

Freedom of Thought

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasize the fact that 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. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher, or writer, from H. P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties. The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise the right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.

Freedom of the Society

The Theosophical Society, while cooperating with all other bodies whose aims and activities make such cooperation possible, is and must remain an organization entirely independent of them, not committed to any objects save its own, and intent on developing its own work on the broadest and most inclusive lines, so as to move towards its own goal as indicated in and by the pursuit of those objects and that Divine Wisdom which in the abstract is implicit in the title "The Theosophical Society".

Since Universal Brotherhood and the Wisdom are undefined and unlimited, and since there is complete freedom for each and every member of the Society in thought and action, the Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organization.



THE THEOSOPHIST

VOL. 145 NO. 11 AUGUST 2024

CONTENTS

Message in a Bottle: Trust—I <i>Tim Boyd</i>	5
Mahatma Letter to F. Arundale: Advice to Members of a TS Lodge <i>Koot Hoomi</i>	9
Krishnamurti: Ninety Years of Theosophical Ripples—II <i>Pedro Oliveira</i>	12
The Pyramid That Points to the Stars <i>Hugh Murdoch</i>	20
Contemporary Science: Facts, Ideas, and Questions—II <i>Rajaram Nityananda</i>	26
Theosophy and Ecology: Saving the Environment <i>Muneeb Ahmad</i>	32
International Convention Information	36
Theosophical Work around the World (International Youth Gathering & Recent Appointments)	39
International Directory	42

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Note: Articles for publication in *The Theosophist* should be sent to: <editorialoffice@gmail.com>

Cover: Ra, the sun god, was frequently depicted as a falcon, wearing the solar disc headdress. He symbolized an essential source of creation — the sun. From a version of *The Book of the Dead*, c.1150 BC, published in *The Way to Eternity: Egyptian Myth*, p. 22, Images Color Library. Time-Life Books BV, Amsterdam, 1st English printing 1997. (See related article on p. 20 of this issue.)

This journal is the official organ of the President, founded by H. P. Blavatsky on 1 Oct. 1879. The Theosophical Society is responsible only for official notices appearing in this journal.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths, and theosophists endeavour to live them. Everyone willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.

Message in a Bottle: Trust — I

TIM BOYD

RECENTLY, while visiting with members of the Theosophical Society (TS) in Italy, I was asked for an interview. A film about the TS in Italy's history was being made and the director thought a few questions with the International President might be useful. The questions were few in number, maybe five or six. Most were historical or related to the teachings of Theosophy, but the final question was different. It was: If you were to write a message in a bottle and entrust it to the sea, what would you write?

As someone who frequently speaks to groups of people, I recognize a need to be aware of the audience for whom the message is intended. In my case, most often it is either members of the TS, or spiritually inclined people. The point of such awareness is to identify areas of interest or involvement that connect us. A message in a bottle does not permit such analysis. Anyone, anywhere, at any time could be the recipient. As I understand it, the oldest such message was found 101 years after it was dropped in the water. The longest distance was a bottle that travelled from England to Perth, Australia — 14,500 km.

The message that I proposed was as compact and easily understood as possible and hopefully invited a depth of

thought beyond the words. It was five words: "Trust. Be open. Do something." For me these are big ideas that can resonate with anyone — ideas which we all understand at some level, but which can reveal ever-expanding levels of meaning according to our own unfoldment and engagement. Having answered the film director's question I felt satisfied that our interview had come to an end; the cameras would stop rolling and the microphones would be removed. Nothing more needed to be said. The message spoke for itself. Of course, the director then asked me to elaborate. Here is the gist of what I shared.

Trust

In our normal lives, whether it is between husband and wife, parents and children, teachers and students, communities of all descriptions, businesses, or nations, the sense that one can rely upon the character, ability, strength, and honesty of one's partner is a requirement for all healthy relationships. Wherever that trust is missing, dysfunctional relationships arise. Uncertainty can lead to doubt; doubt to distrust; distrust to a range of isolating and separative reactions — suspicion, fear, anger, even hatred. Where there is distrust the capacity for true harmony and connection dissolve. Faced with someone we

distrust we become hyper-vigilant, examining perceived motives, distancing ourselves for self-protection, and removing ourselves from the possibility of being fully present. Our fear of somehow being harmed removes us from the present moment to a parallel world of distrustful thought.

It is true that even a habitual liar wants to be trusted. Experience teaches us that there are people, businesses, governments that have not earned our trust, or have violated it. We live in a world of wounded people. Women, children, the aged, the handicapped, animals and so on, are abused. Our hearts are “broken” in our attempts to create loving relationships. Children are trained not to trust by the examples of unkind, self-centered parents and relatives. Even in the churches and temples of the world, where people entrust the care of their very souls, human frailty and distorted development take their toll. Wars, famine, natural disasters, disease, deaths can lead some to believe that even the Universe, or God, cannot be trusted. The effects can be lifelong, such that a lifetime can be spent withholding oneself from the experience of love and connection for fear that, once again, one’s trust will be violated, or because the wounds we carry make us believe ourselves unworthy. Once broken, reestablishing genuine trust can be challenging.

All of this is part of living, and navigating our course in the world. H. P. Blavatsky, one of the main founders of the Theosophical Society, is reported to have said that “the world is man living in his personal nature”, with all of its imperfections and limitations. This is the

case for our personal lives. But for many, a point comes when the pull of a deeper dimension of themselves, beyond the merely personal, becomes important — the outline of a dawning potential for a “spiritual” life begins to be seen. With this shift in perspective, how does one approach the issue, “Trust”?

From the Ageless Wisdom’s point of view, a human being functions on multiple levels. The levels with which we are most familiar comprise the personality — the physical, energetic, emotional, and materially focused thought components which continuously interact in producing our sense of “I”, or self. Closely associated with the personality is the Soul, the vehicle of the undying Higher Self, composed of the impersonal levels of thought, the intuitive, or genuinely spiritual dimension, and Spirit itself — in the parlance of Theosophy, *ātma* (spirit), *buddhi* (intuitive), and *manas* (specifically the impersonal, higher reaches of mind). Spirit, or *ātma*, is described as universal and not a principle in the human being. It requires a vehicle (*upādhi*) that becomes enlivened by reflecting the “light” of *ātma*. In many ways the function of *ātma*/Spirit is analogous to the way light functions.

Take the example of outer space. Although we can see stars, moons, and other lighted bodies in all directions, all else appears dark, yet space is filled with light. It only becomes apparent when there is something to reflect it. The astronaut holds out his hand into the darkened space and it becomes brightened by the essentially invisible light that is present everywhere. In the case of Spirit,

the reflective body is *buddhi*, or the plane of intuitive consciousness.

For the spiritually oriented person the work one does is directed towards elevating the mind so that its habitual “center” moves nearer to the light. The reflecting light becomes increasingly clear as we approach the realm of Spirit and its vehicle, *buddhi*. In *Light on the Path*, Mabel Collins makes the statement: “You will enter the light, but you will never touch the flame.” Our sincere practice moves us ever closer to the source of the light. In that process we are changed, in the sense that our perception of things is different. In the spiritual practice of India there is a term for the effects of this elevation process. The Sanskrit term is *manas taijasi* — the Illumined Mind — a mind that so nearly approaches the realm of Spirit that it takes on its qualities. It becomes radiant, shining, not with its own light, but just like the brightened full moon reflects the sun, it becomes a mind capable of dispelling darkness.

The path leading to this illumination and heightened service is completely dependent on trust. In Shankaracharya’s *Crest Jewel of Wisdom* he lists what are described as the *shatsampatti* — Six Jewels. These same six points were expressed in a contemporary form in J. Krishnamurti’s first book, *At the Feet of the Master*, under the section titled “Good Conduct”. What is written as *shraddha* (faith, trust, reliance) in the *Crest Jewel* is termed “Confidence” in Krishnamurti’s book. There he makes the statement: “Unless there is perfect trust, there cannot be the perfect flow

of love and power.” But trust in what?

“You must trust your Master; you must trust yourself.” For many both of these demands pose difficulties. To most of those who are even aware of the idea of spiritual evolution the Masters are an ideal, an object of belief. Their confidence is based on historical reports, the experience of others, the profound teachings attributed to them, and the logical necessity that the process of spiritual evolution must lead the expansive states of being that we identify with the Masters. But, as yet, the direct experience is lacking.

In our spiritual practice we are encouraged to elevate the mind through proper study and to experiment with quiet and its ever-deepening potentials. In this process what we find is that we do have experiences of light, blessing, and grace — sudden, perhaps brief, moments of intuitive insight that confirm the presence of a deeper reality whose dimensions and qualities become clearer as our practice deepens. Within that deeper reality we become aware of the outline of that consciousness we describe as the Master. In *At the Feet of the Master* it says: “If you have seen the Master, you will trust him to the uttermost.” Intuitive “seeing” confirms, in a way far beyond the physical sense of sight, the reality of the “Master”, not as a personality, but as an active principle. This is the trust that invites a response.

Most of us feel that we have a pretty good idea of who we are, but probably we do not. Ask anyone who they are and the most likely response is about what they do. “I am a lawyer/laborer/merchant. I have a family. I am a member of a po-

litical party, church, neighborhood. I feel strongly about . . . I believe in . . . I am a weak/strong person”, and so on. The list can be short or long, but it only describes the personality — the desires, attachments, struggles of the body, senses, emotions, and mind. The fact that there is a higher Self inhabiting the personality is lost on many. What is described as “the still, small voice” of that Higher Self tends to be drowned out by the noise of needs and wants, calm and storm, fears, angers, and so forth. Too many people find themselves overwhelmed by the insistent demands of finding food, shelter, and safety to hear a small voice. The big voices of threat and need are simply too loud.

