

Annie Besant in India

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Compiled by C. V. Agarwal and Pedro Oliveira

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For Radhaji

Contents

Introduction	
1. An Enduring Dedication (1847-1891)	
2. From England to India	
3. <i>Sanātana Dharma</i> : Education through Timeless Values	
4. President of the Theosophical Society: ‘Theosophy is for All’	
5. Krishnaji and the World Teacher Movement	
6. Her Vision for India	
7. India’s Awakening	
8. Home Rule for India	
9. Commonwealth of India Bill: Foundation for the Future	
10. The Departure of the Diamond Soul	
11. Epilogue	
Appendix 1	
Appendix 2	
Appendix 3	

Introduction

In July 1924, at the Queen's Hall in London, the Golden Jubilee of Annie Besant's public work was celebrated. C. Jinarājadāsa, who was the time in Adyar, Madras, India, quoted from a telegram he received concerning the occasion which said: 'I am amazed... this is no narrow Jubilee; it is the history of the past fifty years.' A number of her former colleagues were there, including the MP George Lansbury.

From the Irish struggle to Home Rule for India, from fiercely fighting social injustice and inequality in England to tackling child marriage in India, from exposing the hypocrisy of the upper classes in London towards the appalling poverty of its East End, from becoming Madame Blavatsky's successor (according to Blavatsky's own words) to being elected President of the Theosophical Society (TS) and an open target for malice and unending misrepresentation, even to this day, Annie Besant made history.

Most public figures retain a form of protective shield, even in these days of electronic media. Annie Besant's public work was direct, open, uncompromising, relentless and effective. Her protective shield, if there was one, was a sound, calm and life-altering unselfishness. As a deep student of the *Bhagavad Gitā*, she knew that only selfless action can transform the mind and therefore the world. She was, indeed, the 'sage of stable mind' described by Sri Krishna to Arjuna in chapter two of that pearl of world spirituality:

He whose mind is free from anxiety amid pains,
indifferent amid pleasures, loosed from passion, fear and anger, he
is called a sage of stable mind. (56)

He who on every side is without attachments, whatever
hap of fair and foul, who neither likes nor dislikes, of such a one

the understanding is well-poised. (57)

Her *Autobiography*, published in 1893, narrates her personal journey as it happened and provides compelling evidence that unselfishness and a profound sense of justice were the driving forces of her life, much before she joined the Theosophical Society. She was portrayed during the serious institutional crises in the TS, in a similar way as in the Judge and the Leadbeater cases, as a power-hungry, deluded, ambitious and weak woman. Her accusers had a psychological need to thus portray her as such, for at every step she was making her own decisions without fear or favour. However, life shows that smearing a leader that does not work for self eventually backfires.

As an example, two scholars in our century (Daniel H. Caldwell¹ and David Reigle²) presented unbiased, technical and scholarly evidence that the Third Volume of *The Secret Doctrine*, published by Annie Besant in 1897, with the notes which were left behind by Madame Blavatsky in her care, was indeed the work of the author of *The Secret Doctrine* and not an adulterated text. For publishing it she endured widespread abuse and malice from Theosophical groups in different parts of the world, not affiliated with the International Headquarters at Adyar. The abuse continued in the twentieth century through books, magazines, journals, blogs and websites, and it continues even today.

As President of the Theosophical Society she spearheaded an unprecedented popularization of Theosophy. Her books became widely popular, bringing the message of Theosophy to remote corners of the globe. The TS expanded its presence to countries in

¹ 'The Myth of the "Missing" Third Volume of *The Secret Doctrine*', Blavatsky Archives, <https://www.blavatskyarchives.com/sdiiipt1.htm>

² *Secret Doctrine Würzburg Manuscript* by David Reigle, Eastern School Press, Cotopaxi, Colorado, 2014.

which it did not exist before. She helped in making the light of Theosophy shine far and wide.

She introduced to the world a young, shy, sometimes vacant-looking young boy called Jiddu Krishnamurti. She was completely convinced that one day he would become the vehicle for the Bodhisattva Maitreya, the World Teacher. Again she was ridiculed and abused, even by some of her own TS members. But if you read Krishnamurti's final statement of February 1986, recorded a few days before he died, and included in Chapter Five, you will see how her vision for him was completely fulfilled. Those who knew him closely reported on the depth of his love for 'Amma', as Krishnaji referred to Dr Besant.

But it was her work for Mother India that occupied a great deal of her time, to which she lent a mind and a heart galvanized by the ever-present holiness which dwells in Āryavārta, the ancient name for India. An essential part of this book consists of the many and moving testimonies of her Indian colleagues and contemporaries about how complete, self-denying and compassionate was her dedication to India, and equally her courage and determination while working for that nation. The testimonies reveal how her life and love for the country was poured through the hearts and minds of her colleagues and co-workers. She was venerated almost like a spiritual political guru, with the fundamental difference that while many 'political gurus' use the adulation to pursue their own self-interest, Dr Besant channelled the veneration towards her into a mass movement that was instrumental in awakening India from its slumber.

The real core of this book is her vision for India. Essential to that vision is the principle that the state does not exist for itself but must wisely use its powers and resources to awaken the potentialities of every individual, to bring opportunities to all, to educate its citizens in the truth that all life is one. In Dr Besant's vision, the essence of religion – which the Indian ethos calls *dharma*, duty, law, order,

essential nature – can provide the living background to the education and growth of individuals. This comes about not by inculcating beliefs and dogmas, but by sharing the view that we do not exist for ourselves alone. The significance of our lives is achieved when we realize that we have a duty to society, and that duty is service. For Dr Besant, that duty was spiritually compelling: “The Theosophic Life must be a life of service. Unless we are serving, we have no right to live. We live by the constant sacrifice of other lives on every side, and we must pay it back; otherwise, to use an ancient phrase, we are but thieves and do not repay the gift.” (*The Theosophist*, March 1909)

When she publicly differed from M.K. Gandhi in his policies of civil disobedience and non-cooperation, and was practically shunted aside by the leadership of the freedom movement, she would still press on with her work. She continued to maintain that India one day would be a spiritual democracy. In his book, *A Theosophist Looks at the World*, N. Sri Ram (TPH Adyar, 1950), who was at one time Dr Besant’s private secretary, describes the concept:

A spiritual democracy can only mean for us a democracy in which there is the preference of Wisdom to ignorance; order brought by elimination of those conflicts which now tear the democratic body; freedom for each to grow to his possible stature; a democracy in which all laws and institutions in every department will exist to afford an outlet to the creative energies of the people and make an appeal by their rightness to the good sense and idealism in every uncorrupted individual. It must be a democracy planned and constructed with proper measures and in due proportion, showing a perfect adaptation of its various parts to each other and to the whole.

This book contains three Appendices: ‘A Besant Diary of Principal Events’, ‘A List of Books and Pamphlets Written by Annie Besant’ and ‘Annie Besant and the Judge Case’. The first two were

selected by Dr Agarwal and the third one by me. Since so many books, articles and essays have been written for more than one hundred and twenty years condemning Dr Besant for her role in the Judge Case it seems only appropriate to present her views of that difficult period in the life of the Theosophical Society, together with those of Col. Henry S. Olcott and some of his fellow workers in the TS.

Acknowledgements

Radha Burnier, President of the Theosophical Society (1980-2013) mentioned to me and to others at Adyar that, before he passed away, J. Krishnamurti asked her to write a biography of 'Amma' (as he used to refer to Annie Besant). While keeping the idea in her mind she was constantly hampered by lack of time due to her heavy responsibilities, including many international travels. Mrs Burnier then asked Dr C. V. Agarwal, former General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in India and the author of the book *The Buddhist and Theosophical Movements*, which depicted the unparalleled contribution of Col. H. S. Olcott to the Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka, to come to Adyar.

Dr Agarwal took up residence at Adyar, the International Headquarters of the TS in Chennai, India, and conducted research on the book for a number of years, until he passed away in June 2009. He was also at that time Officer-in-Charge of the TS Archives.

Mrs Burnier realised that it was not possible to undertake a full biography of Dr Besant. Instead, she said that the book should concentrate on her work in India. She also decided that the first chapter should consist of a condensed version of Annie Besant's *Autobiography*, which was duly prepared by Dr Agarwal.

After Dr Agarwal passed away, I went to Mrs Burnier's office and indicated to her that with notes and material prepared by him I could try and produce a manuscript for her consideration, to which she agreed. After I left Adyar, in September 2011, I worked

on the manuscript in my spare time. A triennial meeting of the Indo-Pacific Federation of the TS was scheduled to take place in Bali, Indonesia, at the end of October 2013. I had planned to attend that meeting and then proceed to Adyar in order to conduct a course at The School of the Wisdom. I was also going to show the unfinished manuscript to Radhaji.

On the morning of 1st November 2013, when my wife Linda and I were at breakfast, John Vorstermans, National President of the New Zealand Section of the TS, told us the news that Radhaji had passed away on the night of 31st October at her residence at Adyar. The news travelled very fast throughout the TS. Tributes to her came from different parts of the world. After I arrived at Adyar I went up to Parsi Quarters, her residence, now empty, to pay my respects to her. She had helped me to dedicate myself to the work of the Society.

Before I left Adyar, in September 2011, Radhaji had approved the table of contents and chose the title for the book, *Annie Besant in India*. We had several telephone conversations between the end of 2011 and her passing in 2013. Working full time and with a schedule of travels within Australia and sometimes also overseas, my time allocated to work on the book was limited until more recent times.

Sincere thanks are due to Mrs Radha Burnier for her encouragement, guidance and inspiration, as well as for conversations over a period of more than seven years about the history of the TS and the role of Adyar, about Dr Besant and also Krishnaji. [I would also eventually ask her some Sanskrit questions, like the meaning of the word *stitha* (in *stithaprajña*, the stable mind of the sage mentioned in the Second Discourse in the *Bhagavad Gitā*). She said: ‘Immovable’. In other words, a mind unshaken by experiences, steady, firm, unassailable. That was her mind. My respect for her is renewed every day, both in my mind and in my heart.]

This book would not have seen the light of day without the steady and dedicated research work of Dr C. V. Agarwal. He

produced most of the content for the first four chapters: ‘An Enduring Dedication (1847-1891)’ – a much condensed version of important points in Mrs Besant’s *Autobiography*; ‘From England to India’, containing Basil Hodgson-Smith’s serialized articles in *The Theosophist* about Mrs Besant’s work from 1891 to 1911, entitled ‘Twenty Years of Work’; ‘*Sanātana Dharma*: Education through Timeless Values’ and ‘President of the Theosophical Society: “Theosophy is for All”’. The first two appendices are also the fruit of his research: ‘A Besant Diary of Principal Events’ and ‘A List of Books and Pamphlets Written by Annie Besant’, both originally published in *The Theosophist*, October 1947, Besant Centenary Number.

Sincere thanks are also due to the Adyar Library and Research Centre at the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Chennai, India. It was there that Dr Agarwal conducted most of his research for this book over a number of years. Gratitude is also expressed to the TS Archives at Adyar for the photographs included in this book. Appreciation is also extended to the Campbell Theosophical Research Library in Sydney which contains a unique collection of Theosophical periodicals from the earliest years of the TS.

I am grateful for the help given by Sri S. Sundaram, former General Secretary of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, and resident at its Headquarters, for providing information about Dr Bhagavan Das and Dr Besant, in particular his moving testimony after the former had immersed her ashes in the Ganga. Srimati Manju Sundaram, Visiting Professor of the Benares Hindu University, provided much needed information on the Indian pandits that helped Mrs Besant with her translation of the *Bhagavad Gitā* into English.

Special thanks are due to Neeta Agrawal, an accomplished designer, for her unique cover design and blurb, and also for her generous assistance over a long period of time. She has undertaken voluntary work for the Theosophical Publishing House at Adyar for many years thus enhancing, with her artistic acumen, the quality of

books and magazines that TPH Adyar brings out. Her work can be seen on Instagram under 'neetadesign'.

It is hoped that an Indian edition of this book may be published in the not too distant future.

Pedro Oliveira
Compiler

An Enduring Dedication (1847-1891)

The world into which Annie Besant was born was a period of traumatic social and political upheaval and nervous change. The Great Famine in Ireland (1845-1852) caused unprecedented mass starvation, disease and emigration, during which more than one million people died and another million emigrated from Ireland. It would have a strong impact on the relations between Ireland and Britain, eventually leading to the Irish independence. The impact of the famine was nothing short of graphic:

The starving peasants streamed into the nearest considerable town, hoping for relief there, and found too often that there the very sources of charity were dried up. Many, very many, thus disappointed, merely lied down on the pavement and died there. Along the country roads one met everywhere groups of gaunt dim-eyed wretches, clad in miserable old sacking and wandering aimlessly with some vague idea of finding food, as the boy in the fable hope to find the gold where the rainbow touched the earth. Many remained in their empty hovels and took death there when he came. In some regions the country seemed unpeopled for miles. A fervid national writer declared that the impression made on him by the aspect of the country then was that of 'one silent vast dissolution'.

(McCarthy, Justin, *A History of Our Times*, vol. I, George Robertson, Melbourne, 1881, p. 225)

During 1848 Europe was swept by revolutionary movements that affected over fifty countries, including some in Latin America. They were a cry for more social and political participation brought about by a heightened political awareness. What was known as the

year of ‘unfulfilled revolutions’ included the Crimean war, the Indian Mutiny, the war between France and Austria, the long civil war in United States and the campaigns of Garibaldi in Italy.

Around the same time period in India, during what became known as the British Raj, the approach to education of Indians was exemplified by Macaulay’s stand ‘who strongly believed that India had nothing to teach its own subjects and the best education for them should happen in English’.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_education_in_the_Indian_subcontinent)

After a hot debate in council between Macaulay and Prinsep, it was decided on 7 March, 1835, that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European Literature and science among the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriated to education would best be employed on English education alone. ... No more students, however, were to be supported during the period of their education and no money should be employed on printing Oriental works. All funds thus released should be employed “in imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language”.

(The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Volume V, Edited by H. H. Dodwell, Cambridge, At the University Press, 1932, p. 112)

Annie Besant would address these and other vital issues for India’s life and progress vigorously and with sharp and focused intent. Her kind, intelligent and compassionate nature responded to the great social, economic and political issues of her time always with energy, determination and selflessness. And throughout her struggles one common factor was her heartfelt resonance to the vast and appalling suffering she saw in the world. The lot of those who

suffered always received more attention from her than her own well-being and comfort. Hers was a dedicated life.

Below are some of the highlights of Annie Besant's life story up to 1891 based on her *Autobiography*. In its Preface she wrote:

It is a difficult thing to tell the story of a life, and yet more difficult when that life is one's own. At the best, the telling has a savour of vanity, and the only excuse for the proceeding is that the life, being an average one, reflects many others, and in troublous times like ours may give the experience of many rather than of one. And so the autobiographer does his work because he thinks that, at the cost of some unpleasantness to himself, he may throw light on some of the typical problems that are vexing the souls of his contemporaries, and perchance may stretch out a helping hand to some brother who is struggling in the darkness, and so bring him cheer when despair has him in its grip.³

And she adds: 'it may well be that the story of one may help all, and that the tale of one soul that went out alone into the darkness and on the other side found light, that struggled through the Storm and on the other side found Peace, may bring some ray of light and of peace into the darkness and the storm of other lives.'(op. cit., p. xiv.)

No one, not even her loving parents, could have ever dreamed that the baby, who was born in London on 1 October 1847, would become known to people around the world for more than six decades of sustained and courageous service to humanity and whose example and teachings continue to inspire and elevate countless people almost ninety years after her passing.

³ Annie Besant, *An Autobiography*, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1983, p. xiii.

Annie Besant's father was Irish on his mother's side 'though belonging to the Devonshire's Woods on his father's'. Her mother was of pure Irish descent. Although born in London Annie Besant declared that 'three-quarters of my blood and all my heart are Irish'. The mother instilled into Annie the ideal of acting honourably in the face of suffering; she might starve but not run into debt, any suggestion of shame must be shunned. Heart-breaking suffering must be borne with a smile. This strict training established in young Annie a sense of honour, reticence, and prepared her to face storm, slander and attack in her future public life. There arose in her an attitude of 'stubbornly resistant feeling' and 'inwardly asserted its own purity in face of foulest lie, and turning scareful face against the foe, too proud either to justify itself or to defend'.

A beautiful relationship existed between her father and mother. 'He was keenly intellectual and splendidly educated; a mathematician, a good classical scholar, and a master of six languages, 'with a smattering of Hebrew and Gaelic'. As a student of philosophy, he was profoundly sceptical to the extent of sending away the priest who was brought to his death bed. Her mother was selflessly devoted to those she loved, contemptuous of all that was mean or base, highly sensitive on every question of honour, sweet in tenderness yet of iron will. She was a devout Christian but her husband's 'liberal and unorthodox thought modified and partially rationalized her beliefs'. She did not have faith in doctrines like eternal punishment, the vicarious atonement, the infallibility of the Bible, the equality of the Son with the Father in the Trinity.

Such was the home atmosphere into which Annie was born, deeply religious at heart but rebellious against dogmas that crushed the reason and did not satisfy the soul. A calamity befell the family when Annie was five years old. Her father caught a cold which settled in his chest and he passed away. A few months later her infant brother passed away leaving her and her elder brother as sole consolation to the bereaved mother.

As a child Annie was ‘mystical and imaginative’, highly religious and ‘with a certain faculty for seeing visions and dreaming dreams’. The sensitiveness to impressions other than physical ones was a marked feature of her family. In her childhood elves and fairies were real things, and she saw her dolls as real children.

Now began a period of struggle and hardship. Her father had a good income but he left hardly anything for the family to live on. On his death bed he urged that Harry, Annie’s elder brother, should receive the best possible education. Her mother resolved to fulfil that last wish and decided to educate him first at Harrow and later at Cambridge or Oxford. This was a bold scheme for a penniless widow, but she had a strong mind and will. Two of the family friends had offered to educate him but could not afford such an ambitious project, however, they helped. She moved to Harrow and the parents of a boy Harry’s age kept him under her charge, which gave her an income.

Soon afterwards a kindly maiden lady of means, Miss Marryat, came to the home and took an interest in Annie’s education. She had already undertaken to educate one of her nieces and thought it would be good to have two girls to teach. After some persuasion and seeing the larger interests of the daughter the mother agreed to leave Annie under the charge of Miss Marryat.

Miss Marryat delighted in seeking out children from families of very small means and giving them the best possible education. She had a perfect genius for teaching and taught everything except music for which she engaged a teacher. She was very gentle and taught in a manner that was a delight to the children, who called her ‘Auntie’. She strongly disapproved of learning by rote material they did not understand. The emphasis was about children expressing what they learnt. Thus, Annie covered a wide spectrum of subjects including languages, and a joyous and healthy clarity of thought and expression was ingrained in her.

Annie started reading from the age of five when she was frequently absorbed in fairy land or in dreams of heroes or martyrs. Her religious education, with a strongly evangelical bent, began at the age of eight. Her memory was very good and took dreamy pleasure in reciting from memory many parts of the Old and New Testaments.

When Annie was about fourteen years old Miss Marryat, with a view to give a broader based education, took her along with her other 'children' to Germany and France. While in Germany the girls went to some lovely excursions such as climbing mountains, rowing on the Rhine and wandering in exquisite valleys.

In Paris they spent seven happy, busy months, as part of her training which stood Annie in good stead for later life. They had to work hard at their studies on four days a week and spent time in galleries of the Louvre crowded with Madonnas and saints, visited almost all the beautiful Churches – that of St Germain de l'Auxerrois impressed Annie. She remembers the solemn beauty of Notre Dame, the gaudy magnificence of La Sainte Chapelle, the stately La Madeleine and impressive St Roch. The English Chaplain at the church of the Rue d'Aguesseau taking advantage of the visit of the Bishop of Ohio there arranged for a confirmation ceremony. Annie had already taken the vows made in her name at Baptism very seriously. She carefully prepared for this ceremony with prolonged prayers, the 'sevenfold gifts of the spirit', which were to be given to her by 'the laying on of hands'.

Wise teacher as Miss Marryat was, she gradually and gently withdrew her constant supervision and left Annie to find her own way through her studies. She would intervene only when some mistake was made. Thus, Annie gradually became more and more self-reliant. When sixteen years of age Annie perfected her French and German and returned home to live with her mother, going each week for a few lessons at Miss Marryat's place. Her mother had a passion for music and so arranged lessons with an able teacher.

The study she chose shows her bent of mind. She dwelt on Fathers of the early Christian Church into whose writings she delved deeply. Conception of a Catholic Church lasting through the centuries gave her great joy. She dwelt on apostles and martyrs from the early days of Christianity. 'One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism' and considered herself a child of the Holy Church. Keen to tread the pathway trodden by the Saints she fasted as enjoined by the Church and flogged herself to see if she could bear physical pain. Constant study, weekly communion, ecstatic meditation became part of devotional life she voluntarily chose for herself.

At the Christmas in 1865 a little mission church was opened near Annie's grandfather's house in a very poor district of Clapham, in which she and her aunt worked hard for the as a preparation for Easter decorating it beautifully. She had mentally prepared herself for the great event of Resurrection, following the traditional Catholic practice of fasting, prayers and mentally following the historical events. For better understanding she compiled the occurrences from the Four Gospels. As she proceeded, she became very uneasy on account of discrepancies and contradictions that increased as she proceeded with the task. As all doubt is considered to be sin and apparent contradictions were supposed to be tests of faith, she shuddered and imposed on herself an extra fast as penance for her 'ignorance and lack of firmness in the faith'. She had been indoctrinated against heresy. She was pained that doubt had struck her and quickly buried it. 'But it had been there, and it left its mark'.

Idealism led her to have a special regard for the priests and the position of the wife of a priest seemed to her second only to that of the nun. In the light of higher emotions and rise of the spirit of real self-sacrifice the false prophets' veil of youthful fancy are lifted. Then follow either wreckage of life, or through all tribulations, outer destruction and life 'is steered by firm hand into the port of a nobler faith'.

In the Easter of 1866 Annie met the Rev. Frank Besant who was appointed a deacon in the little Mission Church; they hardly knew each other. In the summer a small party went on holiday in which these two were the only young ones and naturally in walks, rides and drives they were together. A little before leaving he asked her if she would marry him. She was startled and could not believe that her going with him would be interpreted as flirtation whereas her thoughts were in a totally different direction. She wanted to refuse but remained quiet. He urged her to remain silent on the matter till he had spoken to her mother and left to catch the train. This incident put her to great distress and she was highly upset. In spite of this her sense of honour was such that she did not speak to her mother. A fortnight or so later when Mr Besant returned Annie refused to remain silent 'but out of sheer weakness and fear of inflicting pain' she got engaged to a man she did not love.

So, she was betrothed and later married as she entered the twenty first year of her life. On her broaching to mother the subject of breaking the engagement she was reprimanded for being so dishonourable as to break her word. A few months before marriage Annie and her mother stayed with an old friend, Mr Roberts, who was reputed to be 'the poor man's lawyer'. There she began to take an interest in the world of politics. He described the pitiable conditions of women, naked to the waist with petticoats only up to the knee, working even with three or four year old babies. Annie considered Mr Roberts as 'her first tutor in Radicalism' and he found in her 'an apt pupil'.

On 18 September a police van carrying two Fenian leaders to jail was stopped and the entire Irish population surrounded it, broke open the strong van and led the two to a place of safety. In this process a policeman was accidentally shot and died. Violence broke out between the Irish and the English. The poor naturally turned to Mr Roberts for pleading the case in which five persons were accused of murder. As Annie drove the wife and two daughters of Mr Roberts

through the Irish section of Manchester to the court the angry crowd, waving fists, surrounded the vehicle shouting against the English. In this critical situation Annie informed them of their identity whereupon the mood changed completely in their favour and the road was cleared for them.

The court was comprised of highly prejudiced judges one of whom was predetermined to convict, and the jury paid little attention to the arguments of Mr Roberts. Two were released as not being present and the other three were hanged. Annie read in the *National Reformer* that Charles Bradlaugh had written earlier against the manner of trial and pleaded for the release of the innocent. She also read his pleading for Ireland. At the close of his reasoning he wrote, 'Let a commission ... sit solemnly to hear all complaints, and then let us honestly legislate, not for the punishment of the discontented, but to remove the causes of the discontent'.

In her *Autobiography* Mrs Besant writes: 'In December 1867, I sailed out of the safe harbour of my happy and peaceful girlhood onto the wide sea of life, and the wave broke roughly as soon as the bar was crossed.'⁴ Annie was accustomed to freedom, had never a harsh word spoken and was indifferent to household details. Mr Besant was very authoritarian, wanted things arranged and done exactly as he wanted, was ill-tempered and spoke harshly to Annie if his wishes were not carried out in detail. This shocked her first to indignant tears which gradually led to defiant resistance.

Annie's first serious attempts at writing were made in 1868 when she was only twenty-one years old. She laboriously studied and collected facts about the saints after whom Black Letter Days were marked in the Calendar but details were not supplied. The manuscript seems to have been appreciated but mysteriously disappeared. A Church brotherhood offered to publish it if she would give 'an act of piety to their order'. Its ultimate fate was unknown to Mrs Besant. Her short stories regularly appeared in the Family

⁴ Op. cit. p. 64.

Herald. Her novel was not accepted as it was considered 'too political' by the same magazine. She contributed a theological pamphlet dealing with the duty of fasting incumbent on all faithful Christians.

Annie's literary career was checked for some time when a son was born in January 1869 and a daughter in August 1870. She was ill on both occasions as her general health had been failing for some time. As she could not afford to keep a nurse the young ones kept her busy and also brought a new ray of happiness into her life. The son was healthy but the daughter was delicate. Both caught whooping cough in the spring of 1871. Young Mabel suffered bronchitis followed by congestion of the lungs. For weeks she lay in peril of death on the knees of her loving mother day and night. The doctor pronounced that she could die any moment but she survived miraculously. The child remained ailing and delicate but those weeks of anguish exhausted Annie so much that after the danger was over she collapsed and lay in bed for a week. This was followed by a struggle in another dimension which lasted over three years and almost cost her life. The struggle transformed her from a Christian to an Atheist. She later wrote about the stand taken by Atheists on the question of God: 'The Atheist does not say "There is no God", but he says, "I do not know what you mean by God."'

This added to the intensity of her suffering. To Mr Besant, an ordained priest, such enquiry and questioning were intolerable for they were considered inexcusable sins of doubt, more particularly in the wife of a priest. This attitude greatly increased conflict and unhappiness in the couple. Her unsuspected strength rose up in rebellion; yet she did not dream of denial but refused to kneel.

One day in the summer of 1871 Mr Besant was away after a fierce quarrel with her husband. She was desperate as she had lost hope in God and had not learnt to live for hope for humans. She decided to put an end to her life, brought a bottle of chloroform which the doctor had left for the baby to relieve temporarily the intense suffering of whooping cough, and was about to drink it. She heard

in a clear and soft voice, ‘O coward, coward, who used to dream of martyrdom, and cannot bear a few short years of pain!’ She flung away the bottle out of shame and for a moment felt strong enough for a struggle, and then fell fainting on the floor. The thought of suicide occurred momentarily and only once again in her long periods of strife but she put it aside as ‘unworthy of a strong soul’.

The kind clergyman to whom she had met some months before continued to write understanding letters, declaring the doctrine of eternal punishment as baseless, that God is much better than what she was taught to believe, and so on. But Mrs Besant could not be moved by arguments that ‘appealed to emotions’ alone, leaving ‘the intellect unconvinced’. She pined for rational answers to problems of human misery on a vast scale, regardless of differences between the innocent and the guilty. The long struggle shattered her health. She lay for weeks helpless and prostrate with ceaseless headache, unable to sleep.

As her condition improved slightly her doctor brought her books on scientific subjects and would spare time to explain knotty points on physiology. He perhaps saw that diversion of thought from the channels in which it had been running to a dangerous extent was necessary.

In her studies she could not find solution to four problems, namely:

- (1) Eternal punishment after death,
- (2) The meaning of ‘goodness’ and ‘love’, as applied to a God who had made this world, with all its sin and misery.
- (3) The nature of the atonement of Christ, and the ‘justice’ of God in accepting a vicarious suffering from Christ, and a vicarious righteousness from the sinner.
- (4) The meaning of ‘inspiration’ as applied to the Bible, and the reconciliation of the perfections of the author with the blunders and immoralities of the work.

It will be noticed that after the agony Mrs Besant had suffered the progression of thought was orderly and steadily grew. The doubts posed above are of a moral nature, 'a protest of the conscience rather than of the brain'. The deeper intellectual problems of religion – the deity of Christ, the existence of God, the immortality of the soul – came up later.

Later she would maintain that the rising tide of materialism cannot be checked by sharp criticism and denunciation but by offering 'a loftier ethic and a grander philosophy' so as to satisfy the educated conscience and the enquiring intellect.

The family eventually moved to Sibsey, in Lincolnshire. Here Mrs Besant found more time to read and to continue with her service to the poor. She studied heretical and Broad Church books as well as orthodox ones. A year later, after Christmas in 1872, an epidemic of typhoid fever broke out. She went from one home to another nursing the sick most effectively, with great tenderness and love. However, she found it impossible to return to the old faith. Church services became a torture week after week. She kept doubts to herself as she thought she should not shake the faith of others.

She found some relief from the mental strain in practical parish work, nursing the sick, trying to brighten the lot of the poor. As she had herself visited their dwelling places, ill-ventilated, with broken and leaking roofs, crowded to the full, her sympathies were naturally with the claims of the agricultural labourers. One night she found in one bed a drunken man, fever-stricken wife, the fever-stricken child and a dead child. This became an integral part of her political education.

Then a ray of light came as she went with her mother to a Sunday morning service where there were people who had passed through difficulties similar to hers. Her meeting and subsequent discussions with the Rev. Charles Voysey and his wife opened up to her new views on religion, as their theism was free from defects that had revolted her. She read newer books and the nightmare of an

Almighty Evil passed away and she felt relaxed to be able to comfortably renounce the orthodox dogmas.

In the autumn of 1872 Mrs Besant was introduced to Mr and Mrs Thomas Scott. Their home was open to all who had a love of Truth and the desire to spread freedom among the people. He was an old man and for years had issued a series of monthly pamphlets on various shades of thought but all were heretical. However, they were all cultured and polished in tone. A few months later Mrs Besant wrote a pamphlet, 'On the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth', which was followed by others, though all were anonymous.

The year 1873 was a very crucial year in Mrs Besant's life. She returned to her home in Sibsey, no longer in a state of doubt for she had rejected the teachings of the Church. She was willing to attend Church services not directed to God Himself but could no longer attend the Holy Communion for that involved recognition of Jesus as Deity. On the first 'Sacrament Sunday' with much pain she left the church service as she could not take communion.

The knowledge of the great power of oratory that was hidden in her came to her when one day when she was alone in the church, ascended the pulpit and delivered her first lecture which was on the 'Inspiration of the Bible'. 'A feeling of power and delight' came to her as her voice went 'ringing down the aisles' and the passion in her 'broke into balanced sentences'. She had never to pause for 'musical cadence or for rhythmical expression'. She then knew that she had the 'gift of speech' which she could use to convey the intended message.

The continual refusal of Mrs Besant to take communion led her husband, in July or August, 1873, to tell her to conform or leave the house. In spite of her ill-health she chose the latter. Her mother was heartbroken.

She tried all possible avenues for work so as to maintain herself and her sickly daughter Mabel. After much searching work was found in a household where she had to work as governess to young

ones, a cook and a nurse for which only board and lodging for her and Mabel were given. The two young wards soon afterwards got, one after another, serious infections and sickness and Mabel was sent to her caring grandmother whereas Mrs Besant was to live in an isolated room with an ailing ward under the risk of becoming ill, for not even the mother of the boy would come to see her own son.

Her mother went to town and fell dangerously ill and Annie rushed to nurse her. She had an intense longing for communion but absolutely refused to do so unless her darling Annie did also. She declared that she would rather be lost with Annie than saved without her.

No clergyman would agree to give communion to Annie on account of her anti-church views. In desperation and with hesitancy she went to Dean Stanley who knew her mother. He graciously came, had a quiet chat with mother, returned and travelled again the next day to see her. After talking to mother he tried to understand Annie's position. Dean Stanley was very liberal and understanding and told Annie that conduct was far more important than theory, that he regarded all as 'Christians' those who tried to follow the moral law of Christ. On Annie's question of the absolute Deity of Jesus he paid little stress saying that Jesus was 'in a special sense the Son of God' and considered it a folly to quarrel over words when dealing with the mystery of the Divine existence.

The following day Dean Stanley celebrated the Holy Communion at the bedside of her dear mother and told her to remember that 'our God is a God of truth, and therefore the honest search for truth can never be displeasing in his eyes'. It was after eighteen months that Mrs Besant took the Sacrament for the last time. Her mother passed away on 10 May.

Mrs Besant wrote for Mr and Mrs Thomas Scott pamphlets on subjects like Inspiration, Atonement, Meditation and Salvation, Eternal Torture, Religious Education for Children, and earned a small amount to run the household of two. Often she went to the

British Museum to study and could not afford to buy meals. Mrs Scott would come to see her if she was absent for two days and offered most needed dinner. She was always very welcome to their household. When in 1879 Mr Scott died Mrs Besant wrote: 'To no living man – save one – do I owe the debt of gratitude that I owe to Thomas Scott.'

At about this time she bought a copy of the *National Reformer*. In it was a long letter attacking Mr Bradlaugh and a brief, self-restrained answer from him. There was in the paper an article on the National Secular Society devoted to the propagation of Free Thought. As no dogma was attached to membership Mrs Besant applied for it and was informed that she could receive membership certificate from the hands of Mr Bradlaugh.

It was a fateful Sunday evening of 2 August 1874 that Mrs Besant went to listen Mr Charles Bradlaugh from whom she learned much while working in closest collaboration during the years to come. He would become an enduring and significant influence on her life.

The sound advice that he gave her included: 'You should never say you have an opinion about a subject until you have tried to study the strongest thing was said against the view to which you are inclined.' 'You must not think that you know a subject until you are acquainted with all that the best minds have said about it.' 'No steady work can be done in public unless the worker studies at home far more than he talks outside.' 'Be your own hardest judge, listen to your own speech and criticize it; read abuse of yourself and see what grains of truth are in it.' 'Do not waste time reading opinions that are mere echoes of your own; read opinions you disagree with, and you will catch aspects of truth you do not readily see.'

As her study and reflection matured, her perception of the world showed signs of a deeper understanding which was not limited to traditional Atheism. In 1874, in her paper 'On the Nature and Existence of God', her advice was: 'Study nature's laws, conform to

them, work in harmony with them, and work becomes a prayer and a thanksgiving, an adoration of the universal wisdom, and a true obedience to the Universal law.'

She gave overwhelming importance to conduct as is evident in her pamphlet of 1874 on the 'True Basis of Morality'. She cautioned her fellow workers in the Freethought movement to ensure that while striking down dogmas of the Church people are not uprooted from the sanctions of morality before better basis is implanted. 'That which touches morality touches the heart of society; a high and pure morality is the life-blood of humanity. ... It is, then, a very important question whether we, who are endeavouring to take away from the world the authority on which hitherto has been based all its morality, can offer a new and firm ground whereupon may safely be built up the fair edifice of a noble life.'

Her extreme political views as on the land question, taxation, the cost of Royalty, the obstructive power of the House of Lords, also gave rise to opposition towards her. She was a Home-Ruler, an expression that later became well known in India, and opposed all injustice to the weaker nations. She opposed the oppressive policy in Ireland, in the Transvaal in South Africa, in India, in Afghanistan, in Burma and in Egypt. She demanded national education instead of big guns, public libraries, instead of warships.

She was given a place on the staff of the *National Reformer* which could afford to pay her only a guinea a week. She wrote regularly under the pseudonym 'Ajax' from August 1874 and was sub-editor, later co-editor, from 1877 until the death of Mr Bradlaugh in 1891. She started by taking part in informal debate, then reading of a paper on 'The Political Status of Women'. The title of her second lecture, 'True Basis of Morality' shows the direction in which her thinking was moving.

In January 1875 after much thought and self-analysis Mrs Besant resolved to give herself wholly to propagandist work, as a Freethinker and a Social Reformer. She counted the heavy cost. It

would outrage the feelings of her new friends and was likely to imperil the custody of her darling little Mabel. 'But the desire to spread liberty and truer thought among men, to war against bigotry and superstition, to make the world freer and better', all this impelled her with a force that could not be denied. She seemed to hear the voice of Truth ringing over the battlefield and she offered herself, risking everything, for the cause she considered sacred.

'Civil and Religious Liberty' was the title of her talk with which she started her definite lecturing in January 1875. On 12 February she started on her first provincial lecturing tour and on the 28 spoke for the first time from the platform of the Hall of Science to the Secularist audience with whom she stood leading them to the cause of liberty. Such platform work continued for eighteen years, in the course of which she bravely faced many hardships, slept in the cottages of miners, dined at their tables.

In 1877 Mrs Besant was plunged into one of her most bitter struggles from which she came out victorious, and her role and that of Mr Bradlaugh were highly acclaimed. It brought with it such pain and anguish that she did not want to recall it. Rev. Mr Malthus had put forward the doctrine that married people should be taught to limit their families within their means of livelihood. Dr Charles Knowlton, convinced of the doctrine, wrote in 1835 a physiological treatise giving practical advice on conjugal prudence and parental responsibility. He was for early marriage, so as to avoid prostitution and limiting the family so as to look after the children better. Four decades later, with a view to profiteering, a publisher added some obscene and indecent pictures. On being prosecuted he pleaded guilty and was convicted.

Mr Bradlaugh and Mrs Besant carefully considered the matter. He risked his Parliamentary position. For her much greater risks were involved, facing slander, allegations of scandal, and most painful deprivation of the custody of her daughter. But the public cause, the good of all would not deter them from sacrificing all. Their stand

was simple and definite. They would not have published the original pamphlet – of course, no pictures. They believed that ‘on all questions affecting the happiness of the people ... fullest right of free discussion ought to be maintained at all hazards’. Mrs Besant could not keep her out for she had seen the misery of the poor, of her sister women with children crying for bread.

Mrs Besant and Mr Bradlaugh decided to sell the pamphlet themselves in their personal capacity and not involving anyone else. They delivered copies of the pamphlet to the concerned judicial and police authorities and announced the place and time of sale. Both of them were arrested. They would have been acquitted in the first sitting of the case but for the insistence of one of the seven jurors. A clause was added to the verdict that, the book ‘is calculated to deprave public morals’. The jurors, as well as the Lord Chief Justice, entirely exonerated ‘the defendants from any corrupt motive in publishing it’. In fact the Lord Chief Justice described Mrs Besant and Mr Bradlaugh as ‘two enthusiasts who have been actuated by a desire to do good in a particular department of Society’. He added a splendid statement on the law of population and praised their straightforwardness.

Sadly, although an attempt made in April 1875 to deprive Mrs Besant of the custody of Mabel had been unsuccessful a fresh case was made out on the basis of the Knowlton pamphlet case and her own views on atheism and the pamphlet ‘Law of Population’. The judge before whom the case came up was a highly prejudiced person and of very orthodox views. He passed an order to deprive her of her child not allowing time for appeal. The judge admitted that the mother had taken the greatest possible care of the child, but held that mother, in deciding not to give the child religious education, was sufficient ground for depriving her of custody of her child. Later another very senior judge sharply rebuked the judge for going outside the case and considered the judgement an ‘abuse of an unpopular opinion’.

A messenger came from Mr Besant who virtually snatched away the shrieking and struggling child. Digby and Mabel both came back to their mother as soon as they reached of age of leaving behind a miserable father whom none could help in spite of the best intentions on account his irrational views.

