

MOMENT OF TRUTH A TRIBUTE TO H.P. BLAVATSKY

Each year, on White Lotus Day, we come to

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This article is based on a talk given on White Lotus Day at the Krotona Institute, School of Theosophy, in Ojai, California, during May, 1987.



Each year, on White Lotus Day, we come together to turn our thoughts and hearts to that great and brave soul who strove to show the sceptical world the light of truth by not only giving back to the West the essence of the Eternal Wisdom, but also by herself living a life of pure selflessness and utter dedication to her task. We pay homage to one who lifted a little more of the veil that shrouds the Eternal Truth, and restored to mankind some parts of those grand spiritual revelations to which she gave the ancient name of THEOSOPHY.

What does H.P.B. stand for? A message of hope and grandeur, and a sublime example of selflessness is my reply. According to A.P. Sinnett....

*She was concerned with bearing a message to the world of grave importance and infinite solemnity. It was not half uttered, not a hundredth part understood, before it was snapped up by every lively journalist in search of a new joke.*¹

The purpose of her message was of vast inclusiveness and infinite depth, at a time when separativeness and shallowness of approach were prevalent everywhere; when scientists, scholars and clergy exhibited an incredible self-conceit and self-complacency.

Her message embraced the universe as well as man; timelessness as well as time; the infinitude of space as well as the spacelessness of spirit. It gave a splendid panoramic view of life on this planet, and firmly set it in the framework of the solar system; it revealed the universe's spiritual history as well as history proper; a history never before given in such entirety to the world at large; it pointed out man's unique role and purpose in that vast drama; it maintained man's divine origin and perfectibility when every effort was being



made to trace man's descent from the ape and to degrade the purpose of human life. That purpose was shown as spiritual, and within the grasp of every human being at a time when the incipient and pernicious doctrine of a mechanical universe and the absurdity of human existence was taking shape to bear its disastrous consequences in our twentieth century.

Furthermore, her message claimed that every human being who had reached a certain level of inner development and had enough courage and selflessness to tread the spiritual path could still find the door open to the gaining of a deeper insight into the mysteries of life and death, to the attainment of our spiritual purpose, and that we could receive help from those who had gone far ahead of us. Indeed, it revealed the existence of these more highly evolved brothers of humanity.

A great ideal, and yet one within the reach of every human being of whatever race, class, sex or religion, was presented to the world, and a path was outlined for the individual.

H.P.B. was herself the living example of that truth which the Lord Christ taught us ... *Seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be open unto you.* Whilst giving out in vast sweeping strokes a panoramic picture of life and of its meaning, she showed individual human life as inextricably part of that vast whole, and infinitely worth the divine pilgrimage it undertook.

She explained in terms that the West could grasp the meaning of that great, mysterious equation of the Upanishads... *That thou art*, equivalent

to the Psalmist... *Be still and know that I am God*, and to Christ's... *I and the Father are One*. Thanks to her pioneering efforts the underlying significance of the mystical statements of world scriptures became clearer. Not just one man was inherently identical with the Godhead, but every man, woman and child — it was up to everyone of us to unfold our inner potential in order to become the living embodiment of the divine spark within us — this is our birth right. At one stroke all the religions were shown as equal pathways to Truth, each being a chord in the universal symphony of human aspiration. Thus a great rent was made in the thick veils of both Christian and materialistic prejudices.



The very climate of thought is today far more open. What before was taboo or considered the work of the devil is openly claiming the attention of serious and scientifically trained minds, such as in the fields of comparative religion and of psychic research in the universities and other similar institutions. Co-operation, harmony, inclusiveness have now become ideas acceptable to average humanity. Even politicians (at least in England) are beginning to use the word "compassion" as a valid and necessary expression of humaneness.

Who was that being who, with extraordinary singleness of purpose, utmost dedication, and daring flaunting of crippling conventions, for some eighteen years gave the nineteenth century Western World the greatest message it had received for many an age — namely that of the one divine life which pervades all things, that one truth which the Upanishads had proclaimed thousands of years before and which India, caste ridden, seemed to have forgotten? Who was that woman who showed the West that Christianity was not the only custodian of Truth as it claimed, and who opened the eyes of the sceptical West to the treasures locked up in Oriental lore, in the sacred books of the East so misunderstood, mistranslated and all too often derided by the scholars of the day? Who was that being who first attempted to draw East and West together in the bonds of spiritual brotherhood, of equality in essential humanity, intelligence and divinity, and who, following her Master's lead, tried to open the eyes of the world to the necessity of brotherhood for mutual understanding, for mutual help, and for universal redemption?

