

Freedom of Thought

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

Freedom of the Society

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

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



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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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

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

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

The Mission of the Theosophical Society

TIM BOYD

AT our most recent General Council meeting, a mission statement for the Theosophical Society (TS) was finalized. Although many statements have been made related to the mission and purpose of the TS, particularly by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB), in the 143-year history of the TS there has never been a formal mission statement.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, in a short section titled “The Abstract and The Concrete”, HPB addresses the subject of the relationship between Theosophy and the Theosophical Society. One of the things she says is that “Theosophy is divine nature, visible and invisible, and its Society human nature trying to ascend to its divine parent.”

In that same section she also says that “Theosophy is the shoreless ocean of universal truth, love, and wisdom, reflecting its radiance on the earth, while the Theosophical Society is only a visible bubble on that reflection”. She tries to help us understand the relationship between Theosophy, which is divine, and our work within this organization, which has a form. She closes by saying that the TS “was formed to assist in showing to men that such a thing as Theosophy

exists, and to help them to ascend towards it by studying and assimilating its eternal verities”.

In a sense, the idea of a Society whose purpose is to show the existence of an ever-undefined Theosophy is a statement of mission. However, for someone not yet fully grounded in a studied awareness of Theosophy, it is an unsatisfying statement.

For a little more than a year, the General Council of the TS, with input from other members, has been engaged in the process of trying to refine a concise and comprehensible statement of the mission of the TS. Much like a sutra in the scriptures of the world, the attempt has been made to make the expression of mission so brief, compact, and easy to remember that it can be quickly communicated, but so conceptually rich that dwelling on it reveals ever-deepening layers of meaning.

The Mission Statement which has been adopted for the Theosophical Society is a total of twenty-four words: “To serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realization of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual self-transformation, and the unity of all life.” In the remainder of this article we will try to unpack this

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one sentence. Much like a sutra, every one of those twenty-four words adds something meaningful.

Service

To serve is the primary function of the TS. Service is often interpreted in different ways, but for our purposes it involves a conscious participation, a conscious compassionate activity that connects us with others in ways which relieve suffering. Of course, our service is often unconscious. For example, the simple act of breathing gives plants the carbon dioxide they require to live. Plants breathe out the oxygen that humans and other life forms require. So, in a sense, just breathing is service. However, part of the role of the theosophical work is to become fully conscious, fully aware, so that our service is not just random activity, but charged with awareness and compassion.

Humanity

In what direction is that service focused? The mission is “to serve humanity”. The normal conception of humanity is as the seven billion individual human beings which populate the Earth. The collectivity of all these human beings is what we tend to call “humanity”. From the perspective of the Ageless Wisdom, there is the idea of the divine human. What we think of as humanity is not merely an amalgamation of seven billion different people; it is a single entity in much the same way that we as individuals are composed of many lives, but think of ourselves as a unit. When we think of our bodies or “I”,

myself as a human being, if we are a little more precise about it, what we call “I” is a combination of the activity of trillions of human cells, more trillions of bacteria living on and within the body, and the unseen participation of every range of consciousness from the lowest mineral to the highest spiritual beings. The cooperative activity of all of these units and streams results in what we call “I”.

So, there is this humanity that we serve in our limited ways. Conscious service begins with a recognition of our unity with this greater Whole, this greater Self, and with a deepening understanding of the ways we participate within it. Humanity in another sense is an as-yet-unrealized ideal. In our behaviors and present level of development, we are not yet fully human. On numerous occasions HPB compared so-called “human” behavior with that of animals. To the degree that the focus of our consciousness lies in the realm of desire, selfishness, separation, humans become “the most consciously and intelligently bestial of all animals”. (HPB).

Genuine, or realized humanity, is what we strive toward. The realized human, it is said in *The Stanzas of Dzyan*, has within themselves the “mind to embrace the universe”, a holistic, all-embracing mind. This is still a distant goal for us. When we speak of service to humanity, it is twofold. We give service to the collective whole by serving the individuals and groups which form its body; and we are servants of the divine ideal planted within us in our efforts to root ourselves in its all-embracing consciousness.

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Cultivating

How do we serve humanity? There are many organizations in the world that focus on service to humanity: the Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and so on. What is particular to the service that the TS envisions? In the Mission Statement it says, “to serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realization”. Let us examine what might be meant by “cultivating”. It is a very particular term that normally relates to gardeners, or people who focus on growing or caring for plants. It is directly linked to the natural world and to the processes of life and consciousness.

Just planting a seed in the ground does not make someone a gardener. A person who takes on the role of caring for plants must engage in an intensive study of the cycles of Nature and the potentials of the seeds. They have to be aware of the needs and requirements for the growth of these living things, and be prepared to provide for these needs at the proper moments. All of this is involved in the process of cultivation.

The TS exists to bring about a flowering of a deeply hidden human potential — a Divine Seed. What is the seed that is planted within humanity that the TS exists to nurture? The next portion of the Mission Statement gives an indication.

Ever-deepening

We are here “to serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realization”. “Ever-deepening”

speaks to not only the direction, but the nature of this process.

The fact that this cultivation we engage in is without limits means that it is continually deepening. Often in spiritual dialogues we talk about “depths” and “heights”. In a way, depth and height are synonymous terms for a certain expansion of consciousness. As a word, “ever-deepening” is perhaps more appropriate, because the idea of depth tends to draw our awareness inward, whereas height seems to move awareness up and out. The intention of the language is to turn our vision inward.

Understanding

We make a mistake in our appreciation of the meaning of “understanding” if we confuse it with “knowledge”. The two are different in nature and quality. Knowledge can exist in the complete absence of genuine understanding. It is very common for people of profound knowledge to have no sense of its relationship with all other things, which is the basis of understanding. This condition of mind is so evident that we should not require any additional proof beyond our daily observation. All we need to do is to look at recent history, at any major scientific invention or discovery that has come into the world — whether it is electricity, atomic energy, or biological substances. To the understanding mind each revelation of Nature’s powers deepens one’s recognition of relationship with the world around us, with others, and with invisible realms.

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A sense of connection is a necessary component of the understanding mind. But, taking the example of electricity, driven by the mind that is focused only on knowledge, one of its early uses was in capital punishment — electrocution of prisoners. Rather than to behead or shoot someone, the knowledge-bound human genius who made creative use of electricity possible, used it to kill other human beings. The discovery of atomic energy had the same result, but worse. Instead of killing single individuals its very first use was in war and the massive annihilation of human life. Knowledge can be used in ways that deny connection and relationship with all life. Understanding, on the other hand, is the perception of relationship; it is an expression of the intuition, of *buddhi*. It is a recognition of unity.

Realization

We are here to “serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realization”. Realization means a full awareness, whether it is of an aspect of the Divine Wisdom or in the case of a realized person, the total awareness of an undivided state of being. In a sense, realization is the necessary outcome of a deepening understanding.

The Ageless Wisdom

The Mission Statement specifies an understanding and realization of three things. First, the Ageless Wisdom, sometimes referred to as Sanātana Dharma, the Eternal Wisdom. Within theosophical circles we sometimes find “Ageless Wisdom”

and “Ancient Wisdom” being used synonymously. Although the two terms are closely related, they express different ideas. Ancient Wisdom refers to a specific expression of the Ageless Wisdom tradition, something that has already come into existence, that has a history.

The Greek and Egyptian Mystery Schools, with their specific deities and ritual, and Vedic practice in India are some examples of Ancient Wisdom — specific expressions of the Ageless Wisdom, appropriate for a certain time, place, and people. “Ageless”, by definition, applies to the past, present, and whatever traditions develop in the future. It is the “rootless root” from which all else springs. At the commencement of our current cycle of growing global interconnection, the most recent expression of the Ageless Wisdom was introduced with the founding of the TS in 1875. At some point in a distant future, Theosophy, as we have come to know it, will also fall into the category of an Ancient Wisdom — completely true, eternal in its nature, but very specific, and time-bound in terms of its form of expression. This is the ever-renewing nature of Theosophy — the Ageless Wisdom.

Spiritual Self-Transformation

The theosophical work we do as individuals we describe as “spiritual self-transformation”. It is rooted in the idea that the self, the norm of separative, personality-based living, can be transformed, acted upon by the indwelling spirit in ways that make it transparent to what

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Annie Besant described as the “Hidden Light shining in every creature”.

What is involved in transformation? Probably the process is simpler than the way we generally approach it. It is not a matter of adding more ideas or knowledge. The purpose of the knowledge that we accumulate is to assist in stripping away the many obstacles that we have created within ourselves to the natural and ever-present flow of spirit.

The Unity of All Life

The final words of the Mission Statement of the TS are “the Unity of all Life”. “An ever-deepening understanding and realization of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual self-transformation, and the unity of all life.” The Mission Statement ends where the work of the Theosophical Society begins. The first Object of the TS is Brotherhood, which could also be expressed as unity. There is no spirituality in the absence of the realization of unity or oneness. Unity is the basis of all understanding, spirituality, and even physical well-being. Even at the level of our personality, there is no strength where unity is absent. When we look at a small child, in its first efforts to walk, the child fails time after time. The reason for the failure is that the newborn body has yet to become united with its various parts. The

muscles of the arms and legs are not fully under the control of the person. In human relations the absence of unity expresses itself as fragmentation, weakness, and illness.

