Spiritual Progress

BY

H. P. BLAVATSKY

Theosophical Publishing House
Adyar, Madras, India
Reprinted from *The Theosophist*, Vol. VI.
Spiritual Progress

BY

H. P. BLAVATSKY

November 1916

THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE
Adyar, Madras, India
**Spiritual Progress**

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'S well-known lines

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.

Does the journey take the whole long day?
From morn till night, my friend.

are like an epitome of the life of those who are truly treading the path which leads to higher things. Whatever differences are to be found in the various presentations of the Esoteric Doctrine, as in every age it donned a fresh garment, different both in hue and texture to that which preceded; yet in every one of them we find the fullest agreement upon one point—the road to spiritual development. One only inflexible rule has been ever binding upon the neophyte, as it is binding now—the complete subjugation of the lower nature by the higher. From the Vedas and Upaniṣhats to the recently published *Light on the Path*, search as we may through the Bibles of every race and cult, we find but one only way—hard, painful, troublesome—by which man can gain the true spiritual insight. And how can it be otherwise, since all religions and all philosophies are but the variants of the first teachings of
the One Wisdom, imparted to men at the beginning of the cycle by the Planetary Spirit?

The true Adept, the developed man, must, we are always told, become—he cannot be made. The process is therefore one of growth through evolution, and this must necessarily involve a certain amount of pain.

The main cause of pain lies in our perpetually seeking the permanent, and not only seeking, but acting as if we had already found the unchangeable in a world of which the one certain quality we can predicate is constant change; and always, just as we fancy we have taken a firm hold upon the permanent, it changes within our very grasp, and pain results.

Again, the idea of growth involves also the idea of disruption; the inner being must continually burst through its confining shell or encasement, and such a disruption must also be accompanied by pain, not physical, but mental and intellectual.

And this is how it is, in the course of our lives, the trouble that comes upon us is always just the one we feel to be the hardest that could possibly happen—it is always the one thing we feel we cannot possibly bear. If we look at it from a wider point of view, we shall see that we are trying to burst through our shell at its one vulnerable point; that our growth, to be real growth, and not the collective result of a series of excrescences, must progress evenly throughout, just as the body of a child grows; not first the head and then a hand, followed perhaps by a leg, but in all directions at once, regularly and imperceptibly. Man’s tendency is to
cultivate each part separately, neglecting the others in the meantime; every crushing pain is caused by the expansion of some neglected part, which expansion is rendered more difficult by the effects of the cultivation bestowed elsewhere.

Evil is often the result of over-anxiety, and men are always trying to do too much; they are not content to leave well alone, to do always just what the occasion demands and no more; they exaggerate every action, and so produce karma to be worked out in a future birth.

One of the subtlest forms of this evil is the hope and desire of reward. Many there are who, albeit often unconsciously, are yet spoiling all their efforts by entertaining this idea of reward, and allowing it to become an active factor in their lives and so leaving the door open to anxiety, doubt, fear, despondency —failure.

The goal of the aspirant for spiritual wisdom is entrance upon a higher plane of existence; he is to become a new man, more perfect in every way than he is at present, and if he succeeds, his capabilities and faculties will receive a corresponding increase of range and power, just as in the visible world we find that each stage in the evolutionary scale is marked by increase of capacity.

This is how it is that the Adept becomes endowed with the marvellous powers that have been so often described; but the main point to be remembered is, that these powers are the natural accompaniments of existence on a higher plane of evolution, just as the
ordinary human faculties are the natural accompaniments of existence on the ordinary human plane.

Many persons seem to think that Adeptship is not so much the result of radical development as of additional construction; they seem to imagine that an Adept is a man who, by going through a certain plainly defined course of training, consisting of minute attention to a set of arbitrary rules, acquires first one power and then another, and when he has attained a certain number of these powers is forthwith dubbed an Adept. Acting on this mistaken idea they fancy that the first thing to be done towards attaining Adeptship is to acquire "powers"—clairvoyance and the power of leaving the physical body and travelling to a distance are among those which fascinate the most.

