

# THE INDIAN THEOSOPHIST

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*Editor*

**PRADEEP H. GOHIL**

## A STEP FORWARD

One of the duties of a member of the Theosophical Society is to let everyone know what Theosophy is without pushing others to join the Society. However, common men and women, who are attracted to Theosophy by its main theme of universal brotherhood, can be easily repelled when they hear strange and puzzling concepts like 'Etheric double', 'Prana', 'Kama', 'Manas', 'Buddhi', 'Atma', etc. They feel that all these are very arcane and obscure for them to understand. Their initial keenness and eagerness take a dip and we lose some people who might have become very good Theosophists. Hence it is very necessary to give them a simple but comprehensive explanation of Theosophy.

So if one can describe in clear terms, the seven aspects of man's nature based on theosophical precepts, it has the potential to lead the interested person to a deeper study of the philosophy, science and religion of Theosophy. This can ultimately lead the person to a realization of the central objective of the Society - the universal brotherhood and the possibility of spiritual growth. A book titled *The Seven Principles of Man* by Annie Besant published by the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, is written for the busy men and women of this world to make plain some of the great truths that render life easier to bear and death easier to face.

According to Theosophical teaching, a person is a seven-fold being or has a septenary constitution. One can also say that a person's nature has seven aspects, may be studied from seven different points of view, and is composed of seven principles.

The clearest and best way of all in which to think of a person is to regard him as one, the Spirit or true Self; this belongs to the highest region of the universe and is same for all; it is a ray of God, a spark from the divine fire. This is to become an individual, reflecting the divine perfection, a son that grows into the likeness of his father. For this purpose the true Self is clothed in garment after garment, each garment belonging to a definite region of the universe. Thereby it gains knowledge and experience and all its latent potentialities are gradually drawn out into active powers. So essentially a person is sevenfold, an evolving being, part of whose nature has already been manifested, part remaining latent at present for most of human kind.

The Seven Planes and the Principles functioning thereon are given below:

7. Atma	Spiritual
6. Buddhi	Spiritual
5. Higher Manas	Mental (The thinker or mind)
4. Lower Manas	Mental
3. Kama	Astral
2. Prana or Etheric double	Physical
1. Dense physical body	Physical

Man's consciousness is able to function through as many of these aspects as have been already evolved in him into activity. This evolution, during the present cycle of human development, takes on the lower five out of the seven planes of Nature. The sixth and the seventh plane will not be reached by most of hu-

manity in the present cycle and hence need not be discussed. A 'plane' is merely a condition, a stage, a state. So we might describe man as fitted by his nature, when that nature is fully developed, to exist consciously in seven different conditions or stages or states or planes of being. For example a Rajput warrior of past may be conscious on the physical plane (in the physical body) feeling pain of a cut, hunger and thirst. But in the heat of a battle, his consciousness will be centred in his passionate and emotional part of his nature (Kama) and he may suffer a wound without knowing it. When the excitement is over, consciousness will pass back to the physical and he will feel the pain of his wound. In my school days, I had heard of a Rajput warrior fighting near Bhavnagar with his sword for several hours after his head was chopped off in the war. Now I can understand how that could have happened.

It has also been found convenient, having regard to man's mortal and immortal life, to put these seven principles that we have talked about, into two groups –one containing the three higher principles and therefore called the Triad, the other containing the four lower, and therefore called the Quaternary. The Triad is the deathless part of man's nature, also known as spirit and soul while the Quaternary is the mortal part, also known as the body. So if someone asks me "Who are you?" then my reply can be that "I am a Monad" - an unextended, indivisible and indestructible entity that is the basic or ultimate constituent of the universe and a microcosm of it. Learning of the seven principles of man can certainly be a step forward in one's spiritual development and evolution.

*TIM BOYD*

## **THE OLD MAN AND THEOSOPHY: THE LIFE AND WORK OF BILL LAWRENCE — II**

In the 1960s Chicago youth gangs had become quite pronounced. Whole neighbourhoods were the fiefdoms of 15 to 21 year olds, and there was warring between gang groups.

In response to an inner guidance, Bill Lawrence moved from the suburbs to the heart of the youth gang area. He bought a house which to call it "dilapidated" would be glorifying it — the windows were broken, the heating system had died, and the frame was leaning about ten inches on one side. The house sat right at the boundary where three of the neighborhood gangs would contend. The way it worked was not too different from the way nation states function today: There were certain boundaries recognized by the gangs, and if a member of one gang was found on the territory of another, there would be trouble. They were constantly fighting over territorial rights.

Bill came from a rural community, and all of his life he was used to having flower gardens. So he started planting flowers. A well-meaning neighbour spoke to him one day: "Mr. Lawrence, I see what you're trying to do, but let me tell you, save your effort, because the kids in this neighbourhood never let anything grow." His simple response: "Well, I'm going to have a flower garden!" To which she said, "You can try, but I'll be dead and gone before you grow flowers in this neighbourhood."

At that time, grown people would be sitting on their porches after work, but as soon as it got dark, everybody would go inside because then the "kids" ruled the streets. It was a difficult

time. A lot of these gang kids, because of the violence surrounding them, were hyper alert. It was a survival mechanism. So when this new person, who clearly did not look like the rest of the people in the area, came into the neighbourhood, they started to wonder who he was. They thought he might be with the police. So they would be going around trying to “check out” who he was.

Sometimes Bill would call them aside and talk to them. One of those fellows was a boy they called “Crazy Willie”. At that time Willie was 16 years old and was deeply involved in one of the gangs. I got to know him very well when I moved to Chicago.

Both Willie and the Old Man told me the story about the first time they met. Willie was walking by one day while Bill was working in his front yard. He called Willie over to him: “Say, son, come here.” Bill had told me how Willie had walked over to him, his lips were tight, face hard, and a gun visible under his T-shirt. Willie was suspicious of this man and roughly replied: “What?” The Old Man told him: “I see where you and another boy with a scar in the middle of his forehead, shot someone the night before last.” Bill described how they had done it, how they had been hiding behind something, and shooting at a man. Willie was shaken, but denied it. “I see it, son, what I want you to do is to bring the boy with the scar here. I want to talk to both of you.”

