

# THE CANADIAN THEOSOPHIST

Divine Wisdom

Brotherhood

Occult Science

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## H. P. BLAVATSKY IN 1950

BY BORIS DE ZIRKOFF

In the coming year of 1950, students of the Ancient Wisdom in all parts of the world will celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the modern Theosophical Movement.

The corner-stone of this Movement in its organized form was laid on American soil in 1875. The most powerful weapon used by H. P. Blavatsky in her strategic offensive against the entrenched forces of materialism was her pen. The dynamic power of her writings etched upon the screen of time the outline of those enduring principles of truth, which have since rent the tangled web of opposing forces, ushering in a new era in human thought.

Today, three quarters of a century after the inception of her work, the writings of H. P. Blavatsky stand out as the most amazing manifestation of the creative genius of man, and serve as an unimpeachable witness to the spiritual strength and immense knowledge of those Teachers whose direct Messenger she was.

These writings contain the basic principles of a new science and foreshadow the tenets of the great philosophical and religious systems which will emerge

from the womb of time and become sooner or later the spiritual and ethical foundations for generations to come. With prophetic insight, they outline in flaming terms the struggle between materialism and spirituality which is taking place before our very eyes all over the world—a struggle in which we, students of the Esoteric Philosophy and seekers after Truth, are privileged to play an important part.

Science, psychology, philosophy and religion have all moved a long way ahead, compared with the relatively static position they occupied in 1875. Every discovery of modern science and every progressive move in the other fields of human thought vindicate with every day that passes the spiritual and ethical integrity of H. P. Blavatsky's mission and work, and sustain at every turn the knowledge and wisdom of that profound source from which she drew.

A mere cursory glance at the scientific view of Nature, as voiced today by the greatest exponents of Science, would conclusively show that the world is not too far removed from the time when the character and the message of H. P. Blavatsky will receive complete and final vindication before the impartial

tribunal of history from which there is no appeal.

This final vindication of one of the most vilified and misunderstood characters in the occult history of the world can be greatly hastened by a wider acquaintance with her writings on the part of both students and the general public. These writings have an even greater and deeper meaning today than they had at the time of their first appearance.

It is therefore fitting that the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the modern Theosophical Society on American soil be commemorated by the launching of an American Edition of her Collected Writings. Once before an attempt was made to publish a uniform edition of these writings, an attempt which was interrupted by the outbreak of the recent World War.

Arrangements have now been completed to publish the initial volume of an American Edition, which will consist of her literary output for the year 1883, this material having never yet been published in any collected or consecutive order.

The American Edition is to be published by the Philosophical Research Society, Inc., of Los Angeles, California, whose Founder and President, Manly Palmer Hall, is internationally known to students of occultism as a brilliant writer and lecturer on occult and metaphysical subjects.

The forthcoming volume will embody invaluable teachings concerning the Nebular Theory, the Constitution of the Sun, the origin of Classical Civilizations, the nature of the Monad, the Auric colours of various ethnic groups, the date and role of Gautama the Buddha and Sri Sankarâchârya, the Transmigration of Life-Atoms, the projection of the Double, Mahâtmas and Chelas, etc., and will include several outstanding prophecies concerning the near

future. Among the essays contained in this volume are several which were dictated to H.P.B. by high Initiates and which deal with some of the most profound subjects given out in the early years of the Movement.

Future volumes will bring out material belonging chronologically to succeeding years, as well as a revised and greatly augmented edition of the material published in the earlier series now out of print.

As intended from the very outset, some twenty-five years ago, when the work of compilation was begun by the present writer, this uniform edition of H. P. Blavatsky's writings is arranged in strict chronological order, showing the gradual unfoldment of H.P.B.'s mission and the serial development in the presentation of the teachings.

The entire material has been transcribed *verbatim et literatim* direct from the original sources. No editing of any kind has been allowed to take place. Obvious typographical mistakes, however, have been corrected, and quotations introduced by H.P.B. have been checked with the originals as far as was possible to do so.

The volumes will contain explanatory footnotes by the Compiler, embodying historical data concerning various individuals and events mentioned by H.P.B. in the text, and a special Biographical and Bibliographical Appendix giving succinct information regarding the many writers, scholars, and historical characters whose writings she quotes or refers to. An analytical Index will give the correct systemic spelling of Sanskrit and other technical terms according to present-day standards.

Future volumes will include a complete and authentic translation into English of the several serial stories which H.P.B. wrote in Russian for the *Moscow Herald*, the *Russian Messenger*, the *Tiflis Messenger* and *Pravda*, and

which have never yet been translated in their entirety into any language. Students of H.P.B. will also be glad to see translated for the first time into English her epoch-making French essays on the origins of Christianity, whose invaluable contents have remained so far a *terra incognita* to most students.\*

It is the fervent hope of the present writer that this effort, which has had so much thought and labour behind it, will be generously supported by all students of H.P.B., irrespective of their organizational affiliation. This literary project needs their combined and whole-hearted backing and deserves their moral and material help.

The writings of H. P. Blavatsky are a rallying point around which all true Theosophists can assemble in serried ranks, united in a common objective, strong in a selfless endeavour, pressing forward into the future, eastward-bound towards the Sun.

