

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



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CONTENTS

The Theosophical Society, Hierarchy, and Personality <i>Tim Boyd</i>	5
World Crises: The Root Cause – II.B <i>P. Krishna</i>	10
Six Ingredients to a Happier Life <i>Vicente Hao Chin, Jr.</i>	15
Awareness as Process and Result <i>Svitlana Gavrylenko</i>	20
Nurturing the TS in Australia – Our Legacy to the Future <i>Stephen McDonald</i>	27
Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom	30
Unity in True Dialogue <i>Jan Nicolaas Kind</i>	31
<i>The Theosophist</i> in the Vasanta Press <i>A. K. Sitarama Shastri</i>	33
Why the TS Left the Arya Samaj <i>K. Dinakaran</i>	36
Theosophical Work around the World	39
International Directory	40

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

The Theosophical Society, Hierarchy, and Personality

TIM BOYD

IN theosophical circles we have a high regard for cycles, also for the number “seven”. From this combination of thoughts early in the history of the Theosophical Society (TS), it was determined that every seven years an election for the TS International President would be held. In recent years this caused us some problems when in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, where the TS is registered, it was determined that the seven-year term of office was in conflict with the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act which designated three years as the limit.

As with a number of features of the TS rules, the matter was resolved by the government of Tamil Nadu granting the TS an exception to this rule. The thinking of the government was a combination of factors: (1) the TS is an international organization, making triennial elections unwieldy, (2) the TS and its rules were in existence prior to the Tamil Nadu Act and the state of Tamil Nadu itself, and (3) the high esteem in which the TS is regarded for its role in bringing about the independent nation of India.

In 2014 after the passing of the TS’s longest serving President, Radha Burnier, I was elected as the eighth International

President. In my mind I was something of an unlikely choice for the position, having only been at Adyar a total of three times over the previous three years for a grand total of three weeks. My résumé consisted of many years of work solely within the USA — the TS in America, the TOS, and quite locally in Chicago within a spiritual community I participated in founding, back in the 1970s.

Although some of this experience could be generalized and applied at Adyar, I was in over my head. The saving grace for me had little to do with my history, or experiences, and everything to do with attitude and state of mind. I was willing. Whether foolish or naive, I embraced the opportunity for deeper service. My exposure to the wisdom tradition and to profound individuals within the TS who had deeply touched this wisdom left me little choice.

Organizationally the TS has a hierarchical structure. There is a head from whom authority flows downward. This is a form that is consistent with spiritual traditions throughout history. Whether it is the guru, rabbi, imam, Rinpoche, or abbot, the congregation, *sangha*, temple, brotherhood, sisterhood, or order,

The Theosophical Society, Hierarchy, and Personality

hierarchy is imbedded in our approach to spirituality. Wherever we find realized people, men or women who demonstrate a closeness to Oneness and the powers that express through such a consciousness, our tendency is to place them on a pedestal and imbibe.

It is a natural and intelligent response to value and respect those who exceed us in wisdom. A distinct problem we encounter in organizations focused on spirituality is that we really do not know what wisdom is. In the Bible it is said that “the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”. Genuine wisdom often bears a close resemblance to madness when it appears in our world. The great avatars and prophets of history upended societies and transgressed norms of law and conduct.

The Buddha abandoned his wife and child in search of enlightenment. Upon attaining enlightenment his refusal to recognize caste distinctions virtually excluded the Brahmins from access to his teachings. The social order of the time and laws of caste forbade them from even being in the presence of the lowest castes. If so much as the shadow of a member of the “untouchable” caste touched a Brahmin, ritual cleansing was required. Jesus accepted social outcasts as disciples and rejected the religious teachings of his time. Krishna involved himself in a war that brought about the destruction of the Kshatriya (warrior) caste, on occasion giving advice deemed immoral for

his time. The spread of Mohammed’s teachings and the growth of his community incited his society to a war against him and his followers.

J. Krishnamurti made the statement: “It is no sign of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society.” What seems to be the rejection of social norms by those who are genuinely wise is in reality an expression of the impossibility for wisdom to be confined within the limitations of conventional society. The ocean cannot be contained in a teacup. So we judge its presence by the signs or behaviors that have conditioned our thinking for millennia. How does he speak? Is she well read and knowledgeable in spiritual subjects? Can they quote the scriptures and the great Masters of the past? Does he eat the proper foods? Does she wear the proper robes? Does he seem to have paranormal powers of perception or healing? Is he well regarded and acclaimed by respected members of the community?

All of these are signs which may or may not indicate wisdom. In spiritual traditions around the world knowledgeable or eloquent people are regularly mistaken for wise, to the detriment of others and themselves. Anyone who has embraced a spiritual path for some time has seen their share of manipulative pundits and priests, cruel vegetarians, rogue Rinpoches, self-absorbed theosophists, selfish devotees, and others who, though exposed to the potent energies of the wisdom tradition, have been thwarted by the inadequate development of the tool of personality. Wherever the direction of

The Theosophical Society, Hierarchy, and Personality

an organization and the guidance of its members is vested in an individual, there is the potential for even one flaw of character to affect the whole.

H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) once made the point that “personality is the curse in the Theosophical Society, as it is everywhere”. This was not intended to mean personality in the popular sense of an individual’s mannerisms, qualities, and characteristics. From the Ageless Wisdom perspective personality has the specific meaning of the organization of the materials of the physical, emotional, and mental, or *mānasic*, fields that define and filter one’s range of response.

HPB refers to personality as a curse, having painfully experienced it repeatedly in her efforts to share some measure of the Ageless Wisdom with the world. Time and again she witnessed how well-intentioned, upright, seemingly well-adjusted people changed when exposed to the heightened flow of power that accompanies even contact with knowledge about spiritual things, let alone actual wisdom.

Like plugging a 110-volt appliance into a 220-volt outlet, unless there is some mechanism to control the electrical flow, the appliance will quickly burn out. The materials that compose it are not capable of conducting current at that level. Like everything else, the limitations imposed by an undeveloped personality are not permanent, but an intelligent and rigorous attention is required to build in materials able to accommodate more potent energies. The maxim emphasized

by HPB was: “First deserve, then desire.”

Given the fact that personality is an unavoidable feature of being human, and that it is the source of all misunderstanding, separatism, and self centeredness, what can be done to mitigate its influence in a spiritual organization? This is a question that all spiritual traditions have had to face. It could even be said that the problematic human personality is the reason for the appearance of every avatar and messiah, and for the establishment of the traditions that grew from their teachings. The starting point for all valid spiritual teachings has been to understand and move beyond the domination of the personal and its unexamined projection into every aspect of human experience. Whether the focus is mindfulness or union with the divine, a grounding in something superior to the personal is the universal direction of spiritual practice.

From an Ageless Wisdom perspective the fundamental idea of hierarchy is that there is an infinite chain of ever-expanding consciousness, and that each ascending level exceeds, but also encompasses the former state. So, although more expansive or “higher”, it is inseparable from the preceding condition from which it has grown. No matter how tall the tree, no matter how expansive the view from its heights, it remains deeply rooted in the earth. This understanding gives us a glimpse into the depth of the First Object of the TS: “To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood . . .” The level of connection we describe as “Universal Brotherhood” is a fact of Nature.

The Theosophical Society, Hierarchy, and Personality

Oneness, or the radical inseparability of consciousness at all levels, is the basis for anything that can be described as spiritual. The nucleus is formed when the fixed and divisive barriers of personality dissolve, even temporarily.

In a sense, the spiritual endeavor succeeds by repurposing the instincts of the personality — self-preservation and self-aggrandizement. The emphasis on cooperation and compassion as avenues to peace and happiness, and access to deepened capacity gradually draws the attention away from an isolating sense of self to an enlarged experience of connection. We live, move, and participate within a “Greater Whole”, which once experienced eclipses the importance of our engrained limiting behavior.

What does leadership mean within a hierarchical structure such as the TS, whose focus is the realization of the Unity of all life? The Hermetic axiom says: “As it is Above, so it is Below.” Affinity to the higher benefits all that is beneath. The most efficient service to humanity results from connection to higher orders of consciousness and the energies that can flow unimpeded as a result of that connection. In theosophical tradition great emphasis is placed on selflessness as a condition that enables such connection. Whether it is a guru, God, or a Master of the Wisdom our inability to extend the limiting sphere of self is a barrier to their influence.

This problem is as challenging for the sincere aspirant as for the casual practitioner. One of our great difficulties is that the habits and training of this and

previous lifetimes lock us into a way of seeing the world that is separative, isolating, and inherently incorrect. HPB wrote: “The first necessity for obtaining self-knowledge is to become profoundly conscious of ignorance; to feel with every fiber of the heart that one is ceaselessly *self-deceived*.” One function of an organization or group is that it provides a laboratory for the experiment of selflessness.

It is the nature of any group that one is continually in the presence of others whose personality composition differs from one’s own. While we recognize natural harmonies with some, with others we can feel distance, or even aversion. Yet we are drawn together and choose to be together purposefully. The Mission Statement for the TS is: “To serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realization of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual self-transformation, and the unity of all life.” With this as a motivating direction for our thinking and shared work, our focus is lifted beyond personal preferences, attractions, and aversions. When we lose sight of this, we lose connection and stall in our growth as individuals and as a group.

