

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

The Relevance of Our Work

TIM BOYD

THE theme for this 144th Convention is “Nurturing the Seed”. Although at this point we have heard many in-depth examinations, without over-laboring the theme I would like to add a few further thoughts.

The seed analogy requires some definition: a seed is an embryonic life enclosed in a protective shell. Our interest is not horticultural, but related to the soul — the Hidden Life within the confining shell of human personality. The eventual expression of that life depends on the dissolution of the shell in the proper way at the proper time. But how does one know that way and that time?

In *At the Feet of the Master* a young J. Krishnamurti makes a sweeping statement: “In all the world there are only two kinds of people, those who know and those who do not know, and this knowledge is . . .” what matters. The specific knowledge he referred to was evolution, in the sense of unfoldment of consciousness and its accompanying capacities.

Whether we are discussing the human soul, or the seed of a plant, the specialized knowledge involved in cultivating a seed is the domain of the gardener, that person who has gained knowledge through long observation, study, and practice. From experience, a good gardener knows the seed’s potential for growth and the con-

ditions required for it to thrive: the quality of the soil, moisture, sun and shade, and seasonal cycles. In essence it is an experience-based awareness of the interdependence of things.

The best gardeners know something more: the power of human consciousness in promoting growth. The life-enhancing effects on living things of love, kindness, and intention are an active part of their awareness. Significant examples of this abound. In his book, *Hidden Messages in Water*, Masuru Emoto documented his research into the effect of human consciousness on the molecular structure of water. His water-crystal experiments involved exposing water in glasses to different words, pictures, or music, and then freezing and examining the aesthetic properties of the resulting crystals with microscopic photography. In his experiments water exposed to positive speech and thoughts would result in visually harmonious crystals being formed when that water was frozen. Negative intention would yield fragmented crystal formations.

When my daughter was in grade school her teacher assigned the class a science project of their choosing. She decided to attempt the well-known experiment where three sets of seeds are planted. One group of seeds is exposed to loving talk at

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intervals during the day; another receives negative speech during the same intervals; the third is not spoken to at all. In all other respects the light, soil, and moisture are the same. The result was that at the end of the growing period the seeds receiving the positive attention showed a measurable difference in the size of the sprouts.

Within the academic-science community both Emoto's research and my daughter's seed experiment are relegated to the status of "pseudoscience". This is a term normally used to label beliefs, theories, or practices considered scientific, but lacking any basis in scientific fact. The list of pseudoscientific fields is long — Astrology, Feng Shui, Rupert Sheldrake's Morphogenetic Fields, Acupuncture (until its effects were scientifically demonstrated), Extrasensory Perception, Hypnosis, Psychoanalysis, and so on. In spite of the bias against scientific demonstration of consciousness as an inextricable agency in the natural world, there are many statistical studies showing the effects of consciousness that satisfy the scientific method standard.

A number of notable studies have been performed demonstrating the healing power of love. Because consciousness itself is not yet measurable, and, from a scientific perspective, is only revealed by its effects, the studies measured statistical effects. Using married couples with a positive relationship as the test group, a number of demonstrable effects were recorded. Among them are: people in a loving relationship tend to have fewer heart attacks and strokes; they live long-

er, have higher survival rates from major surgery and cancer; are less depressed; their wounds heal faster; thinking of a loved one lowers the blood pressure, etc. The true gardener/spiritual practitioner has an innate knowledge of these things.

There is a significant knowledge that the gardener lacks. He has no knowledge of the life force within the seed. Beyond the fact that it exists, and that it reveals itself and grows when given the proper conditions, it forever remains a mystery. His experience is that the application of his lesser knowledge leads to the expression of a greater life.

As spiritual practitioners we can also say that we know nothing of Spirit. The realm of what we can know is confined to the spectrum of the mind, which touches upon Spirit at its highest reach and on Matter at its lowest. What we can say about Spirit is limited to what we know of its "reflection" on the field of the upper reaches of mind — the "Higher Mind". Similarly, we know nothing of matter. In the current understanding of science the totality of the known and studied matter comprising the universe amounts to approximately 5% of the amount of matter required for the universe to be expanding at the rate that it does. The other 95% has been termed "dark matter", which does not absorb, reflect, or emit light. It cannot be detected except by its effect on the objects within the known universe.

The mind could be described as the "field" within which the soul's seed is planted. It is the "location" where all of the work of spiritual practice takes place.

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The nature of that work has been variously described: “Know thyself” was the inscription carved into the stone above the temple of the Oracle of Delphi. The Buddha’s teaching said: “Be a light unto yourself”. H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) said that we must “paralyze” the personality. The great English poet, William Blake, gave an excellent indication of the nature of our work: “If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, Infinite.”

This cleansing of the doors of perception is the work we do as individuals, and it begins with a realization. In HPB’s words, “The first necessity for obtaining self-knowledge is to become profoundly conscious of ignorance; to feel with every fibre of the heart that one is ceaselessly self-deceived.” We form fixed ideas on the nature of reality based on the most partial information. All of our organs / doors of perception are limited to an extremely narrow band of the electromagnetic, sound, taste, smell, and feeling spectrum as well. We need to recognize that the reporting from all of our avenues of perception is incomplete.

The path to a deepening understanding begins with the observation of the way we perceive and react in the world. We observe the body and its habits. The nervous movements we make when we sit or stand; the postures we adopt; the foods and environments we seek out; the way in which the breath flows into and out of the body. We begin to become conscious of all our normal bodily processes, not with a sense of judgment, but simply bring-

ing them to the level of awareness. Most likely we will find that many of our normal habits do not contribute to a sense of well being, but fragment our energy. Similarly, we observe our emotions. We learn to distinguish between bodily states and emotional currents that influence the body. We observe the physically stimulating effect of anger, the dulling effect of sadness, the uplifting energizing effect of happiness. From this process of observation we gain a sense of the emotions that contribute to our well-being.

The most important level of observation is with our thoughts, our mindstream. In the first letter written from one of the Mahatmas to A. O. Hume, a profound fact about the inner effects of thoughts was shared: “Every thought of man upon being evolved passes into the inner world and becomes an active entity . . . It survives as an active intelligence, a creature of the mind’s begetting . . . Thus, a good thought is perpetuated as an active beneficent power; an evil one as a maleficent demon.” The stream of thought unconsciously generated by each person “reacts upon any sensitive or nervous organization which comes in contact with it.” It is at this mind level that we have our greatest capacity to help, or harm.

Sincere engagement in this process of observation reveals certain deficits and opportunities; limitations and also powers latent within us. Our main revelation should be that at every moment we have the capacity to consciously evolve and transmit thought. The simple act of clearly “seeing” this truth resolves countless difficulties

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and uncertainties. This level of awareness leads to a condition of effortless response. When one sees that the road ahead is impassable and that an alternate route is open, it is easy to turn and go in a different direction. All of our actions — bodily, emotional, and mental — are subject to the same ordering principle.

With clarity of seeing comes a deeper, previously hidden potential. In this seeing process the shell encasing the embryonic life of the soul is dissolved. The Hidden Life, Light, and Love, which are the nature of the soul, for the first time, become fully accessible. Even the partial dissolution of the shell of personality results in flashes of insight and purposeful stability. From this illumined perspective the words of St Augustine apply: “Love, and do what you will . . . Let the root of love be in you: nothing can spring from it but good.” The challenge is that love, unadulterated by personal need and desires, only results from an open connection to the soul. A person who finds the soul’s influence growing within becomes a beneficial force in the world.

When considering the relevance of all this, the question is: relevant to what, or to whom? One thing is clear: in terms of popular discussion or culture the line of thought we followed above rarely comes up. There is the occasional veiled allusion in film, music, or literature, but attempts at a direct consideration are claimed by the various religious approaches, whose separative theologies tend to be more divisive than unifying. In spite of histor-

ical examples of the occasional great soul who has influenced social change — the Mahatma Gandhis, Martin Luther Kings, Abraham Lincolns, Nelson Mandelas, and their lesser known co-workers — in the realm of politics, economics, social engineering, business, entertainment, news reporting, agriculture, and so on, the role of the awakened soul is not ignored, but absent from awareness.

So, what is the possible relevance of a work that does not even rise to the level of awareness in those for whom it is intended? Are the Theosophical Movement and the numerous allied efforts that it spawned destined to be for the benefit of a few individuals only? The TS was founded to “form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity”. Although awakened individuals are required, the work has always centered on the potency of a group effort. In HPB’s words, “Though but a minority of our members are mystically inclined, yet . . . the key to all our successes . . . is in our recognition of the fact of the Higher Self — colourless, cosmopolitan, unsectarian, sexless, unworldly, altruistic — and the doing of our work on that basis.” At the individual level we provide conditions for the Higher Self/soul to impress itself on our world. At the level of the “nucleus” we seed the thought atmosphere with the glowing forms of new potentialities — as yet unrealized possibilities for a unity based on the inherent indivisibility of humanity. These thoughts, exemplified in a few, must ultimately react upon the whole. ✧

The Sublime Symbology of the Lotus

LINDA OLIVEIRA

THE theme of this Convention, “Nurturing the Divine Seed”, is a timely reminder that we are all Divine in essence; and that the seed of this transcendental nature is always present, ready to expand into our waking consciousness when the conditions are favourable. Once that seed has opened even a little, it makes an indelible mark on the heart and mind, so that we are never quite the same again; indeed, that partial opening is a foretaste of the glory that awaits each and every human being — something so powerful and so sublime, that it is never forgotten.

We can learn much of consequence from the Book of Nature, including the trajectory of our spiritual destiny. The universal symbology of a seed growing into a plant is both powerful and profound. The lotus is one such plant; and of course, it is a very significant one in the Theosophical Society.

H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) affirmed that since antiquity the lotus has been held sacred by the Aryan Hindus, Egyptians, Buddhists, and also adopted as a Christian emblem. In Christianity the lotus is

depicted as a lily. This flower has been revered in Japan and China. Also known as the *padma*, the lotus is an ancient and favourite simile *both* for the Kosmos itself, and for the human being. In the cosmic context, she explained that the lotus seed contains within itself the perfect miniature of the future plant, the spiritual prototypes of all things hitherto existing in the immaterial world before they become materialised.

