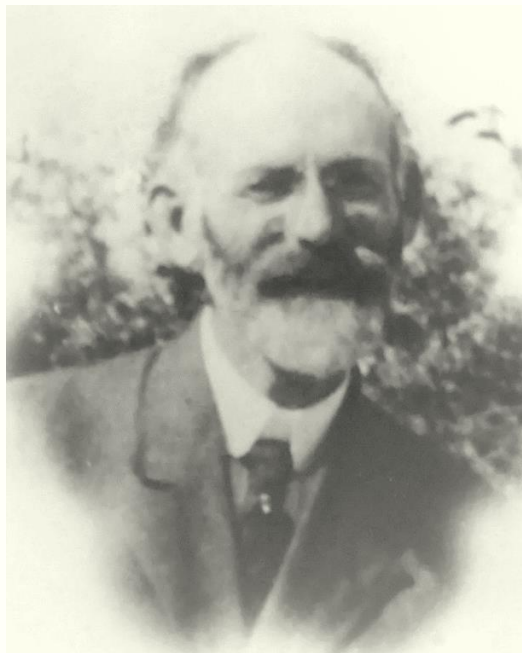


# Spiritual Practices in Theosophy

*a collation from Robert Crosbie's letters and articles*



“When we desire anything, that itself is not what we want but the feeling it gives us; if it gave us no “feeling” we would not desire it. Thus by raising our desires we can reach higher “feelings.”” (page 6)

*Initial reading, on two dispositions*

FEARLESSNESS, sincerity, assiduity in devotion, generosity, self-restraint, piety, and alms-givings, study, mortification, and rectitude; harmless, veracity, and freedom from anger, resignation, equanimity, and not speaking of the faults of others, universal compassion, modesty, and mildness; patience, power, fortitude, and purity, discretion, dignity, unvengefulness, and freedom from conceit — these are the marks of him whose virtues are of a godlike character, O son of Bharata. Those, O son of Pritha, who are born with demoniacal dispositions are marked by hypocrisy, pride, anger, presumption, harshness of speech, and ignorance. The destiny of those whose attributes are godlike is final liberation, while those of demoniacal dispositions, born to the Asuras' lot, [suffer] continued bondage to mortal birth; grieve not, O son of Pandu, for thou art born with the divine destiny. There are two kinds of natures in beings in this world, that which is godlike, and the other which is demoniacal.

*The Bhagavad Gita, Chapter XVI, W. Q. Judge's translation.*

# Introduction

This collation outlines an approach that Crosbie grouped under three pairs of practice: **Unity-Universality; Study-Wisdom; and Work-Service**, page 3.

They are an application of the formula of the Three Fundamental Propositions of *The Secret Doctrine* that are studied in Theosophical circles, and this approach, when extended and developed, enables us to meditate and live with a conscious connection with the natural world.

Crosbie's approach helps guard against an intellectual understanding of *Unity*, or the importance of *study*, or the best way to work, without following the many and far-reaching conclusions in practice, as are suggested there.

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## Unity and Universality

### Meditation, as Union with Atman

[Of the many means of cultivating integrated mental states, meditation is recommended and may include certain *Buddhist Meditations*. We have often covered these so will not do more than mention in passing Samatha practices for instance, which are well described a TM article reproduced in the Newsletter on the Sun & Meditation ([Theosophical Notes No. 9 Autumn 2019](#) page 4).

In the following extract from Crosbie's letters he uses a device from Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* for the "procurement of steadiness of the mind." The help comes from our thoughts taking "as its object someone devoid of passion — as, for instance, an ideally pure character" so as to reach this first and most needed condition of meditation.<sup>1</sup> In this case he follows W. Q. Judge's suggestion of contemplating on the Eastern Mahatmas who were behind the founding of the Theosophical Movement in 1875.]

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Meditation as used by us, is what is called in Sanscrit *Dhyana*, *i.e.*, want of motion, and one-pointedness. The main point is *to free the mind from the power of the senses*, and to raise a current of thought *to the exclusion of all others*.

