

THEOSOPHY DOWNUNDER

**Newsletter of the Theosophical Society (Pasadena) Australasian Section
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THE PRESENCE OF LIGHT – Andrew Rooke

A wise man once said that you can't possibly judge a person's spiritual progress from outward appearances alone. This was certainly the case for a friend of mine who was like any elderly lady catching the local bus to the Supermarket for the weekly shop. Yet I knew she had spent a lifetime of quiet study of theosophical books, raised a family, was a responsible member of her local community, and was ever conscious to put spiritual book-learning into daily-life practice.



She told me that during one of her regular shopping expeditions, a complete stranger, a young lady, had confronted her at the bus stop and said – “I had to come over and see you”... “I must talk with you.” Without questioning her motives, my friend sat down and several buses went drifting by whilst they talked together for a couple of hours. It turned out that this young lady was on her way to commit suicide when she felt irresistibly drawn to the old lady in the bus stop.

Her extreme situation seems to have somehow forced open the doors of inner perception for the distressed young lady. She said that, as she walked by the bus-stop she could see a kind of bright light surrounding the old lady and above her head the vision of an open door amidst the light. This amazing sight prompted her to speak to a complete stranger about her most private thoughts and fears. After a couple of hours earnest talking together she changed her mind about suicide. She resolved to face her problems, and go on living with her new-found friend there to provide timely advice, as by now they were firm friends. As far as I know, she has since gone on to live a full and happy life.

The thought struck me, just how many lifetimes of earnest application to both the study and living of her philosophy this friend of mine must have completed to reach this stage of spiritual development to where she shone with the inner 'buddhic' light of pure compassion. How amazing to be just right there at that bus-stop when she was most needed, and for this to be recognized by someone in great need of guidance at that particular moment. Surely this was not by chance, but the compassionate workings of the Law of Karma. Certainly none of our efforts in our spiritual endeavours are wasted even if it seems that we may sit studying alone for hours seemingly unnoticed, or work in unspectacular careers. What we are inwardly from moment to moment must be vastly important. We show our 'true colours' when we are placed under the acid tests of life experience – and that may happen even when we are waiting for the local bus!

Kent Nerburn, from his book, *Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace*, put these thoughts beautifully when he wrote :

"We are not saints, we are not heroes. Our lives are lived in the quiet corners of the ordinary. We build tiny hearth fires, sometimes barely strong enough to give off warmth. But to the person lost in the darkness, our tiny flame may be the road to safety, the path to salvation. It is not given us to know who is lost in the darkness that surrounds us or even if our light is seen. We can only know that against even the smallest of lights, darkness cannot stand. A sailor lost at sea can be guided home by a single candle. A person lost in a wood can be led to safety by a flickering flame. It is not an issue of quality or intensity or purity. It is simply an issue of the presence of light." - *Andrew Rooke, Melbourne, Australia.*

It is better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness – Chinese proverb.

NEWS

New Edition of Expanding Horizons now available: A paperback print version of *Expanding Horizons* (2nd Edition) is now available . The PDF version has been online since last July. First published in 1965, the book is a "50th Anniversary Edition" -- when in fact it is timeless, reading as well today as it did when it first appeared. It's a wonderful bridge-builder -- not only to the general public, but to theosophists new and old. As with so many of our books, each reading reaches deeper levels within. Jim Long was a master at going directly to the heart of important issues -- and how he does this here provides wonderful examples of his practical, common-sense approach. The Second Edition is paginated the same as

the First Edition and changes are minimal -- mostly modernizing spellings, capitalization, punctuation, and some dated terminology.

Theosophy Downunder Newsletter now four times per year: this newsletter will be issued online four times per year in March, June, September, and December from 2016 onwards. If you have any articles, poems, reviews, or thoughts on Theosophy or related subjects, please send them along to us at: andrewrooke@hotmail.com

Meetings in Melbourne: a wide variety of meetings are available at our Theosophical Library Centre in Melbourne including the University of the Third Age course on the ancient wisdom. Meetings are all listed at: <http://www.theosophydownunder.org/library/meeting-programme/>

New on the Theosophy Downunder website and in our library: our website is at: www.theosophydownunder.org A new lecture has been added to the Theosophical Lectures menu by Roza and Margarita Riaikkenen: *Music and Colour in Nature*. New books in the library include: *The Bhagavad Gita: condensed version*; S.Radakrshnan: *The Principle Upanishads*; J.S. Gordon: *Esoteric Egypt: the sacred science of the land of Khem*; Geddes and Grosset: *Ancient Egypt: Myth and History*; RC Dutt (ed) *The Ramayana and the Mahabharata*; B Radice *Hindu Myths: a sourcebook*; M Stapleton *The Neumes Concise Dictionary of Greek and Roman Mythology*; H Kitto *The Greeks*; M Mascetti *Sayings: The Wisdom of Zen*.

World Parliament of Religions (WPR) recognizes European Pagan Religions: the WPR was held in October 2015 at Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. It was a great success with 10,000 delegates in attendance. A feature of this Parliament was the recognition and attendance of representatives of the ancient pre-Christian religions of Europe. The so-called Pagan religions of Europe were banned from attending the first WPR in 1893, recognized at the second in 1993, and featured since 2009.

An example is the Lithuanian Romuva. It is an indigenous European religion featured at the Salt Lake Parliament, represented by priestess Inija Trinkuniene. Because Lithuania converted so late and so slowly, it retained many pre-Christian practices, myths, and songs, which nationalist scholars began collecting in the 19th century. Native religion began to recover, especially between the world wars, but then was outlawed under the Soviet occupation (1940-1992). In 1967 students in the cities, such as Inija, began investigating their heritage and Romuva was re-founded, despite active persecution from 1971 until Lithuanian independence in 1992. Inija presented Romuva as an unbroken spiritual tradition going back to prehistory.