As a result of the prosecution Malthusian views, which in modern days are known as family planning, aroused interest all over the country. Wherever Mrs Besant and Mr Bradlaugh went there were crowds overflowing the lecture halls to listen to their Radical and Freethought lectures and thousands heard for the first time what secularism really meant. Her writings and speeches were, naturally, marked with considerable bitterness against Christianity. Later in life she admitted that her attacks should have been directed towards dogmatic practices of the Church but not against Christianity and need not have been so harsh.

In early 1879 she started studying under Dr E. B. Aveling who was an able teacher in scientific subjects and had started writing for the National Reformer. At the age of thirty-two, when most people stop studies, she matriculated from the London University. Her studies were in addition to her ever increasing writing, editing and lecturing from one end of England to the other besides the 'wear-and-tear of pleading her case for the custody of her daughter' in the courts. As a result of her pleadings which were not merely for the sake of her children but also for the cause of the free thought movement, she gained full access to her children. The victory was hailed by Mr Bradlaugh as 'on with a pleading unequalled in any case on record for the boldness of its affirmation of Freethought'. He added, 'the most powerful pleading for freedom of opinion to which it has been our good fortune to listen'.

Mrs Besant's pleading exposed in the Press comments that it was an offence in the eye of the law to hold unpopular opinion. The outcome of all this long and painful struggle 'was a change in the law which had rested all power over the children in the hands of the

father, and from thenceforth the rights of the married mother were recognized to a limited extent’.

Mrs Besant took advanced certificates and became a qualified teacher in several branches of science. She took examinations of London University and failed in B.Sc. Practical Chemical Examination, after having passed for more difficult examinations earlier. On account of her views some attempts were made to prevent her from studying in the University. She was denied permission to visit the Botanical Garden in Regent’s Park. In spite of all this she gained the distinction of being the only student to gain an Honours degree in Botany in England.

In October 1879 Mrs Besant met Mr Herbert Burrows who had come to attend a meeting to consider organizing Land Law Reforms. He worked with her in close cooperation in reform movements in the years to come.

From 1880 began the long Parliamentary battle of Mr Bradlaugh in which Mrs Besant was most closely associated with him. She learned many lessons from Mr Bradlaugh in his dealings with those who were bitterly against his principles, who did their best to ruin him. He addressed in an exemplary manner the members of Parliament who had acted against the law, having harmed him to the greatest extent, who did not let him take the seat to which he had been elected, who had drawn him into expensive legal battles in which he came out triumphant and, in spite of his poor resources, they had him thrown out of the Parliament causing physical injury. In spite of all such treatment from the members he upheld the dignity of Parliament, never breaking the rules or violating the law, bearing no ill will or bitterness against any. He believed in justice.

On 3 May Mr Bradlaugh presented himself and respectfully begged the permission of the Speaker of the House of Commons ‘to make a solemn affirmation or declaration, instead of taking an oath’ as provided under the Evidence Amendment Acts (of 1869 and 1870). He added that under these Acts he had made affirmation in

the highest courts of jurisdiction. The matter was debated more than once and referred to Committee after Committee but no eloquence, no plea for justice made in greatest humility and respect for the House allowed him to take the oath. He refused to obey 'because that order was against the law'. The Serjeant-at-Arms, who happened to be physically of a much smaller stature than Mr Bradlaugh, was ordered to remove him. All awaited in silence how he would do so. To the surprise of all at the light touch of his shoulder he bowed and accompanied his small captor to the prison of the House.

On the following day appeared a leaflet from Mrs Besant on 'Law Makers and Law Breakers'. Her thesis was, 'On freedom of election depends our liberty; on freedom of conscience depends our progress'. There was so much protest that the House rescinded its resolution, Mr Bradlaugh was released from prison and allowed to take the affirmation. Immediately after he had taken his seat he was served with a writ for having voted without taking the oath and a long and expensive battle in the law, court after court, began and was finally won in the House of Lords. However, the Court of Appeal decided against him and declared the seat vacant.

In the subsequent election Mr Bradlaugh was re-elected. A similar drama began. A large crowd had gathered from all parts of England and at one stage wanted to enter the House by force but Mrs Besant stepped in between the crowd and the police and pacified the masses not to break the law, thus preventing large scale violence.

However, from inside the House the Law-abiding, courteous Mr Bradlaugh was flung out by fourteen hefty guards. He lay outside the members' door in torn clothes, injured, after which his arms had to be kept bandaged for weeks. Someone remarked: 'This man might be broken but not bent'.

Mr Bradlaugh's struggle with Parliament continued. In spite of large scale protests, surprisingly, the House refused to allow him his seat, at the same time refusing to declare it vacant for fear of his being returned still more triumphantly. The House was started when

Mr Bradlaugh took the oath on 21 February and it expelled him. He was returned for the third time to the House elected by more votes but the House once again refused to let him take his seat. The entire Liberal Press agitated.

In May 1882 Mrs Besant wrote that Mr Bradlaugh was a man 'who by the infliction of great wrong had become the incarnation of a great principle'. In the next general election he again won, took the oath and his seat and brought in and carried an Oath's Bill which gave Members of the Parliament the right to affirm. It also made Freethinkers competent as jurymen and witnesses.

She reprinted an article 'Coercion in Ireland and its Results' exposing wrong done under the Coercion Act. It had a wide circulation. She pleaded for the release of the suspects and those who pleaded for them. This had some effect, but an unfortunate incident struck a blow. The Government reconsidered the policy and sent Lord Cavendish with a message to release the suspects but he was stabbed to death. Mrs Besant was shocked. She wrote: 'They have stabbed the newborn hope of friendship between two countries, and have reopened the gulf of hatred that was just beginning to close.' There was a wave of retaliation and hastily a new coercion Bill was passed.

Mrs Besant's sympathy is to be seen in her sketch of 'the misery of the peasants in the grip of absentee landlords, the turning out on the roadside to die of the mother with a newborn in her breast'. All this was for want of a few shillings for overdue rack-rental. The Bill was said to be for the 'repression of crime', for reconciliation of England and Ireland, for friendship, but Mrs Besant observed that 'they dug a new gulf'.

In the midst of this political and social strife Mrs Besant heard for the first time about the Theosophical Society and she thought that with no definite ideal for membership it had only a dreamy, emotional, scholarly, interest in religio-philosophical fancies; some having strange theory of 'apparitions' of the dead and

interest in otherworldism. In reply to a query she wrote in the *National Reformer* while secularists have no right to refuse membership to Theosophists, the consistent secularists cannot join the TS.

These views came to the notice of Madame H.P. Blavatsky and she wrote in *The Theosophist*, August 1882, that the above views have been expressed out of entirely misconceived notions and added: 'The term "Supernaturalist" can no more apply to the latter [Theosophists] than to Mrs A. Besant and Mr. C. Bradlaugh.' She occasionally commented appreciatively on the struggle of Mr Bradlaugh in Parliament and for other causes. In one such note she wrote very appreciatively of the work of Mrs Besant.

As a result of harassing persecutions, the circulation of theological and political writings of Mrs Besant and her associates increased greatly and they moved to Fleet Street at larger premises where she continued to work until Mr Bradlaugh's death in 1891. Mrs Besant wrote: '... it killed him at last, twenty years before his time, sapping his splendid vitality, undermining his iron constitution.' As Mrs Besant was all along helping him there was a great strain on her also. Her remarkable legal acumen and persuasive eloquence showed forth when she appeared as a witness. These legal battles ended in 1883 with a total victory for Mr Bradlaugh when the House of Lords gave a judgement in his favour.

Paying tribute to him Mrs Besant wrote: 'Nothing more touching could be imagined than the conflict between the real religious feeling, abhorrent of heresy, and the determination to be just despite all prejudice.'

This driving force that pushed her into politics was necessary to help certain laws protecting the rights of the downtrodden. In 1884 a bill was introduced to Parliament fixing a twelve-hour day as the limit of a young persons' toil. She considered it to be brutal and declared that the 'legal day' should be eight hours for five days in the week and not more than five hours on the sixth. She was about to embrace the Socialist viewpoint and praxis.

She pointed out that affluent people gave in the name of charity, say, a meal in a year to a half-starved family whereas if they had paid fair wages the family could have earned a hundred extra meals. Out of the exploits of the ill-paid workmen they built hospitals and pretended to be very generous. She added: ‘... and we see idlers flaunting in the robes woven by the toilers, a glittering tinsel superstructure founded on tears, the struggling, the grey, hopeless misery of the poor.’ She says: ‘Socialism in its splendid ideal appealed to my heart, while the economic soundness of its basis convinced my head.’ In it she saw a hope for brotherhood and possibility of a freer life for all. She said that conflict between ‘a personal tie and a call of duty could not last long, and with heavy heart I made up my mind to profess Socialism openly and work for it with all energy’.

Eventually Mrs Besant joined the Fabian Society as it was less antagonistic to the Radicals. It had eminent members, George Bernard Shaw being the most widely known. There she worked hard as a speaker and writer popularising socialist thought, sound economics, and the effort to turn the workers’ energy towards social rather than merely political reform.

During the same year (1885) a movement was started in England to draw attention to the terrible sufferings of the Russian political prisoners, and it was decided at a meeting held at Mrs Besant’s house to form a society of friends of Russia. Mr Bradlaugh attended the meeting. She had moved to a sixteen-room mansion in June 1883 on 19 Avenue Road which later in the early nineties became a centre of Theosophical activity.

The impact of the Socialist movement, with its eminent and forceful speakers, can be judged by the fact that the police authorities stopped their speaking in the open air whereas they closed their eyes to others so speaking. Herbert Burrows, later associated with Mrs Besant in theosophical work, won a seat on the London School

Board, to which Mrs Besant was elected in 1888. He was the first to demand industrial education.

The year 1886 was terrible for labour, with reduction in wages and increase in the number of unemployed during a bitter winter. Agitation for the eight hours day increased. Wages were so low that some said: 'We may as well starve idle as starve working.' The wrongs done to those poor hard working people set Mrs Besant's heart and tongue afire for those 'trampled on, abused, derided, who asked so little and needed so much, who were pathetically grateful for the pettiest services, who were so loving and so loyal to those who offered them poor services and helpless love'. The feelings urging her heart can better be expressed in her own words:

I had long given up my social reputation, I now give up with ever-increasing surrender ease, comfort, time; the passion of pity grew stronger and stronger, fed by each new sacrifice, and each sacrifice drew nearer to the threshold of that gateway beyond which stretched a path of renunciation I had never dreamed of, which those might tread who were ready to strip off self for man's sake...

In 1887 the agitation for social justice intensified. Mrs Besant took part in five long debates, and some of them were published as pamphlets. She found the Charing Cross Parliament which met on Fridays, with various portfolios given to eminent persons both in the 'Socialist' Government and the opposition. When Mrs Besant was invited to address it she, strictly following the etiquette of Parliament, respectfully bowed to the speaker. This provided a good training for future parliamentarians. In October 1887 she formed a Socialist Defence Association with some well-to-do and respectable, ready night and day to bail out any prisoner arrested for exercising the right of walking in procession and speaking. This she did because

the large number of unemployed began walking in procession and harshness on the part of police led to some disturbances.

She was a party to organizing in November a meeting of like-minded organizations to protest against the interference with the fundamental right to hold meetings. Several groups, one led by Mrs Besant, marched silently to Trafalgar Square. The police suddenly, unannounced, charged upon the people: men and women fell under a hail of blows. Then came a rattle of cavalry and Life Guards followed by the Scot Guards with bayonets fixed. The soldiers were ready to fire. So word was passed round, 'Go home', with a view to avoiding large-scale bloodshed. Peaceable, law-abiding workmen, who had never dreamed of rioting, were left with broken limbs. The next day there was a regular court-martial; witnesses were kept out by the police and innocent, decent workmen were sentenced to imprisonment. Mrs Besant team arranged bail after bail, an eminent barrister offered devoted service and she saw to it that they were released and sent to their homes.

Mrs Besant then organized the Law and Liberty league to defend all unjustly assailed by the police. A poor workman killed in the incident was given a public funeral with Mrs Besant and other eminent public figures leading the procession with a mass of human beings, bear headed following respectfully making a mute protest, unknown before, against the outrage that had been wrought. The result of all this was that indignation grew and the people tactfully avoided excuses for violence. This created so much pressure on the tory Government that a new Prime Minister had to be installed.

In the struggle that had been going on for the sake of suffering humanity, persons widely differing in theological creeds toiled together to aid and relieve the oppressed. They worked in absolute harmony side by side with a common goal, showing that there is a unity stronger than any antagonism, deeper than speculative theories, which divide. With such thought in her mind Mrs Besant mooted in *Our Corner*, February 1888, the idea of founding a new Brotherhood

in which service to Man should take the place previously spent in service of God. In this brotherhood work should be worship and none should be regarded as alien who was willing to work for human good. Mr W.T. Stead editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and who had worked with her during a recent agitation for the oppressed expressed to similar thought. Thus a close link in work was formed between the two.

Towards this end Mrs Besant and Mr Stead started a half-penny weekly, the *Link*. It was aimed at speaking for the silent, dumb sufferers. It announced its object as the building up of a New Church dedicated to the service of man. In this small paper week after week were highlighted the starvation wages paid to working people – women, children and men. Another part of the work was defending people from unjust landlords, exposing workhouse scandals, enforcing various Acts to protect the working class. ‘Vigilance Circles’ were formed in various districts to keep watch over cases of cruelty to children, extortion, insanitary workshops, sweating, etc. and to report to Mrs Besant for remedial measures.

Crusades for the poor in all walks of life were organized, for the dockers for a minimum to wage, for children going to the school to be fed, against production of ‘cheap goods’ which meant robbing the helpless of fair wages. Interestingly, a Consumers’ League was formed the members of which pledged to buy from shops certified ‘clean’ from unfair wages.

As a result of an investigation and pressure, and to avoid risk of prosecution the employer of the match-girls, Bryant & May (Limited), asked them to sign a paper certifying that they were well treated and contented. They refused to sign and came in as a group to the office of Mrs Besant in Fleet Street. Mrs Besant met the delegation which explained to her their pitiable condition. The leader was dismissed next day and all went on strike. Mrs Besant and Mr Herbert Burrows had to work very hard looking after their grievances and collecting donations to support them. Mr Bradlaugh asked

questions in Parliament. Numerous meetings were organized and finally a procession of the girls was led to the House of Commons. Ultimately a settlement was arrived at.

There were other areas in which the condition was so miserable that Mrs Besant's heart grew sick and ever louder sounded the question: 'Where is the cure for sorrow, what is the way of rescue for the world?' This questioning eventually led her to Theosophy.

Mrs Besant asked for a 'match-girls' drawing-room where they could relax, read, play and have recreation. Two years later, in August 1890, Madame H. P. Blavatsky opened such a home, the Working Women's club at Bow Street. The reputation of Mrs Besant increased demands on her time and energy from many quarters, like tin-box makers, shop assistants, fair wages to be paid by all public bodies, dockers, and so on. All this was besides scores of lectures for secularist, Labour, Socialist organizations, writing articles and pamphlets. With a view to helping the children she contested the School Board and returned triumphant. She was instrumental in introducing many reforms. Besides meals, she arranged a system of medical examination and treatment of the children.

Since 1886 there had been a growing conviction that her philosophy was not sufficient, that life and mind were more than she had dreamed. Into this darkness a ray of light came through A. P. Sinnett's *The Occult World*. By early spring of 1889 she was convinced that there was some 'hidden thing, some hidden power' and grew desperately determined to find at all costs what she was searching for. In this state of seeking she 'heard a Voice that was later to become for her the holiest sound on earth, bidding her to take courage for the light was near'.

A fortnight later, Mr Stead gave her two volumes of *The Secret Doctrine* written by H. P. Blavatsky, asking her if she would review them. As she turned over page after page the interest became absorbing and she seemed to be on familiar ground. The doctrine put

forward was natural, coherent, subtle yet intelligible. In a flash she knew that the weary search was over.

After writing the review she sought an introduction to Madame Blavatsky and asked to be allowed to call. On receiving a welcome note she and Herbert Burrows, whose aspirations were similar, went to 17 Lansdowne Road. After passing through the hall and outer room, in her own words she said: ‘... a figure in a large chair before a table, a voice vibrant, compelling, spoke: “My dear Mrs Besant, I have so long wished to see you”, and I was standing with my hand in her firm grasp, and looking for the first time in this life straight into the eyes of ‘HPB’. I was conscious of a sudden leaning forth of my heart – was it a recognition?’ The conversation was a general one, no word of occultism. As she rose to leave, two brilliant, piercing eyes met hers, and with a yearning throb in the voice: ‘Oh, my dear Mrs Besant, if you would only come among us!’

When she told Madame Blavatsky she wanted to join the TS, the latter asked: ‘Have you read the report about me by the Society for Psychical Research? Go and read it and if, after reading it, you come back – well.’ Mrs Besant carefully read the said report and found it to be based on slender evidence. It needs to be added that the article which maligned Madame Blavatsky and had been called for a hundred years a report of the Society for Psychic Research and the views expressed in it have now been disowned by that Society.

The next day she signed an application for joining the Society and on receiving her membership diploma went with it on 10 May 1889 to Madame Blavatsky, who was alone, and bent down and kissed her. Mrs Besant then expressed the desire to be a pupil of hers. Madame Blavatsky’s stern face softened and with tears in her eyes, put her hand upon Mrs Besant’s head and said: ‘You are a noble woman. May Master bless you.’

Mr George Bernard Shaw, on coming to know of Mrs Besant’s joining the TS, rushed to her office to tease her. He has written: ‘... she was no longer in the grip of her pride; she had after many

explorations found her path and come to see the universe and herself in their real perspective.’

In her review of *The Secret Doctrine* Mrs Besant surveyed fields of knowledge as propounded by Eastern and Western thinkers and sages and also the field of science, made it clear that there is very much more to be known than our present faculties can grasp; she stated that there is nothing supernatural, ‘any more than your knowledge is supernatural, though much above that accessible to the fish; ... we know then by personal knowledge ... The powers we possess are not supernatural, they are latent in every human being, and will be evolved as the race progresses.’

In the midst of all this she, with Mr Herbert Burrows, went to the great Labour Congress held at Paris from July 15 to 20 and spent a day or two at Fontainebleau with Madame Blavatsky who had gone there for rest. There she was translating from ‘The Book of the Golden Precepts’, now so widely known under the name of *The Voice of the Silence*.

After returning to London, and in reply to many criticisms and queries, Mrs Besant gave two lectures on 4 and 11 August 1889 in the Hall of Science on, ‘Why I became a Theosophist?’ These were condensed into a pamphlet bearing the same title. In it she said: ‘An imperious necessity forces me to speak the truth, as I see it ... That one loyalty to Truth I must keep stainless, whatever friendships fail me or human ties be broken ... and I ask no other epitaph on my tomb but “she tried to follow Truth”.’

She continued to work for the School Board, made possible by the financial assistance of a friend. She also continued to champion the cause of struggling labour movements, reducing the exploitation and hardships of fur-pullers, tram and busmen, feeding and clothing children. It was during this period that Mr Bradlaugh fell very seriously ill and was advised rest and a sea voyage. He went to India to attend the National Congress, where he was acclaimed as ‘Member for India’, and died in the spring of 1891.

Madame Blavatsky was ‘very poor towards the end of her earthly life, having spent all on her mission, and refusing to take time from her Theosophical work to write for the Russian papers’ which paid her highly. ‘But her slender purse was swiftly emptied when any human pain that money could relieve came her way. To give just one example, coming to know how some poor children were happy to receive country flowers from Mrs Besant she gave thirty shillings, which was all that she had of her own money, to ‘buy thirty dinners for thirty poor little starving’ children. In 1890 she was given £1,000 to use at her discretion. It was decided to use the money to renovate a large old house ... a large hall attached to it was built and opened by Madame Blavatsky on 15 August 1890. She dedicated it to ‘the brightening of the lot of hard working and underpaid girls’. It was tenderness of heart that led her pupils to found, after her death, the ‘HPB Home for little children’.

As lease of the headquarters of the T.S. in Europe was expiring it was moved to 19 Avenue Road, where Mrs Besant lived. Some alterations were made and a hall was built for the meeting of the Blavatsky Lodge of the TS. Madame Blavatsky and her staff of workers came to live there in July 1890. The rules of the household were simple but HPB insisted on great regularity of life. After dinner at 7 pm, the outer work of the Society was put aside and all gathered in her room. Plans for work were discussed and above all, HPB patiently taught her pupils according to their needs and understanding and explained knotty points. During the day she wrote incessantly in spite of severe handicaps of the body. Her life was a lesson to her close pupils to lead a life of unselfish beauty, following the nobility of her character.

‘And thus I came through storm to peace’, writes Mrs Besant, ‘not to the peace of an untroubled sea of outer life ... but to an inner peace that outer troubles may not avail to ruffle – a peace that belongs to the eternal ...’ ‘Quiet confidence has taken the place of doubt

... In life, through death, to life, I am but the servant of the great Brotherhood.’⁵

* * *

Below is the text of Mrs Besant’s address, on 30th August 1891, in the Hall of Science, London. It was later published as *Adyar Pamphlets* No. 84, TPH Adyar, December 1917. It is entitled ‘1875-1891: A Fragment of Autobiography’.

Annie Besant, on Sunday evening, the 30th of August, delivered an address on “1875 to 1891: a Fragment of Autobiography”, at the Hall of Science, Old Street, St. Luke’s. The occasion was her last appearance on the platform of this Hall, which has now passed entirely under the control of the National Secular Society. There was a very crowded and very interested audience.

Mrs Thornton Smith presided and, after making various announcements, said: “Tonight my friend [Mrs Besant] speaks from this platform for the last time.” Annie Besant, who was greeted with most cordial and prolonged cheers, said:

On the 28th of February, 1875, I stood for the first time on the platform of the Hall of Science to speak from that platform to a Freethought audience. I spoke then, announced under my own name, but with another name added thereto – one under which, since the preceding August, I had written in the *National Reformer*. It was the name of “Ajax”, and I used that name for writing in the *Reformer* because when the darkness came down upon him and his army, the words which were said to have broken from his lips expressed my own feeling then, as they express it now. Out of the darkness and the danger, his voice is said to have rung over the battlefield: “Light,

⁵ Annie Besant, *An Autobiography*, p. 332.

more light". It is that cry for "light" which has been the keynote of my own intellectual life, then and ever since, light – whithersoever the light may take one; light, through whatever difficulties the light may lead one; light, although in its brightness it should blast the eyes that gaze upon it: I would rather be blinded by the light, than sit willfully in the twilight or the dark. Months before – in the August of the preceding year – I had come to the Hall for the first time to receive my certificate of entrance into the National Secular Society. I received it then from the greatest president that Society has had or is likely to have. From that time there dated a friendship to which no words of mine can do justice, or speak the gratitude I feel – a friendship that was only broken by the grave. Had he lived, this lecture would, probably, not have needed to be given, for, if there was one thing that Charles Bradlaugh did, it was to keep free the platform which was given him in charge, and to permit no test of doctrine or of belief to claim a right to bar the platform that was free in name and in deed as well.

I pass hurriedly – for I have but brief time tonight – I pass hurriedly over many years, taking but one point after another that seems to me to be of interest in the retrospect of tonight. Not very long after I came on to this platform, in the May following, I was elected a vice-president of the National Secular Society, and that position I laid down when the late president gave up his office. I began my service in the Society under him, and I could serve under no lesser man. From that time forward – from the time, that is, of the commencement of my service – I constantly occupied the platform here and elsewhere. And they were rougher days then with the Free-thought party in the provinces, than those they have now to face. During my first year of lecturing work I can remember some rough scenes that now it would not be easy to parallel. Stones that were thrown as the most potent argument to use against a lecturer, even though that lecturer were a woman; the broken windows of a hail; a bruised neck at one place; a walk through waving sticks and a

cursing crowd at another place – these were the kind of arguments which Christians were readier to use then than they are now. The party has grown very much stronger during the sixteen and a half years which have passed from then to now. I well remember, looking backward, and recalling incident after incident that marked those passing years, the memorable Conference in 1876, when there was present on the platform a miner of Yorkshire who, a member of the Society and an Atheist, was the first to spring into a cage to go down where 143 of his comrades lay dead and others were in danger of death after a colliery explosion – the cage into which none dared to spring until the Atheist set the example and stimulated the courage of others. My experience in the National Secular Society has taught me that you may have the most splendid courage, the most absolute self-devotion, the most heroic self-sacrifice, that those virtues can exist without possessing faith in God or belief in a hereafter: they are, indeed, the flowers of man's nature springing up fragrant and beautiful in every creed and in none.

It was not so long after my entrance into the National Secular Society – a little more than two brief years – that that struggle came upon us in which Charles Bradlaugh and I myself defended the right to publish, at a cheap rate, information which we believed to be useful to the masses of the poor and of the weak. What the upshot of that struggle was you all know. How bitter the struggle was some of you, perchance, may have gauged. I, who went through it, know its results were that no amount of slander or abuse could hereafter make much difference, when one thought it right to take a particular line of conduct; for in the years that followed that trial there were no words too foul, no epithets too vile, to be used in Christian and in Freethought journals, against my co-defendant and myself. When one has once been through that fire of torture, when everything that man and woman hold dear, fame, good name, reputation, character, and all else – when all have been sullied, slandered and maligned, after such a hammering all subsequent attacks seem but poor and

feeble, and no words of reproach or unkindness that later can be used avail to touch a courage that has held through trials such as that. And I do not regret (I never have regretted and don't now) the steps that then I took, for I know that both in the eyes of the wise today, and in the verdict of the history that in centuries to come shall judge our struggles, the verdict that then shall be given will not be given on what one has believed but on how one has worked: and I know that though one's eyes may often be blinded, and one's efforts wrong, the courage that dares to speak, the courage that dares to stand – those are the things that men remember, and if you can never write “coward” on man or woman's grave, their place is safe in the hearts of men, whether their views are blessed or banned in days to come.

I pass, however, to the theological position, for that is one that interests all, is the most important, and the one to which your thoughts and minds will most strongly turn tonight. In 1872 I broke with Christianity, and I broke with it once and for all. I have nothing to unsay, nothing to undo, nothing to retract, as regards my position then and my position now. I broke with it, but I am no nearer to it in 1891 than I was when I first joined the ranks of the National Secular Society. I do not say that my language then was not harsher than my language would be now, for in the first moments after a great struggle, when you have paid such a price as I paid for intellectual liberty, you do not always in the first moments of freedom, in the reaction from a great conflict, you do not always think of the feelings of others as charity and as true toleration would command that you should think. I spoke words bitterer than I should speak now; words harsher and more critical than I should speak today; but of the groundwork of my rejection then I have nothing to alter, for I stand upon that ground today as I stood then. I did not give up that Christian faith without much and bitter suffering; and I do not know whether, if anyone set to work to fabricate some physical apparatus which would give the best opportunity for suffering during life – I do not know that any ingenious artificer could do very much more

cleverly, than to weld together in one human body the strong brain of a man and the warm heart of a woman: for where a man can break with opinions where logic tells him (not always, indeed, without bitter suffering), I doubt if there can be any woman who can break with any faith she has ever held, without paying some heart's blood as the price of alienation, some bitter need of pain to the idol which is broken.

In looking back, as I have been looking today over some of my own past writing, I saw words with respect to the giving up of Christianity which were true: true in the feeling that they then depicted, and true in my remembrance of it now for the deity of Christ is the last Christian doctrine, I think, to which we cling when we leave Christianity. "The doctrine was dear from association: there was something at once soothing and ennobling in the idea of a union between man and God, between a perfect man and a divine supremacy, between a human heart and an almighty strength. Jesus as God was interwoven with all art, with all beauty in religion; to break with the deity of Jesus was to break with music, with painting, with literature. The Divine Child in his mother's arms, the Divine Man in his Passion and in his Triumph, the human friend encircled with the majesty of the Godhead – did inexorable truth demand that this ideal figure, with all its pathos, its beauty, its human love, should pass into the pantheon of the dead Gods of the past?" People speak so lightly about change in theological belief. Those who speak lightly never felt deeply. They do not know what a belief is to the life that has been moulded round it, to the intellect that has accepted it, to the heart that has worshipped it; and those are not the feeblest but mostly the strongest Freethinkers who have been able to break with the faith that they have outgrown and still feel the pang of letting the intellect be master of the hearts. On that I have nothing more to say than this: that, in the newer light into which I have passed, return to Christianity has become even more impossible than in my older days of the National Secular Society; for, whilst then I rejected, seeing the

logical impossibilities, now I understand why that faith has held men for centuries as I never understood before; and if you want to be safe against a superstition, know the human truth that underlies it, and then no fresh name can ever take you back to it, no sort of new label can ever make you accept as true the myth that covers the truth you know.

To pass from that to the other two great points around which the struggle of the age today is raging: belief in a personal God and belief in the persistency of life after death. As regards the first, belief in a personal God, I have again nothing to say different from that which I wrote many years ago: "Existence evolving, into endless forms, differing modes, changing phenomena, is wonderful enough; but a God, self-existing, who creates out of nothing, who gives birth to an existence entirely diverse from his own – 'matter' from 'spirit', non-intelligence from 'intelligence' – who, being everywhere, makes the universe, thereby excluding himself from part of space, who being everywhere, makes the things which are not he, so that we have everywhere and somewhere else, everything and something more – such a God solves no question of existence, but only adds an unnecessary riddle to a problem already sufficiently perplexing." Those were the words with which I summed up an argument against a personal God outside nature. By those words I stand today, for the concept is as impossible to me now as it was to me then.

Some years later, in 1886, I come across a phrase which shows how at that time my mind was beginning to turn towards a different conception. I was speaking of the various religions of the world, and alluded to those of Hinduism and Buddhism as dealing with the problem of existence, and then went on to say: "These mystic Oriental religions are profoundly Pantheistic; one life pulsing through all living things; one existence bodying itself forth in all individual existences; such is the common ground of those mighty religions which number amongst their adherents the vast majority of human kind. And in this magnificent conception they are in accord with

modern science; the philosopher and the poet, with the far-reaching glance of genius, caught sight of that unity of all things, the 'one in the many' of Plato, a belief which it is the glory of modern science to have placed on the sure foundation of ascertained fact." I do not mean that when I wrote those words I was a Pantheist; but I mean that you have in them the recognition of that unity of existence which is common to Pantheism and to Materialism, the great gulf between the two being this: that whereas Pantheism speaks of one universal life bodying itself forth in all lives, Materialism speaks of matter and of force of which life and consciousness are the ultimate products and not the essential fact. That is the difference in the opinions that I held, and that I hold now. I still believe in the unity of existence, but I realise that that existence is a living force, and not only what is called "matter" and "energy"; that it is a principle of life, a principle of consciousness; that the life and the consciousness that pulse out from its centre evolve from that one eternal life without which life and consciousness could never be. That is the great difference which separates the position of the Materialism that I once held from the position I hold today; and that has its natural corollary that, as the essence of the universe is life, so the essence of each man is life as well; that death is but a passing phenomenon, as simple and as natural as that which is spoken of as life; that in the heart of man as of the universe, life is an eternal principle fulfilling itself in many forms, but immortal, inextinguishable, never to be either created or destroyed.

Now, glancing back to the Materialism to which I clung for so many years of life, glancing back over the training it gave me, and the steps by which slowly I left it behind, there is one point that I desire here to place on record. You have Materialism of two very different schools. There is the Materialism which cares nothing for man but only for itself; which seeks only for personal gain, personal pleasure, personal delight; which cares nothing for the race but only for self; nothing for posterity but only for the moment; of which the

real expression is: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." With that Materialism neither I nor those with whom I worked had aught in common. With that Materialism, which is only that of the brute, we never had part nor lot. That is the Materialism that destroys all the glory of human life, it is the Materialism that can only be held by the selfish and, therefore, the degraded. It is never the Materialism that was preached from this platform, nor which has been the training school in which have been trained many of the noblest intellects and truest hearts of our time.

For what is the higher Materialism after all? What is it but the reason and thought which is the groundwork of many a noble life today? It is that which, while it believes that the life of the individual ends in death, so far as he himself is concerned, recognises the life of the race as that for which the individual is living, and to which all that is noblest and best in him is to be devoted. That is the Materialism of such men as Clifford, who taught it in philosophy, and of such men as Charles Bradlaugh, who lived it out in life. It was that Materialism which was put into words by Clifford when, for the moment fearing he might be misunderstood, he said: "Do I seem to say, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'? Nay; rather let us take hands and help, for today we are alive together." Against that Materialism I have no word of reproach to speak now. Never have I spoken word of reproach against it, and I never shall; for I know that it is a philosophy so selfless in its noblest forms that few are grand enough to grasp it and live it out, and that which I have brought back as fruit from my many years of Materialism is the teaching that to work without self as the goal is the great object-lesson of human life. For there can be no selflessness more complete than that which accepts a life of struggle for itself that the race may have an easier life in years to come, which is willing to die that, from its death, others may have wider life; which is willing to sacrifice everything, so that even on its own dead body others may rise to greater happiness and a truer intellectual life.

But – and here comes the difference – there are problems in the universe which Materialism not only does not solve but which it declares are insoluble, difficulties in life and mind that Materialism cannot grapple with, and in face of which it is not only dumb but says that mankind must remain dumb for evermore. Now, in my own studies and my own searching, I came to problem after problem for which scientific Materialism had no answer – nay, told me that no answer could be found. There were things that were facts, and the whole scheme of science is not that you are to impose your own will on nature, but that you are to question nature and listen to her answer, whatever that answer may be. But I came upon fact after fact that did not square with the theories of Materialism. I came across facts which were facts of nature as much as any fact of the laboratory, or any discovery by the knife or the scalpel of the anatomist. Was I to refuse to see them because my philosophy had for them no place? Was I to do what men have done in every age – insist that nature was no greater than my knowledge, and that because a fact was new it was, therefore, a fraud or an illusion? Not thus had I learned the lesson of materialistic science from its deepest depths of investigation into nature. And, when I found that there were facts that made life other than Materialism deemed; when I found that there were facts of life and consciousness that made the materialistic hypothesis impossible; then I determined still to study, although the foundations were shaking, and not to be recusant enough to the search after truth to draw back because it wore a face other than the one I expected. When I found that in the researches of men of today, who still are Materialists, there are many facts which they themselves admit they cannot explain, and about which they will endeavour to form no theory; when I found in studying such branches of mental science as hypnotism and mesmerism, that there were undeniable facts which had their place in nature as much as any other facts; when I found that as those facts were analysed and experimented on, consciousness did not rise and fall with the pulsations of the brain or the

vibrations of the cells of the brain; when I found that as you diminish the throb of physical life your intellectual manifestations became more vivid and more startling; when I found that in that brain in which the blood ran freely, from which, on examination, every careful instrument of science gave an leverage of the lowest conditions that made life possible at all, when I found that from the person with a brain in such a condition thoughts could proceed more vividly than when the brain was in full activity – then do you wonder that I began to ask whether other methods of investigation might not be useful, and whether it was wise for me to turn my back upon any road which promised to lead towards a better understanding of the subtlest problems of psychology?

Two or three years before, I had met with two books which I read and re-read, and then put aside because I was unable to relate them to any other information I could obtain, and I could find no other method then of carrying my study further along those lines. They were two books by Mr Sinnett. One was *Esoteric Buddhism* and the other *The Occult World*. They fascinated me on my scientific side, because for the first time they threw an intelligible light upon, and brought within the realm of law and of natural order, a large number of facts that had always remained to me unexplained in the history of man. They did not carry me very far, but they suggested a new line of investigation; and from that time onward, I was on the look-out for other clues which might lead me in the direction I sought. Those clues were not definitely found until early in the year 1889. I had experimented, to some extent, then, and many years before, in Spiritualism, and found some facts and, much folly; but I never found there an answer, nor anything which carried me further than the mere record of certain unexplainable phenomena. But in 1889 I had a book given to me to review, written by H. P. Blavatsky, and known as *The Secret Doctrine*. I was given it to review, as a book the reviewers of the paper did not care to tackle, and it was thought I might do something with it, as I was considered more or

less mad on the subjects of which it treated. I accepted the task, I read the book, and I knew that I had found the clue that I had been seeking. I then asked for an introduction to the writer of that book, feeling that the one who had written it would be able to show me something at least of a path along which I might travel with some hope of finding out more than I knew of life and mind. I met her for the first time in that year. Before very long I placed myself under her tuition, and there is nothing in the whole of my life for which, I am one tithe so grateful as the apparent accident that threw her book into my hands, and the resolution taken by myself that I would know the writer of that book.

I know that in this hall there will not be many who will share the view that I take of Helena Blavatsky. I knew her, you did not – and in that may lie the difference of our opinion. You talk of her as “fraud”, and fling about the word as carelessly of one with whom you disagree, as Christians and others threw against me the epithet of “harlot” in the days gone by, and with as much truth. I read the evidence that was said to be against her. I read the great proofs of the “fraud”: how she had written the letters which she said had come to her from the men who had been her Teachers. I read the evidence of W. Netherclift, the expert, first that the letters were not written by her and then that they were. The expert at Berlin swore that they were not written by her. I read most carefully the evidence against her, because I had so much to lose. I read it; I judged it false on the reading; I knew it to be false when I came to know her. And here is one fact which may, perhaps, interest you much, as rather curious from the point of view that Madame Blavatsky was the writer of those famous letters.

You have known me in this Hall for sixteen and a half years. You have never known me lie to you. My worst public enemy, through the whole of my life, never cast a slur upon my integrity. Everything else they have sullied, but my truth never; and I tell you that since Madame Blavatsky left, I have had letters in the same

writing and from the same person. Unless you think that dead persons write – and I do not think so – that is rather a curious fact against the whole challenge of fraud. I do not ask you to believe me, but I tell you this on the faith of a record that has never yet been sullied by a conscious lie. Those who knew her, knew she could not very well commit fraud, if she tried. She was the frankest of human beings. It may be said: “What evidence have you beside hers?” My own knowledge. For some time, all the evidence I had of the existence of her Teachers and the existence of those so-called “abnormal powers” was second-hand, gained through her. It is not so now, and it has not been so for many months: unless every sense can be at the same time deceived, unless a person can be, at the same moment, sane and insane, I have exactly the same certainty for the truth of those statements as I have for the fact that you are here. Of course you may be all delusions, invented by myself and manufactured by my own brain. I refuse – merely because ignorant people shout fraud and trickery – to be false to all the knowledge of my intellect, the perceptions of my senses, and my reasoning faculties as well.

And so I passed out of Materialism into Theosophy, and every month that has gone since then has given me reason to be more and more grateful for the light which then came; for it is better to live in a universe you are beginning to understand than in one which is full of problems never to be solved; and if you find yourself on the way to the solution of many, that gives you at least a reasonable hope that you may possibly at last be able to solve those that are at the moment beyond your grasp. And, after all, those with whom I stand are not quite the persons whom it is the part of wise men merely to scoff at and make a jest of. Amongst them are men well able to investigate; many are men of the world, doctors and lawyers – the two professions which are just the two which ought to be able to deal with the value of scientific and logical evidence. Already you may find the ranks of Theosophy winning day by day thoughtful and intellectual adherents. Even in the ranks of my own party I have not

gone over quite alone, for my friend and colleague, Mr Herbert Burrows, went over with me; and since then, Br. Carter-Blake has joined us.

