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Editor

PRADEEP H. GOHIL

A STEP FORWARD

There have been many incidents all along the last several years of the abuse of sacred names and terms of the Theosophical Society. The sad part is that these names are used with utmost confidence of knowing what the higher ones have said or done. How can we blame an ordinary theosophist when even a member of the Indian Section Council recently invoked the higher ones over a very petty matter? Whenever such comments are made, they may or may not be true. At my level, I certainly cannot give an answer. 'The burden of proof rests with them'. Some of them, 'a few - very few, indeed - have either distinctly lied or were hallucinated when boasting' with such words. It is best not to let their words enter into our mind.

Madam Blavatsky was once asked if she has written *The Secret Doctrine* with inspiration from the Masters. She mentioned very candidly :

“Certainly; she says expressly in the Preface that she gives out the doctrines that she has learnt from the Masters, but claims no inspiration whatever for what she has lately written. As for our best Theosophist, they would also in this case far rather that the names of the Masters had never been mixed up with our books in any way. With few exceptions, most of such works are not only imperfect, but positively erroneous and misleading. Great are the desecrations to which the names of two of the Masters have been subjected. There is hardly a medium who has not claimed to have seen them. Every bogus swindling society, for commercial purposes, now claims to be guided and directed by 'Masters',

often supposed to be far higher than ours! Many and heavy are the sins of those who have advanced these claims, prompted either by desire for lucre, vanity, or irresponsible mediumship. Many persons have been plundered of their money by such societies, which offer to sell the secrets of power, knowledge, and spiritual truth for worthless gold. Worst of all, the sacred names of Occultism and the holy keepers thereof have been dragged in this filthy mire, polluted by being associated with sordid motives and immoral practices, while thousands of men have been held back from the path of truth and light through the discredit and evil report which such shams, swindles, and frauds have brought upon the whole subject. I say again, every earnest Theosophist regrets today, from the bottom of his heart, that these sacred names and things have ever been mentioned before the public, and fervently wishes that they had been kept secret within a small circle of trusted and devoted friends.”*

I still wonder what is it that prompts even members of the Theosophical Society to invoke the higher ones in trifle matters!! Is it to show off, is it to win an argument or is it to become popular? I feel it is likely to be all three of these. One must just know that the higher ones are beyond the scope of our knowledge. We simply cannot demean them by such statements about them. Do we even know 1% of their capabilities? Not abusing the sacred names and term would be the best step forward for all of us.

* H.P. Blavatsky, *THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY*, 1st Simplified Adyar Edition, 8th Reprint, 2020, The Indian Bookshop, Indian Section, TS, Varanasi, pp.290-291

THREE THOUGHTS

RECENTLY, during the course of a week, I had the opportunity to be exposed to three stimulating streams of thought: two from conversations, and one from a written article. Each was framed according to its own particular sphere, but, at least for me, there seemed to be a uniting thread of relevance to living a spiritual life.

(1) The first was a conversation that took place among three people: two Tibetan Buddhist Rinpoches and a political figure and philosopher in the Indian social and political realm. The conversation was supposed to cover the theme of “Ethics, Meditation, and Wisdom in a Turbulent World”. In actual fact, the conversation stopped at ethics. Ethics (*sīla*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and wisdom (*prajñā*) are the final three perfections (*pāramitās*) as listed in Buddhism and in *The Voice of the Silence* by H. P. Blavatsky (HPB).

The realm of ethics is often expressed in terms of specific moralities — things that you do, and things that you do not do. Generally, what you should not do gets the greatest attention, much like the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament — “Thou shalt not...” So it is with the *pañcha-sīla*, or the Five Precepts: no killing, no stealing, no lying, no taking of intoxicating substances, and no wrong use of sexual functions. In its most superficial sense these are behavioural prohibitions related to outer actions. As with all valid teachings, the intent and effects of attention to these ethical precepts are not isolated to our outer living.

The focus of this ethical approach is to do no harm (*ahimsa*) to ourselves, or others, by abstaining from killing, stealing, lying, or intoxication in its varied forms. We observe our tendencies to steal praise or recognition from others, the various untruths we tell our-

selves to prop up our chosen identities, and so on, and we choose to refrain. Only when we come to see the insidious effects of our unaware habits of mind can they change. The direction of the practice is that through the cultivation of ethics the mind is set on a proper course — the mind is protected. Nagarjuna, the great Buddhist saint and philosopher, made the comment: “Without the discipline of protecting the mind, of what value are all other disciplines?”

In order for any structure to stand it requires a proper foundation. Without the grounding of an ethical foundation a spiritual practice is not supported, and sooner or later shows its weakness. An intention rooted in ethics protects the mind. From what? From itself. This was one conversation during the course of the week.

(2) Another stream of thought that I encountered was related to the way we look at the nature of the human being and the universe. Generally our thought moves from densest matter, to ever finer grades of matter, to the realm of Spirit. A theosophical point of view provides a couple of sevenfold ways to view it. We often think in terms of physical, etheric, astral, mental, spiritual (*buddhic*), *ātmic*, and their corollary terms.

Lucy Oliver is a contemporary thinker deeply rooted in the Ageless Wisdom tradition. In an article she tried to reframe the discussion. The way she frames it is in terms of *surfaces*, *flow*, *rhythm*, and *field*. The terms are quite different and in some ways foreign. But to some degree it has great value, because it forces us to view it in a different way.

Surfaces are everything that we contact with our senses, the physical things that we sense in the world. In Indian spiritual tradition the senses are termed the *jñānendriyas*, or organs of knowledge. These are our windows on the world, the areas that we think of as the most basic reality: the room we sit in, the body we inhabit, the things we smell and see, all of the things that are reported to us by our senses.

One of the comments from HPB was: “The first necessity for obtaining self-knowledge is to become profoundly conscious of ignorance; to feel with every fiber of the heart that one is ceaselessly self-deceived.” She was not only referring to ignorance in the world around us, in the political, or social realm. We have to be convinced of our *own* ignorance: that what we see as “real” in the world is utterly incorrect and partial. It begins with the recognition that our senses only give us partial information.

