

## Freedom of Thought

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

## Freedom of the Society

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

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



# THE THEOSOPHIST

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**Cover:** H. P. Blavatsky (12.8.1831 – 8.5.1891) co-founded the Theosophical Society in 1875 in New York City and published *The Secret Doctrine* in 1888 (see p. 8)

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# THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

*Founded 17 November 1875*

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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.

# Address to New Members

TIM BOYD

I HAVE been thinking about that moment when I joined the Theosophical Society (TS) many years ago, and reminding myself about the feelings and hopes I had at that time, because joining the TS requires some thought, it is not something that you do casually.

So as a result of your own thought, feelings, and silence, you make a choice. The choice is: “I will be a part of something — the theosophical movement, the Theosophical Society.” Each of you has certain ideas, maybe expectations, of what lies ahead. This is a wonderful thing, but also it is something that you will continually have to re-examine within in yourself.

What is it that you are looking for in this association with the TS? For some of you there might be the idea that you are joining because it is a continuation of a family pattern. For generations, perhaps, there have been members of the family who have been associated with this movement, and now it is something that you think “I can take on”; that is one view.

For others there might be the idea that somehow you have glimpsed something that speaks about a deeper potential, that is possible for you to realize. Maybe you have been around people that when you

look at them you can see that they have some sense of peace or equanimity in them, and you wonder “Maybe this Theosophy has something to do with it”, and, if so, it is something that you want to be a part of; that is another way of seeing it.

One of the things that always becomes clear is that, as new members, you take a step today that leads you toward tomorrow; this is a long process. In order for someone to even have an interest, to have the sense that there is something of value to be found in this Theosophical Society, there has to have been a long process that has taken place not just in this lifetime, but in many lifetimes, bringing you closer and closer to your own association with Truth.

But now there is the moment when you make the conscious decision that you *will* proceed in this way, and this is a *very* important step, because now it is not just something that has been bubbling beneath the surface, it is something that you have decided and you commit yourself to act. This commitment has a powerful influence. What you will find is that with commitment come opportunities as well as challenges which otherwise would not have arisen. You will also find that as you are able to meet those challenges, something grows inside of you.

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One of the things very peculiar to this theosophical movement is that it was developed and founded by ordinary people. Our founders were great people: Henry S. Olcott, Helena P. Blavatsky, and a whole lineage of great members. But the actual movement of the TS was founded by great beings — the Masters of the Wisdom — who have always stood behind this movement. So in a very real sense, in making a connection with this movement, we make a connection with those great beings as well.

One of the things I was told when joining the Theosophical Society was that in doing so we become a link in a golden chain that stretches throughout humanity; each one of us is a link. So we both draw from others around us, and we also add to the strength of those who are around us. In our theosophical life we often find that a lot of what we do is done while we are alone. Sometimes it is possible to feel a sense of isolation that we are laboring and moving alone against a current in this world. But always behind and beneath there is a support that we can avail ourselves of; we can always tap into it. This particular moment, when we welcome our new members, is focused on that.

This is a moment when not just the new members and the international President meet. It is when other members of the TS surround you so that you can know that now, and in every moment to come, you are supported by individuals, but more importantly you are supported by a Wisdom Tradition. The more deeply and sincerely that you contact that pre-

sence, the more profound will be your influence in the world around you and the support that flows to you. That is why we are here to congratulate you on the step you have chosen to take.

We are also here to remind you that not just in this moment, but in all moments going forward, there is a group of supportive co-pilgrims on the Path. We are here to help you to build for yourselves the future that comes from making this very important choice. So we welcome you.

At many meetings that you *will be* attending in the future, there is an invocation which is said, a Universal Prayer written by Annie Besant, which expresses the universal sense of the divine and ever-present support for each and every one of you. I will say it first, and then I will ask all of you to stand and recite it together. This Universal Prayer speaks to three things that are hidden, unseen but ever-active within each and every one of us. First: “O hidden life, vibrant in every atom.”

Second, there is a light that also has a power, it is always present, but it is hidden, not just in us, but in *everything*. As you become able to see more clearly, you find that it is present in everything. At a certain point in our unfoldment it ceases to be hidden: “O hidden light, shining in every creature.” How often are we able to see this? *Everything* that exists comes into being through this hidden life, this hidden light.

So we say this Universal Prayer in order to tune our minds and our hearts to

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look for it: the hidden light that is *always* shining in every creature. Very often in our day-to-day circumstances we find ourselves faced with “problem people”. Sometimes it is difficult to acknowledge that just as there is a rose, there is a thorn, and that the same source creating the rose, creates the thorn. In order to see that and to act accordingly, there is this emphasis on the hidden light that is shining in every creature.

And third: “O hidden love, embracing all in oneness.” Very often we use the word “spirituality”. The whole basis of spirituality is oneness — the recognition, acknowledgement, and experience of oneness. Everything that relates to unity and unifying is based on love. Love, at whatever level we experience it, unites us. If it is just with our beloved friends, our husbands, our wives, there is a union that takes place. But the hidden love that animates the universe is the one that stands

behind every form of life; it embraces everything equally in oneness.

This is the Universal Prayer. You will hear it, will say it, and ideally at some point will find yourself actually meditating on it and deepening it, driving its seed more and more deeply into your consciousness. With that, it will come to life; if you nourish the seed, it will come to life. And as with any seed, it has its own growth pattern, its own direction. Your role is to nourish it and tend it, to allow its life-giving force to come to the fore.

So I will ask all of us to please stand and we can recite “O Hidden Life”:

O hidden Life, vibrant in every atom;  
O hidden Light, shining in every creature;  
O hidden Love, embracing all in Oneness;  
May all who feel themselves as one  
with Thee,  
Know they are therefore one with  
every other. ◇

Whatever the personal views of the two Founders, the journal of the Society [*The Theosophist*] 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.

Koot Hoomi

*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*

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

# Among the Adepts: Madame Blavatsky on *The Secret Doctrine*

ANNIE BESANT

IT would be difficult to find a book presenting more difficulties to the “reviewer with a conscience” than these handsome volumes bearing the name of Madame [H. P.] Blavatsky as author — or, perhaps, it would be more accurate to say, as compiler and annotator. The subject matter is so far away from the beaten paths of literature, science, and art; the point of view so removed from our Occidental fashion of envisaging the universe; the lore gathered and expounded so different from the science or the metaphysics of the West, that to 99 out of every 100 readers — perhaps to 999 among every 1,000 — the study of the book will begin in bewilderment and end in despair.

Let it be said at once that the great majority of average easy-going folk will do well not to begin *The Secret Doctrine* (*SD*) at all. A certain mental position must be acquired ere any reading thereof can be aught save weariness and futility. The would-be reader must have an intense desire *to know*, and to know not merely the relations between pheno-

mena but the causes of phenomena; he must be eagerly searching for that bridge between matter and thought, between the vibrating nerve-cell and percipency, which the late Professor Clifford declared had never yet been thrown across the gulf that sunders them; he must be free from the preposterous conceit (that exists now as really for the psychical universe as it did in the days of Copernicus for the physical) that this world and its inhabitants are the only inhabited world and the only intelligent beings in the universe; he must recognize that there may be, and most probably are, myriads of existences invisible, inaudible, to us, because we have no senses capable of responding to the vibrations that they set up, and which are therefore non-existent to us, although in full activity, just as there are rays at either end of the solar spectrum quite as real as the visible rays although invisible to us.

If only the nerve ends of our eyes and ears could respond to higher and lower rates of vibration, who can tell what new worlds, more and less “material” than our

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**Dr Annie Besant** was the second international President of the Theosophical Society from 1907 to 1933. Article reprinted from *The Theosophist*, August 1889, pp. 696–8.)

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own, might not flash into our consciousness, what sights and sounds might not reach us from spheres interblended with our own? A deep-sea fish, aware that his comrades explode if they are dragged to the surface, and knowing nought of life conditions other than his own, might, if he were a rash deep-sea fish, deny the possibility of other intelligent beings inhabiting the upper regions of the sea or the land invisible to him. And so we may, if we are rash, deny all lives save those led on our globe at the bottom of our air-ocean, and human deep-sea fishes had better leave Madame Blavatsky's volumes alone.

None the less is her book at once remarkable and interesting — remarkable for its wide range of curious and ancient lore, interesting for the light it throws on the religions of the world. For as she unrolls the *SD* we catch sight of familiar faces in the imagery that passes under our eyes, now Egyptian and now Jewish, now Persian and now Chinese, now Indian and now Babylonian, until slowly the feeling grows up that she is showing us the rock whence all these faiths were hewn, the complete cosmogony whereof these have presented disjointed fragments. Inevitably the question arises: "Have we here, from the Aryans who rocked the cradle of the world's civilization, the source of all the master-religions as well as of the master-races of the Earth?"

The first volume of *SD* is divided into three parts — an exposition of Cosmic Evolution, of the Evolution of Symbol-

ism, and of the contrast between Science and the "Secret Doctrine". Of these the first will most repel and the third will most attract. For the first is a metaphysical treatise wherein the Hindu brain, subtlest and most mystic of all mental organisms, expounds Being and the beginning of beings in a fashion that no Western intellect can rival. The causeless Cause, the rootless Root, whence spirit and matter alike differentiate, is the One Existence — hidden, absolute, eternal indistinguishable by us from non-existence in that it has no form that can enable us to cognise it. From this all that exists proceeds; in itself Be-ness — why not Existence? — then Becoming, and the Becoming alone can be intelligible to us.