It does happen that even in crisis the Higher Self is “heard”. The undeniable presence of an exalted inner self, beyond the limits of the personality, makes itself known. It can be a crucial experience in one’s life, reorienting one’s focus and understanding. As with everything else we do, with increasing attention to the soul’s presence comes increasing awareness. Our deepening involvement deepens our familiarity and connection. It becomes a virtuous cycle whose result is trust in the abiding presence of what Rumi and other mystics call “the Friend”. Others call it the “Higher Self” or “soul”. With time, patience, and intelligent effort our center of awareness that impels our activity in the world becomes closely linked to the soul. It is from this perspective that the comment, “I am not a human being having a spiritual experience, but a spiritual being having a human experience”, becomes a meaningful statement of identity.

In all the world there are no perfect personalities. Everyone is unevenly de-

veloped, filled with numerous strengths and abundant, often hidden, weaknesses. Many businesspersons, politicians, wives, husbands, even great spiritual teachers have “fallen from grace” because of uncontrolled weaknesses in their personalities. Our karma-creating activities cannot be ignored, but to the extent that we choose to solely focus on the personality, we see and create difficulties. However, out of our own experience of the soul’s presence it becomes an intuitive certainty that the same presence is in everyone. In the *Bhagavadgītā*, Krishna identifies himself as “the Inner Ruler Immortal present in the hearts of all beings”.

One of the results of a deepening exposure to the potentials that lie beyond the purely personal is the awakening of certain latent powers. Many associate clairvoyance with seeing auras, angels, astral colors, precognition, and so forth. On our way to the “perfect trust” that opens the “flow of perfect love and power” we discover that our growing trust leads to an expanding clarity of vision. The capacity to see into hearts and recognize the thirst for connection, and to speak and simply “be” in ways that make such connection real is one of the sleeping powers that awaken with trust. We find power in such things as kindness and compassionate activity. Our thought becomes charged with healing power. Every word, every glance from our awakening hearts has power.

We live in a responsive Universe. Our cooperation moves that response toward wholeness, healing, and understanding. Trust. Be open. Do something. . . .

(To be continued)

Mahatma Letter to F. Arundale:¹ Advice to Members of a TS Lodge

KOOT HOOMI

[1884]

To Francesca Arundale,
Fellow [member] of the Theosophical
Society,
Treasurer of the London Lodge
77. Crescent Circle,
Notting Hill. W.

The day of the separation is close at hand and I would say to you a few words. You are an officer of the LL [London Lodge] and as such have a special duty and opportunity.

It is not enough that you should set the example of a pure, virtuous life and a tolerant spirit; this is but negative goodness — and for *chelaship* [discipleship] will never do. You should, even as a simple member, much more as an officer, learn that you may teach, acquire spiritual knowledge and strength that the work may lean upon you, and the sorrowing victims of ignorance learn from you the cause and remedy of their pain.

If you choose, you may make your home [where HPB was the guest of Mrs

and Miss Arundale (see address above)] one of the most important centres of spiritualizing influence in all the world. The “power” is now concentrated there, and will remain — if you do not weaken or repulse it: remain to your blessing and advantage. You will do good by encouraging the visits of your fellow members and of enquirers, and by holding meetings of the more congenial for study and instruction. 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 [London 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 learnt, so that they may be capable of participating intelligently in the proceedings of regular meetings. There is a strong disposition to slur over the ceremony of “initiation” in such a way

Koot Hoomi, or KH, is one of the Mahatmas that inspired the founding of the Theosophical Society (TS). He engaged in a correspondence with two English theosophists living in India, A. P. Sinnett and A. O. Hume, which was published in the book *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*.

Mahatma Letter to F. Arundale: Advice to Members of a TS Lodge

as to make no serious impression upon the candidate. The method of the Parent Society [the Theosophical Society (TS)] may be unsuited to English prejudices, yet to fall into the opposite extreme of undignified haste is very much worse. Your ways of *initiation* are a standing insult to every regular *chela* and have provoked the displeasure of their “Masters [Masters of the Wisdom]”. It is a sacred thing with us; why should it be otherwise with you?

If every Fellow [member of the TS] took for his motto the wise words of a young boy, but one who is a fervent theosophist, and repeated with Bertram K [Bertram Keightley], “I am a theosophist before I am an Englishman”, no foe could ever upset your Society. However, candidates should be taught, and old members always recollect, that this is a serious affair the Society is engaged in; and that they should begin the work as seriously by making their own lives theosophical. The “Journal” [a periodical that Miss Arundale helped to plan, but which was never published] is well begun, and should be continued. It should be the natural complement to that of the “SPR” [Society for Psychical Research] which is a bag of nuts uncracked.

Your branch should keep in correspondence with all the others in Europe; the Germania [Germania Theosophical Society] can help you; the others need your help. This is a movement for all Europe, not for London only, remember. The American members are under great disadvantages, and have had until now,

since the Founders left, no competent leaders; your Branch can, and should, help them, for they are your neighbours, and the Headquarters have already too much to do in other quarters.

A chela [disciple] will be detailed to answer general questions if the Branch deserves assistance. But remember: we are not public scribes or clerks, with time to be continually writing notes and answers to individual correspondents about every trifling personal matter that they should answer for themselves. Nor shall we permit those private notes to be forwarded as freely as hitherto. Time enough to *discuss* the terms of chelaship when the aspirant has digested what has already been given out, and mastered his most palpable vices and weaknesses. This you may show or say to all. The present is for the Branch addressed to you as its officer.

You have accepted an important service — the financial agency — and done wisely. Such aid was very needed. If the members in Europe wish well to the Mother Society [the Theosophical Society], they should help to circulate its publications, and to have them translated into other languages when worthy of it. *Intentions* — you may tell your fellow-members — and kind words count for little with us. Deeds are what we want and demand. LCH [Mrs Laura C. Holloway] has done — poor child — more in that direction during two months than the best of your members in these five years.

The members of the L. Lodge have such an opportunity as seldom comes to

Mahatma Letter to F. Arundale: Advice to Members of a TS Lodge

men. A movement calculated to benefit an English-speaking world is in their custody. If they do their whole duty, the progress of materialism, the increase of dangerous self-indulgence, and the tendency towards spiritual suicide can be checked. The theory of vicarious atonement has brought about its inevitable reaction: only the knowledge of karma can offset it. The pendulum has swung from the extreme of blind faith towards the extreme materialistic skepticism, and nothing can stop it save Theosophy. Is not this a thing worth working for, to save those nations from the doom their ignorance is preparing for them?

Think you truth has been shown to you for your sole advantage? That we have broken the silence of centuries for

the profit of a handful of dreamers only? The converging lines of your karma have drawn each and all of you into this Society as to a common focus, that you may each help to work out the results of your interrupted beginnings in the last birth. None of you can be so blind as to suppose that this is your first dealing with Theosophy.

You surely must realize that this would be the same as to say that effects came without causes. Know then that it depends now upon each of you whether you shall henceforth struggle alone after spiritual wisdom thro' this and the next incarnate life, or, in company of your present associates and greatly helped by the mutual sympathy and aspiration. Blessing to all — deserving them.

KH

Endnotes

1. **Francesca Arundale** was a member of the TS, close friend of H. P. Blavatsky and Annie Besant, and great-aunt and adoptive mother of George S. Arundale (3rd international President of the TS). Reprinted from *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom* (1881–1888), First Series, Letter No. 4. Compiled by C. Jinarā-jadāsa. (Adyar, Chennai, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 2011). First ed. 1919.

Knowledge for the mind, like food for the body, is intended to feed and help to growth, but it requires to be well digested, and the more thoroughly and slowly the process is carried out, the better both for body and mind.

Mahatma Morya

Thus, little by little, the now incomprehensible will become the self-evident; and many a sentence of mystic meaning will shine yet out before your Soul-eye, like a transparency illuminating the darkness of your mind. Such is the course of gradual progress. . . .

Great man is he who is strongest in the exercise of patience.

Mahatma Koot Hoomi

Krishnamurti: Ninety Years of Theosophical Ripples — II

PEDRO OLIVEIRA

From George Arundale's speech:

You have had on this most memorable morning the great privilege of listening first to the representative in the outer world of the world's greatest KING [Annie Besant]. As his representative, she has given to you his message. Not often is it given to the great KING's messenger to convey to the outer world his order and commands. And then you had the great privilege of listening to my beloved brother Oscar, a great representative of the coming Lord. And so I stand before you, and I would like you to think of my dear brother, Bishop Wedgwood, as standing by my side today, as he will be tomorrow. We two stand before you as humble representatives of the third great department of which our Mother has spoken to you. The first, the ruling department, with our Chief as its messenger here today; the second, the great department of wisdom and of teaching with my brother Oscar as its representative here today. And now with the power and the fire comes the need of the third great department, that of the Mahachohan, the great Organiser of the world's forces, whose

pupils my brother Wedgwood and myself have the infinite privilege to be. (p. 314)

Again from George Arundale's speech:

I have a somewhat difficult, though marvelously fascinating task to take up this morning. I do it with a certain amount of diffidence, because I am speaking here to you this morning by command of my own great Master, the Mahachohan who represents so wonderfully the Activity department of the Logos, and one can only very feebly reflect in human speech the instructions that He has given.

