

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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* Disciple of a Guru or Master

** Fellow (Member) of the Theosophical Society

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Cover: “Tree of Life” image on a floral silk textile, influenced by Middle-Eastern and Hindu cultures, often used for prayers, the tree of life theme has carried various meanings across cultures, e.g., in Judaism it holds wisdom and in the Hindu/Buddhist culture it is meant to grant wishes to the needy. Artist unknown, circa 1770s.

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

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

Presidential Address

To the 148th International Convention of the Theosophical Society (TS)
(In-person & on Zoom from 31 December 2023 to 4 January 2024)

I AM happy to warmly welcome all the delegates here at Adyar and those online around the world to open this 148th International Convention with us. I wish you a fruitful and inspiring time during the Convention programs and related events on our campus. Let us now turn to those Great Ones whose compassionate care and blessings our Society has enjoyed for all these years. Please rise:

**May those who are the embodiments of Love Immortal
bless with their help and guidance this Society,
founded to be a channel for their work.
May They inspire it with their Wisdom, strengthen it
with their Power, and energize it with their activity.**

It is a pleasure to open this 148th Annual Convention of the TS.

For a number of years we have been required to give full attention to renovating and upgrading our Adyar home. It has been a necessary and all-absorbing effort that has demanded a dedicated group focus. Over time we have developed a team of people who have the concentration and commitment that has moved us forward. This year we have continued the process. The most obvious renovation project has been the completion of the New Quadrangle. Those of you who have stayed there in the past will appreciate the extensive upgrade — not only of the units themselves, but the installation of walkways and garden spaces. It has become our shared habit of thought that in all of our projects beauty is a requirement. Annie Besant described Adyar as the “Masters’ Home”. The outer expression of beauty and power must align with its inner presence.

We have also completed a number of infrastructure upgrades that will be unseen by most. Our electrical supply, sanitation, and water systems have been redone in various locations on campus. New classrooms for the Olcott Memorial School, the Adyar Theosophical Academy, and the Social Welfare Centre were constructed. Secured spaces for archival materials; restoration of important artwork in our Museum; upgrades to our dining facilities, Library Conference Room; gardens; Security Office; Internet access; Administration Building; and other improvements far too numerous to list have also been part of this year’s activity.

The work of maintaining and improving our physical campus will never end. However, we have reached a point where we can now apply a greater focus to the purpose for which this place exists. The hardest work — the development of a shared team ethos and

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functional systems to support that shared vision — at this point, is in place. That and the establishment of relative financial security for the TS brings new vistas into view. The TS Adyar headquarters is the global center for the Theosophical Movement. We are more than buildings and land.

In HPB's book *The Key to Theosophy* she describes the purpose of the TS as “to make it known that such a thing as Theosophy exists”. Taking this as our direction, the question has been “How?” How do we make the existence of Theosophy known? Historically, this has been attempted along two lines: 1. books and magazines; 2. talks — the written and the spoken word. While valuable, these two avenues do not exhaust the possibilities. At Adyar we are working to provide a vital, usable center for a higher work. Nothing less than the regeneration of the human mind can be an acceptable direction for us. Our answer to the question “How?” has become: By every means available. Toward that end here at Adyar we utilize every one of our activities to demonstrate a fundamental Unity we all share.

Two schools (the Olcott Memorial School, a free school which has been operating continuously for 130 years; and the Adyar Theosophical Academy, begun in 2019), the Social Welfare Centre for pre-schoolers, the Vocational Training Centre, our extensive animal rescue and care facility at the Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary, which has become the premier institution of its type in South India; are ongoing projects. During this year we have added two new programs of outreach to the broader community: Wisdom for Living, which features highly accomplished presenters across the spectrum of human activity (Science, Medicine, Spirituality, Business, Arts, and so on) sharing the ways in which they apply spiritual principles in their work/life; and Libraries as Communities, which monthly draws people to the Library to hear from top people in fields directly related to the books in our collection, and to engage in the study and discussion of a curated book list. Both programs are in person and have experienced excellent participation. The School of the Wisdom (SOW) under the directorship of Erica Georgiades has become a global activity. In addition to the inperson sessions taking place on our campus, online sessions have been successfully initiated. Additionally our involvement in art, music, children's programs, and eco-responsibility have been prominent this year.

All of this is a “people-dependent” process. Anyone can pronounce the word “Theosophy” or quote the words of illumined past members, but Theosophy only comes to life through that person who, by personal effort, has realized something of its meaning. Though each of us is imperfect in our wisdom and in our personalities, working together we continue to accomplish remarkable things. The TS exists for the world, not for ourselves. We are committed to magnifying the Experiment that is the TS. We are aware that everything we attempt will not bear fruit, but some of it will — richly.

TIM BOYD

The Work around the World

In the **Asia-Pacific** region, the TS in **East and South-East Asia**, with 719 members, operates in four countries: Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, and Myanmar. Though there is no lodge in China, remarkable growth was seen through the efforts of the Chinese Project Team of the **Singapore Lodge**, which developed a Chinese website and conducted online lectures and talks. Another notable event in Singapore was the opening of new premises in August. A Theosophy course was held in Chinese, and a book club accessed translated literature, recorded lectures, and subtitled videos. Two blog groups engage members and non-member sympathizers. **Malaysia** hosted the 15th Indo-Pacific Conference on-line in November, focusing The Work around the World on “Finding Joy Amidst Uncertainty”. In **Japan**, online study sessions were organized bimonthly, and several books were translated and published in Japanese.

With the end of the restrictions of the global pandemic, most of the activities of the TS in **Australia** have returned to normal. After almost three years, January saw the resumption of the National Convention as an in-person gathering in Adelaide, South Australia. There was a healthy attendance, perhaps because of the long hiatus, with a host of excellent speakers and over 75 delegates making it a memorable event. In April and May, International Lecturer, Juliana Cesano, led the annual Australian School of Theosophy at Springbrook, Queensland. Later,

Juliana continued with a tour of the Section, giving talks and workshops in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart, and Melbourne. In October, a three-day event was held at the Springbrook Education and Retreat Centre entitled “Ancient Wisdoms in a Modern World: A Contemporary Exploration of the Stories and Symbols That Bring Meaning to Our Lives”.

The TS in **India** had another successive annual increase of membership to 12,230. The trend towards online lectures set during Covid-19 had blossomed. Another highlight was a plan to contribute to the participation of 100 members of the Section in the 12th World TS Congress to be held in Vancouver in 2025. A three-day 131st National Convention was held in October at the Radha Burnier Amphitheatre in Varanasi. The 175th Birth Anniversary of Dr Annie Besant was celebrated in October with floral tributes paid by the students and staff of the educational institutions, the workers, and the members. The 147th Foundation Day was celebrated online as also Adyar Day. White Lotus Day was observed in the Annie Besant Hall in Varanasi. The 99th Easter Conference was conducted in April at Adyar, based on the book *The World Around Us*, a compilation of Radha Burnier’s “On the Watch-Tower” articles during 1980–2007. Five Federations conducted study camps at Bhowali from April to June. Several online talks were given by the President and the national lecturers. *The Indian Theosophist* was published

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monthly in English and Hindi. The website, <theosophy-india.org>, hosts several magazines from the different Federations. TOS activities had active participation of members at all levels during the year.

The year's activities in the **New Zealand** Section were back to pre-Covid levels. The National Convention was held in January in Whanganui, with the theme, "Our Journey — From Me, to We, to the Oneness of All", with Nancy Secrest as the guest speaker. The School of Theosophy was held in April with Ravi Ravindra, who spoke on the "Journey of Spiritual Search". Immersion Weekend was held in early August with the theme: "Theosophy, a Path of Discovery". The Online Theosophical Sunday's program had four sessions with Martin Leiderman on "Exploring The Secret Doctrine". Branch seminars continued to be conducted by John Vorstermans and Renée Sell. A new website was released in August with a new look and feel, added functions, improvements to the Events page, online shopping, and membership database. *TheoSophia* continued to be popular in New Zealand and worldwide.

The **Philippine** Section transitioned to in-person interactions after the pandemic. It marked its 90th anniversary in 2023 and conducted the National Convention online in November, with the theme "The Quest for Truth: The Challenge of Our Times", where I delivered the keynote address. Activities included a recollection/retreat, reports, meditation sessions, panel discussion, workshop, plenary session, and action plans. Guided meditations with lectures and Q&A sessions were

held each month, while midweek public meditation sessions happened weekly. Publications like *The Theosophical Digest*, *The Philippine Theosophist* newsletter, and *Peace Ideas* remained consistent. The TOS engaged in feeding programs, typhoon disaster relief, and outreach activities. Correspondence courses continued. An online presence is maintained through Facebook, YouTube, and its website, <theosophy.ph/index.html>.

In the **European** region, the TS in **Austria** has 78 members in three Lodges. A new board was installed for the branch in Graz. Two Lodges offered weekly lectures throughout the study year. Study subjects were based on classical theosophical teachings and related subjects. The third Lodge will be reorganized shortly. In July members attended the summer school organized by Karin Walzl in Linz and the summer school of the German Section. Members received the *Adyar* periodical Magazine from the German Section, published three times a year.

In **Belgium**, seven Lodges continued regular activity, some of them publishing newsletters and all of them organizing study meetings and monthly lectures on theosophical topics. All TS Adyar commemorations were held at the Brussels headquarters: White Lotus Day, Founders' Day, Adyar Day, and Annie Besant Day. Healing and peace meditations which have a loyal following were conducted in cooperation with Belgian TOS. The Brussels headquarters also welcomed EFTS Executive and Council meetings in early September.

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The TS in **England and Wales** continued to promote the ancient wisdom teachings through the activities of Headquarters and Lodges and Centres. Headquarters presented 24 online Sunday evening lectures. Besides local speakers they had international speakers from Belgium, Italy, Scotland, and USA. The 18 Lodges and three Centres met regularly for both personal study and public talks. They continued the Foundation and Higher online Diploma Courses in Theosophy. The Summer School was held again after four years, in August, with Pablo and Michele Sender as chief speakers on “The Spiritual Path in Challenging Times”. A new group, “Young Adult Theosophists of England and Wales”, was formed by enthusiastic younger members, affiliated to The World Federation of Young Theosophists. The quarterly magazine *Esoterica* continued to be distributed to members and interested parties around the world. The website had a substantial increase of visits and visitors. Facebook and YouTube followers have increased. Membership growth was helped by the Associate Scheme enabling people to study Theosophy for two years before committing to becoming members.

