

# The Secret Doctrine, Krishnamurti, and Transformation

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## Chapter 1:

# The Secret Doctrine

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The "Secret Doctrine" of H.P. Blavatsky has been hailed universally as providing the basis for all the foundational teachings of the new age. From Gurdjieff to Ramtha, from Alan Watts to David Spangler, From Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung to Wassily Kandinsky and his many successors, from Alice Bailey to Edgar Mitchell, from Manly Palmer Hall to William Irwin Thompson, from Rudolf Steiner to John White, from Edgar Cayce to Ken Wilber, careful research has shown that the *Secret Doctrine's* approach to the perennial philosophy provides the scaffolding for the thrust of their work, and often for their main theses.<sup>1</sup>

The pervasive passionate interest in widely diverse issues and practices, such as various forms of meditation at one end of the spectrum, with crystals at the other end--and numerous psychobiological and other beliefs and practices in between--also reveal having a similar pedigree. The cultural renaissance in Japan, India, and other Asian countries (which has been seminal for numerous developments in the 20th Century) has also been shown to be associated with the same source.

Yet, for all its influence, it now seems that the truly deeper elements in the *Secret Doctrine*--which point to the heart of the secret doctrine of the very ancient and profoundly influential perennial philosophy--have not been explored to date. These elements, as is shown in what follows, point to the necessity for looking at the psychological teachings to be found in that work. If the psychological elements are not taken into account, it is practically inevitable to end up with confusion and misinterpretations.

## Metaphysical limitations

In the past, the *Secret Doctrine* has been viewed strictly as a metaphysical treatise. That concentration on the metaphysical aspects of Blavatsky's *magnum opus* has been responsible for a large body of productive research into what could be called the intellectual aspects of the perennial teaching. On the other hand, such one-pointedness has also resulted, unfortunately, in previous studies of it being plagued by far-reaching limitations. Similar remarks could be made of 20th Century studies on the perennial philosophy, and of the new age movement's teachings.

Yet, a psychological understanding of the secret doctrine--which is the basis for the *Secret Doctrine* and for the perennial teachings--shows previously unexpected connections with the work of J. Krishnamurti. Careful research shows these connections to be critical for having a better understanding of both Blavatsky (HPB) and Krishnamurti.

The most essential point in these intimate relationships may be expressed in the following manner:

*The essence of the Secret Doctrine, like that of J. Krishnamurti's insights and observations, is human transformation.*

But while the expression "human transformation" is closely associated with Krishnamurti (there is even a series of his videotapes called *The Transformation of Man*), it may sound somewhat strange as representative of the *Secret Doctrine* to the ears of a *traditionalist* student of H.P. Blavatsky's great work. This may be attributed to the emphasis historically in *Secret Doctrine* studies on metaphysical aspects of the teaching, rather than on its many other dimensions, particularly the psychological. That emphasis has turned out to be critical historically, because a very large number of new age teachings, which trace back their pedigree to HPB, have followed suit in interpreting the *Secret Doctrine* as if it were providing a purely metaphysical teaching. A similar pattern may be found in 20th Century studies of the perennial philosophy, all of which have been based on the *Secret Doctrine's* presumed metaphysical foundations. Such studies have tended to concentrate on the conceptual husk of the ancient perennial philosophy, and to ignore the existence of its psychological and spiritual heart.

## **Practical Occultism**

Such a point of view, however, would seem to severely misinterpret the teaching when taken in its totality, as is shown in what follows. For while metaphysical aspects have their place, according to HPB they represent only one of the "seven keys" to understanding the *Secret Doctrine*.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, there is quite a body of evidence to show that the psychological (also called spiritual or mystical) key must be the first one to be turned, if any of the others are to be of use to the serious student.<sup>3</sup>

This ought to come as no surprise, since according to HPB and her teachers, from time immemorial every single esoteric school has demanded a very intense and deep level of moral probity and strength of character from anyone wishing to be even a *beginner*. One of the most basic teachings given by them is that the mere act of being admitted to such a school amounted to something of a psychological transformation from what life in the "outside world" has always been. This inner or true teaching, which represents the heart of the perennial philosophy, is what HPB referred to as "Occultism" (in her writings, that word never has the demonic or more superficial meanings often associated with it). Further, HPB made a very clear distinction between what she called "theoretical" and "practical" Occultism.

... or what is generally known as Theosophy on the one hand, and Occult science on the other, and:  
The nature of the difficulties involved in the study of the latter.

It is easy to become a Theosophist. Any person of average intellectual capacities, and a leaning toward the metaphysical, of pure, unselfish life, who finds more joy in helping his neighbor than in receiving help himself, one who is ever ready to sacrifice his own pleasures for the sake of other people, and who loves Truth, Goodness

and Wisdom for their own sake, not for the benefit they may confer--is a Theosophist.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, the ancient wisdom implies that someone engaging only in what she calls the "theoretical" aspects of the teaching is *expected* to be "of pure, unselfish life"--someone who is a true lover of truth and goodness and who therefore does not identify with various forms of conditioning. Clearly, this implies a psychological mutation from the way of life that most of us are used to in all the various human cultures, and may not be for everyone. Yet this refers only to the "theoretical" or more superficial aspects of the teaching.

*Practical "Occultism"* is even more thoroughly psychological, and demands much more spiritually from the candidate, according to Blavatsky. There is great subtlety here, because HPB's presentation of what a "theoretical" understanding of theosophy is has absolutely nothing to do with accepting a conceptual system. In fact, she specifically says in that theosophical classic that in order to be a theosophist, it is sufficient to have "average intellectual capacities"--so long as the psychological-spiritual requirements are met.

HPB and her teachers provided very many clarifications such as that, in a diverse number of ways. Nevertheless, their teaching was interpreted in such a manner as to make it possible to perceive it as being merely an intellectual construction, which anyone could accept or reject purely on the basis of logic and knowledge. Unfortunately, such an intellectual--metaphysical--understanding of what theosophy is would continue to be universally held among theosophists a century after her death. In chapter 2 it is suggested that such an intellectual, conceptual view of the nature of theosophy comes directly from Victorian society and its values, not from esoteric sources--and certainly not from Blavatsky and her teachers.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For documentation of Blavatsky's pervasive influence over numerous cultural developments throughout the 20th Century, see, for instance, her definitive biography by Sylvia Cranston, HPB. *The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement*, New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 1993 (see especially Part 7, "The Century After"); see also several well-researched works by James Webb, such as *The Occult Underground*, La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1976; and *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers*, Boston: Shambhala, 1987; see also Alan Watts, *In My Own Way. An Autobiography*, New York: Pantheon, 1972 (for paperback, New York: Vintage, 1972); see also Kathleen J. Regier, *The Spiritual Image in Modern Art*, Wheaton, Quest, 1987; see also Gail Levin and Marianne Lorenz, *Theme and Improvisation: Kandinsky & the American Avant-Garde 1912-1950. An Exhibition Organized by the Dayton Art Institute*, Boston, Toronto and London: Bulfinch Press, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> On the seven keys, with their separate universes of discourse, see, for instance, H.P. Blavatsky, *The*

*Secret Doctrine*, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1971, vol. 4, pp. 85-86; vol. 5, p. 186, pp. 201-204; on the metaphysical key not being self-sufficient, see: vol. 5, p. 186; see also references to the Doctrine of the Heart versus the Doctrine of the Eye, vol. 5, pp. 387, 406-413.

<sup>3</sup> Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 78-79, 89-90; vol. 5, pp. 406-413.

<sup>4</sup> H.P. Blavatsky, *Practical Occultism, and Occultism Versus the Occult Arts*, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1948 [1888], pp. 7-8.

## Chapter 2:

# Victorian Theosophy

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One of the commentaries of the *Secret Doctrine* most respected among theosophists is Geoffrey A. Barborka's *The Divine Plan*.

It is true that none of the theosophical organizations endorse officially the writings of anyone, even including those of HPB. Nevertheless, it is also true that in practice, a number of teachings (as well as certain approaches to their study) are taken for granted by most members as being theosophical. Also, certain books are generally accepted as representing correctly the true teaching of HPB and her teachers. One such is Barborka's. Yet this is how Barborka characterizes his presumed synthesis of the *Secret Doctrine*:

Pondering on the vast reaches to which one may extend one's thought, so that millions and millions of stars may be envisioned, and yet there is no limit to the immensities of Space, one must of necessity become imbued with the idea that law and order prevail throughout infinity--that there is in very truth a Divine Plan. Everything partakes of this Plan: worlds, suns, nebulae, galaxies, island universes--these exist because of this Divine Plan, they are indeed part of it. All the beings in the worlds are also integral parts of the Plan. The universe exists because it represents the unfoldment of the vast Scheme. Other universes likewise manifest the operation of the Divine Plan.