There is a powerful principle that cuts across spiritual traditions. It has been expressed as “Wherever two or more gather in My name, there I am in the midst of them.” “My name” may be seen differently depending on one’s tradition and training as an ID for a localized activity of consciousness and form. The same name can mean a variety of things to different

The Theosophical Society, Hierarchy, and Personality

people depending on their relationship to the “person”. Anyone’s name describes a person who is a neighbor for some, a boss for others, a parent or child, an adversary, and so on. One of the causes of religious tension is absence of a shared name for that which encompasses, yet transcends all name, form, and consciousness. Wars are fought over it. In the higher sense “My name” is not a mere word. It is like a GPS marker on a map of consciousness, leading us to a “location” of heightened activity.

In a hierarchical sense, at any time or place that two or more people can establish a harmonious focus on a greater consciousness, that consciousness becomes available. Our work within the TS is nothing less than this. In this condition, outwardly, great things are achieved. In the outside world the TS is involved in numerous activities — schools, training centers, healing groups, animal welfare work, childcare facilities, anti-stress training, and more. All of these are meaningful, necessary work, but it is the inner condition of a consciously cultivated and deeply felt union with our coworkers that gives life to these efforts.

The power that is accessible to an elevated group consciousness, to the nucleus, exceeds what is possible for the individual, and where the focus is on service to others, or to humanity as a whole, the group becomes a conduit for the energies of higher sources. New ideas, new ways of thinking, new solutions to age-old problems reveal themselves and

become suddenly practical. Previously unrealized resources and people appear to aid in the work. In the words of Goethe: “A whole stream of events issues . . . raising in one’s favor all manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings, and material assistance, which no man can have dreamed would have come his way.”

Whether it is a TS Lodge, or Study Center, or its International General Council, the most basic requirement is that we learn to think beyond our personal wants and needs. Working together as a group has been the ongoing experiment that mitigates much of the undesired influence of personality. This approach does not guarantee that any decision will be agreeable to all, or even that it is the best course of action in the long run. What it *does* ensure is that the movement toward harmony and the process of forming a nucleus are ongoing.

There is a Tibetan expression that a parrot can live to be 100 years old, but in the end it is still a parrot. Fast forward to April 2021: another cycle of seven years has come and gone and with it my reelection as International President. What has been learned? Seven years ago at the time of my inauguration I commented that the need is to respond to the “ever-calling invitation to *openness*, which is the only way in which we as individuals can be transformed, and the only way in which humanity can experience the regeneration that has been spoken of”. This is territory we will continue exploring together. ✧

World Crises: The Root Cause — II.B

(In continuation of Part II.A)

P. KRISHNA

J. KRISHNAMURTI said that it is necessary to free ourselves of the conditioning of what we consider right, wrong, moral, or immoral. We have not examined it, we have simply acquired it from the environment in which we were born. It is an accident of birth, but it becomes *my* culture, *my* religion, *my* community, and so on. Therefore, it acquires importance in our consciousness as with everything else that we consider “mine”. It is a very deep-rooted illusion in the sense that it is not created by Nature, but by our own minds. It is necessary for us to *unlearn* all of this.

We find it difficult to eliminate the conditioning because it is sitting there in the brain, in the memory. The illusion is not a fact, but its existence in our mind is a fact. When we realize this, we do not identify with it. If we realize that our own opinions are just a product of our culture, where we grew up, its importance is diminished in our consciousness as we start enquiring into all this. That is what freedom from conditioning means; not that our brain will stop projecting opi-

nions; it will do its work, but why do we have to identify with that? Why don't we look at it the same way as we look at the opinion of a friend or a stranger? An opinion is not the truth, neither ours nor anyone else's.

But unless one sees this, one identifies with certain opinions, and that is what causes ideological or cultural division. Then we have images about people as Muslims, Hindus, Christians, atheists, and so forth, and those images are associated with all kinds of cruelty, superstitions and other traits. When we learn about the affiliation of a person, the mind can already hate that person without knowing him or her. Only human beings have this problem. We can hate someone even before having any bone of contention with them, mainly because their ideas or affiliation are different from ours.

So we have a serious problem and it is not going to go away merely because we accept this logic, or we consider this to be true and know that it is just an opinion. This requires in-depth work within our own consciousness, called

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self-knowledge. Unfortunately, we have not created a questioning and learning mind in this field; we are too sure of our own opinions. We have done so in science, history, geography, and about the universe. That is why we have made a lot of progress in our understanding in all those fields.

But, in our consciousness, we do not have a learning mind; we have a mind identified with the “me” and the “mine”; holding on to it, arguing for it, defending it, and living with that permanently. It is a kind of prison in which the mind gets trapped; it may be intelligent in some areas and extremely ignorant in others. That is why it is necessary to change education. If we see the need for self-knowledge, we must inculcate this enquiry too.

Now, what is this self-knowledge which creates wisdom, or a long vision? When we have a short vision, the ego seems profitable. After all, if I join a particular community, I make friends with them, I have a sense of belonging, they look after me, I also do work for them, and so on; it feels nice and brotherly and so on. Another person does the same thing with his group for the same reasons that we do with our group. And the two groups have competition and rivalry, as they are divided from each other ideologically, culturally, religiously, and by belief. That creates the greatest insecurity.

The idea that belonging or identifying oneself with a group creates security is an illusion. But when we do not see far enough, or do not look with a long vision, it seems to give us security. And

that is the illusion in the mind; that is the absence of wisdom. There is wisdom only in a mind that is free from illusions. Self-knowledge is the means to end illusions since the perception of what is true and what is false dissolves the illusions in the mind. It means one must hold all opinions and judgments with some doubt and be willing to inquire and not be attached to them. Then, if we see that they are false or harmful, we can drop them instantly.

But if we are investing in it psychologically, deriving importance, status, and identity from it, then we are not willing to drop it. Different scientists also have various theories, but if we point out to one of them that his theory is wrong, he has to drop it, because his personal theory is not important; it is only important when it points to a truth. The love of truth must be stronger than the love of a personal idea.

Unfortunately, in the religious field we have not realized the value of this and therefore we stick to it. Similarly, we invest in our own opinions and ideas, whether we are a communist, socialist, or capitalist. Those are personal opinions. It is in that sense that the world problem is not separate from the individual problem, because the same ego creates the individual problems in our relationships. Let us take an example.

If we approach life with desire, it means we are dissatisfied with our present state. Our mind is judging the present state and feeling dissatisfied; therefore it seeks to make it better. We think by acquir-

ing something more, either more virtue, money, or comfort, we will be happier, so we approach life with desire. Now, desire has some consequences irrespective of the object of desire. It has also been said that we should have noble desires. But desire itself is a problem as approaching life with a desire has certain consequences.

If it is not fulfilled, we will experience frustration and anger; if it is fulfilled, we will feel proud and comfortable for a while, but dissatisfaction and boredom will set in again for the same reason they set in earlier. When the desire is not fulfilled, the desire energizes us, but when it is fulfilled the energy disappears until another desire is born. So we get trapped in this vicious circle of boredom, escaping through desire for more to some sort of fulfillment, then stagnation, and boredom again. Unless we understand this whole cycle, the mind will not be free from it.

The entertainment industry knows that we are tremendously bored people, so they make money out of it by offering us all kinds of escapes, which is just an avoidance of the problem. One must ask a deeper question: why am I constantly bored and what is boredom? After all, there is the river out there, the tree, the dog, the neighbor's child, books, so many things around me.

What is dissatisfaction? Does it mean I have become insensitive to all these? What has made me insensitive? If we look at it, we will find that when we have desire and ambition our attention is all the time focusing on that objective; therefore, we

do not pay attention to any of these other things, and when we do not pay attention, we lose sensitivity. We do not feel anything for the river if we do not sit by the river, if we do not walk in Nature, we do not relate to a tree, we will not perceive their beauty.

We do not pay attention, because our focus is on the direction of ambition and fulfillment. That creates insensitivity, and this becomes a vicious circle in which we are trapped. All that is the consequence of the ego, because desire is the root of the ego. We can try controlling desire, but controlling a desire becomes another desire. We can only become aware of the danger of this whole thing, and when we see the danger of something, it drops away. If we only agree that it is dangerous and we see the logic of it, it is not the same as perception. When we perceive a danger, it is not the intelligence of our thinking, but Nature's intelligence which is at work.

Nature has created a human intelligence for us which does not let us court danger. When we see real danger, we do not go near it. It does not require reasoning or decision. So perception is real action because it transforms consciousness. Similarly, direct perception of the danger of the ego will prevent us from approaching life egoistically. But that requires persistent watching of the consequences of the egoistic approach with a learning mind, as it is not obvious to begin with.

With freedom from the ego comes the flowering of love, which is a normal quality that our consciousness is imbued with.