There are seventeen Lodges in **Finland**, organizing public talks regularly in different cities of Finland as well as in Estonia. Some of them organize weekly or monthly studies of theosophical books. Eight Lodges have a theosophical library. Two celebrated their 90th anniversary in September. The annual general meeting was held in Helsinki in May with 37 mem-

bers present. During the summer months there were two talks a month, some available online. Foundation Day, Adyar Day, and White Lotus Day were celebrated during the talks. The TOS organized a spring festival in April and a Christmas event to raise funds. It supports Olcott Memorial School, Social Welfare Centre, and the Boy’s Hostel in Adyar. *Teosofi* magazine appears four times a year. *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, Second Series*, by C. Jinarājādāsa was published in Finnish. An audiobook on Mabel Collins’s *Light on the Path (Valoa tielle)* is available on YouTube and Soundcloud. The Facebook page has 1,600 followers.

At the TS **France**, bimonthly hybrid courses, online meditation sessions, and public lectures attracted a core of interested participants. Members participated in a silent retreat on the theme “Acquainting the Mind with Meditation” at the end of April. Founders’ Day, Adyar Day, and White Lotus Day were celebrated. An online study group on the Mahatma Letters with the Belgian Section and Spanish participants continued. A study group on fundamental theosophical teachings for new members also went on. The National Convention on “The Laws of the Higher Life” took place in the end of June with Sabine Van Osta as guest speaker. The Section’s online presence grew, including Face-book, YouTube, and weekly e-news-letters. The publishing house, Editions Adyar, began to sell TPH Adyar books via website. The TS library was open to the public. The magazine *Le Lotus Bleu* is published ten times a year

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both in electronic and hard copy form.

The three annual meetings of the TS in **Germany**, with 135 members, were held, as always, in the South in the autumn, in the North in the spring, and the summer school in the middle of Germany. The guest of honour was Esther Pockrandt, who joined online, for two lectures on *Taming the Dragon Within*. A course on *The Secret Doctrine* was continued. Isolde Sültemeyer talked about Rukmini Devi Arundale's life and her great services to the TS, India, and wildlife. Monthly online meetings bring members and guests from all over Germany together listening to the best speakers nationwide. Meanwhile, three healing groups met regularly and some met to meditate for peace worldwide. The thrice-yearly *Adyar* magazine published a special edition in December with translated talks from the International Convention 2021. Authors and lecturers in German keep growing.

Since June the TS in **Greece** was able to organize hybrid meetings. A study group on *The Secret Doctrine* also held online meetings. Joint Lodge meetings and individual meetings were organized. The membership increased, with new members attending the lectures and study group more frequently. The General Assembly meeting was held in April with good attendance. Foundation Day, White Lotus Day, and Adyar Day were celebrated. The magazine, *Ilisos*, was published every three months with 200 subscribers.

TS in **Hungary** held its two usual General Assembly meetings, one in spring, the other in the autumn. The one operat-

ing Lodge has 22 members and 11 are members at large. Monthly meetings were held. A series of bi-weekly workshops took place with "Cosmogenesis" of *The Secret Doctrine* as the theme. MATESZ, the Hungarian TOS, organized charity collections and donated to persons in need. The virtual healing group had weekly gatherings/group meditations. Eleven public lectures were given. White Lotus Day commemorated Madame Blavatsky. Numerous lectures are available in the YouTube video channel, "The Hidden Side of Our World", with 2,650 members. "Theosophy in Hungary" is a podcast available on YouTube. *Occult Chemistry* by C. W. Leadbeater and Annie Besant, and *The Conquest of Illusion* by J. J. van der Leeuw were translated and published. Contact was established with TS in Switzerland, Slovakia, and USA.

Regular touch was kept with all the 95 TS in **Ireland** members via study notes, messages, and uplifting quotations. They also had the opportunity to join TS programmes and receive Theosophical magazines online. Many new members joined thanks to the website. In-person programmes started last autumn for the Belfast and Dublin Lodges, with talks, meditations, and study. The All-Ireland Convention was held in May with Gerard Brennan from Australia as the guest speaker on "Along the Path and towards the Mountains". Online contact with other Sections and their magazines was encouraged since Covid time. The Organizing Secretary delivered a talk to the Russian TS on "Thought Power and its Higher

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Potential”, with simultaneous translation into Russian.

In the TS in **Italy**, the year saw positive results. The *Rivista Italiana di Teosofia* (Italian Magazine of Theosophy) was published bimonthly. A study on meditation led by Ms Tr  n-Thi-Kim-Di  u was organized at Milan in October. Two Intergroup Seminars were held, one at Trieste in October with the theme, “This unknown Life: Theosophy and Knowledge of the Occult”, and the other at Turin in January on “Art and Theosophy”. The Theosophical Seminar in Ascona took place in March on the “Relationship between Art and Theosophy and the Role of the TS”. The Section organized its 109th National Congress in Cervignano del Friuli in June with the theme “Sublime Harmony, Beauty of Life”. An online 10-lesson “Introductory Course to the Stanzas of Dzyan, Part I, Cosmogogenesis” was held. The Italian Young Theosophists translated and took care of the audio magazine. The monthly newsletter has over 3,600 active users.

The TS in **The Netherlands**, with 367 members, ten Lodges, and seven centres, collaborates closely with ITC (International Theosophical Centre) in Naarden, known as the “European Home” of the TS. The activities at the ITC included two autumn 2022 events themed “Exploring the Latent Powers in Humankind”, a Spring 2023 seminar on “What is Consciousness?”, and a Summer 2023 seminar led by Kurt Leland on “Cooperative work with invisible worlds”. The second gathering of the World Federation of Young

Theosophists was hosted at the ITC in June, featuring a special seminar by Kurt Leland titled “The Path of Cooperation and the Spiritual Life”. The quarterly journal, *Theosophia*, is available at <www.theosofie.nl>. An online bimonthly newsletter is distributed to over 1,000 subscribers. The library houses 25,000 books available. The bookshop maintains a stock of theosophical and related books, primarily sold online.

The Strommen Group of the TS in **Norway** continued its collaboration with the Dharma group, giving bimonthly lectures based on a course programme from the TS in New Zealand website's "Theosophical World Resource Centre" <<https://www.ts-adyar.org/content/resource-centre>>, divided into 12 lectures. From the pandemic time, the meetings had to become online, and now they are transitioning to physical meetings.

The TS in **Portugal** had at least three public sessions monthly. Along with the celebration of the traditional commemorative days integrated in the history of the TS, sessions were held at least every fortnight, all well attended. The website continued to be a good reference to those who showed interest in the Section's history and activities. A regular newsletter was published. Social networks were used to reach a larger public. Lodges and Study Groups worked regularly.

The online lecture centre of the TS in **Russia** continued its work. Fifty-one meetings were conducted of which nine included international speakers. Two online projects, “Reading H. P. Blavatsky's

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articles together”, is actively being developed. Another one, “Introduction to the Philosophy of Religions” was launched. The online course “Introduction to Theosophy” was launched in November. The 12th All-Russian Theosophical Conference was held in Kemerovo in April, with the same theme as that of the International Convention held in Adyar. Weekly meetings on *The Secret Doctrine* continued. Two Saturdays a month there is a course on “Symbolism in Astrology”. The monthly meditation course “Theosophy and Life” continued. Along with TS India, the “School of Wisdom 2023” was held in July on self-knowledge. The memorial days of Blavatsky, 8 May and 12 August, are traditionally celebrated in all Russian Lodges. With the participation of international Theosophists from Brazil, Turkey, and Belarus, the Theosophical Forum was held in Smolensk in July. The 12th annual Theosophical Seminar on *The Secret Doctrine* was held in August in the village of Makarievka, and in November the National Congress of the Theosophical Society in Russia on “The Nature of Thinking: Conscious Thinking” was held. The official pages are maintained in social networks: Facebook, V Kontakte (Russian analogue of FB), and Telegram. This year new accounts were created on Yandex.Zen and RuTube. Videos are posted on <youtube.com/Theosophy>. Over 200 new videos were posted during the year.

The TS in **Scotland** held a regular, very popular theosophical study group on Saturdays. The Organizing Secretary gave talks/study sessions on *The Voice of the Silence*

at every Lodge. Malcolm Macqueen, gave a talk entitled “Theosophy and Hellenistic Astrology” at the AGM in June.

The TS in **Slovenia** has five lodges and two study centres with 75 members. The work takes place at Theosophical meetings in the Lodges and also online meetings once a week. This mode is preferred, as members from all the Lodges can attend the meetings. The Memorial Days were organized and celebrated — the birthday of Annie Besant online and the others in physical gatherings. Their magazine, *Theosophical Thought*, is in digital format. The website is <teozofskodrustvo.si>.

The **Spanish Section** had face-to-face activities in addition to online meetings. Different levels of knowledge were addressed, from basic courses to the study of in-depth content for the more experienced. The annual events organized were the annual Silent Retreat, conducted by Tr  n-Thi-Kim-Di  u at the end of October; the Iberian Days during the Easter season; the Summer School at the end of August; and the three significant dates for theosophists: Foundation Day, Adyar Day, and White Lotus Day.

The membership in the **Swedish** section increased slightly and many of them are interested in the different study groups. A wide number of public lectures have been held, as well as a mini school on “Knowledge and Reality” during the autumn. The summer school was held successfully on the theme of “The Brain and Extended Consciousness”.

The **Swiss** TS is working to change from a Presidential Agency to a Section.

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They published articles on the Ticino online blog/magazine, <teosofia.ch>, and <facebook.com/groups/teosofii> and recently joined Twitter <twitter.com/teosofia_ch>. The Italian Theosophical magazine was distributed free at the Locarno bookshop. In Ascona, the European Theosophical Seminar on “Art and Theosophy” was organized in collaboration with the European Federation and the Italian Theosophical Society. The Swiss Theosophical Centre in Ascona hosts an active library. The Theosophical Course in Geneva explores official Theosophical texts monthly and holds online weekly meetings in French. The Lugano group meets weekly since April. A new study center was established in Zurich in May. The Section supported the Young Theosophist’s Gathering in Naarden and the project for the restoration of the Adyar painting collection.

