



OPEN & ALIVE - Edition 5

In search of hope

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Events to date in 2020 do not augur well for the next decade. Martin Luther King Jr once said that only when it is dark enough can we see the stars. Currently our view of the stars is obscured by a thick cloud of fear and anxiety engendered by the corona virus pandemic, a cloud so thick that hope upon which we usually call in such situations also seems to have been hidden from view.

Finding hope would seem to be of paramount importance for our recovery from the situation. However, hope has proven to be elusive, shrouded in mystery from the beginning. Before we begin our search, let's determine what we are seeking. Is hope an expression of joyful anticipation, or a panacea upon which we rely in times of despair? According to my trusty dictionary, hope is *"an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of possible outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large."*

Where should we search for hope? Let's start at the beginning. It would seem that the course of hope never did run smooth, beginning with its disadvantaged background. It was included, we are told, in a box containing all the problems threatening the downfall of humanity, given by Zeus to Pandora, the first woman, with instructions to entrust it to her partner, Epimetheus. Nevertheless, as in the case of her counterpart, Eve, the onerous responsibility for the well-being of humanity was foisted upon her. Legend differs as to whether it was Pandora who, out of curiosity, or her husband, against her advice, opened the box. In either case, all sorrows and problems were released into the world. Only hope did not escape. Or did it?

Another version of the story tells that hope escaped together with its unsavoury cohabitants. Friedrich Nietzsche wholeheartedly supported this claim, believing hope to be the worst of all evils, simply prolonging the torments of man. Dismissing this nihilistic view, I would nevertheless suggest that, by escaping, hope would at least have the opportunity of serving as an antidote to evil, in spite of the overwhelming odds against it. After all, what purpose could hope possibly serve if left in the box? The reason for its original placement there among all the evils of the world is another question to ponder.

Yet another player emerges to obscure the chequered history of hope - the Greek demi-god, Prometheus, chained to a rock by Zeus to have eagles feast daily on his perpetually restored liver, as punishment for stealing fire from the gods. In his tragedy, "Prometheus Bound", Greek tragedian Aeschylus describes Prometheus' two great gifts to humanity: firstly, hope which aids our struggle for a better future, and fire, the source of technology, making the success of that struggle possible.

Many claims have been made about the whereabouts of hope. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul listed hope as one of the three things which abide - but where? According to the poet, Alexander Pope: "Hope springs eternal in the human breast". Later Alfred Lord Tennyson assured us: "Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering 'it will be happier'."

In the current world situation, confronted by drought, flood, fire, war, environmental destruction, civil unrest, pandemic, to name but a few of the escapees from Pandora's box, many may regard such assurances as wishful thinking. What are hope's chances of success in the face of such formidable enemies?

The following definition offered by philosopher and ethicist Dr John Messerly is inspiring: "My interpretation depends on understanding hope, not as an expectation, but as an attitude that leads us to act rather than despair."

Hope resides in our willingness to act. Our actions are proof of the sincerity of our words. Never before has the active pursuit of the objectives of the Theosophical Society been more important for the collective well-being.

Pamela Peterson
Secretary, Blavatsky Lodge Executive Committee



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A conversation about Enlightenment

Most earnest spiritual seekers have contemplated the concept of enlightenment and hope to achieve it either for themselves as a way out of the suffering of living a mortal life, caught in the cycle of birth and death - the wheel of Samsara. They may also feel a strong urge to find answers to life as a means to help relieve the suffering of others and to create a more harmonious world for all sentient beings.

When we ask "what is Enlightenment?" there is an assumption that there actually is such a thing and that we may even believe that it is possible to achieve it. Obviously this is important as, if we don't believe we can achieve transcendence, we won't develop the commitment to stay with the process. Unfortunately from all accounts, this process is arduous and takes total commitment and dedication. But what is it and what do we have to do in order to achieve it?

All the great spiritual paths teach that in order to reach the Ultimate Source: God, Atman, Brahman, Nirvana or whatever name you choose to use, it is necessary to focus on exploring our consciousness to develop a greater clarity of what reality is beyond the thinking mind. Developing this clarity requires commitment to a spiritual path of your choice. Christianity had its mystics and gnostics, Northern Asia and South America had, for example, their shamans and India had the ancient Vedas with, in particular, the Upanishads or the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and the eight limbs of Raja Yoga based on the dualistic Sankhya philosophy, then there was Shri Shankaracharya, the most renowned teacher of non-dual Advaita Vedanta philosophy, and approximately 2,500 years ago the Buddha developed his teachings of the eight-fold path which spread right across South East Asia before spilling over into the rest of the world. These are just some of the spiritual teachings that have developed right around the globe since antiquity revealing different paths to the same destination or source.

