

## Freedom of Thought

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

## Freedom of the Society

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

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



# THE THEOSOPHIST

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Editor: *Mr Tim Boyd*

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# THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

*Founded 17 November 1875*

*President: Mr Tim Boyd*

*Vice-President: Dr Deepa Padhi*

*Secretary: Ms Marja Artamaa*

*Treasurer: Ms Nancy Secrest*

Headquarters: ADYAR, CHENNAI (MADRAS) 600 020, INDIA

Vice-President: [ivp.hq@ts-adyar.org](mailto:ivp.hq@ts-adyar.org)

Secretary: [secy.hq@ts-adyar.org](mailto:secy.hq@ts-adyar.org)

Treasurer: [treasury.hq@ts-adyar.org](mailto:treasury.hq@ts-adyar.org)

Adyar Library and Research Centre: [alrc.hq@ts-adyar.org](mailto:alrc.hq@ts-adyar.org)

Theosophical Publishing House: [tphindia@gmail.com](mailto:tphindia@gmail.com) // [www.adyarbooks.com](http://www.adyarbooks.com)

Editorial Office: [editorialoffice@gmail.com](mailto:editorialoffice@gmail.com), Website: <http://www.ts-adyar.org>

**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.

# Some Thoughts on Study

TIM BOYD

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

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

The only part I might take issue with is the idea that it is “easy” to become that person.

An interesting aspect of her list of a theosophist’s qualities is that none of them refer to membership in an organization. Those who are attracted to this theosophical approach soon find themselves asking some questions like: Where do I begin? What can and should I study? In J. Krishnamurti’s little book, *At the Feet of the Master*, the importance of study is emphasized, but study first that which will “most help us to help others”.

So, what is it that most helps us to help others; how do we study it; where do we find it?

I travel around the world interacting with TS members and groups. Sometimes it is surprising the areas that theosophists choose to focus their attention for study. The range of choices is broad. For some, study focuses solely on the writings of HPB and the Mahatma Letters. For others, the second wave of theosophical teachers — Besant, Leadbeater, and Krishnamurti — occupy their study. For others it is the understanding, and even the cultivation, of the psychic realm.

It is important to choose wisely, especially in the beginning. An initial small step in the wrong direction can lead us far away from the direction we had originally intended. The purpose of our study is the elevation of the mind. Like climbing to a mountain peak. There are many possible paths that lead to the peak of the mountain, but at the summit we find before us a single vision of the patterns and appearance of the Earth below.

We use the word “below” because for the duration of our mountaintop experience, the Earth where we live, where our day-to-day lives take place can be

clearly seen as an interrelated whole. A fact of these experiences is that sooner or later we must descend from the heights we have attained. Whether we are standing on a physical mountain or rapt in the elevation that occurs occasionally in meditation, eventually we must come down to Earth, once again engaged in our normal activities. In the aftermath of a peak experience we might imagine we could leave behind the many limiting habits we have cultivated during our lives. We cannot. We have the experience of having seen clearly, and now must guide ourselves by the memory of what we have seen. We do remember, and that knowing cannot be taken away.

There is a meditation teacher named Jack Kornfield, who said: “After the ecstasy comes the dishes.” After the peak experiences we are back washing dishes, taking children to school, going to the workplace, all of the mundane things that comprise a life, but somehow, we do it differently. As Joy Mills once described it, “You look the same, but never see the same again.” In our theosophical approach this elevation is cultivated in the process of study, meditation, and service.

It would be well to have a complete teaching to help us develop as holistically as possible. In HPB’s writings she references the Lam Rim, a body of wisdom teachings typical to Tibetan Buddhism. Lam Rim is also referred to as “the graded path to enlightenment”. It is thought of as a complete package, so that at whatever level of unfoldment we find ourselves,

there is a step on the ladder of these teachings that is suited to us. From the Lam Rim perspective there are three different levels of spiritual practitioners. They call it the “three scopes” — “small”, “medium”, and “great”.

The small scope relates to the person who is concerned for their own suffering and is searching for happiness within this ever-repeating wheel of samsara, or cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Practitioners of the small scope are working to be happy in this life and sow the seeds for a better rebirth in another life. Perhaps to be born into a family of wealth and authority, or into one of the various heaven realms associated with Tibetan Buddhism.

The medium scope would be those practitioners who have seen the folly of this repetitive cycle of suffering and seek liberation from it. In our theosophical writings we hear about the Pratyeka Buddhas, sometimes (incorrectly) described as “Selfish Buddhas” for their focus and success in achieving a personal liberation from the realm of suffering.

Then there is the great scope, the Bodhisattva path, for those who are determined to become enlightened in order to benefit all suffering beings. The vow of the Bodhisattva is “May I attain Enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings”, and is very much aligned with the theosophical approach.

In the theosophical tradition there are profound teachings that address us at all of the many levels where we find

ourselves. Many of these books tend to be short. Like a sutra, they leave it to us to experiment, extend, and expand the teachings.

*At the Feet of the Master* speaks about four qualifications that lead toward entry onto the path of discipleship – discrimination, desirelessness, good conduct, and Love. We also have HPB's *The Voice of the Silence*, which is “Dedicated to the Few” and describes the path at another level of unfoldment, and there is Mabel Collins's *Light on the Path*, with its various admonitions. The first part of the book talks about all of the desires we must “kill out” before we move on. Paradoxically, after they have been extinguished the next phase of the book talks about another level of things that we must desire! One of those is “desire possessions”, but these are possessions of an inner nature. So the idea of moving progressively from those things of the desire world, is to go more and more inward. The book closes with the section on “seeking”, what it is that we seek, and how we seek it.

In the final verse, after having killed out desires, cultivated proper desires, and sought out the way, then we are told to stop — “don't do anything”. The last phrase in the book is “to look for the flower to bloom after the storm”. Until the storms of life have shaken us to our roots, the flower of wisdom does not bloom. These are complete teachings



that can guide us along the way, if we can make the connections from the abbreviated versions to their sources.

When I was much younger, I had a teacher who would sometimes say things that seemed peculiar. One of the things he would say is that the wisdom teachings are safe from people who are not ready for them. He would give the example of someone taking a handful of diamonds and spreading them on the floor. A person coming into the room who did not know how to recognize a diamond would say: “Your house is not very neat. You have glass scattered all over the floor.” But someone who knows the value of jewels immediately would perceive that precious diamonds were laying all around his feet.

The teachings that we have been given are like this. It is the nature of wisdom that it is expressed in such a way that whatever our level of unfoldment they will feed us at the level of our need. Our responsibility is to be aware that they are without limit. So while it might be easy to become satisfied with the crumbs that we are able to digest at this moment, our role is to elevate, to always try to look deeper, try to deepen our experience.

What we find is that, invariably, as the scope of awareness opens within us, the exact same teachings will speak to us in a very different way. That is the beauty of it — it is an unending path, and we are unendingly supported at every point of it.

# Renewal is the Flow of Nature

CARLOS PÉREZ MENÉNDEZ

WHAT is the meaning of the Universe? Is it stationary or is it evolving? It was not until 1927 that astronomers began to know that the Universe is not stationary but it is expanding. Georges Lemaître was the astronomer who elaborated this hypothesis using Einstein's General Relativity Theory. Einstein himself was introducing in his theory an arbitrary term, the "cosmological constant", so the equations produce a stationary Universe. He will later call it his bigger mistake.

## All things are flowing

About 2,500 years ago, on the coast of Anatolia (now belonging to Turkey), the Greeks built several settlements. One of them was Ephesus, where there was a famous temple dedicated to Artemis which was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It was a time of many conflicts, wars, and changes of rulers. Here, in Ephesus, a great philosopher called Heraclitus talked about the ever-changing nature of everything. Heraclitus said that "no man ever steps in the same river twice" to point to the ever-changing flow of water and also the ever-changing person. Other Heraclitus phrases state that "all things are in motion like streams" and

"all things are passing and nothing abides". The pre-Socratic philosopher summarized the idea of continuous change of things with "everything flows" (*panta rhei* in Greek).

## The Trimurti in Hinduism

In Hinduism, there is the concept of the Trimurti, a trinity of deities that are the personification of universal principles. They are designated as Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver, and Shiva, the destroyer. This usually is understood as a cycle in which at the beginning occurs the creative phase (Brahma), followed by a period in which the things or beings created are maintained as they are (Vishnu). Then, after a while, the life cycle ends with the destruction of the forms (Shiva) to start again a new cycle. This sounds consistent with our daily life experience. For instance, our physical body has its creation in the womb of our mother, it is preserved for the duration of our life, and then it declines, and after death, it is destroyed.

However, the idea of preservation as a quiet, inactive period in the cycle, is it true or is it an illusion? Let us investigate it in more detail.

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Carlos Pérez Menéndez became a member of the TS in Argentina in 1973, where he was Vice-President of the Section. He has lived in Spain since 1991, where he is an active TS lecturer, President of Hesperia Lodge, Madrid, and the author of *Theosophy in the 21st Century* (see <theosophy.world>).

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### **Renewal of the cells in our body**

Our body creates new cells by the division of existing cells, thus replacing old cells that die. Carbon-14 studies have shown that almost all cells in our body are replaced every 7 to 10 years. Each cell type has a different lifetime and renewal speed. Red blood cells have a lifetime of about 4 months. It is estimated that about 100 million new blood cells are created in our body every minute. Cells of the intestinal epithelium and the stomach are replaced every few days.

Scientists once thought that adult brains do not produce new neurons, but the study shows that about 1/3 of the cells in the hippocampus, a brain region related to memory and learning, are replaced during the lifetime of a person.

Therefore, we can see that our body is in constant renewal.