Some Properties of the Lotus

Some interesting information exists about the lotus flower, which enriches this exploration further. Long before the advent of humanity, lotus flowers were said to be distributed widely across the globe. When temperatures were low during the Ice Age, most plants in the northern hemisphere did not survive; and yet the lotus flower did so. These flowers have even been referred to as “living fossils”. From this we derive a sense of that which is ancient and that which is precious.

There is another correspondence, too. There was a notable instance in 1954 in

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which lotus flowers disappeared in one area due to a catastrophic flood. However, remarkably, three years later, water receded to normal levels and in the shallow part of the lake concerned, the plants began to grow leaves again in great density. Two years later, the abundance of lotuses in that particular place returned. The lotus therefore has a great tenacity in the face of natural disasters. Lotuses can endure the scorching sun, but when dormant can even resist cold temperatures. So the lotus also symbolises resilience in a very real sense. These natural qualities of the lotus flower are a thing that we humans can relate to.

The Lotus as Symbol of the Universe

HPB wrote:

This mysterious and sacred plant has been considered from time immemorial a symbol of the Universe, in Egypt as well as in India. There is hardly a monument in the Valley of the Nile, hardly a papyrus, on and in which this plant did not have a place of honour. From the capitals of the Egyptian columns to the thrones and the coiffures of the god-kings, the lotus is found everywhere as a symbol of the Universe. It became of necessity an indispensable attribute of every creative god and goddess.

(*Collected Writings*, vol XII,
“The Legend of the Blue Lotus”, p. 177)

She continued that the conditioned Cosmos came from “*Padma-yoni* — ‘the bosom of the lotus’ — from the absolute Space of the Universe, outside of space and time”.

THE LAST VIBRATION OF THE SEVENTH
ETERNITY THRILLS THROUGH INFINI-
TUDE. THE MOTHER SWELLS, EXPANDING
FROM WITHIN WITHOUT, LIKE THE BUD
OF THE LOTUS.

The Secret Doctrine
Stanza III, *sloka* 1, p. 62

The golden egg (or matrix) from which Brahma came forth was often referred to as the celestial lotus. Hence this flower is also associated with the depiction of various deities. Vishnu floats in sleep during the nights of Brahma, on the primordial waters, stretched on a lotus flower.

The Hindu Trimurti is personified in the world of ideas by Creation, Preservation and Destruction, or Brahmā, Vishnu, and Śiva; in the world of matter by Earth, Water, and Fire, or the Sun, and symbolised by the Lotus, a flower that lives by earth, water, and the sun. The Lotus, sacred to Isis, had the same significance in Egypt, whereas in the Christian symbol, the Lotus, not being found in either Judaea or Europe, was replaced by the water lily.

(*Collected Writings*, vol. 14, p. 100)

Clearly, therefore, the lotus has a profound association with all that is Sacred.

The Lotus in Ancient Egypt, Buddhism, and Hinduism

In ancient Egypt there were two main types of lotuses — the white and blue — the blue variety being scientifically a water lily (*Nymphaea caerulea*), but symbolically a lotus. Later on, the pink lotus flower was also introduced into

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Egypt. However, it is the blue flower that tends to be the most commonly portrayed in Egyptian art, such as paintings and carvings in walls of temples and in tombs.

The ancient Egyptians noted that the lotus opened in the day and closed during the night, therefore associating the flower with the cyclicity of rebirth, and also with the Sun. For the Sun also has its own cycle, appearing during the daytime and disappearing from view at night.

In this tradition we also find the lotus associated with resurrection. The following passage is found in the “Papyrus of Ani”, *Egyptian Book of the Dead*:

As if I'd slept a thousand years underwater I wake into a new season. I am the blue lotus rising. I am the cup of dreams and memory opening — I, the thousand-petalled flower. At dawn the sun rises naked and new as a babe; I open myself and am entered by light. This is the joy, the slow awakening into fire as one by one the petals open, as the fingers that held tight the secret unfurl. I let go of the past and release the fragrance of flowers.

I open and light descends, fills me and passes through, each thin blue petal reflected perfectly in clear water. I am that lotus filled with light reflected in the world. I float content within myself, one flower with a thousand petals, one life lived a thousand years without haste, one universe sparking a thousand stars, one god alive in a thousand people.

If you stood on a summer's morning on the bank under a brilliant sky, you would see the thousand petals and say that to-

gether they make the lotus. But if you lived in its heart, invisible from without, you might see how the ecstasy at its fragrant core gives rise to its thousand petals. What is beautiful is always that which is itself in essence, a certainty of being. I marvel at myself and the things of Earth.

I float among the days in peace, content. Not part of the world, the world is all parts of me. I open towards the light and lift myself to the gods on the perfume of prayer. I ask for nothing beyond myself. I own everything I need. I am content in the company of god, a prayer that contains its own answer. I am the lotus.

Buddhism

In Buddhism the lotus is associated with purity, with spiritual awakening and detachment. It is associated with the white Tara. The flower is considered pure because it is able to emerge from murky waters and be perfectly clean. The fact that water can easily slide off its petals can be equated with detachment, and the opening petals can be equated with spiritual awakening.

Not unsurprisingly, the lotus also symbolises the awakening of the Lord Buddha, and serves as a reminder that all beings have the same potential to attain Enlightenment. The flower grows out of mud and rises to the water's surface to bloom in beauty and purity; similarly, humans have the potential to rise above desire and attachment so that the true nature is revealed.

The lotus flower itself represents the stages on the spiritual path. This is because a closed bud is regarded as

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synonymous with the beginning of the journey. When the flower is partly open, then one is walking it. And a fully blooming flower signifies the end of the journey — Enlightenment.

We can find the lotus throughout Buddhist art and literature. One of its most important representations in literature is the *Lotus Sutra*. Lotus flowers come in many different colours, each one having a different meaning as we shall see now:

White Lotus: This symbolises Bodhi, the state of total mental purity and spiritual perfection, and the pacification of our nature. It generally has eight petals corresponding to the Noble Eightfold Path of the Good Law. It is the lotus found at the heart of the Garbhadhātu Mandala, being the womb or embryo of the world. It is characteristic of the esoteric sects, and the lotus of the Buddhas.

Red Lotus: This symbolises the original nature of the heart (*hr̥daya*). It is the lotus of love, compassion, passion, activity and all the qualities of the heart. It is the lotus of Avalokiteśvara.

Blue Lotus: This is the symbol of the victory of the spirit over the senses, of intelligence and wisdom, of knowledge. It is always represented as a partially opened bud, and (unlike the red lotus) its centre is never seen. It is the lotus of Manjuśri (a Bodhisattva associated with prajñā, wisdom), and also one of the attributes of Prajñāpāramitā, the embodiment of the “perfection of wisdom”.

Pink Lotus: This is the supreme lotus, generally reserved for the highest deity;

sometimes confused with the white lotus, it is the lotus of the historical Buddha.

Purple Lotus: This is the mystic lotus, represented only in images belonging to a few esoteric sects. The flowers may be in full bloom and reveal their heart, or in a bud. They may be supported by a simple stem, a triple stem or a quintuple stem. The eight petals represent the Noble Eightfold Path and the eight principal acolyte deities of the central deity on the mandalas. The flowers may also be depicted as presented in a cup or on a tray, being a symbol of homage.

It becomes very clear how appropriate White Lotus Day is in remembrance of HPB, as a lotus of this colour represents mental purity and spiritual perfection, and given the fact that she took Pañcha Śīla. Despite her personal imperfections, she was a spiritual giant.

Hinduism

We now come to the Hindu tradition. The term *padma* is translated as “lotus”. In Hinduism it has various expressions.

By reproducing from its own matrix rather than the soil, the lotus symbolises spontaneous generation (*svayambhu* in Sanskrit). It can use either seed dispersal *or* its root system for reproduction. It grows in mud, yet rises in immaculate purity to the surface and opens to the sun. Therefore its evolution begins in the mire of Samsāra but it rises to full Enlightenment and purity, of which it is the quintessential symbol. Purity is also one of its main associations in the Buddhist tradition, as we have seen. The unsullied

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lotus arising from the depth of the waters and far from the shore is associated with the idea of purity, but also with *sattva* — balance and harmony. Not only does the lotus represent purity of mind, but also purity of body and speech.

The closed lotus symbolises potential; open, it symbolises actualisation. Furthermore, water splashed upon a lotus leaf never remains, but immediately slips off. In the same way the dirt of worldliness never stains the Enlightened Being.

Lakshmi is usually depicted as seated upon a lotus, representing the enlightened and pure mind that has already been mentioned. Also, flowers such as the lotus (*padma*) and the blue lily (*nilotpala*), are generally to be seen in the hands of the images of goddesses, especially in the hands of goddesses Lakshmi and Bhumidevi. The lotus is therefore one of the “attributes” or “accessories” of such deities.

Like Lakshmi, the goddess Saraswati is often depicted as seated on a white lotus which symbolises light, knowledge, and truth. Also, from the cosmic point of view, the lotus in Vishnu’s lower right hand represents the manifested universe, the flower that unfolds in all its glory from the formless and infinite waters of causality.

The Lotus and the Human Being

Turning now to the unfoldment of the human being, as has been seen, the lotus has a beautiful meaning. It follows the whole trajectory of human unfoldment, from the mire of the mud of the earthly realm, all the way to a state of Divinity.

The flower grows up through the water, with its roots in the mud, which represents the material realm. The stalk which passes up through the water is related to existence in the astral world. The leaves sometimes float on the surface of the water. And the lotus flowers themselves are found on thick stems, usually sitting several centimetres above the water. The flower which eventually opens its heart to the air above, is emblematic of the spiritual being, open to the freedom and vastness of the air, and the light of the sun.