From this one primal element, whereof all phenomena are transmutations, and then a hierarchy of existences in linked order, the gradual evolution of a universe. In reading this "origin of things", as in reading all others, there is the constant feeling of unsatisfied desire for evidence, despite the sweep of conception and the coherency of the whole. Of course the claim set up is that this "Secret Doctrine" comes from those who know, know with scientific certainty, not with mere guess and groping, from the Arhats, the Wise Ones of the East, whose disciple Madame Blavatsky claims to be. But then we crave for some proof of the revealers.

As regards the metaphysics, here again once more there is the feeling of the breakdown of language, the contradictions in which the mind is involved

when it strives to grasp the ever-elusive ultimates of being. However flexible and subtle in its shades of meaning Sanskrit may be, our Occidental tongues, at least, stumble into maddening confusion amid the shadowy forms and no forms of the Thing in itself, and when it comes to symbolizing existence as a boundless circle, using a word that implies limitation, and is empty of meaning without it, in connection with the absence of limitation, what can one do save admit that we have passed out of the region in which language is useful as conveying concepts, and that before the mystery of existence silence is more reverent than self-contradictory speech?

Very briefly and roughly put, the idea is that Be-ness evolves spirit and matter, spirit descending further and further into matter in search of experience not otherwise attainable, evolving all forms; it reaches the lowest point, commences its reascent, evolves through mineral, vegetable, animal, until it attains self-consciousness in man: then in man, with his sevenfold nature, it climbs upward, spiritualizing him as he evolves, until the grosser body and the animal passions are purged away, and his higher principles united to Ātma, the spark of the divine spirit within him, reach their goal, the absolute existence whence they originally came, carrying with them all the gains of their long pilgrimage.

This process implies, of course, manifold reincarnations for each human spirit as it climbs the many steps at whose summit alone is Rest. Only when a certain

height is touched comes memory of the past, and then the purified spirit can gaze backwards over the stages of its ascent.

Passing over Part II, on Symbolism, we find Madame Blavatsky, in Part III, in full tilt against modern science, not as against its facts, but as against its more recondite theories. It is an easy task for her to show that great scientific thinkers are at issue with each other as to the constitution of the ether, the essence of "matter" and of "force", and she claims that the Occultist has the knowledge after which the scientist is only groping, and that at least, among the warring theories, Occultism may demand a hearing.

Some of the theories now put forward, indeed, come very near to occult views, and make scientifically possible some of the startling manifestations of occult power. Newton's view, for instance, that "gravity must be caused by an agent acting constantly according to certain laws", is in unison with the Occultist's assertion that all the "forces" in Nature are actions of Intelligences, working ceaselessly, though invisibly to us, in the universe; while much of the speculation of Butlerof and Crookes almost touches Occult teaching.

The Ākāsa of the Occultist is, as it were, the "matter-force" after which Science is groping, the parent of all phenomena. Within our terrestrial sphere, on the plane of the universe accessible to our physical senses, Science is accurate as to vibrations and so on; where it fails, says the Occultist, is in supposing that these are all, that on these lines of

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investigation can ever be discovered the nature, say, of light or colour; there are planes above ours on which matter exists in other modifications, in other conditions; on those must be sought the causes whereof science studies the effects, the true nature of our physical phenomena.

The Atom, that strange conception of the physicist, elastic yet indivisible, is to the Occultist a soul, “a centre of potential activity”, differentiated from the One Soul of the universe, “the first born of the ever-concealed Cause of all causes”, building up the visible universe. Instead of matter “inert” and “inanimate”, clashing through eternities, flinging up here a sun and there a world, and finally evolving thought, the Occultist sees Intelligence robing itself in matter, energizing, guiding, controlling, animating all that is. The antithesis could not be sharper, and one or other solution of the problem of problems must be accepted by the philosopher. Which?

The second volume of Madame Blavatsky’s work deals with the human being, the first part being occupied with his genesis, the second with the symbolism of his religions, the third with the contrast between the Occult and the scientific views of his evolution. Of these the first will be met with the most furious and contemptuous resistance, for briefly this is the theory: Man as he is now, with his sevenfold nature — physical body, vital principle, “astral body”, animal soul, human or rational soul, human spirit, divine spirit — was not created off-hand complete.

The First Race was created, breathed out of their own substance, by the beings who built our world, and was spiritual, ethereal, sexless, and of slight intelligence; the Second Race was produced by gemmation from the First, more material than its progenitor and asexual.

The Third Race was produced oviparously, and among these separation of the sexes appeared gradually, the earlier being androgynous, the later distinctly male and female; the intellectual development was still very low, for spirit had not yet become sufficiently clothed with matter for self-conscious thought. Of this race in its later stages were the dwellers in Atlantis and the Lemurians, among them the birth of religions, astronomical and sexual.

Of these was born the Fourth Race, the giants, the “men of renown”, in whom we touch the “purely human period”. (A curious excursus on the “third eye”, which occurs here, receives remarkable confirmation from some of the latest scientific speculations on the pineal gland.) Now begins civilization, and the building of great rock cities, and the physical and intellectual nature of man develops “at the cost of the psychic and the spiritual”; the huge statues and remains found in Easter Island, Bamian [or Bamiyan, Central Asia] and other spots, bear witness to the great size of their makers, as do the vast dwellings and the “enormous human bones” of Misorte [in ancient America].

With the Fifth Race we pass into the domain of history, and to this the present

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races of men belong. Far away as, at first sight, all this seems from Occidental science, yet the careful reader will mark the curious analogies between this occult view of human evolution and the scientific view of the evolution of living things on our globe, an evolution still shown in broad outline in the individual development of each human being from ovum to man.

Madame Blavatsky's views may not meet with acceptance, but they are supported by sufficient learning, acuteness and ability to enforce a respectful hearing. It is indeed the East which, through her, challenges the West, and the Orient need not be ashamed of its champion. We have here but given a few fragments of her lore, and injustice is necessarily

done by such treatment to a coherent whole. The book deserves to be read; it deserves to be thought over; and none who believes in the progress of humanity has the right to turn away over-hastily from any contribution to knowledge, however new in its form, from any theory, however strange in its aspect.

The wild dreams of one generation become the commonplaces of a later one, and all who keep an open door to Truth will give scrutiny to any visitant, be the garb of Asia or of Europe, be the tongue of Paris or of Ind. If this counsel be of folly or of falsehood, it shall come to naught, but if of Truth ye cannot overthrow it. Passing strange is it. Of the truth in it our superficial examination is insufficient to decide. ◇

... it was learned that a niece of [Albert] Einstein's, in India during the 1960s, paid a special visit to the headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar. She explained that she knew nothing of Theosophy or the Society, but had to see the place because her uncle always had a copy of Madame [H. P.] Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* on his desk. The individual to whom the niece spoke was Eunice Layton, a world-traveled theosophical lecturer who happened to be at the reception desk when she arrived. While in Ojai, California, in January 1982, Sylvia Cranston met Mrs Eunice Layton, who confirmed the story.

Sylvia Cranston

*HPB — The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement*, 1994, p. 567–568

# *The Voice of the Silence:* A Paradoxical Guide to Living

BARBARA HEBERT

SO many books have been written expanding on the themes in H. P. Blavatsky's (HPB) *The Voice of the Silence* (*The Voice*). So many wonderful students have spoken — and will speak — about it. It is humbling to contemplate the possibility of sharing anything in a few pages that has not already been shared. On the other hand, the synergy of many thinking along the same lines, contemplating these mystical and frequently paradoxical instructions for walking the Path, allows us to expand our understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

This reminds me of a portion of *The Mahatma Letters*, No. 59 Barker (ML #59; #111 chron.) in which the Master Koot Hoomi (KH) writes to A. P. Sinnett:

Try. "Nothing was ever lost by trying." You share with all beginners the tendency to draw too absolutely strong inferences from partly caught hints, and to dogmatize thereupon as though the last word had been spoken. You will correct this in due time. You may misunderstand us, are more than likely to do so, for our language must

always be more or less that of parable and suggestion, when treading upon forbidden ground; we have our own peculiar modes of expression and what lies behind the fence of words is even more important than what you read. But still — TRY.

Therefore, we will follow the words of the Master and TRY.

*The Voice* is a mystical book. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines mystical as having a spiritual meaning or reality that is neither apparent to the senses nor obvious to the intelligence; and involving or having the nature of an individual's direct subjective communion with God or ultimate reality.

When we read or study *The Voice*, we must do so with the intuition, or *buddhi-manas*, because we are having a direct and subjective communion with the Ultimate Reality; a communion that is neither apparent to the senses nor obvious to the intelligence or the mind (*kāma-manas*). I am reminded of teaching poetry to high-school students who tried to read and understand every word literally.

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**Dr Barbara Hebert** is President of the Theosophical Society in America. Talk delivered at the Krotona Institute of Theosophy, Ojai, California, on 26 January 2019.

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It cannot be done. We have to read beyond the words. Or, more beautifully stated by Sangharakshita in his booklet, *Paradox and Poetry in The Voice of the Silence*:

It is as though the hand, which transcribed [these fragments] for the good of humanity and dedicated them “To the Few”, had written in letters of fire above the sanctuary portal an awful warning that here was ground upon which the intellect could not tread, where only a chastened and sublimated spiritual intuition that worked not within the narrow bounds of formal logic could possibly hope to gain admittance. (p. 7).

With that warning in mind, we will try to gain insight from some of the paradoxical statements in *The Voice*; paradoxical statements that according to Sangharakshita are “a method of awakening Soul-Wisdom” (p. 7). Fragment I, verses 58–62 of *The Voice*, provide a useful place to begin this exploration:

Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become that Path itself.