The basis of everything that we call theosophical comes back to the unity of all life. Life is omnipresent and is necessarily intelligent, intelligence expressed in movement. All is in motion — not randomly, but in a patterned manner. Life’s underlying intelligence impresses itself on matter. Whether it is gravity, electromagnetism, or karma and reincarnation, we can speak about Laws of Nature or the Laws of the Universe because there is an intelligent patterning to life that we can perceive.

This brief article has been an attempt to highlight a few of the thoughts and insights that arise in dwelling on the Mission Statement. In order for it to come to life for us, we must each make our own exploration, in thought and in quiet reflection, allowing its depths to unfold for us. Like anything that is truly theosophical in nature, the depths that are possible for us to uncover are without limit.

Thus, the Mission of the Theosophical Society is:

To serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realization of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual self-transformation, and the unity of all life.



Unity has also the meaning of integrity, peace, and action that is choiceless, not arising out of the perplexities of dilemma and contradictions.

N. Sri Ram
Thoughts For Aspirants

Saint Sai of Shirdi and Theosophy

DEEPA PADHI

INDIA is a holy land of saints, spiritual masters, adepts, and avatars. In the mid-19th and early 20th century, there lived a fakir in the remote unknown village of Shirdi, in the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, India, who later came to be known as Saint Sai of Shirdi, affectionately called Saibaba. Sai denotes “saintly father” or “divine father”. Saint Sai became a *paramukta*, the perfected one, transcending the barriers of time, space, and human limitations — the highest stage of spiritual evolution. Those “who out of infinite compassion, make the greatest renunciation of not enjoying the blissful state of Godhood, but choose to incarnate in a human body on Earth to serve suffering humanity, are called Sadgurus (Perfect Masters)”. (*The Age of Shirdi Sai* by Dr C. B. Satpathy, p. 2.)

His origins, like date and place of birth, parentage, even his name, were unknown to the people of Shirdi. He was first seen as a young boy around sixteen, meditating under a neem tree (medicinal tree) in Shirdi. Then he disappeared for a while and reappeared when he was twenty, and stayed on in Shirdi for sixty

years till he left his mortal coil in 1918.

He was a spiritual revolutionary, considered the greatest social reformer of his time. He was an embodiment of simplicity and humility, his belongings being a *kafni* (long coat), headwear, a tin pot, a *jhula* (shoulder bag), and a short stick. He used to sleep on the floor of a temple and later shifted to a ruined masjid (mosque). Numberless people were attracted to him when he was alive, and even today, because of his simplicity. There are many similarities between the precepts of Theosophy and the teachings of Saint Sai, as listed below.

Oneness

The key principle of Theosophy is the essential Oneness of all beings. Life or consciousness is everywhere throughout the cosmos because all originate from that One and the same Divine Source. It is an Absolute Principle, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable, transcending the power of human conception. It is one, but manifested as many. “The whole of existence, all of life, is an indivisible unity or wholeness. Some call it God, others intelligence.”

Dr Deepa Padhi is international Vice-President of the TS and President of the TOS, Odisha Region, India. This article is a tribute to the Perfect Master Sri Sai of Shirdi in his death centenary year (1918–2018).

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Saint Sai's well-known epigram was *sabka malik ek*, or "God is one for all", call it Krishna, Allah, Jesus, Jehova, Nanak, Buddha, or by any other name. He believed in Oneness of God, the Supreme Power. To him all religions are only different paths leading to one single destination. A person is free to practise any religion or faith, but, socially and morally, not free to disrespect other religions or faiths. He never professed that he was a Hindu nor did he ever claim that he was a Muslim, while both Hindus and Muslims revered him. He was above all religions, sects, and cults.

Sai had realized the oneness of life and had identified himself as one with all life forms — human and non-human. It was said that when his horse Shyamakarna was whipped, Sai felt the lashes falling on his back. Many times he was seen sharing food with dogs, cats, crows, and pigeons from the same plate. One day, Mrs Tarkhad, one of his devotees, fed a hungry dog with bread who was barking at the gate during lunchtime. In the afternoon, when she came to the mosque to meet Sai, he thanked her for feeding the dog with bread and said: "The dog to whom you gave that piece of bread, is one with me, so also other creatures (cats, pigs, cows, flies, and so on) are one with me. I am roaming in their forms. So abandon the sense of duality and distinction, and serve me as you did today." (*Shri Sai Satcharitra* by Hemadpant, p. 56.) He saw everything as being in him and himself in every being and thing. So he served everyone without any dif-

ferentiation, as if he was serving himself.

Universal Brotherhood

Another significant meeting ground of Sai's teaching and Theosophy is Universal Brotherhood. The first Object of the Theosophical Society is to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, irrespective of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour. He also believed in universal brotherhood, never discriminating in the treatment of individuals on the basis of any of the above, and social status in addition. For him there was no barrier between rich and poor, literate and illiterate, healthy and diseased, ruler and beggar, saint and thief. "All, being the children of one God, should be treated with dignity", was his teaching. He had taught the art of living together in a world of differentiation.

Unintelligent Asceticism

Theosophy does not support unintelligent asceticism, as it is simply self-torture for selfish ends, particularly, to gain psychic power. This does not help in spiritual development. What is necessary is moral asceticism. It is a means to an end; that end being the perfect harmony of the inner nature of the human being and the attainment of complete mastery over the sense organs. Similarly, Sai did not encourage fasting and self-torture. He often said that one should not pray on an empty stomach, as the mind cannot be focused when one is hungry.

Sai had made reason and faith interdependent, meaning thereby that without

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the highest level of reasoning, faith cannot sustain and, at the same time, a person cannot evolve with mere reasoning, without having faith in a supreme power, call it God or anything else. This led to a healthy togetherness among different groups living in Shirdi.

Reincarnation and the Law of Karma

Theosophy believes that we are responsible for our own lives. No divine Being or Power can take away the results of our actions, good or bad. “As you sow, so shall you reap”, admonishes the Bible. As H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) says:

It [is] the *ultimate law* of the universe, the source, the origin, and fount of all other laws which exist throughout Nature. Karma is the unerring law which adjusts effect to cause, at the physical, mental, and spiritual planes of being. . . . Karma is that unseen and unknown law which *adjusts wisely, intelligently, and equitably* each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer. Though itself unknowable, its action is perceivable.

(*The Key to Theosophy*, ch. 11.)

Saint Sai also believed in the Law of Karma and stated that the reactions (results) of actions of past lives are bound to come back in future lives; not necessarily in the next life. Those with whom one had good relationships in the past life will be friends and those with whom one had strained relationships, will become enemies in the next life. The laws of Nature, through unseen ways of working, will bring these people together and

precipitate the good or bad events as ordained from the past. Sai categorically made the statement that “. . . no one develops any kind of relationship with another person unless the relationship has been brought forward from previous lives. Unless something is done in the present life of the individual to end this continued state of antagonism, it will spread over many more lives.” (*The Age of Shirdi Sai*, p. 170–71). Therefore, Sai preached the principle of “forgive and forget”. As it is said: “Forgiveness ought to be like a cancelled note: torn in two and burned up, so that it can never be shown against one.”

Altruism

Great theosophists have said that mere intellectual knowledge is not Theosophy. In the words of HPB:

Theosophy must be made practical, and has, therefore, to be disencumbered of useless discussion. It has to find objective expression in an all-embracing code of life, thoroughly impregnated with its spirit — the spirit of mutual tolerance, charity, and love.

True Theosophy is Altruism. “It is the Great Renunciation of the Self, unconditionally and absolutely, in thought as in action.” Altruism is the opposite of “selfishness”. It is the principle or practice of selfless concern and service for others. Annie Besant states:

While we are still consciously separate, altruism may rightly be regarded as the Law of Life, based on a common origin

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in the divine, based in . . . the pilgrimage which every soul must tread.

Theosophy teaches that through the practice of love and compassion, Universal Brotherhood can be established. Compassion can transform individuals and thereby, society. Sai was an epitome of these qualities, going to no temples, following no rituals or religion, only loving his people and sacrificing for them. He used to give his devotees loving assurance, putting his hands on their heads and saying: "Why fear when I am here?"

In 1910, on Diwali day, he was warming himself while placing wood into the fireplace, which was burning brightly. After some time, instead of pushing the log of wood, Sai pushed his hand into the fireplace. This was noticed by his close associate Madhavrao Deshpande, who forcibly dragged him away.

Baba then came to his senses and said that the wife of a blacksmith at some distant place was working the bellows of a furnace. When her husband called out to her, forgetting that her child was on her lap, she got up hastily and the child slipped into the furnace. Then she cried out to Sai to save her child. So he immediately thrust his hand into the furnace and saved the little one.

Later the couple visited Shirdi with the child and paid their gratitude to Sai. He was the famous doctor of all doctors who never cared for himself, but worked for the welfare of others, himself suffering unbearable pain in the process. This incident demonstrates his all-pervasive and compassionate character.