Now, briefly put, it is the desire and intention of the Elder Brethren that with as little delay as possible there should be established a great Theosophical World-University with stress on the word "theosophical". And when I use the word "theosophical", I want you to realise that I naturally include in it the word "Star". I make no distinction myself between the Star and Theosophy, because the Star is all-embracing and Theosophy must inevitably therefore come within its enfolding rays. Nevertheless, speaking as I am to a Star audience, I want you to realise

Mr Pedro Oliveira is a former Education Coordinator of the TS in Australia. He served at Adyar in the early 1990s as international Secretary, and later as Head of the Editorial Office.

Krishnamurti: Ninety Years of Theosophical Ripples — II

to the full that this Theosophical World-University is essentially and definitely a Star activity; the more so is it definitely a Star activity as it happens, as no doubt many of you know, that our beloved Head, Krishnaji, has in the past been associated with Universities. . . .

My Master said only the other day that He would himself guide and control this University. When about the same time we had the privilege of an audience of the Lord Maitreya himself, alluding to this University, He said, that it would have his own great benediction, so that we start under the most wonderful auspices. (p. 318)

From Dr Besant's address:

And the Liberal Catholic Church should be the very heart of the teaching that the Christ will give. The TS was called by a Master the cornerstone of the Religion of the future, where all the religions will meet together in that Church Universal . . . (p. 339)

When Bishop Leadbeater, who was in Sydney at that time, was made aware of the several announcements, including reports of initiations, apostles, and so on, which took place at Ommen in August 1925, "he was 'visibly distressed', according to Ernest Wood who happened to be with him in Sydney at the time. He did not believe in any of it and said to Wood, 'Oh, I hope she does not wreck the Society.'" (Mary Lutyens' *Krishnamurti — The Years of Awakening*, John Murray, London, 1975, p. 214)

From George Arundale's communication:

The Camp broke up on the 14th and the party who had been at Huizen before it opened returned there. George kept saying excitedly all day, "I know something else has happened but it seems impossible!" But the impossible had happened, for the next morning Mrs Besant called Lady Emily, Esther Bright, Rukmini, and Shiva Rao into her room and told them very shyly that she, Leadbeater, K. Raja, George, Wedgwood and Oscar had all taken their fifth and final Initiation on the night of the 13th, but it was to make no difference to the way they were to be treated. (Rukmini later told Lady Emily that she had become an Adept — that is, taken the fifth Initiation — at the same time as the others. She had taken three Initiations in three days!) (*Krishnamurti — The Years of Awakening*, John Murray, London, 1975, pp. 214–215)

Below is Krishnaji's response to the developments at Ommen:

Lady Emily had written to K. from Huizen to tell him about everything that had occurred there and had received a cable from him while she was in Camp asking whether Leadbeater had confirmed all these happenings. She had cabled back that Mrs Besant herself was making the announcements, and added, "Put your trust in her". When she arrived in London, she found a letter from him awaiting her full of a most unhappy scepticism.

(*Krishnamurti — The Years of Awakening*, p. 215)

Krishnamurti: Excerpts of His First Public Talk at Adyar, 29 December 1933

Krishnamurti: Ninety Years of Theosophical Ripples — II

Mr Warrington, the acting President of the Theosophical Society, kindly invited me to come to Adyar and to give some talks here. I am very glad to have accepted his invitation and I appreciate his friendliness, which I hope will continue, even though we may differ completely in our ideas and opinions.

I hope that you will all listen to my talks without prejudice, and will not think that I am trying to attack your society. I want to do quite another thing. I want to arouse the desire for true search, and this, I think, is all that a teacher can do. That is all I want to do. If I can awaken that desire in you, I have completed my task, for out of that desire comes intelligence, that intelligence which is free from any system and organized belief. This intelligence is beyond all thought of compromise and false adjustment. So, during these talks, those of you who belong to various societies or groups will please bear in mind that I am very grateful to the Theosophical Society and its acting President for having asked me to come here to speak, and that I am not attacking the Theosophical Society. I am not interested in attacking. But I hold that while organizations for the social welfare of man are necessary, societies based on religious hopes and beliefs are pernicious. So, though I may appear to speak harshly, please bear in mind that I am not attacking any particular society, but that I am against all these false organizations which, though they profess to help man, are in reality a great hindrance and are the means of constant exploitation. . . . Now the beliefs, ideals, virtues, and sanc-

tified ideas which you are pursuing, and which you call knowledge, prevent creative thinking and thereby put an end to the continual ripening of thought. For thought does not mean the following of a particular groove of established ideas, habits, traditions. Thought is critical; it is a thing apart from inherited or acquired knowledge. When you merely accept certain ideas, traditions, you are not thinking and there is slow stagnation. You say to me, "We have beliefs, we have traditions, we have principles; are they not right? Must we get rid of them?" I am not going to say that you must get rid of them or that you must not. Indeed, your very readiness to accept the idea that you must or must not get rid of these beliefs and traditions prevents you from thinking; you are already in a state of acceptance, and therefore you have not the capacity to be critical. . . .

[Y]ou hold certain beliefs, certain dogmas, certain principles with which you oppose any new and conflicting situation, and you imagine that you are thinking, that you are critical, creative. . . . But if your attitude is merely one of opposition, then your mind will not meet mine; then you will not understand what I am trying to convey.

So when the mind is accustomed to opposition, when it has been carefully trained, through so-called education, through tradition and belief, through religious and philosophical systems, to acquire this attitude of opposition, it naturally does not have the capacity to criticize and to doubt truly. But if you are going to understand me, this is the first thing you should have. Please don't shut your minds against what

Krishnamurti: Ninety Years of Theosophical Ripples — II

I am saying. True criticism is the desire to find out. The faculty to criticize exists only when you want to discover the inherent worth of a thing. But you are not accustomed to that. Your minds are cleverly trained to give values, but by that process you will never understand the inherent significance of a thing, of an experience, or of an idea.

To me, then, true criticism consists in trying to find out the intrinsic worth of the thing itself, and not in attributing a quality to that thing. You attribute a quality to an environment, to an experience, only when you want to derive something from it, when you want to gain or to have power or happiness. Now this destroys true criticism. Your desire is perverted through attributing values, and therefore you cannot see clearly. Instead of trying to see the flower in its original and entire beauty, you look at it through coloured glasses, and therefore you can never see it as it is. . . .

My purpose during this series of talks is to awaken your own true critical capacity, so that teachers will become unnecessary to you, so that you will not feel the necessity for lectures, for sermons, so that you will realize for yourself what is true and live completely. The world will be a happier place when there are no more teachers, when a man no longer feels that he must preach to his neighbour. But that state can come about only when you, as individuals, are really awakened, when you greatly doubt, when you have truly begun to question in the midst of sorrow. Now you have ceased to suffer. You have suffocated your minds with explanations, with know-

ledge; you have hardened your hearts. You are not concerned with feeling, but with beliefs, ideas, with the sanctity of so-called knowledge, and therefore you are starved; you are no longer human beings, but mere machines. . . .

There is no resting place in life. Thought can have no resting place. But you are seeking such a place of rest. In your various beliefs, religions, you have sought such a resting place, and in this seeking you have ceased to be critical, to flow with life, to enjoy, to live richly. . . .

The unknown is not your concern. Beware of the man who describes to you the unknown, truth, or God. Such a description of the unknown offers you a means of escape — and besides, truth defies all description. In that escape there is no understanding, there is no fulfillment. In escape there is only routine and decay. Truth cannot be explained or described. It is. I say that there is a loveliness which cannot be put into words; if it were, it would be destroyed; it would then no longer be truth. But you cannot know this loveliness, this truth, by asking about it; you can know it only when you have understood the known, when you have grasped the full significance of that which is before you. [The full text can be seen at <jkrishnamurti.org/content/adyar-1st-public-talk-29th-december-1933/1933>]

Madame Blavatsky on the Essential Work of the Theosophical Society (TS)

Belief in the Masters was never made an article of faith in the TS. But for its Founders, the instructions received from them when

Krishnamurti: Ninety Years of Theosophical Ripples — II

it was established have ever been sacred.

H. P. Blavatsky, *The Original Programme of the Theosophical Society*
(1886)

(Online text: <theosophy-nw.org/theosnw/theos/th-origp.htm>)

The above statement from the principal co-founder of the TS is relevant because it is an expression of truth. There is no official, institutional belief in the Masters in the TS nor is it a requirement for membership. The TS policies in fact forbid the imposition of any such beliefs on its members. The Society is not a belief-based organization but an enquiry-based one. But there were and there are members for whom the reality of the Masters and their work is an inwardly-centred realization which has made all the difference to their lives. It is also the result of their deep study and assimilation of Theosophy as a Wisdom teaching. However, this is a private matter and not an institutional one. The Theosophical Society was and remains free from organizational beliefs.

In the following statement, HPB suggests that the efficient work of the TS involves a “process of inner enlightenment” which is brought about by the weakening of the “feeling of separate-ness” in ourselves, points which were also taken up by Krishnaji in his writings:

It is not the policy of self-preservation, not the welfare of one or another personality in its finite and physical form that will or can ever secure the desired object and screen the Society from the effects of the social “hurricane” to come; but only

the weakening of the feeling of separate-ness in the units which compose its chief element. And such a weakening can only be achieved by a process of *inner enlightenment*. It is not violence that can ever insure bread and comfort for all; nor is the kingdom of peace and love, of mutual help and charity and “food for all”, to be conquered by a cold, reasoning, diplomatic policy.

It is only by the close brotherly union of men’s inner SELVES, of soul-solidarity, of the growth and development of that feeling which makes one suffer when one thinks of the suffering of others, that the reign of Justice and equality for all can ever be inaugurated. This is the first of the three fundamental objects for which the Theosophical Society was established, and called the “Universal Brotherhood of Man”, without distinction of *race, colour or creed*.