Are you quite wise to be so sure that you are right and that there is nothing in the universe you do not know? It is not a safe position to take up. It has been taken in all ages, and has always proved mistaken. It was taken by the Roman Catholic Church centuries ago, but they have been driven back. It has been taken by the Protestant Church time after time. They also have been proved mistaken. If it is taken by the Freethought party now, is that to be the only body in human history that is the one and final possessor of the truth and knowledge that never in all the centuries to come may be increased? For, friends, that, and nothing else than that, is the position that you are taking in this Hall at the present time. [“Quite Right”, and “No”, “No”.] You say “no”. Listen for a moment, and let us see if it be not so. What is the reason I leave your platform? Because your society shuts me off it. [“No”, and “Yes”.] When you have done shouting “no”, I will finish my sentence. The reason that this is my last lecture in this Hall is because the condition which was placed upon my coming on the platform, after the hall passes into the hands of the National Secular Society, is that I shall not in my lectures say anything that goes against the principles and objects of the Society.

Now I will never speak under such conditions. I did not break with the great Church of England, and ruin my social position, and break with all that women hold dear, in order to come to this platform and be dictated to as to what I should say. Your great leader would never have done it. Imagine Charles Bradlaugh standing upon this platform and, when he went up to the room of the Committee of the National Secular Society, their coming to him and saying: “You should not have said so and so in your lecture.” And do you suppose that I, who have spoken on this platform so long, will place myself in that position? Mind, I do not deny the right of your Society to do it. I do not challenge the right of your Society, or any other, to make

any conditions it pleases round its platform. You have exactly the right that every church and sect has to say: "This is my creed and, unless you accept it, you shall not speak within my walls." You have the right; but, O my friends and brothers, is it wise? Think. I have no word today to say against the Society; no word to say against its committee; but I have sat upon that committee for many a year, and I know on it are many young men sent up by their societies – when they have only been members a very short time – to take part in the deliberations. Are these young fellows, who are not my equals in training or knowledge, of the world, of history or theology – are they to have the right to come and say to me, when I leave the platform: "Your lecture went beyond the limits of the principles and objects of our Society"? It is not thus I hold the position of a public teacher, of a public speaker.

I will only speak from a platform where I may say what I believe to be true. Whether it be true or not, it is my right to speak it; whether it be correct or not, it is my right to submit it to a tribunal of my fellows. But you, what is it you are saying? That you will have no word from your platform save that which you already know, echoing back from your brains to the brain of the speaker the truth you have already discovered. While one more truth remains in the universe to be discovered, you do wrong to bar your platform. Truth is mightier than our wildest dreamings; deeper than our longest plummet-line; higher than our loftiest wings; grander than you and I can even imagine today. What are we? People of a moment. Do you think centuries hence, millenniums hence, your principles and objects will count in the truth which our race then will know? Why bar your platform? If you are right, discussion will not shake your truth. If you are right, you ought to be strong enough to hear a lecturer put views you don't agree with. I never dreamt that from this platform, identified with struggles for human liberty, a platform on which I have stood with half the world against me, I never thought I should be excluded from it by the barrier of objects already accepted; and while

I admit your right to do it, I sorely misdoubt the wisdom of the judgment that so decides.

In bidding you farewell, I have no words save words of gratitude to say in this Hall; for well I know that for seventeen years I have met with a kindness that has never changed, a loyalty that has never broken, a courage that has always been ready to stand by me and defend me. Without your help I had been crushed many a year ago; without the love you gave me, my heart would have been broken many long years since. But not even for love of you, shall a gag be placed upon my mouth; not even for your sake will I promise not to speak of that which I know to be true. Although my knowledge may be mistaken, it is knowledge to me. As long as I have it, I should commit the worst treachery to truth and conscience if I allowed anyone to stand between my right to speak that which I believe I have found to those who are willing to listen to me. And so, henceforth, I must speak in other Halls than this; henceforth in this Hall – identified to me with so much of struggle, so much of pain, so much of the strongest joy that anyone can know – after having tried to be faithful, after having struggled to be true, henceforth in this Hall my voice will not again be heard. To you, friends and comrades of so many years, of whom I have spoken no harsh word since I left you, and of whom through all the years to come no words save of gratitude shall ever pass my lips – to you, friends and comrades, I must say farewell, going out into a life that is shorn indeed of its friends, but has on it that light of duty which is the polestar of every true conscience and brave heart. I know – as far as human being can know – that Those to Whom I have pledged my faith and service are true and pure and great. I would not have left your platform had I not been compelled but if I must be silent on what I know to be true, then I must take my dismissal, and to you now, and for the rest of this life, to you I bid –
FAREWELL.

[As attempts are being made to misrepresent what is above said, I add here that the above Farewell was meant, as was plainly

said, for the Hall of Science and its audience. In future, as since May, 1889, when joined the Theosophical Society, I shall speak to any Branches of the National Secular Society, as I do to Spiritualists and others with whom I disagree, so long as they do not claim a censorship over what I say.]

After this period Mrs Besant would embark on a life of energetic work for the Theosophical Society, visiting many countries, writing many articles and books and establishing herself as a real leader of the movement and a continuator of the work of the Founders. She would go through a number of institutional crisis without hesitating or doubting her ability to deal with them. Under her leadership the Society would experience unprecedented growth and influence and become a recognized force for change in the world. But it would be in India that her skills, wisdom, courage and determination would place her at the centre of a renaissance movement, a true awakening of the motherland, a spiritual spring, which in Sanskrit is called *Vasant*.

From England to India

- 1891 Succeeded H. P. Blavatsky as Outer Head of the E.S.T.
- 1893 September represented the Theosophical Society at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago;
November 9th, arrived in Colombo, and on Nov. 11th lectured on 'Karma';
November 16th, landed in India, at Tuticorin, 10.24 a.m.;
December, her first Convention Lectures delivered: 'The Building of the Kosmos'
- 1893-94 First lecture-tour in India, attracting audiences of thousands
- 1894 Engaged in the Judge 'case';
First lecture tour in Australia and New Zealand;
First address to Indian National Congress
- 1895 January, settled in Benares;
Translated the *Bhagavad-Gita*;
Awarded the Subba Row Medal;
Summer, began clairvoyant research
- 1896 April, lecture series in London, later published as *The Ancient Wisdom*
- 1897 Reorganized the American Section;
Edited and issued *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. III
- 1898 July 7th, started the Central Hindu College in Benares
- 1900 First lectured in India on Social Reform
- 1901 Started the *Central Hindu College Magazine*, which soon attained a circulation of 15,000
- 1902 Joined Co-Freemasonry
- 1904 Started a Girls' School in Benares;

[The sources for this chapter are ‘HPB and the Present Crisis in the TS’ by Constance Wachtmeister (<https://theosophists.org/library/books/h-p-b-and-the-present-crisis-in-the-theosophical-society-1895/>), originally published in *Theosophy In Australasia*, July 5, 1895, pages 5-8; *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* by Josephine Ransom, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1989; and ‘Twenty Years of Work’, a compilation by Basil Hodgson-Smith from the ‘Watch-Tower’ notes and ‘Supplement’ in *The Theosophist*, from *Lucifer* and *The Path*, for the period between 1891 and 1911.]

Within a year of shifting to Avenue Road Madame Blavatsky passed away. Let us consider what Countess Constance Wachtmeister, who had lived for six years with her as her close friend and helper, has written about finding a replacement. Madame Blavatsky considered several persons who might have guided and taught after her but was unsuccessful in her search and became ‘depressed and downhearted’, saying ‘There is nobody left to take my place when I am gone.’ Long before Annie Besant appeared on the scene Madame Blavatsky had told Countess Wachtmeister that a woman would be her successor. On seeing Mrs Besant for the first time she exclaimed, ‘My dear Mrs Besant, I have so long wished to see you.’

Her hopes revived but as Wachtmeister had been discouraged by failure of various persons who it was thought could be possible successors, she looked upon Mrs Besant with critical, if not suspicious, eyes. She thought it possible that Annie Besant might be an ambitious person entering the Theosophical Society with the motive of governing and controlling its affairs. She watched her closely, judging and criticizing every action from this point of view. She noticed that Mrs Besant continuously endeavoured to overcome her shortcomings and was full of self-sacrifice in her daily life. The watchful eyes of the Countess noticed in Mrs Besant an indomitable will-power which overcame one obstacle after another. She became convinced that Mrs Besant could succeed Madame Blavatsky.

Two more incidences convinced the Countess. One day she saw Mrs Besant ‘enveloped in a cloud of light – Master’s colour. He was standing by her side with his hand over her head’. She rushed to Madame Blavatsky and narrated what she had seen. Madame Blavatsky confirmed the truth of the incident. At a lecture to workmen she saw the Master by Mrs Besant’s and felt that she spoke with an eloquence not noticed before.

While living with Madame Blavatsky, Mrs Besant spent some time every evening with her to receive occult teachings.

Very soon after joining the TS she started speaking and writing about Theosophy. Mrs Besant first article appeared in the 15 August 1889 issue of *Lucifer* on ‘Karma and Social Improvement’, next an article on ‘Hypnotism’ and this was followed by an article on ‘Memory’. The article on ‘Theosophy for the Profane’ appeared in March and April issues of *Lucifer*. Thereafter followed regular contributions of articles, some under ‘Theosophical Gleanings’, in the same journal.

A special mention may be made of an article in the December 1890 issue of *Lucifer*, on ‘T.S. and H.P.B.’ later published as a pamphlet, protesting against the constant petty criticism levelled at Madame Blavatsky who came to know of it only after publication.

As Mabel Collins was unable to continue Annie Besant was appointed co-editor of *Lucifer* from September 1889.

In November and December 1889 Mrs Besant addressed crowded audiences on Theosophy. These were followed by several lectures delivered in 1890 at various places in England, Ireland and on the continent. Her first lecture in Ireland was on 3 October 1890 in Dublin on ‘Why I became a Theosophist’. As early as that a commentator said, ‘She understands, as few good speakers do, the beauty of rhythm in a sentence, and the force that is gained by the reiteration of some particular words’.

It was on 4 September that Colonel Olcott arrived in London and was warmly greeted by Madame Blavatsky. On this day he saw

Annie Besant for the first time. She met Mr C.W. Leadbeater in 1890 at Mr A. P. Sinnett's home in London. The President, Col. Olcott, went several times to hear Mrs Besant speak, and was struck by her forcible oratory.

Madame Blavatsky knew that her physical existence would come to an end very soon. She wanted to place the work on a secure foundation. She saw great organizational power in Mr Judge and potentialities of teaching in Mrs Besant. It is possibly for this reason that she asked Mrs Besant to go to America and with Mr Judge should visit some Lodges there. As Mr Judge did not know Mrs Besant, Madame Blavatsky wrote to him on 27 March 1891 describing Mrs Besant as, 'the soul of honour and uncompromising truthfulness ... unselfishness and altruism is Annie Besant's name ... It is only a few months she studies occultism with me in the innermost group of the E.S. and yet she has passed far beyond others... She is a most wonderful woman, my right hand, my successor, when I will be forced to leave you, my sole hope in England, as you are my sole hope in America.'

Countess Wachtmeister has narrated that Madame Blavatsky used to wear a signet-ring which had highly magnetic properties. The ring was to be handed over to Annie Besant after her death according to her express direction.

Mrs Annie Besant arrived at New York on 9 April 1891. Her first lecture was on 'London, its Wealth and its Poverty'. In this she drew a vivid picture of the awful state of things there among the poor, but with little relief offered by the rich. This was followed on the 15th by a lecture on 'Dangers Menacing Society', showing dangers not only of disproportionate distribution of wealth but also of overproduction.

As the poor became educated they saw clearly all this and became discontented. She spoke on the same subject in Washington on the 24th. Returning to New York she gave two lectures, one of which was to clear some misconceptions. Thence Mrs Besant and

Mr Judge proceeded to Boston to attend the Theosophical Convention on 24 April. She, designated by Madame Blavatsky as her 'agent and representative' during her visit, gave greetings from her to the Convention and read out her message pointing out that the present cycle of great conflict and continued strain will continue up to 1897-98. Madame Blavatsky's message added, 'If the T.S. can hold through it, good; if not, while Theosophy will remain unscathed, the Society will perish... and the world will suffer...' Mrs Besant's main lecture to the Convention was on 'Theosophy and its Message to the Western World'. There were other lectures besides hers. A special mention may be made of a reception given in her honour by New England's large and powerful organization 'Women's Press Association' where she addressed the gathering on 'Women and Journalism from the Theosophical Standpoint'.

Madame Blavatsky's warning to the members came true. The next few years were full of conflict and strain among some of the principal workers but the T.S. did 'hold through it' and continues to serve humanity even today.

Mrs Besant and Mr Judge returned to New York on 1 May, stopping at Springfield on the way. Her first American tour ended with a lecture to the Aryan T.S. of New York. On 6 May Mrs Besant accompanied by Mr Judge and Dr and Mrs J. D. Buck, left New York for England. Madame Blavatsky passed away on 8 May while they were on board.

After attending meetings and discussions with workers Mrs Besant along with Mr Judge went on a lecture tour in England. Her subjects included 'What Education Should Be', 'Civilization and Human Happiness', 'A Page of Forgotten Eastern Philosophy'. She wrote for *Lucifer*, contributing an article in July on 'Theosophy and the Law of Population'. She lectured also before the London Spiritualist Federation on 'Where Materialism Breaks Down'. Her itinerary included Bradford, Liverpool, Sheffield, Birmingham, Brighton, Brixton, and Battersea. In addition she lectured at the

Blavatsky Lodge, Manchester, Greenwich and thrice at the Hall of Science.

In consultation with the Esoteric Section Council Mrs Besant and Mr Judge agreed that they together should assume full leadership of the E.S., Mr Judge for America and Mrs Besant for the rest of the world, with the Headquarters in London.

Mrs Besant refused to stand for reelection to the London School Board, as she wanted to devote her full time to T.S. work. At this time was published the first installment of 'The Seven Principles of Man' which continued monthly until it was completed.

Responsibility of editing *Lucifer* fell mainly on her shoulders. As a result of the impetus given by her great interest was aroused in theosophical subjects in various journals, and the lecture halls were full to capacity. She wrote in the editorial of *Lucifer*, July 1891:

Theosophy is gaining in England a hearing such as it never had before. Not only have many journals, finding the interest aroused in the subject widespread and eager, readily printed articles on Theosophical subjects, but public meetings, limited only by the size of the halls in which they were held, have attested that interest in some of the provincial towns ... Early in the year I came to the conclusion that any effective propaganda on Theosophy among the population at large was hopeless in this country, unless we could get people to listen to the doctrine of Reincarnation ... So I told H.P.B. that I intended to take Reincarnation as a subject for lecturing, and her prompt approbation told me the new departure was a step in the right direction.

During the remainder of the year she continued lecturing, and wrote a vigorous editorial in the December *Lucifer* on 'Ought Theosophists to be Propagandists?' urging all those who had received

Theosophic knowledge to pass it on. But her health suffered from her overwork.

With the arrival of Mrs Besant on the Theosophical platform there was a noticeable change in the quality of the audience. It was not to listen to a political oration or to witness sensational miracles or manifestations. It was an aggregation of truth-seekers. A few went to scoff but many remained. In the audience an eminent Baptist, an Independent deacon, now a Secularist next, a Swedenborgian and also a Quaker sitting shoulder to shoulder with a Church Warden. Lectures were followed by many questions, letters of enquiry asking about libraries, from where further information could be obtained and where books could be bought.

On 9-10 July 1891, at the First Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society in Europe, the President-Founder took the chair and Mrs Besant welcomed him and pledged the loyalty of the Convention to the Cause. A largely attended public meeting was held at which Col. Olcott, A. P. Sinnett, William Judge, Mrs Besant, Bertram Keightley and Herbert Burrows spoke. On 17 July the European Section was duly chartered.

On 30 August the President went with Mrs Besant to attend her farewell address to the Secularists, for they had voted that she should not speak to them on Theosophy. She explained her search for Truth, her work for the Freethought movement and her contact with Madame Blavatsky. A great sensation was caused when she declared that she herself had received letters from a great Teacher in the same handwriting as those which Madame Blavatsky had received. This statement was discussed in the press with great excitement. She continued lecturing during the year. Due to overwork her health suffered towards the end of 1891. From the March issue of *Lucifer* onwards she wrote a series of articles on Reincarnation.

It may be relevant to mention that Col. Olcott on his way back to India lectured at many places in the USA and in early

October met Mr Judge in San Francisco. There were already difficulties concerning claims made by Mr Judge regarding his relationship with the Masters. Col. Olcott came to an understanding with him about Theosophical matters.

In spite of her poor health Mrs Besant lectured widely in early 1892 (at thirty-six places between January and June).

In February 1892, the first installment of Manual II, *Reincarnation*, appeared in *Lucifer*, which continued monthly till finished. In July appeared her 'Rough Outline of Theosophy', and there was held in that month the Second Annual Convention of the European Section of the Theosophical Society, held in Manchester in July, and continued her vigorous lecturing in England until she left for the USA on 24 November. In September Mrs Besant began to publish 'Death and After', which was continued monthly and formed Manual III.

Plans had been discussed as to the possibility of a visit to India in the autumn of 1892, but the visit had to be postponed, Mrs Besant sending the following letter [published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. XIV]:

TO INDIAN THEOSOPHISTS

19 AVENUE RD., LONDON, N.W.,

October 21, 1892.

DEAR FRIENDS AND BROTHERS,

I am told much disappointment is felt because I cannot yet visit India; and as India is to me, as to every Theosophist, the "Sacred Land", I earnestly desire that no harsher feeling may mingle with that of regret. Last year I promised to visit India, if possible; but there were two conditions necessary of fulfilment: (1) That my health would bear the climate; (2) That as I live on what I earn, and use my earnings for the support of Headquarters left in my charge and that of others by H.P.B., enough money should be raised in India to cover the cost of the tour and to pay towards the

maintenance of Headquarters that which I should have paid out of my earnings if I were working in Europe or America. Neither of these conditions was fulfilled. The physician who attended H.P.B. while she lived in London stated positively that if I went to India and lectured as I proposed, I should not return alive; that, overstrained by the trouble of that year and the heavy work that fell on me, my strength would not bear the hot climate and the complete change of life-conditions; that, while I might get all right again working in England or America – the latter being especially advisable because of the sea-voyage and bracing climate – a lecturing tour in India must mean a hopeless breakdown. Apart from all else, this opinion was enough to delay my visit.

But the second condition remained unfulfilled. There was not sufficient interest at first felt in the proposed tour to raise the necessary funds, and this by itself rendered delay imperative. Some hasty members have spoken of breach of contract on my side in my not visiting India this year. I made no promise to do so. I promised to go last year if certain conditions were fulfilled, one of which depended on members of the Society. The members did not fulfil that condition, so the arrangement lapsed, and since then I have made no promise and can therefore commit no 'breach of contract'. Now apart from all questions of promises, I am deeply and earnestly desirous of visiting India; but I cannot consult my wishes only. I have work placed in my hands which I am bound to carry out, and you, my dear Indian brethren, cannot be the judges of my duty. While I shall be grieved if you are angry with me for my absence, the anger would not move me from doing what is right. It may be that circumstances next year will permit me to visit you; and if so, it will not be my heart or will that will place any obstacle in the way. But I can make no definite promise...

India's salvation depends on herself and her resident workers, not on the passing excitement that might be caused by lectures from me; and you, my brothers, are responsible for your own land.

Ere long I hope to stand face to face with you, I, to whom India and the Indian people seem nearer than the nations to which by birth I belong. In heart I am one with you, and to you by my past I belong. Born last time under Western skies for work that needs to be done, I do not forget my true motherland, and my inner nature turns eastward ever with filial longing. When Karma opens the door, I will walk through it, and we will meet in the body as we can already meet in mind. Farewell

ANNIE BESANT, F.T.S.

Mrs Besant landed in New York on 30 November and was met by Mr Judge, Mr. Neresheimer, Dr. A. Keightley and others. Her lecture programme was as follows: New York, Toledo, Fort Wayne, Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Sioux City, Omaha, Portland, Tacoma, Seattle, San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, Los Angeles, San Diego, Kansas City, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Columbus, Pittsburgh, New York, Boston, etc. She herself writes (see *Lucifer*, Vol. 12, p. 105):

Landing at New York, I found the Aryan Branch as active as ever and considerably stronger in numbers than on my last visit, and the effective nature of the propaganda carried on was evidenced by the large audiences. The new Headquarters is a splendid acquisition, and it is good to see the General Secretary (W. Q. Judge) in his office like a spider in the middle of his web, and all the strands running out in every direction . . . This floor may be said to be the backbone of the Headquarters; above it are meeting-rooms, and yet above again the dwelling-rooms of bachelor members; below it is the Hall of the Aryan Lodge, and below this the printing office where John, the brother of James Pryse, does for the American Section the work done in England by his brother. The Aryan Press and the H. P. B. Press are mighty twins without

which the literary side of the movement would be sorely handicapped.

After that she moved to Chicago, Milwaukee and then westwards to St Paul and southwards to several places. From Portland again she travelled northwards to the State of Washington, travelling southwards a thousand miles at stretch, arriving in San Francisco. Mrs Besant describes the group as a great Theosophical centre on the Western Coast, not only large in numbers but also strong in energy and devotion.

She spent a week there conducting a number of meetings before leaving for Los Angeles and San Diego for the second time. After a five-day train journey she reached Kansas City. She says the audiences at St Louis, Indianapolis, Dayton and Columbus were small as not much Theosophical propaganda had been done. As a result of work done by the Buck family a large enthusiastic audience was present at Cincinnati. Then, via New York, she reached Boston for a large meeting. Then again southwards she travelled in the eastern states. She was shocked at the sight of the workers in Pittsburg, a familiar sight in the old countries, with 'shoulders bowed with constant burden of anxiety'.

Visiting a few more places she left New York to pick up threads at the Headquarters in London. On 27 April 1893 Mrs Besant wrote to Col. Olcott that she would be able to visit India in autumn. In May her four-day visit to Holland put new energy into the Dutch Headquarters staff. The title of the lecture on 19 May at Amsterdam was 'Evolution of Man, from the Animal to the Divine'. The next day she spoke on 'Theosophy, its Teaching and its Meaning'. A special and uncommon feature of the visit was that her lectures were appreciatively reported in detail in all the newspapers. These followed two crowded meetings of members and enquirers at the Headquarters.

On 26 August Mrs Besant, accompanied by Miss Miller, G.N. Chakravarti, and H. Dharmapala, sailed for New York. Col. Olcott, by Executive Orders, deputed Mr Judge to represent him officially and Mrs Besant as 'special delegate' to speak on behalf of the Theosophical Society at the First World Parliament of Religions held at Chicago on 15-16 September 1893, with various organizations holding their own congresses. After overcoming several hurdles the T.S. was granted permission to hold its own congress. The lectures were crowded to such an extent that the hall allotted to hold 500 was changed to one which would hold 1500 and then to one which would hold 4,000 which was also packed but very few attended other sessions of the Congress.

Dr J. Anderson, editor of *The Pacific Theosophist*, wrote of Mrs Besant's address: 'Seldom has a tide of eloquence ever flowed from human lips than came from those of Annie Besant.' *The Tribune* reported, 'Occultism and esoteric subjects held full sway last evening at the Hall of Washington. The hall was crowded with an audience eager and anxious to listen to the words that fell from the lips of the most prominent theosophist of the day, Mrs Besant, on whom the mantle of Madame Blavatsky has fallen.' Mrs Besant went on her first visit to Canada soon after the World Parliament of Religions.

Mrs Besant arrived in Colombo on 10 November 1893 and lectured to crowded meetings in Kandy, Colombo, Galle and Pandure. She landed on Indian soil at Tuticorin on 16 November and lecturing at eighteen places to ever-increasing crowds and reached Adyar on 20 December. The Convention had a larger attendance than ever before and Mrs Besant gave all the four Convention lectures on 'The Building of the Kosmos'.

On New Year's day Mrs Besant lectured on the Madras Esplanade to a crowd of 6,000 in the open, without a microphone. So far, she had given forty-eight lectures (including those at the Convention). On 7 January 1894 she, with the President and others, sailed from Madras to Calcutta and went up to Lahore in the West

and then via Bombay left for England on 20 March. In the April 1894 issue of *The Theosophist* Col. Olcott gave a detailed account of Mrs Besant's tour and the great impact it made:

The departure of Annie Besant for England closed the record of one of the most remarkable lecturing tours in history. It is a record of 15,000 miles of travel by sea and 6,500 by land, in Ceylon and India; of 121 public addresses to at least an aggregate of 100,000 people; of the widening of the hearts of several nations; of the awakening of popular enthusiasm for the ancient faiths of Hinduism and Buddhism among their much dejected adherents; and of such a display of ability as an orator, philosopher and public teacher, as to put her in the very highest place in the minds of Eastern people. From the Southern province of Ceylon to Lahore, the capital of the Punjab, and from Calcutta, the metropolis of the Indian Empire, to Surat, the ancient gateway on the Western sea of the commerce of India with Western Nations, comes but one verdict as to her preeminence in all those qualities that mark the civic leader of men. Before November last her name was scarcely known in the East, save among a few readers of Western free-thought literature; it is now known and spoken of with benedictions in tens of thousands of homes, by every class of people in the countries through which she has passed triumphantly, during the tour just completed. Instead of my exaggerating in what is said above, our friends in every town visited will, upon reading these lines, rather accuse me of understating the facts; for everywhere there were the same crowds hanging upon her eloquent lips, the same rain of tears when she pathetically described the fallen state of the old religions and the spiritual degradation of the peoples, the same wild applause when she sat down, almost exhausted, after her fervid perorations.

As regards her keeping within the constitutional limits of our Society's policy, I do not see how there can be two opinions. Her theme was ever Theosophy, and besides being a Hindu by

religion she has ever declared herself a thorough-going Theosophist. While she showed that Theosophy was more fully and clearly taught, as she believed and as H. P. B. proved, in the Aryan Scriptures than anywhere else, she also said that it was the indwelling soul of every religion the world had ever known.

As regards the entire tour it may be said that there was a monotony of exciting arrivals and departures from stations of generous, even lavish, hospitality; of smothering under flowers and sprinkling with rose-water; of loving addresses presented in tasteful caskets by reception committees; of chanted Sanskrit *ślokas* full of Eastern compliments and hyperboles, from both orthodox and unorthodox pundits; of organisation by me of Hindu religious and ethical societies among school-boys and undergraduates; of visits to sacred shrines and holy ascetics; of morning conversations when, for two hours or even three, Annie Besant would answer offhand the most difficult and abstruse questions in science, philosophy, symbolism and metaphysics; of grand orations daily to overpacked and sweltering audiences, which found no halls big enough to hold them, and so overflowed into the neighbouring compounds or streets, sometimes by hundreds and thousands, and had to be driven away by the police; of processions in palanquins, by night with torches, by day and night sometimes with bands of Hindu musicians, choirs of female singers and groups of bayaderes with national music and dance, as though ours was a religious progress; of presents of Kashmir shawls by hosts and magnates who could afford to comply with the ancient custom of thus honoring scholars, that has come down from remotest antiquity; of rides on elephants through crowds of pilgrims; of floating in quaint boats down sacred rivers, past holy cities like Benares, Prayag and Muttā, to see the bathing multitudes and the waterside temples, houses, mosques and tombs of dead potentates, sages and ascetics; of formal meetings with pundits for discussions; of receptions at private houses where we were made acquainted with the most

educated and most influential personages of the great cities: this for five months on end; a rushing up and down and across the great Indian peninsula; a conscientious filling of engagements and strict keeping to the advertised programmes; a series of meetings and partings with beloved old colleagues and new acquaintanceships formed with later corners.

Over all, through all, and lingering with me like the strain of a sweet symphony dying in distance, the recollection of the most splendid series of discourses I ever listened to in my life; and of intimate companionship with one of the purest, most high-minded, most intellectual and spiritually elevated women of our generation, or of any previous age, of whom I have read in history. Unlike as H. P. B. and I were in many respects, we were akin in more ways than Annabai and myself can ever be. My praise of her is not tinged with blind partiality. She is religious fervor and devotion personified, the ideal female devotee who in time evolves into saint and martyr. Her Hinduism is the lofty spiritual concept of the *Bhagavad-Gitā*, a splendid, perhaps unattainable, ideal.

If there was monotony in other things throughout the tour, there certainly was not as regards lodging-places. At one station we would be quartered by the local committee in a palace, borrowed for the occasion from the local agent of some absentee rajah; at the next at a bug-haunted, uncleanly, mud-floored and mud-walled travellers' bungalow, perhaps one where the wood of the doors had been eaten out by white ants, or become so warped as to defy the tight shutting of them. The *charpoy*s (bed-cots) were sometimes so soiled and full of animal life that we all preferred sleeping on the floor on mats – no hardship for either Annabai or myself, or for that matter, for our dear companion, the self-forgetting and humble-minded hard worker for Theosophy, the Countess Wachtmeister, although she usually resorted to her deck-chair, which she carried with her against such emergencies. Several times we were put up at railway stations, where the journey had to

be broken to take another railway line; but in India that is no great hardship. To people of our simple tastes, it was pleasanter than to have to sleep in palaces full of costliest furniture; for one could not help grieving over the human misery with which the latter contrasted. Yet, let me say, that whatever the temporary habitations in which our friends lodged our party, it was given in love and the sense of that made us happy, in the most gorgeous *koti* as in the most humble bungalow. Our every wish was anticipated, our every imaginary want provided for; and if the memory of Annie, her lectures, talks and sisterliness, is sweet to the memories of the local Branches who entertained us, so likewise does she carry away a heart full of fraternal affection for the Hindu, Parsi and Mussalman brothers she left behind – but not forever.

She landed at Colombo on November 9th, crossed over to India on the 15th, visited thirteen stations before reaching Madras, and stopped at Adyar until January 7th, 1894. At the Convention she gave a series of lectures on “Sound”, “Fire”, “Yoga”, and “Symbolism”, which were published under the title *The Building of the Kosmos*. We sailed for Calcutta on the 7th, where she scored the greatest triumph, we are told, that any public speaker had had in the metropolis. The town hall was packed to suffocation with a sitting and standing audience of 5,000, yet so complete was her command over their feelings that when she sank her voice to a half-tone of pathetic recitative, they listened in absolute silence to catch every word, until at the fitting moment their suppressed feeling found vent in torrents of applause. The description applies to each of her Calcutta addresses; and the comments of the local Press and those of the whole Presidency prove the depth and permanency of the impression she made on the people, the high and low, the educated and uneducated. Her progress through Bengal and Behar was almost a royal one in its exhibition of popular fervor. She could not drive through the streets nor enter a lecture-hall without having to pass through crowds who had gathered just to gaze at the

champion of their hoary faith, the declared student of the old Aryan wisdom, and to salute her reverentially with joined palms held in front of their foreheads, as they have been taught to salute the Brahman and the true ascetic from the earliest times to the present day. At Berhampore, there was a great gathering of Nuddea and other pandits to greet her, and in their joint address to her in Sanskrit they ingeniously paraphrased her name into the honorific title of “Annavasant”, which means “the giver of nourishment to the whole world”. The triumph of Calcutta was repeated at Lahore. Fortunately the huge circular pavilion erected for the sessions of the National Congress in December had not yet been dismantled, and seating accommodation was available for some 4,000 people. Annie Besant’s voice, which did not fail her throughout the tour, was found equal to the occasion at Lahore and could be heard with ease throughout the vast auditorium.

Having now reached our most northern point of travel, we turned southward by Bareilly, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Nagpur, and Poona, to Bombay; thence onwards to Surat in the west, and to Baroda, half-way between the two; then back to Bombay, where the 18th and 19th of March were devoted to public addresses and private meetings, receptions and conversaciones; and the last event of all was the embarkation of our dear apostle of Theosophy on the P & O steamer *Peninsular* for Europe.

After returning to England from India she presided over White Lotus Day meeting, afterwards lecturing for a fortnight at various places. Later Mr Bertram Keightley accompanied her on a tour of Sweden where she patiently answered numerous enquirers.

She wrote about Mr Keightley: ‘[he] devoted himself during our stay to the helping and enlightenment of the enquirers who thronged round us. Noting his patience, his gentleness, his ready insight into the often inarticulate difficulties of the questioners, and his lucidity of explanation, I realised why our revered H. P. B. so deeply loved

and valued him as pupil and friend. The Theosophical Society has few more useful servants and none who is more devoted.'

When she left India for England, she was requested by the President-Founder to formulate charges against W. Q. Judge, the Vice-President and the President-elect. From the time she arrived until the Convention, she had led a lonely life, for thought and feeling were strongly against her and she had a very hard time indeed. The feeling in favour of W. Q. Judge was intense, and it was not until he had alienated many by his shuffling that Annie Besant experienced any warmth of support. She wrote: 'No member of any weight stood by me except Mr. Sturdy, Mr. Sinnett and Mr. Bertram Keightley.' She was regarded on all sides as mistaken and uncharitable, and was treated like a guilty person. (See *The Case against Mr. Judge*, and the Watch-Tower in *Lucifer* about that time.)

Mrs. Besant published in *Lucifer* (July, 1894) lectures given at Blavatsky Lodge on 'The Meaning and Use of Pain' and 'Devotion and the Spiritual Life'. Mrs. Besant's charges against William Judge were not met but evaded; and statements were read by each, after which resolutions were passed closing the subject. Mrs. Besant and others sent out a circular which is printed in *Lucifer* (August, 1894) on 'Occultism and Truth', and almost immediately left England for Australia, where she arrived in September, 1894.

In that year Mrs Besant undertook a long tour of Australia and New Zealand. Col. Olcott, in his Presidential Address to the Convention, says that the tour has 'opened out a new field to us, and the first practical result is the taking of steps to form an Australasian Section.'

She arrived in Australia on 26 August 1894. In Melbourne the general election happened to be in full swing, and actors and actresses were playing to empty benches, nevertheless hundreds were nightly turned away from the doors of the Bijou Theatre where Annie Besant delivered her first four lectures. So great was the interest that a second four had to be delivered at the Athenaeum. Mrs

Besant's married daughter, Mabel Besant-Scott, was baptized by the Archbishop of Melbourne the following May. Her husband, a Melbourne journalist, undertook to edit the newly established *Australian Theosophist*.

At Sydney her welcome from the Australian public was even more enthusiastic. The Opera House was nightly packed to overflowing, and Mrs. Besant wrote: 'The Society is making steady progress here and is harmonious and united.' Eminent personalities of the day presided over her lectures. It is an interesting coincidence to find Sir William Windeyer, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, chairing one of her lectures in Sydney. It was he who had delivered one of most favourable judgements, condemning some remarks made against her by another judge in the matter of her publication on birth control. The reporter of the *Daily Telegraph* of Sydney noted this and commented on the response to her lecture as 'one of the most critical assemblages ever allured within the compass of speakers' voice in Sydney'.

She delivered ten lectures and the tone of the Press was everywhere most appreciative. On October 1st she sailed for New Zealand, where she received a similar cordial and appreciative welcome, visiting Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin and Wellington. She writes:

I rather hope that the general orthodox feeling may be a little softened by one incident of my visit: the Bishop of Auckland and his daughter called on me at the Theosophic rooms. By the way, if you see a paragraph that I attended the cathedral service and took the sacrament, it is not true! But the statement was all over Auckland. I was at a meeting at the time, but that does not matter. It will do with the Ganges bathing and the visit to the Roman Catholic authorities on my joining the Roman Catholic Church, to prove how variable are my religious opinions.

She arrived in Madras on 22 December. At the 1894 Convention Mrs Besant gave four Convention lectures on the famous series called 'The Self and its Sheaths'. They show her deep insight into the Hindu scriptures, and her crowded audiences sat enthralled under her eloquence. The Anniversary celebration in the Madras town hall had a packed audience, and at each of her remaining two public appearances she had 6,000 and 7,000 hearers.

She proposed at the Convention that W. Q. Judge should be asked to resign as President-elect, which was carried. On landing at Colombo on December 18th, she had received a file of the *Westminster Gazette* containing articles by Mr. Garrett on certain frauds in the Theosophical Society. Having read them carefully on the railway journey from Colombo to Madras, she wrote a long reply to *The Daily Chronicle*, which, with a speech at the Adyar Convention on 'Should Mr. Judge Resign?' is contained in *Lucifer* (February, 1895). She prefaces her statement with these words:

I fully admit that anyone who takes on the platform the position of public teacher of morality is rightly challenged for explanation if anything arises that throws doubt on his probity and purity; if he is not prepared to answer the challenge, he should retire from the public position; he is bound in honor to declare what he believes to be the real state of the case, and to leave the issue clear . . . I am therefore ready to answer, ready to let the public pass its verdict on me. Then I shall go on with my work, whatever the verdict may be; for I have been condemned before by the public and then have been as extravagantly praised. If now the wheel has turned for another period of condemnation, I can work as contentedly through it. Those who build on the rock of pure intention may, from folly or ignorance, use poor materials in their building. Who should be more glad than they if the fire burns these up, so teaching more care for the future?

It had been planned that Mrs. Besant's second Indian tour should be on a much more restricted scale than the former: the Convention lectures, a tour in the Punjab, visits to a few stations in the North-West Province, a course in Calcutta, and a very short one at Bombay. Her progress through the country provoked the same popular enthusiasm as had the first tour. Touching on the then crisis in the Theosophical Society, she said:

The Society's work is not to be judged by the actions and peculiarities of those who were and are at the head of it, but by the work they had done and were doing in the spiritual regeneration of the various nationalities of the world.

Mrs Besant was very active in England after her return in April 1895 and lectured at many places there till the beginning of December 1895. Her first lecture in St James Hall was on 'Mahatmas as Facts and Ideals', Mr. Sinnett presiding and giving a short preliminary address; the lecture was issued in pamphlet form, and sent to all members of the Society. Three series of four lectures were delivered on Sunday evenings: (1) Man and Law (2) Reincarnation and Devachan (3) Man and his Bodies. Besides these she gave a series of five lectures in August 1895 entitled 'The Outer Court'.

Between this time and the Annual Convention, there was a perfect deluge of pamphlets. Mrs. Besant presided at the Northern Federation on May 11th, and gave a short account of her travels in Australia and India, and lectured in the evening on 'Brotherhood, True and False'. Other lectures were on 'The Brotherhood of Religions' and 'The Pilgrimage of the Soul'.

The Fifth Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society on July 4th was a stormy one and Mr Judge's adherents left the Convention after an excited protest. They in future called themselves the 'Theosophical Society in England, America', etc., as the case might be.

Mrs. Besant gave a series of lectures on Sundays in St. James's Hall on Karma, which were published as Manual IV. In this there is evidently an increased development of astral and mental sight. Unlike the former Manuals, it is the result of personal observation and not derived from H. P. B.'s teachings. She visited Holland for the second time, and during August gave a very notable series of lectures to Blavatsky Lodge entitled 'The Outer Court'.

Dr. Besant's First Use of Clairvoyance
(first printed in *The Theosophist*, October 1932, p. 11.)

'In the year 1895, Dr. Besant and her colleague C.W. Leadbeater, accompanied by Mr. Bertram Keightley, went for a short holiday to Box Hill, Surrey. The holiday lasted from Friday, August 16, till Wednesday 21st. What happened during the trip was reported at the time in a letter received by Miss F. Arundale in Benares. C.J. [C. Jinarajadasa]

From C.W. Leadbeater to F. Arundale

August 25, 1895

Turning to other matters, we had a capital time at Box Hill. The weather was splendidly fine all the time we were there (from Friday night to Wednesday evening) so we simply climbed the hill directly after breakfast (which was always at eight), took a rug with us to sit upon, and remained there either all day, if we had taken up some lunch, or at any rate till two o'clock. When we descended for lunch we camped out in the garden (which was large) directly after it, had our tea out there about five, and came into dinner about seven, after which we took a two hours walk and went to bed. That was our life all the while we were there, and we did nothing but talk

Theosophy the whole time. I wished very much you could have been with us for I am sure you would have enjoyed it all immensely.