With a membership of 105, the work of the TS in **Ukraine** continued despite the ongoing war conditions. Eight departments and a Study Center functioned with all Branches holding meetings studying theosophical literature. Key events included the 18th Convention on “Living Now: Challenges of Internal Life”, held online in November. White Lotus Day was observed. Also, “Herald of Light Day” commemorated the 192nd birth anniversary of Blavatsky in August. The online project, “Theosophy for the Curious”, was offered on Saturdays from October to March, acquainting participants with Theosophy. The website, <theosophy.in.ua>, remained active, as

also <facebook.com/theosophy.in.ua>. The School of the Wisdom, titled “The Key to the Inside”, was conducted online in August-September. The Science Group had 12 participants with regular meetings, seminars, and public lectures. Two bilingual magazines — “Theosophy and Science” and “Svitoch” — and monthly newsletters were regularly published. Aid was given to those affected by the war. The Order of Healing conducted weekly healing rituals designed for souls lost in the war. An online psychological help group was established. Thursday meditations were held for unity, support, and protection of the country.

In the **Americas**, the TS in **Argentina**, with a membership of 279, started twelve two-year online courses on Theosophy for members-at-large in places without TS Lodges. Seven books were printed in Spanish: *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, “Cosmogogenesis” by HPB; *Sri Ram, a Life of Altruism and Wisdom* by P. Oliveira; *Notes on the Bhagavad Gita* by S. Row; *Approaching the Secret Doctrine* by P. Sender, *The Yogic Ascent to Spiritual Heights* by G. Hodson; *Reflections on the Eternal Wisdom* by J. Mills; and *Raja Yoga* by W. Slater. The Section’s YouTube channel was expanded with 441 videos and over 4,000 subscribers. At the Theosophical Centre in San Rafael, Mendoza, in October, a National Conference was held with the theme, “Practical Theosophy: An Invitation to Live Altruistically, Transforming Knowledge into Wisdom”. In February, the 56th Summer School was held on “The Inner Life: Self-

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knowledge and Contemplation in the Three Paths”, by Juliana Cesano, with an attendance of 77 people.

Bolivia, with a membership of 68, six branches, and three centres carried on study, research, meditation, and dissemination. Some members delivered national and international lectures on various topics. Workshops and introductory courses to Theosophy were done in the cities of La Paz, Cochabamba, and Tarija, to spread theosophical knowledge and increase membership. Public meetings were held every month, with the participation of all branches and study groups. The special theosophical dates such as Foundation Day, Adyar Day, and White Lotus Day, were celebrated. The *Bolivian Theosophical Magazine* was published quarterly from December.

The TS in **Brazil** has 618 members, 33 Lodges and 25 Study Groups. The 42nd Summer School on “Ancient Wisdom and Peacebuilding” was hosted in January. The 29th International Theosophical School and winter seminar was held on “*Light on the Path* and the Spiritual Journey — Esoteric Instructions and Existential Challenges” in July. The hybrid format enabled people from other places to take part, with access to renowned international speakers, and live translation to Portuguese. The Section held weekly online Theosophical Studies Groups open to the public. The headquarters in Brasilia were open for services including the secretariat, bookshop, and Hatha Yoga sessions daily. From December, in-person weekly lectures resumed at the Head-

quarters, which were recorded and made available on TV SUPREN’s YouTube channel. TOS marked 115 years of work and published an International Handbook. A Theosophical school at the Raja Centre is being planned. The TPH had a successful year with their magazine, *Sophia*, reaching its 100th ed. in 20 years.

The TS in **Canada**, with a membership of 113, had meetings every other Sunday with local and international speakers. The website, the Facebook page, and the YouTube channel are continuously updated. A more structured and up-to-date advertising plan was implemented to promote Theosophy. Some members were interviewed on a research project on “Spirituality in the Modern World”. The aim of developing links with non-affiliated Lodges in Canada continued by organizing meetings with them. They expect to have a sixth Lodge soon. Some of the books studied were: *A Study In Consciousness*, *The Secret Doctrine*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and so on.

The TS in **Chile** had public events that attracted new members, including conferences in August and October, titled “The Greatest Wisdom Is to Know Yourself” and “Forgetting Yourself to Serve” respectively. Branches like Arundhati operated continuously, with online sessions for members. The Amor Branch adjusted its study schedule for increased participation. Seven introductory Theosophy courses were offered at the national Headquarters, at the end of which attendees could choose to join the TS. Online study groups continued and the library reopened in May.

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The building of the TS in **Colombia** was reopened with Wi-Fi system, communication equipment, monitors, and so on, enabling study activities, both online and physically at the headquarters, by the two Lodges in Bogotá. Medellín Lodge also met weekly and Lodge Sol del Ecuador was annexed to the Presidential Agency. There has been an effort to promote online study groups in other Colombian cities and Ecuador, and to join the IATF (Inter-American Theosophical Federation), as well as the creation of the Node of Theosophical Diffusion; at National and IATF level. The “Brahma Vidya School” was inactive. An introductory course to Theosophy for neophytes will be started. The group, “Encounters with Krishnamurti” continued. The magazine, *Selección Teosófica* (*Theosophical Digest*) is published online four times per year.

TS in **Costa Rica** continued having 4 active Lodges with 60 members. The challenge, now that members have gotten used to virtual meetings, was to encourage them to go back to in-person meetings, and hybrid sessions helped. International TS festive days like Annie Besant’s Birthday, Founders’ Day, Adyar Day, and White Lotus Day were observed. A three-month *Introductory Course to Theosophy* was conducted successfully in hybrid mode with active participation. In April a seminar, *The Secret Doctrine — Path of Self-Transformation*, was conducted by Martin Leiderman, with about 30 people attending. Video forums and study groups also took place. Four issues were published of their magazine, *Sila* —

Revista costarricense de Teosofía (*Sila — Costa Rican Theosophical Magazine*).

The quarterly online *Revista Teosófica Cubana* (*Cuban Theosophical Magazine*) was published by the TS in **Cuba** without interruption. The Annual Convention was held in January on “Universal Brotherhood”. Official celebrations and commemorations of the TS were done as usual. The traditional Summer School was held in July on “The Three Paths of Yoga”. During January–October the studies continued, but were suspended during August (summer holidays). Instead, a public conference was held every Saturday about different theosophical teachings. In January and September a Basic Study Course on Theosophy was held as usual at the Havana headquarters.

With forty-five members the TS in the **Dominican Republic** gave intermediate and advanced courses on Theosophy online twice a week, and the introductory course in person. Weekly meetings in person were resumed in August. The premises have undergone a facelift and inaugurated in December. It will house the Lodges, study groups, and Presidential Agency office. Commemorations of theosophical dates were done along with the Inter-American Theosophical Federation. In October the Fall seminar on “Intuition, our Connection with the Soul” was held in person, facilitated by Drs Isaac Jauli and Enrique Reig and around 30 people took part. The OTS meets every week to perform the Healing Ritual.

The TS in **Mexico**, which has twelve Lodges and four Study Centers, held some

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important events during the period. The School of Theosophy was held in Atlixco, Puebla, in November 2022 by Pablo Sender with the following topics: “Service as a Theosophical Path”, “The Theosophical Path of Meditation”, and “The Evolution of Higher Consciousness”. All lectures were held in person and transmitted live on Zoom, Facebook, and YouTube, and recorded on the website.

The Mexican Section was invited by the Mexican Society for the Study of Religions, which is part of the National Institute of Anthropology and History of the Government of Mexico, to participate in the “Colloquium on Spiritualism, Theosophy, and Spirituality”. Dissemination work was done via the web page, <sociedadteosofica.mx>; two Facebook pages, <facebook.com/teosofiamx> and <facebook.com/teosofia.blavasky>; three YouTube channels, Teosofía en México, Sección Mexicana de la Sociedad Teosófica, and Sociedad Teosófica en México; and the magazines *Teotlsofia*, *Dharma*, *Duda*, and the *Magazine of the IATF*.

The TS in **Perú** has 34 members. The HPB Lodge conducts two online meetings and two in-person gatherings monthly since March. They celebrated Foundation Day, Adyar Day, and White Lotus Day online, on their respective dates.

From October to December the TS in **Puerto Rico** concentrated on encouraging attendance in in-person meetings. In January, the Inter-American Theosophical Federation (IATF) offered a week’s seminar at the TS Headquarters in India. In

February, the IATF president visited the headquarters in Puerto Rico and public lectures were delivered by Dr Enrique Reig. White Lotus Day was a solemn celebration. Fred Fernández, a senior member, delivered a workshop on “The Elevation of Consciousness”. A public lecture is given every Sunday. In July/August 2023, Mrs Idarmis Rodríguez, from the Krotona Institute of Theosophy in Ojai, California, visited San Juan for 22 days and attended several TS Headquarters’ study groups, sharing appreciable insights.

The TS in USA had a slight increase in the membership to 3,445. The education department organized, in conjunction with the program committee, two successful weekend programs for the in-depth study of Theosophy: “Approaching the Secret Doctrine” with Pablo Sender, and “The Pervasive Presence: Exploring H. P. Blavatsky’s Teaching on the Seven Principles” with Eugene Jennings. The Prison Program has seen a rise in the number of referrals and currently has 51 prisoners enrolled in the correspondence course, supported by 18 volunteer mentors across the country with a total of 115 prisoners as members of the TSA. Our annual Mind-Body-Spirit Festival, “Theosofest”, was held in September and attracted approximately 3,000 visitors and 130 vendors. The Quest Book Shop continued to expand product lines, including offerings in world religions, mysticism, and children’s items.

In **Venezuela** the Lodges meet every Sunday. The study books include the *Bhagavadgītā*, *Quantum Physics*, and

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Emotions by Ana Belén López Solano, and *At the Feet of the Master*, among others. In all the Lodge meetings a half an hour of meditation for peace is held, as per TOS. Special theosophical dates such as Foundation Day and Adyar Day were celebrated.