### **A forest is flowing**

A forest may be seen as quiet, but there is unceasing activity. Many cycles are acting constantly and simultaneously like the water cycle, CO<sub>2</sub>, and O<sub>2</sub> cycles for instance, and also a very important one, the nitrogen cycle. The atmosphere is composed of 78% nitrogen and it is an essential element for life. In the soil, nitrogen-fixing bacteria allow the assimilation of this element by the roots of plants and trees which can grow making new cells with this nutrient.

Trees and plants grow new cells thanks to photosynthesis and by absorbing nutrients from the soil. The leaves, flowers, and other vegetable remains fall to the ground together with animal remains. Here an army of insects decomposes the dead

organic matter, passing it to the soil, where bacteria and fungi produce other compounds, and finally the nitrogen is released again to the atmosphere thanks to other bacteria.

Therefore, the destruction of the body of a plant or an animal is needed to make new plants and trees that are the basis of life. The renewal is constant, the forest flows over time, surviving plagues and fire, but not destruction caused by humans.

### **The living Earth**

The Earth is changing continuously but at a very low speed compared with our lives. Earthquakes and volcanic activity are evidence of geological changes. Continents form a part of the tectonic plates that move atop the mantle, which is solid but plastic and ductile enough to slowly flow due to heat convection, causing the movement of the tectonic plates. When two tectonic plates collide, it causes earthquakes and earth movements resulting, at the same time, in destruction and the rise of new elements on the surface, like mountains. The recent strong earthquake in Turkey and Syria shows how vulnerable we are on the surface of a planet that gives us all that we need for life, but that is continuously changing, even when we think of it as static “as a solid rock”.

### **Stars and galaxies are transforming themselves**

There is destruction and creation in stars also, where there is fusion activity where hydrogen atoms are converted into helium, releasing a large amount of



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energy, which in the case of our Sun makes life on Earth possible. When a star explodes at the end of its cycle it generates heavy elements like calcium, iron, zinc, copper, gold, and others, that will be used in a future planetary system of a new star. Life on Earth is possible thanks to the elements created by the explosion of a previous star, because biological processes use heavy elements like iron and zinc that are very common in biological bodies.

### **Learning means destruction and creation**

When we learn something, we are destroying an old concept, an old model of thought, and building a new concept, one that is according to our new experience or with the new understanding. The new concept or idea may be an extension of the old one, but we destroyed the old one anyway, because experience or contemplation proves that it was wrong or incomplete. Therefore, learning is a continuous process of destruction and construction of models and archetypes in our minds.

Thought is the result of the past acting in the present; the past is constantly sweeping over the present. The present, the new, is ever being absorbed by the past, by the known. To live in the eternal present there must be death to the past, to memory; in this death there is timeless renewal.

Jiddu Krishnamurti

Tenth Public Talk in Ojai, 1945

To keep this process going, it is important that we can ask the right questions. A question is the beginning of knowledge.

To ask the right questions we need an open mind, capable of reviewing previous ideas, perhaps acquired from others or through our own interpretation of certain facts.

Einstein got rid of the prevailing and tacit idea that time is absolute, when he saw that it did not agree with the facts, to formulate his Special Theory of Relativity. He revised a common preconception that people were unaware of. He had to destroy this idea to build the theory that has since been proven enough number of times.

Continuous learning is important in our relationships. We have images of others that are based on superficial impressions or facts of the past. But every person is changing. What do we really know about another person? We must destroy our prejudices to understand other people.

### **Impermanence is one of the pillars of Buddhism**

In Buddhism, the concept of impermanence, *anicca* in Pali (*anitya* in Sanskrit), is one of the pillars of its philosophy. It is one of the three marks of existence. Impermanence means that all conditioned existence is composed of aggregates that sooner or later will be decomposed. There is no material or mental object that is permanent.

The attachment to changing things produces suffering or *dukkha* because they will have an end. We can appreciate our car but we must be conscious that it will not last forever. We can love another person, but we must be aware that our relationship will change over time and they will disappear, as in the case of our parents, or they will make their own life, perhaps far from us, as in the case of our

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children. Love is permanent and is not lost, but the relationship between incarnated personalities changes and will come to an end.

### Swastika and Trimurti

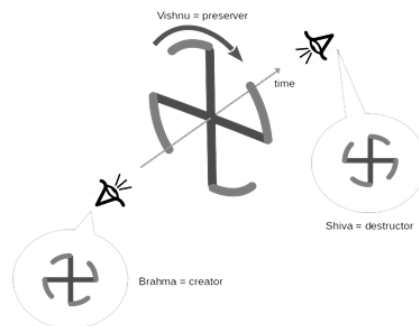
Let us now return to the idea of the Trimurti. We can contemplate Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva as three aspects of a continuous process instead of three separate causes.

In the following passage from the *Padma Purāna*, it is taught that Vishnu is the supreme cause, thus identifying him with Brahma, and also that his special work is to *preserve*:

In the beginning of creation, the great Vishnu, desirous of creating the whole world, became threefold; Creator, Preserver, Destroyer. In order to create this world, the Supreme Spirit produced from the right side of his body, himself as Brahmā; then, in order to preserve the world, he produced from his left side, Vishnu; and in order to destroy the world, he produced from the middle of his body, the eternal Siva. Some worship Brahmā, others Vishnu, others Siva; but Vishnu, one yet threefold, creates, preserves, and destroys: therefore, let the pious make no difference between the three.<sup>2</sup>

This is a very interesting point of view. The Trimurti is a threefold expression of Vishnu. The swastika is a symbol present in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and many cultures in the East, the West, and Africa. Unfortunately, it was used by the Nazi Party and now is forbidden in Germany. However, we can find a nice significance in the swastika. One interpretation holds that it is a rotating cross

that has its ends on fire. The trail left by these flaming ends when rotating forms, the folded arms of the cross. There are two kinds of swastika, the one that rotates clockwise, associated with Brahma, as the creative power, and the one that rotates counterclockwise, associated with Shiva, the destructive power.



We can imagine the swastika rotating in space and advancing on the rotation axis, representing time, like a screw. The evolution of consciousness and material forms takes place with the advance of the rotating swastika. If we look at it from one side, we will see it rotating clockwise, creating. But if we look at it from the other side, we will see it rotating counterclockwise, destroying. So creation and destruction are two inseparable and simultaneous aspects of the same process. Then what is Vishnu, the conservational power? It is the permanent rotation of the swastika. Conservation does not mean something static, on the contrary, it implies keeping the process of renewal — creation, and destruction — always active. This is the process of Life.

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Permanent renewal is the flow of

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Nature, but we often do not realize it. We want things to remain as they suit us or as we are used to. Changes happen, often without warning. We can lose our job, the information on our computers, our phones, or even worse, we can lose a loved one. And we can also die as personalities since we are not permanent. If we are identified with our body, with our emotions, and with our thoughts, it will seem to us that the end of everything is near. If, on the other hand, we observe the renewal process in Nature, we will realize that we are an integral part of that process and that Life, which is our essence, is not destroyed but its expression is changed.

### Accepting the renewal to live wisely

If we understand the continuous renewal of Life, as Heraclitus taught, we will not fight against the inevitable changes. This does not mean that we should accept everything. There are always things to correct, guide, and improve. When that happens, we promote change and renewal.

We often find ourselves in our lives with unexpected changes that are external to us. Whether they are karmic effects of

our past actions or simply new events produced by other people or things that life presents us with, these changes surprise us. Our first reaction is rejection, trying to get things back to the way they were before. But if it is beyond our control, this response will be useless. We then try to survive in the new situation by bemoaning the change that has occurred. However, the smart thing to do, which requires a detachment from the old situation that no longer exists, is to accept the new situation, observe and see what we can learn. What challenge is life presenting us now? Where will it take us? What lesson can we learn?

We can lose our job after many years of work and we think that the world around us is collapsing. But it can be a good opportunity to reorient ourselves professionally and change our lives. We need to accept the challenge and have an open mind.

Leaving our comfort zone is embarking on the adventure of life. To be reborn we have to die. Can we flow with the rhythm of life?

One is never afraid of the unknown; one is afraid of the known coming to an end.

J. Krishnamurti

### References

1. There is a great database for researchers that summarizes a lot of biological numbers, named *Bionumbers* on the web. For this interesting article visit the webpage: “How quickly do different cells in the body replace themselves?” <[book.bionumbers.org/how-quickly-do-different-cells-in-the-body-replace-themselves/](http://book.bionumbers.org/how-quickly-do-different-cells-in-the-body-replace-themselves/)>.
2. *Hindu Mythology, Vedic and Puranic*, by W. J. Wilkins, [1900], <[sacred-texts.com/hin/hmvp/hmvp18.htm](http://sacred-texts.com/hin/hmvp/hmvp18.htm)>.

# Theosophy and the TS: The Opportunity That Knocked on Humanity's Door

SHIKHAR AGNIHOTRI

AMONG all the significant days of celebration in theosophical circles, today has a bit of ambiguity in the way it is named and celebrated. However, this can be positive as it opens up more avenues for sharing with others. We all know that 17 February is celebrated as Adyar Day in memory of the passing of H. S. Olcott (HSO), J. Krishnamurti (JK), and Giordano Bruno, and of the birth of C. W. Leadbeater (CWL). May 8th is celebrated as White Lotus Day in memory of the passing of H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), and 1 October is celebrated as Annie Besant's (AB) birthday. The ambiguity is that in some parts of the world, today is celebrated as Foundation Day, while in other parts it is celebrated as Founders' Day. Although they sound similar, they are still different.