Let thy soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun.

Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer’s eye.

But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain, nor ever brush it off, until the pain that caused it is removed.

These tears, O thou of heart most merciful, these are the streams that irrigate the fields of charity immortal. ’Tis on such soil that grows the midnight blossom of Buddha, more difficult to find, more rare to view than is the flower of the Vogay tree. It is the seed of freedom from rebirth. It isolates the Arhat both from strife and lust; it leads him through the fields of being unto the peace and bliss known only in the land of silence and non-being.

When we think of the Spiritual Path, most of us perceive it as something linear with a beginning and an end. Merriam Webster defines a path as a “trodden way; a track specially constructed for a particular use”. It is an external way for us to arrive at our goal. However, Verse 58 presents us with a paradox. We cannot walk the path until we become the path. What does this mean? How do we become the path? Becoming the path — becoming anything — requires an internal transformation.

This verse, “Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become that Path itself”, indicates that the path is not an external walkway, a linear walkway, allowing us to reach some end point; rather, it is an internal journey.

As Joy Mills writes in her book *From Inner to Outer Transformation*: “We are not separate from the path, from the process . . . we are examining ourselves, our motives, our inmost nature, the very roots of our being. Examining every aspect of ourselves. Nothing must go unexamined.” (p. 37) It is through this self-examination,

self-observation, that we can begin to make this internal transformation. Throughout *The Voice*, we are encouraged — admonished even — to engage in self-examination; from the beginning of Fragment I, verses 4 and 5: “The mind is the great slayer of the Real. Let the disciple slay the slayer.” to “Give up thy life, if thou wouldest live.” (I, 21); “Before that path is entered, thou must destroy thy lunar body, cleanse thy mind-body, and make clean thy heart.” (I, 51); “Step out from sunlight into shade, to make more room for others.” (II, 140); and on through Fragment III: “Thou shalt not let thy senses make a playground of thy mind.” (III, 218)

It is this internal journey which is our daily work. Each and every day, hour, and minute, we must engage in self-observation. Why? Because once we become aware that there is something “more” than this phenomenal world; once we become aware of the glimmer of light that exists, it is almost impossible to turn away. We are compelled to move forward, or rather inward. No one makes us do it. We choose it. As Joy says, walking this path is a “self-chosen responsibility”.

She relates the story of a zaddik, a Jewish holy man, jailed in Northern White Russia several hundred years ago for his views and opinions. His jailers taunted him, asking him: If your God is omnipotent and omniscient, why did He call into the Garden of Eden saying, “Adam, where art thou?”

As Joy says, “It does seem a rather ridiculous question — if God had only

two people to look after, how could he lose one half of humanity?” But the zaddik replied, “Yes, God is omniscient. Because it was not that God did not know where Adam was, but Adam did not know where he was.” Adam replied: “I hid myself.” Joy says that we are also in hiding. Do we know who we are? Do we know where we are?

It is this “divine discontent” that pushes us onto the path from which it is almost impossible to turn away. At some point, we heard the call, “Where are you?” We realized then, on some level, that we were “in hiding” so we began the journey to find ourselves. It is a journey that takes us far and wide, yet we never have to physically move from our location. It is the journey of becoming the path.

Where does this journey begin? It begins every single moment and can be measured by the way we act in the world. Some might question this statement, asking if our journey should not be measured by the degree and amount of knowledge we have. Certainly knowledge encompasses part of the journey, as seen in Fragment I, when the three Halls are discussed.

Many of us, as theosophists, love the Hall of Learning, that is, we love to read, to study, to discuss, to increase our understanding of the metaphysical concepts which have been shared with us. We must have knowledge, but there is danger in this particular hall, says *The Voice*. Verse 26 says: “In it thy soul will find the blossoms of life, but under every flower a serpent coiled.” How easily we

can become caught up in “slicing and dicing” the metaphysical concepts that have been shared with us so that we can increase our understanding! But knowledge is clearly not enough. We must move beyond the Hall of Learning to the Hall of Wisdom. Verse 33 urges us to flee from the Hall of Learning: “This Hall is dangerous in its perfidious beauty, is needed but for thy probation.”

Therefore, our inward journey, as long as we live in this phenomenal world, must be measured by our outer actions. It has been said that words have no value unless actions are taken. Another variation of this saying is: “In the end, it’s not the talk, but the walk that matters.”

Marie Poutz, who lived at Krotona and was an amazing woman and Theosophist, discussed the question of right action. Ms Poutz, as she was known, said the difference was not between right action and wrong action but rather between love and not-love.

She described love as actions that awaken the immortal spirit within others. Is that not what we want for those we love — to find the beauty of their true selves? She described not-love as any action that helps to obscure the interior light of another. So, if we look at any action we may take, not as right or wrong, but rather as “Is this action love or not-love”, we are then acting every moment in recognition of the divinity in all. Joy writes:

There are many lonely people in the world, so many who have suffered loss of one kind or another, and above all, there are

those who are hungry for understanding, for truth, for the wisdom which the theosophical worldview has to offer. We may not have all the answers, and indeed none of us can have all the answers, but we can speak from the heart, and if we cannot speak, we can reach out with a smile. That action will always be right which flows from love, from the heart.

The choice of ways is always present before us. We can live in such a manner that our very presence in the world brings, according to verse 158: “light and comfort to the toiling pilgrim, and [in such a way that we] seek out him who knows still less than thou.”

What better instructions for daily living can we receive than this? How simple, and yet how profound. As we engage in self-examination, how often can we say that we have spent the day in actions that flow from the heart? That our actions brought light and comfort to others? That we have shared what we know with others? A caveat here — we do not have to “preach Theosophy” or even to use theosophical terms in sharing what we have learned. Rather, it is incumbent upon us to meet others where *they* are and to use *their* language so that they can hear. Truth is Truth, regardless of its clothing.

Fragment II describes two paths — the Open Path and the Secret Path — and between these two paths, we will choose one. Returning to Joy Mills again in *From Inner to Outer Transformation*, she says: “As is evident throughout *The Voice of the Silence*, and indeed throughout all

## *The Voice of the Silence: A Paradoxical Guide to Living*

of HPB's writings, the dharma, or way, inherent in the theosophical worldview is that of the Bodhisattva, the path of renunciation." Ours is the Secret Path: as Theosophists, we live to serve humanity.

Every time we act from the heart, we are choosing love over not-love, we are preparing, or perhaps even beginning, to walk the Secret Path — the Bodhisattva Way — that provides the archetype for us to follow. It is our guide to living.

The other verses mentioned earlier (58 to 62) remind us that we are to become the very embodiment of compassion:

Let thy soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun.

Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye.

But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain, nor ever brush it off, until the pain that caused it is removed.

This is the Bodhisattva way. And then the final verse:

These tears, O thou of heart most merciful,

these are the streams that irrigate the fields of charity immortal. 'Tis on such soil that grows the midnight blossom of Buddha, more difficult to find, more rare to view than is the flower of the Vogay tree. It is the seed of freedom from rebirth. It isolates the Arhat both from strife and lust; it leads him through the fields of being unto the peace and bliss known only in the land of silence and non-being.

The compassion that we feel, "these tears" are the foundation or "seed of freedom from rebirth". It is the very beginning of the Path of the Bodhisattva.

Compassion, says *The Voice*, is "the Law of laws — eternal harmony" (III, 300). We are enjoined to become "compassion absolute" (III, 301). Then verse 307: "Compassion speaks and saith: Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?"

As Theosophists, we answer "No", because we have chosen — self-chosen — the Path of Renunciation for the sake of humanity. We will remain with humanity until all pain is removed, until all suffering is gone, until the world cries no more.



**Harmony is the inlet of God [Brahman] into the mind, so that the mind acts in obedience to a law above mind — and that law is unity. Unity is the Nature of God, and harmony is its expression in mind and in the works of mind.**

Ernest Wood  
*The Bhagavad Gita Explained*, p. 196

## *Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom*

“No religion can prove by *practical*, scientific demonstration that there is such a thing as one *personal* God; while the esoteric philosophy, or rather *theosophy* of Gautama Buddha and Sankaracharya *prove* and give means to every man to ascertain the undeniable presence of a living God in man himself — whether one believes in or calls his divine indweller Avalokiteswara, Buddha, Brahma, Krishna, Jehovah, Bhagawan, Ahura-mazda, Christ, or by whatever name — there is no such God outside of himself. The former — the one ideal outsider — *can never be demonstrated*; the latter, under whatever appellation, may always be found present if a man does not extinguish within himself the capacity to perceive this Divine presence, and hear the “voice” of that only manifested deity, the murmurings of the Eternal *Vach*, called by the Northern and Chinese Buddhist Avalokiteswara and Kwan-Shai-yin, and by the Christians — *Logos*.<sup>2</sup>”

H. P. Blavatsky  
*Collected Writings*, vol. V, p. 100

# To Flow Is to Change

CLEMICE PETTER

MOST of us are familiar with the teachings of the Buddha, who said that we suffer because of attachment, which means we suffer because we cling to things, situations, people, beliefs, conclusions, and so many other things that it is impossible to list them all. However, the fact is that we suffer because we would like to mold Life, to tell what it should be, what direction it should move towards, and in which way it should happen.

We also try to mold people; we believe that if the person is our son, daughter, wife, or husband, or related to us in any way, we have the right to shape their life, their beliefs, or even their faith. We have developed such beliefs simply because we do not love people for who they are, but we expect them to fulfill our desires and wishes. As long as people play the role designed by us, we say we love them. But as soon something falls out of the plan, we no longer “love” them. In fact, we have never even seen them; we have only seen our own desires and fantasies.