World Crises: The Root Cause — II.B

We do not create it through our thinking. When we think and try to create it, we end up with sentiments which appear like love, but are not the real thing. When the ego is absent, there is this feeling of friendship, or love, which is intrinsically there. But when the ego gets attached to it, it creates possessiveness, which destroys the state of real love. The following chart shows what the ego does to our natural abilities:

Love + Ego = Attachment, Possessiveness

Wish + Ego = Desire, Addiction, Craving

Power + Ego = Domination, Exploitation

Sexuality + Ego = Lust, Pornography, Rape

Friendship + Ego = Support, Dependence,
Agreement

Talent + Ego = Pride, Vanity, Superiority

Humility + Ego = Inferiority, Servility,
Obedience

Excellence + Ego = Competition, Rivalry

Groups + Ego = Division, Nationalism,
Extremism

Thought + Ego = Worry, Fear, Anxiety

Pleasure + Ego = Habit, Addiction, Boredom

Need + Ego = Greed, Covetousness

The ego turns all natural abilities into complex things with a seed of destruction in them. The twelve abilities listed above are natural positive qualities. The problem comes when we add the ego to them, and that ego process is what we are talking about. That is the big problem for humanity, both in our personal life, and in the world. So self-knowledge is a necessity for everyone. The idea, that some people will acquire self-knowledge to become saints and we will simply follow them, has been disproved repeatedly

in history. This is because we cannot follow another human being without first coming upon wisdom ourselves. Virtue cannot be enunciated and practiced without wisdom.

We can read what the Buddha has said but we are not able to follow what he is saying, we are not able to live that because we do not have that wisdom and understanding. Wisdom is not transferable. Knowledge is transferable, but it is not wisdom. So education must concern itself with not only imparting knowledge, but also taking the responsibility to help the student come upon wisdom. Therefore self-knowledge needs to be a concern of education, even more than knowledge.

At present, we have almost 8 billion egos in the world, so it makes little difference which way we organize them. If we control the violence in one direction, it will burst out in another direction, because the violence that is there in human consciousness creates a sea of violence, within which storms are inevitable. That is the reason why we have never been able to free ourselves of war, crimes, and so on. There is no simple solution, we have already tried them all: religion, propaganda, knowledge, science, socialism, capitalism, atheism.

The learning mind, discerning what is true and what is false, is the true religious mind as it generates wisdom. The aim of self-knowledge is not to become a Buddha. Let us not make that our aim. Let the aim be to grow in wisdom, in our understanding of ourselves and life. That is enough

reason to do this enquiry, wherever that may take us. We do it for the love of it, for the love of truth. And that is what Theosophy was meant for.

Theosophy says truth is the highest religion, but we do not know the truth. Therefore, we must approach it with great humility and must connect our inquiry with our daily life; otherwise, religion becomes an escape. Let us stay with profound questions and observe our own consciousness in daily life as it is operating, finding our own answers through perception, not through ideation.

The idea is alright for creating the question but not for answering the question. If we answer the question from ideas, then it becomes philosophy. The professor of philosophy has as ordinary a consciousness as the ordinary man. He has greed, selfishness, ambition, fear, sorrow and so on, though he has all the knowledge about what the Buddha, the Christ, Socrates, and others have said, and he can explain them to his students.

This ability to explain is useful for communication, but it is a trivial thing. The real thing is to come upon transformation of consciousness, and that does

not come until we perceive the truth for ourselves. This means that we must perceive the danger of the ego. It will drop away, if we can perceive it as directly as we perceive the danger of fire or of a precipice, not through ideation and argument.

I have pointed out that the root cause of the major problems that I listed in my last two articles lies in the ego process within our consciousness. That transformation of consciousness is a by-product of wisdom, and the way to come upon wisdom is through self-knowledge. This means we must live with questions, not with conclusions. Let us not defend opinions, but, question all of them, especially our own, and let us seek answers, not intellectually, but through observation in daily life.

Then the answer will be something real for us, not just an idea. Ideas do not transform consciousness. In the third part of this article, we shall look at how education can help students to come upon a new mind with a different direction in life, so that they are not just replicas of us, making the same mistakes as we do! ✧

**Surely the holy one is not deaf.
He hears the delicate bells that ring
On the feet of an insect as it walks.**

Kabir in *The Songs of Kabir*
translated by Rabindranath Tagore

Six Ingredients to a Happier Life

VICENTE HAO CHIN, JR

THE subject of happiness is seldom discussed in theosophical lectures or articles. The impression one gets is that the theosophical life is basically a matter of self-discipline. H. P. Blavatsky wrote: “Neither is Theosophy the pursuit of happiness, as men understand the word; for the first step is sacrifice; the second, renunciation.” (*Collected Writings*, vol. 12, p. 450). Thus, we are told that we should prepare ourselves for a life of difficulty, challenge, and even suffering.

So is the subject of happiness relevant to the quest for the transcendent life? In *Light on the Path*, one of the most profound theosophical books in modern times, we are told: “Kill out desire of comfort. . . .” but “Be happy as those are who live for happiness.” Even *At the Feet of the Master* stipulates cheerfulness as one of the six points of conduct: “Your duty is to remain always joyous and serene.”

The Why of Happiness

There are several reasons why a happy and cheerful life creates a significant difference from practical and spiritual views:

- ◆ It indicates that one is successfully dealing with adverse karmas that cause sorrow.
- ◆ It makes one more effective, good, unselfish, and service-oriented.
- ◆ It enables us to better transcend the traps of worldly life and be more non-attached.
- ◆ It is better than sorrow.

What is Happiness?

First, it may be helpful to examine what happiness is not:

- ◆ Evidently, it is not pleasure, because pleasure results from a momentary satisfaction of a physical or psychological urge. It is the building up of psychic energy and the sudden release of that energy.
- ◆ Neither is it excitement, for excitement is another temporary buildup of psychic energy characterized by positive anticipation. Once released, the excitement is gone.
- ◆ Happiness is also not material success: fame, position, or wealth. There have been many famous and ultrarich people who have committed suicide. If social success is equivalent to happiness, these people should be the happiest people on Earth.
- ◆ It is not laughter, for even the unhappy can laugh.

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Six Ingredients to a Happier Life

Pleasure, excitement, and laughter are episodic. In other words, they happen for a certain limited period, and then they are gone the next moment. Is happiness episodic? Does a person become an unhappy person just because he or she lost a mobile phone today? Or is he still a happy individual who happens to have lost his phone today? Happiness is not momentary pleasure or positiveness. We look at life and make an overall assessment of whether we are generally happy or not.

In 2001, the well-known psychologist Martin Seligman published a book entitled *Authentic Happiness*. In this book, he considered that happiness is an event that happens to an individual. In 2010, Dr Seligman published another book entitled *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*. In this second book, he concluded that his first book's view of happiness was not correct. Happiness is not an event; it is a state. He adopted the term "well-being" to describe this state of happiness, which lingers despite the ups and downs of each day.

Thus, we can define happiness in this way: "It is a sustained state of well-being, contentment, and meaningfulness, accompanied by positive feelings."

- ◆ Well-being refers to a general state of satisfaction and meaningfulness in life.
- ◆ Sustained means that it is felt or perceived for an extended period — months, years, or an entire lifetime.
- ◆ Contentment refers to the capacity to accept the present moment as it is.

- ◆ Positive feelings refer to optimism, appreciation, gratitude, lightheartedness, joy, cheerfulness, and so on.

Six Ingredients to a Happier Life

With the above introduction, let us look into six ingredients in making our lives happier. All of them are within our control:

1. Remove causes of unhappiness
2. Develop habits of positiveness
3. Nurture positive relationships
4. Help others selflessly
5. Be ethical
6. Have a wholesome philosophy of life

1. Remove Causes of Unhappiness.

Many psychologists have listed factors that contribute to well-being and happiness, but, strangely, none include this critical ingredient — removing causes of unhappiness. To my mind, this ingredient is foundational. Some causes of unhappiness are: fear (including worry and anxiety), depression, resentment, anger, guilt, hurt, and even aversion. If not removed, they can make a person almost incapable of long-term happiness.

A person with fear, for example, can hardly be happy. The state of fear is one of constriction and defensiveness that is definitely unpleasant, whereas happiness is one of naturalness, spontaneity, expansiveness, and positiveness. Fear takes many forms: anxiety, phobia, low self-confidence, low self-esteem, fear of criticism, fear of failure, or fear of what people will say. The problem is that they are chronic states. It is not just being scared for ten seconds and then the fear disappearing.

Six Ingredients to a Happier Life

For example, anxiety is a constant fear in the periphery of one's consciousness that manifests as tension, guardedness, discomfort, or timidity. Its roots are the thousand and one unpleasant and fearful experiences since childhood that have not been resolved and released. They impinge upon the present moment in a semi-conscious way that prevents us from being our natural and cheerful self. These unresolved unpleasant experiences become subconscious "push-buttons" that easily get triggered by memory or association. They are like constant, inner dark clouds that prevent the mind and feelings from being cheerful.

These push-buttons can be removed. For the past twenty years, thousands of people have learned how to release them during the "Self-Transformation Seminars" conducted by the Theosophical Society. Through a direct and simple approach that uses self-awareness, the bottled-up energy gets safely released permanently. The principle behind such a release is testable and straightforward. First, the discomfort in tension, tightness, or energy congestion is still in one's system, even if it is subconscious. Second, when this inner tension or congestion is allowed to flow, this chronic feeling disappears, and one goes back to a state of naturalness and spontaneity.

2. Develop Habits of Positiveness. Positiveness refers to psychological states such as cheerfulness, enthusiasm, optimism, appreciation, or gratitude.

Positiveness is a habit. Some people are

genetically endowed with such a predisposition; others are not. For those who are not, they can still develop positive habits and overcome their innate moroseness.

William James was one of the early psychologists who recognized that one could change one's feelings by altering one's behavior. We usually say that when we are cheerful (feeling), we smile (behavior). In other words, cheerfulness results in smiling. But the opposite is equally true, according to James. Smiling produces cheerfulness. Try smiling right now and notice an immediate change in one's internal state. By developing the habit of smiling (a muscular habit), one shifts naturally towards more frequent daily cheerfulness.