What type of transformation do we need to make and what do we have to let go of in order to achieve this more evolved state of consciousness? Progress on the spiritual path seldom has anything to do with achievement in the worldly sense, but is more to do with achieving states of awareness that are transcendental to all the material world has to offer. This is not to say that one cannot enjoy the fruits of this world, but they are seen as byproducts to your endeavours and their impermanent nature lessens your attachment to them as your levels of awareness increase.

It is widely accepted that the spiritual path consists of effort to purify the body, thoughts and desires. Over time interest in living just to pursue our own desires lessen. The focus becomes service to others, a letting go of the need to constantly feed our unquenchable desires of the lower ego. This can be likened to a wild horse that needs taming in order to perform its tasks and not to control you—its master.

Enlightenment itself is not something that one achieves but is more a process of development along a spectrum of awareness of consciousness to realise what you already are! There is the well-known analogy of each individual consciousness, a spark of the divine, the monad as it is called in theosophical teachings, being like a wave in the ocean thinking it is separate to all the other waves, but in fact all waves are part of the one ocean or the One Being experiencing the manifest universe through its infinitesimal life forms. In other words it is the One Being experiencing Itself and you are that Being! This can be very difficult to believe unless one begins to experience heightened states of awareness beyond thought when the unity of all life is sensed.

Humanity with its ability to think has greatly developed the intellect. What do you know that is not a thought? Do you believe you can know something without thinking? This is where the process of meditation becomes paramount in learning to control the modifications of the mind. To slow down the thinking process, to develop the ability to so finely control the mind and focus so deeply that all perception of the physical world disappears and yet you are lucidly aware that You still exist! This is a major step on the path to Enlightenment. You have gained a glimpse into something that you know with complete certainty is profound and this changes everything. There is no turning back. In many ways the path becomes easier because it becomes, to use a Krishnamurti expression, a choiceless choice. The material world no longer has the same attraction for you, you have entered the path, but there is still a long evolutionary way to go and many challenges to face. However you always have that space within you that you can turn to for rest and guidance. You have connected with your Higher Self, all doubts have been dispelled. You must continue, however, to work at strengthening your belief and dispelling future doubts as they arise and they will. The lower ego is an entity which is very cunning and does not want to lose control.

An experience of knowing that You exist beyond thinking is one of the turning points on the path to Enlightenment.

Rosanna Sheridan

Vice President, Blavatsky Lodge Executive Committee



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Points which I consider Important

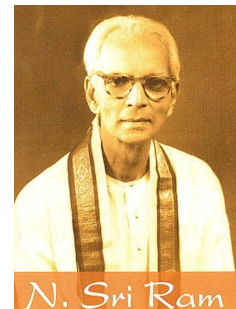
By N. Sri Ram (Source: The Theosophist, 1949, v. 70, September, p. 413)

1. Each one's progress depends on himself, not on any leader or on winning his good grace. It takes place according to Nature's laws. Progress is certain and inevitable.
2. Each one of us has a long way to go. How long one stays in any particular stage is of little importance.
3. The "Master" is at the same time a Perfect Man in a physical embodiment and the Ideal of Perfection in each individual's heart. When some progress is made towards realizing this Ideal, the Master will be found.
4. Our progress takes place best when we least think of it and of ourselves, and are giving the most service to others and to the Cause of the Masters, which is human advancement and happiness.
5. We help others not by interfering with their lives or by imposing our ideas on them, but always by acting in a spirit of sympathy and self-identification with them in their troubles and joys.
6. We must try to use our own judgment, limited and imperfect as it may be, in all matters, and have the courage to act according to it, giving equal freedom to others in a spirit of brotherhood.

What is important is the spirit in which we live our daily lives and attend to every detail which has a place therein. Our present lives are largely a preparation for future work.

Rosanna Sheridan

Vice President, Blavatsky Lodge Executive Committee



Thoughts for Aspirants

By N. Sri Ram

The meaning of the whole universe is contained in the Self. That Self is in the heart of each man, and it is his very nature to seek that meaning by action and by experience.

He who has realised and embodies in himself just one truth of vital significance becomes thereby a transmitter of that truth, to a degree which no amount of verbal propaganda can fix in the hearts of others.

A truth is a truth to our consciousness only as it is fetched out of the voidness of the abstract and placed in the setting of its proper relationships in life. It is application which tests a principle and shapes its proper expression.

Truth is something to be experienced, a state of be-ing, which is also knowledge from within.

Wisdom is an aspect of God, which shines through the Creative Spirit. Hence, His Wisdom is in all things, in their being as well as their becoming, in each separate thing as well as in the totality.

To discover the law of one's own being and live it is Wisdom.

