

# Theosophy Forward

Moving  
ahead in  
the 21st  
century

Main theme in this issue

# Our Unity

“The Gita Class” and the Heart of Study

Hilma af Klint

The Future of the Theosophical Tradition

Tsong Khapa

Place of Last Retreat

# Theosophy Forward

This independent electronic magazine offers a portal to Theosophy for all those who believe that its teachings are timeless. It shuns passing fads, negativity, and the petty squabbles of sectarianism that mar even some efforts to propagate the eternal Truth. *Theosophy Forward* offers a positive and constructive outlook on current affairs.

*Theosophy Forward* encourages all Theosophists, of whatever organizations, as well as those who are unaligned but carry Theosophy in their hearts, to come together. Theosophists of any allegiance can meet and respectfully exchange views, because each of us is a centre for Theosophical work.

It needs to be underscored that strong ties are maintained with all the existing Theosophical Societies, but the magazine's commitment lies with Theosophy only and not with individuals or groups representing these various vehicles.

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# Theosophy

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# Helena Petrovna Blavatsky

(an introduction)

by John Algeo - USA

[This article was first published in the *Friend's Review* of March 1992.]

She was the woman with the magic eyes. Piercingly blue, those eyes looked, not just at, but completely through, anyone she fixed upon. She seemed to see through the surface persona right to the innermost secrets of heart and soul.

Those magic eyes were set in a puffy face crowned with frizzy hair, atop the corpulent body of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, perhaps the most remarkable and influential woman of the last century. Descended on her maternal side from Russian nobility, she had a grandmother who was famous as a natural scientist and a novel-writing mother who was called the George Sand of Russia.

When she was a little girl, the family serfs believed she had power to command nature spirits and household hobgoblins. Throughout her life, she was surrounded by amazing phenomena: bell sounds from the empty air, materialized objects, the ability to read sealed messages, astral projections, and more. She impatiently dismissed the belief that spiritualistic communications came from the dead, and claimed that they were the result of natural forces that anyone could learn to control.

Imperiously self-willed, when she was eighteen on a dare she married a man of her father's generation — but refused to consummate the wedding. Instead, she left home and homeland to wander over the world — Europe, the Near East, India, the Far East, North Africa, and America. In the course of those travels, she met remarkable teachers and learned the rationale behind the marvelous-seeming phenomena that followed her everywhere.

In 1873 she was sent to the United States to found an organization to carry on the mission of spreading the ideas she had learned. Two years later in New York city she started such a group in cooperation with several other persons, notably Henry Steel Olcott, a former Colonel in the Union Army who

had spent the Civil War exposing government corruption and had been one of three investigators into the assassination of President Lincoln and William Quan Judge, a promising young, New York-based lawyer. They called their new organization the Theosophical Society.

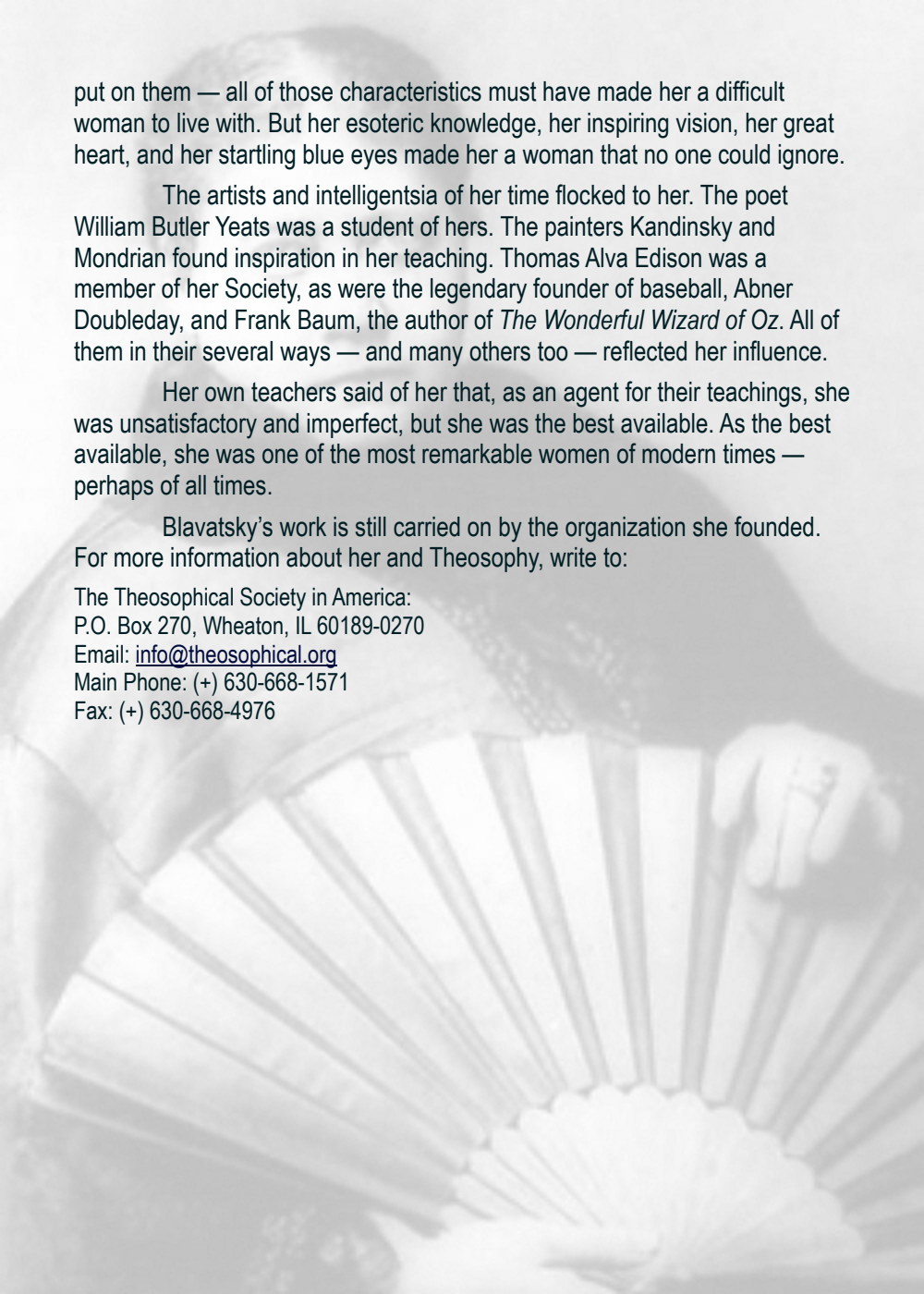
After the publication of her two-volume book *Isis Unveiled* (an extended argument that the ancients knew more than the moderns do about the mysteries of life), Blavatsky and Olcott—the Theosophical Twins — went to India, where they established the international headquarters of their Society at Adyar, Madras, (now Chennai) on the southeastern shore of the subcontinent. Ever the subject of controversy and the object of missionary churchmen's enmity, Blavatsky left India in 1885, eventually to settle in London, where she completed her masterwork, *The Secret Doctrine: The synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*.

Blavatsky died in 1891, 123 years ago, but her influence lives on. Her voluminous writings — they fill more than twenty volumes, with several volumes of her letters still being edited — are the source of most modern esoteric ideas. She and her followers popularized in the Western world such Eastern ideas as karma, reincarnation, the subtle body, inner planes, spiritual evolution, evolved human mahatmas or masters, and initiation into a cosmic hierarchy of adepts. Long before Aldous Huxley, she taught the existence of a Perennial Philosophy, an Ancient Wisdom that has existed all over the world since the childhood of humanity, usually in secret form.

That Ancient Wisdom, as she interpreted it, emphasizes the unity of all human beings and indeed of all life on our planet and throughout the universe. It says that life and evolution have a goal, which is increasing awareness, fuller being, and productive joy. It proclaims the ability and responsibility of all persons to determine their own futures, to be their own saviors. At the same time, it stresses the interconnectedness of all people — we suffer one another's pains and benefit from one another's strengths. The ethical keynote of her teaching was altruism — the recognition that the best way to help ourselves is to forget ourselves in helping others.

Helena Blavatsky was no saint. Her emotional ups and downs, her expectation that others would work as tirelessly and unstintingly as she did, her sharp and plain tongue, her skill in managing others, and the demands she





put on them — all of those characteristics must have made her a difficult woman to live with. But her esoteric knowledge, her inspiring vision, her great heart, and her startling blue eyes made her a woman that no one could ignore.

The artists and intelligentsia of her time flocked to her. The poet William Butler Yeats was a student of hers. The painters Kandinsky and Mondrian found inspiration in her teaching. Thomas Alva Edison was a member of her Society, as were the legendary founder of baseball, Abner Doubleday, and Frank Baum, the author of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. All of them in their several ways — and many others too — reflected her influence.

Her own teachers said of her that, as an agent for their teachings, she was unsatisfactory and imperfect, but she was the best available. As the best available, she was one of the most remarkable women of modern times — perhaps of all times.

Blavatsky's work is still carried on by the organization she founded. For more information about her and Theosophy, write to:

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P.O. Box 270, Wheaton, IL 60189-0270  
Email: [info@theosophical.org](mailto:info@theosophical.org)  
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# Our Unity Series

In this first quarter 2014 issue of Theosophy Forward four contributions by:

Helena Kerekhazi

Jonathan Colbert

Garrett Riegg

Marijn Gijsbers

# Our Unity

by Helena Kerekhazi – USA

## A Bird's Eye View of the Theosophical Movement Then and Now

“Night before last I was shown a bird's-eye view of the Theosophical Societies. I saw a few earnest reliable Theosophists in a death struggle with the world in general and with other — nominal but ambitious Theosophists. The former are greater in number than you may think, and *they prevailed*, as you in *America will prevail*, if you only remain staunch to the Master's programme and true to yourselves” (from a letter to W. Q. Judge, printed in *Lucifer* 8.46 (June 15, 1891): 291, which he reports is from an 1888 private letter to him).

What would Madame Blavatsky see now? Would it be much different after all this time? Certainly after more than a century and a quarter, some changes have emerged. Robert Crosbie, founder of the United Lodge of Theosophists, had to advertise for a copy of *The Secret Doctrine*, an indication of how little Theosophical information was available. Nonetheless, as any student of Blavatsky's writings can attest, that remarkable woman introduced compelling, if not comfortable, truths that have come to have a life of their own.



Sometimes Theosophical members lose sight of what the Theosophical movement was intended to be. That intention is clearly stated as follows: ... From *The Path* – August 1895

## The Theosophical Movement

“There is a very great difference between the Theosophical Movement and any Theosophical Society.

“The Movement is moral, ethical, spiritual, universal, invisible save in effect, and continuous. A Society formed for theosophical work is a visible organization, an effect, a machine for conserving energy and putting it to use; it is not nor can it be universal, nor is it continuous. Organized Theosophical bodies are made by men for their better cooperation, but, being mere outer shells, they must change from time to time as human defects come out, as the times change, and as the great underlying spiritual movement compels such alterations.

“The Theosophical Movement being continuous, it is to be found in all times and in all nations. Wherever thought has struggled to be free, wherever spiritual ideas, as opposed to forms and dogmatism, have been promulgated, there the great movement is to be discerned. Jacob Boehme’s work was a part of it, and so also was the Theosophical Society of over one hundred years ago; Luther’s reformation must be reckoned as a portion of it; and the great struggle between Science and Religion, clearly portrayed by Draper, was every bit as much a motion of the Theosophical Movement as is the present Society of that name — indeed that struggle, and the freedom thereby gained for science, were really as important in the advance of the world, as are our different organizations. And among political examples of the movement is to be counted the Independence of the American colonies, ending in the formation of a great nation, theoretically based on Brotherhood. One can therefore see that to worship an organization, even though it be the beloved theosophical one, is to fall down before Form, and to become the slave once more of that dogmatism which our portion of the Theosophical Movement, the T.S., was meant to overthrow.

“Some members have worshipped the so-called ‘Theosophical

Society,' thinking it to be all in all, and not properly perceiving its *de facto* and piecemeal character as an organization nor that it was likely that this devotion to mere form would lead to a nullification of Brotherhood at the first strain. And this latter, indeed, did occur with several members. They even forgot, and still forget, that H. P. Blavatsky herself declared that it were better to do away with the Society rather than to destroy Brotherhood, and that she herself declared the European part of it free and independent. These worshippers think that there must be a continuance of the old form in order for the Society to have an international character" -

(from <http://www.filosofiaesoterica.com/ler.php?id=1387#.UwzpHoV7S5Q> ).

When I first came to the United Lodge of Theosophists through the introduction of a Dutch friend, I was really very fortunate to have experienced warm greetings and fellowship from two older patient and unhypercritical class facilitators who taught classes for teenagers. At the time, teenagers were really searching for answers and asking a lot of questions, so it was trendy to do spiritual searches. Thus we should always look to what young people need and where they are to inform themselves about how the teachings can help them today with what they are up against, and remember to extend to others a nonjudgmental hand of fellowship.

What are the issues these days for youth? I think their hopes and dreams have been greatly shaken now because of economic and domestic pressures, as well as seeing their friends go off to serve in foreign wars. Those experiences require some of the strongest words of advice and support that the teachings can muster. We are facing combat veterans returning with post-traumatic stress disorders that need our help and support. The Bhagavad Gita describes family wars in a way that can lead to an understanding of our own internal wars. Its message cannot be overemphasized today. The great battle lies within each of us rather than outside us. If our inner demons are exorcised, the outer ones will disappear.

Making connections with youth today is accomplished mostly through the social media, so attempts to have an Internet presence for Theosophy is very important. We of older years enjoy magazines and books: youth are more comfortable in their notebooks and hand-held devices. A time will surely come when they will get fed up with such media and reach out to more real face-to-face contact, for example in Internet cafes for meetings. But now, to break

Theosophical isolation, the social media of Facebook, webinars, online Theosophical literature, and blogs are probably the best places to meet youth with Theosophical ideas.

Economic pressures have made it very hard for people to live physically close to meeting halls because of over-priced real estate, costly transportation expenses, and the economic pressures forcing both parents to work to support their families. Parents struggle to find a way to educate their children in morals and ethics, so may just toss up their hands and say that there is nothing else better around. Just getting to a meeting can be a luxury for many. So we do need other ways to connect than just face-to-face and that need will undoubtedly be met by the Internet and social media.

Some other real challenges facing current Theosophical unity come from the existence of several different Theosophical groups, but those challenges will fade as the Theosophical movement evolves. All the groups include remarkable students just as all cultures include remarkable people. So what is really important when it comes to the soul planes is less tradition-based; some other deeper principle needs to be operating that transcends all of the separate groups.

The usual intergenerational conflicts belong to the various cultures and to the evolution of consciousness in all of us. We are engaged in a balancing act that we pass on as we react to the skandhas of our parents and create skandhas for our kids, who will create them for theirs.

Seniors have needs too, and we have an aging population that presents new challenges to us as well. How can we be a bridge to four or five generations of a family in Theosophy? This is a new area for us. The oldest try and keep up with the technologies of the youngest, but are we out of touch as the result of aging leadership in the various Theosophical groups?

Are there deeper generational gaps we have not examined? Is there a forum where we can honestly and openly support senior Theosophists, and is there a need at times for seniors to step down graciously so that younger students can reach out better to the community as well as for their own needs? What means do we have to determine when leaders are no longer efficient in their role and need to step down to let others more capable take over? This latter question also applies to CEOs and board members, generals, and

leaders of all sorts. The best leaders step down when they are either at their peak or admit that they should step down before they hurt a group, perhaps unwittingly, because of illness or aging. The truth is that the health of a Lodge depends on all its members, but problems exist at the top as much as the bottom. If a meeting center is run in a healthy way, it will flourish, so spiritual members count. Flexibility is ever health, and rigidity is ever disease. Rigidity in leadership and membership is usually a sign of problems to come.

Patience is the most practical tool to achieve Theosophical unity. It is one of the principal ways to combat the paranoia that comes from many uncertainties. Those with a rather large case of the “not-enoughs” or the “too-muches,” which they only too readily report in others but cannot see in themselves create logjams, as we were taught in Theosophy School plays.

Too often those born into Theosophy have faced the danger of feeling above it all so fall into the very traps they have been teaching others to avoid. Those traps include becoming dependent on income and benefits from working for the movement and property management that leads to internecine wars. So the material world creeps into the spiritual and needs to be honestly evaluated so that people learn to help themselves and not become codependent on Theosophical salaries, foisting their family problems onto the Lodges instead of developing the necessary personal responsibility. In other words, healthy boundaries are needed — personally, financially, legally, and spiritually. Theosophical interdependence is not codependence.

What good is it to exercise compassion when people do not know how to receive love? That is one of the biggest problems of our day. People do not know how to feel and experience. Compassionate people impress others to open their hearts and minds to compassion by creating a safe space for this to happen. This is a huge issue for the the homeless, the mentally challenged, the traumatized, the war-torn refugees, and the many poor. We see many of them searching for personal healing at our Lodge meetings. They have learned that it is safer not to trust the hand of fellowship because past experience shows it cannot be counted on. One scam after another — abuse, neglect, incest, addiction, diseases — afflict the soul's ability to find its way out for nourishment.

Many Theosophical groups are not happy. Often their classes are morose, heavy, monotonous, ponderous, lacking happiness, joy, and the

benefits of being interconnected in the best possible ways. No wonder we cannot attract and keep the young as we age. It's just not healthy to be morose about teaching Theosophy. Theosophical mold can and often does end up not only in our buildings but in our classes as well.

Having taught successfully in Theosophy School, I know it can be done. Not as a hammer, which is a mistake of prior generations that need not be repeated. Theosophy can be taught with an eye to the lightness of our being, mindful of the life-giving, soul lifting, nourishing gifts that spiritual connections give us. That is some of what Theosophy and Theosophical unity need today. Theosophy has elevated the buddhi-manas of the race, and it will continue to evolve along our spiritual pilgrimage as we learn from our mistakes.

In order to move forward with Theosophical unity, we need to reach out to members of other groups in a collegial and fraternal way in our own discipline and interest areas. Time needs to be set aside for meditating on these ideas and having dialogues and meetings with others who are like-minded. Such people may exist across religious and philosophical disciplines, and across all groups. Those who have eyes to see will of course see the Theosophical movement everywhere. Those who cannot see will nonetheless be carried along with it.



# Our Unity

by Jonathan Colbert – USA

## Unity and Solidarity – Hope and Responsibility

“Unity always gives strength; and since Occultism in our days resembles a “Forlorn Hope,” union and co-operation are indispensable. Union does indeed imply a concentration of vital and magnetic force against the hostile currents of prejudice and fanaticism.”

Mahatma K.H., *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, Second Edition, p. 36

There are three main reasons that Theosophists should have unity: to reflect brotherhood from the higher to the lower planes; to overcome the status quo; and our responsibility to the future.

We are told in Theosophy that there is a great Brotherhood of *Bodhisattvas*, responsible for protecting and teaching humanity. They were once men and women like us, but have evolved in previous cycles to great heights of exalted consciousness and saintly conduct. They exist in an unfathomable field of unity; their hearts and minds attuned to the Great Law, to one another and to all of humanity. They have said that if we wish to know them, to study their philosophy; and if we wish to serve them, to serve their humanity.

Cyclically, they work through adept messengers. At all times, their influence is available, depending on our rising in individual consciousness to their level – and on how much we can collectively mirror their deep unity *via* our unity here on this plane.

As Theosophists, we are not working for any definite organization, but instead, as W. Q. Judge said, to raise the *manas* and the *buddhi* of all humanity. There are forces of selfishness, of the status quo, that have no interest in raising the consciousness of humanity. They are just fine with science remaining materialistic; with religion, superstitious; with wars, poverty, with each man fearing the other. They have no interest in Theosophy – with its

teachings of unity and solidarity, of hope and responsibility – to enter the arena. But this does not mean that we have to go along. Through our unity as Theosophists, we can stand up to existing powers. The orbit of the sacred is revolutionary – especially if we stand united.

Gandhi saw an intimate connection between freedom and solidarity. As long as there are castes and outcastes, he said, India did not deserve to be free. He achieved freedom for his country by uniting its people in solidarity. A manifestation of this idea today would be our responsibility to the next generation of potential Theosophists. If the 21<sup>st</sup> Century generation is reticent to come to meetings, wary of forms and traditions, it would seem that it would behoove us to get over our 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century feuds.

Regardless of affiliation, we should be a unified front of workers. We can all practice unity in spirit, if not in constitutional form. We can become friends with members of Theosophical organizations not our own. In our publications, meetings and conferences, we can announce upcoming events in other organizations as well as promote the annual Theosophical Conferences and online magazines such as *International Theosophy Magazine* and *Theosophy Forward*. When we recognize the contributions, vitality and integrity of other groups, we come to see that it is not just a nice-sounding thing to do, to have unity. By coming to know new fellow Theosophists, we gain the perspective to appreciate other tradition – and our own.



# Our Unity

by Garrett Riegg – USA

## Unity and ITC – Avoiding ego conflicts

Some degree of “unity” is essential to every organization of human beings. Whether in families, clubs, lodges, cities, or nations, we crave a sense of unity because it includes peace, harmony and beneficial cooperation. For Theosophists especially, unity ties into brotherhood and to our one Source of All: the transcendent spiritual aspect of the universe.

Sadly, in pursuing unity we sometimes oppress or manipulate others to get our own way or our own vision of what is good for the group. A superficial, forced unity is contrary to human dignity and free will.

Despite our high aspirations for unity and harmony, we human beings are constantly in conflict. Whether it's a minor misunderstanding or a bloody war, we are impelled by our lower natures to strive for our own goals and unique perspectives. In this striving, we can feel threatened by competition, criticism or just different viewpoints. This causes hurt feelings, arguments, lost friendships and even schisms.

How do we achieve meaningful, positive unity without giving up individual initiative and free expression? From sixteen years of International Theosophy Conferences, I would suggest a few of the many principles that foster positive unity:

1) *Accepting good enough.* It's great to strive for perfection in your own life but expecting others to have identical priorities is a formula for conflict and heartache. The best part of cooperation is that we support each other, especially when someone “falls down on the job.” If we can help them in a positive way to do better, that is great. Sometimes for the sake of harmony we just have to accept that a project is late, or less than perfect.

2) *Criticism rarely works.* Certainly we need to know where we made mistakes but it takes great diplomacy not to blame the problem on anyone and

to genuinely accept in our own hearts that other people are doing the best they can. We don't know what other challenges they have: health, family, finances or even a difficult childhood that may make them react irrationally. Being non-judgmental is the greatest gift that we can give other people. And that doesn't mean we give up judging policies, procedures, actions, etc. We just don't make it personal. It is hard to avoid implicitly criticizing someone unless we have raised our own level of perception to that of buddhi-manas. That means that we genuinely see others as our equals, deserving our respect and compassion. When someone fails, we should be more concerned to find out what's going on with that person rather than immediately trying to blame or problem solve.

3) *People matter.* In *The Key to Theosophy* Madame Blavatsky said: "It is not what is done but the spirit in which the least thing is done that counts." Without that spirit of mutual support and love we lose our enthusiasm and creativity. For me, that is the real goal of unity and cooperation: to foster the best in each of us as we work together.

I have painfully learned that I need to focus not so much on our goals as on the thoughts and feelings of the people working with me toward that goal. Whether we are trying to "produce" a conference, an article, or new by-laws; the process, for me, is more important than the resulting product. It is not the perfection of our outward activities that counts. Rather it is the sense of contribution and appreciation that each member of the team experiences.

We are going to leave behind our bodies, personalities, titles, organizations and achievements. So let's focus on what will be enduring: our loving thoughts and communion with other beings.

4) *Avoid being self-righteous.* Sometimes we are so devoted to our own vision of truth so we are often unaware of how strident we sound to others.

5) *Tune in to feelings.* Feelings are important. We learn in Theosophy not to give in to our passing and changeable feelings. We learn to control our emotions. Still, we have to see our feelings as warnings from our subconscious. We need to be aware of the feelings of others, to know what they need. As Madame Blavatsky said: "we are trying to effect a reform in human nature" (*The Key to Theosophy*, page 231).

This is why I love ITC: it provides opportunities for people to grow not just their intellect but also their heart connection with other people who share a Theosophical outlook. Unity arises naturally from sharing with empathy. Good lectures bring our minds together; and working together in small groups allows us to know each other more deeply. This is why ITC plans more year-round sharing through our new affinity groups (History, Literature, Law, Arts, etc.) and our committees (Education, Mysticism, Science, etc.)

I would like to see all Theosophical organizations flourish as they spread the message of Theosophy. With spiritual unity, respect and cooperation across our different Theosophical groups we can move the world toward unity and brotherhood among all peoples, nations, religions and races.

Now is the time!





# Our Unity

by Marijn Gijsbers – The Netherlands

## What can be done to overcome the apparent unsurmountable hindrances that have divided the Theosophical traditions for so long?

The answer to this question is both very simple and quite challenging. Simple because if we would all manage to live Theosophy there would be no hindrances, only unity. And challenging because understanding Theosophy is one thing, practicing it in everyday life is quite another.

Now let's be clear about one thing: when I say Theosophy I mean Theosophy as it was brought to us by the Masters and H. P. B.

To advance working together I see three important steps:

- 1) sharing a vision;
- 2) being willing to learn;
- 3) being able to have a constructive dialogue.

To start with the first, all Theosophical organizations (that I know of) share the wonderful objective of a brotherhood of men. This is a most inspiring, but also abstract concept. What does it mean? What does it look like? Is this a situation in which we cooperate more or less on autopilot? Or is this a situation in which the wisest tell the others what to do? Or do we secretly think that this will only happen once all the other organizations finally realize that they had it wrong?

Of course not. It is harmony that can only be established by combining a wide variety of characteristics that make the whole complete. A perfect diversity of physical, emotional and mental characteristics; even in our *buddhic* aspects we develop differently. Very much like a giant tree all the branches and leafs are different, but they share the same roots and work together towards the growth of the tree. We need to be different or we could never grow together. In H. P. B's words:

“It is diversity of opinion, within certain limits, that keeps the Theosophical Society a living and a healthy body.” (*H. P. B. to the American Convention 1888*)

To share a vision we need to talk about it, learn about each other's perspectives, and actually construct this idea of unity in our minds eye. The guidelines that we want to follow when doing so are the Theosophical Principles as laid down by H. P. B. and the Masters. They are essential in laying a strong and stable foundation for the future and making sure we remain a Theosophical movement, instead of degenerating into the umpteenth new group.

Anyone who ever had a difference of opinion knows that having a constructive dialogue is not always easy. In my experience it actually becomes harder once you think you know and understand something thoroughly. Working in educating professionals I again and again stumble upon people who are seen by others (or themselves) as experts that find it hardest to develop a new skill, or change how they conceive a certain situation. In the parable of Plato's cave they have managed to get out of one cave only to trap themselves in another.

The only way out is a willingness, hunger if you will, to learn. This is an attitude, a way of life that keeps us both humble and open to cooperate with others. It means that we leave the door wide open for a different or higher knowing. Like Dalai Lama, who once called himself 'nothing but a simple monk', stated:

“If science proves some belief of Buddhism wrong, then Buddhism will have to change.” (Dalai Lama in *The New York Times*, 12 November 2005)

If we are prepared to do this, to leave our preconceived notions behind, we can start to have a constructive dialogue.

The whole idea of dialogue is to share perspectives, whereas a discussion (from the Latin *discutere*: break up) is all about defending and attacking points of view.

So let us investigate: what have these different Theosophical organizations produced in terms of knowledge and ways to apply Theosophy? When can we call something Theosophical and when not? What can we do to work together as Theosophical organizations to light a lantern of Truth in a



world where darkness and misery so often prevail?