In another incident, a woman told Sai about her son's illness, who was suffering from plague, with buboes on his body. With very soft and kind words Sai said: "The sky is beset with clouds; but they will pass off and everything will be smooth and clear." So saying he lifted his coat up to the waist and showed to all present, four fully developed buboes as large as eggs, and said: "See, how I have to suffer for my devotees; their difficulties are mine." (*Baba: The Devotees' Questions* by Dr C. B. Satpathy).

Although he had acquired various kinds of supernatural powers, he never exhibited them for his own self. His performances of miracles were as natural as his routine activities and were always for the benefit and well-being of others in distress. His whole life was a life dedicated to altruistic service.

Mysticism

Mysticism plays a large part in Theosophy. HPB was a clairvoyant and practical mystic, and many theosophists had occult powers. Annie Besant writes:

It is the realization of God within, that makes the Mystic strong. . . . He realizes that Omnipotence living within himself which makes all difficulties easy and all burdens light; . . . he is content because he is seeing God in everything.

Saint Sai of Shirdi was also a mystic. Mysticism is realizing wholeness within the "ground of all". As a mystic, he felt that the world is intrinsically and undoubtedly connected, and because of his

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connection with everything and all beings, he felt a need to serve others in order to help guide them through their difficulties, obstacles, and critical decisions.

Reading the minds of others is one of the yogic abilities (occult powers) that Sai possessed. He had the power to penetrate the minds of all living beings through the use of his subtle intuitive powers. It was a direct mind-to-mind connection which did not require the medium of language. To Sai every person was like an open letter, but he never disclosed anything about others.

Those who went to Shirdi to meet him with an intention of testing him, came back as his followers. Once a theosophist from Bombay (Mumbai), went to Shirdi with the intention to find for herself whether Sai belonged to the school of black or white magicians. As she entered the mosque, the all-knowing Sai, before being asked, clarified that he did not belong to any of the white or black magician schools. He was sent by God to serve people and guide them to attain their highest spiritual goal.

Saint Sai could know the past, present, and future of those who visited him and see what happened at distant places as he possessed clairvoyant powers. There are plenty of experiences about Sai appearing in physical form in different and distant places, while he was actually in his human form at Shirdi. He would manifest himself in different forms whenever required for his devotees, who in many instances recorded these incidents in their diaries.

His performance of “miracles” were not considered by him as supernatural events, as he knew that nothing could happen beyond the laws of Nature. He had knowledge of all the laws of Nature and, therefore, full control over them. Although he had a body, he had attained such a state of purification to the point that his soul was not bound by the physicality. As a result, he could produce whatever he desired or willed. As his will was tuned with that of God, it was meant only for the good of others. His will had a creative force, so whatever he used to say, happened.

He was considered a mystic not because he exhibited such supernatural, mystical phenomena, but because of his constant union with the Absolute Consciousness, the source of everything. He was much above a mystic. Not all mystics are self-realized, but Saint Sai was both. The saying that “a mystic is not the knower of Truth, but *is* Truth itself” was true of him. His devotees considered him as an omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent god. He proved that when he was alive and, even now, people are experiencing the same after decades of his leaving the body.

It is no wonder that today, as always, he is revered and worshipped by millions of different religions across India and abroad. He did not leave behind any cult, ashram, or institution. He had nothing, no belongings when he left his mortal form. His life was a brilliant example of Theosophy in action. ✧

Conscious, Subconscious and Unconscious Mind in Daily Life

PRADEEP H. GOHIL

Introduction

If we ask people to differentiate the conscious mind from the subconscious mind, we will get varying answers. Some will say that it is mindfulness or awareness that distinguishes between them. But to say that the subconscious mind is unaware would be wrong. It has been well documented that we can be influenced by our surroundings or what people say, even when the conscious mind is totally out of it, such as when under anesthesia or while asleep. Another argument put forth is that the conscious mind is where we do all our thinking and logical reasoning. But that too does not entirely distinguish it from the subconscious or unconscious mind. The unconscious mind is the storage place of all our memories, emotions, and habits, and is in fact very good at reasoning and logic.

The Conscious Mind

This is the part of our mind responsible for logic and reasoning. When asked what is one plus one, it is the conscious mind that is going to do that addition. It also controls all our intentional actions while conscious. For example, when we decide

to take any voluntary action like moving the hand or leg, the conscious mind does it. So whenever we are aware of the thing we are doing we can be confident that the conscious mind is at work.

The conscious mind is also known to be the gatekeeper of the mind. If someone were to present us with an idea that does not match our belief system, then the conscious mind filters out that belief. The same happens when someone criticizes us or calls us names. If, for example, someone says, “you are dumb”, the conscious mind filters this statement and we realize we are not really dumb.

The conscious mind is what most people associate with who they are, because that is where most people live day to day. But it is by no means where all the action takes place. The conscious mind is a bit like the captain of a ship standing on the bridge giving out orders. In reality it is the crew in the engine room below the deck (the subconscious and the deeper, unconscious minds) that carry out the orders. The captain may be in charge of the ship, but it is the crew that actually guides the ship, according to the training they were given

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over the years to do the best they can. The conscious mind communicates to the outside world and the inner self through speech, pictures, writing, physical movement and thought.

Unique Functions of Conscious Mind

The two most powerful functions that the fully developed conscious mind can perform and the other two minds cannot are the ability 1) to direct our focus, and 2) to imagine that which is not real — to visualize. It is these two very significant faculties that can change our life.

Ability to Direct Focus

The conscious mind can direct our focus. If all we do is focus our conscious thoughts continually on negative things, then our subconscious will obediently deliver the feelings, emotions, and memories that we associate with that type of thinking. And because those feelings become our reality, we can then be caught up in a never-ending loop of negativity, fear, and anxiety — constantly looking for the bad in every situation.

Some people find it quite easy and natural to direct their thoughts towards a more positive approach of life in all situations. This ability of our conscious mind to direct our attention and awareness is one of the most important powers we have, and to create change in our life, we must learn to control what we consciously focus on.

But how do we do that? The actual skill of directing our focus is quite simple — all it comes down to is making a choice.

Deciding how we will think and what thoughts we will allow into our mind will determine our destiny. It can literally be used for good or evil, for constructive or destructive means.

Ability to Imagine or Visualize

Let us look at what happens when we use imagination. It brings us to the other important ability of the conscious mind — visualization. The mind can literally imagine something that is totally new and unique — something we have never physically experienced before. By contrast, the subconscious can only offer versions of what memories it has stored of past experiences.

But what is really interesting is that the subconscious cannot distinguish between what the conscious mind imagines and what is real, so whatever is brought up by conscious imagination and intently focused on, also brings up all the emotions and feelings associated with that image in the mind for us to experience.

Visualization can be used to create some amazing results. In one sporting study, three groups of people were tested on their ability to improve their free-throw accuracy in basketball. They were tested at the start of the experiment and at the end. One group was instructed to physically practise free throws for 20 days in a row. The second group was not allowed to train at all. The third group spent 20 minutes a day getting into a relaxed state and only imagining themselves performing the free throws. They were also taught, that if they missed the throw in their

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minds, to adjust slightly and see themselves getting it the next time. At the end of the experiment the results were incredible. The group that physically practised each day improved their score by 24%. The second group which did not practise, understandably did not improve at all. But the third group, which had only visualized doing it, actually improved their score by an amazing 23% — nearly as much as the first group!

The Subconscious Mind

The subconscious mind, on the other hand, is in charge of one's recent memories, and is in continuous contact with the resources of the unconscious mind. It reacts spontaneously. It is an involuntary reaction to stimulus, such as blinking when dust falls or flinching at a sudden explosion. For example, when we are learning to drive a car, we drive "consciously" — every action is conscious, like changing gears, applying brakes, turning, and so on. After a few years of experience, we drive subconsciously. The feet are doing their job, the hands theirs, and we are usually relaxed.

The subconscious works similar to a computer's RAM. It holds short-term memory, and current, regularly used programs. Further, the subconscious also plays an important role in our day-to-day functioning. It works hard at ensuring we have everything we need for quick recall like telephone numbers, shopping lists, and so forth. One of the truly great things about the subconscious mind, and one which we need to take advantage of to

effect change, is that it obeys orders! People often erroneously think that the subconscious is in charge and we are merely at its mercy. In fact, it is the complete opposite. The conscious mind gives it the direction, the environment. The subconscious will only deliver the emotions and feelings of what we continuously think about.

The Unconscious Mind

The unconscious mind is the storehouse of all memories and past experiences — both those that have been repressed through trauma and those that have simply been consciously forgotten and no longer important to us. It is from these memories and experiences that our beliefs, habits, and behaviours are formed. The unconscious mind constantly communicates with the conscious mind via the subconscious, and is what provides us with meaning to all our interactions with the world, as filtered through our beliefs and habits. It communicates through feelings, emotions, imagination, sensations, and dreams. Its memory is not the kind that we can pull out at our choosing. It is there, but we cannot recall it at will, no matter how hard we try. Certain psychoanalytical methods like hypnosis can bring it back, or it can be triggered by a particular event, like a familiar place, scene, scent, or a dream.