A bumble-bee in this room will see a range of the spectrum of light far beyond what we are capable of seeing. A dog will be able to sense smells of people who passed through the room days ago. Our senses are extremely limited and their reporting misguides us continually. Yet we form, cling to, and demand that others accept very solid ideas based on the inadequate reports of our senses.

There is a foundational concept that everyone and everything is looking for happiness. Happiness could be said to result from the capacity to *flow* among these surfaces. So long as any area of sensation holds us, fixes our attention to it, we find ourselves stuck in a repetitive process of fighting, or fulfilling the sensory demand. This is a psychological process that involves not merely the senses, but our emotional and mental reactions. When we find that our movement is relatively unrestricted, which is to say that our sense of attachment or aversion to the sensual surfaces is reduced, we experience a state of flow. Like water in a stream, we flow around what might otherwise appear as obstacles, and we feel happy.

Rhythm expresses the idea that there are cycles in which we participate. These cycles operate beneath or beyond our awareness and control and shape our experience of the world. Everything from the cycle of breath, to the circadian rhythms of waking and sleep, to the progression of the seasons, cycles of evolution, to the grand cycle of cosmic manifestation and absorption, fall within the idea of rhythm.

Our sense of flow is an individual mental and emotional experience of expansion and freedom within the grander pattern of cycles, or rhythm. Flow occurs within the world of experiences, but to rise beyond mere experiences is the nature of the spiritual life. Actual silence, where the experiencing mind ceases its activity, is the direction toward which we point ourselves. In the process of becoming quiet, still, and ultimately silent, we connect with ever deepening levels of these all-encompassing rhythms.

In the world’s Ageless Wisdom traditions there are examples of extending consciousness that are given. In Sir Edwin Arnold’s poetic rendering of the Buddha’s awakening, *The Light of Asia*, at the end Arnold expresses the experience thus: “The dew drop slips into the shining sea”. It is such a beautiful example of the extension of awareness that occurs when the dividing surface of self is merged with the greater whole.

We think of the ocean as a great body of water, but within it there are virtual rivers or currents flowing at different depths and directions. The ocean is not just one thing, it is one all-embracing life with many different currents that occur within it. In many ways this expresses the idea of *field*. The spiritual life that we attempt to cultivate involves connecting ourselves with one or another of those currents which flow within this greater whole. In that sense *surfaces*, *flow*, and *rhythm* are ultimately united within the *field* of universal consciousness, or Spirit.

(3) The third stream of thought resulted from a conversation with an educationist, who is also a prominent business person. In these types of conversations different sorts of ideas creep in. This person used a term for the benefits of education — “the multiplier effect”. It is an economics term that was being applied to education. Basically it quantifies the proportional increased return resulting from an investment of a specific amount. The idea being examined was the nature and degree of positive change in Indian society that the

investment in the education of a child ultimately provides.

In all of these three conversations I found my involvement coloured by a perception of the Theosophical Society's purpose. So, for the economic idea to work in this realm, it has to be translatable into something that fits a spiritual path. Again, we turn to some of the things that HPB and others have said.

HPB made many statements about the inherent brotherhood of humanity, or oneness of all life. She expressed this in many different ways: "It is an occult law . . . that no man can rise superior to his individual failings without lifting, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part. In the same way no one can sin, nor suffer the effects of sin, alone. In reality, there is no such thing as 'separateness' . . . the nearest approach to that selfish state which the laws of life permit is in the intent or motive." Consciously or unconsciously, we are either purifying, or polluting the stream we all share.

The mixture of these three avenues of thought — the protection of the mind that is emphasized in ethics, or *śila*, the perception of the self as a stream functioning within an oceanic consciousness, and the fact that everything that we add to that stream, multiplies its effect beyond the bounds of our awareness — is an important avenue for us to consider. There is a thread connecting these seemingly isolated ideas, as there is a thread that connects anything and everything, when we look more deeply.

(Courtesy: *The Theosophist*, September 2021)

HUGH SHEARMAN*

A SERIOUS DEDICATION

The significantly creative coming together of a person and a scene is a recurrent theme of history. In these times we have become very sophisticated in our view of historical events and have become aware of large impersonal factors – climate, economics, traditional class structures, genetics and many more – but the impact of the individual remains a mystery that we have found ourselves unable wholly to rationalize and explain.

Many westerners have felt that to arrive in India is to experience an indefinable and yet deeply stirring sense of coming home. Colonel Olcott had felt it more than Annie Besant. From the time of her arrival there in 1893 she began to lay a trail of literary evidence of her temperamental affinity with India and of India's influence upon her. There are those many small books that came from her year by year, each in the form of four lectures given initially at one of the Theosophical Society's annual conventions. The first, on *The Building of the Kosmos*, was based on her first set of Indian lectures delivered in 1893.

These small books have in them the ardour of a great discovery – one could almost say, of a love affair – as she deepened and enlarged her sympathetic understanding of Indian religion, philosophy and culture and gave an intellectually brilliant expression to what she found and felt about them.

Vital to her understanding of India, as of so much else, was that largeness of sympathy and intelligence which enabled her to see

*Dr. Shearman, the author of several books like *The Passionate Necessity*, *Modern Theosophy*, etc was a veteran Theosophist and member of the TS's General Council.

and know a unity behind every diversity. India, as she encountered it, contained even more diversity than it does today, when modern transport and communications have so greatly changed people's awareness of one another. India could not be grasped as one 'thing'. It contained and still contains deep disparities and incompatibilities, and yet for Annie Besant it was all fundamentally one.

To see unity in disunity places the individual at times in a position of some difficulty, for there is no language available for expressing what one sees. The rhetoric and the large generalizations which Annie Besant sometimes used were not in her case, as they sometimes are with other political speakers, an evasion of details or a dodging of incompatibles. It was of her very nature to see the whole always underlying its confused and disparate components; but this was something virtually impossible to express without generalizing.