\* Advance orders for the forthcoming volume are now accepted. The price is \$6.00 per volume. Orders can be placed direct with the Philosophical Research Society, Inc., 3341 Griffith Park Blvd., Los Angeles 27, Calif., U.S.A., or with the Editorial Offices of *Theosophia*, 240 Western Bldg., 553 So. Western Ave., Los Angeles 5, Calif., U.S.A. Orders will be acknowledged individually. Date of publication will be announced shortly.

### TRY

Three letters! What a tiny word TRY is but what a huge word when put into action! Just try to put TRY into action and see what happens. It takes effort to make TRY work. A little effort means a little TRY. A bigger effort means a bigger TRY. Soon we realize what unlimited power this tiny word has when we constantly use it.

We should study that word. It is very potent and one that is well worth being tagged "Word No. 1" in our vocabulary. What does it mean? Comparitively, it is the opposite to I CANNOT. TRY is a positive thought and if we use TRY as our "Word No. 1" we will always think in terms of effort instead of no-effort. If we apply TRY instead of I CANNOT in the direction of knowledge we will not be sorry.

Never again will we say: "I cannot take an active part in Lodge meetings because of this or that." We will use TRY and the first thing we know we are taking an active part in the Society, even though it means only appearing in the Lodge room. We will never again say of some phrase of the Teaching: "I cannot understand that!" We use TRY again and soon a faint light will glimmer and grow to bathe us in the mellow glow of understanding.

If we are to progress toward the Path, we must not become despondent and say: "I cannot." Nor will we say: "I will try tomorrow for today I am not ready." We will make ourselves ready by putting TRY into action, now!

E. T.

"From this hour, freedom!

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines,  
 Going where I list, my own master, total and absolute,  
 Listening to others, and considering well what they say,  
 Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,  
 Gently, but with undeniable will, diverting myself of the holds that would  
 hold me."

Walt Whitman.

# A RECONSIDERATION OF KARMA

BY ALVIN BOYD KUHN, PH.D.

It would be something of the dimensions of a major tragedy if it could be demonstrated that almost over the entire period of the existence of modern Theosophy the practically universal conception which Theosophists have entertained and inculcated as to the significance of their great central doctrine of Karma has been grossly distorted out of its true meaning, connotation and reference. That such has been actually the case and that Theosophy itself has been held back from its full service of enlightenment and uplift by the miscarriage of correct understanding in this particular is the message of this article.

I am constrained to undertake the task of formulating my reflections on this important subject because of the absolutely magical effect my presentation of it previously has produced upon the minds of a number of persons of good intelligence. After hearing the exposition these persons registered such a degree of delight, astonishment and mental relief as to leave little doubt that the rectified view of Karma, if substantiated, would come as a blessed boon to all Theosophists and others accepting the doctrine in its common terms of understanding. As one of these individuals expressed it, this new approach to the meaning of Karma will lift a heavy weight of depression and apprehension off the minds and souls of some millions of people. If any such measure of beneficence is entailed in the elucidation there would seem to be ample justification for its publication to the world.

It can be said as a foreword that there has been much uncertainty among even the most astute Theosophists about this great pivotal doctrine. The great prin-

ciple itself in its general connotation has always seemed a necessary postulate of the reason. It was rationally satisfactory, not to say heartening, in that it gave the mind the assurance that in all the complex tangle of personal and collective history abstract justice was being dispensed. The soul of a man could rest free from the terrible stab of the thought that people singly or in the mass were being made the hapless victims of blind chance or fate. It anchored the mind to the assurance that in truth a God of wisdom, love, justice and even mercy (though it questioned the mercy a bit) had his hand firmly on the course of history, to insure to each of his children absolutely equitable fortune. To one emerging out of his Christian orthodoxy, which had made God's mercy and "forgiveness" and his Son's vicarious sacrifice the basis of hope of escape from the inexorable consequences of past dereliction, the doctrine appeared at first somewhat stern and forbidding. But it did carry the sanctions, so to say, of rigid justice and sheltered the individual consciousness in the safe harbour of certitude. If the reign of abstract justice seemed hard, at least the immunity from injustice which it guaranteed became a strength and stay in our life.

Thus the doctrine has been fully accepted as an integral item in the structure of Theosophic philosophy, indeed almost its foundation rock on the moral side. With all this, however, there have been uncertainties, doubts and misgivings as to the operation of the general law in its particular incidences. This matches the common experience of *homo* (not so) *sapiens* whenever he comes to trace the working of broad

general principles or laws in particular cases. It has given rise to that ready maxim of practical affairs that "it is the exception that proves the rule." This gets by in casual uncritical thought; but it leaves the reason disturbed. A rule to which there are exceptions is proven not to be the rule. And we do not like to think that a law of absolute justice can be abrogated by any casual interference or miss out in any case.