H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings,
vol. 10, pp. 74–75

The Mahatma Letters

The following passages from *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* show similarities with the teachings of Krishnaji in what concerns the timeless nature of intuitive perception, the disastrous results of self-centredness and the age-old conditioning of the human mind. (Source: <theosociety.org/pasadena/mahatma/ml-con.htm>)

Believe me, there comes a moment in the life of an adept, when the hardships he has passed through are a thousandfold rewarded. In order to acquire further knowledge, he has no more to go through a

Krishnamurti: Ninety Years of Theosophical Ripples — II

minute and slow process of investigation and comparison of various objects, but is accorded an instantaneous, implicit insight into every first truth. . . . [T]he adept sees and feels and lives in the very source of all fundamental truths. (ML 31 / chron. ed. 17)

The real evil proceeds from human intelligence and its origin rests entirely with reasoning man who dissociates himself from Nature. Humanity, then, alone is the true source of evil. Evil is the exaggeration of good, the progeny of human selfishness and greediness. Think profoundly and you will find that save death — which is no evil but a necessary law, and accidents which will always find their reward in a future life — the *origin* of every evil whether small or great is in human action, in man whose intelligence makes him the one free agent in Nature. It is not Nature that creates diseases, but man. (ML 10 / chron. ed. 88)

As for human nature in general, it is the same now as it was a million of years ago: Prejudice based upon selfishness; a general unwillingness to give up an established order of things for new modes of life and thought — and occult study requires all that and much more; pride and stubborn resistance to Truth if it but upset their previous notions of things; such are the characteristics of your age. (ML 1 / chron. ed. 1)

The following quote provides evidence of how loose talk about the Masters hinders their essential work:

The cant about Masters must be silently but firmly put down. Let the devotion and service be to that Supreme Spirit alone of

which each one is a part. Namelessly and silently we work, and the continual references to ourselves and the repetition of our names raises up a confused aura that hinders our work. (Master KH to Annie Besant, August 1900, in *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, First Series, Letter no. 59, TPH Adyar)

N. Sri Ram on Krishnamurti

Writing to a TS member in India, in July 1953, N. Sri Ram, the fifth President of the TS, said:

Our late President, Dr Besant, hoped for certain great events to take place, but it could not be said even at that time that they would take place in the exact manner in which the expectations were framed.

I personally feel that there is an intimate connection between Krishnamurti and the Great Teacher, but also believe that the message which comes through him is put in form which is Krishnamurti's own, so that we need not think that every word is literally "inspired", as devout Christians think of the words in the Bible. I have a very great respect for Krishnamurti and have also been influenced in my thoughts by what he says. (TS Archives)

Writing to another correspondent in December 1953, Sri Ram addressed the criticism of Krishnamurti within the TS:

I do not know how the report started that "the Theosophical Society is about 'to make peace' with Krishnamurti". I have great regard for him, and also affection. I believe there is a profound value in what he says, but at the same time I also think that in

Krishnamurti: Ninety Years of Theosophical Ripples — II

what we call “Theosophy” there is a magnificent conception, which in truth does not contradict what Krishnamurti says. So I do not think in terms of conflict and making peace. . . .

I know that in the past there have been misunderstandings between those who are ardent supporters of Krishnamurti, and those who are partisans of the theosophical movement. But in a cosmopolitan organization there is no room for any kind of partisanship. (TS Archives)

In my book *N. Sri Ram — A Life of Beneficence and Wisdom* (The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai, 2009), I included an interview with Sri Ram, conducted by the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in India. The interview was published in the December 1989 issue of *The Theosophist*, the N. Sri Ram Centennial Issue. A few excerpts, which relate to the relationship between the TS and Krishnamurti, are given below.

Q: *Mr Sri Ram, what was in Dr Besant’s mind when she declared Krishnamurti as the coming Teacher?*

NSR: Mrs Annie Besant believed that she was in touch with certain great beings whom the Hindus would call *rishis* or *mahatmas*, that is, *jivan-muktas*, liberated beings. She accepted the idea from Madame Blavatsky when she joined the Theosophical Society in 1889. And Mrs Besant practised certain forms of meditation and went in for rigorous self-training, and in that way she came, inwardly, not outwardly and physically, into touch with more than one of those *rishis* or *mahatmas*.

Their names are mentioned in theosophical books. They are usually referred to by their initials: Mahatma M. and Mahatma KH.

As she was in contact with those beings, she would receive certain instructions from them. I think she came to understand through this contact that the world was at a critical stage and the world teacher who is also one of the great beings called by the Buddhists, the *bodhisattvas*, was in all probability going to take a physical form in order to help humanity through this crisis. She believed that if Mr Krishnamurti grew up and proved worthy, he might become as it were, linked with the consciousness of the great World Teacher. So she believed that Krishnamurti had a great mission to perform.

This was about the year 1909, when Mr Krishnamurti was only fourteen years old, but both Mr Leadbeater and Dr Besant, who were in touch with these Mahatmas, believed that Krishnamurti would probably grow up to be a channel for the teaching of the supreme World Teacher, who, as I said, was one of the liberated beings and that was the reason why she took charge of him from his father.

His father was a Theosophist. She told the father about the possible destiny of his son, and the father gladly gave her the charge of Krishnamurti to be looked after. His father lived in poor circumstances. She could give many opportunities that he could not. She wanted him to be very well brought up, perfectly healthy, well-developed physically, have a good education, not in India, but perhaps in Oxford or

Krishnamurti: Ninety Years of Theosophical Ripples — II

in some places like that, and in every way helped him to fulfil his mission, and that was the reason why she took over charge of Mr Krishnamurti. I was myself at Adyar at that time. I remember seeing him as a boy in 1910, walking about these grounds along with his younger brother, Nityananda, who passed away later on. (pp. 180–182)

Q: *Did you also see some promise in Krishnamurti at that time?*

NSR: It was difficult for anyone to see the kind of promise, perhaps, which one would expect. He was not academically brilliant at that time. He was dreamy and mystical. He was not particularly interested in his studies. He did not do well as a comparatively small boy or as a child in his studies. So it is all the more surprising that Mr Leadbeater and Dr Besant should have seen something remarkable in him when no one else could see anything of that sort. (p. 182)

In my article, “There is No Religion Higher than Truth” — Views on E. L. Gardner’s criticism of C. W. Leadbeater (published in <cwlworld.info>), the following was mentioned:

In November 1963 E. L. Gardner, a former General Secretary of the English Section of the Theosophical Society and respected student of Madame Blavatsky’s writings, published a booklet entitled *There is No Religion Higher than Truth: Developments in the Theosophical Society*. In it Gardner presents a strong criticism of CWL’s perception of the Masters which is encapsulated in his following statement: “With the advantage of forty years perspective, plus the letters to Annie Besant and the events of 1920-30, it is now clear (as some have long known or suspected) that the Lord Maitreya and the Masters with whom Leadbeater was on such familiar terms were his own thought-creations.”

(To be continued)

Where there is a following and where there is a leader in matters spiritual or psychological, there is bound to be confusion. In that, there is a contradiction between your own deep-down urges and compulsions, and the imposition placed upon them by the leader, by what you think you should do. So there is a contradiction psychologically, and that contradiction leads to conflict. Where there is conflict, there is effort, and where there is effort, there is distortion. A religious mind has no conflict. A religious mind does not follow anyone. It has no authority because authority implies imitation and conformity. There is conformity because you want success, you want to achieve, and therefore there is fear.

J. Krishnamurti

From Public Talk 5, New Delhi, 4 February 1962

The Pyramid That Points to the Stars

HUGH MURDOCH

THE pyramids of Egypt have long been a source of great fascination for a wide range of people, from tourists, explorers, and professional archaeologists to mystics. Most of the pyramids are now in ruins, but a group of three large pyramids on the Giza plateau are well preserved because of their very meticulous construction. The largest and most complex of these is known as “The Great Pyramid”. It is a massive structure with a base covering thirteen acres and a height comparable to that of a fifty-storey building. The sides of its base form a perfect square accurately aligned North, South, East, and West. Modern surveying detects errors of less than one part in a thousand in the uniformity of the sides, in the accuracy of the corner right angles, and in the geographic alignment.

The Great Pyramid is attributed to King Khufu (usually known as Cheops, the Greek form of his name). According to modern archaeological scholars, he reigned for twenty-three years from about 2550 BCE. He belonged to the

fourth dynasty. Estimates during the last century placed his time at more than 3000 BCE. Some speculators, including H. P. Blavatsky, one of the main founders of the Theosophical Society, have suggested that the pyramids are still very much older. The observations and deductions of an astronomical nature that I describe here are not only very interesting for ancient Egyptian mythology and for the light they throw on the astronomical ability of the ancient Egyptians, but also for the date of the Great Pyramid.

The full purpose of the pyramids may never be known, but clearly they are associated with ensuring a smooth passage for the departed king to the “Duat”, which is usually translated as “netherworld”. I prefer the term “afterworld”, for as we shall see, the Duat is, at least in one manifestation, represented as in the sky. The Egyptians recognized parallel, if seemingly contradictory, mythologies. Archaeologists have concentrated on the solar mythology to the neglect of a parallel stellar mythology. The king is seen as a

Hugh Murdoch (1924-2015) was an astrophysicist, university professor, and lifelong member of the Theosophical Society. He had a penetrating insight into the interface of science and Theosophy. Reprinted from *The Quest*, vol. 86, February 1998. TPH, Wheaton, IL, USA.

The Pyramid That Points to the Stars

son of Ra, the sun god, but he is also identified with the god Horus, and Horus is associated with a star, though which star is not known.