Willie then went back and told his accomplice what happened with the Old Man. He would not believe him and said that Willie must have told him what happened, because nobody had seen them. This, Willie denied, and said the man just wanted to talk to them. Finally, the two boys went to see Bill and he talked to them in a very different way than they had expected. All of these rough young people started to learn that this man could

“see” things. At first they were suspicious, but they soon realized that the Old Man was only telling them things for their own good.

More and more of these young fellows started to gather around the “Old Man”. He would talk with them. Gradually they started helping him work on the house. He taught them how to use a hammer and nail; how to saw wood; how to make a salad; they helped to level the leaning building; they even helped planting flowers! One day he was working in what had become his glorious flower garden, and the same neighbour who had told him he would never be able to grow such a garden, came out on her porch and said: “You know, Mr Lawrence, you have the most beautiful flowers!” The way he told me the story, he was bent over pulling weeds and did not even look up, but told her, “You mean you’re not dead yet?”, and kept pulling weeds.

Bill became known as “the Old Man” when he started working with these kids. There was a tall and skinny kid who became quite attached to him, and Bill would always tell him: “Larry, you look just like a string bean.” So the others nicknamed him “Bean”. So Larry said: “You’re calling me “Bean”, let’s all call him “the Old Man”. The name stuck. At that time Bill was 48, which seemed ancient to these young kids.

Those kids started to help with something they had *never* done: to encourage growth, to encourage life. Soon Bill started to have meetings at his house, where he would call together members from the different warring gangs. This had never happened before. At any other time or place such an encounter would have guaranteed a shootout or a fight, but they all trusted and respected him.

When they came to his door he would tell them the ground rules: “First thing you need to know, there are only two bad people in this house, and I’m both of them! There will be no

violence here. Leave your weapons at the door.” Though hesitant, they would tell him, “I wouldn’t do this for anybody but you!” Then they would pull out a gun, a knife, and so on, and would place them all on the growing pile of armaments by the door. They would then go into the house and he would start to talk to them about the Ageless Wisdom, Theosophy, but in a language that was completely understandable to these young people.

One mistake that many make is to accept assumptions about kids like these, lacking in certain types of opportunities. The most common approach views them as some sort of problem. A fact is that many of these kids were natural born leaders. The type of person it takes to be at the head of an organization of 200 to 500 people is not something accomplished through mere violence. Many of them were brilliant and highly developed old souls, lacking in guidance and exposure to another way of seeing the world. So when they came in contact with the Old Man, and what he had to offer, the hidden and misdirected abilities of a lot of these people blossomed.

Bill would sit them down and talk to them, stepping down the conventional language used to express the Ageless Wisdom into terms to which they could relate. He would talk to them about what we understand as “karma”. It would be something like asking them to think about the flowers that they planted, or an apple tree: “If you plant an apple seed, what do you get?, an apple tree; and from that apple tree, what do you get?, an abundance of fruit, and it is all apples, not grapes, or oranges. It’s all according to the seed that you plant.”

Then he would tell them:” If you plant a seed of hate, of violence, or of killing, what do you expect to grow?” *That* they could see. Out of this group of young people, a number of them took it upon themselves to use their leadership abilities in a totally different manner. They became self-appointed ambassa-

dors of peace. At some risk to themselves, they would go out and make treaties and truces among the opposing gangs.

That particular area of Chicago, which had been a continual hotbed of gang violence, saw the violence steadily diminish. A lot of those young fellows went on to become quite prominent in activities promoting peace and understanding — strong voices for positive change.

During this time Bill Lawrence came in contact with Theosophy and the Theosophical Society (TS). This was going to change his life completely. The first time he went out to the TS headquarters in Wheaton, Illinois, he said he had a feeling that this was a place where he had been before. He described it as a sense of coming home. It was at that time that he would say that the jigsaw puzzle of his life started to come together. It was at that time, too, that he started to have a different vision that kept pestering him. It was about a move to another house. Having done so much work on his present home, he had no inclination or money to purchase another one, but the vision of this house kept coming back to him.

It worked out finally in a remarkable way that he found the house, purchased it, and moved in. He kept working with the gang kids, but another group of people was drawn in at that point. I came in on that wave around 1972-73. The house he moved into was very different from the previous one. It was a 16-room mansion that over the years had declined.

When I first encountered the Old Man I was not looking for Theosophy, or what it had to offer. As a college student on spring vacation, living in New York City, I had come to Chicago to visit a cousin that I was very close to, but had not seen in a couple of years. My reason for going was typical of a 19-year old with time on his hands, going to visit a cousin that I remem-

bered as a fun guy. I thought this was going to be a good vacation.

Barrett's parents were wealthy and had given him far too much. Staying with him this time, however, I noticed that his behaviour was different than I remembered. In addition to a new common sense and responsibility he talked about meditation, reincarnation, and other metaphysical subjects to which I had no previous exposure. I found myself wondering: "What is this?" In the past Barrett would wake up late in the day. Now when I awakened in the morning he would be sitting in the corner of the room, facing the wall with his eyes closed.

It is a statement about my own shortcomings that this behaviour seemed strange to me. Talking common sense is one thing, but just sitting down and not moving? At that time I did not have any frame of reference for such behaviour. Finally I asked him: "Barrett, what are you doing?" He said: "I'm meditating!" He gave me a little book to read which did not particularly interest me. So I said: "Barrett, you've changed since I saw you last! What is going on?" He told me, "You need to meet my teacher, the "Old Man". My plan for a really enjoyable time in Chicago seemed to be melting away.

On hearing this my thought was, "I am on vacation from teachers, and I certainly didn't come to Chicago to meet an old man." So he took me to meet the Old Man. I was prepared to be underwhelmed by this fellow. I did not want to be there. Although he talked about some interesting things, nothing in particular stuck with me. One thing that did stick was that while we were there, a friend of my cousin's who had come with us was having a headache. The Old Man turned to two young men who were studying with him and asked them to "take his headache".