There is a further fact about the style and language in which she spoke and wrote that has to be remembered. In that earlier century she was a member of a new first generation of emancipated women, and there was no clear precedent to guide her in her choice of language to speak to the world. Characteristically she chose a bold and rhetorical style. Those who sometimes complain today about that style forget the social climate in which she had to make her way.

The heroic story of Annie Besant's work for India and the results she achieved there, has been told many times, and it exhibits her powerful intensity of character, her courage, tenacity and insight, her dedicated and apparently almost inexhaustible vitality. The benefit that accrued was mutual, for the traditional wisdom of India enlarged her view of life and her understanding of human nature even while she initiated change in India.

Olcott's view of India had involved, with his great tolerance and kindness, the sort of attitude that is summed up in those old words, 'with all thy faults we love thee still'. Often our sympathies

and our effective helpfulness depend on a shared limitation with those we approach. Did Annie Besant share any limitation with India?

In the west today the great limitation that people have seemed to see in her was that she lacked a sense of humour, that she appeared to be incapable of laughing at herself. This was the complaint of Bernard Shaw who knew her well, and a number of subsequent biographers have also said or implied the same criticism. This impression about her has certainly caused quite a number of westerners to misunderstand or underestimate her.

Quite simply, her commitment to certain causes was so complete and uncompromising that she became wholly identified with them and so took herself as seriously as those causes of which she had become a part. Her seriousness was not small and personal.

A sense of humour at its best is a sense of proportion. While Annie Besant could be uncompromising she could also approach problems with a sense of proportion, acting realistically and with tact and moderation. One of her objectives for India was the liberation of Indian women, and she worked for this continually, but realistically and with tact and moderation. On meeting a dignified Indian elder who affably proceeded to introduce his sub-teenage child bride, Madame Blavatsky had lashed out in instant anger and contempt and told him that he was an old beast. Annie Besant, however, knew how to act with tact and restraint and not in an inappropriately combative spirit such as is liable to elicit frustrating and destructive resistance.

The approved and sometimes too much prized western sense of humour is often a device for dissociating oneself from responsibility. Annie Besant had no wish to dissociate herself from anything in the human condition. In this she was wholly serious. In the India that she discovered on her arrival there in 1893 there was little that was funny, little to laugh at, and much that was deeply tragic, just as she

had found in London when she had come as a trade union organizer among the match-workers. She quickly developed a sympathetic affinity with the aspects of Indian life which most called for compassion and change.

Annie Besant's dedicated seriousness in many social and political causes was never the humourlessness of the fanatic. She saw that progress and solution are not best pursued merely confrontationally. That was why, in spite of her deep regard for Gandhi, she could not go along with certain essentially militant and non-co-operational strategies which he adopted.

As for the casually personal side of life, she could be relaxed and entertaining. With Major Graham Pole, who looked after some of her business affairs for her, she engaged in affectionate banter in which, as the writer has been told by the Major's sister-in-law, he would tell her that she was 'a silly old woman' and she would respond with placid good humour.

One could exercise the imagination on various historical might-have-beens which could have come about had Annie Besant directed her full mature life and energy to several other pursuits to which she had turned from time to time. But Theosophy and India were the two great causes that she chose to make her own. Today it is for Theosophists and Indians alike to try to be worthy of the honour she did them.

(Courtesy: *The Theosophist*, December 1993)

UMA BHATTACHARYYA*

TRANSFORMATION AND FREE WILL

Transformation is bound to come in the human life whatever be the level of our spiritual development. This is the plan of nature i.e. steady unfolding of consciousness, awareness. We must understand that the design of universal consciousness is ultimate evolution of the entire nature which includes human existence as well. If we do not expand our vision beyond the body and don't attain core purpose of life during this lifetime itself then our whole journey would be jeopardized. It is like boarding a stationary train which has all facilities and comforts to travel with and then disembarking at the same station where we boarded after a prolonged period. The purpose is served only when the train carries us to our destination. Comforts are good only as long as they don't interfere with journey of Atman to transcend body consciousness and attain infinite bliss, eternal peace. The game of life is all about this. The journey of life continues for one or more lifetime until there is a complete transformation and infinite is attained.

The kingdom of heaven is within us. We are not aware of our kingship at present. We know not that we are God. So, we suffer fortune and misfortune, love and hatred, praise and censure. Manifold variations and fluctuations of this world plague us; but the moment we realize that we are God, Almighty, none of these external changes affect us. We remain calm and composed revelling in our own self. This is the ultimate transformation for which we have taken this journey of life again and again.

Human being is mindful. He has the power to align with unseen- the subtle hand of divinity. We can choose to remain at lower

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level of awareness- eating, drinking and sleeping and remain engrossed in the sense gratification. On the other hand, we could soar to higher level of consciousness where we can find perfect balance in every set of circumstances. We have a choice - to live an ordinary life and suffer or live an enlightened life and remain blissful. Enlightened life is attainable by exercises of choice and action with awareness.

For getting transformed one needs to exhaust his *sanskaras/vasanas* which he acquired from past lives. As long as *vasanas* exist, thought, desires and actions will constantly flow from us. All our thoughts, desires and actions emanate from *vasanas* like sound emanates from etchings of record. It seems as though we are left with no choice, but to act according to our own *vasanas*. But it is not so. Man alone amongst all living beings has the choice of action. Other living creatures are denied the freedom of action apart from their inherent nature. For instance, tiger is ferocious, it can never be kind and peace loving. It must strike and kill whereas cow is mild and meek by nature. Following its choiceless pattern of life, an animal neither evolves nor devolves consciously. It has taken birth just to exhaust its *vasanas* in the realm of activities in which it is born. For them it is only *bhog ki yoni*. Animals therefore tread a beaten path.

Unlike animals, man enjoys freedom of action. We could be more beneficial to the society or we could be extremely harmful. Unlike animals, man can consciously exhaust his *vasanas* and rise to the greater heights of perfection or accumulate more *vasanas* and sink to the lower depth of degradation. Choice of action is rendered possible because he possesses a unique faculty called “Self-effort”, which is also known as *Purushartha* or *free will*. Self-effort gives us the freedom of independent action regardless of the nature of our *vasanas*. Our present *vasanas* arising out of our *Prarabdha* or *Sanskara*, set the broad pattern of our life, but through

self-effort we can modify or change the pattern. This is the prerogative which man alone enjoys.