“The essence of Theosophy is the perfect harmonizing of the divine with the human in man, the adjustment of his godlike qualities and aspirations, and their sway over the terrestrial or animal passions in him.” (*H. P. B. to the American Convention 1888*)

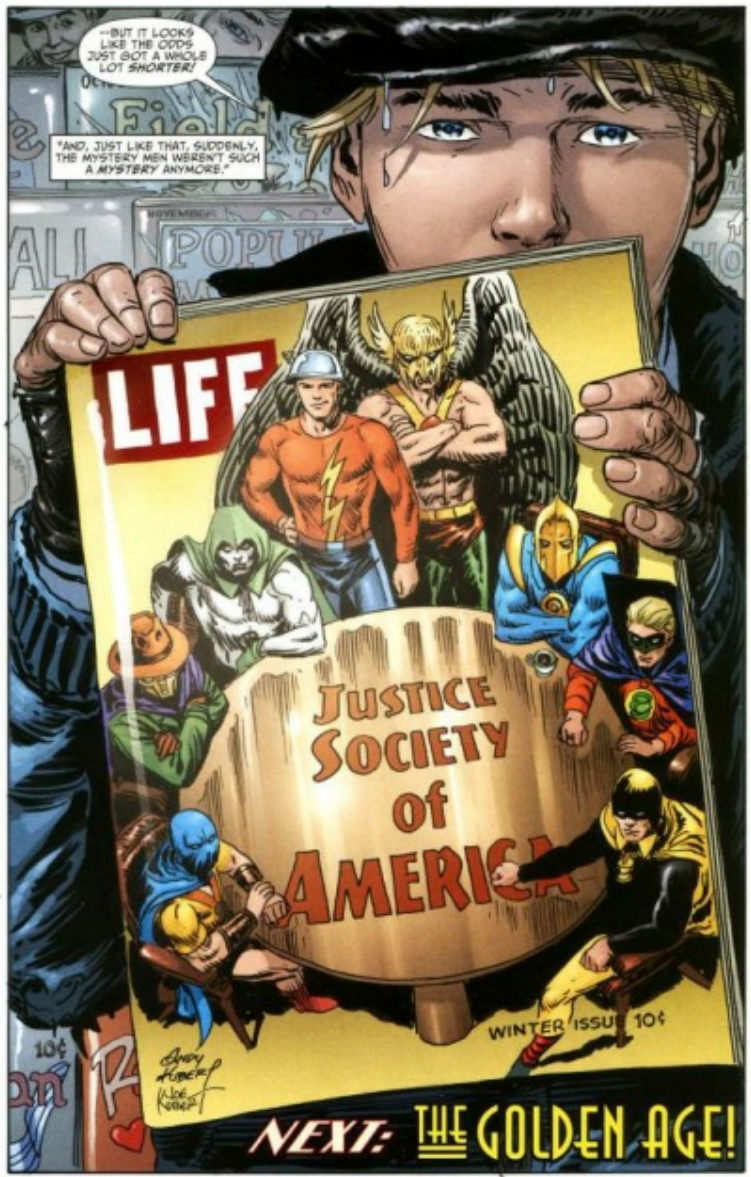
Let's put this into practice and start by agreeing on the principles that we can find in the original teachings as a basis for finding and sharing those godlike aspirations. Then use our higher qualities to reason and find harmony, and please: let's forgive each other when our ego's play up and we become unreasonable because of some emotional attachment. We are, after all, all students.



*Vitruvian man by Joma Sipe*

...BUT IT LOOKS  
LIKE THE ODDS  
JUST GOT A WHOLE  
LOT SHORTER!

"AND, JUST LIKE THAT, SUDDENLY,  
THE 'MYSTERY MEN' WEREN'T SUCH  
A MYSTERY ANYMORE."



**NEXT: THE GOLDEN AGE!**

# Compassion and the Golden Age of Heroes

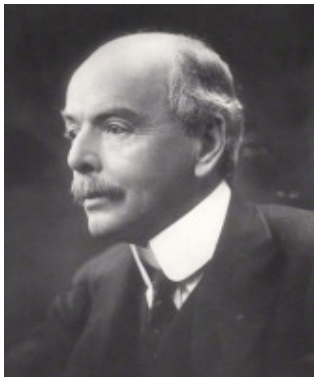
by Keith Pritsker – USA

[This talk was given during 15th Annual International Theosophy Conference held in August 2013 in New York. The theme title of the conference was “How to Awaken Compassion? - H. P. Blavatsky and the Eternal Secret Doctrine”]

*Why does [government] always crucify Christ, and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?*

Henry David Thoreau, in *Civil Disobedience*

Heroic efforts can be contagious. Dr. Leander Starr Jameson led a raid against the Boers in South Africa's Transvaal in 1896. The raid was covertly supported by the British Government only to be condemned publicly when it failed. Jameson was imprisoned for 15 months. Nevertheless he returned to South Africa after his release and became Prime Minister of the Cape Colony in 1904. An Indian born writer met him, was inspired by his example, and wrote about the personal qualities that made him unique.



*Dr. Leander Starr Jameson*

Some of the challenges and hallmarks of our age include greed, violence and environmental degradation. How can we most effectively challenge and overcome them?

H. P. Blavatsky states in her introduction to *Isis Unveiled* that her work is a plea to recognize the Hermetic philosophy: "... the anciently universal Wisdom Religion, as the only possible key to the Absolute in science and theology." (*Isis Unveiled*, Preface, p. vii)

That philosophy included the works of Plato. H. P. B. goes on to say only a few pages later: "It is the Platonic philosophy that can alone afford us the middle ground [between science and religion]. (*Ibid.*, p. xi) Or as the transcendentalist, Ralph Waldo Emerson but it: "Out of Plato come all things that are still written and debated among men of thought." (*Representative Men*)



Plato

Plato was an idealist who believed that ideas rule the world. That sentiment has been echoed more recently by the hard-headed economic theorist, John Maynard Keynes when he concluded his *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* with these words: "I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas. Soon or late, it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil." (Harbinger, 1935 (1964), pp. 383-4)

Theosophy provides a unique historical perspective by encompassing a vast scheme of human evolution covering some 16 million years since the incarnation of self-consciousness mind, the separation of the sexes and the origination of language. (*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 2, pp. 191 et seq.)

This past as outlined in *The Secret Doctrine* suggests that the values of patience and determination are essential aids to our individual and collective welfare.

The nature of mind is dual. H. P. B. writes: "... Self-consciousness belongs alone to man and proceeds from the SELF, the higher Manas ... between the *psychic* and the *noetic*, between the *Personality* and the *Individuality*, there exists the same abyss as between a 'Jack the Ripper', and a holy Buddha." ("Psychic and Noetic Action," *Lucifer*, October-November 1890. As constrained by karmic law we can choose to identify with and act from either the higher or lower aspect of this principal.

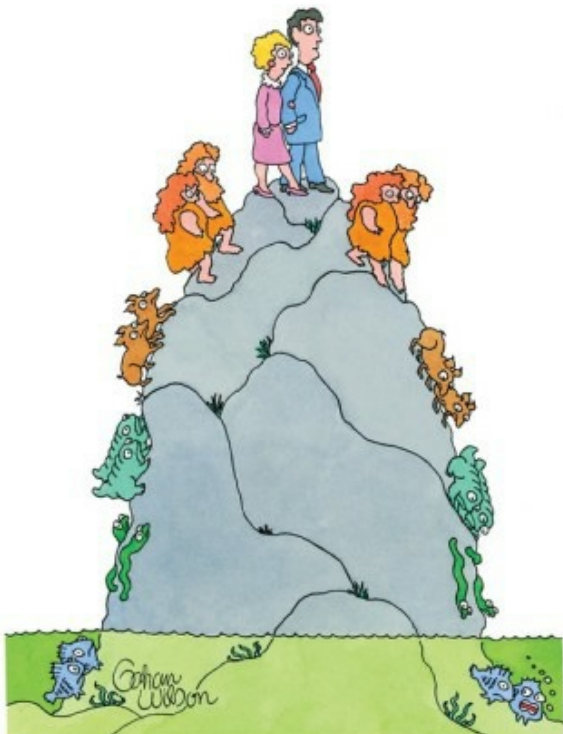
In so choosing we can set in motion each hour of each day our thoughts so as to determine our actions, habits and destiny.

So it is that the third fundamental proposition given in *The Secret Doctrine* states that: "... The pivotal doctrine of the Esoteric philosophy admits no privileges or special gifts in man, save those won by his own ego through personal effort and merit throughout a long series of metempsychosis and reincarnations." In other words human evolution is driven by self-induced and self-devised efforts, checked by karma. (*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol.1, p. 17)

This is, as the Bhagavad-Gita puts it, our "glorious unsought battle." The failure to engage in that battle leads to despondency (see Bhagavad-Gita, chapter 1, The Despondency of Arjuna) and defeat as illustrated in this cartoon from *The New Yorker* (on the right).

Bridging the gap between theory and practice requires an understanding of both ourselves and the world in which we live. Henry Ford recognized that we create our own reality when he said: "Those who say they can and those who say they can't are both right."

The world operates under cyclic law. Among those laws that effect our ability to work together are ages of greater and lesser spiritual influence.



“Well that was a total waste of time.”

Details about these ages can be found in *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 2, pp. 66-74:

Plato	Tamil Calendar	Length of Time (years)
Gold	Krita Yuga	1,728,000
Silver	Treta Yuga	1,296,000
Bronze	Dwapara Yuga	864,000
Iron	Kali Yuga	432,000
<hr/>		
<b>Total</b>	Maha-Yuga	4,320,000

Plato states that in a golden age the polis — a community of people living together — is best ruled by a philosopher-king: “Unless ... either philosophers become kings ... or ... kings and rulers take to the pursuit of philosophy seriously and adequately, and there is a conjunction of these two things ... there can be no cessation of troubles ... for the human race ... there is no other way of happiness either for private or public life.” (*Republic*, Book V, 473d-e)

But in an iron age the checks and balances of a democratic system are the most fair due to a prevalence of greed and distrust. “... [I]f all ... are unprincipled the best thing to do is to live in a democracy.” (*Statesman*, 303b)

We’ve recently ended the first 5,000 years of Kali Yuga. Plato says of this age: “... as time goes on and forgetfulness of God arises in it, the ancient condition of chaos also begins to assert its sway. At last, as this cosmic era [i.e. Maha-Yuga] draws to its close, this disorder comes to a head. The few good things it produces it corrupts with so gross a taint of evil that it hovers on the very brink of destruction, both of itself and the creatures in it.” (*Statesman*, 273d-c) We have 427,000 years left before we return to a golden age (*The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. 2, p. 483).

Our efforts are four times more potent in this age, a unique characteristic which constitutes but *one tenth* of an entire maha-yuga.

In this regard William Q. Judge, one of the founders of the

Theosophical Society with H. P. B. wrote: “We can get great comfort from the theory given out at various times, that in Kali Yuga a small effort goes father for results than the same when made in a better Age. In the other Ages the rates of all things are slower than in this; hence evil now seems quick; but in the same way good is also much quicker in effect and reach than in a slower time.” (Path, 1894)

Because cooperation is so difficult concerted individual effort can make this challenging time the “Golden Age of Heroes.”

There is an implicit recognition that we live in such an age by the masses who flock to literary and mass media examples of such heroes.



*Iron Man 5*

Heroic action is always constrained by the limitations imposed by the world in which we live. Consequently, the third fundamental, the “pivotal” doctrine of self-determination, is indissolubly linked to the second, universal law. Hence reincarnation and karma are the twin doctrines of hope and responsibility.

But above all heroic action requires compassion. Plato asks: “... what is the meaning of the word hero?” And he answers: “... the name



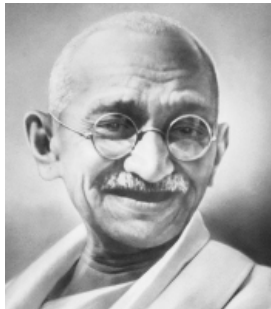
signifies that they were born of love ... [and] are demigods. Think of the word in the old Attic, and you will see better that the name heroes is only a slight alteration of Eros, from whom the heroes sprang." (*Cratylus*, 398c-d)

What is compassion? H. P. B. begins by telling us what it is not: "Compassion is no attribute" she says. "It is the law of LAWS — eternal Harmony, Alaya's SELF; a shoreless universal essence, the light of everlasting Right, and fitness of all things, the law of Love eternal. The more thou dost become at one with it, thy being melted in its BEING, the more thy Soul unites with that which Is, the more thou wilt become COMPASSION ABSOLUTE. Such is the Arya Path, Path of the Buddhas of perfection." (*The Voice of the Silence*, 1892, pp. 58-59)

There are also many examples of such heroic action in real life including:



*Thomas Paine, pamphleteer and writer, who President Washington called the single man most responsible for the success of the American Revolution*



*Mohandas Gandhi, apostle of non-violence and father of modern India*

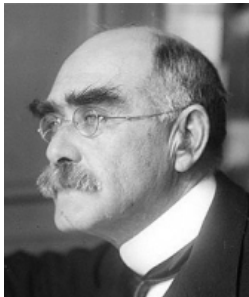


*Martin Luther King, Jr., largely responsible for the inspiration and success of the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's*



*Cesar Chavez, who fought for the rights of American farmworkers*

We can use such an age to strengthen our fortitude and self-reliance and thereby unfold the heroic within ourselves.



*Rudyard Kipling*

Dr. Jameson's example continues to inspire many today. The Indian-born writer, none other than Rudyard Kipling, an exponent of reincarnation and

the first Nobel Laureate for Literature in the English language immortalizes the qualities that he saw in Dr. Jameson in his poem, "If." One hundred years after its first publication still the most popular poem in Britain and an inspiration to many around the world:

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream — and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think — and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breathe a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings — nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforbearing minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,

Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And — which is more — you'll be a Man, my son.

For a beautiful musical rendition of this poem see: Bobby Gosh's "A  
Song for Erik" (Duet with Tammy Fletcher, 2007)

From "BOBBY GOSH, A Little Bit More ... The Early Years,"

[www.bobbygosh.com](http://www.bobbygosh.com)



# THE Bhagavad Gita

The Divine Song of God

# “The Gita Class” and the Heart of Study

From a Student

[This talk was given during 15th Annual International Theosophy Conference held in August 2013 in New York. The theme title of the conference was “How to Awaken Compassion? - H. P. Blavatsky and the Eternal Secret Doctrine”.]

The students at the Wednesday afternoon Bhagavad-Gita Class at the United Lodge of Theosophists (ULT) in Los Angeles are links in a long chain. Started over 85 years ago, in this class there are no experts, authorities or leaders - only fellow students who consider the text together. How does this work? What is its value? Welcome to the Gita Class!

We meet every Wednesday, all year long. We start reading the Gita in October, and end (not that we ever “end”) in late May or early June, when we turn to other works to maintain the energy of the meeting cycle through the summer months. In the fall, we return again to the Gita with a brief overview of the Mahabharata, stressing that each character in the epic is a facet of the human heart; nothing is alien, all is a lesson and a progression in the soul’s journey. (And, sometimes ... just to break the “narrative” of the personal perspective, and to brush away any cobwebs of expectation, we begin the annual consideration by starting with Chapter Eighteen instead of Chapter One.)

While there are no set rules, there are patterns, lines of work, and texts: we read aloud and then question and wonder together, using the rendition of the Gita by W. Q. Judge, and the accompanying Notes on the Gita. *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Key to Theosophy*, and *The Theosophical Glossary* also are available as supplementary material. Each session begins with reading and discussing the “Declaration” of ULT, followed by a statement from a student volunteer of the “Three Fundamental Principles” of theo-sophia.

The foundation provided by text-based classes frees us from personal bias and opinion, on any sort of attainment or lack of attainment. If there is a disagreement, the chair person can simply say, “Let’s go back to the text; let’s

figure out what this book actually says.” And that’s the strength of studying together. “I know what I think, I’m tired of what I think; I want to hear what all of you, as fellow students, have encountered when you read the text.”

In one of his letters, William Q. Judge talks about the “mental groove” of the inner railroad track of the personal mind. He asks, “How do we get off our track and develop in ourselves the ability to understand the track that everyone else is running on?” We do that in a study class, as we hear the response, the tone, the thinking of fellow students. Any study class worth its salt will develop in us a depth of understanding of what our fellow students are, where they are coming from.

How do we learn by opening up our hearts to the skandhas of each of our fellow students as we go on our spiritual journey? How do we develop a class that fosters the togetherness of all of us and the ability of each of us to learn to listen and then to care? If we really hear our fellow students, then compassion and caring is automatic. The gift of being human is that we can suddenly understand the pain, the joy, and the path of our fellow humans. And when we look at what we call aberration in humanity, however we label it, in whatever culture, that’s when we cannot see the pain in the other and when we have gone away from the great gift of humanness in us all.

This radical nature of theo-sophia often attracts radical thinkers. And, it may happen that the children of these iconoclasts themselves need to rebel by turning to many paths and byways. If you have been raised in Theosophy, what does that mean? It means you are dragged to classes you don’t understand; it means you have to hear things over and over again; it means you see a lot of old people. And you do what every young person worth their salt has to do: you go out into the world and seek your fortune, just as in all the fairy tales in all the countries of the world. You have to go away. And when you go away, you find all sorts of extraordinary things. You find all sorts of teachings, all sorts of people, but if you are incredibly lucky, you never forget the tone you heard as a child. It can’t be described, but like all true tones, once it is heard it never is forgotten.

And when, having done everything and studied everything, when all external markers and duties have ended, you say, “Somewhere there still may be people who also heard that original tone, and are studying the way I

remember.” And so you return. But – as Rip Van Winkle and others found out – while we are away, everything changes. However, while everyone you knew is gone, the magic old ladies you would give anything to talk to now that you are an old lady too are still there, the books are being studied, people are talking about the ideas, the meaning, what always lasts. The work at ULT, for many years, was maintained by volunteers and, for those of you who are familiar with volunteerism in the United States, those volunteers who maintained churches, school, nonprofits were women who were not - as the euphemism goes – employed outside the home. That has changed now. But for many, many years, the Bhagavad Gita class on Wednesday afternoon was seen, unconsciously perhaps but still seen, as the old ladies’ class. And as the old ladies’ class it was not seen as something that was really cutting edge, not seen as where the dynamic history of the Theosophical movement was going.

So, as the years went by and the old lady volunteers are no longer with us, if you were to join us in LA at one o’clock on Wednesday afternoons, what you would now find, to be blunt about it, are fellow-students who are able to “be there” when the rest of the world is at work: those who are unemployed, retired, ill, homeless, or simply truly devoted students with open minds and hearts who are able to step out of the jog trot of the daily into a new vision of possibilities – the Gita class.

Of course, all the years you were away from active class participation, you “studied”. (It was really “dabbling,” but how could you know?) You dabbled in the Gita, and you thought you “read” *The Secret Doctrine*. You even impressed yourself with all you knew! So you arrive in a class where there are other students who have been studying for a while, and you realize that you don’t know anything at all. How refreshing! You discover that when we study alone, we focus on what we like; on what’s congenial to our own personality. We don’t study anything we are not interested in, so we easily can miss huge chunks of different, unsettling ideas. Startled and humbled, you also experience a great relief as you realize that, while you have been studying what your personality liked, this great teaching actually is about what happens when your personal nature says, “I’m so tired. I just have to rest for a bit,” thus allowing the Real Mind and Heart – our Krishna nature – to be heard through the new silence.

And that’s just what happens in the Bhagavad Gita. Arjuna says “I

can't go on, I'm so depressed, I can't fight, can't do anything." And, because he has had the foresight and the great inner intuition that he will need something different at some point, he has chosen as his charioteer Krishna, who we know is actually his own Inner Nature. In the dialogue that follows, all Arjuna does in the beginning is complain, just as all we do when we are forced to see something new. We mutter, "I don't get it, it's contradictory, why are they boring me like this." And, if we are lucky enough to be in a class with students of diverse minds and experiences, we watch their personal responses as well as our own, and we see that that's what the personality does, that's what it's supposed to do, until our Heart and Mind step in and soothingly say, "It's all OK. Just rest, listen, and consider another perspective."

So, if we persevere, keep on studying together, being jolted, reexamining, reconsidering, we find that there is a marvelous shift in the Gita, about halfway through, where Krishna very gently and very firmly has gotten the personality to be quiet, to calm down. ("Unto ye who findeth no fault ...") And that's where the real Gita begins.

Yet when we begin studying, still craving structure and comfort, we often focus on Chapter Two. When our parents die, we read "Thou grievest for those who may not be lamented," and we are assured that everything comes to an end and we feel comforted, as we should. But if we focus only on what the personal nature gets from the Gita, we miss the whole point of the extraordinary transformation that takes place in the last third of the book. Here, as spirit and matter coalesce into the true Self, that unknowable, vast, unspeakable essence that is Reality manifests in the text. And, in our class experience, when we truly learn to listen to different views, understand different temperaments and karmic inheritances, we open up as a whole, not as individuals seeking outside ourselves, but as souls on parallel journeys of heart and mind.

When we look at human beings as seven-fold states of consciousness and matter, we are able to shift our consciousness from our basest to what we might call our highest at any moment. What causes us to do that? The mother who hears the child cry; the soldier who suddenly says I don't want to harm my enemy; the physician who stops the flow of blood. However we do that, whatever brings us to that point opens up parts of ourselves that have been hidden from us.



As we learn to navigate through the texts, to correlate and consider, we recognize the extraordinary number of references to the Gita throughout, and we may understand what it might have meant to students in 1890 when the text became easily accessible. To minds used to Western monotheism and private, individual salvation, the Gita brought a connection between the two halves of the world - the Western mind and the Eastern mind - a great link, so that we would be what we truly are, one world. Now, of course, you can go into any bookstore or you can go online and find almost any text from every teaching. Yet the value of the Gita remains, for despite all the arguments, all the different languages, all the different approaches, we are still all on the same journey, and we are all One.

Look around. Look at all the different people, all the outside, look at yourself: constant change, constant illusion (not in the sense that it's not real on the physical plane) but we are sevenfold beings. We are that unnamable, unknowable essence, we are that essence as it starts working and manifesting; we are the desire nature that keeps everything going on this plane; and we are both the astral plane and the physical plane. We have to be all this to function as spiritual and material beings in manifestation. That's what the Gita really says: welcome to the Gita class.

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To one of the Vice-Presidents  
or Councillors of the  
"London Socy. of Theosophical  
Society."  
from R.H.

Fragment of Mahatma Letter 120

# Mahatma Letter 120

[The text here is that from *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett from the Mahatmas M. and K.H.*, transcribed and compiled by A. T. Barker, arranged and edited by Vicente Hao Chin, Jr. (Manila: Theosophical Publishing House, 1993).]

## Letter Number 120

Received January 1884

[Introduction:] This letter is ... one of the most important letters in the book so far as the Theosophical Society — especially in the West — is concerned.

The Mahatma has just ordered two telegrams to be sent, one to Mrs. Kingsford and one to Mr. Sinnett, to notify both that Mrs. Kingsford should continue as President of the London Lodge. The telegram to Sinnett is short and to the point: “Kingsford must remain president.”

In this letter, the Mahatma suggests that the London Lodge should be administered by, at least, fourteen Councillors — “one half openly inclining towards the Christian Esotericism as represented by Mrs. K., and the other half following Buddhist Esotericism as represented by Mr. S.; all important business to be transacted by majority of votes.”

Although seemingly a rather fragile arrangement, the plan might have worked had it not been for a further complication. Early in December of 1883, Mrs. Kingsford and the Vice-President of London Lodge, Edward Maitland, issued a Circular which embodied a severe criticism of the teachings contained in Sinnett’s new book, *Esoteric Buddhism*. Understandably, this did not make for improvement in the harmony of the situation. In late January, 1884, Subba Row, in collaboration with “another still greater scholar” who, it is believed, was the Mahatma M., issued in pamphlet form a “Reply” to this Circular Letter. Subba Row sent this to H.P.B. with a covering letter, requesting her to forward it to the London Lodge. She did so on January 25, 1884. The full text can be found in *Esoteric Writings of T. Subba Row*, pp. 316-356.

[Text of the letter:]

To One of the Vice-Presidents or Councillors of "The London Lodge,"  
Theosophical Society, from K.H.

To the Members of the "London Lodge," Theosophical Society, —  
Friends and Opponents,

I have just ordered two telegrams to be sent to Mrs. A. Kingsford and  
Mr. A.P. Sinnett to notify both that the former should continue to be the  
President of the "London Lodge" Theos. Society.

This is not the desire alone of either of us two, known to Mr. Sinnett,  
or of both, but the express wish of the Chohan Himself. Mrs. Kingsford's  
election is not a matter of personal feeling between ourselves and that lady but  
rests entirely on the advisability of having at the head of the Society, in a place  
like London, a person well suited to the standard and aspirations of the (so far)  
ignorant (of esoteric truths) and therefore, malicious public. Nor is it a matter of  
the slightest consequence whether the gifted President of the "London Lodge"  
Theos. Soc. entertains feelings of reverence or disrespect toward the humble  
and unknown individuals at the head of the Tibetan Good Law, — or the writer  
of the present, or any of his Brothers — but rather a question whether the said  
lady is fitted for the purpose we have all at heart, namely the dissemination of  
TRUTH through Esoteric doctrines, conveyed by whatever religious channel,  
and the effacement of crass materialism and blind prejudices and skepticism.  
As the lady has rightly observed, the Western public should understand the  
Theosophical Society to be "a Philosophical School constituted on the ancient  
Hermetic basis" — that public having never heard of the Tibetan, and  
entertaining very perverted notions of the Esoteric Buddhist System.  
Therefore, and so far, we agree with the remarks embodied in the letter written  
by Mrs. K. to Madam B. and which the latter was asked to "submit to K.H.;"  
and, we would remind our members of the "L.L." in this reference, that  
Hermetic Philosophy is universal and unsectarian, while the Tibetan School  
will ever be regarded by those who know little, if anything of it, as coloured  
more or less with sectarianism. The former knowing neither caste, nor colour,  
nor creed, no lover of Esoteric wisdom can have any objection to the name,  
which otherwise he might feel, were the Society to which he belongs to be  
placarded with a specific denomination pertaining to a distinct religion.  
Hermetic Philosophy suits every creed and philosophy and clashes with none.

It is the boundless ocean of Truth, the central point whither flows and wherein meet every river, as every stream — whether its source be in the East, West, North, or South. As the course of the river depends upon the nature of its basin, so the channel for communication of Knowledge must conform itself to surrounding circumstances. The Egyptian Hierophant, the Chaldean Mage, the Arhat, and the Rishi, were bound in days of yore on the same voyage of discovery and ultimately arrived at the same goal though by different tracks. There are even at the present moment three centres of the Occult Brotherhood in existence, widely separated geographically, and as widely exoterically — the true esoteric doctrine being identical in substance though differing in terms; all aiming at the same grand object, but no two agreeing seemingly in the details of procedure. It is an every day occurrence to find students belonging to different schools of occult thought sitting side by side at the feet of the same Guru. Upasika (Madam B.) and Subba Row, though pupils of the same Master, have not followed the same Philosophy — the one is Buddhist and the other an Adwaitee. Many prefer to call themselves Buddhists not because the word attaches itself to the ecclesiastical system built upon the basic ideas of our Lord Gautama Buddha's philosophy, but because of the Sanskrit word "Buddhi" — wisdom, enlightenment; and as a silent protest to the vain rituals and empty ceremonials which have in too many cases been productive of the greatest calamities. Such also is the origin of the Chaldean term Mage.

Thus it is plain that the methods of Occultism, though in the main unchangeable, have yet to conform to altered times and circumstances. The state of the general Society of England — quite different from that of India, where our existence is a matter of common and, so to say, of inherent belief among the population, and in a number of cases of positive knowledge — requires quite a different policy in the presentation of Occult Sciences. The only object to be striven for is the amelioration of the condition of MAN by the spread of truth suited to the various stages of his development and that of the country he inhabits and belongs to. TRUTH has no ear-mark and does not suffer from the name under which it is promulgated — if the said object is attained. The constitution of the "L. Lodge, Theos. Society," affords ground of a hope for the right method being put in operation before long. It is well known that a magnet would cease to be a magnet if its poles cease to be antagonistic. Heat on one side should be met by frost on the other, and the resulting temperature will be healthy to all people. Mrs. Kingsford and Mr.

Sinnett are both useful, both needed and appreciated by our revered Chohan and Master, — just because they are the two poles calculated to keep the whole body in magnetic harmony, as the judicious disposal of both will make an excellent middle ground to be attained by no other means; one correcting and equilibrising the other. The direction and the good services of both is necessary for the steady progress of the Theosophical Society in England. But both cannot be Presidents. Mrs. Kingsford's views being at the bottom (minus the details) identical with those of Mr. Sinnett in matters of Occult philosophy; and, by reason of their association with the names and symbols familiar to Christian ears and eyes, they falling in better than those of Mr. Sinnett with the actual bent of English national intelligence and spirit of conservatism, Mrs. K. is thus more adapted to lead the movement successfully in England. Therefore, if our advice and desire are of any account with the members of the "London Lodge" — she will have to occupy the Presidential Chair for the ensuing year, at any rate. Let the members under her leadership resolutely try to live down the unpopularity which all esoteric teaching and all reform are sure to attract at the outset and they will succeed. The Society will be a great help to, and a great power in, the world, as well as a secure channel for the flow of its President's philanthropy. Her constant and not altogether unsuccessful strife in the cause of anti-vivisection and her staunch advocacy of vegetarianism are alone sufficient to entitle her to the consideration of our Chohans as of all true Buddhists and Adwaites — hence our Maha-Chohan's preference in this direction. But, as the services of Mr. Sinnett in the good cause are great indeed — far greater, so far, than of any Western Theosophist — therefore, a new arrangement is found advisable.