Let us look at another set of habits: optimism versus pessimism. Optimists look at the bright side of things, while pessimists look at the opposite. Dr Martin Seligman, the founder of Positive Psychology, discovered that in addition to making people unhappy, pessimism makes people maladaptive in most endeavors: they do poorly in sales, have lower grades in school, fare worse in athletics, and so forth. Fortunately, we can do something to change this attitude or habit. Dr Seligman, in fact, wrote a book entitled *Learned Optimism* to offer such solutions.

When individuals consciously try to be positive, something changes in the way they look at life and the world. The world has not changed, but their state of happiness has. Try regularly expressing appreciation towards other people, feeling grateful for what we have, smiling

Six Ingredients to a Happier Life

frequently, being optimistic about almost anything; then the habit of positiveness will set in. And life changes.

3. Nurture Positive Relationships.

In the life of the average individual, the greatest source of unhappiness is people. Jean-Paul Sartre once wrote: “I know what hell is. Hell is other people.” We get upset when we lose a large amount of money, but after a few days, we get over it and continue with life. But when we are hurt, angered, or frightened by other people, the aftereffect is likely to be long term or permanent. I have known of seventy-year-old people who still cry when recalling their unhappy childhood incidents.

The good news is that people are also the sources of their greatest happiness: warm friendships, a loving marital relationship, a happy family, a pleasant work environment with bosses and coworkers, and the opportunity to help other people.

A positive relationship is something that is built, nurtured, and watered regularly. There have been known approaches towards building a wholesome and happy relationship with others, such as effective communication (assertiveness without being timid or aggressive); expressing love effectively through the five languages of love: affirming statements, quality time, touching, giving gifts, acts of service; and the 95/5 rule, which means that out of a hundred interactions with other people, 95% should be positive or at least neutral, and not more than 5% negative or critical.

4. Help Others Selflessly. This is an inestimable ingredient of happiness — helping others without thinking of anything in return. It need not be in terms of money. It can be a genuine listening ear or anything that uplifts other people and makes them feel lighter or happier.

Dr Albert Schweitzer, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, addressing a group of graduating students, said: “I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.”

Dr Martin Seligman once gave two weekend assignments to his psychology students. The first was to engage in something that they thought they would enjoy — watching a movie, hanging out with friends, going to the beach, and so on. The second was to do something to help someone — even strangers. The following week, he asked the students which of the two activities gave them greater happiness. The students were unanimous: helping others gave a greater feeling of joy.

5. Be Ethical. This ingredient is not an attempt to be moralistic. It is a piece of practical and sound advice.

Try to deliberately harm other people — cheating, deceiving, hurting, or depriving them of something — there are two consequences: (1) Internally, we do not feel good. We may seem to feel satisfaction and even pleasure, but inwardly we know that we have done something wrong, and we cannot have true inward peace and happiness. Externally, we have just

Six Ingredients to a Happier Life

set off a chain of karma that will eventually painfully return to us, bringing more unhappiness. It can be immediate — being punched back; or it may take days or years before we receive what we deserve, such as negative public opinion, losing a job, or going to jail; or it may come in another lifetime — being born to cruel parents or being born with severe disabilities.

The reward of an ethical life is inner peace, not being afraid of consequences, and eventually, a life of harmony and positiveness.

6. Have a Wholesome Philosophy of Life. This ingredient covers a wide variety of insights that one learns from experience or from others. Such insights can come from plain, good common sense or the profound principles of ageless wisdom. Below are examples:

Do not compare yourself with others, but strive to attain your own level of excellence by doing your best. A comparative or competitive outlook is one source of dissatisfaction and unhappiness — trying to keep up with our neighbors, colleagues, or classmates. There will always be people whose life situations are better or worse than us. Neither be discontented nor be proud in connection with what other people have or have not. We set our own inner benchmarks and pursue what is meaningful to us, not what is meaningful to other people.

Do not double your loss. Suppose I lost a leg due to an accident. I may feel bitter and blame people for such a tragedy, resulting in long-term unhappiness. What I do not realize is that I have just doubled

my loss — I have lost a leg, and I have lost my happiness. Why not just stop at one loss and retain my capacity for being cheerful and happy?

See the larger picture of life. Life is not just about jobs, income, or social status. It is about the growth of the soul towards perfection from life to life. This is a fundamental insight known in the spiritual traditions of both east and west. It results in human perfection, what Buddhists call Arhats, Bodhisattvas or Buddhas, what Hindus call Rishis or Mahatmas, or what St Paul speaks of as “just men made perfect”. The psychologist Abraham Maslow describes such a growth direction as self-actualization and self-transcendence.

We create our destiny. Many people are passive victims of their environments. Wiser people are aware that it is within our power to (a) change our attitudes towards our circumstances, and (b) alter our future circumstances by sowing the right seeds of karma at every moment.

The subject of happiness is highly relevant to all of us struggling in this world of sorrow. We need to know the laws that govern Nature, human life, and society. This is during our growth stage when the self or ego is still engaged in such a struggle. However, in the spiritual life, there comes a point when this center called self would have faded into universality and non-duality. In such a stage, the issue of happiness is no longer relevant, for one has transcended human happiness and unhappiness.

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Awareness as Process and Result

SVITLANA GAVRYLENKO

ACCORDING to theosophical doctrine, consciousness is present in all forms of life, but manifested in them to varying degrees. We can, abstracting from the human level of mastering consciousness, define this concept for the smallest particle of the material world, for the *atom*, in its most general and primary definition as “the ability of a certain form of being to selectively respond to environmental conditions”. Then we will be able to make sure that the atom is capable of reacting with some elements, but not with others. Its chemical behavior can be influenced by temperature, pressure, and other conditions. Under certain circumstances, it is capable of absorbing or emitting microparticles, and so on. All the signs of consciousness are there.

H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) wrote about this in her article, “Cosmic Mind”. If the atom is endowed with this quality, then what can we say about the gross, material world, and even more so about what is subtle, immaterial? As far as science is concerned, the theme of the presence of consciousness in the mineral and plant world is

carefully avoided. Only attempts are made to determine the signs of the presence of consciousness in animals, and research is mainly carried out based on the example of a human being. So by “consciousness”, science understands:

The subject’s idea of the world and of his place in it is associated with the ability to give an account of his inner mental experience and what is necessary for the intelligent organization of joint activity. Consciousness is a form of mental activity and an element of higher nervous activity, the basis of which is the brain. There is an opinion that consciousness is a biological function of the human brain, which allows an individual to get some idea of the world around him and of himself. The mechanism of consciousness was formed as a result of human evolution. The physiology of this mechanism is not fully understood.” (Wikipedia)

As you can see, there are both quite acceptable and rather weak ideas for the occultist. Both the very concept of consciousness and the signs of its presence

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Awareness as Process and Result

are still the subject of scientific debates.

The topic of consciousness is very multifaceted; we will not consider it in detail. We all have an idea about this, which to some extent suits us. I will only note that among theosophists there is an idea that consciousness does not evolve, but only the degree of mastering it evolves. We will also omit this discussion. Hence, I will avoid using the words “evolution of consciousness”. Today our main theme is awareness. This is one of the highest stages of mastering consciousness. It is difficult for me to imagine awareness in relation to the subhuman kingdoms of Nature, in minerals, in plants. It is possible that animals have the rudiments of this property.

Some modern psychologists define the concept of awareness or mindfulness as continuous tracking of current experiences, that is, a state in which the subject focuses on the experience of the present moment, without getting involved in thoughts about past or future events. This is the so-called ability of consciousness to introspect its own activities. Thus some tend to understand awareness as a constant so-called presence “here and now”. But it seems that this is a somewhat simplified view.

Let us take a simple example from life: a writer performs a mechanical monotonous work — peeling potatoes — and at the same time a scene with the heroes of the novel that he is currently writing is playing in his mind. He is clearly not “here and now”, but at the same time he is very conscious in his creative process. Rather,

today, awareness on the physical plane can be attributed to the evolutionary past of human beings.

Awareness has as its basis the human capacity for self-awareness, which we acquired as a result of individualization, in the middle of the third root race. Together with the spark of intelligence received from the higher beings, solar *pitrs*, *agnishvāttas*, or *mānasa-dhyānis*, people then acquired the ability to realize themselves as separate units, to engage in self-determination, self-awareness.

At first, it was only a potential ability that developed under the influence of a powerful evolutionary tool such as the duality of perceiving the world. This process continues now with all of us, and around us. The spark of intelligence allowed us to go on the path of knowing the world and ourselves, since observations, knowledge of the world around us, and life experience were not just remembered, but in a certain way were assimilated with the help of this newly acquired mechanism of consciousness.

Let us take a closer look at how the process of assimilating knowledge, or cognition, is carried out. One Sufi master (Idris Shah) said: “Information comes *before* insight.” The cognition process is associated with some mental practices: reading, listening, observing, rational/logical reasoning, including practical experience and its rationale, which can be considered a cognitive process.

In the beginning, everything seems to be scattered, fragmented, and confused. Despite all efforts, people even feel

Awareness as Process and Result

discomfort and confusion from the abundance of information and the inability to clarify their task. But then, thanks to their efforts, sooner or later something happens. *Eureka!* Everything seems to fall into place, cause-and-effect and logical relationships are clearly understood. This is called differently as awareness, insight, comprehension, clarity.