There are some evolved souls who come on this earth only to guide the masses to the path of spiritualism, like great Sri Ramkrishna Dev, Sant Kabir etc. They came as transformed being but majority of us are in the realm of darkness and suffer multitude of external pressure, sorrows and frustrations. We tend to ignore our deep standards, cherished ethics and ultimate objective of life. These lead us to a hollow meaningless existence where we squander the precious days, months and years. We live under shadow of fear and we are sometimes under tremendous stress to protect what we have. Here comes the role of self-effort or free will to rediscover the original path of spiritualism. Through self-effort one gradually advances on the path, and there begins a transformation within. Vedanta also requires our commitment to inner transformation.

For inner transformation, meditation is the only scientific technique through which we can exhaust all our desires and thoughts which emanate from our past *sanskaras*. To be honest, mind of today’s world is in chaotic state and agitated mind is not fit for meditation. Our mind must be cleared before we reach the seat of meditation. Purity of mind means making ourselves free from all clinging and cravings for the objects of this world. Today human existence is limited to petty desires and decadent strivings. Though human being desires to elude sorrow and restlessness perhaps he is not aware of the way out. He has to understand that he must use his free will/ self-effort to get out of this mess. For rescuing himself from these delusions, when he makes sincere effort to charter his life, in an unknown territory of spiritualism bringing *Yam, Niyam, Asan* etc. in his routine, he starts moving beyond the existence of material life. Mind attains the state of calmness and harmony. Our success in meditation is directly proportional to initial preparation of our mind.

When mind is free from desires it is calm and composed. When

it is riddled with desires it is agitated and stormy. The agitated mind cannot concentrate. The essential prerequisite for concentration and meditation is reduction of our desires. Reduction of desires is the renunciation. The concept of renunciation has been gravely misconstrued. Renunciation does not mean retirement from services and society. This does not mean dispensation of normal life as householder. It is not measured by quantum of possession, but it is determined by the attitude of dispossession towards our possessions. King Janak is a perfect example of a great man of renunciation. He possessed large fortune. His attitude of dispossession towards his possession made him true example of renunciation. The spirit of renunciation alone can pave the way to salvation for nation as well as individuals. In this lies the real freedom and happiness of mankind.

As we advance in our spirit of dispossession or detachment, our *sattvic* nature is more pronounced. We gain more and more objectivity in life and become less and less involved in the happening in and around us. We begin to observe the world as an onlooker, as a witness. Renunciation is the secret of success. When our mind rests on high ideal beyond selfish desires and egoistic living, all our energies concentrate around our determined goal. We are then at our best. The stern law of life is: attach you lose, detach you gain.

The essential prerequisite for concentration and meditation is reduction of our desires. We must eradicate first which disturbs our concentration. We have to reduce our desires. Reduction of desires is development of renunciation. That is the preliminary condition necessary for meditation and realization of our self. Desires are eliminated by three methods :

- (i) Reduction in quantity of desires through *Karma Yoga*
- (ii) Improve the quality of desires through *Bhakti Yoga*
- (iii) Change the direction of desires through *Jnana Yoga*

The first and foremost part of spiritual training is study and analysis of our inner constitution. Before we take up any spiritual path, we must find out what exactly is our basic nature and our spiritual requirement. Our inner nature depends upon varying strengths of our mind and intellect. Thus, there are the 'emotional', the 'rational', the 'energetic' and the 'indolent'. The emotional man is one whose mind or heart is comparatively more developed than his intellect. His mind governs his personality than his intellect. Such a man is designed for the course of devotion-*Bhakti Yoga*. With intensive practice in the course of devotion, the devotees' *vasanas* get practically exhausted. He becomes spiritually prepared for deeper meditation and realization of his Self.

The second type, the 'rational' man is one whose head predominates over his heart or mind. His intellect is comparatively more developed than his mind. He is more rational, intellectual and discriminative. A man of such caliber is suited for the course of knowledge-*Jnana Yoga*. Since he is discriminative, analytical and logical in his approach, he needs the chaste logic and philosophy of Vedanta. He gets absorbed in contemplation of the transcendental Reality. Consequently, his *vasanas*, thoughts and desires drop off. He also becomes spiritually qualified for deeper meditation and realization of higher Self.

The 'energetic' man is one who is balanced in his mental and intellectual personalities. Sometimes he is emotional, at other time he is rational. He has mixed temperament. Such a man is inclined to activity, work, service. The course of action, *Karma Yoga*, satisfies his particular temperament since both head and heart are simultaneously employed in it. With his mind he may dedicate his activities to lord of his heart, while his intellect is constantly aware that his supreme-self is behind each and every activity. This is called *Nishkam Karma Yoga*. As spiritual practitioner thus pursuing the course of action, his inner personality sheds its worldly thoughts and desires. His mind is purified. His intellect is tuned in for contemplation and meditation upon the Reality.

Emotional people need to take the course of devotion, the intellectuals need the course of knowledge. The active people need course of action. But in actual analysis, we find that no man is wholly emotional or wholly intellectual etc. Every individual is combination of aforementioned different natures. We may be predominantly intellectual but then possess other qualities as well. Therefore, right prescription for our spiritual edification is an intelligent combination and regulation of all courses. Being predominantly intellectual, one may need more of a study and proportionally less of other courses. If we choose and organize our efforts methodically, we are bound to progress in our spiritual path.

The Yogas give the mind a high ideal in life and mind expands with selfless ideal. Consequently, the selfish thoughts and desires fall off. Mind is thus purified. It becomes congenial for concentration and meditation. Spiritual enquiry culminates in discovery of our Self. Atma is the goal of our pursuit. We have to turn introvert, wade through our body mind and intellect, our gross subtle and causal bodies and reach the core of our personality. Our mind and intellect get deranged by troubles and tribulations of the world. Our inner personality needs to be rehabilitated. Our mind and intellect are required to be regenerated.