It seems necessary for a proper study and correct understanding of our Philosophy and the benefit of those whose inclination leads them to seek esoteric knowledge from the Northern Buddhist Source, and in order that such teaching should not be even virtually imposed or offered to those Theosophists who may differ from our views, that an exclusive group composed of those members who desire to follow absolutely the teachings of the School to which we, of the Tibetan Brotherhood, belong, should be formed under Mr. Sinnett's direction and within the "London Lodge T.S." Such is, in fact, the desire of the Maha Chohan. Our last year's experience amply shows the danger of so recklessly submitting our sacred doctrines to the unprepared world. We expect, therefore, and are resolved to urge, if necessary more caution than

ever from our followers in the exposition of our secret teachings. Consequently many of the latter which Mr. Sinnett and his fellow-students may from time to time receive from us, will have to be kept entirely secret from the world — if they would have us give them our help in that direction.

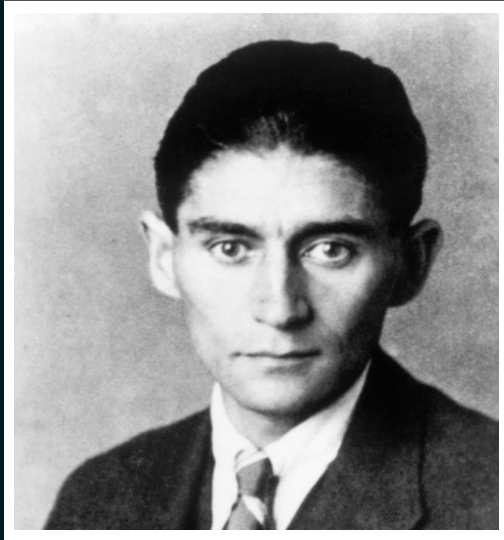
I need hardly point out how the proposed arrangement is calculated to lead to a harmonious progress of the “L.L.T.S.” It is a universally admitted fact that the marvellous success of the Theosophical Society in India is due entirely to its principle of wise and respectful toleration of each other’s opinions 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. It is only in the absence of this generous consideration, that even the faintest shadow of difference arms seekers after the same truth, otherwise earnest and sincere, with the scorpion-whip of hatred against their brothers, equally sincere and earnest. Deluded victims of distorted truth, they forget, or never knew, that discord is the harmony of the Universe. Thus in the Theos. Society, each part, as in the glorious fugues of the immortal Mozart, ceaselessly chases the other in harmonious discord on the paths of Eternal progress to meet and finally blend at the threshold of the pursued goal into one harmonious whole, the keynote in nature [Devanagari characters for the Sanskrit word sat “being, existence”]. Absolute Justice makes no difference between the many and the few. Therefore, while thanking the majority of the “L.L.” Theosophists for their “loyalty” to us their invisible teachers, we must at the same time remind them that their President, Mrs. Kingsford, is loyal and true also — to that which she believes to be the Truth. And, as she is thus loyal and true to her convictions, however small the minority that may side with her at present, the majority led by Mr. Sinnett, our representative in London, cannot with justice charge her with the guilt, which — since she has emphatically disclaimed all intention of breaking the letter or the spirit of Article VI of the Rules of the Parent Theos. Society (which please see and read) — is one only in the eyes of those who would be rather too severe. Every Western Theosophist should learn and remember, especially those of them who would be our followers — that in our Brotherhood all personalities sink into one idea — abstract right and absolute practical justice for all. And that, though we may not say with the Christians, “return good for evil” — we repeat with Confucius, “return good for good; for evil — JUSTICE.” Thus, the Theosophists of Mrs. K.’s way of thinking, — were

they even to oppose some of us personally to the bitter end, — are entitled to as much respect and consideration (so long as they are sincere) from us and their fellow-members of opposite views, as those who are ready with Mr. Sinnett to follow absolutely but our special teaching. A dutiful regard for these rules in life will always promote the best interests of all concerned. It is necessary for the parallel progress of the groups under Mrs. K. and Mr. S. that neither should interfere with the beliefs and rights of the other. And it is seriously expected that both of them will be actuated by an earnest and sleepless desire to respect the philosophical independence of each other, while preserving at the same time their unity as a whole — namely the objects of the Parent Theos. Society in their integrity — and those of the London Lodge, in their slight modification. We wish the London Society should preserve its harmony in division like the Indian Branches, where the representatives of all the different schools of Hinduism seek to study Esoteric Sciences and the Wisdom of old, without necessarily giving up for it their respective beliefs. Each Branch, often members of the same Branch — Christian converts included in some cases — study esoteric philosophy each in his own way, yet always knitting together brotherly hands for the furtherance of the common objects of the Society. To carry out this programme, it is desirable that the “London Lodge” should be administered by at least fourteen Councillors — one half openly inclining towards the Christian Esotericism as represented by Mrs. K., and the other half following Buddhist Esotericism as represented by Mr. S.; all important business to be transacted by majority of votes. We are well aware of and quite alive to the difficulties of such an arrangement. Yet, it seems absolutely necessary in order to re-establish the lost harmony. The constitution of the “London Lodge” has to be amended and can be so amended if the members would but try; and so bring about more strength in such friendly division than in forced unity.

Unless, therefore, both Mrs. Kingsford and Mr. Sinnett agree to disagree in details and work in strict unison for the chief objects as laid down in the Rules of the Parent Society, we can have no hand in the future development and progress of the London Lodge.

K. H.  
December 7th, 1883,  
Mysore.





“Don't bend; don't water it down; don't try to make it logical; don't edit your own soul according to the fashion. Rather, follow your most intense obsessions mercilessly.”

**Franz Kafka**

(German-language writer of novels and short stories.)



*Silence*

# The Voice of the Silence

11 (Verses 142-160)

by John Algeo – USA

The metaphor of the “three vestures,” introduced in verses 140 and 141, is continued in the following verses.

## A. VERSES [142-149].

[142] The Shangna robe, 'tis true, can purchase light eternal. The Shangna robe alone gives the Nirvāna of destruction; it stops rebirth, but, O *lanoo*, it also kills compassion. No longer can the perfect Buddhas, who don the Dharmakaya glory, help man's salvation. Alas! shall Selves be sacrificed to Self; mankind, unto the weal of units?

[143] Know, O beginner, this is the *Open Path*, the way to selfish bliss, shunned by the Bodhisattvas of the Secret Heart, the Buddhas of Compassion.

[144] To live to benefit mankind is the first step. To practice the six glorious virtues is the second.

[145] To don Nirmanakaya's humble robe is to forego eternal bliss for Self, to help on man's salvation. To reach Nirvana's bliss, but to renounce it, is the supreme, the final step — the highest on renunciation's path.

[146] Know, O disciple, this is the *Secret Path*, selected by the Buddhas of Perfection, who sacrificed the Self to weaker Selves.

[147] Yet, if the Doctrine of the Heart is too high-winged for thee, if thou needest help thyself and fearest to offer help to others — then, thou of timid heart, be warned in time: remain content with the Eye Doctrine of the Law. Hope still. For if the Secret Path is unattainable this day, it is within thy reach tomorrow. Learn that no efforts, not the smallest — whether in right or wrong direction — can vanish from the world of causes. E'en wasted smoke remains not traceless. “A harsh word uttered in past lives is not destroyed but ever comes again.” The pepper plant will not give birth to roses, nor the sweet jessamine's silver star to thorn or thistle turn.

[148] Thou canst create this day thy chances for thy morrow. In the Great Journey, causes sown each hour bear each its harvest of effects, for rigid justice rules the world. With mighty sweep of never-erring action, it brings to mortals lives of weal or woe, the Karmic progeny of all our former thoughts and deeds.

[149] Take then as much as merit hath in store for thee, O thou of patient heart. Be of good cheer and rest content with fate. Such is thy Karma, the Karma of the cycle of thy births, the destiny of those who, in their pain and sorrow, are born along with thee, rejoice and weep from life to life, chained to thy previous actions.

## B. COMMENT.

With verse 142, Blavatsky begins her interpretation of the “three vestures.” To put on the Dharmakaya vesture is to be united with the absolute, the ultimate reality, the Buddha nature. To be so united is to lose all contact with the limitations of the world, and therefore to be unable to participate in the enlightenment of others. Uniting with the absolute is, of course, the ultimate goal of all beings, but an ultimate goal is not the same thing as a proximate goal, and The Voice of the Silence argues for the desirability of a different proximate goal, one devoted to teaching and helping others to find the Way.

The path of devoting oneself to help others, even at the expense of one’s own immediate freedom from the restrictions and frustrations of life, is the bodhisattva ideal advocated by Northern Buddhism. The path of seeking personal enlightenment, following the teachings of the historical Buddha to that enlightenment and thus to the freedom of nirvana, is the arhat ideal associated with Southern Buddhism.

The arhat (literally “deserving respect” or “honorable”) is thought of as entering that estate by an initiation, for which an initiation robe woven from hemp is worn. “Shangna” or “shana” is literally “hemp” or a cloth made from it; it symbolizes the acquiring of wisdom and the destroying of the separate personality, as HPB’s gloss makes clear: Gloss 22. The Shangna robe, from Shangnavasu of Rajagriha, the third great Arhat or Patriarch, as the orientlists call the hierarchy of the 33 Arhats who spread Buddhism. “Shangna robe” means, metaphorically, the acquirement of wisdom with which the Nirvana of destruction (of personality) is entered. Literally, the initiation

robe of the neophytes. Edkins states that this “grass cloth” was brought to China from Tibet in the Tong Dynasty. “When an Arhan is born this plant is found growing in a clean spot” says the Chinese as also the Tibetan legend.

Verse 142 thus highlights a paradox: Perfection has no room for imperfection or pain. And so those who have attained perfection cannot participate in the pain of others (be compassionate) or in the alleviation of that pain. Only the not-yet-perfect can help the imperfect. Which is better — to remain imperfect and work for the welfare of the many imperfect human selves or to reach perfection in the One Self and have nothing to contribute to others?

*The Voice* has no trouble in answering that question. In verse 143, the first option is called the “open” or exoteric path. It is the public teaching of religions: get saved! Become enlightened! It is said to be the way to “selfish bliss.” And that is another aspect of the paradox. How can selflessness be selfish? That option is “shunned” by those who follow the “secret heart” or esoteric wisdom. They remain in the world and are Buddhas of compassion.

Yet another aspect of the paradox is set forth in verse 144. To become perfect oneself — that is, to practice the six glorious virtues — has second place in the steps one takes on the Path. The most important thing is “to live to benefit mankind.” The way to personal perfection is to forget about oneself by serving others. The six glorious virtues are the *paramitas* (described later in verses 198 and 206-213), as HPB’s gloss makes clear: Gloss 23. To “practice the Paramita Path” means to become a Yogi with a view of becoming an ascetic.

First, we forget about ourselves and devote ourselves to helping others. Then we can set about trying to make ourselves better by practicing spiritual disciplines and acquiring virtues that extend from the first of the *pāramitās*, namely, sharing what one has with others (*dana* or giving) to the last, namely, attaining insight into the nature of things (*prajnya* or intuitive wisdom).

The alternative to merging with the absolute and leaving this world is to remain in it — an alternative developed in verses 145 and 146. If we do not put on the Dharmakaya robe by becoming perfectly enlightened and merging with the absolute, we can instead put on the Nirmanakaya robe, that is, remain in this world, continue to incarnate in order to teach others and thereby help

them to freedom from pain and frustration. As noted above, the Nirmanakaya Buddha is the historical Buddha, who incarnates to teach humanity.

The highest form of renunciation is not renouncing the world. It is renouncing renunciation of the world and thus remaining a part of the world. It is the “secret” or esoteric path. It is the teaching of the inner side of all great religious traditions: not to “get saved” but to “help save.” Those who take this path sacrifice their union with the great and perfect Self for the good of the weak, imperfect selves of all beings.

To follow such an ideal, however, is not easy. It requires great courage to renounce peace and ease for labor and woe. And so verse 147 says that if we do not feel up to this challenge, we should simply follow the public, exoteric religious teachings, the “eye doctrine.” But don’t despair. If we are not up to the challenge in this life today, we may be so tomorrow: Gloss 24. “Tomorrow” means the following rebirth or reincarnation.

This consolation may remind us of the ending of the poetic passage beginning “There is a road”: “For those who win onward, there is reward past all telling: the power to bless and save humanity. For those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come.” The road, the bodhisattva path, the *Nirmānakāya* robe is there for us. If we do not accept it this life, very well. There is always another time. The principle of karma guarantees that any effort we make will have its results, small or great, good or bad. The least attempt at spiritual progress will eventually bear fruit, as also will every wrong action: “A harsh word uttered in past lives, is not destroyed but ever comes again,” a saying that is identified in a note as one of the “Precepts of the Prasanga School.”

Verse 148 continues with a sweeping statement of the pervasiveness and inevitability of the operation of karma in our lives and in the whole world process. It applies to the entire sweep of our evolution, as the gloss says: Gloss 25. The “Great Journey” is the whole complete cycle of existences, in one Round.

Karma, however, is a complex subject — one that we often oversimplify. Some of its complexity is hinted at in verse 149, which alludes to the fact that our actions involve others. Our karma or actions affect not just ourselves, but other beings as well. We are all interlinked; we participate in

each other's lives. It is, indeed, that fact which makes this discussion of karma not a digression (as it might at first appear to be) but an integral part of the discussion of the two options apparently available to us: to seek salvation for ourselves alone, or to renounce private salvation in favor of working for the salvation of all.

The message of *The Voice* seems to be, not that we "should" be altruistic and concerned for others' welfare, but instead that concern for others is the only real option. The exoteric approach, the "eye doctrine," or "open path," is only a stop gap measure. Because we are all karmically interlinked, and because every action we do affects all others, the bodhisattva way of service to all life is the only way.

**C. MEDITATION.** Meditate on verse 144: "To live to benefit mankind is the first step."

The following verses 150-160 develop in some detail the concept of a communal or collective Path that we follow as part of an evolving group or band of servers who have dedicated themselves to the welfare of others.

**A. VERSES [150-160].**

[150] Act thou for them today, and they will act for thee tomorrow.

[151] 'Tis from the bud of renunciation of the self, that springeth the sweet fruit of final Liberation.

[152] To perish doomed is he, who out of fear of Mara refrains from helping man, lest he should act for self. The pilgrim who would cool his weary limbs in running waters, yet dares not plunge for terror of the stream, risks to succumb from heat. Inaction based on selfish fear can bear but evil fruit.

[153] The selfish devotee lives to no purpose. The man who does not go through his appointed work in life — has lived in vain.

[154] Follow the wheel of life; follow the wheel of duty to race and kin, to friend and foe, and close thy mind to pleasures as to pain. Exhaust the law of Karmic retribution. Gain *siddhis* for thy future birth.

[155] If sun thou canst not be, then be the humble planet. Aye, if thou art debarred from flaming like the noon-day sun upon the snow-capped mount of purity eternal, then choose, O neophyte, a humbler course.

[156] Point out the way — however dimly, and lost among the host — as does the evening star to those who tread their path in darkness.

[157] Behold Migmar [Mars], as in his crimson veils his eye sweeps over slumbering Earth. Behold the fiery aura of the hand of Lhagpa [Mercury] extended in protecting love over the heads of his ascetics. Both are now servants to Nyima [the Sun], left in his absence silent watchers in the night. Yet both in *kल्पas* past were bright *nyimas*, and may in future days again become two Suns. Such are the falls and rises of the Karmic Law in nature.

[158] Be, O *lanoo*, like them. Give light and comfort to the toiling pilgrim, and seek out him who knows still less than thou; who in his wretched desolation sits starving for the bread of Wisdom, and the bread which feeds the shadow, without a Teacher, hope, or consolation, and let him hear the Law.

[159] Tell him, O candidate, that he who makes of pride and self-regard bond-maidens to devotion; that he, who cleaving to existence, still lays his patience and submission to the Law, as a sweet flower at the feet of Shakya-Thub-pa [Buddha], becomes a *srotapatti* in this birth. The *siddhis* of perfection may loom far, far away; but the first step is taken, the stream is entered, and he may gain the eyesight of the mountain eagle, the hearing of the timid doe.

[160] Tell him, O aspirant, that true devotion may bring him back the knowledge, that knowledge which was his in former births. The deva-sight and deva-hearing are not obtained in one short birth.

## B. COMMENT.

The “they” and “them” of verse 150 are those referred to in verse 149 who form with “thee” a karmic band, each of whose karma influences the others of the band. The members of such a band have a collective or “distributive” karma, as HPB calls it in *The Key to Theosophy*, in which the actions of each member of the band affect all its other members.

This concept of our karmic connection with one another within a group is a curious mirror reflection of the evolutionary principle of individualization. In evolution, consciousness moves from a group soul, one soul that manifests in a number of physical bodies simultaneously (as, for example, all the bees in a hive are expressions of a single life rather than



separate ones), to smaller and smaller soul-groups, consisting of only a few embodied expressions, until the human state is reached. In becoming human, we are “individualized.” That is, the evolving entity or monad expresses itself in only one personal form at a time.

We human beings are thus the most separate, divided, isolated beings of the cosmos. The angst of isolation is the “curse” of the human “Fall” out of an integrated Eden, where we lived in harmonious but unconscious integration with other beings, into the fragmented world of self-awareness. But that is not the end of evolution. Indeed, far from being the zenith of spiritual evolution, the human state is in one sense its nadir.

From the self-aware state of isolated separateness, we evolve toward a conscious reintegration with other beings in which we each retain our separate identity but become conscious of our fundamental unity in the Ground of Being. The result is a reestablishment, not of the old group soul, but of a conscious analog of it: a self-aware collective consciousness in which each individual retains a distinct identity but also shares with all other fellow individuals a common awareness of their unity and mutual participation in the One Life.

The first step toward this conscious reintegration is the formation of karmic bands, in which evolving human souls are linked to one another by shared karma and eventually by a shared consciousness. Final liberation from the limitations of existence depends on our overcoming (or “renouncing”) the illusion of an isolated, separate self (verse 151), and that overcoming begins with the karma we share with others.

Those who try to maintain the isolated state in which human life begins at the time of their individualization from the group soul are doomed to failure, for that is an evolutionary dead end. Only when we live a life of altruistic helping, by acting for others as they act for us, do we fulfill the purpose of our lives. Our appointed work in life is to make contact with our fellows, to become part of an evolving band of distinct but interlinked souls (verses 152-153).

The first Object of the Theosophical Society is highly relevant here. The first Object is often regarded as a pious generalization, an impractical statement of an impossible ideal. It is nothing of the sort; it is very specific,

very practical, and very real. The nucleus it speaks of as being formed by the Fellows of the Society is in fact one of these karmic bands or collective groups of souls. This is not to say that everyone who signs an application form and pays dues automatically becomes part of that nucleus. To say that would be superstitious. But everyone who joins the Society has thereby an opportunity to become part of this nucleus. Whether we do so or not is up to us. It has to be a conscious decision, freely taken.

Within our ever growing collective consciousness, we each have an appointed way or duty. Following that way, doing that duty without regard to the consequence to us personally, exhausts our personal karma and develops in us the higher siddhis, which are the powers of wisdom, compassion, creativity, and harmony (verse 154). Our duty is not unchanging; rather it varies with time, and we are to follow whatever duty we have at a given time. When we are a sun, we should shine like a sun; when we are a planet, we should move as planets move (155-158).

The point about relative and varying duty is illustrated by a tradition that says the present planets Mars and Mercury were in the past suns and will in the future be suns again. Verse 157 uses names for the heavenly bodies: Migmar, Lhagpa, and Nyima, of which HPB notes: Gloss 26. *Nyima*, the Sun in Tibetan Astrology. *Migmar* or Mars is symbolized by an “eye,” and *Lhagpa* or Mercury by a “hand.”

Like Migmar with his Eye and Lhagpa with his Hand, we are to watch over and lend a helping hand by giving light and comfort to our fellow pilgrims on the Way (verse 158). In thus sacrificing what seems to be our personal interest to “Shakya-Thub-pa” or Buddha — not just the historical Gautama Buddha, but the Eternal Buddha Nature — we enter upon the Path or into the “stream,” as verse 159 states. We become, to use a traditional Buddhist term, *srotapatti*, which HPB glosses: Gloss 27. *Srotapatti* or “he who enters in the stream” of Nirvana, unless he reaches the goal owing to some exceptional reasons, can rarely attain Nirvana in one birth. Usually a chela is said to begin the ascending effort in one life and end or reach it only in his seventh succeeding birth.

Buddhism traditionally recognizes four stages on the Path to Enlightenment and Liberation:

1. One who has entered the stream and has become free from the first three of the ten fetters, which are the illusion of being a self separate from all other selves (the basic fetter of all of us), vacillation or skeptical doubt (the special fetter of intellectuals, scholars, and scientists), and clinging to forms and rules (the special fetter of fundamentalists).

2. One who will return once only and who is nearly free from two further fetters: cravings or desires and all ill-will or aversion, that is, wanting either to have or not to have.

3. One who will return no more (but be reborn in higher worlds) and who is completely free of the first five fetters.

4. One who is worthy (an *arhat*), having cast off the last five fetters: desire for existence in the lower worlds of forms, desire for existence in the higher formless worlds, conceit or self-esteem, restlessness, and ignorance.

The ten fetters are wrong ways of thinking and desiring that have to be removed, one by one, as we follow the Path to the ultimate goal.

In the Theosophical tradition, these four stages are referred to as the first four initiations. It is probably best not to think of these as formal initiations like those of Freemasonry or even as wholly distinct stages of development, but as a symbol of the fact that enlightenment, liberation, or salvation does not come all at once, suddenly, but instead is a process that comes by degrees. Becoming enlightened is not like flipping a wall switch that suddenly turns on the light. Rather, it is like turning up a dimmer switch to gradually increase the light until it is as bright as possible. Still, the first step must be taken, and that beginning is a discrete event, like putting our hand on the switch or stepping through the gate onto the Path.

It took us a long while to lose the knowledge that we once had. It will take us a long while to regain it and to lose the ignorance we have replaced it with. We should not hanker after special powers and insight (“the eye-sight of the mountain eagle, the hearing of the timid doe” of verse 159 or the “deva-sight and deva-hearing” of verse 160). Instead, we should enter the stream, form the links that unite us with others, and eventually everything else will follow.

### C. MEDITATION.

1. Consider the implications of becoming, not just a card-carrying member of the Theosophical Society, but a part of a nucleus of the universal brotherhood. In such a nucleus, what is our relationship with other members of the nucleus? What do we owe them? What do we share with them?

2. Dwell on the following poetical statement by HPB: "There is a Road, steep and thorny, beset with perils of every kind, but yet a Road. And it leads to the very heart of the universe. / I can tell you how to find those who will show you the secret gateway that opens inwardly only, and closes fast behind the neophyte forever more. / There is no danger that dauntless courage cannot conquer. / There is no trial that spotless purity cannot pass through. / There is no difficulty that strong intellect cannot surmount. / For those who win onward, there is reward past all telling: the power to bless and save humanity. / For those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come."



# In the Light of Theosophy

[This article appeared in the December 2013 issue of *The Theosophical Movement*. For more articles published in this excellent magazine follow this link: [http://www.ultindia.org/previous\\_issues.html](http://www.ultindia.org/previous_issues.html) ]



Eyes are the windows to the soul; they indicate the real you. Self-help gurus encourage us to look deeply into our own eyes. But looking deep into our own eyes, or of another's can be uncomfortable experience because not all of us are prepared to face the truths revealed, writes Vinita Dawra Nangia. Eyes reveal the emotional state of the person at a particular time. The author writes that sometimes her eyes reveal the presence of a peaceful soul, at other times she saw a cynical old person with a world weary look, or a youthful

person full of enthusiasm. She writes that it was like seeing a new person every time she looked into the mirror. The one who peeped from her eyes every morning gave an indication of what she was *really* thinking and feeling behind the social mask.

Just like the body, the eyes have a language of their own. Too much blinking can indicate discomfort. The one who hardly blinks or frequently looks away, may be trying to hide something. The one who looks directly at you might be interested in you and the conversation. A doctor looks into the eyes of the patient to gauge his state of health, because eyes can indicate liver disease, diabetes and even cholesterol. Through recent research doctors have been able to find non-invasive methods of looking into the eyes of a person and watch the working of dopamine in that person, which in turn can indicate the possibility of drug-abuse, gambling, or getting Parkinson's disease or Schizophrenia. The eyes of the person could reveal inner beauty and we might see our own beauty mirrored in them, writes Vinita Nangia. (*Times Life! Sunday Times of India*, November 10, 2013)

The eyes reflect both the mood and character of the person. Often, we try to gauge from the eyes whether the person is trustworthy or not. Describing his first meeting with H. P. Blavatsky, W. Q. Judge, one of the co-founders of the Theosophical Society, writes: "It washer eye that attracted me, the eye of one whom I must have known in lives long passed away."

Tears in the eyes may well be considered an outlet for bottled-up emotions. "Tears," in the language of the occultists express simple human emotions. We know that we are not able to see things clearly so long as we are emotionally involved. "Tears" in the eyes are often indicative of the inner state, where the soul is shaken by grief, disappointment or pleasure, so as to lose its hold on the divine nature.

Every person gives out magnetic exhalations. These exhalations are more intense from the eyes, palms, fingers and soles of the feet. An "evil eye" is the destructive power of thought. An envious glance of a person on a beautiful vase or a car or any other object or person may result in damage or injury to the same. In such a case, thoughts of envy combine with elementals and become an entity which precipitates down his glance.

Hypnotic condition can be produced by purely mechanical method

which involves the fixing of the eyes on some bright spot, a metal or a crystal. It is the eye, says H.P.B., which is the most occult organ of all, on the superficies of our body, which serves as a medium between the metal or crystal and the brain, and *attunes* the molecular vibrations of the nervous centres of the brain, to the rate of vibrations of the object gazed at, by catching the rhythm of the latter and passing it on to the brain. But in the case of direct passes, it is the Will of the operator radiating through his eye that produces the unison between his will and the will of the person operated upon. (*H.P.B. Series No. 9*, pp. 32 and 37)

Glamour is witchery or charm on the eyes, making them see things differently from what they really are. In order to be able to see an object, not only should the light proceed from the object to the eye, but also, light must proceed from the eye towards the object.

When the light from the eye falling on the object is completely cut off, the object disappears. When the luminousness of the light coming from the eye is altered, the object is altered in shape or color for the perceiver, writes Mr. Judge. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 85)



L. FRANK BAUM  
Author of "The Wizard of Oz," etc.



# L. Frank Baum and Theosophy - Part I.

by John Algeo - USA

The term “theosophy” or “Theosophy” has two meanings, identified in *Merriam-Webster’s 11th Collegiate Dictionary* as “1: teaching about God and the world based on mystical insight [and] 2 often capitalized: the teachings of a modern movement originating in the United States in 1875 and following chiefly Buddhist and Brahmanic theories especially of pantheistic evolution and reincarnation.” Theosophists certainly accept the historical part of the second definition and generally subscribe to all three concepts of pantheism, evolution, and reincarnation. However, they generally regard Theosophical teachings, including the three specifically mentioned as by no means limited to Buddhism and Brahmanism, but rather as the common property of the more general sense of “theosophy,” that is, spiritual teachings about the divine and the mundane that can be found in diverse traditions all over the globe.

All three of those basic concepts are worth considering further. Pantheism is a term formed from Greek “pan” = “all” and “theos” = “god.” In Theosophical use, it is the theory that God and nature are identical, that is, everything in nature is an expression of the divine and the divine ensouls every particle of matter. Incidentally, in this use, the term “theory” denotes a way of viewing the world, being from a Greek term meaning “to look at,” rather than unfounded speculation. In a Theosophical view, evolution is not just biological but cultural, intellectual, and spiritual as well; and reincarnation is the principal means by which human evolution progresses through the ages.

Theosophists regard the theories of pantheism, evolution, and reincarnation as universal ones that can be found in all religious traditions of the world. It is a typical Theosophical view that every traditional religion has two aspects: an outer or exoteric one and an inner or esoteric one. In their exoteric aspects, religions can be very different from one another and often antagonistic as well. They are expressions of the cultures and times in which

they are practiced. But in their esoteric aspects, all religions are harmonious, being expressions, varying of course according to place and time, of the same eternal truth, which Theosophists call the Ancient Wisdom.

Founded in 1875 in New York City, the Theosophical Society is an organization whose name was chosen to align it with the larger theosophical tradition. Among the sixteen persons who participated in the formation of the Theosophical Society, two were notable for their roles in its future development: Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), a charismatic Russian of upper-class family, and Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907), an American lawyer and journalist who served during the American Civil War (1861–1865), chiefly as an investigator and reformer of military procurement, for which he was highly respected and rewarded by the federal government of the United States. His contacts and influence with the U.S. government help to get Blavatsky and Olcott free from being tailed by the British secret service when they were traveling in India. Blavatsky was the energetic force that brought the Society into existence and remained its chief theoretician throughout her life. Olcott provided the organizing force that held the Society together. He became the first president of the Society and held that post until his death.