I expected someone was going to get a Tylenol and a glass of water for him. Instead they put a chair in the middle of the

room with one standing in front and the other behind him. They rubbed their hands together and put them close to his head without touching him, waited maybe thirty seconds, shook their hands, and went back to their original seats. Immediately the young man said how much better he felt!

I did not know what to do with what I had just witnessed. I saw something, but, really, I did not see anything! Clearly my cousin's friend was relieved, he was not pretending. Without any familiar label to place on this event, I just let it go.

Finally, the time came to leave. At the door I said goodbye to the Old Man. He looked at me and said: "I'll see you soon, son." I was returning to New York very early the next morning. Having listened to him for an hour, making numerous positive pronouncements, knowing that I would not be seeing him anytime soon, my 19-year-old arrogance came into full bloom, so I told him, "No I doubt I'll see you." He just smiled and repeated, "I'll see you soon, son", and I left.

Back at my cousin's house, while packing to leave, I found that something I had brought with me was missing. We looked for it everywhere and could not find it. After our futile searching my cousin said: "We should probably go ask the Old Man." This made absolutely no sense to me, and I told him that this "Old Man stuff" has gone too far. Feeling that my cousin could use a reality check, I pointed out things that were so obvious to me, namely that the Old Man lived miles away from here, so how could he possibly know anything about it?

Having made my case, like the lawyers on TV, I looked at my cousin awaiting his confession of being wrong. I will never forget the way he looked at me. It was a look of pity, as if I was the one out of touch with reality! I let that pass, feeling that I had made my point.

On this last night of my vacation we had some of the fun I had been hoping for, visiting different people. I did not have a sense of direction in Chicago at that time, so I had no idea of the places my cousin was driving. Later on in the evening we stopped in front of a house. I recognized this house as the Old Man's place. When we came in he looked at me, smiled, and said: "So, we meet again?" Then he added: "The thing you came here to ask me about, you'll get your answer when you get back to New York."

From that point on the conversation switched completely and he started talking about Theosophy, the Ageless Wisdom, about who we are as opposed to who we think and pretend ourselves to be. He started to go very deep. At a couple of points during the evening he diverged in his conversation to describe in very graphic detail specific occurrences in my own life that he had no possible way of knowing in any ordinary manner. At that point I did not have to be further impressed with the fact that he could "see".

He talked for a while and I listened intently. Then he said: "You know, son, I want to share something with you. It is a mantra I made for myself; think about it, it might do you some good." It went: "I know that I am a spark from that eternal flame. I am a grain of sand on this beach of life. I am related to a blade of grass, correlated to a leaf on a tree. I am part of the universal all; what can be denied me?"

The Old Man kept talking. At a certain point he said: "It is time for you to leave." I still wanted more and said, "No, please keep on . . ." He interrupted me saying, "You had better go. Remember, you have to leave early in the morning. Look at your watch!" I realized that four hours had passed in what seemed like the blink of an eye. Already it was early in the morning!

I left and went back to New York. Driving back, I cannot say that I was thinking about the things he had said. There was far too much for me to process. I arrived in New York and still had a couple of days before I had to be back at school. I went for a walk in the park to sort through all that was on my mind. As I walked I found myself thinking about the Old Man's mantra.

When I was in Chicago my cousin had given me a book on yoga to explain something about meditation. I had read only a paragraph, which had not made much of an impression on me. But while walking in the park that one paragraph came back to me. It was specifically about the breath and a way of breathing. Focusing on the in-breath and the out-breath, and thinking about "I am a grain of sand on this beach of life", that was when something happened to me that I will not attempt to describe — not because I don't want to, but because even in the many years since that moment I still have no words. I can talk about the after-effects.

While walking I had a feeling that suddenly everything around became very, very quiet and still. In the midst of New York City, there was not a sound, only an intense, gathering silence. I started to walk down a flight of steps and, literally, in the time between raising one foot and putting it down for the next step, something inside me opened up, like a shell breaking open, and I could "see" in a way that I did not know how to describe.

Later, when I read about people who had mystical experiences, I realized: "That's it!" There were a number of side effects associated with the experience, but from that point on it became very clear that there was a great deal more to life than I had previously imagined. Many of the pieces started to fit together, and a much deeper level of understanding unfolded.

This heightened experience stayed with me for a couple of weeks, then died down. There is an often-quoted expression: "It 196/ THE INDIAN THEOSOPHIST, May/ 2021

is better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all.” It is one of those truisms that only become clear when the intense suffering of the loss has faded. Having lived in, then been removed from such an exalted awareness was the most miserable experience I could have imagined. It was clear that the experience had been generated by my contact with the Old Man, so that is when I decided I had to return to Chicago.

A year later, when I returned, there were many young people gathering around the Old Man from different places. Some had met him and had their own extraordinary experiences. Every Wednesday night there would be meetings at the house. At one point musicians from all over Chicago started to come. Usually the gathering would not end until the morning hours. These young musicians felt that their music had a potency to heal and uplift, and they came to the Old Man sensing that he could help them go deeper. Often they had had transcendent experiences while performing. Out of that group healing teams were formed, and much work was done.

Initially I had taken a term off from school, planning to spend three months with him. There is an expression: “Man plans and God laughs”. The three months turned out to be thirteen years, until the day he died. In the background of my mind I had thought that since my experience had resulted from having met him one time, if I stay with him for three months it will be permanent. But, of course, that is not the way it works. On this path we get occasional glimpses that serve to give us motivation to study and do the work required to deepen.

The Old Man died in 1987, but a community had formed around him that continued for another fifteen years. Gradually people turned their attention to different areas of their own lives that they wanted to pursue. So the community had its time, and then it ceased.

From time to time, if we are lucky and aware, we find ourselves in the presence of exceptional people. As difficult as it is for us to accept, the message they all share is that what we see in them is not as great as what they see in us. The difference is not that they are somehow endowed with gifts unavailable to the rest of us, but rather it is their openness to live a life that is authentic. The Old Man was completely and fully himself, not an imitation of anyone else.

Authenticity and lack of pretence remove the barriers blocking our access to an inner source. To anyone who makes themselves available, that inner life expresses itself in the unique manner suited to their development. The Old Man had a powerful personality which was attractive to many people. But its value was in his ability to use it as a tool for something altruistic, more profound.