Spiritual training is imparted to our mind and intellect so that mind and intellect are rehabilitated; our emotions and thoughts are reconstituted. Spiritual study and reflection help purify our mind and strengthen our intellect. Introspection helps to keep our intellect alert and available for all our action. We become more and more objective in life and less and less involved in the affairs of the world. We get nearer and nearer to the centre of our personality.

Meditation is the final gateway to Reality. All spiritual practices take us up to that gateway. Different courses purify our mind of worldly thoughts and desires. They prepare us, qualify us for concentration and meditation. Meditation is designed for those who possess a purified calm mind. Meditation will not help spiritual ini-

tiates. In fact, it may do more harm than good. It is a post-graduate course in religion. We don't start with meditation, we end with meditation. Before we plunge into meditation, there is a lot of ground to cover. The above mentioned courses of *Bhakti Jnana* and *Karma Yoga* help us to cover that ground, provided we choose them according to our personal needs through self-effort or free will. Without such preparation, the practice of meditation is like trying to run before one can crawl. Few realize that meditation is a highly technical course. It is a specialized art, skill. The mind requires initial processing and preparation. Only a prepared mind can be trained to concentrate single pointedly. The art of keeping mind aloft in sharp focus upon a single thought to the exclusion of all other thoughts is meditation.

When we are on the path of meditation and we practice it in our daily life, we become more cheerful, more tranquil and more objective in life. Anger, hatred and restlessness get controlled and ultimately vanish. This is the test of correct meditation. The greatest help to spiritual life is meditation. Through meditation, we succeed in divesting ourselves of all material conditions and realize our divine self. The seeker finds that his life is set on a new trajectory and moving in right direction to fulfil the purpose of his life.

However, ultimately it is only through divine grace one experiences complete transformation within and merges with the Universal Consciousness. In words of Swami Vivekananda – “Those who are pure always in body, mind and speech, who have strong devotion, who discriminate between real and unreal, who persevere in meditation and contemplation, upon them alone, the grace of the lord descends”. Shri Ramkrishna used to say sometimes “Do rely on Him, be like a dry leaf at the mercy of the wind” and again he would say “The wind of His grace is always blowing, what you need to do is to unfurl your soul. Each soul is potentially divine”.

NEWS AND NOTES

Bombay

Asala Poornima Meeting

Asala Poornima Meeting of BTF with Blavatsky Lodge and all other Lodges of Mumbai were virtually hosted by BTF President Bro. Vinayak Pandya on 23rd July 2021. The meeting was opened with the Universal Prayer and Bro. Vinayak Pandya's Opening Words to invoke Blessings of Guru – Lord Buddha as described in Shri H.K. Sharan's English Prose 'The Light of Asia'. Sis. Meherangiz Baria recited the Buddhist Prayer. BTF Secretary Sis. Mahazaver Dalal welcomed all to the meeting held on the eve of Asala Poornima, which was on 24th July with Full Moon at 8.07 a.m. She explained the purpose was to be attuned to Asala Poornima Celebration to be held on Southern Slope of Himalaya in the garden of Lord Maitreya at the time of Full Moon next morning.

Bro. Bhavesh Pandya speaking in Hindi said '*Atma Deepo Bhava*' means that one's own *Atma* is Guru, but first one should develop the qualities to be a *Shishya* (Spiritual student).

Sis. Mahatab Tarapore fondly remembered Asala Poornima Meetings in Green Room of Blavatsky Lodge with Alter Table prepared by Sis. Navaz Dhalla and Rangoli about Lord Buddha by Sis. Kashmira Khambatta. She described the ceremony taking place on Southern Slope of Himalayas in the garden of Lord Maitreya with *Pentecostal Miracle*. Lord Maitreya speaks the First Sermon of Lord Buddha in original sonorous Pali, but everyone present hears him '*in his own language wherein he was born*'.

Sis. Archana Munshi spoke about *The Middle Path of Lord Buddha* and '*The Turning of the Wheel of Law*' with the Four Noble Truths: (1) Sorrow or suffering, (2) The Cause of Sorrow,

(3) The Ceasing of Sorrow or Escape from Sorrow and (4) The way which leads to the Escape from Sorrow.

Sis. Zeena Rastomjee read out '*The Eightfold Path*' which leads to the Escape from Sorrow.

Bro. Navin Kumar speaking about the question raised by Bro. Bhavesh Pandya said that Theosophical Society does not believe in a Guru like a Religious Faith Guru, but it has Himalayan Masters to guide. Theosophy respects Great Souls of all Religions. As it is said, 'No one is your friend and no one is your enemy, but everyone is your Teacher', so one must learn from their *Bahuguna* for spiritual progress. Bro. Navin Kumar recited '*Guru Vandana*'. Quoting Saint Kabir's couplet he said that if Guru and Govind (Krishna) are standing together first one must touch the feet of Guru.

Dr. Rajam Pillai said that in early days Religious Teachings were only for Brahmins, Temples and Gurukuls. Lord Buddha opened the Teachings for '*Bahujana Hitaya – Bahujana Sukhaya*', i.e., for the welfare and happiness of many.

Bro. Vinayak Pandya said that Invisible Helpers and Gurus help humanity to progress.

Bro. Taral Munshi said *Guru Poornima is a blessed day to revere Guru*. He read about *Mukti Marg of Tahtagata Lord Buddha* from Shri H. K. Sharan's Hindi prose compilation of '*The Light of Asia*'. The reading also narrated how Lord Buddha's father King Shuddhodana, wife Yashodara and son Rahul accepted Tathagata's Teachings.

The meeting ended with the recitation of a Sanskrit prayer by Bro. Navin Kumar.

The study of Gujarati Books – '*Theosophist nu Karya*' and '*AB, HSO, CWL na Jiwan na Adbhut Prasango*' was concuted VASANTA-GANESH-JYOTI LODGE in its Thursday meetings,

during the last two months. Currently the study of '*Sampurna Shikshan na Panch Stambho*' is being conducted by Bro. Vinayak Pandya.

