his death, Olcott established the last of the five schools in Madras (Chennai). There is an old saying of profound wisdom that a society prospers when an old man plants a tree knowing fully well that he will not live to benefit from the shade and fruits of the tree when it is grown. This is his legacy to us. Keeping the organizational interest above personal interests at all times, may we work together in such a way that we deserve this legacy, and in the true spirit of Adyar Day. ✧

**We seek, inquire, reject nothing without cause, accept nothing without proof:
we are students, not teachers.**

Henry Steel Olcott, Inaugural Address, 17 November 1875

Books of Interest

THE SECRET DOCTRINE COMMENTARIES: *The Unpublished 1889 Instructions* by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, transcribed and annotated by Michael Gomes, I.S.I.S. Foundation, The Hague, 2010.

Theosophy needs to be stated afresh for every generation. Theosophy itself is timeless truth, but the generations change, and so also must the presentation of timeless truth if it is to speak to new generations. Besant, Leadbeater, Arundale, Jinarājadāsa, Sri Ram, and still living spokespersons have done and continue doing just that. Nevertheless, the basis of all Theosophy was set forth long ago by the Masters, Olcott, and Blavatsky.

Helena Blavatsky, in particular, is the spiritual mother of us all. So her own comments on and explanations of her masterwork, *The Secret Doctrine*, are invaluable guides to the timeless truths of Theosophy. Shortly after the 1888 publication of her masterwork, HPB held regular meetings with some of her students to deal with matters arising from their study of the *SD*. A stenographer took notes at those meetings, and records of the first twelve such meetings, after editing for clarity and coherence, were published as *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*. Until now, the full transcriptions of those early meetings and no records of later ones have been generally available.

Now, Michael Gomes, one of our

premier Theosophical historians, has produced a full and accurate edition of the 1889 discussions. It takes the place of the old *Transactions*, which are neither complete nor adequate because they formalize the discussion, thereby disguising the spontaneity of exchanges. This new edition deserves a place next to *The Secret Doctrine* itself on the bookshelf of every serious student. It also merits the attention of even casual readers who want to know what *The Secret Doctrine* is about.

This new edition also makes for charming reading: the banter and interchanges among the participants are often humorous and indicate the easy relationship they shared. For example, at one point HPB grows exasperated at the many disorganized questions put to her by the all-male group: ‘You are the most inquisitive people I ever met. If it were not your unmentionables that protect you, you would all be Mother Eves, every one of you! You are the most inquisitive people I ever saw in my life, and you are the most impertinent. You cannot come and ask one thing after another. Tuesday after Monday, Wednesday after Tuesday, and so on. You want to jump from Monday to Saturday and from Saturday to Halifax. Upon my word, I have no patience’ (p. 516). Similarly, Bertram Keightley asks HPB, ‘Can you give us some more definite idea — e.g. an analogy on the physical plane — of what is meant

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here by “Cosmic Desire” which “evolves into absolute Light”?’ HPB begins her response with a joke on herself: ‘Now there is a question for a modest young woman.’

It is, of course, impossible to cover adequately here the content of the 653 pages of transcriptions in this volume. The book’s 23-page index will help the curious to find many of the important topics covered in the instructions: both general, ordinary ones as well as specifically Theosophical ones.

Dreams

For example, the ordinary subject of dreams has fascinated human beings from our earliest days. The Greek epic *Odyssey* talks about true dreams that come through gates of horn and false dreams that come through gates of ivory. Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio* concerns a true, prophetic dream and incorporates Pythagorean philosophy. The Judeo-Christian Bible is full of dreams. Chaucer’s ‘Nun’s Priest’s Tale’ talks about the difference between and the causes of true and false dreams, the latter being the result of indigestion or the like. In more recent times, Freud wrote about dreams as unconscious expressions of psychological problems, and Jung thought they were efforts to resolve such problems. In *The Secret Doctrine*, dreams are mentioned only twice and both times incidentally; the *SD Commentaries*, however, include extensive and insightful discussions of them.

We learn in the *Commentaries* that in sleep, if the higher mind is also inactive (or sleeps), the automatic activity of the

cerebellum (or back brain) may be consciously remembered as dreams (pp. 42, 52–3), which are the false dreams coming through the gates of ivory. These dream emanations of the cerebellum are ‘instinctive feelings which . . . are just recollections of what took place’ (p. 53). ‘The average person dreams what is perfect nonsense, dreams of digestion [as Chaucer wrote], of nervous disturbances [as Freud thought], etc.’ (p. 55).

However, there are other ‘dreams that really are [true] dreams’ (p. 55); ‘those dreams . . . that really have something in them [being true dreams coming through the gates of horn] are produced by the vision of the higher Ego’ (p. 53). ‘I said to you here that it is when we do not dream about anything [derived from the physical plane] that we dream the most. Not only that, but we act the most, and we live on an entirely different plane from this one, and our life is a thousand times more active. Our existence, rather, is a thousand times more varied: and it would be a nice thing if we could bring it back. . . . There . . . you are not separate from any man in creation, as your mind is not separate from the ALL’ (pp. 80, 82). Consciousness in Devachan is that of such a dream that is blissful and timelessly present (p. 25).