(Courtesy: *The Theosophist*, April 2021)

**The Theosophic life must be a life of service. Unless we are serving, we have no right to live. We live by the constant sacrifice of other lives on every side, and we must pay it back; otherwise to use an ancient phrase, we are but thieves and do not repay the gift. Service is the great illuminator. The more we serve the wiser we become, for we learn wisdom not by studying but by living.**

**Annie Besant**

**‘The Theosophic Life’**



## THE SHADOWS IN THE CAVE

Madam H.P. Blavatsky was a remarkable person, not merely in her age but of all ages. She has left for posterity a literary, intellectual and spiritual heritage as rich as it is wide. Apart from her books she was a prolific writer on a variety of subjects. Her four major books *The Key to Theosophy*, *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Voice of the Silence* indicate her range of thinking. They follow a significant and meaningful order.

Her *Key* satisfied the intellectual demand of her age with abstruse theosophical philosophy. In *Isis* she gave to the people of her time, greatly fascinated by the phenomenon of spiritualism or lower psychism—a subject ridiculed by scientific circles in the nineteenth century - the strength of her great authority, with the ease with which she could, and did, perform such phenomena. It is noteworthy this subject has gained much respectability today as extra-sensory perception.

But she warned people in no uncertain terms- that mere spiritualistic experiments would not take them very far in meeting scientific challenges. She told evenly votaries of physical science; ‘There are more things in heaven and on earth than are thought of in your philosophy.’ HPB thus fought on two fronts, that is the forces of materialistic science and morbid lower psychism. She was much misunderstood due to her adverse stand on spiritualism after what looked like a semblance of a nominal initial support for it. She indicated that only a clear philosophy

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\*Was a reputed author and lecturer and a senior member of the Indian Section.

of occultism could answer science practised by Prof. Tyndall and his like who had declared in clear and unmistakable terms that; ‘In matter lies the promise and potency of every form of life’.

To him life was not qualitatively different - it was only a part of the permutations and combinations of matter - and so matter alone was the answer to the problems posed by Life. It was in answer to this statement that HPB advocated the formulation of a clear philosophy of occultism and this she did magnificently in her monumental *SD*. Through three postulates in the *SD*, namely the principle of Identity, the principle of Recurrence and the principle of Periodicity, she gave the whole story of man and the universe - Cosmogogenesis and Anthropogenesis. It was a great revelation to all. HPB’s *SD* is, as she herself stated - a synthesis of science, religion and philosophy - a veritable masterpiece of the history of the world’s literature. But occultism too was not the last word in HPB’s magnificent recipe for humanity. Significantly she ends *Isis*: ‘It needs the right perception of things objective to finally discover that the only world of reality is subjective.’

This is a strange statement. Is the perception of reality subjective, dependent upon the perceiver and his angle of perception? If so, reality is the product of the vagaries of the observer. It must then vary from one perceiver to another. Here one finds an echo of what J. Krishnamurti was to say after nearly a century in his book *Truth and Reality*. Krishnamurti speaks of actuality, reality and truth. Actuality is what the senses cognize; reality is what the mind perceives; and truth is what is irrespective of the perceiver’s angle of perception. Reality is indeed what the mind perceives. Sankara’s classic illustration is of the rope mistaken for a snake. For the person who sees the rope as a snake, the perception is real, the sight of the snake frightens him, for him

the snake is real, and yet it is not, for to the other person, it may not appear as a snake. This is indeed the psychology behind the perception of the so-called reality. It is the perception by the mind's and there is much selectivity that operates in this act of mind's perception, coloured by its own projections. The mind sees what it wants to see, particularly under the impact of its own unfulfilled experience of the past, impelled by the pressure of psychological memory or the memory of *rasa* as the *Bhagavadgita* puts it. And so HPB says that in the right perception of things objective, one realizes that what one looks at is nothing but subjective and man mistakenly regards it as something that exists *per se*.

It is very interesting that HPB and Krishnamurti should refer to what is called as the Real as in the ultimate analysis only the projection of the mind and therefore subjective. HPB in her books deals with the nature of threefold perception, namely, sensorial, extrasensorial or psychic and occult. In this there is the duality of the perceiver and perceived, the observer and observed. Such perception is fragmented and lacks wholeness. Surely the right perception is that where the things are perceived as a whole, but this the mind is unable to see for the mind assumes the role of the perceiver. In the famous Hindu spiritual text the *Ashtawakra Samhita* the teacher says to the pupil that: 'Here lies your bondage in that you have created another perceiver.'

This other perceiver is the mind and one accepts what this other perceiver shows. The teacher further says: 'Remove this false perceiver if you would be free from your bondage'. The mind as perceiver enables us to see only that which it has projected. That one sees what one has projected is recognized in modern science, particularly modern physics, in the phenomenon of the 'looking glass universe'. We live in this looking

glass universe where one can see what the mind has placed in front of the looking glass. Modern physics is facing a crisis which the scientist F. Capra calls 'the crisis of perception'. In a very revealing introduction to *Quantum Questions*, Ken Wilber says: 'What are the respective roles of science and religion? Does physics even deal with Reality (capital 'R') - or is it necessarily confined to studying the shadows in the cave?'

The nineteenth century scientists were absolutely certain that what they were observing was reality, the only reality, but the twentieth century scientists are equally certain that they do not know what reality is, and they are probably only looking at shadows. They say that their shadows have changed from what Plato's caveman saw - but nevertheless what they are looking at are only shadows - they do not know what the substance is. This is very much like what the Hindu non-dual philosophers used to call the rope being mistaken for a snake. We see a new concept of *maya* emerging where even the scientifically trained are talking of the shadows in the cave.

It has to be noted that in every act of perception - whether sensorial, psychic or occult, there always persists the duality of the perceiver and the perceived, the observer and the observed. F. Capra tells us that 'in every act of perception, the perceiver is involved'. With the intrusion of the perceiver the perception is naturally vitiated, it gets fragmented so that there is never the perception of the whole. Life, however is the whole - it can be known only as a whole or none at all. This is the crisis of perception which science has come across and which Hindu philosophy referred to as *maya* or a deluded perception. This makes one realize that the only world of reality is the subjective, as HPB says in *Isis*.