This richly allegorical flower symbolises various qualities pertaining to the human journey, the human spiritual unfoldment, such as resilience or tenacity (remember the qualities of the plant itself); also purity of mind, calmness, serenity; *sattva*; spiritual perfection; knowledge, wisdom and love; the original nature of the heart — compassion, passion and, again, love; the highest deity; the Noble Eightfold Path; beauty; non-attachment, spiritual being; and, last but not least, Enlightenment.

It is deeply uplifting to consider that within each of us dwells the “Jewel in the Lotus” — which can be thought of as Padmapāni, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, or whatever name we give to our Divine Self. Indeed, our Quest of many lifetimes is to become, and fully realise, our divine potential, despite the fact that this may be forgotten at times amidst the many demands of physical life in this material realm. HPB observed:

Enough has been said to show that while for the Orientalists and profane masses

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the sentence, *Om Mani Padme Hum*, means simply “O, the Jewel in the Lotus”, esoterically it signifies “O, my God within me”. Yes; there is a God in each human being, for man was, and will rebecome, God. The sentence points to the indissoluble union between Man and the Universe. For, the Lotus is the universal symbol of Kosmos as the absolute totality, and the Jewel is Spiritual man or God.

(*Collected Writings*,
vol. XII, p. 561, “Hierarchies”)

All in all, the symbolism of the lotus is truly sublime and inspirational, imbued with deep meaning. For the cycle of the lotus holds, allegorically, the poten-

tial of universes and of the Self-realised human being.

Let us finish by dwelling upon these inspirational words:

He who perceives the world
With truth, purity, and vast knowledge,
And with benevolence and compassion,
Should be ever longed for and looked up to.
He is a spotless pure ray of light,
A sun of wisdom that destroys the darkness,
A flame that withstands the winds of
calamity.

He brilliantly illuminates the entire world.

The Lotus Sutra, Chapter XXV,
“The Gateway to Every Direction Mani-
fested by Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara”



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The Soul, Mind, and Meditation

EDUARDO J. GRAMAGLIA

1. Three Aspects of the Mind

Before considering the nature of that inner principle which we call “soul”, and that of meditation as the technique to approach it, let us focus for a moment on the energy of the mind (*manas*). The mind’s essence has a peculiar nature, and it is said to be a great mystery in this solar system. Its substance is committed to both the spiritual and material natures, being involved with the world of form and the formless, acting as the titan-god Prometheus, the mediator between worlds.

Manas stands at the midway point where Spirit reflects into matter, thus producing consciousness.¹ Unlike the astral matter, which we know can be swept into activity by thought-forms, and the nature of which is that of *attracting to itself*, the nature of mental matter is that of “diffusing”, irradiating, and making contacts, thus permitting knowledge and reaching out to objects of perception. But due to its very nature of sharing with the lower and the higher, it can be looked upon from three angles or perspectives, and in this sense we are considering man as a mental creature or *unit*.

The side that is brought into contact with the world of form is called *concrete or receptive mind*, and is the reasoning or discriminating principle, with a tendency to distinguish and draw limits. This aspect, useful as it is, has been particularly over-rated in this sublunary world, where many distinctions and boundaries need to be drawn; and it is sad what the traditional education system has laid emphasis on: the accumulation of data, and those features that make us *different* from each other. Perception thus becomes a sort of *appropriation*, an *accumulation*, that adds to a personal sense of belonging and possession.

The results of such a culture can be seen today in scholarly environments, where *love of truth* has been superseded by a sense of self-importance. The fact that these days so many fields of knowledge are researched and studied without connection with each other, thus producing “experts” in isolated fields, is the result of the predomination of the lower *manas* in our Western education. It would perhaps be too much for the pride of our present-day “experts” to

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admit that there can be no scholar more aptly qualified than a *real Initiate*, who is aware that knowledge cannot be confined to isolated compartments, and who is really aware of the spiritual energies conditioning, qualifying, and working behind and through matter.

But *manas* has yet another aspect, which we call the higher or abstract mind. It is the lowest aspect of the Spiritual Triad, the ocean of ideas which has not yet been embodied in concrete substance; these ideas are real “blueprints” of the universal Architecture; and once the lower mind has been brought into rapport with the Real Being, the soul within man, this higher aspect of the mind brings enlightenment to the lower one. In this rapport we have the seeds of illumination and inspiration. We should not forget that both aspects of *manas*, the lower and the higher, share the same essence.²

However, in the heart of *manas* lie Consciousness and Light itself: The Son of Mind, the Ego, or Soul, in other words, that *relatively* real Individuality, by which the lower nature is eventually infused. I say “relatively” because this positive pole will eventually become a negative one, being absorbed by the most essential of individualities: the Monad itself. At that stage, the goal to be reached becomes the vehicle to be surrendered.³ This is the search for the “Lost Word” in Masonry: once the Word (symbol of the soul) is discovered, it is found to be but another “substitute” for a deeper and more essential one, thus opening up new vistas to explore.⁴ Such are the mysterious ways Nature has

of demonstrating that man is essentially the trinity hinted at by St Paul. The gap between the receptive and the illumining mind has to be breached, and the soul is the “coordinating factor” in that process. A beautiful symbol is found in one *Upanishad*,⁵ where it says that “the gods feed upon men”: the Higher Ego casts the lower ego as a ray (essentially, the lower *manas*) in order to obtain his earthly experience.

Soul-infusion and the capacity of the mind to receive impressions from above and stamp them on the physical brain, makes the disciple ready to know his part of the Plan, and be in touch with ideas poured in by Those who *normally* function and live on those levels: The Hierarchy of Light. He then knows his inner group and function within a specific Ray department, being capable of an *intelligent cooperation with the Plan*, which is, after all, the main reason why a so-called *Spiritual Path* is undertaken. By “intelligent cooperation” is meant the capacity to contribute to the bringing down of ideas in order to help establish a new world order, which is the result of a cosmic, systemic, or planetary soul-personality bridging and fusion.

2. The Middle Fire as a Synthesizing Factor

So — we may wonder — *what* is the mental plane, or mental matter, after all? Annie Besant aptly describes it as “consciousness working as thought”,⁶ that is, *the mind working in its own world*, unencumbered with physical spirit-matter

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independently of its relationship with the physical brain. This is the world of the *real man*, and in fact one may recall the Sanskrit word, *manas*, as derived from the root verb, *man*, “to think”: Man is essentially a *Thinker*. Vibrations set up in the brain and nervous system are the ways the Thinker reveals his presence on this physical plane through sympathetic vibrations which are, after all, a *sad reproduction* and a small section of that ray of solar energy that strives to express itself through coarse materials.

So, no matter what a physician or psychologist may claim (only an *Adept* can *truly* be a physician or psychologist) the vibrations of the brain and nervous system turn out to be only a small fragment of the vast irradiation of the Thinker working on his own level. *Manas*, as above said, is a unique force in the solar system, as it can get involved both with the world of form and the formless, and has the innate and potential capacity to switch either to the lower or the higher. Though, alas, the astral body is too frequently found to be *fused* with the mental matter, their substance being so tightly interwoven that both natures are perceived — and act — as *one*. This is what we call *kāma-manas*, and by this we mean the mind *working in and with* the desire nature. This is the “mind” dealt with by psychologists.

When the *manas* is free from this attachment, it becomes a clear and luminous field, which can be infused with the light from the Presence. The mind is like a lens which can be turned in either direction,

and therein lies its infinite potential for contact and knowledge. As a telescope, the mind must be oriented toward the *zenith or meridian*, its highest and clearest possible focus. It is never oriented toward the *horizon*, where only distorted images can be perceived.

So, we may wonder, *what or who is this Thinker, the Soul?* It is the divine Self, limited, “individualized” by a subtle layer drawn from materials of the formless regions of the mental plane: a film around a ray of the Self, a beam of the One Light, shut off from its source.⁷ This Actor, the eternal individualized Man, is the Presence that conveys the feeling of “I-ness”; simply put, *ourselves*.

Man⁸ is ultimately a spiritual essence, a Monad, manifested in three aspects, which we call Spirit, Soul-mind, and the threefold personality. These three *fires* must eventually meet, producing complete illumination, and the regulating or coordinating factor in this process is the Middle Fire, *manas*. Eventually the threefold personality is brought into communication with the soul, thus permitting the brain to be impressed by impulses coming from the soul. The mind, when able to synthesize the five senses, is thus the *coordinating factor*, as has been suggested by Patañjali.⁹

This role is then seen to be taken up by the Soul: The Soul, a gift from the *mānasa-putras*, as a consequence of its inherent love nature, its “gravity”, understood in its deeply occult sense, becomes the great “synthesizer”. There is an inherent “relating faculty” in the soul which

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brings both aspects of the mind into alignment. This eventually evokes an inflow from *buddhi*, or intuition, into and through the aligned mind. The blast of the supernova then occurs, and the “causal body” is shattered, thus *Life Itself* being released, more than *the Self*, as J. Krishnamurti so insightfully pointed out.

The stages of this process may be specified using an astrological approach. Mercury, the “divine Prometheus”, rules Gemini, the constellation of the two brothers (soul and personality at one stage, and the Monad and the soul at another), which are a symbol of the pairs of opposites to be integrated. Interestingly, the “two brothers” in some mythologies, are brother and sister who are also lovers (as found in *Die Walküre*, by Richard Wagner, a rather inaccurate rendering of Nordic myths). Mercury is the expression of that dual aspect of *manas* which *mediates* between the higher and the lower. Hermes (Mercury) carries the messages between the soul and the brain, thus establishing a relation between the lower and the higher selves. This planet is the illumined mind, the *coordinating* factor, relating soul and personality.

So, in terms of discipleship service, the disciple is a *window to the universe*, a usable channel for the impression and expression of subjective ideas on the world of appearances. The greater the inner alignment, the less distorted the perceived *proto*-idea; in the same way as the closer a text is to the original language, the better it reveals the author’s intention. The attained alignment and coordination enables the disciple to

become an *outpost* on the physical plane, thus anchoring the seeds of a higher and broader consciousness. However, before this can be accomplished, a threshold must be passed, and the pilgrim on the way is brought face to face with *himself*.