Sangam- Spritual conference at the Jyoti Tudesay meet of Rohit Lodge - Ahmedabad, Reva Lodge - Vadodara, & Jyoti E-Lodge- Mumbai with three speakers in three languages- English, Gujarati and Hindi :

Bro. Taral Munshi with his innovative expertise and zeal to spread Theosophy far and wide crystallized his dream of Jyoti E-Lodge by launching virtual '*Theo-Jyoti Tuesday Meet*'. His wife Archana is an active creative partner in this Mission.

THEO JYOTI OR BRAMHA VIDHYA KI JYOTI is initiated by *JYOTI E-LODGE* of Bombay Theosophical Federation.

'THEO JYOTI YOU TUBE CHANNEL' is launched with active link:

<https://youtube.com/channel/UCMHAerrhEdyIpHvcF65Wahg>

Theo-Jyoti's inception is in Bro. Taral Munshi attending Meetings of Gujarat Lodges' Zoom meetings. Thinking together with Bro. Harshvadan Sheth, Bro. Atul Darji, Bro. Kirit Patel and Bro. Harshad Dave the beginning was made with Vadodara's Bro. Nikhil Bhai Desai's talk in Gujarati, jointly for Three Lodges. The other speakers were Bro. Harshvadan Sheth in Gujarati, Bro. Ashok Lokhande in Hindi, and Sis. Laxmi Mandleeka in English. With the experience of initial meetings *THEO JYOTI* was formed with the vision -

To bring under one umbrella activities of all Theosophical Lodges in INDIA and of the world – ON-LINE.

To propagate all active lodges' activities done on-line and off-line inside and outside world of Theosophy.

To propagate and activate lodges technically inactive with giving support to their efforts on-line and off-line.

To make a UNIVERSE OF THEOSOPHY of existing Theosophists and common people with a spark on-line and off-line through various activities like ART FORMS.

To awaken THEOSOPHY in common people, who are yet not introduced to Theosophy.

To crystallize the Vision, propagate Theosophy in 12 main INDIAN LANGUAGES and ENGLISH, a connecting Global Language.

The stream of 'Triveni Sangam' was started with main speakers Bro. Nikhilbhai Desai in Gujarati, Bro. Uday Pakawala in Hindi and Bro. Harshad Dave in Gujarati. The translators of other two languages were Bro. Harshvadan Seth, Bro. Harshad Dave, Bro. Taral Munshi and Bro. Atul Darji.

With the First Flyer TRIVENI TUESDAY MEET opened to larger audience of TS Brethren, Adyar to Uttar Pradesh. This meeting of 13th July 2021 on '*Insights – Madam Blavatsky*' was with main speaker Ranjanben Vaidya speaking in English and translations in Gujarati by Bro. Harshvadan Sheth and in Hindi by Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri.

To date other main speakers are Bro. Nikhilbhai Desai in Gujarati, Bro. U. S. Pandey in Hindi, Shri Ranjanben Vaidya in English, Prof. C. A. Shinde in English and Bro. Naresh Trivedi in Gujarati. The translators of other two languages and moderators have been Bro. Harshvadan Sheth, Sis. Ranjanben Vaidya, Bro. Taral Munshi, Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri, Bro. Atul Darji, Bro. Kiran Singlot, Sis. Meenakshi Gaidhani, Bro. Narsinh Thakaria and Sis. Archana Munshi.

Theo-Jyoti invites like-minded Theosophists to join TRIVENI with their expertise and suggestions.

TOS 69TH COMMEMORATION MEETING FOR ASHO NAR JAMSHED MEHTA on 1st August 2021

Theosophical Order of Service, Mumbai Region (TOS) organized meeting to commemorate Asho Nar Jamshed Mehta on 1st August on the occasion of his 69th Death Anniversary. The Meeting of 1st August 2021 was opened with the Universal Prayer. President Sis. Thrity Dalal in her welcome speech spoke about compassion and calmness emanating from Jamshed and love and affection he showered on all who came in contact with him, *which reaches us Oneness of life with all of humanity.*

BTF President Bro. Vinayak Pandya with PowerPoint presentation focused on Jamshed's realization of 'Ageless Wisdom, seeking spiritual self-transformation through selfless acts that earned him the epithet of *'Prophet of the Poor'*. He added that at the time of Partition Jamshed wanted to go to India, but *Kayade Aazam Mohammed Ali Jinnah asked Jamshed to stay back in Pakistan to serve Karachi.* Jamshed was the First Mayor of Karachi Municipal Corporation and with 13 years of service as Mayor he transformed Karachi for which he is called *'Maker of Modern Karachi'*. Pakistan had *Commemorative Stamp* of Rs.3/- for Jamshed on 7th January 1988 and there is a *Jamshed Memorial Hall* on Mohammad Ali Jinnah Road. Jamshed had attended Dr. Annie Besant's lecture in Mumbai and was greatly inspired to live Theosophy. For him Dr. Annie Besant was his Spiritual Guru. Bro. Vinayak in the end sang song to pay *tributes to Gunijan Jamshed: 'Maitree Bhavan Pavitra Zaranu, Muj Haiyaman Vahya Kare'*.

Sis. Meherangiz Baria narrated how Jamshed lived all the Three Objects of the TS. Jamshed believed in Universal Brotherhood. Though Zoroastrian, he visited worship places of all religions and participated in other religious events. He had started a study class for comparative study of Religion, Philosophy and Science. He had full faith in Laws of Nature. He was used by Masters as a channel to share Divine Wisdom.

Sis. Parinaz Gandhi read an article of Ms Shernaaz Engineer, Editor of 'Jam-e-Jamshed', published in Jame of 1st August 2021 titled *'Karachi's Saint in Human Form'*. Madam Shernaaz Engineer in her address said that "Jamshed Mehta's ability to find 'joy and meaning' in every act, especially in deeds of service to his family, community, civic administration and nation - holds an inspiration for us during the Pandemic." Jamshed Mehta's last words were, *'TRUST IN GOD AND GOD ONLY'*.