In our supreme confidence in the law of Karma — which this article is *not* intended to disturb or weaken — we have tended to hug it to our hearts and minds so tightly, so affectionately, that we have conceived it as working with an inexorable exactness that almost restores the "eye for eye and tooth for tooth" assumptions of the old naturalistic codes of the so-called first dispensation. *The Light of Asia* asserts that the law operates to the last minute detail of exactitude. "Not one jot or tittle of the law shall be abated until all be fulfilled" stands in our own Christian Scriptures. "As"—and precisely as—"a man soweth that also shall he reap." If a man murder his fellow, that fellow will murder him in the turn of later fortune, even if many lives hence. So asserts the doctrine in what may be taken to be the general popular conception in Theosophical circles. Exceptional students may be better instructed.

But—Hitler, as common conception based on demonstrable facts asserts, gave the word to murder many millions. Other historical potentates have done much the same thing. The question arises: must these murderers be personally murdered each time for twelve million lives? Must every individual victim incarnate to murder the Hitlers? One can be murdered but once in an incarnation. The ordinary Karmic supposition seems horrendous. The law

seems unable to work with literal precision here!

But this dilemma seems incidental and clever minds will have plausible solutions. The point of our critique comes to view in another consideration. This point concerns the general habit of Theosophic ideation and expression in inveterately referring the explanation of Karmic operation to the *past*. Be it announced, then, as a challenge to more enlightened Theosophical thinking, that, when rightly envisaged, Karma, as it registers its decrees, is to be considered only in secondary reference to the past, and always and universally in primary reference to the future!

So true is it that Karmic situations and events are universally referred to the past that the common phrase, "past Karma," has come to be almost a synonym for Karma itself. When the challenge for an explanation or analysis of present good or ill fortune confronts the minds of Theosophists, they with practical unanimity reply: the person is reaping his good or bad Karma, generated of course in the past. No phrases are more common than those of "good Karma" and "bad Karma." If this is disputed, I must say that in my personal association with Theosophists for over forty-two years I can recall no single exception to the statements here made. Karma, it can hardly be disputed, is thought of as the present consequence of *past* action.

It will be countered at this point that always the Theosophic view holds that Karma corrects past errors and as a consequence educates for the *future*. This is granted. The future, as well as the past has come in for its recognition in the doctrine. What I must repeat is that nearly all Theosophic thought about Karma refers explanation of its decrees in overt events almost exclusively to the past, and leaves the emphasis on the future so faint and feeble that it

finds little place in common talk or speculation on the subject. On the other side, we assert that the doctrine should be so expounded that every mention of the term would immediately and habitually point the thought to the locale of explanation as lying in the future, instead of, or in far minor relevance, to the past. We explicitly maintain that its chief, its most important and its true philosophical reference is to the *future*, not to the past.

The insistence of general exegesis on its connection with the past has, as several of the persons mentioned assured me, caused the law of Karma to hang like a brooding accusation over the daily mentality of most Theosophists. As there is much of suffering and adversity in all lives, the thought has been deep-seated that we are perpetually being hounded by the unrelenting pursuit of our bad past. It hangs continually on our trail, exacting its tolls. The conception makes of our present a dark cloud threatening forever to rain down more ill-fortune upon us. I hardly believe it can be denied that when ill-fortune strikes it is the immediate and instinctive impulse of the average Theosophist to begin at once to seek, or to wonder what he has done in his past to bring on him the present misfortune. Almost never does it occur to him to interpret it simply as discipline, training, education for his future good. The thought of the future may be in the background of his speculation; what I here claim is that it is not, as I assert it should be, right out in the immediate foreground, the first instinctive thought always.

This must sound revolutionary enough; but what comes next will carry an even more heterodox ring in Theosophic ears. No phrase in Theosophic parlance is commoner than that which says that we "make" our good or evil

Karma. Unwise or selfish acts, we constantly hear, "create" evil Karma; unselfish deeds and thoughts *make* good Karma. We are even said to be *sowing* our Karma, to be reaped in the future, or "piling up" our quantity of it.

As opposed to the implications behind such phrases I believe that reflection will uphold my forthright assertion that we do not *make* or *create* or *generate* any of our Karma at all! We do not ever *make* our Karma; what we do is to take it, already made for us and *condition* it or give it specific character. For all the Karma that any one on the evolutionary path ever had or will have has been *made* for him before he set his foot on the first rung of the human ladder!

Karma, the Sanskrit word, means "action" and action carries consequences and bears fruit. And all souls have been committed to the necessity of acting in a scheme of unfoldment before blame or censure could possibly have been a moral concomitant of choice in behaviour. Man no more *creates* his Karma than does a child, and man in his initial stages can no more logically be held morally responsible for modes of action in relation to his future than can the child in relation to his mature life. We do not blame children; we teach them.