Where the perceiver is present the vision is invariably clouded and shrouded in subjectivity. There is no wonder, there-

fore, that modern science is talking of the subjectivity of science— it is erroneous to regard scientific perception as objective. It can talk of objectivity only when it can know the silencing of the subjective factor - the factor of the perceiver.

J. Krishnamurti used to say that right perception is that where there is neither the perceiver nor the perceived. Now the perception has no existence *per se* - it is the creation of the perceiver- and as Patanjali says, it is sustained by the perceiver for his own interest. Just as in meditation it is not the thought that is the problem - the problem is the thinker. The perceiver vitiates all acts of perception. We are all concerned with right action in daily life - but most often we forget that right action is possible only when there is right perception. It is only when the perceiver is eliminated that one can see what is - otherwise one must perceive shadows in the cave - the shadows cast by the perceiver or observer. In a short article like this it is not possible to go into the problem of the elimination of the perceiver as discussed by HPB - nor where she is concerned with the problem of sensorial or psychic or occult perceptions - but in mysticism which she discusses in *The Voice of the Silence* wherein she says: ‘the right perception of existing things, the knowledge of the non-existent’!

Surely the existent or the manifested gives one a fragmented vision - it is the unmanifest that is whole! Mysticism is indeed the knowledge of the unmanifest. And so the knower himself has to be silent. It is only when there is the end of knowledge and therefore the end of the knower that there is the dawn of wisdom. And Theosophy is not concerned with the acquisition of knowledge but with the dawning of wisdom. HPB says in *SD*(vol. I,p.323,Adyar edn.): ‘The *SD* teaches no atheism, except in the sense underlying the Sanskrit word, *nastika*, a rejection of idols. In this sense every occultist is a *nastika*.’

When an occultist becomes a *nastika* then he enters the precincts of mysticism where all idols and images of the mind have ceased to exist - where the cave itself has disappeared and therefore one is vouchsafed the vision of Reality, completely free from the shadows cast by the mind.

Having spoken about the sensorial, psychic and occult perceptions, HPB indicates the mystic way in *The Voice of the Silence* in the clearest manner, the way where alone the vision of the Real, unobstructed by the shadows cast by the perceiver himself no more intervene: ‘Thou hast to study the voidness of the seeming full, the fullness of the seeming void... Thou hast to feel thyself all thought and yet exile all thoughts from thy soul.’

(Courtesy: *The Theosophist*, May 1991)

**What is called for, if we are to promote human progress in a real sense, is not any superficial activity following an established pattern, but an endeavour to awaken people to certain fundamental truths which have roots in their own being. To awaken others, we must of course be ourselves awake.**

**N. Sri Ram**

*The Nature of our Seeking*

## NEWS AND NOTES

### Bombay

January – June 2021 Commemorative Issue  
Blavatsky Lodge – Theosophical Society

The ‘Synergy’ issue released on Adyar Day 17 February 2021: A virtual meeting of BTF & Blavatsky Lodge was held with compliments of the Publisher & Managing Trustee Dr. Rajam Pillai of Synergy Foundation Trust and distributed to Brethren in Mumbai and posted to the Indian Section TS, Varanasi & Theosophical Society Adyar. It was also sent to many TS Lodges abroad. This colourful issue, full of photos focused on Theosophy, commemorates 140th Year of Blavatsky Lodge TS, Mumbai, established by the Founders Madam H. P. Blavatsky and Col. H. S. Olcott on 20 February 1880, with Bro. Arni Narendran’s article on ‘*A Lotus Flower in Full Bloom*’.

The issue is a window to spiritual life abroad with articles on *Yazidi Temple and Art inspired by Spiritual Insight*. Other contents are *Report of Students’ Symposium, Book Review, other information and Tributes to Bro. Bertie*, who was on Advisory Committee of Synergy.

### BLAVATSKY LODGE’S MEETINGS :

Bro. Arni Narendran conducts the study of Bro. P. Pavri’s book ‘*Theosophy Explained in Questions & Answers*’ on every Monday. Interest in study of this book is rekindled, thanks to reprint of the book by Bro. Rusi Toddywalla. Bro. Navin Kumar has sent soft copy to Brethren to facilitate their interactive virtual study sharing personal experiences.

Sis. Aban Patel had conducted the study of C.W. Leadbeater’s book *Inner Life* on every Friday. She completed, the First Part of the book with her in-depth study and encouraging Brethren to think and speak on the points under study.

Bro. Navin Kumar continued with study of *The Light on the Path* encouraging Brethren to think together.

Sis. Aban Amroliwalla gave talks on (1) ‘How we remember our Past Lives’ based on C. Jinarajadasa’s book, (2) Prayers & Effects, (3) Raj Yoga &– Pratyahara and (4) Blessings of Meditation.

Sis. Aban Patel is conducting the study of C.W. Leadbeater’s book *Power & Use of Thoughts* with slides of *Thought Forms* from CWL & Annie Besant’s book *Thought Forms*. The study was started on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

Meditation at the end of Blavatsky Lodge’s meetings: Bro. Arni Narendran conducts short meditations for Welfare and Peace and Harmony.

### VASANTA – GANESH – JYOTI LODGES’ MEETINGS:

Study of *Sevabhava Shikshan*, Gujarati book based on J. Krishnamurti’s teachings about ‘How to impart Education’ is conducted by Bro. Vinayak Pandya on every Wednesday. Dr. Ajay Hora and Bro. Harshvadan Sheth of Ahmedabad are Mentors. Brethren are encouraged to share their experiences as a teacher.

Study of a Gujarati book *Mrityu ni Pankhar ma Vasant* (Spring in Autumn of Death) was started on 18 March 2021. This book is a true story of a 13-year young girl Stuti ‘Atama-

Swarupe' (as a soul) after an accidental death communicating with her Dear Ones and close associates about the journey of her soul after death. This book is written by her mother Usha Chaturvedi. Late Shri Rohit Mehta, the then General Secretary of the Indian Section, in the Foreword of this book writes that 'the book will be a solace to people on death of their Dear-one'. Now the study is being conducted by Bro. Vinayak Pandya on every Thursday.