3. The Dweller

See you, what porter sits within the vestibule? *What face watches over at the threshold?*¹⁰

The Path is a path of *Light*: the pilgrims walk in the full light of day, and the brighter the light, the darker the cast shadow: Upon that Way the hidden stands revealed, and the darker aspects inevitably come to the surface. Any pledge or decision to move forward calls for an inevitable surfacing of dark aspects that had remained hidden, this seems to be the Law. That recurrent facing of oneself will eventually lead toward that final encounter with what Bulwer Lytton in *Zanoni* so poetically described as a “phantom which glides slowly into the chamber”, and seems to “crawl as some vast misshapen reptile”, finally identifying itself as the *Dweller of the Threshold*.

That creature, so vividly depicted in poetical imagery as with bewitching eyes, is but that third aspect of Divinity, in fact, *all that a man is, apart from the spiritual self*. It is that glamorous terror that we gradually learn to face through repeated reflections in the mirror of *form*, the gradual recognitions of those aspects to be surrendered, those thought-forms created by ourselves that we must learn to confront each day. This is all part of

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the training in becoming *occultly aware* of ourselves, which is but our humble contribution to the final dissipation of that planetary Dweller.

This “seeing oneself” could also be looked upon as the process by which non-essentials are disposed of, in much the same way as a mountain climber gets rid of all the extra weight in order to be able to reach the summit, as I have seen here in the Andes. The attainment of the goal is inevitable: the mountaintop will eventually be reached, but no stage of the process can be skipped, and a fearless recognition of the dark inside is required. The elimination of unwanted elements must precede the final blending stage.

The Path that is trodden in the full light of day is a path *in consciousness*, not otherwise. The consciousness of man, which progresses along increasingly wider identifications, gradually sets aside from the sphere of the self that which is recognized as “not-self”, at the same time adding on other possibilities which had remained latent up to that point. After all, the Path is the way toward the recognition of what *we already and essentially are*. The progressing man is thus compelled to unavoidably “face himself”.

As a result, this progressing man also finds his brother’s face reflected on his own, and his own face reflected on his brother’s, in the same way as he finds the universal reflected on him, and himself reflected on the mirror of the universal. The “changes” experienced are just a tricky way of saying that he is becoming *increasingly himself*: the different *personae*

(masks) that, one by one, are discarded, so that the inner being is capable of an improved expression, a call for a constant update of his energy make-up.

We, as personalities, are the *monsters* of all mythologies, which only the selfless commitment of a *hero* can defeat. So man — in a truly and most deeply occult sense — *must find himself*. In finding himself, he finds the All.

4. Meditation as an attitude

In an era of computers and cellphones, the concept of *concentration* has become a thorny subject, first of all because it is becoming increasingly difficult for the younger generations to fix the mind on anything for a sustained period of time. But it is also due to the incapacity — shared by all ages — to have a fresh and renewed perception: our existing concepts color our thinking process. The basic and simple injunction to “pay attention” is something so easily said, and not so easily accomplished, but probably *this simplest of phrases holds a great secret of self-renewal and human regeneration*.

By “living a concentrated life” is not meant merely attention focused on any particular object or matter, but *a constant sense of alertness as a permanent and sustained, and at the same time serene and relaxed, attitude*. One may wonder how relationships would improve if each situation or person, no matter how many times repeated, were to come across with a fresh sense of renewal, without any past event or already-existing concepts interfering in the process.

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So the first step — of many — would be taken, towards that culminating act of “slaying the slayer”, this statement from *The Voice of the Silence* involving a continuous effort leading to an ultimate “forceful” and decisive deed which can only be performed “in the moment of equilibrium, when the enemy is disconcerted by the silence”. Thus Mabel Collins’ *Through the Gates of Gold* depicts this crucial moment of release, when the “serpent of self” is killed.

Meditation follows concentration, and is essentially *an attitude of mind* more than a practice or discipline. However, the technique of occult meditation seems to be the best demonstration of the principle “energy follows thought”, by which the mind is trained to direct its focus toward the higher and subtler realms and synchronize itself with another already ongoing meditation: that of the Inner Being.

Perhaps we could look upon meditation as the “innate attitude” of the universal mind, as a positive force directing its focus toward the realm of form, receptive to impulses from higher realms, so that immersion in matter with its consequent gaining of consciousness may take place, and differentiation may proceed: a sort of “counter-meditation”, so to say. “Father-Mother spin a web whose upper end is fastened to Spirit . . . and the lower one to its shadowy end, matter; this web is the universe spun out of the two substances made in one”. How many secrets lie hidden within this primeval relationship between the higher and the lower, so beautifully depicted in the “Cosmogensis”

volume of *The Secret Doctrine* (p. 29)! It appears to hold the answer to so many mysteries: consciousness, sex polar opposites, and meditation itself! The creative imagination of the *Logos* giving birth to the manifested universe! The role of creative imagination in this process cannot be overemphasized, as can be seen in Patañjali’s *Yoga-Sutras*, III, 24 to 31: we become that on which we fix our minds.

In musical terms, meditation could be thought of as the result of the resolution of the many dissonances of the lower nature into a consonant triad or chord, the third being the integrated personality, the fifth the soul. Eventually this fifth or dominant note of the soul will find its resolution in the *tonic note* of the Monad. Meditation activates this process of *alignment* in a scientific way, producing a factual replacement of the substance of the lower vehicles, rendering them increasingly receptive to impulses coming from above. The role of the mind is here noteworthy, as it acts as the focus where the higher reflects in the lower. It can thus be seen that it is the soul, the “real man”, that “treads the Path”, the lower nature fulfilling its right function as sheaths, or vehicles of expression.

So an interesting thought comes up: the mythical hero that finds his way into the jungle of form *is the soul*, the efforts of the personality being confined to “letting this happen”, “stepping aside”, and cleaning out obstacles. This sheds an interesting light on the interpretation of certain myths, like the role of heroes in classical mythology. The anthropological oppos-

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ition between *nature* and *culture*, and the duality hero-god, so much enlarged upon in today's studies of the myth of Hercules, are but outer symbols of the disciple working out the "epic" conflict of the polar opposites, thus reaching his "apotheosis", namely, becoming *divine*.

The practice of meditation, which is sustained concentration or *dhāranā*, is intended to flow to a stage in which one *slips out of one's own meditation*, loses oneself and becomes the soul (which is a form of *samādhi*, the last stage of the *ashtānga-yoga*, or "union by eight stages"). Real freedom then ensues, freedom not *for* oneself, but *from* oneself, as Ravi Ravindra so insightfully pointed out. In this sense the meditation process resembles service. Real and stabilized soul contact softens the mechanisms of self-concern, so that light can pour in.

The soul *is* the light of knowledge itself, which is reflected *in* and *through* the mind — the mind being used as an *instrument* or an organ of perception — to then reach the brain. Service then appears as a natural outlet for that energy of Light and Love, which at first but triggers the realization of how "pointless"

the life on the level of form can be; but then *losing oneself* in service turns out to be the inevitable outcome of the process of soul-infusion. At that stage *all makes sense*, and life becomes a demonstration of what the wise Heraclitus of Ephesus said: "The most powerful harmony is that which lies hidden."¹¹

The three pillars — meditation, service, and study — are mutually counterbalancing, and are constantly *mirroring* each other. They are part of an age-long and tested method of "taking the Kingdom of Heaven by force", as was so wisely and enigmatically hinted at in Matt., 11:12. The "forceful" process of spiritual awakening is literally "playing with fire", as has been suggested: the "violence" (not to be taken *literally*, but as a metaphor) resulting from the stimulation of the three fires, runs smoothly and safely, provided the three pillars — meditation, study and service — are harmonically and rhythmically energized and activated. One should realize that the whole process *must be slow and gradual*, for, "when searching for gold, much earth must be dug, only to find but little", as the ancient Heraclitus so wisely pointed out.¹² ✧

Endnotes

1. Sometimes, in order to explain ourselves, we use incorrect wording. That which we call "Spirit" is in fact matter in its subtlest state, and "matter" is Spirit in its densest state; *manas* being a sort of "middle point" in terms of degree; musically, the "dominant note", so to say. All development possible for man in this solar system (except for those who are a "rare efflorescence of a generation of enquirers") is contained within the "Cosmic physical plane", what we call "planes" being in fact cosmic "sub-planes". So, even the Monad, however subtle and formless its realms may appear to us, dwells in the sub-atomic (etheric) layer of what is essentially matter. So, our universe is made of substance.

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2. H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, vol. XII, p. 709. Also in D. Caldwell, “The Esoteric Papers of M. Blavatsky”, p. 609.
3. The noumenon (lit. Greek “that which is thought”) becomes the phenomenon (lit. Greek “that which appears or manifests itself”, same root as that of “phantom”, “epiphany”, and so on).
4. The myths have plenty of colorful images depicting what matter does to spiritual realities: the corpses of Osiris, Orpheus, and Hiram Abiff are torn to pieces, which have to be collected, “coordinated”, in order to bring them back to life.
5. *Brhadāranyaka Upanishad*, VI.2.16, “They reach the Moon, and become food. And the Gods feed on them.”
6. *The Ancient Wisdom*, 2nd Adyar ed., ch. IV, p. 135.
7. *Id.*, p. 162.
8. I wish modern languages had the equivalent of the Greek word *anthropos*, which is inclusive and points both to men and women. The so-called “inclusive language”, so rampant today in American Spanish, and as yet so flawed, is at least a well-meaning attempt to erase the age-long prevalence of male-oriented language. As occult students, we should know that it is our thought that we should first of all aim at changing. Language being a subconscious product of the collective, it is not so easy to enforce conscious changes into it.
9. *Yogasutras*, II.20; IV.23.
10. Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI. 574, “*Cernis, custodia qualis vestibulo sedeat? Facies quae limina servet?*”
11. Fragment 54: Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium*, IX.5.
12. Fragment 22, quoted by Clement in *Stromata* IV: 4, 2.