We stayed at a house called "The Cottage", a real old fashioned place, delightfully clean and quiet, but possessing modern conveniences as far as baths and good cooking are concerned. We were visited more than once by the Masters, also by D.K. and H.P.B, and while we were there Mrs. Besant learnt to use astral vision, which is not only a never-ceasing delight to her, but a great help to me, as I have now another person to help check my recollection of things. She plunged into it all with the greatest ardour, and we made some very interesting investigations together, the results of which will no doubt materialize themselves presently in the form of papers or articles.

We got some unexpected new lights upon Devachan, shewing (sic) possibilities which to me at least had been quite unexpected before. The subject was fairly fully worked out, and a series of examples were shown to us, but the whole explanation is far too long to write here, and the conclusions without the explanation are startling.

Very shortly and roughly put, it comes to this that as a man evolves in goodness and intelligence, he generally develops his consciousness on that plane; the images of him which enter into the Devachan of his various departed friends are no longer mere reflections (which are really illusions) but become a part of his extended consciousness, so that the dead man is not deceiving himself when he thinks that he meets and talks with a friend still on earth; and the higher a man rises the more truly he is present in his friend's Devachan.

Of course this crude statement requires considerable modification, but I am giving the merest outline, and I must say it

was a great relief to me to find that it was so. Another interesting point was the extent to which the contemplation in Devachan of a noble idea to which one looks up with love and gratitude may perfect and spiritualize one's character during that period; the example given being that of a sempstress [another name for seamstress, *Compiler*] who had been a kind of ministering angel in the slum in which she was. The feelings that her ministrations aroused among these unfortunates was the only thing, in some cases, that gave them any Devachan at all, so that her earthly help was as nothing beside the impulse she gave them on a higher plane, though of this she was naturally entirely unconscious.

We also made further investigations into the different orders of atoms and molecules, the arrival of the first class pitris from the Moon, and the manners, customs, religion and history of some Lemurian and early Atlantean races, to say nothing of a few casual incarnation hints. During the latter we witnessed the first birth of Mahatma Morya on this earth, on arrival from the spiritual state following the Lunar Chain, and found him again about a million years ago as one of the great dynasty of the Divine Rulers of the Golden Gate in Atlantis.

So you see we did not altogether waste our time though we were taking a holiday. A little rest and change did Mrs. Besant a great deal of good. She is down at Harrogate lecturing today and will return tomorrow. She delivered a very fine address here last Thursday evening, sweeping away all the absurd and almost blasphemous exaggerations with which the Path of spiritual advancement has been often described as a "Path of woe", of ever increasing agony from age to age, and insisting on the sane aspect – the joyous confidence, the serenity and bliss which can be given only by the widening knowledge of the disciple.

C.W. LEADBEATER

Further investigations were made after the return to London; they were incorporated in the *Theosophical Manual*, No VI, *The Devachanic Plane*. This incident of the sempstress is described at length on pp.40, 41 – C.J.’

The English Lodges which seceded on account of the Judge decision were: Dublin, Bow, Brixton, Croydon, Southport, H. P.B., Earl’s Court, Charleroi and Yarm. Mrs Besant had planned to visit India at the time of the Indian Section Convention in October 1895, held on the occasion of the Durga Puja, which was to be the first Convention on the newly acquired premises for its Headquarters at Benares, but delayed doing so, though at very great inconvenience and serious pecuniary loss. She says:

H. P. B., Col. Olcott and myself are now the persons assailed... It is best that I remain at hand to deal with any specific accusations that may be made. The plan adopted by the enemies of the Society of gathering together accusations against prominent members, keeping careful silence while the members are at hand, and launching the accusations publicly when they are on the other side of the world, or are on the eve of departure, is not a very chivalrous or honorable one; but we must take people as we find them . . . So I have unpacked my boxes and settled down again to work here. I am grieved to think of the disappointment that will be caused in India by the cancelling of the arrangements. However, it is all one work, whether in India or in England; and the duty of the faithful servant is to be where the greatest stress happens to be at the moment ...

For myself, I may say – as I see in many papers that I am going to leave or have left the Theosophical Society – that since I joined the Society in 1889, I have never had a moment’s regret for having entered it; nay, that each year of membership has brought an ever-deepening thankfulness and ever-increasing joy. I do not expect to

find perfection either in the outer Founders of the Theosophical Society, or in its members, any more than they find it in myself, and I can bear with their errors as I hope they can bear with mine. But I can also feel gratitude to Col. Olcott for his twenty years of brave and loyal service, and to H.P.B., for the giant's work she did against materialism, to say nothing of the personal debt to her that I can never repay. Acceptance of the gift she poured out so freely binds to her in changeless love and thankfulness all loyal souls she served; and the gratitude I owe her grows as I know more and more the value of the knowledge and the opportunities to which she opened the way. Regret indeed there is for those who turn aside, terrified by shadows, and so lose in this life the happiness they might have had; but for them also shall the light dawn in the future, and to them also shall other opportunities come.

A six penny *Gita* translated by her was published in England. She lectured at Exeter, Plymouth and Tavistock. Centres were formed at the last two places.

At the end of the Preface to her translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Mrs Besant expresses 'grateful acknowledgements' to the following scholars, friends of hers at Benares (Varanasi): Babu-s Pramada Das Mitra, Ganganath Jha, Kali Charan Mitra and Upen-dranath Basu. Thanks to the assistance of Srimathi Manju Sundaram, Visiting Professor, Faculty of Performing Arts, Benares Hindu University, and a resident of the Headquarters of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society in Varanasi, we are able to present some biographical information about those eminent scholars:

Babu Pramada das Mitra was a great scholar of Sanskrit. He was held in very high esteem by his contemporaries, other luminaries and pandits of Kashi (Varanasi) in the latter half of the 19th century. Pramada das Mitra played a vital role in promoting Sanskrit language among students and awakening interest in them to learn this beautiful language – *Deva-vani* – the language of the Gods. He had

equal command over both the languages – Sanskrit as well as English. The Anglo Department was established in the well-known Sanskrit College, Banaras, and at that time Pramada das Mitra was appointed as teacher of English for the Sanskrit learning students. He passed away in 1901, in Kashi.

Babu Kali Charan Mitra was the son of Pramada das Mitra and he too was a renowned scholar of Sanskrit. After his father's demise, Kali Charan Mitra took up the responsibility of completing the publication work of some rare and important manuscripts which his father had started working on.

Dr Sir Ganganath Jha (25.12.1872 – 9.11.1941) was in the line of the great multi-disciplinary scholars of this country [India], who were luminaries, masters in different fields and branches of knowledge. Known as Mahamahopadhyaya Sir Ganganath Jha, he was a great scholar of Sanskrit, English, Indian Philosophy and Buddhist Philosophy. He was also a Pandit of the Nyāya systems of Philosophy. He had great command of both the languages – Sanskrit as well as English. One of his greatest contribution has been the translations of some of the abstruse, profound scriptures and traditional texts of Sanskrit into English.

He was the author of many books in Sanskrit, English and Maithili. Ganganath Jha was Professor of Sanskrit in the Myor Central College, Allahabad, from 1902 to 1918. He was later appointed as Principal, Government Sanskrit College, Banaras, after Dr Venice's retirement. He was the first Indian Scholar to have taken charge of that College as Principal.

Dr Jha was nominated as member of the Council of State (Rajya Sabha) by the then Central Government. Dr Ganganath Jha graced the high office of the Vice Chancellor, University of Allahabad in the year 1923. During the last few years of the 19th century (around 1892 or so) and due to his close association with Shri Govind das (elder brother of babu Bhagawan Das and a theosophist) he

got the opportunity to meet Col. Olcott and Dr Besant and was greatly impressed and influenced by them both.

Upendranath Bāsu was born in Kolnagar in Bengal, circa 1864. He graduated with degrees in Arts and Law from Calcutta University. After graduating he practiced law at Benares (now Varanasi). Bāsu joined the TS in 1884 and his name is mentioned in the first report of the Kāshī Tattva Sabhā Lodge in Banaras where he was one of the founders with Bhagavan Das as Librarian. Bāsu was one of the seven Founders of the Central Hindu College and held from its commencement the offices of Vice-President of the Board of Trustees and Vice-Chairman of the Managing Committee.

At the suggestion of Mr A.P. Sinnett, Mrs Besant and Mr Leadbeater started looking at chemical elements with their clairvoyant sight and the results of their observation appeared for the first time in *Lucifer*, November 1895. Later these investigations were made in much more detail and published as *Occult Chemistry*. The investigations proceeded fast for the next decade or a little more and then slowly until 1933, mainly by Mr Leadbeater. Mr C. Jinarajadasa, who acted as scribe, brought out the third edition of *Occult Chemistry* in 1951. This work continues to attract the attention of scientists and also of historians of science.

In his introduction to the third edition of *Occult Chemistry: Investigations by Clairvoyant Magnification into the Structure of the Atoms of the Periodic Table and Some Compounds*, by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, originally published in 1908, C. Jinarajadasa writes:

This work contains a record of clairvoyant investigations into the structure of matter. The observations were carried out at intervals over a period of nearly forty years, the first in August 1895 and the last in October 1933. The two investigators, Annie Besant (1847-1933) and C. W. Leadbeater (1847-1934) were

trained clairvoyants and well equipped to check and supplement each other's work.

There were a number of studies on Besant and Leadbeater's book, including *Extra-sensory Perception of Quarks* by Dr Stephen Phillips (1982), and *Occult Chemistry Re-evaluated* by E. Lester Smith, FRS (1984). There were also studies by those who were (are) skeptical of Besant and Leadbeater's original work.

The journal *Physics World*, in its September 2003 issue, carried an article by Jeff Hughes, from the Center for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine, Maths Tower, University of Manchester, UK, entitled "Occultism and the atom: the curious story of isotopes". In his article Hughes highlights the influence of *Occult Chemistry* on the scientific work of Francis Aston, Nobel Prize for Chemistry (1922). The article is reproduced by kind permission in www.cwlworld.info.]

In December 1895 she left for the Annual Convention at Adyar. The crowds that flocked to hear her daily morning lectures did not seem to be in the least diminished by the rain. The lectures were published under the title *The Path of Discipleship*. Conversations were held every afternoon, and every evening there was a gathering for questions, restricted to members. Mrs. Besant went to Poona, where meetings for members were held, besides a great public meeting in the Congress *pandal*, to which 3,000 to 4,000 people came. From there she went direct to Benares. When in Calcutta she lectured for the Anti-Vivisection Society.

At the beginning of 1896 the first installment of *Man and His Bodies* appeared in *Lucifer*. She lectured on 'The Law of Sacrifice' and 'Man's Place in Evolution'. In April she began in the small Queen's Hall a series of thirteen lectures, intended to give a general scheme of Theosophy. These were published under the title *The Ancient Wisdom*, the first chapter of which was published in *Lucifer*, July and August, 1896, under the name of 'The Unity Underlying

All Religions'. In the June 'Watch-Tower' of *Lucifer* there is a reference to the establishment of a Central Hindu College at Benares, to be affiliated to the Allahabad University. 1896 saw several books and pamphlets by Mrs Besant, the most famous being *Man and his Bodies*, *Four Great Religions* and *The Path of Discipleship*. The Sixth Convention of the European Section, presided over by Col. Olcott on 4, 5 July, was a very harmonious one. He attended several of the lectures delivered by Mrs Besant in the Queen's Hall during May, June and July. Mrs. Besant lecture on 'Reincarnation' was heartily applauded. In June Mrs Besant was ill, possibly due to a broken jaw, but in August continued her lecturing at several places in England. She spoke at Amsterdam on 7 and 8 September and left for Bombay the 13th. Fresh fields and pastures new were trodden during this visit. After a crowded lecture and many interviews at Bombay, she went straight to Benares for the Convention of the Indian Section. The week before Convention, she writes:

Durga Pujā is a family religious festival something like Christmas, only Hindus fast instead of feast at their religious ceremonies. A good deal of money is usually spent over it but Babu Upendranath and his family this year set the example of using the money for the relief of the suffering caused by the high prices of food brought about by the coming famine. They bought many wagonloads of wheat, and opened a shop in their courtyard, where it was sold considerably below market price, thus aiding the industrious who are on the verge of starvation from the raised prices ... The Convention went very well, and much useful work was done, one thing being the utilising of the organization of the Theosophical Society to aid in the relief of the starving. The rains have failed over the whole of India, and the harvest is lost. Such a famine has never been before, the food supply cannot last over the winter, and how three hundred millions of people can be fed by imported supplies is the problem to be faced. A catastrophe on a huge scale is

feared.

At this Indian Convention Mrs. Besant gave the following lectures: 'The Path of Action', 'The Path of Wisdom', 'The Path of Devotion'. From Benares Mrs. Besant and Upendranath Basu started in November on a lecture tour in the Punjab and Sindh, visiting Lucknow, Delhi, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Multan, the latter having had only one preceding Theosophical visitor, Colonel Olcott sixteen years before. From Multan, she writes:

I explained to the people how Theosophy gave them the key to their own teachings, showing them how it illuminated many passages and symbols of whose meaning they knew nothing . . . Tomorrow we go to Sindh, quite unbroken ground.

From Hyderabad, Sindh, she writes:

This letter is penned under difficulties, a crowd of women are gazing through the windows and flowing over the threshold, a number of aged men are seated round the room, a pundit is eagerly arguing in Sindhi with a priest of Guru Nanak, and I have refused to answer questions on Paramātman and Ātman on the ground that I have closed my reception and must do my English mail. This is a curious place, the people good-hearted and gentle-natured, very ignorant and very eager to learn, quite untrained in thought, not even conversant with the teachings of their own religion. . . . We left for Hyderabad, travelling all day through the arid tract that lies beyond the fertilising influence of the Indus. There is no famine here, for the country is supplied by its great river and has no rains. In consequence of this mud is largely used for the good houses, as plaster might be in England, and they have a curious, clean-cut, flat, massive appearance, with very thick walls and flat roofs. Houses and forts are all of this smooth mud, and last for hundreds

of years uninjured . . . The first day's lecture at Hyderabad was attended by a crowd that swept away all the arrangements made to receive about one-fiftieth of their number. I had to stand on a table and address a densely packed standing audience, that remained quiet as mice, but must have been very uncomfortable. On the three following days we had a big awning spread and I spoke from a verandah. Every morning's conversazione has been crowded and the people very earnest, but oh I so ignorant. I got some of the more hopeful together and formed them into a centre for study, but advised them not to join the T.S. till they knew a little more. They have bought quantities of books, clearing out our whole stock. I have had one large meeting of women also, they being as eager as the men.

From Karachi, she turned southward, and at Bangalore in Mysore lectured on 'Theosophy, the Science of the Soul', which so impressed the Prime Minister of the Independent State, who presided at the meeting, that he requested an abstract be printed and circulated by the Government, the lecture dealing mainly with education. At the palace of the Maharani, Annie Besant lectured to the leading ministers and court officials, her visit producing some important results.

She proceeded to Adyar for the Annual Convention of the T.S. This Convention of 1896 equalled, if it did not surpass, either of its predecessors in point of harmony and enthusiasm. There was an unusually large attendance of members. Mrs. Besant's morning lectures on Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Christianity were confessedly the ablest, most scholarly and eclectic she has ever given. An Indian sovereign Prince and the Mysore Dewan attended the lectures.

Her long and stormy journey of nearly five weeks from India to America via England was completed on March

18th, when she arrived at New York. Of course many reporters called on her at Jefferson Hotel. She told them:

I have come to plant the seeds of esoteric truth among the people, not to wage war with anyone ... I do not come to antagonise Mrs. Tingley [President of the seceded Lodges of America] or to proselytise among her adherents. We are preaching the same truths to the world at large. I will try to draw converts from the outside public and aid as much as I can those Branches of the Theosophical Society that remain loyal to the parent Society.

New Lodges were formed at New York and Washington; then Annie Besant together with Countess Wachtmeister and Miss A. J. Willson, proceeded westward to St. Louis. Miss Willson, writes:

In New York we had heard of floods along the valley of Mississippi, and as we advanced towards St. Louis, which is built at the junction of the Mississippi and the Missouri, more and more flooded ground and traces of recent heavy rains could be observed from the railway. The papers had been full of the panic caused by the rising of the river, and from this and other causes, we had received a telegram that no lecture could be given at St. Louis; so we passed on to Kansas City. Here, too, a new Lodge was formed. At Topeka we were told that we were the first members of the Theosophical Society who had visited this pleasant little place with a Lodge of a dozen members. The Library Hall was filled with a superior audience. At Denver the crowd of enquirers increased, until they overflowed the hall; and quite a strong Lodge was formed of thirty-two members, one of whom volunteered to find a

room for use as a Theosophical Reading Room and centre for enquiry. At Colorado Springs all, at first, seemed cold in regard to Theosophy, but before we left a group of eleven had formed themselves into a Lodge. Once more we boarded the train and climbed across the Rocky Mountains, with their grand and vivid scenery; and descended through the desert on to the well-watered, snow-mountain encircled plain on which stands Salt Lake City. From many causes this centre of the Mormon religion seemed unlikely for Theosophical ideas to take root and the audiences were small, but once more we found people sufficiently interested to form a Lodge for study. So too at Ogden. Thus far we leave behind an unbroken chain of Lodges in all the towns visited.

Then round the head of Great Salt Lake, across the desert and over the Sierra Nevada, down the full length of California to San Diego, beautifully situated on its landlocked bay, not far from the frontiers of Mexico. In the evening the drawing-room of the hotel was filled two and three times in succession by the crowds who flocked to see Mrs. Besant. Amongst them were a few old members, and it was pleasant to see them expand into a wider understanding of the aims and objects of the Theosophical Society as they listened. They had an opportunity of asking some of the questions which had puzzled them, and they finally united with the new members to form a Lodge. At Los Angeles a reception was given to Mrs. Besant and the Countess by Harmony Lodge, which 200 or 300 people attended. After six days' work, the little party left for San Francisco, where lectures, classes, conversations, a reception at which 300 people were presented to Mrs. Besant, and a celebration of White Lotus Day, were interspersed with Lodge meetings and talks to members. Here

we had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Marques, whose observations on the human aura have lately been brought to the notice of the public. On one day five meetings were addressed by Mrs. Besant; for by some misapprehension a public announcement had been made of a lecture which she had refused for want of time, and she would not disappoint those who might come. Visits were made also to Alameda, Oakland and Stanford University, San Francisco; then on to San Jose, Santa Cruz, Sacramento; on to Portland, Oregon, to Tacoma on Puget Sound, with its fir and cedar-clad hills guarded by isolated snow-capped peaks. At Olympia the Governor of the State attended the lecture.

In beautifully situated and pure-aired Seattle we found a strong Branch and much hopeful work progressing. This is one of the many Branches which owe their origin to tireless energy of the Countess. It was only started last summer, but already has its lecture room and library, and over fifty members. One of the ideas mooted by Mrs. Besant at Seattle was that of a federation of all the Lodges in the State of Washington, on the plan of the Northern Federation in England, for the purpose of interchange of Theosophic thought and help in the work. This would mean a meeting every six months in one or other of the towns, and would tend to foster outside interest and to promote a closer tie amongst the members by personal interest.

Spokane distinguished itself by flocking in such crowds to the first lecture that some hundreds had to be turned away. Butte, Montana, came next, a desert of hills honeycombed by mines of copper, silver, iron and gold. Anaconda and Helena, two other mining towns, were visited. At the latter place the Unitarian minister gave up his

lecture in the midst of a series and advertised Mrs. Besant's instead. On June 15th we found ourselves in Sheridan, Wyoming, near the house of Buffalo Bill and some of his Wild-West riders. Here we encountered a different type of men from the miners of Montana, cowboys. It was cheering that the young Branch had already thirty members. A few new members joined, and we hope that some of the scattered ranchers carried back to their homes ideas to work into their daily lives. At Lincoln, Nebraska, the Universalist Church was packed both on Sunday and Monday; and a study class was formed. At Omaha a prominent Woman's Club held a reception in Mrs. Besant's honor, and lectures in the Opera House commanded audiences, somewhat thinned by the heat which drove all who could to leave the town for the country.

At the Chicago Convention many delegates were gathered, and other Sections were represented by delegates, letters or telegrams of greeting. Mrs. Besant, after a sketch of the work in India and Europe, spoke of the new literature, which is of such value to the usefulness of the Theosophical Society and laid stress on the duty of members to perfect themselves in a knowledge of the fundamental teachings of Theosophy that they may be ready to give help to those who enquire. 'No movement that is ignorant can live', she said, 'and no movement that is ignorant ought to live. The Masters are the Masters of Compassion, but they are the Masters of Wisdom as well.'

From Chicago Mrs. Besant worked eastward. A cloudburst near Menomine had swept away three bridges the day before, and we had to wait patiently till they were patched up sufficiently to permit our train to crawl slowly over them. She left a trail of new Lodges behind her in Michigan: Kalamazoo, Charlotte, Jackson, Ann Arbor,

Detroit. In Ohio, Toledo, Sandusky, Cleveland received a visit. Mrs. Besant has recently placed in the hands of the Central States Committee a number of library boxes, containing full sets of books for elementary and advanced study, to be circulated among the various Branches. On our way from Cleveland to Buffalo, N.Y., we passed not far from one of the famous "camps" of the Spiritualists, and such a pressing invitation was sent us that it was decided to go to Lilydale to lecture for them. Missing a train connection necessitated a long drive in the dark through country roads. They were waiting at the 'camp', and the Countess and Mrs. Besant were immediately conducted to the canvas-sided 'auditorium'. Her lecture on 'Life after Death' was listened to with deep interest, and the next morning many enquirers came; for the more educated and thoughtful Spiritualists are tired of the mere round of phenomena and are eagerly seeking a philosophy which can explain what they know and lead them on to know more. Mrs. Besant lectured again, and a Branch was formed.

After Buffalo and Niagara Falls, we crossed over Lake Ontario to Toronto, Canada. A dozen new members joined the Branch there, and a Lodge was formed at Hamilton. Returning over the blue waters of the lake, at Rochester, N.Y., Miss Susan B. Anthony took the chair at Mrs. Besant's lectures and a Branch was formed. All the interest in Theosophy which had been growing on our way seemed now to culminate, and in Boston a Branch of nearly fifty members was quickly formed; some old members who had dropped away coming gladly into touch again. At Lynn a small united Branch rejoined the parent Society, after being separated for a time in the confusion caused by the late troubles. Her farewell lecture in New

York was on 'Theosophy: its Past, its Present, and its Future', a vivid sketch of the origin of the Theosophical Society, its past troubles, its present position firmly grounded on knowledge gained by those who had followed the course laid down by its Founders, and its grand future as the spiritual helper and moral educator of races yet to come. This was a fitting conclusion to her six months of continual travel, joyful work and ungrudging aid to all who chose to ask it.

After a rest of but ten days, she resumed her work of lecturing in England, and in December visited France, lecturing in English and in French.

She went to Sweden and Norway in 1898, lecturing on "Theosophy and Christianity," "States of Consciousness," and kindred subjects in Goteborg, Christiania, Stockholm, Upsala, Lund, Copenhagen. She writes of Norwegian Christiania:

Darkness covered the land in a way quite novel to us; there were only about five hours of daylight, and that was not light. The weather varied from clear blackness to foggy blackness; there was snow and ice, but no sun; and one felt that Nature here is really an unkind stepmother to her children. The grim tales of Norse mythology seem natural and proper, and the terrible wolf Ferris is felt as an appropriate inhabitant. But in spite of the grimness, Christiania gave us large and very intelligent audiences, and Stockholm gave us a warm welcome. In Upsala, the old University town, the hall of the University was filled with attentive hearers. To our astonishment, Copenhagen presented us with an audience of a thousand people, a remarkable assemblage for the Danish capital, proving

how deep was the interest aroused by Theosophy. Amsterdam seemed homelike, after the dark North, with the familiar faces of dutiful Dutch workers. The Dutch press was more friendly than it had ever been before, and by its help Theosophical teachings have reached thousands of homes. The work finished at the Hague. It is good to see how in that land there are eager brains and hearts ready to welcome message of Theosophy, as bringing a ray of light into the darkness of the world. Men are hungering for religion, but fear to be given stones instead of bread; they are weary of formulae and empty promises, but listen gladly when truth is offered in a way that appeals to sound reason and sane emotion.

A lecture tour to Scotland followed, and on March 14th, 1898, Mrs. Besant left for India, going via Rome, where she met the members of the Rome Lodge in the afternoon of her arrival. The next day the hall of the Society of the Press in the Piazza Colonna was crowded to excess to hear her lecture entitled 'La Theosophie dans le Passé et dans l'Avenir' [Theosophy in the Past and in the Future], in which the work of the teachers of the same great truths in the past in Rome was traced, and the Romans of today were urged to welcome the help that had been rejected in the past.

Arriving in Benares on April 3rd, Mrs. Besant busied herself starting the Central Hindu College. She returned to London early in July, and aroused great interest by her lectures on 'The Reality of the Unseen World', 'Theosophy and Modern Thought', 'Esoteric Christianity', 'The Hidden Side of Religions', 'The Trinity', 'Divine Incarnations', 'Atonement and the Law of Sacrifice', 'Natural and Spiritual Bodies', 'Difficulties of the Inner Life', 'Resurrection and

Ascension', 'The Mystic Christ', 'Theosophy and Social Problems', 'The Good and Evil of Competition', etc.

She attended the Convention of the Indian Section held at Benares in October of the same year. She writes:

In the evening of the second day, the delegates and some invited guests witnessed the famous fire ceremony, in which certain people walk, and make it possible for others to walk over red-hot wood ashes. This ceremony some time ago was performed every year in the garden of a certain wealthy lady; but since her death it has been discontinued; so one of our members arranged with the people who are able to perform the feat for its celebration during Convention. A trench about sixteen feet long and eight feet wide was dug and filled with wood, this was set on fire and kept burning during the day with fresh wood, until a thick bed of red-hot ashes was formed, filling the bottom of the trench. A slope was made at each end to the level of the ground above. When all was ready, we took our seats, nine or ten feet away from the trench, and very uncomfortable was the heat from the glowing bed. I tried walking along the path between the trench and our seats, but was driven away by the intensity of the heat. The ceremony began with some chanting, and then the two chief performers who were to go first were obsessed with much violence; their yells and contortions were painful to witness, as is usual in such cases. Many coconuts were broken in front of them, and the crashing of these and the shouts of the obsessed, the imperious chant of the celebrant, the whirl of the torches by their dancing bearers, and the rattle of the drums made a weird and tumultuous scene. Presently partial quiet was obtained, and an image of Agni, the Fire-God, was carried round the fire in a palki which

contained also two drawn swords crossed in front of image; a couple of marked swords were carried by two of the processionists; and the obsessed persons, now only struggling slightly, were led in the ranks. The procession went twice round the fire and then the palki was set down, a naked sword was given to one of the obsessed and he was led to the edge of the slope leading to the bed of hot ashes, brandishing his sword and dancing and yelling. At the other end he ran round on the path, and then again across the ashes. He cut with his sword at a turban on the path, knocking it into the fire where it blazed up gaily, not sharing his immunity. His obsessed comrade followed him, and when they had run over the ashes several times they were caught by the assistants and held, still struggling to get at the fire. It was strange to see one of them, a small, slight man, swaying half a dozen sturdy fellows hither and thither as he struggled to get free; but this extraordinary strength is one of the characteristic marks of obsession. After this, any man or boy was allowed to walk through the fire, and a number of people availed themselves of the permission. Most of them ran, but one stopped and took up a handful of the glowing cinders; one gentleman, a friend of ours, walked twice over the red-hot bed at a deliberate pace. He states that it felt like warm sand only, and when Dr. Pascal examined the soles of his feet he found them quite uninjured, and the skin of the feet as soft and thin as his own. Such is a simple statement of the facts we witnessed, and I offer it without comment.

The Convention Hall at Adyar presented a brilliant appearance at 8 a.m. on the 27th December, when Colonel Olcott conducted Mrs. Besant to the platform to deliver the first of four morning lectures of her course on 'The Evolution

of Life and Form'. The nave and transept, together with the outside galleries, were packed to overflowing; and the beloved speaker was greeted in the most enthusiastic fashion. His Excellency, Sir Arthur Havelock, Governor of Madras, was present, and was most cordially received. Mrs. Besant's subject was 'Ancient and Modern Science', and the theme was treated in a strain of fervid eloquence that it seemed she had never previously reached. She also gave an eloquent and impassioned address at the close of the Convention on 'Theosophy and the Future of India'. The following extract will be of interest:

India in the past was given by the Supreme the one great duty among the nations of the world, to be the mother of religion, to be the cradle of faith, to send out to all other peoples the truths of the spiritual life. That was the primary duty of India, and all good things were hers as long as she fulfilled her dharma. As gradually she fell away from the position of the mighty imperial mother of the world's faith, she lost all else that had made her glorious in the past. Her wealth diminished, her independence was gradually undermined; lower and lower she sank, until her people well-nigh lost their place among the nations. Other nations have trodden that path before. There were mighty civilisations in the older world, and nothing but their ruins remain today to mark where once they ruled, fought and lived . . . While nation after nation died and was buried, India—India older than the oldest of these—is not yet dead. Her dust is not yet on the funeral pyre. India still lives, breathing faint and low. India, the ancient mother, most ancient of all, still stands as Durga stands. Eternity lies behind the goddess, but she remains ever young; for spirit knows no age, no birth, no dying. And where a

nation stands emblem of spirituality, she must live; though her sons deny her and her lovers stand afar off. The mother, looking over the land and asking for someone to serve her, raised her eyes to the mighty Gods and said: 'Lo, I will take some of my children's souls ... and send them forth to other nations; they shall be born among other peoples . . . Their love shall remain when the love of the children in my land has grown cold. Then I will bring them back to my household from the far-off nations of the earth, and I will plant them here to tell my children what they should do to recall amongst them the memory of their ancient faith, the possibility of revival that lies in the spiritual nature.' And they, from many lands, have heard the mother's call, and have come across many oceans to her summoning voice; and they ask her own children, for very shame, to do her bidding, lest the children of her past returning in the garb of the stranger, should be truer to India than those born on Indian soil . . . I tell you that the future that lies before you shall be greater than your past has been, mightier in spiritual knowledge, grander in spiritual achievement, more potent in spiritual life ; that the very Rishis Themselves who are without, standing waiting, shall again find Their home on Indian soil . . . When the greatest in the nation live the life that is simple, frugal, holy, in the discharge of duty; then only when the leaders are spiritual, all else shall they obtain.

Mrs. Besant and Colonel Olcott left Madras for Rangoon on the 5th of January, 1899, the Prince-Priest of Siam, Rev. Jinawaraswansa, accompanying the President on a Buddhist religious mission which they had jointly undertaken. In Rangoon she gave lectures on 'Man, the Master of His Destiny', 'Theosophy and Its Aims', 'Theosophy, Its Place in Thought and Action', 'Materialism Overthrown by Science',

‘Can a Man of the World Lead a Spiritual Life?’. Returning to Calcutta, Mrs. Besant launched upon a lecture tour in northern India, arriving in England on May 6th, after an absence of eight months.

On White Lotus Day a statue of H.P.B. was unveiled at Adyar by the President-Founder. Mrs. Besant says:

How different is May 8th, 1899, from May 8th, 1891. Then sad hearts gathered round the cast-off body, wondering what would happen . . . Now her statue is unveiled in a world echoing with Theosophic thoughts; and some of her teachings are being justified by science and scholarship. The Society which she and Henry Steel Olcott founded is strong and well organised, at peace within and winning respect without; its literature is spreading and the teachings committed to its care are permeating modern thought.

Resuming her lecture work in England, Mrs. Besant spoke on ‘The Ascent of Man’, on ‘The Mahabhārata’, etc. She visited France, some eight hundred people listening to her lectures on ‘The Ancient Wisdom’ at the Hotel des Societes Savantes. Again in England, she lectured on ‘The Christ’ and ‘The Place of the Emotions in Human Evolution’, in the latter adopting Bhagawan Das’ classification of the emotions as forms either of love or hate manifested towards superiors, equals or inferiors, virtues and vices thus being permanent moods or modes of either love or hate. During August Mrs. Besant attended the Wagner festival at Bayreuth, where she addressed a select audience of Wagnerites who had gone to attend the festival, on ‘The Legend of Parsifal’. She writes of his music:

Truly some of his phrases and cadences belong to the Deva kingdom rather than to earth. They are echoes of the music of the Passion Devas.

After a short visit to Amsterdam and Brussels, she returned to London, giving a most successful series of lectures at the Banqueting Hall, St. James, on 'Dreams' and 'Eastern and Western Science'.

She left London for India on September 22nd, was present at the First Anniversary of the Central Hindu College at Benares on October 27th, and delivered the closing speech. She gave the four lectures on 'Avataras' at the Indian Convention at Benares.

Mrs. Besant at the time was ailing, and remained at Benares, with the exception of one visit to Calcutta. On Sunday afternoons, she lectured to the Benares Lodge on 'Light on the Path', in spite of ill-health. She left India early in April, 1900, arriving in Italy on the 22nd, where she spoke in Naples, Rome, Florence, and Venice, and reaching England on May 10th with G. N. Chakravarti and B. Keightley. Unfortunately, the cold east wind prevailing at the time proved very trying to her and she lost her voice and was obliged to relinquish her engagement to preside at the quarterly meeting of the Northern Federation in Harrogate, and to lecture in that town. Recovering her voice, she gave a Course of three lectures on 'The Emotions, their Place, Evolution, Culture and Use'. She attended the Congress at Paris with Mrs. Isabel C. Oakley, G. E. Chakravarti and Mr. Mohini Chatterji. During July was held the first Convention in the new rooms at Albemarle Street, London. The proceedings began with the reception of delegates by Colonel Olcott and Mrs. Besant. There was a large influx of French and Dutch members; Germany, Italy, Spain, Denmark and Belgium were also

represented. The Section lecture room overflowed during Mrs. Besant's lectures on 'Thought Power'. In August she presided at the Northern Federation, addressing the Federation on 'The Relativity of Morality', 'Spiritual Evolution', 'Whence Come Religions?', 'Ancient and Modern Science'. She continued lecturing in England until September, when she left for India.

Until the Annual Theosophical Convention met in Benares, Mrs. Besant worked in North India. At the Convention she gave four important lectures which were afterwards published under the title of *Ancient Ideals in Modern Life*. In the 'Afterword' she has summed up the chief reforms proposed:

1. A resolve for parents not to marry their sons before eighteen, not to allow the marriage to be consummated before twenty; the first marriage (betrothal) of their daughters to be thrown as late as possible, from eleven to fourteen, and the second (consummation) from fourteen to sixteen.
2. To promote the maintenance of caste relations with those who have travelled abroad, provided they conform to Hindu ways of living.
3. To promote inter-marriage and inter-dining between the subdivisions of the four castes.
4. Not to employ in any ceremony (where choice is possible) an illiterate or immoral Brāhmana.
5. To educate their daughters, and to promote the education of the women of their families.
6. Not to demand any money consideration for the marriage of their children.

If pious men in all parts of the country carried out these reforms individually, a vast change would be made without disturbance or excitement; but they would need to be men of clear heads and strong hearts, to meet and conquer the inevitable opposition from the ignorant and bigoted. The worst customs that prevail are comparatively modern, but they are regarded as marks of orthodoxy and so are difficult to be put aside.

Esoteric Christianity was published during 1901 and widely reviewed; also *Thought Power*. Mrs. Besant appears again at the Adyar Convention, Colonel Olcott writes:

Our dear Mrs. Besant reached Adyar on December 24th from Benares in a state of prostration, after a violent attack of fever, which was sad to see. No one outside the number of us who recognise the fact of the watchful guidance of our Teachers would have dared to anticipate that on the second subsequent day she would be able to mount the platform and lecture. She faced a packed audience of 1,500 and discoursed for an hour and a quarter on 'Islam' without a falter in her voice from beginning to end; and yet it had taken her almost five minutes to descend from her bedroom to the hall on the floor below. This lecture was the first of a series which have been published as *The Religious Problem in India*.

After Convention Mrs. Besant made an extended tour of India. Of her return to England in 1902, Miss Edith Ward says:

Although she was much fatigued by the tiresome and delayed journey from Brindisi, she soon looked more

like her old self and speedily took up a heavy burden of work with her usual cheerfulness. We all rejoice that the fever from which she suffered in India seems to have passed entirely away; and although it has left her far from strong, and more easily fatigued than in former days, we trust she will gradually regain her former powers of endurance. The work she has undertaken is very heavy, and we are now in the midst of three courses of lectures, besides special meetings and odd lectures here and there. Over 300 members assembled to hear her more advanced series, and people are turned away from the public lectures for lack of room. Speaking on 'Theosophy and Imperialism', she showed what was the duty of an imperial race, and what should be its glory and function in the history of the world; she was heard to the farthest corner of the hall.

This year she visited Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, France and Italy; and in November left for India. She was present at the twenty-seventh Annual Convention, and lectured on 'The Larger Consciousness', 'The Law of Duty', 'The Law of Sacrifice', 'Liberation'. Being appointed by the Italian Section to represent it at the Benares Convention of the Theosophical Society, she made a report of the progress of the Society in Italy, basing her remarks upon her own observations when visiting the Branches a few weeks previously. She left Benares to tour Bengal, Rajputana and Kathiawar.

At the Annual Convention of this year, 1903, the President, Colonel Olcott, finding himself in a dilemma on account of the number of people present, Mrs. Besant offered to give a popular lecture on the 27th December in the open air, before commencing her usual course of the four lectures

at Convention. Her subject was 'The Value of Theosophy in the Raising of India'. On one of the lawns an area was enclosed with a fence, and seats and carpets were placed; but by early dawn such a crowd had gathered that they swept away the fence, and took possession of all the ground, the benches and chairs being passed over their heads to the outside, and the crowd squatted on the carpet spread around the platform. By the time Mrs. Besant appeared, the audience numbered 5,000 persons. Her voice rang out clear and strong, in spite of the fact that she was suffering from a severe cold; and her lecture was listened to in profound silence with occasional outburst of applause. The tax on her throat was too much, however, and the subsequent lectures had to be given in the Convention Hall. At the first lecture the crush was very great, and so importunate were the outsiders that they actually smashed the heavy wood and iron western gate of the Hall and came in with a rush. In his address, the President says:

The Central Hindu College has greatly prospered during the year . . . The colossal achievements of Mrs. Besant in promoting the Hindu religious revival will never be thoroughly appreciated until her biographer takes up the story of her activities . . . To the reflective Hindu of the future, the fact of its all being accomplished by an English lady will enhance the wonder of the result of her labors. She has already received gifts in money and real estate for the College to the extent of four and a half lakhs of rupees. [Rs. 450,000]

Early this year (1904) a Northern Federation of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society was formed. Delegates from almost all the Branches in the Punjab, Kashmir

and Jammu, the North-west Provinces, Sindh, Rajputana and the Sikh States met on March 24th at the Lodge of the Lahore Branch. Bhagawan Das was voted in the chair, and Mrs. Besant laid the foundation stone of the building for the Lahore Branch. Very soon after the publication of her pamphlet, *The Education of Indian Girls*, a school for girls was opened at Benares, with Miss Arundale as principal.

The following letter from Mrs. Besant written from Benares on February 17th will prove of interest:

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I am told, on what ought to be good authority, that there is a growing tendency in the Theosophical Society in London to consider me as a sacrosanct personality, beyond and above criticism. Frankly, I cannot believe that any claim so wild and preposterous is set up, or that many know me so little as to imagine that, if it were set up, I would meet it with anything but the uttermost condemnation. Even a few people holding and acting on such a theory would be a danger to the Society if any considerable number held and acted on it, the Society would perish. Liberty of opinion is the life-breath of the Society; the fullest freedom in expressing opinions, the fullest freedom in criticising opinions, are necessary for the preservation of the growth and evolution of the Society. A 'commanding personality' – to use the cant of the day – may in many ways be of service to a movement, but in the Theosophical Society the work of such a personality would be too dearly purchased if it were bought by the surrender of individual freedom of thought; and the Society would be safer if it did not number such a personality among its members.