Sis. Mahazaver Dalal shared that through a photo of Jamshed Mehta in her mother's cupboard at an early age she had learnt, *'Jamshed Mehta was a Saint who could be approached whenever in need.'*

The meeting ended with a song in Jamshed Mehta's memory, written by Kerbanu Patel, music composed by Navroz Mehta and the song was rendered by Jamshed Kotwal.

OBITUARY

At Jamshed Mehta's Commemorative Meeting of TOS on 1st August 2021, *'Jamshed Mehta's Memorial Song'* sung by Sis. Silloo Shroff was missed. Sis. Silloo, a member of TOS and friend of TS, passed away on 19th June 2021. She with her Late husband Jal had given Musical Evening of devotional songs for a Support Convention. With her songs she used to uplift Theosophical gatherings at Blavatsky Lodge and Shanti Lodge. She even at a very advanced age with classical *alaps* had sung a song at the last Support Convention of 2019-20. May her soul be endowed with celestial music.

Kerala

A Malayalam version of *Patanjali Yoga Sutra* done by one of the senior most member of Kerala, Dr. V.P. Viswakumar, Alleppey, was released on-line on 23rd August 2021. Bro. Ajeesh Kumar, publisher Upasika Publishing House, Trissur, welcomed the participants. Federation's President, Dr. M.A. Raveendran, released the book by giving a copy to Bro. S. Harihar Raghavan. Dr.

Raveendran in his speech compared the similarities of Patanjali Yoga Surtra and the Buddhist Philosophy on Meditation and *Chitta Vrities*. Both the schools have many similarities which is an in-depth subject for research.

Bro. K. Dinakaran, Secy. K.T.F., congratulated the Translator for his earnest effort to introduce Patanjali Yoga Sutraa to the common man in Kerala. He said that one of the oldest translation of Patanjali Yoga Sutra in Malayalam was done by a great Theosophist Sri. V. K. Narayana Battathiri which was published in the *Sanathana Dharma* Magazine - an official organ of Kerala Federation. He also added that the pioneer Theosophist Br. W.Q. Judge has also translated it into English. Brothers I.K. Taimni and Rohi Mehta also translated Yoga Sutra and explained it. Bro. S. Sivadas also conveyed his greetings.

Talk - Indian Section on-line Programme -

Bro. K. Dinakaran, Secy. K.T.F., spoke on the Book “**The Principles of T.S Work**” by I.K. Taimni on 22 August 2021. Bro. Pradeep Mahapatra presided over the on-line meeting. The seven chapters of the book address the main work of T.S. and every member is requested to study the book in detail. The practical suggestions given in the book are an eye-opener to every Lodge, Federation and Section. He also added that Lodge is the basic unit where members learn the practical lessons of Universal Brotherhood. If we fail to achieve this all other efforts are futile.

Uttar Pradesh & Uttarakhand

Dharma Lodge, Lucknow, held four on-line meetings in the month of August, when talks were delivered on the topics ‘Mahatma letters and teachings therein’, ‘How to sleep?’, ‘The Four Noble Truths’, and ‘At the Feet of the Master-Love’. The speakers were Bro. Pramil Dwivedi, Bro. U. S. Pandey, Sis. Meenakshi Gaidhani and Bro. B. K. Pandey respectively.

In the on-line meetings of Nirvan Lodge, Agra, held on 05 and 26 August, talks were delivered on the topics ‘Emblem of the Theosophical Society’ and ‘*Janmashtami ka Sandesh*’ by Bro. Pradeep Mahapata and Bro. H.K. Upadhyay respectively. Bro. C.A. Shinde delivered talks on “Golden Stairs” in the meetings held on 12 and 19 August.

Bharat Samaj Pooja was performed by Bro. Gyanesh Kumar Chaturvedi on 08 August.

Talks were organized in the on-line meeting of Pragya Lodge, Lucknow, on the topics ‘What is in Lucifer Magazine’, ‘Homage to HPB’ and ‘Be Ye Wise as Serpents’. The speakers were Erica Georgiades, Sis. Sripriya H. Raghavan, and Sis. Nancy Secrest respectively. These were held on 1, 15 and 22 August.

Pragya Lodge organized three more meetings exclusively for the members of the Lodge on 05, 19 and 26 August. Sis. Sushmja Tiwari spoke in these meetings on the topics ‘*Vani ka tap aur Prajna*’, ‘*Nirbhayata*’, and ‘*Karm Niyam*’ respectively.

Special Programmes: A special programme in memory of the two founders of the Theosophical Society- H.P. Blavatsky and Co. H.S. Olcott was organized by the Pragya Lodge on 08 August 2021. The programme commenced with invocation of the Universal Prayer by Sis. Vasumati Agnihotri. Bro. U.S. Pandey talked briefly about life and work of Madam Blavatsky. He also shared some of her thoughts on the objects of TS and roles expected from the members, etc.- as mentioned in HPB’s last few letters to some theosophists of that time. Sis. Sunita Kajale presented a nice poem composed by her in homage of the two founders. Bro. S.K. Pandey talked about life and work of Col. Olcott. The programme ended with the vote of thanks given by Bro. Shikhar Agnihorti to the speakers and all the participants.

Another special programme of International Youth Panel was

organized by the lodge on 29 August 2021. The theme was “Challenges of the Youth and Theosophical Solutions” in which Krista (of France), Christopher (of Philippines), Rafael (of Brazil) and Smitapragyan (of India) joined as panellists.

Bro. S.B.R.Mishra spoke on the topics ‘All is Brahman’, and ‘Teachings of Krishna ji’ respectively in the on-line meetings of Sarvahitkari Lodge, Gorakhpur. These were held on 8 and 9 August. Bro. Ajai Rai spoke on ‘Physical Sun’ and ‘Spiritual Sun’ respectively on 15 and 22 August.