Madame Blavatsky's first attempt to form a similar organization was made in Cairo. It did not succeed. Her teachers (the Masters [in a sense more frequent in Britain than in America, namely "a teacher; a person qualified to teach"]) then directed her to go to America, in order to meet Colonel Henry S. Olcott, who was investigating mediumistic phenomena at the Eddy homestead in Chittenden, Vermont, and was publishing the results of his investigations in some newspapers. Blavatsky demonstrated that she could produce such phenomena herself, and she maintained that their real explanation was quite different from the causes assumed by most spiritualists.

Blavatsky maintained that Spiritualistic phenomena were produced, not by the souls of dead persons coming into our world from "the other side," but rather by the force of the human medium, often exercised unconsciously, or by "elementals," which are semi-intelligent forces of nature. Blavatsky sent strongly worded articles to newspapers and journals defending what she called "true spiritualism" and exposing fraudulent mediums. In replying to an article on "Rosicrucianism," she delivered what she characterized as her "first occult shot," hinting at the sources of the great secret teachings of all times, guarded

throughout the ages by those wise persons, the “Masters,” in the sense of both skilled persons and teachers.



Her articles brought Madame Blavatsky considerable notoriety, and her ideas on occultism — a word she helped to make familiar to the world — heightened interest in what was to become the Theosophical Society. Men and women of note attended her soirees in New York City. At one of those sessions, on 7 September 1875, a talk by G. H. Felt on “The Lost Canon of Proportion of the Egyptians” led to a decision to form a society for the study of such subjects. “The Theosophical Society” was chosen as the name of the new organization. According to tradition, it was selected by those present who just flipped through a dictionary to find an appropriate term.

The Theosophical Society was intended to be eclectic, that is, to reflect the traditions of a number of sources and not to be limited to any single one. Its members were not restricted to any single approach, nor expected to subscribe to any creed. Several meetings were held to frame and pass rules, and an emblem was adopted as the seal of the Society. On 17 November 1875, Colonel Olcott gave his inaugural address as president of the society, and this date is therefore still remembered as the Foundation Day of the Theosophical Society.

In 1877, H. P. Blavatsky published her first major work, the two-volume *Isis Unveiled*, which, she said, was “the fruit of somewhat intimate acquaintance with Eastern adepts and study of their science.” Its success was immediate and widespread around the world, attracting many persons to membership in the Society, despite the fact that it is a disorganized text, and

by no means an easy read. However, it is full of arcane information and covers an amazingly broad scope of spiritual and mystical concepts.

Late in 1878, at the direction of HPB's Masters, the two Founders left New York for Bombay via England. At that time, the Society was largely restricted to New York City. HPB and HSO left the American (that is, the New York) Society in the charge of a third important early member, a lawyer by the name of William Quan Judge. On their arrival in India, HPB and HSO first established the headquarters of the Society in Bombay, where their house was crowded with visitors. The press frequently published reports of their activities, and the Colonel lectured in Bombay and elsewhere to overflowing audiences. The appearance of two Westerners, neither British, who were presenting the Ancient Wisdom of India to modern-day Indians, as well as to others, was bound to attract a good deal of attention as an anomaly, especially in the eyes of the British Raj.



*Theosophical Twins*

# Human Regeneration - Part II.

## The Nature of the Change

by Radha Burnier - India

[Recognizing regeneration as the kernel of all Theosophical work, the International Theosophical Centre at Naarden, The Netherlands, jointly with the Federation of Theosophical Societies in Europe, organized two seminars in July 1990, with a number of office-bearers, workers and members of the Society from different countries as participants. The proceedings of the seminar were published as a book under the title Human Regeneration.]

As we have already said, there is an unprecedented challenge before the whole of humanity – not just before one particular race or group of people. War, the armaments race, pollution, poverty, the population problem – all these, and perhaps other things too, threaten humanity. Most people do not realize that all these challenges outside reflect what is inside the human mind – your mind, my mind, everybody's mind. The hatred which manifests itself in war is a reflection of the animosity and suspicion in all our minds. Poverty reflects our inability to feel at one with others – to share. Pollution arises out of greed to have more and more, endlessly. What is inside and what is outside are not different. Even when we accept this mentally, we do not make an effort actually to see the relationship that the root of all problems is in the human psychological condition. Because we do not see this, we try all the time to tinker with the outside. What we imagine are great plans to change the world amount to nothing more than a little superficial, temporary, inadequate patching up.

So the world problem cannot be separated from the condition of the individuals who compose the world, whose mind is unable to look at things as a whole. As we have already said, the problems which exist today in an acute form are the problems of all humanity – not of part of the world, not of one people or nation; the solutions too have to be solutions which deal with the whole, not looked at from the viewpoint of the advantage of one section of humanity. The mind which is accustomed to divide and break up everything always looks from a particular angle, but the fragmented mind cannot find the

true or lasting solution to problems, especially in the present day when all the peoples and nations of the world are interconnected. So it is important to free the mind of its tragic tendency to look at everything piecemeal

We also said that if man cannot find out more about himself, and understand himself as he is and also what he will be, his own wonderful, boundless potential he cannot know what is good for him. So he constantly works for what he thinks is good, but he actually creates suffering. Theosophy and the Theosophical Society must and can offer the direction and guidelines in regard to this. We will discuss the objects and the work of the Society later. Today we shall consider the nature of the fundamental change.

Questions have arisen about what is fundamental. Is anything fundamental? Is there a difference between the subsidiary and the basic? We may say that a fundamental change is one which resolves the many different problems with one sweep, so to speak. It is like rooting out a weed. If you cut the branches of the weed, they may sprout again. In Hindu mythology there is the demon or anti-god called Ravana, who has ten heads. He was unconquerable for ages because when a head or two were cut off, they grew again. Finally, the divine incarnation, Rama, struck off all the heads at one stroke and put an end to the evil.

In our personal lives, as well as in the community around us, we find continuing problems. There are countries in which there is little orderliness, people throw rubbish everywhere. This is of course a subsidiary problem, for you may remove the rubbish and the next day they will throw more. Obviously the more basic problem is the mentality. If people realized that what they are doing is unpleasant for themselves as well as for everybody else, if they saw that if everyone behaves exactly as they do, nothing would improve, in other words if their attitude changed, the outside situation would change. So we come to something a little more fundamental than merely removing rubbish. If you go still further, you will find that this attitude is essentially self-centered, and self-centeredness may express itself in many other ways besides throwing rubbish. If you deal with that self-centeredness, not only this problem, but many other problems would also be solved.

So the fundamental cause, the source of the problems must be identified and resolved. Only this brings about a fundamental change, with a

totally different relationship and way of living.

We have already listened to some words pointing to the basic cause of humanity's problems: 'It is neither Nature nor an imaginary Deity that has to be blamed, but human nature made vile by *selfishness*.' Selfishness is the cause of all mankind's difficulties. The fundamental change is therefore from selfishness, which is also self-centeredness, self-preoccupation and so forth, to a state of sympathy, harmony and unity, where other people's well-being is realized to be of as much, if not of more, importance than one's own. Some may know this theoretically, although millions of people will not even accept it as a valid theoretical proposition. Part of our work as members of the Society is to use all the reasoning, literature, philosophy, devotional methods, discussions, the example of our lives, everything – to show the validity of this fact. When the inner condition changes from self-centeredness to a realization of unity the world will change.

Again I would like to quote a brief sentence from *The Mahatma Letters*: 'The term "Universal Brotherhood" is no idle phrase ... It is the only secure foundation of universal morality.' Let us examine a little what we mean by selfishness. Because we are not aggressively selfish people, we tend to be fairly contented with ourselves. We see that people who are crudely ambitious, cruel, etc. wreak havoc in the world and we look at them as the culprits. We are on the whole nice people – only on the whole – and so we do not regard selfishness as a problem, perhaps even an evil, within us. But let us try to see the selfishness inside without a feeling of guilt. Guilt is unnecessary; all of us are selfish. Not one of us is exempt.

Self-centeredness can be very subtle. We must become aware that even in relationships with people who are close to us – the family, children, parents, a friend for whom we have affection there is still a barrier. That person is always the 'other' and I am 'myself'. This is also selfishness. The other person's body is of course different, but why need the mind regard everything as 'other' - human beings, animals, trees and even the earth. Human relationships are the most complicated. Plants do not cross us. Even the poor animals cannot really set themselves against us. They have no chance. But other human beings do. We cannot wipe them out as we do the animals and plants, unless we go to war.

What is our internal attitude, with regard to comforts? Often life is like a game of musical chairs, with few positions available and many seeking them. Do I feel the comfortable position should be mine? Do I walk a little faster in order to get it first before somebody else? In a lot of little things the self-centre shows itself if one watches. When we are indifferent, and do not feel moved by the pity of the world's condition, it is also selfishness. The Buddha advised that we should realize sorrow as the first truth; it referred to the movement of compassion from within, a release from one's self-centeredness.

Let us not be too easily satisfied. Let us not think that there are nice people in this world. Of course there are a lot of nice people, even in this unpleasant world. But being nice is different from being free of self-centeredness, self-preoccupation, the self in its varied manifestations. The fundamental change has to do with rooting out the self completely - not necessarily in one day. It means really working for *nirvana*, for *nirvana* is 'putting an end' to the egotistic self.

We make words like 'unity', 'brotherhood', 'harmony', 'compassion' into weak terms. These words have a profound, revolutionary significance, if we understand them rightly. It means seeing the inner nature of everything that exists; to see that everything in Nature has a purpose, value and meaning in itself, not what we attribute to it. Most of us unconsciously tend to think that values are according to our prejudices, wants and ideas. The person one considers to be of value is somebody who pleases us in some way – physically, psychologically, or whatever. As for other people, one may not dislike them, or be against them, but a deep sense of respect, a sense of their ineradicable value may not be felt. Brotherhood means something different from what we generally think it does. It implies learning to see that the one unitary life everywhere is wonderful beyond our imagination, subtle, profound, sacred. Wherever it is – and there is no place where it is not – there is something to be respected, studied, something with which we have to feel in harmony, because that harmony is the only way of really knowing.

So the fundamental change we are talking about is from selfishness to unity. Selfishness, whether positive or negative, even if it seems to be no more than indifference or laziness, must end utterly. This change to realization of unity is revolutionary, fundamental. If selfishness were eradicated, one would never feel anger or bitterness, or get into frictions; our life would be one



of deep respect for others. One would not try to thrust on them what one thinks is right. We would respect their own unique path of unfoldment. We would not respond unkindly when something does not suit us or is not pleasant. These are all expressions of self-centeredness. All forms of immorality, greed, anger, corruption, deception in all the small forms in which we practice it - would end. What a great change!

It would also be a change from turmoil and restlessness to profound peace and harmony, because the source of agitation, destructiveness and conflict – one part of the mind wanting something, another part something else – is in the personal desires of the self.

If we say the fundamental change is from wanting to not wanting, there may be some who react 'how is it possible not to want?' If we start thinking that way, we may never change. We must realize that all 'wanting' is bound to end in frustration, because everything that is needed, and more, is within ourselves. Peace is in our consciousness, because it is the very nature of life and consciousness. Life is beauty, life is goodness and the purity of unity. But because we struggle and do not allow that life to flow from within, we suffer from want and seek elsewhere.

Fundamental change is thus many things.-It is change from selfishness to altruism; from strife, inside and outside, to peace; from ugliness – there is a lot of ugliness inside us – to beauty and harmony. It is a change from a state of ignorance to wisdom.

Strife, the feeling of separateness, is a burden the consciousness carries, yet it wants affection, it craves for relationship. Self-centeredness is the epitome of ignorance. We think that ignorance is removed when we have attained what is normally called knowledge. But it is not. What is called knowledge is not knowledge at all. It is merely loading the brain with ideas and much information. The Upanishads, Lao Tzu and other sages declared that he who knows does not know. He who really knows is the one who realizes Unity, which is also supreme beauty, harmony, peace, love, and the wisdom which enables one to act rightly. Knowledge which has no element of love in it, is not knowledge. Wisdom is both intelligence and love, and different from what we ordinarily call knowledge. So we can say the fundamental change is from ignorance to wisdom. It means becoming aware of the true nature of life – its

meaning and inherent purpose.

Then should we regard ordinary knowledge as useless? It depends on what that knowledge is. There is knowledge which is really useless, except for practical purposes. You have to know certain things, like your way home. Apart from that, a lot of knowledge we accumulate is useless. But there can also be useful knowledge. In the Indian tradition they say, as the diamond is used to cut the diamond, knowledge may be used to transcend knowledge, and to obtain insight and intuitive awareness of the true nature of life, its unity. Thus there is a breaking out of the prison of the self. It is such knowledge that the T.S. must be concerned with, and provide.

In a Theosophical lodge, if a group wants to organize courses in physiology, botany and so on, which is useful, should they be encouraged? We must ask: Useful from what point of view? It is not the work of the T.S. to offer knowledge which is useful for practical things like how to assemble a car or radio. The knowledge we are concerned with is that other kind of knowledge which can point the way to a truth beyond its own range. Humanity now needs to go beyond the analytical, fragmented mind, always dissecting, comparing, evaluating, to another kind of perception, for which we can use the word intuition, although it is too often used in a wrong sense. The word buddhi is better, because it means waking up – from the false reality in which the mind is caught.

Most of the things with which we are occupied, fights, hopes, what somebody said yesterday, what we want to do tomorrow, all seem important at the time. Yet only a small part of our concerns has importance, and even that only of a relative order. Is there a waking up out of this to see what life is really like, its meaning, deep significance, and beauty? Is there a way of thinking, of looking at things which can help all human beings, not just ourselves, to break out of the prison-house of the self into a realization of the shared nature of life, our common destiny? If we think in these terms we see how very vital is the first object of the T.S.: universal brotherhood without distinctions. If the mind can realize brotherhood without any distinctions, be free of duality, the 'other' and myself, my well-being versus somebody else's, is that not a dimensional change, a religious journey? Transformation has a truly religious meaning.

We have created divisions by our thinking, we have been conditioned

nto it. If we could free ourselves from that conditioning, we would be radiating peace and harmony. So universal brotherhood without distinctions is not an idle phrase, a commonplace thing. It is the main work of the Theosophical Society. When we convert it into something ordinary, we feel that we must go around finding other things to do. But there is no difference between such brotherhood and regeneration, for it calls for a totally new mind, a mind without divisions, distinctions, comparisons, and evaluations.

What a wonderful pioneering activity it is to try and create a nucleus of universal brotherhood! Some people ask why only a nucleus? It is obvious that we can only start with a small group which realizes the importance of universal brotherhood and takes it seriously enough to try and make that brotherhood without distinctions a reality. But a nucleus is a living thing, so it will grow; other people will come into the brotherhood, because they see what a glorious change it is. How else can we begin? What a marvelous object we have; and what inspiration we would get, if we understood the fundamental change this involves. We get accustomed to words, that is the trouble. We do not go sufficiently into the richness of the meaning of brotherhood, take the trouble to realize that when universal brotherhood without distinctions becomes a reality, there would be a mind in which there is delight, love, strength, wisdom, everything. So this is no ordinary task.

Sri Sankaracharya says in a work called 'Self-knowledge': 'Who is there more foolish than he who madly strives for his own benefit? Whether it is in a small way in a little circle, or in an aggressive form in a large arena, who is there more foolish than he who strives for his own benefit? It is utter ignorance which makes one live and work for himself. On the contrary, as indicated by the Buddha: 'Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so let us cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings.'

So, let us not take as an already known thing such a truth as brotherhood. What we know about being selfish or unselfish is very superficial. We have to examine these matters many times in great depth to realize all that it implies. If we do that, then we might be strong in carrying out the work of the T.S. which is to bring about a change in human society.

To be continued.

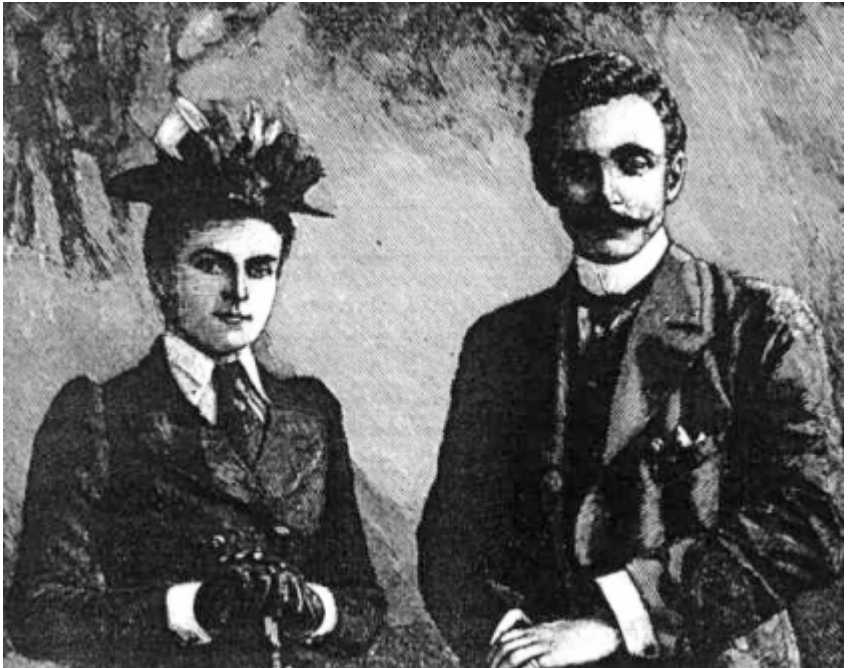
# Theosophy and the Society in the Public Eye

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# The Suffragette and the Dodge Heiress

by Marty Bax – The Netherlands

Countess Muriel De La Warr (née Brassey 1872-1930), became a member of the Theosophical Society as an active suffragette. According to her close friend, the Christian Socialist George Lansbury, Muriel did not pride herself on her progressive work and her financing of the movement. Lansbury was one of the founders of the *Daily Herald* and a fervent supporter of women's rights, and his campaigns were largely funded by Muriel. Before his political career, Lansbury had been a railway contractor, just as Muriel's grandfather, Thomas Brassey (1805-1870) had been. Brassey was responsible



*Muriel and Gilbert De La Warr*

for laying the railways throughout the whole of the British Empire, and became unfathomably rich. But wealth was not enough for Muriel, she wanted to have the title of a countess. Therefore Muriel married Gilbert Sackville, Eighth Earl De La Warr (pronounced Delaware) in 1891. Gilbert belonged to the oldest of English upper-class families. However, his family's fortunes had dwindled and he needed money. Muriel had plenty of it.

One could suppose that everyone was happy. But Gilbert went on to blow his luck by having a fling with an actress in his hometown Bexhill-on-Sea and eventually went to live with the actress a couple of houses down the street from his wife. The marriage ended in 1902 and Muriel went on to be a suffragette, as did her eldest daughter Idina. Idina, however, became famous as a “bolter,” someone who lives a very promiscuous life. She married five times and was the scandal of the English peerage. The biography *The Bolter* (2008) recounts her very naughty adventures. The book was written by Frances Osborne, Idina's great-granddaughter.



*Idina Sackville*

Within the Theosophical Society, Muriel's network and financial backing, as well as others, was important. She was introduced to the Society by Lady Emily Lutyens, the wife of the famous architect Edward Lutyens — a man of common background but artistically gifted, who worked his way up through (intimate) contacts with women — and the daughter of a Viceroy of India, Robert Bulwer-Lytton. The Lutyens family was directly related to former Prime Minister Arthur Balfour (1902-1905). Balfour's brother, Eustace, was an

alcoholic architect who married Lady Frances Campbell, and this somewhat bohemian couple became close friends with the painter Edward Burne-Jones and his wife. All these women were committed suffragettes. (See for a listing E. Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide*, London, 2001).



*Emily Lutyens*

At the time Muriel became a member of the Society, she lived in London with her friend and co-member, Mary Melissa Hoadley Dodge (1861-1934). Dodge's name is often misspelled as "Headley" and she is mistakenly thought to be the heiress to the Dodge car emporium. Mary Melissa Hoadley Dodge was the daughter of William E. Dodge, one of two controlling partners in the Phelps Dodge Corporation, one of the largest copper mining corporations in the United States. Mary's grandfather was David Hoadley, the president of the Panama Railway Company. So now we've made a full circle to Muriel's grandfather's business!

William Dodge had a house built in Tudor Revival style by one of the most famous American architects at that time, James Renwick Jr. He was also a philanthropist, who fundraised and was on the executive board of MOMA, the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Dodge was also a member of a host of other institutions such as the National Academy of Design in New York. Mary's sister Grace was also active in the women's rights movement in the U.S. To give an indication of the wealth of the family, at her death in December 1914, Grace's net estate was worth \$7 million, of which she

bequeathed more than \$1.5 million to religious, charitable, and educational institutions.

Railways and money were not the only shared elements in the biography of Mary Dodge and Muriel De la Warr. They both hosted the brothers J. Krishnamurti and Nityanandan, when they arrived in London from India. Muriel first housed them in Old Lodge in Ashdown Forest, then in a flat on Robert Street in Adelphi. Mary Dodge provided them housing in West Side Common, Wimbeldon. The brothers were educated under their wings, and Krishnamurti went on to become known as the World Teacher by some Theosophists. (According to Mary Lutyens, when the boys first came to London, Frank Arundale and Mrs. Besant were looking after them.) The daughter of Emily Lutyens, Mary, became the first biographer of Krishnamurti.

Mary Dodge was influential in further establishing the position of the Theosophical Society. She settled a life annuity of £500 on Krishnamurti and an income of an undisclosed amount on Annie Besant, the second president of the Theosophical Society. She also paid for the acquisition of about 6 acres of land in Ojai, California, for use by the Theosophical Society. It is the home of Krotona, one of the ES centers. The architectural historian Alfred Willis researched the building history of the original Hollywood colony in all its details. One of the most colorful persons of Krotona was co-founder and Wagnerian opera singer Marie Barnard Smith Russak Hotchener.



*Greystone Dodge house*



# Hilma af Klint

by Kathleen Hall - Canada



*Hilma af Klint*

No form can come into objective existence — from the highest to the lowest — before the abstract ideal of this form — or, as Aristotle would call it, the privation of this form — is called forth. Before an artist paints a picture every feature of it exists already in his imagination; to have enabled us to discern a watch, this particular watch must have existed in its abstract form in the watchmaker's mind. So with future men. (Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, 1:310)

The world is often not ready to accept what pioneers working on the spiritual plane have discovered in their lifetime, and therefore some things must wait to be revealed. In 1986, 42 years after her passing, a small collection of Hilma af Klint's remarkable paintings were publically shown in "The Spiritual in Art," Maurice Tuchman's ground breaking exhibit held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Prior to her death in 1944, all of Hilma af Klint's works were given in trust to her nephew, requesting that they not be publically revealed until at least 20 years after her passing.

It was not until 2013 that the first major exhibition of her work was shown at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. The museum curated more than 1000 paintings and 125 notebooks. These works were unpacked from mysterious trunks, some of which had never been opened, and included her thoughts, mediumship experiences, and notes about her paintings.



*View of the series 'The Ten Largest', at the Moderna Museet exhibit, 2013*

Until recently very little was known about the artist Hilma af Klint and her mystical paintings. Born in Sweden in 1862, she studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm and became an accomplished landscape and portrait artist in her early years. This was her public art and how she earned her living; however there were other sources from which quite different paintings were inspired. It was sometime after the death of her sister in 1880, that Hilma af Klint became interested in spiritualism and mediumship. In 1886 she formed a group called "The Five" or "The Friday Group." This was an occult gathering of women who, John O'Rourke writes, "claimed to have 'spirit world' leaders, or 'High Masters,' Gregor, Clemens, Amelie, Ananda and Esther among others. ... according to af Klint, in 1904, Ananda told her to begin producing paintings from the Astral Plane. This, she was informed, would follow a period of preparing to mediate a message." Many of Hilma af Klint's works were the expression of these mediumistic sessions in which she said she channelled symbolic messages from the Masters. "The pictures were painted directly through me, without any preliminary drawings and with great force. I had no idea what the paintings were supposed to depict; nevertheless, I worked swiftly and surely, without changing a single brushstroke" (*With Great Force Swiftly and Surely*).

In 1888 Hilma af Klint joined the Theosophical Society and became interested in the work of Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater, and most likely read *Thought Forms*, their ground-breaking book that discussed how thoughts could be seen as colored forms carrying the intent of the sender. She also met Rudolph Steiner and studied his Rosicrucian, Theosophical, and later Anthroposophical teachings, though Steiner questioned af Klint's involvement with mediumship. All of these encounters informed her spiritual development and influenced her esoteric practices.

Hilma af Klint's early works were direct translations of what she saw on the spiritual plane; later she took charge of interpreting her messages. This evolution in her approach could be considered as the progression of an initiate to that of an advanced pupil or adept who learned how to manage her spiritual teachings. "Mediumship is the opposite of adeptship; the medium is the passive instrument of foreign influences, the adept actively controls himself and all inferior potencies" (*Isis Unveiled*, 2:588).

Hilma af Klint considered the works she produced during her

mediumship experiences as a “commission,” the fundamental idea being “to convey knowledge about the unity of all existence, which lies hidden behind the polarized, dual world in which we live” (*Hilma af Klint: A Pioneer of Abstraction*). Her first painting series of the commission, *The Temple* (1907-1915), consists of several large groups of paintings on various themes. Some are composed of organic shapes — others are more geometric.

Several notebooks document Hilma af Klint’s working processes for many of her paintings with notes and sketches, giving clues to the symbolism and Theosophical ideals she embedded in her works. Spirals and snails depict the spiral of evolution, and the tendril, as seen in plant growth, represents the consciousness that embodies life and seeks to grow. Color has important meaning in Hilma af Klint’s paintings: “white is the ‘holiest of all colours’, blue ‘the colour scale of powerful, real nature, the faithful’, and yellow, ‘the splendid colour of light, of the foundation of knowledge’.” Yellow also represents the



*Evolution, No. 15, Group IV, The WUS/Seven-pointed Star Series, 1908*

masculine, blue the feminine, and green the merging of the two. Words and letters also have significance in her work. The letters AO and WU respectively represent spiritual evolution and the duality of spirit and matter. The word avonwener written across the top of one of her paintings means “those who try to shed light on the earthlings” (*Hilma af Klint*, p. 42).

Many of Hilma af Klint’s paintings (specifically in the Swan series) were the result of her study of polarities, as shown in her use of color, male and female figures, and the dual concepts of above and below (the connection between humanity and the universe), the stages of life, and the evolution of humanity.

The last group of paintings in The Temple series consists of three large paintings that are called altar pieces. Bernitz writes: “They were painted at the end of 1915 and, according to af Klint, they represented a ‘summary of the series so far’.” The paintings are heavily infused with Theosophical symbolism such as the triangle, the six pointed star, and the circle. These works depict Theosophical concepts of spirit descending into matter (involution) and matter ascending into spirit (evolution) — an unending cycle, the universal dimensions of time and space without beginning or end represented by the circle. The first painting, Altar Piece No. 1, may also depict the teachings of the seven rays as discussed in Blavatsky’s, *Isis Unveiled* (1:514): “The Rosicrucian theory, that the whole universe is a musical instrument, is the Pythagorean doctrine of the music of the spheres. Sounds and colors are all spiritual numerals; as the seven prismatic rays proceed from one spot in heaven, so the seven powers of nature, each of them a number, are the seven radiations of the Unity, the central, spiritual SUN.”

Following The Temple series, Hilma af Klint’s work became very geometric through the years 1916-1920. During this time she painted the Parsifal and Atom series and a set of paintings on the great religions of the world. The title “Parsifal” may refer to one of the Knights of King Arthur’s Round Table who went in search of the Holy Grail, or in allegorical terms, spiritual knowledge.

The Atom series seems to be a working process to gain greater insight into duality principles and planes of existence. Hilma af Klint stated: “The atom has at once limits and the capacity to develop. When the atom expands on the ether plane, the physical part of the earthly atom begins to



*Altarpiece, No 1, No 2 and No 3, Group X: 1915*

glow” (*Hilma af Klint: A Pioneer of Abstraction*). As Hilma af Klint was a member of the Theosophical Society, she most likely studied Blavatsky’s teachings and may have read such passages as the following: “It is a law of Occult dynamics that ‘a given amount of energy expended on the spiritual or astral plane is productive of far greater results than the same amount expended on the physical objective plane of existence’” (*The Secret Doctrine*, 1:644).

“Occultism tells us that every atom, like the monad of Leibnitz, is a little universe in itself; and that every organ and cell in the human body is endowed with a brain of its own, with memory, therefore, experience and discriminative powers. The idea of Universal Life, composed of individual atomic lives, is one of the oldest teachings of esoteric philosophy” (*Lucifer*, 6 April 1890, p. 90).

“Every star is an independent planet, which, like our earth, has a soul of its own, every atom of matter being impregnated with the divine influx of the soul of the world. It breathes and lives; it feels and suffers as well as enjoys life in its way” (*Isis Unveiled*, 1: xxi).