It rests on about 700,000 traditional songs, as well as myths, folklore and healing practices. Now 5,000 Lithuanians list Romuva as their religion and it is growing quickly. Central Romuva beliefs include the sacredness of nature, which includes the worlds of the living and the dead, and worship of one supreme reality through its manifestations as many gods and goddesses. Morality means living in accord with the Universal Law of Harmony, through love, kindness, inspiration, and positive actions. The sacred fire as purifier and sustainer is the chief symbol. There are family rituals, festivals centered on the cycle of the year and celebrations of the major events in human life, such as birth, marriage and death. Although the ancestors stay near their descendents for a period, eventually they reincarnate. As

with other pagan traditions, Romuva is being reborn in a new generation seeking to reconnect with their native spirituality. A full report on the WPR 2015 is available at: <http://www.theosophy-nw.org/theosnw/view/view1115.htm>

New Book on Norse Mythology: reflecting the growing world awareness of the value of Heathenry/Paganry, our friend in Iceland, Gudrun Kristin Magnusdottir, has recently been in touch to tell us that she has just published a new book on Norse mythology and its esoteric meaning. This time Gudrun addresses her considerable literary and artistic talents to the story and inner meaning of the Norse Semi-God, Loki, who, as we know from the Norse myths, is very prone to mischief. Loki represents the human condition as it is today with our spiritual potential clouded by our inclination towards our animal nature. Gudrun reads her book, and explains her unique cartoon illustrations, in a You Tube video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVKfP5C7i7I>

Also, further information about Loki, including new theories on time, is available at: <https://odsmaldotorg.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/loki-and-the-yule-cat1.pdf>

This research indicates Loki as Saturnus and Kronos, the inevitable spur of time, and the winter-solstice death of sun-gods - who always resurrect.

Gudrun's website is at: <https://odsmal.org>

International Headquarters: The Theosophical Society, Pasadena, has a comprehensive website, www.theosociety.org where, apart from the a wide selection of online publications, there is information regarding the basic concepts, objectives and history of the society, correspondence courses which are offered and contact details of all sections worldwide are listed.

American Section: The website of the American Section is www.americasection.us Further literature can be ordered online through the Wizards Bookshelf.

Northwest (USA): The latest edition (December 2015) of the monthly newsletter *Theosophy Northwest View*, features the articles, *Religious Conflicts with Public Policies* and *Pursuing a Spiritual Path to Peace* by Sally Dougherty and 'Lyn Fleury Lambert. To view these and all back editions go to www.theosophy-nw.org For easy access, articles and publications are collated according to topics and world spiritual traditions.

British Section: The British Section's website: www.theosophical.org.uk Various articles and newsletters are featured; correspondence courses as well as free online subscriptions to the Compass are offered. The June 2015 edition features an article *Judge Not* by Sarah Belle Dougherty and December issue features articles by WQ Judge and James A. Long on dealing with negative thoughts and 'Giving and Receiving'. The National Secretaries, Pat and Sandy Powell have recently moved to a new address and they can be contacted at: ts-uk@talktalk.net

German Section: For our German-speaking readers, the comprehensive German website provides information, contact details and discussion and study group

schedules: www.theosophie.de The second issue of LOGOS is available. It is dedicated to the great American philosopher, writer and transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson. It includes the views of Maurice Maeterlinck on Emerson who is occasionally quoted in various theosophical literature.

The Netherlands Section: For our Dutch-speaking readers, the Netherlands Section's website has a wide selection of translated, online publications, where articles are collated according to topic. These are listed according to authors. Two new online publications have recently been posted: *H.P. Blavatsky: Geselecteerde Artikelen, Deel 1:1874-1882* and *Mysteriescholen door de Eeuwen Heen* by Grace F. Knoche. Copies in print can be ordered via the website. A selection of audio books and PowerPoint presentations are now also available. Lectures and study groups are held in various towns in the Netherlands, as well as study groups via Skype. Courses are also offered and a guide is given in terms of topics and literature for self-study. Visit <http://www.theosofie.net> for further information.

The Swedish Section: Our HQ has posted the Swedish webpage on their site for the present time. The new links are: <http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/sverige/index.htm> For Swedish online literature go to: <http://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/sverige/TeosofiskaBokforlaget/index.htm>

The South African Section: For general information and monthly meetings in the Gauteng area, contact Alice Yetman at: alice.yetman@gmail.com. Contact person in the greater Durban area: Grant Halliday, email: halliday@absamail.co.za Contact person in the Western Cape: Dewald Bester.

Exploring Theosophy: the Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy: This website, maintained by David Pratt, features a wide selection of topics relating to theosophy: <http://davidpratt.info>

Much study will lead to book-knowledge, but unless the waking man follows to the best of his ability the ethical precepts he will lose most of his work by death. . . . The middle course should be pursued; by attending to right philosophy so as to inform the brain and mind, and by also studying and fully practicing ethics and all the virtues. - W.Q. Judge: *Echoes of the Orient* 3:460-1

WESTERN ESOTERICISM: Part 1: The development of the Esoteric Tradition in the West – Nivard Vas.

[Because Theosophy frequently refers to Indian religions, especially Buddhism and Hinduism, many people at our meetings in Melbourne ask if there is a similar mystic tradition in Western countries. There certainly is! With this issue we commence a new three part series by Nivard Vas running throughout 2016 on the Western Esoteric Tradition which gives an outline of the development of Esotericism and Occultism in the West – Editor]

Esoteric Knowledge: Every man has two lines of ancestry. The first is through his parents and has to do with his mental and physical nature. The second line of descent belongs to the inner man, the psychical line. It is hidden and more fundamental than the physical ancestry. To discover this line, we have to free our minds of our mental habits.