The Importance of Stars to the Egyptians

The Egyptians were keen observers of the stars, as befits a desert civilization. They named the major planets and a number of bright stars. They used groupings of stars known as decans to measure time at night. Most of the Egyptian star names have not been identified with modern ones. However, references to Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, are clear, as are those of the constellation Orion, which they called Sah or Sahu. The rise of Sirius in the east just before dawn, after not having been visible for seventy days, was the harbinger of the rising of the Nile waters, close to midsummer.

There are many references to stellar mythology in the Pyramid Texts. These are hieroglyphic and pictorial inscriptions on the walls of the tombs of kings commencing in the era of the fifth dynasty. These traditions, however, existed over a very long period and so are relevant to Cheops's time, with which we are here concerned. The Pyramid Texts are among the oldest religious writings. They are addressed to the departed king, who is identified with Osiris. There were special rituals to bring about the king's Osirification, and the new king then became a new incarnation of Horus. The recognized divinity of the kings gave them enormous authority over the population.

Isis, sister and consort of Osiris, is associated (or identified) with the star Sirius.

There are several chambers and passageways in the Great Pyramid. A descending passage in the north face of the pyramid goes down at an angle of 26.5 degrees and extends into the bedrock. This angle is an accurate slope of one in two. Leading off this passage, at a distance of about 20 yards from the entrance, there is an ascending passage at the same angle, part of which opens out as a grand gallery. Two large chambers are known as the King's Chamber and the Queen's Chamber. These names were assigned by the Arabs who broke into the pyramid during the 9th century, hoping but failing to find treasures.

Recent Challenging Discoveries

Some seemingly minor features have long been neglected. These are narrow shafts rising upwards at an angle from the north and south walls of the King's and Queen's Chambers. They have been passed over as ventilation shafts. The shafts from the Queen's Chamber do not reach the outside air, but this did not seem to matter because it was the general view that the Queen's Chamber was abandoned during construction as the result of a change of plans to build a larger and more elaborately finished King's Chamber. Recent astronomical discoveries show, however, that the so-called air shafts are not the incidental features previously imagined. These discoveries also seriously challenge the belief that the Queen's Chamber was abandoned.

In order to understand these recent discoveries, we need to recognize that the

The Pyramid That Points to the Stars

stars in Ancient Egypt were not in the same positions in which we see them today. The important difference is the angle of elevation of a star above the horizon when it crosses the north-south meridian plane at the highest point in its daily traverse across the sky from east to west. This is known as its culmination. The angle varies systematically for all stars over a 26,000 year cycle due to the precession of the earth's polar axis about a direction perpendicular to the Earth's orbit around the sun. The change in the elevation angle for a typical star over the presumed 4,500 years since the pyramids were built is not trivial. For example, Orion was then about 14 degrees farther south than it is today.

In addition to precession, it is necessary to take account of what astronomers call proper motion. This is motion in space relative to our sun. For some stars, for example Sirius, this can be significant. The so-called air shafts, like all the internal passageways, are oriented in a north-south direction. This is a consequence of the careful north-south orientation of the whole pyramid, so the shafts, being also in the north-south meridian plane, can point to a particular star at its culmination.

Did the Air Shafts Have an Astronomical Purpose?

In 1963 an Egyptologist and architect, Alexandre Badaway, who was interested in the architecture of the pyramids, decided that the concept of air shafts was illogical and wondered whether they might have an astronomical purpose.

Accordingly he teamed up with a young American astronomer, Virginia Trimble, who carried out the necessary precession calculations to see where the shafts of the King's Chamber might have pointed in the sky at the time the pyramids were built. (Trimble is now a professor of astronomy and a vice-president of the International Astronomical Union).

Trimble and Badaway found that around 2600 BCE, the southern shaft of the King's Chamber, at an elevation of 44.5 degrees to the horizontal, pointed to one or other of the two brightest of the three stars in the central belt of Orion at their highest point (or culmination), that is, when they cross the north-south meridian. They also found that the northern shaft, at an elevation of 31 degrees, pointed to the star Alpha Draconis (or Thuban), which was one degree from the north pole and would have served as a pole star at that time. (Giza is almost exactly at a latitude 30 degrees north).

Badaway and Trimble concluded that the orientation of the shafts was deliberate, in view of the importance attached in Egyptian mythology to the Osiris-Orion association and to the circumpolar stars, those which never set but move in a circle about the North Pole. These were referred to as the imperishables and were considered to be the abode of departed souls. The two collaborators had great difficulty in getting their results published because of the scepticism of archaeologists, who lacked knowledge of and interest in astronomy. Their results were published in 1964 in an obscure German

The Pyramid That Points to the Stars

archaeological journal. There was controversy at the time between an age of 2600 BCE and an earlier estimate of 2750 BCE. Their result favoured the 2600 BCE estimate, and subsequent work by archaeologists has independently rejected the older age.

Ways of Ascent for the Soul of the King?

Trimble's article was published in English in her book, *Visit to a Small Universe*. She notes that "in the ceiling of the tomb of Senmut the column devoted to Sah (i.e. Orion) includes three large stars arranged vertically and bearing a striking resemblance to the three stars we call Orion's Belt". She concludes that "considerations of Egyptian religion and modern astronomy combine to indicate that the 'air shafts' of Cheops' Pyramid were actually intended as ways by which the soul of the deceased king might ascend to join the circumpolar stars and the god constellation Sah".

This work was ignored for about twenty years. Trimble went on with her career in astronomy and showed no further interest in Egyptology. At last in the 1985 edition of his authoritative work *The Pyramids of Egypt*, the foremost authority on the subject, I. E. S. Edwards, former keeper of Egyptian antiquities for the British Museum, included the essential features of Badaway and Trimble's results (but without any acknowledgment to them). He repeated the suggestion of the shafts as passage-ways for the soul of the king in a BBC program in 1994, in which Trimble and others also took part. It was seeing the face

of an astronomer I knew that got me interested in this subject.

The Queen's Chamber Was Not Abandoned

In the meantime a new player entered the scene. Robert Bauval was carrying out engineering projects in Arab countries, including Egypt. In 1979 he became interested in the Pyramid Texts and in Sirius after reading Robert Temple's book, *The Sirius Mystery*. Knowing nothing initially of Badaway and Trimble's work, his interest in Orion was in suggesting that the layout of the three pyramids of Giza mimic the three stars of Orion's belt, of which more soon.

While he was in Sydney, Australia, from 1986 to 1989, Bauval asked John O'Byrne, of the Sydney University astronomy department, to carry out precession calculations for him on both Orion and Sirius. He was interested to find out whether the neglected southern shaft of the Queen's Chamber might point to Sirius. O'Byrne did some calculations for him and then showed him where to find the appropriate formulae.

Badaway and Trimble had not considered these shafts, which were believed to have been abandoned. Bauval found a match with Sirius for the southern shaft of the Queen's chamber at 2750 BCE, not quite consistent with the date for Orion, but he thought a plausible error in the angle of the shaft measured last century might explain the difference. Bauval found that the northern shaft of the Queen's Chamber pointed to Beta Ursa Minor (Kochab), a prominent circumpolar

The Pyramid That Points to the Stars

star. (Alpha Ursa Minor is Polaris, our present pole star). If Bauval was right, the Queen's Chamber had not been abandoned but was an integral part of the design.

In 1993 a German robotics engineer, Rudolph Gantenbrink, explored the various shafts with a sophisticated, remotely driven robot with a video camera. The shafts are approximately 9 inches square and not easily accessible. Gantenbrink's exploration provided more accurate angles for the shafts, bringing all of the dates to within fifty years of an average value, 2450 BCE. Since fifty years' difference represents only a quarter of a degree difference for the angle of the Orion shaft, this is a striking result.

Archaeologists currently suggest 2550 BCE for the commencement of Cheops' reign, plus or minus 50 to 100 years. Within the limits of their own uncertainty, the two estimates agree. Could the astronomical deductions fit a corresponding date in a previous precession cycle? They could not, because the proper motion of Sirius would be substantial over that long period, and the Orion-Sirius match would fail. Thus the structure of the Great Pyramid enshrines the date of its construction in a manner which astronomers 4,500 years later are able to deduce.

The Shafts As an Expression of Egyptian Mythology

It can no longer be doubted that the shafts were designed to express the Egyptian mythology involving Orion, Sirius, and the circumpolar stars, especially given the close association of Sirius with Isis and Orion with Osiris. Now recall

Bauval's suggestion that the layout of the three Pyramids of Giza mimics the relative positions of the three stars of Orion's belt. He also suggests that the orientation of the three pyramids relative to the Nile river matches the orientation of Orion's Belt to the Milky Way. This is at least plausible in the light of many references in the Pyramid Texts to a "Winding Waterway" in the sky. If this is accepted, then in Bauval's view, the Duat (or afterworld) in the sky is matched on the ground by what is commonly referred to as the Giza necropolis.

Gantenbrink's robot established clearly that the Queen's Chamber shafts extend to a height well above the level of the King's Chamber. This is further confirmation that the Queen's Chamber is part of the overall design rather than having been abandoned due to a change of plans, as the archaeologists have believed. The Queen's Chamber shafts do not reach the outside of the pyramid. In fact Gantenbrink's robot observed what appeared to be a door with a handle at the end of the shaft.

He has wanted to return and explore beyond it with an ultrasonic device but the Egyptian authorities who were formerly cooperative have refused. Several interesting objects were found in the lower part of the southern shaft of the Queen's Chamber by an earlier explorer and, having apparently been lost, were recently rediscovered in the British Museum despite the Museum having denied knowledge of them.