This thesis appeared plausible to my mind for years, but never found clinching succinctness until viewed in the light of an analogy which, I think, puts it in practically unassailable position. The relation of humanity to its Karma can be said to be precisely like that of a person who is brought to the foot of a great towering mountain and told he must climb to the peak, and that an infinitude of abundant life awaits him as recompense for his exertions when he reaches the top, though both joy and sorrow will attend his climb. A worse

fate than defeat or failure will be his if he does not climb. The necessity—and it is well to remember that the early great Greek Theosophists called the wheel of life the *cycle of necessity*, *anangke*—the effort, the difficulties, the dangers,—these constitute the man's Karma. And it is all there in front of him *before he starts!* One's Karma is just this obligation to climb the high mountain of human evolution. Indeed it is right there in our venerable Christian Scriptures in the story of the old serpent or dragon leading the Christ in us to the mountain of the fleshly life. And I can assure students that in the "lost language of symbolism" in which all ancient Scriptures were written "the devil and Satan, that old serpent," is the cosmic divine force that swirls us around the cycles (represented by the coils of the serpent's body), and the word "mount" or "mountain," or the "hill of the Lord," is just this earth itself. The obligation to climb is set before us as life is set before the young child, before the conditions of moral responsibility could be in play. No man ever "made" any of his Karma. God, Life made it for him at the very start.

It is our own literature that tells us that some of the hosts of angelic beings destined to climb the mount of earthly evolution balked at the prospect. How can we forget the "unwilling Nirvanees" of the *Secret Doctrine*? It is almost certain that they are the five "foolish virgins" (for they were denominated Kumaras, i.e., "virgin souls") who, refusing to incarnate, had no oil in their lamps when their bridegroom came at midnight (and "midnight" again is a symbol of incarnation!—how marvellously this language of symbolism tells the whole story!).

All Karma, therefore, is "good Karma." This remains true in spite of the very obvious and very real possi-

bility, amounting to virtual certainty, that the initial ignorance, the inexperience, the folly, the blindness, the undevelopment, the selfish motivations of the young traveller of the new road will so unwisely bungle his actions that the consequences of his errors will involve his feet in the roughest and most tortuous and torturous paths up the hill. Early tentatives in the sheer effort at learning will embroil his steps in every sort of painful delay and wandering aside into false paths. Learning ultimately comes mostly through the suffering incident to unwise choices of action. Only pain can at times wrench the self-centered pilgrim loose from addictions to things gross and bestial and crush his wilful obstinacy in clinging to them. Suffering is at last the great purgator, the master tamer of the wild animal in us. It is the slayer of the "ape and the tiger" in human nature.

But it still is true that the traveler does not "make" this Karma, in the sense that he would not have had it if his errant actions had not brought his difficulties and sufferings upon him. His Karma—all of it—was there for him by virtue of his being given the chance at evolution, a child of God destined to grow to the fulness of the stature of the nature of Christhood. All he could do with his Karma was to condition it as painful through bungling or delightful through learning. For stressful will it be in any case, since—as I have so often said in lectures—no soul will escape just that amount of pressure, of stress and strain, found necessary by the forces of life to make it *exert itself* sufficiently to bring forth to function the Godlike potentialities latent within the core of its being.

So, then, at last the heavily-laden souls of Theosophists—and all others—can unburden themselves of the imputa-

(Continued on Page 128)

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## OFFICE NOTES

Isolated students and those unable to have access to Theosophical literature should avail themselves of the Travelling Library conducted by the Toronto Theosophical Society. There are no charges except for postage on the volumes loaned. For particulars write to the Travelling Librarian, 52 Isabella Street, Toronto, Ont.

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The President, Mr. C. Jinarajadasa underwent an operation in Chicago recently to correct a condition which has been causing him considerable distress for several years. The operation was entirely successful and after a period of convalescence at Olcott, Wheaton, the

President left for India with much renewed health and energy.

\* \* \*

Our best wishes are sent to Mr. James S. Perkins, National President of the Theosophical Society in America who recently underwent a second operation on his leg which was severely injured in an accident in March 1948. Mr. Perkins carried on his duties and acted as Chairman of the Convention last June, but was suffering considerably and had to use crutches. It is hoped that this operation will restore the full use of the limb.

\* \* \*

We were delighted to receive recently the first four issues of a new Theosophical magazine, *Malaya and Siam Theosophical News* which is published at Singapore under the editorship of Mrs. H. B. Moorhead. This four page magazine contains interesting Theosophical articles, news of the section, the programme of the Singapore Lodge and a list of the lodges and outposts in Malaya and Siam. Best wishes are sent to our new contemporary.

\* \* \*

*Manas* which has been strongly recommended several times in this column continues to bring each week a collection of most vital, constructive, analytical articles on world affairs, important books, education, religion, philosophy, etc. Many fellow students, here and elsewhere, share our own high regard for this magazine. Sample copies will be sent free; enquiries should be addressed to Manas Publishing Company, Box 112, El Sereno Station, Los Angeles 32.

\* \* \*

The article on Karma by Mr. L. Furze-Morrish which appeared in the August issue has aroused many criticisms, written and oral. There is considerable duplication in the letters; two



are quite long, but we hope to run the contra arguments next month.

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Mr. James Cousins, Acting Editor of *The Young Citizen* (Adyar) announces that word has been received from Srimati Rukmini Devi that she desires the magazine to continue. Its cessation had been announced in the May and June issues.

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The contrast between the spirit of Mr. C. Jinarajadasa's Convention Talk to Members, portions of which appear in this issue, and the spirit of the explanations given for the motion in General Council respecting the proposed transfer of the pictures of the Masters to the Esoteric School, is so striking that we can readily infer that the proposed motion has not the blessing of the President. When in Toronto last June Mr. Jinarajadasa spoke of the necessity for maintaining complete freedom of belief and independence of thought in the Society.