In any event, both carry a lot of significance and subtle messages for us to imbibe in their own way. In fact, the real aim of celebrating or observing any anniversary is to receive those subtle messages. Today, I wish to talk about the purpose of founding the Theosophical

Society (TS), the achievements of the Inner and Outer Founders, and the subtle messages conveyed through them. For this reason, I have based this talk on the Mahatma Letters, which are considered one of the primary sources of theosophical teachings in this era. (See: *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett — In Chronological Sequence*)

Founders' Day is a way of paying tribute not only to the individuals who were instrumental in materializing the vehicle of Ageless Wisdom that we all know as the TS, but more importantly, to remind ourselves why they were extraordinary and what it takes to do what the main Outer Founders HPB, HSO, and William Quan Judge (WQJ) did.

On this day we remind ourselves of the qualities, qualifications, and virtues we need to develop to assist in the Divine Plan in a conscious manner under the guidance of the Masters of the Wisdom and Compassion. It is easy to glorify the ideals and make idols of the people who lived those ideals, but it really takes devotion, dedication, inspiration, and innocence to try

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**Mr Shikhar Agnihotri** is an International Lecturer of the Theosophical Society (TS), Adyar, and a National Lecturer of the Indian Section of the TS. He resides at and works for the TS Adyar International Headquarters as Executive Assistant to the General Manager.

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and live those ideals. As Master Koot-Hoomi (KH) wrote about HSO to A. P. Sinnett (APS) in Letter No. 5 (ML-4):

Him we can trust under *all* circumstances, and his faithful service is pledged to us come well, come ill. . . . Where can we find an equal devotion? He is one who never questions, but obeys; who may make innumerable mistakes out of excessive zeal but never is unwilling to repair his fault even at the cost of the greatest self-humiliation; who esteems the sacrifice of comfort and even life something to be cheerfully risked whenever necessary; who will eat any food, or even go without; sleep on any bed, work in any place, fraternise with any outcast, endure any privation for the cause.

It is self-explanatory what is expected of an aspirant. But we should not misunderstand when it says: "He is one who never questions." Questioning and inquiry are the essence of the self-discovery journey. But there comes a stage when Master and disciple are in so much harmony, and the devotion is so complete, that there is no longer room for any doubt or questioning; hence this statement.

As far as HPB's life is concerned, although seemingly full of magical, magnificent, and adventurous stories, behind them we also see, at least externally, extreme physical pain, suffering, and betrayal being conspired against, and even falsely proved a fraud and impostor for almost three quarters of a century until 1960, when she was finally vindicated of all the charges which were based on a biased and sponsored agenda. But what

made her special and outstanding was that knowing all this would happen, knowing that she would have to go through a thorny path, as her Master (M.) told her when they met in person in London's Hyde Park, she still seized the *opportunity* and offered herself to be of *service* to her Master, to humanity, to us, and to all future generations.

And it is not just I who am saying this. In Letter no. 48 (ML-47) Master M. mentions:

Martyrdom is pleasant to look at and criticize, but harder to suffer. There never was a woman more unjustly abused than HPB.

The reason why the Master used the word "criticize" is that, leaving aside the external attacks on HPB/HSO, there were also doubts in the minds of a few individuals within the TS who questioned the choice of the Masters in selecting HPB/HSO as the external founders, because both of them had a few personality traits, like being irritating or eccentric in their natures, and the other individuals thought that they themselves were better candidates than HPB/HSO. To that criticism, Master KH replies to APS, and this is a very important and almost unknown occult process to the majority of us, which he unveils:

(Letter no. 22 (ML-26)) I am empowered to allow you a glimpse behind the veil. This state of hers is intimately connected with her occult training in Tibet, and due to her being sent out alone into the world to gradually prepare the way for others. After nearly a century of fruitless search,

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our chiefs had to avail themselves of the only opportunity to send out a European *body* upon European soil to serve as a connecting link between that country and our own. . . . Now, no man or woman, unless he be an initiate of the “fifth circle”, can leave the precincts of *Bod-Lhas* (“Divine Rulers”) and return back into the world in his integral whole. . . . *One* at least of his seven satellites has to remain behind for two reasons; the first to form the necessary connecting link, the wire of transmission, the second as the safest warranter that certain things will never be divulged. She is no exception to the rule, and you have seen another exemplar — a highly intellectual man — who had to leave one of his skins behind; hence, is considered highly eccentric.

The reason why HPB and HSO were given the opportunity to be the mediums of the Masters is not explicitly stated, but there are hints that suggest it may have been a reward for their past efforts. Clara Codd's book, *The Way of the Disciple*, mentions that in one of their earlier lives, HPB and HSO formed a bond of sacrifice with their Master for which the Master promised them greater responsibility in a much grander and humanitarian work. This work is supported by the Master's (M.) statement in Letter no. 33 (ML-38), where he gives a clear hint about the nature of the work and the expectation from an aspirant:

It is he alone who has the love of humanity at heart, who is capable of grasping thoroughly the idea of a regenerating practical Brotherhood who is entitled to the pos-

session of our secrets. He alone — such a man — will never misuse his powers, as there will be no fear that he should turn them to selfish ends. A man who places not the good of mankind above his own good is not worthy of becoming our *chela* — he is not worthy of becoming higher in knowledge than his neighbour.

Through all these statements we get a peek into the life of the Outer Founders and get inspired by their courageous endurance of personal injustice, brave declaration of principles, and valiant defence of those who are unjustly attacked. But what were the guiding principles behind this approach? As Master KH says in Letter no. 2 (ML-2):

He who would lift up high the banner of mysticism and proclaim its reign near at hand, must give the example to others. He must be the first to change *his* modes of life; and regarding the study of the occult mysteries as the upper step in the ladder of Knowledge must loudly proclaim it such, despite exact science and the opposition of society.

And in another place, he makes it very clear:

(Letter no. 11 (ML-28)) We want true and unselfish hearts; fearless and confiding souls, and are quite willing to leave the men of the “higher class” and far higher intellects to grope their own way to the light.

This clearly indicates that external appearances and intellectual superiority means naught in comparison to purity of heart.

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These were some of the glimpses into the character and integrity of the founders and the guiding principles or ideals that they lived by. But just as the founders took the opportunity to be the light-bringers in this era, Theosophy itself is the opportunity that was given to us, to humanity, in this era again, to redeem ourselves from the mire of the world of illusion in which we are engaged for hundreds of lives.

We read that in the last quarter of every century, an effort is made by the Masters of Love and the Wisdom to give a spiritual impulse for the upliftment of humanity. It does not mean that in the rest of the three quarters they do not assist or help. They are always ready to guide and support any individual who is sincerely willing to take up the onerous task of sharing some of the heavy karma of the world.

As Master KH himself admits in Letter no. 136 (ML-65):

Every step made by one in our direction will force us to make one toward him. But it is not by going to Ladakh that one shall find us.

Also in Letters no. 5 (ML-4) and 47 (ML-45):

Humanity in the mass has a paramount claim upon us. . . . It is our law to approach every such an one if even there be but the feeblest glimmer of the true "Tathāgata" light within him.

They are always ready and willing to help us. If we do not receive help, it is not because of their non-responsiveness but due to our ineligibility. In the last quarter

of each century this effort by them is for the collective human consciousness to evolve. It was with this aim that Theosophy was reintroduced to the world in the last quarter of the 19th century. This has happened in the past under different names and forms, as mentioned in Letter no. 15 (ML-8):

Theosophy is no new candidate for the world's attention, but only the restatement of principles which have been recognized from the very infancy of mankind.

So this time the spirit of Theosophy under the guidance and inspiration from the Masters of the Wisdom and compassion took the body of the Theosophical Society, supported by the humongous efforts by the outer founders who became the mediums between the visible and the invisible.

By celebrating Foundation Day today, we are reminding ourselves of the vital principles of Theosophy, which are not mere words but something to be lived daily. The *opportunity* that was Theosophy and the TS that knocked on humanity's door in 1875 has not stopped knocking yet. The impulse that was given in 1875 is becoming more relevant with every passing day.

This knock can be heard and felt by anyone who has an eager intellect, unveiled spiritual perception, and brotherliness for all. Theosophy is the *homing signal* that leads an aspirant along the thorny, steep, and winding path towards one's origin where our true nature, and thereby true relationship, is revealed.

Realizing this relationship is the

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fundamental principle of Theosophy — not any occult practice, not the performance of miracles or magic — but the realization of brotherhood / siblinghood. Universal Brotherhood was chosen as the chief aim of the TS, and as Master KH clarifies in Letter no. 5 (ML-4):

The term “Universal Brotherhood” is no idle phrase. . . . It is the only secure foundation for universal morality. If it be a dream, it is at least a noble one for mankind: and it is the aspiration of the *true adept*.

Let us quickly revisit the purpose and vision with which the TS was founded through three statements and review, in their light, the current situation:

1. (App. 2, “View of the [Maha] Chohan on the TS) It is not the individual and determined purpose of attaining oneself Nirvana . . . which is, after all only an exalted and glorious *selfishness*, but the self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead on the right path our neighbor, to cause as many of our fellow creatures as we possibly can to benefit by it, which constitutes the true Theosophist.

2. (Ibid.) Between degrading superstition and still more degrading brutal materialism the white dove of truth has hardly room where to rest her weary unwelcome foot. . . . It's time that Theosophy should enter the arena. . . . The Theosophical Society was chosen as the cornerstone, the foundation of the future religion of humanity. To achieve the proposed object a greater, wiser, and especially a more benevolent intermingling of the high and the low, of the alpha and the

omega of society, was determined upon.”

3. (Letter no. 88 (ML-10)): “Our chief aim is to deliver humanity of this nightmare, to teach man virtue for its own sake, and to walk in life relying on himself instead of leaning on a theological crutch, that for countless ages was the direct cause of nearly all human misery.”

These three statements give us a broad idea of what the philosophy and objective was behind the formation of the Theosophical Society: the central ideas of selflessness, non-discrimination, and self-reliance.

We should ask the question, how much of it have we achieved? To answer this question, I am going to share some data:

- Be it the formation of the United Nations in 1945; or

- Article 17 of the Indian Constitution, 1949: “Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of Untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.”