The hidden side of life is applicable to all things. Take for example a tree. We know it as a 'tree' because we named it a tree ourselves. Through the means of a cross section of its trunk we can discover its inner constitution. With a microscope, we can discover the ends of the roots, or the cells that compose the stem and leaves. Yet about the essence of the life of the tree itself, which expands from a tiny seed and surrounds itself with bark, we discover nothing. The study of the esoteric philosophic tradition is a discovery of our hidden history. To find truth we will have to look for it in the whole circle of the compass, and not only one quarter.

Actually, esoteric knowledge can be found in virtually all cultures and religious traditions of the world. It is as old as humanity. This is the first in a series of three articles on the development of Western esotericism. I will go as far back as possible in time. From ancient Egypt, Central America, and Atlantis, Greece, and through into modern-day Western thinking. In this article I will discuss the ancient Western traditions that have come down to us from the distant past. In further articles I will work our way into the present time.

The importance of the esoteric knowledge is demonstrated by the growing interest in it and its re-entry into human affairs. Currently, there are three dedicated university chairs on the subject in Europe. In Amsterdam in the Netherlands; in Paris, France; and in Exeter, England.

I did a formal term in the University of Amsterdam during the autumn of 2011. It is called, 'Hermetica I: an introduction to Western Esotericism'. This course is very educational and dealing with the historical development of the European humanities. I will discuss this history too and add some esoteric principles. Our goal is to discover some of the secrets of life.

The Ancient History of Mankind: Present-day history that we are taught in schools goes quite far back in time. Yet there is a higher and infinitely older history of the distant past, largely forgotten to the memory of man. Proof of this are the various legends, such as the flood legend common to the epic of Gilgamesh from the ancient Sumerian culture, the Old Testament of Jewish tradition, and in the Middle Eastern civilizations. The winds of change erode the original structures and we are left with are ruins, myths and legends. There was also a deliberate destruction of ancient libraries, such as the great Alexandrian library in Egypt, by religious fanatics, and other rather short-sighted people.

Geological epochs follow one another in time. Continents rise in different parts of the globe above the waters of the sea. They are inhabited for long periods of time by various racial groups that have immigrated from elsewhere. In their turn these continents sink beneath the waters of the oceans. As a result the history of these periods is lost to us, we are left only with the myths and legends known to man.

There still exists to this very day a great brotherhood who works for the long term betterment and spiritual evolution of mankind, they are called the Mahatmas of Compassion. We are told in theosophical books that they trace an unbroken and uninterrupted ancestry back at least 12 million years back to the original focus of light! The Esoteric Doctrine has always existed in its totality. It is in the keeping of the Mahatmas and the Adepts of the Secret Sciences. It is a complete system of thought which does not evolve or change, although our understanding of it deepens throughout the ages. It is ever-enduring sometimes openly expressed when the times are kind, sometimes hidden for long periods of time during times of intolerance.

The western esoteric tradition as we know it today has its roots in the religious traditions of Gnosticism, Hermeticism, and Neo-Platonism of the Greek and Roman civilizations before the Christian era. Working back into history we find that the early Greek civilization was educated and influenced by the Egyptians. Just like the Jews. In the Bible we find that Moses was taught by Egyptian priests. Moses did not originate a new religion for Israel. He simply adapted the mysteries of Egypt to the needs of Israel.

Ancient Egypt: Who were the ancient Egyptians? Where did such a high science and culture come from in the first place? Besides myths and legends to unravel this mystery, we also have languages as a guide to the origin of the wonderful ancient Egyptian civilization. Languages have not yet received the due attention that they deserve. Greek was the dominant language of the Mediterranean world before Christ. Some authorities say that ancient Greek derives from the Mayan language of Central America. This can be easily checked by consulting the dictionaries of both languages. It is feasible that ancient Egyptian and Mayan hieroglyphs have the same origin. This brings us to the legend of Atlantis. According to Plato and the ancient Egyptians, Atlantis was a continent that was situated in what is now the Atlantic Ocean. According to theosophy and other authorities such as the famous American psychic, Edgar Cayce, this sunken continent was originally the home of the Mayans and Egyptians.



Atlantis: The esoteric tradition states that the racial group of humanity that lived on Atlantis was called the Atlanteans. They lived and evolved for millions of years on that continent. They were seafaring people and travelled the globe, settling in various regions. China, Central America, Europe, Egypt, and Babylon to name a few. Egypt is prominent as a migratory land largely during and after the flooding of major islands

that composed Atlantis. Theosophy tells us that the Atlantean civilization was very materialistic.

Skeptics of the existence of Atlantis say that only fools and charlatans believe in Atlantis. But were the towering intellects of Greece such as Solon and Plato fools or charlatans? The indigenous Americans also have an oral tradition of Aztlan, a sunken civilization, paralleled with that of Plato. Was it not for the writings of some of the Greek philosophers, who went to study in Egypt under the tuition of learned instructors, nothing would be known about Atlantis today.

The Egyptians did not entrust their mysteries to everyone. These were reserved for those who excelled in virtue and wisdom. Moses, Pythagoras, Solon, and Plato to name a few.

Esoteric schools have been in existence for centuries. In India, Egypt, China, Greece, Scandinavia, Mexico and other countries to the north and south of the equator. Historical records exist of their functioning, flowering, and dying out. Their students had to undergo training in discipline. They were taught the truths that were hidden to the majority. They were pledged to secrecy, because knowledge is power. Power can be misused consciously or unconsciously.