Bauval makes many more suggest-

The Pyramid That Points to the Stars

ions, some of them stretching credulity, but I have confined myself to those that are near certain: the stellar orientation of the shafts with the resultant dating and then the alignment of pyramids matching Orion's Belt, which is at least plausible.

The following Pyramid Texts are relevant. The Egyptian word "Duat" has been substituted for the translator's "nether-world" and "Sirius for his "Sothis". These texts are mainly addressed to the newly departed king, who, as Osiris, is closely associated with Orion. Similarly, Isis and Sirius appear to be interchangeable. This is powerful symbolic mythology:

Behold he has come as Orion, behold Osiris has come as Orion . . . O King, the sky conceives you with Orion . . . You will regularly ascend with Orion from the eastern region of the sky; you will re-

gularly descend with Orion to the western region of the sky . . . Sirius will guide you in the goodly roads which are in the sky. The Duat has grasped your hand at the place where Orion is. In your name of dweller in Orion, O Osiris. Your sister Isis comes to you rejoicing for love of you; your seed issues into her, she being ready as Sirius and Har-Sopd (an unidentified star) has come forth from you as Horus, who is in Sirius.

The phrase "your sister is Sirius" occurs many times. There is much more in similar vein to the passages above. In the following, final quotation, the pyramid itself is closely associated with the departed king as Osiris:

O Horus, this king is Osiris, this Pyramid of the King is Osiris, this construction of his is Osiris; betake yourself to it. ✧

Ed. Note: In ancient Egypt, Ma'at was the goddess of truth, justice, balance, and most importantly — order, resembling the universal law of Karma. Ma'at was also believed to be created when Ra, the sun god, arose from the waters of Nun (chaos). She was often considered to be the daughter of Ra and was married to Thoth, the god of wisdom.

(From <egyptianmuseum.org/deities-Maat> and <egyptianmuseum.org/deities-ra>)

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Contemporary Science: Facts, Ideas, and Questions — II

RAJARAM NITYANANDA

LET me get back to physics. One kind of physics is searching for fundamental laws which, as I said earlier, can be written on a single sheet of paper. Of course, the laws have been evolving, but they have been fairly stable for the past fifty years. It is often true, but not always, that experiments and/or observations done by one set of scientists are taken up by theorists who then come up with some equations. Sometimes equations are written down based on some evidence, but then more evidence comes up. It is certainly true of Newtonian gravity. He looked at the apple and the moon, and gave us his law of gravitation, and then the orbits of the planets fell into place. But Einstein was unhappy with Newtonian gravity for purely theoretical reasons. It needed a notion of simultaneity which he had just demolished in 1905. But once he wrote down those few lines (it took him some eight years!) a lot of other experimental phenomena were predicted and verified. Einstein's theory of gravitation is one

of the great successes of 20th century physics. It is used in astronomy and even in our day-to-day life via the global positioning system (GPS) built into all mobile phones.

Coming to the physics of fundamental particles, our current model took a long time evolving, from the early twentieth century. From the mid-1970s, we have had what is called a standard model, which explains an enormous amount of experimental data. However, it doesn't include gravity and Einstein's gravity doesn't tell us anything about particles. So, the next frontier for people interested in fundamental laws of Nature would be to unify these two branches of physics. I have many colleagues at the International Centre for Theoretical Sciences (ICTS) in Bangalore, who are trying to do that. I keep meeting them over lunch and I am sure when they succeed, we will hear about it. I want to emphasize that there are these very few people who have the equipment to work at the top of the

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pyramid on unifying these fundamental forces and particles. What do the rest of us do, in physics and other sciences?

We may have the laws, but the path leading from them to explaining even the breaking of a wave on a beach — let us not get into anything as complicated as a leaf — is a lot of hard work, and is still not completed. The fact that simple laws can have rich and complex consequences even in a simple set-up is shown in controlled laboratory experiments. For example, we heat a liquid from below, and then suddenly we find that some cells appear. It took the English gentleman scientist, Lord Rayleigh, and Benard in France, to explain why that happened on the basis of very simple-looking equations.

I want to use such examples to bring in an alternative view of physics to the narrowly fundamental view which is more widespread. Physicists holding these two views are always at loggerheads because they have to share the same funds. An interesting incident from the history of physics is that a part of the US community headed by Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg wanted to build the next big accelerator which would tell them more about the fundamental particles. But there was another Nobel Prize winner, Philip Anderson who said — and I paraphrase — “We should be spending that money funding thousands of people who do experiments in their lab and who will keep discovering new phenomena every day.” In fact, he coined the slogan, “More is different”, to emphasize the richness and diversity being continually uncov-

ered as we study the properties of matter — physical, chemical, and biological.

Theosophy tells us that there is no religion higher than “Truth”, but I have to put Truth in quotes because you will not get complete agreement even amongst physicists as to what is the “Truth” worth pursuing. The fundamental physicists are trying to unify gravity and particle physics. But there are many who are trying to understand the behavior of fluids in the laboratory, or the behavior of the ocean, or of clouds. The fundamental laws are the same, but the effort and insight needed to apply them to link experiment with observation cannot be underestimated.

Philip Anderson gave us a different view of science. It is not monolithic, but comes in layers. We have one fundamental layer, at the smallest scale of matter. The next layers could be particles, nuclei, atoms, molecules. Then comes cells if we are into biology, or polymers if chemistry. This layer model of science is something which appeals to me. The question is, suppose my friends or other friends of theirs succeeded in unifying gravity and fundamental physics, would that change the way we do chemistry? The answer is “absolutely not”. The layers are somewhat isolated from each other, and new properties emerge at each layer, calling for different concepts, techniques, theories, and so on.

Now and then, something interesting happens when different fields collide. All the developments I told you about tracing the tree of life, and in particular

the tree of recent human evolution, are based on the application of chemistry to biology to extract these tiny amounts of DNA, and find the sequence of the molecules making up the DNA chain. Computer science comes in a major way to process this huge amount of data produced by biology and genetics — to know that “this” gene produces “that” protein, and so on. Therefore, people can make an educated guess that Denisovans probably had black skin and hair. Amazing reconstruction, remote sensing in time if you like, that is the kind of thing which is happening. I think this is the view of science that I would like to leave you with, not as a giant monolith. I also mentioned the competitive aspect, where there is a lot of checking going on what people are doing, by other people.

Coming back to the fundamental laws of Nature, there are some who decided to go a little beyond. They asked the following question: Suppose the laws had been slightly different. For example, no one knows why gravity has exactly the strength that it has; you can write down an equation with a symbol called G , but it needs an experiment to tell you that G is 6.67 in some units. Suppose it was 6.69 what would have happened? The answer is very surprising. The consequences are so great: if we play around with gravity, the way the stars shine will change as it is gravity which holds them together; the way the universe expands will change; life needed billions of years to evolve and the universe had to last that long, so stronger gravity may mean it

recollapses. Thus, there is a very strange connection between the numbers in the fundamental laws of physics and the fact that we are here.

Let me give a couple of other examples. We have these chemical elements; the body is made up of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and even heavier things like calcium, and so on. Where did they come from? So back to astronomy. At the very early, hot phase of the universe there was hydrogen and helium, nothing more, and then everything had to be made inside stars. Stars are hot enough that, for example, three helium nuclei can combine, $4 + 4 + 4 = 12$, and 12 would give you carbon. So that has happened in stars. Then it comes out of the star and is now in your body. The Sun is a second-generation star; earlier stars produced some of these elements and then the gas collapsed and made a star like the Sun; that is why we have this number of 4.5 billion years for the Earth whereas it is 10 plus billion years into the past for the first stars and planets to form.

Then the question is how easy is it for three helium nuclei to fuse to form a carbon nucleus. It is a result of accident: two helium nuclei which collide stick together a little longer than one would expect because of some energy matching (called resonance), and in that time a third nucleus comes along and they combine to form a particular state of carbon. If the strength of the nuclear force was different, this fusion may not happen. Which means no elements beyond carbon! If there is no carbon,

then magnesium or any of the other later elements cannot form.

The oxygen molecule is yet another example that I learned from one of my chemist friends. When oxygen is around things rust, but rather slowly. But if the oxygen molecule had been only slightly different, things would rust in seconds. That form of oxygen, which is only slightly different from the form that we are familiar with, is extremely reactive. So, it is a good thing that the energy levels were ordered the way they are. So, there are all these coincidences, accidents including the asteroid that hit the Earth, which seem to have brought us to where we are today. What do we make of this? This is called fine-tuning; we need to have all these numbers just right to produce the world that we see.

Now there is an ambitious proposal called the multiverse according to which there may be multiple universes distributed here and there, where the above numbers can be different. Of course, the here and there are not connected, so there has to be unimaginably large scales in this multiverse. Therefore, the single universe in this multiverse which had the right numbers gave rise to us and we live in that. Is this science? A lot of people think not. On the other hand, if you don't accept this you have to accept the idea that it is a chain of accidents that gave rise to where we are today. That is called the anthropic principle, that is, you explain these numbers by saying if the numbers had been different, we would not be here to measure these numbers!

I do remember cycling past the Headquarters Hall long back, and reading the objectives of the Theosophical Society. Of course, one doesn't understand much of that at age 13. It said something about the laws of Nature, comparative study of religions, Universal Brotherhood, and I distinctly remember it said powers latent in "man", but now I see it says powers latent in "human beings". So, someone has edited it. I'm sure the people who first wrote it, powerful women like Blavatsky and Besant, did not use "man" in the sense of a male person!

I'm sure they had all kinds of powers in mind, but even at the level of things which can be analyzed scientifically, there are amazing powers very hard to explain. So let me give you my favorite examples. The mathematician Ramanujan wrote down a large number of mathematical formulae. He just wrote them down in a notebook towards the end of his life. He could barely survive, but he just kept writing and writing. It is clear that he did not take the standard path mathematicians do, of starting from what you know, followed up by deduction.