- The Civil Rights Act of 1964, a landmark civil rights and labor law in the United States, that outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. It also ended segregation of school children based on race.

- The adoption in December 1979 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the United Nations General Assembly. The most comprehensive international human rights treaty to focus on women, the Convention in its preamble acknowledges that “extensive discrimination against women continues to exist” and



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emphasizes that such discrimination “violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity”.

- The ending of the apartheid system in South Africa through a series of bilateral and multi-party negotiations between 1990 and 1993.

Racist laws and practices have been abolished in many countries, and there is an international framework for fighting racism guided by the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, effective 1969. However, this does not mean that discrimination has ended, as too many individuals, communities, and societies continue to suffer from the injustice and stigma that racism brings. It only means that the work is ongoing, and the undercurrent of equality and justice for all is becoming stronger and stronger.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1960 and the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015 indicate that the realization of interdependence in Nature is being understood, even if only by a few. At least a section of society is increasingly aware and taking measures to make course corrections.

However, as far as materialism is concerned, a research conducted in 2016 revealed that materialistic trends are increasing among youth today. Factors contributing to this increase include social media, brand consciousness, self-centeredness, fake personality development, and the desire to be socially accepted. The objective of this study was to identify the factors contributing to the increasing materialism among youth and

to change them in order to reduce the destructive effects that result in reduced emotional well-being and negative attitudes. At least there is an understanding of the cause-and-effect relationship, and this may lead to the development of a holistic solution.

### Religious Superstitions

The present generation is intellectually active and not only seeks logical answers to rituals and superstitions, but is also courageous enough to question their utility and relevance in contemporary times. Even in the most bigoted religions, there are individuals who are asking questions, as seen in ongoing protests by women in Iran, efforts to make child marriage a punishable crime, and the banning of killing animals in the name of religious sacrifices. These events indicate the unfolding of the collective human consciousness.

The above events highlight how they are related to the work of Theosophy. It is often asked what the TS has achieved in its 147 years of existence and why there are so few benefactors.

As far as the numbers are concerned, here is a very valuable advice from HPB:

(Letter no. 140 (ML-141)) If the Founder of the society and the Founders or Presidents of the Branches had ever kept in view the fact that it is not so much the quantity we are in need of, but the quality, to make the Society a success half of the disasters would have been avoided.

As far as achievements are concerned, sometimes we do not have answers because we may not see the extent of the

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effects, the hidden side of our work, the uplifting vibrations that are generated by collective theosophical thought and their effects on human consciousness, world parliaments, and individuals who get inspired by these vibrations to start a movement to fight against any such challenge brought upon us by human selfishness. The few examples I shared just now are indicative of this change in the collective human consciousness that is taking place gradually but steadily, be it materialism, wars, global warming, terrorism, climate change, or apathy.

At the danger of being charged with exaggeration, I would like to say that the theosophical movement has been the mother of hundreds of New Age spiritual movements, not only in India but around the world, which are doing work in their respective fields related to human consciousness. This is the reason that we, as individuals and as a Society, support any such non-violent, non-political, and spiritual movement that works to reestablish human values and remove injustice in any form and at any level to uplift human consciousness.

But all these and much more are the consequences and side effects of our work of study, meditation, and selfless service. These are no small achievements, and I am not saying this for the TS to take credit for these things. I am just trying to connect the visible effects with their invisible/hidden/possible causes based on my understanding of them.

However, there is a lot to be done still. It is up to us whether to make use of this opportunity or wait for it in the next birth.

Moreover, to the souls who have been fortunate enough to come to this place that we often call “Adyar — The Masters Home”, what does this opportunity mean? Because, as discussed, we are not here by chance. We are not here by accident or coincidence. We are here because some time in the past, we wished to be here, we willed for us to be here, to be of some service to the Masters of Love and the Wisdom, just like HPB and HSO did at some point in their previous lives.

Adyar being the center from which Theosophists all over the world draw inspiration, it is our responsibility to not only revere and preserve the rich spiritual legacy of this place but also to put our effort into making it grow and enlarge its sphere of influence. And how can we do this? It is already being done by various such gatherings, talks, meditations that we do. But we can also try to experiment by involving all the human resources available at our hands, which includes various departments and workers, in this uplifting process. Each and every person who works on the campus is an ambassador of the TS to the outside world. If the ambassador generates a feeling of happiness, trust, and friendship in others, they are, in fact, giving the opportunity of Theosophy to a new soul just by their presence. At the same time, with this collective effort, the whole campus becomes increasingly influential and inspiring as far as the inner self is concerned. And that would be a great service to humankind.

It is for this reason that today, from this platform, that I would like to share for

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consideration, a thought, a proposal, rather, in fact, two proposals, that have come to my mind often, and I am sure these must have occurred to many others.

The first proposal is to introduce a meditation period, about seven minutes, preferably at the beginning of the day's work in every department. It does not have to be very complicated or complex, as many people think about meditation. To start with it can just be being silent for a couple of minutes, observing the breath followed by a thought or prayer for the spiritual upliftment of humanity. This practice can help to nourish our souls and provide us with food for thought. Once a month, instead of meditation, we could have an interaction between each Head of Department and the workers about the TS Objectives, the Mission Statement, and the attitude towards life as per the theosophical approach. This will not only strengthen the bond between individuals within the department, but also across departments.

Secondly, I propose that we consider taking technological assistance for the propagation of Theosophy. Nowadays, almost everyone has a smartphone, so we can explore the possibilities of having an app for TS. This app can be downloaded by anyone and connected with updates.

I am not aware of the economics and logistics involved, but I think it will be a big step in bringing all the members around the world closer and attracting new members too.

To conclude, I would like to share a couple of statements that provide strength and hope while walking this path. Sometimes, we may feel doubt or despair when we do not seem to be making headway anywhere. The following statements by Master KH, an inner founder, and HSO, an outer founder, are relevant here:

Letter no. 136 (ML-65): "But I may tell you, who have ever been faithful and true to *me*, the fruits of your devotion shall not be allowed to decay and crumble down into dust from the tree of action." [Master KH]

Letter no. 122 (ML-87), explanatory introduction): "I wish that everybody in the Society could realize how certain it is that those Great Brothers who are behind our work keep a vigilant eye upon all of us who with a pure heart and unselfish mind throw our energies into it." [HSO]

And the assurance given by Master KH about the TS:

Letter no. 87 (ML-34): "The Society will never perish as an institution, although branches and individuals in it may." ✧

**The theosophical conception is that the universe and its organisms do not come about merely as the result of Nature's experiments and chance variations, but that from the beginning there is a divine plan for evolution, and that no new type appears which was not intended to appear.**

C. Jinarajadasa (16.12.1875 – 18.6.1953)  
*Fragments*, Compiled by Elithe Nisewanger

# Individuation and Global Responsibility: The Subtle Magic of Lincoln, Eisenhower, and Mandela — II

JAMES TEPFER

### III. “Statesmen as Magicians of the Heart”

We are now going to invoke the blessings of the *rāja rishis* of ancient times; the king-initiates referred to by Krishna in the *Bhagavadgītā* when he points to the *guruparampara*, the sacred, spiritual lineage of enlightened teachers of which the *rāja rishis* are an integral part. The king-initiates of ancient epochs exemplified the divinity as well as the dignity of true royalty, of enlightened rulership for the welfare of all. These eminent Kshatriyas exemplified all the sublime virtues and cultural graces which we yearn for in our turbulent times. Despite our authentic longings, we might easily doubt that such selfless individuals could actually exist untarnished in the political realm. Is it possible, we wonder, for even the most sincere politician to be both a wise witness and a just participant in the complex world of modern politics? Yes, it is possible as we will see.

Each of the three exemplary leaders

that I have selected for our consideration this evening, Lincoln, Eisenhower, and Mandela, seem to qualify as statesmen who intellectually and morally individuated to such a remarkable degree that they became unconscious magicians in their own right. While they made no claims of being wise — much less of being magicians — they met many of the qualifications for having a heart-transforming effect on the lives of others.

All three were unconditionally committed to a compelling vision of a better world. And their respective visions became the “thrice-sacred flame” that illuminated and guided them over the arc of their extraordinary lives. Lincoln, for example, saw America as a living experiment in democracy and was wholeheartedly pledged to extending the principles enunciated in its forgotten “Declaration of Independence”: namely, the propositions of liberty and — most especially — equality. Eisenhower foresaw the emergence of “a new global order of the

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**Dr James E. Tepfer** is an associate of the United Lodge of Theosophists (ULT) in Santa Barbara, California, USA. Public Lecture given at the International Convention of the TS on 1 January 2023.

ages” in which the yoke of colonialism was to be cast aside and the United Nations was to become the primary civilizing agency for universal justice between nations. Mandela was committed to racial reconciliation and he consciously risked alienating both black Africans and white Africanas in his conscientious efforts to bring about racial accord in South Africa.

All three leaders were humble before their respective visions and all cared deeply for the common man. All three were selfless when it was most needed and all were — at all times — fearless. Finally, what former president Nixon said of Eisenhower can equally be said of Lincoln and Mandela. When Nixon was asked to specify the quintessential quality of Eisenhower, the former Vice President under Eisenhower said: “It’s simple. Ike loved everybody. And, with rare exceptions, everybody loved Ike.”

Let us turn to President Lincoln first. As we know, Lincoln — and the brave white and colored soldiers of the Union Army — freed six million slaves from lives of misery and degradation. But what is very little known is that Lincoln was more than a man of political action; he was also a gifted thinker. He was that rare breed — a moral thinker in the realm of politics. By the time he assumed the mantle of the presidency, he had individuated to a high moral and intellectual degree. He believed fervently in the “politics of responsibility”, of objective idealism. As he once told a friend, “I clarified my ethical principles by studying the teachings of Jesus, strengthened

my ability to reason clearly by studying Euclid’s geometrical propositions, and improved my understanding of politics from a careful reading of Shakespeare’s plays.”