After meeting with Rudolph Steiner again in 1920, Hilma af Klint joined the Anthroposophical society and became immersed in the literature. These teachings influenced her to give up geometric abstraction and she started to paint predominantly formless watercolours. These later works focused on showing the unconscious life of plants in soft, flowing watercolours, not unlike the works of Rothko and other color field painters.

Hilma af Klint's last known paintings were completed in 1932. They were visionary maps foretelling the London blitz and the naval battle in the Mediterranean during World War II. On October 9, 1944, she wrote her last journal entry which seems to tell us that her work on earth was done, but would carry on elsewhere: "You have mystery service ahead, and will soon enough realize what is expected of you" (*Hilma af Klint: A Pioneer of Abstraction*, p. 279)

The next exhibition of Hilma af Klint's work is being held at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, (Copenhagen) from March 7 to July 6, 2014.

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# Miscellany and Trivia

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# Anecdote about monks (1)



A monk was driving in India when suddenly a dog crosses the road. The car hit and killed the dog. The monk looked around and seeing a temple went to knock on the door. A monk opened the door. The first monk said: "I'm terribly sorry, but my karma ran over your dogma."

# Anecdote about monks (2)



Three monks decided to practice meditation together. They sat by the side of a lake and closed their eyes in concentration. Then suddenly, the first one stood up and said, "I forgot my mat." He stepped miraculously onto the water in front of him and walked across the lake to their hut on the other side.

When he returned, the second monk stood up and said, "I forgot to put my other underwear to dry." He too walked calmly across the water and returned the same way. The third monk watched the first two carefully in what he decided must be the test of his own abilities. "Is your learning so superior to mine? I too can match any feat you two can perform," he declared loudly and rushed to the water's edge to walk across it. He promptly fell into the deep water.

Undeterred, the yogi climbed out of the water and tried again, only to sink into the water. Yet again he climbed out and yet again he tried, each time sinking into the water. This went on for some time as the other two monks watched.

After a while, the second monk turned to the first and said, "Do you think we should tell him where the stones are?"

# Anecdote about monks (3)



Four monks were meditating in a monastery. All of a sudden the prayer flag on the roof started flapping.

The younger monk came out of his meditation and said: "Flag is flapping"

A more experienced monk said: "Wind is flapping"

A third monk who had been there for more than 20 years said: "Mind is flapping."

The fourth monk who was the eldest said, visibly annoyed: "Mouths are flapping!"

# Anecdote about monks (4)



A Western Buddhist woman was in India, studying with her teacher, a Buddhist monk. She was riding with another woman friend in a rickshaw-like carriage, when they were attacked by a man on the street. In the end, the attacker only succeeded in frightening the women, but the Buddhist woman was quite upset by the event and told her teacher so. She asked him what she should have done – what would have been the appropriate, Buddhist response.

The teacher said very simply, "You should have very mindfully and with great compassion whacked the attacker over the head with your umbrella."

# Anecdote about monks (5)



The psychiatrist asks the Zen Master, "How do you deal with neurotics?"

The Zen Master replies, "I get them to the point where they can't ask any more questions".

# The Society

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# Editorial

## From the Bottom Up

by Jan Nicolaas Kind

The Theosophical Society, Adyar, is going through an important transitional period. After the passing of Radha Burnier, for 33 years its international president last October, a successor needs to be chosen. With her death, an era came to an end. International presidents like Henry Olcott, Annie



*From the Bottom Up*

Besant, and more recently C. Jinerajadasa or N. Sri Ram will not appear again. The twenty-first century typically requires another type of leadership.

The election process which started earlier this year so far has been quiet and no skirmishes have taken place. Some well-meaning Adyar members have difficulties accepting the fact that both candidates — C. V. K. Maithreya and Tom Boyd — chose not to respond to various questionnaires they were presented with, and have not extensively appeared on the Internet, presenting their ideas and vision for the future.

It is understandable that members would like to know more about what the future holds in store for the TS Adyar and what qualifications are needed for leading the largest of the Theosophical organizations.

Harsh criticisms related to the so-called silence come primarily from those who consider the many who have dedicated their entire lives to the Work to be a bunch of dummies, spending their time plotting, conspiring, lying, manipulating, and disenfranchising while digging themselves into trenches waiting for events to unfold and disrespecting the membership. Most of those critiques come from biased sources, from individuals who have already made it clear that they either do not support one of the two candidates, or have no trust whatsoever in the organization's officers, or find that the TS Adyar has painfully outlived itself.

One could argue that being silent is not the most elegant stance during an election and that transparency ought to be the key word for all time to come. On the other hand, however, proper transitions take long to materialize; abrupt changes never work out; therefore patience needs to be exercised. Both candidates clearly need much time to think, considering what women and men will be the best members on the team of co-workers, rearranging their private lives to participate in future international activities. For a long time there was no transparency at all, decision taking was fully concentrated on the international president. This now will have to change, and it will, but it'll take time.

Instead of bombarding the candidates with questions or criticisms because of their relative silence, members and those who believe that their society is a worthy organization could ask themselves how they, *themselves*, can contribute and how they can help spreading the teachings presented to us



by H.P.B. and the Masters. So the question arises: "What have you done for Theosophy today?"

This is my view: The period preceding the 2014 election most probably won't receive an award in a beauty contest. However, this is the best that can be done considering the circumstances. If transparency is to work and if indeed openness and clarity about future plans are to be conveyed, one needs a clean environment and trustworthy channels to articulate them. With all respect, I sincerely believe that the channels screaming the loudest for transparency aren't the ones that can be considered to be most transparent and helpful.

It is of the utmost importance that members of the TS Adyar come to comprehend that all matters need to be realized from the bottom up and not from the top down. Each one of us is a "center" and each one of us is able to contribute, by living our lives according to what we have learned, thereby setting a good example.

In that simple way lies the successful future of the TS Adyar.



*Mentor*

# The Old Man:

## Tim Boyd Speaks about His Friend and Mentor

by James LeFevour – USA

To hear Tim Boyd tell it, it just sounds like stories from his youth, but at the age of nineteen, he met and befriended a profound person in Chicago who would become his teacher for decades. Theosophy idealizes people like the person Tim describes, people who give everything they have to the cause of bettering the world and benefiting the people in it, yet we seldom hear their names. You will not find Bill Lawrence's story written in Theosophical archives, yet he was a true Theosophist by any definition.



*Bill Lawrence*

Tim describes Bill as a man with immense spiritual presence, but also as a charming individual with welcoming charisma. When asked about when they first met, Tim describes a time when he was a student on vacation from Brown University. His cousin, Barrett, was the one who first introduced Tim and “the Old Man” which is how Bill Lawrence's students affectionately referred to him. Tim describes sitting with his cousin and several other young

people in Chicago as they waited in Lawrence's house just to see him.

"I was waiting to see who this guy was, because he had been built up as 'the Old Man.' I thought it was going to be somebody intensely grey, one of those stereotypical wise-man types, but this guy was actually quite dapper. He was an old man to us, but at that time he would have been only 54 years old. Old guy!

"When he came down, he was quite charismatic. He talked about various things, and it was one of those situations in which the person you sit down with is the focus of the conversation. I think there were five or six of us there, because a couple of people studied with him regularly, but it was the Old Man's show. He hit on a bunch of different subjects. He said something about the use of recreational drugs and what people were using at that time, and I had an opinion about that so I spoke up about my opinion. Then he looked at me, and you know you always hear about piercing eyes, but he really had piercing eyes. He looked at me, and he just kind of smiled."

In that meeting, a lifetime student-teacher bond was made. Even though Tim says he didn't know it immediately, apparently Bill Lawrence knew it. Tim and his cousin spent a few hours talking Theosophy with the Old Man before they got up to leave. Tim recalls quite well the significance of that parting:

"We were getting ready to go and he walked us to the door. I said the standard farewell: 'Bye, thanks. It's been nice seeing you.' Then he looked at me and he said, 'I'll see you soon, son,' which struck me as a little odd. When he told me that, I said, 'Probably not. You probably won't see me too soon, because I'm leaving very early in the morning.' It was partly my concept of fact and partly a little nineteen-year-old arrogance or hubris that popped up.' He didn't change though; he just looked at me the same way with a bit of a smile. He said 'I'll see you soon, son.' And we walked out."

Tim explains that even though this was the first time for him to sit and talk in the Old Man's house, it was a common occurrence for Bill Lawrence to speak with the youth in the neighborhood. In fact, several years earlier, Bill Lawrence purchased a large house in one of the worst neighborhoods of Chicago, and then he invited the local youth gang to come and meet at his house.

“Chicago at that time was really embroiled in a lot of gang violence. You could say parts of the city are still that way now, but back then it was probably even worse because you had whole neighborhoods that were controlled by teenagers with guns. They really were quite organized. The house that the Old Man lived in was right where three of these major gang turfs met. He started to have meetings at his home, not just for one individual gang, but for all of them together. These were guys who, if they saw each other on the street outside the old man’s house, would have been in fights, there would have been shots, there would have been something going on. And yet they would all come to his house, and they would meet, and he would talk to them.

“Basically the Old Man talked to the gang members just about Theosophy, though not in any terms that anybody at the Theosophical Society would use. He would talk to them about karma, and he would use the example of an apple seed and an apple. He would say, ‘If you plant an apple seed, what do you get? You get an apple tree and then you get an abundance of apple fruit. You guys around here are planting seeds of violence, pain, and injury. What do you think you are getting out of that?’ And they started to kind of get it.

“Eventually the police noticed that, for whatever reason, things in the hottest spot of the city were dying down. I met a lot of those guys. A lot of them ended up being quite good friends of mine and still are to this day. They were just natural-born leaders. As teenagers they headed up two, three, or four hundred member gangs, and all those gang members looked to them for marching orders. They were old souls, for whatever reason, incarnated into a situation with no direction. But when they met Bill, a lot of them got a direction and decided that, instead of being like the baddest guy on the block, they were going to be more like ambassadors of peace. That was a bigger challenge. So they said, ‘We’re going to cool it down around here,’ and a lot of them just started to go out and spread that as the message. As a result, it cooled down.”

It is obvious that Bill Lawrence was no normal man. That is not just because he curbed the gang violence in Chicago or even because he took those responsible and molded them into altruistic members of the community. The reason Bill was so unique is that he was doing this all intentionally, following a plan. He was guided to purchase the house and to change that

community as he did, just as he was guided in many other ways since he had embraced life as an occultist.

Bill Lawrence's life had not been an easy one. Being born with gifts did not make it easy for him to grow up, especially in some closed-minded communities. And for a good part of his young life he tried hard to make an identity for himself that was one of his choosing, and not one that was just assigned to him. Tim Boyd delves into some of Lawrence's early experiences growing up:

"As I came to understand it, he grew up in central Illinois in a little town called Georgetown, next to Danville. His father was a coal miner named John Lawrence, who was half British and half Native American; his mother was Leona, and she was half Native American and half African-American. His father looked like he was European, and his mother really looked like she was Black. When you put these two together you got Bill Lawrence, but to look at him he could have been Italian or Egyptian or black Irish; he could have been a lot of different things, he could have been Native American. Black is not what you would have thought, but that was how he identified.

"Bill Lawrence was a peculiar child because apparently he was one of those kids who are born clairvoyant. I remember hearing Dora Kunz talk about how some children are born with a flap of skin that comes down over the face like a veil, typically they remove this, but she said there was this old wives tale that this is a sign that they have second sight. Dora was born with this cowl, and Bill Lawrence was also born with a cowl. His older sister lived with us for a while; her name was Velma, but we called her 'Sis.' She described all the trouble he used to get into because of his clairvoyance. Velma was also quite clairvoyant, but nothing like Bill. In his time, kids were supposed to be seen and not heard. When Bill was a child, various people would come into the house, and he would describe things about them that weren't supposed to be known. He would just say it, and then they'd always punish him. Back then, as punishment, you would get a beating; and he got more beatings than his share.

"Velma and Bill once talked about how one time a woman came in whom none of them liked, and he said, 'Oh, I see that she's going to get her breast caught in a wringer.' Back then they used hand-cranked wringers to help dry washed clothes. Sure enough, the talk among the women later was

about how Molly had been drying clothes, and she was bent over, and her breast got caught in this wringer, and it was a painful experience.

“Then they described a time when someone came in and he said, ‘Oh, she’s going to die. There’s black around her. She’s going to die.’ They said to young Bill, ‘Shut up! You can’t talk!’ Sure enough though, the woman did die. He would see all these things. He got some images of himself from past lives, one of which was like some sort of preacher. Then he would get all the kids together and he would start preaching to them. When he was preaching, he said that, because he thought he had long coattails on, he’d be hitting his hand against these coattails while he preached. And all the kids would listen to Bill spinning these new stories and preaching to them.

“One day Bill told his father, ‘You know, I’m not from here. I’m from Tibet.’ In the early part of the twentieth century in central Illinois, nobody knew what Tibet was. He said that he caused so much trouble in his family that his father really started to study, and became quite a deep occultist from having to study just to try and understand this child.

Ever since he was born, Bill Lawrence had been naturally gifted, though it wasn’t until the day he chose to fully embrace his capabilities and bring them under his control for the betterment of all beings that he began to grow spiritually as fully as he did. And even after that, only in discovering Theosophy, did Bill find a body of teachings that spoke to the forces that had been moving him his entire life. As Tim Boyd explains of his teacher, when Bill Lawrence first came to the Theosophical Society in Wheaton, he felt as if he had finally come home.

In a letter Bill Lawrence wrote to Tim shortly after their first meeting, he stated in the first few lines: “When the student is ready, the teacher is never found wanting.” Lawrence proceeded in his letter to invite a teen-aged Tim Boyd to come and stay at the house and learn what he had to teach him for a three month break from college. Boyd, a young man who had never even heard the word meditation before meeting Lawrence, immediately packed his bags. His mind was set.

The intention of the Old Man was to cram three years of spiritual training into three months, which was fine news at the time for the eager and astute Tim Boyd. What ended up happening is, however, even more profound.

Tim Boyd never went back to Brown University. In his own words, he says, "That was where I would spend the next twenty to thirty years of my life."

As many know, those experiences led Tim Boyd to become the national president of the Theosophical Society in America as well as to be nominated for the international presidency. Boyd currently serves on the same campus that Bill Lawrence found so captivating when he first learned of the Theosophical Society.

What is also particularly of interest to many who know Tim well, and have read the description he gives of his mentor, Bill Lawrence, is the striking similarities of the qualities they both share. There are certainly physical qualities such as the piercing eyes, but there is also a nature of presence that is appropriately similar. Many have commented that Tim Boyd carries about him a warm yet intense atmosphere. Whether in a crowd or in a personal audience alone with him, a welcoming and sincere energy permeates those who are privy to it. The reason for bringing up that fact here is that it testifies to the strength of a teacher-student relationship, and to the Theosophical belief that those in these positions of influence do not get there without earlier lifetimes leading up to it.

Tim Boyd has done a few articles and lectures on the Old Man, but surely there is room for more. The reason Theosophical Societies celebrate such worthy Theosophists and past leaders is both to remind others of the Theosophical mission and the means by which it is accomplished in so many different cultures and walks of life. Bill Lawrence is exceptional. How fortunate we all are to learn from his great example.



# The Future of the Theosophical Tradition

by Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu – France



[The author is Chairperson of the European Federation and General Secretary of the French Section of the Theosophical Society. She has a deep concern for Theosophy and its future].

Every true spiritual teaching comprises three aspects: theory, which expounds its fundamental verities; practice, which experiments with these verities; and the testimony of the genuineness of the experimentation by those who practice.

Generally, for most of the established and organized religions, theory has become dogma while practice has lost its experimental value. As to the testimony of the genuineness of the experience, this aspect is almost non-existent, replaced long ago by blind faith under the argument of mystery. This has a common and obvious reason: all these religions have lost the vivifying contact with their founder.

The third and last aspect, which is the testimony of genuineness by those who practice the spiritual life, is bound to give proof that the teaching is true – that is, non-eroded by time and non-polluted by the action of human thought. In addition, it has to prove that the experience of the teaching leads those who practice towards an ever-greater understanding that will cancel or refute the wrong assertions brought into the doctrine. This experience constitutes the distinctive mark of the theosophical doctrine. How can we link Theosophy and the Theosophical Society to the three aspects mentioned?

Firstly, what is Theosophy? In the famous message called The Mahā Chohan's Letter [1: 9] it is said in substance that religion and philosophy, if true, must offer an answer to all human problems. These problems have not found any satisfactory answer in the organized religions so far practiced. The current moral state of humanity is evidence that the significance of a true spiritual teaching has not been understood by most people.

Why is it that Theosophy, which is meant to be the source of solutions, has not provided at first sight the expected answers to benefit ailing humanity? The Theosophical doctrine does not contain any dogma, or any literature having the imprimatur seal. Also, it does not have any established authority. At first glance it looks like a disassembled body. This causes Theosophy to be accused of syncretism. Nevertheless, when the inner vision of a student has grown and widened through study and reflection, concepts can be better constructed into a harmonious theory which satisfies reason.

Yet, with all the knowledge acquired, nobody can define Theosophy. And that is perhaps for the better, because to define is to confine, whilst Theosophy, which deals with the Divine Wisdom, is limitless. How then can one experiment with a theory that cannot be defined?

Although it cannot be defined, the Theosophical doctrine is based on a few fundamental verities. To proclaim the One-Life is to affirm one of those verities. To deny separateness is to assert the same truth. To form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood without distinction of race, caste, sex, color, or creed, constitutes the experience of this truth that is the One-Life. This truth remains theoretical as long as the experience of forming a nucleus of Brotherhood is not completed by the students.

How then to evaluate the degree of success or failure of the experience in order to testify to the genuineness of the doctrine? The testimony can be lived at least at two levels: the collective one, concerning the Theosophical Society as a group of individuals, and the individual level, concerning each of its members. Though it is difficult to judge the collective level, since this necessitates a global vision of its actual state on the subtle planes, one can say that on the visible plane the theosophical ideas have been well disseminated for more than a century. They have given birth to a multitude of movements, some of which claim their affiliation to the TS, whilst others

deliberately ignore their origin. The Theosophical Society is no different from its members; each one of whom by their understanding and actions contributes undoubtedly to the collective spiritual level of the Society as well as its impact in the world.

We all know that the Theosophical Society was founded in the 19th century to oppose materialism and egoism. After more than one hundred years of existence and activity, it seems that its task and role are needed more than ever. The human society with more powerful appealing forms and effective organization often misuses technological progress for the intensive exploitation of human desires and fears. Unrestrained materialism, based on generalized greed, in covenant with religious dogmatism fed by ignorance and mental laziness, seems to hold the monopoly of dictating the behavior of many human beings.

The experiment of Theosophical action bears consideration. We may ask, who will hear better the voice of reason combined with the concern for the spiritual well-being of fellow human beings, but the members of the Theosophical Society? The latter, meant to be the cornerstone of future religions [1: 3], has to provide society with individuals who are capable of resisting materialism's new forms of attack and of helping their fellows to do the same. To learn to relinquish temptations – constantly fed by organized malice, to learn to get rid of all this amalgam of so-called religions, managed by a class of salaried priests, and to denounce the pseudo-mystic fair marketed by cheap gurus – means to prevent the evil-minded from poisoning the atmosphere of subtle regions of existence. In that way, the outpost of the Army of Light can be formed. Only those who have good will and who aspire towards that which is lofty can be enrolled.

The sharing of ideas which are, after all, different facets of the insight of the doctrine, should not become a contest of eloquence where the winner affirms his superiority as an undisputed and incontestable authority. This sharing is meant on the contrary to lead students of Theosophy towards a level of consciousness where awareness is *de facto*. Naturally, this is only possible after serious study and with an open mind. Moreover, the student would keep a distance from book learning which produces brains stuffed with undigested concepts which sooner or later, become mechanically repeated formulas.

However, study and reflection lead the student to self-enquiry. The student comes to the state of knowing what and when he knows, as well as what and when he does not know. In other words, while knowing, one is aware of what remains to be learned. The mind thus remains open, making possible the breaking-through of new insights that will create new pathways in the brain. These connections act as channels for new ideas and understanding. It seems it is the only effective way to prevent condescension and bigotry.

It is easy to see that dogmatism acts as a scourge on established religions. More courage is needed to be aware that this phenomenon can also strike the Theosophical movement. The fundamentalists who refer solely to *The Secret Doctrine* and to the writings of Madame Blavatsky, as well as the unreasonably passionate admirers of Krishnamurti could be the Pharisees of this century, unless they undergo a complete self-transformation.

As history often repeats itself, the Theosophical Society has a duty to avoid the death-trap of dogmatism because “the crest wave of intellectual advancement must be taken hold of and guided into Spirituality.” [2: 99] The mind can therefore be revolutionized so that it can reach the inconceivable heights of the Spirit. Thus it contributes to the “fane of imperishable rocks” mentioned in one of the Mahatma Letters:

For countless generations hath the adept builded a fane of imperishable rocks, a giant's Tower of Infinite Thought, wherein the Titan dwelt, and will yet, if need be, dwell alone, emerging from it but at the end of every cycle, to invite the elect of mankind to co-operate with him and help in his turn enlighten superstitious man. [3: 51]

Today superstition is still the root-scurge from which originate many others such as obscurantism, cruelty and indifference, for example. The need to eat meat, the belief in vicarious atonement, the conviction, conscious or unconscious, of being separate from others, are some of the consequences of superstition manifested at different levels. To help humanity to free itself from superstition at every level is still one of the main tasks of the Theosophical Society. Moreover, it seems that this task is endless.

Humanity, being a collective entity, renews itself constantly by using new forms from the infinite reservoir of nature; the animal souls that reach maturity in their individualization are likely to take human forms soon. The

doors between different realms of nature, which were closed and normally should remain closed for a long period of time, are in danger of being broken. This is due to the pressure of irresponsible actions of some scientists who constantly show their disdain for Nature by gambling with Her Laws as apprentice sorcerers, and to the rampant greed of those who unscrupulously inflict on animals unnatural and shameful treatments.

Just think about all the genetic engineering and poisoned food given to defenseless animals with the aim to increase profit. Much has been said about the consequences of those treatments upon the health of people who eat these products and corpses of animals slaughtered in pain and suffering. Little is said about, and few are concerned with, the much more serious occult consequence – the fracture of the door between different kingdoms in Nature.

Each member of the Theosophical Society, to the extent he or she is concerned with true occultism, could try to understand the great problems of humanity in the light of this science and solve them with the best of his or her understanding. To this effect, it is important to discriminate between the science of occultism and the occult arts, and all the fuss of cheap esotericism which is flourishing in many places. Each one of us could learn to bring a bit of light to the world of darkness. And in doing so, we have to be aware not to be moralizing towards our fellow human beings and avoid making them feel guilty. The Theosophical Society was founded on the universal basis of the One-Life by the constant endeavor of successive generations of altruistic workers with the benediction of our Elder Brothers. It is to be avoided to become, now or later, an ivory tower used as a privileged place of debate about somewhat metaphysical topics by a self-styled elect indulging in mutual congratulations whilst sipping the writings of the founders and basking in the secure sun of eternal life.

It is clear that any understanding of Theosophical teaching would necessarily be embodied in unselfish service of all that lives. This service – beyond the benefit of visible well-being and good common sense – should be anchored in goodness or universal love that is in fact the very foundation of true brotherhood. If it is delightful to see the innocent smile of a young child whose mind is still in the process of formation and not yet spoiled by the sense of ego, it is more touching to observe Universal Love expressing itself amongst co-disciples of Theosophy. More rare than gold, more precious than any

possession on earth, this love, when manifested in terms of infallible solidarity, becomes an invincible armour against any attack of darkness. Since the fault through which darkness might break is embedded in the sense of ego, forming a nucleus of universal brotherhood is no different from surpassing and transcending one's own ego.

Inner growth is the other experiment. To oppose obscurantism and to serve humanity are the two main pillars of our action in the outer world. In parallel, to grow inwardly is the motivation of our inner action. Indeed, this limitless growth will lead the student towards higher doors of Nature and will expand his or her consciousness towards refined regions located beyond the human kingdom. The access to these crystal-clear regions cannot be forced by magic, nor can they be reached by the mere wishes of lukewarm hearts. Rather, it unfolds as an inevitable consequence of the natural growth of that soul which burns with constant ardor for the loftiest ideal.

1This growth can be realized by an active preparation made of self-transformation, which is purification and which sooner or later will amount to the dissolution of the sense of ego. Through self-purification, understanding grows and matures with studies, reflection and meditation.

Studies let students examine fundamental ideas of the Theosophical doctrine. Reflection helps observe one's own behavior, actions and reactions, as well as one's deep motivations. Naturally, this necessitates a certain practice in order to see as far as possible the movements of mood, emotions and thoughts taking place, developing, and finally disappearing into the background of consciousness.

A quiet inner attitude of the mind generates a pre-disposition to attention prior to meditation. Meditation is not only the practice of some techniques by the body or the mind. It is not either the self-suggestive process of imagination, which is merely an expression of thwarted desires, nor is it the mere absence of images, emotions and words resulting from a dull mind. But, in a mind cleansed of all these phenomena emerges a state which is at the same time dynamic and refined; this state is watchfulness.

The testimony is important. These altruistic actions achieved in service of humanity to oppose obscurantism with studies, reflection, as well as self-purification and a meditative disposition of the mind are not sufficient for a

Theosophical foundation.

Theosophical teachings – if they are true – have the characteristic of remaining unscathed by time and thought. A Theosophist can testify to the genuineness of the teaching by giving it the element of irrefutability. History tells us that after his illumination, Gautama the Buddha was asked to give proof of it. As an answer, he touched the earth as a witness, showing by this mudra that his experience of illumination was as irrefutable as the reality of the earth.

This testimony cannot be given either by co-disciples or by institutional hierarchies. Each soul, before acquiring the merit of being directly instructed by the Elder Brothers, is destined to experiment for itself the truths which it has learned, assimilated and lived. Each one is meant to “be a lamp unto oneself,” as advised by the Dhammapada. The guidance comes from the innermost depths of oneself where, unceasingly, aspiration “to that which has neither substance nor existence” [4: 27] burns with a high, clear and steady flame.

Learning to know his lower nature and to master it, the student learns to observe life, the heart of human beings and his own heart as exhorts *Light on the Path*:

Regard earnestly all the life that surrounds you.

Learn to look intelligently into the hearts of men.

Regard most earnestly your own heart.

For through your own heart comes the one light which can illuminate life and make it clear to your eyes. [4: 23–24]

Thus the student Theosophist will be able to perceive the true dimension of life. And observing Nature outward, and his consciousness inward, he can learn from Her the secrets concealed in deeper levels of consciousness and matter. According to *The Mahatma Letters*, the Adepts had explored these levels at the peril of their lives in a remote epoch of universal time. The inner faculties can be developed to the extent of introspective investigation. These faculties help the flowering of intuition and the growth of discernment.

Thus we come to the future of the Theosophical tradition which will rely upon those individuals who consent to lead pure lives based on goodness

and who actively work to get humanity out of obscurantism by co-operating with the Titan, whenever he emerges, “until the foundations of a new continent of thought are so firmly built that no amount of opposition and ignorant malice guided by the Brethren of the Shadow will be found to prevail.” [3: 51]

These individuals who are psychologically independent and who volunteer to submit themselves to the constraints necessary for the spiritual evolution of humanity, will not admit any fixed orthodoxy. They will accept neither any superficial hierarchy nor any uniformity. However, they will constitute an authentic, religious lineage which will lead a secular life, living in the world amongst people without being polluted by worldly preoccupation.

Keeping their feet grounded on earth, but having their heads anchored in space as the everlasting, and their hearts rooted in Universal Love, these individuals will be super-sensitive beings, capable of communicating with different levels of existence and consciousness. For them, spiritual insights will be transmitted from within, directly from the higher principles. They will have learned – in their turn – the capacity to explore matter with the inner instrument in order to verify by direct perception the occult facts announced in the doctrine. They will have learned to unify the love aspect to the will aspect of life. Indeed, they are individuals in flesh who have learned to master the passage bridging life and death, having learned to die consciously.

“Is it a dream?” you may ask. My answer is: No, it is not a dream. Such individuals do exist all over the world, yet the Theosophical Society has the dharma to be their nursery. A handful of souls, spiritually mature, are gathered in every generation in order to serve the Theosophical Society and, through it, humanity. This handful of “voluntary victims” [3: 51] meant to assist the Wiser in their immense task, will constitute the future of the Theosophical tradition. They will form an invincible army to oppose obscure forces until that day when Fraternal Love will seal them into an infallible solidarity.

This is not a dream, and even if it were a dream, who will dare to join and make it a sublime one? It is up to each one of us to answer.



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# Mini interviews

Angels Torra  
Jan Nicolaas Kind  
Manuela Kaulich  
Liliana Katharine Grossman  
Carlos Guerra  
Tim Boyd

Opinions and ideas expressed in the mini-interviews are exclusively of those who are being interviewed. They don't necessarily represent the ideas and opinions of the compilers of Theosophy Forward.