Consequently, one can understand *awareness as a final action* related to the cognitive chain, preceded by observation, analysis, reasoning, experience, knowledge, and understanding. Also, the process of mastering consciousness can be understood as a stepped one, where horizontal, quantitative levels associated with the accumulation of knowledge and experience, and vertical transitions or qualitative leaps that lead to a new level of awareness, open up new alternatives, giving the opportunity to look from a new height to which our consciousness is able to rise. We can also use a spiral analogy instead of a stepped one, if it fits someone better.

Keeping in view the fact that awareness is a cumulative quality completing a certain process of cognition, we can talk about the cycles of awareness. For example, students at school may study different disciplines without seeing a special connection in them: biology, chemistry, geography, literature. This knowledge is scattered and confused. But as a result of mastering the school course, they develop a certain picture of the world: scattered knowledge gives a certain integrity of understanding of the world.

After school, a person enters the university, and a new cycle begins. Ideally, a person with higher education should have a better understanding of the laws of the universe. There can be many such cycles, and the levels of comprehension may differ. Thus I would like to share with you two thoughts:

1. We have a certain *internal mechanism*, universal, deep and unconscious, a need and craving for knowledge, prompting us to climb this ladder. What pushes us to these actions? We observe how children show curiosity, what an uncontrollable thirst for knowledge is inherent in them, and how important it is to use this quality correctly and not drown it out with inept educational methods. Viktor Frankl, an Austrian philosopher and psychologist, called it the “Will to Meaning”. This is an innate human quality, the analogue of which is absent in the lower kingdoms of Nature. This quality belongs to our higher nature, and is one of the attributes of our divinity.

2. However, awareness should not be reduced only to rational methods of cognition, it also contains an *irrational principle*, a mystical component. We can assume that the latter is a leap in human consciousness, caused by some hidden internal mechanism, embedded in the unconscious, and perhaps not without the participation of certain higher entities with which our consciousness at high levels is in direct contact and interacts.

Even Wikipedia writes in this regard that in certain situations our waking consciousness can “initiate and influence

Awareness as Process and Result

the information-processing procedure occurring in the unconscious. . . . Such processes have much more power than intellectual operations, although they are limited in the application of logic, which is on the whole the prerogative of the mind.” We can conclude that the process of awareness begins to work at the junction of consciousness and unconsciousness.

Now let us move on in our consideration of awareness. It is closely connected and actively manifests itself in the process of creative search and ensures the solution of various *creative problems*. Specific, highly powerful, and creative, problem-solving processes can be initiated in the unconscious spontaneously under the influence of efforts to collect, accumulate, memorize, and process information related to the solution of the problem, undertaken and implemented in the field of waking consciousness.

The results of these processes can subsequently be displayed on the surface of awareness, including in the form of artistic images, plots, melodies and other elements of artistic creativity. In this case, we are talking about the influence of such internal hidden processes of information processing. This is usually attributed to insight, intuition, and so forth, which is imperceptible to the waking consciousness.

It can be assumed that awareness and inspiration, as elements of the creative process, are very close in their inner nature. We have only touched on this topic in passing, but it is extremely inter-

esting, deep, and broad in content, and can give rise to a separate study.

Further, Eastern philosophy speaks of a certain awakened state of consciousness, a state of complete awareness, *turiya*. It is characterized by a high degree of internal composure, concentration, and complete external relaxation, calmness and spontaneity. Science today has found its analogue of such a state. It believes that one of the main neural networks of the nervous system, which ensures the interaction of waking consciousness and the unconscious, including when solving information and, especially, creative tasks, is the network of the passive mode of the brain (NPMB). Here are the characteristics this network is endowed with according to scientists:

- ◆ NPMB provides flexibility of thinking, disconnection from the mode of purposeful problem-solving according to well-known procedures, branching of the solution processes, switching attention from one task to another.
- ◆ It promotes creative expression and has the ability to establish connections between individual parts of the brain, and thus, unique associations appear and the development of a person’s identity is carried out. Therefore, it is possible to act spontaneously and directly, that is, according to the impulses of the subconscious.
- ◆ It makes vague memories clearer and helps to use memory that is beyond the boundaries of attention, the processes of spontaneous recollection, to

Awareness as Process and Result

extract information from it that cannot be extracted in other ways.

We see that science goes its own way, but the rapprochement with timeless wisdom takes place.

With each cycle of awareness, people advance to their Higher Self, gaining a breadth of horizons, the skills of synthesizing knowledge-concepts-ideas-experience, a higher level of competence in vital matters, as well as an increased power of influence on their environment. The cycles of awareness lead us only forward along our evolutionary path, both in mental and moral aspects.

If we use special theosophical terminology, then, as is repeatedly mentioned in the letters of the Mahatmas, the sphere of awareness is the fifth principle of man, the *higher mind*, or *buddhi manas*. The *role of the heart* should be emphasized here. It is not for nothing that in HPB's *The Voice of the Silence*, she says: "Self-knowledge is of loving deeds the child." Here she is pointing out that the brain is the center of intellectual consciousness, and the heart is the center of spiritual consciousness, or *buddhi manas*.

It is this principle that, with its glimmers, illuminates the lower, logical, reasoning mind of a person in moments of relaxation after a period of intense activity, bringing the desired awareness as a reward for the labor of searching for truth.

Such insights are infrequent at first, but with continued effort they become more productive. These insights, glimpses of intuition, testify to the communi-

cation that arises between our lower and higher mental (*mānasic*) planes, which, for the time being, are separated. And such an improvement in the way of communication between the lower and higher levels of our mental plane is called building a "rainbow bridge", or *antahkarana*.

Awareness is often associated with inner light, radiance, and the achievement of the final result of building *antahkarana* is associated with enlightenment. When this construction is completed, the two *mānasic* planes are combined into one. There is no need for an intermediary, which is the causal body, and full awareness is achieved on the human plane of being. However, evolution does not end there; new cycles, new tasks of mastering consciousness begin, which are already correlated with the next, fifth, kingdom of Nature. This is how Master KH writes about it:

The adept sees and feels and lives in the very source of all fundamental truths — the Universal Spiritual Essence of Nature, *Shiva* the Creator, the Destroyer, and the Regenerator. As spiritualists of today have degraded "Spirit", so have the Hindus degraded Nature by their anthropomorphic conceptions of it. Nature alone can incarnate the Spirit of limitless contemplation. "Absorbed in the absolute self-unconsciousness of physical *Self*, plunged in the depths of true Being, which is no being but eternal, universal Life, his whole form as immovable and white as the eternal summits of snow in Kailasa where he sits, above care, above sorrow, above sin and

Awareness as Process and Result

worldliness, a mendicant, a sage, a healer, the King of Kings, the Yogi of Yogis”, such is the ideal Shiva of *Yoga-Shastras*, the culmination of Spiritual Wisdom.

(*Mahatma Letters*, No. 17, ML-31, KH to Sinnett, received 26 March 1881)

Going back to the human stage again, and as we have already noted, at first a person does not grasp exactly how the expansion of the sphere of awareness is carried out, does not control the activity of *antahkarana*, the mechanisms of awareness are not explicit. However, as the higher and lower aspects of *manas* draw closer, as the bridge of *antahkarana* is built, the degree of awareness increases and an indicator of its maturation is a stage that can be called *awareness of awareness*.

How can we describe this? It is like turning attention inward. We begin to see ourselves, our ideas about ourselves, we begin to see that we are talking about one thing, but in fact something completely different is happening. We are beginning to see that our methods, reactions, and stereotypes are not working the way we want them to. We see what we are doing and what it leads to. And our life begins to change without any additional effort. We make only one effort — impartial, unidentified observation. This is what J. Krishnamurti said about it:

If you want to understand the beauty of a bird, a fly, a leaf, or a person, you must direct all your attention to it. This will be awareness. And you can direct all your attention to something only when you are interested. This means that when you really

want to understand something, you give your whole mind and heart to figuring it out.

One more aspect directly related to the cycles of awareness is *initiations*. For the evolution of an individual human being, these are great cycles associated with his mastery of consciousness (“expansions of consciousness”), which are “prepared” by many smaller cycles. It can be compared with climbing stairs to the floors of a multi-storey building. The flights of stairs are made up of steps, or smaller preparatory cycles, and flights lead to the next floor, to a new great cycle of evolution. In the same way we take the steps from floor to floor.

These flights of stairs are associated with the development of self-control and conscious functioning of a person, first of all, of the lower planes of human manifestation, that is, physical, ethereal, emotional and mental. The initiation process marks consecutive successes in the joint, concerted efforts of our lower “self” and the higher “Self”, as if conventionally moving towards each other. In the early initiations, our higher “Self” acts as the initiator, and then this function is performed by the appropriate exalted spiritual beings of a certain rank.

Initiations are significant, sacred events that do not happen in each of our lives; they mark the significant results of qualitative transformations in our self-knowledge and worldview. This, as well as racial cycles, must also be discussed separately.

Summing up, I list five final points

Awareness as Process and Result

relating to the qualitative side of the study of awareness that go along the thoughts of Tatyana Ushakova, an independent researcher who is close to me in spirit:

First: Awareness is seeing what is happening in the inner and outer world. This is *the harmonization and consistency of the internal and external*.

Second: This is a *state of direct experience (living) of what is happening*, and not thinking of, and even less so, evaluating what is happening.