It is evident to the perceptive student of Lincoln, that he had not only an alpha heart but an alpha intellect as well. Therefore, it should not be surprising that his focused compassion, when combined with his versatile intelligence, could indeed be magical in its transforming effect on others. His magic, his alchemy, often manifested itself through the art of timely storytelling and not only through acts of political self-transcendence. His stories, witticisms, and perceptive accounts of imagined and actual life-incidents were numerous and diverse. Sometimes humorous stories or incidents were told to diffuse an atmosphere of hostility.

Sometimes stories and tales were told by Lincoln to release the accelerating tension of disagreement; sometimes as a substitute for the logic of argument; and, sometimes, to restore sanity when it could so easily have been lost during the most depressing periods of the Civil War — of which there were many. Lincoln’s timely storytelling can be seen as “magic” of a democratic kind; magic that all of us do at times — especially with dear friends and in moments of soul serenity. It involves no special psychic powers. It springs from intellectual integrity and moral purity.

Beyond his gift for taletelling, Lincoln engaged in a subtler magic, that of purifying prejudices embedded in the public

mind, that is, all Southerners are evil due to the “Cain-mark” of slavery. On one particular, historic occasion, Lincoln was able to use inspired “word-magic” to transmute the attitude of Northerners toward their Southern brothers and sisters. The specific transformative moment was when Union supporters gathered to celebrate the anniversary of the Union Army’s turning-point victory over the Confederate Army on the battlefield at Gettysburg.

The brief commemorative that Lincoln finished writing on his way to Gettysburg and delivered amidst the controlled chaos of that festive occasion no doubt had little immediate impact on his bustling audience. However, when it was later read by multitudes in the comforts of leisure and the quiet of solitude, the reverential tone of the “Gettysburg Address”, its invocation of pristine principles, and its universal sentiments enlightened the hearts and purified the minds of many — then, and thereafter. The ten sentences that make up Lincoln’s two minute “Gettysburg Address” are truly mantramic; like the verses of Shelley’s poetry or the meter of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Lincoln’s address is intuitively expressed in a cadence and rhythm that seem to faithfully mirror healing celestial harmonies.

Indeed, Lincoln’s eloquent peroration of the Gettysburg battlefield is truly a humble consecration, an offering to the “gods” of reconciliation, a eulogy to the nobility of all those soldiers who sacrificed for the Cause in which each fervently believed. (Heaven, by the way, is com-

pletely indifferent to the color of the soldiers’ uniforms. It celebrates their valorous human spirit not their personal allegiances.) It is noteworthy that when Lincoln’s tribute is read out loud today, we are so moved by its unexpected reverence, poignancy, and its compassionate embrace of soldiers from both sides of the conflict that our painful images of Civil War battles momentarily subside and, strangely perhaps, we feel cleansed and uplifted by those unknown soldiers on both sides who each gave “the last full measure of devotion”.

Dwight David Eisenhower, too, did his own magic both as the Supreme Allied Commander of allied forces in World War II and as a two-term President of America. Eisenhower drew out the best from the common man as well as elicited more than the best from the very best when it was most needed. There are numerous testimonials to the peculiar magnetic effect that many felt while being in the immediate orbit of Eisenhower’s pulsating presence. Many noted an energy emanating from him that was almost palpable. Fortunately, his etheric efflux was not charismatic, seductive, or domineering in its effect. It was benign, warm, and welcoming.

When he turned his full mental attention to you and spontaneously gave you his incandescent smile, it was simultaneously charming and disarming. But, more than this, Eisenhower had the true magician’s ability to immediately win over your trust. He was easy to trust because he was so willing to give you his full, open-

ended, sympathetic attention. Furthermore, he was unusual in that he was able to suspend the complex colorations of previous interactions and listen to you afresh. It was like a perpetual first meeting. Past judgments were suspended and prior disagreements were of no real consequence either. Every encounter was, in some sense, an original.

At the moment of personal engagement, a bridge was welcomingly extended across the spaces between you both and he was already crossing it to sit with you a while and discuss matters trivial or troublesome. Temperamentally speaking, the supple light of dawn was almost always within and around Eisenhower. It was rarely nighttime. He was fundamentally an optimist who sloughed off moments of discouragement with relative ease. His inner luminosity drew friends a little closer, and made enemies less distant and more receptive. He was, in a Buddhist and Socratic sense, that rarest of individuals; he was one who was “morally awake” not only to conscience and to principles, but to the hopes, aspirations, and felt-needs of the diverse peoples he met and served.

The litmus test of Eisenhower’s natural magic was his series of private meetings with Stalin at the end of World War II. Stalin, the most suspicious and paranoid of men, was notably struck with Eisenhower’s character and conduct during the war and, after the defeat of the Nazis, Stalin invited Eisenhower to visit Moscow. He accepted the invitation and flew to Moscow with General Zhukov — the brilliant Russian general who Eisenhower

felt was the primary reason the Allies defeated the Germans. He spent a week in Moscow and, in addition to private conversations with Stalin, was feted by the dictator in public. In fact, during a parade in Moscow, Stalin insisted that Eisenhower stand on Lenin’s tomb, a privilege no non-Communist or foreigner had ever been accorded. When Eisenhower left Moscow later that week, Stalin told Avril Harriman, the U.S. Ambassador:

General Eisenhower is a very great man, not only because of his military accomplishments but because of his human, friendly, kind, and frank nature. He is not a coarse, brusque man like most military.” (*Eisenhower: Soldier and President*, Stephen E. Ambrose, p. 218)

Clearly, there was magic in Eisenhower’s way of relating to Stalin. His inner radiance, trust, and ability to instill trust — even in the most distrustful of men — was extraordinary. Most importantly, his ability to suspend judgment and treat Stalin as a human being who was just as much interested in peace as he was, made Stalin relax and confess to him how much Russia needed the help of America after the war — not only monetarily but in terms of the assistance of American scientists and technicians. Eisenhower was sympathetic and put Stalin at ease as very few could. For a magical moment, the two leaders became “co-conspirators for the good” — of the world as well as of Mother Russia.

Nelson Mandela was a great admirer of President Lincoln and Mahatma Gandhi.

He studied both their lives meticulously. Like Gandhi, Mandela affected a revolutionary change of heart in the soul of a nation. In his case, it was a simultaneous transformation in the attitudes of both the black South African and the white Africana. Mandela successfully exorcised the self-pitying demon of revenge in blacks and non-violently slayed the hydra-headed snake of fear in whites.

Interestingly enough, Mandela unwittingly laid the basis for his future “soul magic” while in prison. Several years before he was released from Robben Island prison, he decided to study and master the Africana language. He wished to better understand Africanas, learn their history and, if possible, communicate with them in their native tongue. As he entered into the complicated mindset and history of the white minority, he realized that he had to understand — of all things — the white rulers’ passion for rugby! Rugby, as he discovered, could be a relatively easy means of engaging in non-political, non-confrontational conversation prior to discussing volatile political issues such as the black vote and the inevitable dismantling of apartheid in the years ahead. So, accordingly, Mandela studied the history of rugby, learned its rules, and memorized all the names of past legendary as well as current team players.

The South African rugby team was called the “Springboks” and they were revered by the white Africana. Understandably, they were hated with a passion by black South Africans who continually rooted against them whenever they were

allowed to attend rugby games. Not only did the average black citizen disparage the team, but the African National Congress party in South Africa managed to get the Springboks disqualified from participating in international competition. As a result, the Springboks could not compete for any world rugby title.

Mandela’s occasion for creative magic did not form clearly in his mind until shortly after he was elected president. But, from that point on, he began to consciously visualize, carefully think through, and progressively assemble all the characters necessary for his “Great Play”; it would be a deep drama of the human spirit, one worthy of an Aeschylus or a Shakespeare. And, like the latter with *The Tempest*, Mandela was intent on bringing about a convergence of events that could conceivably transmute the lead of mutual hatred and distrust into the gold of respect and understanding. He wanted to awaken the conscience of the nation in different senses, and bring about racial harmony and active tolerance.

In brief, President Mandela managed to get the Springboks rugby team reinstated and eligible for international competition. He then managed to convince World Rugby to let South Africa host the next world cup in Johannesburg, South Africa. Just as importantly, Mandela, by degrees, won over the Springbok team. In particular, he won the affection and admiration of the Springbok’s captain, Francois Pienaar. He did so by telling him with uttermost sincerity that his team was representing the whole nation and that the



entire country was behind him and his fellow Springboks.

Mandela also raised a question for Pienaar to ponder (the same one he said that he pondered every day): “How do we get the loyal people around us to exceed their own expectations of what they can do? In other words, how do we elicit the extraordinary from others?” Pienaar and Mandela were able to do just that — each in his own way. Slowly, thoughtfully and with great respect for each member of the team, Mandela earned the trust of the Springboks. In time, as journalist John Carlin reported: “He (Mandela) had won their hearts.” And, to the surprise of the rugby world, the Springboks earned their way to the World Rugby finals, held in Johannesburg.

What happened next is best expressed by Richard Stengel in the biography, *Mandela’s Way*:

In his most famous gesture of reconciliation, Mandela wore the Springbok jersey and cap to the rugby finals at Johannesburg’s Park Stadium in 1995. When he strode out before the game to greet the team captain, the mostly white crowd began to chant, “Nelson, Nelson!” It was one of the most electrifying moments in the history of sport and politics. Tokyo Sexwale, who had been imprisoned with Mandela on Robben Island, told [the journalist, John] Carlin, “That was the moment when I understood more clearly than ever before, that the liberation struggle was not so much about liberating blacks from bondage, as it was about liberating white people from fear.”