*"Realization comes from dwelling on the thing to be realized."*

W. Q. Judge says, "To meditate on the Higher Self is difficult; seek then, *the Bridge*, the Masters. The patient dwelling of the mind on a single thought results in the gaining of wisdom, and it is thus that the true Occultist is developed. Aspiration toward the Higher Self should form part of the daily meditation; the rising toward the higher planes of our being, *which cannot be found unless they are sought*. Earnest and reverent desire for Master's guidance and enlightenment will begin the attunement of the nature to the harmony *to which it must one day respond*."

Concentration on a single point in the Teaching is a road to the philosophy; self-examination, a road to knowledge of oneself. *To put oneself in the place of another*, to realize his difficulties,

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<sup>1</sup> *Patanjali's Aphorisms*, Bk 1, Sutras 35-37 on techniques on how the mind becomes purified and thus steadied.

and thus be able to help him, *is that faculty* – which when extended makes it possible for the Adept to understand the nature of the stone or other form of consciousness.” Meditation is a good beneficent practice leading to a great end. It is also a great destroyer of the personal idea.

*The Friendly Philosopher*, Letter 32, 93

The word Om or Aum is at once an invocation of the highest within, a benediction, an affirmation, and a promise; its proper use is said to lead to a realization of the Self within. The Aum contains within itself all the aspects and implies the Universe controlled by the Supreme Spirit. It represents the constant current of meditation which ought to be carried on by every man, even while engaged in the necessary duties of life. There is for every conditioned being a target at which the aim is constantly directed; in the Mundaka Upanishad there is the following, “Om is the bow, the Self is the arrow, Brahman is called its aim. It is to be hit by a

OM, the bow



the Aim is union  
(Atman or  
Brahman...)

man who is not thoughtless; and then as the arrow becomes one with the target, he will become one with Brahman. Know him alone as the Self, and leave off other words. He is the bridge of the Immortal. Meditate on the Self as Om.”

*Notes on the Bhagavad Gita*, Crosbie, p. 224-225

### A Warning for today’s New Age interest in ‘spiritual entities’

“Do not try to open up conscious communication with beings on other planes. It is not the time and danger lies that way, because of the power of creating one’s own images, and because of the power and disposition of the dark forces to simulate beings of Light, and render futile your efforts to reach the goal.”

*The Friendly Philosopher*, 14

[See also p 4 on elemental energies. Regarding meditation and Patanjali’s system, H. P. Blavatsky’s *Theosophical Glossary* entry for “Raja-Yoga” defines it as “The true system of developing psychic and spiritual powers and union with one’s *Higher Self* – or the Supreme Spirit, as the profane express it” and summarises it as “The exercise, regulation and concentration of thought.” This is the continuous *focus* or yoga of conscious living. To sit down and practice meditation can be a part of it – and it is of course recommended that we endeavour to do so – but an always mindful life is our most important meditation.]

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## Study and Wisdom

### Study, Self-Knowledge and the Removal of ‘Hindrances’

With reference to the mind’s poor grasp of things: what we want cannot be obtained by anxiety, doubt, fear, impatience, expectancy that it is time that something should come to us, and so forth. This latter is looking for reward. Make up your mind to continue as you are for one hundred lives, if necessary, and continue.

The hindrances must be stopped, *if that which is hindered is to come*.

All the other study is good, necessary, and preparatory. **Unity—Study—Work**—are the trinity of this plane. **Universality, Wisdom, and Service** are the higher trinity. You are the *One* who is preparing the way for the latter, by means of the former.

We learn by experience. Confidence gives courage—is courage. After a while we learn that the Law will act, regardless of any sentiment we may hold. And in this work things occur in peculiar ways—not to be accounted for by the usual process. At least, such has been my *experience*.

*The Friendly Philosopher* by Robert Crosbie, Letter 33, p 96

## The Rules of Esoteric Psychology

There is consciousness and its perceptions, the latter becoming more and more objective creations on different planes of matter *on account of the Creative, Preservative and Destructive powers inherent in Consciousness*, or, more properly, the Self.