Over and over again I have emphasized this fact, and have urged free criticism of all opinions, my own

among them. Like everybody else, I often make mistakes; and it is a poor service to me to confirm me in those mistakes by abstaining from criticism. I would sooner never write another word than have my words made into a gag for other people's thoughts. All my life I have followed the practice of reading the harshest criticisms with a view to utilise them, and I do not mean as I grow old to help the growth of crystallization by evading the most rigorous criticism. Moreover, anything that has been done through me, not by me, for Theosophy would be outbalanced immeasurably by making my crude knowledge a measure for the thinking in the movement, and by turning me into an obstacle of future progress. So I pray you, if you come across any such absurd ideas, that you will resist them in your own person and repudiate them on my behalf. No greater disservice could be done to the Society or to me than by allowing them to spread.

It is further alleged that a policy of ostracism is enforced against those who do not hold this view of me. I cannot insult any member of the Society by believing that he would initiate or endorse such a policy. It is obvious that this would be an intolerable tyranny, to which no self-respecting man would submit. I may say, in passing, that in all selections for office in the movement, the sole consideration should be the power of the candidate to serve the Society, and not his opinion of any person: Colonel Olcott, Mr. Sinnett, Mr. Mead or myself. We do not want faction fights for party leaders, but a free choice of the best man. Pardon me for troubling you with a formal repudiation of a view that seems too absurd to merit denial; but, as it is gravely put to me as a fact, I cannot ignore it. For the Society, to me, is the object of my deepest love and service; my life is given to it; it embodies my ideal of a

physical plane movement. And I would rather make myself ridiculous by tilting at a windmill such as I believe this idea to be than run the smallest chance of leaving to grow within the Society a form of personal idolatry which would be fatal to its usefulness in the world. In the T. S. there is no orthodoxy, there are no popes. It is a band of students eager to learn the truth, and its well-being rests on the maintenance of this ideal.

Mrs. Besant returned to England to continue her lecture work. In the small Queen's Hall, where she gave a series on 'Theosophy and the New Psychology', hundreds were turned away each night. In June, 1904, she opened the eighth annual Dutch Convention, and was the chief figure of the International Congress which met in the same month. Some of the subjects treated this year were: 'Is Theosophy Anti-Christian?', 'The New Psychology', 'The Message of Theosophy to Mankind'. She visited also Sweden, Norway and Germany.

The first edition of the Indian Convention Lectures for 1903, *The Pedigree of Man*, published in September, was completely sold out in six weeks. On her return to India, she gave a week to Italy, inaugurating the new headquarters at Rome. *A Study in Consciousness* was published in the autumn, making a worthy third to *The Ancient Wisdom* and *Esoteric Christianity*. At the Indian Convention her four public lectures were entitled 'Theosophy and Life', 'Theosophy and Sociology', 'Theosophy and Politics', 'Theosophy and Science'.

Speaking in Bombay in 1905 on 'The Unification of India', Mrs. Besant pointed out that:

One of the greatest difficulties that struck at the root of unification was that there had never been a united India in the past. Temporary unions there had been from time to time; but never was there one unified nation extending from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, from Bengal to Kathiawar. . . The task before Indians, therefore, is to make a self-sustaining and self-conscious nationality . . . Another difficult factor is religion, more so than the part played by religion in the West . . . Forgetfulness of sectarianism and the showing of public spirit could be instanced by the small Parsi community, which being only a few thousands yet, owing to its education and worth, had not failed to contribute its share in the making of Indian nationality . . . For attaining unification, Mussalmans must respect and love Hindus, and Hindus do the same to Mussalmans.

Mrs. Besant also lectured on 'Education for Women', and expressed herself as in favor of teaching girls English, otherwise part of their husband's mind would be alien to the wife. She also advocated the teaching of sanitation, simple medicine, the scientific qualities and values of food, some form of art, as music and embroidery. She said: 'Nothing was so hopeless, as to build a nation out of only men.'

Sanātana Dharma: Education through Timeless Values

1913 January 1st, transformed the Theosophist Office into Theosophical Publishing House at Adyar; Entered Indian politics with the clearly stated object of claiming Dominion Status for India within the British Commonwealth; Handed over Central Hindu College to become nucleus of the Benares Hindu University; Started the Theosophical Educational Trust; September formed a small band, which later developed into the Order of the Brothers of Service; Reorganized the German Section.

1914 January 2nd, started *The Commonweal*, a weekly journal of national reform;

July 6th, re-elected President of the Theosophical Society; July 14th, started *New India* (daily newspaper) which lasted fifteen years and revolutionized Indian journalism;

Started the Y.M.I.A. (Young Men's Indian Association) and donated Gokhale Hall (Madras) to be a centre of free speech.

1915 Wrote her famous summary of 'What Does India Want?'; Formed the Madras Parliament for parliamentary training and political propaganda: Dec. 16th, inaugurated Adyar Arts League.

1916 Started the Home Rule League, which soon reoriented the National Congress to a new vigour; Externed from the Bombay Presidency; Started the Girls' College, Benares.

1917 April 7th, founded the Order of the Brothers of Service;

May 8th, Women's Indian Association organized in Adyar under her Presidentship, from which grew the All-Indian Women's Conference at Poona in 1927, and the All-Asian Women's Conference at Lahore in 1931;

June — September, interned by the Government of Madras;
August, elected President of the Indian National Congress;

Dec. 26th, delivered her presidential address to the Congress, later published as *The Case for India*; Started S.P.N.E. [Society for Promotion of National Education] with a National University at Adyar under the chancellorship of Rabindranath Tagore

1918 Organized the Indian Boy Scouts, which amalgamated with the Baden-Powell Scouts in 1921.

1920 At the session of the Indian National Congress stood against Mr Gandhi's plan of non-co-operation — stood alone (with five others supporting her) against shouting thousands, three brief years after being a national hero and acclaimed by vast crowds.

In her notes published in 'On the Watch-Tower', *Lucifer*, June 1896, Mrs Besant addresses both her concern for the system of education in India and announces the formation of the Central Hindu College. She says:

The problem of religious education is troubling India as it troubles England, for the Indians – a profoundly religious people – are beginning to see that their young men lose touch of their several ancestral faiths and drift into a quasi-scientific materialism, as they pass through their college training, developing their faculties on western lines and leaving entirely on one side all religious study. The English Government is necessarily neutral in religious matters, ruling as it does a population holding various faiths; it can only lay down a curriculum of secular learning and recognize degrees obtained solely by such pursuit. Under these circumstances the different religious communities are finding it necessary to bestir themselves, each on behalf of its own youth, and some colleges have been founded in which students are prepared for the university examinations, but are at the same time trained in religious knowledge and in the practice of religious duties.

Up to the present time the Hindus have confined their efforts to the establishment of schools for boys, and here and there

for girls, at which they receive elementary education, fitting them to pass ordinary school examinations, and in which the children are also given religious and moral instruction. Even these are few and far between, and are wholly inadequate to the needs of the population. The Theosophical Society has tried to partly fill the gap by starting the Hindu Boys' Associations, in which pandits give some religious and moral teaching from the Hindu Scriptures and instruct the boys in their religious duties. But these are again lamentably few compared with the teeming youthful population. At last, however, a definite scheme has been set on foot to provide a school and college education hand-in-hand with religious and moral training.

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A prospectus has been issued for the establishment of a Central Hindu College at Benares, and after explaining the need that exists for the much wider spread of college education, it goes on:

All who are acquainted with the present system of education know well that the most desirable kind of intellectual and moral training is not imparted in the existing institutions, and that the influence they exert upon their students is not of the right kind. The proposed college will be affiliated to the Allahabad University and will conform to the curriculum laid down by it, and will ultimately be a seat of universal learning—a place of true “Liberal Education,” where students will be made to breathe the clear and pure atmosphere of thought. But in addition to this it will supply – what is most urgently needed, a definitely religious and moral training, and it will be an institution where particular attention will be paid to the formation of character, where the ancient Aryan virtues of reverence, self-reliance, freedom, moderation, calmness,

equitableness. justice and courtesy will be instilled into the hearts of the students.

While the college will seek as its professors tried and experienced men with high University honours, it will also look for men who have at heart the religious and moral character of the students, and will treat them as sons to be watched over and guided, not as strangers who attend a course of lectures as a matter of business. Moreover an attempt will be made to wed the occidental sciences and learning to the oriental. The education given up to date has signally failed to produce the sort of men required by the country, to do the work and to fulfil the aims expected of it by the state. That the country which, in ancient times, produced the most learned men and the greatest thinkers the world has ever known has not been able to produce even one such man with half a century's modern education, shows that there must be something wrong either in the matter or manner of the present system of education. These defects the Hindu College will try to remove...

Already a gentleman in Bombay has consulted one of the promoters of this scheme, stating his wish to give a lakh of rupees towards the foundation of a Hindu College and school in his own town; he is willing, and indeed desirous, that Benares shall lead the way, feeling, as we feel, that Benares, as a most ancient of Hindu learning, is the fitting leader of an enterprise destined to give to India a system of education which shall be permeated by the ideals of her sublime religion, shall preserve her sons from materialism while giving them the education demanded by the times, and shall train them into pious Aryan gentlemen while enabling them to hold their own with western culture. It will be regrettable if a movement destined to such lofty achievement should start in a commercial centre instead of in a city known the world over as the centre of religious learning, and the Committee mentions the above fact because the generous donour cannot be expected to

stand back for long in order to give the precedence to Benares that his Hindu heart desires.

The appeal is signed by some of the leading citizens of Benares, and our readers will be glad to know that several of these are members of the Theosophical Society, and that the Bombay gentleman mentioned is one of our oldest members. Before leaving Benares, I called on the Maharaja of Benares – to ask his help for the College, and he promised some land for its site. It is hoped that many wealthy men will come forward to contribute the large sum necessary for the building and endowment of such a college and that all over India similar institutions will spring up, to aid in the revival of Indian spirituality and Indian wisdom.

* * *

The necessity for such a movement is seen to be all the greater when we cast our eyes over the world at the present time. India is the one country that adds to the occult treasures hidden in its Scriptures a continuous and unbroken tradition from archaic times to the present, supporting the reality of occult truths. The Sages who made her past so glorious and gave her the priceless gift of her Shastras never left her wholly unguided; ever some disciples were among her children, and outside these there were the exoteric beliefs and practices, by which a considerable number in every generation re-verified the more easily proved of the statements as to the unseen world. Now that all the world over psychism is spreading, in America, Australasia and Europe, and that statements of the most conflicting kind are being made by psychics, each on his or her own independent authority, we are likely to find the value of a long recorded experience endorsing the ancient statements of the giants of old. But in order that India may play her part in spiritual evolution she must be able to meet the West on equal terms as regards the knowledge of the physical plane, and the education of her sons in nineteenth century lore

becomes important as increasing her influence as spiritual teacher. We are threatened with a swirl of pseudo-occultism, of medieval Rosicrucianism mixed up with misunderstood Hermeticism, and such churned-in fragments of Fourth Race magic as their possessors think too worthless to preserve the secrecy of their hidden lodges, guarded by sterner initiations than frames debilitated by luxurious western living are fit to face. In such times the teachings of India now being popularized in the West may come as a healthy wind blowing away miasmatic fog, and may render clear the ancient narrow way which Theosophy was sent by Indian Masters to re-proclaim.

In the July 1933 issue of *The Theosophist*, C. Jinarajadasa published two texts by Annie Besant in which she presents the ideas which moved her to start her educational work in India. The first is from 7 July 1898, when the Central Hindu College was opened. The second was part of a tribute to Dr Bhagavan Das. In his explanatory note Jinarajadasa says:

The aim of emphasizing religious teaching as an integral part of education was the primary object of the Theosophical Education Trust when it was organized by Dr Besant in 1913, after the Central Hindu College had been handed over to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and others to become the nucleus of the Benares Hindu University. The Trust had for its object: 'To establish Schools and Colleges which shall open to students of every faith and in which religious instruction shall be an integral part of education.' Even as late as 1923, the National High School, which was located near Adyar, state in its prospectus: 'General religious training in the student's faith, and, as regards Hinduism, on the lines laid down in the Sanatana Dharma Catechism and The Elementary Text Book of Religion and Morals, will be compulsory throughout the School.

Below are the two above mentioned statements by Annie Besant:

Educational Work in India
(An Appeal in 1898)

Since the introduction of English Education into India, Indian parents have been under a great difficulty. Without English Education service and the learned professions were closed to their boys; moreover, they saw in this Education a means of culture and of national gain, and desired it earnestly for their sons. But the Education given in Government Colleges and Schools was purely secular, the Government being unable to give religious neutrality to which it was pledged. The only alternative to the Government Institutions were those established by missionaries, and in these the Christian religion was taught. The Indian parent could thus only obtain for his sons the necessary English Education at the peril of their religion; he was obliged either to see them receive an education without religion, or one with an alien religion – a painful alternative. The result on Indian youth was that, for the most part, they grew up materialists; the omission in the Government Institutions made them regard religion with indifference; that in the Missionary Institutions sapped their belief in their own faith and left them unreceptive to any other. Religion threatened to disappear from Indian educated life, and the moral character of Indians in public life showed signs of deterioration. Many appeals were made to the religious communities to take up the duty of religious and moral education by Viceroy, Lieutenant-Governors, and other officials. At last a small circle of Hindus and myself took the question, believing that in the union of western culture with eastern religion lay the redemption of India, the raising up of a generation of Indians worthy to be citizens of the Empire. We founded the Central Hindu College at Benares, and

formulated a scheme of religious, moral, intellectual and physical culture, which we laid before the princes and people of India. A Board of Trustees was formed, consisting of leading Hindus, to hold all property; the Maharajah of Benares gave land and a building worth upwards of £3,000; the Maharaja of Kashmir gives a monthly subscription of over £50; and other Princes have made generous donations. We have already raised over £30,000, and have built classrooms which are filled with 450 boys and young men, and a large boarding house, which is now being doubled in size. We are building fine chemical and physics laboratories, as we are teaching science practically, and are endeavouring to turn the attention of parents and boys to the revival of the industries and arts of India, instead of to the learned professions and Government service, already much over-crowded. And we lay great stress on physical education, encouraging games of all sorts while we set our faces against boy-marriage. Similarly, schools are being started in other parts of India, affiliated with the Central Hindu College, and educating on the same lines.

I venture to appeal for some financial aid on this great work from English lovers of India. We need a library to house our rapidly increasing store of books, now lining passages for want of proper housing; we want a museum for the specimens of Indian industries we are gathering; we want workshops – we already have some good carpentering apparatus – for technical education. These buildings will cost about £8,000 altogether. And we have gradually to build up a permanent endowment to secure the carrying on of the College in perpetuity. No gift to India can be more useful than aid in this patriotic effort to give her sons the best western education wedded to her own ancestral religion. And no English gifts would meet with more gratitude.

The other part of the work is in its infancy – a similar movement for the education of Hindu girls. This education is planned to meet the needs of Indian women and is not on English lines. It

includes religion, morality, literary teaching in a vernacular, Sanskrit, and, where possible, English; arithmetic, history and geography; household science and sanitation, first aid in accidents; music, drawing and painting, needle work. For this, help is much needed, as education for girls is not as yet as popular as education for boys, and yet without the education of its women, India can never take her rightful place among nations. A Central Hindu Girls' School being is now being built at Benares; one on the above plan is working in Lahore; others are being begun. For this movement also, I earnestly ask for help.

Donations may be sent to me at Mrs. Jacob Bright's, 31 St James' Place, London, S. W.

ANNIE BESANT

One part of our joint work, with other optimists, was the starting of four classes in the city of Benares, in one of the houses belonging to his family, two school classes and two college classes, in which the effort was made to make the Hindu religion an integral part of the education of Hindu boys. A tiny seed was sown, but it grew to the Central College and School, and that into the Hindu University; for the Trustees – of whom we were two, gave over their land, buildings and funds as a nucleus for that greater work. For many years Mr Bhagavan Das was Secretary of the Managing Committee, and the success of the work was largely due to him.

The bond between us, growing out of a comradeship of many years, will, I am sure, last through the change called death and will bring us together in a future life.

ANNIE BESANT

In the January 1899 issue of *Lucifer*, the full prospectus for the Central Hindu Colleges in Benares was published. The patron was H. H. The Maharaja of Benares. The members of the Board of Trustees were:

Justice Subramania Aier, Upendranath Basu, Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Adityaram Bhattacharya, Annie Besant, Gyanendra N. Chakravarti, Pandit Suraj Kaul, Bertram Keightley, Rai Baroda K. Lahiri, Pandit Cheda Lal, Rai Pyari Lal, Rai Pramada Das Mitra Bahadur, Kumar Narendranath Mitra, Colonel H. S. Olcott, Rai Bahadur Kumar Parmanand, Raol Shri Harisinghji Rupasinghji, Kumar Bharat Singh, with Govinda Das as Honorary Secretary.

The Managing Committee was composed of Upendranath Basu, Jnaendranath Basu, Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Adityaram Bhattacharya, Annie Besant, Gyanendra N. Chakravarti, Bhagavan Das, Govinda Das, Bertram Keightley, Pandit Cheda Lal, Kalicharan Mitra.

Below is the preamble of the prospectus:

In ancient times in India the education given to the young aimed at the harmonious development of all sides of the character. Religious, moral, intellectual, emotional and physical capacities were all educed and trained. The study of the Shastras went hand in hand with that of philosophy and science, while many of the youth became also proficient in athletic exercises and manly games. Religion was not a thing apart from the life, but was interwoven with the occupations of the teacher, the legislator, the warrior, the merchant, and the servant. It did not unfit a youth for active work in the world, but taught him how to discharge his duties in a way that was beneficial to his country and profitable to himself. The priests of India were as saintly, her sages as philosophic, as her warriors were irresistible in battle, and gallant in tournament, her merchants wealthy, her people loyal, dutiful and prosperous. Ignorance of religion and negligence of morals were looked on as the mark of a base and savage nature, unfitting a man for any post of responsibility, honour and profit. A man was expected to know the duties of his order and to perform them,

otherwise there was no place for him in the social system. A servant who did not serve, a merchant who did not grow wealthy, was regarded as contemptuously as a warrior who turned his back on an enemy, or as a Brahmana who was ignorant of the Vedas.

The decay of the religion which was the root of Indian prosperity, national and individual, brought about the decline of the nation. Prosperity deserted India as India lost, one by one, the jewels of her religious heritage. Nevertheless, a precious deposit of belief and knowledge remained, and Indian youth were still trained in religion and in morals even when foreigners swept over the land as conquerors, and when in many of her provinces her own princes no longer ruled. Her sovereignty was wrested from her but her religion remained as consoler and as guide, teaching her to reap patiently the sad harvest of her sins and to sow hopefully the seeds of glory.

During the present century a slow but sweeping change has passed over the land, and the heart of India, that had resisted the sword of conquest, was wounded by the keen stiletto of an education which slew her faith and insidiously pierced her ethics. Inspired by the most sincere philanthropy, and wishful to bring to the Indian people the type of education which was proving successful among themselves, the rulers of India founded and fostered a system of education which was designed to bring to India the treasures of Western thought, to fit her sons to cope successfully with the new civilization spreading among them, and to hold their own in many departments of public life with the sons of the conquering nation. It would be unjust and unworthy to refuse to recognize the sincerity of the efforts made to place within the reach of Indian youth an education similar to that which was enjoyed by the youth of England. But in England this education was permeated through and through with a religious and moral atmosphere; at Harrow, Eton, Winchester and Rugby, at Oxford and Cambridge, divine worship, teachings from the Christian scriptures,

and lessons of moral obligation, formed an integral part of the education curriculum. No boy could pass through a public school and a University without being subjected daily – during the most impressionable years of life – to influences designed to train him into a Christian gentleman. When the English system was transplanted to India, the whole of this religious and moral training was left out, and only the secular part of the system was rooted here. For this, no blame attaches to those who began and continued the present educational arrangements. The educators and the educated had no common religion; to teach Christianity would have been to empty the schools, while to teach Hinduism was neither possible nor desirable. For a religion can only be taught by those who believe in it, and where teachers and taught are of different faiths, only secular education can be imparted and received.

It was the duty of Hindu parents and of family priests to see that the sons, handed over to secular schools and colleges, were instructed duly and fully in faith and morals. But this duty was neglected, and all the energies of the pupils, stimulated by rewards in college and by the prize of public success in later life, were turned into secular channels. Several generations grew up unpurified by religion, untrained in ethics, ignorant of the treasures of Indian philosophy and science, of the stupendous literature which was their national heritage. Contemptuous of the wisdom of the ages they ignored, avid for new thought and western manners, they lost all patriotism, national self-respect and pride, and became mere copyists of western fashions, densely materialistic, arrogantly unspiritual. Young India was digging the grave of ancient India and sterilizing the germs of future India, when Mme. H. P. Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott heroically flung themselves across the downward rush of the blinded Indian youth, aroused them to a sense of their danger, stirred them into a realization of their fall. The Indian heart in them, asleep not dead, awoke at that clarion call, and the revival of Hinduism from north to south, from east to

west, dates from the beginnings of the whole work wrought by the founders of the Theosophical Society.

It is largely due to this change in public feeling that the Central Hindu College of Benares is now a fact. Some members of the Society – deeply feeling the need of the meeting the conditions of the time by grafting religious and moral teaching upon Hindu lines on the spreading tree of school and college western education – initiated two years ago a scheme for founding in the sacred city of Kashi a model school and college where the best western education should be given and where religious and moral teaching should also be imparted.

The Institution consisted of the School, the College, the Boarding House and the Gymnasium. The School course, extended to about five years, included English: Language, Literature and Composition; a Classical Language: Sanskrit; a Vernacular: Hindi, Bengali or Marathi; Mathematics: Geometry, Arithmetic, Algebra and Mensuration; History: of India and of England; Geography: General and Physical; Political Economy; Book-keeping; Drawing; Agriculture; Shorthand writing; Elementary Chemistry and Physics; Morals instructions based upon the Hindu religion.

The College taught up to the M.A., LL.B. and D.Sc. Examinations of the University of Allahabad. The course of study comprised the following subjects: English – Language, Literature and Composition; Sanskrit: Language, Composition, Literature and Philosophy; Western Philosophy; Mathematics: Pure and Mixed; Logic; Political Economy; History: Ancient and Modern; Mental and Moral Science; Physical Science; Law; Moral instructions based upon the Hindu religion.

The prospectus also included an item on ‘the relation between teachers and pupils and the creation of a public spirit’ which stated:

It is desired to bring about between teachers and pupils a feeling of perfect trust and confidence, of firm but gentle fatherliness on the one side, of cheerful and frank reliance and obedience on the other. The *nexus* is not money but love. Professors who deliver lectures and feel no further interest in the students will find no welcome in the school or college. Those who love to impart knowledge and who feel the sacred responsibility of the teacher's office will alone remain permanently on the staff. They must love the institution, feel pride in it, labour for its success, subordinate themselves to its interests. And they must be for the students an example of noble manhood; sincere, straight, gentle, strong men. These are what is needed. They must foster a public spirit among the students that will be their own best ally in the maintenance of discipline and diligence. All that is mean, underhand, tricky, shabby, cowardly, vicious, must be felt as disgraceful, discountenanced by students as much as by teachers. Things unworthy of an Aryan gentleman must be stamped with disapproval by the youths themselves. They must be encouraged to set a high standard and live it, until a man shall be proud to say in the face of the world, "I was a student at the Hindu College, Benares."

Central Hindu College

The first annual report of the Central Hindu College (1898-1903) mentions a declaration by Dr Richardson and Bhagawan Das:

‘Let us then *state our principles*. First, our work is educational not political, and we refuse to take sides for or against any political party – work for harmony, solidarity and progress.

‘Our hope in making good men is based on religion and therefore our *second* principle is that the education we give must be religious.

‘Thirdly, the education must be western as well as eastern the secular education that we give is western, while the religious is eastern This training is designed to restore to the Indian character many valuable qualities it has lost in the decadence of the Kali Yuga.

‘Fourthly, we aim at making education cheap and flexible.

‘We are not seeking Government aid or Government funds as such an experiment can succeed as a private venture.’

Mrs Besant, in her concluding observations, said:

‘ the field that we seek to occupy has been empty up to the present The Government itself have told us that they would not do right in entering upon the field of religious education the work we do is not of rivalry but rather that of supplementing the work of other institutions. We are here then to teach religion – Hinduism to the Hindus. *That is our speciality* The next point is that the secular education should be of the best type. We propose in this college to wed the best secular education of the western type to the best religious teaching of the eastern type. If this is to be done effectively, then it is necessary that in the college staff East and West must meet and join hands as friends and co-labourers, as sympathisers and lovers of each other.

In the second annual report, besides ideals of education, etc., Mrs Besant spoke of the need for national dress to be worn first by the boarders: ‘cultivation of memory destroys the intellect – we want to get rid of the cramming system. Feelings that prevailed in the olden days between teacher and pupil need to be restored. We lay more stress on reasoning than on memory.’

The *CHC Magazine* was started on 1 January 1901. In the seventh annual report a mention is made of the first batch of five

students who graduated. A free boarding house for Sanskrit reading was opened, called *Vidyarthis*.

‘We hold character as more precious than intellect, and service nobler than success. Love of country.’

Educational Work

It was during her tour of Punjab and North-Western Province, after the Indian Section Convention held at Benares in October 1896, that the idea of education bringing out the ancient ideals of India began to take concrete shape in Mrs Besant’s mind. In that tour she visited several out of the way places, from Hyderabad (Sindh) going up to Peshawar. She noted: ‘the people in that region are very ignorant and very eager to learn ... quite untrained in thought, and not even conversant with the teachings of their own religion.’ On account of their lack of education and knowledge about the deeper aspects of life, and under her inspiration the idea of a Hindu College in that area started. In fact, at Rawalpindi the public planned to start an ‘Annie Besant Sanskrit Library’ (See Arthur H. Nethercot’s *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, Rupert Hart-Davis, Soho Square, London, 1963, vol II, p. 62.)

As facilities for imparting the kind of education Mrs Besant had in mind were very difficult in that area the choice fell on Benares. The important reason for choosing Benares is revealed in her lecture on ‘The Purpose of the TS’, delivered at the American Section Convention on 31 August 1929, in which she stated: ‘The Master told me, “Make a Spiritual Centre in Benares.”’ So she went in search from place to place, and when she found the present place, He said: ‘This is the place.’ That explains the reason for making Benares her home.

Although the name of the College was ‘Hindu’ College, it was by no means sectarian. At the Indian Section Convention in

October 1898, four months after the College was opened, Mrs Besant explained that there were educational institutions managed by the missionaries for the Christians. The Theosophists had already started schools for the Buddhists. So there was urgent need to have educational institutions to reinstate the ancient Indian ideals which, generally speaking were termed 'Hindu'. (The word 'Hindu' was not used in a narrow form.)

In his presidential speech at the 1898 Convention, referring to the Central Hindu College, Col. Olcott said: 'It seems to me right that our Indian members should lead the way in this matter of high national importance since they can best realize what a public blessing it would be if the Indian people can be led back into the path which was traced out for national evolution by the Mighty Rishis of Aryavarta. ...wherever opens out fresh fields for philanthropic public work, we, Theosophists, should be the pioneers to enter it.'

The CHC annual report for 1898 mentions that in the original appeal for founding of the College it is stated: '...every effort will be made to instil into the minds of the students from early youth, those lofty and holy sentiments of religion and morality which can be drawn from the ancient Sanskrit literature ...so as to prevent them from becoming irreligious, to encourage them in keeping up their nationality, and to inspire them with reverence for their ancient religion and the great Rishis.'

It is true, says the first annual report of the CHC, that 'every student is required to study Sanskrit whether he takes it as his second language or not'. Mrs Besant's plan was very broad based and not on narrow 'Hinduism' as is found in India in this century. This statement is supported by the fact that arrangement for the study of Persian after the College hours had been made with twenty-six students at the end of the first year itself offering Persian.

Study of the Shastras went hand in hand with that of philosophy and science. The lessons were made interesting with the help of stories from the Puranas, and also were practical in a way that

would tempt the students to apply them in daily life. In his speech at the 1898 Indian Convention Dr Richardson said: 'The students were given a sound education calculated to make them practical, trustworthy and noble men so that they may prove to be worthy sons of India.'

As mentioned in the CHC Reports (1898-1903), Mrs Besant founded the CHC in such a manner that '...it will be a place for a liberal education where pupils will be able to breathe the pure and clear atmosphere of thought... in addition will supply the urgent need of ... a definitely religious and moral training... particular attention will be paid to the formation of character where ancient Aryan virtues of reverence, self-reliance, freedom, moderation, calmness, equitableness, justice and courtesy will be instilled in the hearts of the students.'

Besides these it was made clear that the work is educational and not political and refused to take sides for or against any political party. The work was for harmony, solidarity and progress. How successful was this is evidenced by the fact that while most of the educational institutions were disturbed or closed during the political upheavals, especially of Bengal, the studies in the CHC were never disrupted or disturbed.

The CHC first annual report stated that the College did not accept any Government grant. This enabled it to carry forward its ideals freely and fearlessly. Theosophists from all over the world gave financial help. One of the aims was to make education within the reach of the common man and to keep it flexible.

The CHC was in a way adopted or supported by Theosophists. Even then it was not called a Theosophical College because, as Mrs Besant made clear, Theosophy is not a sect. Theosophists eminent in the educational field and having very lucrative and promising future gave up their careers in various countries and joined the staff. Some of the luminaries who joined in the formative years were Arthur Richardson, the first Principal, from England; Dr Harry

Banbery was the first Headmaster; Miss Sarah E. Palmer, who had sixteen years teaching experience in U.S.A.; Miss Lilian Edgar, Mr Bertram Keightley, Dr W. A. English, Mrs Marie Museaus Higgins, Miss Rodda. Later several others joined of whom Mr G. S. Arundale, who later became Headmaster and Principal, is best known.

On her return from Europe Mrs Besant went straight to Benares. An important meeting was held on 5 April 1896 at which most of the principal workers in the north were present. It was called 'to consider ways and means in connection with the scheme for a Central Hindu College at Benares'. It was decided to start the College in the following July and an Executive Committee was formed to work out details and implement them. Soon Mrs Besant began to draw prominent people in the country, both members of the TS as well as non-members.

A momentous meeting was held on the 10th 'to consider ways and means in connection with the scheme for Central Hindu College at Benares'. The meeting included some of the Society's most brilliant workers in the north. It was decided to start the College in the following July, and an Executive Committee was formed. A monthly subscription, guaranteed for six years, was opened and on the list of subscribers was the Indian Section itself. The most important resolution was to the effect 'that at least half-an-hour be given every day in the classes to the study of the true spirit of the ancient Hindu Religion and of the Sanskrit language wherein it is mainly embodied'. To understand the full importance of this action would necessitate an outline of the condition of affairs in India. As that is not possible, it can only be said that there was a prevailing apathy among the Indians themselves as to India's future, an almost fatal tendency to take it for granted that India was decaying, and that only the West had the

key to success in worldly affairs, and must be imitated in every department of life. Only India's inner spiritual life remained intact, but inoperative in outward affairs. To recall that spirit to be an efficacious factor in India's daily life was the goal which Mrs. Besant put before herself, at the Master's direction, with what success we shall see as time goes on. She began at once to draw together into Committees the prominent men of the country, both members of the Society and non-members.

(Josephine Ransom, *A Short History of the Theosophical Society*, p. 327)

In the book *History of the Banaras Hindu University* by Shivanandan Lal Dar (Banaras Hindu University Press, Varanasi, 1966, p. 88), we read that the principal objects for which the Central Hindu College was started – as given in the Memorandum of Association – were:

- (1) To establish educational institutions, including boarding houses, which shall combine moral and religious training in accordance with the Hindu Shastras with secular education.
- (2) To promote the imparting of similar religious and moral training in educational institutions.
- (3) To found scholarships and fellowships for the encouragement of learning and research.

The institution was opened on 7 July 1898, with Vedic rites in a small rented house near the Town Hall. Dr Arthur Richardson offered his invaluable services as Honorary Principal. To start with, there were fifteen teachers mostly honorary, and 177 students.

Mrs Besant left in early June for a lecture tour of England and returned to Benares on 18 September and stayed there, except for short visits to cities in the North, looking after the work of

College and the Indian Section Headquarters. Three classes, First year and X and IX classes, were started. The College was affiliated to the Allahabad University and the courses prescribed by it were followed.

The accommodation proved insufficient and the College moved to a larger building in the heart of the city on 3 September. As the public recognized the value of the education imparted this accommodation also proved insufficient. The Maharaja of Benares, Sir Pratap Narayan Singh, a life-long benefactor and appreciator of the reforms introduced by Mrs Besant, donated a magnificent building with surrounding 13 bighas [almost three hectares] of land in Kamachha into which the institution moved during Shiva Rathri holidays of 7 to 12 March 1899. There it functioned and flourished for over two decades and the Boys' School is still located there. Across the road are the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society which is a gift of Mrs Besant along with her personal residence, the famous Shanti Kunj.

Dr Arthur Richardson, Principal of CHC, in his report to the Indian Section Convention for the work done from July to October 1898, said:

Half an hour daily is devoted to instruction in principles of the Hindu Religion, a portion of the Gita is first read in Sanskrit... then follow selections from the sacred books... the moral precepts emphasized with the help of Puranic stories. The lesson is then concluded with a few words from the Principal...What is aimed at is to make the lesson interesting as well as instructive and to present the practical aspect of the Hindu religion in a way that will tempt the students to apply it in daily life... The students are given sound education calculated to make them into practical, trustworthy, and noble men...so that they may prove to be worthy sons of India.

In addition, special lectures were given every Sunday morning, generally by Mrs Besant when she was in station, which the students may attend voluntarily.

In the same Report above mentioned, presented to the Indian Section Convention of 1898, by Dr Richardson says:

In ancient times in India, the education given to the young aimed at the harmonious development of all sides of the character. Religious, moral, intellectual, emotional and physical capacities were all educed and trained.... Study of the Shastras went hand in hand with that of philosophy and science.

In her speech at the above-mentioned Convention Dr Besant traces education in great institutions like Harrow, Eaton, etc. She then addresses decline in the duty in India and the awakening caused by the Founders of the Theosophical Society, H. P. Blavatsky and H.S. Olcott:

It is largely due to this change in public feeling that the CHC is now a fact. Some members of the TS, deeply feeling the need of meeting the conditions of the time by grafting religious and moral teachings upon Hindu lines... initiated two years ago a scheme of founding a school in Kashi.

...It will be a place for liberal education where pupils will be able to breathe the pure and clear atmosphere of thought... in addition it will supply the urgent need – a definitely religious and moral training ... particular attention will be paid to the formation of character, where the ancient Aryan virtues of reverence, self-reliance, freedom, moderation, calmness, equitableness, justice and courtesy will be instilled in the hearts of the students.

The original appeal for founding of the College said:

...every effort will be made to instill into the minds of the students from early youth those lofty and holy sentiments of religion and morality which can be drawn from the ancient Sanskrit literature, such as Manu, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, etc., so as to prevent them from becoming irreligious, to encourage them in keeping up their nationality and to inspire them with reverence for their ancient religion and their great Rishis.

In this scheme, the most important features are: (1) The Boarding House; (2) the religious and moral teachings; (3) The relations between teachers and pupils and the creation of a public spirit, and (4) The place given to Sanskrit.

In the concluding paragraph of the said Report Mrs Besant writes: 'The Hindu College will send out youth trained in western knowledge but purified and ennobled by religious teaching, able to influence the work-a-day world but moved by the lofty ideals. ... The movement of which the CHC is a nucleus is therefore in no sense designed to oppose the present system but rather to supplement it.'

In order to help the studious but poor fees were fixed very low. The Viceroy invited suggestions for the CHC Board of Trustees on the questions pending regarding Education in India. The following information is based on the Annual Reports of the Central Hindu College for the period 1898 to 1903.

The College's First Anniversary was held on Friday, the 27 October 1899. The report, which was presented by Dr Richardson and Bhagawan Das, the Secretaries of CHC, says:

The largest and most enthusiastic meeting seen in Benares for many years celebrated the 1st Anniversary of the CHC on October 27th, 1899. The beautiful hall in the building, given by H. H. The Maharaja of Benares, has been newly decorated, and now makes an admirable setting for functions of this kind.

...within the one short year of its existence, this institution has actually combined good western education with sound and orthodox Hindu religious instruction, and effective training in morals as well as in the country, respect and gently noble manners which used to be such prominent characteristics of a well-bred Hindu, but whose rapid, disappearance of late years has been deplored... a beginning has been made in gradually substituting for mere memory cramming, that real training and development of the mental powers, which is only true education, we cannot but feel success assured... But both moral and mental training are largely conditioned in their successful application by the physical organism of those who are subjected to such disciplineit is not merely a local institution, but aims at benefitting the whole India, no less care is being devoted to the establishment of a Boarding House...where they can have the best of home influences, every care and comfort with wise and fatherly protection.

The secular instruction covers the causes prescribed by the University. For the purposes of religious instruction, every student is required to study Sanskrit, whether he takes it as his second language or not. Mrs Besant delivered a series of nine lectures on the Mahabharata.

During his Indian tours, Col. Olcott formed in many places Hindu Boys' Societies and also raised subscriptions for them. This vindicates allegations made by some against him that he identified himself exclusively with the work for the Buddhists. Seeing his success Countess Wachtmeister founded, in January 1895, a journal for the Hindu youth. It was called *Arya Bala Bodhini*. This served admirably as the magazine for the Central Hindu College. It had wide circulation throughout India. Later, from January 1901, it was named as *Central Hindu College Magazine*.

In its 1899 Convention, the Indian Section voted for adopting the CHC, so it became part of the work of that Section of the TS.

In his Presidential Address to the Convention of 1903, Col. Olcott while appreciating the work of the CHC said: ‘The colossal achievements of Mrs Besant in promoting the Hindu religious revival will never be thoroughly appreciated unless her biographer takes up the story of her activities. To the reflective Hindu of the future, the fact of its all being accomplished by an English lady will enhance the wonder of the result of her labours. She has already received gifts in money and real estate for the College to the extent of 4.5 lakhs of rupees.’

Mrs Besant spent the entire year of 1903 in India, mostly staying at Benares attending to the work of the CHC, and as a result of this the College developed. New laboratory, library and the upper storey of the Boarding House were built. During her lecture tours she combined the exposition of Theosophy, with ever increasing breadth and beauty, with a resistless drive on behalf of education.

In the CHC’s 10th Annual Report Mrs Besant states: ‘Our work is training of thousands of India’s sons into noble manhood, into worthiness to become free citizens of a free land... Another part of our work is to draw India and England nearer to each other.’

Below are some of her statements as contained in the CHC’s 11th Annual Report:

...education is no education when religion and morality do not form an integral part of it... patriotism and love of country and duty to the Empire which is growing mightier generation after generation.

Small seed we planted, but it grew, just as a seed germinates when the sun shines upon it and the waters of heaven descend upon it, and the little seed grows into a mighty tree in the future. Now the institution that is around you is known throughout the civilized world.

All important is it that you should not leave the future fathers and mothers of India uneducated or ill-educated.’ Referring

to the disturbed conditions in India: 'There have been troubles in many Colleges, insurrections and strikes, students have been expelled, but no serious trouble in CHC... If any of them go wrong, the elders are to be blamed. Young boys do not understand the full meaning of the words they use... I plead for the boys that they shall not be judged harshly... Let us forget the evil and remember the good... India requires men, brave, resolute and strong men who know their duty and are not afraid to do it.