Bro. Vinayak Pandya displays book on screen to help the participants, who do not have a copy of the book. Their meetings end with closing prayers rendered by Bro. Bhavesh Pandya.

Bro. Arni Narendran - a Speaker at Virtual Meetings: Bro Arni Narendran delivered a talk on the 'Universal Mind' at the Adamant Lodge, Research Seminar on 'The Secret Doctrine'. Other speakers on the event were Mr. Vladimir Yaryi, Ms. Evegeniya Shaboornikova, (Moscow), Ms. Ifigenia Kastamoneti (Greece), Ms. Esther Zigane (Australia), Ms. Brigitte Taquin (France).

Bro Arni Narendran along with Bro. Luke Ironside, convened a Spanish meeting of the Virtual Centre of Theosophical Studies. The participants were Ms. Stepahnie Vargas (Bolivia), Ms. Agnes Mar (Costa Rica) and Ms. Tapashri Ganguly (United Kingdom). It was held on 6 March. This first-ever Spanish virtual meeting will attract more youth towards Theosophy.

### **Royalaseema**

A conference on "Quest for the Best" in pursuit of the Ageless Wisdom was organized under the auspices of the Federation (RTF) on 28 February 2021. It was attended by 34 young

participants. The conference was inaugurated by Bro. Pradeep H. Gohil, President of the Indian Section, TS. In his inaugural address he stressed the need to keep up the ideals of society above all. He appreciated the remarkable way in which the Federation is carrying out its activities because of which 176 new members have joined TS.

The participants were invited to express their views on the theme of the conference. Then, in the post-lunch session, activities were conducted in context of the first and third object of the TS. A symposium was chaired by Bro N. C. Krishna, National Lecturer and Vice-President of RTF. The speakers were Geetha Radhika, Prasuna, Sharan and Suresh. A special programme "Reflections" on new ways and means to take Theosophy to youth was organized.

The entire programme was anchored by the Joint Secretary of the Federation Bro. M. Narayana Rao and the programme ended with vote of thanks given by Bro. S.R. Venkat Rao.

Keeping the present situation in view, precautionary measures were strictly followed.

Four members of the Federation led by the Secretary Bro. M.S. Raghunath visited the following Lodges in the month of February: Dharmavaram, Rayadurgam Lodge Srigrurukrupa TS at Amarapuram. Study was conducted at Rayadurgam Lodge and on the next day Bharat Samaj Pooja was conducted by children of the Lodge. The children were presented T-Shirts with our Logo in the front and Study, Meditation and Service at back which was well appreciated. A study was conducted at Amarapuram and 40 children attended Pooja there. They were

presented T-Shirts and later a variety programme was organized on how to create interest among the children regarding theosophical activities. This Lodge is nurturing youth under the guidance and leadership of Dr Basavaraju along with Bro. Murthy, Chandrakeerti, Sri Eeranna and Lakshman. Then, the members visited Lodge at Chittor and the Jignasa Lodge at Madanapally.

A Two-day programme with Bharat Samaj Pooja and Induction programme for newly joined members was organized on 20-21 March. In this programme the newly joined members were given a small information booklet with objects, list of Lodges with phone no, important days, pictures of founders and presidents of TS. Besides, a devotional meeting for children was organized in which theosophy was explained through stories, poems and hymns of Great Philosophers

Regular training of Resource Persons is conducted by Bro. M. Narayana. Besides, many innovative and inspiring programmes have been introduced to encourage and welcome youth to TS. In this connection whatever feedback is received and the drawbacks which are pointed out are studied by the members and serious thought is given to the suggestions and opinions given for strengthening the work of the Federation.

### **Utkal**

The following activities were conducted from October 2020 to March 2021:

The Utkal Theosophical Federation invited Sis. Sabine Van Osta, Gen Secretary, T S, Belgium, who delivered lecture on “Self -Development in the light of Service” through on-line Google meet. Sis.Paurnamasi Pattnaik introduced the speaker

and Dr. Chittararanjan Satapathy, President, UTF, gave concluding remarks. The programme was held on 17 October 2020.

The “Foundation Day of the Theosophical Society” was conducted through on-line Google meet on 17 November 2020. Dr. K.P. Padhy and Prof. Partha Sarathi Prasad Sarangi delivered lecture on this occasion on the significance of the Theosophy and Theosophical Society.

Late Ramesh Prasad Mohanty Memorial Lecture was held on 24 January 2021 through on-line Google meet. Bro. Satyabrata Rath, Secretary, Sanat Kumar Lodge and Council member delivered a lecture on “Exoteric and Esoteric Philosophy”.

“Adyar Day” was celebrated in the UTF Hall, Gautam Nagar, Bhubaneswar, on 17 February 2021. Bro. Dhruva Prasad Panda, Sis. Manjushree Mohanty, Sis. Sailabala Acharya and Sis. Bandana Panda delivered talks on this occasion on the significance of “Adyar Day”. Bro. P K Mahapatra, Vice-President(UTF) and National Lecturer, presided over the meeting and spoke on the life & contribution of the founders and other great personalities of the TS. The meeting concluded with the vote of thanks offered by the Secretary- Sis. Paurnamasi Pattnaik.

Dr. R. C. Rath Memorial Lecture was held on 20 March 2021 in the UTF Hall, Gautam Nagar, Bhubaneswar. Bro. R.C. Pattnaik, President of Sanat Kumar Lodge and President- TSRA, BBSR, delivered a talk on this occasion on “Integrated Sound”. It was followed by question & answer session. Dr. Deepa Padhi, Int. Vice-President, spoke on the life and contribution of Dr. R.C. Rath who was the founder President of UTF and President

of Cuttack Lodge. Dr. Chittaranjan Satapathy-President, UTF, presided over the meeting and introduced the speaker and spoke on the contributions of Dr Rath. The meeting concluded with the vote of thanks given by Sis. Purnamasi Pattnaik.