In the **African** region, the **East & Central African** Section, with 107 members, comprises Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia. The highlight of the year was the visit of Isis Resende in January/February. Her 20-day lecture tour of Lodges in Kenya, Uganda, and Zambia attracted a lot of new people, resulting in increased attendance. Some members found the online talks organized by various Sections of the TS around the world an alternative to the weekly Lodge meetings. But most members are unable to join due to lack of reliable but expensive Wi-Fi connectivity.

In the Adyar **Headquarters**, the **School of the Wisdom** conducted six courses in English, of which five were online: “From Intellectual Understanding to Life Practice: Foundations of the Buddha’s Teaching in the Light of Theosophy” by Trăn-Thi-Kim-Diêu; “The Fundamentals of Advaita Vedanta Tattva-bodha — Cycle II” by Dr Radha Raghunathan; “Sanskrit: The Divine Language” by Dr Sadananda Das; “Expanding Our Understanding and Compassion” by Dr Barbara Herbert; and “Exploring Meditation, the Real Occult Power of a Human Being” by Trăn-Thi-Kim-Diêu. The course held in Adyar was, “The Necessary Journey of Self-Transformation” by Ravi Ravindra. There were also four online classes in

Spanish: “Los Mahatmas y la Sociedad Teosófica: Origen y Propósito” by Isis M. B. Resende; “Pasado, presente y futuro de la humanidad. Su origen y evolución física, intelectual y espiritual (Antropogénesis)” by Esteban R. Langlois; “Simbología y Teosofía” by Maria Carmen César Galante; and “La Meditación, Su Importancia y Valor Espiritual” by Gaspar Torres Martínez. The last one could not be completed due to the passing away of the teacher.

Additionally, during the last International Convention, the School organized an Art Exhibition by Shiva Ram, a mini course focusing on “Theosophy & Ecology: Practical Wisdom for Living in the Contemporary World” with Linda Oliveira, Pradeep Gohil, and Radha Ragunathan, and the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Brahmavidya Ashram. Furthermore, at the time of the programme in the campus a few additional activities were included such as “Exploration Day — A Contemplative Walk through Nature, Listening to the History of the Adyar Campus” with Shikhar Agnihotri; a chanting workshop with Jaishree Kannan; and a vegan cooking class with Nidhi Sharma.

With the first full operational year of the **Theosophical Publishing House** (TPH) following Covid-19, the sales of books increased during the year. The reprinting of 46 out-of-stock book titles was undertaken. Also the following 3 new books were published during the year: *Theosophy in the 21st Century* by Carlos Pérez Menéndez, *Annie Besant in India* by Pedro Oliveira, and *Blessed by*

Mysterious Grace by Ravi Ravindra.

The **Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary** (BMAD), a charitable outreach programs of the TS, has grown to become one of Chennai's largest and busiest animal shelters. During the year it treated over 15,000 outpatients, admitted over 700 sick or critically injured street animals for treatment, discharged 400 animals post treatment, and conducted over 400 major surgeries. It also did 2,500 animal birth control (ABC) surgeries, a key initiative of the shelter, and found permanent homes for over 100 animals. The team was completely engaged in conducting rescues of stranded animals and humans alike, during Cyclone Michaung. Several ABC marathons were conducted this year as an initiative to control the rising street animal population in the city, and provide them with a better quality of life.

The **Theosophical Order of Service** (TOS), under the direction of Ms Nancy Secret, is present in 36 of the 59 countries where the TS is active. It also has several outreach avenues. Their website, <international.theoservice.org>, is being updated, and their Facebook page is <facebook.com/tosinternational>. This was a year of "thinking outside of the box" as several TOS countries began new programs. Meditations for Peace were begun in Argentina, Belgium, and USA. Brazil created a theatre group that presented several philosophical plays. They also distributed musical instruments to children. India began a dance group for children and started counselling 150 prisoners. Italy started a new project called

"mail from the elves", where adherents receive envelopes having small, moving citations from books, to share and embrace awareness, openness of heart, solidarity, love, positivity, brotherhood, and acceptance. In the Philippines, students began a hydro-planting system. Several countries supported relief work in the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria and for assistance to refugees from the Russo-Ukraine war. Help with various women's issues, education, youth involvement, and animal welfare were other activities. Almost all countries have healing groups.

The Director of the **Adyar Theosophical Academy** (ATA), Mrs Sonal Murali, reports that ATA began its fifth academic year in June 2023 with 185 students from Nursery to Grade 6. Three new classrooms with glass up to the ceiling create a beautiful setting of learning in the midst of Nature. New site called Kirby Gardens has been identified for expansion of school up to Grade 12. ATA continues with its immersive and participatory activities providing divergent experiences to its learners, brimming with curiosity, questions, and discoveries, through outdoor learning experiences, Nature Journaling and other mindfulness activities, meditative assemblies to start the day, field trips as well as celebrations of Indian festivals and events. The Annual Sports Meet took place on 21 Jan 2023 with international President Tim Boyd as Chief Guest. The Republic Day celebration on 26 Jan involved children in a vibrant discussion on the Indian Constitution. Mr Boyd and other TS mem-

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bers enjoyed interacting with activities set up by the students. Various guests from Argentina, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, New Guinea, Colombia, and Finland visited and spoke about their diverse cultures. Grade 6 students visited the Theosophical Society (TS) Adyar Museum, where they were enthralled by the rich legacy of the TS.

Educators enriched themselves through

sessions of Waldorf philosophy; an Energy Healing workshop; a Relook at Education based on Aurobindo's Integral Education; How to bring about Creative Thinking based on *Six Thinking Hats* by Edward De Bono; Lesson Planning to integrate a multi-disciplinary approach; a series of Maths workshops; and Understanding J. Krishnamurti's Educational Philosophy.

TIM BOYD

Why is there, one must ask, this division — the Russian, the American, the British, the French, the German, and so on — why is there this division between human and human, between race and race, culture and culture, one series of ideologies against another? Why? Why is there this separation? Humanity has divided the Earth as yours and mine — why? Is it that we try to find security, self-protection, in a particular group, or in a particular belief, faith? For religions also have divided humanity, put person against person — the Hindus, the Muslims, the Christians, the Jews, and so on. Nationalism, with its unfortunate patriotism, is really a glorified form, an ennobled form, of tribalism. . . . This terrible desire to identify oneself with a group, with a flag, with a religious ritual, and so on, gives us the feeling that we have roots, that we are not homeless wanderers. There is the desire, the urge, to find one's roots. . . .

It is our Earth, not yours or mine or his. We are meant to live on it, helping each other, not destroying each other. This is not some romantic nonsense but the actual fact. But humanity has divided the Earth, hoping that it is going to find happiness, security, a sense of abiding comfort. Until a radical change takes place and we wipe out all nationalities, all ideologies, all religious divisions, and establish a global relationship—psychologically first, inwardly before organizing the outer — we shall go on with wars. If you harm others, if you kill others, whether in anger or by organized murder which is called war, you, who are the rest of humanity, not a separate human being fighting the rest of humanity, are destroying yourself.

Excerpts from *Krishnamurti to Himself*

On the Threshold of Tomorrow

BORIS DE ZIRKOFF

THE restlessness and confusion of our minds in the present-day world is the direct result of a shattered and crumbling view of life. The complacency of an outmoded religion, the false security of a selfish social order based upon political slogans empty of spiritual content, and the banality of quasi-ethical concepts rooted primarily in convenience and the alleged superiority of might over right, these and other familiar landmarks of a dying era are collapsing before our very eyes, and in every part of the habitable world.

Many do not see it. Others, while cognizant of the fact, prefer to talk about something else, rather than face the natural results from equally natural causes, and to rebuild *now* their own lives upon foundations and precepts which alone can provide spiritual security in a world of endless change.

The minds of men the world over are gripped today in a fearful conflict waged on the battlefield of their thoughts. It is this inner conflict which is the cause of the crumbling of once-proud human institutions, and the collapse of a social structure that was supposed by so many to have been the highest manifesta-

tion of “civilization” and “progress”.

The mental and emotional climate of the race has experienced some revolutionary changes. By means of the rapid developments of modern science — foreseen and predicted by a number of mystics and occultists in recent centuries — the entrenched materialism of a former school of thought has been rooted out from its strongholds. The battering ram of widening and all-embracing research has toppled the fortifications of our moulds of mind, and has let in floods of light upon problems and domains of thought which the all-powerful materialism of former centuries preferred to deny the very existence of.

Generation after generation have been taught both in the Halls of Science and in the privacy of their family circles — with exceptions far and wide between — that the basis of Nature is material, that matter is the primary factor of all that is, that life is but a chance accident in Nature, and that reality consists of those tangible and wholly measurable factors which can be demonstrated by the functions of the physical senses alone.

But suddenly a gateway opened upon

Boris M. de Zirkoff (1902–1981) a Point Loma Theosophist, was editor of *H. P. Blavatsky's Collected Works* and writer. In 1981 he received the Subba Row Medal for his huge contribution to theosophical literature. Reprinted from *Theosophia*, vol. V, no. 1 (25) — May–June 1948.

new and undreamt of vistas. We began to feel a strong breeze blowing from an unsuspected portal rapidly flung open. Before we had the time to turn round and adjust our mental astigmatism, we found ourselves in the midst of a scientific cyclone which swept out of sight and beyond the horizon all our most cherished ideas and concepts of yore.

We found ourselves holding an "open house", not exactly of our own choosing to be sure, at which strange guests invaded the one-time quiet premises. Hobnobbing with atomic bombs, radio waves, electronic wave-packets, transmission frequencies, rocket-propelled planes, guided missiles, psychosomatic diagnoses, extra-sensory perceptions, and the like, may have been exciting at first; but when the novelty of it all wore off, it became only too apparent that our ways of thinking, our modes of feeling, and our patterns of behavior, somehow or other were unable to adjust themselves to the long-range global objectives demanded by the introduction of these guests into the familiar circle of our everyday contacts.