The Divine Plan is a manifestation of Divine LAW. Just as the sun emits innumerable rays which are of the same essence as their emanating source, so rays are emitted from Divine Law, which are of the same essence as their Source; therefore these rays are Divine Laws. These maintain the Divine Plan.<sup>1</sup>

Before commenting on that passage, a point should be made. Every student of any aspect of the new age, or of the perennial philosophy, owes a debt of gratitude to Barborka for providing such a handy compendium of the *Secret Doctrine* as viewed from the point of view of the metaphysical key. Therefore, what follows is not intended to minimize in any way the value of the great service he has done to students of these subjects. Rather, it is precisely because his exposition of the *Secret Doctrine* in the metaphysical key is so well presented, that he has been singled out in this exploration. The

problems discussed in what follows, in other words, are not problems that should be identified as unique to Barborka. They are instead problems typical of *any* metaphysical approach to understanding that which is.

## Big minds, puny God?

Barborka's statement seems to be but a new version of the so-called argument from design for God's existence. This manner of thinking is still popular among Christians--and other theists--who happen to be uneducated in developments in philosophy over the past three centuries. Barborka expresses himself as if he personally knew for a fact that "God" or "Divinity" has a conceptual, linear mind not too dissimilar from ours, and that such a "mind" is responsible for the alleged "Divine Plan."

Clearly, as Immanuel Kant and many others after him have shown in various ways, there are in such views intrinsic problems.<sup>2</sup> These difficulties may be summarized (and oversimplified, for lack of space) in one of two ways. Looking from one end at what they claim, they imply that the alleged "mind of God" is so small, that its workings can be understood fairly perfectly by a human mind. Looking at the claims from the other end, they imply that the mind of this particular human being is so big that it can perfectly understand what "God" is, and to know fairly accurately what that "Divinity" is "thinking."

In other words, either "God" is too small, or the mind of the metaphysician in question is too big. In either case, "God" seems to turn out to be much punier than most of us would have thought, which is actually the opposite result intended by metaphysicians. They would much rather be able to "have the cake, and eat it too," since they want us to believe that "the mind of God" is genuinely grand.

Perhaps the metaphysicians' problems stem partly from the fact that they also want us to accept the subliminal message that the metaphysician's mind is so clever, that it can thus understand clearly what "God" is "thinking." and what such a "God" intends to do in the future. In other words, perhaps an important subliminal message we are expected to accept without question is that the one who is truly "grand" is *the metaphysician* in question, since that person can presumably figure all of this out for us. If this is not self-enhancing intellectual arrogance, it is hard to think what else could be.

## Theosophical theology

But there is a far more serious misinterpretation of Blavatsky's teaching implied in such a purely conceptual understanding of it: No mention is to be found in the statement made by Barborka, nor anywhere else in his book, about the necessity (according to HPB) for psychological transformation to take place *before* one engages in such purely intellectual musings. Yet such speculations were presented for fully one century after HPB's death as if they were "Theosophy," by practically every single theosophical leader and writer on the subject.

What Barborka outlines in his book is actually a *theology*. In other words, it is a presentation of *concepts*--in the context of accepting, without the kind of soul-searching questioning, that is involved in a radical psychological transformation--a number of principles that are believed to be "Theosophical." Since such a mental exercise is thoroughly unrelated to human transformation, it is

therefore totally unrelated (except perhaps in a very peripheral and superficial way) to what H.P. Blavatsky and her teachers meant by theosophy.

The metaphysical way of interpreting the *Secret Doctrine*--employed to the exclusion of any other possibility--was applied from the very beginning. In fact, in his book *Barborka* is in a sense but making a compendium of "*Secret Doctrine* studies" that had gone on before him. For instance, another widely respected commentator of the *Secret Doctrine*, W.P. Wadia, had said some forty years earlier that:

The desire to become practical occultists, if pure and genuinely unselfish, will bring the realization that practical occultism is but the lowest form of applied metaphysics.

... Psychic and spiritual teachings are not more fully understood because their metaphysical basis is not contemplated upon. Is it to be wondered at, then, that the fundamentals of the esoteric science are metaphysical in character, and that the books of H.P.B. abound in lengthy and many-sided considerations of metaphysical propositions? *The Secret Doctrine* is full of metaphysical universals and particulars, of philosophical principles and details for the same reason that the Vedas and the Upanishads, the six points of view of the six Indian Schools are also full of them. The Gnostics and the Neo-Platonists, the Pythagoreans and Essenes before them also taught metaphysically. Every attempt to dissociate metaphysics from science, philosophy from psychology, has resulted in the degradation of the omnipresent omniscience into a personal god, of man's divinity into carnal bestiality, of the Wisdom-Religion into a religious creed.<sup>3</sup>

## Theosophy upside down

When Wadia says that "practical occultism is but the lowest form of applied metaphysics," he is stating that an intellectual understanding is prior to, and more important than, psychological and spiritual transformation. This is an exact reversal of what HPB and her teachers had said, that first there must be inner transformation, before there can be any study that could be called "theosophical." After all, it should be recalled that such a transformation can take place, according to HPB in the passage quoted earlier, even if one has "average intellectual capacities."

While it is true that HPB makes many references to metaphysical and philosophical teachings, it is also true that she makes many other kinds of (non-metaphysical and even anti-metaphysical approach to the study of the *Secret Doctrine*, however, obliterates that huge body of teaching, for the sake of



excluding anything that is not conceptual and intellectual. In the process of thus excluding most of HPB's teaching, the metaphysical approach also dispenses with the psychological key to the study of the secret doctrine. Yet, according to HPB and her teachers, without the psychological key--without transformation--whatever study a person does is exoteric. It is external to the secret doctrine.

Another element present in Wadia's statement--and indeed in the majority of metaphysical expositions in general--is a penchant for arrogance, for thinking that because one has a "clear" idea of the way the universe is put together (according to one's theory) therefore one is in a superior and perhaps even transcendent position, relative to other human beings. This too is typical of Victorian thinking and behavior, as has often been noted by students of that quaint and picturesque period. As Ralph Noyes pointed out,

Between ourselves and the world around us there is a more complex interplay than we used to think.

In the days of the great Victorian anthropologists--J.G. Frazer, in *The Golden Bough*, was their belated and last exemplar--the traffic was seen as wholly in one direction. Benighted savages awed by the great forces of Nature which they could neither control nor understand, had as we then saw it, taken refuge in foolish superstition and fruitless magic. Latter-day gentlemen of suitable social class and adequate learning could afford some good-natured loftiness about these primitive imaginings. Technology had conquered much; science stood near to a final understanding of the mindless forces around us; our species had nearly triumphed. It was not long since Lord Kelvin had urged a sharp reduction in the intake of student physicists to Imperial College, London, on the grounds that little now remained to be done except to tidy up some loose ends at the edge of knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

Such unmitigated presumption and smug self-assurance is typical not only of Victorian society: believers in metaphysical systems--such as Victorian Theosophy--share with 19th Century European society a similar sense of certainty based on what is perceived as the logical elegance of the system in question.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey A. Barboraka, *The Divine Plan*, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1964, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith, New York: St.

Martin's, 1965 [1781].

<sup>3</sup> W.P. Wadia, *Studies in the Secret Doctrine*, Bombay: Theosophy Company, 1961 [1922-1925], vol. 1, p. 75.

<sup>4</sup> Ralph Noyes, editor, *The Crop Circle Enigma. Grounding the phenomenon in science, culture and metaphysics*, photographs by Busty Taylor, Bath, U.K.: Gateway, 1991 [1990], p. 34.

## Chapter 3:

# Victorian Zen

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There are elements implied in the discussion in chapter 2 that are not considered by Wadia. Nor are they considered by the many others who accept only aspects of the metaphysical key to the secret doctrine as sufficient for starting a true "study" of theosophy.

For instance, it may be that an important part of the appeal of metaphysical structures may be related to the fact that human beings have always enjoyed a good story. When note is taken that metaphysical schemes are at bottom but good stories for intellectuals and for devotees of the conceptual mind, their sometimes irresistible--almost drug-like--attraction may be better understood. In any case, human beings up to now have tended to have been as if powerfully enchanted by such story-telling, and by the logical neatness of good tales. It may then be seen that perhaps the perennial teachers who authored the *Secret Doctrine* often used (though of course not always) such story-telling forms of communication, largely for the benefit of their Victorian audience.