“Whatever state of consciousness the Perceiver may be in, the things of that plane are for the time being his only realities.”

It is all relativity and here is where the knowledge of the Real and the Unreal frees from bondage. The whole universe exists only for purposes of Soul. Soul is individualization of Being; we, as self-conscious beings, have to remain in the bondage of matter long enough to give lower segregated entities<sup>2</sup> the necessary impetus toward self-consciousness. The majority do this work unconsciously, partly right and partly wrong. It is possible to do it consciously and free from attachment, as well as rightly.

A good comprehension of the processes is wise and necessary, for the sake of others who need to see that the way of devotion is not that of merely being good. The books of devotion contain the rules of war, the duties—individual and collective—of the warrior, the right conduct in the field. Moreover, they give the maps of battle-grounds where the foe is to be met, and tell how the battle should be fought<sup>3</sup>—to win.

*The Friendly Philosopher* by Robert Crosbie, 135

## Understanding Elemental Energies

We have in the past generated, or created by thought, and reinforced by action, numerous elemental beings of the nature of Prakriti.<sup>4</sup> As long as our thought is in keeping with their natures, no great friction is observed; but when our thoughts fail to provide them with sustenance, the struggle for life begins, and must continue until these creatures of ours die, or are so changed as to cause no hindrance. It is a new *Manvantara*<sup>5</sup> in our little solar system, “the guiding spirit” ruling, controlling, or sweeping away all entities connected with the old evolution, in accordance with the key-note of the new.

*The Friendly Philosopher* 78-79

The elemental kingdoms have never been fully explained, for which there must be a reason. There are seven great classes of Devas (universal intelligences), with their seven sub-divisions, among the former being the Kumaras with whom man has most to do—or vice versa. The nature-spirits seem to be the off-shoots of the first elemental kingdoms, some passing the concrete Mineral (not becoming crystallized); others not becoming herbalized; others escape

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<sup>2</sup> We assume Crosbie is referring to the training of the elemental energies that make up our lower state of being.

<sup>3</sup> There are many examples of ideals in conduct; those quoted in the opening reading on page 1 are an example.

<sup>4</sup> These psychic energies create the force of our habits... and give them their stubbornness that resists us when we wish to change them! The esoteric psychology teaches that every thought coalesces with (ie joins with and reinforces) a consubstantial elemental ‘entity,’ a lower form of nature’s consciousness, some benign, others not.

<sup>5</sup> The recurring cycles of birth, life and death, as present in the universe as it is in miniature in human life.

forms of watery life; still others escape forms of air life... H.P.B. says, “There are no entities in the four lower kingdoms possessing intelligence that can communicate with men, but the elementals have instincts like animals. It is, however, possible for the Sylphs (the wickedest things in the world) to communicate, but they require to be propitiated.”... they seem to court and delight in human worship.

*The Friendly Philosopher* 104

[This implies that in our daily conduct we should not reflect in ourselves the *sylph* temperament which Éliphas Lévi calls “giddy and bilious” (excitable and peevish) as do those who like this characteristic. Likewise H. P. Blavatsky says in *Kabalistic Views on ‘Spirits’*: “the element of the gnomes predominates in melancholy (sad) persons; of the salamanders in the sanguine (optimistic, bullish); of the undines, in the phlegmatic (stolid).” The aim of our spiritual practices should be to empower and free ourselves from these four predominating traits, noting that these will produce (twelve?) combinations from the influences of the three Gunas on them, **Truthfulness** (Satva), **Activity** (Rajas), **Inaction** (Tamas). The perfected man and woman learns to transcend both the *Elemental influences* and their *Guna attributes*.]

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## Work and Service

### Equanimity and Altruism

You have it right: one has to grow into that state where he seeks nothing for *himself*, but takes whatever comes to pass *as the thing he most desired*. There is no room for personal desire in this.

With reference to the mind’s poor grasp of things: what we want cannot be obtained by anxiety, doubt, fear, impatience, expectancy that it is time that something should come to us, and so forth....