Third: *Awareness is expressed actively*, it includes action, since this is participation in the surrounding life, and not observation from the outside.

Fourth: *Awareness is holistic, it is not fragmentary*.

Fifth: Awareness as a process, on an individual and collective level, leads us to an increasingly *ecological way of life*, in the broadest and most comprehensive sense of the term, thus leading us to the *fifth kingdom of Nature*. ✧

Tormented by spiritual thirst
I dragged myself through a somber desert.
And a six-winged seraph
appeared to me at the crossing of the ways.
He touched my eyes
with fingers light as a dream:
and my prophetic eyes opened like those of a frightened eagle.
He touched my ears
and they were filled with noise and ringing:
and I heard the shuddering of the heavens,
and the flight of the angels in the heights,
and the movement of the beasts of the sea under the waters,
and the sound of the vine growing in the valley. . . .
Like a corpse I lay in the desert.
And the voice of God called out to me:
"Arise, O prophet, see and hear,
be filled with My will,
go forth over land and sea,
and set the hearts of men on fire with your Word."

Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837)
"The Prophet"
Translation by Dimitri Obolensky

Nurturing the TS in Australia — Our Legacy to the Future

STEPHEN McDONALD

LAST night I had a dream, or possibly it was a real event. I woke up in the still of the night and at the foot of my bed stood Madame H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) and Col. H. S. Olcott, the founders of the Theosophical Society (TS). She had an enigmatic look in her face and he (with his long, luxurious beard) had eyes of great compassion. HPB looked at me with intensity and said: “As you are assuming the national presidency for Australia, do you have any questions for us?” I paused for a moment and tentatively asked, “What will be the future of the TS in Australia and the world in the coming years?”

Col. Olcott spoke to me through that commodious beard: “You are coming up to the 150th anniversary of the TS. The future is here and now, not years away; you are creating it every day. You have a legacy to work with; all you need is a vision to provide direction and the right actions to get you there.” I pondered about what he meant by a “legacy” and a “vision” to steer us in the right direction. I realized that the work of the TS is a serious one, and it rests upon us all to take up the opportunity that is our legacy.

As a Section of the TS, Australia has been endowed with a structure and resources that provide us with immense potential — properties, such as Springbrook in Queensland, Canyonleigh in New South Wales, and Mt Helena in Western Australia. We have a modest but useful income from investments and a strong tradition of service from our membership. The ingredients are here and now. We just need to bring into manifestation our objectives. To do this we must be clear about our purpose and direction. We must care for our legacy — for the money and resources that are our responsibility, to use them to further those purposes because our resources are not for our personal benefit, but to benefit the world.

But, “What are our purposes and direction?” I thought, and I put this question to HPB. Before she answered me, she lit up one of those Russian Sobranie cigarettes that she liked to smoke. Olcott grimaced and admonished her for the unhealthy habit. “You know how bad that is for your health!” and she snapped back, “Well, it hasn’t killed me yet!”

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Nurturing the TS in Australia — Our Legacy to the Future

She looked again intently into my eyes and explained: “The purpose and direction you take now depend upon your vision, which should be one that is derived from and shared by your fellows.” I thought about her statement. What is my vision for the TS in 5 or 10 years? Any vision must first be founded upon our legacy.

A clear purpose is stated in our First Object: *To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour.* Obviously, it means being free from all prejudice, but its meaning is far greater than our mundane understanding. At a deeper level, it involves freedom from the self, whereby our separation from the world (or universe) does not exist. That is one of the principles that Theosophy shows us — that duality is an illusion.

My personal vision includes a sense of nurturing, of caring for and protecting our Society, supporting and encouraging our fellows, and respecting their individual quests. To do these things, two elements must be nurtured: freedom of thought and a fostering of individual search.

HPB nodded and then said: “Today you are part of a new theosophical movement, though it is not new at all. It is based upon the precepts of an ageless wisdom. What needs to be new is your presentation. As you offer this ageless wisdom to the world it must be done without any effort to impose or indoctrinate, to proselytise or direct. The door is open to enter, but that must be done by each person — you cannot lead anyone through that portal.”

I realized that we have been entrusted

with an onerous responsibility. Our inner founders provided a vehicle by which humanity can find its way back to its source. As a principal objective, however, Brotherhood is not just about getting along in some utopian harmony, but about working together with a shared purpose, creating relationships which can nurture our Society. Fostering relationships between our members, Lodges, and Groups will be an important objective for my presidency. The question remains as to how this vision is to be achieved?

Col. Olcott looked over his small spectacles and opined: “Whatever you decide to do, don’t agonize about it. A good place to start your work is with yourself.” That made me recall an elderly friend who I first met at Adyar in 1985. She lived in Melbourne and whenever I went there for work, I usually called by to see her. She would sit me down and look pensively at me and ask: “What have you been doing to improve yourself since we last met?” A very theosophical question that always made me search for the answer.

Action is the critical part of implementing a vision for the future. Acting now is up to each of us, independently and inter-dependently. If we see the future, however, as some bright, distant point, we are less likely to get there. Plans need to be made and implemented within a clear and practical time frame. Do not think that Stephen as President will create a better Society for us to enjoy. We are all creators; if we assume someone else will do the work for us, we are doomed to failure.

Why did you join the TS? Was it to read books, to attend study groups/workshops/

Nurturing the TS in Australia — Our Legacy to the Future

conventions or for the camaraderie of like-minded people? All these things are worthy pursuits, but they tend to be focussed on self-centred activities. All of us need to explore and focus on the common purpose and goals that underpin the legacy that we share. Our future is not distant, because we are creating it now. From a certain perspective our thoughts create the world around us. If we focus on our Society's diminishing effect in the world, then so it will be. Instead, deciding on our actions depends upon fully understanding the problems we face.

I glanced up to see HPB's eyes looking into mine again. She could read my mind and related a story from her past. When in New York she took up the cause of an unpopular spiritual paper in Boston called *The Spiritual Scientist*. The editor, a man called Gerry Brown, had fallen out with his rich family because he wanted to edit a spiritualist journal. HPB said: "Of course, I felt fired up like a dry match immediately, got several subscribers for him the same day and sent him my article."¹ Olcott nodded knowingly about that incident. The point is, we all need to be "fired up like a dry match" to revitalise the fortunes of our organization.

We need to decide on our actions as best we can and implement them as well as possible. Sitting and talking about our declining membership or financial problems will not change anything unless we act with purpose. Our declining membership is worrying. Attached to that is the

digital world we are living in, where young people are not joining (or effectively supporting) organizations as they did in the past. This is not new; it has been going on for decades. We may not be able to change this modern lifestyle, but we can adapt our approach to it. To implement radical changes, we need to "feel fired up like a dry match" and find out what needs to be done.

The answer, however, often lies in properly understanding the question. Examining the problem without prejudice will reveal the correct answer. Action then arises in absolute awareness when the mind is crystal clear.

When I looked back at HPB and Col. Olcott, they could see the perplexed look on my face. They knew that doubt had entered my psyche and HPB directed me to "The Three Truths" quoted in Mabel Collins' *Light on the Path*. I will conclude with these poetic aphorisms:

The soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour has no limit.

The principle which gives life dwells in us, and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard, or seen, or smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception.

Each man is his own absolute lawgiver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself; the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment. (TPH Adyar, 1963, p. 26.)

Clearly, the fate of *our* Society is in *our* hands, whatever we make of it. ✧

References:

1. Michael Gomes, *The Dawning of the Theosophical Movement*, Quest Books, 1987, p. 69.

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

IN the theosophical conception of humanity,
this mysterious universe is related to each individual
in an intimate fashion; the beauty of the universe,
the wonder of all its knowledge,
cannot be dissociated from man's life.
What the universe, the macrocosm, contains,
the human being, the microcosm, unfolds.
As a knowledge of the Whole
explains to us, the part,
so too the part reveals to us the Whole.

It is a wonderful truth that through man
all life-streams flow; that the life of minerals,
animals, plants, the life of the hills, streams,
and forests, all are in some way passing through
the consciousness of each individual human being.

A wayside flower and the tiniest living creature
both throb with the message
of the unity of the cosmos.

C. Jinarajadasa (1875–1953)
Fragments From the World of C. Jinarajadasa, ch. 18
Compiled by Elithe Nisewanger

Unity in True Dialogue

JAN NICOLAAS KIND

HELENA Petrovna Blavatsky (HPB), co-founder of the original Theosophical Society (TS), with its headquarters in Adyar, Chennai, India, stated: “Truth is the quest of every Theosophist.” It is this *quest for Truth* that all students of Theosophy (*should*) have in common, and it is *in this quest that lies that Unity*. Being united in that quest, however, is not that easy. Theosophists and their respective groups or Societies have gone, in those very early years, through considerable *growing pains*, as adolescents do.

Disagreements, quarrels, and even splits from the parent organization were common in the years directly after HPB’s passing in 1891. Those who, guided by their own conscience, really made an effort to reach out to theosophists from other currents, truly brought the first object into practice. Over time several such valiant attempts have been made.

Much progress has come about over the decades. Theosophists from the various streams with different approaches to the understanding of the “TheoSophia” communicate with each other and try to learn from one another and that is a great development. Although once in a while the old and worn-out conflicts flare up,

by now there is no longer the “back to Blavatsky” mantra, since going back implies turning the clock back; consequently, one can only go “forward with Blavatsky, and many others”.