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#### EDMONTON LODGE

The Annual Meeting of the Edmonton Lodge was held on June 8th, 1949, when officers were elected for the coming year as follows:

President, Mr. Emory Wood.  
Vice-President, Mr. Whitbred.  
Secretary, Mrs. N. Dalzell.  
Treasurer, Mrs. W. Robinson.  
Librarian, Mrs. A. Chapman.

We have one new member, Mrs. M. Williams, and one application for membership.

During the past year many evenings were given to the study of *The Key to Theosophy*, which proved both instructive and interesting.

The visit of Pandit Rishi Ram made a very pleasant interlude.

Mrs. N. Dalzell,  
Secretary.

#### ORPHEUS LODGE A TRIBUTE

The members of the Orpheus Lodge regretfully announce the loss of their Secretary, Edwin Harper, who died on Sept. 5th at the age of 54. Eddie had been a member of the Orpheus Lodge for more than twenty years and despite ill health, was always ready to carry his weight in the lodge work. Recently he had the pleasure and advantage of close personal association with Professor Ernest Wood, and later with Pandit Rishi Ram when they accepted the hospitality of his home while lecturing in Vancouver. His cheerful presence, dry humour, and fearless expression of opinion will be missed in our lodge discussions.

#### REVIEW

*I Say Sunrise* by Talbot Mundy is an important book, a strong book. It was published posthumously and so far as we are aware is his only work of non-fiction. It is a comparatively small book of some 185 pages but readers who remember the distilled wisdom of parts of *Om* and *The Devil's Guard* will expect to find 'much in little' and will not be disappointed. ". . . to avoid the intolerant wrath of loving kindness hell-bent on being its brother's keeper" is a vivid phrase from the introduction where Mundy tells of an incident when he was a governmental official and had to satisfy an ultimatum from high authority that the nakedness of the natives under his charge must cease. It was refreshing to read that the ultimatum was obeyed and that on the day of its expiry each native appeared wearing the simple apron devised by Mundy—but each wore his or her apron on behind!

"Can we discover a faith that no grief can dim, nor fear shake; and yet that shall not offend intelligence, nor deny religion, nor diminish dignity, nor distort facts, nor ignore history, nor tempt us to impose our ignorance and selfish-

ness and cruelty and blindness on our fellow men? I believe so. That is why this book is written."

With the above words Mundy closes closes chapter One and the discovery of such a 'faith' is pursued in the following chapters. "Reincarnation" is an outstanding chapter, and so also is "Love". "Two Women" (H. P. Blavatsky and Mary Baker Eddy) is an outspoken analysis of the effect of these two women upon modern thought. The last chapter "Conclusion" opens "There is no conclusion. Our mass-mistake is that we worship definitions and that our definitions are invariably wrong . . . We think in terms of ends, whereas there really is an eternal procession of new beginnings." In this chapter Mundy's 'faith' is strongly and clearly expressed in phrases that challenge the mind and elicit responses.

An excellent book for Theosophists to read and ponder over—and a good book to pass on to anyone who stands at one of the many transitional points in the evolution of consciousness.

Published by Andrew Dakers Limited, London. Price \$2.00.

### THE THREE TRUTHS

The soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour have no limit.

The principle which gives life dwells in us, and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard or seen, or smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception.

Each man is his own absolute law-giver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself; the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.

These truths, which are as great as is life itself, are as simple as the simplest mind of man. Feed the hungry with them.—Idyll of the White Lotus.

### — YET WOULD I GIVE —

In me the scribe so much confounded,  
an angel with but broken wings,  
the secret soul, yet senses all com-  
pounded  
with dreams and with despair that  
sings.

Within, the albatross that flies forever  
across far seas unknown, unsung;  
within, the Delphic knower and yet  
never  
has the truth splendid been upon my  
tongue.

I am still waiting on the august riddle,  
the undeciphered task of unknown  
year,  
the beginning, the end and yea the  
middle  
for I am chastened by the Chario-  
teer—

His questions quicken the quick senses,  
His truth destroys their very need.  
till memory returns and life dispenses  
the ripened fruit, the quickened seed.

Yet would I give as gives a lover  
the self unique within its dream,  
when all is said I shall at last discover  
that things are far from what they  
seem.

Yet would I give over and over  
such silhouettes though soul has fled,  
till I assuredly discover  
the dragon of apocalypse is dead.

H. L. Huxtable.

### BOOKS ON THEOSOPHICAL SUBJECTS

which have passed the tests of time and use  
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564 PAPE AVE., TORONTO

## THOU SHALT NOT COVET!

The members of the General Council of the Society have been asked to vote on a resolution authorizing the transfer to the Esoteric School of two pictures of the Masters, K.H. and M. These pictures are the property of the Theosophical Society but are in the custody of the E.S. and are kept in the shrine room at Adyar.