H.P. Blavatsky was a mighty individuality and personality. The dominant note in her being was that of power and light. We might remind ourselves of Charles Johnston's tribute to that effect...

The first and earliest impression I received from H.P.B. was the feeling of the power and largeness of her individuality; as though I were in the presence of one of the primal forces of Nature... This sense of the power of individuality was not what one has felt in the presence of some great personality, who dominates and dwarfs surrounding persons into insignificance, and tyrannously overrides their independence. It was rather the sense of a profound deep-seated reality, an exhaustless power of resistance, a spirit built on the very depths of Nature and reaching down to the primeval eternities of Truth.

Gradually apparent under this dominant impression of power arose a subtle sense of great gentleness and kindness, an unfailing readiness to forget herself entirely and to throw herself heartily into the life of others.

Another side of H.P.B.'s character unfolded itself more slowly — the great light and piercing insight of her soul.

One was lulled, as it were, by the sympathetic personality, and tranquilised by the feeling of balanced power, so that at first this quality of inner light might remain unnoted, till some sudden turn of thought or change of feeling opened the eyes and one recognized the presence of a denizen of eternity.²

Thanks to her enormous driving force H.P.B. managed to bring her remarkable and strong personality under the control of the Higher Self in all matters pertaining to her mission, and finally patiently endured *all* persecution and intolerance, which were both vilifying—and crucifying. Many of her letters reveal her agony of soul, her struggles, and also so many of human and endearing touches. On 19th August, 1885 she wrote in a letter to A. P. Sinnett — *Since ...Master forced me to live, let me live and die now in relative peace*. As we know, no Master ever forces anyone to live!

All great souls are servants of mankind. H.P.B. is for us a brilliant example. She sacrificed fortune, reputation, health, and life itself for the sake of her ideal, for the sake of the great movement she started, for the sake of her Master whom she revered so deeply. This Master could not help but write in one of his letters... *Unselfishness and an eager readiness for self-sacrifice for the good of others, what a multitude of sins does not this cover!*³

W. Kingsland tells us ...*She taught us Theosophy — not as a mere form of doctrine, not as a religion or a philosophy, or a creed, or a working hypothesis, but as a "living power in our lives".*⁴

She told William Q. Judge ... *We are not working merely that people may call themselves Theosophists, but that the doctrines we cherish may affect and leaven the whole mind of this century.*⁵

In an 1889 issue of her magazine, *Lucifer*, she wrote... **Real Theosophy is altruism. It is brotherly love, mutual help, unswerving devotion to truth** (observe that it is not to H.P.B. as a person, but to Truth). We tend to forget this in our zeal to pass on the doctrine.

What is truth? There are many levels of our apprehension of truth. For our present purpose truth is the moment of coming to ourselves. This moment is pertinent **now**, since we are remembering H.P.B., her legacy and what we are doing with it!

We have made ourselves custodians of the divine message which H.P.B. brought to the world. We have all the books in which that message is enshrined and the organization to disseminate it. Tremendous work has been done in order to make this *gnosis* readily available. We must pay tribute to all the hard workers involved in this task. But, to be a custodian of the form and to be a living exponent of the content of a message are two vastly different things. We have become far too crystallized in our custody through our clinging to nineteenth century outmoded forms of expression and thought, and also backwardness in style, approach, image, etc. This is the constant criticism. This can be easily remedied, if we **wish** to. My concern is far more with us as human beings, with **our** handing down of the contents of the *gnosis*. As a Hindu said of his own wisdom tradition which, as we know, is the essence of *theos - sophia*, we have been given the milk of the Eternal Wisdom, but instead of drinking it, we have spilled it over our heads!

The nineteenth century reformulation of the ageless wisdom is taken by certain members of The Theosophical Society as the ultimate and absolute source of wisdom on this earth, thus falling into the trap of dogma—dogma which fossilizes the wings of the mind, atrophies the soul, and reduces man to a fanatic. H.P.B. warned us against this again and again. Thus in one of the *Five Messages to the American Theosophists* (as quoted in *Fundamentals of the Esoteric Philosophy*, p.vi) she states ...

Orthodoxy in Theosophy is a thing neither possible nor desirable. It is diversity of opinion, within certain limits, that keeps The Theosophical Society a living and a healthy body, its many other ugly features notwithstanding. Were it not, also, for the existence of a large amount of uncertainty in the minds of students of Theosophy, such healthy divergencies would be impossible, and the Society would degenerate into a sect, in which a narrow and stereotyped creed would take the place of the living and breathing spirit of Truth and an ever-growing Knowledge. According as people are prepared to receive it, so will new Theosophi-

cal teaching be given. But no more will be given than the world, on its present level of spirituality, can profit by it.

For the past twenty years some of us have fought very hard against this dangerous sectarian trend in The Theosophical Society, with very little result. As it is truly said by Joy Mills (in a student's training workshop)... *Theosophy is not a closed system of thought.* This is ignored completely by too many members. This excellent expression of *not a closed system of thought* can be compared with what an acute-minded scholar said about the great figure of MAAT, or Cosmic Order, which is the Egyptian idea of Truth, Righteousness, Divine Wisdom, their 'Theos Sophia' ... *MAAT is not defined as to its content, not circumscribed or crystallized. She is the object of an active search undertaken by man's awakened mind. We have to apprehend her according to circumstances and the criterion is the good of human beings.*⁶

I would add, of all living creatures, of all life. Would that our 'theos-sophia' were the object of an active search in our daily life at all the levels of our being; not merely head learning. Only then could we live in the brotherhood of man and the oneness of all life. It is a sad fact that we are not happy at welcoming in our midst those of our 'brothers' who belong to other semi-esoteric bodies, even though they move within the vast sweep of the Theosophical Movement. Instead of co-operating with them in our common search for truth, exchanging viewpoints and research findings, and holding out the hand of brotherhood and mutual understanding, we tend to look down upon them from the heights of our supposed purity of custody and supposed better understanding of truth. This insidious, if unconscious, attitude of "I am holier than thou" is far too prevalent among our members. We also forget that, as the Mahatma Letters said a century ago... *The work of the Theosophical Society is linked in with similar work that is secretly going on in all parts of the world.* (p.271) If, then even more so nowadays when so many more people are far more open to the esoteric viewpoint and more understanding of the needs of mutual exchange.



We quarrel with, and then ostracize, those members who do not agree with some of our ideas and leave us. We even deride certain of them publicly, or in articles read by other semi-esoteric bodies, but keep selling their books — they do sell better than ours! This shows complete failure in the understanding and the practice of our First Object In clinging to the separative attitude of the Piscean Age, we are lagging more and more

behind the great world movements that are ushering in the Aquarian Age of collaboration, co-operation, of coming together in an effort to understand each other better, towards the goal of living together in greater harmony — and harmony is the key to brotherhood.

We were meant to hold the torch of leadership in all the intellectual domains of human endeavours precisely to pour into these a spiritual invigoration, but we have not been very brilliant with regard to the Second and Third Objects of the Society. With a few outstanding exceptions (e.g. G. Hodson of New Zealand), we have left it to the universities or other such bodies to undertake the study of comparative religion, science and philosophy and of psychical research. There is a tremendous field of research open to us along all these lines to vindicate H.P.B., not only of new research, but also a re-assessment of our own interpretation of the great doctrines such as karma and reincarnation, for we are not necessarily right in our interpretation nor in our understanding of H.P.B.'s main contentions. There is no final word on anything. The study of Theosophy should develop our synthetic insight which we should bring to any of these fields that we choose in order to counterbalance the analytical approach of the scholars. All too often it has served to narrow our minds to dogmatic assertions and to thinking that 'we' hold the final solution.

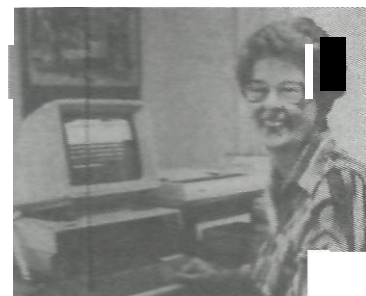
However, some recent landmarks in theosophical research are worthy of notice. One is the foundation of the Theosophical History Association with its emphasis on a fair assessment of what actually happened in the Theosophical Movement, disregarding all the petty squabbles that litter the history of the Society. Another is the book, *Ancient Wisdom, Modern Insight* (Quest Books, 1985), by Shirley Nicholson, which brings together an up-to-date review of the Ancient Wisdom. The author shows a deep comprehension of the tenets of *The Secret Doctrine*, and an ability to bring them in line with the more advanced of modern insights. The third is the research undertaken by Paul Johnson (of Pasadena) on *Madame Blavatsky: The Veiled Years*, which presents a startling theory which was first put forward at the First International Conference on Theosophical History held in London in July 1986, and later published as a booklet in 1987. This research shows, from quotations from her own letters and *The Secret Doctrine*, the undoubted connections of H.P.B. with the Sufis, which was very secret, as anything to do with the Sufis at that time had to be. Johnson observes ...

Only the Sufis, of known esoteric bodies, exemplify the non-sectarian, synthetic approach of H.P.B. and her teachers. It is not the intention of

this paper to equate Sufism with what Olcott calls the 'universal, mystic Brotherhood', but rather to suggest that its role as a past and present vehicle for that fraternity has been underestimated by theosophists. (p. 6).

Tribute should also be paid to two members who, against all opposition — both within and outside the Theosophical Society, have worked on steadfastly and courageously for the better understanding of our fellowmen and for humanness towards other sentient creatures. One is Joy Mills, who, through her unique work for the Theosophical Society at Krotona, is constantly striving to open the frontiers of our minds through the interchange of ideas by inviting people of various backgrounds and disciplines, thereby keeping us in contact with the more advanced of modern thinking. The other is Dr. Catherine Roberts, who gave up a scientific career to combat the insensitive attitude of scientists towards animal experimentation, in the face of complete indifference from the world at large, and, I fear, apathy from most of our members.

joy Mills



Let us pause a little longer and go deeper into our moment of truth, of coming to ourselves. Everywhere I go I find all too often among the older members boredom and fear. The general attitude is ... 'we know everything, we have heard the best speakers in the past, attended countless lectures, there is nothing more for us to learn'. And so one falls into a comfortable rut. Obviously hearing too many lectures will bring boredom. Perhaps we should find something else to do other than lecture ad infinitum. But do we realize that boredom and spirituality do not go together? Where is that spirit flame that should guide us onwards? Where is that dynamism that should transform us constantly, that should make us step forward into the new age in full trust and confidence, strong in our stand on Truth, and not just a 'reformulation' that is already 'dated' in the next century? Where is that wonder at the beauty of the universe that should make us want to explore more of it and bring our contribution to the quota of theosophical research?

G.R.S. Mead stated ... *He alone is a true Theosophist who develops all his higher faculties and*

learns to sense the 'fitness of things', their underlying harmony, on all occasions/

Behind many of our presentations (I do not say all) there is a disheartening emptiness, a repetition of what others have said before us without any new findings of our own, without any new assessment, any deeply thought-out conviction, any real assimilation, any living experience, and this tends to stifle the yearning of the spirit within us. Take, for example, the doctrine of space in *The Secret Doctrine*, which is difficult to apprehend intellectually — we may verbalize it ad infinitum, but that will get us nowhere. Behind it is the profound experience of our inner space, the great void that is the fullness, wherein we mirror the vastness of the universe, the space that is freedom, the freedom wherein our spirit wings its way into the boundlessness of the Infinite, and comes back refreshed, invigorated, inspired. Do we know that in the Vedas space is equated to freedom?

As one member in New Zealand put it in his answer to Charles James' provocative enquiry, *Theosophy 2000...* So often we are just content to be postmen because the other letter writers were so good. Aye, there's the problem!

In order to remain alive, to understand these doctrines that have come to us, to make them our own, and to be their living exponents, not just fossilized custodians, in order to pass them on to posterity as living experiences, we have to plunge into our inner space, the emptiness within which paradoxically will be filled with its quickening fullness, its liveliness, its dynamic power of renewal. We have to explore the space within our depth — there where the divine spark is hidden and waiting for us, there where is the true source of inspiration, and the only source that can revivify us and make us true torchbearers of that Eternal Wisdom called Theosophy. But ... we are afraid of this plunge. The path to Truth requires courage, bravery — it is the supreme adventure!

Awake, arise, seek out the light. As narrow as the edge of a razor is the path that leads to the

Eternal! These words of the Katha Upanishad spoken more than two thousand years ago hold good now as ever before.

H.P. Blavatsky was a leading example of this path. She stated ... *There is a road, steep and thorny and beset with perils of every kind, but yet a road, and it leads to the heart of the universe. I can tell you how to find Those who will show you the secret gateway that leads inward only and closes fast behind the neophyte for ever more. There is no danger that dauntless courage cannot conquer; there is no trial that spotless purity cannot pass through; there is no difficulty that strong intellect cannot surmount. For those who win onward, then is reward beyond all telling; the power to bless and serve humanity. For those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come.*⁹

Let us remain faithful to the spirit of truth which H.P.B. tried to instill in us.



References:

1. H.P.B. — *In Memory of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky* by Some of Her Pupils, London 1931, p.33
2. *ibid*, p.60-61
3. *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, p.370
4. H.P.B. — *In Memory of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky* by Some of Her Pupils, p.159
- 5.6 *ibid*, p.68
- A. Theodorides *Les Egyptiens anciens, citoyens ou sujets de Pharaon? Revue internationale des droits de l'Antiquite.* 3^eser. vol. XX, 1973 (translated from French by J. Miller)
7. *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, p.271
8. H.P.B. — *In Memory of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky* by Some of Her Pupils, p.15
9. *The Real H.P. Blavatsky*, A Kingsland, quoted on Dedication p.