The Druids: In Western Europe one of these esoteric cultures of knowledge was that known to us as the Druids. The Druids were the holy men of the Celts of ancient Gaul and the British Isles. Theosophy tells us that their priests were descendants of the last Atlanteans. They believed in the rebirth of man through a series of reincarnations in this world. Women had a high status in Celtic civilization, for example, women that were proven worthy were admitted into their sacred order and were initiated into the mysteries of their religion and science. Their sacred rules had to be committed to memory for writing it down was not permitted. They did not have images or statues of their deities. Although the Celts did have these images.

Julius Caesar wrote of the Druids; “They renounce war and do not pay war taxes. They are excused from military service.” Their knowledge of Karma is reflected in their way of life. Druidic physicians were skilled in the treatment of illnesses. Their recipe for good health was cheerfulness, temperance and physical exercise. Very little of their life and customs have come down to us.



The Greek word *drus*, meaning oak, is very similar to the Celtic word Druid. The Druids were called ‘oak-men’, symbolizing wisdom and strength. The Celts made the oak tree an emblem of hospitality. Due to its strong trunk, knotty branches and thick foliage, it was the equivalent of a temple. Truth is found behind the veil of matter.

Symbolism: Symbolism played a major part in the ancient world. Symbolism is a divine language that is enduring and helps us find truth. The ancients left us great symbolic monuments. The Druids left us the various stone ‘Menhiers’, or ‘standing

stones', all over Europe. Stonehenge in England and those at Carnac in France are evidence their capabilities.

Our prehistoric teachers left us a profound symbol in the form of a column, pillar or obelisk. This pillar symbol is the link between the heavenly or invisible world of consciousness and the earthly world of matter. As the ancient Hermeticists would say: "As above, so below". Two pillars symbolize a gateway from one world to another. Remains of ancient pillars and obelisks can be found, among others, in Egypt. The laws were carved or cut into these pillars in hieroglyphs and symbols.

In the esoteric society of Freemasonry, whose roots lie in ancient Egypt and Atlantis, we find the symbol of the apron. This suggests servitude in work. To do our duty to humanity in its quest for unification with the divine world of consciousness.

Hermetic Philosophy: These ancient traditions had their various deities to whom they paid reverence. One of the most mysterious and least understood was Thoth the Egyptian god of wisdom. He had authority over all the other Gods. Symbolized with his Ibis-head, pen and tablet, he is the recorder and judge. He records, thoughts, words and deeds of men. Here we see the evident ancient symbol for Karma, which is inevitable: cause and effect.

The ancient Greeks took over this deity and renamed it Hermes *Trismegistus*. He was the god of learning, patron of physical sciences and the very soul of esoteric knowledge. Hermes is an active worker and teacher of humanity. He shows us our divine roots and justice in divinity. As I said earlier, 'Hermetica' is coming back into human affairs, shown by the dedicated universities chairs of Europe. I will discuss Hermes a little more when we get to the Middle Ages.



The great Brotherhood of Compassion, the Mahatmas are but one link in a cosmic chain of beings. This immense chain of cosmic beings was called, the golden chain of Hermes, by the ancient Greeks. The Mahatmas of Compassion who helped to form the Theosophical Society, are workers and guides in this natural cosmic structure. They relay this everlasting philosophy to humanity by carrying the torch of knowledge and wisdom throughout the ages.

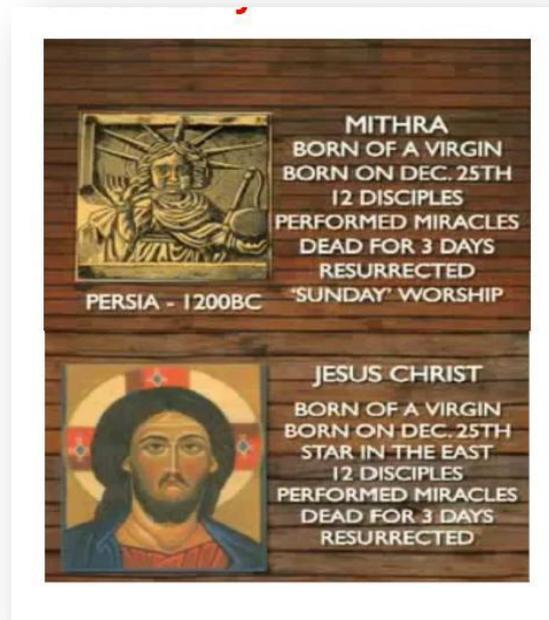
The ancients had other symbols and rituals. The Hawk and Globe were symbols of the Sun in Egypt. It was important for the ancients to pay reverence to the Sun at the sacred seasons of the equinoxes and solstices.

Mithraism and Christianity: Mithras, was an ancient deity that made his way into Europe from Iran and India. Mithras was the god of light who was similar to Thoth and Hermes, bringing abundance of growth and health. As a religion, Mithraism, spread like wildfire into the Roman empire of Europe even as far north as Britain. It

had similarities of beliefs with that of the so-called 'pagan' beliefs of the ancient Europeans. For example its reverence to the Sun was central in its belief.

The ancients were closer to natural phenomenon than we are. Their priests saw beyond the veil of matter. The Sun has its higher form invisible to us. This form is pure consciousness. Its returning to the northern hemisphere in the spring was celebrated at the equinox, the first day of the spring. New growth and abundance was returning to the people.