That was an audience thirsty for any *theory* of the world that approximated in some way German Idealism in its expression, since that philosophical system was the rage of the day in Victorian circles. It even became fashionable to make extensive use of capitalization of certain words, a practice which is intrinsically foreign to other European languages (including English), however much it may be part of German grammar. Yet this dated usage continued to be employed--as in Barborka's passage quoted in chapter 2, in a book published in the 1960s. This literary mannerism is often employed as the kind of prosopopoeia that was typical of German Idealism, and of Romanticism, to hypostatize or reify certain favored ideas.

The Victorian audience was also passionately interested in any *theory* that dealt with the then-popular subject of evolution, and that had something interesting to say about the relationship between science and religion, due to the general confusion that existed about that subject. It is most likely for such reasons that the secret doctrine was dressed up by the perennial teachers for that particular reading room party in just the way it was. That seems to be a reason why the teachings were often given using the bombastic language typical of that age, and why they go into questions of interest to Victorian audiences. But underneath the varnish of all those Victorian accretions may be found the teaching of *Dhyan*, of mystic meditation--of human transformation.

## Victorian commentaries on Zen

The *Secret Doctrine* was said to have been largely a commentary of portions of a very ancient manuscript, called by HPB the *Stanzas of Dzyan*. It now seems that something may have been lost in the translation from Senzar (the language in which the original of the *Stanzas* was said to have been written), and Victorian English. As a result, in the first century after the publication of the *Secret*

*Doctrine* there were published about two dozen commentaries in Victorian English by different authors, in spite of the fact that the Victorian dialect (with its prejudices) had by that time ceased to have viability, not to mention credibility. If one can see the humor of teaching Zen using only Victorian English (with all its prejudices and expectations), then one can perhaps understand a little better what may have been the true intent--and forlornness--of HPB's teachers.

While each of the subsequent commentators emphasized different aspects and looked at that work from different perspectives, every single commentary is written from the assumption that the secret doctrine is strictly a metaphysical system. They all assume, without exception, that any person with a good mind, a good amount of knowledge, and good logical abilities, would be able to accept or reject such a system on its intellectual merits.

Nowhere is it said in any of those books that a prerequisite for such study is what HPB said is required: a reasonable modicum of psychological transformation from the normally self-centered life that most human beings live, in order to even *begin*. Such psychological-spiritual transformation was referred to by HPB whenever she spoke of the path of discipleship and initiation. According to that perception, in the absence of the life of discipleship, what is said belongs--almost by definition--to the world outside the adytum of the perennial teaching, and is therefore not *theosophy* properly. By the nature of the case, it is more likely that such conceptual speculations generally represent a mere *opinion* about theosophy. Possibly, it is an unenlightened one at that, given that spiritual transformation is not an essential element of metaphysical speculation. As it is expressed in a privately-published Buddhist work quoted by HPB, "no one can be entrusted with the knowledge (Secret Science) before his time." She goes on,

... Farther on, a man seeking to master the mysteries of Esotericism before he had been declared by the initiated by the Tch'-an-si (teachers) to be ready to receive them, is likened to

"one who would, without a lantern and on a dark night, proceed to a place full of scorpions, determined to feel on the ground for a needle his neighbor has dropped."

Again:

"He who would acquire the Sacred Knowledge should, before he goes any farther '*trim his lamp* of inner understanding,' and then 'with the help of such good light' use his meritorious actions as a dust-cloth to remove every impurity from his mystic mirror, so that he should be enabled to see in its lustre the faithful reflection of Self... First, this, then Tong-pa-nya [the state during which an Adept sees the long series of his past births, and lives through all his previous incarnations in this and the other worlds]." <sup>1</sup>

In other words, according to HPB and her teachers, in order to be in a position to begin to study "theosophy," it is first necessary for a psychological transformation to begin to take place. If there is

no transformation in the making, then what one does, whatever else it may be, and however "well-informed" it may be, is not theosophy.

## Zen dust

It may incidentally be noted that in the quote above HPB refers to using one's meritorious actions as a dust-cloth to remove every impurity from one's mystic mirror. This is a clear reference to the use of just such an image in the early history of Zen Buddhism, and therefore is meant to connect the essence of theosophy with the sort of transformation that Zen is meant to help bring about. It refers specifically to a very famous verse composed by the sixth Patriarch of Zen in northern China, which said:

This body is the Bodhi-tree,  
The soul is like a mirror bright;  
Take heed to keep it always clean,  
And let not dust collect on it.<sup>2</sup>

HPB's reference implies rather clearly that the secret doctrine she and her teachers were teaching is one and the same with transformative approaches, such as those found in Zen. Nor is that the only place where such references can be found. In the *Voice of the Silence*, for instance, there is a fragment that begins:

For mind is like a mirror; it gathers dust while it reflects.<sup>3</sup>

She provides an explanatory note for that sentence, in which she gives the source for it by saying,

From Shin-Sieu's Doctrine, who teaches that the human mind is like a mirror which attracts and reflects every atom of dust, and has to be, like that mirror, watched over and dusted every day. Shin-Sieu was the sixth Patriarch of North China who taught the esoteric doctrine of Bodhidharma.<sup>4</sup>

Bodhidharma was, as Buddhists well know, the founder of Zen. Apart from its intrinsic merits, a curious thing about HPB's references is that--contrary to what is generally believed among Buddhist scholars--she was the first person to use Zen doctrines in the West. It is usually thought that the first knowledge of Zen outside of Buddhist circles had been provided by D.T. Suzuki in his *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, which began to appear in 1927. While deeper aspects of these connections with Zen are explored further on, it is first important to look at other issues that are critical for an understanding of the true nature and sources for the secret doctrine. This is done in the next two chapters.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, *op. cit.*, vol. 5, p. 412.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in D.T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism, First Series*, New York: Grove Press, 1961 [1927], p. 206.

<sup>3</sup> H.P. Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, Golden Jubilee Edition, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1939 [1889], "The Two Paths," fragment 115. p. 148.

<sup>4</sup> Blavatsky, *Voice of the Silence*, *op. cit.*, note 6, p. 231.

## Chapter 4:

# The Mystery Language

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The *Secret Doctrine* is written in what could be called multidimensional poetry. Much of what it says has simultaneously different meanings, and so what is read into it depends largely on the standpoint of the reader. It is pregnant with the notion that the esoteric teachings cannot be understood, except through the use of seven qualitatively different modes of perception, called "keys." "Keys" is used both in the sense of opening previously closed doors to knowing ourselves and the world, and in the sense of providing clues that would not be otherwise available for the investigation. As she said in the *Secret Doctrine*,

Speaking of the keys to the Zodiacal mysteries as being almost lost to the world, it was remarked by the writer in *Isis Unveiled* some ten years ago that: "The said key must be turned seven times before the whole system is divulged. We will give it but one turn, and thereby allow the profane one glimpse into the mystery. Happy he, who understands the whole!"

The same may be said of the whole Esoteric system. One turn of the key, and no more, was given in "Isis." Much more is explained in these volumes. In those days the writer hardly knew the language in which the work was written, and the disclosure of many things, freely spoken about now, was forbidden. In Century the Twentieth some disciple more informed, and far better fitted, may be sent by the Masters of Wisdom to give final and irrefutable proofs that there exists a Science called *Gupta-Vidya*; and that, like the once-mysterious sources of the Nile, the source of all religions and philosophies now known to the world has been for many ages forgotten and lost to men, but is at last found.<sup>1</sup>

## Non-linear keys

So seven different modes of perception are required in order to understand what the secret doctrine is about. On the other hand, being able to identify the exact meaning and even the name of each of the keys is quite another matter. For one thing, in various places the text says that only two of the seven keys could be given out at the time of writing; elsewhere, it is said that three or perhaps four have been revealed. And in other sources, like the passage from *Isis Unveiled* quoted above, for instance, it

is stated that only *one* turn of *the* key has been given then. While those statements throw a great deal of confusion into the notion that there are *seven* keys, the fact is that it gets worse.