He is the wise man who is able to distinguish between his limited wisdom and his unlimited ignorance.

Wisdom implies knowledge of life, in addition to knowledge of form; a knowledge not only of particulars, but also of that which binds the particulars, the unity in them.

Lucille Crocker

Member, Blavatsky Lodge Executive Committee



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Light on the Path

By Mabel Collins

1. Kill out ambition.

Note- Ambition is the first curse: the great tempter of the man who is rising above his fellows. It is the simplest form of looking for reward. Men of intelligence and power are led away from their higher possibilities by it continually. Yet it is a necessary teacher. Its results turn to dust and ashes in the mouth, like death and estrangement it shows the man at last that to work for self is to work for disappointment. But though this first rule seems so simple and easy, do not quickly pass it by. For these vices of the ordinary man pass through a subtle transformation and reappear with changed aspect in the heart of the disciple. It is easy to say: 'I will not be ambitious', it is not so easy to say: 'When the Master reads my heart, He will find it clean utterly'. The pure artist who works for the love of his work is sometimes more firmly planted on the right road than the occultist who fancies he has removed his interest from self, but who has in reality only enlarged the limits of experience and desire, and transferred his interest to things which concern his larger span of life. The same principle applies to the other two seemingly simple rules. Linger over them, and do not let yourself be easily deceived by your own heart. For now, at the threshold, a mistake can be corrected. But carry it on with you and it will grow and come to fruition, or else you must suffer bitterly in its destruction.

2. Kill out of desire for Life
3. Kill out desire of comfort
4. Work as those work who are ambitious.
5. Respect life as those who desire it.
6. Be happy as those are who live for happiness.
7. Seek in the heart the source of evil and expunge it.

It lives fruitfully in the heart of the devoted disciple as well as in the heart of the man of desire. Only the strong can kill it out. The weak must wait for its growth, its fruition, its death. And it is a plant that lives and increases throughout the ages. It flowers when the man has accumulated unto himself innumerable existences. He who will enter upon the path of power must tear this thing out of his heart. And then the heart will bleed, and the whole life of the man seem to be utterly dissolved. This ordeal must be endured, it may come at the first step of the perilous ladder which leads to the path of life; it may not come until the last. But, o disciple, remember that it has to be endured, and fasten the energies of your soul upon the task. Live neither in the present nor the future, but in the Eternal. This giant weed cannot flower there, this blot upon existence is wiped out by the very atmosphere of eternal thought.

Lucille Crocker
Member, Executive Committee Blavatsky Lodge

Words of Love

From Mata Amritanandamayi—know as Amma (Mother)

Love is the very foundation of beauty and fulfillment of life.

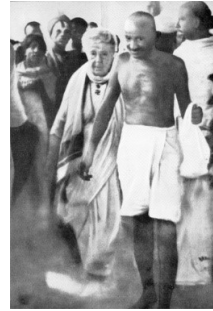
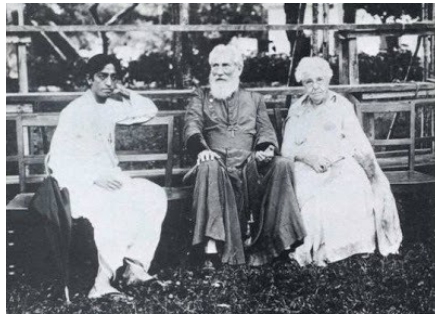
If we dive deep enough into ourselves, we will find that the one thread of universal love ties all beings together.

As this awareness dawns within us, peace alone will reign.

Narelle Johnson
Member, Executive Committee Blavatsky Lodge

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A brief summary of the life and career of Annie Besant (1847—1933)



Our Annie was a strong-willed Irish girl who certainly established a name for herself in the history of the Theosophical Society as those others with a close association to Madame Blavatsky, and collaborated in psychic research with Charles Leadbeater.

Annie Besant was highly respected in “New Thought” circles, with a clear writing style reminiscent of Mary Baker Eddy (1821 – 1910), whose Christian Science included elements of Quimby, Vedanta and Hegel. She was also a great orator and a prolific writer, being the author of over 300 books, many of which can be found in our Adyar Library.

Besant was also very active in the Women’s Rights movement and protests. Her stance on birth control led to divorce from her clergyman husband and her two children being taken from her.

Besant met Madame Blavatsky in 1890, and by 1907 Annie had become the President of the Theosophical Society. In 1917 she also became President of the Indian National Congress and established the Indian Boy Scout movement in 1918. She was also involved in the founding the Theosophical Order of Service and the Banares University.

Annie Besant was an outspoken and active supporter of both the Irish and Indian self-rule, but the highlight of Annie’s life was the adoption of Krishnamurti for whom she bought an estate.