Indeed, as the aggregate sound of Nature is shown to be a single definite tone, a keynote vibrating from and through eternity; having an undeniable existence per se, yet possessing an appreciable pitch only for "the acutely fine ear"* — so the definite harmony or disharmony of man's external nature is seen by the observant to depend wholly on the character of the keynote struck for the *outer* by the *inner man*.

*** This tone is held by the specialists to be the middle F of the piano.**

H. P. Blavatsky
“Are Dreams But Idle Visions?”
Collected Writings, Vol. III, p. 434

Awakening the Heart-Mind

JOHN VORSTERMANS

THE exploration of processes to awaken our spiritual potential incorporates the development of a perception that has a heart-mind focus. Below are some of the practical steps to the operation of awakening the heart-mind.

According to Theosophy, the Mind and the Soul *are the same thing*. The Soul is also referred to as our *permanent individuality*, in contrast with our *present personality*. It is this Mind-Soul-Ego which incarnates and reincarnates, from life to life and body to body, on a long journey of progressive evolution and inner unfoldment.

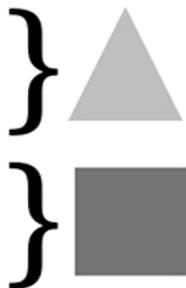
WHAT IS OUR SOUL

The Soul (Heart)

- Atma or True Self
- Buddhi
- Mind (*Manus*) linked to Buddhi

The Human Nature

- Mind (*Manus*) linked to passions / desires / attachment
- Prana / Astral
- Physical



H. P. Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*, Fragment II, "The Two Paths", draws attention to differences between the "Eye" and the "Heart".

♦ The Dharma of the "Heart" is the embodiment of Bodhi, the Permanent and Everlasting.

♦ The Dharma of the "Eye" is the embodiment of the external, the non-existing.

Eye = Head Learning; Heart = Soul
Wisdom; Bodhi = True Divine Self

The Eye reflects the nature of the outward-turned Mind, focused on knowledge, the external, the impermanent. It has strong passions, desires and attachments which it finds itself immersed in and conditioned by. The human Mind is associated with our inherent animal nature. The Heart represents the Mind which is turned inwards, associated with the *buddhi*, our spiritual Soul, and is free from the attachments of the human self or personal ego. Ultimately, we need both fully developed, with our awareness focused on the Soul.

At this stage of our human evolution, the challenges we face are at the level of

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the Mind. There is a battle between the lower and the higher mind, or between the conditioned and unconditioned mind. It is referred to by many names and is the most significant battle we have before us. As we move our attention from the outward-turned mind to the Soul, a more accurate reality is revealed.

J. Krishnamurti talks about the Heart and the Mind as follows:

... when the heart enters into the mind, the mind has quite a different quality; it is really then limitless, not only in its capacity to think, to act efficiently, but also in its sense of living in a vast space where you are part of everything.

Meditations, Shambala Publications Inc.,
Boulder, 2018, p. 10.

A complete change of perception or awareness takes place where you truly experience the unity of life that lies at the very core of the Soul.

How does the Heart enter the Mind, how do we move awareness to the Soul?

By moving awareness to the Soul, we can see what is true and real. This step requires the *development of discrimination*, a willingness to question everything that presents itself to us that we take for granted — our views, perceptions, and beliefs. To develop a perpetual awareness of everything that is happening, both externally and internally, is part of this process.

Much of the illness we suffer from in today's world is the result of inner disharmony or conflict, where our actions in

this world do not align with universal values. For example, through the process of the comparative study of the great religions, we learn that “harmlessness” (*ahimsa*) is a universal value. Living a life of harmlessness is noted as the first step to be taken in all the great religions. To cause harm by our action or thoughts creates a psychological imbalance. This imbalance results in “dis-ease” or ill-health, physically, emotionally, and mentally.

Therefore, observing our thoughts, actions, and speech, endeavours to keep them in balance with universal values such as harmlessness and results in the realignment to universal values and removal of harmful habits. By adopting this practice, we experience greater respect for life, become non-judgmental, have a healthier lifestyle, and develop a more compassionate nature.

Life itself has a way of teaching us if we would be present to what is happening every moment.

When we disagree with someone, or someone pushes our button, causing a reaction within us, then is an excellent time to reflect on what underlies such a response. A disagreement often happens when a conditioned belief confronts us. If we look at what is going on, we may find we are holding onto an idea that is not true, but a part of our incorrect view of reality.

Such triggers are valuable moments allowing us to look at ourselves and reflect on our perceptions. Life experiences, especially fears, create emotional patterns that affect and condition our responses to

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specific events. For the heart to enter the mind, these conditioned patterns we have created must be released.

As H. P. Blavatsky says in the “Golden Stairs” we must have an open mind. To know our self is to drop or let go of what is not-Self. Consider for a moment that *humanity is living in ignorance*. We live in reality as perceived by our senses, which has created this make-believe reality. In the movie called *The Matrix*, everyone is trapped in a collective dream which they believe is real. One of the dreamers begins to see inconsistencies in the dream, at first not understanding and therefore ignoring them. After a great deal of struggle, he is able to awaken from the dream illusion to a new reality. The “Matrix” story is not far from the truth of our existence.

Take a look at the dream (illusion) where we find ourselves. Personal desire is strong; the acquiring of possessions is the hallmark of success in this dream world. We see ourselves as distinct, separate beings, another apparent distortion of reality. We have lost touch with our inner awareness, our heart-mind. In this reality, we exploit the planet to gratify desires, to outdo our neighbours, even though we can see the world’s resources running out, the effects of climate change, and so on. Millions of people live in poverty and sickness in this dream.

At the same time, a small percentage collects all the wealth and manages food supplies and medicines, where corporate profit is more important than social well-being. Is it time to wake up from this dream of the lower mind and awaken to

our Heart, our Soul? When will we wake up from this dream?

How do we grow our awareness to awaken from the dream and perceive reality?

The first step required is one of simple observation. It is often described as meditation, of reflecting on the thoughts which arise in the Mind. It is not about trying to inhibit these thoughts; instead, to become aware of them. If we are willing to look at our reoccurring thoughts, we begin to identify conditioned thinking, thought patterns or thought-forms which filter our perceptions of reality. Once we become aware of these patterns of thinking, we have a choice of giving them energy, or letting them go and eventually dissolve.

Meditation, one of our most significant methods of developing self-awareness, is invaluable in the development of the right kind of awareness. Through observation of the mind and in the creation of mindful awareness, we develop an understanding of mind-nature and inner awareness. We might start a meditation practice for 10 minutes a day which allows us to connect with the inner watcher or witness who watches over everything we do, think, or desire. It is this watcher who is aware of our thoughts during meditation, reminding us that we have lost our focus and become distracted by some thought pattern.

We note the distractive thought pattern to reflect on later, to try and identify the pattern or conditioned thought, then bring our attention back to the observation. Once we connect with our inner

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watcher, meditation moves from a short daily process to constant observation of our thought, speech, and actions. This process is called “choiceless awareness” — always aware. We are unconscious *pilgrims on a soul journey*. As we awaken to the reality of the journey centred in choiceless awareness, the road to Self-discovery has begun, opening and centring ourselves in the heart-mind. We then awaken from the dream to the true heart connection.

Pilgrimage stories are often allegorical, and hold valuable clues to our awakening. The ancient wisdom suggests there are seven keys to interpret sacred texts such as the biblical stories or parables. The first key and most obvious is the story itself which often depicts a historical event such as the life of Jesus or, in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the battle taking place before Arjuna.

You can also read these stories as an allegory for our pilgrimage. In this case, the main character of the story, such as Jesus or Arjuna represents the spiritual journey we take to awaken our heart or soul awareness. Other characters in the story represent qualities that we must develop to be able to complete the journey. Thus the biblical story of Jesus is our own story. We learn to master our lower passions and desires, represented by the crucifixion, not literally, but symbolically. The same for Arjuna — the battle he is facing is the battle of righteousness we are all facing.

The Prodigal Son

In this biblical story the metaphysical meaning of the “two sons” of the Bible

(Luke 15:11) describes the two aspects of the Soul or consciousness. The son who stayed at home is the religious or moral son; the son who went into the far-off country is the human incarnation of the Soul into all the pleasures of the senses and passions. Going to a “far country” is separating the consciousness from its parent source. The first step in being able to return to the father’s house is repentance and confession. If we are truly repentant, the father will forgive; he will have compassion, and the bounty of the Divine Mind will be poured out upon us.

When there is unity between the outer sense and the inner Spirit (the return of the younger son to his father’s house), there is great rejoicing; vitality and understanding awaken. The “fatted calf” is the richness of strength always awaiting the needy Soul. When all these relations have been established between the within and the without, there is rejoicing. The dead man of sense is made alive in the consciousness of Spirit; the lost is found.

The story of *The Wizard of Oz*, written by Frank Baum, a notable theosophist, is an allegorical tale of the Soul’s path to illumination. This is the story of Dorothy’s awakening. The Yellow Brick Road represents the evolving self. Silver shoes represent the silver cord — the link between the material and spiritual selves. The Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Cowardly Lion, who are respectively searching for a brain, a heart, and courage, are qualities required to be developed on the pilgrimage. The cruel wizard in the emerald city is a personification of the

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personal god of Christianity. In the final part of the story Dorothy is awakened on her return to Kansas in her heart-mind.

The Pilgrimage, by Paulo Coelho, recounts his spectacular trials and mysterious mentor, Petrus, and a journey across Spain in search of a sword. This fascinating parable explores the need to find one's path. In the end, we discover that the extraordinary is always found in the ordinary and simple ways of everyday life. Paulo is on a quest for his sword, which he is told he will find at the end of the Camino Trail. Along the journey, he is beset by one challenge after another that slows him in reaching the sword, his goal. Eventually, he has the realisation that it is each challenge we meet in everyday life that is our teacher. Paulo eventually learns the valuable lesson of being present to the learning every moment on the journey and recognises that the destination (the sword) is simply a distraction.