For instance, when it comes to being able to pinpoint, without fear of erring, exactly what are the names and content of the seven keys, the task becomes seemingly unwieldy. The following are *nineteen* different names used at various points in the *Secret Doctrine* for the presumed "seven" keys:

1. Metaphysical
2. Spiritual
3. Physical
4. Psychological
5. Anthropological
6. Psychic
7. Theogonic
8. Mystical
9. Anthropogonic
10. Numerical
11. Physiological
12. Astronomical
13. Geometrical
14. Symbolical
15. Astrological
16. One that "dealt with creative man, i.e., the ideal and practical mysteries."
17. Arithmetical
18. Moral
19. Cosmological

Anyone not conversant with the methods of research of the perennial philosophy would be likely to see confusion in this seeming intellectual *potage*. It would therefore be valuable to first realize that the perennial way of communication--such as that used by HPB's teachers--is never meant to be "easy," since it is intended to awaken new perceptions and perspectives in the listener or reader, as much as possible. After all, what the perennial philosophy is about is transformation, and one would think that psychological mutation would require much more than mere reading or intellectual "understanding."

The mystery language, as the *Secret Doctrine* refers at times to its mode of communication, does not use conventional language for its foundation, as is done, for instance, in metaphysics. Rather, it employs a "logic" based on a more comprehensive form of perception than the one we all have more or less grown accustomed to since the times of the cavemen, and which has been institutionalized in academic circles as the only acceptable form of thinking. This does not mean in itself, of course, that there is necessarily any guarantee that the mystery language is clearer or better than "the vernacular" for every purpose.

## **Holism and compassion**



In fact, one of the most formidable stumbling blocks for the acceptance of the *Secret Doctrine* by a wider public, especially a more educated public, has been that it easily lends itself to appropriation by *anyone* without any need on their part to exercise mental clarity, scruples, intelligence or compassion. This suggests that the *Secret Doctrine*, like its human sources, is thoroughly vulnerable. A reason for its being secret and for its authors' remaining fairly isolated from the rest of the world seems to be this eminent vulnerability of theirs. It could be said that a supremely compassionate human being is a supremely vulnerable human being, and compassion is probably the keyword that most appropriately describes in our limited language the essence of the source of the *Secret Doctrine*. Perhaps that vulnerability is partly responsible for the overdevelopment of groups and schools in the 20th Century, all of them hailing back to HPB and her teachers, and each of them claiming (or more often insinuating) to have *the* right interpretation.

The language of compassion is the language of total acceptance of differences; it is the attitude of all-accepting compassion that lends to the mystery language its comprehensiveness. But therein lies another major stumbling block in understanding what the *Secret Doctrine* and its authors intend to say, since the reader, the one who is facing this possibly "otherworldly" source, must share in that comprehensive attitude in order to have even a faint hope of understanding what it means. In other words, no amount of scholarship, and even less of acceptance of metaphysical principles, will be of any use in the "study" of it. That is, unless it comes from an attitude of compassion, in the context of having a willingness to undergo a total psychological transformation.

This implies, of course, that scholarship itself must work using completely different standards from those prevalent up to the late 20th Century, in order to understand the "lines of reasoning" (if one could call them that) pursued in the *Secret Doctrine*. The understanding and use of the mystery language seems to require a great deal more than is normally assumed in any conventional field of research. For one thing, it requires that the researcher drop *completely* any and all forms of conditioning before the research proper can even begin. This means that one cannot assume the reality of any religious belief, of any intellectual school, of any experiences one has had in the past, of any interpretations one has found useful for understanding other matters. It means, indeed, that one must actually *die*, quite literally, to any and all identifications one has made throughout the course of one's life.

According to the perennial teaching everywhere, this death is quite indispensable. Presumably, so long as one holds on to any one of the innumerable forms of conditioning that one tends to identify as being a vital part of oneself, it is not possible to see anything, except through the very opaque screen of those identifications. If one is a Catholic, for instance, and one is convinced at some level of the truth of Catholicism, that conviction will inevitably vitiate one's perception of anything one intends to investigate. In other words, there are certain (Catholic) assumptions that one will be taking for granted and that one will be unwilling to question. And since one will not question them, the guide in one's alleged investigation will not be truth, but one's conditioning, in this case Catholic.

## **Dying to the known**

The mystery language may then be perceived as beginning at the point where conventional forms of communication end. And the "keys" to it refer in part, singly and collectively, to any of a number of

ways of perceiving that imply the non-acceptance in one's life of conventions based on conditioning. What this means is that the only way of using the mystery language in any form (or of understanding it when someone else is using it) is through the death of the me, of what theosophists have called in their classic literature "the personality."

This "dying in order to really live" ought to come as no surprise to students of the esoteric lineage. In the ancient mysteries--as in the Egyptian, for instance--"initiations" would be held in which the candidate was often placed in a coffin. The candidate would remain there for several days performing certain forms of meditation, after which there would be a "new birth," psychologically and spiritually. Similar practices have been common in Tibet and elsewhere. The candidate was in other words expected to die to the life of the world "outside," that is, to the life of personal identifications. And this is clearly what was meant also by Socrates when he said that philosophy--the love of wisdom--consisted of the daily practice of death.

The point is that, as expressed throughout Blavatsky's writings (and as would later be repeated by innumerable authors, many of whom would not acknowledge the source of their information) there was an esoteric lineage present in all major cultures of the world. According to her, that international and inter-regional lineage had one language through which it communicated, regardless of the vernacular each spoke. That single tongue was the so-called mystery language. But the mystery language, in its essentials, turns out to be no language in the ordinary sense. It is simply the form of communication that is available to anyone in the world who is in the process of dying from moment to moment to whatever particular conditioning that person had been born.

Such human beings would indeed be able to communicate clearly and efficiently with each other, and to easily recognize each other. After all, there would be among them no barriers on the basis of their nationality, religion, sex, creeds, caste, color, university department, or any of the many other differences that are required by society when one lives a life of conventions. Such human beings would be worthy representatives of a true brotherhood of humanity, and would pose the only hope for the creation of a sane society.

This may be the reason behind the fact that the perennial teachers who founded the Theosophical Society were constantly insisting on a universal brotherhood of humanity being the one reason for having started the movement. The brotherhood they were referring to was then not an ideal, since ideals are conceptual and so they always divide--and anything that divides is against brotherhood. Rather, it was the brotherhood that takes place naturally, without looking for it, without "working towards" it, as a result of having died to all of one's identifications.

The mystery language is, then a silent language. This is appropriate even etymologically, since the word "mystery" (like the word "mystic") comes from the Greek *mysterion*, meaning "a secret rite, divine secret." And that word in turn comes from *mystes*, "one initiated into the mysteries." The curious thing about these roots is that they all derive from *myen*, "to close (the eyes or the mouth)." In other words, the sound of the mystery language was, as in the title of HPB's translation of fragments from the *Book of the Golden Precepts*, the voice of the silence.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. xxxviii.

## Chapter 5:

# Seven Keys

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In speaking of the number seven, HPB explains that it is often used in the perennial philosophy as a blind for unity. Perhaps a better way of understanding the meaning of the number seven as used throughout the *Secret Doctrine* and similar writings, is to refer to it as standing for *E Pluribus Unum*, as in the motto of the United States of America. "A Pluralistic Unity" is what the esoteric seven often stands for, though it is more than that; it is also a comprehensive unity.

An interesting thing about pluralities, however, is that they are composed of disparate elements, which may be, and often are, at odds with one another. This ingredient of apparent disharmony is essential in the esoteric perception of life, since as the Master KH pointed out, "discord is the harmony of the universe."<sup>1</sup> The "harmony of the universe," then, is not a cloning of homogeneous elements. It is instead a harmony that comes as a result of incongruous elements somehow coming together. That is the way harmony expresses itself in music as well. A beautiful or interesting sound coming out of the simultaneous presence of several others that are very different among themselves, is an essential ingredient for good music. And according to the Master, it is also the way harmony expresses itself in life in general.

So in using the expression "seven keys" HPB is using poetic license in an esoteric mode, to refer in part to the cacophony of modes of perception concerning life in general that are possible, and of how in the "mystery language" they are all accepted simultaneously--and transcended. That is, they are transcended at least in the sense that identification with any one key to the exclusion of any of the others, would imply ignorance of the mystery language. The element that provides the harmony is the capacity of the perceiver to not go crazy with the various alternative modes of perception, but to instead accept the beauty, goodness and truth in each, and move on, seeing that in and of themselves, they are all limited. If the perceiver becomes infatuated with any one of the innumerable approaches or explanations that are possible (such, for instance, as metaphysical, intellectual explanations), the perfume of direct contact, of sensitivity, will not be there, and the sense of comprehensiveness and therefore of harmony will be lost. As Plato pointed out, "Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder."