We say we love our children, but it does not seem to be true, because when we love

someone it is a delight to see life unfolding through that person, but we are scared of that unfoldment, simply because deep inside, we know that we cannot control it, and to control is very important in our relations.

Then we come across another situation — we also like to think that we know what will make other people happy. If this were true — if we knew what makes for happiness — we would be happy people, which does not seem to be so. It is important to realize that happy people are lost in happiness, and therefore have no time or interest in criticizing or judging. It is only the unhappy that occupy themselves with someone else’s life.

Buddha’s teachings also say that happiness on this earth is possible. He talks about the path of righteousness and Unity of life. He says: “Do not kill.” And for most of us killing is only a physical phenomenon. We never look at the killing that is going on at subtle levels. We are too materialistic to look at somebody and think that what animates that body is of a subtle nature, a delicate flower that is struggling to open up and spread its perfume into

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the world. We need to see that everyone is a unique gift given to the world, and each one has some special talent which, if allowed to bloom, will fulfill a gap in the network in which human life unfolds.

A child is full of life, happiness, and curiosity that gradually disappear as the years go by. We never look at this and ask: Why does this happen?" It seems to me that this is deeply related to the fact that we try to shape the child's behavior from the very beginning and, feeling strait-jacketed, without freedom to move, to flow, the fragile flower trying to open to life slowly withers away. And at the end of the period of this monstrosity that we call education, we have a dead entity, a young man or woman who is nothing but a cog in the killing wheel developed by the rigidity of rules and formulas, a world created by the mind, a world without mercy.

After the education period in which the child is molded, shaped, and the spontaneous flow is lost, we have an adult ready to shape others and to make life as miserable to them as it feels to himself. This is because death is all he knows, he cannot tolerate life in any form, he will shape the environment in which he lives, interfere with the rhythm of Nature, destroy forests, and pollute the air. At the pinnacle of insanity, he will kill the rivers, which are the source of all life on this planet, without realizing what he is doing and its consequences. Today we are witnessing cities suffering without water, and at the same time a stinking substance runs in rivers where some years ago fresh, clean water was available for human consumption.

It seems that not even the fact that many of us are living in highly polluted cities, where the air carries into our system poisoning substances and where children cannot play outside the house in the open air because it is not safe in many ways, not even this has been capable of making us think. One wonders what else can make us think. Are we such stupid species incapable of seeing the obvious that is going on in our own house? We talk about God and about Love in temples, churches, mosques because we consider these places to be sacred. What about Life? Is it not the highest sacred thing, to be honored and cared for? We worship buildings made of stone and live a desert life. We talk about a perfect time and place, heaven, while creating hell on Earth.

We have neglected life to such an extent that it is withdrawing from the planet where humans have grown from savage to civilized and sophisticated beings. So the question is: Is civilization synonymous with disregard for life? Is it synonymous with competition, violence and greed? If so, maybe it would have been better if we, the human race, had remained savages, at least the planet would have been safe from our increasing stupidity. The fact is that we, as we are today, are a danger to ourselves and to the environment in which we live. It is time that we change the mode in which our mind operates. From competition, that leads to war and destruction, to co-operation, that leads to inner growth and development.

Because the mind, which is a tool, has

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been left running without intelligent direction, it is making life impossible on Earth. Please do not think we are not contributing to the present crisis as, after all, some of us are fighting for human rights or animal welfare or even protecting Nature. However, this “I”, this “me” is beating hard, and while we are doing all this, at home, we are killing those with whom we share the same roof.

We kill our children when we choose for them, when we tell them all about life and love, what they are and what they are not, when we do not allow them to find out for themselves — it is out of fear of life that we try to shape our children. We kill our wife or husband when we expect something from them. We kill the unfortunate ones who have no other choice in life other than to work for us, we kill them when we expect them to do everything the way we want them to, not allowing any expression of creativity. There is no respect for the humans under our control in our working places.

We do not see a human being working, we see a lifeless machine that has to produce as much as we want, as much as we think it should, and we see our interest threatened if they do not fulfill what is expected, for, after all, we are paying them. We really believe that we can buy people’s most precious gift, which is Life, with money; this is the highest sin and the most disgusting crime against Love. Today, with all our technology, we are killing faster than ever. Since the industrial revolution we have destroyed the environment in which we live more than ever

before, and depression among people has become as common as the flu. And still we do not care to stop and look, in order to understand what is going on.

We can call ourselves brothers and sisters as much as we wish, but if we cannot feel it, those words become knives cutting out whatever little sensitiveness is left in our hearts. So if you do not feel something in your blood as part of your being, do not repeat it, because the repetition of something not understood, that is not in our heart, becomes a poisoning lie that dulls the heart and sickens the soul.

After all, we are those children from whom life was taken away and to whom all kinds of atrocities happened in school life, at home, and in relation with other kids. Knowing this, what is there left for us, other than being part of this monstrous world? To find out what has happened to us, and how all that happened has shaped our lives, is the work of those who wish to live. This is not in order to change ourselves, because if we think in terms of a change, that this “I” will bring about, there will be no change at all, it will be just an adjustment into another facet of the same old structure, because this “I” and the society are one and the same.

However, if one can be aware of how the mind has been shaped through beliefs, formulas, and conclusions, then we may come upon a different kind of understanding about life. And it is only then that there will be a possibility for the flow of life to run free, without the walls of the “me” preventing its course.

Saint Francis of Assisi wrote a wonder-

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ful song, and in it he says that in order to live, we need to die. We need to die to all our conditionings, all that which is mechanical, because all mechanical behavior is the expression of a dead entity. To live, to be alive, means to flow, and to flow is to change. But we are desperately trying to avoid changes. The missing factor in this is that only dead things never change; when there is no flow, no change, only stagnation with its bad smell and ugly features remain. It is a law of Nature that all which is dead will sooner or later rot away.

The journey in a physical body is short for some, and for others quite long; it does not matter much either way. What matters is to be aware that it is just a journey; it will change scenarios many times. In the same way, when we travel in a train or in a car, as we move we may see beautiful mountains, poor villages, and cities with their noise, beauty, and dirt. All kinds of things and people cross our way, but the moment we want to retain and stay with the mountains and avoid the dirty cities, struggle and suffering begin.

This does not mean that we cannot enjoy the journey; it means that we should be like a guest in a foreign land — whatever is given, we simply enjoy and do not demand for more or something else, because life knows best what is in store, built by our own thoughts and actions. To ask for something we do not deserve makes us indebted to Mother Nature.

Here one has to be very careful, because many people translate the flow of life into the fulfillment of their own desires, which means to indulge in all kinds of

things and call it the flow of life. To flow with life requires awareness and discrimination from the beginning until the last breath. It is not an irresponsible way of life, just the contrary, to flow one has to feel tremendously responsible. To flow is to be light, not to carry any weight; to flow one needs to strip oneself of all desires, wants, and identifications, such as nationality, race, culture, and family, which are the stumbling blocks preventing the joy of life.

Here again there is a very delicate point — family. It does not mean that one should abandon one's family; it rather means that one should have no sense of separation as "my" family, so, my responsibility is only with them. It means that we belong to one family, the *human* family. And we can go a step further: it means that we belong to the Universal Family. *All* that lives on this or any other planet, or in any part of the Cosmos is part of us, therefore it *is* our family, and as such, we are responsible for each other and for the whole Universe. There is only one life, and whether we can see it or not is a different matter. If we live in the illusion of the "me" and "you", the "we" and "they", then suffering and death are guaranteed.

Mind is a difficult tool to manage; it creates all kinds of illusions, and the difficulty lies in the fact that those who are deluded cannot see that what they see is illusion. To avoid such painful situations we need to understand the tool, which means, we need to understand how this illusion-maker works, how it kills the Real and replaces it with illusions.

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As with any tool, to manage it with mastery we need to understand its mechanism, its engine, so we need to look at it, give attention to it. There is no other way to learn about anything; we need to have the interest, the urge. We need to learn the art of doubting: not to believe our own conclusions and interpretations. To look at life with a scientific mind, a mind that is always learning is the key in the process of understanding life, and therefore ourselves.

To be aware that the mind is incapable of dealing with changes, and to learn that it is the mind that is trying to keep life imprisoned in the high towers of beliefs, conclusions, certainties, and tradition may help to avoid crystallization. However, life cannot be put into a prison — it runs out and only death is left in its place. Because the mind is blind, it cannot see that life has gone, so it keeps cherishing a dead body as if it was a living one. To change is the most difficult thing, because we have

built strong walls of resistance. Some of them are old friends, such as knowledge as conclusion, tradition, beliefs, and many others which make for the formation of groups and separate us from each other, and sooner or later animosity among any groups will arise.

Mind likes to control, to have everything organized and functioning as a clock; the moment something does not happen in the planned way, it cannot deal with it anymore, and at that moment war is born; it may be a small war, between husband and wife, but still war. So, all violence is the explosion of despair for control. To change is to die to the dimension of violence, greed, anger, envy, competition, and ignorance, and to be born into the dimension of Universal Living, where Love and Compassion are the children of understanding the oneness of life, where mind works as a tool directed by intelligence, whose nature *is* Love and Compassion. To flow is to live in the dimension of Light.



**Devotee: Does not education make a sage more useful to the world than illiteracy?**

**Maharshi:** Even a learned man must bow before the illiterate sage. Illiteracy is ignorance: education is learned ignorance. Both of them are ignorant of their true aim; whereas a sage is not ignorant because there is no aim for him.