All theosophical organizations and groups, including those who consider themselves independent, are but branches of one large theosophical family tree. Each branch has earned its place under the sun; each branch represents a unique facet of the diamond called the Theosophical Movement.

In our *quest for Truth*, we are encouraged to investigate all that comes our way, seriously, consciously, and always with an open mind. Given the fact that Theosophy, or the TheoSophia, did not start with Helena Blavatsky and will not end with her, we all know that she most definitely was that formidable channel, reintroducing the Old Wisdom that had long been forgotten. On many an occasion HPB specifically insisted that we are to enquire and investigate, *never taking anything for granted*, and hence, not fall into the trap of orthodoxy.

I have been fortunate enough to have been able to make friends with students affiliated with the various groups and

Mr Jan Nicolaas Kind is a Dutch national residing in Brazil and USA. He has been a member of the Theosophical Society, Adyar since 1994 and is editor-in-chief of the e-Magazine *Theosophy Forward*.

Unity in True Dialogue

I do sincerely admire their activities: organizing events, study groups, courses, book publications, you name it. They all infuse their own particular energy and understanding to come to self-realization, and consequently work towards the lofty ideal of making our planet a better place to live on, because ultimately that is what it is all about; it is not about *my* Theosophy or *your* Theosophy!

At times, however, the old agonies resurface. What happened more than 125 years ago seems to become actual again, which by now of course is not at all realistic. In our day and age, dialogue among theosophists in most cases brings them together, it being recognized that a main objective of dialogue is to learn from one another, valuing one another's chosen and favorite authors, many, with their respective generational lineages. All are free to agree or *respectfully* disagree.

In order to learn, one has to perfect the art of listening — to the beliefs and convictions of others without any prejudice. As good listeners know, listening is a quality of the heart. The simile of cross-pollination ought to be applicable here. Cross-pollination is not a *one-way* deed!

It is counterproductive, I would even like to say *plain silly*, to reanimate occur-

rences that happened a long, long time ago. The past cannot be undone. Mistakes were made on all sides. The future nevertheless is ours and *it* is now, and with that vision directly on our radar we are able to continue our amazing journey together.

Perhaps, in order to free us from the *bondage of the past* it is wise to read Dorothy Bell's sagacious, recentering, and healing lines again, at the end of her well-known introduction to *Roots and Shoots*:

But the original impulse that produced the seed and the tree, the branches and offshoots, the underground runners with their place in the sun, is still within, seeking expression and fulfillment. There is no need to change any boundaries, annex other territories, or dissolve any compartments, save in the prison of the mind. And a mind that is crippled by memory — by separation and fear — can never be free. We can find our own place in the sun by going beyond the bondage of the past and serving that impulse wherever we are. That is our territory; that is our center; that is our theosophical family.

Read the full version of this important paper by Dorothy Bell at: <theosophyforward.com/articles/the-society/533-editorial-sp-937771929>. ✧

There was a unity of purpose in all the work that Annie Besant undertook. That purpose was the betterment of humanity and promotion of peace and goodwill in the larger life.

Surendra Narayan
Annie Besant on the Brotherhood of Religions

The Theosophist in the Vasanta Press

A. K. SITARAMA SHASTRI

THE Theosophist journal was printed by Messrs Thompson & Co., Printers, Madras (now Chennai), up to 1909. Vol. 30, no. 7 was the first issue printed by the Vasanta Press, with about 800 copies only.

During the time of the late President Col. H. S. Olcott, it was felt that to make a journey from Adyar to Madras, to get work done at the Printing Office was very troublesome. In those days the means of travel were very primeval. The Headquarters of The Theosophical Society had a roomy “Victoria” and one or two small country carts drawn by ponies. The journey from the Headquarters to the Printers often took one hour. Postal arrangements were not satisfactory either. Since personal instruction to the Printer by the then Editor, Col. Olcott, or the Sub-Editor, Dr [W. A.] English, was more satisfactory for the expeditious finishing of the editorial work, they often went in one of these vehicles to the printing place, jolting in the carriage on uneven roads.

It was the desire of our President-Founder to open a printing concern at Adyar. The wish was often expressed but

he was not able to carry it out. When the present President, Dr Annie Besant, took office it was her first achievement to install a printing office at Adyar, namely, the Vasanta Press.

During the infancy of the concern only small pamphlets and booklets were printed. *The Adyar Bulletin*, a monthly organ for non-sectionalized countries, was first taken up by the Vasanta Press in January 1909, and a few months later, the printing of *The Theosophist* was undertaken. The Editor of *The Theosophist* who had been for many years in London the Editor of *Lucifer*, and later *The Theosophical Review*, chose to reproduce on the wrapper of *The Theosophist* the picture of the *Lucifer* printed in silver on a blue background. Some years later the cover changed to what it was two years ago.

Dr English and then Mrs [Marie] Russak looked after the subediting of *The Theosophist*. When Mr [C. W.] Leadbeater with Mr [Johan] van Manen arrived at Adyar the magazine received an impetus and the number of pages was increased. The number of copies printed rose to 4,000 in 1911.

Mr A. K. Sitarama Shastri established the Vasanta Press, Adyar, Madras (now Chennai), India, in 1904, which he managed until 1937. He became a member of the TS in 1892 and was a theosophical lecturer in South India from 1901–7. Reprinted from *The Theosophist*, vol. 51.1, October 1929, pp. 39–42.

The publication of “The Lives of Alcyone” and of “Orion and Erato” and articles of superphysical investigation added to the popularity of *The Theosophist*. Adyar then was frequently visited by members from foreign countries and the expansion of the compound began; lodgings for students from foreign countries were built, electric lighting and motive power was installed. These changes made it possible to drive the printing machinery by electric power.

It may not be out of place here to mention that for a year or two the Vasanta Press worked by hand power and printed *The Theosophist*. It was a hard business to drive the machines by hand power. All this time *The Theosophist* had been printed in small pica type and it was thought that a bigger type would add to the popularity of the magazine. In October of 1911 the bigger type was introduced and the palmy days of the magazine, which began with the advent of Mr Leadbeater, continued in full swing. The quality of paper, the type, the wealth of information contained in its pages and not only these, but also the magnetic names of the editor and Mr Leadbeater appearing as writers of articles, made *The Theosophist* a cherished monthly magazine.

One is apt to forget who all make a magazine great. Each one of the component parts of the machine should cooperate with every other. The writers of articles, the Editor and subeditors and their assistants, the printer and finally the dispatch office, all these have to be working wholeheartedly to earn credit for the

magazine. While writers like Dr Besant, C. W. Leadbeater, Johan van Manen and others wrote, subeditors and their helpers, such as Messrs B. P. Wadia, [W. T.] Brown, [T. L.] Crombie, Mrs [Julia H.] Cannan and Mrs Kerr proofread the articles and helped the printer; the dispatch department under the control of Mr B. P. Wadia was supervised by able hands like Mrs [Georgia] Gagarin, Miss De Leeuw, Miss [M.] McCulloch, Mrs Christoffel, and many others at different times helped in seeing that the dispatch work was quite up-to-date.

While we laboriously worked and reached the peak and maintained our position there with credit, the Great War came and, as it changed the face of the world in many ways, it worked against the prosperity of our magazine also. The Editor began to work more vigorously in politics; Mr B. P. Wadia, subeditor, also. All, but a tiny part of their attention, was transferred to the daily newspaper — *New India*. Mr Leadbeater left Adyar and so also Mr van Manen. I alone remained where I was and where still I am. The cost of production trebled and quadrupled; the number of subscribers gradually declined and what one may term a descending arc was rapidly being travelled through. The quality of articles did not demand strenuous study, the number of pages lessened, the subscribers’ roll fell and this latter because very few of our foreign subscribers could manage to have the necessary composure and leisure to study and think “[w]hile great events were on the gale, and each hour brought a varying

The Theosophist in the Vasanta Press

tale” from the battlefields. To augment these misfortunes the foreign mails were not carried regularly and the magazine often reached the foreign countries after long delay.

Ground once lost is always difficult to be regained in the department of magazines as in others. So we stand somewhere in the middle of the descending arc wherefrom strenuous efforts are being made by the worthy subeditors of the present day to regain the lost position. While the parent theosophical magazine was losing ground, there arose many a daughter magazine, one in almost every country. The local enthusiasm and patriotism push the daughter magazines; though it is a matter

of pride and self-congratulation, that the parent magazine cannot be overlooked, as the words of wisdom from the President of the TS have an eternal value for the young and the old alike.

I stay where I have been for these twenty years, very proud to be here, having from my co-workers and helpers in the Vasanta Press a very loving and hearty cooperation. Better days are dawning in that Mr C. W. Leadbeater is appearing on the horizon. More than thirty years ago, growth and expansion came when he came to Adyar. This time his coming must help the magazine again and I pray it will. I hope to be benefited by the dawning. So be it. ✧

Whatever the personal views of the two Founders, the journal of the Society has nothing to do with them, and will publish as willingly criticism directed against Lamaism as against Christianity. . . . *The Theosophist* making room as willingly for hymns on the Lamb as for slokas on the sacredness of the cow. . . . M.[orya] thinks that the Supplement ought to be enlarged if necessary, and made to furnish room for the expression of thought of every Branch, however diametrically opposed these may be. *The Theosophist* ought to be made to assume a distinct colour and become a unique specimen of its own. We are ready to furnish the necessary extra sums for it.