A hundred years later, people are still trying to prove some of his statements; a couple of them turned out to be wrong; a large number of them are right; but were only understood much later. But we have only understood the statements, we have no idea how he wrote them down. All this occurred in the brain of someone who was dying and we have absolutely no clue as to how it happened. I personally would take it to mean that a billion years of

evolution can give rise to all the wonderful things that we see. When we have so many neurons, they can connect in ways which are unimaginably complex that we do not understand, and may never understand. There could be a barrier there.

My other example: If you watch basketball, you will see someone from the middle of the court launching the ball. Quite often it actually goes in. Sometimes the player is jumping, someone else is trying to get up to him, and you can imagine the kind of precision, the calculation, that is needed to make the ball go in the basket. How does it happen? I find it mind-blowing. These are the powers latent in man! This is very pedestrian compared to what the founders of the TS had in mind. But even at this level there are things where science seems to be up against a barrier.

At the same time, this has not stopped people from creating AI, robots whose capacities are multiplying daily. So, one may say, there is nothing mysterious about it, probably someone will make a robot that throws the basketball in a precise arc from the middle of the court into the basket, some fifteen metres away. But something interesting has happened in AI and robotics which is not stated often outside the scientific community. Their computer programs are so complicated that they are designed to update themselves, so no one understands what is really going on inside the robots. Thus there is a subfield of AI which says, we want an “explainable AI”. But the “explainable AI” people cannot do all these wonderful — or maybe not so

wonderful — things. So, there are these keywords which are used: emergence, complexity, order, and so on. They are just a way of saying that some qualitative change has occurred. This is something like the distinction between non-life and life — there are things on the border where people are not very sure.

We know the tree of life happened, we happened, and then we populated the planet. And what did we do after that? I told you about the rise of *Homo sapiens*, but this could be evidence of the fall. In a picture of India taken from a NASA satellite one can see the impact of human settlement <tinyurl.com/2p9nau7k>. The night pictures are better, as all human activity can be traced by light. If you are shocked, the next one, which is India on the night of Diwali, may be even more shocking <tinyurl.com/5n7ydvdp>. This is human impact. Most of this light is unnecessary, just burning up energy. Of course, astronomers hate it, light pollution means their telescopes lose the ability to see faint objects.

Clearly, our planet is now being shaped by human technologies. Let me just take a broad view, no details. All of them are science-based. A lot of the things I described in biology are based on very sophisticated technology. Someone could do an experiment on a small scale, but if you want to study thousands of fossils you need to automate it. Renewable energy is supposed to save us, but maybe we should just consume less energy, and distribute it more equitably. I think most people would agree that the kind of changes we

are seeing made to our environment are detrimental to society. Maybe there are some people in the world who think things are getting better. But even if they are, how long is that going to last, is it sustainable? Right now, it is not. Very thoughtful economists have shown that inequality has increased. It need not have happened if we had had all this technological power. Surely it could have been diverted in a direction which reduced inequality, pollution, and so on. That has not happened in the past, and there does not seem to be a trend towards this in the future in spite of major individual efforts.

To summarize, I have just tried to trace for you where we, as human beings living on this planet and modifying it, stand according to recent discoveries of contemporary science. There is little doubt that there is life on some of the billions of planets in our galaxy, let alone others. But the strange path leading to our form of life has had so many accidents, and it may well be that we — in the sense of beings “just like us” — are unique, and it

is our duty not to destroy this. The Society’s basic objectives of brotherhood are more relevant today than ever before. I also noticed the words “to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity” in the Object. The Society will always be a nucleus. Physics teaches us that if you cool down water it turns to ice. The way that happens is a small piece of ice, a nucleus, emerges first, and then the ice grows around it. So, I take the word “nucleus” to mean something like that. We try to change first, and then we try to change others. But we have to communicate with the others. The one thing we cannot do is to turn the clock back; the genie is out of the bottle, so to speak.

I had said that I would raise questions. I am ending this lecture without giving any answers to the fundamental questions about our future, but we cannot ignore them. I hope this attempt to bring you a picture of contemporary science, especially those developments which tell us about who we are, where we are, and where we are going, has been helpful. ✧

Be alone, that is the secret of invention; be alone, that is when ideas are born. My brain is only a receiver, in the Universe there is a core from which we obtain knowledge, strength, and inspiration. I have not penetrated into the secrets of this core, but I know that it exists.

Nikola Tesla

Theosophy and Ecology: Saving the Environment

MUNEEB AHMAD

THEOSOPHY, a spiritual and philosophical tradition that seeks to explore the underlying unity of all life, offers profound insights into the urgent task of conserving our environment. This comprehensive worldview emphasizes the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of living in harmony with Nature. By understanding and applying theosophical principles, individuals and communities can be inspired to adopt more sustainable practices and contribute to the preservation of our planet for future generations.

The Core Principles of Theosophy

At its heart, Theosophy is a synthesis of ageless wisdom traditions and modern spiritual thought, aiming to reveal the fundamental truths that underlie all religions and philosophies. It emphasizes the unity of all life, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of a divine purpose that guides the evolution of the universe. Theosophists believe that all beings are interconnected and that every action we take has a ripple effect on the larger web of life.

One of the central tenets of Theosophy is the concept of “Universal Brotherhood”, which posits that all humans, regardless of race, creed, sex, colour, or nationality, are part of a single family. This idea can be extended to include all forms of life, suggesting that we are all part of a larger ecological community. This perspective fosters a deep sense of respect and responsibility towards Nature, as harming any part of the ecosystem ultimately harms the whole.

Theosophy and Environmental Ethics

Theosophy’s emphasis on interconnectedness naturally leads to a strong environmental ethic. If we view the Earth as a living, breathing entity, it becomes clear that our actions must be aligned with the well-being of the planet. This shift in perspective can inspire more sustainable living choices and a greater commitment to environmental conservation.

One practical application of theosophical principles is the promotion of a lifestyle that minimizes harm to the environment. This includes reducing

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waste, conserving energy, and making conscious choices about the products we consume. For example, Theosophy encourages the adoption of a plant-based diet, not only for health and ethical reasons but also because it has a significantly lower environmental impact compared to a diet based on animal products.

The Spiritual Dimension of Environmentalism

Theosophy teaches that true environmentalism is not just about practical actions but also about cultivating a deeper spiritual connection with Nature. This involves recognizing the sacredness of all life and developing a sense of awe and reverence for the natural world. By fostering this spiritual connection, individuals are more likely to take meaningful steps to protect and preserve the environment.

Meditation and mindfulness practices, which are central to theosophical practice, can help cultivate this deeper connection with Nature. By spending time in Nature, observing its beauty and complexity, and reflecting on our place within the larger web of life, we can develop a greater appreciation for the natural world and a stronger commitment to its preservation.

The Role of Education and Community

Education is a crucial component in spreading theosophical principles and promoting environmental conservation. By teaching people about the interconnectedness of all life and the importance of living in harmony with Nature, we can inspire a new generation of environ-

mental stewards. This education should be holistic, integrating scientific knowledge with spiritual wisdom to provide a comprehensive understanding of our relationship with the environment.

Community involvement is also essential in fostering a culture of environmental conservation. Theosophical communities can serve as models of sustainable living, demonstrating how to live in harmony with Nature through practices such as permaculture, renewable energy use, and zero-waste living. These communities can also provide support and encouragement to individuals seeking to make more sustainable choices in their own lives.

Theosophy and Global Environmental Challenges

Theosophy's holistic worldview is particularly relevant in addressing global environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. By recognizing that these issues are interconnected and require a coordinated, global response, Theosophy can inspire collaborative efforts to address these pressing problems.

Climate change, for example, is not just an environmental issue but also a social and ethical one. Theosophy teaches that we must consider the impacts of our actions on future generations and on the most vulnerable populations. This perspective can inspire more equitable and just policies and practices that prioritize the well-being of all beings, not just those in positions of power and privilege.

Biodiversity loss is another critical

issue that Theosophy can help address. By recognizing the intrinsic value of all species and the importance of maintaining the balance of ecosystems, Theosophy can inspire efforts to protect endangered species and their habitats. This includes supporting conservation initiatives, promoting sustainable land-use practices, and advocating for policies that protect natural areas.

Practical Steps for Theosophical Environmentalism: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

One of the most effective ways to minimize our environmental impact is by reducing waste. Theosophy encourages us to be mindful of our consumption and to choose products that are sustainable and have minimal packaging. Reusing and recycling materials also help reduce the strain on natural resources and minimize pollution.

1. **Conserve Energy:** Theosophy teaches that energy is a precious resource that should be used wisely. This can involve simple actions like turning off lights and appliances when not in use, using energy-efficient devices, and supporting renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power.

2. **Support Sustainable Agriculture:** By choosing organic and locally grown food, we can reduce the environmental impact of agriculture. Theosophy encourages us to support farming practices that are sustainable and that protect the health of the soil, water, and air.

3. **Protect Natural Areas:** Theo-

sophy emphasizes the importance of preserving natural areas for the well-being of all life. This can involve supporting conservation organizations, advocating for policies that protect wilderness areas, and participating in local efforts to restore and protect natural habitats.

4. **Educate and Advocate:** By sharing theosophical principles and promoting environmental awareness, we can inspire others to take action. This can involve organizing educational events, participating in community discussions, and advocating for policies that promote environmental sustainability.