*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*

# Towers of Infinite Thought

NICHOLAS C. WEEKS

SACRED places of initiation are mentioned in H. P. Blavatsky's (HPB) *Isis Unveiled* and many other passages in theosophical writings. While the altruistic function of these initiation temples is made clear, what span of wisdom, power, and virtue was fixed in their minds is known only to the initiates. The function is described as a mastery of life and wisdom:

A mastery gained through the unfolding in the individual of the spiritual and intellectual powers and faculties which are innate and native to all men, but which require "evolving", or bringing forth or unfolding, partly by self-induced efforts in training, and partly by teaching given in the initiation chambers.<sup>1</sup>

The "Towers", which are found throughout the East in Asia, were connected with the Mystery-Initiations . . . The candidates for Initiation were placed in them for three days and three nights, wherever there was no temple with a subterranean crypt close at hand. These round towers were built for no other purposes. . . . They were sacred places of initiation.<sup>2</sup>

For countless generations hath the adept

builded a fane of imperishable rocks, a giant's Tower of INFINITE THOUGHT, wherein the Titan dwelt, and will yet, if need be, dwell alone, emerging from it but at the end of every cycle, to invite the elect of humankind to cooperate with him and help in his turn enlighten superstitious man.<sup>3</sup>

This third quotation gives a general hint, that an Adept's thoughts are boundless, both in number and in depth. Their motive and function is to enlighten humanity, like that of the bodhisattva Titan Prometheus. Here is testimony that the Master Koot Hoomi (KH) and other Brothers in Tibet still used one specific tower when they were ready for their initiation:

At a stone's throw from the old Lamasery stands the old tower, within whose bosom have gestated generations of Bodhisattvas.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to mental and physical initiation towers or temples, there are also astral initiation places. Here is an astral temple Damodar K. Mavalankar wrote about in a letter to William Q. Judge:

After walking a considerable distance through this subterranean passage, we

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came into an open plain in Ladakh. There is a large massive building thousands of years old. In front of it is a huge Egyptian Tau. The Building rests on 7 big pillars in the form of pyramids. The entrance gate has a large triangular arch . . . . This the Chief Central Place where all those of our Section who are found deserving of Initiation into Mysteries have to go for their final ceremony and stay there the requisite period. I went up with my Guru to the Great Hall. The grandeur and serenity of the place is enough to strike anyone with awe. The beauty of the Altar, which is in the centre and at which every candidate has to take his vows at the time of his Initiation, is sure to dazzle the most brilliant eyes. The splendour of the CHIEF's Throne is incomparable. Everything is on a geometrical principle and containing various symbols which are explained only to the Initiate.<sup>5</sup>

W. Q. Judge recalls a past-life story. An Adept speaks:

This is an old tower used by the immediate descendants of the white Magicians who settled on Ireland when England's Isle had not arisen from the sea. When the great Masters had to go away, strict injunctions were left that no fires on these towers were to go out, and the warning was also given that, if the duties of life were neglected, if charity, duty, and virtue were forgotten, the power to keep these fires alive would gradually disappear. The decadence of the virtues would coincide with the failure of the fires, and this, the last tower, guarded by an old and a young man, would be the

last to fail, and that even it could save the rest, if its watchers were faithful.<sup>6</sup>

In the Mahayana tradition there is a much revered section of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*<sup>7</sup> that gives details, some symbolic, some occult, about the Infinite Thought Tower that a bodhisattva would experience. In this case, inspired by Bodhicitta motivation, the aspirant is the youth Sudhana.<sup>8</sup> He seeks a bodhisattva guru to guide him further on his path. Each of his many gurus teaches Sudhana what liberation state they knew and then suggest another guru to serve. One thing he learned, as the reader of this sutra will also understand, is how and with what elements, a Tower of profound and noble ideas is built by an aspirant to initiation:

Then the youth and maiden<sup>9</sup> told Sudhana of their own liberation and said to him, "Go south, to a place called Seashore. There is a garden called Great Adornment, wherein there is a great Tower called Vairochana's<sup>10</sup> Treasury of Adornments.

That Jeweled Tower is born from the bodhisattva's matured roots of goodness. It is born from the bodhisattva's power of mindfulness, his power of vows, his power of self-mastery and his power of mystic knowledge. It is born from the bodhisattva's good skillful means. It is born from his blessings, virtue, and wisdom.

The bodhisattva who abides in this inconceivable liberation, out of a mind of great compassion, makes appear such an adorned state of power and liberation for all living beings. Maitreya<sup>11</sup> Bodhisattva dwells securely within it."

## Towers of Infinite Thought

Master Hsuan Hua<sup>12</sup> explains a little:

The country where Maitreya Bodhisattva dwells is called Seashore. The “sea” is the wisdom sea of the Bodhisattva undergoing one more birth [before Buddhahood]. The Garden is called “Great Adornment” because with the causes perfected, the ten thousand practices adorn the fruition. The Great Jeweled Tower is named Vairochana’s Treasury of Adornment. It is a symbol of the Dharma Realm, and therefore it is vast, infinite, and adorned. Vairochana is the Dharmakāya Buddha. The Great Jeweled Tower is the Adorned Treasury of the Dharmakāya Buddha.<sup>13</sup>

Long before anyone aspires toward such a Jeweled Tower, much less reaches it, a path of many virtues must be trod in daily life. There is one virtue that is not usually among those most valued. Gratitude has a subtle power of goodness that blesses one who knows it. Ingratitude is common and a curse to many. Master KH mentions several times that “ingratitude is not among our vices”. H. P. Blavatsky points out that “ingratitude is a crime in Occultism”.<sup>14</sup>

Duty is that which is *due* to Humanity, . . . especially that which we owe to all those who are poorer and more helpless than we are ourselves. This is a debt which, if left unpaid during life, leaves us spiritually insolvent and moral bankrupts in our next incarnation. Theosophy is the quintessence of *duty*.<sup>15</sup>

Our sacred duty is to repay the help and support we have received, over many lives, from the Buddhas, Masters,

gods, parents, and the rest of humanity. This divine duty will move us to tap our own bubbling spring of virtues. These will flow forth from our “fountainhead of utter wisdom”, as G. de Purucker called it. A grateful person is rare, as Buddha taught:

These two kinds of persons are rare in the world. What two? One who takes the initiative in helping others and one who is grateful and thankful. These two kinds of persons are rare in the world. . . .

And what is the plane of the good person? A good person is grateful and thankful. For gratitude and thankfulness are extolled by the good. Gratitude and thankfulness belong entirely to the plane of the good person.<sup>16</sup>

Gratitude to the Guru is obligatory among aspirants and disciples. As the *Book of Discipline* says:

To the earnest Disciple his Teacher takes the place of Father and Mother. For, whereas they give him his body and its faculties, its life and casual form, the Teacher shows him how to develop the inner faculties to the acquisition of the Eternal Wisdom.<sup>17</sup>

There is a long section in this part of the Sutra in praise of the essential spiritual friend or guru. Here is one verse:

The good and wise advisor is like a kindly mother that gives birth to the lineage of the Buddha. He is like a kindly father that bestows vast benefit. He is like a nursemaid that guards one and does not allow one to engage in what is evil.

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Here are two of the verses giving the attitude of the disciple toward the guru:

You should think of yourself as afflicted by a disease and think of the good and wise advisor as the king of physicians. You should think of the Dharma that he proclaims as fine medicine, and think of the practice one cultivates as ridding one of disease.

You should also think of yourself as one who is traveling far, and conceive of the good guru as a guiding Master. Also think of the Dharma that he proclaims as the right path. Also think of the practice one cultivates as that which will reach the distant goal.

Sudhana, his heart overflowing with gratitude and reverence for all the bodhisattvas who have taught him, bows low before the Jeweled Tower, the realm where Maitreya and his bodhisattva disciples dwell. Powerful blessings of goodness sweep over him, and he arises refreshed and inspired. Then, keeping his mind focused on the Jeweled Tower, he begins to circle it. As he walks around the Jeweled Tower, he concentrates on all the beneficent qualities and powers of the Great Ones who live there. He finally stops at the entrance and prays that Maitreya would arrive and open the doorway for him.

Off in the distance he sees Maitreya approaching with a vast retinue of human and non-human beings. When Maitreya Bodhisattva came closer, joyful Sudhana prostrates himself fully. Maitreya then praises Sudhana to all

the assembly as an ideal Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva also teaches all gathered there on the heart of the Mahayana path — Bodhichitta.<sup>18</sup>

Sudhana asks Maitreya to open the Jeweled Tower for him, Maitreya snaps his fingers three times, and the door opens. Sudhana enters the Jeweled Tower samādhi and the door closes behind him. Sudhana first notices that the Jeweled Tower is vast like boundless space. He sees countless towers, each of which reveals a past life of Maitreya Bodhisattva teaching all sorts of beings on all aspects of Buddha's Dharma. Other towers display his many powers, wisdom, and great compassion. This part of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* uses jeweled pillars or towers of light to correspond with what *sutrātman* means: "Sutrātman, the luminous thread of immortal *impersonal* Monadship, on which our earthly lives or evanescent Egos are strung as so many beads."<sup>19</sup>

Many more Jeweled Towers reveal similar aspects and teachings regarding other great bodhisattvas. In samadhi, Sudhana sees each object and hears each teaching within the Jeweled Towers. He also sees many fantastic images of magnificent vistas radiating from each of the Jeweled Towers. With the power of firm mindfulness, and purity of vision, Sudhana sees, hears, and knows these endless marvelous panoramas.