Trained, as we were, to regard matter as of primary importance, and our five senses as paramount in the diagnosis of Nature's mysteries, we found ourselves utterly unfit to navigate upon uncharted seas, where spiritual and quasi-occult agencies pervaded the elements, and global solutions were demanded of us who had been taught to think in terms of narrow political boundaries, entrenched party-politics, and the two-by-four psychology of overworked patriotism and self-sufficiency. And so our minds have

in a very short time reached all advanced stages of organized chaos.

To erect a new civilization upon the heaped-up rubble of an old one is impossible. The building site has to be cleared in the first place. To apply outworn methods characteristic of man's ignorance and selfishness to the building of something presumably "new", is simply a symptom of our inveterate habit of clinging to time-honored mental and emotional moulds, even if their spiritual vacuity has been demonstrated beyond any possible doubt by the irreducible logic of history.

To build a greater and nobler structure wherein the vaulting aspirations of an awakening humankind may find a suitable dwelling place, there is need of something else than "unilateral alliances", "raw materials", "island bases", "universal military training", or the hackneyed conferences and conventions wherein grandiloquent speechifying is often followed by dramatic exits of delegations, attempting to play upon the sordid stage of power-politics, the role of some heroic figure from the Ring of Nibelungen.

Corrupt ideologies and false doctrines can never be overcome by violence, whether physical or moral. They can be overcome only by doctrines and ideas which raise the intellectual, ethical and spiritual pitch of mankind, and inspire the minds and hearts of men with universal objectives, urging them to deeds of kindness and magnanimity.

The nations of today, and their leaders, and men of power and influence must realize sooner or later the imperative need of spiritual values as a foundation for

action, reform, and reconstruction. With the departure of the materialistic conception of Nature into the limbo of exploded myths, there is no other alternative but a spiritual revaluation of our objectives and methods, of our “ends and means”, as Huxley would say.

In the age of atomic power, there are at least three false conceptions which must be given up and abandoned at the very outset. They are: armed conflict between nations, narrow and exclusive nationalism, and racial discrimination. Men and women of the dawning era will be forced by the natural development of ideas to realize that military expeditions, armed aggression, and imagined superiority of one group over another, are phantasms of diseased imagination to be resolved and transmuted into the higher ideas of inter-racial understanding, world community, international arbitration, free exchange of the fruits of human endeavor, and the will to live together in peace and integrity. It is either that or the end of “civilization” as we understand this term. It is either that — and *now* — or the extinction of the noblest hopes in the hearts of the millions for the expansion and awakening of a grander consciousness among men.

The leaders of humankind cannot remain any longer on the mere level of military tactics, economic covenants, and secret pacts; they must of necessity become students of at least the rudiments of true philosophy, and begin to practice its ideals. Either that, or they will be replaced in the natural development of the historic process, by men and women whose hearts

are actuated by greater ideals and nobler objectives.

We must find a formula whereby the integration of humanity into one family can be accomplished with the least possible friction, and in the quickest possible time. We must eradicate from men’s minds the false doctrine that war can ever settle any problem, or that coercion, physical or mental, can ever “convert” people into another mode of thought. These are tragic falsehoods preying upon human minds, like obsessing vampires, distorting our actions and our motives. No war has ever solved any problem, as history stands witness to. No military dictatorship has ever suppressed any ideas or convictions, however false or true they may have been, as the history of ideas will show to any student.

The crisis of today is a crisis of human thinking, not solely a conflict of mutually-excluding political and economic interests. If we are to go up and forward, we must abandon our mental and emotional aggressiveness, intolerance, superiority and exclusiveness. We must replace them with universality, goodwill, global consciousness, mutual understanding, and *the will to peace*. Justice, integrity, kindness, forgiveness, love of our fellow-men, charity and human dignity, must be made paramount in our mutual relations, as men and as nations. They must be shown to be *symptoms of inner strength*. Upon them can be reared a true civilization, the civilization of the atomic age.

The alternatives are simple: **One World** — **or None!** ♦

The Kind Heart

KIRK GRADIN

Thou hast to be prepared to answer Dharma, the stern law, whose voice will ask thee at thy first, at thy initial step: “Hast thou complied with all the rules, O thou of lofty hopes? Hast thou attuned thy heart and mind to the great mind and heart of all mankind? For as the sacred River’s roaring voice whereby all Nature-sounds are echoed back, so must the heart of those ‘who in the stream would enter’, thrill in response to every sigh and thought of all that lives and breathes.”

—*The Voice of the Silence*

AS we bask in the profound renewal of invisible Nature that occurs with the turning and rebirth of the solar year, and look upon the past twelve months seemingly so full of veiled moral indifference, senseless sectarian violence, political fakery, and entrenched tribalism, it is most appropriate to reflect deeply upon the theme of the kind heart. Have we really not yet learned that kindness and forgiveness are among the minimal foundation stones of true civilization, of all wholesome, harmonious, and beneficial relationships? Have we not yet taken to heart the words of the Buddha, that “In this world, hatred ceases not by hatred, by love alone does hatred cease”? Do we really imagine that Jesus spoke metaphorically in the Sermon on the Mount, that we should always find a way to “turn the other cheek”, to give your cloak also to one who steals

your coat? When shall we begin to truly imbibe one of the central teachings of Krishna? “Without hostility for any being, with friendliness (*maitra*) and compassion (*karuna*), without the sense of ‘I’ or ‘mine’, the same in sorrow and happiness, having forbearance and ever content . . . such a devotee of Mine is exceedingly dear to Me.” (*Bhagavadgītā*, XII.13–14)

Etymologically, the word “kind” is derived from the Indo-European root *kin*. “Kin” refers to commonality by birth of family, tribe, or race. To be kind is to treat someone with the same generosity, aid, and sincere consideration as you would a family member. It is the innate sense of commonality that impels one human being to attend to the needs of another without thought of recompense. Kindness is characteristic of all natural

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self-sacrificing friendship and selfless devotion, as in that of brother for sister, of mother for child, of teacher for aspiring pupil. But all great teachers have implored us to regard all beings and all of life in this way. We are gratefully reminded of those courageous doctors and nurses “without borders” who are at this moment tending to the wounded in Ukraine and Gaza, as in other war imperiled locations around the globe, at tremendous risk to themselves, convinced that it is their dharma to do so. Each act of true kindness is a reflection of innate altruism and mirrors to some extent the greatest of kindnesses exemplified by heroes, sages and spiritual reformers.

Theosophy encourages us to think of kindness as having a minimal and maximal meaning. Since 1998, 13 November became “World Kindness Day” initiated by The World Kindness Movement, an international NGO composed of representatives from seven member-nations with no religious or political affiliation. It is now an international movement with thirty-five member-nations. Their mission statement is simply “to create a kinder world”. Although there is an official application process, anyone of any age, nation, or creed can become an Ambassador of Kindness. Such an ambassador “is someone who makes a difference to others with a simple smile or hello”. Such a person offers a helping hand when your hands are full, or invites others to “join in” when they are standing alone. In short, anyone who “is willing and capable of making a difference because they choose to do some-

thing rather than nothing” can qualify. According to their website, an Ambassador of Kindness is anyone who is “Friendly, Understanding, Positive, Inspirational, Grateful, Compassionate, Resilient, Passionate, Patient, Empathetic, Respectful, Determined, Forgiving, Humble, Honest, Courageous”.

Theosophy teaches that all beings have a common spiritual origin and may be likened to rays of a single divine sun. All constitute a single universal family, regardless of age, race, sex, caste, color, nation, or any external characteristic or affiliation, and all are engaged in a common evolutionary quest. This commonality of origin and destiny is not confined to what we normally call the human kingdom, but extends to all the kingdoms of Nature, visible and invisible. Every kingdom is composed of monadic beings, divine in essence, and all are deserving of our utmost kindness and deepest consideration.

In this sense, kindness is, both metaphysically and ethically, at the very heart of theosophical thought. Metaphysically, the highest form of kindness may be linked with the fundamental wisdom-vibration of the cosmos itself, called in the Upanishads: *parā-vāch*, a mere drop of which initiates *paśyanti* and *madhyamā-vāch*, the divine light and sound of logoic unfoldment on behalf of universal good. This metaphysical reality is further reflected in *brahma-vāch*, in the words of enlightened beings, in *mantrams* and *mantram*ic sutras designed to draw the mind towards resonance with underlying

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realities pervading the whole of Nature.

The idea that the highest Deity, the most omniscient form of intelligence of which we can conceive, and its primordial creative act may be equated with universal kindness and love can be found in many traditions. Three examples are derived from Greek, Hindu, and Buddhist philosophy; *Eros*, *Kamadeva*, and *Maha-Karuna*. According to the classical Greek cosmogony described by the pre-Socratic Parmenides, divine *Eros* was the highest and first deity which brought the cosmos into existence. Likewise, in the oldest Hindu Vedic traditions known to humanity, the god *Kamadeva* is linked with the primordial act of emanation, the emergence of being from non-being. *kama* as pre-cosmic and cosmic Desire or *fohat*, is a deeply metaphysical conception. In her *Theosophical Glossary*, H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) defined it as “the first all-embracing desire for universal good . . . for all that lives and feels, needs help and kindness, the first feeling of infinite, tender compassion and mercy that arose in the consciousness of the creative ONE FORCE, as soon as it came into life and being as a ray from the Absolute.”

And finally, in the *Yogāchāra* tradition of Mahayana Buddhism, *Maha-Karuna*, meaning the “Great Compassion”, is the highest aspect of that non-dual Reality which transcends and pervades both Nirvana and Samsara. In the *Lankavatara Sutra*, Pure Love is defined as the culmination of the highest form of enlightenment expressing itself in the fully realized Buddha nature as *prajñā-pāramitā*, omni-

scient divine wisdom. This fusion of the highest compassion and wisdom, symbolized in Tibetan Buddhism as the union of *vajra* and bell, leads to the most exalted ideal known to us, the Diamond-Hearted Master of Wisdom, called *Vajrasattva*: indestructible, self-conscious immortality shining forth with skillful means into life after life for the benefit of sentient beings on behalf of universal enlightenment and felicity.