We can see the same allegories playing out in many modern movies. For example, in *The Lord of the Rings*, Gollum epitomises our dual Mind, and Frodo, on his transformational journey with his companion Sam, exemplifies the qualities he needs to complete the journey. In *Star Wars*, Yoda is the Master we will all become, and The Force, the universal intelligence. The Skywalkers, Anakin, Luke, Ren, and so forth, represent the challenge we all face between the light and the dark forces.

Light and dark are not separate; they are two aspects of the whole which we

must integrate to be complete. In *Harry Potter*, the innocent, curious child depicts qualities we must all possess on our journey. Harry faces the light and shadow within, epitomising our journey. Harry and Voldemort are part of each other, just like we all have the light and the shadow within ourselves. We like to show our light and hide the shadow; however, to become whole, the two must be integrated, processed, just as we need to process our conditioned nature to awaken in the Heart.

It is vital to observe, to be aware of what is passing through our Mind. Through the study of the sacred texts, reading the stories as if they are our own journey provides us with valuable insights. An allegoric view is a fascinating tool we can apply to our own lives, with constant reflection and mind-awareness.

The journey is not about the destination. It is about the challenges we face along the way. The Soul's journey, taken through many incarnations as a human life is consciously trying to reconnect with the Soul and move beyond simple mental/emotional awareness, to become aware from a Soul perspective.

Living Deeply is a book published by the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) based on a decade-long research program into the transformative process experienced by many people. IONS was founded by the NASA astronaut Dr Edgar Mitchell, who had a life-changing transformative experience on his return journey from the Moon to Earth. Of all the people interviewed in the research, no one formula,

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or religious or spiritual practice was found to induce transformative experiences. However, the research also included interviews with many well-known people who had these experiences, who shared essential aspects of their journey of transformation.

Various spiritual practices, such as meditation, do not directly bring about transformative changes. However, such methods are often helpful in creating the fertile ground to enable such experiences to happen. Other elements in a practice that is considered necessary are the importance of right intention, attention, repetition, and guidance.

Realisation isn't something we can do; it's only something we can be ready for. Practice isn't the cause of realisation, but it helps you to be more open and ready to receive what the universe has to offer.

Zenkei Blanche Hartman (2003)

Means of developing Heart-Mind

Each of us must find our own means or way of developing heart-mind, or Soul, awareness. Some possible ways that may be helpful are:

1. A close and careful examination of the world in which we live. Considering the advice of Great Teachers alongside our own experience, reasoning, and research, such as what modern science has to say.
2. Working carefully and with dispassion on exploring what is real and unreal,



and being open to questioning our understanding of what we discover. We will quite possibly find that things that are not what they appear to be are the ones that will bring changes to our actions.

3. Creating a 24-hour, choiceless mindful awareness.
4. Preparing a fertile ground for transformative experience by setting up our awareness practices.

This is helpful for every individual who wishes to develop spiritual intuition or Self-discovery — *a heart-mind*. One of the adepts said: “Come out of your world into ours.”

The Meditative Mind

A meditative mind is silent. It is not the silence which thought can conceive of; it is not the silence of a still evening; it is the silence when thought — with all its images, its words and perceptions — has entirely ceased. This meditative mind is the religious mind — the religion that is not touched by the church, the temples, or by chants.

The religious mind is the explosion of love. It is this love that knows no separation. To it, far is near. It is not the one or the many, but rather that state of love in which all division ceases. Like beauty, it is not of the measure of words. From this silence alone the meditative mind acts.

J. Krishnamurti

The Path of Light

WAYNE GATFIELD

IN her article “La Phare de L’Inconnu”, or “The Beacon of the Unknown”, H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) writes:

The “beacon-light” of Truth is Nature without the illusory veil of the senses. It can be reached only when the adept has become absolute master of his personal self, able to control all his physical and psychic senses by the aid of his “seventh sense”, through which he is gifted also with the true wisdom of the gods — *Theosophia*.

And later in the same article:

The Beacon-light upon which the eyes of all real Theosophists are fixed is the same towards which in all ages the imprisoned human soul has struggled. This Beacon, whose light shines upon no earthly seas, but which has mirrored itself in the sombre depths of the primordial waters of infinite space, is called by us, as by the earliest Theosophists, “Divine Wisdom”.

It is this quest which is mirrored in all the great legends and fairy tales the world over. Most of them concern a quest for something: the Holy Grail, the Golden Fleece, or the hand of a beautiful princess;

all symbolising this quest to realise Divine Wisdom and the trials and tribulations of the Path to reach this particular goal.

Light is always comforting to us; whether it is the light of the sun, the moon, the stars, or even the soft light in our homes or the artificial light of a city or town. Deeper still is the inner light, when we think of enlightenment or we talk of shedding light onto a subject or problem. Light is the same on all levels of being, but it seems to differ because of its interaction with our different vehicles down to the lowest, where it becomes physical light.

The ever-changing intensity and tone of light in varying weather conditions and as the day passes by at different times of the year can have a definite effect on the consciousness of the person involved in the viewing and experiencing of these changes. Sometimes, in autumn particularly, a cloudy day can produce a mellow light that gives rise to a beautiful melancholy that, far from being negative, has a very positive effect on the mind and emotions of any individual who is in the slightest bit sensitive to such things, making

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us aware of what the Japanese call *mono no aware*, or the “poignancy, but beauty of the transience of physical existence”, as also the wonder and assurance of the immortality of life itself.

We can all understand that a bright sunny day lifts the spirits of the majority of people, but this is subtly different, not just as regards the seasons, but also the months. The effect of sunlight on a spring day is not the same as the effect it has in summer, autumn, or winter, or in the early, mid or late stages of these. Nor is a cloudy or rainy day experienced the same way at different times of the year; it has a widely varying ambience depending also on the one experiencing it.

Twilight has a special indefinable magic to it; folklore says this is the time that the fairies come out to play, and we can see and feel the magic of this time of the day. No other time has such an effect on our state of mind, when the veil between worlds seems so nebulous, and if we feel it, a great beauty steals into our hearts and colours everything with tenderness, all too briefly, but in ways that take root in our very souls. Writing about this special time, the Irish theosophist, George William Russell says in his article “The Hour of Twilight”:

For the future we intend that at this hour the Mystic shall be at home, less metaphysical and scientific than is his wont, but more really himself. It is customary at this hour, before the lamps are brought in, to give way a little and dream, letting all the tender fancies day suppresses, rise up in

our minds. Wherever it is spent, whether in the dusky room or walking home through the blue evening, all things grow strangely softened and united; the magic of the old world reappears. The commonplace streets take on something of the grandeur and solemnity of starlit avenues of Egyptian temples; the public squares in the mingled glow and gloom grow beautiful as the Indian grove where Śakuntala wandered with her maidens; the children chase each other through the dusky shrubberies; as they flee past they look at us with long-remembered glances: lulled by the silence, we forget [for] a little while the hard edges of the material and remember that we are spirits.

Children look at the world with wonder, but are too young in mind to express these feelings to others in words — except perhaps in exclamations of joy or awe. As we grow we lose this vision and begin to intellectualise everything. We grow cold. But if we develop the spiritual, poetic, side of our nature, we enter a second kind of “childhood”, but on an entirely different level. The Zen saying, that at first a mountain is just a mountain, then later we see it is not really a mountain, but in the end it is just a mountain again, is an expression of this process. We regain the innocence, the wonder, but with the added experiences we have been through to reach that point. It is like the journey of life from unconscious perfection, through a consciousness of our imperfection, to finally realise our perfection consciously. That is, if there ever really is perfection — maybe

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it is all just relative. As above, so below.

So for most people, the reaction to the effects of light on all levels becomes stunted — we have to regain the child-like state we have lost, as the spiritual teachings tell us. We are looking for that light which never shone on land or sea, but which helps us navigate the vast ocean of Divine Wisdom towards our destination, or the different stages of a never-ending journey as far as we know.

Whether it be Jason and the Argonauts, the Grail Knights, Ulysses, Perseus, or many other legendary heroes of fairy tales from around the world, they all achieved their goal by making it their only real interest — they allowed nothing to stand in their way. They overcame seemingly insurmountable odds by focusing their whole attention on the object of their quest — some fell by the wayside, but the bravest triumphed. Krishna tells us in the *Bhagavadgītā* that if we focus our attention on him we will surely come to him — it is the surest way if we think of Krishna as the Higher Self.

Relating this to our lives we must take the stance that we are immortal beings in essence — our personal selves come and go but what we are in reality does not change. Some of the best words regarding the correct attitude are in *The Voice of the Silence* (II.137–8):

Have patience, candidate, as one who fears
no failure courts no success. Fix thy Soul's
gaze upon the star whose ray thou art, the
flaming star that shines within the light-
less depths of ever-being, the boundless
fields of the Unknown.

Have perseverance as one who doth for
evermore endure. Thy shadows live and
vanish; that which in thee shall live for
ever, that which in thee *knows*, for it is
knowledge, is not of fleeting life: it is the
man that was, that is, and will be, for
whom the hour shall never strike.

The shadows are our personal selves
— that come and go like fleeting shadows.
In the vast scale of things, our few short
years in this particular life are like the
Zen saying that our physical life is like
a galloping horse glimpsed through a
crack in the wall.

All of us are on this inner pilgrimage
and we must find our own way along the
often misty roads that lead us through the
sometimes beautiful and often harsh
terrain that we traverse on our journey.
We meet many friends and teachers on
the way and have countless adventures
and perilous ordeals, but our inner resolve
propels us ever onwards and always the
sun lights our way. Even if it disappears
behind the clouds of our own making,
we know it is still there and will return in
time and it is true that even those clouds
are silver-lined, holding the promise of
better days and times to come.