Example of the Unconscious Mind Triggered by a Dream

A student of the Central Hindu School in Varanasi, founded by Annie Besant, was awarded a package of her books in

1907, upon passing his exams with flying colours. After 50 years or so he was frantically looking for a book by Dr Besant referenced in some book he was reading. He searched for it in all the colleges he had taught but could not find it. One day she came to him in a dream and told him that the book was part of the package given to him at the time of his high school graduation, and was lying forgotten in a certain cupboard. The next morning he looked in the cupboard and found the book. Triggered by a dream the unconscious mind had helped him find something which the conscious mind could not.

Core Change in Daily Life

If we want change in our daily life at a core level, we will have to work on the programmes held in the unconscious mind. There are specialized ways to make that happen, and the place to start is the conscious mind. By continuously being in charge of our thoughts, through directing our focus and using visualization, we can influence the programmes run constantly by the subconscious mind. If we do this often enough, with enough emotional energy, it will start to reprogramme our unconscious internal representation and belief system. When that happens we will experience change in our daily life at a very deep level. It is very much a top-down approach. After all, it is how our habits, behaviours and beliefs were created in the first place. We need to give creative visualization a try to create the life we always wanted, and see how it works.

Unconscious Mind Triggered by Ads

A good example for unconscious behaviour especially among youth is a TV advertisement where a popular but unhealthy soft drink is shown being drunk by celebrities who act as if their thirst is miraculously quenched. People seeing this ad suddenly feel thirsty, go to get the advertised drink from their fridge and drink it. They know the drink is unhealthy. If they had applied their conscious mind, would they ever drink it? But the ads create an impression on the unconscious mind.

Basic Challenges for the Human Brain

The human brain has two very fundamental challenges today.

First, the human brain is burdened with excessive information and knowledge. Right from childhood we are burdened with studies and exams, most of which we rarely use in life. Newspaper information, medical information on the internet, travel information, bank information, food information, information on movies, management information, and on and on. I am convinced that the more humans are burdened with information, the greater is the danger for their brain to go into depression.

The second fundamental challenge is how unconsciously people behave. I would like to term this unconscious indulgence. How many are aware of what they do? Very few people enjoy killing. Still, there is a lot of killing happening in the world. The fact is that though few are enjoying it, most are supporting it *unconsciously*. Hence we remain divorced from reality, we never try to reach the unconscious or bring

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it to the surface, examine it, see it or listen to it. Listening to the unconscious appears to be not given to modernity. There is only one thing that can make us bring the unconscious to the surface, and that is silence. But how much silence is possible in our daily life except possibly when we are in a special place like the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar?

Conclusion

The kind of reflections we have had during this World Congress are powerful tools for bringing a change of perception and overcoming the unwholesome states of mind in our daily lives. Constantly

remaining conscious by wisdom, we can effect a change in our thinking patterns. As our perception changes, the frequency with which anger and negativity arise is minimized and so does the duration. With practice and continuous, conscious behaviour, we can attain a state where anger and negativity will not arise in us. As we make progress on this path of reducing anger, and developing virtues of action, speech, and thought, we observe that our state of remaining conscious becomes stronger. And as we master the art of remaining conscious, our meditation becomes effective — it will become effortless, making us progress on the path of evolution in this life. ✧

If an evil thought, projected with malefic intent, strikes a purified body, it will rebound and fly back along the magnetic line of least resistance, returning to and striking its projector. . . . Thus “curses (and blessings) come home to roost”.

Arthur E. Powell
The Mental Body

Annie Besant, Theosophist

MURIEL PÉCASTAING-BOISSIÈRE

Exclusion from the National Secular Society

“I would not have left your platform had I not been compelled.” These words were part of the concluding lines of Annie Besant’s farewell lecture to the National Secular Society, delivered in the [London] Hall of Science on Sunday, 30 August 1891. However, Besant had joined the Theosophical Society over two years before, in May 1889, and the reasons why she was eventually excluded from the NSS in August 1891 are more complex than a simple reaction to her conversion.

As mentioned by Besant herself in the *National Reformer* in 1882, Charles Bradlaugh had actually befriended Col. Olcott, during a lecture tour in the United States in the 1870s, and Olcott had given a speech in Bombay in 1879, favourable to Bradlaugh’s secularism. In the early 1880s, *The Theosophist* published an advertisement for freethinking literature, and Bradlaugh also advertised *The Theosophist* in the *National Reformer*. Some of the members of the Bombay and Madras sections of the NSS joined the Theosophical Society, including Murugesu Mudaliar, the editor of the Madras

Freethought Journal. Bradlaugh then grew nervous, and articles criticizing Theosophy began to appear in the columns of the *National Reformer*. Most of them came from Bradlaugh, but he could still be slightly qualified, as when he wrote that he hoped Blavatsky was right when she asserted that Theosophists contributed to break down caste in India.

The 1889 annual convention of the NSS was held on 9 June. Bradlaugh was re-elected as president and Besant as one of the vice-presidents. Her work on the London School Board was praised, and her speech on freethought and humanism was greeted with “loud and long applause”, according to the *National Reformer*, but nothing was said about her joining the Theosophical Society just a month before. On 15 June, Besant published her first article as a Theosophist, in *Lucifer*. Titled “Practical Work for Theosophists”, it bridged her socialism and her newly-found spirituality, and she dared sign it “Annie Besant, F. T. S” — but it apparently fell under the radar of the NSS.

Then on 23 June Besant published under her name in the *National Reformer* a long, and this time very favourable

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review of *The Secret Doctrine*, titled “The Evolution of the Universe”. Besant used scientific arguments her secularist readers might respond to, stressing the continuity between occult and Victorian sciences, but her review launched an immediate controversy within the NSS. She never meant it as a provocation; on the contrary, she had introduced her review saying: “The *National Reformer* reaches so many different types of readers . . . that it seems likely that among them all some will be found to take interest in the unfamiliar views of the universe set forth in this very remarkable work.”

The review was how Bradlaugh learned of Besant’s joining the Theosophical Society. He reacted to it — but also to the numerous letters he received about it — in the next issue of the *National Reformer*, under the title “Some Words of Explanation”. After admitting to not having read *The Secret Doctrine*, Bradlaugh wrote: “I very deeply regret that my colleague and co-worker has . . . adopted as facts matters which seem to me as unreal as it is possible for any fiction to be.” He added, quite clearly: “The editorial policy of this paper is unchanged, and is directly antagonistic to all forms of Theosophy”, and concluded that: “An Atheist certainly cannot be a Theosophist.” Besant’s answer was printed right below Bradlaugh’s violent reaction. She presented Theosophists as freethinkers themselves:

On matters of religious opinion, the members are absolutely free. The founders of the Society deny a personal God, and a

somewhat subtle form of Pantheism is taught as the Theosophic View of the universe, though even this is not forced on members of the Society.

The most virulent of Besant’s secularist opponents proved to be George W. Foote. He was an old adversary of hers, having already opposed her public support of birth control in 1877, to the point of joining the NSS-breakaway British Secular Union for a while. Like Bradlaugh, Foote also strongly disapproved of Besant’s socialism. Foote immediately published a pamphlet titled *Mrs Besant’s Theosophy: A Candid Criticism*. The text, however, reveals a number of prejudices that had very little to do with Besant’s Theosophy, but very much with her sex: “From the lips of a woman, especially if young or engaging, even commonplaces are apt to pass with men as revelations, and faulty logic is wonderfully convincing.” Foote’s misogyny was even more obvious when he asserted: “[Besant] has not the gist of originality. She seems to me very much at the mercy of her emotions, and especially at the mercy of her latest friends.” As for Blavatsky, Foote twice called her a “sorceress”, to whose spell Besant had supposedly succumbed “body and soul”. Yet, just like Bradlaugh, Foote readily confessed: “For my own part, I cannot say that I have *read* these volumes; but I have *looked* through them.” He still firmly concluded: “Mme. Blavatsky’s *Secret Doctrine* is the work of an accomplished charlatan.”

Thus it was mostly to Foote that

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Besant answered with her two lectures jointly entitled “Why I Became a Theosophist”, given in August 1889 in the Hall of Science, “to a crowded audience”, according to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Its report reveals that she still enjoyed considerable support from her fellow secularists: “In concluding Mrs Besant said . . . she would never give her enemies the right to say that she left the ranks of organized freethought of her own free will. (Applause.) If they wanted her to go, let them say so. (‘No, no.’)”. In September, *Lucifer* published a report of the debate that had followed Besant’s second lecture. Many of the questions were actually candid inquiries into the tenets of Theosophy: “the gentleman [asked] whether Theosophy is a system which can be grasped by the majority of people; another gentleman wished to know where the Ego was between the periods of reincarnation;” but other secularists openly called for Besant’s exclusion: “Mrs Besant must go”, a “Mr King” exclaimed.

Foote responded with two lectures, both called “Secularism and Theosophy: A Rejoinder to Mrs Besant’s Pamphlet”. Interestingly, in them Foote admitted to having already “complain[ed] of Mrs Besant’s having used the Freethought platform ‘in an unjustifiable manner’ to propagate Socialism”, thus unwittingly showing that Besant’s Theosophy only added to his resentment towards her. Foote also revealed his fear of Besant’s powers of persuasion, writing: “she might lead Freethinkers astray. . . . The best of us are human, and many excellent per-

sons have followed a trusted leader into new paths, out of sheer love and admiration.” . . . Then threateningly: “Foreign matter will sometimes enter an organism, but the organism tries to expel it, and, if strong enough it succeeds.” As for Theosophy, he just concluded: “At any rate, it is hardly worth discussing.”