The Sanskrit word for kindness is *maitrī* and in Pali, *metta*. It literally means “friendship”, but is often translated as “loving-kindness”. *Maitri* is the cultivation of an active interest in the happiness of all other beings, whether they are perceived as enemies, friends, or neither, and whether suffering appears to be present or not. In all schools of Buddhism, it is the first of what is called the “Four Immeasurables” based on a meditative practice prescribed by the Buddha.

He lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of loving kindness, and so the second, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around, everywhere and equally, he continues to pervade with a heart of loving kindness, abundant, grown great, and without measure, without any taint of hostility or ill-will. —*Samyutta Nikaya*

The other three Immeasurables are: Compassion (*Karunā*), Joy (*Muditā*) and Equanimity (*Upeksā*). Briefly described, *Muditā*, or Joy, is an impartial, inward rejoicing in the success and good fortune of others, a buoyant ever-flowing stream

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of unmitigated jubilation in the happiness and virtues realized by others as in all beneficial forms of karmic flourishing. *Upeksā* in this context is equanimity, a state of inner equipoise that is indifferent to personal gain or loss, honor or dishonor, praise or blame, pleasure or pain. It is meant to lead to freedom from all forms of egoistic self-reference and impatience. It is the capacity “to look upon tempests” and not be shaken, to witness with the eye of soul the vast suffering of humanity without fear, despair, depression, the wish for retaliation, or loss of confidence.

Each of the Immeasurables is to be consciously cultivated towards all beings in each of the six directions of space until all space is pervaded and suffused with the elixir of pure benevolence and indestructible good will. This practice is not only one of the antidotes to selfishness and self-interest but one which progressively transforms consciousness and imagination into a sublime and highly potent creative force. This is why the Four Immeasurables are also called *brahmaviharas*, the “sublime or divine abodes of *Brahmā*”. *Brahmā* as one aspect of the Hindu Trimurti, is the highest creative deity, logos, or Platonic *Demiurgos*. In *The Voice of the Silence* this force culminates in a compassion that transcends lifetimes, eternities, and *manvantaras*.

Behold! Thou has become the Light, thou has become the Sound, thou art thy Master and thy God. Thou art THYSELF the object of thy search: the VOICE unbroken, that resounds throughout eternities, exempt from

change, from sin exempt, the Seven Sounds in one, THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE.

Although many concepts found within Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism can be found in *The Voice of the Silence*, according to HPB, this small series of fragments represents a universal “Trans-Himalayan” esoteric tradition not confined to Buddhism. At the same time, it may have been in the hidden libraries and retreat of the Eighth Panchen Lama in the vicinity of Tashi Lunpo that HPB, in the company of Masters, was given access to the texts central to the translation of *The Voice of the Silence* and the Stanzas of *Dzyan* as given in *The Secret Doctrine*. For the first time in known Western history, these truly esoteric texts were translated and partially made public by her. The centenary edition of *The Voice of the Silence*, published in 1989, contains a dedication in Tibetan by the Ninth Panchen Lama and a foreword by the 14th Dalai Lama. This certainly underlines the faithful reflection of aspects of esoteric *Theosophia* in Northern Buddhism. Moreover, exoterically it was in the Mahayana traditions of Buddhism that the cultivation of altruism, creative imagination, and logoic compassion was brought to center stage and focus in the eighth century *Bodhi-charyāvatāra*, (*A Guide to the Bodhi-sattva's Way of Life*) by Shantideva.

According to traditional biographical accounts, Shantideva was regarded by his fellow monks at Nalanda as a ne'er-do-well, whose behavior seemed restricted to activities of eating, sleeping, and puttering around. In an effort to embarrass him, the

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monks invited a large congregation of people to the monastery and had the Abbot demand that he preach to them. Much to the monks' surprise, Shantideva responded by saying, "Would you like me to expound the teaching of a former scholar . . . or would you prefer me to recite something you have never heard?" The monks, chuckling to themselves and hoping to compound his embarrassment, replied, "Please teach us something completely new!" In response, Shantideva sounded the *Bodhicharyāvātāra*, which is said to be the entire teaching of the Buddha from the *Mādhyamika* (Middle Way) perspective, all three turnings of the wheel delivered in a single, highly condensed poetic discourse. Moreover, during the exposition, it is said that the celestial Bodhisattva of wisdom, Manjushri, appeared seated in the sky. As the poem neared its end, both Shantideva and Manjushri ascended and disappeared into the clouds, Shantideva's voice alone resounding to the last verse.

The poetic sutra he recited became one of the great classics of Mahayana literature and, according to Tibetan scholars, it is the most widely read, cited, and practiced sutra in the whole of the Indo-Tibetan tradition. In 1984, when the Dalai Lama was presented with an English translation of the text and asked to bless it, he did so readily, placing it on his forehead saying, "If I have any understanding of compassion and the practice of the bodhisattva path, it is entirely on the basis of this text that I possess it."

The foundation of the path as given

by Shantideva, is the cultivation of *bodhichitta*, a word rich in profound meaning, but which we may provisionally define as "the altruistic mind of enlightenment", the relinquishment of the very idea of individual salvation or spiritual freedom replaced by the motivation to rescue all sentient beings from the darkness of ignorance and suffering. In this way, the seed of *bodhichitta* is linked with the highest form of loving-kindness, condensing the four Immeasurables into a single heart essence.

Over the centuries, many renowned Buddhist teachers have composed commentaries, frequently dividing Shantideva's text into three main sections, along the lines of a famous prayer attributed to Nagarjuna.

May Bodhichitta, precious and sublime,
Arise where it has not yet come to be;
And where it has arisen may it never fail
But grow and flourish ever more and more.

Following this scheme, the first three chapters are designed to stimulate the dawning of *bodhichitta* in the mind. The next three give instruction on how to prevent it from dissipating, while the seventh, eighth, and ninth propose the means by which *bodhichitta* may be progressively intensified. Chapter three contains the Bodhisattva Vow, an extended version of the Kwan Yin Pledge which has since the eighth century been the words by which both laypersons and Tibetan Buddhist monks officially enter upon the Bodhisattva path. A portion of that vow is given below. The six chapters that follow give a detailed exposition on

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the *pāramitās*, reinforcing the nature of the path, also found in *The Voice of the Silence*. That is, that the highest form of enlightenment is realized through the cultivation of these “transcendent excellences” by which consciousness is not only alchemized, transformed, and elevated to the “other shore” of Nirvana, but by which the Heart Doctrine is embodied, thereby bridging heaven and earth, eternity and time.

This involves the gestation of what Theosophy refers to as the permanent astral, or the *Nirmānakāya* robe which, like all esoteric human principles is in actuality, seven-fold. It is by this sublime means that the boundless mercy of Kwan Yin never ceases hearing the cries of humanity and by which it is capable of ceaselessly aiding the evolution of sentient beings “for Kalpas without number”. In following this path, one aspires to become like a stone in the Guardian Wall, serving the Boundless Light or Boundless Age of *Amitābha*, the great Brotherhood of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who protect, sustain, and guide all beings to their highest good. It is in this way that “relative” or “aspirational” *bodhichitta* is transformed into “ultimate” *Bodhichitta* or Absolute Compassion, where self and other, Nirvana and Samsara, unite and where the personal will is replaced by “the pure bright essence of *Alaya*”, the universal will of SPACE itself, which knows no term, cessation, or decay.



And so I join my hands and pray
The Buddhas who reside in every quarter:
Kindle now the Dharma’s light
For those who grope, bewildered, in the
dark of suffering!

For all those ailing in the world,
Until their every sickness has been healed,
May I myself become for them
The doctor, nurse, the medicine itself.

Raining down a flood of food and drink,
May I dispel the ills of thirst and famine.
And in the ages marked by scarcity and
want,
May I myself appear as drink and sustenance.

For sentient beings, poor and destitute,
May I become a treasure ever plentiful,
And lie before them closely in their reach,
A varied source of all that they might need.

May I be a guard for those who need
protection,
A guide for those who journey on the road.
For those who wish to go across the water,
May I be a boat, a raft, a bridge.

May I be the wishing jewel, the vase of plenty,
A word of power and the supreme healing;
May I be the tree of miracles,
And for every being the abundant cow.

Like the earth and the all-pervading elements,
Enduring as space itself endures,
For boundless multitudes of living beings,
May I be their ground and sustenance.

— Shantideva

HPB in Tibet

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

AMONG the many mysteries in H. P. Blavatsky's (HPB) life the central one is who she really was. Scholars of different persuasions have referred to her as an "adventurous traveller", a "strong-willed woman", a Russian writer who dabbled in the "occult", a "psychic" and a "medium", plus much less kind descriptions. A multifaceted life like hers provoked equally different perceptions of her, who indeed was a strongly independent woman travelling around the world, sometimes to forbidden places like Tibet.



H. P. Blavatsky in 1879

But it is her Teachers' description of her that really matters in order to understand her real work in the world: the herald for the rebirth of the Esoteric Tradition in the western world. For them she was *Upasika*, an initiated Chela.

Even in her own lifetime people would play with the word "initiation" to attract attention, followers, power, and money. In today's world it has become a brand — a corporate logo that is used by many self-aggrandizing individuals to build around themselves a "spiritual" empire, constantly selling the message that the "Guru/Initiate/Avatar" has reached the summit of spiritual enlightenment and that all we have to do is to follow him or her, for a price.

Unlike such individuals, HPB undertook, voluntarily, to live a life of complete self-sacrifice in order to prepare herself to the work that was assigned to her by the Masters. In doing so she attracted the world's contempt and opposition, she had to face betrayal and ignominy, and was the subject of a relentless campaign of character-assassination and malice. For a profoundly spiritually sensitive

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individual, who underwent a serious process of inner, spiritual transformation, to be at the receiving end of the world's vilest currents must have been an unspeakable ordeal.

The passages below present, sometimes in detail, the unique process that HPB went through. It goes without saying that only a highly resourceful individual would have been able to face it like she did, without any allurements of personal gain whatsoever.