Mandela had attempted the seemingly absurd in order to achieve the almost impossible. He had affected a change in the soul perceptions of both blacks and whites. They each began to see each other in a more accepting light, and, in so doing, they unconsciously expanded and enriched their own sense of selfhood.

#### **IV. The Buddha’s Magic: The Conversion of Angulimala**

One of the most paradigmatic occasions in recorded history of high human magic (of accelerated mind transformation) is that of the Buddha’s conversion of the robber and assassin, Angulimala. The epic, non-violent confrontation between the Magus-Teacher, Buddha, and the merciless bandit, Angulimala, took the form of an intense dialogue. The latter occurred immediately prior to Angulimala’s plan to single-handedly attack a small town and humiliate its raja [nobility title]. The Buddha’s fearlessness, his serenity, good will, and compassion were all operative and worked their magic on Angulimala. The latter realized that he was in the presence of a real warrior and he uncharacteristically and progressively deferred to him.

In this dramatic historical encounter, we can readily discern the two opposite poles of human potential — the Self-enlightened and the self-deluded. The Sage (Buddha) is beyond even our most exalted conceptions of “individuation”. He is para-individuated. He is suffused with transcendent wisdom and unconditional compassion while the deluded bandit is steeped in spiritual ignorance,

rampant passion, and overflowing ill will. The Buddha's mind is as luminous as a thousand suns while Angulimala's mind is defiled, obscured, lunar, and destined for states of woe.

Fortunately for Angulimala, he had the good karma to come into personal contact with the Buddha; an individual who had conquered the ego and could instantly understand the degraded condition of the disfigured and depraved brigand, who was suffering from acute "soul sickness". As a consummate spiritual physician, Gautama Buddha saw the medicine needed and the self-transmutation required. If Angulimala would take the medicine offered by the Buddha, then self-regeneration was possible, but was by no means guaranteed.

At the end of their extraordinary dialogue, Angulimala, chastised and humbled, came to see that he must attempt the seemingly impossible. He must attempt to visualize the possibility of enlightenment while inhabiting a debased mind. He must, somehow, see beyond himself. His initial act of self-transcendence was to place his trust in the Buddha and to be humble before the Teaching. But he must also awaken his mind; he must arouse his rational and moral awareness. How could he do this? How could he overcome the inertia of lives of self-indulgent passions and of mental sloth? It is not enough that the Buddha's compassion was at work on the inner planes, fertilizing the seed of intuitive intelligence within Angulimala.

More was needed. The bandit's mind must, in some way, be stimulated, chal-

lenged, and inspired. This is where the confrontational dialogue between the Buddha and Angulimala proved pivotal. The latter could not initiate a spiritual conversation with himself. The Buddha knew this and so he initiated a dialogue between them by giving Angulimala a vision of a battle more glorious than all other battles. That battle was for spiritual freedom. Through Angulimala's initial ego-centered questions and Buddha's frank but encouraging answers, Angulimala became more authentically focused and sincere about the path of transfiguration.

Interestingly enough, Angulimala's and Buddha's "dialogue in the jungle" is surprisingly Platonic because it is so existentially genuine. Each is in dead earnest. Their intense, pointed dialogue is spiritual engagement at a high level. Each questions the other. However, unlike Angulimala, the Buddha's speech is surcharged with logic light. It is illuminating, healing, and purifying. He points Angulimala toward spiritual North and challenges him to undertake the perilous quest. Accordingly, Angulimala is inspired to do so and, on the spot, takes the vows of a Buddhist monk. By the end of his long life, he earned the deep respect of many members of the Sangha and was highly praised by the Buddha before the latter's death.

### V. Closing Thoughts

Magic is ubiquitous. It is in Nature and in man. It occurs wherever and whenever spirit and matter creatively coalesce through the agency of a purified

intelligence. If this is true, then is it not a wonderful thought, my friends, to think that at this very moment in time there are literally hundreds of millions of magicians on our good globe? Who are they, you ask? They are the babies of every culture. Every baby is a natural, unconscious magician. Babies are pure vehicles of the light of the immanent spirit, of the *Ātman*. Their personality is incipient and cannot impede the undulating flow of the spirit. Babies radiate the sweet efflux of *buddhi* through their spontaneous laughter, their delightful curiosity, and their sympathetic responses to their mother's happiness and sorrows. Babies breathe purity and goodness.

And what of the child between the ages of three and seven, before the higher faculties begin to incarnate and long before the onset of puberty and its disorienting effects? The growing child is engaged in the holy activity of learning and the power that comes from knowledge. Think of it. To the young boy or girl, the world has just been created. "Let there be Light" is today and every day. Every discovery is an original to the young child. The growing child cares not for history or for ego. It is full of love and trust, and possesses an unblemished imagination. Parents and teachers are held in awe.

What is more, young children freely and willingly embrace diverse legends and stories of human bravery and self-sacrifice. They live in a Golden Age for a while and wise parents do their best to help them carry that attitude forward when they enter formal education. All in all, to young

children, magic is existentially real. It does not need any explanation.

And what of adults? We are more blessed than we often realize. The Great Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas (the greatest of magicians) are ever at work in multiple orbits across the globe. In addition, there are secular exemplars among us as well. There are unknown Lincolns, Eisenhowers, Mandelas, and Gandhis hidden in plain sight. They are content to live their lives in ordinary roles this time and, like Odysseus in Plato's "Myth of Er", quietly go about their sublime *dharma* unnoticed. If we look with an open mind and a heart untainted by cynicism, we will see them.

There is another class of individuals whose very *bhakti*, or devotion, makes magic possible. What I mean is that enlightened minds can help awaken unenlightened minds and imprisoned hearts across cultures and historical epochs when unconditional devotion is present. Time and geography can be *mayavic*, deceptive. For example, when the true devotee of Jesus turns daily to the New Testament to replenish his spirit and purify his mind, he is unconsciously declaring that Jesus is living, vital, and present in the words and images of his teachings.

Such an earnest devotee is not only rising above time and culture, but, more importantly, he is rising above the gravitational pull of his own mindset. In doing so, he is engaging in an act of pure communion with the spirit of his Teacher. For a precious moment, the devotee is bringing Jesus forward into the present, into his own mental world, and letting Jesus'

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teachings shed their revelatory light on the complex labyrinth of his daily obligations. Millions of dedicated devotees of the world's diverse religions experience this daily even though they might not consciously think of it as magic. But it is magic because it cleanses the mind and regenerates the heart.

Beyond these millions of *bhaktas* (religious devotees) across the globe, there are those innocents among us who are inexperienced in the perverted and torturous ways of the world. They are spiritually vaccinated and immune to

the cynicism and dystopian thinking of the worldly wise and politically ambitious. They are patient and trust that the best is yet to be. They look forward, not backward, and they look beyond the miasma of the present.

Whatever its form, ordinary human alchemy reflects the highest spiritual theurgy of the Bodhisattvas. The latter's magical emanations are spontaneous, benevolent, and uplifting. They touch the hearts of the ready, reverential, and receptive at every level of life and in every condition whatsoever. ✧

**O Teacher, what shall I do to reach to Wisdom?  
O Wise one, what, to gain perfection?**

**Search for the Paths. But, O Lanoo, be of clean heart before thou startest on thy journey. Before thou takest thy first step learn to discern the real from the false, the ever-fleeting from the everlasting. Learn above all to separate Head-learning from Soul-Wisdom, the "Eye" from the "Heart" doctrine.**

**Yea, ignorance is like unto a closed and airless vessel; the soul a bird shut up within. It warbles not, nor can it stir a feather; but the songster mute and torpid sits, and of exhaustion dies.**

**But even ignorance is better than Head-learning with no Soul-wisdom to illuminate and guide it.**

H. P. Blavatsky  
From *The Voice of the Silence*  
Fragment II, "The Two Paths"

# Feminism, Spirituality, and Universal Kinship

CATALINA ISAZA CANTOR

LET us start by quoting international President of the TS Adyar, Mr Tim Boyd, who has said: “There are things in life that are so obvious, so clear, and so undeniable that it seems strange there should be any need for discussion. The need to empower the female population, one half of the planet’s population, is such a subject”. Let us have some perspective on a couple of related issues.

In 2021 the World Bank estimated that it will take 135.6 years to eliminate gender inequalities in the world. Around 700 million women and girls live in countries where there are no women in government positions and they have only three-quarters of the legal rights granted to men. Sixteen million girls will never set foot in a school and two-thirds of the world’s illiterate adults are women (UNESCO Institute for Statistics). There are other data related to violence, work life, sexuality, and so on, that give an account of the situation, which I will not mention because they are not the main theme of this talk.

It is relevant to mention the above in an institution whose main objective is universal brotherhood and which has service as one of its three pillars. If the TS aims to form an active brotherhood among mankind; to promulgate the essential unity of everything, and demonstrate that this unity is fundamental in Nature; to study ancient and modern religion, science, and philosophy; and to explore the hidden side of Nature and mankind then we need to go deeper on any subject that implies any kind of discrimination towards any group of people. When we think of kinship, there should be a scenario of equality, equity and solidarity among human beings, without distinction of race, creed or gender.

Let us examine the issue further from the point of view of spirituality and universal kinship, a term that may be more neutral in terms of gender. It is important to reflect upon the kind of language that we use to refer to things, as the words are what we use to understand and relate

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**Mrs Catalina Isaza Cantor** is a long-term member of the TS in Colombia, and now resident worker at TS Adyar, Chennai, India. Article based on a TheoxSophia Talk organized by the TS in the Philippines on 5 March 2022.