Four talks were delivered at Prayas Lodge, Ghaziabad, on the theme ‘Art forms of Spirituality’. These were held on 08, 15, 22 and 29 August and the speakers were Shri Rahul Varshney, Smt. Monica Kapoor, Smt. Sangita Mishra and Bro. Taral Munshi respectively. Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri moderated the meeting on 22 August.

Sis. Suvralina Mohanty conducted on-line study class for children and youth on every Sunday morning at 09.30 a.m. The subjects covered during August, 2021 were ‘Self-review’ and ‘Basic Theosophical literature’.

During the on-line meeting of Noida Lodge held on 01 August, the study of the book *The Voice of the Silence* - Part II-The two Paths, was continued by Sis. Lalita Khatri.

The Annual General Meeting of the lodge was held on 08 August, 2021, in which discussion on the topic “Astanga Yoga” was also held.

Bro. S.S. Gautam spoke on the topics ‘One-pointedness’ and ‘Confidence’ respectively in the meetings of Chohan Lodge, Kanpur, held on 01 and 08 August. The subject of Bro. Pramil Dwivedi on 22 August was ‘Sacrifice for Service.’ Lodge’s Annual General Meeting was held on 29 August.

Kashi Tattva Sabha, Varanasi, organized two on-line meetings on 08 and 22 August, when talks were delivered on the topics ‘Bhagwan ke Darshan ki Samiksha’ by Bro. Harinam Singh and ‘Shiva in The Secret Doctrine’ by Bro. U.S. Pandey respectively.

U.P. and UK Federation study camp: On-line study of the book “*THEOSOPHY As the Masters See It*” written by Clara M. Codd was continued and concluded in final three sessions held on 12, 13 and 14 August, 2021. During the session on 12 August, Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri covered, the portions of the book Part-3, Section I-The Three great qualities- sub-sections (iv) to (viii). During the session held on 13 August, Sis. Suvralina Mohanty covered Part 3, Section II- Crisis in the Society. In the eighth and final session held on 14 August, Bro. S.K. Pandey covered Part 3, Section III- Miscellaneous Subjects and also items 1 to 3 of Section IV- Our Path to the Masters. And finally, during the same last session Bro. U. S. Pandey covered the remaining parts 4 to 7 of the Section IV and also the Appendix- Some words on daily life.

This was followed by an interactive session. Many members from other federations also participated in the programme.

Contribution in other Federations:

On invitation by Shankar Lodge, Delhi, Sis. Suvralina Mohanty delivered an on-line talk on 7 August. The subject she spoke on was “Fetters on the path of evolution”.

On invitation by Shankar Lodge, Delhi, Bro. S.B.R.Mishra delivered an on-line talk on “Self and Non-self”. It was held on 14 August.

Contribution in the events of other Forums:

Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri conducted the study of the chapter ‘Regret Nothing, Never Be Sorry’ of the book *Trust yourself to Life*. It was organized by the Young Indian Theosophists Group on 15 August.

Sis. Suvralina Mohanty, Secretary of Tapasya Lodge, Ghaziabad, conducted the study on “Death is our Friend” from the book *Trust Yourself to Life*. It was held in the Young Indian Theosophists group on 29 August 2021.

Three young members of Tapasya Lodge, Ghaziabad, namely Kritika Goel, Pranshee Mohanta and Manisha Mishra, moderated the weekly study sessions in Young Indian Theosophists group on different dates.

Bro. S.B.R.Mishra gave a talk on ‘Teachings of Krishna ji’ during a meeting of Eves’ Welfare Ladies’ Club, Gorakhpur. It was held on 27 August.

National Lecturers

On invitation by Jodhpur Lodge, Bro. U.S.Pandey delivered an on-line talk on the theme “Insight into the nature of Self in light of the Upanishads”, It was held on 08.08.2021.

On invitation by Jyoti Lodge (Mumbai), Rewa Lodge (Vadodara), and Rohit Lodge (Ahmedabad), Bro. U.S. Pandey delivered a talk in the second session during a joint meeting of these three Lodges held on 24.08. 2021.The theme was ‘What is TRUTH?’

Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri presented a gist in Hindi of the talk delivered by Bro. Pradeep Gohil in English on “Compassion and the First Object of TS”. It was held on 31.08. 2021.

Programme in Bengal Federation: Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri delivered a talk and conducted a practical session on meditation during the Annual Convention of Jnana Marg Lodge of Bengal Federation on 22.08. 2021.

Contribution in the Indian Section on-line programmes :

Bro. U. S. Pandey conducted study and delivered talk on the last chapter entitled “The Future of the Theosophical Society” of the

book *The Key to Theosophy*. It was held on 01 August 2021. During his talk Bro. Pandey brought out various statements of H. P. Blavatsky and the Masters regarding the future of the TS, and conditions required to be fulfilled by its members. He also mentioned about C.W. Leadbeater’s relevant narration in the portion ‘The Beginning of the Sixth Root Race’ of the book *Man: Whence, How and Whither*.

Bro. U. S. Pandey conducted study of the remaining portion of the Mahatma Letter No. 111 (ML- 59) in the second session held on 06 August, 2021.

Contribution in International programmes:

Bro. Shikhar Agnihotri delivered, a talk on the topic “Reason-Intuition-Awareness - Pathways of Right Action”. It was held on 07 August during the annual convention of Visayas-Mindanao Federation of Philippine Section. He gave two talks on “At the Feet of the Master” and “Seven Portals” on 07 and 28 August respectively in the lecture series ‘Path of Discipleship’ organized by Ukrainian/Russian Section. Besides, Bro. Agnihotri spoke on “Dreams” on 28 August during the tenth International Panel organized by World Federation of Young Theosophists.

**Great is philosophy which moulds the minds of men,
great is science which gives light of knowledge to
the world; but greater than all is religion which
teaches man his duty, which inspires man with
strength to accomplish it; greatest of all is that
knowledge of the human soul which makes daily
service the path of progress and finds in the lowest
work the steps that lead to the highest achievement.**

ANNIE BESANT
“THE SUPREME DUTY”
THE UNIVERSAL LAW OF LIFE