In her President's Speech, as recorded in the CHC's 12th Annual Report (1909), Mrs Besant says:

The growing gulf noticeable in India between teacher and student has been bridged here by instituting a tutorial system... We try to meet the students with sympathy (advise regarding politics), study and discuss, but not act until you are out of pupilage.

We are trying to re-instate some of the old ideals, not blindly, not fanatically but adopting them to the needs of the present. It is not that everything that was good for the men of the past which would be good for men of the future.

Viceroy visits Central Hindu College

C. W. Leadbeater reported in the *Central Hindu College Magazine* (reprinted in *The Theosophical Messenger*, January 1911):

The work of the President of the Theosophical Society, Mrs. Besant, has been so manifold that only posterity will be able to value it in all its phases. Her work in India specially will be seen in its fruition in later generations of the Hindu peoples. Apart from the impetus she has given to the revival of all that is best in Hindu philosophy and ethics, her work for education will always be appreciated with gratitude by the spiritually-minded Hindus because

she has been successful in combining with secular education a love of religion and ideals of service for the motherland. On November 10th last, the Viceroy of India, the Earl of Minto, visited the Central Hindu College, founded by Mrs. Besant, and, after receiving an address from Mrs. Besant and her Hindu colleagues working for education, spoke of her work in the following terms:

‘I have often told you, Mrs. Besant, that I looked forward someday to visiting the Central Hindu College. I am afraid I have told you so often that you may have begun to doubt the reliability of my intentions. I have, however, appeared at last, and I can assure you I am very glad to be here and see for myself the great work which owes so much to your energy and genius.

‘The College was founded only twelve years ago, and, like many other great undertakings, it originated from small beginnings, and, if I may say so, I believe that its youthful energy and the very spirit of its existence has been nourished by the fact of its inauguration having been, as you say in your address, an example of self-help, the successful effort of a small knot of Indians and Englishmen to meet without Government assistance what they believe to be a pressing want of the youth of this country. During the last twelve years the College has grown into the great institution of today, and naturally its increasing popularity demands an addition to its funds, I hope that will be forthcoming. I am convinced that the spontaneous effort to which it owes its origin will continue to strengthen the value of the maxims its founder originally laid down.

What those maxims are were clearly set forth in Mrs. Besant’s address at the commencement of this year. I understand them to be that religious and moral training should go hand and hand with ordinary secular education; that good citizenship depends upon the formation of character in early youth; and that patriotism and love of country should be the foundation of good citizenship, culminating in a devoted loyalty to the King-Emperor. It is upon

lines such as these, and they are very notable lines, that Mrs. Besant maintains that the youth of the country should be educated, and she claims, too, that the observance of those lines has already preserved peace amongst the students of this College, which has been markedly absent at some other centres of learning. No one believes more than I do in the inestimable value of the tenets to which I have referred. I hope that the Hindu College with strict regard for them may successfully continue to mould the youths of India. It is strength of character, based upon religious and moral training that produces men fit for the battle of life.

‘I can only tell you again, Mrs. Besant and gentlemen, how glad I am to have been here today. Lady Minto and I, when we have exchanged the suns of India for the hills of our Scottish home, will often think of our visit to the Central Hindu College and will never forget the very kind words we have listened to from you.’

We reproduce below the text of a public lecture by N. Sri Ram organized by the Adyar Lodge of the TS at the Gokhale Hall, Madras, 10 July 1947, and originally published in *The Theosophist*, October 1947. In it Mr Sri Ram points out how the formation of the Central Hindu College was the beginning of Mrs Besant’s magnificent work for education in India.

DR. ANNIE BESANT’S WORK FOR EDUCATION IN INDIA

N. Sri Ram

It is very rarely that it is given to a person to play many roles in one, displaying a diversity of gifts in different fields of life. Dr Besant was an educationist with high aims and ideals, but she was at the same time a politician of worldwide repute and eminence, and a great spiritual teacher, venerated as such not merely by thousands, but without exaggeration, tens of thousands of all races and faiths.

She combined in herself to a remarkable degree the gifts of exposition, writing and organization. One does not readily find a person of thought, who is capable of giving ideas of value, equally well translating those ideas into action, and helping bands of people attracted by them to become leaders in their turn. She had also the rare combination of an unflagging youthfulness of spirit with the balance and maturity of age and a wide outlook upon the problems and affairs of her age and the people.

When she came to India in 1893, she seemed to have before her mind's eye a broad plan of India's renaissance. She first plunged into the task of the religious revival of India, because she found that those who had modern education on western lines were beginning to be materialistic and look down on their ancient faith with contempt or indifference. They were being carried away by the glamour of western civilization, and apologetic about their own national culture and ways. So everywhere she awakened the people of India to the glory of their heritage, to the splendour of their own ancient civilization and faith. After she had succeeded in making thoughtful Indians once again turn their minds to the truths of their philosophy, the truths embedded in their religious system, which she did with electrifying effect by lecturing over the length and breadth of India, she began the work of education with the starting of the Central Hindu College at Benares. After several years of this work for Indian youth, she gave those lectures in Madras entitled "Wake up, India!" dealing with the problems of social reform. She did not plunge very deeply into this aspect of Indian life, for she considered it was the duty of the Indians themselves to tackle their social evils. Lastly, crowning all her previous work, she started the campaign for India's freedom.

It is remarkable that in each one of these phases it was a deeply religious attitude which constituted the core of her outlook. Education was to her a matter of life and therefore of religion. It was based upon religious principles and the religious outlook of the people.

Social reform in those days was especially divorced in its orientation from Hindu religion and philosophy. The social reform she advocated was aimed at removing outworn customs and accretions which had encrusted the faith of the people. When she took to politics she took to it with a fervour of idealism that cannot be described as otherwise than religious. As Gandhiji himself has said, she made Home Rule a mantram in every village. She was not merely an agitator, though she had to agitate for her ideals – and none could do it better – but she was above all a nation-builder. One of her biographers has described her as ‘a passionate pilgrim’; whatever the path she took, she trod it as a pilgrim, with all the fervour of a dedicated spirit pressing ever onward to its goal.

Her Education had two distinct aspects; one was that it had a religious foundation, and the other was patriotism or love of the Motherland. To her religion was not a narrow creed. She took the leading part in producing those textbooks of Hindu religion and ethics which were called the Sanatana Dharma Series. Anyone who reads them will see that she has put together there the essentials of the Hindu faith, leaving out whatever may be of the nature of an excrescence or superstition. Her religion included an appreciation of the truths of other religions; similarly, her patriotism was not a patriotism of hate, or of narrow-minded pride, but a patriotism of love which expressed itself in every constructive endeavour and was based on the greatness of the past as an inspiration to the future.

She gave a number of talks to the students in the Central Hindu College, which have since been published, giving the stories of Sri Rāmachandra and the Mahābhārata war. We see there how she proceeded to awaken the enthusiasm of students, and – I may add – of grown-up men too, for the ideals and truths enshrined in our ancient epics. Her ideas on Education, her principles, were exemplified in that College, which soon became famous all over the land. It attracted boys from almost every corner of India. Being situated in Benares, the holy city of India, it had students from places as far

distant as the Punjab and Eastern Bengal, and Tuticorin in the south. A Central Hindu College boy had a stamp which was distinguishable from boys of other colleges.

She carried on her work there with the help of Dr Arundale and a band of other devoted assistants. She stressed certain ideas that might be familiar now but were not considered at all at that time, such as the importance of building up the adolescent body with proper diet, hygiene and the playing of games. The Central Hindu College was noted for the skill, the expertness and the capacity of its students in every game that was played in those times – cricket, hockey, football and others. She was later to become the pioneer Indian Scouting, a movement which she started in order to build-up character and the attitude of ready service in young men who badly lacked such an outlet for their energies. She formed a cadet corps in the Central Hindu College, which drew much attention wherever it went; the cadets were dressed in an Indian uniform, drilled in military style taught to act as a team loyal to one another and to leaders. She tried also something that was then new to Indian schools, namely, the prefect system. All the time, in her institutions, the stress was on character and service, and there was the distinctive feature of a complete absence of punishment. Dr Besant's ideal was to train the young men into men of courage, upright and able to face the difficulties and responsibilities of their lives. She made it a cardinal rule in every institution under her control that discipline should be based on love and respect and free from fear.

Dr Besant did not believe in political action by students and that point was brought out very strongly during the both of the anti-partition movement in Bengal and the Non-Cooperation of 1920-21. She regarded the student years a period of precious preparation for citizenship; she did not countenance the throwing of them as raw recruits into the battleline to become ready casualties, as in her view battles were not won by such tactics. But she advised her young people to study politics, and every other problem of general interest; to

take part in school and college parliaments, in order to learn to present their points of view in debate, to appreciate opposed views, and to cultivate the graces of courtesy and parliamentary manners amidst sharp differences of opinion. She edited for a number of years a magazine, *The Young Citizen*, in which she held up high ideals for inspiration of young people.

When the Central Hindu College flowered into the Hindu University, that University recognized her unique labours in the educational field by conferring upon her the degree of Doctor of Letters – an honour which she very much appreciated.

Freed from the responsibility of guiding that college, she formed the Theosophical Educational Trust, and soon a number of schools and colleges in different parts of India came under the control of that body. In these institutions, the principles which were followed were those advocated by Dr Besant. Education was regarded as an aid to natural growth, and was to be education not only for livelihood but also for life and leadership. She attached very special importance to the education of girls, because she realized that it is the women of the land who are the best custodians of its culture. She stressed the importance of preserving distinctive ideals of Indian womanhood, not turning them into copies of western women – however splendid these might be – but making them embodiments of their own culture and ideals.

She was in the Central Hindu College, and in all the institutions with which she was associated, a constant inspiration both to the teachers and students. To every student she was a loving and accessible mother. She had the remarkable gift of attracting around her helpers who were eager to give their all for the cause which they considered it their privilege to serve under her guidance.

In addition to all this, she lectured in all parts of India on national education, and she visited even small towns and villages which one could not reach by convenient means of transport, because she felt that it was necessary that the principles of right

education should be understood by the people, so that the education of India may be controlled by Indians, that it may be national education in the true sense of the term, purged of all the faults which were so glaring in any system that had been devised for other ends and purposes than the building up of India into a strong nation capable of holding her own.

In the year 1918, after the goal of Home Rule had been accepted by the British Government, she launched National Education movement with the help of Dr Arundale, because she felt that without education on national lines there could be no true national freedom and that in India democracy should not grow into government by multi-headed ignorance. In the Commonwealth of India Bill for the freedom of India, which she drafted in 1925, she wrote the right of citizens to free elementary education, embodying her view that every child born in the land should be able to enjoy that right; he should not only have the necessary physical care, but also the education needed to launch into the stormy waters of life; the Bill contemplated one or more schools in every village managed by the village authorities.

Dr Besant was always full of encouragement to young people. This particular Association in the premises of which we are meeting today – the Young Men’s Indian Association – was part of her gifts to the young men of Madras. When the Pachaiappa’s College was suffering for want of a hostel in which to house its boys, she gave a handsome donation which enabled them to build a hostel, so that the young people who needed to reside in the City of Madras for study might have a place in which they might be properly housed and looked after. She paid the fees of ever so young boys who came to her for help, sometimes for urgent assistance. I know that they all addressed her as ‘Mother’, whether they knew her personally or not, and she accepted that description. She used however to say she was a mother to so many that it was not possible for her to meet all requirements.

Dr Besant was one of the first to stress the importance of giving education in the mother-tongue of the boy. She fully recognized the value of English as a second language and as a means of communication with people of other lands and its value for other purposes too, but the use of English not merely for learning as a language but as the medium for learning other subjects constituted a crushing burden to the young brain. She encouraged also in every way possible the learning of Sanskrit and Arabic, as the classical languages of India.

In all these respects and ways she was an educational pioneer. Her education did not aim at the mere manufacture of graduates by the hundred. She taught that every child had his own unique individuality, which the true educator must respect; the system should adapt itself to the child, not the child to the system. These ideas of hers have yet to find their true and proper fulfilment. Her educational ideas were characterized by the wisdom with which she planned all work with which she was concerned. In the field of politics she was a constructive statesman of the highest calibre; she was equally a statesman in every other field of life.

Dr Besant, although she passed away in 1933, has not yet become dim in our eyes. We would do well in this Centenary year to keep her memory green with our gratitude, by recalling all her splendid work for this country and the ideals which she so constantly placed before us for our inspiration and guidance. Our entry as a free nation into the circle of nations is a culmination of Dr Besant's work for India in the political field. Her work in the educational field will no doubt bear its equally important fruit in course of time, as a free India undistracted by the pressing problem of her politics turns her attention to the constructive tasks that await her consideration.

Formation of the Benares Hindu University

The following notes are based on the book *History of the Banaras Hindu University* by Shivanandan Lal Dar (Banaras Hindu

University Press, Varanasi, 1966, pp. 90-105). Remarks by Dr Besant are referred to as indicated.

With success of the Central Hindu College (CHC), the idea of establishing a National University was gradually flowering in the mind of Mrs Besant. In 1907, she put forward the idea of establishing an all denominational university to be named 'The University of India' at Benares. The Governing Body to be composed of the Trustees of the CHC and representatives of all important creeds. The university was to be an examining body in the beginning like Government universities in India at that time, take up teaching later on and should affiliate colleges of all denominations each of which would teach its own religion to its students. The well-established Central Hindu College, Benares, has given permission to the proposed university to use its building for the examination and office purposes.

In the petition for the Royal Master (addressed to H.M. The King), the need for a new university 'having a field of activity of a distinctive character from the existing universities, and possessing special features of its own' was emphasized. This was in accordance with the declared policy of the Government 'that higher education should more and more devolve on private and voluntary endeavours'. The attempt would be on 'unifying and rendering effective Indian initiative in educational matters'.

The petition stated that 'the most marked speciality of the proposed university will be in the fact that it will affiliate no college in which religion and morality do not form an integral part of the education given. It will make no distinctions between religions, accepting equally Hindu, Buddhist, Parsi, Christian, Muhammadan, but it will not affiliate any purely secular institution... will draw together all the elements which regard the training of youth in honour and virtue as the most essential part of education.'

'The second important speciality will be the placing in the first rank of Indian philosophy, history and literature and seeking in these and in the classical languages of India, the chief means of

culture. While western thought will be amply studied, eastern will take the lead.'

'The third important speciality will be the paying of special attention to manual and technical training, to science applied to agriculture... so as to revive the now decaying industries of India.'

The signatories included besides Mrs Besant prominent citizens from all over India, among others Sir S. Subrahmania Aiyar, Sir Narayana Chandravarkar, Dr Ashutosh, Sir P. C. Chatterji, Khan Bahadur N. D. Khandalavala, Syed Husein Iman, Hirendranath Datta, Mazharul Haque, Ganga Prasad and Rai Bahadur Shyam Sundar Lal.

'The petition was sent up to the Secretary of State for India by H.E. the Viceroy in September 1910, and subsequently, it was referred back by him to the Government of India for opinion on various points.'

During this period, between Mrs Besant's formulation of the specific scheme 1907 and the Viceroy sending the petition to the Secretary of State in September 1910 and his referring back to the Government of India, several developments took place in the country which jeopardized her scheme.

'The idea of sectarian educational instruction was being deliberately fostered not only by the leaders of the Muslim Community but was also receiving the inspiring blessings of the British officials in high quarters.' Lord Curzon, when he paid a visit to the Aligarh College, told the Muslims that they should 'not be left behind while their rivals were pressing forward in the face'. In 1904, large subscriptions were raised for the Aligarh College. 'In the beginning of 1911, the Muslims, under the leadership of H.H. the Aga Khan, submitted a demand for a University Charter for the establishment of a Muslim University at Aligarh.' As a result, 'a number of Muslims who had given their names to Mrs Besant's scheme withdrew from it, leaving only a very few leaders of that community on it.'

'The Hindu Community was also raised to exert itself at this juncture by the sight of the success of the Muslims'. Workers of the

Central Hindu College (CHC) were invited at several places and received donations but the Hindu population wished to have a university of their own just as the Muslims planned. At this point in time, Pandit M. M. Malaviya revised his old scheme and in the 1910 session of the Congress decided to resume the work of the university, which had been put off year after year. It may be added Mrs Besant had put forward the idea of The University of India in 1907. In the meantime, while Bharat Mahamandala of Kashi, under the Presidentship of Maharaja of Darbhanga was working for a Sanatana Dharma University at Benares. He also joined hands with Dr Besant and Malaviyaji.

So there were three schemes before the Government. The University of India, a Hindu University and a Muslim University. It was clear that a charter would not be granted to all the three. As the larger university of India would embrace both Hindus and Muslims, 'the Muslim community had deliberately and finally cut themselves off' from this larger, broader scheme. Mrs Besant's scheme had the advantage that it had a well-established CHC as its base and she herself had wide experience in the organizational work, but the disadvantage came in because the Muslims as a community had withdrawn, leaving a very few broadminded Muslims with her.

In this background 'Mrs Besant and Pandit M. M. Malaviya met in Calcutta in March 1911, talked over the situation and decided to join hands'... 'they and a few other leading Hindus met at Allahabad on 8 April 1911, and it was agreed that the petition for a Royal Charter already submitted by Mrs Besant to the Government should be the basis of work with certain modifications. These proposed changes were printed in a circular letter dated 11 April 1911, issued by Mrs Besant, which was also published in various dailies and weekly. Mrs Besant left for England from Bombay on 22 April for six months, thinking that while she would look after the interests of the scheme for granting of the Charter during her stay in England and Malaviyaji would look after enlisting support and collection of

funds in India. She also hoped that her circular letter of 11 April 1911 would make it easier for her team of workers to work in cooperation with Malaviyaji.

This public announcement and Mrs Besant leaving immediately for Bombay to go to Europe with Mr G. S. Arundale, Krishnamurti and Nityananda, on 22 April 1911, gave an opportunity to her opponents to raise a big public controversy against her.

In the April 1911 issue of *The Theosophist* she wrote: 'It may well be that these (i.e. two scheme of Muslim University of Aga Khan and Hindu University of Malaviyaji) will be preferred to my scheme in which all religions in India were treated equally and an attempt was made to unite instead of to divide.'

Mrs Besant was far ahead of her time. The deeply rooted communal feelings prevailing gave wide public support to separate 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' universities and not to Mrs Besant's attempt to have a University of India in which all the religions were to be treated equally. Her attempt to unite was obstructed by the disruptive communal forces whose ill effects in India caused the partition of the country and which continues to show its face in an increasing manner even today.

The letters, mostly anonymous, started finding faults, while she was out of the country, with everything that she did and with Theosophy. They did not spare Malaviyaji on account of his Hindu orthodoxy. Some newspapers took leading part in publishing such letters. There was much disunity among Hindus themselves.

'Briefly, the bulk of their criticism was only destructive.... Irritation appeared to have centred round two points. Firstly, that too much of Theosophy had been introduced in the CHC and secondly that in the new University Mrs Besant would automatically force Theosophy on all; the position was actually not so.'

The root cause seems to be narrow-mindedness of most of the people, who could not rise above their sectarian viewpoint deeply hidden within them and made them not to cooperate with Mrs Besant

who was for an educational system 'in which all religions of India were treated equally'. Drawing attention to the original teachings without later incrustations and to the essential unity and purpose of all religions was considered and denounced as introducing too much of Theosophy. Most people consider their religion to be superior to all other religions. This emphasis on equality was interpreted as imposing Theosophy. It must not be forgotten that after all the CHC was founded and financed by theosophists and that eminent theosophist-teachers, leaving their promising career in the world, came to build the CHC with the assistance of local people, most of whom were members of the TS, at least during its early years.

The over-orthodox Hindus alleged that Mrs Besant was opportunistically using the CHC for converting people to Christianity, whereas orthodox Christianity thought just the opposite. The aggressive nationalists thought that she was an agent of the Crown whereas over-nervous bureaucrats who did not understand the spirit of uprightness and self-dependence considered her sowing seeds of sedition. Thus there were too many misconceptions of the whole movement on the part of those who had not had the advantage of closely watching the lives of the two leaders, Mrs Besant and Malaviyaji.

There also seems to be another contributing factor. Mr. G. S. Arundale was a very enthusiastic person who kept high ideals before him and tried to inspire youngsters towards idealism and the spiritual life. He joined the staff of CHC in his twenties. When he was about thirty years old, bubbling with enthusiasm and energy, came the announcement by Mrs Besant and Mr Leadbeater that the world condition was ripe for a great Teacher to come again. Teachers have come to lead the world throughout the eons. At that time, they did not know who and how he would come but thought that he might use some pure and suitable person through whom the message would be given.

Josephine Ransom, in *A Short History of the Theosophical Society*, pp. 390-91, says that as part of preparation of this coming, 'in 1910 Mr Arundale had started among the boys of the CHC a private order called 'The Order of the Rising Sun of India'. It was intended to draw together those of his scholars who believed in the near coming of a great Teacher, and he did not expect it to spread beyond the limits of the College.'

Against the expectations of the founders, the youthful members of this exclusive order went around with a sense of superiority over others. This is a common human failing. The members had to take some secret and sacred promises of working for the cause and, as the common practice in spiritual organizations, to keep certain matters private and also to follow the leader, in the present case Mrs Besant. This activity became a centre for attack by those who were not in it. It was a private organization and not a secret one.

Ransom continues: 'The Trustees did not approve of this activity. On 11 January 1911 the Order was made public because Mrs Besant found that many people "were ready for just such a society".' (p. 391)

Prominent among those who started attacking Mrs Besant on her work in general and educational work in particular was Dr Bhagavan Das. As General Secretary of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, he used the columns of its journal, *The Theosophical Review*, to attack her. He wrote to newspapers and wrote of a twenty-five-page letter to the Editor of the *Christian Commonwealth*, London, which had all along been against Mrs Besant, on account of leaving Christianity in young years and her broad based, wider activities. This opened the field for similar attacks on Mrs Besant and the TS. In his pamphlet 'The C.H.C. and Mrs Besant', Dr Bhagavan Das wrote of her wish to 'save mankind' and secondly 'to be regarded as a saviour of the same....' The former wish prevailed on the whole over the latter from 1894 to 1907, with the help of the good advice and influence she did a magnificent work.

It is a historical fact that during 1904 and 1907 Benares was Mrs Besant's house and Dr Bhagavan Das was closely associated with her. On becoming the International President, her headquarters shifted to Adyar. So the good advice and influence spoken of by Dr Bhagavan Das is obviously that of his own.

In a very derogatory manner Bhagavan Das attacked Mrs Besant. The correspondence preserved in the Archives of the TS at Adyar as well as public statements of Mrs Besant at that time reveal her magnanimity. She did not counterattack Dr Bhagavan Das and patiently and calmly took the brunt on her and answered in a most dignified manner.

Dr I. N. Gurtu, who succeeded Dr Bhagavan Das as General Secretary of the Indian Section of the TS, in a letter of 5 June 1913, replied to the allegations in detail. Later after transferring the CHC to form a nucleus of the BHU, Mrs Besant formed a new Theosophical Education Trust whose Trustees were from the E.S. Dr. Bhagavan Das attacked this rule. Dr Gurtu says that it had to be so after Mrs Besant's experience of the Trustees of the CHC. To apply restrictions to the membership of Trusts is common practice in the world today, probably because Trusts are formed for specific purposes and trustees must be committed to fulfil those purposes.

However, in September 1933, in his talk on 'Annie Besant and the Changing World', delivered at the Town Hall, Benares, after immersing the ashes of Dr Besant in the Ganges, Dr Bhagavan Das' attitude had changed. He said:

'To herself, she was a humble servant and missionary of the Spiritual Hierarchy ... which guides the evolution of humanity; I regarded her as my spiritual mother from the moment I first beheld her ... even I had the deplorable misfortune, once, of being engaged in a public controversy with her, in 1912-13, over the affairs and policies of the CHC and the TS ... When the controversy had blown over, I humbly begged her forgiveness, not for any differing

views, but for any harshness that might have crept into my language....because of my coarse and unregenerate nature...’

He summarized the difference in views between him and Dr Besant: ‘that we should all pray ... that a Helper of Mankind may come, but no particular person should be accepted or proclaimed or treated as an Avatar or initiate’

According to *History of the Banaras Hindu University* (pp.104-05), Mrs Besant and Malaviyaji talked over at Calcutta in March 1911 and again on 8 April 1911 at Allahabad, when a few leading Hindus were also present. Mrs Besant agreed to modify the University of India scheme in favour of the University of Benares. She made the changes public by her letter of 11 April 1911 and she left India on 22 April. In the midst of many controversial letters and notes published in the newspapers, the editorial column of *The Leader*, Allahabad, 18 May 1911, put the case excellently from the standpoint of thoughtful and judicial minded public worker. The Editorial appreciated the work of Mrs Besant and exhorted ‘that prejudice and prepossession will not be allowed to sway deliberations on this matter of supreme importance to the fruition of the scheme, that impartiality and liberality of thought will govern the decision of those responsible, and whatever may once be resolved will be adhered to inflexibly for nothing is more fatal to ultimate success than continued indecision.’ In this connection, what Mrs Besant wrote in *The Theosophist*, April 1911, before leaving for Europe is worth taking into account.

‘It may well be that these (i.e. the schemes of the Muslim University of Agakhan and Hindu University of Malaviyaji) will be preferred to my scheme in which all religions of India were treated equally, and attempt was made to unite instead of divide.’

In *The Theosophist*, May 1911, she alludes to an outside influence on the process: ‘The attacks made on myself by the party which strove to wreck the T.S. on the passing of the President-Founder wrought much harm to the College ... from its inception the College has been the child of the T.S.’

History of the Banaras Hindu University (p. 107) mentions that Pandit Iqbal Narain Gurtu, who was then the Headmaster of the CHC, visited a number of places enlisting support and collecting funds for the amalgamation of the two schemes. Successful public meetings were held with a good public response.

‘While Pandit I. N. Guru was organising these meetings, enlisting the sympathy of the public in favour of the amalgamated scheme, the controversy was still going on in the Press. At last, in *The Leader* of 1st June 1911, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya stated his position in the following words:

“The question of amalgamation of Mrs Besant’s scheme of a University of India and of a University of Benares is still under consideration.” (op. cit., p.108)

‘The public did not like that the matter should be kept hanging, and meetings were held at several places and resolutions passed in favour of amalgamating the two original schemes and the CHC to be the nucleus of the University.’ (op. cit., p.108)

‘On the 10th July 1911, Pandit Malaviya came to Benares and had an informal meeting with some members of the CHC Committee. He pointed out certain difficulties.... and proposed certain alterations, which to those present seemed important.... He was advised by the CHC Committee to write to Mrs Besant’ who was in Europe. Malaviyaji issued a statement on the same day which was interpreted by different persons differently. (op. cit., pp. 107-08)

‘On 6 August 1911, at the usual half yearly meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Central Hindu College, Malaviyaji was also present and Mrs Besant’s letter of 11 April 1911 and modifications due to certain difficulties raised by Malaviyaji were considered. The

Trustees expressed inability to accept the modifications proposed by Malaviyaji without knowing the views of Besant. The Board passed a *tentative* resolution mentioning its inability to take ‘any action in regard to funds and properties of the institution but... was willing to join hands with Mrs Besant and Malaviyaji... in promoting the establishment of the Hindu University at Benares of which the CHC will be an integral part.’ (op. cit., p. 109)

‘Subsequently, Mrs Besant wrote to the Editor of the Lucknow *Advocate* (date not given): “...after waiting since last April for the amalgamation agreed upon between Malaviyaji and myself, I am proceeding with the scheme as agreed to. I cannot throw aside the scheme worked for several years, approved by the late Viceroy.”’ (op. cit., p.110)

Then Mrs Besant speaks of efforts made in England and discussions held with the highest officials to ‘change the name from the University of India to the University of Benares necessitated by the demand for a Muslim University I do not agree to drop my nearly completed work, as the Hon. Pandit seems to expect.’ (op. cit., p. 110)

Mrs Besant returned to Benares from her European tour on 21 October 1911. On the same day, a meeting took place between her and Malaviyaji. ‘All differences sank in the common aim which promised so much for an awakened India.’ That evening she went to the CHC along with Malaviyaji and those members of the Board of Trustees of the CHC who could be present. There she announced ‘that the amalgamation of the three schemes for a university – those of the Hon. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the Hon. Maharaja Sir Rameshwar Singh Bahadur of Darbhanga and her own – was an accomplished fact. Every heart rejoiced and the good news quickly flew by wire all over the country.’ (op. cit., p. 193)

The next day, 22 October 1911, Mrs Besant, Malaviyaji, Maharaja of Dharbhanga and four others met and signed a short memorandum for a Hindu University with a governing body

consisting of representatives of the Hindu community, Mrs Besant and representative trustees of the CHC. It also declared that the petition of Charter filed by Mrs Besant which was before the Secretary of State for India will be withdrawn.

The 13th Annual Report of the CHC, published in December 1911, mentions that the Board of Trustees of the CHC met on 25 and 26 December 1911 at which meetings Mrs Besant formally informed the members of the development that had taken place. She proposed a resolution, which was passed. Mrs Besant, as President of the CHC, said:

‘We are standing today with happiness and pride but with a slight tincture of sorrow.... This college is OURS – is going largely out of our hands, is passing into a wider life, and will yield loyalty to other persons. The sorrow is that of a mother, glad that the son is going out to do his work in the world.

‘Whether this be our last anniversary, whether we shall gather here... I cannot say... It may be truly said that the CHC is the foundation of that mighty university, which shall save for the world the priceless Hindu Culture and shall use western thought.’

In her Presidential Address to the International Convention of the TS in 1911 she said: ‘The CHC is blossoming into a university and will soon no longer need the fostering care of the T.S. which has watched over it during the days of its infancy. It will reach majority as soon as the university is established, and its mother will send it out joyfully into the world to play a man’s role therein.’

She also wrote *On the Watch-Tower, The Theosophist*, November 1912: ‘Meanwhile it is the duty of Theosophists to work for the Hindu University as they have worked for its nucleus, the Central Hindu College, which makes it possible.... It will be good for India, as for any other nation, to have a College which will welcome all the

rivals with equal respect and so foreshadow the future amity, and build for a United India.’

We read in *A Short History of the Theosophical Society*, p. 402, for the year 1913:

Though the CHC, ‘the fruits of all the years of labour and self-sacrifice’, had been willingly surrendered to the Hindu University and was essential to its success, some of the university authorities now entertained fears about the association of the university with Mrs Besant. This was the climax to the antagonism led by Dr Bhagavan Das... he went far along the same lines as did Dr Steiner, when he suggested that members of the E.S. should be excluded from all the offices of the T.S.... So bitter grew the opposition that Mrs Besant offered to resign as President of the Board of Trustees.... The antagonism generated by Mr Arundale's attachment to J. Krishnamurti and his efforts to build up a group of young men to help him when the time comes... he resigned his principalship... many on the staff also resigned. Miss Arundale resigned from the Girls School... Mrs Besant took steps to form a Theosophical Educational Trust....

This is what Mrs Besant wrote in ‘On the Watch-Tower’, *The Theosophist*, March 1913:

‘...from the very beginning of the CHC we have all tried to inspire the students with great ideals embodied in persons. The heart of the young one cannot be touched in any other way. Now an attempt is being made by a few influential members of the governing bodies to destroy this spirit and to substitute for it any metaphysical ideas and the cult of the impersonal, which may suit sages, but not boys. The situation is imperiling the stability of this much loved institution and my own difficult position (owing to the

lawsuit in Madras) makes it impossible for me to be in Benares; were I there, none of these difficulties would arise.

She continues to follow the developments in Benares when she wrote in 'On the Watch-Tower', *The Theosophist*, June 1913:

The news from Benares will sadden the many well-wishers of the CHC. The handing over of the college to the Hindu University and the placing of members of the university committee on the College Board in order to facilitate the transfer, have proved disastrous, for the new members had done nothing for the college and cared nothing for its liberal traditions. Hence the persecution of the theosophical honorary workers, culminating in the attempt to drive my friends and myself away. Illiberal orthodoxy has made an unholy marriage with unbelief in order to injure theosophy... These papers (*The Leader* and *The Hindu*) sedulously reprint each other's articles and string them each their hands.'

She asks friends not to accept reports as accurate, appearing in *The Hindu*.

All through the year 1912, Babu Bhagavan Das wrote vehemently against me, using the Indian Section magazine as a weapon; then he poured accusations against me.... (When she went to Benares) a great crowd of professors, masters and students came to me, that Babu Bhagavan Das was circulating among them the statement that I was mad, and begging me to take action.

She offered her resignation from the Board of Trustees but the majority turned it down.

Fifteen years of labour have been destroyed, out of hatred based on theological and political reasons.

I may add that the last outrages, which brought about the resignation of the members of the staff (Dr Arundale and twenty-three of the staff resigned in protest against the publication of the letter in *The Leader*). It was the publication in that newspaper of a very private letter addressed by Mr Arundale to a group of a few intimate friends. It was obtained in a very surreptitious way, and sent with an anonymous letter to *The Leader*.... The group which is attacked was one founded in 1909, with the idea of helping me in my work, and of leading a life of self-sacrifice...

...The work lives, and will soon embody itself in another form. We are driven from the outworn body, so we take a new one, for the Eternal Spirit of Love and Service, expelled from one body, clothes itself in another.

Five of our band of workers opened a Theosophical School in Benares on July 7th (1913) and keep alive our ideals there. Two more go to Madanapalle to work. Mr Wodehouse takes in charge a large group, to enter English Universities and they, with Miss Arundale, left India on May 15th.

Below are some of the responses in the Indian press at that time regarding the unfolding crisis in the Central Hindu College:

‘CHC and the proposed Hindu University’, *Madras Standard* (22 July 1914): ‘A most serious crisis has arisen in the life of the CHC... The whole future of this national institution trembles in the balance.’ After discussing the ideals for which the CHC was founded, Mrs Besant goes on to say that ‘while it was necessary to accept the educational curriculum of the Government and to conform to the general rules as regard the educational arrangements, the CHC preserved independence’ and accepted no Government grants.

The Hindu University, *The Madras Standard* (22 July 1914): ‘In the belief that this policy (i.e. of the CHC) of piety and independence would be followed in the Hindu University (and knowing this to be the views of her colleagues in the committee)... she agreed that

the college should be the nucleus of the University and won over several of the Trustees, who feared to resign their control. Feeling that the Government terms, if accepted...will place her in the position of betrayer of a public trust'...she has written articles of protest.

National Education, *The Madras Standard* (23 July 1914): She discusses in detail the ideals on which the CHC was founded, names great rulers of India whose ideals students should follow and not of Nelson and Wellington, etc. 'But we cannot sacrifice Indian nationality on the altar of our gratitude to our English rulers.' England and India will be most closely bound together, if they work hand in hand, and heart with heart – 'we do not ask Government what type education shall be abolished. We ask that a national education may be allowed to develop side by side.

'If the Government will not charter a national University, we bow to the decision; but we will not accept a bondage "glided with" a liberal grant-in aid'... Let the Hindu University committee keep the funds and apply them to the cause for which they were collected.'

In a letter to the editor of *The Christian Commonwealth*, London, Dr Bhagavan Das accused Mrs Besant of having 'two natures, a higher and a lower', that is altruism, the wish to 'save mankind', and egoism, the wish to be regarded as a savior of the same humanity. He says that the former prevailed from 1847 to 1907, and that her second nature was dominating her more and more since the passing of H.S. Olcott. He also accused her of encouraging a culture of personal worship when 100 or so members of the staff threatened to resign en masse if Dr Bhagavan Das was not condemned publicly. Later on he also criticized her decision to form the Theosophical Education Trust as all the members would be TS members. He also accused Mrs Besant suffering from mental delusions.

On 15th April 1913 Mrs Besant sent her resignation from the office of President of the Board of Trustees of the CHC. 'I should have liked to have continued as President of the Board of Trustees for the short time which remains before the CHC is merged with the

Hindu University... But I appear to have lost for some reason the confidence and goodwill of some of my old friends... I therefore place my resignation ...’ The Board of Trustees requested her to remain as President.

The Central Hindu College – Girls’ School

On 29 March 1904, this School was taken over by the Trustees of the Central Hindu College. The following Notes from Appendix B of 1906 report of the CHC throw light on the coming into being of the Girls’ School.

‘Although ever since her arrival in India in 1893, Mrs Besant had been profoundly convinced that in the right education of women lay the real power which would hasten by centuries the task of India’s uprising, she felt that any effort made in this direction for Hindus would be worse than useless. Initial years of labour had proved that she was working for the uprising of Hinduism and not for its subversion.’

In fact, one of the first things done by Countess Wachtmeister and Mrs Besant on arrival in India in 1893 was concern with girls’ education but they were advised to wait on account of suspicion. Now, ten years had elapsed and Mrs Besant’s intentions and sincerity were well established.

‘The first effort was made at Lahore, but teachers were lacking’... until Miss Arundale arrived in 1903... for seven months from 19 August 1903 Miss Arundale had been teaching in her own home girls of the neighbouring compounds, beginning with two in the first day and gradually increasing to ten attending more or less regularly.... Her rooms could hold no more. There was the need for large rooms ‘and the purdah necessary for the older girls maintained’. Then Mrs Besant and Miss Arundale called a meeting in Gyan Geha on 29 March 1904 ‘to consider a scheme for a Girls’ School in Benares’.

Mrs Besant said: ‘The ordinary English, or Missionary, education given to girls is destructive of all Hindu ideals and the sanctity of the Hindu home. The Theosophist could handle the situation’, so the CHC Girls’ School was founded.

Mrs Besant said: ‘The national movement for girls’ education must be on national lines; it must accept the general Hindu conception of women’s place in the national life, not the dwarfed modern view but the ancient ideal. It must see in the women the mother and the wife, or, as in some cases, the learned and pious ascetic, the Brahmavadini of olden days.’

After discussing such ideals, the essentials are given as follows – only titles are given here. She outlined the essential features as:

1. Religious and Moral education
2. Literary Education
3. Scientific Education
4. Artistic Education
5. Physical Education

‘There will always be some exceptional girls who need, for the due evolution of their faculties, a more profound and a wider education and these must be helped to what they need as individuals, each in her own line.’

The initial difficulty of bringing the children to the school was overcome by getting ‘our omnibus and a pair of horses...’

The Central Hindu Girls School started on 19 August in 1903 in the house of Miss Francesca Arundale, was taken over by the CHC Trust on 29 March 1904 and later became the Central Hindu Girls’ School. On 30 October 1905 there were seventy-two children on its rolls.

The CHC Annual Report for 1908 says that the CHC Girls’ School ‘is doing splendidly well under the care of Miss Arundale

and Miss Palmer. A new block of four rooms was added and a piece of land purchased for a new Boarding House’.

Religious instruction which is the chief feature of the College has made a distinct progress. In the College, the stress on girls coming in Indian dress was laid. The first Principal was Miss Francesca Arundale with Miss Sarah E. Palmer as Vice-Principal and Miss Lilian Edger assisting.