The matter of transfer was first proposed by Mr. N. Sri Ram who suggested as follows: "I . . . suggest for consideration that the pictures be handed over to the Esoteric School, now that it is a registered body, as being a body or group composed wholly of persons who believe in the Masters and revere Them. The T.S. is a bigger body which permits a variety of opinion on the existence of Masters, the value of sacred pictures, etc."

Later the following resolution was presented: "Resolved that the pictures of the two Masters, M. and K.H., brought to Adyar in 1884 by Colonel Olcott and heretofore placed in the custody of the Esoteric School, be and they are hereby, handed over unreservedly to the Esoteric School, a registered body, to be its property and for such use and purpose as in its sole judgment shall be deemed fitting."

The reasons given for this amazing proposal will come as a severe shock to many members. The T.S. is deemed no longer worthy of owning the pictures because its members are not *required* to *believe* in the Masters and are free to hold a variety of opinion on their existence! But in Heaven's name, is not freedom of belief the very essence of the Theosophical attitude?

In 1924 the General Council passed a resolution affirming the principle of freedom of thought in the Society, de-

claring ". . . there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none which any member is not free to accept or reject. . . Every member has an equal right to attach himself to any teacher or to any school of thought which he may choose, but has no right to force his choice on any other."

That the present proposal could be made and presented as a formal resolution to the General Council indicates a grave situation within the Society. Because members are exercising their right of freedom of opinion concerning the Masters and 'the value of sacred pictures', the pictures are to be taken away from the Society and handed over to the more exclusive Esoteric School. Such an action could bring about another serious crisis in the Society and might lead to a reduction in our ranks similar to that which followed an earlier attempt to impose a creed on the Society.

The resolution should be unanimously rejected. The rejection would be a heartening indication that within the Society there is still a majority who do support the principle of freedom of thought and belief and who in the words of the above mentioned resolution of the General Council, are prepared "to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise his own right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof."

Apart from the implicit contravention of this fundamental principle, the General Council should also obtain legal opinion as to whether or not it is within the power of the Council to transfer the pictures without committing a technical breach of trust.

D. W. B.

## FROM "A TALK TO MEMBERS"

*Given at the American Convention, June 28, 1949*

BY C. JINARAJADASA

To speak very frankly—and I have experience of your Section on and off during forty-five years, so that there is not much I do not know about the American Section, and some of it I wish I did not know—in many lodges a new member has a whole avalanche of Occultism unloaded upon him. Some theosophical leaders are so keen about the occult aspects, their belief in the Masters, their belief in the angels and all kinds of revelations, they unload all their dogma, as if the new member should receive it all with welcome. Particularly with regard to the idea of the Masters, they take for granted that anyone who comes in should accept this idea with great warmth and delight.

I will give an instance of what is taking place now. *The Society is in no way committed to the idea that the Masters exist.* Historically there is enough material for you to prove to yourself that certain remarkable Beings were involved in the organization of the Society. Now, it was the custom during many years when Dr. Besant was the President, at the opening of Conventions for her to make the following invocation:

"May Those who are the embodiment of Love Immortal bless with Their protection the Society established to do Their Will on earth; may They ever guard it by Their Power, inspire it with Their Wisdom, and energize it with Their Activity."

You may say, then, that Dr. Besant in every Convention committed the Society to a belief in the existence of the Masters. But she has said, again and again, that there is no obligation on

anyone to believe. Equally, if one believes, no one else has a right to say that he must *not* believe. People are free within the Society to believe or not to believe. But I do grant you that upon a public occasion, like a Theosophical Convention, to read an invocation of this kind, addressed to Those who founded the Society may seem to commit the Society to a belief in Their Existence. Following that tradition, since I became President, I have used that invocation, and I ask the members to rise. In India I suppose eighty percent of the members present in Convention have a firm faith in the existence of the Masters, and I have merely held up the tradition. Perhaps I ought not to.

But I find that here and there in your lodges in this country, you are asking that *all* repeat that invocation, so that the newest member who has joined the Society has to say, "May those, etc." I suppose he does so; it is expected of him. But you are *committing* him to a belief in the Masters, and you have no right to ask anybody to have any kind of belief in the Society's ideas, except that of Universal Brotherhood.

Here I have to draw attention to the fact that we must take the greatest care not in any way to manufacture a creed. In the year 1900 Dr. Besant received a very striking letter from the Adept Koot-Hoomi. We must remember that H. P. B. had died nine years before, so it could not have been any kind of "hocus-pocus" on the part of H. P. B. The Master says in that letter, which is with me in Adyar: "The T.S. and its members are slowly manufacturing a creed." They certainly were manufacturing a

creed in Benares headquarters then, particularly distressing for it insisted that unless one believed in the Masters and accepted certain people as their agents, he or she could not be a good Theosophist. That is not so. I know many dozens of good Theosophists, good workers for the Theosophical cause, who do not feel that they can believe in the existence of the Masters. Yet in spite of all that, they are good Theosophists.

What is important is that a member should accept the ideal of Universal Brotherhood, with a general spirit of theosophical propaganda, which is to eliminate all kinds of difficulties as between the nations, the religions and cultures. So long as he works for *that*, he is a good Theosophist, and he may leave to another life the belief in the Masters.