Bradlaugh, for his part, only officially expressed his disapproval once more a few weeks later in the *National Reformer* — scornfully asserting that he did not want to waste any more time on a belief that held “only a very minor place among the world’s delusions”, and he went on comparing “Mme Blavatsky” to “M. Jules Verne”. Bradlaugh’s further silence on the matter of Besant’s Theosophy may have had to do with the fact that he was invited to attend the Indian National Congress (INC) in Bombay in December 1889. There, he met the man who had founded the INC in 1885: Allan Octavian Hume, an Anglo-Indian former civil servant, who had been a member of the Theosophical Society between 1881 and 1883. By 1889, a significant number of Indian and Anglo-Indian members of the INC also were Theosophists, which did not seem to bother Bradlaugh when he was acclaimed by the INC as their “Member for India”.

Still, when Bradlaugh resigned from the Presidency of the NSS in February 1890, shortly after he came back from India, he appointed Foote as his successor until the next annual conference, held in Manchester in May — during which Foote was elected by acclamation. Besant then announced her resignation

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as vice-president, because she could not “work harmoniously” with Foote, although the Executive Committee tried to dissuade her. Foote’s own paper the *Freethinker* then said it presumably meant she had also resigned from the NSS — adding that it did not really matter anyway, since she had resigned *de facto* when she had converted to Theosophy.

This was merely wishful thinking on Foote’s part, for not only was Besant still a member, but she still lectured for the NSS, as in August 1890 for its North-West section . . . She also went to Ireland for the first time in her life in October 1890, where she lectured to the NSS sections of Dublin and Belfast. Besant was still fighting for secularism as late as March 1891, on the London School Board, arguing: “that every freethinker ought to be glad to obtain relief from the duty of giving religious instruction which he did not believe in”.

However, Bradlaugh’s death on 30 January 1891 deprived Besant at least of symbolic support within the NSS. In April she left England to attend the annual convention of the American Section of the Theosophical Society, held in Boston, as Blavatsky’s personal delegate. Before her departure, she said she would soon be back on the platform of the Hall of Science — but Mme Blavatsky died on 8 May, while Besant was sailing back from America.

The papers that carried Blavatsky’s obituary dwelled on the Hodgson Report and systematically mentioned Besant. *The London Daily News* of 9 May thus read: “Madame Blavatsky was openly charged with imposture. For all that, there

were many believers in her, and among the most conspicuous and most ardent of these was Mrs Besant.” *The Pall Mall Gazette*, no longer edited by W. T. Stead by then, published on its front page an article on HPB entitled “The Prophetess of the Buried Tea Cup”, referencing one of the events investigated by Hodgson, said: “Mrs Annie Besant, revolting from miracles, threw herself upon Mahatmas and atheism ends in theosophy”.

After Besant announced on 21 June that she would “not be able to present herself as candidate at the coming School Board election”, explaining that “The death of my honoured friend and chief, Mme Blavatsky, throws on me heavy additional work in connection with the Theosophical movement”, the *Pall Mall Gazette* published an interview of Besant under the headline: “I Believe in Madame Blavatsky.” The journalist described Besant as “a lady of great force of character, quickness of mind, and command of words”, and concluded about her unwavering faith in Blavatsky: “We talk of Mme Blavatsky’s ‘miracles’ — surely, the ‘miracle of miracles’ is here!”

The first annual convention of the Theosophical Society in Europe was held in London, partly at Besant’s place, on 9 and 10 July. The context proved perfect for George Foote to launch a renewed attack on Besant. On 17 July, he had a letter sent to her stating that the NSS committee in charge of the Sunday lectures in the Hall of Science “desire[d] that all lectures from this platform on Sunday evenings shall be on subjects upon which the lecturer is in agreement

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with the principles and objects of the National Secular Society”. Besant replied that she could not “submit to a censorship”, and “must accept [her] exclusion from the platform”. She announced she would give the NSS a farewell address on Sunday 30 August.

It may sound as if Besant used the letter as a convenient opportunity to leave the NSS, but this view runs counter to what she expressed in her address. It was titled “1875–1891: A Fragment of Autobiography”, because Besant summed up her work within the NSS since 1875, as well as her own personal evolution.

“The hall was crowded to its utmost capacity”, according to *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, and there must have been many journalists, judging by the number of other reports in the London papers. Still according to *Reynolds’s Newspaper*: “When Mrs Besant rose a voice cried ‘Shame’, then there were many cries of ‘No, no,’ then cheering, which lasted for several minutes.” Her tribute to Bradlaugh also was cheered, and there were “laughters and cheers”, when she said that she was given *The Secret Doctrine* to review because she “was thought to be more or less mad on such subjects”. But Besant also voiced a powerful denunciation of the paradox of supposed *free-thinkers* refusing to listen to different views, and acting as a sect themselves:

I did not break with the great Church of England, and ruin my social position, and break with all that women hold dear, in order to come to this platform and be dictated to as to what I should say. . . .

What is it you are saying? That you will have no word from your platform save that which you already know, echoing back from your brains to the brain of the speaker the truth you have already discovered. . . . If you are right, you ought to be strong enough to hear a lecturer put views you don’t agree with.

Reynolds’s Newspaper concluded:

During the closing sentences of her address Mrs Besant spoke under great emotion — an emotion which was reflected not by a few of her hearers. Having ended, she left the platform with the friends that accompanied her. Meanwhile the place simply rang with cheers

— which once again tends to show that even by then, Besant enjoyed significant support within the NSS. In fact, just as with the socialists, it seems that at least a portion of late Victorian secularists did not consider Theosophy as totally incompatible with their views.

An Immediate Leading Role within TS

Meanwhile, Annie Besant’s ascension within the Theosophical Society had been as swift as that which had followed her joining the National Secular Society. She became a co-editor with Blavatsky of the monthly *Lucifer* in September 1889, then president of the Blavatsky Lodge in January 1890. In July of that year, she transferred the lease of her large London house in St John’s Wood to the European Section of the Theosophical Society, at a time when her reduced income no longer

allowed her to rent it. Her home thus became the headquarters of the Blavatsky Lodge, and Blavatsky herself, as well as a dozen of the most influential Lodge members came to live there — including G. R. S. Mead, Blavatsky's personal secretary, who had studied mathematics at Cambridge, then Eastern philosophy at Oxford. There was also Isabel Cooper-Oakley, Archibald and Bertram Keightley, and Countess Wachtmeister, a French aristocrat married to a Norwegian diplomat. Lectures took place every Thursday evening, and they were so successful that admission tickets had to be printed. These lectures resulted in several new converts, such as suffragette Ursula Mellor Bright . . . as well as her daughter, Esther.

Besant, accompanied by Archibald Keightley, undertook her first transatlantic voyage in April 1891 to represent Mme Blavatsky at the annual convention of American Theosophists, in Boston, and she took advantage of the journey to make a lecture tour along the East Coast — she even gave a lecture on the liner returning to Europe, at the request of passengers who had recognized her. It was only upon her arrival that Besant learned of Mme Blavatsky's death, just a few months after Bradlaugh's. By a coincidence, they had both died of renal failure, and both secular funeral services took place at Brookwood Cemetery, in Woking. Besant and William Q. Judge, now general secretary of the American Section, had been appointed by Blavatsky as "Joint Outer Heads" of the Esoteric School (the "Inner

Heads" being the Masters themselves).

The World Parliament of Religions of Chicago (1893)

In 1893, Besant travelled to Chicago to take part in the World Parliament of Religions, which was associated with that year's World Columbian Exposition. She was accompanied by two of her socialist and Theosophist friends, Herbert Burrows and Henrietta Muller, and also by a young Brahman from Benares, Gyanendra N. Chakravarti. This professor of mathematics at the University of Allahabad became her tutor in Brahmanism. From then on, Hinduism supplanted Buddhism in Besant's spirituality, but mostly in its ancient, traditional form. She also crossed paths with Swami Vivekananda, whose immense success during the Parliament contributed to spreading awareness of Hinduism among Westerners.

The Theosophist lectures were very successful too: the Lutherans, less popular, had to exchange their fifteen-hundred-seat hall with the five-hundred-seat one originally meant for the Theosophists. No fewer than 3000 people attempted to squeeze into this hall for the Theosophists' final lecture, on Saturday evening, to the point that an additional one had to be organized on Sunday in Washington Hall, the largest of the Parliament of Religions, where a balcony was hastily erected so that everyone could fit in. Fortified by this triumph, Besant and Müller then left for a lecture tour that took them to Cincinnati, Toronto and New York. ✧

Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom

I have no name,
I am as the fresh breeze of the mountains.
I have no shelter;
I am as the wandering waters.
I have no sanctuary, like the dark gods;
Nor am I in the shadow of deep temples.
I have no sacred books;
Nor am I well-seasoned in tradition.
I am not in the incense
Mounting on the high altars,
Nor in the pomp of ceremonies.
I am neither in the graven image,
Nor in the rich chant of a melodious voice.
I am not bound by theories,
Nor corrupted by beliefs.
I am not held in the bondage of religions,
Nor in the pious agony of their priests.
I am not entrapped by philosophies,
Nor held in the power of their sects.
I am neither low nor high,
I am the worshipper and the worshipped.
I am free.
My song is the song of the river
Calling for the open seas,
Wandering, wandering,
I am Life.
I have no name,
I am as the fresh breeze of the mountains.