### A new mode of perception

The secret doctrine therefore abandons any linear approach to understanding the way things are, and puts its trust in direct perception, a perception denuded of all conditioning. This form of direct perception that takes place together with dying to conditioning may be seen as a more sophisticated, deeper form of empiricism. It implies perceiving things a little more the way they are, since elements foreign to the actual perception--and which are usually present primarily because of one's conditioning--are eliminated. Esoteric studies, then, begin by not responding to absolutely any vested interest whatsoever. The only concern in esoteric investigations is with encountering and accepting

that which is the case, independently of any theory, polarization, or ideology.

In the early days of the founding of the Theosophical Society, the comprehensive approach implied in the secret doctrine was, by and large, ignored by the membership. Many of the members interpreted--and a few became well-known writing about--the secret doctrine as if it were a "rational," that is, a linear, exposition of reality. They took it as a metaphysical system in the conventional sense; they took it as a world of ideas that is "more pleasing to the mind," and meant to explain logically the nature of reality. In order to do that, they *had* to use conventional logic, unaided by the mystery language.

In a way, the outcome was somewhat amusing, because from the 1880s on, there were new books coming out from those sources every year, and almost all of these books contradicted on important points the previous ones. Even the same author would often revise the data in subsequent expositions of "the teaching." This "problem" led in some cases to the creation of a number of splinter groups, each of which thought it had *the* real explanation. This is exactly what has happened in the history of religion, as soon as people begin to identify with conceptual interpretations, and to create theologies. It also led, after HPB's death, to the creation of standardized explanations of "the secret doctrine" or Theosophy, in the various organizations thus formed.

Unfortunately, it was not perceived at the time that the secret doctrine is to be understood in terms of seven keys. That is, the various theories or approaches have each a value, but none of them is complete or sufficient in itself. Not only that, but all of the various explanations that have been given can collectively be subsumed under what could be called the *metaphysical key*. They all have in common the characteristic of appealing to the mind's linear or time-bound approach, and of providing a rational picture of the way things are. Other "keys" appeal to ways of perceiving that are different qualitatively from the metaphysical, and are given "equal time" by the esoteric doctrine.

## **The mythical key**

A case in point is the mythical key, of which much is said in the *Secret Doctrine*. This way of understanding is never meant to provide a rational picture of the universe, and is therefore qualitatively different from the metaphysical key. Its approach is to tell, for instance, a story which is not meant to be historically true (even though sometimes it may have points of contact with historical events). Rather, it is meant to teach either by morals one can derive from the story, or by impressing upon one some universal principle which is never verbalized in a straightforward, rational way.

This key was actually picked up from HPB's work by Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, and others, who for the most part obliterated all or most other keys for the sake of it. Thus, mythical studies in the 20th Century, while they have brought about a keen awareness of the viability of this mode of perception, tend to also ignore the comprehensiveness implied in the perennial philosophy's "seven keys." Although these mythical studies are generally much closer in their approach to the mystery language, they nevertheless tend to minimize the importance of the metaphysical key, as well as of other keys. As mentioned earlier, the critical key for us at this juncture in history is, according to HPB and her teachers, the psychological key.

In any case, the mythical form of communication is extremely powerful, and its main messages are not generally spelled out conceptually, as is done or at least attempted when the metaphysical key is used. The messages of the mythical key are expressed silently, through the power of symbols.

In fact, one of the characteristics that most of the keys (other than the metaphysical) have in common is that silent quality of their main messages. Although words are often used to convey these messages, the main thrust of what they try to communicate is almost never what is actually said. Such may in fact be an important part of the reason for the tremendous power that art forms can exert psychologically and spiritually. The individual person receiving art's subliminal messages is given the space in which to accept their meaning according to his or her capacity for understanding. Usually, these other modes of communications have several levels of meaning, so one could go back to them again and again, and invariably continue discovering new levels of significance and value.

## **The psychological key**

Seeing what the secret doctrine is not can be an important step towards understanding what it is. If it is not exclusively a metaphysical system, then the use of other approaches to understanding it becomes a necessity. Once one takes into account the existence and significance of the seven keys and of the mystery language (the language of silence), it may be possible to explore--hopefully with some clarity--what the actual teaching is. Further, the psychological or mystical key *must* be turned first, as is insistently pointed out in the writings of Alice Bailey, where HPB's esoteric teaching on this subject is revealed. One reason for this is that the psychological key involves the required individual transformation that opens the field of perception to an understanding of all the others.

It may then be possible to understand from a wider perspective the statement made in chapter 1, that the essence of the *Secret Doctrine* is human transformation. After all, the process of such a transformation *is* the psychological key. That statement is further explored in what follows.

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## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Christmas Humphreys and Elsie Benjamin, eds., *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1962, p. 395.

## Chapter 6:

# The Stanzas of Zen

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There are at least three main indicators of the truth of the proposition that the essence of the *Secret Doctrine* is human transformation. One of these is to be found in the text itself of the *Secret Doctrine*. A second may be deduced from the explicit connection that HPB makes between the *Voice of the Silence* and the *Stanzas of Dzyan*, the latter being the foundation text for the *Secret Doctrine*. A third indicator comes from the recently discovered fact that the *Stanzas* are either culled from, or are the source for, the *Kalachakra Tantra*--the most highly regarded esoteric teaching of Tibet. Each of these indicators will be explored in turn in this and the next two chapters, and then the question of connections with Krishnamurti will be briefly examined in the final chapter.

## The Stanzas of Dzyan

The meaning of the word "*Dzyan*" is provided by HPB and her teachers in the *Secret Doctrine*. She refers to the "*Book of Dzyan*--from the Sanskrit word 'Dhyan' (mystic meditation)." <sup>1</sup> Why not call it simply "meditation" and let it go at that? In a short footnote at the very beginning of the *Secret Doctrine*, it is stated that "*Dan*, in modern Chinese and Tibetan phonetics *Ch'an*, is the general term for the esoteric schools and their literature," and that the related word *Janna* was defined in the old texts as "a second inner birth." <sup>2</sup> In other words, what the authors of the *Secret Doctrine* mean by "meditation," and what the *Stanzas of Dzyan* are about, is *human transformation*, which takes place mystically, not as the result of a practice or of the acceptance of certain ideas.

A way of referring to this main source of all theosophical teaching that would be perhaps more meaningful to an audience of a hundred years later, would be *The Stanzas of Zen*, as *Dzyan*, according to Blavatsky, is a synonym of the Japanese "Zen." In the *Theosophical Glossary*, for instance, she offers for "Dzyan" the alternate spellings "Dzyn" and "Dzen." <sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the original intention behind Zen seems to have been largely lost: Zen has been identified in the minds of many as a *method* for obtaining enlightenment; but methods and systems are mechanical, time-bound, and therefore are not transformative.

The *Stanzas of Dzyan* can then be seen as being primarily a book of *koans* (to appropriately borrow a term from Zen) about the nature of the life of transformation. Koans are intended not either to educate or to still the mind. They hopefully provoke the ruminative chaos that might help accelerate the brain's thoroughly giving up on itself. Thereby is created the space for the mystical mind to manifest in that true state of meditation of primary interest to all of the world's perennial schools.

## Space and sunyata

The early stanzas, particularly, deal with the question of "Space." From the psychological perspective, "Space," as it is discussed in the *Secret Doctrine*, refers to *sunya* or *sunyatta*. This is the state of awareness that happens when what normally passes for "living" is surrendered to the uninterrupted flow of that which is truly original. This vital living is empty of conceptual content, empty of expectations, empty of identifications; in one word, it is *sunya*.

There is a danger implicit in interpreting the "Space" of the *Stanzas* as if it were exclusively a metaphysical concept to be "understood" and discussed in more or less intellectual terms. Such discussions tend to strengthen the me--ever ready for new "adventures" in its own expansion, which is what these intellectual excursions always are. Yet that is what has been done almost exclusively in *Secret Doctrine* studies. In that *milieu*, the term has come to have a meaning along the more or less Biblical lines of "In the beginning, there was Space."

It is not too difficult to recognize how such a metaphysically-oriented study of the *Secret Doctrine's* "Space" may possibly be intellectually exciting to some. Yet, in spite of the enchanting attraction of such a story-telling approach, the fact is that it has very little to do with the life of transformation. Nor does it seem to have much to do with true understanding of the perennial teaching, which according to HPB and her teachers comes from a source other than the intellect.