During the Roman Empire, there was a determined scramble for dominance of human thinking. Mithraism and Christianity ran a neck on neck race. Mithraism lost the contest to the new Christian belief. Early Christianity had a relation to the ancient beliefs. Its rituals and holy days were derived from the ancients. Christmas and Easter are good examples that were taken over by Christianity from the ancient Roman festival of 'Saturnalia' in December, and the spring festival of the German goddess 'Estera'. When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine the Great, even the Emperor himself became a Christian. Christianity then gave features of becoming autocratic and dogmatic in relation to the ancient religions of Europe which they derisively labelled as 'pagan'. The ancient belief systems of Mithraism, Hermeticism, Platonism and Gnosticism gradually faded. The esoteric traditions became hidden or went underground under the sway of the autocratic rule of the Christian Church protected by the secular authorities



The ancient belief of reincarnation was removed from the scriptures. The new doctrine became, – 'you only live once'. As a result we lost a lot of knowledge. The deeper understanding of our Souls and what happens to these, when we die, was lost. The ancients had a trustworthy understanding of the Soul. For example, the Egyptian God Thoth was not only a recorder and judge. He was also a *pyschopomp*, a Greek word meaning; 'Conductor of Souls', or 'Good Shepherd'. The Egyptians firmly believed in the truth of the soul having a living existence after death. This is symbolized in the ceremony of Thoth weighing the heart of the disembodied soul against the 'feather' of Truth.

With the triumph of Christianity over Mithraism, the latter became classified as a mystery religion. Many other ancient philosophies later evolved into mystery organizations. I will discuss them in another article in this series.

Another symbol known to us is the slaying of the Bull. Bull fighting became a tradition in lands around the Mediterranean. The original belief of slaying the bull goes back

to the high priests of Atlantis. The bull symbolises our material desires. The slaying of the bull became a symbol of triumph over earthly materiality.

Is it strange to want to know where we come from and what happens to us after death? We are made up out of both physical matter and spirit. Why do we invest so much time in matter and so little in the spirit?

Spirit and Matter: In general, it may be said that people who are selfish and live with their minds turned inwards, will never pay attention to higher intelligences that speak to them. They are centred on themselves, their physical wellbeing. They have a fear that external forces are going to injure them. This fear might be because it stops their concentration on themselves, which is their only idea of happiness. Things of matter are worshipped rather than things of spirit. They are, so to speak, in the wood and only see the trees surrounding their own field of thought. They have no general view of the whole.

There is a systematic formulation of spiritual and natural laws that still exists in the world. Proof of this lies within man himself. Only he can judge and perceive the truth by using his powers of understanding, discrimination and judgement. To discern truth we have to cultivate the power of looking outwards in order to observe the facts of nature. As well as cultivate a power of understanding, discrimination and judgement by looking inwards. It works both ways.

Truth brings to the wise man exactly what the wise man brings to truth. Everyone finds truth according to his own knowledge and understanding. Egocentric people dream of becoming enlightened. They are always trying to find truth within themselves and to bind it there. They have not yet advanced into the mystery of finding themselves within Truth. Man is part of all the laws and principles of life.

A Story about 'The Law': I will end this first part of our series with a short story about the Law;

An eastern sage once told his disciple that if he could become still enough, gentle enough and wise enough, he could hear the chanting of the Law everywhere. The disciple did not understand, so the master held up his hand and in a few seconds a little bird flew out of the forest and alighted on his finger. As it sat and sang, the master asked: 'Do you hear the song?'

The disciple answered: 'Yes, I am aware of an exquisite melody.'

'Be more silent and listen more intently,' commented the master.

The disciple became still and sought to unite his consciousness with the consciousness of the bird. After a while the master asked: 'What do you hear now?'

The disciple replied: 'I hear a little fluttering noise.'

The master nodded approval. 'You have reached that degree of silence in which you are hearing the beating of the little bird's heart. Now listen even more closely.'

The disciple remained silent again until the master asked: 'What do you hear now?'

The disciple turned a radiant face to his teacher. 'Master, I have heard a miracle.'

The master replied: 'Explain it to me.'

'I cannot explain it,' answered the disciple. 'All I know is that as my realization became one with the heart of the bird the sound of the beats changed into a song so subtle, so gentle that even the ears of realization could scarcely hear it. But as I listened with my heart and soul, the sound became more, and more clear, until at last the words were distinct.'

'What were the words?' asked the master.

The disciple replied, 'The heart of the little bird was singing, *'I take refuge in the Law.'* - Nivard Vas, Holland.

Further Reading:

A book of quotations W. Q. Judge.
Chaldean Magic F. Lenormant.
Dictionary of symbols Chevalier and Gheerbrant.

Echoes from the Gnosis G.R.S. Mead
Encyclopaedia of eastern philosophy and religion Schuhmacher and Woerner.
Encyclopaedia of mythology R. Graves.
ENCYCLOPEDIA THEOSOPHICAL GLOSSARY G. de Purucker (online only)
Forbidden history Douglas Kenyon.
Lectures in ancient philosophy M.P. Hall.
Sacred mysteries among the Mayas and the Quiches A. le Plongeon.
Secret teachings of all ages M. P. Hall.
Self-unfoldment by disciplines of realization M. P. Hall.
The crest jewel of wisdom Shankara-Acharya.
The esoteric tradition G. de Purucker.
The origin of the Egyptians A. le Plongeon.
The temple in man Schwaller de Lubicz.
Theosophical glossary H. P. Blavatsky.
Theosophy, imagination and tradition A. Faivre.
Theosophical encyclopaedia P. S Harris.
The western esoteric traditions N. Goodrick-Clarke.
To light a thousand lamps G. F. Knoche.
Westerse esoterie en oosterse wijsheid J. Slavenburg en J v Schaik.

Next issue: *Western Esotericism: Part 2: Western Esotericism through the Ages – Nivard Vas.*

When the winds of change blow, some people build walls, others build windmills – Chinese proverb.