At this point Maitreya snaps his fingers, brings Sudhana out of his samadhi state and tells him:

Good man, you have been dwelling in the bodhisattvas' inconceivable self-mastery.

## Towers of Infinite Thought

You enjoyed the bliss of all bodhisattvas' samādhis. You have become able to see what is sustained by the spiritual power of the bodhisattvas and what flows forth from their aids accumulated on the path. Such are the marvelous temples and towers which their vows and wisdom caused to appear. Thus it is that you observed the practices of the bodhisattvas, and heard the Dharma of the bodhisattvas. You know the virtues of the bodhisattvas, and now fully understand the vows of the Tathāgata.

Sudhana agrees and says: "This is all due to the awesome spiritual power of the Guru who supports and remembers me."

*The Secret Doctrine* mentions the Unity of infinite gradations of thought.<sup>20</sup> So it would seem the Occult Brother-

hood's Towers are built of infinite gradations of selfless thoughts. As Master KH said in Mahatma Letter 15, chron.:

The only true and holy [feeling], the only unselfish and Eternal one — [is] Love, an Immense Love for humanity — as a *Whole!* For it is "Humanity" which is the great Orphan, the only disinherited one upon this earth, my friend. And it is the duty of every man who is capable of an unselfish impulse to do something, however little, for its welfare. Poor, poor humanity!

Thus, those theosophists who aspire to become co-workers with the Brothers and Amitabha Buddha<sup>21</sup> must never stop building their own towers of boundless good thoughts, words, and deeds. ◆

### Endnotes

1. G. de Purucker, *Esoteric Tradition*, I:45.
2. H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, XIV, 281–2.
3. *Mahatma Letters*, Letter 18, chronological.
4. ———, Letter 29, chron.
5. Sven Eek, *Damodar and the Pioneers of the Theosophical Movement*, 61.
6. W. Q. Judge, *Echoes of the Orient*, I:543.
7. Near the end of Master Śikshānanda's translation of ch. 39, also known as *Gandavyuha Sutra*.
8. Good wealth.
9. Maiden, possessing virtue; youth, born of virtue.
10. All-pervading.
11. Kindly One, a tenth-stage bodhisattva who will be the next Buddha.
12. Died in 1995; more biography at <[cttbusa.org/founder.asp](http://cttbusa.org/founder.asp)>.
13. *Flower Adornment Sutra*, ch. 39, part VIII, 12.
14. H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, XII, 593.
15. ———, *The Key to Theosophy*, 229.
16. *Anguttara Nikāya*, translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, 153, 177.
17. H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, XII, 590.
18. "Thought of enlightenment"; the intention to reach Buddha's perfect Bodhi in order to free all beings from suffering.
19. *The Secret Doctrine*, II, 513.
20. ———, I, 627–29.
21. *The Voice of the Silence*, Fragment III.

# Revering Nature: Towards a Theosophical Ecology — II

JONATHAN COLBERT

A SENSE of wonder is certainly an aspect of revering Nature. But, what about our own individual contact with it? Is Nature a place or a thing that is only outside, out in rural areas or far away from big cities? Theosophically, everything we touch is Nature. Everything is made of living atoms, and is alive. Everything is a unit of life, or *monad*, in spiritual evolution. Everything that we see and sense is embodied consciousness, ever living and learning on its own path of life and evolution.

Revering Nature, no more than loving another person, is more than just a profound feeling, something that *happens* to you. Remember when the young deer Bambi became “twitterpated”, or in love, in the movie, when he saw a young female deer? This is something that just *happened* to him, due to the biology of being a young, adolescent deer. But revering Nature as a *verb*, as something you *engage in*, like love, can grow very deep, even if it is only starting from the profound joy of simply being in Nature.

In our modern times, alas, as a society, we have moved away from Nature and have failed to revere her. We have come to view things in terms of dualities. We think of man and Nature, or worse, man *versus* Nature. We also think in terms of life versus not-life. We think that we are the only species with a soul, so we think in terms of soul versus dead matter. But in Theosophy there is no such thing as dead matter.

What is alive, then — beyond the obvious — meaning plants, animals, and humans? Theosophically, and the ancients thought this too, the entire mineral kingdom is alive, no less than anything else. What is the life that is within rocks and stones, within the life of minerals? The life and intelligence within minerals is that of the energy of cohesion and dispersion. You know there is life in a stone when you break it against another, thus creating a spark.

In Theosophical monadology, there is something called the mineral monad. What is a monad? A monad is a point of

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## Revering Nature: Towards a Theosophical Ecology — II

life. A monadic point of life can experience the plane of being a mineral, a plant, an animal, a human, or even beyond our normal conception of what it means to be human, that is, an adept or a Mahatma. What then defines what it is to be a monad? Theosophy teaches that all of life is sacred, every point of life contains a spark of the divine, and has within it a spark of That which it shares with all of life. There is latent in every monad That which is already perfect, complete, whole. And yet every monad is on a great pilgrimage.

Each monad — as an eternal pilgrim — is simultaneously (1) gathering experience on every possible plane and in every possible relation to all other monads, (2) while at the same time it is transforming and metamorphosing by unfolding, unlocking, and awakening its sacred and secret essence. All monads are doing this, whether it be the mineral, plant, or animal kingdoms, or the awakened self-conscious monad of the human being. It is not only the blessed metacognition of the profound and universal unity that fosters our feeling of solidarity with all of life; it is also the existential awakening that all of life is *doing the same thing* — all points of life, at whatever level of individuation, at whatever stage of latent or active self-consciousness, is on an eternal pilgrimage. We are all eternal pilgrims.

When two hikers in the Sierras meet on a path, oftentimes, in an instant, they have a deep understanding of one another and a special solidarity with one another.

What is it that makes for this unique feeling between these two pilgrims, who heretofore were total strangers? Why is there that special moment of eye contact, openness, and admiration for the other? I can tell you right now that it is *not* because they both smell good! It is because they are going through the same thing; they are sojourners on what in H. P. Blavatsky's (HPB) *The Secret Doctrine* (*SD*) is called the “obligatory pilgrimage”. Both have sore muscles and perhaps some blisters on their feet, yet they have seen beautiful lakes, verdant meadows, and amazing forests. They have seen vistas from hard-earned vantage points — perhaps high above the timberline — from lofty ridges, plateaus, and mountaintops.

Yes, these sojourners know that the other has gathered many memorable experiences along the way, but also they know something else: that the other has *unlocked* something within himself or herself. This is the spiritual recognition of one monad to another and the deepest definition of what it is to reflect all other points of life from your unique point of view. This is what it is to revere Nature, to bow down to the deep integrity of each monad, each fellow sojourner of the pilgrimage of life, whether that life is deemed to be further or less far along the Path.

In HPB's *The Voice of the Silence*, we are enjoined to:

Help Nature and work on with her; and  
Nature will regard thee as one of her

## Revering Nature: Towards a Theosophical Ecology — II

creators and make obeisance. And she will open wide before thee the portals of her secret chambers, lay bare before thy gaze the treasures hidden in the very depths of her pure virgin bosom. Unsullied by the hand of matter she shows her treasures only to the eye of Spirit — the eye which never closes, the eye for which there is no veil in all her kingdoms.

This is a favorite passage for so many theosophists. It is so moving, so close to one's deepest understanding of Theosophy, for it calls each soul to an arousal of a secret and sacred sense of individual responsibility to all that lives. How do we help Nature? What does it mean to work on with her? What would it mean to be regarded by Nature as one of her creators? What is the hand of matter? What is the eye of spirit? There are many ways to try to understand this passage, but I think a special clue is given in the idea that if we regard Nature with pure unsullied reverence, then for us there will not even exist any kind of veil, not in any or all of her kingdoms.

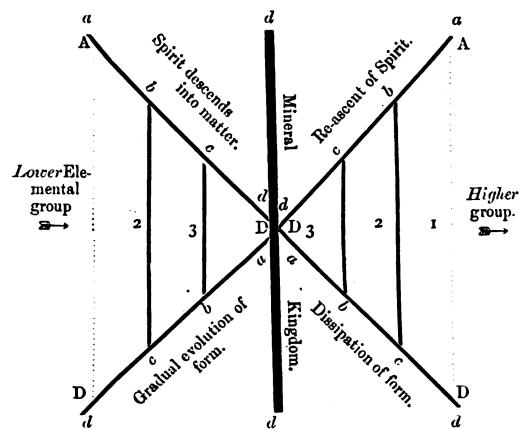
Theosophically, there are seven kingdoms: the human, animal, plant, and mineral — and three more invisible kingdoms below the mineral. These lower three are the elemental kingdoms, hinted at by the Rosicrucians, the Alchemists, and such mysterious personages as Paracelsus and Cornelius Agrippa. Theosophically, the elements of earth, wind, fire, and water are spirited by intelligences. In the wisdom traditions of old, the gnomes of the earth, the sylphs of

the wind, the salamanders of fire, and the undines of water were more than just the stuff of fantasy. They were the primary denizens of the complex realms of invisible Nature:

The silent worship of abstract or *noumenal* Nature, the only divine manifestation, is the one ennobling religion of Humanity.

*(SD, vol. 1, p. 381, fn.)*

Why would a profound appreciation, or worship, of these elemental kingdoms below the mineral be so important, so ennobling? What do we mean by “below”? Does that mean that they are less important, that they have no life? Theosophy says “No”. Just because the consciousness within them happens to be less individuated than in the case of the mineral kingdom, this does not mean that they are unimportant or that they do not serve a critical role in the great economy of Nature. Precisely *because they are less individuated*, their evolutionary thrust is all that much more *affected and molded* by all of the thoughts, feelings, emotions, actions, and words of the human kingdom.