Bro. P.K. Mahapatra, Vice-President, UTF and National Lecturer, conducted Odia programme on “Brahmavidya Byakhana” through Google meet by different speakers. It was held on every Saturday from 4pm to 5pm.

The members of Barabati Lodge conducted meeting on Google meet on every Monday from 6.00pm to 7.00pm in which study of the book *The Secret of Self Realization* written by I.K. Taimni and *Man and Bodies* were taken up by Prof. Sahadeb Patro-former President, UTF and Bro. B. S. Mohanty- Secretary, Barabati Lodge, respectively. Prof. Patanjali Tripathy, Vice-President of the Lodge, hosts the programme. Prof. C. A. Shinde was also invited to give talks on various topics.

The meetings and discussions on the book *Dhammapada* are being held at Cuttack Lodge. These meetings were started in January 2021 and are held on 4 days in every week.

The members of Cuttack Lodge celebrated “Adyar Day” on 17 February. Dr. Chinmayee Mohapatra, Vice-President and Bro. S. S. Pati, Secretary of the lodge, delivered talks on the significance of “Adyar Day”. Dr. Chittaranjan Satapathy, President, UTF, presided and also delivered talk on this occasion.

Meetings are held on every Sunday in Bhubaneswar in which the study of the book *Talk on the path of the Occultism (At the Feet of the Master)* is conducted by Sis. Purnamasi Pattnaik.

Meetings are held on every Tuesday at Siddhartha Lodge through on-line Google meet on the book *Talk on the Path of Occultism (At the feet of the Master)*. Sis. Mitalini Mahapatra, President of Siddhartha Lodge, speaks on every Sunday from 4.00pm to 5.00pm on the subject “Mahatma Letters”. Sis. Vasumati Agnihotri, Sis Bibha Saxena and Bro. U.S. Pandey, National Lecturer were invited to deliver talk on different subjects in the Annual Conference of the Lodge as well as on other days.

A meeting of the Utkal Theosophical Federation was conducted at on 22 February, 2021 at the residence of Bro. Dhrub Prasad Panda in Bhubaneswar Fourteen senior citizens of Cosmopolis attended the meeting where Sister Purnamasi Pattanaik spoke on “Structure and function of human body with special reference to involution and evolution of Monad.” Sis. Snigdha Padhi, member of Sambal Theosophical Lodge, introduced the speaker and the topic from Vedantic perspective where she briefly presented the process of creation from subtle *Tanmatra* to gross *Panchamahbhuta* and three bodies. The talks were *Jugalbandi* discussion of Vedanta and Theosophy arriving at the undisputed conclusion that Atma, the pure consciousness is beyond the bodies. The meeting was enlivened by lively participation of Bro. Dhruba Panda, Sis. Bandana Panda, Sis Swarnalata Das and the members in the question-answer session.

Bro A P Lokande, National Lecturer, delivered talk on “Discipleship” for Siddhartha Theosophical Lodge, Bhubaneswar. It was held on 30 March 2021.

The Federation(UTF) is conducting on-line study class on the book *Freedom from the Known* it is held on every Monday between 4-5 pm.

### **U.P. & Uttarakhand**

Dharma Lodge, Lucknow, organized on-line meetings on 03, 10, 17 and 24 March, 2021, when talks were delivered on the topics ‘Dreams’, ‘Cycles’, ‘Occult functions of some human organs and their correspondences’, and ‘Service of Humanity’ by Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri, Bro. U. S. Pandey, Bro. Pramil Dwivedi and Bro. Ashok Gupta respectively. A Question and Answer session on theosophical theme was organized on 31 March.

Nirvan Lodge, Agra, observed its foundation day on 04 March 2021 and on this occasion it organized a seminar on the topic “What did I gain from Theosophy?” Besides, the Lodge conducted on-line meetings on 11, 18 and 25 March, when talks were delivered on the topics ‘Responsible Nutrition’, ‘Bhagavad Gita and its values’ and ‘Gita-Bodh and Dhyana’ by Dr. Amit Srivastava, Dr. Neelam Bhatnagar and Bro. H.B. Pandey respectively.

Bharat Samaj Pooja was performed on 14 March by Bro. Gyaneesh Kumar Chaturvedi.

Pragya Lodge, Lucknow, organized an on-line panel discussion on 07 March on the theme ‘Life after Death’ with participation of Bro. U. S. Pandey, Bro. S. K. Pandey, Bro. N. C. Krishna and Sis. Varsha Patel as panelists. The programme was coordinated by Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri.

It conducted on-line meetings on 14 and 21 March when

talks were delivered on the topics ‘Gita-Kabir-Krishnamurti’, and ‘Yoga- An Introduction’. The speakers were Sis. Jaishree Kannan and Bro. S. B. R. Mishra respectively.

Sarvahitkari Lodge, Gorakhpur, held on-line meeting on 21 March 2021 in which a talk on ‘Shiv in the Secret Doctrine’ was delivered by Bro. L. S. Shukla.

On-line meeting was held under the auspices of Prayas Lodge, Ghaziabad, on 07 March in which Sis. Sandhya Rani delivered a talk on the topic ‘Inner Meaning of Theosophical Society’s Emblem’. During the meetings held on 14, 21 and 28 March, Sis. Suvralina Mohanty conducted study of the book *The Masters and the Path*- Chapters 1 to 3.

Sis. Suvralina Mohanty conducted on-line study class for children and youth on ‘Time and Timeless.’ These were held on every Sunday morning at 07.30 am.

The study of the book *The Voice of the Silence* was continued by Sis. Lalita Khatri at NOIDA Lodge. These were held on 07 and 21 March.

Chohan Lodge, Kanpur, organized on-line meetings on 07, 14, 21 and 28 March 2021 when talks were delivered on the topics ‘Spiritual Path and entry into this’, ‘Ten Commandments’ and ‘Discrimination’ (contd. on 21 and 28 March) by Bro. S. S. Gautam, Bro. S. B. R. Mishra, and Bro. S.S. Gautam respectively..