Two years after being formed, the Benares Hindu University bestowed on Annie Besant a great honour: ‘On 14 December 1921, the BHU conferred upon Mrs Besant its Honour Degree of Doctor of Letters, in “grateful recognition” of her ‘invaluable co-operation in establishing the university’. She was “very happy to have this link with the loved Central Hindu College, now the Hindu University”. She and other Trustees of the College were elected as life members of the University Court and Council.’ (*A Short History of the Theosophical Society*, p. 446)

Educational Institutions Founded or Inspired by Annie Besant and other Theosophists

- National Women’s College, Benares – founded 1916 by Theosophical Investment Trust
- National College at Hyderabad, Sindh - founded October 1, 1917 by Theosophical Investment Trust
- Wood National College, Madanapalle, Chittoor District, Madras – founded in 1915 by Theosophical Investment Trust
- College of Agriculture or National Agricultural College, located in Damodar Gardens, Adyar – founded July 15, 1918 by the Society for Promotion of National Education (SPNE)
- National College of Commerce, Kilpauk, Madras – founded July, 1918 by SPNE
- Training College at Madras, Kilpauk Madras – founded in September, 1918 by SNPE

- Besant National College, Bombay – scheduled to be recognized by SPNE in 1919
- National College. Ahmedabad – scheduled to be recognized by SPNE in 1919
- National Women’s University, Poona - considering cooperation with SPNE

Primary and secondary schools included:

- Sanmarga Free Samskrit School, Bellary, Bellary District, Madras - founded in 1889 by R. Jaganathia, FTS
- National Girls’ School, Benares City, United Provinces - founded in July, 1913 by Annie Besant
- National Boys’ School, Benares City, United Provinces - founded in July 7, 1913 by Annie Besant
- National Collegiate School, Cawnpore, United Provinces – formerly of Allahabad University
- National Girls’ School, Coimbatore, Madras - founded May 24, 1906 by Rai Saheb Marana Gounder
- Indraprastha Girls’ School, Delhi, Punjab
- National High School, Hyderabad, Sindh – founded October 1, 1917 by Theosophical Investment Trust
- Gomukhi National School, Kallakurchi, South Arcot District, Madras – founded January, 1918 by N. T. Vasudeva Rao
- Gokhale Free Primary School, Kankoduthivanitham, Tanjore District, Madras – founded May 9, 1917 by R. Ranchapagesan
- Pathashala, Karachi – founded by a local committee of Theosophists August 7, 1917
- Sarasvati Pathasala for Girls, Kumbakonam, Tanjore District, Madras – “taken up, after being relinquished by the Municipality in 1908, by a Local Committee”
- Hindu Girls’ School, Lalgudi, Trichinopoly District, Madras – founded January, 1898 by T. Nataraja Pillai

- National High School, Madanapalle, Chittoor District, Madras – founded March 13, 1888 by O. L. Sarma – James H Cousins, Principal, and Margaret Cousins, music instructor
- National Elementary School, Madanapalle, Chittoor District, Madras – founded about 1898 by P. Siddapah
- Free Elementary Panchama School, Madanapalle, Chittoor District, Madras – founded October 1, 1915 by a Local Committee – James H. Cousins, Principal
- Vanantha Night School, Madras – founded March 5, 1917 by R. Giri Rao – staffed by students of the Wood National College as an experiment
- Raja Night School – Chippili, Madanapalle, Chittoor District, Madras – staffed by students of the Wood National College as an experiment
- Krishna Night School, Pippireddipalle, Madanapalle, Chittoor District, Madras – founded November 14, 1916 by V. A. Rajaratnam – staffed by students of the Wood National College as an experiment
- National Elementary School, Kilpauk, Madras City, Madras – founded July 1918 by M. K. Rajaragopalachariar – associated with College of Commerce, Fritz Kunz serving as correspondent
- National Hindu Girls’ School, Mylapore, Madras City, Madras – taken over by SPNE in July 1918 – Francesca Arundale, Headmistress and Bhagirathi Sri Ram also involved
- National High School, Teynampet, Madras City, Madras – founded July 9, 1918 by SPNE following AB’s *Principles of Education* – N. Sri Ram was Asst. headmaster
- Sri Minakshi Vidyasala, Madura, Madras – founded Oct 3, 1904 by Madura Theosophical Society
- National Girls’ School, Mangalore, South Canara District, Madras – founded June 17, 1918 by the Mangalore public

- Andhra Jatheeya Kalasala, Masulipatam, Kistna District, Madras – founded December, 1907, opened February, 1910 by the public of the Andhra Districts
- Dr. English’s Panchama Free School, Nellore, Nellore District, Madras – founded by Dr. W. E. English
- Dandapani National School, Palni, Madura District, Madras – founded July 14, 1914 by the Theosophical Educational Trust
- Rajahmudry National School, Rajamundry, Godaveri District, Madras – founded January 1, 1908 by public of Rajamundry
- Victoria Higher Elementary School, Tindivanam, South Arcot, Madras – founded January 1, 1902
- P. V. C. Lower Secondary School, Vayalpad, Chittoor District, Madras – founded February 17, 1895 by O. L. Sarma, R. Giri Row, R. Seshagiri Row
- N. P. R. National Girls’ School, Vayalpad, Chittoor District, Madras – founded February 17, 1895 by O. L. Sarma, R. Giri Row, R. Seshagiri Row

Source: Adyar Archives of the Theosophical Society

President of the Theosophical Society: 'Theosophy is for All'

- 1906 Engaged in the Leadbeater case
- 1907 July 6th, elected President of the Theosophical Society;
August, pursued researches into occult chemistry;
- 1907-1911 Increased the Adyar Estate from 27 to 253 acres
- 1908 Founded the T.S. Order of Service (renamed, in 1921, the Theosophical Order of Service);
Formed the Sons of India, and the Daughters of India;
Started the Vasanta Press at Adyar
Order of the Round Table started, with her as Protector;
Dec. 31st, made the first public announcement of the coming of a World Teacher
- 1909 Adopted J. Krishnamurti and his brother;
Travelled 45,000 miles during the year
Continued occult chemistry researches
- 1910 With C. W. Leadbeater engaged in clairvoyant research for the book, *Man: Whence, How and Whither*
- 1911 January 1st, first delivered the Star Invocation;
June, started the Order of the Star in the East;
Dec. 28, was present at memorable meeting of the Order;
June 15, lectured at the Sorbonne, Paris, on the 'Message of Giordano Bruno to the Modern World'
- 1912 Founded the Temple of the Rosy Cross;
Founded the Order of Theosophical Sannyasis;
Heard the oration of Pythagoras at Taormina
- 1912-14 Engaged in a lawsuit with J. Naraniah
- 1913 January 1st, transformed the Theosophist Office into Theosophical Publishing House at Adyar.

Some have complained that our literature is at once too abstruse, too technical, and too expensive for the ordinary reader, and it is our hope that the present series may succeed in supplying what is a very real want. Theosophy is not only for the learned; it is for all.

Seven Principles of Man by Annie Besant
(Theosophical Publishing Society, 1892)

The Theosophical event of the year in England, in 1905, was the International Congress⁶. Representatives of thirteen nationalities spoke, each in his own tongue. About 600 delegates were present, 200 of whom were non-British. Without a shadow of doubt it was due to Mrs. Besant that so much life, so much enthusiasm, could find such harmonious expression at every meeting. She, indeed, put most of the members to shame by the completeness of her devotion to the Congress, its work and its members, during the long busy days. No wonder a vote of thanks to her evoked a thunder of applause. *Thought-Forms*, the joint work of Mrs. Besant and Mr. Leadbeater, was published this year. At the Indian Convention in December she gave the usual course of four lectures on the *Bhagavad-Gitā*; then went Northward.

Her lecture work still stressed Hinduism and the need of a Hindu revival. In a letter to Babu Hirendra Nath Datta she writes:

The needs of India are, among others, the development of a national spirit, and an education formed on Indian ideals and enriched, not dominated, by the thought and culture of the West.

⁶ Sources for this chapter include 'Twenty Years of Work', a compilation by Basil Hodgson-Smith from the 'Watch-Tower' notes and 'Supplement' in *The Theosophist*, from *Lucifer* and *The Path*, for the period between 1891 and 1911; as well as others mentioned in the text.

The present King George, then Prince of Wales, visited, with the Princess of Wales, the Central Hindu College at Benares in January or February. On the following morning the Princess sent for Mrs. Besant to write in her private autograph book; Mrs. Besant requested that a photo of the King be placed in the College Hall. Mrs. Besant and others were honored with invitations to the royal reception. ‘Lotus’ writes in *The Theosophical Review*:

Nothing in India can be compared with Benares. Benares is, in truth, the heart of India. What prodigious vitality! No centre could have been more propitious for the renaissance of the great religious movement which Annie Besant is leading with all her moral power. Her aim is to restore the principles upon which was built the great Aryan civilization. Such work demands extreme tact.

In May, Mr. Leadbeater resigned from the Theosophical Society, after a so called trial presided over by Colonel Olcott which considered charges against him in connection with his advice to boys regarding self-abuse (masturbation); he left Harrogate for Brittany on June 1st. Feelings ran very high at first; and on June 7th Mrs. Besant received an account of the acceptance by Mr. Leadbeater before the Advisory Committee of the facts alleged in the evidence. Mrs. Besant was much upset and thought and said that she had been the victim of glamour when she had spoken of having been with him in the Highest Presence on earth. Later she apologized to Mr. Leadbeater, retracted her words, and said: ‘Never a shadow of cloud can come between us again.’

A comprehensive study of the Leadbeater case was published in the book *CWL Speaks – C. W. Leadbeater’s Correspondence concerning the 1906 Crisis in the Theosophical Society*, compiled by Pedro Oliveira with a Foreword by Robert Ellwood (Olive Tree

Publishing, Woy Woy, Australia, 2018). The book is now online at www.cw1world.info.

Colonel Olcott conducted the Chicago and London Convention and the Paris Congress in 1906, and then returned to India.

The Colonel died on 17 February, 1907, at 7.27 a.m. During his last illness, there were appearances of the Masters and instructions to appoint Annie Besant as his successor. Mrs. Besant also had similar instructions from her Master. In a letter to the Branches of the Theosophical Society, dated 6 February, she writes:

When friends had mooted the question of my becoming President previously, I had said that only my Master's command, addressed to me personally, would induce me to accept it. I told Colonel Olcott this when he wished to nominate me before They had spoken. [She had, in fact, urged the nomination of Mr. Sinnett.] When I was sitting with the President the evening before the visible appearance of the Blessed Masters to their dying servant, to bid him name me as his successor, and we were asking Them to express Their will in the matter, the two Masters appeared astrally, and tried to impress his mind. To me my own Master said: 'You must take up this burden and carry it.' The Colonel said: 'I have my message; have you anything?' 'Yes', I said. 'What is it?' 'I will tell you when you have announced yours.' Then he said he would wait till morning and see if he received anything further. I then wrote down what had been said to me, sealed it, and locked it away. In the morning the Colonel was clear that he was ordered to nominate me, but he was confused about subsidiary details. I advised him to wait till all was clear, as some of the details seemed to me impracticable. On the evening of that day he asked me to sit with him again, and ask Them to speak. I refused, as I had had my answer and I could not properly ask again, and I went downstairs. Then took place that manifestation, borne witness to by the Colonel and his two friends, as already related by him in *The*

Theosophist of February, 1907. He sent for me and told me what had occurred while his friends were writing it down in another room. I then informed him of what I myself had been told. The written account exactly corroborated his spoken account, and the Master Himself confirmed it to me the same night, as I sat in meditation. It hurts me to bring Their names into what has been made a controversy, but if I remain silent and allow the Theosophical Society to be swung on to a wrong line, I should be false to my duty.

In the account referred to above, the Colonel says:

Probably on account of the possibility of my life closing at any time, the two Mahatmas who are known to be behind the Theosophical Movement, and the personal instructors of H.P.B. and myself, have visited me several times lately (in the presence of witnesses, being plainly visible, audible and tangible to all), with the object of giving me some final instructions about things that They wished me to do while still in my physical body.

Again, he wrote:

They told me to appoint Annie Besant as my successor; and I cannot but feel glad that their decision confirms the view that I had myself already taken.

The chief reason for the opposition to Mrs. Besant's election was her assertion that she believed in the purity of Mr. Leadbeater's life, while she totally dissented from the advice he had given. There was a tendency, especially in England where there had been an expectation that Mr. Sinnett would succeed to the office of President, being then Vice-President, to question these visits of the Masters to

the Colonel; but as Mr. J. Midgley wrote in *The Theosophist*, for May, 1907:

It is intellectual suicide to begin to deny psychic phenomena after thirty-one years of investigation into the psychic and other powers latent in man, in accordance with our declared Third Object; after thirty-one years of combat for psychism and psychic phenomena as against materialism. And further, it would not only be intellectual, but also moral, suicide to begin to deny the existence of Masters and Their power and right to appear to Their disciples to instruct and counsel; and especially is this the case when we remember that, but for the existence and appearance of these Masters to such disciples, this Society would never have had an existence. It is Their offspring, with that other great psychic phenomenon, H. P. B., as its mother. In infancy it lived and became famed on account of the psychic powers manifested by or through her. The wonderful information which has been given to the world during the last thirty-one years concerning all departments of nature: physical, psychical, intellectual and moral, has come mainly from one source; namely, these Masters, who are now somewhat contemptuously styled ‘apparitions’ and whose ‘psychic pronouncements’, we are told, spell ‘Theosophic slavery’. Furthermore, there was a quibble over the words ‘appoint’ and ‘nominate’ as applied by the Colonel to his successor; the former in a preliminary letter of information sent out in January 7th, the latter in the official notice of January 21st. This seems of little consequence considering the fact that the candidate must be ‘elected’ by the vote of the whole Society.

Mrs. Besant was elected by an overwhelming majority of 9,580 votes. Her Presidential Address of 29 June 1907, is of vital interest, and furnishes a criterion by which to judge the Society’s work since then:

The Society asserts itself as a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood . . . Its function is to proclaim and spread abroad Theosophy, the Divine Wisdom, the Brahmavidyā, the Gnosis, the Hermetic Science—the one supreme fact that man may know God, because he is himself of that Nature which he seeks to know . . . The condition of the continuing life of the Society is its perfect toleration of all differences, of all shades of opinion . . . We must welcome differences of thought . . . This is not only sound principle, but it is also sound policy; for thus only can new avenues to knowledge constantly open before us . . . As its President, I say to all men of peace and goodwill: ‘Come, and let us labour together for the establishment of the kingdom of religious Truth, religious Peace, and religious Freedom upon earth – the true Kingdom of Heaven’ . . . So much for our principles. What of our practice? . . . Our Lodges should not be content with a programme of lectures, private and public, and with classes. The members should be known as good workers in all branches of benevolent activity. The Lodge should be the centre, not the circumference, of our work. To the Lodge for inspiration and knowledge; to the world for service and teaching. The members should take part in local clubs, societies and debating associations . . . They should, when members of religious bodies, hold classes outside the Society for members of their faith, in which the spiritual instead of the literal meaning of Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and other doctrines should be explained, and the lives of the great mystics of all religions taught. They should see that children receive religious education, according to their respective faiths. They should in every way hand on the light which they have received. People belonging to kindred movements should be invited to the Lodge, and visits should be paid to them in turn . . . It would be useful also if in every Lodge a small group of members were formed, harmonious in thought and feeling, who should meet once a week for a quiet hour, for

combined silent thought for a given purpose and for united meditation on some inspiring idea; the members of this group might also agree on a time at which daily they should unite in a selected thought-effort to aid the Lodge. Another group should study under the Second Object, and this group should supply lecturers on Theosophy to the outer world. A third group might take up the Third Object and work practically at research, carrying on their work if possible under the direction of a member who has already some experience on these lines, thus increasing our store of knowledge . . . Let me close with a final word, to all who have aided and to all who have worked against me in the election now over. We are all lovers of the same Ideal and eager servants of Theosophy. Let us all work then in amity. Let not those who have worked for me expect me to be always right, nor those who have worked against me expect me to be always wrong. Where you agree with me, follow and work with me; where you disagree, criticise and work against me, but without bitterness and rancour.

Mrs. Besant had asked Mr. Sinnett to continue in the post of Vice-President; but on his issuing a pamphlet on 'The Vicissitudes of Theosophy', containing among other statements this, 'that people had been led to believe that a certain Russian lady of very wonderful gifts and characteristics was chosen by the adept Masters as Their representative in the world of ordinary life and sent out to inaugurate the Theosophical movement . . . Beliefs of this kind belong to the mythology of the Theosophical movement', she asked him to resign the Vice-Presidency and appointed Sir S. Subramania Aiyar, of Madras.

She continued lecturing in London, and presided over the Northern Federation in June. She was accompanied by Miss Arundale, George Arundale and Mrs. Sharpe. Her subjects at the Federation were: 'Communication between the Planes', 'The

Relation of the Masters to the Theosophical Society', 'Psychism and Spirituality', 'The Idea and Work of the Masters in Religion'.

The Convention of July, 1907, in London, was very tense. Mr. Thomas denounced the Masters and Mrs. Besant, while she was in the chair, could not reply. Annie Besant and G. R. S. Mead spoke in Essex Hall in the evening. She writes in *The Theosophist* for October:

I write in Germany, in the midst of the woods of Saxony where I have taken refuge in order to do some necessary writing, after coming out of the whirl in England and before plunging into the whirl in America. It is truly said that change of work is as good as a holiday; and the change is great from the roar of London, with its rattle of cabs, its thunder of motor omnibuses and motor cars, its rumbling of heavy drays, its shrieks of newspaper boys, to the sough of the wind in the branchlets of firs and pines, the murmur of happy insects, the occasional cry of a bird, the rippling whisper of the leaves as they laugh to each other in their joy in the sunshine and the caresses of the breeze. How different is the air inbreathed by the lungs! In London it is charged with the smoke of a myriad chimneys, with the petrol fumes of countless motors, with the breaths of millions of human beings, with emanations of uncleanness of every kind. Here it is sweet with flower-laden breezes and vital with the rosy globules of Prāna, tossed off from the exuberant life of the pine trees, catching more than they can use of the solar rays. It is good to be on the broad bosom of Nature, the Mother, and to feel the surging pulses of her nutrient life. Blessed is she, the Spouse of God, the Shakti of the Great Lord, and life-bringing, peace-giving, is the breath of her lips.

The Twenty-first Annual Convention of the American Section assembled at Chicago on September 1st. Mrs. Besant occupied

the chair. Returning to Europe, she visited Holland and Sweden in fulfilment of outstanding promises. King Oscar granted her an interview, at which she presented him with *Esoteric Christianity* in English and *The Ancient Wisdom* in Swedish. She writes:

. . . he being a man deeply read in philosophical and religious questions, and he showed much interest in the points discussed. Few European sovereigns would care or would be able to talk over such questions. His gracious and warmly expressed good wishes will always remain a pleasant memory. From Northern Scandinavia I fled swiftly Southward to fair Italy, where Mrs. Cooper-Oakley awaited me at Milan. The lecture was in the Università Populaire, one of the institutions springing up all over Italy, wherein the results of university culture are placed at the service of students of all classes. I paid a visit to Ars Regia, a promising activity. It is a Theosophical Publishing business, started with a capital small in money but large in devotion. Mrs. Kirby, an Italian lady, is the chief translator. May it prove as successful as similar ventures in London and Benares. At Turin a lecture on 'Theosophy and Modern Science' attracted many professors, among them Professor Lombroso. At Florence equally interested audiences, and at the handsome villa of Lady Paget in the afternoon, the audience was chiefly English and American, so I was allowed to relapse into my mother-tongue—a relief after the French in which all the lectures and addresses were given. At Rome we arrived in the early morning. Never was such a place for interviews; they were incessant.

From Genoa, the last town visited, Mrs. Besant sailed for Colombo, where, she says:

My thoughts fled back to 1893 when the Colonel welcomed the Countess Wachtmeister and myself at that same spot. Then, as now, we went first to the Headquarters of the Buddhist

Theosophical Society, where loving welcome was given. Then to the Musaeus School for Girls, where Mrs. Musaeus-Higgins with unflagging zeal and devotion has built up a successful boarding-school for girls. She has had to overcome suspicion, opposition, slander; but now, aided throughout by the never-wavering support of Mr. Peter de Abrew, she has secured success for her school and respect for herself. The Government has just recognized her school for teachers, the first for Buddhists in Ceylon. The prize-giving in the afternoon was a most successful function, and I was glad to distribute prizes for cooking, nursing and sanitation, among those for more literary accomplishments. The next day was full of engagements, including a visit to the aged High Priest, Sumangala, who was very friendly, and a lecture at Ananda College on 'The Noble Eightfold Path'. Ananda College is in a most flourishing condition, thanks to the Principal, Mr. Jayatilaka, and the Buddhist Theosophical Society. It was founded by Mr. Leadheater, who gathered round him a class of twenty-five boys, and out of this little nucleus grew the now flourishing College. I visited also the High Priest Dharmarama, a learned man of middle age, who devotes himself much to the education of young laymen and monks, and is highly respected. We went to Galle to visit our College there, where Mr. Woodward is devoting himself, heart and soul, to the good work. An address to the boys, and two lectures—one in the Temple where Colonel Olcott took pansil, finished the day. Back to Colombo, and a lecture to the Social Reform Society, of which I have been a honorary member from its early days, and then to Kandy through the splendid scenery that makes one of the noblest panoramas of outward beauty in the world. Back to Colombo, to the steamer to Tuticorin, the quay crowded with singing children and affectionate elders, and so farewell to the beautiful isle.

At home in India on the 30th November, and what a journey it was! Addresses, flowers, fruits, at station after station until the carriage was a garden. I never realized before how many Branches

we had along the railway line. At Madras triumphant arches from Egmore to Adyar, and within the Adyar grounds also arches gay with flags and well-chosen mottos.

The Convention of 1907 met at Benares. The President gave the address, over 400 delegates were gathered, and many visitors attended from countries outside India. Not the slightest cloud marred the sunshine of love and peace which illuminated the great gathering. Mrs. Besant's lectures, the subject of which this year was 'Yoga' were given in the College Hall.

In *The Theosophist* for January, 1908, appeared the first installment of *Occult Chemistry*. All the work upon which these articles are based had been done by herself and Mr. Leadbeater, but Mrs. Besant was responsible for the wording. She also founded the T.S. Order of Service, inspired thereto by the words of a Master of Wisdom which H. P.B. had printed in an early number of *Lucifer* and which Mrs. Besant reprinted in *The Theosophist* of March, the gist of which lies in the words:

Theosophy must be made practical . . . Let every Theosophist only do his duty, that which he can and ought to do, and very soon the sum of human misery, within and around the areas of every branch of our Society, will be found visibly diminished. Forget self in working for others.

After presiding at the Behar (sic) Federation, Mrs. Besant embarked from Colombo for Australia. She writes:

It was monsoony weather, and to say that is to say enough. [Our President has always been peculiarly liable to sea-sickness.] On May 26th, to the promised moment, we drew up beside the wharf at Fremantle. An early reporter somehow had got on board, and had his interview ere the ship was made fast. Then came the

members in a troop, with warm and loving greetings, headed by Mrs. John, the capable and kindly wife of the General Secretary, who has most generously been deputed to be my companion throughout the tour. So I shall be well taken care of. Another steamer, a small one this time, took us up the Swan River, so called from the many black swans who possessed it before its annexation by man, to Perth, the pretty capital of Western Australia. And here I am, not a stranger in a strange land, but a friend among friends, as is the Theosophist all the world over. Thus begins another tour in the same noble cause of enlightenment, and every omen promises success. The evening of the day of my arrival was devoted to a members' reception in the Society's room, which is part of the art studio of Miss Florence Fuller, generously placed at the disposal of the Perth Lodge for its meetings. A very admirable portrait of the President-Founder, painted by Miss Fuller, is at one end of the room, accompanied by two other productions of her clever brush, portraits of H. P. B. and myself. We spent a pleasant evening in making acquaintance with each other. An exceptionally able and thoughtful reporter had an interview very well reproduced in the West Australian of the following day. Perth turned out in force to hear the first public lecture about Reincarnation. Very pleasant memories remain of Perth and Fremantle; the audiences were very large, very receptive and quick to understand. The Australians seem to be alert and progressive people, keenly alive and eager to know; and a young people in a new country are naturally less bound by conventional habits of thought than the people of older lands. They are very kindly and hospitable, and made us quite at home with a hearty welcome. Thus are ties formed that re-assert themselves in future lives.

It is best to draw a veil over the next four days, rolling and pitching on a grey sea dashed with white foam, stretching away to a grey horizon. It all seemed very appropriate to King Yama's kingdom, the inauspicious Southern pole. At intervals I

played patience with cards, and for all the time with mind. But all passes, and as we drew slowly up to the new wharf at Adelaide, a line of smiling faces told that the warm circle of Theosophic Brotherhood had opened again to enring us. A flight of the younger ones to the waiting special secured us a carriage; and as they sprang out we climbed in, and away we went for the city, carrying with us the roses and violets that a South-Australian mid-winter yet permits. A Scotch home opened its doors to me and a French one welcomed Mrs. John; for we are poly-national over here, and the Lodge contains not only Scotch, English and Irish, but men from France, Germany, Poland and maybe from other lands. A good German looked familiar, and lo! he was an old co-worker from the Patriotic Club, Clerkenwell Green.

The Adelaide campaign opened on June 9th with an E.S. meeting, many interviews and a public lecture at the Town Hall, to a large but somewhat impassive audience. However, they listened intently, and warmed up towards the end. Here, as in Perth, the press shows itself very friendly, giving good reports and undistorted interviews, a great contrast to the American reporters with their reckless disregard of truth. On the 10th I addressed a very crowded meeting of the Labour Party in the Trades Hall, with the President of the Trades Council in the chair, on 'What Theosophy has to say to the Workers'. The audience was a great contrast to that of the night before, all alive and palpitating with interest, breaking into volleys of cheers for what it approved, and of interjections on what puzzled it, as I expounded Brotherhood, Reincarnation and Karma as the triple basis of a stable Society. The audience took with remarkable good temper my strictures on treating the wise and the ignorant, the elder and younger brothers in the State Family, as on a level, and on allowing the ignorant to rule the State. One sees here the result of power passing into the hands of the ignorant: the hasty snatching at a momentary advantage without thought of the remoter consequences; the thinking

only of Australia and not of the Empire; the hatred of colored races. One looks forward, and sees the Australians themselves becoming yellow under the play of climatic influences, and wonders how they will then keep a 'White Australia'; many of whom are already much yellower than the Northern Indians whom they exclude. And one thinks secondly, if Jesus Christ should come this way, he would be prevented from landing by the Australian law. One doubts if a white Australian should consistently worship a colored Saviour!

The Adelaide Branch is a very peaceful and harmonious one, its happy condition being very largely due to the long leadership of Mr. Knox, who passed away early this year. He was good enough to leave me £100, and this will go to diminish the debt on me for the purchase of Blavatsky Gardens at Adyar, a purpose that, I am sure, he would heartily approve. The Lotus Circle of some forty children, nursery of the T. S. of the next generation, presented me with an Australian flag to represent the Commonwealth at Adyar. The Adelaide visit closed with a lecture in the Town Hall. The place was packed and a large crowd in the street when I arrived. 'No admission, ma'am', said a courteous sergeant of police, as I reached the closed gates. 'I don't mind', said I, 'but then there can be no lecture.' 'Oh!' said he, laughing, and the big iron gates were opened. It was a fine sight, the great hall packed in every corner, people standing along the walls, sitting on the steps to the platform; and the lecture was most attentively listened to. This morning's paper has much Theosophy in it, for the Adelaide clergy are behind the time and preached nineteenth century sermons against it, with a plentiful lack of knowledge.

South-Australia has universal suffrage, every man and woman of twenty-one having a vote. The women have no difficulty in voting, as the polling-booths have been moved from the public houses to public buildings since woman suffrage was granted. An election was going on, on the 14th of June, and there

was no crowding, no disorder, men and women, often together, going quietly up to vote. But there is one bad sign: the cultivated men and women are indifferent to their duty and leave the power in the hands of the ignorant. Adelaide is a pretty city with wide streets, and the City Fathers wisely secured in its early days a broad belt of woodland encircling the town; so that, however large it may become, the 'Park Lands' as they are called, will remain open, and with their green grass, their olive and eucalyptus trees, their grazing cows—clothed as in Holland— will be a joy to the inhabitants. The city may spread beyond them, but not over them.

Mrs. Besant's next letter is from Melbourne, June 24th, 1908. She writes:

Melbourne is at present the Federal Capital of Australia, a fine, wide-streeted city, some sixty-four years old. Its Press is commercial, political and sporting, showing apparently little interest in matters of deeper import, not unfriendly but indifferent. It reflects the tone of the people, young and caring most for superficial interests and the play of the moment. With this goes a curious strain of formal religiosity—no post, no newspaper, dislocated tram and train services on Sunday. The audiences at the lectures, however, have been large, showing that there is a section of the people who are alive to the deeper interests and are realizing the problems of human life. Melbourne has no less than four Lodges, and they have been acting together in organizing the work of my visit of thirteen days.

We cannot but wonder how Australia will shape socially. Here, in Melbourne, house servants demand and receive £1 a week, with board and lodging, and are often incompetent and unruly, leaving without notice, and careless of their employers' interests. French, German, Swiss, Chinese, Japanese servants would be a blessing to innumerable households, but the law does

not allow the householder to engage a servant abroad and bring him or her over. Even a firm, bringing over some skilled English artisans on contract, found its men were refused permission to land. An unskilled man is not allowed to sweep garden paths and mow grass at less than ten shillings a day. The general result is great temporary prosperity for manual laborers, high prices for food, high rents, and the reduction of the professional men to a low standard of living, small value of brains, and large value of muscles. Well-educated people, instead of helping the State by contributing literature, art and culture to its life, are forced to sweep their houses, dig their gardens and cook their food. The immediate results are seen in the narrow intellectual and artistic life, a very high drink bill, an extraordinary amount of racing and betting, and a serious lack of discipline among the young, which bodes ill for the future. What the results will be remains to be proved. It is certainly a huge experiment, and whether it will issue in a world-example or a world object-lesson, the future will show. Will it end in a dictatorship, resorted to in despair over the incompetency of the ignorant, or in the discovery of a method whereby the wisest shall be placed in the seats of power?

In Melbourne an elementary class for study is to be formed for non-members attracted by the lectures. Perth writes of the formation of three groups for different lines of study. The real value of these lecturing tours lies far more in the local activities stimulated and in the impetus given, than in the lectures and meetings themselves. The lecture on 'The Guardians of Humanity' drew Mr. Deakin, the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, as an interested hearer. Mr. Deakin was a member of the Theosophical Society in his younger days, but has slipped out of active work in the overwhelming labor entailed by his responsible office. He seems to have kept up his interest in Theosophy, and he stands out as a man of high ideals, which he seeks to embody in his public life. He is a statesman among a crowd of politicians, head and shoulders above

his fellows, and in touch with the life of the world and not only with that of Australia. The Melbourne Branches, the members of which have shown me unstinted kindness, made me a very useful present, a gold wristlet to carry a watch, a great improvement on the leather band which I have hitherto worn and which does not suit the heat of India.

In her next letter, dated from Sydney, July 7th, she says:

We left Melbourne by the afternoon express of June 29th for the capital of New South Wales, reaching Sydney the next day at 11 a.m. It was bitterly cold in the early morning, thick hoar frost covering the landscape, and the water chilly as ice, depriving the fingers of feeling. The Sydney friends, headed by Mr. John, the well-loved General Secretary, gave us a warm greeting on the platform.

A company has been formed to give the Section a permanent abiding-place, and a piece of land has been bought, the houses on it are adapted for T.S. purposes, and a good hall is to be built. The Section is growing strong, the Sydney Lodge forms its strongest Branch, so that it is well that they should have their own dwelling, independent of landlord's whims. In fact, there has been some difficulty in making arrangements for all the activities connected with my visit, and we have had to use rooms in different buildings for the various meetings. It is pleasant to see in all the Lodge rooms that I have so far visited in Australia, how loyally the Australian members cling to the prominent workers in the T. S. The President-Founder and his great colleague, H. P. Blavatsky, form the dominant pair of portraits; near them C. W. Leadbeater and myself appear; and this quartet is everywhere. Miss Edger is also generally seen, and Mr. Staples, the first General Secretary, is not forgotten. As the years go on, this portrait gallery will be better

and better filled; and later generations will look with interest on their forerunners.

It was a very keen and interested crowd that attended the public lecture, and it taxed the seating-room of the large Centenary Hall. The subject 'Reincarnation' seems to attract people in Australia more than any other. We are having many members' meetings for the subjects which interest our own people, as well as the usual conversations, E. S. meetings, and interviews. We had a curious experience over the first Sunday lecture. Australia keeps alive the disreputable old statute of George III against Sunday meetings, and only the clergy are allowed a free hand. They may charge pew-rents, but no charge may be made for lectures or concerts. No charge was to be made, therefore, for my Sunday lecture, for which free tickets were issued, so as to avoid a crush. But as we had arranged to allow people who had bought tickets for the course of six lectures to use these tickets for the Sunday meetings, instead of giving them additional free tickets, we received on Saturday notice from the police that this brought us under the law! We accordingly admitted anyone who came and asked for no tickets. It is odd in a country like this to see the ancient rags of bigotry, which have been thrown on the dust-heap in England, flaunted in the face of the public, and the police appealed to, to annoy decent and harmless folk. Were I a denizen of Australia, I should certainly try to get rid of this objectionable statute but a mere visitor is bound to submit to the law of any State he visits. On Sunday morning I lectured in the church of Rev. George Walters, a gentleman who had had the courage in the seventies, when prejudice ran high, to take the chair for me in Lancashire. He was then a bold and progressive thinker, and is one still. In the evening was the lecture—attended by a vigilant policeman and an informer, watching that we did not break the law—on "Theosophy and Christianity," and the crowded audience showed profound interest in the subject.

The last week has run its swift course, with nothing remarkable to relate, save the fact of the astonishingly large audiences. "Brotherhood, Real and Unreal" evoked much interest and some curious comments; as for instance, the remark that the idea of a physical, moral and mental brotherhood from which escape was impossible was a 'really terrifying idea'. Yet, as it is true, the more widely it is known, the better. The lecture on India, with its lantern illustrations, was evidently much enjoyed; and one may hope that it corrected some of the wild ideas current here about Indians. Many a pleasant memory remains of this visit to Sydney; all the arrangements have been so well made and the friends so cordial and affectionate that it would have been impossible to suggest or wish for any improvement. Australia stands for loyal co-operation and for earnest work for the cause, without constant bickering over the faults or supposed faults of individuals; and I feel I may rely upon the Section for support in guarding the Society's liberty and in maintaining it on the broad basis that some are so anxious to narrow.

From Brisbane, Mrs. Besant writes:

Mrs. John and I steamed out of Sydney station on July 13th, amid the loving farewells of a crowd of members assembled to bid us God-speed. The railway carriage was fragrant with a great heap of roses and violets; for roses and violets are in flower together in Australia, so that we bore northward with us the kindly thoughts of the Lodge, materialized into exquisite flowers. Through the evening and the night we fled onwards, and the morning found us on the northern highlands of New South Wales, with hoar frost whitening the trees and the sun gleaming down redly through mist-laden air. At 11 on the morning of the 14th we changed at the boundary line of the adjacent States and went on by the narrower gauge of Queensland. Presently we were whirling down the curves

cut along the mountain sides of the Toowoomba range, reminding one of the line across the Ghats to Bombay; and on through the darkening twilight till night fell again; and then at 9 p.m. into the brilliance of the Brisbane station, and into a crowd of new faces but loving hearts that gave welcome as warm as had been the farewells of the Sydney brethren.

A pleasant feature of these Australian gatherings is the meeting with friends of the past that one knew in England in earlier days, and now and again with someone who knew and loved our H.P.B. One old gentleman told me how, in London long ago, he had looked round the Society and wondered how it would go on when H.P.B. passed away; and how he had rejoiced when, from the outer world, I had entered the Theosophical circle, and H.P.B. had welcomed me to the work. Yet such anxiety need never be; for, as Upendranath Basu wisely and rightly said last Christmas, so long as the T.S. is under the guidance of the Masters, there will always be someone who will command the confidence of the large majority of the Society.

The first public lecture was delivered on the evening of the 15th to a large audience, but one that by no means filled the great Exhibition Hall which the Lodge had been obliged to take. The attention was keen and well sustained, and the audience showed warm appreciation of the Theosophic message. The "large" became "larger" with the succeeding lectures; and the Queensland work made a good conclusion to the Australian tour.

The democracy here has done nothing in the way of preventing strikes apparently; for, despite the high wages paid for manual labor, strikes seem to be more frequent than in the old country. A strike of bakers greeted our arrival at Sydney; a strike of milkmen a little before had cut off the milk supply; and so on. The reproof of a boy for bad work made all his comrades strike, and a whole iron-works was laid idle by the insubordinate lad. The car-drivers at Melbourne threaten to strike during the visit of the

American fleet unless they are given screens. None of these folk seem to care that they hurt tens of thousands of innocent people, so long as they get what they want, and, they take swift advantage of any public need to wring from the employers anything they desire. It is the karma of the past harshness in rejecting the fair demands of labor, but every effort should now be made to train the young in the sense of public duty and responsibility, so as to prevent the social debacle which will otherwise ensue. Another difficulty is the ignoring of natural facts. Labor Unions do not allow milkmen to deliver milk twice on Sundays. As the cows are not yet trained to give double supplies of milk on Saturday and none on Sunday, the milk arrives but may not be distributed; the milkmen do not like to lose it, and mix it sterilized with Monday's milk; and in the hot weather numbers of babies die from the unwholesome milk thus provided. The enforcement of Union rules which bring difficulty and suffering into every household is embittering social life, and adding to the difficulties of the problems that Australia has to solve.

From New Zealand, whither Mrs. Besant proceeded from Australia, she writes:

It is cold, but the country is emerald green after two months of rain. Today the sun is shining brightly; and white fleecy clouds flung across the sky remind one of an English day in spring. On the 22nd of July we steamed out of the magnificent Sydney harbor, large enough, one would think, to shelter the navies of the world. It is one of the world's sights, that splendid harbor, with its rolling hills and little bays and inlets, with the narrow road out, between high cliffs. Out we went, and peace was at an end. We came into a mass of great rollers; and the vessel, lying low in the water, became their prey. They charged the deck, and the passengers rolled over into the scuppers, a confused heap, and then fled drenched, to take

refuge within. They shivered into pieces the door of a deck-cabin, covering the unfortunate occupant with water and broken wood, and leaving desolation behind. Then they had their way, and the deck was left free to them as playground. The ship was very crowded, and four of us Theosophists were packed into one small cabin, with washing apparatus for one and one campstool. There was no place to sit, as the saloon was turned into berths, and the only place was the dining-room, redolent of roast and fried meats, porter and other drinks ; and used also as a sleeping- room for men for whom no cabins could be found. One felt that it was hardly fair to be charged first-class tare for the fourth part of a cabin, the quarter of a basin and of a camp- stool, and no place to rest our sick bodies outside. Our stewardess, with over forty sick women to attend to, was beyond praise in her kindness; but she had a cruelly hard time. However, the four days came to an end, and we landed at Auckland.

Next Wellington was visited, where Mrs. Besant says:

I should think that Theosophy is, at present, but little known; it does not seem to be in the air.

Christchurch and Dunedin followed; and of the journey by land in New Zealand, the comment is:

One could but wish that the train was more comfortable, and that more than one small foot-warmer might be granted to three shivering people. The train service is very antiquated, and the rolling stock the worst I have encountered in my journeys over the world. Among all the reform movements of N.Z., a corner might surely be found for a reform in railway accommodation.

After a fortnight's strenuous work, there was a less stormy voyage to Tasmania, where Hobart and Launceston Lodges

received visits, with Lodge meetings, public lectures and interviews. Then back to Melbourne, and on across the southern coast to Fremantle.

She writes:

Since I left Fremantle, a bright, pleasant room on the city's main street has been secured. It is open every afternoon for use as a reading-room, and the Branch has a nice little library.