The responses of the interviewees are not edited for content. Some contributors give short answers to the questions while others touch upon the subject more elaborately.

# Angels Torra



*1. What's your name, where are you from and how long have you been a member of the TS?*

My name is Angels Torra, I am from Barcelona, Spain, and I've been a member of the TS since 1972.

*2. Are you active in your Lodge/Section and if so, what do you do?*

I am the General Secretary of the Spanish Section since October 2013.

*3. How did you first learn about Theosophy or come in contact with the Society?*

I was born in a Theosophical family. My father was the Presidential representative for Spain during the long years of dictatorship, when Theosophy was not allowed in Spain.

*4. What does Theosophy mean to you?*

To me, it represents a set of parameters leading to a better understanding of myself and the world.

5. *What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?*

*Light on the Path, The Voice of the Silence*, for their mystical inspiration; the Bhagavad Gita; *The Secret Doctrine*, and so many others ... my interest cannot be reduced to one single book.

6. *What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the TS Adyar (as an organization) is facing at the moment?*

Times have changed; it's time to work in a team, since there are no more prominent figures to be leaders. We need to work together to respond to today's necessities.

7. *Is there anything you would wish for the future of the Theosophical Movement?*

When it started, it was the avant-garde of the world thought, way ahead of its time. The initial impulse has taken us to where we are now. We need to activate our search within to find a way to self-transformation, not only of ourselves but for the entire Society in general.

# Jan Nicolaas Kind



*1. What's your name, where are you from and how long have you been a member of the TS?*

My name is Jan Nicolaas Kind, I am originally from Amsterdam in The Netherlands, and I first became a member of the TS–Adyar in November 1994. Later I also became affiliated with the TS–Pasadena and the United Lodge of Theosophists. My good friend, the late Henk Spierenburg always told me that if one cannot beat those Theosophists it's better to join them all. At present I live in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil.

*2. Are you active in your Lodge/Section and if so, what do you do?*

I have held several positions in The Netherlands, Brazil, and India. Now I am not active in any Lodge in particular, but serve as editor-in-chief of the independent Web magazine Theosophy Forward and work for ITC, International Theosophy Conferences Inc., currently as co-host for the 2014 Naarden conference taking care of all publicity matters.

3. *How did your first learn about Theosophy or come in contact with the Society?*

It was in Amsterdam during the famous sixties, then a long-haired hippie, when I first heard about Theosophy from a Jewish violinist with whom I had become acquainted. I was fascinated by his stories about the laws of cause and effect, our place in the universe, the one-life, and his sublime interpretation of what compassion is all about. It took me more than twenty-six years, a lot of soul searching and a few travels around the world actually to become a member.

4. *What does Theosophy mean to you?*

Theosophy is a coherent system of thought. The esoteric doctrine embraces the three pillars of our thinking: science, religion, and philosophy. For me personally Theosophy became the ultimate eye-opener, for which I am forever grateful.

5. *What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?*

This is a very difficult question. Let me just say that I am in particular touched by the writings of William Judge and Robert Crosbie because of their profound simplicity, here I refer to their complete oeuvre. Annie Besant's *In the Outer Court* and especially *Thought Power* are gems; also the works of Gottfried de Purucker such as *Fountain Source of Occultism* and *The Esoteric Tradition* are invaluable. The wonderful essays by Boris de Zirkoff are a joy to go through, and from the typical Adyar authors I enjoy reading I. K. Taimni's books as well as some of C. Jinerajadasa's earlier publications. *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* and all that H.P.B. wrote, especially *The Voice of the Silence* and *The Key to Theosophy*, are all-time study books that I greatly appreciate.

6. *What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the TS is facing at the moment?*

In 2010, I was fortunate enough to get to know Sally and Jim Colbert from Julian in California, who had been working for International Theosophy Conferences (ITC) for many years. Through them I was introduced to this organization. This unique initiative offers a platform on which Theosophists from all the various traditions can meet. In the past, attempts were made to come to a "constitutional" unity, one large Theosophical organization. This

idea, *I must emphasize*, is no longer feasible. All traditions, respectable as they all are, definitely have their own places, relevance, and something distinctive to offer. That, by all means, should continue. When we refer to Theosophical unity in the 21st century, we refer to primarily a spiritual unity. So it is a challenge to bring all those who call themselves Theosophists together in a spirit of compassionate brotherhood, whereby particularly the art of listening is being exercised and mutual respect and understanding are achieved. So, the biggest challenge in my opinion is to further develop that idea. H. P. Blavatsky handed out much when she reintroduced the old wisdom that had long been forgotten; and that is precisely what unites all Theosophists, both those affiliated with the various organizations and also those who operate independently. When all of them gather once or twice a year under the banner of ITC, they can explore ways to ensure keeping Theosophy alive for future generations. ITC folks put it very clearly: “Not back to Blavatsky, but *forward* with Blavatsky.” In many of its publications, ITC refers to the following phrase, which is significant but also simple to understand by those not yet familiar with what this organization stands for: “... further explore the Path that all Theosophical traditions can follow to serve mankind in togetherness, respectfully and constructively, spiritually, and cooperatively untied, *while each tradition remains loyal to what it holds and advocates.*”

*7. Is there anything you would wish for the future of the Theosophical Movement?*

Is there anything to wish for about something that always was and always will be? I believe that the movement will take care of itself, so it all depends how one interprets this question. I wish that all those who feel attracted to the teachings, one way or another, would discover that being a true Theosophist means that one is committed at all times, for better or for worse. Too often some consider the Theosophical Society as their own little and exclusive playground, as if it were a kind of stage in a theatre where they can play their self-imposed roles as dominant figures or even as protectors. When egos are diminished to an absolute minimum, I see quite the opposite: a kind of eagerness is displayed, while hunger for titles, positions, or importance disappears. Some people consider themselves to be the “guardian angels” of Theosophy. How wrong can one be? Theosophy exists, and all we need to do is to serve it as humbly and silently as possible. Titles, so-called prominence,

and positions are part of the material world; and that is where the phantom of spiritual materialism looms. So, again, if there is such a thing as a wish to be shared, I sincerely wish that all who are active in the Theosophical arena, in whatever tradition or independently, realize that there is but one reason why we're here in this incarnation, on this planet, in this round at this level of consciousness and development, and that is to help those who are less fortunate and those who will come *after* us. Doing that requires unconditional commitment.



*Unconditional commitment*



# Manuela Kaulich



*1. What's your name, where are you from and how long have you been a member of the TS?*

My name is Manuela Kaulich. I am German and live in Regensburg near Munich. I am a member of the TS since 1989.

*2. Are you active in your Lodge/Section and if so, what do you do?*

Since 2008 I am the General Secretary of the German TS after one period of being its secretary. In autumn 2008 I founded a new group in Regensburg and still lead it. In these positions I plan the German Summer Schools and the Southern German Meetings every year.

*3. How did your first learn about Theosophy or come in contact with the Society?*

A friend brought me some books and among them I found Beatrice Flemming's *Theosophical World View*. Reading the book I became more and more fascinated and therefore I bought the books of Annie Besant and C. W.

Leadbeater of the same series. Then I went looking for the TS in a telephone book of Munich where I lived at that time and found my first Theosophical teacher Eva Diller.

#### *4. What does Theosophy mean to you?*

For me as the Ancient Wisdom Theosophy is that wisdom I get in contact with. And through the Theosophical teachings of H. P. Blavatsky, Annie Besant, C. W. Leadbeater etc. I get in constant touch with that eternal and infinite wisdom. In the Theosophical principles I found a certain guidance which helps me recognize my way and my duties and helps me to take difficult decisions even in my normal daily life.

#### *5. What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?*

Sometimes when I am looking for a certain theme I open the *The Key to Theosophy*. Often it is the first step of my studies on a special subject. And it is a good source for explanations for new Theosophical students. I like sentences like: 'Altruism is an integral part of self-development. But we have to discriminate. ...' It is one of the basic books for me.

#### *6. What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the TS is facing at the moment?*

The election of our new International President is the biggest challenge for me at that moment. The sections need more connections to our headquarters in Adyar and among one another. We need new impulses, structures, a new agility with more young people. There are so many esoteric movements, serious and dangerous ones, but the Theosophical Society, the outer government of Theosophy, the mother of all of them; it seems like its sleeping. The Dalai Lama is very famous and travelling all over the world but nobody is speaking about Theosophy! Why is that? There should be no competition or comparison but I think people should speak about his and the Theosophical teachings at least in the same breath.

So we need a new President with charisma, openness but also devoutness firmly based on Theosophy who presents Theosophy to every single person who is interested.

#### *7. Is there anything you would wish for the future of the Theosophical Movement?*

As an example of Universal Brotherhood the different societies should still work more together. In the past there was much decomposition. It should become a demonstration of the deepness of Theosophy and its tolerance to show 'unity in diversity' to everybody.



# Liliana Katharine Grossman



*1. What's your name, where are you from and how long have you been a member of the TS?*

Hi! My name is Liliana Katharine Grossman, and I am from Brooklyn, New York. I have been a student of Theosophy since I could make the decision to go to the Children's Discovery Circle at the United Lodge of Theosophists, at the age of three or four.

*2. Are you active in your Lodge/Section and if so, what do you do?*

I am not an active member.

*3. How did your first learn about Theosophy or come in contact with the Society?*

I was born into it. My father was a member.

*4. What does Theosophy mean to you?*

Theosophy is a way of being for me. It is a constant demand to take responsibility for the knowledge that has been imparted to me through the teachings. For me at the core of how I practice Theosophy is the heart doctrine, which is the practical application in daily life. It is crucial to cultivate compassion in oneself so to give to others what we would want done upon oneself, to all those one meets, as well as to oneself. One can not truly be compassionate towards others, if one isn't compassionate towards oneself. So for me Theosophy is a practice, a discipline of self-cultivation, taking full responsibility for my actions, thoughts, feelings, speech, and in that process of "purification" becoming ever more Loving.

*5. What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?*

My favourite Theosophical book is *Concentration and Meditation* by Christmas Humphreys. It is a constant guide. It is a part of my "tool kit". I love it because it has deep wisdom of the Ancient Wisdom Traditions, and I can use the practices/meditations in my daily disciplines. It gives you the tools one needs for our evolution as Beings. In using what this book offers regularly I have the power to more adeptly discipline myself in a productive and sensitive way. Aiding me to focus in greater intensity on the task at hand, working towards a one-pointedness, I can manifest my dreams, my Destiny.

*6. What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the TS Adyar is facing at the moment?*

There is too great a focus on learning the texts, and not enough taking action. We as a Theosophical Entity need to do the "Yoga" of the teachings we believe in. There must be a stronger practice that is a part of how we learn, of how we are students. This is why I believe we aren't in a Renaissance, and there isn't much of an influx of new joiners, young theosophists, and why some old Theosophists have left their lodge, or other organized house of practice. More youth would be interested if we paid more attention to the times, and had a section of our institution dedicated to the "Great Practices".

*7. Is there anything you would wish for the future of the Theosophical Movement?*

A future that I would love to see manifest for the Theosophical Movement is a great growth, a transformation, a Renaissance. A face that is in

the light of the general public, where it is being talked about, discussed, and is influencing the raising of the collective consciousness is a major way. To see each house of Theosophy, each lodge, bustling with people excited about being there, and doing the great work H. P. Blavatsky was beckoning us to step up to, wielding our will for the good of humanity, for the evolution of our race.



# Carlos Guerra



*1. What's your name, where are you from and how long have you been a member of the TS?*

My name is Carlos Guerra. I am from Portugal. I am a member of the Theosophical Society since 1974.

*2. Are you active in your Lodge/Section and if so, what do you do?*

At the moment (2014) I am the General Secretary of TS in Portugal.

*3. How did your first learn about Theosophy or come in contact with the Society?*

I came in contact with the Theosophical Society when I was 17/18 years old. At that time, I was a student of a very well-known teacher of Philosophy (Maria Beatriz Serpa Branco), an active member of the TS in Portugal. She was an exceptional human being, and is a vivid reference, a rare example of, what living Theosophy means.

*4. What does Theosophy mean to you?*

Theosophy means a permanent challenge, a way of questioning, an integrated vision of everything around us, a way of living in the dynamical movement of *self-knowing*. Theosophy means to avoid anchoring on static and moralising ideas, to deconstruct barriers based on dogmas. The open clues for a flexible research given by Theosophy are points of departure and not of arrival.

*5. What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?*

Indeed I have not a favourite Theosophical book or author. It would be reductive to name one Theosophical book or author. To refer just a book or just an author would imply to give them a major importance. What really matters is the Theosophical teaching in itself. The right attitude of mind will give the capacity to find the essence of the teaching in any real Theosophical book by any real Theosophical author.

*6. What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the TS is facing at the moment?*

It is to question/reflect, not only theoretically, about tradition as the main driving force of an organization. It is also the problem of real decentralization, which means a radical change in the backward-structure of the organization. A philanthropic organization does not need “leaders” but real organizers. Too much politics in such an organization will turn it into an ordinary organization with some members anxiously looking for power, for self-interests, feeling that they are experts on this or on that, trying to show that they have in one way or another reached some kind of illumination/initiation. The TS Adyar does not need a spectacular number of members, as in some moments of its history, but real and humble seekers without any sense of superiority.

*7. Is there anything you would wish for the future of the Theosophical Movement?*

To wish something for the future of the Theosophical Movement is a mere exercise of imagination. It is an urgent need to look at the conditions of the Theosophical Movement *now*. Indeed we may say that the Theosophical Movement is an unending and dynamic movement, imperceptibly touching everywhere, as a natural movement. The future of the Theosophical Movement depends on the right answer to the following question: at the



moment the TS Adyar and each of its members are promoting or obstructing the natural flow of the Theosophical Movement?



*The Tree of Love by Joma Sipe*

# Tim Boyd



(This interview was first published in October 2011)

*1. What's your name, where are you from and how long have you been a member of the TS?*

Tim Boyd. I joined the TSA in 1974.

*2. Are you active in your Lodge/Section and if so, what do you do?*

Since May I serve as President of the American Section (USA).

*3. How did your first learn about Theosophy or come in contact with the Society?*

My first exposure to Theosophy was as a late teenager. It came through an active, but unorthodox, TS member. In meeting him it was clear that whatever it was that gave such vibrancy and power to his life and words, I wanted. I became convinced that Theosophy, as a living and applied wisdom, was that something.

*4. What does Theosophy mean to you?*

While it certainly is a body of teachings that can be written and spoken about, for me Theosophy is an experience – an encounter with truth.

*5. What is your favourite Theosophical book and why?*

One of the early books I read was by Annie Besant, *In the Outer Court*. I like it so much for a couple of reasons: it is short and can fit in your pocket; it is also a profound description of progressive unfoldment from someone who has clearly lived what she describes. It is a good book for new and old students alike.

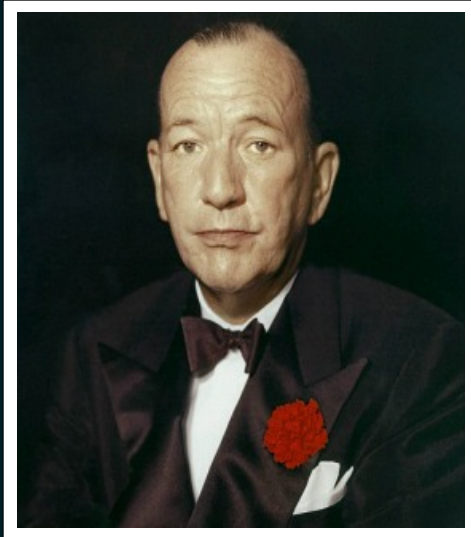
*6. What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the TS Adyar (as an organization) is facing at the moment?*

Fragmentation and irrelevance.

*7. Is there anything you would wish for the future of the Theosophical Movement?*

An infusion of youthful energy; whether in the form of new members of a young age, or older members who embody a flexibility of mind and heart. The ideal would be young and old working together.





“It’s discouraging to think how many people are shocked by honesty and how few by deceit.”

**Noël Coward**

(English playwright, composer, actor and singer.)



“This life is yours. Take the power to choose what you want to do and do it well. Take the power to love what you want in life and love it honestly. Take the power to walk in the forest and be a part of nature. Take the power to control your own life. No one else can do it for you. Take the power to make your life happy.”

**Susan Polis Schutz**

(American poet and producer of greeting cards)

# Good News

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# Good News from Adyar

Adyar, the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society, hosted a significant event on Sunday, January 26, 2014. Ali Ritsema, a General Secretary of the Dutch Section of the Theosophical Society for three terms, gave a PowerPoint presentation on “Karma” at the monthly meeting of the Madras Theosophical Federation. It was a well-structured, cogent one-hour presentation with frequent interaction by the audience. A local newspaper, the *Hindu*, carried a brief announcement of the Program: (<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-downtown/talk-on-karma-at-theosophical-society/article5618483.ece>).

The meeting was preceded by a serving of Indian ghee sweets (made with clarified butter), bonda (a south Indian sweet or spicy snack), and tea. The venue was the historic Blavatsky Bungalow. The ambience and the weather were perfect, perhaps bestowed by some good karma and grace.



*After the Indian sweets and tea into the Blavatsky Bungalow.*

Ali mainly drew from Buddhist teachings, Blavatsky's books *The Key to Theosophy* and *The Secret Doctrine*, as well as *The Mahatma Letters* and other classic books. Ali's presentation visibly inspired everyone in the audience. Her slides were elegantly made with illustrations pleasing to the eyes and the text in attractive colors.

S. Ramu, the president of the Madras Theosophical Federation, introduced Ali to a record crowd of about 100 people. In his concluding remarks, Ramu quoted J. Krishnamurti as having said that we do not take the laws of karma seriously because, if we did, our conduct would be vastly different from what it actually is. He expressed his hope that Ali's message would inspire a transformation in the lives of all those who attended the program.



*Ali Ritsema, well versed, convincing and always inspiring*

When the meeting ended, many of the participants surrounded Ali with further questions and gave her their e-mail addresses, as she generously agreed to send them an electronic file with her slides. Mr. S. K. Srinivasan, Secretary of the Madras Theosophical federation proposed a vote of thanks.

Photos by courtesy of Richard Dvořák.



# Good News from ITC



The meeting many have been waiting for!

From August 15–18, 2014, all roads lead to the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden, The Netherlands, a wonderfully located spiritual retreat center fostering brotherhood and peace.

On this peaceful estate, International Theosophy Conferences Inc. will host a historic meeting and invites participation by Theosophists from all over the world, belonging to all organizations, but also independent Theosophists and sympathizers who are actively involved in studying or promoting Theosophy.

The theme will be **“Theosophy, Unity and Helping the World ... Where do we go from here?”**

We are glad to announce that the program is reaching completion. This will be a typical working conference: short introductions followed by workshops. In order to realize the objectives for this working conference, all those who take part, whether they are scheduled as speakers, facilitators, assistants, or participants, are equally important. All have a voice.

The conference will follow an interactive and holistic approach, emphasizing dialogues, workshops, and sharing. The theme will focus on our goals and roles as students of Theosophy in the various organizations.

Results of the workshops will be presented in plenary feedback sessions, as input for the end product of the gathering: “The ITC 2014, Naarden Declaration.” Furthermore, the core of the ITC program in Naarden will consist of three parts: Religion, Philosophy, and Science. English will be the language spoken.

The conference opens on the afternoon of Friday, August 15, with a keynote talk, setting the tone with the Mâha Chohan’s letter as the guideline for this discourse.

The Naarden conference will further explore the path that all Theosophical organizations can follow to serve mankind in togetherness, respectfully and constructively, spiritually and cooperatively united, while each organization remains loyal to what it holds and advocates.

Objectives for this conference:

1. To ensure we keep Theosophy alive for future generations, i.e., not back to Blavatsky, but *forward* with Blavatsky.
2. To bring together representatives of Theosophical organizations and students of Theosophy who are committed to spread Theosophy as presented by H.P.B and the Masters.
3. To intensify ties by fostering meaningful intercommunication among all Theosophical organizations as well as independent Theosophists.
4. To exchange ideas and best practices on how to present Theosophy in an accessible and inspiring way.

It is highly recommended that you register and book your accommodation early to avoid disappointment. It was possible to make an attractive arrangement with a first class hotel at less than a 10-minutes drive from the location. A *free* shuttle service to and from the grounds will be provided.

Go to our website and fill out the registration form: <http://www.theosconf.org/>

This is a grand and unique opportunity to meet Theosophists from different backgrounds, in order to come to know them, to socialize and mingle, exchange ideas, to initiate new initiatives and last but not least also to have some fun. H.P.B.'s invaluable work is ultimately what brings all Theosophists together.

International Theosophy Conferences Inc. emphasizes that all Theosophical organizations are branches of one Theosophical tree, offering a key to a Theosophical future whereby the various representatives show respect and compassion for each other, thus forming a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood.

# Good news from International Theosophy Magazine

From the editors of this magazine we received the following message:

To all Theosophists wanting shared interest: International Theosophy Magazine, International Theosophy Conferences Inc.'s (ITC) periodical, wants to be a portal for those who would like to communicate with other Theosophists with shared interest.

The following groups are being formed:

- Science
- Health
- Psychiatry/Psychology
- Education
- Mysticism
- Art
- Technology
- Other

Let the editors know what group you would like to be a part of and read what others are doing in the field, or learn about research centers. You could also indicate if you are interested to become a group organizer.

International Theosophy Magazine will give focus to and draw from all Theosophical traditions.

Write to:

James Colbert: [jim@jim2sal.com](mailto:jim@jim2sal.com)

Helena Kerekhazi: [helenaeeqbio@optonline.net](mailto:helenaeeqbio@optonline.net)

January,  
2014

International Theosophy  
Magazine

Meditation  
Masters



*REFLECTIONS ON THE NEW YORK CONFERENCE;  
INFORMATION ABOUT THE UPCOMING NAARDEN CONFERENCE;  
DAILI LAMA AND JUDGE;  
PLUS THE MASTERS.*

# Good News from Kenya

Why did Usha Shah, Convenor of the TOS work in Kenya, turn up at the International TOS Conference in the USA in July with purple toe nails?



As we all know, there are many ways of serving in this world. One of the easiest ever for Usha Shah was to serve as a guinea pig at the vocational skills training days she organized in late June for ladies in Nairobi. Manicure, pedicure and hairdressing were scheduled and Usha went in feet first! Enjoy reading her lively report.

Early on 25th June, twelve very eager-to-learn ladies arrived at the Theosophical Society premises to learn all about manicure and pedicure procedures. It was cold outside and the ladies were welcomed with biscuits and cups of curried tea – meaning with spices, milk and sugar all boiled together. Once they felt warmed-up and restored, we all trooped up into the teaching hall. We introduced ourselves and talked briefly about how financial independence can help in leading a stress-free life. Having their own money, it was suggested, assures women of dignity, self-respect and assistance with the



material needs of their family. Pedicure, manicure and hairstyling are jobs that can be done in their own home, enabling women to be present for their children.

Fatma then took over. She explained all about nails, cuticles, the need to keep our nails clean – all the necessary things needed for manicure and pedicure. After the theory, we had a lunch break where the ladies intermingled and discussed what they had learnt. Now the practical part began. Fatma demonstrated the exact procedure and the 'guinea pig' was Manjuber who throughout the three sessions helped to cater – along with Kiyoo.



The procedure was cutting and shaping finger nails, soaking, softening and washing the nails, again filing, smoothing and cleaning followed by a massage and finally applying the nail polish. Manjuber's nails looked lovely with the red nail polish! The ladies then began practising on one another and as we had an odd number, Kiyoo received a manicure – the first in his life

for sure! Everyone had lots of fun with 'before and after' nails under the watchful eyes of teacher Fatma. After having tea we dispersed at around 4 p.m. with really ravishing nails!

The pedicure day was also led by Fatma and it was full of laughter as by now the ladies had become friendly and more open.

The pedicure session more or less followed the same pattern but involved more work on the soles of the feet. The massage is very restful.

The guinea pig was 'yours truly' who opted to have her toe nails colored PURPLE!

The third session – a repeat of hairdressing – was delayed but it was worth waiting for Agnes, the teacher for this session. She explained to the group about hair, its composition and ways to see different types of hair. She then taught the ladies to braid, use extensions of false hair, and make bans, etc. The guinea pig for braiding was our Shama, our volunteer photographer for the three days, who after the session was given the name 'Wanjiku'! The ladies were given a starter pack containing wigs, extension hair, combs, etc.

We finished at around 4.30 p.m. tired but happy. So ended three days of learning, practicing and maybe a transition to an income generating project from home. Three ladies from the last session on hairdressing have found employment in salons and one has women come to her home for hairstyling!



# Good News from London



## International Conference On Theosophical History – Call For Papers

An international conference on Theosophical history will be held at 50 Gloucester Place, London W1U 8EA on Saturday and Sunday, 20-21 September 2014.

The chair of the conference is Professor James Santucci, editor of the quarterly journal *Theosophical History* - [www.theohistory.org](http://www.theohistory.org).

Any person may submit a paper to the Programme Committee on any aspect of the subject, including the relationship between Theosophy and the arts. Summaries of not more than 200 words should be sent by 8 May 2014 to the associate editor, Mr. Leslie Price at: [leslie.price@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:leslie.price@blueyonder.co.uk)

Conference participants will be responsible for their own travel, meals and accommodation but those presenting papers will be exempt from registration fees.

# Good News from Naarden

The International Theosophical Centre, Naarden – The Netherlands

## ANTHROPOGENESIS: The Evolution of the Human Soul as described in The Stanzas of Dzyan.

Dates: 13-18 June 2014

The speaker, Martin Leiderman, is an Industrial Engineer, resident in Los Angeles, working for an electronic avionics company. He is a long time student of Theosophy as well as a national and international lecturer in Spanish and English. He, with his wife Susan, holds a weekly study group at his home and participates in the Spanish Study Group in Los Angeles. He is also presently a Board Member of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy.



*Martin Leiderman*

The Stanzas of Dzyan are considered to be part of the earliest writings about the Ancient Wisdom and form the foundation of the major work of H. P. Blavatsky - *The Secret Doctrine*. They contain the main ideas to be studied, contemplated and realized in a practical manner by all students of Theosophy.

E-mail: [activities@itc-naarden.org](mailto:activities@itc-naarden.org)

For information call :(+ ) 31 (0)35 5417118

The registration form can be downloaded from [www.itc-naarden.org](http://www.itc-naarden.org)  
and sent to: [activities@itc-naarden.org](mailto:activities@itc-naarden.org)

# Good News from the IATF

Inter-American Theosophical Federation

## Congress

May 28 – Jun 1, 2014

Location: Headquarters of the Theosophical Society in America, Olcott,  
1926 North Main Street, Wheaton, IL 60187



*Olcott in Wheaton*

Conference theme: "Theosophy as Action."

Join with coworkers from North, South, and Central America. Renowned Theosophical speakers from USA, Mexico, Costa Rica, Honduras, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico will present Theosophy as a practical power embracing cultures, societies, and the individual. Simultaneous translation in English and Spanish will be available.

Link to program in English:

[http://www.theosophical.org/files/events/Conferences/IATF-2014-Program\\_English.pdf](http://www.theosophical.org/files/events/Conferences/IATF-2014-Program_English.pdf)

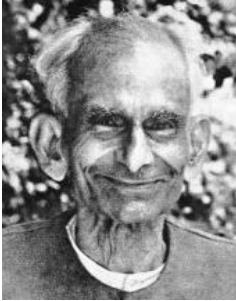
Link to program in Spanish:

[http://www.theosophical.org/files/events/Conferences/IATF-2014-Program\\_Spanish.pdf](http://www.theosophical.org/files/events/Conferences/IATF-2014-Program_Spanish.pdf)

# Theosophical Encyclopedia

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# I. K. Taimni (1898-1978)



*I. K. Taimni*

[Originally printed in the *Theosophical Encyclopedia*, ed. Philip S. Harris, Vicente R. Hao Chin, Jr., and Richard W. Brooks (Quezon City, Philippines: Theosophical Publishing House, 2006); here slightly revised.]

I. K. Taimni was born in Lucknow, India, in a Kashmiri Brahman family. His father was Pandit Prem Kishen Taimni. Taimni's mother died early, and he was brought up by his grandmother, who, a devotee of Lord Rama, lovingly called him "Sri Ram." With only a younger sister and an affectionate but reserved father, his childhood was lonely.

The family moved to Allahabad, where Taimni studied in a government college and earned an M.Sc. in chemistry. He had a brilliant academic record and joined the teaching staff at the University. In 1928 he earned a Ph.D. in inorganic chemistry from London University and continued to work at the Allahabad University until his retirement.

Taimni joined the Anand Lodge of the Theosophical Society in Allahabad at the age of 21 (diploma No. 19388 dated June 12, 1919). Perhaps an important influence on his Theosophical vocation was his marriage to Kunwar Nagu of Indore, who attended the Theosophical Girl's School attached to the Indian Section headquarters at Varanasi and joined the Theosophical Society in 1925.