You may ask me, then, why I am giving a lecture tonight on the "Letters of the Masters," and showing Their scripts. That lecture is not intended in any way as propaganda to evoke in you a faith in the Masters. It is a lecture on a historical basis, to tell you something of the inner history of the Society, as shown in those letters received from Them. Incidentally, all the letters from the Masters have a deep interest for us who are aiming at the spiritual life, because of certain statements here and there concerning the problems of ethics and of spiritual unfoldment. They are of the deepest fascination, but they are in no way to be quoted as authoritative in our theosophical propaganda, and one can be a good and a helpful Theosophist without a belief in the Masters.

Sometimes, frankly, there is a kind of fanaticism which characterizes some Theosophists. They think you *must* believe in the Masters, otherwise there is no salvation for you. I have seen this in many ways in many parts of the world. I remember in the year 1922

when the Liberal Catholic Church was active in Australia with Brother Leadbeater as a Bishop of it, certain of our most enthusiastic and devoted workers in Sydney became fanatical. One went out and told all her friends, "If you don't believe in the Masters, the Masters will not look at you. And if you don't belong to the Liberal Catholic Church, They will have no use for you." As you can imagine, that kind of fanaticism roused the fiercest opposition. Equally, on the other hand, there were other fanatics who said, "If you are a theosophical lecturer and you happen also to be a priest of the Liberal Catholic Church, do not lecture on our platform with your clerical collar. We will not have you appearing on our platform as a clergyman." Mind you, they would allow any Christian clergyman who wanted to lecture to wear his collar buttoned at the back, but they drew the line at allowing a Theosophist to do so. Of course that is fanaticism of a completely different kind. And it was because of this that a year or so later Dr. Besant and the General Council passed in 1924, that declaration concerning freedom of thought, which you will find since that day has been published in every issue of THE THEOSOPHIST. So then, we have to be on our guard against excessive enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is marvelous, but when it turns to fanaticism, then it is most damaging to the Theosophical movement. It is very easy for people to get the attitude of "holier than thou."

Now, there are many, many roads to Truth, and the first thing we need to realize is that there are people finding Truth outside of the Society. There is a wonderful way within the Society, but we cannot say that salvation is only limited within the circle of the Society.

After joining, if you are a worker in a lodge and are known as a Theosophist, there is a certain conduct that is obligatory upon you, and that is that you

must be a Theosophist first in the home. That, as you know, is one of the hardest things, because it means that your spouse, your husband or wife, may be opposed to your ideas. That is a sad piece of karma, but you have to bear up with it and then you have to adapt yourself to the situation. You have your obligations and your duties and you cannot fall down on them. But equally it is necessary that you should carry out your duties, firm in your loyalties, but not necessarily rousing opposition by insisting on minor matters in your theosophical decision as to things.

Now I come to the attitude in the lodge. I do not know that to be a member of the lodge makes matters easier. Sometimes it is very beautiful to be in a lodge where everything is harmonious, where the members seem to be old friends of past lives who have met again. But there are other times when your membership, particularly if you are called upon to take an office, brings you difficulty after difficulty, and it seems to be a continual trial. Once again, you have to make a stand on certain points, but only on fundamental principles and not on details of how a work should be done. There should be no need to insist that your opinion is necessarily the best opinion on the map, and you can give way on certain matters that are not fundamental. But when it comes to certain fundamentals, particularly where others are involved, then you must remember that clause in the Golden Stairs: "A valiant defense of those who are unjustly attacked."

In many a National Society there occur crises. . . . I often say that the right is never completely on one side. Part of it is on each side. And if I were to observe dispassionately, sixty percent of the right is on one side and forty percent on the other. The real quarrel between the two is for the twenty percent in between, or the ten percent in which

each would have to give way. If one or the other were both willing to give in, what we call give-and-take, then it would be possible for both to meet and carry on, even if it were not the best solution. But any solution which keeps up a continual irritation and an open sore is not the best solution, even if it is that of a majority.

Now, another element. If you want to study, that is, to understand, you can do so alone, but you will not be able to go so very far unless you happen to be a profound student. Sometimes students become purely mental and miss the true significance of their studies. I recall years ago some person meeting me, not a member, in Salt Lake City and telling me that he had read through *The Secret Doctrine* twice, but had not felt inclined to join the Society. I opened my eyes very wide. I did not say anything, because it would have been rude, but I could have said, "So you have studied, and you think you know *The Secret Doctrine*, do you? You know nothing of it at all."

The whole spirit of *The Secret Doctrine* is the spirit of service. If there, a great knowledge is given to you, it is a knowledge to be applied. And that is why in my own *First Principles* there is one sentence alone that stands out to me as *the sentence* of the whole book. It comes at the end: "Loving action is Divine Wisdom at work, and whoso acts lovingly will inevitably come to the Wisdom." So, in our theosophical study, action must always be linked to study.