WHAT EXACTLY IS BUDDHISM?: *In our meetings we often refer to the Buddha, Buddhist teachings and Buddhist terminology when discussing theosophical teachings. A reader has queried exactly what do we mean by 'Buddhism' as we use the term all the time without explanation.*

Tony Downey replies:

Siddharta Gautama, later, The Buddha, was born approximately 566BC as a prince to a small kingdom in the north-east of India. His parents, keen to keep him in the folds of the establishment, protected him from all outside influences. He grew up in the lap of luxury, got married, and had a son.. One day he went outside the palace and for the first time in his life saw a sick man, a beggar, and a dead body. He then realized how the world really is. Thinking about the suffering he had seen that day, he left the palace and started on his search to ease the suffering of his fellow man. He wandered through northern India on his own for a couple of years and, after deep meditation, found inner peace and enlightenment preaching his first sermon near Varanasi.

In this sermon he outlined his philosophy. Firstly what he called the **Four Noble Truths**: that there is suffering in all components of individuality. The cause of this suffering is craving and desire. Suffering can be stopped by stopping craving and desire. The way to end suffering he called the **Exalted Eightfold Path**: which, if followed correctly, would lead to the attainment of 'Nirvana' (enlightenment) by the elimination of ignorance and selfishness.



The eight steps are: Right Views; Right Intention; Right Speech; Right Action; Right Livelihood; Right Effort; Right Mindfulness; and Right Concentration.

The Buddha (an honorary term meaning 'the enlightened one') travelled through the many kingdoms existing at that time in northern India for forty years teaching along the way. He died to the outside world at the age of eighty years old. During these years he formed the 'Sangha', or brotherhood/sisterhood of spiritual students – monasteries for monks and nuns who took his teachings through India and surrounding kingdoms. Over the years these teachings were written down as scriptural texts known as Buddhist 'Sutras'.

The Buddha himself called his teaching the Dhamma-Viraya, or the Doctrine and the Discipline, for the way of life reaching enlightenment/perfection and for avoiding the ceaseless round of reincarnation.

Over the centuries Buddhism spread from India to Sri Lanka, Tibet, China, Japan, Thailand, Cambodia, South-East Asia, and in the last one hundred years to Europe, North America, Australia, and all other parts of the world. Buddhism in the world today is practiced by an estimated 535 million people representing 7% to 8% of the world's total population. China is the country with the largest population of Buddhists, approximately 244 million or 18.2% of its total population. – **Tony Downey, Melbourne, Australia.**

TECHNICAL THEOSOPHY: THE BUDDHIC CYCLES - Don Shepherd

The study of technical theosophy is one of the most rigorous intellectual aspects of theosophical exploration. At the same time, it is also one of the most intuitional exercises of logic. The two main expressions of technical theosophy are found in the writings of H.P. Blavatsky and G. de Purucker, but their works—though inspiring many—have largely remained an abiding mystery of esoteric thought on the monads and their cycles through the cosmic planes with their respective humanities. This is because the study of technical theosophy was never intended as a means to an end, but rather as a never-ending means to understanding the ever-present process of mind evolving. As such, both writers seemingly veiled the cycles in cryptic numbers and apparent contradictions while revealing just enough of the light to draw us deeper into their world and remind us that there is a sacred context to every moment of experience. Technical theosophy, when understood in this light, serves as the vector along which mind evolves towards deeper spiritual significances in which we are directly participatory. Each one of us as human beings directly participates in the life cycle of the Buddhas—those human buddhas like Gautama who come to us twice in every major cycle, or the Root-Races of each Round, to provide the keynote for that cycle and to sow the seeds for the next; it is this life cycle that technical theosophy helps one to understand. The following is an exploration into technical theosophy and the Buddhist cycles.



In G. de Purucker's, *Fountain-source of Occultism*, he explained that two main Buddhas appear in every Root-Race, "one towards the beginning and the other towards the middle or the end, depending upon circumstances." (FS 520) Elsewhere, in his *Dialogues*, he asserted that Gautama was the "first Buddha of the two" for the 5th Root-Race. (DIA 2-211) If one takes these statements at face value, he immediately confronts an apparent contradiction. As

humanity is currently in its "4th Sub-Race" of the 5th Root-Race (having already traversed through the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Sub-Races), it seems problematic that the first Buddha, the one at the beginning, would appear near the middle of the Root-Race trending towards its great mid-point Racial catastrophe that splits it in two. With a 5th Root-Race that is 4 to 7 million years old with another 4 to 5 million years to go, it clearly is not in its beginning stages. (FU 239, ST 639, FS 166). Precisely here is the veil thrown over his own teaching by G. de Purucker.

The solution to the problem is to recognize that he has either thrown a blind over the numbers or over one of the words relating to the numbers in the cycle. In regard to this technique, G. de Purucker stated that one of the commonest blinds used "when writing on esoteric matters in a public work is using the same word in varying senses." (FU 239) In the example provided above, what word did he use in a varying sense? In this case, G. de Purucker used the word "beginning" in his explanation in *Fountain-source* in a varying sense. He used it in the sense later confirmed by him in *Dialogues* when clarifying that the "first Buddha of the two of any Root-Race comes at about the middle point of his Root-Race." (DIA, 2- 216) Therefore, rather than there being a first Buddha at the "beginning" and a second Buddha "towards the middle or end" as described in *Fountain-source*, the first Buddha actually comes at

about the middle and the second Buddha actually comes near the middle or the end, depending on the circumstances. Those circumstances are even more complicated because they deal with the Sub-Race cycle in relation to the Root-Race cycle—but they will be explained shortly. The key to remember, however, is that there is no beginning Buddha for a Root-Race in the traditional, chronological sense of the word; there is middle and a middle/end Buddha. Thus, the middle Buddha (or Gautama) is referred to, quite accurately, as the first Buddha of the 5th Root-Race. This is a part of technical theosophy.