To those who wish to acquire such powers for their own private advantage, we have nothing to say; they fall under the condemnation of all who act for purely selfish ends. But there are others who, mistaking effect for cause, honestly think that the acquirement of abnormal powers is the only road to spiritual advancement. These look upon our Society as merely the readiest means to enable them to gain knowledge in this direction, considering it as a sort of occult academy, an institution established to afford facilities for the instruction of would-be miracle-workers. In spite of repeated protests and warnings, there are some minds in whom this notion seems ineradicably fixed, and they are loud in their expressions of disappointment when they find that what had
been previously told them is perfectly true; that the Society was founded to teach no new and easy paths to the acquisition of "powers"; and that its only mission is to re-kindled the torch of truth, so long extinguished for all but the very few, and to keep that truth alive by the formation of a fraternal union of mankind, the only soil in which the good seed can grow. The Theosophical Society does indeed desire to promote the spiritual growth of every individual who comes within its influence, but its methods are those of the ancient Ṛṣhīs, its tenets those of the oldest Esotericism; it is no dispenser of patent nostrums, composed of violent remedies which no honest healer would dare to use.

In this connection we would warn all our members, and others who are seeking spiritual knowledge, to beware of persons offering to teach them easy methods of acquiring psychic gifts; such gifts are indeed comparatively easy of acquirement by artificial (laukīka) means, but fade out as soon as the nerve-stimulus exhausts itself. The real seership and Adeptship, which is accompanied by true psychic development (lokoṭṭara), once reached is never lost.

It appears that various societies have sprung into existence since the foundation of the Theosophical Society, profiting by the interest the latter has awakened in matters of psychic research, and endeavouring to gain members by promising them easy acquirement of psychic powers. In India we have long been familiar with the existence of hosts of sham ascetics of all descriptions, and we fear that there is
fresh danger in this direction, here, as well as in Europe and America. We only hope that none of our members, dazzled by brilliant promises, will allow themselves to be taken in by self-deluded dreamers, or, it may be, wilful deceivers.

To show that some real necessity exists for our protests and warnings, we may mention that we have recently seen, enclosed in a letter from Benares, copies of an advertisement just put forth by a so-called “Mahâtmâ”. He calls for “eight men and women who know English and any of the Indian vernaculars well”; and concludes by saying that “those who want to know particulars of the work and the amount of pay” should apply to his address, with enclosed postage stamps! Upon the table before us lies a reprint of The Divine Pymander, published in England last year, and which contains a notice to Theosophists who may have been disappointed in their expectations of Sublime Wisdom being freely dispensed by Hindû Mahâtmâs, cordially inviting them to send in their names to the Editor, who will see them, “after a short probation,” admitted into an Occult Brotherhood, who “teach freely and without reserve all they find worthy to receive”. Strangely enough, we find in the very volume in question Hermes Trismegistus saying:

“For this only, O Son, is the way to Truth, which our progenitors travelled in; and by which making their journey, they at length attained to the good. It is a venerable way and plain, but hard and difficult for the soul to go in that is in the body.
"Wherefore we must look warily to such kind of people, that being in ignorance they may be less evil for fear of that which is hidden and secret."

It is perfectly true that some Theosophists have been (through nobody's fault but their own) greatly disappointed because we have offered them no short cut to Yoga Vidyā, and there are others who wish for practical work. And, significantly enough, those who have done least for the Society are loudest in fault-finding. Now, why do not these persons, and all our members who are able to do so, take up the serious study of Mesmerism? Mesmerism has been called the Key to the Occult Sciences, and it has this advantage, that it offers peculiar opportunities for doing good to mankind. If in each of our Branches we were able to establish a homeopathic dispensary with the addition of mesmeric healing, such as has already been done with great success in Bombay, we might contribute towards putting the science of medicine in this country on a sounder basis, and be the means of incalculable benefit to the people at large.

There are others of our Branches, besides the one at Bombay, that have done good work in this direction, but there is room for infinitely more to be done than has yet been attempted. And the same is the case in various other departments of the Society's work. It would be a good thing if the members of each Branch would put their heads together, and seriously consult as to what tangible steps they can take to further the declared objects of the Society.
In too many cases the members of the Theosophical Society content themselves with a somewhat superficial study of its books, without making any real contribution to its active work. If the Society is to be a power for good in this and other lands, it can only bring about this result by the active co-operation of every one of its members, and we would earnestly appeal to each of them to consider carefully what possibilities of work are within his power, and then to set about earnestly carrying them into effect. Right thought is a good thing, but thought alone does not count for much unless it is translated into action. There is not a single member in the Society who is not able to do something to aid the cause of Truth and universal Brotherhood; it only depends on his own will, to make that something an accomplished fact.