The study of Theosophy is absolutely inseparable from action, serviceable action for others. The study of these deep truths, alone, would lead you only part of the way. That is why it is most helpful that you join a lodge where there is a study class. And every lodge should have a study class. Why is it helpful to study with others? It is very much like what happens when flint is

struck with steel. Both are black objects, nothing inspiring about the steel or the flint, but as they strike, a spark of light shines out. Similarly, as you are studying together, from the interchange of thought suddenly there is born some new thought, some new implication, as to a possible solution to your problem. That is why in meeting together in friendship with an earnest spirit of truth, seeking Truth, you will be helping each other.

I must here warn those who are leaders in groups: Don't lead! I mean by that, do not impose yourself. It is so easy, because others have made you a leader, for you to lay down the law, to say: "It must be so." Sometimes, such is our human nature, we rather delight in being in office and we have a sense of grievance if we are not elected again. When Dr. Besant was in Australia in 1922 and a new lodge, called Blavatsky Lodge, was organized, she advised a rule should be passed that no lodge president elected for one year should be elected more than twice. After that he must step down for at least one year before he could be a candidate for re-election. That prevented a certain clique from perpetuating a certain policy.

I know one dear old Theosophist in England who had built up a lodge at much sacrifice, and was elected president year after year. Finally, when he was an old man, he got into his head the notion that he would like to die a president, and he did. And in the meantime the lodge slowly began to die also! He had looked up to Bishop Leadbeater, and I was a warm friend of his, but whatever slight hints we gave that he might give others the opportunity, he simply did not pick up at all. He was so absorbed in the sense of what he thought was devotion to the Masters, by dying as the lodge president. I watched that way that, slowly, the vitality of the lodge went away.

It is a very noble opportunity to have to serve a lodge. But also, do not let the members impose upon you, do not let them insist that you are the only saviour of the lodge, that if you are not elected as lodge president or federation president, nothing will happen. Do not put up with that. Say definitely, "If the federation is so weak it cannot elect another president instead of me, who served three years, then let the federation go hang!" There is no vitality in it. Do not try to keep up a half-living corpse. If the members are so weak-kneed and cowardly that no one will spring forward, do not put up with it. It is not good for the lodge or the federation that they should impose upon you and put upon you the duty. In theosophical work every one must share his part. And if there is a situation, as I said, where the others will not share, let the work go to pieces, and from the fragments a better type of work may be built up later,

Also, I would say to the lodge leaders: Do not take for granted that because you are a lodge leader, the Masters have selected you as a channel to pour Their wisdom through you. It is nothing of the kind. You are merely there as a lodge leader, one who works out the schemes of study, but you are not to impose what you believe is the explanation. Your privilege is to call out from the others what they think is the explanation. Pool all the knowledge together, and when it comes to certain questions which you cannot solve, leave them and say, "Let us pass on to something else that is easier to understand."

Study well, but remember also the eagerness to share. It was well said by Blake, "The cistern contains, the fountain overflows." You must be a fountain, not a cistern keeping the knowledge to yourself. Your whole aim should be to be like a fountain, so that whatever you have gained of inspiration overflows to others.

Here I want to mention one fact, which is that although you are a member of a lodge, there is something more which you can do. That is to make something of your home, so that your home becomes a temple of theosophical interest for others, so that they may come to your home also. Here it is that we have a letter which Miss Arundale, Dr. Arundale's aunt, who adopted him, received from the Master Koot Hoomi in the year 1884. In that letter, received in a way almost officially as she was the treasurer of the London Lodge, the Master speaks as follows and this advice given in 1884 is very vital and useful for today: "You will do good by encouraging the visits of your fellow members and of inquirers and by holding meetings of the more congenial for study and instruction. (The London Lodge had no regular place of meeting.) You should induce others, in other quarters, to do likewise. You should constantly advise with your associates in the Council how to make the general meetings of the Lodge interesting. New members should be taken in hand from the first by the older ones especially selected and assigned to the duty in each case, and instructed thoroughly in what you have already learned, so that they may be capable of participating intelligently in the proceedings of regular meetings." And it is in that letter the advice is given: "Try to make your home a center of Theosophy."

The understanding of Theosophy is not merely a matter of the head. It is a matter of the heart also. Most of our theosophical lodge groups and lodge study classes are charged with, shall I say, a mental atmosphere, and the heart quality, if you have it, will almost get dried up. Now, remember that the heart, that is, the purified emotions, contacts the nature of the Buddhi, and that is a higher region than that of the mind. As that is the case you must

supplement your theosophical knowledge and appreciation with the feeling of the heart also. Sometimes after you have studied mentally some difficult problem, it is the heart that will explain to you the inner significance that is behind the problem.

From *The American Theosophist*, August, 1949.

## A RECONSIDERATION OF KARMA

(Continued from Page 119)

tion, so common in Theosophic ideation, that they have made "bad Karma" in the past or will make it in the present or in the future. They can breathe easier in the thought that all their Karma has already been made potentially for them. It is possible to epitomize the position here advanced in the terse phrasing of the statement that while they can not *make* bad Karma, they still can make their Karma bad. And there is a world of difference between the two expressions. Indeed that difference summarizes the gist of our whole article. They can not *make* it, but they can character it, good or bad. It is already made, but awaits its specific character and colour at the hands of each one.

(To Be Concluded)

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