Taimni was instrumental in constructing the building of the Anand Lodge in 1935, and he contributed his own library to the Besant Memorial

Library located in the Lodge. He worked as Secretary of the Lodge and later as President. He established the Anand Publishing House for the publication of Theosophical literature. A person of warm and affectionate nature, humility and unassuming ways, he avoided publicity and did not like being photographed. He died at Lucknow on June 7, 1976.

Taimni's main contribution to Theosophy was through his books, some of which were translated into several languages. His writings combine deep insight into Eastern wisdom, knowledge of occult philosophy, and an understanding of physical sciences. He published a number of translations of Kashmir Saivism texts.

Taimni's principal publications by the Theosophical Publishing House are: *An Introduction to Hindu Symbolism* (1965, 1969); *The Science of Yoga* [a translation and commentary on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali] (1961; paperback edition from Wheaton, 1967); *Man, God and the Universe* (1969); *Gayatri* (1974, 1978); *Science and Occultism* (1974); *The Secret of Self-Realization* [a translation of and commentary on the Pratyabhijñāhrdayam of Ksemaraja] (1974); *Self-Realization through Love* [a translation of and commentary on the Bhakti-Sutra of Narada] (1975); *A Way to Self-Discovery* [originally titled *Self-Culture: The Problem of Self-Discovery and Self-Realization in the Light of Occultism* (1976)]; and *The Ultimate Reality and Realization* [a translation of and commentary on the Siva-Sutra] 1976).

# Paul Brunton (1898-1981)



*Paul Brunton*

[Originally printed in the *Theosophical Encyclopedia*, ed. Philip S. Harris, Vicente R. Hao Chin, Jr., and Richard W. Brooks (Quezon City, Philippines: Theosophical Publishing House, 2006); here slightly revised.]

Paul Brunton authored works on yoga and other spiritual subjects, many of his published works reflecting his early interest in Theosophy. He was a fairly regular attendee at Theosophical Society meetings in London as mentioned in the biography, *Paul Brunton, a Personal View*, by K. T. Hurst (Burdett, N.Y.: Larson, 1889, p. 46).

Brunton's original name was Raphael Hurst. Born in London in 1898, he became a journalist, but soon began writing books on mysticism and yoga which gained considerable popularity. Much of his work was the result of first-hand research undertaken during extensive travels in Egypt and India.

His published works include: *A Search in Secret India*; *The Secret Path*; *A Search in Secret Egypt*; *A Message From Arunachala*; *A Hermit in the Himalayas*; *The Quest of the Overself*; *The Hidden Teaching Beyond Yoga*; *Discover Yourself*; *The Wisdom of the Overself*; and *The Spiritual Crisis of Man*. His notebooks were published posthumously between 1984 and 1988 in sixteen volumes entitled *The Notebooks of Paul Brunton*.

# Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925)



*Rudolf Steiner*

[Originally printed in the *Theosophical Encyclopedia*, ed. Philip S. Harris, Vicente R. Hao Chin, Jr., and Richard W. Brooks (Quezon City, Philippines: Theosophical Publishing House, 2006); here slightly revised.]

Rudolf Steiner founded the Anthroposophical Society after serving as General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in Germany.

Steiner was born in Kraljevec, Upper Austria on February 27, 1861. As a fifteen-year-old youth he made the acquaintance of a herbalist who not only knew the species, families, and life of plants, but also their secret virtues. That herbalist had the ability to see the etheric form of plants and could contact the elementals associated with them. This acquaintanceship stimulated Steiner's latent psychic abilities so that later Steiner claimed that the herbalist was a messenger from a Master of the Wisdom. From the age of eighteen Steiner had what he described as "a direct and involuntary seeing of things."

At university in his late teens, Steiner studied Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. He also studied mathematics, chemistry, mineralogy, botany, and zoology. "These studies," he said, "afford a surer basis for the construction of a spiritual system of the universe than history and literature." Steiner outlined his intellectual mission as "To re-unite science and religion. To bring back God into Science and Nature into Religion."

Steiner earned the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Vienna, with a



thesis entitled *Truth and Science*, and wrote a number of articles on zoology, geology, and the theory of colors which included Theosophical ideas. He was editor of a weekly journal called the *Deutsche Wochenschrift* (German Weekly). In 1890 Steiner asked to superintend the re-editing of Goethe's scientific works (at Weimar) and shortly afterwards he published two works, *Truth and Science* and *The Philosophy of Liberty*.

Steiner joined the Theosophical Society in 1902 in Berlin, entering not as a student of the Eastern tradition, but as an initiate of Rosicrucian esotericism who recognized the significance of Hindu philosophy. He was convinced that his work lay in the endeavor to unite Eastern and Western traditions and was assisted in that work by Marie von Sivers, a Russian by birth with a command of English, Russian, French and German languages. When he was appointed General Secretary of the German Theosophical Section, von Sivers became his assistant. In 1908 he published a work with a foreword by Annie Besant, dealing with the attainment of knowledge of higher worlds.

In about 1912 a problem arose in the German Section. Under the auspices of Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater an organization was formed called the Order of the Star to promote the work of J. Krishnamurti. The German Section ruled that members of that Order were not eligible to join the Theosophical Society in Germany. Since that contravened the rules of the Theosophical Society, it caused considerable dissension, and Besant was directed by the Council at Adyar to write Steiner. When Steiner did not reply to that letter, the Council canceled the charter of the German Section.

Steiner consequently decided to form his own organization, which he called the Anthroposophical Society. Steiner's reputation and charisma ensured the success of the new society, which eventually spread around the world. It advocated an esoteric approach to many activities, particularly in health and education. Steiner Schools, called Waldorf Schools, still operate in many countries. Steiner believed that humanity originally participated in the spiritual processes of the world through a dreamlike consciousness out of which the more limited but awake consciousness of today evolved. He believed that it was possible for humans to regain awareness of their essential spirituality through right training.

published writings include *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* (1894); *Theosophy* (1904); *The Way of Initiation* (1908, foreword by Annie Besant); *Knowledge of Higher Worlds and Its Attainment* (1909); *Occult Science, an Outline* (1913); *Christianity as Mystical Fact (and the Mysteries of Antiquity)* (1914); *A Road to Self-Knowledge* (1918); *Story of My Life* (1924); and numerous articles in *The Theosophist* journal while Steiner was still a member of the Theosophical Society.



*First Goetheanum - a timber and concrete structure designed by Rudolf Steiner*

# Radha Burnier (1923-2013)



*Radha Burnier*

[The following is based on an entry by Mary Anderson in the *Theosophical Encyclopedia*, edited by Philip S. Harris, Vicente R. Hao Chin, Jr., and Richard W. Brooks (Quezon City, Philippines: Theosophical Publishing House, 2006), here revised for Theosophy Forward by John Algeo.]

Burnier, Radha (née Sri Ram) was the seventh International President of the Theosophical Society (Adyar). Radha Sri Ram was born on November 15, 1923, on the estate of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, Madras (now called Chennai), India, where she spent her childhood. Her father, Nilakanta Sri Ram, a life-long Theosophical worker and a collaborator of Annie Besant's, was the fifth International President of the Society. Her mother, Srimati Bhagirathi, was also an active member. The family was Brahmin, but, as Theosophists, they did not observe the rules of segregation from other castes prevalent at the time. In 1951 she married Raymond Burnier, a Swiss citizen, and thereby became a Swiss national.

Coming from a Theosophical family, Radha early developed an interest in philosophical and spiritual questions as well as a sense of values and concern for the underprivileged. A childhood spent in the beautiful Adyar estate fostered a love for Nature and a sensitivity to its beauties. Having met during her childhood many people from various parts of the world, promoting harmony and cooperation among all peoples was, practically from the beginning, a way of life for her.

She received most of her basic education at Theosophical schools and, in 1942, was the first student to graduate in classical dancing (Bharata Natya) from the international art academy of Kalakshetra in Madras, founded by her aunt Rukmini Devi Arundale. She subsequently gave dance recitals in many cities in India and Europe and played a major role, with dancing, in the film *The River* (1951), directed by Jean Renoir. That film has been critically regarded as one of the greatest color films.

Radha also pursued an academic career and obtained an M.A. degree in Sanskrit from Benares Hindu University, earning first place in the examination. In 1984 she was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters by Nagarjuna University in recognition of her "distinguished contribution to the advancement of learning and the promotion of human values."

Radha joined the Theosophical Society in 1935 and was President of youth and adult lodges in Adyar and Benares for several years. She worked as Librarian and in other capacities at the Indian Section headquarters from 1945 to 1951. Repeatedly elected General Secretary of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, she held that office from 1960 to 1978. She served as President of the Madras Theosophical Federation from 1959 to 1963. She was Director of the Adyar Library and Research Center from 1954 to 1980, being also the general editor of its oriental publications as well as its journal *Brahmavidya*. She herself translated from Sanskrit the Hathayogapradipika, the dance chapter from the Samgita Ratnakara, one of the most important Indian musicological texts.

Burnier was a member of the Society's General Council from 1960 onward and also served for many years on the Society's Executive Committee as well as the Finance Committee and the Theosophical Publishing House Council. She was elected seventh International President of the Theosophical Society in 1980 and re-elected in 1987, 1994 and 2001. In addition to being President of the Society, she held the following offices: Head of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy in Ojai, California, and of the Manor Foundation in Sydney, Australia; President of the International Theosophical Center in Naarden, Holland; Chairman of the Olcott Education Society (OES), whose concern was the education and welfare of children from the poorer classes and which administered the Olcott Memorial School, the HPB Hostel for the

underprivileged, and the Social Welfare Center at the Society's headquarters. Radha was also chair of the Besant Education Fellowship, sponsoring several schools in India; founder and President of the New Life for India Movement, which has been working since 1968 for the promotion of right citizenship, right values, and the use of right means among Indians, especially through its journal *Wake Up, India*; and president of the Environmental Society, Madras.

From 1960 onward, Radha lectured throughout India and the world to members and the public on Theosophical, philosophical, environmental, and social issues. She was the guest speaker at many Theosophical conventions, congresses, and summer schools. She also spoke in universities and on the radio. As president of the Society, she was the editor of its international magazine, *The Theosophist*. Her editorials, called "On the Watch-Tower," treated topical themes with great insight and were frequently translated into other languages. Radha was the author of several books: *No Other Path to Go*; *Truth, Beauty and Goodness*; *The Way of Self-Knowledge*; *The Universal Yoga Tradition*; and *Human Regeneration*; as well as many articles in *The Theosophist* and were reprinted or translated in other Theosophical journals around the world.

Soon after Radha's election as Theosophical Society president, J. Krishnamurti accepted her invitation to visit the Adyar estate, after an interval of almost half a century. Thereafter, when in Madras, he was a frequent visitor to the estate. Burnier had known him since childhood and had a friendly relationship with him. Under her inspiration, many members of the Society recognized that Krishnamurti's teachings are fundamentally Theosophical, especially in their uncompromising openness to what is.

Burnier's aim was to invest the Theosophical Society with a renewed sense of purpose, social and ecological awareness, and a deeper spiritual insight. Consequently, she stressed social values and resistance to any form of corruption. She was committed to ecology, animal welfare and support for the downtrodden. Her life was thus one of applied Theosophy.

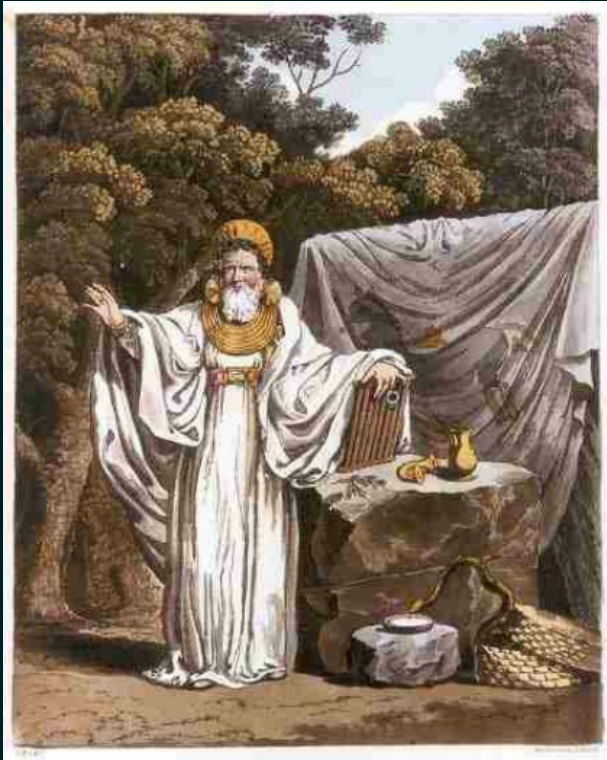
# Druidism

[Originally printed in the *Theosophical Encyclopedia*, ed. Philip S. Harris, Vicente R. Hao Chin, Jr., and Richard W. Brooks (Quezon City, Philippines: Theosophical Publishing House, 2006); here slightly revised.]

Druidism was the religion of the Celts of ancient Gaul and the British Isles. Description of their religion is difficult since very few authentic written records exist; those that do exist are not first-hand. According to the Stoic philosopher Poseidonius, the main tenets of the Druids were that the soul of man is immortal and that the universe is indestructible, although it was periodically consumed by fire or water.

The word “Druid” comes from an ancient Celtic source referring to a tree. An early reference to Druids was by Julius Caesar, about 50 BCE. Caesar wrote of the Druids, “They hold aloof from war and do not pay war taxes; they are excused from military service and exempt from all liabilities. Many young men are tempted by these advantages and come to the Order to receive training that lasts about twenty years.” The popular idea of Druids performing rituals at Stonehenge and gathering mistletoe with golden sickles lacks any documentary foundation, but has persisted in oral tradition.

Helena P. Blavatsky wrote about Druids in positive terms, as in *The Secret Doctrine* (2:756): “The mystery veiling the origin and the religion of the Druids is as great as that of their supposed fanes [temples] is to the modern Symbologist, but not to the initiated Occultists. Their priests were the descendants of the last Atlanteans, and what is known of them is sufficient to allow the inference that they were eastern priests akin to the Chaldeans and Indians, though little more. It may be inferred that they symbolized their deity as the Hindus do their Vishnu, as the Egyptians did their Mystery God, and as the builders of the Ohio great serpent mound worshipped theirs — namely under the form of the “Mighty Serpent,” the emblem of the eternal deity TIME (the Hindu Kala). Pliny called them the “Magi of the Gauls and Britons.” But they were more than that. The author of *Indian Antiquities* [Thomas Maurice]



inds much affinity between the Druids and Brahmins of India. Dr. Borlase points to a close analogy between them and the Magi of Persia; others will see an identity between them and the Orphic priesthood of Thrace — simply because they were connected, in their esoteric teachings, with the universal Wisdom Religion, and thus presented affinities with the exoteric worship of all. Like the Hindus, the Greeks and Romans (we speak of the Initiates), the Chaldees and the Egyptians, the Druids believed in the doctrine of a succession of worlds, as also in that of seven “creations” (of new continents) and transformations of the face of the earth, and in a sevenfold night and day for each earth or globe.” In the same work (2:760), Blavatsky wrote, “The Druids believed in the rebirth of man ... in a series of reincarnations in this same world; for as Diodorus says, they declared that the souls of men, after determinate periods, would pass into other bodies.”

# Medley

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# Tsong Khapa (1357–1419)

by Jan Jelle Keppler – Belgium

[This talk was given during 15th Annual International Theosophy Conference held in August 2013 in New York. The theme title of the conference was “How to Awaken Compassion? - H. P. Blavatsky and the Eternal Secret Doctrine”]

## Introduction

During my studies at the Faculty for Comparative study of Religions in Antwerp, Belgium, lectures were given by Mrs. Drs. Martine Strubbe on the subject of Buddhism. For the exam at the end of the academic year 2009-2010, she requested her students to prepare a paper in the form of a treatise about a Buddhist scholar.

The scholar I chose, Tsong Kha-pa, lived in Tibet from 1357 until 1419. According to many writers he is considered to be the main reformer of Tibetan Buddhism. He is also seen as the actual founder of the order of the New Kadampa also called the Gelugpa's or the Yellow Cap monks. Both the Tibetan Head of State in exile, the Dalai Lama as well as the spiritual leader, the Panchen Lama, belong to this order.

The colossal Himalayan Mountains form a border between the Indian subcontinent and the rest of Asia. The Himalayas are the world's tallest mountains, towering more than five miles above sea level. Himalaya means “home of snow” because the tallest peaks of the Himalayas are always capped with snow.

The Himalayas include Mount Everest, the tallest mountain in the world. Everest rises 29,028 feet above sea level on the border between India and Nepal. No plant life grows near the mountain's peak due to powerful winds, extremely cold temperatures, and a lack of oxygen. Many adventurous people attempt to climb Everest every year. Often their venture ends in sickness or death. Most people are unable to breathe 20,000 feet above sea level because there is not enough oxygen in the atmosphere. A person will



suffer brain damage when one is unable to breathe. Strong winds and frigid temperatures make the climate even more rigorous. Clearly the peak of Mount Everest is a place for only the heartiest of people.

Check this link: <http://www.mrdowling.com/612-himalayas.html>

## The life of Tsong Khapa (1357-1419)

Tsong Khapa, also called Je Rimpoche, was born in eastern Tibet in the Valley of Tsong Kha (Onion Valley) in the province of Amdo. It is said, that at the place where he was born later the Kumbum monastery was founded. His birth took place in the Tibetan “Year of the Bird”, or in the year 1357 of our era. Many of the facts and circumstances described here are in the first part of the book *Life and Teachings of Tsong Khapa* by Robert A. F. Thurman. He was the fourth of a family with six sons. The father was a hefty, but modest and taciturn man. This energetic and subdued man was constantly with his thoughts on the teachings of the Buddha and recited every day the “the pronunciation of the names of Mañjushri”. Mañjushri is one of the main bodhisattvas in Mahayana Buddhism. His name means compassion. The mother was a most friendly and unsuspecting woman. She always sang the

mantra of Avalokiteshvara “Om Mani Padme Hum” = “See the Jewel of the Lotus is Coming” The name of Avalokiteshvara means “He who is seen”, or “He who looks down”. He is also named Padmapani, or the Lotus Carrier, and is one of the main bodhisattvas of the Northern Buddhism.

In the “Year of the Monkey” prior to his birth, his parents would have had many auspicious dreams, which indicated that a being of particular high stature would be born, who could be considered as an emanation both of Avalokitesvara and of Mañjushri. The mother during childbirth would have experienced no pain. There would also have appeared a star in the sky. All in all, the stories around his birth have resemblance to those of Buddha and Jesus.

At the age of three Tsong Khapa, took the laity vow before the Fourth Karmapa, Rolpay Dorje and he got the name Kunga Nyingpo. His first teacher was the Lama Choeje Dondrup Rinchen. After this Lama had given many gifts to his father, including horses and sheep, he was permitted to take him away from his parents.

Tsong Khapa took the novitiate vow and got the name Losang Drakpa, at the age of seven. This name he would later use as a pseudonym for the publication of his controversial work. Before he took the novitiate vow he received many teachings and initiations, including the “Heruka Permission” within the tantric practice of the generation of Mandalas inside the human body, and he got the secret name Donyo Dorje. Buddha Heruka is a manifestation of enlightened compassion.

On the advice of his teacher he first studied the great treatise of *Abhisamayalamkara* and then the other treatises.

Following quotation is from:

[http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/sutra/level6\\_study\\_major\\_text\\_s/abhisamayalamkara\\_maitreya/overview\\_8\\_realizations\\_abhisamayalamkara.html](http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/sutra/level6_study_major_text_s/abhisamayalamkara_maitreya/overview_8_realizations_abhisamayalamkara.html)

“One of the major Mahayana sutra texts studied by all four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism is *Filigree of Realizations (mNgon-rtogs rgyan, Skt. Abhisamayalamkara)*, a commentary by Maitreya on the *Prajnaparamita Sutras (phar-byin mdo, Sutras on Far-Reaching Discriminating Awareness, Perfection of Wisdom Sutras)*. It receives such emphasis in the Tibetan

traditions – and not in the Indian or East Asian Mahayana ones – perhaps because Haribhadra, the author of its main commentary, was a disciple of the mid-eighth century Indian master Shantarakshita. Shantarakshita was the first Indian master to visit Tibet.”

He stayed with his first teacher, until he went to central Tibet at the age of 16. There he had as teacher the head of the Drikung Kargyu monastery, the Lama Chennga Choekyi Gyalpo, from whom he received instruction in *bodhicitta* (the selfless spirit) and *mahamudra* (Great Seal). In this monastery he was also inaugurated in the main medical treatises by the famous doctor Konchog Kyab and his fame began spreading already.

At age of 17, he went to the Choedra Chenpo Dewachen monastery in Nyetang. There he studied with Tashi Senghi, Densapa Gekong and Yonten Gyatso. It was the last one, who taught him how to study the great treatises and helped him with the *Ornament for Realisations*. Of this work both the basic text and the commentaries he had learned by heart and he understood them, within 18 days. Also the *Prajña Pāramitā* (perfection of wisdom), he made effortlessly his own within the shortest times. At the age of 19 he was considered as a great scholar, both by his teachers as by his fellow students.

Therefore he began to travel around in the U-tsang province in central Tibet to have debates in several monasteries, such as those of Samye, Zhalu, Sazang, Tzechen and Sakhya, where he got extensive instructions and a number of initiations. In Sakhya he did the exams in the *Prajña Pāramitā*. In Tzechen he met the revered Sakhya Lama, Rendawa Shönu Lodro, who had a special method in the teaching of the *Treasury of Knowledge* and who he would be regarding as his most important teacher. The two developed a mutual teacher-pupil relation. Rewanda taught him the *Madhyamika* philosophy of the Way of the Middle. He also received instruction by Chandrakirti on the *Entrance to the Road of the Middle*.

He returned to Lasha via Nyetang and became apprentice to the Abbot Kazhiwa Losal, a great scholar in *Vinaya*, Monastic Discipline. Under his direction, he studied the basic texts of the *Discipline* and of the *Treasury of Knowledge* with the many associated comments. He could handle more than forty pages of text per day, learn them by heart and understand them. He knew more than twenty thousand verses of the *Prajña Pāramitā* by heart. While

praying with the other monks, he could effortlessly do the one-pointed concentration exercise on insight meditation.

During a harsh winter in Nyetang, he gave his first teaching, while he had to remain there, because he suffered from severe back pain. He taught the knowledge or metaphysics of the Mahayana Abhidharma on the basis of the *Compendium of Knowledge* of Ashanga. He taught also in this context the *Treasury of Knowledge* by Vasubhandu, what text he had had mastered completely, at first reading on the spot.

He traveled around along important monasteries and teachers, began to hold retreats and to master all major works of the complete Kanjur (The Teachings of the Buddha) and Tanjur (The Comments on Doctrine). He took exams in the four remaining of the five treatises on the Middle Way, Logic, Knowledge, Perfection of Wisdom and Discipline. One is not sure, where and when he received his ordination, but it is generally assumed, that this was at the age of 21 in a monastery not far south of Lasha.

He returned to his second teacher the head of the Drikung Kargyu monastery, Lama Chennga Choekyi Gyalpo, from whom he received all the teachings, which Marpa had given to Milarepa and Ngogchu Dorje, two of his four sons. This teacher taught him even in tantra, the *Six Doctrines of Naropa* and many other issues, such as the teachings of Je Phagmo Drupa and of the founder of the Drikung Kergyu monastery.

Following text is from:

<http://www.dharmafellowship.org/library/essays/drukpa-kagyu-lineage.htm>

“Phagmo Drup Dorje Gyalpo (1110-1170) was born in Kham in far eastern Tibet. At the age of four he took the vows of a novice monk and began his training on the spiritual path. He traveled to central Tibet to receive further training from masters residing in the vicinity.

“He received his training from a series of masters, including the head of the Sakyapa school, who taught him the complete Lam-Dre teachings. Thus he attained mastery in Buddhist Philosophy and a technical understanding of the Sutras and Tantras.

“Nevertheless, Phagmo Drupa realized that this was not enough; he needed the guidance of a qualified Yogi to transform his meditation into direct

realization. He therefore placed himself at the feet of Gampopa.

“Sometime after a brief discussion with the latter, Phagmo Drupa experienced a sudden awakening into the true nature of his own mind, and thereby fully realized ultimate Truth. During the next few days, following this experience, Phagmo Drupa completely mastered the full and direct realization of Mahamudra.”

At the age of 32 Tsong Khapa wrote “Legshay Serteng” or the Rosary of Eloquent Teaching, a comment on the Perfection of Wisdom in the form of a summary of all 21 Indian commentaries on Decoration of the Realizations.

At the age of 33, he came in contact with Lama Umapa, whose life as a shepherd was completely changed after a vision of Manjushri. This Lama saw in Tsong Khapa an appearance of the Buddha of Compassion and wanted to become his disciple. It was through the fixed connection that this Lama had with Manjushri and later in a self-developed direct relationship with Manjushri, that Tsong Khapa received the teaching of the Buddha of Compassion.

He travelled together with his disciples and held fasting-retreats. He received instruction in the Kalachakra-cycle and instructions on astrology and on how to create Mandalas. Kalachakra means wheel of time and is also the name of one of the Tantric meditation Buddhas. He also began to give tantric teaching and tantric initiations. He kept traveling and holding retreats for two decades, the longest of which lasted four years. During this retreat he would have done three and a half million fully outstretched prostrations and one million eight hundred thousand mandala offering sequences. He took more and more students of the various schools to himself and taught the teachings of the Buddha. He received and gave initiations and wrote treatises and poems.

He refused to go to India, where he could have become Abbot of a large monastery. Also he refused to go to China, where he could have taught at the request of the Emperor. Instead, he stayed in Tibet, where he gave teachings, read and wrote lyrics and held meditative retreats with his disciples. He laid particular emphasis on the Monastic Discipline, *Vinaya*, and kept himself always accurately to all the requirements up to even the least significant ones.

From the age of 52 years, he traveled less because of his serious

health problems. His pupils offered him to build a monastery for him on a place to be indicated by him. (*Life and Teachings of Tsong Khapa*, by Robert A. F. Thurman) He chose the Mountain Drogri, or the Nomads Mountain, and gave the place the name Ganden, which means “The Residence of Maitreya” or “The Pure Land”. Together with his pupil Gendun Drup, who later would be posthumously promoted as first Dalai Lama, he visited the place. Within a year 70 buildings were erected. The following year, Tsong Khapa began already to teach in the monastery.

The construction of the Ganden monastery is considered to be the fourth of the major works of Tsong Khapa. The monks of this monastery are wearing yellow colored head caps to distinguish themselves from the other orders, who wore red caps (Nyingmapa) and black caps (Karmapa). The Abbot of the monastery called the Ganden Tripa is also the head of the Gelugpa order. Gelug means the virtuous. The teachings are contained in Lam-Rim lectures. Lam-Rim lecturing is one of the three methods of teaching within each of the Tibetan Lama traditions, of which the other two are the study of texts and oral instructions.

At 61 years of age he gave still lengthy instructions. He wrote a work with comment on Entering the Middle Path. Until the end of his life he continued daily to say prayers and perform rituals. On the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month of the Year of the Pig (1419) he died at the age of 62, while he sat in meditation in the lotus position.

The work “The Eighty (Main Deeds) of Thongkhapa”, which was written by the great Lama Kargyu Panchen, immediately after Tsong Khapa's death, contains a very comprehensive and detailed description of his life and is considered his most authoritative biography. This work could not be found in the form of a translation.

## The work of Tsong Khapa (1357-1419)

In the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD, early Buddhism, which had been preached in Tibet since two centuries, had been founded by Padmasambhava with the first monastery of the order of the Nyingma-pa (meaning “The Old School”) in Samye, east of Lasha. Today the original building does not stand. The site was destroyed during the cultural-revolution, but restored afterwards.





Pearlman, Ellen (2002). *Tibetan Sacred Dance: a journey into the religious and folk traditions*. Rochester, Vermont, USA: Inner Traditions. p. 94: "When Padmasambhava consecrated Samye Monastery with the Vajrakilaya dance, he tamed the local spirit protector, Pehar Gyalp, and bound him by oath to become the head of the entire hierarchy of Buddhist protective spirits. Pehar, later known as Dorje Drakden, became the principal protector of the Dalai Lamas, manifesting through the Nechung Oracle."

Dorje (1999), p. 173: "Samye Monastery is laid out in the shape of a giant mandala, with the main temple representing the legendary Mount Meru in the centre. Other buildings stand at the corners and cardinal points of the main temple, representing continents and other features of tantric Buddhist cosmology. The main temple is full of Tibetan religious art in both mural and statue form, as well as some important relics. Many Tibetan Buddhists come on pilgrimage to Samye, some taking weeks to make the journey."