## Revering Nature: Towards a Theosophical Ecology — II

In the diagram above, the mineral kingdom is right in the middle of the involutionary and evolutionary life-wave. The arrows show the motion of the life-wave to the right. Spirit descends into matter to the point of the mineral kingdom — then reascends its way back. Matter gradually takes on form until it reaches the mineral kingdom. Then, as form evolves through the higher kingdoms, it becomes more and more dissipated.

As also shown in the diagram, the degree to which the elemental kingdom is more spiritual is the degree to which it is formless. The relatively spiritual elementals are ethereal in nature and have to do with our thoughts and our skandhas. These ethereal elementals are shaped by the vibratory rate of our thinking. The more spiritual and unselfish our thoughts and motives are, the more they are of the nature of formless, spiritual essences. The coarser our thoughts are, the coarser are the nature of the elementals that we attract to the orbit of our inner vestures.

Remember, referring to the elemental kingdom as the “spirits of the elements” is only a beginning way to think of them, probably the simplest way to begin to tune into the reality of their existence. But, in a more spiritually developed culture, wherein the worship of invisible Nature is more naturally understood, why could you not have 330 million gods and goddesses, *devas* and *devatas*, as in that of ancient India?

Ultimately guided from within without and from above below by the spiri-

tual hosts and hierarchies of invisible Nature, these elementals constitute the very “nerves of Nature”. There are thousands of classes of elementals, all of which are sensitive to the feeling-tone of every thought, will, and feeling that goes through our minds. Human beings are ceaseless dynamos of potent thoughts — sometimes we generate beautiful, generous and uplifting thoughts, sending the thought elementals on an upward trajectory, and other times, perhaps, not so much, unfortunately giving these little lives a downward trajectory.

So, we can see that not only are human beings responsible for the preservation of the incredible diversity of plant and animal species in Nature, but we are also responsible for the well-being of invisible Nature. We may ask: “How am I supposed to be responsible for all this invisible stuff? It is hard enough to take care of what I *can* see!” But if we keep in mind that the spirits of the elements reside in all of Nature, in everything we touch, in everything we handle, everything we use — everything we give, everything we receive — we see that it is in *how* we touch things, handle things, use things, and give and receive things that determines how we *influence* the invisible life and properties within all with which we interact.

A final aspect of life in which we can revere Nature in a practical way is in something as immediate to us as our everyday speech. William Q. Judge suggests in *Letters That Have Helped Me* that we “use with care those living messengers called words”. Words have

## Revering Nature: Towards a Theosophical Ecology — II

the power to bless or curse, to heal or to harm. If our thought dynamizes and transforms the living atoms of Nature, then our speech dynamizes these invisible “lives” all the more so. A single homogeneous Resonance pervades the entire universe. This Divine Resonance, *Nāda Brahma*, is the vivifying power, the great awakener, stirring all the atoms and molecules, the little “lives” and elementals, into action in all the three worlds — terrestrial, astral, and celestial. The whole evolution of matter from the invisible to the visible depends on sound. Each thought, word, and deed, then, serves in this way as a seed, or *bija*, impelling forth life from small beginnings, and from the invisible to the visible.

Dr Vandana Shiva, mentioned earlier [in Part I], is one of the great ecologists — and feminists — of our time. Educated in physics and philosophy, she oftentimes refers to the Indian dot, or *bindi*, she wears on her forehead as a symbol of the generous universe that is all around us

and of how everything, seed-like, starts with small beginnings. She sees the idea of the seed, like Mahatma Gandhi’s spinning wheel, as a symbol of independence, democracy, and freedom. Having taken much of her inspiration from the women of the Indian Chipko Movement, who placed their lives on the line in defence of the great trees of the Himalayan forests, she is beloved worldwide as a pioneering ecofeminist. To the chagrin of corporate agribusiness greed, she fights tirelessly and effectively to preserve seed diversity on behalf of Indian small farmers. Her Indian admirers have called her Durga, after the protective mother goddess of the universe. Durga’s consort, Siva, we can remember, is the Good Gardener in Nature.

In learning to revere Nature, to act in attunement with her, to help and work on with her, let us sow seeds of beneficence, kindliness, and goodwill to all that lives.

(Concluded)

**Corporations are fictions. They have been assigned a human and a legal personality, and now they are trying to dispossess people of their democratic rights, and they are trying to dispossess nature of her rights. We are at a watershed for human evolution.**

**We will either defend the rights of people and the Earth — and for that we have to dismantle the rights that corporations have assigned to themselves — or corporations will in the next three decades destroy this planet in terms of human possibilities.**

Vandana Shiva

# Memories of Dr Hugh Shearman

MARIE HARKNESS

ONE of the strongest, most inspiring and helpful influences on my earlier theosophical journey was Dr Hugh Shearman. We remained firm friends and colleagues from 1983, when I joined the Theosophical Society Adyar (TS), until his passing in 1999.

I later realized he had been a prolific writer of theosophical texts, non-theosophical books (such as *A Bomb and a Girl*) and also was a revered and much respected newspaper reporter for a Protestant paper, *The Newsletter*, during the troubles in Northern Ireland. He wrote numerous pertinent articles for *The Newsletter* and did not mince his words. For his own protection at that time, he wrote under a pseudonym. He also later wrote a history of *The Newsletter*.

Hugh was a Liberal Catholic Priest and performed the Mass at his home every Sunday morning. He had attended school at the prestigious Belfast Royal Academy, the oldest school in Belfast. He studied at Queens University there and completed his PhD on History at Trinity College, Dublin. He was particularly interested in Irish history.

He had informed me that he joined the TS in Belfast as a youth. If my memory serves me correctly, he went to his first meetings along with his father, who was a principal of a large school in Belfast. He recalled being surrounded by a number of very staid and elderly ladies at the Lodge.

Having read many spiritual texts over the years before deciding to join the TS after the birth of my youngest son Shane in 1983, I decided to contact Dr Hugh Gray, then General Secretary of the TS in England, from an advertisement of theirs I had seen. I wrote him a letter enclosing long pages of all the texts I had studied since schooldays.

Dr Gray referred my letter to Dr Hugh Shearman, who was then President of Belfast Lodge, and who had previously for many years been the Regional Secretary for Northern Ireland. Hugh, as I was asked to call him, then kept up regular contact with me for many months. There was such a power and strength in his letters, which inspired me so much, that I realized this was the journey I had to take for the rest of my earthly life and beyond.

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**Mrs Marie Harkness** is the Organizing Secretary of the Theosophical Society in Ireland.

## Memories of Dr Hugh Shearman

It took me at least six months before I had the courage to drive all the way to Belfast to the Theosophical venue there, a 110-mile round trip. I was expecting to meet a strong robust figure from the sheer strength of Dr Shearman's writings.

So, one Sunday I took the plunge and arrived at a building on the Antrim Road in Belfast, a stretch known as "The Murder Mile". The TS members used to meet in a small dingy room there with its own unique atmosphere. I went into the room and there were a number of elderly ladies sitting quietly on hard upright chairs, with hands on laps, not speaking, but I was greeted in silence with a nod and a smile from some. Above their heads sepia photographs of C. Jinarājadāsa, G. S. Arundale, Annie Besant, J. Krishnamurti and Radha Burnier hung on faded wallpaper. Beside the speaker's chair was a small mahogany table with a little brass bell, for a call for silence, I presumed.

I did not dare think anything negative about the room, about anyone there, about anything that happened, because from all the study I had done, I firmly believed that these experienced Theosophists had the power to read my mind at all times—so I had to be very careful! Suddenly amongst a few others arriving, a thin almost emaciated gentleman turned the corner and faced me. He could have been from C. W. Leadbeater's era. He was dressed in an ill-fitting brown suit, had a goatee beard and moustache, and piercing eyes. He doffed his jaunty brown hat at me and welcomed me to the Society — thus my

first meeting face to face with Dr Hugh Shearman.

At the time, we had study meetings on Wednesday nights, which I rarely missed, and Open Days on Sundays. I remember thinking there was quite a different atmosphere on a Sunday. In time, all attending became more talkative, a little chit-chat before meetings, and afterwards very congenial when we were having our cup of tea, biscuit, or piece of cake. Hugh used to share with us some of his funny stories and jokes. I still was very guarded with my thoughts though!

A year or two later we moved to our own iron-shaped building at Hillsborough Drive, Woodstock Road, Belfast. Frequently there were very few of us on a Wednesday night at our study meetings, as the troubles were at their peak — at times only Hugh and myself were present.

Often when I entered Belfast, I was redirected to strange roads and streets, and now and again arrived late for meetings due to frequent bomb scares. We took turns in giving talks on a Sunday to the members of the Society, and Hugh once informed me that whenever he was preparing a talk, he gave it to his typewriter!

I visited Hugh's house on the Cliftonville Road a number of times and was very fond of his lovely and supportive wife, Molly. He later moved to a large dwelling on Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast, not far from the Stormont Government buildings. This house was a huge spacious building and he confided to me that in winter, when he was quietly

## Memories of Dr Hugh Shearman

reading or preparing his talks for the Society, he would wrap himself up in a blanket with a hot-water bottle on his knee. He said he could function better that way. He had two children late in life, Robert and Amanda.