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ourselves to our reality. The power of the spoken word is well known:

*The spoken word has a potency unknown to, unsuspected, and disbelieved in, by the modern “sages” . . . [And] such or another vibration in the air is sure to awaken corresponding powers, union with which produces good or bad results, as the case may be. (H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), *The Secret Doctrine (SD)*, vol. 1, p. 307).*

But, even beyond words, how would it be even possible to achieve a scenario of equality and kinship amidst a civilization where selfishness is still prevalent? Maybe if we only focus in the external/material dimension, that can be hard to achieve. The key may be a holistic approach from a wide spiritual conception, that goes beyond what religion says. But first, let us examine some of the views that religion conveys about women and the feminine.

Abrahamic monotheistic religions are mainly patriarchal: God is a being with masculine characteristics and is to be feared, the feminine represents what leads man to his downfall. These religions used doctrines to justify the subjugation of women. The notion of women as accomplices of the Devil — Lucifer — predominates in Christian history and has served to legitimize their subordination. Muslim women can be stoned to death on a daily basis for actions that cannot even be called crimes.

All this comes from a misunderstanding of some of the sacred texts. Hence, a deep reading and understanding

of sacred texts is necessary. Every religion has a hidden (esoteric) side and an external (exoteric) side. We could even refer to the “Doctrine of the Eye” versus “The Doctrine of the Heart” that HPB’s *The Voice of the Silence* mentions, the first being what comes from a merely intellectual approach to things and the latter a deep approach that rises from intuition, or *buddhi*. In this respect, let us remember what HPB states in *The Secret Doctrine (SD)*, vol. 1:

Esoteric Philosophy reconciles all religions, strips every one of its outward, human garments, and shows the root of each to be identical with that of every other great religion. It proves the necessity of an absolute Divine Principle in Nature. (p. xx)

But no one has ever gone to the trouble of collecting and collating together those facts. The reason for this is, that all such events were recorded symbolically; and that the best scholars, the most acute minds, . . . have been too often darkened by one or another preconception. . . . The religious and esoteric history of every nation was embedded in symbols. (p. 307)

The exoteric dogmas may often have been altered, the esoteric never. (p. 312).

Therefore, if the sacred texts have a deeper meaning, it is imperative to look for it, especially by those who can do a comparative study of ancient and modern religion, science, and philosophy, acknowledging not only the common ground among the religions but the deeper meaning that lies beneath them all. For instance,

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if we take the view of women as accomplices of the Devil or Lucifer, HPB states in *SD*:

The expression of the allegorical serpent does not . . . refer at all to the physiological fall of men, but to their acquiring the knowledge of good and evil, which knowledge came to them *prior* to their fall. (vol. 2, p. 279).

As HPB mentions, Lucifer is the bearer of light and represents progress, civilization, liberty, independence. Lucifer is the Logos, the Serpent, the Saviour (*Collected Writings*).

In the 19th century, rebellious women performed counter-readings of this misogynistic tradition. Lucifer was reconceptualised as a liberator, and Eve became a heroine who eats from the fruit of knowledge and leads humanity out of ignorance: she was the first individual who disobeyed God, which can be interpreted as not allowing to be led by blind faith.

The birth of the modern theosophical movement played a key role. Most of feminist history has emerged from — and alongside — esoteric developments such as spiritualism, theosophy and paganism. The rise of Theosophy and the influence of HPB gave women alternatives for thinking about their place in the hierarchy.

Blavatsky, Annie Besant and many other women involved in the theosophical movement and other spiritual movements were rebellious in their time and rejected the domination of men, supported the ideal of political, social, and spiritual freedom.

HPB herself, and later Besant, were

among the first women of their time to become leaders of a spiritual movement, something that even today, in the 21st century, is almost non-existent or allowed. The Theosophical Society insists on the spiritual independence of all beings and includes men and women equally in all levels of the organization.

Until then, only Buddhism had given women the same position as men in the church hierarchy. But even modern Buddhism is marked by male domination as traditional Asian society did not accept women leaving home and the *bhikkhunis*, or female monks, gradually disappeared. Even Hinduism, which has a rich pantheon of female goddesses, is not exempt. The reality of many Hindu women is very different, and the idealization of women as divinity is not reflected in dignified treatment and improved opportunities.

In the dominant patriarchal vision, introduced with the Code of Manu, “The dharma of woman” (5.146) is established, according to which: “During her childhood, a woman should depend on her father; during her youth, on her husband and her children; if she has no children, on her relatives who are close to her husband and, in their absence, on those of her father; a woman should never govern herself as she wishes.”

After having this overview of the conception that religions have about women, what some global data indicate may seem ironical. According to Pew Research Center, 83.4% of the world’s women identify themselves as religious,

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compared to 79.9% of men. Why would there be more female practitioners in religions that not only do not fully represent them, but also exclude and marginalize them?

Perhaps this has to do with the fact that within the being, the drive for the spiritual is greater. That *religare* is intuited as a liberating element. The sacred feminine is mentioned as a way of rescuing that other polarity of creation.

We speak of Gaia, Mother Earth, as a living organism, and with this we seek to vindicate the role of engendering that is inherent to the feminine, as well as to rescue the status of equality that all beings of creation have, as equally important parts of the ecosystem. That is why on many occasions the feminist movement goes hand in hand with ecological movements that seek to cast aside the model of superiority that humanity has in Nature and see it as one more element of Nature and its balance. In fact, in the “Proem” of the *SD* it is said:

By the third symbol — the circle divided in two by the horizontal line of the diameter — the first manifestation of creative (still passive, because feminine) Nature was meant. The first shadowy perception of man connected with procreation is feminine, because man knows his mother more than his father. Hence female deities were more sacred than the male. Nature is therefore feminine, and, to a degree, objective and tangible, and the spirit-Principle which fructifies it is concealed. (vol. 1, p. 5)

Actually, the first Stanza of *SD* opens by referring to a female eternal principle

that is the parent of the universe: “The eternal parent (Space) wrapped in her ever-invisible robes had slumbered once again for seven eternities”. According to HPB:

That first something which *can* be conceived, . . . has to be treated of as a feminine principle. In all cosmogonies the first differentiation was considered feminine. . . . It is the goddess and goddesses who come first. The first emanation becomes the immaculate Mother from whom proceed all the gods, or the anthropomorphized creative forces. We have to adopt the masculine or the feminine gender, for we cannot use the neuter *it*. From *IT*, strictly speaking, nothing can proceed, neither a radiation nor an emanation. (*Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1946)

It is interesting to note that in her first draft of *The Secret Doctrine*, known as the *Würzburg Manuscript*, Blavatsky used the word “mother” instead of “parent” in her translation of the first sloka of Stanza I: “The Eternal Mother (Space) wrapped in her ever-invisible robes (cosmic pre-nebular matter) had slumbered for seven Eternities” (Theosophy Wiki).

The idea of the sacred feminine as a way of rescuing the value of femininity and empowerment has been fundamental, and it is necessary to go beyond that meaning so as to include the whole feminine aspect of creation, which embraces also the feminine aspect of men. In fact, the entire creation has a female and male side, without the two,



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the manifestation will not be possible:

Fire . . . the active, male, generative principle; and Ether, or the Soul of matter, the light of the fire, for the passive female principle from which everything in this Universe emanated. Hence, Ether or Water is the Mother, and Fire is the Father. (*SD*, vol. 1, Stanza 2, p. 57)

Let us remember that the spirit has no gender and that the true meaning of spirituality is that of universality: humanity and all that exists is born from a principle such as the one mentioned in *SD*, an ABSOLUTE principle (*Parabrahman*) that before manifesting itself has no gender distinction and whose manifestation is given only with the presence of the two polarities, the feminine and the masculine. Both principles play a vital role in the development of the Cosmos and in the evolutionary process of the monad, but the universal divine principle is both sexless and formless. The sex distinction is but a temporary duality that will disappear in the millennia to come as humanity ascends:

The Father-Mother are the male and female principles in root-nature, the opposite poles that manifest in all things on every plane of Kosmos, or Spirit and Substance, in a less allegorical aspect, the resultant of which is the Universe, or the Son. They are “once more One” when in “The Night of Brahmā”, during Pralaya, all in the objective Universe has returned to its one primal and eternal cause, to reappear at the following Dawn — as it does periodically. (*SD*, vol. 1, Stanza 1, p. 41)

At the universal level, the higher self is neither male nor female and occupies the bodies of men and women by turns in countless lifetimes until it begins to manifest the higher qualities of both, culminating in the appearance of the spiritual androgyne or divine hermaphrodite, as HPB calls it in *SD*, vol. 2, “Anthropogenesis”. Therefore, feminism, without a broad, spiritual, conciliatory vision of service and real concern for the human race as a whole (including men), can very easily become the very thing it criticizes and wants to deconstruct: an isolated, endogamous, limiting, discriminatory, and violent discourse.

Hence, we advocate **humanism** here, working from service and spiritual vision to rebuild and strengthen the sense of unity, in which each gender fulfils the dharma that is proper to it according to its innate natural characteristics. The spiritual emancipation of the human soul from the bondage of selfish materialism is the step towards that humanism, that universal kinship.

To speak of feminism within the religio-spiritual context has to do, then, with this holistic, universal, integrative vision and understanding of what underlies the universe. This applies not only to feminism, but to any cause that seeks equality and equity, and that should start from a spiritual vision, even if at the level of manifestation it is dedicated to a specific movement such as feminism, our present concern.

So, to the question of what is the role of the spiritual life to the discussion on

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feminism and universal kinship, we can say that it is the one that starts from the liberation of all conditioning. Most of us are in the prison of our own creation of ideas, prejudices; we are slaves of tradition, of some kind of belief, of faith. It is not possible to reach that freedom through some figure, symbol, or idea and, in this sense, the mere affiliation to a religion, as we saw, can be contrary to the ideal of fraternity, unless we go to the deeper sphere of that religion and live its pure teachings and not the interpretations of the same.