Below is the Mahatmas description of the challenging process that leads a candidate to the state of Chelaship, which HPB achieved:

Every human being contains within himself vast potentialities, and it is the duty of the adepts to surround the would-be chela with circumstances which shall enable him to take the "right-hand path", — if he have the ability in him. We are no more at liberty to withhold the chance from a postulant than we are to guide and direct him into the proper course. At best, we can only show him — after his probation period was successfully terminated — that if he does this he will go right; if the other, wrong. But until he has passed that period, we leave him to fight out his battles as best he may; and have to do so occasionally with higher and *initiated* chelas such as HPB, once they are allowed to work in the world, that all of us more or less avoid.

(*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter 92, chronological ed.)

In the next passages Mahatma KH points out how the adepts' chiefs searched for a long time to find someone like HPB

as well as how the formation of the Theosophical Society (TS) was conceived by the Brotherhood of Adepts:

After nearly a century of fruitless search, 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.

(Letter 22, chronological ed.)

On the 17th of November next the Septenary term of trial given the Society at its foundation in which to discreetly "preach us" will expire. One or two of us hoped that the world had so far advanced intellectually, if not intuitionally, that the Occult doctrine might gain an intellectual acceptance, and the impulse given for a new cycle of occult research. Others — wiser as it would now seem — held differently, but consent was given for the trial. It was stipulated, however, that the experiment should be made independently of our personal management; that there should be no abnormal interference by ourselves. So casting about we found in America the man to stand as leader — a man of great moral courage, unselfish, and having other good qualities. He was far from being the best, but (as Mr Hume speaks in HPB's case) — he was the best one available. With him we associated a woman of most exceptional and wonderful endowments. Combined with them she had strong personal defects, but just as she was, there was no second to her living fit for this work. We sent her to America, brought them together — and the trial began.

(Letter 45, chronological ed.)

HPB in Tibet

The above-mentioned passages strongly imply that the success of the new venture — the TS and the dissemination of Theosophy — was based in no small measure on HPB's occult training in Tibet. It becomes apparent that such training could not be conducted in any other country but required her physical presence in that secluded country where her Teachers lived.

Geoffrey Barborka, in his insightful book *H. P. Blavatsky, Tibet and Tulku* (Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1966) presents important evidence not only of her travels to Tibet but also some passing glimpses of the inner training she was undergoing under the direction of the Mahatmas. Barborka quotes the following letter from HPB to A. P. Sinnett:

"I say . . . to the world: 'Ladies and gentlemen, I am in your hands and subject and subordinate to the world's jury, *only since I founded the TS*. Between H. P. Blavatsky from 1875 and HPB from 1830 to that date, is a veil drawn and you are in no way concerned with what took place behind it, before I appeared as a public character. . . .'"

". . . The whole of my life except the weeks and months I passed with the Masters in Egypt or in Tibet, is so inextricably full of events with whose secrets and real actuality the dead and the living are concerned, and I made only responsible for their outward appearance" (*op. cit.* p. 116)

In the next passage, HPB replies to a critic, Arthur Lillie, regarding her travels in Tibet:

"I will tell him [Arthur Lillie] also that I have lived at different periods in Little Tibet as in Great Tibet, and that these combined periods form more than seven years. Yet, I have never stated either verbally or over my signature that I had passed seven consecutive years in a convent. What I have said, and repeat now, is, that I have stopped in Lamaistic convents; that I have visited Tzi-gadze, the Tashi-Lhünpo territory and its neighbourhood, and that I have been further in, and in such places of Tibet as have never been visited by any other European, and that he can ever hope to visit." (*op. cit.* p. 121)



Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, Shigatse,
Tibet (Wikimedia Commons)

In the same reply to Lillie, HPB recounts having met her Teachers near the border of Tibet:

"Only two years back, as I can prove by numerous witnesses, when journeying from Chandernagor to Darjeeling, instead of proceeding to it direct, I left the train half way, was met by friends with a conveyance, and passed with them into the territory of Sikkim, where I found my Master and

Mahatma Koot Hoomi. Thence five miles across the old borderland of Tibet.”

(*op. cit.*, p. 123)

In a letter to Sinnett, HPB recalls a brief but significant visit to her Teachers' Ashrama:

The fact is that had I not left Bombay in the greatest secrecy — even some Theosophists who visit us believing me at home but busy and invisible as usual — had I not gone *incognito* so to say till I reached the hills and turned off the railway to enter Sikkim I would *have never been allowed to enter it* unmolested, and would not have seen M. and KH in *their bodies* both. Lord, I would have been dead by this time. Oh the blessed blessed two days! It was like the old times when the bear paid me a visit. The same kind of wooden hut, a box divided into three compartments for rooms, and standing in a jungle on four pelican's legs; the same yellow chelas gliding noiselessly; the same eternal “gul-gul-gul” sound of my Boss's inextinguishable chelum pipe; the old familiar sweet voice of your KH (whose voice is still sweeter and face still thinner and more transparent); the same *entourage* for furniture — skins, and yak-tail stuffed pillows and dishes for salt tea, and so on.

(*The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, T. Fisher Unwin Ltd, London, 1925, letter 19)

The passage below, from *Personal Memoirs of H. P. Blavatsky* by Mary K. Neff (London: Rider & Co. Paternoster House, E.C., 1937) refers to one of the periods of spiritual training that HPB underwent in Tibet, with her Masters:

IN THE MASTER'S ASHRAMA AT LAST

... Of HPB's life in the home of her Master, we catch but few glimpses. One of the most intimate of these is contained in the following reminiscence written by her in 1886: “I was again (a scene of years back) in Mahatma KH's house. I was sitting in a corner on a mat, and he was walking about the room in his riding dress, and Master [M.] was talking to someone behind the door.

“‘I remind can't’ — I pronounced in answer to a question of his about a dead aunt. He smiled and said: ‘Funny English you use.’ Then I felt ashamed, *hurt in my vanity*, and began thinking (mind you, in my dream or vision which was the *exact* reproduction of what had taken place word for word sixteen years ago). ‘Now I am here and speaking *nothing but English* in verbal phonetic language, I can perhaps learn to speak better with him.’

“To make it clear: with Master I also used English, which whether bad or good was the same for him, as He does not speak it but understands every word I say *out of my head*, and I am made to understand Him — *how* I could never tell or explain if I were killed *but I do*. With D(jwal) K(ul) I also speak English, he speaking it better even than Mah. KH.

“Then in my dream still, *three months after*, as I was made to feel in that vision — I was standing before Mah. KH, near the old building taken down He was looking at; and as Master was not at home, studying in Senzar in his sister's room, and asked him to tell me if I had translated them correctly and gave him a slip of paper

with these sentences written in English.

“He took and read them, and correcting the interpretation read them over, and said: ‘Now your English is becoming better. *Try to pick out of my head even the little I know of it.*’ And He put his hand on my forehead in the region of memory and squeezed his fingers on it (and I felt even the same trifling pain in it as then, and the cold shiver I had experienced); and since that day He did so with my head daily, for about two months.

“Again the scene changes, and I am going away with Master who is sending me off back to Europe. I am bidding goodbye to his sister and her child, and all the chelas. I listen to what the Masters tell me. And then come the parting words of Mah. KH, laughing at me as He always did . . .” (p. 147)

In the following passage of a letter from Mahatma KH to both A. P. Sinnett and A. O. Hume, an attempt is made by the Master to explain one of the mysteries of HPB’s personality, which was at times misunderstood by both English gentlemen:



Tibet mountains (Wikimedia Commons)

I am painfully aware of the fact that the habitual incoherence of her statements — especially when excited — and her strange ways make her in your opinion a very undesirable transmitter of our messages. Nevertheless, kind Brothers, once that you have learned the truth; once told, that this unbalanced mind, the seeming incongruity of her speeches and ideas, her nervous excitement, all that in short, which is so calculated to upset the feelings of sober minded people, whose notions of reserve and manners are shocked by such strange outbursts of what they regard as her temper, and which so revolt you; once that *you know* that nothing of it is due to any fault of hers, you may, perchance, be led to regard her in quite a different light. Notwithstanding that the time is not quite ripe to let you entirely into the secret; and that you are hardly yet prepared to understand the great Mystery, even if told of it, owing to the great injustice and wrong done, 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, 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. You do not understand? Of course not. Please then, remember, what she tried to explain, and what you gathered tolerably well from her, namely the fact of the *seven* principles in the *complete* human being. 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 — if I may use the expression. *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 bearing and status of the remaining *six* depend upon the inherent qualities, the psycho-physiological peculiarities of the person, especially upon the idiosyncracies transmitted by what modern science calls “atavism”. Acting in accordance with my wishes, my brother M. if you remember. You had but to accept it, and at any time you liked, you would have had for an hour or more the real *baitchooly* to converse with, instead of the psychological cripple you generally have to deal with now.

(*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter 22, chronological ed.)

HPB knew, much before she published *The Voice of the Silence* in 1889, one of the cardinal truths of the spiritual

Path: “Nay, O thou candidate for Nature hidden lore! If one would follow in the steps of holy Tathāgata, those gifts and powers are not for self.” (Fragment Three, verse 285) In a world that daily glorifies selfishness and self-centredness her example shines like a star in a profoundly dark sky. Her example becomes itself a teaching: forget self in the service of all that lives.

When she lay dying in her house in London, in May 1891, her last words to Isabel Cooper-Oakley were: “Keep the link unbroken! Do not let my last incarnation be a failure.” She was the living link with the world of the Adepts, the Masters of the Wisdom and Compassion, a world of perfect altruism, of peace and renunciation of everything that pertains to self. Cynics maintained that the link was broken on her death. But they failed to see that it continued to be alive in every theosophist that endeavoured to aspire to be of service, to probe deeper, to cleanse their hearts, to purify their minds, to forget themselves. The link is a spiritual revolution that cannot be stopped.

The link with the Wise Ones, which HPB embodied, did not die. It illumined many lives, it comforted many souls, and it energized a global movement. She lives amongst us as the soul of Theosophy made practical. ✧

Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars . . . Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

Martin Luther King Jr.