According to the *Voice of the Silence*, understanding of the inner doctrine comes only to those actually involved in the life of transformation.<sup>4</sup> Therefore (this fundamental source proposes), a real understanding of what is meant in the *Stanzas* by "Space" is likely to be found only in the act of transformation. The actual state of awareness (or state of being) that takes place when there is no attachment to any of the things of the conditioned mind makes it possible to understand directly the workings of the universe, partly because it implies a cleaning of all conditioning.

There is obviously a radical difference between being in that state of awareness, and holding onto *ideas* about attachment. Therefore, it is only in that transformed state, unencumbered by any of the unquestioned prejudices of one's past, that it would be possible to really understand anything of significance. It is probably precisely because the inner teachings can only take place in the context of that state of transformation--something that would only happen in the aloneness of one's being--that they are referred to as "the Doctrine of the Heart."

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, *op. cit.*, vol. 5, p. 389.

<sup>2</sup> Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> H.P. Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Glossary*, London: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1892, p. 107.



<sup>4</sup> Transformation is the subject of the whole book. See, for instance, Blavatsky, *Voice of the Silence*, *op. cit.*, fragments 4, 5, 19, 32, 33, 51, 56, 63 and 64.

## Chapter 7:

# The Voice of the Silence

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In the preface to the *Voice of the Silence*, HPB makes a remarkable statement about the relationship between that work and the *Stanzas of Dzyan*:

The work from which I here translate forms part of the same series as that from which the "Stanzas" of the *Book of Dzyan* were taken, on which the *Secret Doctrine* is based.<sup>1</sup>

To say that the *Voice of the Silence* and the *Secret Doctrine* have the same source is equivalent to suggesting that neither of them can be understood if they are being studied by a mind still unaware that it is under the influence of its own conditioning.

## The yoga of the Voice

The *Voice of the Silence* is ruthlessly clear on the subject of the need for an unconditioned mind (a mind clarified by yoga), for it begins with the warning that

He who would hear the voice of *Nada*, "the Soundless Sound," and comprehend it, he has to learn the nature of *Dharana*. Having become indifferent to objects of perception, the pupil must seek out the *rajah* of the senses, the Thought-Producer, he who awakes illusion. The Mind is the great Slayer of the Real. Let the Disciple slay the Slayer.<sup>2</sup>

So, according to this preliminary admonition, anyone who cannot "become indifferent to objects of perception," is not in a position to begin properly the study of the *Voice of the Silence*--or of the *Secret Doctrine*, since they are of one and the same source and presumably impose the same requirements on their students.

In the eight-fold or *astanga yoga* of Patanjali, its eight "limbs" are enumerated as *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. They are "limbs" and not "steps" because none of them can be practiced adequately without all the others being present. Nevertheless, the order in which they are given by Patanjali has been the one in which they have been taught for millennia, which is the order hinted at in these early lines of the *Voice of the Silence*. It is said there that now that the pupil has "become indifferent to objects of perception" (*pratyahara*), he "has to

learn the nature of *Dharana*" (usually translated as "concentration").

In other words, the *Voice of the Silence* is not meant for mere conceptual speculation. This is clearly a book of advice for anyone seriously involved already on the path of yoga, on the path of transformation. And since according to HPB the *Secret Doctrine* comes from the same source, one would expect that exactly the same strictures should be true of it.

## Sunyatta

For instance, it seems fairly clear that the first stanza is meant to describe, as well as words will permit such a thing, the state of awareness called in Zen and other schools (and in the *Secret Doctrine*) *sunyatta*. According to all those teachings, it is in that state that presumably can take place a greater communion with the universe. That first stanza can also be said to be a description of the states of awareness present in an adept, as the text itself expresses it when it refers to "the 'opened eye' of Dangma." As HPB explains in a footnote,

In India it is called the "Eye of Shiva," but beyond the Great Range it is known in esoteric phraseology as "Dangma's Opened Eye." Dangma means a purified soul, one who has become a Jivanmukta, the highest Adept, or rather a Mahatma so-called. His "Opened Eye" is the inner spiritual eye of the seer; and the faculty which manifests through it, is not clairvoyance as ordinarily understood, i.e., the power of seeing at a distance, but rather the faculty of spiritual intuition, through which direct and certain knowledge is obtainable.<sup>3</sup>

That first stanza refers explicitly to the fact that when there is *sunyatta*, "Space," none of the explanations given in the scriptures are of any significance, since there is no one to read or consider what they say. It gives a graphic picture of what it is like to be in that state of complete emptiness. Part of what it points out (as in the teachings of Nagarjuna, on which Zen is based) is that the path to liberation is meaningless in that state, because there is no one to react to anything, there is no place to go, there is no yearning to change anything. Therefore, when the psychological emptiness of *sunyatta* is, "The Seven Ways to Bliss were not." Nor is there any concern in that state for the misery of mediocrity of daily life as it is usually lived, that is, in a constant attachment to various objects of sensation (represented in Buddhist terminology by the so-called twelve *nidanas*). Therefore, "The Great Causes of Misery were not."

What follows is the entire text of the stanza, which is quoted so the reader may look at it from this psychological perspective. While only a full commentary with careful consideration of each term and with specific references to Buddhist and other sources would be likely to provide a clearer exposition, the more transparently psychological statements have been italicized:

The Eternal Parent, wrapped in her Ever-Invisible Robes,  
had slumbered once again for Seven Eternities. *Time was*

not, for it lay asleep in the Infinite Bosom of Duration. Universal mind was not, for there were no Ah-hi to contain it. *The Seven Ways to Bliss* were not. The Great Causes of Misery were not, for there was no one to produce and get ensnared by them. Darkness alone filled the Boundless All, for Father, Mother and Son were once more one, and the Son had not yet awakened for the new Wheel and his Pilgrimage thereon. The Seven Sublime Lords and the Seven Truths had ceased to be, and the Universe, the Son of Necessity, was immersed in *Paranishpanna*, to be outbreathed by that which is, and yet is not. Naught was. *The Causes of Existence* had been done away with; the Visible that was, and the Invisible that is, rested in *Eternal Non-Being--the One Being*. Alone, the One Form of Existence stretched boundless, infinite, causeless, in Dreamless Sleep, and Life pulsed unconscious in Universal "Space", throughout that All-Presence which is sensed by *the Opened Eye of Dangma*. But where was *Dangma* when the *Alaya of the Universa* was in *Paramartha*, and the Great Wheel was *Anupadaka*?<sup>4</sup>

## Paramartha

*Paramartha* is the name of another esoteric treatise said to belong to the same series as the *Stanzas* and the *Voice of the Silence*:

Together with the great mystic work called *Paramartha*, which, the legend of *Nagarjuna* tells us, was delivered to the great Arhat by the Nagas or "Serpents" (in truth a name given to the ancient Initiates), the "Book of the Golden Precepts" claims the same origin.<sup>5</sup>

The term is one of crucial importance in the *Madhyamika* school of Buddhism, and is defined in the *Secret Doctrine* as "Absolute Being and Consciousness, which are Absolute Non-Being and Unconsciousness."<sup>6</sup>

Krishnamurti, speaking in a more contemporary style, clarified (italics added) this matter of Absolute Being, which is Absolute Non-Being, when he pointed out that

The essence of thought is that state when thought is not. However deeply and widely thought is pursued, thought will always remain shallow, superficial. The ending of thought is negation and what is negative has no positive way; there is no method, no system to end thought. The method, the system is a positive approach to negation and

thus thought can never find the essence of itself. It must cease for the essence to be. *The essence of being is non-being, and to "see" the depth of non-being, there must be freedom from becoming.*<sup>7</sup>

HPB explains further in her commentary, using a language denuded of the Hegelian terms invariably employed in the *Secret Doctrine* (perhaps to enhance acceptance by her Victorian audience). She says that

"Paramarthasatya" is self-consciousness, Svasamvedana, or self-analyzing reflection--from *parama*, above everything, and *artha*, comprehension--*satya* meaning absolute true being, or *esse*.<sup>8</sup>

If HPB's commentary to verse nine of the first stanza is read carefully, it will be seen that the subject matter of the whole stanza, clearly, is not altogether the creation of the universe in the conventional sense, as every single commentary on the *Secret Doctrine* takes for granted. Rather, and reading it with the psychological key in mind--instead of with the metaphysical, as has been done in the past--this text is dealing primarily with states of awareness that are possible only for a very accomplished adept. It is said there (*italics added*) that