### **Contribution in other Federations:**

Study/Talks in Delhi Federation:

Smt. Vibha Saxena, Secretary of Noida Lodge, delivered



on-line talks at Indraprastha Lodge, Delhi, on 14 and 21 March. The subject of her talk was “Occult Science and Theosophy— Lifting a corner of the veil”. She also delivered an on-line talk at Shankar Lodge on “Practical Theosophy”. It was held on 27 March 2021.

Bro. S.B.R. Mishra, President of Gorakhpur Lodge, delivered an on-line talk at Indraprastha Lodge, Delhi, on the topic “Law of Karma”. It was held on 28 March 2021.

#### **Contribution in the Indian Section on-line programmes:**

Smt. Vibha Saxena delivered on-line talks on “Mahatma Letters 44 and 45” on 12 and 19 March 2021.

#### **Contribution in International Programmes:**

International Seminar on The Secret Doctrine: Bro. U. S. Pandey joined as a panelist in an international seminar organized on-line by ‘Adamant’ Lodge, Moscow of the Theosophical society in Russia. The theme was “Sloka 4, of Stanza I of the Secret Doctrine-Cosmogogenesis”. It was held on 27 March, 2021.

Several members from countries like Finland, Russia, England, Greece, South Korea and India participated in this seminar.

#### **National Lecturer**

On invitation by Delhi Federation, Bro. U. S. Pandey directed a study on “Rejuvenation and Self-transformation by Awareness”. It was held on 12, 13 and 14 March, 2021, in which members from several federations joined.

On invitation by President of the Theosophical Society in

Philippines, Bro. U. S. Pandey delivered an on-line talk on “Truth, Goodness, Beauty” or “*Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram*” (in Samskrit) in their joint lodge meeting held on 20 March 2021. Members and other persons from several countries like New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia, Greece, Kenya and India participated in it.

During this talk he covered extensively the points such as; Truth- three aspects of everything- being, thing, quality, action etc. in manifested universe, mystical trinity, what is truth, two levels of truth, conditions/requirements for perceiving truth, real knowledge, significance of paradoxical statements in comprehension of truth, four aspects of Truth; Goodness- being truth in action, *Shivam* a mystic in action, First and efficient cause-the Supreme Good, The GOD, real spiritual seership in ‘Union to the Deity’ or *Samadhi*, manifesting as Cosmic order and harmony; Beauty-its varying ideas, hidden in things, manifestation as secret laws of nature, perception possible when heart being pure and self-forgotten, aspect of one Reality, essential elements of beauty, lying in the eye of beholder, transient nature of corporeal beauty in forms, childlike purity needed to perceive beauty, essential to free expression of life; Truth, Good and Beauty- an integrated phrase of three words which are inseparable and co-existent, Truth and Goodness being fundamental values in Greek thought, parts of eightfold path preached by Lord Buddha, attributes of perfect being, Devachanic experience as bliss; Bliss and Beauty being perceived together; Points of the Art of Right living in the light of perception of this phrase- Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

## OBITUARY

Bro. Rustam R. Dalal (Diploma No. 68529) passed to peace on 27 April 2021. He was a member of Blavatsky Lodge, Bombay, from 14 January 1986. He held some responsible posts in connection with the work of the TS. He was a member of the National Executive Committee of the Indian Section and the Indian Section Council for a few years; was National Treasurer of the Indian Section from 2005 to 2007 and Treasurer of Bombay Theosophical Federation for the last few years. Besides, he was the editor of *The Bombay Theosophical Bulletin*. Being an active and energetic member he, along with his wife Mrs. Mahazaver Dalal, always encouraged the youths to attend the programmes organized by the Lodge/Federation.

Bro. Erv. Godrej Ratanji Panthaky, member of Blavatsky Lodge with membership of 23 years passed away on 12 December 2020. A Lawyer and Head Priest of Banaji Limji Agiyari was a Theosophist at heart. He used to periodically give donations to Blavatsky Lodge and was particular to send his fees with Late Dr. Darius H. Umrigar.

Blavatsky Lodge Library's member Dr. Minocher Nariman Sahukar passed away on 5 January 2021. He was keenly interested in Theosophy and even at the age of 93 years was particular to receive his copy of BTF Bulletin.

Shri Rai Annpurna Prasad (Dip. No. 100439) of Gorakhpur lodge passed to peace on 27.02.2021.

Sis.Pravata Nalini Rautray, a sincere and devoted member of Sanat Kumar Lodge, Bhubaneswar, passed away on 12 Dec 2020

Bro. Narayan Pradhan, one of the senior most members of Laxmi Narayan, passed to peace on 16 March 2021. He was a very active and dedicated member of the Utkal Theosophical Federation. He had also represented the Indian Section Council member for one term.

Bro. Mohan Lal Khatri (Diploma No. 51274 & LMC 1862) passed to peace on 22 April at his home in Noida.

Dr. Sunilbhai Thakar (Diploma No 102007), a member of Purnand- Petlad, Anand, passed to peace on 21/4/2021.

Bro. Vishvabandhu( Vasudev) Keshavlal Jani(Diploma No. 47464) passed away on 26 April. The programme of Rohit Lodge, Ahmedabad were being held at his residence in Savita Society for many years.

Bro. Ganpatbhai Vasava (Diploma No. 99077) of Shabari-Kantidara Lodge, Bharuch, passed to peace on 26 April 2021

May the souls of the aforementioned Brothers be blessed with peace.

## **THE GOLDEN STAIRS**

A Clean life, an open mind,  
A pure heart, an eager intellect,  
An unveiled spiritual perception,  
A brotherliness for one's co-disciple,  
A readiness to give and receive advice and instruction,  
A loyal sense of duty to the Teacher,  
A willing obedience to the behest of TRUTH,  
Once we have placed our confidence in,  
And believe that Teacher to be in possession of it,  
A courageous endurance of personal injustice,  
A brave declaration of principles,  
A valiant defence of those who are unjustly attacked,  
And a constant eye to the ideal of human progression  
And perfection which the Secret Science depicts,  
These are the Golden Stairs  
Up the step of which  
The learner may climb  
To the temple of Divine Wisdom.

**H.P. BLAVATSKY**