The “Elixir of Life”: From a Chela’s Diary — III

GODOLPHIN MITFORD, F.T.S *

Physical results

Now the desire for food will begin to cease. Let it be left off gradually — no fasting is required. Take what you feel you require. The food craved for will be the most innocent and simple. Fruit and milk will usually be the best. Then as till now, you have been simplifying the quality of your food, gradually — very gradually — as you feel capable of it diminish the quantity. You will ask: “Can a man exist without food?” No, but before you mock, consider the process alluded to. It is a notorious fact that many of the lowest and simplest organisms have no excretions. The common guinea-worm is a very good instance. It has rather a complicated organism, but it has no ejaculatory duct. All it consumes — the poorest essences of the human body — is applied to its growth and propagation. Living as it does in human tissue, it passes no digested food away. The human neophyte, at a certain stage of his development, is in a somewhat analogous condition, with this difference or differences, that he *does* excrete, but it is through the

pores of his skin, and by those too enter other etherealized particles of matter to contribute towards his support.⁹ Otherwise, all the food and drink is sufficient only to keep in equilibrium those “gross” parts of his physical body which still remain to repair their cuticle-waste through the medium of the blood. Later on, the process of cell-development in his frame will undergo a change — a change for the better, the opposite of that in disease, for the worse — he will become *all* living and sensitive, and will derive nourishment from the Ether (Ākās). But that epoch for our neophyte is yet far distant.

Probably, long before that period has arrived, other results, no less surprising than incredible to the uninitiated, will have ensued to give our neophyte courage and consolation in his difficult task. It would be but a truism to repeat what has been again alleged (in ignorance of its real rationale) by hundreds and hundreds of writers as to the happiness and content conferred by a life of innocence and purity. But often at the very

Godolphin Mitford (1844–1884) became a member of the TS in India and a probationary chela (disciple) of Master KH in 1882, but eventually failed, having dabbled in black magic during his wild youth. Reprinted from *The Theosophist* in two parts: March and April 1882, and in *Five Years of Theosophy*, 1885.

commencement of the process some real physical result, unexpected and unthought of by the neophyte, occurs. Some lingering disease, hitherto deemed hopeless, may take a favourable turn; or he may develop healing mesmeric powers himself; or some hitherto unknown sharpening of his senses may delight him. The rationale of these things is, as we have said, neither miraculous nor difficult of comprehension. In the first place, the sudden change in the direction of the vital energy (which, whatever view we take of it and its origin, is acknowledged by all schools of philosophy as most recondite, and as the motive power) must produce results of some kind. In the second, Theosophy shows, as we said before, that a man consists of several men pervading each other, and on this view (although it is very difficult to express the idea in language) it is but natural that the progressive etherealization of the densest and most gross of all should leave the others literally more at liberty. A troop of horses may be blocked by a mob and have much difficulty in fighting its way through; but if every one in the mob could be changed suddenly into a ghost, there would be little to retard it. And as each interior entity is more rare, active, and volatile than the outer and as each has relation with different elements, spaces, and other articles on Occultism, the mind of the reader may conceive — though the pen of the writer could not express it in a dozen volumes — the magnificent possibilities gradually unfolded to the neophyte.

Many of the opportunities thus suggested may be taken advantage of by the neophyte for his own safety, amusement, and the good of those around him; *but the way in which* he does this is one adapted to his fitness — a part of the ordeal he has to pass through — and misuse of these powers will certainly entail the loss of them as a natural result. The *itchcha* (or desire) evoked anew by the vistas they open up will retard or throw back his progress.

Living longer than biology would give us

But there is another portion of the Great Secret to which we must allude, and which is *now*, for the first, in a long series of ages, allowed to be given out to the world, as the hour for it is come.

The educated reader need not be reminded again that one of the great discoveries which has immortalized the name of Darwin is the law that an organism has always a tendency to repeat, at an analogous period in its life, the action of its progenitors, the more surely and completely in proportion to their proximity in the scale of life. One result of this is, that, in general, organized beings usually die at a period (on an average) the same as that of their progenitors. It is true that there is a great difference between the *actual* ages at which individuals of any species die. Disease, accidents and famine are the main agents in causing this. But there is, in each species, a well-known limit within which the Race-life lies, and none are known to survive beyond it. This applies to the

human species as well as any other. Now, supposing that every possible sanitary condition had been complied with, and every accident and disease avoided by a man of ordinary frame, in some particular case there would still, as is known to medical men, come a time when the particles of the body would feel the hereditary tendency to do that which leads inevitably to dissolution, *and would obey it*. It must be obvious to any reflecting man that, if by *any procedure* this critical climacteric could be once thoroughly passed over, the subsequent danger of “Death” would be proportionally less as the years progressed. Now this, which no ordinary and unprepared mind and body can do, is possible sometimes for the will and the frame of one who has been specially prepared. There are fewer of the grosser particles present to feel the hereditary bias — there is the assistance of the reinforced “interior men” (whose normal duration is always greater even in natural death) to the visible outer shell, and there is the drilled and indomitable Will to direct and wield the whole.¹⁰

From that time forward the course of the aspirant is clearer. He has conquered “the Dweller of the Threshold”, the hereditary enemy of his race, and, though still exposed to ever-new dangers in his progress towards Nirvana, he is flushed with victory, and with new confidence and new powers to second it, can press onwards to perfection.

For, it must be remembered, that Nature everywhere acts by Law, and that the process of purification we have been

describing in the visible material body, also takes place in those which are interior, and not visible to the scientist by modifications of the same process. All is on the change, and the metamorphoses of the more ethereal bodies imitate, though in successively multiplied duration, the career of the grosser, gaining an increasing wider range of relations with the surrounding kosmos, till in Nirvana the most rarefied individuality is merged at last into the Infinite Totality.

From the above description of the process, it will be inferred why it is that “Adepts” are so seldom seen in ordinary life; for, *pari passu*, with the etherealization of their bodies and the development of their power, grows an increasing distaste, and a so-to-speak, “contempt” for the things of our ordinary mundane existence. Like the fugitive who successively casts away in his flight those articles which incommode his progress, beginning with the heaviest, so the aspirant eluding “Death” abandons all on which the latter can take hold. In the progress of negation everything got rid of is a help. As we said before, the adept does not become “immortal” as the word is ordinarily understood. By or about the time when the death-limit of his race is passed he is *actually dead*, in the ordinary sense, that is to say, he has relieved himself of all or nearly all such material particles as would have necessitated in disrupting the agony of dying. He has been dying gradually during the whole period of his Initiation. The catastrophe cannot happen twice over. He has

only spread over a number of years the mild process of dissolution which others endure from a brief moment to a few hours. The highest Adept is, in fact, dead to, and absolutely unconscious of, the world; he is oblivious of its pleasures, careless of its miseries, in so far as sentimentalism goes, for the stern sense of DUTY never leaves him blind to its very existence. For the new ethereal senses opening to wider spheres are to ours much in the relation as ours to the infinitely little. New desires and enjoyments, new dangers and new hindrances arise, with new sensations and new perceptions; and far away down in the mist — both literally and metaphorically — is our dirty little earth left below by those who have virtually “gone to join the gods”.

And from this account too, it will be perceptible how foolish it is for people to ask the Theosophist to “procure for them communication with the highest Adepts”. It is with the utmost difficulty that one or two can be induced, even by the throes of a world, to injure their own progress by meddling with mundane affairs. The ordinary reader will say: “This is not *god-like*. This is the acme of selfishness.” But let him realize that a very high Adept, undertaking to reform the world, would necessarily have to once more submit to incarnation. And is the result of all that have gone before in that line sufficiently encouraging to prompt a renewal of the attempt?

Conclusion

A deep consideration of all that we have written, will also give the Theosophists

an idea of what they demand when they ask to be put in the way of gaining *practically* “higher powers”. Well, there, as plainly as words can put it, is the Path. . . . Can they tread it?

Nor must it be disguised that what to the ordinary mortal are unexpected dangers, temptations, and enemies also beset the way of the neophyte. And that for no fanciful cause, but the simple reason that he is, in fact, acquiring new senses, has yet no practice in their use, and has never before seen the things he sees. A man born blind suddenly endowed with vision would not at once master the meaning of perspective, but would, like a baby, imagine in one case, the moon to be within his reach, and, in the other, grasp a live coal with the most reckless confidence.

And what, it may be asked, is to recompense the abnegation of all the pleasures of life, this cold surrender of all mundane interests, this stretching forward to an unknown goal which seems ever more unattainable? For, unlike some of the anthropomorphic creeds, Occultism offers to its votaries no eternally permanent heaven of material pleasure, to be gained at once by one quick dash through the grave. As has, in fact, often been the case many would be prepared willingly to die *now* for the sake of paradise hereafter. But Occultism gives no such prospect of cheaply and immediately gained infinitude of pleasure, wisdom, and existence. It only promises extensions of these, stretching in successive arches obscured by successive

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veils, in an unbroken series up the long vista which leads to Nirvana. And this too, qualified by the necessity that new powers entail new responsibilities, and that the capacity of increased pleasure entails the capacity of increased sensibility to pain. To this, the only answer that can be given is two-fold: (1) the consciousness of Power is itself the most exquisite of pleasures, and is unceasingly gratified in the progress onwards with new means for its exercise; and (2) as has been already said: This is the only road by which there is the faintest scientific likelihood that “Death” can be avoided, perpetual

memory secured, infinite wisdom attained, and hence an immense helping of mankind made possible, once that the adept has safely crossed the turning-point. Physical as well as meta-physical logic requires and endorses the fact that only by gradual absorption into infinity can the Part become acquainted with the Whole, and that that which is *now something* can only feel, know, and enjoy EVERYTHING when lost in Absolute Totality in the vortex of that *Unalterable Circle* wherein our Knowledge becomes Ignorance, and the EVERYTHING itself is identified with the NOTHING.

(Concluded)

Endnotes

9. He is in a state similar to the physical state of a foetus before birth into the world.

10. In this connection we may as well show what modern science, and especially *physiology*, has to say as to the power of the human will. “The force of will is a potent element in determining longevity. This single point must be granted without argument, that of two men every way alike and similarly circumstanced, the one who has the greater courage and grit will be longer-lived. One does not need to practise medicine long to learn that men die who might just as well live if they resolved to live, and that myriads who are invalids could become strong if they had the native or acquired will to vow they would do so. Those who have no other quality favorable to life, whose bodily organs are nearly all diseased, to whom each day is a day of pain, who are beset by life-shortening influences, yet do live by will alone.” Dr George M. Beard.

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