Alaya is the Soul of the World of Anima Mundi--the Over-Soul of Emerson--which according to esoteric teaching changes its nature periodically. Alaya, though eternal and changeless in its inner essence on the planes which are unreachable by either men or cosmic gods (DhyaniBuddhas), changes during the active life-period with respect to the lower planes, ours included. *During that time not only the Dhyani-Buddhas are one with Alaya in Soul and Essence, but even the man strong in Yoga (Mystic Meditation) "is able to merge his soul with it," as Aryasanga, of the Yogacharya school, says. This is not Nirvana, but a condition next to it.*<sup>9</sup>

The real nature of space, and the seriousness of the difficulties implied in speaking about this subject without the proper perspective in one's daily life (as is routinely done by metaphysicians), is again clearly spelled out by Krishnamurti:

Thought cannot conceive or formulate to itself the nature of space. Whatever it formulates has within it the limitation of its own boundaries. This is not the space which meditation comes upon. Thought has always a horizon. The meditative mind has no horizon. The mind cannot go from the limited to the immense, nor can it transform the limited into the limitless. The one has to

cease for the other to be. Meditation is opening the door into spaciousness which cannot be imagined or speculated upon. Thought is the center round which there is the space of idea, and this space can be expanded by further ideas. But such expansion through stimulation in any form is not the spaciousness in which there is no center. Meditation is the understanding of this center and so going beyond it. Silence and spaciousness go together. The immensity of silence is the immensity of the mind in which a center does not exist. The perception of this space and silence is not of thought. Thought can perceive only its own projection, and the recognition of it is its own frontier.<sup>10</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Blavatsky, *Voice of the Silence*, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> Blavatsky, *Voice of the Silence*, *op. cit.*, fragments 2-5.

<sup>3</sup> Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 118.

<sup>4</sup> Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 91-92.

<sup>5</sup> Blavatsky, *Voice of the Silence*, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>6</sup> Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, *op. cit.*, p. 119 fn.

<sup>7</sup> J. Krishnamurti, *Krishnamurti's Notebook*, Harper & Row: New York, 1976, pp. 57-58.

<sup>8</sup> Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 120 fn.

<sup>9</sup> Blavatsky, *Secret Doctrine*, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 119.

<sup>10</sup> J. Krishnamurti, *The Only Revolution*, Victor Gollancz: London, 1970, p. 40.

## Chapter 8:

# The Kalachakra Tantra

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The recent discovery that the *Stanzas of Dzyan* are at least partly taken from the *Kalachakra Tantra* (or possibly viceversa) goes a very long way to showing that the essence of the *Secret Doctrine* can best be expressed as being the transformation of man. After all, transformation is universally acknowledged as the essence of Tantra, and the Kalachakra lineage is similarly recognized both in India and Tibet as the source of the highest and most esoteric of all teachings.<sup>1</sup>

Researches done by professor Jagannath Upadhyaya of Benares Sanskrit University, by H.J. Spierenburg of the Netherlands, and by David Reigle in the United States provide quite emphatic evidence that the true teaching of theosophy is one and the same with the so-called "Teaching of Shambhala," another name for the teaching of the Kalachakra lineage.<sup>2</sup>

Connecting the *Stanzas* and the *Kalachakra Tantra* is a true landmark in the understanding of the actual teaching of HPB's teachers. Since the essence of the Kalachakra teaching is transformation, it implies that the essence of theosophy is what takes place in the process of transformation itself. The heart of theosophy would then not be likely to be a mere series of "teachings" that anyone can speak or write about with more or less lucidity. Rather, it would be the act of transformed perception itself, unencumbered by any claims coming from the conditioned mind. In Buddhism, the most developed line of teaching came through the Mahayana and the Vajrayana, in both of which the initial teachings of the Buddha seemed to have been discarded radically. And it should be kept in mind that Nagarjuna, who is considered the primary source for these lineages, has been widely acknowledged as giving the "Teaching of Shambhala."

The reason why there is in Nagarjuna the appearance of discarding the Noble Eightfold Path together with many of the other fundamental teachings of Buddhism, is perhaps that they had become a tool for the conditioned mind rather than an element for true liberation. The moment a fixed idea is created about any truth, it ceases to be the truth and begins to be an element of the conditioned mind--and is one of the reasons for the danger of metaphysical expositions made without the benefit of the psychological key. That is perhaps a reason why in the roots of the Mahayana and the Vajrayana it was considered indispensable to do away with the acceptance of fixed teachings. This then may also be a reason why true theosophy cannot be a series of fixed teachings, however sublime they may sometimes sound.

## The teaching of Shambhala

All such teachings are of the world of the conditioned mind, and are not very likely to lead to a life of transformation, except as they may provoke frustration and subsequent abandonment by the very

serious. In fact, the teaching of Shambhala (as in the first stanza quoted above) seems to suggest very clearly that the life of transformation does not begin until and unless all ideas, beliefs and attachments to various philosophies cease to be. Transformation implies that the conditioned mind is no longer, and something else takes its place. It is only in such a state that true theosophy *begins*. When transformation is taking place, according to Nagarjuna and therefore the teaching of Shambhala, it is then not necessary to believe or disbelieve in anything. The beliefs in reincarnation, karma, the oneness of life, the spiritual path, or any others, are quite dispensable in the context of the life of transformation. Whatever takes place in such a context of total negation of the conditioned mind is sacred (to borrow a term from Krishnamurti) and is its own source; it does not require justification from any book or teaching. Its normal expression would be a total compenetration with whatever is taking place, and so it would be described by personalities witnessing it as compassion, wisdom, understanding, caring. As Krishnamurti put it,

Meditation is not a search, it's not a seeking, a probing, an exploration. It is an explosion and discovery. It's not the taming of the brain to conform nor is it a self-introspective analysis, it is certainly not the training in concentration which includes, chooses and denies. It's something that comes naturally, when all positive and negative assertions and accomplishments have been understood and drop away easily. It is the total emptiness of the brain. It's the emptiness that is essential, not what's in the emptiness, there is seeing only from emptiness, all virtue, not social morality and respectability, springs from it. It's out of this emptiness love comes, otherwise it's not love. Foundation of righteousness is in this emptiness. It's the end and beginning of all things.<sup>3</sup>

## **Krishnamurti and Nagarjuna**

A connection between Krishnamurti and Nagarjuna has indeed been made by Buddhists. In speaking of Pandit Jagannath Upadhyaya, Pupul Jayakar says in her biography of Krishnamurti that

In the beginning of the 1950s, when pandits of Varanasi had first hear Krishnaji, the Buddhists held that Krishnaji was speaking Buddhism, the Vedantins that he was in the stream of Vedanta. Later, Upadhyayaji felt that Krishnaji was more in the stream of Nagarjuna. Again, at a later period, he felt that krishnaji's word was what Nagarjuna would have said had he been alive today. It was relevant to the contemporary moment.<sup>4</sup>

It would seem to be a great temptation for a conditioned mind, when confronted with a manifestation of the life of transformation, to create a new world of ideas in order to explain that life. However, in



the first place the description of the conditioned mind (*all* descriptions are the descriptions of the conditioned mind because they are expressed in its language), are not the described, they never can say what one would like for them to be able to say. And secondly, even when the description is inspiring at some level, it is never itself the life of transformation, and is therefore completely irrelevant. The only thing that matters is the life of transformation, and it would seem that all the "teachings" are so much grist for the mill of the conditioned mind, no matter how beautiful or profound they may sound. This is the first lesson to be learned in the teaching of Shambhala, as all the evidence seems to suggest.

## **KH and transformation**

A formidable problem is how difficult it is to really see this first lesson for oneself, since there is no help from any scripture, guru, or tradition at that point. One is totally by oneself, with nothing to lean on. As one of HPB's teachers, the Master KH, put it,

The fact is, that to the last and supreme initiation every chela--and even some adepts--is left to his own device and counsel. We have to fight our own battles, and the familiar adage--"the adept *becomes*, he is not *made*" is true to the letter.<sup>5</sup>

Eliminating the attachments of the conditioned mind (including all the teachings and practices that one's conditioned mind may have come to identify with the spiritual life), obviously would create a tremendous vacuum in one's life. This void would be so deeply uncomfortable, that there would be a very great temptation to fill it up with new concepts. It is very tempting, for instance, to create a new world of ideas out of the notion that all ideas are to be given up.