He often referred to the former International President, C. Jinarājadāsa, whom he hosted at his home when he came over as Guest Speaker to Belfast Lodge. He described him as a small but very potent and truly inspiring person. Hugh frequently gave talks in England when invited to do so. He was also a member of the International Council at Adyar and on occasion received a phone call from the then President Radha Burnier. He was always ready for a chat, but Radha could be quite precise, so he informed me.

We both travelled together to the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden, the Netherlands, in 1990 to attend the first Seminar by Mrs Burnier on "Human Regeneration". We found this a most uplifting and inspiring occasion. There was something "other" in the atmosphere. He introduced me to many Theosophical colleagues of his at that time. This visit left a deep impression on me, particularly the few chats I had with the then President Radha.

I think it was in the late 1980s when Hugh had to go into the hospital to have an operation to remove one of his kidneys. The consultants and doctors there found the removed kidney so unusual a shape they asked permission to house this in their medical museum. Hugh was tickled pink and very proud of this!

Hugh had great compassion and I experienced this in practice. I went through a personal and traumatic time in the early 1990s and in order to protect me as regards keeping my three children, Hugh housed all my theosophical books and so on in boxes at his home — just in case these were used against me in the High Court. Northern Ireland, at that time, was very religious on both sides and could veer into fundamentalism. There was little tolerance for anything outside the box — so I had to be very careful. I deeply appreciated the loving support I received then from Hugh and his wife, Molly.

In the late 1990s, when Hugh suffered from ill health, Molly and his family visited him regularly at the nursing home. I also visited him and he continued to be mentally alert and write his letters right up to his passing. He loved gifts of nice notepaper and envelopes. Shortly before he died, Helen Gething arrived in Belfast to present the Subba Row Medal which Hugh had been awarded in recognition of his services to Theosophy through his prolific writings. This was presented to his son Robert, who received it on his father's behalf.

My understanding of Theosophy from Hugh over the years has left a deep impression on me and no doubt on other members. As I have read it, no matter what life throws at you, we need to keep going, focused on our commitment to the theosophical cause. He kept saying "act from the Centre" and "the Centre is everywhere, the circumference nowhere".

## Memories of Dr Hugh Shearman

As I understood it, analytical thought does not then get in the way. Another saying of his was: “God made man, and man has been returning the compliment ever since.”

I felt he had wholly and completely dedicated himself to the cause of the Masters, whether feeling well or otherwise. I can truthfully say that at that time he was the most dedicated and inspiring person I had ever met. He believed such dedication and deep commitment to the Work no doubt lifted the consciousness of the world a little and aided The Holy Ones.

We were the “foot soldiers” as it were, the “cogs in the wheel”. In a sense he was an inspiring example of how to overcome all obstacles and stay focused on the greater task at hand. He never missed TS

meetings except when he needed a short recuperation time following his operation and whenever through ill health he had to go into a nursing home. All meetings started right on time; he was very particular about this.

I have no doubt Hugh had an inner mission, was a very special person, and carried out his duties, as he saw them, with a calm energy and inner joy. This was infectious. He had the capacity to see behind things, see through people — he could read you! I still had to watch my thoughts.

When he passed away peacefully in 1999, I was happy for him that he was released from an ailing body and was now reaping his just reward by winging his way towards the Light, but in my heart I missed my dear friend, teacher, and mentor. ◇

Some have tried to edit *The Secret Doctrine* down into an abbreviated and orderly form, making it the vehicle for the propounding of a system; or they have used it as a quarry from which material could be extracted for the purpose of building a system. But a major ingredient in the message of *The Secret Doctrine* is that life is not a system and cannot be contained within a system. The jungle quality of the book is part of its message. Whatever the mind may say or do, an intuitive perception of wholeness cannot be merely analytical or sequential.

Hugh Shearman  
“A Message Ahead of Its Time”  
*The Theosophist*, May 1991

# Theosophical Work around the World

## Adyar, India — ATA Opening

The Director of the Adyar Theosophical Academy (ATA), Mrs Sonal Murali, reports that the Academy had two events for its founding in the Besant Gardens area of the Theosophical Society (TS) Adyar, Chennai. One was a puja (a dedication offering divine honors to something sacred) on 20 June 2019, and the other was the Opening Day of the Academy four days later.

The puja was conducted for an auspicious start of the school in the presence of Ms Nancy Secrest, international Treasurer, and other friends, members, and residents of the TS. It created a beautiful atmosphere as the priest chanted purifying and energizing mantras. The incense fragrance and chiming bell sounds filled the hall. There even was a light drizzle during the puja after a scorching summer. In the evening, they also had a much-needed shower. Within no time the green grass shoots showed up on the ground.

On 24 June, the newly founded ATA formally opened on the lush green campus of the TS. Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, Chairman of the Theosophical Golden Link College, Philippines, and former General Secretary of the TS in the same country, planted a Magnolia champaca sapling to mark the school's founding day. He was joined by TS Adyar General Manager Mr K. Jaikumar, guests, teachers, and students in adding soil and

sprinkling water to symbolically nurture it collectively. The newly planted sapling soon received much-awaited rains and the premises is already ringing with the delightful laughter and pitter-patter of children as they take their first steps into their new school.

The programme was well attended by the parents of the students as well as members and friends of the TS. After the tree planting, all gathered in the newly renovated hall of ATA. The programme began with a Bengali devotional song rendered by students of Bala Vidya Mandir, accompanied by Mr S. Srinivasan, LEAP Foundation, followed by the melodious chanting of Ms Jaishree Kannan, a message by Mrs Murali, and a talk on theosophical education by Mr Hao Chin. A joint creative activity between parents and students ended the programme, with the younger children taking home a gift of Rainmaker (a visual and auditory toy) and the older ones putting together a terrarium.

ATA has classes from preschool to Grade 2. It provides an ideal space for creativity and exploration for children. The students of class 1 and 2 had a good time during their Nature walk and trip to the great banyan tree on the TS grounds. They enjoyed the cool breeze and smell of wet sand. To stop for snacks, they chose the newly renovated Blavatsky Bungalow veranda, where they were amazed by the

## Theosophical Work around the World



The newly renovated ATA building



Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr., Chairman of Golden Link Foundation, Philippines, planting Magnolia champaca sapling to mark ATA's foundation day with Mrs Sonal Murali, Director of ATA and Mr K. Jaikumar, TS, General Manager



The bright, airy learning space is all set with sensory learning materials to welcome its students



Students join in adding soil and sprinkling water

A crafting session inspired by  
The Great Banyan Tree



## Theosophical Work around the World



Children and their craftwork outside the ATA building



Raining outside? No problem! Let's run indoors



It's time for a picnic! Children at the Blavatsky Bungalow gazebo after exploring the environs of The Great Banyan Tree



Students set off to explore the campus



Engrossed in butterfly craft



Learning to count

## Theosophical Work around the World



A month into the launch of ATA, students have engaged in a variety of activities: learning life skills, quiet-time in the library, exploring the great outdoors, and making new friends



Members of the General Council Planning Meeting held in late June 2019 at the International Theosophical Centre (ITC) Naarden, the Netherlands. Seated in the center is international President Mr Tim Boyd, with international Treasurer Ms Nancy Secrest on his right and international Secretary Ms Marja Artamaa on his left. Next to Ms Secrest is the Chairman of the European Federation Council, Miss Trân-Thi-Kim Diêu, next to Ms Artamaa is former General Secretary of the TS in the Philippines, Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, and behind the President stands the Chairman of the ITC Naarden Centre, Mr Arend Heijbroek.

beautiful view of the ancient banyan tree. The children also took time to sit down and sketch what they saw along the journey.

On their way back, they spotted birds, insects, and a mongoose surprised them! They also saw some trees filled with fruitarian bats and were mesmerized by the bats hanging upside down in large numbers, looking like closed black umbrellas. The walk was a joyful experience in itself, with each child taking time to admire the beauty of the flowers, the variety of plants, the little dewdrops settled on the leaves, and the serenity of the lotus pond. On their return, the students were thrilled to make a craft of the banyan tree. ATA's website is: <adyartheoacademy.in>.

### ITC Meetings — Naarden

A total of 27 General Council members and some invitees from 16 countries held their third **Planning Meetings** during the end of June at the International Theosophical Centre (ITC) in Naarden, the Netherlands, to discuss the eleven projects chosen to be followed last year, which were monitored.

The project "The future of TPH" is a major challenge for the TS as a whole. The market has undergone great changes for publishing companies: E-books have become ever more popular, printing and storing large volumes is no longer wise, so printing on demand has been available for some time. One solution is creating a virtual TPH International, and it requires the creation of a committed international

team. A specific model is being developed. Another demanding project is "Introductory books on Theosophy" to attract new readers by offering theosophical concepts in a modern, undogmatic way, while maintaining content and being close to the spiritual life of the reader. The series would have 12 handbooks. This project has four potential writers and needs two co-readers, a content editor, and a designer.

The project "International speakers' list", created to help Sections and other Theosophical units to find a speaker representing the international TS, has been fulfilled by producing a list of 33 names authorized by the President, which was distributed in July. Another successful project is establishing "Theosophical schools". The first one already started in June at the TS Adyar international headquarters. The project to find a "Theosophical meditation course", intended for the public and beginners in meditation, has collected three guidelines to be tested voluntarily by Sections. Six more projects were reviewed and encouraged to proceed.

All the discussions were fruitful and gave impetus for further development during these five days. A **General Council meeting** of the TS was held on 29 June. ITC Naarden is a perfect centre for creative and sincere discussions, thanks to its renewing vibrations and workers, and to international President Tim Boyd, who is the protector of the Centre and makes these discussions open and possible. ◇

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