In the darkness the moon borrows
its light from the sun and gives us some
comfort until the dawn casts its spell over
our world and hope grows strong in us.
Then comes the moment we hear the rush-
ing of the river of life and reach the bridge
we must cross. We will feel the thrill of
knowing that this is the consummation of
all our efforts over many lives and that

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soon the dreams and nightmares will have passed and we will be faced with the great choice that we must take in time but which will ultimately end in our release and the general uplift of humanity as a whole. *Light on the Path* (I.12) tells us:

For within you is the light of the world — the only light that can be shed upon the Path. If you are unable to perceive it within you, it is useless to look for it elsewhere. It is beyond you, because when you reach it you have lost yourself. It is unattainable, because it for ever recedes. You will enter the light, but you will never touch the Flame.

So we may reach our goal only to find out that what we thought was the end is really just a beginning and as far as we know there is no end to the quest. The sun lights our way — not just the physical sun, but the inner sun that illuminates the path for us on to the endless end.

On the way we help each other; we understand the limitations of human nature and are willing to forgive “not seven times but seventy times seven”, and always to pass the gentlest sentence possible on those who err. We learn that the journey is not really a solitary one, but taken with all our fellow pilgrims — our fellow seekers — and that we always have the good of humanity as a whole in our minds as we progress onwards. But in a way progression is an illusion, as we are already there — we just need to clear away the clouds that obscure our vision and prevent us from seeing the ever-shining sun of our inner being.

All of our lives can be an adventure,

a quest to reach our Holy Grail — the struggles we go through, the heartaches and joys are all grist for the mill. If we develop the right attitude we can make use of all our experiences that come our way to help us on our way. When we look at the world we should imagine we are on a mountain looking down at all that goes on — the lower mind has created so many divisions — between countries, religions, sects, political parties, and even families and individuals — yet we are all the same within. All these outer differences are just “the great dire heresy of separateness that weans [us] from the rest”, as *The Voice of the Silence* (I.37) tells us.

We are on a small planet, one amongst countless others, yet we still cannot get on with each other; we allow illusion and delusion to keep us apart, building walls instead of bridges, seeing others through our own misconceptions and misunderstandings, failing to make allowances for the limitations of human nature, forgetting to cast the beam out of our own eye before we criticise the splinter in the eye of another, “let him who is without sin cast the first stone”, and so on.

If we want all the people of the world to love each other, then certainly we must show the way the best we can. So I will end with a quote from “The New Cycle” (*Collected Writings*, vol. XI, p. 135–6) by HPB:

No one is so busy or so poor that he cannot create a noble ideal and follow it. Why then hesitate in clearing a path towards this ideal, through all obstacles, over . . .

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every petty hindrance of social life, in order to march straight forward until the goal is reached? Those who would make this effort would soon find that the “strait gate” and the “thorny path” lead to the broad valleys of limitless horizon, to that state where there is no more death, because one feels oneself rebecoming a god! It is true that the first conditions required to reach it are an absolute disinterestedness, a boundless devotion to the welfare of others, and a complete indifference to the world and its opinions. In order to make the first step on that ideal path, the motive must be absolutely pure; not an unworthy thought must attract the eyes

from the end in view, not a doubt or hesitation shackle the feet. There do exist men and women thoroughly qualified for this, whose only aim is to dwell under the Aegis of their Divine Nature. Let them, at least, take courage to live the life and not conceal it from the eyes of others! No one else’s opinion should be considered superior to the voice of one’s own conscience. Let that conscience, therefore, developed to its highest degree, guide us in all the ordinary acts of life. As to the conduct of our inner life, let us concentrate our entire attention on the ideal we have set ourselves, and look *beyond*, without paying the slightest attention to the mud upon our feet. ✧

It is only when all outward appearances are gone that there is left that one principle of life which exists independently of all external phenomena. It is the fire that burns in the eternal light, when the fuel is expended and the flame is extinguished; for that fire is neither in the flame nor in the fuel, nor yet inside either of the two but above beneath and everywhere.

The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett
Letter No. 72, p. 217 (ML 127)

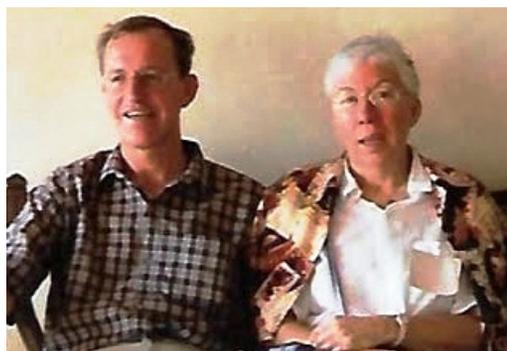
Ali Ritsema — In Memoriam

ALI Ritsema grew up in the northeast of the Netherlands. She was bright and open-minded, married young, and raised two children. Around 1980 she discovered Theosophy and quickly found a friend who shared her interest in the teachings. They both joined the Theosophical Society (TS) and she studied many theosophical handbooks, deciding to devote her life to Theosophy. After her children grew up and left home, she went to live at the Naarden International Theosophical Centre (ITC).

She then attended study courses in Adyar, where she met many active members from around the world, became friends with the then international President of the TS, Radha Burnier, and with Joy Mills, and also went to the Krotona Institute of Theosophy in Ojai, California, where she met Roger Price, who later would become her second husband.

In 1993 she became General Secretary of the Dutch Section of the TS, organizing well-attended weekend and summer schools. She also lectured in both national and international Lodges, wrote articles, translated books, and kept studying on her own. After ten years, she entered a quieter phase of her life, and moved with Roger to Belgium.

Radha Burnier then made Ali her representative in Indonesia, so she went there several times, helping to set up Indonesian Lodges and supporting and advising active members.



Ali with Louis at Adyar, December 1996

Ali's great passion was HPB's *The Secret Doctrine* and she really wanted to write an abridged and more accessible version of that magnum opus in the Dutch language. So she had to prepare herself, and moved back to the Netherlands, close to The Hague, withdrawing from society and devoting herself to study and writing, keeping her international contacts alive via emails. She lived as a nun, receiving very few people, while focusing on her studies.

When cancer struck, she remained optimistic, convinced that the disease eventually would disappear due to her healthy way of life. Unfortunately, a few years later it became painfully clear that the cancer had spread. In August 2019 she was happy to celebrate her 75th birthday with her children and some friends, but her physical condition was rapidly worsening, and on 16 December she peacefully passed away.

— LOUIS GEERTMAN, former Vice-General Secretary of the Dutch Section.

The Mahatmas

ALI RITSEMA

IN the founding and history of the Theosophical Society (TS) the Mahatmas have been the truly inspirational force. They have insight into the evolutionary process of the Universe and the Laws of Nature. They thus stimulate all movements meant to help the progress of the world in the spiritual sense. The intention of initiating the foundation of the TS was to assist humans in showing that “such a thing as Theosophy exists, and to help . . . ascend towards it by studying and assimilating its eternal verities”. (*The Key to Theosophy*, Section 4, “The Abstract and the Concrete”) They emphasize over and over again the importance and practice of a truly Universal Brotherhood of Humanity.

What is a Mahatma?

The word “Mahatma” means “great soul”. H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) states that the Mahatmas are living humans, not “spirits”; their knowledge and wisdom are immeasurable compared to that of a “normal” person. They are said to have mastered their lower nature. They are also referred to as Elder Brothers, Masters of the Wisdom, Masters of Compassion, Adepts, Arhats or Rishis.

In an article by HPB on “Mahatmas and Chelas,” it is stated:

A Mahatma is a personage, who, by special training and education, has evolved those higher faculties and has attained that spiritual knowledge, which ordinary humanity will acquire after passing through numberless series of reincarnations.

(*Collected Writings*, vol. VI, p. 239)

According to Mahatma Koot Hoomi (KH):

The adept is the rare efflorescence of a generation of enquirers; and to become one, he must obey the inward impulse of the soul irrespective of the prudential considerations of worldly science or sagacity.

(*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter No. 2 / ML-2)

The Real Mahatma

The real Mahatma is not his physical body but the higher mind, *manas* pure, inseparably linked to *ātma* and *buddhi*. This connection is brought about through the process of self-purification and inner development as indicated by esoteric philosophy. Whoever wants to contact a Mahatma must elevate his *manas* in such a

Ms Ali Ritsema (August 1944–December 2019) was a long-term member of the Theosophical Society and former General Secretary of the TS in the Netherlands. (See article on p. 34 of this issue.)

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way that the inner perception will be clear and the illusions of the outer world have been transcended. This is an inner process and therefore to “see” a Mahatma does not depend on a certain place but on a state of consciousness. That is why it may be said that the Mahatmas are everywhere.

A Mahatma Is Conscious of His Thinking

Unlike ordinary people a Mahatma is conscious of the working of his mind and its effect. In Letter No. 65 (ML-11), KH states: “It is with jealous care that we have to guard our mind-plane from all adverse influences which daily arise in our passage through earth-life.” As a result a Mahatma is able to make use of his mind consciously; and he determines which thought he throws off or lets in. Since a Mahatma is aware of the fact that emotions and passions are wasting his life force, he will avoid them. To be able to do his work properly he has to protect his powers and therefore will live outside the influence of the masses. This is the reason why a Mahatma is able to make much longer use of his body and will become much older than “normal” people.

However, a Mahatma is not infallible, as they say themselves. They cannot foresee everything every moment of the day. When a Mahatma is taking rest, his powers are also at rest.

The Mahatmas and their Letters

Within theosophical literature *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* has an important place. The book consists of letters written by Mahatmas KH and Morya (M.) mostly to A. P. Sinnett, and a few to A. O. Hume during the first years of the TS. Sinnett was an English jour-

nalist who came in contact with HPB and Col H. S. Olcott (HSO), and through HPB he came in contact with the Mahatmas. Hume, a civil servant with the Indian Civil Service, was a friend of the Sinnetts. The letters are in fact private correspondence by KH and M. and, with a few exceptions, answer questions unknown to the reader. The answers show great depth and wisdom about a great variety of subjects.