The Tibetan king Lang Darma suppressed Buddhism in his country, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

At nearly the age of 60, in the year 1038, the Indian Prince Atisha came to Tibet, like many other Indian monks around the year 1000, to reform Buddhism, which had degenerated in this country. At the time, the understanding of the relationship between sutra and tantra was completely lost in Tibet. Atisha founded the Kadam-pa sect and had such a great influence, that also the existing Kargyu-pa- and Sakya-pa sects reformed partially.

Especially the Sakya Lamas, who usually were married and had their positions inherited from father to son, hereinafter gained worldly power. The great Chinese Emperor Khublai Khan, descendant of Djenghiz Khan, who conquered Tibet in the year 1206, recognized the head of the Sakya school in 1270 as head of this order and granted him the worldly power to reign over Tibet. The Mongol shamanism was apparently closer to Buddhism than Christianity, Islam and Confucianism, which also were known to the emperor.

The legend says that the emperor had requested different religious representatives to produce a miracle and that it was only the Buddhists who could succeed. In return the Sakya Pandita had to ordain the Crown of the Chinese emperor.

In 1368, eleven years after Tsong Khapa was born, the Ming dynasty

came to power in China. For political reasons the Chinese Emperors decided to put the leaders of the two other sects, the Kadam-pa and the Kagyu-pa on an equal footing with the Sakya-pa.

It is in this complicated political situation, that Tsong Khapa would complete the work of Atisha and that the reforms of the Kadam-pa sect would take place. In particular, he showed how the path of knowledge can be united with that of the yoga exercises.

The complete collected works of Tsong Khapa span 18 thick volumes. He studied, so says the tradition, with more than 100 teachers from all the schools of Lamaism or Tibetan Buddhism existing in his time. (There were four schools, the Kadam, Kagyu, Sakya and Nyingma. The name of the latter means the "old school" and its members are called the Red hoods.) He wrote prose and poetry on hundreds of topics.

His greatest merit is that he made accessible for everyone the path to enlightenment with his magnum opus, "The great treatise on the stages of the path to enlightenment", which he wrote during his stay in Reting in the year 1402 when he was 46 years old. The Reting Monastery is located three day trips on horseback north of Lasha amid beautiful juniper shrub forests.

It must be said, though, that he makes a distinction between two categories of readers.

On the one hand, the ordinary people or beginners, people who are still attached to the pleasures of life and just long for a better next incarnation and also those people, who search only for themselves for liberation and enlightenment.

On the other hand, those people, who stirred by compassion, want to awaken spiritually in order to put an end to the suffering of all sentient beings.

He describes in this book, in a language understandable for ordinary mortals, how man can come to enlightenment through understanding of the teachings of the Buddha. He relies both on the classical Indian and Tibetan literature. It has become a handbook for meditation, in which the existing exoteric writings on the sutras are summarized.

All exercises, which are necessary in order to illuminate the mind, are treated. The Teaching, the Teacher, Meditation, Life, Death, Future Life, The

Three Refuges, Karma, Ethics, Attitude of Life, Cause of Suffering, Twelve Dependencies, The Path to Liberation, The Nature of the three Exercises, these are all titles of chapters in part one of the book, which part is intended for people with mediocre abilities.

In this book he actually treats the six Paramitas, or perfections of the bodhisattva: *prajna* *dana* or generosity, *sila* or ethical discipline, *ksanti* or patient susceptibility, *virya* or energy and courage, *dhyana* or meditation and *prajna* or analytical understanding.

He is not to be regarded as a reformer in the meaning of innovator of the teaching. After the Buddha and Nagarjuna had brought the wheel of the teaching into motion for the first and second time, Tsong Khapa did it for the third time. Each time, the teaching is still the same and the four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path and the Tripitaka (three baskets with the books) remain unchanged.

In addition to the fame, to which he rose by writing many treatises and poems, Tsong Khapa has also obtained notoriety, by the following four deeds, which in Tibetan Buddhism are considered as his main works:

1 - He organized the renovation of a dilapidated statue of the future Maitreya Buddha in the Dzingji Temple and the large New Year Celebration of the year 1400 in this same Temple.

2 - In company of Rendawa and Kyapchok Pel Zangpo he gave an extensive teaching in the Discipline, as enshrined in the vows of the ordained monks and nuns at Namtze Deng, a monastery with 600 monks. As a result, that the original tradition of monastic life of ordained monks and nuns was restored.

3 - He organized the first of the Tibetan new year Prayer festival in Lhasa in 1409. On new year's eve of the year of the mouse, there were 8,000 monks gathered. The culmination of this traditional festival, which henceforth takes place during the first two weeks of each year, is located at full moon. During the festival prayers are said for the universal welfare and in the main temple of Lhasa valuables are being sacrificed to the statue of the Buddha. The first day of the Tibetan New Year was February 22, 2012, or Losar 2139.

4 - He founded the Ganden Monastery, which was inaugurated in

1410. In the year 1415 a special temple was built for the Mandalas, by the use of which tantric rituals could be held. These were intended only for the initiates and had to remain hidden from the view of laymen. In the year 1417 a number of images including a large Buddha statue were erected in the great Hall of the monastery. There were further placed in that hall specially crafted three-dimensional gilded-brass Mandalas intended for the 32 exercises of the Godhead Guhyasamaja, the 62 exercises of the deity Heruka and 13 exercises of the deity Yamantaka. The monastery was destroyed under the Chinese occupation in 1959.

## Conclusions

For the student of Western culture Tson Khapa seems an implausible legendary figure. All those stories about the predictive dreams of his parents and his teachers seem to have resemblance to the stories of the fantastic fairy tales from “1001 Nights”.

The parallels with the stories and mystifications about the lives of the Buddha and the Christ, who also could give teaching to the learned doctors at a very young age, appears but all too clearly. For a sober, Western, critical and scientific spirit it is almost impossible to take for granted all these theological stories and statements, which come to them from second and third hand.

A sense of humility comes over us, however when studying the many testimonies on such a perfect life as that of Tsong Khapa. While researching deeper into the subject there comes a moment that one would like to wish the same as what is said of his second great teacher, the Abbot of the Drikung Kargyu monastery, Lama Chennga Choekyi Gyalpo. When the Abbot met again with Tsong Khapa after his ordination he was overwhelmed by tears and he is said to have wished that he also would have been able to have had such intensive practice in his youth.

It is regrettable however that, within a few generations after Tsong Khapa reformed the degenerated Tibetan Buddhism, a relapse to the King-Priesthood took place there again, with all the associated court intrigues, violence and murdering.

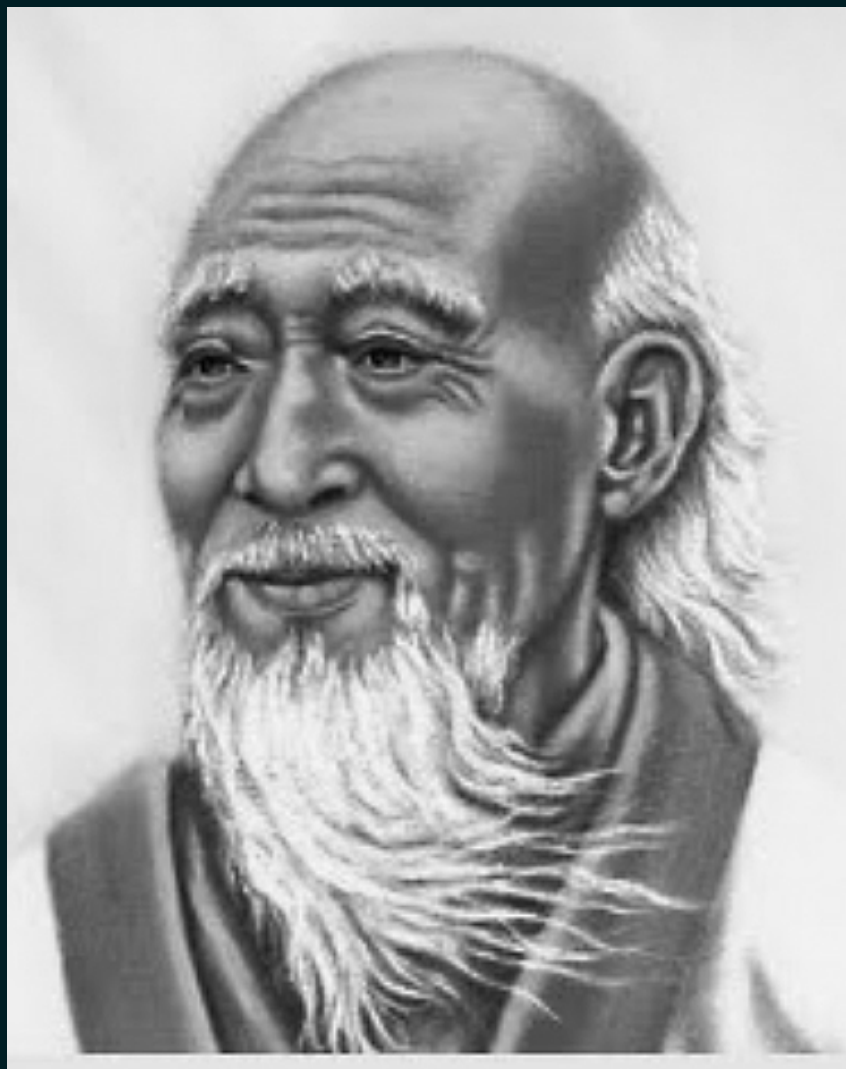
It is encouraging to hear, that the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, current Tibetan head of State and spiritual leader in exile, has recently announced that he will

transfer his spiritual tasks to a successor, who will not have state power. The separation of Church and State in Tibetan Buddhism is in this way in fact restored.

One of the important conclusions is that according to Tibetan Buddhism besides the current Buddha also the Maitreya Buddha of the future actually communicates through visions with people on Earth. But, especially in Northern Europe, this also seems to apply for *Sinterklaas* and, still wider, for *Santa Claus*.

For reasons of safety within Tibetan Buddhism the Tantras may not be studied or practiced by the non-initiated. I know from my own experience, that for more than thirty years ago a warning was given to me that one should not get involved with tantra nor mantra, because Westerners don't know what these are and what their impact can be.





*Lao Tzu*

# Focus

by Leo Babauta – USA

## A simplicity manifesto in the Age of Distraction

Part six

### You don't need to respond

**“Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.”**

*Lao Tzu*

We have developed a fairly urgent need to respond to many things: emails, Tweets & other social network status updates, instant messages, phone calls, text messages, blog posts, blog comments, forum-posts, and more. This need to respond gives us anxiety until we've responded, but unfortunately, there is a never-ending stream of things that require your response.

If we allow these messages to force us to respond, almost as soon as they come, then we become driven by the need to respond. Our day becomes responsive rather than driven by conscious choices. We flit from one task to another, one response to another, living a life driven by the needs of others, instead of what we need, what we feel is important.

You don't need to respond. Think about why we feel we need to respond to everything. Often it's just a compulsion — we're so used to answering messages that we have developed an urge to respond. Often it's also out of fear: fear that people won't think we're doing our job, fear that we'll lose customers, fear that we'll miss out on something important, fear that people will think we're rude or ignoring them.

But what if we weaned ourselves from this compulsion? And what if we addressed these fears?

**1. First, imagine that you're free from the compulsion.** What would it be like? You'd choose what you're going to do today, and work on the

important things. You could still respond to emails and other things, but it would be because you decided it was important to communicate something, not because someone else sent you a message and you felt compelled to reply. You'd be much less stressed out, because you don't feel like you need to get through these piles of things to respond to, or worry about people trying to contact you through various channels.

**2. Next, address the fears.** Think about what specific fears you have — are you afraid people will think you're rude? Are you afraid you'll miss something? Are you afraid you'll lose customers, or get in trouble at work? Figure out what your fears are — there are probably more than one. Now address them with a tiny test — go without responding, just for a few hours. What happened? Did you lose anything? Did you miss anything? Did someone get offended? If nothing bad happens, extend this test — try half a day, or a full day. See what happens. In most cases, nothing bad will happen at all. In a few cases, something negative might happen, but it'll be pretty minor. You'll realize that your fears are mostly ungrounded.

**3. Finally, start weaning yourself.** If you agree that being free of these compulsions would be a better way of living, start moving towards this life. Again, try just a small test — a couple hours every day when you don't respond to things. Set a time, after this "response-free" block of your day, when you do respond. This way, you're in control — you decide when to respond. Eventually, you might increase your "response-free" zone to half a day or more, but start small.

To be continued



# Meditation for Anxiety, Depression?

Some 30 minutes of meditation daily may improve symptoms of anxiety and depression, a new Johns Hopkins analysis of previously published research suggests.

“A lot of people use meditation, but it’s not a practice considered part of mainstream medical therapy for anything,” says Madhav Goyal, M.D., M.P.H., an assistant professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and leader of a study published online Jan. 6 in *JAMA Internal Medicine*. “But in our study, meditation appeared to provide as much relief from some anxiety and depression symptoms as what other studies have found from antidepressants.” These patients did not typically have full-blown anxiety or depression.

The researchers evaluated the degree to which those symptoms changed in people who had a variety of medical conditions, such as insomnia or fibromyalgia, although only a minority had been diagnosed with a mental illness.

Goyal and his colleagues found that so-called “mindfulness meditation” – a form of Buddhist self-awareness designed to focus precise, nonjudgmental attention to the moment at hand – also showed promise in alleviating some pain symptoms as well as stress. The findings held even as the researchers controlled for the possibility of the placebo effect, in which subjects in a study feel better even if they receive no active treatment because they perceive they are getting help for what ails them.

To conduct their review, the investigators focused on 47 clinical trials performed through June 2013 among 3,515 participants that involved meditation and various mental and physical health issues, including depression, anxiety, stress, insomnia, substance use, diabetes, heart disease, cancer and chronic pain. They found moderate evidence of improvement in

symptoms of anxiety, depression and pain after participants underwent what was typically an eight-week training program in mindfulness meditation. They discovered low evidence of improvement in stress and quality of life. There was not enough information to determine whether other areas could be improved by meditation. In the studies that followed participants for six months, the improvements typically continued.

They also found no harm came from meditation.

Meditation, Goyal notes, has a long history in Eastern traditions, and it has been growing in popularity over the last 30 years in Western culture.

“A lot of people have this idea that meditation means sitting down and doing nothing,” Goyal says. “But that’s not true. Meditation is an active training of the mind to increase awareness, and different meditation programs approach this in different ways.”

Mindfulness meditation, the type that showed the most promise, is typically practiced for 30 to 40 minutes a day. It emphasizes acceptance of feelings and thoughts without judgment and relaxation of body and mind.

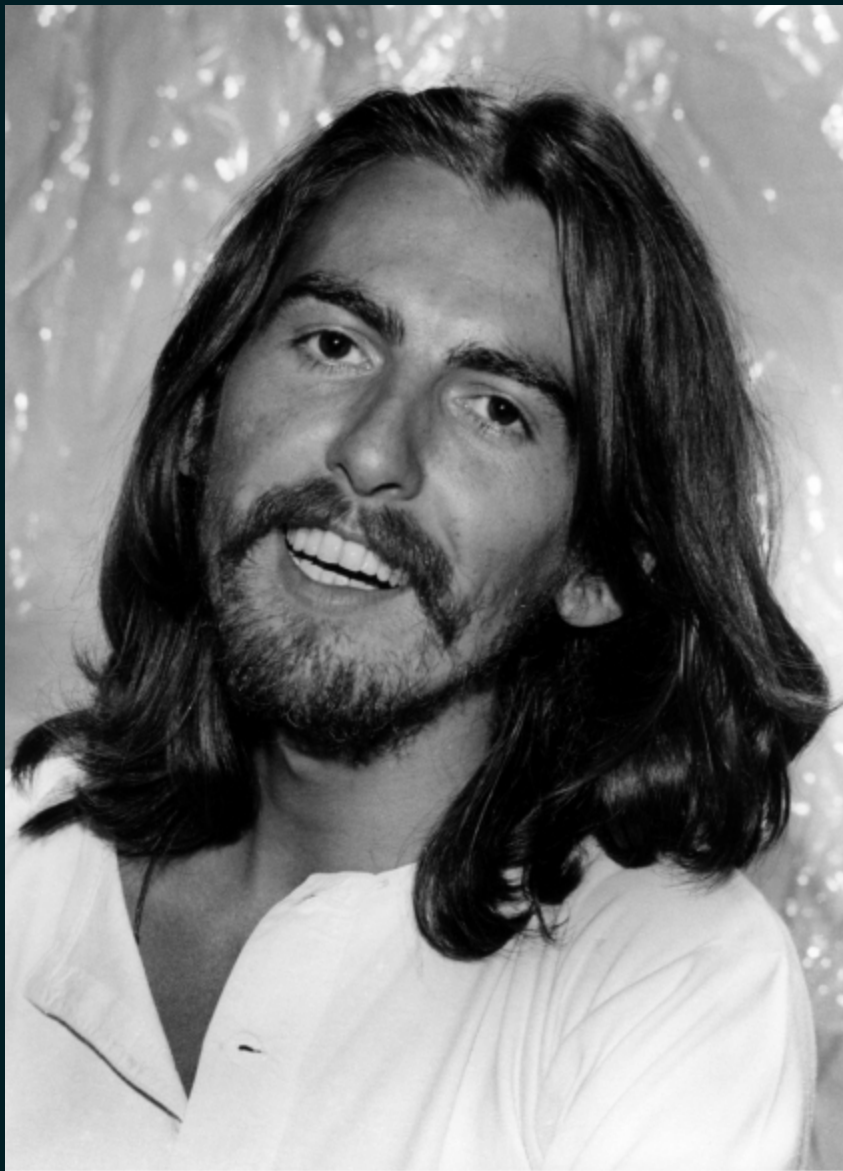
He cautions that the literature reviewed in the study contained potential weaknesses. Further studies are needed to clarify which outcomes are most affected by these meditation programs, as well as whether more meditation practice would have greater effects.

“Meditation programs appear to have an effect above and beyond the placebo,” Goyal says.

Check this link:

[http://www.sciencedaily.com/news/mind\\_brain/spirituality/](http://www.sciencedaily.com/news/mind_brain/spirituality/)





*George Harrison*

# Place of Last Retreat

by Joshua M. Greene – USA

In the aftermath of John Lennon's murder, there was only one place George Harrison could go for shelter.

Recently, a student in my university course on mysticism waited until everyone had left the room before coming up to my desk. "Professor Greene," she said, "you know that point in class about how levels of meditation can be compared to different levels of love? I wanted you to know that really touched me. I'd never thought about meditation as a way to deepen love for another human being. So — thanks." This from a twenty-three-year old who rarely said anything in class, all the action going on below the surface. She tossed her backpack over her shoulder and sauntered out. It was the kind of payoff for a teacher that makes up for months of academic trivia.

Stuff happening below the surface ... "*Du-du-du* ..." I found myself humming a Harrison song called "Sat Singing," a little known 1980 recording by the former Beatle that reveals a deep experience in meditation. As the song begins, George sings about the sun shining in a clear blue sky. He begins to meditate and sings of drifting away, of entering into a deep state with no memory of anything that came before. An unseen lover appears in his heart.

"I am here for you," the lover says.

George sings of leaving behind his embodied life, moving deeper into his ecstasy, drifting into a golden flow, an undulating efulgence that surrounds him and absorbs him until he feels he has become one with his unseen lover. The song extends the moment of intimacy through gently textured slide guitar and a lulling patter, "*du-du-du* ..."

Then, slowly, George emerges from his reverie. The sun is setting and he realizes he has been in a state of bliss for a long time. But there is no disappointment over losing the reverie, only joy. He calls his lover's name. If only he could return to that place, he sings, he would never regret leaving the world behind. He would gladly kiss the rest of the world good-bye if he could

just stay forever in his lover's company.

The title "Sat Singing" plays on the Sanskrit term *sadhu-sanga* used in Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh traditions to mean the company of holy people. George had been keeping company with holy people for the past fourteen years, starting with his first trip to India in 1966 to study sitar with Ravi Shankar. Then in 1968, he brought John, Paul, and Ringo with him on a retreat to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's ashram in Rishikesh. On return to London, he met disciples of Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, a revered instructor of *bhakti* or devotional yoga. In their company, George began chanting mantras, particularly Hare Krishna, and incorporating meditative practice into his daily routine.

For a superstar who had been part of history's most successful rock group, such dedication and discipline were rare. As a fellow student of Bhaktivedanta Swami, I remember joining fellow Krishna devotees on visits to George's home in Friar Park west of London and marveling at the oil paintings of four-armed Vishnu and brightly colored posters of Hindu demigods that decorated his huge Victorian manor. He kept a small marble altar to Krishna over the fireplace. Chanting sessions could go on for hours without a break. We would arrive around 9am and assemble in his living room, he would sit down at his harmonium — a keyboard instrument played with the right hand while the left pumped air through a bellows fixed at the back — and we would begin chanting one mantra or another: *sri rama jaya rama jaya jaya rama* or *hare krishna hare krishna krishna krishna hare hare*. The chanting and playing would go on until lunchtime.

George wrote "Sat Singing" shortly after John Lennon was murdered outside his New York apartment building. It was George's sister Louise who heard about it on the radio from her home in Illinois and called her brother. Several days later, after the shock had worn down, George gave an interview.

"We saw beyond each other's physical bodies," he told a reporter, seeking to reassure fans that John's soul lived on. "If you can't feel the spirit of some friend who's been that close, then what chance have you got to feel the spirit of Christ or Buddha or whatever else you may be interested in?"

On the popular British talk show *Aspel & Company* he added, "I believe what it says in the Bhagavad-gita: 'Never was there a time when you

did not exist, and there will never be a time when you cease to exist.' The only thing that changes is our bodily condition — I feel him around here.”

No one could blame George for wanting to put a positive spin on the tragedy. But if martyrdom was the price for rising so high in this world, neither could anyone fault him for wondering if he would be next. The Beatles wanted only good for the world, and the world had made their lives miserable. The post-Beatles George wanted only to send out a spiritual message to heal people. Would the world show its appreciation in the same way? If nowhere was safe, where should he go?

“Sat Singing” is a candid portrait of *samadhi* or profound meditation — a journeying within oneself to a place of undisturbed quiet and at-oneness with creation. The *bhakti* or devotional yoga tradition describes meditation as taking place in evolving stages, called *rasas* or tastes, and the stage of union described in George’s song is considered highest.

The meditative journey begins with a passive awareness of the Divine called *shanta-rasa* or neutrality, a peaceful but inactive knowledge of God’s presence. This early stage is compared to sugar cane juice: liquid and pure, but easily shaken. *Shanti* or peace receives much attention in Western yoga classes, but the *bhakti* texts describe peacefulness as only the beginning of what the soul can know.

When the meditator advances to the point of wanting to act on awareness of the Divine, *shanta-rasa* stage erupts into *dasya-rasa* or servitude. The devotional tradition compares this stage to cane juice boiled and thickened into syrup. At this point the meditator experiences awe, reverence, and an excitement over moving meditation out of a yoga studio and into everyday life.

This active stage is a more advanced level of God realization, but servitude nonetheless implies higher and lower stations. When meditation intensifies still further and distinctions of higher and lower disappear, the meditator awakens to a feeling of friendship with Krishna, God in personal form. This is *sakya-rasa*, a sense of God as one personal friend, and it is likened to syrup that has thickened into molasses. India’s ancient wisdom texts recount stories of cowherd boys of Krishna’s village Vrindavan (about two hours south of Delhi), whose games and sporting with Krishna demonstrated

such love. In their friendly exchanges, the cowherd boys are oblivious to his position as Supreme Godhead.

Interaction between friends is casual, informal. Love that has evolved still further sheds that informality and reaches the level of *vatsalya-rasa* or parental affection. The adult residents of Vrindavan manifested this loving mood, and the tradition describes this stage of love as having the consistency of molasses further condensed into crystals.

When love for God achieves its most intense stage, the parental sense of duty disappears. What remains is ecstatic abandon, a “merging” of self-interest into that of the divine Lover. This stage, *madhurya-rasa* to conjugal affection, transcends rules, responsibilities and social conventions. The Gopis or cowherd girls of Vrindavan expressed this highest, passionate love of God, which the tradition compares to rock candy. The union of Krishna and the Gopis is the highest realm of meditative experience in the *bhakti* tradition, a place George hints at in his remarkable song “Sat Singing.”

George never considered himself a guru. We don't find these details of progressive stages of spiritual love in his lyrics. He preferred to let the music speak for itself. There are times, though, like that afternoon in the classroom, when a student's appreciation for what meditation can achieve will send me back to those heady days when my own spiritual life was tender and unformed, and a single line from a George Harrison song somehow managed to magically summarized a shelf-full of feelings and emotions.

Check this website: <http://www.atma.org/>



*The author (front row on the right) and students at Hofstra University*





“I have survived. I am here. Confused, screwed up, but here. So, how can I find my way? Is there a chain saw of the soul, an ax I can take to my memories or fears?”

**Laurie Halse Anderson**

(American writer best known for children's novels.)

# Notable Books

Page

The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermons to the Dead  
- by Stephan A. Hoeller

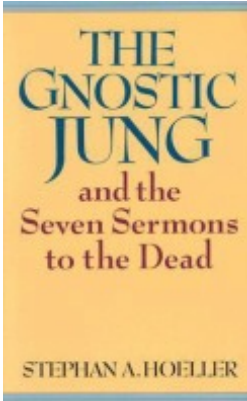
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*"I still love books. Nothing a computer can do can compare to a book. You can't really put a book on the Internet. Three companies have offered to put books by me on the Net, and I said, 'If you can make something that has a nice jacket, nice paper with that nice smell, then we'll talk.' All the computer can give you is a manuscript. People don't want to read manuscripts. They want to read books. Books smell good. They look good. You can press it to your bosom. You can carry it in your pocket."*

Ray Bradbury

# Notable books:



Hoeller, Stephan A.

*The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermons to the Dead.*

Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, Quest Books, 1982, 7th printing, 2009.

Pp. xxviii + 239.

\$ 15.95.

This is exactly the sort of book TPH should be publishing: readable by the general public, authoritative (in that the author knows his subject both deeply and broadly), enriched by personal details, and clearly relevant to traditional Theosophical interests. First, however, a disclaimer: In his preface, Hoeller acknowledges me for having read his manuscript and made suggestions about it. In neither my records nor recollection is any allusion to my having done so; still I must have.

Gnosis is from a Greek work cognate with English know. So it means “knowledge.” But not knowledge about the observable facts of the universe, rather a special knowledge of spiritual mysteries. Historically, the Gnostics were any of several types of first- to third-century AD mystics whom conventional Christians of that time regarded as heretics. Gnosticism includes a “conviction that direct, personal and absolute knowledge of the authentic truths of existence is accessible to human beings, and, moreover, that the attainment of such knowledge must always constitute the supreme

achievement of human life” (p. 11). Jung was born synchronistically in 1875.

Of special interest to readers of this Theosophy Forward Web site are the following remarks: “Theo-Sophic tradition was recognized by Jung to have taken many forms throughout the ages, but also to have been particularly manifest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within the movement of modern Theosophy, enunciated by the Russian noblewoman and world-traveler, Madame H. P. Blavatsky. In such works as *The Undiscovered Self* and *Civilization in Transition* Jung clearly recognized modern Theosophy as an important contemporary manifestation of Gnosticism, and he likened it to a submarine mountain range spreading beneath the waves of the mainstream culture, with only the projecting mountain peaks becoming visible from time to time through the attention received by Mme. Blavatsky, Annie Besant, Krishnamurti and others” (p. 26).



*Carl Jung*



“Remember, if the time should come when you have to make a choice between what is right and what is easy, remember what happened to a boy who was good, and kind, and brave, because he strayed across the path of Lord Voldemort. Remember Cedric Diggory.”

**J. K. Rowling**

(British novelist best known as author of the Harry Potter series)

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## Lengua Española

La Doctrina del Ojo y la Doctrina del Corazón de un estudiante

Serie Nuestra Unidad por Dorothy Bell

Serie Nuestra Unidad por Nicholas Weeks

Serie Nuestra Unidad por John Algeo

La Unidad por Multiplicación, la Multiplicación por Unidades por John Roberts

## Língua Portuguesa

A Doutrina do Olho e a Doutrina do Coração de um estudante

A Nossa Unidade Série por Dorothy Bell

A Nossa Unidade Série por Nicholas Weeks

A Nossa Unidade Série por John Algeo

A Unidade por Multiplicação, a Multiplicação por Unidades por John Roberts

## Lingua Italiana

La Dottrina dell'occhio e la Dottrina del cuore da uno studente

Per la serie "La nostra unita" da Dorothy Bell

Per la serie "La nostra unita" da Nicholas Weeks

Per la serie "La nostra unita" da John Algeo

L'uno attraverso il molteplice, il molteplice attraverso l'uno da John Roberts



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