Jiddu Krishnamurti
The Song of Life

Living a Theosophical Life

WAYNE GATFIELD

THEOSOPHICAL teaching, and indeed all true spiritual teaching, is based upon the fact that the personal self is transitory and that we should aim, in our quest, to focus our attention on that dimension of our being that is eternal. This is the only way to succeed in the final analysis.

Society in general worships the physical body and the personality, and even in spiritual circles the name of the one speaking is often more important than what is said. The celebrity culture runs deep.

The truth is that it does not matter who delivers the message as long as it is delivered correctly and we should all be working as one mind and soul towards the enlightenment of humanity as a whole. As Theosophical students our motto should be as the Masters told us, to start a brotherhood of humanity and a real universal fraternity. If we are to be a nucleus of this brotherhood then the bar is set high. We must foremost learn to love each other and forgive in all cases, and where someone errs, try to help rather than condemn, passing the gentlest sentence possible on them if we need to. Are we as followers of the Trans-Himalayan Brotherhood to act as does a world ignorant of the words

of the holy ones? It should be almost as if the same person wearing many different masks was delivering the teachings from many different angles, with the essence being the same. Unity is strength. “United we stand, divided we fall” is very true in all walks of life.

Never push oneself forward in any way as this is the ego and the transitory personality playing its tricks, trying to sow dissent amongst us. If there is even a trace of enmity or jealousy towards a fellow member of the Society then the right conditions are not there and any talk of brotherhood becomes hypocrisy and cant. It is useless to study and talk of Theosophy until we are learning to love one another and to act as One. A Zen Master once said that the prohibition of Buddhism from killing did not just mean to refrain from taking life physically, but also implied that those who spoke of Buddhism without living the Buddhist life were killing Buddhism. But we are not perfect yet, so most people will say that in that case hardly anyone should deliver Theosophical teachings; but it is all a matter of motive. Are we studying and lecturing on Theosophy so others will think us good speakers and

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students or do we really want to save humanity from sinking into a darkness that it may never recover from? If our motive is altruistic then that will strike home in the hearts of the listeners more than the words. Again some may say that as long as the teachings are given out the motivation does not matter, but we are really trying to touch hearts, not just minds.

Many of us find excuses not to act in this way, and build walls instead of bridges, taking from the teachings only those things that fit in with our way of thinking and turning a blind eye to those that do not. We must beware that we do not go the way of organised religions and meander down the same path. We must check our motives and if we cannot act in a loving way towards each other, what hope is there for the world in general? The Koran says: “If you kill one person unjustly it is as if you have killed the whole humanity, and if you save one person it is as if you have saved the whole humanity.” (Quran, Surah 5, Verse No 32) We know this because anyone who has any reasonable level of sensitivity experiences an actual physical sensation when some great atrocity is perpetrated as a result of terrorism, war or some natural disaster. This may be as depression or a feeling of anger or great sorrow. This is proof that inwardly we are all One and the suffering ripples through the whole of humanity and holds up its general progress. H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) tells us:

It is an occult law, moreover, that no man can rise superior to his individual failings, without lifting, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part. In the same way, no one can sin, nor suffer

the effects of sin, alone. In reality, there is no such thing as “Separateness”; and the nearest approach to that selfish state, which the laws of life permit, is in the intent or motive.

The Key to Theosophy, sec. 11

We must not spend our time just “preaching to the converted” but let our light shine for all to see, without proselytising, because people must be encouraged to find the Truth for themselves, and so we can only provide guidelines. At our Lodge meetings and conferences the welfare of humanity should always be uppermost in our minds as we study and socialise, spending time in a mini golden age of love and fellowship that will have a positive and uplifting effect on society in general. We must not forget the beneficial effects of harmonious living, heart-centred awareness, and a compassionate eye on all those who are struggling. In the rush of life these simple truths often pass us by and we are lost in a labyrinth of words, concepts and images “like a man in a thick forest” as Śankarāchārya tells us.

Simplicity of living becomes lost to us and we find more excuses to be complicated, and thus form more clouds, covering the sun of our awareness. One ray of hope shining in someone’s darkness is worth a thousand words. A practical act of kindness is sometimes all that is needed in a situation, and it is always better to do that directly oneself than through a third party if possible.

It may be that in the rush of life we lose sight of the essential role that the TS plays in the enlightenment of humanity. Organised religion has failed to do this and

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in fact in many cases has done the exact opposite and caused more suffering than comfort for the troubled soul. This is because religions are man-made. If one was to follow the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and live by Jesus' words then this would have a profound and uplifting effect on the world in general, but most of those professing to be Christian through the centuries have made little attempt to live the words of their founder. Great teachers have come to deliver the message of love and peace, but have been largely ignored.

HPB also delivered this message, but it has failed to take root in the minds and hearts of humanity as a whole. W. Q. Judge in his writings strongly emphasised the practice of Universal Brotherhood and the occult effects of its practice. We need to think more of this side of the teachings than mere dead letter promulgation. Also we need to think about our responsibility to humanity and to understand from HPB's and the Masters' teachings how essential it is to truly live this Universal Brotherhood of Humanity. HPB writes in *The Key to Theosophy*, sec. 12

If the action of one reacts on the lives of all, and this is the true scientific idea, then it is only by all men becoming brothers and all women sisters, and by all practising in their daily lives true brotherhood and true sisterhood, that the real human solidarity, which lies at the root of the elevation of the race, can ever be attained. It is this action and interaction, this true brotherhood and sisterhood, in which each shall live for all and all for each, which is one of the fundamental Theosophical

principles that every Theosophist should be bound, not only to teach, but to carry out in his or her individual life.

In time this is expected to filter through to the world in general, but the TS exists to give the impetus by forming this nucleus and by its sincere members at least attempting to live up to these words. We must also heed the warning given by HPB in her article "Our Cycle and the Next":

If Theosophy prevailing in the struggle, its all-embracing philosophy strikes deep root into the minds and hearts of men, if its doctrines of Reincarnation and Karma, in other words, of Hope and Responsibility, find a home in the lives of the new generations, then, indeed, will dawn the day of joy and gladness for all who now suffer and are outcast. For real Theosophy IS ALTRUISM, and we cannot repeat it too often. It is brotherly love, mutual help, unswerving devotion to Truth. If once men do but realize that in these alone can true happiness be found, and never in wealth, possessions, or any selfish gratification, then the dark clouds will roll away, and a new humanity will be born upon earth. Then, the GOLDEN AGE will be there, indeed.

But if not, then the storm will burst, and our boasted Western civilization and enlightenment will sink in such a sea of horror that its parallel History has never yet recorded.

We have the teachings and the guidance to bring about positive changes for good in the world. The Masters said that the watchword is "TRY" and this we must do at least. ✧

HPB: Freedom from Mental Bondage — I

JOE HASIEWICZ

HELENA Petrovna Blavatsky, affectionately known to her friends as HPB, left this world in 1891. In an article written shortly after her death in 1892, Dr Albert Leighton Rawson¹, an important witness to some of HPB's journeyings, described his meeting with her in Cairo in 1851, when she was about twenty years old and he was a young art student from the United States. She revealed to him that she was engaged in a work that would someday "free mankind from mental bondage". He also commented that "her disinterestedness in her mission was sublime, for she frequently said that 'this work is not mine, but his that sent me'", evidently making a reference to the book of John (7:16) in the Bible's New Testament.

What is Mental Bondage?

What is the mental bondage that HPB was speaking about? I do not know that she ever defined it per se or used the term very much even in her own writings. But I will make an attempt to shed some light on what I think she meant, by using some examples.

Bruised Apples

Perhaps my wife Julie's experience may serve to illustrate it from one perspective. In the spring of 2015, we were both part of a service project organized by the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) at the Peoples Resource Center (PRC) in Wheaton. This is a place where disadvantaged people can come to get help with finding a job, improve their literacy, and receive training in computer skills. It also provides food for the hungry.

The TOS group helped with food distribution and Julie helped shoppers make their final selections. Outside were bushels of bruised apples and the shoppers were told that they could take as many as they wanted. Julie called out to a lady who was just finishing up her shopping: "Would you want some of these apples?" The woman politely refused, but Julie, seeing the value in the apples continued: "You can cut off the bruises and make them into applesauce!" To which the woman replied: "Well, I don't know how to make applesauce, I just would not know how to do that." So Julie proceeded to tell her how

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quick and simple it was, and detailed the short recipe. “No, I don’t think that I can do that”, the woman said, and left without taking any apples.

Sometimes opportunities come to us in the form of ideas that can be seized and used to bring about some kind of positive change. Initially, the woman did not know how to make applesauce and probably never thought that there could be a possibility of doing so using the bruised apples. Unfortunately, on that day, she insisted on maintaining her status quo, but we hope that the idea would have stayed with her.