Above all we would reiterate the fact, that the Society is no nursery for incipient Adepts; teachers cannot be provided to go round and give instruction to various Branches on the different subjects which come within the Society's work of investigation; the Branches must study for themselves; books are to be had, and the knowledge there put forth must be practically applied by the various members; thus will be developed self-reliance and reasoning powers. We urge this strongly; for appeals have reached us that any lecturer sent to Branches must be practically versed in experimental psychology and clairvoyance (i.e., looking into magic mirrors and reading the future, etc.). Now we consider that such
experiments should originate amongst members themselves, to be of any value in the development of the individual, or to enable him to make progress in his "uphill" path, and therefore earnestly recommend our members to try for themselves.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vol. III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>25.</strong> Some Difficulties of the Inner Life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>26.</strong> The Vision of the Spirit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>27.</strong> Vegetarianism in the Light of Theosophy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>28.</strong> Correspondences between the Planes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>29.</strong> The Influence of the East on Religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>30.</strong> Communication between Different Worlds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>31.</strong> The Twelve Signs of the Zodiac.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>32.</strong> Theosophy and Its Evidences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>33.</strong> Vegetarianism and Occultism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>34.</strong> England and India.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>35.</strong> The Influence of Theosophy on the Life and Teachings of Modern India.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>36.</strong> Investigations into the Superphysical.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vol. IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>37.</strong> Theosophy and Christianity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>38.</strong> The Religion of Goethe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>39.</strong> Ancient Egyptian Magic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>40.</strong> The Reality of the Invisible and the Actuality of the Unseen Worlds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>41.</strong> The Smaller Buddhist Catechism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>42.</strong> A Word on Man, His Nature and His Powers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>43.</strong> The Inner Purpose of the Theosophical Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>44.</strong> Indian Students and Politics. G. S. Arundale, M.A., LL.B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>45.</strong> Spiritual Life for the Man of the World.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>46.</strong> On Moods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>47.</strong> Buddhism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>48.</strong> Spirituality and Psychism.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**THE ADYAR PAMPHLETS**

**Vol. V**

49. "Spirits" of Various Kinds.  
H. P. Blavatsky  

50. Art as a Factor in the Soul’s Evolution.  
C. Jinarajadasa  

51. The Age of Shri Sankaracharya  
Pandit N. Bhashyacharya  

52. Culture of Concentration.  
William Q. Judge  

53. East and West and The Destinies of Nations  
Annie Besant  

54. The Ritual Unity of Roman Catholicism and Hinduism.  
C. Jinarajadasa  

55. An Epitome of Aryan Morals.  

Annie Besant  

57. The Age of Patanjali.  
Pandit N. Bhashyacharya  

58. Places of Pilgrimage in India.  
T. Subba Rao  

59. The Bhagavad Gita.  
C. Jinarajadasa  

60. Asceticism.  
William Q. Judge

**Vol. VI**

61. When a Man Dies, Shall He Live Again?  
Annie Besant  

62. Gautama the Buddha.  
C. Jinarajadasa  

63. The Superphysics of the Great War.  
Bhagavan Das  

64. Psychic and Spiritual Development.  
Annie Besant  

65. Evidences for Truth.  
T. Sañashiva Iyer  

66. The Bearing of Religious Ideals on Social Reconstruction.  
Annie Besant  

67. Beauty in the Light of Theosophy.  
Anna Kamensky  

68. The Fall of Ideals.  
H. P. Blavatsky  

69. Intuitional Consciousness.  
Francesca Arundale  

70. Man’s Waking Consciousness  
G. S. Arundale

Annual Subscription: Re. 1-8 or 2s. or 50c.  
Postage Free.

Single Copy: As. 2 or 2d. or 4c.  
Postage Extra.

Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras