

Theosophical Meditation

Part 1 of 3 – Sunday 12th January 2020

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

One of the Mahatmas or Masters of Wisdom behind the founding of the Theosophical Movement at the end of the 19th century wrote: “Theosophy should not represent merely a collection of moral verities, a bundle of metaphysical ethics, epitomized in theoretical dissertations. Theosophy *must be made practical.*” (“Some Words on Daily Life”)

Theosophy is in fact far more practical than many realise and constantly calls upon those who study it to put into practice and physical action the principles of compassion, unselfishness, altruism, and service. Anyone who has seriously studied the vast and extensive writings of H. P. Blavatsky in conjunction with those of William Q. Judge (HPB’s closest colleague, co-founder, and fellow Teacher of the Esoteric Philosophy) knows this to be the case.

Robert Crosbie, the founder of the United Lodge of Theosophists, was a devoted pupil of HPB and WQJ and in an article in the January 1916 “Theosophy” magazine he said: “The recognition of H. P. B. as the accredited Agent and Messenger of Masters, carries with it her estimation of William Q. Judge, her colleague from first to last. A study of the writings of both will show their full accord and complementary nature. H. P. B. presented the philosophy as a whole; William Q. Judge exemplified its practical use in daily life; his writings for the most part are devoted to that purpose, hence their incalculable value.”

But what about the actual *practice of meditation* itself? Does Theosophy promote it and explain how to do it? It undeniably does promote and recommend it and, as we’ll see over the course of these three sessions, provides a lot of suggestions and guidance concerning it.

It’s true that Theosophy does not provide its students with *step-by-step* detailed practical instructions such as “#1: do this, #2: then do this, #3: then do this other thing, etc.” but clear stages are given, as Patanjali gives in his Eight Limbs. This is because real and lasting progress can only be made when the type of meditation¹, its frequency and subject arises *naturally* from *within the individual* in response to the theory they have learned. “Self-induced and self-devised efforts” is the expression used in the Third Fundamental Proposition of “The Secret Doctrine” when speaking about how human evolution goes forward. Another factor is that everyone is different and unique in their own way and what is ideal for one person will not be so for another. It is certain that anyone so inclined can read the content to be covered in this three part series and *devise for themselves* some suitable and helpful meditation exercises and practices. Once we have a sound basis of knowledge, we can begin to take responsibility for ourselves.

Some may have heard of something known as the “Blavatsky Meditation Diagram” or “HPB Meditation Diagram.” This will not be included in these meetings, nor has it been published by the ULT, because there are questions as to its authenticity. The doubts do not relate to its content and concepts – which seem clear, good, safe, and in line with her teachings – but rather as to whether or not she actually taught this, or at least in the form expressed in the Diagram. It did not come into existence until around 1940, when a man named E. T. Sturdy produced it and said that towards the end of HPB’s life she had answered Sturdy’s questions about meditation by presenting these things. One year is often sufficient to dim our recollections and in this case approximately 50 years had passed between HPB apparently sharing these things with Sturdy and him drawing up the Diagram! It’s probably for this reason that hardly any Theosophists or Theosophical groups promote or present it, as they can’t vouch for its accuracy and legitimacy in regard to being what HPB actually taught and recommended.

¹ The various types of meditation will be explained in the second and third handouts on 26th January and 9th February.

Guided meditations and group meditations are very popular nowadays but many serious Theosophical students view such practices as undesirable – guided meditation because real progress in meditation has to be made by oneself, plus some guided meditations verge on hypnosis and putting the meditator in a psychically passive state, which from the occult perspective can be quite harmful; and group meditation because of the possibility of “psychic contagion” through the mingling together of different auras and elementals into one collective “entity,” however temporary.

Robert Crosbie’s view of group meditation was partly expressed in one of his letters published posthumously in “The Friendly Philosopher”: “People sometimes say they find a kind of “coldness” at a Theosophical meeting, where principles of philosophy and their application to the affairs of daily life are discussed; they find more “devotion” at the meetings of the various sects or cults, or even at other types of meetings called “theosophical.” It would be interesting to know what such people understand by “devotion.” They often doubtless refer to those types of meetings where there is “meditation,” a sort of prayer-meeting where psycho-religio emotions are aroused. The Teachers of Theosophy say, “The first test of true discipleship is devotion to the interests of another.” So there are different kinds of “devotion,” some of them to the personality. The real meditation is not that.” (p. 118-119)

We will see from the quotes assembled together from H. P. Blavatsky, William Q. Judge, Robert Crosbie, B. P. Wadia, and Damodar K. Mavalankar – all of them reliably in line with the authentic teachings of HPB and of *her* Teachers – that Theosophical Meditation is a pure, safe, harmless, noble, uplifting, and spiritually edifying practice, which anyone and everyone is welcome and invited to pursue. It may not be “exciting” for the lower self but it is proven, reliable, and timeless.

Something more important, however, is the endeavour to live one’s *daily life* in as conscious and concentrated a way as possible. This is ultimately of greater lasting value than sitting down and meditating and is possible for everyone, including those who may have certain health issues which make meditation uncomfortable or impossible. Even a little amount of success in living life consciously makes the practice of meditation easier and more fruitful.

EXPLAINING THE VALUE OF DAILY MEDITATION

“Meditation is silent and *unuttered* prayer, or, as Plato expressed it, “the ardent turning of the soul toward the divine; not to ask any particular good (as in the common meaning of prayer), but for good itself – for the universal Supreme Good” of which we are a part on earth, and out of the essence of which we have all emerged.” (H. P. Blavatsky, “The Key to Theosophy” p. 10)

“While we are endeavoring to understand and practice altruism, and while spreading broadcast the doctrines given out by the Adepts respecting man, his status, future fate, and right way of living, each theosophist can devote some of his time to daily meditation and concentration, and all of his time to extirpating his faults and vices; when he has made some progress in this, the good karma he may have acquired by working for the cause of Humanity, which is the same as Universal Brotherhood, will help him to get ready to begin occult practices.” (William Q. Judge, “The Stream of Thought and Queries” article)

“By setting apart a *particular* time for meditation, a habit is formed, and, as the time comes round, the mind will after a while become trained, so that meditation at the particular time will become natural. Hence, it will be well for you to keep to the same hour as far as possible.” (WQJ, “Letters That Have Helped Me” p. 121)

“Now then, you want more light, and this is what you must do. You will have to “give up” something. To wit: have yourself called half an hour earlier than is usual and devote it *before* breakfast to silent meditation, in which brood upon all great and high ideas. Half an hour! Surely, that you can spare. And don’t eat first. If you can take another half *before* you go to bed, and without any preliminaries of undressing or making things agreeable or more comfortable, meditate again. . . . This is much to give up, but give it up, . . . “The best and most important teacher is one’s seventh principle centered in the sixth.

The more you divest yourself of the illusionary sense of personal isolation, and the more you are devoted to the service of others, the more Maya disappears and the nearer you approach to Divinity.” Good-bye, then, and may you find that peace which comes from the Self.” (WQJ, “Letters That Have Helped Me” p. 96)

“In his hours of silent meditation the student will find that there is one space of silence within him where he can find refuge from thoughts and desires, from the turmoil of the senses and the delusions of the mind. By sinking his consciousness deep into his heart he can reach this place – at first only when he is alone in silence and darkness. But when the need for the silence has grown great enough, he will turn to seek it even in the midst of the struggle with self, and he will find it. Only he must not let go of his outer self, or his body; he must learn to retire into this citadel when the battle grows fierce, but to do so without losing sight of the battle; without allowing himself to fancy that by so doing he has won the victory. That victory is won only when all is silence without as within the inner citadel. Fighting thus, from within that silence, the student will find that he has solved the first great paradox.” (HPB, “The Great Paradox” article)

“The true student has ever been . . . a man of silence and meditation.” (HPB, “What are the Theosophists?” article)

“All Probationers [Note: This refers to probationary aspirants for chelaship/discipleship but can be equally applied by all] are called upon to examine themselves by the light of their own Inner Ego and with the help of the divine virtues – the *paramitas*. Ordinarily, virtues are considered to be attributes of the heart; we do not usually speak of mind-feelings; integration or yoga-union between mind and heart demands that the mind become virtuous. We have to learn to think of virtues and to use our reason and our intelligence, our discrimination and our discernment, in practising the *paramitas*, with which deals the third fragment of our textbook, called “The Seven Portals.”” (B. P. Wadia, “Studies in The Voice of the Silence” p. 16)

“Meditation, abstinence in all, the observation of moral duties, gentle thoughts, good deeds and kind words, as good will to all and entire oblivion of Self, are the most efficacious means of obtaining knowledge and preparing for the reception of higher wisdom.” (HPB, quoting from a Trans-Himalayan esoteric source in the “Practical Occultism” article)

“Neither by the eyes, nor by spirit, nor by the sensuous organs, nor by austerity, nor by sacrifices, can we see Brahma. Only the pure, by the light of wisdom and meditation, can see the pure Deity.” (“Gems from the East,” precepts and axioms compiled by HPB)

BECOMING AWARE OF THE UNCHANGING WITNESS / PERCEIVER / OBSERVER / SPECTATOR OF ALL CHANGES

“The substratum, or support, for the whole Cosmos, is the presiding spirit, and all the various changes in life, whether of a material nature or solely in mental states, are cognizable because the presiding spirit within is not modifiable. Were it otherwise, then we would have no memory, for with each passing event, we, becoming merged in it, could not remember anything, that is, we would see no changes. There must therefore be something eternally persisting, which is the witness and perceiver of every passing change, itself unchangeable. All objects, and all states of what western philosophers call Mind, are modifications, for in order to be seen or known by us, there must be some change, either partial or total, from a precedent state. The perceiver of these changes is the inner man . . .

“This leads us to the conviction that there must be a universal presiding spirit, the producer as well as the spectator, of all this collection of animate and inanimate things. . . . the immortal part of each man – the Krishna who talks to Arjuna . . . being in essence unmodified, it has the capacity to perceive all the changes going on around the body. This *Self* must be recognized as being within, pondered over, and as much as possible understood, if we are to gain any true knowledge.” (WQJ, “Notes on the Bhagavad Gita” p. 23-24)

“The modifications of the mind are always known to the presiding spirit, because it is not subject to modification.”

“Hence, through all the changes to which the mind and soul are subject, the spiritual soul, *Ishwara*, remains unmoved, “the witness and spectator.”” (Patanjali’s Yoga Aphorisms, Book IV, Aphorism 17, with comment by William Q. Judge)

“The meditation spoken of as necessary to the highest attainment is sometimes called “a lifetime’s meditation”; it means that the immortality of man has first to be assumed, and then rigidly adhered to as the basis for every thought and action, for it is only in this way that a realization of immortality can be obtained by embodied beings. As it is from the Spirit in Man that all law and power proceeds, each human being creates his own limitations on every plane of being; he can transcend those limitations only by reverting to and maintaining his immortality, as the observer and experiencer of all the passing changes, himself unchanged and unchanging.” (Robert Crosbie, “Notes on the Bhagavad Gita” p. 148-149)

“We know that we are not our bodies, for they constantly change, while we remain the same identity through all the changes. We are not our “minds,” for we change them whenever we find occasion to do so; if we were our minds we could not change them, and further, it is apparent that “change” cannot see “change;” only that which is permanent can see change. That permanency is the Real, the immortal Man, or, as the “Voice of the Silence” states it, “the Man that was, that is, and will be, for whom the hour shall never strike.” Each is the Self, the Perceiver; non-being, yet the cause and sustainer of being.” (RC, “Notes on the Bhagavad Gita” p. 175-176)

“That in us which is itself unchanging is the only real. Nothing is real that changes. It is only the real that perceives change. Change cannot see change. Only that which is constant perceives change; only the permanent can perceive impermanence. However dimly we may perceive it, there is that in us which is eternal and changeless. This unchanging, constant, and immortal something in us is not absent from any particle or any being whatever. There is only one Life in the world to which we, as well as all other beings, pertain. We all proceeded from the same one Source – not many – and we are proceeding on the same path to the same great goal. The ancients said that the Divine Self is in all beings, but in all it does not shine forth. The real is within, and may be realized by any human being in himself. Everyone needs that realization that he may shine forth and express the God within, which all beings but partially express.” (RC, “What Reincarnates?” article)

“And we may consider this: change cannot see change. Only that which is permanent can see change. So there is that in us which is permanent, which is Real, which is of the highest, which is a ray from and one with the Supreme, the universal Principle or Power, the creator, the sustainer, the regenerator of all that was, is, or ever shall be. We have to *realize* That – each one for himself – first by recognizing that IT IS, omnipresent, eternal, boundless and immutable; second, by divesting ourselves of those things we thought It to be: that It is this body, this mind, these circumstances. All these are changing things, things seen; but that which is the Real, the Supreme, our very Self and the Self of all things, is not subject to change; It is changeless; It cannot be seen, for It is the Perceiver.” (RC, “The Recognition of Law” article)

MEDITATE ON THE HIGHER SELF RATHER THAN THE CHAKRAS AND THIRD EYE

“I advise you to discontinue concentration on the vital centres [i.e. the chakras], which again may prove dangerous unless under the guidance of a teacher. You have learnt, to a certain degree, the power of concentration, and the greatest help will now come to you from concentration upon the Higher Self, and aspiration toward the Higher Self. Also, if you will take some subject or sentence from the *Bhagavad Gita*, and concentrate your mind upon that and meditate upon it, you will find much good result from it, and there is no danger in such concentration.” (WQJ, “Letters That Have Helped Me” p. 115)

“You cannot develop the third eye. It is too difficult, and until you have cleared up a good deal more on philosophy it would be useless, and a useless sacrifice is a crime of folly. But here is advice given by many Adepts: every day and as often as you can, and on going to sleep and as you wake, think, think, think, on the truth that you are not body, brain, or astral man, but that you are THAT, and “THAT” is the Supreme Soul. For by this practice you will gradually kill the false notion which lurks inside that the false is the true, and the true is the false. By persistence in this, by submitting your daily thoughts each night to the judgment of your Higher Self, you will at last gain light.” (WQJ, “Letters That Have Helped Me” p. 116)

SHOULD WE TRY TO BECOME MENTALLY VACANT OR STARE AT PHYSICAL OBJECTS?

“Duty and the final imperative – the “what ought I to do” – comes in here and becomes a part of the process. . . . We are not to go on heedlessly and indiscriminately doing everything that is suggested [i.e. by various different teachers and systems]. We must discover what actions ought to be performed by us and do them for that reason and not because of some result we expect to follow. . . . By pursuing this practice true meditation is begun and will soon become permanent. For one who watches his thoughts and acts, so as to perform those that ought to be done, will acquire a concentration in time which will increase the power of real meditation. It is not meditation to stare at a spot on the wall for a fixed period, or to remain for another space of time in a perfectly vacuous mental state which soon runs into sleep. All those things are merely forms which in the end will do no lasting good. But many students have run after these follies, ignoring the true way. The truth is that the right method is not easy; it requires thought and mental effort, with persistency and faith. Staring at spots and such miscalled occult practices are very easy in comparison with the former.” (WQJ, “Notes on the Bhagavad Gita” p. 128-129)

MEDITATION ON THE HIGHER SELF–ATMAN, THE ONE UNIVERSAL SPIRIT

“This is the Self. Not the mere body or the faculties of the brain, but the Highest Self. And that must be meditated on, or worshipped, with a constant meditation.” (WQJ, “What is the Udgitha?” article)

“The Self is one and all-powerful, but it must happen to the seeker from time to time that he or she shall feel the strangeness of new conditions; this is not a cause for fear. If the mind is kept intent on the Self and not diverted from it, and comes to see the Self in all things, no matter what, then fear should pass away in time. I would therefore advise you to study and meditate over the *Bhagavad Gita*, which is a book that has done me more good than all others in the whole range of books, and is the one that can be studied all the time. This will do more good than anything – if the great teachings are silently assimilated and put into action, for it goes to the very root of things and gives the true philosophy of life. If you try to put into practice what in your inner life you hold to be right, you will be more ready to receive helpful thoughts and the inner life will grow more real. I hope with you that your home may become a strong centre of work for Theosophy.” (WQJ, “Letters That Have Helped Me” p. 106)

“Arouse, arouse in you the meaning of “Thou art That.” Thou art the Self. This is the thing to think of in meditation, and if you believe it, then tell others the same. You have read it before, but now try to realize it more and more each day, and you will have the light you want.” (WQJ, “Letters That Have Helped Me” p. 126)

“It is true that too often when we begin to meditate on some elevating thought, dark thoughts come in, and this is not easy to overcome; but if we remember that the very essence of our being, the inmost sanctuary of the Soul, is divine, we can enter into it and shut out the evil. The tendency of the mind is to wander from subject to subject, and so we should try to follow the advice of the *Bhagavad Gita*: “To whatsoever object the inconstant mind goeth out, he should subdue it, bring it back and place it upon the

Spirit.” “There is no purifier in this world to be compared to spiritual knowledge, and he who is perfected in devotion findeth Spiritual knowledge springing up spontaneously in himself in the progress of time.”” (WQJ, “Letters That Have Helped Me” p. 175)

“But let me again insist upon your trying to realize in your selves that you are a part of the All. That is the constant subject of meditation, and will bring the best and most rapid progress.” (WQJ, “Letters That Have Helped Me” p. 200)

“This chapter [i.e. Chapter 7 of the Bhagavad Gita] is devoted to the question of that spiritual discernment by means of which the Supreme Spirit can be discerned in all things, and the absence of which causes a delusion constantly recurring, the producer of sorrow. Krishna says that this sort of knowledge leaves nothing else to be known, but that to attain it the heart – that is, every part of the nature – must be fixed on the Spirit, meditation has to be constant, and the Spirit made the refuge or abiding-place. He then goes on to show that to have attained to such a height is to be a Mahatma.” (WQJ, “Notes on the Bhagavad Gita” p. 132)

“There is no doubt but that by an earnest aspiration one arouses all the hidden inner foes, but then determined effort will destroy them. It is wise to always remember that “Ishwara” the Spirit that is common to all dwells inside of us and if that be so, our sincere belief in and reliance upon It will gradually awaken us to the consciousness that we are that spirit itself and not the miserable creatures which walk on this earth bearing our names. Hence I would ever reflect on the spiritual unity of all beings, continually saying to myself that I am actually that spirit. Our difficulties are always due to the personality which is unwilling to give itself up to the great idea that it has no real existence except in the one Spirit.” (WQJ, October 1890 letter to Helen Winsor)

“Real Concentration is in fact Union with the Divine. We are to understand that we are each the Divine. There is no separateness but the one Spirit is in each reflected in each person. This truth, expressed by the ancients as “Thou art that spirit” is to be well understood and felt before concentration can become possible. Ordinary concentration of attention is merely an outward show but of course necessary also in the real concentration. Now having deeply thought over this you should study such a book as Patanjali’s yoga Philosophy, which is the philosophy of concentration and in which you should find much light on this topic. The true source for concentration is selflessness, for as long as we feel the shackles of the personal self, so long is concentration hindered in various ways. I think in the above is what you need if you will study it out for it needs much thought.” (WQJ, January 1891 letter to Baber Pathorne)

“. . . thou hast to live and breathe in all, as all that thou perceivest breathes in thee; to feel thyself abiding in all things, all things in SELF.

“Thou shalt not let thy senses make a playground of thy mind.

“Thou shalt not separate thy being from BEING, and the rest, but merge the Ocean in the drop, the drop within the Ocean.

“So shalt thou be in full accord with all that lives; bear love to men as though they were thy brother-pupils, disciples of one Teacher, the sons of one sweet mother.” (“The Voice of the Silence” original edition, p. 49, translated by HPB from the Book of the Golden Precepts)

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PART 2 WILL BE ON SUNDAY 26th JANUARY

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