Mental Blinds

Mental bondage may take the form of a “mental blind” of our own making. This is where we choose to ignore or refuse to accept certain reasonable information we come across on some given subject. We may be presented with an idea or a concept, but, for some reason, we find it disagreeable. Perhaps it conflicts with some belief we have already worked to establish within ourselves, or we may not see it as ever being useful, we just do not think that it could be true, and so on.

A mental blind may also be the result of something that we take for granted, possibly something that we do not think about anymore because we have already made up our minds about it and dismissed the thought of further enquiry long ago, such as, “Well, that is just the way it is”. Similarly, “blinds” may be things that were thrown into the category of “God made it so, and we are not to question”, so we have effectively halted any further en-

quiries that we may have embarked upon.

In any event, we refuse to dig far enough into the subject to reach a conclusion that would satisfy our unbiased reason — so the “blind” remains. By allowing a “blind” to remain, we deprive ourselves of a perception or an insight, or perhaps a certain skill, and the truth of that particular matter which we choose to ignore remains unknown, undisclosed to ourselves for a while longer.

Some may call this closed-mindedness. Sometimes the refusal to accept new ideas can be intentional because we are choosing to conceal the true nature of something from ourselves, as we do not want to accept it for whatever reason, and end up creating a form of prejudice or a religious superstition within ourselves that may eventually incite bigotry or possibly even hatred. On the other hand, HPB encourages us to open our eyes to things that we take for granted and teaches that we need to question, to enquire into our own nature as well as the nature of the universe, of which we are an inextricable part.

Finding Our Way Through

Another approach to understanding mental bondage may be to think about how we can see our way through it. We can imagine ourselves struggling to find our way through life. HPB lights the way by telling us that in each incarnation or Earth-life, the lower mind, the one that we use for our everyday thinking, is endowed with certain instruments to help itself develop. She writes:

Thus the Lower Manas [Lower Mind],

taken as a whole, is, in each Earth-life, what it makes itself. It is possible for it to act differently on different occasions, although surrounded each time by similar conditions, for it has Reason and self-conscious knowledge of Right and Wrong, of Good and Evil, given to it. It is, in fact, endowed with all the attributes of the Divine Soul, and one of these attributes is Will.

(Collected Writings, vol. 12, p. 711)

Will is the exclusive possession of man on this our plane of consciousness. It divides him from the brute in whom instinctive desire only is active . . . [Man's] task is . . . to awaken the will, to strengthen it by use and conquest, to make it absolute ruler within his body; . . .

(Collected Writings, vol. 8, p. 109)

Our task is to learn how to use the tools that we are given in order to break through the mental bondage that comes with the particular circumstances we are born into, and to find ways to use our life as an opportunity for individual growth as well as to help others do the same. But even if we manage to get past the mental blinds of our own making, mental bondage may take the form of insufficient education.

Science

From birth, we train and condition the mind in various ways to help it successfully find its way through life and, if possible, make some kind of a lasting contribution. We teach it the arts, sciences, sometimes religion, philosophy, and so forth, all of which together contribute to the formulation of that mind's world view,

much of which is still subjective. But if, in addition, that mind is able to stop and think about *what we actually know*, and contemplate *the great truths that can still be learned*, very likely it will have the potential to make progress.

Mental bondage may take the form of insufficient information. If you are thinking to yourself, "Well, that was over 125 years ago; surely we have come a long way since then", consider Rupert Sheldrake's 2013 TED Talk (which you can find on YouTube) on "The Science Delusion", where he opens his talk by stating:

The science delusion is the belief that science already understands the nature of reality in principle, leaving only the details to be filled in. This is a very widespread belief in our society. It's the kind of belief system of people who say "I don't believe in God, I believe in science". It's a belief system [or a world view] which has now been spread to the entire world. . . . And, unfortunately, the world view aspect of science has come to inhibit and constrict the free enquiry which is the very lifeblood of the scientific endeavor.

One day we graduate from a fine educational institution, presumably freed from the bondage of insufficient education. But have we only subscribed to the conventional wisdom, simply training ourselves to retrace the existing modalities of thinking and continue working within the confines of our limited understanding, or have we truly prepared ourselves to break new ground and further the progress of humanity? In her article "Occult or Exact

Science?” HPB tells us that occult science is the key to the mysteries of Nature. She writes:

“‘Occult Science’ . . . alone can furnish the key to the mysteries of Nature, and unveil the problems of the universe and of psycho-physical man.”²

Great Minds

HPB’s writings did not escape the notice of those great minds whose eyes were already open, seeking truth and questing to understand the mysteries of Nature. It seems that they may have already agreed with HPB, at least to some extent, that occult science has the key to a deeper understanding of Nature.

Einstein

Evidently, Albert Einstein, the theoretical physicist who developed the theory of relativity, had an interest in HPB’s writings because a niece of his reported that a copy of HPB’s *The Secret Doctrine* was always on his desk. Another witness, Jack Brown, who had met Einstein back in 1935, reports similarly in a 1983 article, “I Visit Professor Einstein”.³ In this article, Einstein remarks: “I have even told Prof. Heisenberg, my fellow physicist, to get a copy [of *The Secret Doctrine*] and keep it on his desk. I urged him to dip into it when he’s handicapped by some problem.”

(To be continued)

Endnotes

1. Rawson was also an author of books on religion, philology, and archaeology. <theosophy.ph/encyclo/index.php?title=Rawson,_Albert_Leighton>
2. “Occult or Exact Science?” *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, vol. 7, p. 55. <katinkahesselink.net/blavatsky/articles/v7/y1886_004.htm>
3. Sylvia Cranston, *HPB: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky*, Preface, p. xx. <blavatskyarchives.com/brown/jackbrownoneinstein.htm>

It is a universally admitted fact that the marvellous success of the Theosophical Society in India is due entirely to its principle of wise and respectful toleration of each other’s opinions and beliefs. Not even the President-Founder has the right directly or indirectly to interfere with the freedom of thought of the humblest member, least of all to seek to influence his personal opinion.

The Mahatma Letters, Letter 120, chron. ed. (ML-85)

Who am I?

RABBI RAMI SHAPIRO

WHO am I? Chances are you have asked this question of yourself many times. The reason the question is asked so often is twofold: first because there is nothing as fascinating to us as ourselves, and second, because no one answer seems to fit over time.

Do not think badly of yourself for being fascinated with yourself. You probably cannot help this. Think of it this way: your entire experience of life is shaped by the self out of which you seem to see the world, and with which you seem to engage the world. So what could be more intriguing than to know what this self is?

When I was growing up in the 1950s it was commonplace for cartoons to represent human beings as little humans inside the heads of our larger bodies. The little human was our “I”, our sense of self, and it seemed to reside in our head, just behind our eyes. The cartoon “I” would manipulate a series of levers and pulleys to make the body function, and would peer out at the world through binocular eye sockets.

Of course even as a kid we knew this was not accurate, but as we grew up the

sense of being someone inside this carbon-based shell of skin and bone never left us. Ask people to point to themselves and most will point to their chest or their head, their heart or their brain, and very few will reference their feet, hands, or butts. We are “in here” somewhere.

The most famous articulation of this is Descartes’ notion that body and mind are separate entities. His famous *cogito ergo sum*, “I think therefore I am”, elevates the mind over the body, and while he was not sure how the immaterial mind ran the material body he had no doubt that it did so.

While many philosophers have sought to disprove Descartes’ mind/body split, most of us perpetuate it because it seems right. We feel that we are someone other than our bodies residing in our bodies. This feeling may reflect an actual fact of our existence or it may be a by-product of the way our brains function giving us the illusion of a self separate from the body. In either case, most of us are attached to the notion: “I am somebody.”

If you believe you are somebody, then you must also believe that other people and other beings are somebody else. The

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universe is populated by myriads of somebodies. This is the view held by most people: my “I” is separate from and other than your “I”, my self is separate from and other than your self.

Once you have settled on the separate somebodies, notion of reality you have to work out just how you will deal with the “otherbodies” in your life. Are they friend or foe? Can you trust them or not? What are your obligations, if any, toward them? If push comes to shove, whom shall you value more: yourself or the other?

Over time we have come to answer these questions by imagining concentric circles of allegiance. My first allegiance is to my self, then to my family, and then my tribe. As most of us moved out of tribal social units we sought other “tribal” affiliations such as nation, race, ethnicity, gender, and so on. Basically it came down to this: those “otherbodies” who are most like me are more precious to me than those “otherbodies” who are less and ultimately least like me.

Of course when you are born you have no idea who is most like you and who is least. You are not born with the criteria for most/least, and have to be taught it by those who claim to be most like you: your parents at first, educators and clergy as you mature, and political leaders and clergy, after that. The aim of all this education is to secure your allegiance to the tribes of your parents, educators, clergy, and politicians; and it works.

Take two toddlers from warring tribes (Israelis and Palestinians for example) and place them in a playground with toys,

and you will over time find them arguing and perhaps fighting. But what they argue over is who gets which toy when, not whom God loves best. As they grow up they are taught how to expand their definition of “toy” to include land, water rights, ideologies, religions, and so forth. But these sophisticated toys must be taught; we are not born to battle over abstractions, we are indoctrinated into that.