The first middle point of the Root-Race is rather stationary in that it occurs in the 4th Sub-Race of its respective Root-Race and signifies a coming of age for that Root-Race. The seeds of the subsequent Root-Race are sown in this period. As for the Buddha that corresponds to this first middle point of the 5th Root-Race, it is the Root Buddha or Gautama Buddha, described by G. de Purucker as the “noblest and most complete and the fullest since the beginning of our 5th Root-Race.” (ST 612) The second middle point of the Root-Race is rather fluid in that it can occur anytime from the middle to the end of the Root-Race (although there is an exception to this rule for the 1st and 2nd Root-Races) so long as the number of the Sub-Race of the current Root-Race matches the number of the succeeding Root-Race. The Buddha for this period as the Seed Buddha—or Maitreya for the 5th Root-Race—watches over those seeds that were dropped earlier by the first Buddha as they sprout into a new, self-sufficient, sui generis, Root-Race. This is considered a second middle point because the new sui generis Root-Race is quite distinct from the previous Root-Race in type and character. Therefore, there are two middle points for each Root-Race—one stationary and one fluid—that correspond to the times when the Buddhas incarnate for the benefit of humanity. (DIA 1-56, 86, 87)

To demonstrate how this worked in practice leading up to Gautama as the first 5th Root-Race Buddha, let us start with the 4th Root-Race and carry the process theoretically through the 7th Root-Race. In the 4th Sub-Race of the 4th Root-Race about 4.5 million years ago, the first Buddha of the cycle came and sowed the seeds for the 5th Root-Race. In the 5th Sub-Race of the 4th Root-Race about 1 million years ago, the second Buddha of the cycle came as a psychological bridge to link the two fully sui generis 4th and 5th Root-Races together. In the 4th Sub-Race of the 5th Root-Race around 560 B.C., the first Buddha of the new cycle, or Gautama, came and sowed the seeds for the 6th Root-Race. In the 6th Sub-Race of the 5th Root-Race, the second Buddha of the new cycle, or Maitreya who will come “millions of years hence,” will bridge the 5th and the 6th Root-Races. (FS 521) In the 4th Sub-Race of the 6th Root-Race, the first Buddha of the next cycle will arrive and in the 7th Sub-Race of the 6th Root-Race the second Buddha of that cycle will usher in the 7th Root-Race.



This process of double middle-points for the Buddhic cycle is confirmed by reading the writings of H.P. Blavatsky. For example, she wrote in her letters to A.P. Sinnett that Gautama corresponded to the end of the 4th Root-Race “between the 4th and the 5th.” (BL 242) As the 4th Root-Race is currently in its 7th Sub-Race and at the same time the 5th Root-Race is in its 4th Sub-Race, this places the current evolutionary state of humanity in accord with H.P. Blavatsky’s statement. (ML 154, DIA 1-88)

Further, in her, *Collected Writings*, elucidating the technical theosophy in A.P. Sinnett's book, *Esoteric Buddhism*, she clarified that Gautama was the "fifth spiritual teacher," thereby equating him with the 5th Root-Race Buddha. (CW 6-267) For her, as with G. de Purucker, Maitreya would come "after the partial destruction of the 5th [Ed. That is, near or after the first middle point or the 4th Sub-Race of the 5th Root-Race] and when the 6th Race will be established [Ed. That is, near or after the second middle point or the 6th Sub-Race of the 5th Root-Race] already for some hundred thousands of years on earth...and therefore he is called the fifth Buddha." (BL 242) As with G. de Purucker, these two, Gautama and Maitreya, are the 5th Root-Race Buddhas. H.P. Blavatsky went on to clarify that the 6th Buddha "will be at the beginning of the 7th Race," thereby referring to the Root Buddha in the 4th Sub-Race of the 6th Root-Race who initiates the seeds of the 7th Root-Race. (BL 242)

As humanity progresses through these successive Buddhist cycles, each one of us has the opportunity to directly participate in the work of Nature's cycles. The imprint that each Buddha makes on the fabric of humanity has to be carried forward by us until the next Buddha sounds its keynote for the subsequent cycle. And so it is that each one of us as a pioneer builds the momentum in unison with one another until the crescendo of the sounding of that future keynote brings with it a figurative new earth and new heaven—the new sub-planes of a new cycle that the Buddha fearlessly guides us into as the earth's orbit, ever led on by an even higher Dhyanibuddha overlooking the Rounds in which the humanities of the Root-Races participate, takes us into ever deeper parts of an inner cosmos yet to be explored. – *Don Shepherd, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA.*

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THE WISE GUIDE - Elizabeth Shabda

After talking with a friend who was consoling dying patients in Palliative Care Elizabeth was moved to write the following poem:

Witnessing - dying
Of another:
Illusion -
Calls to go beyond
Being
The wise guide
Of Higher Reality

There's no End
Only Beginning!
Dress the traveller
In the armour of Truth:
Resounding
The primordial Word
Through the common word.

Masquerading
As Ego:
Palliating
By vague console -
Interrupting
The still whisper
Of the Mother of Mercy.

- Elizabeth Shabda, Melbourne, Australia.

“Learn, then, well the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation, and teach, practice, promulgate that system of life and thought which alone can save the coming races. Do not work merely for the Theosophical Society, but *through* it for Humanity.” – HP Blavatsky.

SPIRIT, PASSION, AND IGNORANCE: THE THREE 'GUNAS': Part 1: Riding the Elevator of Consciousness – Andrew Rooke.