*The Friendly Philosopher*, Letter 33, p 96

The object of Theosophical study and work is *not* individual development, but that each and all should become true helpers of humanity.

*The Friendly Philosopher* 371

### To Work Mindfully is a Spiritual Practice

*[To attain a quiet and receptive mindfulness means we can then do our best, it is to develop equanimity, patience and contemplative self-possession (which is the yoga of concentration). In this letter Crosbie describes this in terms of the knowledge to understand certain changes in our mental states and to live with a more discerning awareness.]*

Kama-loka means the plane or place of Desire. Doubt and Desire seem to go together; for wanting a thing implies the doubt of getting it, and intensity of doubt is expressed in fear. So Desire, Doubt, and Fear are the characteristics of the Kama-lokic state.

I think we may have these about *anything in life*, and in accordance with our intensity (we) attract similar energies from the Kama-lokic state... Lengthy periods of doubt and fear are more intensive than shorter ones in their drawing power and subsequent effects.

We enter that current and receive from that plane so long as we hold on to it. But there is the other side—we can desire nothing for ourselves and determine to accept what comes. *Events and conditions come and go, and no amount of desiring will prevent their coming or hinder their going. Taking this attitude, we live in the Eternal and watch the wheel of Progress called change with neither desire, fear nor doubt to assail us.*

When we desire anything, the thing itself is not what we want, but the feeling that the thing gives us; if the thing gave us no “feeling,” we would not desire it. To do service is also “feeling,” but how different in its effects—instead of harmful reactions.

What will we do when we hear and see what is in Kama-loka?<sup>6</sup> I think that when we arrive at that stage, we shall know we are looking at a condition, and will not be identified with it, unless we should choose to plunge into it in order to “feel” the state. Those in it know nothing but the desires and passions which animate them, think of nothing else; to them there is no other state.

*The Friendly Philosopher* 51-52 (emphasis added)

All the trial and training tend to pull us out of place in order that we may lay hold of another better one, when we determine to “suffer or endure whatever the Higher Self has in store for one by way of discipline and experience.” It is the Higher Self that pulls us into places and conditions.

*The Friendly Philosopher* 139

## Service

The Law works in strange ways at times; it is never idle and it makes no mistakes. Let us rely on IT, for there is nothing else on which we may. If I were utterly worthless, your love and faith and courage would bring results to you just the same, and your sacrifice to an ideal bring out in you all that the ideal holds. And when it is Truth itself we seek and serve, nothing can dismay us or turn us aside. It is much to have gained this understanding—worth its cost ten thousand times.

*The Friendly Philosopher* 140

Theosophy is for those who want it. We are to hold, wait, and work for these few earnest souls who will grasp the plan and further the Cause.

*Book of Daily Quotations*, Crosbie, 5 March

Effective work cannot be done unless there are found persons in the world who can see the necessity for it and will fit themselves more and more to supply the need. That certain persons find such an opportunity is their Karma, but what they do with the opportunity depends upon their realisation of its importance.

*Book of Daily Quotations*, Crosbie, 21 July

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<sup>6</sup> Kama Loca is a low mental condition corresponding to the fourth principle in man, *Kama*, which is usually a transitory after death state but which can also be one taken up with the concerns and anxieties of personal existence now being lived. *The Bhagavad Gita* it describes it as a desire-consciousness created by sense-attachments whose strength “makes the Soul as helpless as the boat which the mind leads astray upon the waters.” Ch 2, 70. Part of what was implied in the earlier section on meditation on page 3 (describing it as “a good beneficent practice leading to a great end... also a great destroyer of the personal idea”) is that it can free us from the traps of self-delusion, which H. P. Blavatsky says, echoing the Buddhist philosophy, will “goad us to the bitter end” unless we have the courage to take pains to ameliorate or disarm it (*The Secret Doctrine*).

On the positive side the encouragement is given that “No one who sees his mistakes can be a hopeless case. The moment we see that we are deluded, that moment we are no longer deluded, although we may be surrounded by the consequences of the delusion and have to work through them.” *Book of Daily Quotations*, Crosbie, 5 January.