The letters contain teachings that have been and still are a source of inspiration for students of the esoteric philosophy. Although they were private and not meant for publication, they were published in 1923 after Sinnett’s death. The original letters are kept in the British Library in London and can be seen when requested. Those written by KH are in blue ink and the ones by M. in red ink. Many of the events described in the letters are nowadays not of much interest for the reader, but for a serious enquirer it is worthwhile to study the teachings they contain. The Mahatmas indicate what a challenge it is for them to pass on their science to people who have been trained in a Western way of thinking. It is not easy to let go of fixed ideas and it requires quite some courage to learn to think for oneself.

Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom

Then there are also the *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, (compiled by C. Jinarājadāsa, in two series) addressed to family members of HPB, to HSO, C. W. Leadbeater, and many others. The first series of these letters was published in 1919; they are not answers to questions and are therefore easier to understand.

Subjects in *The Mahatma Letters*

In order to have an understanding of

The Mahatmas

the point of view of the Mahatmas on any particular esoteric subject mentioned in *The Mahatma Letters*, the student has first to assemble all the information about that subject spread ad hoc throughout many letters. Very abstract subjects are discussed like the Absolute, *ākāśa*, universal laws, and so on, but also less abstract subjects like good and evil, life and death, adepts, discipleship, esoteric wisdom, and so forth.

The Mahatmas and *The Secret Doctrine*

The Secret Doctrine (*SD*) is, as KH states in a letter, “the triple production” of M., HPB, and KH, published in 1888. M. states in a letter that *The Secret Doctrine* has been dictated partly by him and partly by KH. It has also been explained by KH that every mistake or incorrect idea has been corrected either by him or under his guidance.

In *Collected Writings*, vol. XIII (p. 285), is an article attributed to HPB:

Knowledge comes in visions, first in dreams and then in pictures presented to the inner eye during meditation. Thus have I been taught the whole system of evolution, the laws of being and all else that I know — the mysteries of life and death, the workings of Karma. Not a word was spoken to me of all this in the ordinary way, except, perhaps, by way of confirmation of what was thus given me — nothing . . . in writing. And knowledge so obtained is so clear, so convincing, so indelible in the impression it makes upon the mind, that all other sources of information, all other methods of teaching with which we are familiar dwindle into insignificance in comparison.

And she adds to this that it is very difficult to represent in sufficiently accurate

language what was given to her in pictures.

SD consists of two parts, “Cosmogogenesis”, the coming about of the Cosmos, and “Anthropogenesis”, the evolutionary process of humanity. On the title page it is explained that the book is the synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy. The study of this book is not so much about accumulating mental knowledge but a new kind of mental effort, the carving out of “new brain paths”, as HPB puts it, a means of exercising and developing the mind, never touched by other studies.

The motto of the *SD* is like the seal of the TS: “There Is No Religion Higher than Truth.” The *SD* is mostly a commentary on selected stanzas from an ancient work, the *Book of Dzyan*. These Stanzas are poetical verses and have a meditative quality which might have a transformative effect. The word “Dzyan” refers to esoteric schools and their literature and is defined as “to reform one’s self by meditation and knowledge”.

Esoteric Schools Are of All Ages

Esoteric schools have always existed although they are often called mystery schools. The true objective of mystery schools always has been to develop the spiritual powers in humans and to establish a society based on altruism. According to KH:

The mysteries . . . never can be put within the reach of the general public, not, at least, until that longed-for day when our religious philosophy becomes universal.”

(*The Mahatma Letters*, Letter No. 2 / ML-2)

True knowledge can only be passed on when the requisite conditions are being met and then insight comes from within, not from without. ✧

Theosophical Work around the World

The 144th International Convention of the Theosophical Society (TS) took place from 31 December 2019 to 5 January 2020. But for more than one reason, this convention was different, the chief one being that it was hosted by the Indian Section of the TS in Varanasi, the spiritual capital of India. Thirty years had passed since a Convention had taken place there. The theme was “Nurturing the Divine Seed”, being a reminder that all of us are essentially divine.

The seed that was sown in the minds a year earlier took root and gave the fruit of camaraderie among the assembled delegates. But providing such an atmosphere was a challenge in itself, and that too in Varanasi. Although the cold weather tested everyone’s endurance, the warmth of the hearts was much stronger than the chilling cold outside.

The task was big and the time short. The infrastructure was not available to host such a large gathering at Varanasi a year ago. But the lightning speed with which the work was done under the guidance of Indian Section President Pradeep Gohil in the past year was extraordinary. In addition to maintenance work, new buildings, roads, and an amphitheatre had to be constructed. But the Convention Officer was fortunate to have capable, dedicated, and diligent mentors, guides, volunteers, and workers without whom all the work required would have been

impossible to carry out. Volunteers from all the five educational institutions run by the Indian Section and the TS staff came together and gave their best to hold a successful and memorable convention.

On the two days before the Convention, an excursion was arranged for the delegates to visit historical and spiritual places in and near Varanasi, including a visit to Sarnath, the place where Lord Buddha gave his first sermon, and to the Krishnamurti Foundation India, Rajghat Fort, where the group took a walk around the four-hundred-odd acres, and saw the Besant School and the hostel for boys and girls. The visit ended at the Study Center, with its guest houses and the silent room where Krishnaji stayed when visiting Varanasi. Just before the opening of the Convention, the inauguration of the Dr Radha Burnier Amphitheatre took place with around 1,500 in attendance. During the ceremony a song conveying a message spreading the light of love to all was played in the background.

The Presidential address, public lectures, short lectures, symposiums, and panel discussion were a wakeup call to remind us that in the midst of the hustle and bustle of daily life, there lies a seed of divinity in every one of us of which we are often oblivious of, and get caught in the world of illusion and react on the basis of selfishness rather than responding on the basis of Oneness.

Theosophical Work around the World



Inauguration of the Dr Radha Burnier Amphitheatre on 31 December 2019, preceding the opening of the 144th International Convention. On the stage are members of the General Council



Each member of the audience raising a candle lighted from the central lamp, which was first lighted by International President Tim Boyd

Theosophical Work around the World



Left: Mr Pradeep Gohil, President of the Indian Section, and Mr Kalyan Banerjee, who gave the Besant Lecture.
Right: Prof. P. Krishna (KFI) and Mr Tim Boyd, during the discussion on “Krishnamurti and Theosophy”



Left: Prof. C. A. Shinde (India) introduced Ven. Olande Ananda (Sri Lanka), who gave the Public Lecture.
Right: Mr Tim Boyd and Mr Abhaya Srisrimal Jain, who gave the Theosophy-Science Lecture



Exhibition of 24 original illustrations from
Thought Forms by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater

Theosophical Work around the World



Left: Panel discussion: Mr Douglas Keene (USA), Mr V. Narayanan (India), Ms Patrizia Calvi (Italy), Ms Isis de Resende (Brazil). *Right:* Q & A session: Mr Marcos de Resende (Brazil), Mr Tim Boyd, Ms Uma Bhattacharya (India)



Left: Symposium: Ms Clemice Petter (Adyar), Mr Vinayak Pandya (India), Ms Tran-Thi-Kim-Dieu (France). *Right:* Short lectures: Mr Charles Romero (Philippines), chairing, Ms Linda Oliveira (Australia), Mr Narendra Shah (South Africa)



A full-day tour in Varanasi ended with the evening Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat (Ganga Aarti), a spectacular Hindu religious ceremony that takes place every evening

Theosophical Work around the World



The National President of the Brazilian Section of the TS, Mr Sergio Carvalho de Moraes, Jr, speaking to the audience at the Bancários Theater during one of the functions of their centenary celebration



Close-up of the National President of the Brazilian Section

Theosophical Work around the World

Along with the above-mentioned food for thought, there were various evening performances which mesmerised the delegates, such as LEAP India Children's Choir offering songs from several cultures, and old Hindi film songs arranged by the Indian Section.

Apart from the exhibition of "Beauty Without Cruelty" posters, an exhibition of original paintings from *Thought Forms* by Dr Annie Besant and Bishop C. W. Leadbeater was held in the Central Hall in Shantikunj, the residence in which Besant lived for a long time while in Varanasi. The coordination between staff from Adyar and Varanasi was exemplary and everything went smoothly, from planning meetings, communications, registration, to printing of *Daily Bulletins*.

The convention was covered well by the print and electronics media, so as to take the theosophical message of "Nurturing the Divine Seed" far and wide. The whole convention was live-streamed to reach as many people as possible around the world. Overall, it was a memorable event.

Brazil

National President of the Brazilian Section of the TS Sergio Carvalho de Moraes, Jr, reports that they celebrated their centenary from 12 to 17 November 2019, beginning with the release of the book *Theosophy, the Truth of All Ages*, referring to their centenary, including the history of the Section, co-written by several members. It is a journey through time, contemplating the effort and dedication of

workers for the cause of Humanity, who have brought and spread the treasure of Divine Wisdom to the present times. On the second day an award-winning singer, Sabah Moraes, delighted the audience at the Bancários Theater, interpreting Piaf and Piazzolla, which delighted the audience. Again in the same venue on the third day, they enjoyed songs played by the Universidade Brasília Youth String Orchestra.

On the fourth day a photo exhibition was held on the history of the Section, curated by Ana Cristina Moura. The next day a variety of presentations from various artistic traditions were held and perspectives, starting with Arabic music, followed by Indian mantras, devotional songs (*bhajans*), and classical dance, then Tai chi chuan and songs of the Christian tradition, and ending with the Saint Francis prayer sung by all the artists and the audience as well. On the last day representatives of Buddhism, Hinduism, the Baha'i faith, the Liberal Catholic Church, and former Presidents of the Section spoke about the significance of the centenary. Tribute was also paid to former General Secretaries with a beautiful presentation by the Brasilia Choir.

The TS in Brazil was on social media and cultural events websites, facilitating dissemination of TS work and the liberating message of Theosophy. Through the language of art they got closer to the deep and beautiful sense that Theosophy has always been able to stimulate in the soul of humanity. ✧

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