Freedom implies love. If there is no freedom, there is no love, and love is the force that makes us one. As J. Krishnamurti would say: "When you call yourself an Indian or a Muslim or a Christian or anything else, you are being violent, because you are separating yourself from the rest of mankind. So, a person who is seeking to understand violence does not belong to any country, to any religion, and so on, but is concerned with the total understanding of mankind.

This comprehensive understanding of the human race is only given from a spiritual vision. If we go to pre-Christian traditions or Advaita Vedanta, we see a mysticism based on the "unity of all", on "non-duality". This vision transcends ideologies and embraces every person without distinction, becoming a reference of true spirituality.

As part of any spiritual movement, it is part of our dharma to make inequity disappear. Let us make the ideal of

service of and universal kinship a fact in every moment and start with our own circle. The best activism is that which is practiced in our own lives. Perhaps then we will become an example and change will begin to manifest itself.

Educating our children in fraternity, non-comparison, and non-competition can lead to this. Educating boys from an early age in an egalitarian manner can be a revolutionary act in a society that pressures them to become the manifestation of the masculine that has been perpetuated for centuries.

Perhaps it is worthwhile for us to reflect during our moment of meditation or study on questions like this, on our role according to our personal circumstances in the fading of differences, on what we can do from where we are and from what we are to end up walking in the direction of a true universal kinship. With that, many of the problems that afflict our society would diminish.

To conclude, I want to leave the following in the air: First, by studying Theosophy in depth, and understanding karma, we can understand why we are born in a male or female body in a society like ours, and fulfil in a righteous way the dharma that is proper to each gender, and use the opportunity to be in this body to go beyond its limitations and to help people in need. Secondly, why Adepts born in a female body are not often mentioned? I hope one day to find and understand the answer. For the time being, from my position, still full of immense

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limitations, I invite you to make a firm resolution to fulfil our dharma as human beings and students of Theosophy to make this a world with a higher vibration and to make universal kinship in every sphere alive, by taking action towards any inequality or social injustice.

And let us remember: we are not our desires, we are the Divine Will; we are not our thoughts, we are the Divine Wisdom; we are not our emotions and feelings, we are the Divine Love. And all the Universe and beings are imbued with Divine Will, Wisdom, and Love. ✧

**Annie Besant was not only a social reformer and a political activist but also raised her voice for the empowerment of women throughout her career. She joined the National Secular Society that emphasised 'free thought'. Her ideas and topics of interest were on birth control, woman's empowerment, education, trade union and franchise. She also served as the president of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Chennai [from 1907 to 1933] and was the founder of the Women's Indian Association in 1917. . . .**

**Though she has many achievements to her credit, this paper focuses on her role to empower the women in India. . . . She demanded a rightful position for women's social standing in society and also in demanding franchise for women. She arrived in India in 1893, touring all around the country with Henry Steel Olcott (President Founder of the Theosophical Society). She was a militant atheist, socialist, and trade union organiser and a women's right advocate, initiating their emancipation in her first public lecture on "The political status of Women" in 1874.**

**Her movement for women's rights began in 1850. It demanded higher studies, better employment, reform of divorce laws, and property rights for women. She insisted on women's emancipation through her writings and speeches in the 1870's and 1880's in England, fighting for women's rights against British imperial policies. But she was criticised by the British and the Indian social reforms also condemned her as a British imperialist.**

Jishamol B., Ethiraj College for Women  
Empowerment — A study, January 2021

# Books of Interest

**M**AN: WHENCE, HOW, AND WHITHER, by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai, India. 2022, 540 pp., INR 600. <tphindia@gmail.com> <adyarbooks.com>. <amazon.in>.

This book is a record of the clairvoyant investigations done by Dr Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, published in 1913. The research work was started at Adyar in the summer of 1910 and completed in April-May 1912. The book was made possible when the authors decided to go “into retreat”. The foreword of the book states:

The idea that clairvoyant observation is possible is no longer regarded as entirely insane. It is not generally accepted, nor indeed is it accepted to any large extent. A constantly growing minority, however, of fairly intelligent people believe clairvoyance to be a fact, and regard it as a perfectly natural power, which will become universal in the course of evolution. . . . They know that it is a power latent in all of us, and that it can be developed by anyone who is able and willing to pay the price demanded for its forcing, ahead of the general evolution. . . . *The Secret Doctrine* of H. P. Blavatsky is a standing instance of such use.

The last century witnessed a great advance in science and technology. Life became more comfortable through the various inventions of science. New com-

munication systems, modes of transport, inventions and discoveries in the field of medicine, robots, and computers replaced a great deal of human labour. But the fundamental questions that arise in the human mind remained the same. In the introduction the authors pose questions on “the problem of Man’s origin, of his evolution, of his destiny” which are “of inexhaustible interest”.

Whence came this glorious Intelligence, on this globe, at least, the crown of visible beings? How has it evolved to its present position? . . . [Is it a] temporary tenant of a house of clay; or has it climbed upwards through long dim ages, tracing its humble ancestry from primeval slime, through fish, reptile, mammal, up to the human kingdom? And what is its future destiny? . . . Is its present climbing but the schooling of an immortal spiritual Power, destined in its maturity to wield the sceptre of a world, a system, a congeries of systems, a veritable God in the making?

In *Talks on the Path of Occultism*, Vol. II, Leadbeater narrates how he was influenced by a *deva* to write this book:

. . . a passing Deva locked in upon me one Sunday morning when I was giving a talk to some Theosophists at Adyar. He showed me some of the ways in which the Devas would influence men through religion in the beginnings of the sixth root-race. . . . It led to our [Besant and Leadbeater] knowledge of very much about

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the beginnings of the new race, to the investigation on which the second part of *Man: Whence, How, and Whither* was based, and a little later to joint investigation by Dr Besant and myself, which resulted in the first part of the same book. . . . She [Besant] would be remembered by that book when all that she has written before it will have been forgotten.

Just like on the stage the same actor playing different characters in different dramas, individuals play different roles in different incarnations as woman, prince, peasant, or priest. The various star names such as Corona, Pallas, and Lyra, given to Julius Caesar, Plato, and Lao-Tze respectively, impart to the story the element of human interest and teaches the student about reincarnation. Regarding the Masters or perfected men it is stated:

They have climbed to where They stand on the same ladder of life up which we are climbing now. . . . They are not Gods perfect from unending ages, but men and women who have unfolded the God within themselves and have, along a toilsome road, reached the superhuman. They are the fulfilled promise of what we shall be, the glorious flowers on the plant on which we are the buds.

The book explains how different bodies of people came over from other chains to this, and how certain of those groups were spoken of as boat-loads of servers. Practically all members of the Theosophical Society (TS) belong to one of those groups; so the idea of service is a

very strong factor in their dispositions. There are various theories regarding the origin of Man, the Universe, and even the Cosmos. Amid this clash of opinions, this conflict of theories, this affirmation and repudiation of ever-new hypotheses, it may be that the records of Leadbeater and Besant — two explorers treading a very ancient path that few tread today, but that will be trodden more and more by thronging students as time shows its stability — may have a chance of being read. Modern science is today exploring the marvels of what it calls the “subjective mind” and is finding in it strange powers, strange upsurges, strange memories. We may hope that someday science will realize that what it calls the subjective mind, religion calls the Soul, and that the exhibition of its powers depends on the physical and super-physical instruments at its command. A wonderful discovery of the authors is:

Metaphysicians, ancient and modern, declare that Past, Present, and Future are ever simultaneously existent in the Divine Consciousness, and are only successive as they come into manifestation, that is, under Time, which is verily the succession of states of consciousness.

It is clear that occasional help has been given to the authors by the Elder Brethren, in the way of broad outlines here and there, and dates where necessary.

The chapter “Man: Whither” will be very interesting to the modern reader and he/she may marvel at the findings of the authors a century ago regarding many

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things which are now familiar in our daily life. In the new civilization yet to come, they say:

The language which they are speaking is naturally English, since the community has arisen in an English-speaking country, but it has been modified considerably. Many participial forms have disappeared, and some of the words are different.

Regarding the future of Adyar, the author says:

There is still a Theosophical Society; but as its first object has to a large extent been achieved, it is devoting itself principally to the second and third. It has developed into a great central University for the promotion of studies along both these lines, with subsidiary centres in various parts of the world affiliated to it. . . . They have copies of *The Secret Doctrine*, but they are all transcribed into the universal language.

At a time when the internet and e-newspapers were unknown to the world, the authors predict:

The daily newspaper has disappeared — or perhaps we may rather say that it survives in a much amended form. To make it comprehensible it must be premised that in each house there is a machine which is a kind of combination of a telephone and recording tape-machine. This is in connection with a central office in the capital city, and is so arranged that not only can one speak through it as through a telephone, but that anything written or drawn upon a specially prepared plate and put into the box of the large machine at the central

office will reproduce itself automatically upon slips which fall into the box of the machine in each of the houses. What takes the place of the morning newspaper is managed in this way. It may be said that each person has his newspaper printed in his own house. When any news of importance arrives at any time it is instantly forwarded in this way to every house in the community; but a special collection of such news is sent early each morning and is commonly called the *Community Breakfast Chat*.

“Since the two Masters who founded the Theosophical Society are also the leaders of this community, it is quite natural that the religious opinion current there should be what we now call Theosophy.” The teachings of “the innermost circles of our Esoteric Section is the common faith of the community”. It also predicts that “there is no sort of divorcement between science and religion” in this community, and “men no longer worship various manifestations, since all possess accurate knowledge as to the existence of the Solar Deity”.

This wonderful book which was out of print for quite a long time is now available for the public when many of its prophecies have come true to us. Every student of science, religion, and philosophy will find it rewarding and worthwhile. ✧

K. DINAKARAN

A long-term member of the Indian Section Council and Secretary of the Kerala Theosophical Federation.

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