The Elevator of Consciousness: What causes all the problems we see in ourselves, other people, and the world?

Theosophy tells us that most of these problems can be explained by the fact that people and the Universe are composite beings made up of the 7, 10, or 12 different planes of reality, both spiritual and material.

It's as if most people in the world are riding an elevator of consciousness in the Empire State Building between the grossest aspects of themselves down in the basement, to the spiritual realities up in the penthouse on the top floor!

Living in the Penthouse of our Being: Our challenge is to bring the elevator under control and gradually inch our way up towards living more permanently in the 'penthouse' of our Being – then most of our problems in ourselves and the world will simply melt away!

But how did we get to be riding this elevator anyway?

Where does the composite nature of Man and our world come from?

Hindu philosophy as expressed in that *Bhagavad Gita* tells us that it is because we are caught in the threefold nature of the manifest Universe – the **Three Gunas** (in Sanskrit: 'Triguna').



What Are the Three Gunas? 'Guna' is a Sanskrit word meaning literally a 'String' or 'Thread' which both hold the manifest universe together, are the mode of action in the universe, and also bind us humans to the wheel of manifestation – until we can see beyond them.

In the unmanifested universe, energy has three qualities, or rather 'tendencies', known as the Gunas, that exist together in equilibrium: **SATTVA:** spirit/purity;

RAJAS: passion, activity, the process of change; **TAMAS:** ignorance, inertia, darkness.

Once energy takes form, ie. once the Universe is manifest, one quality or other of the three predominates, and the interaction of the three Gunas drives the process of spiritual evolution. But no matter which quality predominates, an element of the other two will always be present as well – this includes people too!

The Three Gunas in People: How does Hindu philosophy say that the three Gunas manifest in people?

Rajas Character: The majority of people in the Western culture with a mixture of all the three qualities but with rajas/tamas dominant. The rajas mind is active, intense, has the potential to become incendiary and aggressive. Those with a rajas-like mind are prone to argument and can be challenging.

Tamas Character: The tamas mind is lethargic, slow, and has the potential to become negative and destructive. Those with a tamas-like mind are prone to disengaging from situations and becoming lazy.

Sattva Character: The sattva mind is balanced and pure. The sattvic person finds a sense of truth and light in their life. They are more open to creating spiritual influences in their lives. Many people may be sattvic momentarily, but truly sattvic people are extremely rare in today's world.

Let's look at the three Gunas in more detail:



'Tamas': Ignorance, Inertia, Ignorance: Let's start off with the Guna that we are most familiar with in this troubled world – Tamas. This quality represents the tendency to inertia, ignorance, downward flow, apathy, reluctance to engage in meaningful activity, don't want to change even if we are suffering, contentment out of ignorance, totally selfish, the desires are dominant, eats harmful foods, worships demons and ghosts, no concept of right and wrong except what gives pleasure to them, ignorance producing misapprehension – the way that you feel when you need to get up in the morning but are reluctant to face the day – even when the alarm is ringing in your ears!

'Rajas': Passion, Desire, Activity: The majority of the human race at the moment are said to be dominated by the Rajas or Rajas/Tamas. Rajas presents the tendency to agitation, passion, desire, 'I want more', greed, incessant activity, the mind is constantly agitated by attachment to material things and the intellect is devoted to ambition and the fruitless search for happiness through the acquisition of objects, movement, expansion, binds to the world by passion born of craving and attachment, is the ruling trait when greed, excessive projects, cravings and restlessness arise, hot spicy food which tastes good at the time but has longer term bad affects, worship higher beings. Rajas is not all bad as there is a knowledge of right and wrong outside of total selfishness to some degree, a partial awakening but the spiritual vision is restricted to your own personal world and flawed by constant longing for the benefit of oneself.



'Sattva': Spirit, Truth, Goodness: The highest and most spiritual of the Gunas is Sattva. Sattva is the tendency and quality of Spirit, Purity, Goodness, Light, Illumination, Intelligence/Consciousness, Upward Flow,. Such a person's mind is always on spiritual realities, he/she is content, contributes to the welfare of humanity, experiences a higher joy, indifferent to what he/she has because he/she has a knowledge of the higher and is concerned with what he/she may become, mind is calm, intellect creative, eats pure foods which guarantee health.

Sattva still binds us to the world by attachment to pure happiness, knowledge and spiritual study. This means that you would rather reject daily life pleasures for spiritual happiness such as reading spiritual books, meditation, service for others, etc. There is the possibility of mistaking such high spiritual pleasures for spiritual realization. – *Andrew Rooke, Melbourne, Australia.*

Next Issue: Part 2: Rising Above The Three Gunas.

**When you seek Love with all your heart you shall find its echoes
in the Universe – Rumi**

A WINDOW OF LIGHT - Amanda F. Rooke.

One Sunday evening I went to the edge of the street, to put out the rubbish bin. The traffic down on the main road still streamed by, a torrent of busy people, anxious to return home, for the big week ahead. I steered the bin to align it better, and place it closer to the curb. After this mundane task, I chanced to glance up the road, where a vehicle was disappearing into the dusky sunset. A perfectly formed square of radiant, apricot coloured light met my gaze, a wonderful, tranquil, gentle vision of some peaceful quietude; you could almost hear the stars moving in their orbits of yet greater stars, as one does, sometimes, as sunset, a gentle roar, from the other side of silence. The square remained, unchanging, as I looked at it again and again, and later I thought it seemed like a window, through which some patient and ancient being, the Hierarch, was looking down at his world, and seeing that it was good, and everyone who saw it, glimpsed a greater perfection, a more complete part of the great All. – *Amanda F. Rooke, Melbourne, Australia.*

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