Theosophy and Inner Transformation

Theosophy teaches that true environmentalism begins with inner transformation. By cultivating qualities such as compassion, humility, and reverence for life, we can develop a deeper commitment to protecting the environment. This inner transformation involves recognizing our own interconnectedness with all life and developing a sense of responsibility for the well-being of the planet. Meditation and self-reflection are powerful tools for fostering this inner transformation. By taking time to connect with our inner selves and reflect on our relationship with Nature, we can develop a greater sense of purpose and direction in our efforts to protect the environment.

Theosophy and the Future of Environmentalism

Theosophy offers a future of environmentalism that is both practical and spiritual, rooted in the recognition of

Theosophy and Ecology: Saving the Environment

the interconnectedness of all life. By embracing theosophical principles, individuals and communities can be inspired to take meaningful action to protect and preserve the environment. This holistic approach to environmentalism can help address the urgent challenges we face and contribute to a more sustainable and harmonious future for all beings.

In conclusion, Theosophy provides a powerful framework for understanding and addressing the environmental challenges of our time. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of all life and the

importance of living in harmony with Nature, Theosophy can inspire individuals and communities to adopt more sustainable practices and contribute to the preservation of our planet. Through education, community involvement, and inner transformation, we can develop a deeper connection with the natural world and a stronger commitment to its protection. In this way, Theosophy offers not just a call to action but a deeper, more meaningful connection to the world around us, fostering a collective commitment to environmental conservation. ✧

**Those who contemplate the beauty of the Earth
find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.**

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

**Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it.
Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.**

Chief Seattle, "Letter to All"

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION INFORMATION

Theme: *Practical Theosophy and the Art of Self-Transformation*

The 149th International Convention of the Theosophical Society will be held at the International Headquarters, Adyar, **from 31 December 2024 to 4 January 2025** (departure 5 January). All members of the Society in good standing are welcome to attend as delegates. Non-members are not eligible for accommodation but can register for the Convention and meals at the canteen. The entire program can also be viewed live, free of charge, on the YouTube channel, **“Theosophical Society Adyar”**.

ACCOMMODATION FOR MEMBERS ONLY

Leadbeater Chambers (LBC): LBC has rooms with two beds and an attached bathroom in each room. A third bed can be added in some of the larger rooms for a group of three. Availability is limited. Hot water is available via solar water heater.

New Quadrangle (NQ): NQ has rooms with two beds and an attached bathroom in each room. Availability is limited. Hot water is available via solar water heater.

Basic Accommodation (BA): The basic accommodation has been upgraded, but the numbers are limited. On sharing basis with more than two delegates in one room and a common rest room. Hot water via electric geyser is available.

ALLOTMENTS

Accommodations will be decided by the Convention Committee during December 2024 and the result will be informed by email. **Allotment will be on first come first served basis. Registration requests sent in after the last date of registration will not be accepted. Registration without stay will be open until the start of the Convention.**

PACKAGES

The rates below are per person **from 30 December 2024 dinner to 5 January 2025 lunch**. Any meals outside the package dates are to be arranged by the delegates themselves. **Local delegates can contact Bangalore City Lodge (BCL) office in Bhojanasala (30 Dec 2024 onwards)** to check the possibility of **“on-the-spot request” of meals**. For any other requests, kindly email the Convention Officer before registering.

International Convention Information

Overseas delegates:

- A.** LBC: US\$ 420 — Registration fee, accommodation, and meals at LBC.
- A1.** LBC: US\$ 190 — Registration fee, and meals at LBC Canteen. No accommodation.
- B.** NQ: US\$ 210 — Registration fee, NQ accommodation, and meals at BCL canteen at Bhojanasala.
- C.** BA: US\$ 150 — Registration fee, basic accommodation, and meals at BCL canteen.
- C1.** BCL: US\$ 110 — Registration fee, and meals at BCL canteen. No accommodation.
- D.** Registration only: US\$ 70 — Without meals and accommodation.

Indian delegates:

- E.** LBC: Rs.14,500 — Registration fee, accommodation, and meals at LBC canteen.
- F.** NQ: Rs.6,500 — Registration fee, NQ accommodation and meals at BCL canteen.
- G.** BA: Rs.5,000 — Registration fee, basic accommodation and meals at BCL canteen.
- H.** BCL Rs. 3,500 — Registration fee and meals at BCL Canteen. No accommodation.
- I.** Registration only: Rs. 500 — Without meals and accommodation.

PAYMENT

Overseas delegates: Register online and make the payment. If for some reason you cannot pay with the online form, payments will be collected from you “on arrival”. Then you may pay the applicable package rate by Master/Visa credit card. Please remember to take your travel insurance before arriving at Adyar.

No Payment in Cash will be accepted.

Delegates from India: Register online and make the payment in INR either (a) online with registration (preferred), or (b) by cheque / bank draft payable to “The Theosophical Society” couriered to the Convention Officer, The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai 600020, India. **(Whatsapp: +91-884092628).**

It is mandatory that delegates send an email with the information about the payment to the Convention Officer at convention@ts-adyar.org soon after completing the online payment process or after sending the cheque,

International Convention Information

mentioning the following: delegate(s) name, bank name, date of transfer, and transfer reference ID. The date of registration for such cases will be the date of realization of the cheque/draft.

REGISTRATION FORM

Last date to register with accommodation is 26 November 2024.

Online registration with instructions for paying will appear on the Convention website [<convention.ts-adyar.org>](http://convention.ts-adyar.org). Registration opens on 1 September 2024, 10 am Indian Time (UTC+5.5). If accommodations become full, the status will be intimated on the website.

Delegates who are (or cannot be) allotted accommodation will be intimated by email by 20 December 2024.

Delegates who cannot be allotted but have paid will have their payment returned **at least 15 days after** the Convention.

CANCELLATION

For delegates wanting to cancel their registration and accommodation requests, **the last date is 10 December 2024**. After this date, no amount will be refunded. If the cancellation request is received by 10 December 2024, then the package amount minus the registration fee (Rs.500 or US\$ 70) will be refunded **at least 15 days after** the Convention.

Convention Officer (CO):

Mr Shikhar Agnihotri, **Email:** [<convention@ts-adyar.org>](mailto:convention@ts-adyar.org)

Postal Address: The Convention Officer, The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai — 600020, India.

Convention website: [<convention.ts-adyar.org>](http://convention.ts-adyar.org).



It is all over now: the New Year's festivities are at an end and I am "Self" once more. But what is *Self*? Only a passing guest, whose concerns are all like a mirage of the great desert. . . .

Mahatma Letter #47, chron. ed. 1993(ML — 45)



WFYT group photo of the participants and the guest speaker with the Himalayan mountains in the back

Theosophical Work around the World



Opening puja ceremony and OM chanting workshop



WFYT group at Nainital lake and Ghorakhal Mandir



Workshops on holistic health, art, and dreams

Theosophical Work around the World

International Youth Gathering

Catalina Isaza Cantor, member of the Organizing Team of the latest international gathering of the World Federation of Young Theosophists (WFYT) reports that this meeting took place in the Himalayan Centre of the Theosophical Society (TS), Bhowali, a beautiful hill station in the Nainital region of India. Surrounded by mountains that created a perfect atmosphere, 26 participants from 11 countries, gathered to dive into a 6-day retreat on “The Flame of Theosophy: Revisiting the Fundamentals”.

The guest speaker, Shikhar Agnihotri, international lecturer of the TS, led the group through the basics of the human septenary constitution, life after death, reincarnation, karma, dharma, and thought power, triggering curiosity, comments, and spontaneous sharing by the participants. The gathering began with Shikhar doing a puja ceremony to worship the higher being in all, creating a sacred welcoming atmosphere for the group.

Fundamentals of Theosophy were explored through engaging workshops: “Holistic Health and Living” by Shikhar and Catalina, showing the power of habits and Nature in our daily routine. Leo and Francis presented their workshop on the practice of “OM Chanting”. Merike and Smitapragyan led an “Art Workshop” where the participants collectively expressed their inner voices by building a tree with powerful theosophical messages

for future humanity. Dreams were also discussed with a practical explanation by Shikhar and sharing from the participants.

The study activities came to a close with a symposium on “Theosophy Applied to Daily Life, Challenges of the Youth, and Theosophical Solutions”. Shikhar’s workshop on “Self-Transformation and Meditation” was the preamble for the “silent time”, when the participants enjoyed almost one day of complete silence, absorbing the learning, sharing, and the possibility to go deeper into self-enquiry.

The group also explored the Nainital region and several sacred places, including the Aurobindo Ashram. The gathering enjoyed an atmosphere of camaraderie, kinship, gratitude, beauty, peace, and expansion, words that express the group’s feelings about all these experiences.

Recent Appointments

The Greek Section elected Mrs Erica Georgiades as General Secretary in March 2024, after Mr Alex Bousoulengas. There was a change in the Austrian Association in April, when Karin Walzl became the Organizing Secretary, succeeding Mr Albert Schichl. In June Ms Trăn-Thi-Kim-Dieu was elected General Secretary for France, following Ms Maxence Ondet, after being interim since October 2023. In June, Mr Janne Vuononvirta replaced Mr Jean-Paul Silvan as General Secretary for Finland. Finally, in July Mr Ingmar de Boer became the General Secretary for the Netherlands after Mr Wim Leys. ✧

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY

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Edited by Mr Tim Boyd, 'Olcott Bungalow', The Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai (TS),

Published by Mr S. Harihara Raghavan, 'Arundale House', TS, and Printed by Mr V. Gopalan, 'Chit Sabha', TS, at the Vasanta Press, TS, Besant Garden, Besant Avenue, Adyar, Chennai (Madras) 600 020, India, on behalf of the President, The Theosophical Society.

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