It is noteworthy that HPB’s treatment of dreams is consonant with a long tradition about dreaming. With respect to most of our ordinary dreams, what HPB says is commonsensical: they are just the consequences of physical or psychological experiences we have had during our

waking state. But she also recognizes a totally different order of dreaming, which derives from a higher level and reflects a different order of existence: a communication from our higher selves to serve as an inspiration to our future actions.

Fohat

On the other hand, the specifically Theosophical subject of fohat is dealt with extensively in both *The Secret Doctrine* (with nearly two columns of references in its index) and in the *Commentaries* (with more than a score of references, many of multiple pages). The term is not in general English dictionaries, but *The Theosophical Glossary* calls it Tibetan and defines it as a ‘term used to represent the active (male) potency of the Śakti (female reproductive power) in nature. The essence of cosmic electricity’.

In the *Commentaries*, HPB distinguishes between an eternal fohatic principle, which she calls ‘the Śakti or Force of the Divine’, and its periodical manifestation as fohat proper, which she equates with the creator god Brahmā (p. 139). However, because Brahmā (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver), and Śiva (the destroyer) are all one — a functionally diverse trinity — fohat is also both constructive and destructive, as well as vitally preservative (p. 373). It is the energetic force that produces manifestation: ‘Fohat . . . means also the self-moving and that which forces to move. . . . This is the real, long translation of the word, Fohat’ (p. 432).

As the moving, creative force, fohat is

likened to the Greek Eros, ‘that universal force of attraction which causes particles to congregate, combine, and correlate, and to produce a triad. Well, that creative force is our Fohat, who neither creates, nor does he produce anything *per se* and by himself, but in virtue of his action, elements, as well as beings, seek to unite in polarity; from which unison results life’ (p. 517). After an extended elaboration on this subject, Bertram Keightley enthused: ‘What you have said there is very good, and it is a great deal more than you have said anywhere in *The Secret Doctrine*.’ To that somewhat backhanded compliment, HPB replied in kind: ‘But I thought you stood there over me when I was writing.’ Her response seems to reflect the fact that the Keightleys, to whom she had shown a draft of *The Secret Doctrine*, had insisted she revise it before publication and is another example of the banter that characterized the sessions on which the *Commentaries* report.

The identification of fohat as the ‘essence of cosmic electricity’ in the *Glossary* (as cited above) appears to be a metaphor using ‘electricity’ to represent the ‘active principle’ or ‘life’ of the cosmos (pp. 248–51). HPB calls fohat ‘the synthetic motor power of all the imprisoned life forces’ (p. 293) and ‘the universal force of life’ (p. 301), that is, the power that brings together all embodied vital forces. She also says, ‘Fohat is the symbol of universal unpolarized electricity [embracing both ‘centripetal and centrifugal forces’]’ (p. 430). Metaphors are inevitable in talking about these matters.

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Fohat is also said to be like threads, the knots in which are the sun and other bodies of the solar system (p. 240), a metaphor that may suggest contemporary string theory in physics. HPB anticipated a great deal that science after her time has come to recognize.

Fohat is also said to act consciously (p. 300), which we might understand as meaning, not 'as a person', but 'with a purpose' in contrast with automatically. However it is also called 'a personification of Mahat', which the Glossary defines as the 'first principle of Universal Intelligence and Consciousness'. HPB clearly states the centrality of fohat to manifestation: 'Fohat is everything, he is the life principle, the vital air we breathe. He is in all the elements. Fohat is the symbol of the root of manifestation . . . the root and soul of motion. . . . Fohat is simply a force in nature. . . . Fohat you have in your blood, every one of you. Fohat is the primal motor of everything, from the beginning of the Manvantara' (p. 361).

Conclusion

The forgoing two examples, sampling what the *Commentaries* have to say about dreams and fohat, illustrate only imperfectly the richness of this volume. In addition to such specific discussions, it contains general observations about life, such as the following comment by HPB, which reflects exactly a judgement of Siddhartha Buddha: 'I do not think I have ever met a truly happy man. To everyone life is a burden, there is something they

cannot find — any interior satisfaction, or peace of mind. I have never met one man yet who was perfectly satisfied' (p. 540).

The discussions also are rife with instances of bantering, several already quoted above; others pop up throughout the volume. For example, once when HPB became weary of the questions put to her, as she frequently did, she responded, 'Can I say to you anything better? What cross-examiners you are.' William Kingsland objected, 'Not *cross!*' to which HPB replied, 'No, *cross-examiners*' (p. 222). The exchange plays on the ambiguity between those who 'cross-examine another' and those who 'examine another crossly'. Such playful use of language is frequent. So is HPB's realistic, if overly modest, self-assessment. For example, at one point, HPB corrects at length an error of wording in *The Secret Doctrine*, and Walter Old (Sepharial) responds, 'We shan't complain so long as it draws forth so much intelligent instruction. Even mistakes give rise to intelligent interest.' HPB replies, 'My dear ladies and gentlemen, if I knew English, I would hold meetings. I have not got the talent for the gab. If I could only put into Olcott's head that which I know, or have his eloquence (because he speaks beautifully), I could do something' (p. 429).

This edition is what is now called a 'keeper' (i.e., one suitable for or worth keeping). Indeed, it is an invaluable addition to our stock of classic Theosophical books. JOHN ALGEO

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