And this is all rooted in the notion that I am somebody. Once I accept that premise, the logical thing is to find out what kind of somebody I am, and that is where the indoctrination comes in. But what if I am nobody?

I am sixty-two years old. This means that, give or take a few cells and a few years, I have run through six to eight bodies in my lifetime. That is based on the scientific fact that almost all my cells are replaced every seven to ten years. I am literally not the man I was ten years ago. But if that is true, who am I?

There are some cells, neurons in the cerebral cortex and some percentage of my cardiomyocyte heart cells, for example, that have been with me since birth, but when I think of myself as a self I am not really thinking of these. When I think of myself I think of the “me” I see when I look in the mirror. Or do I?

I saw a series of photographs of myself taken just a week ago, and none of them looked like me, despite the fact that they were accurate representations of me. The same thing happens periodically when I look at my face in a mirror: it is not my face. Or at least it is not the face

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I think is my face when I am not looking in the mirror.

The fact is I seem to have an idealized image of my physical self that is often at odds with my actual body. The same holds true for my psychological self: When I think of my self I do not think of the immediate thoughts or feelings fleeing across my cognitive field of awareness, I think in terms of a long string of thoughts and feelings culled from my memory and woven into a narrative account of someone I call “me”.

Most people do this, though we only acknowledge it when we are saying something like, “I’m just not myself lately.” You are always yourself, and can be nothing but yourself, but the self you are at this moment may have nothing to do with the narrative self you invent from memory, and hence you do not feel like your self.

To put it bluntly: you are the stories you tell about yourself and not the cells, thoughts, or feelings that actually constitute yourself in this moment. You have the same level of reality as Harry Potter, Nancy Drew, or any other narrative being.

As upsetting as this may sound to you, it is actually good news because it means you are not fixed but fluid; you can change, and the way you change is to change the narrative. This is what psychology is all about, for example: you learn to identify and then rewrite your story. Religion is similar in that you learn to identify with a story that is not your own, but to which you conform.

Knowing you are a narrated self raises another question: Who is the narrator?

There are three possible answers to this question: “no one”, “me”, and “God”. You might believe that stories just happen, that the brain weaves random events into memorable tales in order to make sense out of its own existence. Or you might believe that there is a real you — a soul — behind the narrated you that does the narrating. Or you might believe that there is a God behind all of this that is doing all of this. The problem with all three of these answers is that they, too, are stories we tell ourselves.

There is no way to get outside the story, at least not while you are alive. Perhaps, when you die, you will discover the true Storyteller, but this idea, too, is a story. As William Shakespeare wrote in *As You Like It* (Act 2, Scene 7), “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.”

I could leave this at that: you are a character in a play that seems to have no author. Knowing this you can take responsibility for your character, and change your lines. You may not be responsible for or in control of the scenes into which you are thrust, but you do have the capacity to write new dialogue for yourself.

I believe this is true, but I do not believe it is the whole truth.

If my body, thoughts, and feelings are in flux, if there is nothing but story that links the toddler-me to the adult-me, then I am nobody at all. But being nobody is actually quite liberating. Being nobody means that I can be anybody, which is where our radical responsibility and freedom come into play. Follow this line of

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thinking, and it will lead you into existentialism and the notion that you are the meaning-maker of your own existence. Of course the meaning you make — what Albert Camus would call an act of resistance in the face of life's intrinsic meaninglessness — is made in the realm of story, but given the narrative nature of existence, meaning-filled stories are not to be dismissed as, well, meaningless.

But I want to take this conversation in a different direction. Yes, "Rami" is a character in a narrative; I have no quarrel with that notion. But I cannot shake the intuition that "Rami" is not who I really am.

Martin Buber, the great 20th century Jewish philosopher, posits two ways of engaging life: *I-It* and *I-Thou*. The "I" of I-It sees the world as objects to be used for its own benefit. The "I" of I-Thou sees the world as relationship, a network of interactions between selves that, if any are to benefit, must function in a manner that allows all to benefit. Since both "I"s are narrative constructs, you can weave a story line that optimizes both attitudes: using each in its proper place, and keeping either from creating an imbalance of selfishness (too much I-It) or selflessness (too much I-Thou). In this we may be following the teaching of the first century sage, Rabbi Hillel, who taught, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I?" (*Pirke Avot* 1:14).

As helpful as Buber's understanding is, I suggest it is not sufficient. I add to Buber's I-It and I-Thou a third category, I-I, taught by Ramana Maharshi one of

the greatest saints of 20th century India. The "I"s of Martin Buber refer to the self or ego, the I-I of Ramana Maharshi refers to what he calls *ahamsphurana*, a Sanskrit term best translated as the emanation of Absolute Reality.

The *ahamsphurana* is not the ultimate, but the pulsating of the ultimate. It is as close as we can get to the Absolute and still have a sense of our own relativeness.

As you read these words become aware of yourself doing so. Notice your body sitting in a chair or on the couch. Without changing your posture, become aware of your posture. Now answer this question: Is the you that is aware of yourself sitting also sitting?

Now observe yourself reading. Notice your eyes scanning the page or the screen. Notice how you translate the letters you are scanning into words, and the words into sentences, and the sentences into paragraphs. Notice how meaning arises in you while you read. Now answer the question: Is the you that is aware of yourself reading also reading?

Or stop reading and just notice your thoughts. Is the you that is noticing these thoughts also thinking them?

We could go on: is this "you" male or female, does it have a beginning or an end, is it labeled in any way? A close examination of this fleeting I-I makes it clear (at least to me) that it is none of these things. The I-I has no story. At least that is Ramana Maharshi's story, and I am sticking to it.

Beyond the I-I is Absolute Reality about which we can know nothing, because it

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cannot be an object of knowing. The Absolute Reality is the I beyond I, the Not-I if you like, but more accurately the ineffable knowing that cannot be known. The Absolute is the stage and the scenes and the characters — all of them. And you are that. Or, better, that is you. But so is the I-I and the I-Thou and the I-It.

If your head is spinning with all of this, I have done my job. It is only when you are dizzy with all of this that you intuit the truth. Here are some teachings from the world's religions that humans have used to pass on from one generation to another. While the speakers in these passages are identified as one person or another, they speak on behalf of all of us: their I is you.

God is my Source, and I am his first creation.

Before time — I am.

Before beginnings — I am.

There were as yet no oceans when I was born,

No springs deep and overflowing.

I am older than mountains.

Elder to the hills, the valleys, and the fields.

Before even the first lumps of clay emerged — I am.

(Proverbs 8: 22–26)

Before Abraham was — I am. (John 8:58)

Before time,

at the beginning of beginnings,

God created Me.

And I shall remain forever.

(Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach, 24:9)

Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life.

One who comes to me will never hunger, one who believes in me will never thirst.”

(John 6:35)

Blessed are you who trust in Me, and in Me alone.

You are like trees rooted near water.

Your leaves are evergreen and yield fruit in its season.

You have no fear of drought.

(Jeremiah 17: 7–8, *Hebrew Prophets:*

Selections Annotated & Explained, p. 63) ✧

NOTICE

International Youth Convention 2018

In addition to the International Convention from 31 Dec. to 5 Jan. 2019 (see Aug. issue), Adyar will have an International YOUTH Convention from 27 to 29 Dec. 2018 with the theme “Yogic life through Bhakti yoga, Jnana yoga, Raja yoga and Karma yoga”. The program is based on discussions, and a study paper is provided for pre-reading. The age group is 18–45 years. Encourage young people to attend. Registration form, rates and other information can be retrieved from TS Adyar webpage <ts-adyar.org/event/international-youth-convention>

Marja Artamaa
International Secretary

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, Adyar, Chennai 600 020, India
International Youth Convention 27, 28 & 29 December 2018

<ts-adyar.org/event/international-youth-convention>

REGISTRATION & ACCOMMODATION FORM

(To be filled in **Block Capitals** and sent to the Youth Coordinator, preferably by email at <theyouth@gmail.com>)
Main applicant details to be entered below; the application should be completely filled up in all the fields

Name:Age (limit 18–45 years)..... Nationality: Email:

Address (in home country): Phone/Mobile:

Section/Federation/Lodge: Special Request:

PACKAGE RATES:

- INDIAN STYLE: 1. Rs 2,000 — Includes registration fee Rs 500, and meals at Canteen and Accommodation (sharing/dormitory) Rs.1500.
 2. Rs 1,500 — Local Participants — Includes registration fee Rs 500 and meals at Canteen Rs.1,000.
 3. Rs 500 — Registration fee only for delegates without meals at Canteen & Accommodation.

No.	Name (including the main applicant)	Age	Gender F/M	Member Y/N	Package 1 / 2 / 3	Payment mode	Amount	Remarks (Mention family group, medical condition if any)

Date of Arrival: morning/afternoon Date of Departure: morning/afternoon

Signature of applicant: Date:

Overseas delegates: Please make sure you are covered under overseas travel insurance

For all delegates:

Completing this Registration Form with all particulars is important — please do not send or submit incomplete forms.

Last date for registration or cancellation: 15 December 2018.

For online payments and any clarifications, contact Youth Coordinator by email at <theyouth@gmail.com>.

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