Mahatma Koot Hoomi

The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett

Letter 92 (chron. ed.), pp. 300, 301, 302. (ML-54)

Why the TS Left the Arya Samaj

K. DINAKARAN

OLD Dairy Leaves, the history of the Theosophical Society (TS) by Col. H. S. Olcott (HSO), the Founder-President of the TS, speaks on the historical facts of why the TS had to part its way with the Arya Samaj of Swami Dayānanda Saraswati, who was a prominent figure of the 19th century, instrumental in bringing about many reforms in the Hindu society of the time. His name was also popular in the West as a learned pandit coaching Prof. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit Professor at Oxford.

Both the TS and the Arya Samaj were inaugurated in the same year, 1875, one in Bombay (currently Mumbai) and the other in New York. Impartial historians will mark the role of both these organizations as profound influences in Indian Society as well as in the world at large. Col. Olcott begins ch. 25 of *Old Dairy Leaves* with the words: "If I should fail to introduce the episode of our brief and unpleasant connection with Swami Dayānanda Saraswati and his Arya Samaj, this could not be called a true history of the beginnings of our Society". The first issue of *The Theosophist* in October 1879 contains an autobiography of Swami Saraswati titled "Arya Prakash". H. P.

Blavatsky (HPB) also included two articles, "What Is Theosophy" and "What Are the Theosophists", and explains them in unequivocal terms.

The correspondence between the founders and the Arya Samaj started well before their arrival in the Indian soil in 1879. They were so longing to reach Indian soil, the cradle of many religions and the land of Great *Rishis* and Mahatmas, the holy land of the Vedas, Upanishads, the *Gītā* and Yogaśāstras. Their earlier acquaintance with India was only through books and the direct experiences of their Masters and fellow travellers. On 16 February 1879 HPB and Olcott entered the Bombay harbour. What they could find was only the splendour of the new order of things in which religion and philosophy had no part, and the sincerest worship was being paid to the Queen's image on the rupee! Olcott notes that it gave them the painful sensation of their first disillusionment.

Immediately on their arrival, three theosophists, Mooljee Thackersey, Pandit Shyamji Krishnavarma and Ballajee Sitarā welcomed them with open arms. They could not meet Hurrichund Chintamon, President of the Bombay Arya Samaj,

Mr K. Dinakaran is a long-term member of the Indian Section Council and Secretary of the Kerala Theosophical Federation.

Why the TS Left the Arya Samaj

with whom they had correspondence and who acted as a mediator between them and the Swami.

Olcott records that the first thing he did on touching Indian soil was to stoop down and kiss the granite step as an instinctive act of Hindu worship, or puja!

Although in May 1878 the General Council of the TS passed a vote to unite the TS and the Arya Samaj and change the title of the TS to “The Theosophical Society of the Arya Samaj”, the TS founders had never met the Swami. While they were at Agra they were visited by his local agent, who satisfactorily gave them the views of the chief of the Arya Samaj, so the TS founders decided to meet Swamiji on his return from Haridwar. Later HSO records that at every step they were misled on the teachings of this Swami.

They had a long discussion with Swami Saraswati on the subjects of *nirvāna*, *moksha*, and God, which were acceptable as per theosophical teachings. They also discussed the new rules of the TS, agreed to have a place in the Council, and gave full proxy powers to HSO in writing. The Swami also agreed to include the Buddhists, Parsis, Muslims, Hindus, and so on in the TS, but later on his altruistic eclecticism changed into sectarian exclusiveness and his gracious kindness into bitter abuse. His major work, *Satyārtha Prakāsh (The Light of Truth)* contains severe criticism and contempt of other religions that originated outside India like Islam, Christianity, Parsi, Judaism, and so on. He was also critical of religions originated in India like Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.

Hurrychund was initially acting on

behalf of the Swami and the Arya Samaj, but he was proved to have selfish designs. He hosted the founders at his own house as a gesture of Indian hospitality — *atithi devo bhava* (“a guest is God”). But later on he charged them an enormous amount of Rs 600 for rent, food, attendance, repairs to the house, the rent of chairs for the reception meeting, and even the cost of a cablegram he had sent them! Though the money was returned later on, the founders decided to stop all dealings with Hurrychund. Olcott recorded in his diary that the action of this Arya Samajist shattered their ideal of the progressive, patriotic, and fervently religious Hindu.

The TS’s principles are clearly stated by Olcott as follows:

The [Theosophical] Society teaches and expects its fellows to personally exemplify the highest morality and religious aspirations; to oppose the materialism of science and every form of dogmatic theology; . . . to make known among Western nations the long-suppressed *facts* about Oriental religious philosophies, their ethics, chronology, esoterism, symbolism; . . . to disseminate a knowledge of the sublime teachings of that pure esoteric system of the archaic period which are mirrored in the oldest Vedas, and in the philosophy of Gautama Buddha, Zoroaster, and Confucius; finally, and chiefly, to aid in the institution of a Brotherhood of Humanity, wherein all good and pure men of every race shall recognize each other as the equal effects (upon this planet) of one Un-Created, Universal, Infinite, and Everlasting Cause.

But the Swami’s strong view was: “The four texts of the Vedas shall be received

Why the TS Left the Arya Samaj

and regarded as containing within themselves all that is necessary to constitute them an extraordinary authority in all matters relating to human conduct.” He was silent on any other religious scripture being an authority in human conduct, nor any benevolent interest expressed in the religious welfare of non-Vedic peoples; in short, the Arya Samaj was a sectarian body, not eclectic. “The Swami . . . puts himself in opposition to the whole body of orthodox pandits, since he excludes from his list of inspirational books many that are held by them as sacred.” However, the Swami’s concept of God was that of the Vedāntic *parabrahman*, hence agreeable to the TS.

The Swami’s intolerance of other religious faiths was very high. He, losing his temper, tried to repudiate his own words and acts, and finally turned upon the founders with abuse and denunciations, put forth a circular to the public, and posted handbills in Bombay to call them charlatans! Olcott discovered that the Swami was simply a dogmatic pandit ascetic and not an adept at all. The Samaj was not standing upon the eclectic platform of the TS. The founders helping the Ceylon Buddhists and the Bombay Parsis to know and love their religions better than heretofore was not acceptable to the Swami, since he considered both false religions.

We have to note that in the India of that

time all these dogmatic pandits and so-called religious people were at the helm of affairs. In J. Krishnamurti’s *At the Feet of the Master* we read: “Think of the treatment which superstition has meted out to the depressed classes in our beloved India, and see in that how this evil quality can breed heartless cruelty even among those who know the duty of brotherhood.”

Although the four Vedas proclaimed the ONE Existence, ONE without a Second, an Omnipotent and Unthinkable Principle which exists, the so-called Vedāntists, pandits, and priesthood practiced untouchability and idolatry based on an anthropomorphic concept of God. The situation was not different even after 14 years when Dr Annie Besant visited India in 1893 and made a historical tour all over India.

It was also evident that the Arya Samaj was not similar in character with the TS, but rather a new sect of Hinduism. Olcott says: “Thus, after a disturbed relationship of about three years, the two societies were wrenched apart and each went on its own way.” However, Olcott had great regard for Swami Dayānanda Saraswati, and he added: “The Swami was undoubtedly a great man, a learned Sanskrit pandit, with immense pluck, force of will, and self-reliance — a leader of men. . . . The world is wide enough for us all, and it is better that we all should try to live together as brethren.” ✧

References

1. *Old Diary Leaves*, H. S. Olcott.
2. *At the Feet of the Master*, J. Krishnamurti.
3. *The Theosophist*, vol. 1, no. 1, October 1879.

Theosophical Work around the World

Italy and Ukraine — White Lotus Day

Each year on 8 May theosophists all over the world remember Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891) and her work.

H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) was not only one of the founders of the Theosophical Society (TS), but also the one who, through her writings, made the theosophical teachings available to the Western world.

This anniversary is called “White Lotus Day”, and this 130th year from the passing beyond the veil of matter of the great pioneer of Theosophy, it has assumed a special relevance.

This is because this year the Italian and Ukrainian Sections of the TS jointly celebrated White Lotus Day. The function was led by Mrs Svitlana Gavrylenko,

General Secretary of the TS in Ukraine, with an online Zoom event in the city they now call Dnipro, in Ukraine, which hosts HPB’s birthplace house.

The event, both in Russian and Italian, began with the canonical reading of some passages from *The Light of Asia* by Edwin Arnold, the *Bhagavadgitā*, and *The Voice of the Silence*; then four speeches were presented on the theme: “H. P. Blavatsky and Her Legacy in Today’s World”. The inspiring speakers were Yulia Shabanova, Natalia Berezhanska, Flavia Polignano, and Antonio Girardi, former General Secretary of the TS in Italy.

It was a meeting full of beauty and intensity, in the name of Universal Brotherhood without distinction. ✧

NOTICE

According to the Rules and Regulations of the Theosophical Society, the 146th International Convention will be held online, hosted by the International Headquarters at Adyar, Chennai, India, from 27 to 30 December 2021.

Marja Artamaa
International Secretary

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY

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1947	Africa, East and Central	... Mr Narendra M. Shah	... PO Box 14525. 00800, Westlands, Nairobi, Kenya	... <i>The Theosophical Light</i>	narendrashahi999@gmail.com
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