Annie Besant lived a remarkable life with multifaceted sociological and spiritual involvement.

Graham Shannon
Member Blavatsky Lodge

At the feet of the Master Alcyone Jiddu Krishnamurti

To those who knock.

Love;

Of all the Qualifications, Love is the most important, for if it is strong enough in man, it forces him to acquire all the rest, and all the rest without it would never be sufficient.

Often it is translated as an intense desire for liberation from the rounds of births and deaths, and for union with God. But to put it in that way sounds selfish, and gives only part of the meaning. It is not so much desire as will, resolve, determination. To produce its result, this resolve must fill your whole nature, so as to leave no room for any other feeling.

It is indeed the will to be one with God, not in order that you may escape from weariness and suffering, but in order that because of your deep love for Him you may act with Him and as He does. Because He is Love, you, if you would become one with Him, must be filled with perfect unselfishness and love also.

In daily life this means two things; first, that you shall be careful to do no hurt to any living thing; second that you shall always be watching for an opportunity to help.

Narelle Johnson
Member , Executive Committee Blavatsky Lodge



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“Cotton toes”

The paradoxical cyclicity of time interwoven with more than one reality

Luna opened her eyes suddenly and widely in the middle of the dark night. The sensation of having cotton balls between each toe was so vivid that she sat up in bed, switched the light on and, picking the doona up, she peered hesitantly towards her feet.

She wriggled her toes, there was nothing else there but her pale small feet. Frowning, she looked at the alarm clock beside her bed: 3.33 a.m. it read almost mockingly. Weird, she thought, weird.

This was the third night in a row that this had happened. Actually, since her birthday last Sunday, when she unwillingly turned into a shy teenager with too many freckles, unruly red hair and silly skinny legs.

Then she remembered that at school today that awful boy Justin had started calling her Moona-Moona. She hated it and she hated Justin too.

She wriggled her toes again, perplexed. What could this mean? She sighed, and switching the light off, decided to try to sleep again.

Why had her parents named her Luna, anyway, of all the silly names!

She closed her eyes and sighed again, she would probably never go back to sleep in her life...

The beach was long and deserted. Seagulls were circling slowly and noisily way above her head. The sun was so bright she had to scrunch her face tight. The smell of the ocean was strong and the waves left foamy bubbles everywhere. Great day! she thought, great day!...

The alarm clock opened the morning with uncomfortable buzzing sounds. Back to school, Moona-Moona, back to school. It was Justin's voice in her head. Oh, no, what a way to start the day!

Luna yawned and stretched her arms and remembered: today was the short-short story competition day at school. She loved writing but she had not prepared anything. It did not matter, she would get by anyway, she always did. Her imagination was like a basketful of puppies, she thought, a pleasure to watch and be surprised.

She got dressed quickly and grabbing a big red apple stepped into the sunshine and walked to school.

“Short-short story competition” read the whiteboard. She sat at her desk and chewing the tip of her purple ball-point pen, shot her blue gaze at the right hand corner of the ceiling and started to write.

So did Justin, feverishly, it seemed to her, the silly boy. They all handed in their papers and walked to the yard.

After recess the teacher said, “I have picked up what I consider the most creative story of the lot, Justin, please come here and read it to us all”

With red burning ears Justin cleared his throat, and with a voice that played tricks on him began reading.

“Cotton Toes

“Luna opened her eyes suddenly and widely in the middle of the dark night. The “sensation of having cotton balls between each toe was so vivid.....”

Lucille Crocker
Member, Executive Committee Blavatsky Loge



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When All is New (acrostic)

From Namaste Series 4: © Helen Lambert 20 April'20

When all is new upon these hills ... may one go far far beyond.
Holding such treasures as cupped hands may hold,
Ever heeding the ride to come which glistens within.
Nearing this glance which harnesses a tale already told
Along this path of timeless wandering may one move
Leaning effortlessly into the breeze which tenders the face,
Lifting again the lips of tomorrow which kiss this earth in obeisance.
In each moment of today are great wonders ... to hold lightly
Simple measures which grasp gently a way of clear release,
Nearer to the flight within which never stops, shall one be still
Ever awake in the vastness of Love's being eternal, yet
Within this moment is a place which binds, yet is ever free.

Helen Lambert
TS Member



Contributions to our Newsletter

If you would like to contribute anything to future editions of this newsletter, please send your articles, poems etc. in word or soft copy format via e-mail to adyar@tssydney.org.au for consideration.

The deadline for submissions for our next edition of the newsletter is **4:30pm on Friday 24th July**. Anything received after this time will not be included.

Disclaimer: opinions expressed by individual members do not necessarily reflect the teachings of the Theosophical Society.