Being left without any concept to depend on feels so "wrong" to the concept-bound conditioned mind, that it easily assumes that there must really be something wrong with the death of all of its precious-held attachments. But so long as one is acting according to a formula, no matter how clever, sophisticated or subtle, it is the conditioned mind, the *me*, that is in charge. One might like to find some comfort in having a ready-made formula for how life will be without the conditioned mind. In fact, however it is not possible to predetermine how transformation will take place because, as Master KH underscored, it is always original, unique.

It is this sense of disorientation and uncomfortableness naturally felt by the conditioned mind that has made Krishnamurti's insights and observations so very difficult for many of the vast numbers of people--and not only Theosophists--who came in contact with him throughout his long life. This uneasiness is strikingly reminiscent of the accounts of discipleship and probation spoken of continuously in the early years of the society's history, particularly in the letters of the Masters.

- <sup>1</sup> See Edwin Bernbaum, *The way to Shambhala*, Garden City: Anchor Books, 1980; see also Chogyam Trungpa, *Shambhala. The Sacred Path of the Warrior*, New York: Bantam Books, 1986.
- <sup>2</sup> See David Reigle, *The Books of Kiu-Te or The Tibetan Buddhist Tantras. A Preliminary Analysis*, San Diego: Wizards Bookshelf, 1983; see also his paper "New Light on the *Book of Dzyan*," in *Symposium on H.P. Blavatsky's Secret Doctrine. Proceedings*, San Diego: Point Loma Publications, 1991.
- <sup>3</sup> Krishnamurti, *Notebook*, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.
- <sup>4</sup> Pupul Jayakar, *Krishnamurti, A Biography*, New York: Harper & Row, 1986, p. 434.
- <sup>5</sup> Humphreys and Benjamin, eds., *Mahatma Letters*, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

## Chapter 9:

# Krishnamurti and Transformation

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When Krishnamurti came on the theosophical scene, the universal understanding in all the theosophical and other new age organizations was that theosophy--or the perennial philosophy under whatever other name--is primarily a metaphysical system, a logical construct of concepts and ideas.

It was thought (and still is) that theosophy consists of a series of teachings that, in their reasonableness, lead human beings to live the spiritual life, which was understood as following a number of set rules. Nevertheless, a careful perusal of all the original sources (the letters from the Masters, HPB's writings, and the writings of some of the chelas) shows that the real teaching was never meant to be merely a "rational" exposition of "reality."

Rather, it was presented first and foremost as a series of intuitive injunctions and exhortations to inspire interest in the life of transformation, the life of brotherhood and unconditional acceptance of that which is the case. That is part of the reason why there have been so many apparently disparate versions of the teaching, why most of them are in disagreement with the others on crucial points, and why in the early years (when the Masters' influence was more ostensive) there was such a great confusion among the members about what the actual teaching was.

Most members were looking for--and others were writing and giving lectures about--a "rational" picture of the world. The Masters and HPB, on the other hand, were teaching *a way of living* that implied discarding the intellect as the source of wisdom, and implementing brotherhood in one's life. This meant partly not paying much attention to what anyone (including oneself) believed or did not believe. As was pointed out by Master KH to Mrs. Besant,

No one has a right to claim authority over a pupil or his conscience. Ask him not what he believes... The crest wave of intellectual advancement must be taken hold of and guided into Spirituality. It cannot be forced into beliefs and ceremonial worship.<sup>1</sup>

## Krishnamurti and theosophy

The presence of Krishnamurti in the midst of the theosophical world can then be perceived as not having been a mistake nor a bizarre coincidence. It was through Krishnamurti that the first lesson of the teaching of Shambhala was spotlessly given to the world at large.

What he spoke of throughout his life addressed the necessity for dying from moment to moment (in

the theosophical terminology, the death of the personality), as in the statements quoted in previous chapters. He further addressed the problem of our not being able to understand, to really "know," anything, so long as perception comes from conditioning, from a point of view. The life of concepts and conditioning is clearly also the life of the personality, of the conditioned mind, so (again, putting it in theosophical terms) he was pointing to the need to allow something other than the personality to determine our understanding of things.

But he absolutely refused to give a name to that "other" that came about when the conditioned mind is not there, such as is done in some theosophical, Hindu and Buddhist schools. This refusal of his baffled many, who demanded to be given a "rational" picture of the world. He would never say "this is Buddhi we are speaking of," or "I am referring to the upper triad," as is done in metaphysical, purely conceptual expositions.\* Whenever words are used to refer to this "other" beyond the conceptual mind, everything is thereby relegated to the plane of the conditioned mind, no matter how "profound" or "spiritual" it may sound.

It does not seem as if the real Buddhi of theosophical literature could refer merely to a word or a concept. Nor does it seem as if it could credibly be categorized on a pyramidal chart in which it would be placed near the "top." Terms such as "top," "bottom," "above," and "below," with their connotations of "superior" and "inferior," ought not to be expected to have any place in the world of the *actual* "upper triad" spoken of in perennial literature. But to speak of these things as if one knew what one was talking or writing about can have the effect of demeaning them. It encourages the pretense that they can be spoken about rationally with words and concepts, contrary to the teaching of Shambhala. That teaching proposes, as shown above, that the beginning of learning takes place with the death of the conditioned mind--and with it of all concepts.

## **A litmus test**

Krishnamurti showed uncompromisingly what a serious and dangerous mistake it is to categorize sublime notions. Anyone who only *believes* in "the oneness of life," for instance, and is not actually existing in the state of *being* all life, is thereby almost certain to be falling asleep and going astray from the life of transformation, in which there can be no such *concept*. It may very well be that, upon the actual dying of the conditioned mind with all its concepts and conditionings, there may come the discovery that life *is* one, after all. But that also is a very dangerous *idea* to pursue, because that sort of *speculation* is but another conceptual distraction from the life of transformation.

In other words, Krishnamurti's presence in the 20th Century has made it possible for each of us to have a real litmus test for how serious we actually are about theosophy, about that which is. It implies that a theosophist is not necessarily someone who holds certain beliefs, but rather someone who lives the life of transformation. Another implication in all this is that anyone who believes in or presents theosophy to others as if it were a series of fixed teachings, would be, despite good intentions, most lamentably misrepresenting the truth, and possibly doing a disservice to the esoteric teaching.

It should then perhaps come as no great surprise to read in Pupul Jayakar's biography of Krishnamurti, statements made at the turn of the century by two practicing *tantrikas* of the Kalachakra lineage whom Mrs. Besant consulted regularly in Benares:

Pandit Jagannath Upadyaya of Varanasi, who had found a copy of the original text of the *Kala Chakra Tantra*, and who was undertaking research into it, told Krishnaji that Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj maintained that the Theosophical Society drew much of its hidden teaching from this secret doctrine. He went on to say that Swami Vishudhanand and Gopinath Kaviraj, in the early years of the twentieth century, had spoken to Mrs. Besant of the imminent coming of the Maitreya Bodhisattva and his manifestation in a human body; according to the swami, the body chosen was that of Krishnamurti.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, such statements about Krishnamurti have been widely interpreted as meaning either that he was a very great authority whom we all must follow to the letter, or that those who made such statements were mistaken. Hopefully, it has been shown here that there is a very clear and incontestable intimate relationship between the Kalachakra lineage, Nagarjuna and Zen, the Masters who began the theosophical movement, the teaching of the perennial philosophy, the *Secret Doctrine*, and Krishnamurti. However, this need not mean that Krishnamurti (or the Masters, for that matter) need be accepted *a priori* as a supreme authority in spiritual matters.

Authority, after all, can be seen to be but another *concept* of the conditioned mind--accepted or rejected according to its prejudices--so anyone who follows authorities is not likely to be living the life of transformation. It is the conditioned mind that arbitrarily creates the notions of the "superior" and the "inferior," so indispensable for having authorities. But in reality, such distinctions have absolutely no meaning.

Krishnamurti, was not an authority, in part precisely because he can now be seen to have been an integral part of a much larger picture--of a Tibetan *t'angka* scroll painting, one might say, created in Shambhala.

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## Notes

\* In the graphic--and therefore purely conceptual--picture provided by Victorian Theosophy, "Buddhi" is the level of awareness just beyond the "concrete" mind, and is one of the three elements composing the "upper triad" or Atma (spirit), Buddhi (intuition, love) and Manas ("upper" mind).

<sup>1</sup> C. Jinaradasa, ed., *Letters From the Masters of the Wisdom, First Series*, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1964 [1919], p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Jayakar, *Krishnamurti, op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.