Mrs. Besant writes of the Australasian tour:

Much gratitude remains in my heart for all the overflowing love and kindness which have been poured out on me so richly during the tour. Not to me, as a person was it given, I joy to know, but to the President of the Theosophical Society, the messenger of the Blessed Masters, the witness-bearer to Their watchful care and to the outpouring of Their power. Australia and New Zealand ring true and loyal right through, from the General Secretaries to the youngest newcomer into our ranks. They are loyal to the chosen of the Masters and the elected of the Society, because they know that without such loyalty little can be done, and that liberty can only be joined with effectiveness where the chosen and elected officer is followed and strengthened, not continually harassed and thwarted. Apart from public thanks, my private gratitude must be given for the personal kindness which has surrounded me and made light the burden of work; and most of all to Mrs. John, who travelled with me throughout, bidding me farewell only on board the steamer which is bearing me homewards. I cannot speak in words my loving thanks to her for her sisterly kindness which took all the physical burdens, looked after every detail, thought always of my comfort, never of her own; had ever a gay word for disagreeables, a smile for fatigue, and rarest and most valuable of gifts—silence

for quiet hours. That the heavy Australian tour has left me strong and bright is largely due to Mrs. John. If I do not name others for special thanks, it is because all I have met have been loving and kind. The tour has taken me over 17,630 miles of land and sea, during 44 nights and days of travel; 62 days have been given to work, and the work has comprised 44 public lectures and 90 meetings, at most of which an hour's address has been given, followed by the answering of questions; and a very large number of private interviews. It does not seem a bad record for a woman of over sixty who, a year ago, was declared by some who wished to discard her as being in a state of 'senile decay', and therefore incapable of filling the office of President of the Theosophical Society.

Mrs Besant arrived at Benares on 25 September 1905 (after the Australian tour) and received as ever a hearty welcome from all. Her birthday, 1 October, was made the occasion of festive greetings and rejoicings. In the Supplement of *The Theosophist*, she makes an appeal to the Parsis for the building of a Central Parsi College, but this suggestion has never been carried out. Her Sunday lectures were mainly devoted to subjects connected specially with the Indian nation and the unrestful state of public feeling, pointing out the duties and responsibilities of Theosophists in the matter. On 11 October she took for her address The Sons of India, giving an outline of the newly formed Order of that name, for the purpose of helping and training the boys of India to understand and face the problems, political and social, which confront them, as they begin to turn their thoughts to the condition of their country.

17 November, the Foundation Day of the Theosophical Society, was celebrated at Adyar by the handing over to the Treasurer of the Society the title-deeds of Blavatsky Gardens, and of the naming of these and the adjoining estate. At 4.15 members gathered in Headquarters Hall, and proceeded thence by the new road to the house in Blavatsky Gardens. In the large drawing-room Mrs. Besant

made a brief speech, voicing the gratitude of the Theosophical Society to its Founders, to the Teacher who had brought the Ancient Wisdom, to the Ruler who had built the vehicle. She then handed one of the deeds to Mr. Schwarz, who said a few appropriate words in reply.

At the Convention she was present. There were 650 delegates, and all was joy and harmony. Never before had such meetings gathered at Adyar. Her open-air lecture on the 'Work and Hopes of the Theosophical Society' and her closing one on 'The Opening Cycle' were attended by huge audiences.

On 9 January 1909, she left for a fortnight's lecture tour. She writes:

At Bangalore we were welcomed by members of the two Lodges, one in the Cantonment and one in the City. The bungalow in which we are staying stands on the side of a lake, on which now and again alights a flight of white-winged birds, and in which knee-deep a worshipper may be seen reciting his daily prayers. We drove to the scene of our labors, the laying of the foundation-stone, of the building to be erected by the City Lodge on a site just granted by the Government (an Independent State). The drive took us through the City, in which on all sides new buildings are rising, in consequence of the ravages of the plague, which have compelled the destruction of the more congested parts. The public buildings are remarkably handsome, and the whole place is well-ordered and beautiful, bearing witness to the good administration of the young Mahārāja and his ministers. There was a large gathering on the site of the ceremony, where we were welcomed by the Dewan, who presided. An address was read and presented to me in a beautiful sandalwood casket, and we then went to the place where the stone was waiting, poised in air. A priest had consecrated it, and spread a little mortar for its reception, on which it was duly lowered, and three taps of a silver trowel declared it to be well and truly laid for

the service of God and humanity. Then followed a brief address, on the work of a Theosophical Lodge, and with some chanting of benedictory shlokas, the usual garlanding, and some words from the Dewan, the meeting broke up.

The Dewan took us to the pretty new building for the Rama Krishna Mission, and to the Sanskrit University. A very handsome and spacious building is being raised for this latter by the present Shri Shankaracharya of Sringeri. The whole place when completed will be an enduring testimony to the wise activity of the present Head of the Math, and should become a centre of Sanskrit learning. The present occupant of the high office of successor to the great Shri Shankaracharya is a learned and liberal man. He has encouraged Brahmanas of the sub-castes to intermarry and interdine, reminding them that they are members of one caste; and he has ruled that a student returning from abroad should be received back into caste, if he guides his life by the Shastras.

Mysore State is a living monument of the efficiency of Indians in administration. It was ruled by the Maharani as Regent during the minority of the present Prince, and had as its Dewan the great Sir K. Seshadri Iyer, who stands high in the ranks of Indian statesmen. He spent an immense sum on the supply of pure water to Bangalore, bringing it from sixteen miles away; and the town now rejoices in the electric plant which he set up. He used electricity also for the working of the Kolar Goldfields, now bringing in a large revenue to the State. The Prince, on his majority, came into a well-ruled and well-administered kingdom, and has proved worthy of his splendid heritage. He has just introduced religious and moral education into all State Schools and in all ways shows himself a wise and good ruler. The Central Hindu College is proud to name him among its patrons.

Besides the Lodge activities, there was a visit to the Boys' Association, the members of which attend a religious class and put the teachings into practice by personal work feeding the

poor, clothing the naked, and serving in other ways. Also a Ladies' Meeting, gathered at the home of Mrs. Madhava Rao, the present Dewan's wife. The Bangalore ladies have an association of their own in connection with the Shrinivasa Mandiram of that city. It was opened in 1907, and during the year no less than 5,560 ladies have used its reading-room and attended its meetings, of which there have been 35 during the year. A large number of ladies had assembled, and I made a brief address, translated by the late Acting Principal of the Maharani's College, Shrimati Rukmaniamma, a Hindu lady B.A., a proof in her own person that a university degree need not spoil the gracious modesty of a true Hindu woman.

We reached Mysore City on the 12th, and found a number of brethren waiting to welcome us and to escort us to H. H.'s Guest House. 8.30 saw a large gathering of students and others assembled, and I addressed them on the 'Sons of India'. Then a visit to a very admirably conducted Girls' School, with scholars ranging from four to eleven. They sing most charmingly, and are taught needlework and domestic details as well as the usual subjects. Next came a visit to a Widows' Home, founded in 1907, which has twelve resident widows who are being trained as doctors and in useful walks in life. It teaches up to the standard necessary for entering the Maharani's College, and is doing a much needed and most philanthropic work. It is to well educated widows that we must look for teachers in our Girls' Schools. Both here and at Bangalore we shall have Branches of the Daughters of India.

Back to Bangalore at noon, and soon after H. H. the Maharaja was kind enough to receive me and to talk over the scheme for the University of India. I am glad to say that it met with his warm approval, and he is prepared to join a few of the leading Princes of India in stating formally that approval, in a letter recommending the granting of a charter by H. M. the Emperor. He was also pleased to express his approval of the Order of the Sons of India, and to consent to act as one of its guardians. He also permits his

Dewan to take office in the Supreme Council, so that he may be in direct touch with the movement.

At Calicut on the 16th, a crowded lecture opened the work. We drove to a place where a good Sannyasi, Shri Narayana Guruswami, a true servant of the Masters of Wisdom, is working for the improvement of the outcaste community. They are building a temple and a school, are purifying their lives, and making themselves worthy of social respect. I am happy to know that the local Lodge of the T.S. has been active in helping the good work. These people, hard worked as they are, had beaten out a road to the temporary temple and roofed it with green branches, and a great crowd of them had gathered to give welcome to the messenger who brought words of encouragement and cheer. The effort to raise themselves, under the leadership of the holy man who is giving his life to them, is most praiseworthy, and is another sign of the life that is pouring through India today.

One o'clock saw us in the train for Mangalore. It carried us up the West Coast through the hours of the afternoon, past glimpses of the sea, blue 'neath the sunlit sky, through groves of palm trees, over plains and through cuttings red with the brilliant soil. At every station were curious crowds, thronging to see the woman whose name has become well-known throughout India; and there was many a friendly welcome of smiling lips and folded hands. Here bright faces of students crowded the hall, and seemed to fill the atmosphere with vivid attention. Then off in a jutka – a two-wheeled, rather jolty sort of vehicle—to the scene of the labors of the Depressed Classes Mission, carried on by Mr. Ranga Rao. The Mission has a neat little building, half of which is utilized for six looms, the second half was our meeting-place. There was a Canarese song, which was an appeal, so touching as it came from the lips of the children and lads, that it nearly made speech impossible. The pathos of the concluding cry and the knowledge of the little power to help in the one to whom it was addressed, filled the

eyes with tears and choked the breath; but I made a brief appeal to the higher castes present to help in the redemption of these poor and degraded children of the national household.

In Madras on 26 February 1909, she lectured on 'The Dangers of Alcohol', to a large and enthusiastic audience. She writes:

It is sad that a white-skinned person should be needed to lecture against the inroads made in a once sober country by 'the white man's curse'.

The last Sunday in Madras was a busy One: the usual E. S. and T. S. meetings began the day, the latter followed by some initiations in the T. S. In the afternoon there was a meeting of the Sons of India, Madras Council, presided over by Mrs. Besant, with Sir Subramania Iyer, K.C.I.E., as member for Madras of the Supreme Council, supported by Mr. Wodehouse and others. Then came the closing lecture of the series of five on consecutive Sundays, at which His Excellency the Governor was pleased to be present; and this was followed by his friendly inspection of the library and grounds.

Then off by train to Bombay and Baroda. At the latter, she had a long interview with His Highness the Gaekwar, and another with Her Highness the Maharani. His Highness promised to support the petition to His Majesty the King Emperor for a charter for the

University of India, agreed to be the Guardian of the Sons of India in Baroda, and consented to the appointment of his Dewan on the Supreme Council. On Mrs. Besant's return to Bombay, at a lunch at Government House, His Excellency the Governor expressed his warm interest in, and approval of, the Sons of India. The Director of Education also warmly approved the new Order.

To finish the Bombay work, she records:

A gathering at the railway station to wish me God-speed in the mail-train for Benares. Two nights more and well-loved Kāshī was reached, and loving greetings welcomed me to my northern home.

April saw her once more in Bombay, where she held a meeting of 'The Daughters of India'. The President writes:

It was called by Lady Muir Mackenzie, who strongly sympathizes with our work. The meeting was a large gathering composed entirely of ladies: Hindu, Parsi, Mussalman and a few English. I spoke to them on the ideal of womanhood that we should seek to bring to life again in India. They seemed to be deeply interested, and after the meeting we had a little general talk. Bombay women are as a rule well educated, and are quite ready to work for the motherland.

On 24 April 1909, she sailed from Bombay. What a different voyage from that in the Southern Seas!

The 'Morea' is away on a summer sea. Not a wave, scarcely a ripple, ruffled the broad expanse of water stretching between Bombay and Aden. Turning into the Red Sea, it was as placid as the larger ocean. At Port Said, the passengers for Brindisi transferred to the 'Isis'. In Europe again, the chilly air. Here changes the spirit of my tale, and memory does not joyfully recall the hours on the Mediterranean till Brindisi welcomed us on May 5th. Very gladly did I, at least, find myself on terra firma and rattling along the well-known Italian coast, amid sprouting vines and gray, twisted olives, and presently some snowy summits outlined against the sky. An old friend and co-worker, Mrs. Cooper-Oakley, one of the pupils of H. P. B. who has remained faithful, joined me at

Piacenza, and we journeyed together to Turin. Onward through the great tunnel of Mount Cenis, and through the delightful scenery of the French Alps, to Calais. A very horrid little steamer received us with the mails; and there I remembered my sins in much perturbation of body, if not of mind. After much tossing we reached Dover, where the loving greeting of our British General Secretary met me, and I handed myself over gladly to her care. Away through Kentish fields and Surrey woods until we thundered into London, and rushed into the midst of a crowd gathered at Charing Cross to bid me welcome. And so to 31 St. James Place, my London home.

Mrs Besant writes:

On White Lotus Day, 1909, there was a crowded gathering at the charming new Headquarters of the T.S. at 106 New Bond Street. The flat is delightfully bright and pretty; and, being high up, is quiet and airy. A lift takes one up to the door; through a small hall the visitor passes into a pleasant reading-room with large windows, and then into the library. There is a well-lighted Secretary's office, with the office of the Assistant Secretary adjoining, and a convenient room fitted with a small store for the supply of tea to members. On this festive evening the members had crowded in, and a very pleasant hour was spent in recalling the past and forecasting the future. Many old and well-tried members were present, both from town and country. One wondered how the delusion had been floated that most of the old members were hostile to the President and the General Council. A few familiar faces had certainly vanished, but plenty remained and these more friendly than ever, as though by the warmth of their love and joy to hide the few gaps. On the following morning there was a large gathering of the E.S. in the Co-Masonic Temple.

The next few months will be very busy ones: a series of Sunday lectures in London, and a series of four for T.S. members

under the auspices of Blavatsky Lodge and H. P. B. Lodge. In addition to these I speak in London at the World Congress. Public lectures and Lodge meetings have been arranged at Blackpool (to open a new Lodge), Manchester, Newcastle, Sunderland, Leeds, Derby, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Letchworth (to open a new Lodge), Bournemouth, Southampton, Liverpool, Sheffield, Birmingham, Nottingham, Dublin, Bradford, Harrogate and Oxford. Then abroad there will be lectures in Belgium, Holland, Hungary, France and Italy, and the two months' tour in the United States. If health and strength hold, a good record of work for the T.S. will have been put in ere Indian soil is again trodden by its President. May the blessing of the Masters prosper the work done in Their sacred cause and in Their name.

The series of Sunday lectures was held in the new St. James Hall, which accommodates 1,100 people. It was crowded, and very many were turned away, much to our surprise, as we had not counted on so full a gathering, thinking that the unscrupulous defamation of the T.S., as well as myself, indulged in by some who have deserted our ranks might possibly have slightly diminished the popular interest, alike in the subject and the speaker. The reverse appears to have been the case; for I have never had an audience more sympathetic, more quick to understand, more ready to respond. It proved the absurdity of the idea that Theosophy had in any way suffered from the attempts to discredit it in the popular mind, and showed the folly of those who had left the Society from fear that it would become unpopular. The Theosophical Society evidently stands higher than ever in public respect, and is entering on an even wider career of public usefulness. Quite a new departure is the publication week by week in a widely circulated London newspaper, *The Christian Commonwealth*, of a verbatim report of each lecture, so that it reaches a very large circle.

The 23rd of May had its usual two meetings, and brought also a pleasant visit from one of H. P. B.'s well-loved pupils, Senor

Don Xifre, the head and heart of the work in Spain. The work in that ancient and stately land is hard and unthankful, but a noble band of Fellows has laboured steadfastly and loyally there since the days of H. P. B. These faithful Theosophists have issued a large number of translations, including *The Secret Doctrine*, and maintain a monthly magazine. It was pleasant to meet once more, on the following day, my old friend, Mr. Stead, and to find him as keenly interested as ever in all questions touching the deeper side of life. He is intensely in earnest in verifying communications from those who have passed over, and is endeavouring to establish a reliable means of communication between the two worlds. A large Co-Masonic gathering at the Masonic Temple, 12 Bloomfield Road, was another item of this busy day.

May 27th, 1909, saw the General Secretary, Miss Bright, some other members and myself in the train for Budapest. At Vienna we picked up the French General Secretary and his sisters, Mrs. Russak and others; and arrived at Budapest for the International Federation of European Societies of the T.S. The hospitable home of Professor Zipernowsky and charming wife opened its doors widely to the polyglot invasion; and German, French, English, Italian, Russian, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Hungarian, Czech, Bulgarian, and Finnish were heard along the winding paths of the exquisite garden. The remaining delegates, some 250, were scattered over the city. The ten European Societies were all represented, eight of them by their General Secretaries—a notable gathering. I, as President, took the chair. The ceremony began with the noble Ragozci Hymn, sung by a chorus of men's voices, followed by another melody; and as the music died away, there came a brief presidential address, followed by a speech from each General Secretary in his own tongue. There is always something moving and dramatic in the opening of an International Congress, as language after language, all tuned to the note of Brotherhood, falls on the listening ear. Then came a speech from the Bulgarian

leader, and a lecture by the President on 'The Present Cycle and the Place of the T.S. therein', closed the morning's work. In the evening Dr. Peipers of Munich gave an interesting illustrated address on 'Occulte Medicin und Occulte Anatomia'. The invitation of Italy for the Congress of 1911 was accepted. The next morning ere calling on Dr. Steiner for his lecture 'Von Buddha zum Christus', I said a few words of gratitude for his founding the T.S. in Bohemia, and announced that the Subba Rao medal had been presented to him for the best literary work of the year. He then delivered a very fine lecture.

Lectures, discussions and debates occupied the rest of the time of the Federation, Mrs. Besant contributing 'The Larger Consciousness' and 'The Christ: Who is He?' After the close of the Congress, in the evening, the whole party drove up to the mountain which dominates Budapest, and supped together, while the strains of gipsy music filled the air, and the full moon shone down on the gleaming Danube and the wide dim plain.

Mrs. Besant again writes:

The Art Exhibition was interesting, and it is evident that the New School which is emerging is characterized by the effort to represent the realities which underlie the phenomena of life, and by colour schemes which express and arouse emotion. I was struck by the curiously luminous quality of the blues and greens of one of the Hungarian painters whose pictures were hanging in the Exhibition. This artist, Gyongyoshalasz Takach Bela, presented me with one of his paintings, which will hang henceforth in the library of the London Headquarters. The Fifth International Congress had for its dominant notes harmony and joyousness.

Of the Scottish tour, she says:

Liberal thought is spreading in the citadels of Calvinism, and narrowness will soon be a thing of the past. It is pleasant to visit the Lodges and to witness the life and energy pulsing in them, and pleasant also to greet old friends and make new ones. Some new centres are forming in Scotland, and Theosophy is finding its way into Scotch pulpits.

The Nineteenth Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society in Great Britain and Ireland, Mrs. Besant describes thus:

I delivered a lecture in the large Queen's Hall on 'The Place of Theosophy in the Coming Civilization'; and the great audience showed itself to be extraordinarily responsive to the ideas presented. It is always a thrilling moment as one stands silently before the crowd in that big hall, and lifts one's eyes from area to balcony, from balcony to gallery, and beholds the sea of expectant faces, alert and eager. And then the faces change like the sea, as wave after wave of thought, of emotion, sweeps over them, and the power of the Holy Ones is made manifest, and the atmosphere changes, and life grows full and strong. The Convention was a very happy one, and many were the joyful remarks on the new life so strongly felt in the Theosophical Society, now purged from the elements of hatred and persecution which had clogged it for so long . . . July 19th found me at the Earl of Plymouth's London House, where I gave my last London lecture to a group of guests invited for the occasion. It was a pleasant ending to the strenuous and successful work done during the summer in England, and promises much for the future.

On July 24, Mrs. Besant left for a tour in America, about which she writes:

July 24th, 1909; dawned grayly – Surya Deva has not smiled much on England this year – many friends gathered at Waterloo to bid farewell. At Southampton by Miss Green's good offices, the friendly word of the American Consul, and the kindness of the American Line, I found myself transferred from my modest stateroom to a large and comfortable one, wherein I spent nearly all the time of the crossing. The Atlantic was not kind – it rarely is – but the complete rest was pleasant after all the crowded work, and I read George Sand and found time to furbish up the printer's copy of the London Lectures, thus getting them off my hands. The weather remained cold and cheerless until we were within thirty hours of New York, and then the sun peeped out. The sunshine was brilliant as the Philadelphia drew slowly alongside the dock on July 31st, and a crowd of friends with kind faces and outstretched hands greeted me, to say nothing of four or five cameras avid for photographs for the press. Mr. Warrington and Mrs. Kochersperger took me to the Park Avenue Hotel, which is both charming and quiet, with a central court filled with trees and flowers and a gallery running round it, in which meals are served. We eat our simple meals of vegetables and fruits in these pleasant surroundings.

There was the usual gathering of reporters an hour after my arrival, and the interviews reported in the Sunday papers were less inaccurate than many I have seen on other visits. Knowing that the New York reporter must have something out of which to make fun and construct big headlines, and wishing to avoid subjecting serious and sacred matters to airy ridicule, I meekly offered up a respectable and harmless ghost to the wolves of the press. As I hoped, they all fell upon him, tossed him about, worried him, jeered at him; and, satisfied with this to lighten up their work, they recounted more soberly the matters I wished treated with respect.

On Sunday afternoon we held a Masonic meeting for the initiation of two men and a woman, the Deputy of the Supreme

Council in the United States having fraternally granted me the power to act within his jurisdiction. An interesting and wholly unexpected item of the ceremony of my formal reception as a high Official of the Order was the singing of a hymn written by myself in days long gone by. A photograph was taken after the closing of the Lodge, to add to the lengthening series of pictures gathered from many parts of the world as the movement spreads.

On Sunday evening I had a long and very interesting interview With the Rev. Joseph Strong, President of the American Institute of Social Service. The object of the Institute is to gather information on all economic and social questions in all civilized countries, to tabulate it, and to place it at the disposal of any who need it, in order that experience may be made common property, and mistakes made in one land may be avoided in another. The conception is a noble one, and it appears to be carried out with much self-sacrifice and great ability. Dr. Strong hopes to visit India ere long, and desires to help in the prevention of evils which have so far accompanied the introduction of the Western industrial system wherever it has gone. He wishes to place at the disposal of the public the information which would enable India to utilize any advantage that modern methods may bring her, and to avoid the mistakes into which Western countries have fallen. Dr. Strong thought that our T.S. Order of Service and the Order of the Sons and Daughters of India might find useful much of the work of the Institute, and might be willing to co-operate in its extension to India; also they might be able to send him much valuable information. His useful work certainly deserves our sympathy and help.

There was a meeting of all the New York Lodges on Monday in the Carnegie Lyceum, and the members mustered in force, though many are out of town at this time of the year. I spoke to them of the new sub-race and the coming of the Great Teacher; and it was good to see the intent interest and to feel hearts thrilling

in answer to the thoughts expressed. But I felt a little sad at the absence of a few faces, faces of those who have fallen away from the promise of their earlier years in the Society, and who have rejected the great opportunity offered in this happy time.

Walking along Madison Avenue to look at the old home of the Section, I thought to myself, 'How fond Judge was of New York'. 'And am still', said a quiet voice; and there he was, walking beside me, as he and I had so often walked in the nineties. He will help much in the work of this tour; for he loves the American people, and is ever eager to labour for their benefit. A lecture was decided on at the last moment for Newark, and we crossed the river. To my surprise about 500 people gathered in spite of summer weather and the short notice, to listen to a lecture on 'The Power of Thought'. On the following day, the New York Lodges, greatly daring, had taken the large Masonic Hall for a lecture on reincarnation. I had not intended to lecture in New York, as August is not a lecturing month. However the Hall had been taken, and I could not refuse. A furious rainstorm set in, worthy of India, and the streets ran with water. But despite August, and the absence of 'everyone', and the drenching downpour, the Hall was well filled, and the wetness did not exert any depressing effect on the interest of the audience. It was all eagerness, life, intentness; and I felt that the tour had begun under the benediction which has been on the work since it started this year in London.

Syracuse, Rochester and Buffalo held Lodge meetings and public lectures. At the latter place an untoward incident occurred, which Mrs. Besant thus describes:

The local representatives of the Scottish Rite had let their hall for the lecture with a written agreement, and had received payment. The day before the advertised meeting; they decided to close the hall and gave no notice of their intention. The Lodge heard of

it late that day, unofficially, and were compelled hastily to hire another hall, and on the following evening to post members at the doors of the Masonic Hall and send the public to the other. Masons are supposed to be just and upright; but that is evidently not the rule of the Buffalo Scottish Rite members of the fraternity, who have dishonored by their breach of faith the knightly degrees they nominally work. They cannot even have learned the most elementary meaning of the square and compasses, taught to the rawest apprentice. Perhaps they resented the coming of a woman Mason and wished to show how ill masculine Masons can behave. But I was not going to lecture on Masonry. May they someday learn what Masonic honour means, and not show their fellow townsmen so bad an example! However, they did not prevent our having a very good meeting, as they did not succeed in keeping their secret and in leaving us to find the doors locked when we arrived. We ought to have a Co-Masonic Lodge in Buffalo, if only to set a better example.

En route to Buffalo, we had the delight of seeing for a few minutes the tumbling glory of Niagara. Hideous buildings are rising round the Falls and spoiling nature's wondrous handiwork; and for the sake of gaining a source of power one of the wonders of the world is being marred. For thousands of years it was safe in the care of 'savages'; only 'civilized' man recklessly spoils the beauties nature has taken ages to build. We ran through the fertile plains of Canada, after crossing the stream from the Falls, only returning to the States at Detroit. Quite a crowd of Canadian members met us on the Canadian side and crossed with us. The lecture at Detroit was given at 'The Church of our Father', a fine building; the attendance was very large. As I went on the platform the whole audience rose, as though we were in India, a sign of courtesy very rare in the West. Another half-day's travel carried us from Detroit to Grand Rapids, through the rich orchard lands of Michigan. Grand Rapids had one pretty peculiarity I had not seen elsewhere:

most American towns are very brilliantly lighted, and shops and places of public entertainment have dazzling signs in electric lamps, as though it were a monarch's birthday; but Grand Rapids had rows of lights across its main street, like a festival of lanterns, and the effect was very good.

On August 11th, we reached Chicago, and had the pleasure of greeting warmly the worthy General Secretary, Dr. Weller Van Hook. We had a very full meeting of members that evening, and an E.S. gathering on the morning of the 12th. There was the usual rush of reporters, *The Tribune*, as on my last visit, being peculiarly untruthful. Its reporter described me as seated at luncheon before a lobster, claws and all! This was stated as seen through a crack in the door. To describe a dish of peas and two baked potatoes in this way seems to argue some imagination; but, as a non-corpse eater of twenty years standing, I should prefer not being charged with this particular vice. The public lecture in Chicago drew a large audience, intent from the opening to the closing words. We had to go straight from the hall to the railway station, to start for Duluth, at the head of Lake Superior; on we went through the night and until noon next day. We are in the lumber country, where great logs are rolled down the banks into the river and, chained together, closely packed, are drifted by the current to the point of shipping. Duluth has a splendid natural harbor, and from it is shipped the ore which at Pittsburgh is changed into steel, and to it is shipped the coal from Pennsylvania; into it pours the grain from the fertile Western States, to be loaded into vessels that carry it to a hungry world. From here to Buffalo there is a clear waterway through Lakes Superior, Huron, Erie, till the passage to Lake Ontario is barred by the Falls of Niagara.

Lecturers have not found warm welcome at Duluth, which is more interested in lumber and shipping than in philosophy; nevertheless a body of Theosophists have gathered there, and there are two Lodges, one on each side of the dividing river which separates

Duluth from Superior. Mr. Jinarajadasa has been here lately, and attracted audiences of 200 people – twice as large as one which gave scant welcome to a well-known Arctic explorer, who remarked that he had gone nigh to the North Pole, but had found nothing so frigid as Duluth. Mr. Jinarajadasa has become very popular in the States for his lucid and attractive exposition of Theosophical ideas, while his gentle courtesy and quiet reserve win him admiration and respect. However, Duluth, despite its reputation, treated us exceedingly well, the hall seating 500 was crowded, and the audience was interested and sympathetic, the very reverse of frigid. Doubtless Mr. Jinarajadasa's work had prepared the way for me.

Dr. James, Dean of the College of Education in the University of Minnesota, met us at Duluth and shepherded us to Minneapolis, where we found a pleasant resting-place in the lovely home of Dr. Lee, one of the professors of the University. The house is on one of the high banks of the Mississippi which curves round below; and for a moment I thought of my beloved Gangā, only the bank opposite was tree-covered, instead of being faced with ghats and crowned with temples. Love sometimes sees resemblances which are faint, and it may have been the heart more than the eyes that fancied Gangā where Mississippi rolled. We drove to St. Paul's, the twin-city in the evening, and I lectured on 'The Power of Thought'. On Sunday some 2,000 gathered to listen to 'Brotherhood Applied to Social Conditions'. Another good audience to hear of 'The Coming Race and the Coming Christ'; and then a train journey across 1,128 miles of prairies into the Rocky Mountains to Butte, Montana, the richest hill in the world.

There is something fascinating to the imagination in the thin line of rails flung across prairies, and the wires that span the Rockies and knit together men in distant centres. As the train rushes onwards, it masters distance and unites what Nature has disjoined. A cloudburst had happened and there was a wash-out, and one of

the pairs of rails hung disconsolately downwards, unsupported. We went, cautiously by, feeling our way, lest our rails should follow suit; but stalwart men were at work, repairing the damage wrought by the rebellious element, with the cool skill of the Americans, handling the puzzles offered by nature with the calm born of knowledge and the deftness born of habit. Butte was reached some three hours late, and we met with a warm welcome in that copper-smelting city. On the next morning to Helena, the capital of Montana, a city of scattered houses and green trees, nestling in a cup in the mountains. The interest shown by the audience was a marked feature, here as elsewhere. The minister of the Unitarian Church in which the lecture was given introduced me in friendly fashion.

Again the train claimed us, and we slept ourselves into Spokane, over 381 miles, through scenery hidden by the veil of darkness. The sun rose on a very beautiful landscape of mountain, forest and lake. The Spokane Lodge is a very active one, but works against a hitherto unfriendly press. Let US hope it may be made less hostile by the present visit; at any rate, I wrote a brief article on Theosophy, Its Meaning and Value, for a good weekly journal named Opportunity. There was a large evening gathering to which the subject, Reincarnation, was evidently quite a new idea. The listeners became interested; and it may be that a few will begin to think and study. We left for Seattle, and after twenty-two hours in the train I had to rush to a hotel, wash, dress, and straight off to lecture at 8 p.m. But the journey was a pleasant one, as the train ran through fine scenery, crossing the Cascade Mountains. It was interesting to see the line of rails zigzagging backwards and forwards as we climbed higher and higher, and to pass through an area which a great forest-fire had swept. Tall and black stretched the trunks, here and there high in air, while others lay prone on the earth, where Agni, Archangel of Fire, had laid waste the forest; and over the blackened waste Mother Nature had followed hard on

the heels of the fire, fair flowers had sprung up in her footsteps, green grass waved, and young fir-trees were rising; for Nature will not long endure aught that is ugly, and kisses into beauty new life that adorns what her forces destroyed. When will man learn from nature that beauty is the divine law of manifestation, and that nothing which is not beautiful can or should endure?

Mrs. Besant continues describing her American tour in the summer and autumn of 1909:

Seattle gave us a large audience, keenly interested in Theosophy, on the Sunday evening of our arrival, an arrival brightened by the presence of Mr. Jinarajadasa, who is doing such admirable work in the lecture field. He was to deliver a course of lectures after my departure. The work finished we betook ourselves to a steamer instead of a train, in order to wind our way past islands and forests to Vancouver, British Columbia. At 8 a.m. August 24th, we landed within the huge circle of Britain's Empire. God save the King! Vancouver had only one day, but it made the best of it. Vancouver has not had much chance so far of Theosophical teaching, except during a visit of Mr. Leadbeater; and so large an audience was rather a surprise. We spent the night again on the boat, reaching Seattle at 7 a.m. next day, and going straight from the steamer to the railway station to take train to Tacoma. For the first time since New York we were rained upon, and Tacoma was somewhat shrouded by mist. The audience was gathered in a pretty hall holding about 500 people; and the listeners were eager and followed each stage of the lecture with unwavering interest.

The night found us in the train once more, running south for Portland, Oregon. Portland Lodge had been inactive for some time, but some of those who were its best members are prepared to step forward for its rebuilding, and Mr. Prime, who joined our little party at Seattle, has agreed to stay here for a short time, to help in

the reorganization. With all the flood of new life in the Society, it would be sad to have any old Branch left stranded on the banks. We had a pleasant afternoon gathering of old members and sympathizers; and at night came a meeting in the Masonic Hall for a lecture on 'Reincarnation'. It was crowded with a splendid audience of thoughtful people who caught every point and enjoyed the presentment of the great truth. Then came the train and the continued journey southward.

We awoke to find ourselves running through the beautiful ravines of southern Oregon. Through the day we journeyed onwards through ever-changing but ever-beautiful scenery, and evening found us in the lovely Siskiyou Gorge, and presently Mount Shasta glimmered white with everlasting snow beneath the glooming sky. Another night through northern California, and as noon approached, we reached Fort Costa, whither some of the San Francisco friends had come to give us welcome. At Oakland we betook ourselves to the ferry boat to cross the bay to San Francisco, the queenly city that, three years ago, was rent by earthquake and blasted by fire, and where dynamite was used to save, making a barrier of ruins across the awful torrent of flame which threatened to devour the whole. Marvellous have been the cheerful courage and strength of heart which have rebuilt the city; and though as yet she is not so fair as of yore, and many ruins still bear witness to the terrible days of 1906, San Francisco has arisen, calm and strong, prosperous once more and facing the future with front unbowed. Very interesting it was to hear from some of our members details of the great catastrophe, and of their experiences within it. One of our Lodges lost everything, including its fine library; but it is flourishing even more than before. The activity and brightness of the members was good to see in all three Lodges in the city. We had a joint meeting on the 28th, and many came in from the surrounding towns and swelled the happy gathering.

On the following morning the oldest San Francisco Lodge, the Golden Gate, welcomed our party. In the evening at the large Garrick's Theatre an immense and sympathetic audience had gathered. Mr. Russell, our host, had provided us with an automobile during our stay; and the way in which that car tore up hills that one would have thought inaccessible was a thing to remember. On one of our journeys, when we were a little late, it whirled down these declivities in the most astonishing way, like the swoop of a bird; and San Francisco will ever stand in my mind as a city in which automobiling has been carried to a point where difficulties have ceased to exist. In one thing San Francisco was disappointing; it was bitterly cold, with a piercing wind and at intervals chilling fogs. A thick winter dress barely sufficed to keep one warm.

At Sacramento we have no Lodge, but Dr. Plumb of San Francisco arranged a lecture, and hopes to nurse the young Theosophical plant into strength. We had a meeting in the afternoon for a few already interested, and a class for study will be formed. The lecture on 'Theosophy, Its Meaning and Value' was delivered in the Congregational Church to the smallest and most wooden audience that I have addressed since I became a member of the T.S.! One marvels more and more at the American Press. One meets the reporters with courtesy and treats them as gentlemen and gentlewomen, and they go away and twist and distort everything that has been said, and often invent. As an instance, pressed for my view of woman suffrage, I said that I was not taking part in politics, but thought that sex should not enter into the question; that the uneducated should have votes for local affairs only, and those of both sexes who were highly educated in economics and history should vote in national affairs. This was given as: that women should vote locally and men nationally! Mrs. Tingley having taken the absurd title of 'The Purple Mother', I am baptized willy nilly 'The White Mother', and telegraphed about to England under that ludicrous

appellation. And so on and so on, in a stream of repellent vulgarity. And one cannot escape from it.

Considering Mrs. Tingley's tireless malignity against the T.S., her endeavours to prevent Col. Olcott and Mr. Leadbeater from lecturing in San Diego and her ceaseless vituperation of myself through her lieutenant, I speculate sometimes on her use in the movement. Such abnormal hatred so long continued implies considerable force of character, and force of character is always interesting. She is a fine woman of business, with a remarkable capacity for gaining and holding money – a quality rare in Theosophical ranks – and that seems to be the quality for which she is being used. She owns a splendid property at Point Loma, has broken into pieces the great organization which Mr. Judge built up by years of patient toil, and has driven away the strong band which supported him, so there is nothing to succeed her. I will venture a prophecy: she is being used to make a centre which will pass into the hands of the Society she hates, and will form an important South Californian focus for its world work. The Rome which slew Christians became a centre of Christian power a few centuries later. It is indeed a far cry from Imperial Rome to Point Loma, but the world issues are greater; for the one had to do with a sub-race and the other has to do with a root-race.

To return to the tour. We left Sacramento on the morning of August 31st, and reached Oakland soon after 11 a.m. A crowded gathering assembled at the Congregational Church to hear the lecture on 'Reincarnation', and, as elsewhere, the interest roused in the subject was intense. America seems ripe for this teaching, and it is above all others the one that revolutionizes man's attitude toward life. Of course there are interviewers and reporters everywhere, but these may be taken for granted. On September 2nd we left for Los Angeles, from whence we went by trolley to Pasadena, about twelve miles off. Here I gave a lecture in the Shakespeare Club, and answered questions; and then took a short

motor drive through this prettiest of towns. One very pleasant thing was the reverence shown for living things. No birds may be killed in the town, and our little winged brothers are fearless and tame. As we drove, we passed in the middle of the road a wide-spreading ancient tree; so unusual a sight drew a question, and the answer was that the authorities would not cut down an old tree. I noticed other trees similarly in possession of the middle of the road. Kindness to living creatures is taught in the Pasadena school, as well as practised by elders, and the town is a centre of good influence. After the drive we returned to Los Angeles for a public lecture, and on the following morning put ourselves on the train for San Diego. The visit to our southernmost point was brief but pleasant. The lecture was in the afternoon and was given to a large audience, the most friendly and enthusiastic I have met with during the present tour. In the evening there was a pleasant gathering of the Lodge, and then into the train once more for Salt Lake City, Utah.

It was a long run of 900 miles, first through Southern California, then across a corner of Nevada into Utah, and onwards to the great city planned and shaped by the genius of Brigham Young. Here we again greeted Mr. Jinarajadasa, who had arranged to give four lectures after mine. The audience was not a very large one, but as usual showed keen interest; and the five consecutive lectures should sow some seed for the future. Next morning, September 8th, we again entered the train for another long run – 741 miles to Denver the capital of beautiful Colorado. It was an interesting journey, but across many hastily repaired washouts which delayed us. Up to Leadville, more than 10,000 feet above the level of the sea, we climbed. For some distance our train of twelve coaches had three engines pulling in front and one pushing behind, for we rose 1,500 feet in six miles, a grade of exceeding steepness. In the early morning of the 9th we saw the gleam of snow on the mountain tops and thick frost on the grass, and then ran easily downwards. But we were more than four hours late in arriving, so saw little of our

Denver friends and their beautiful city, and the warmth of the greeting intensified our regret at the brief stay. A lecture to a moderate but friendly audience was given, and the same night we again had to take train to travel another 572 miles to Omaha, where there was a gathering of members and a public lecture. The night was spent in bed for a wonder, with no wheels running underneath; and the following day came the comparatively short journey to Kansas City. As usual a posse of reporters, and in the evening a large members' meeting. Kansas City seems to be short of halls, and the Lodge had to take a huge place seating 15,000 people. Two public lectures were arranged for Sunday and one for Monday, with about 1,500 people at each. The strain of speaking in so large a hall twice in one day was more than should be put on any lecturer. The papers treated us well, being less sensational than they usually are.

We arrived at St. Louis on the 14th. As St. Louis has no Lodge, we had a very quiet day, only broken by newspaper reporters. The hall for the lecture was a pleasant one, belonging to the local Y.M.C.A, and many of the young men were among the audience, listening earnestly to the description of the after-death life. At 10 p.m. we were in the train once more, en route for Louisville. The general atmosphere of Louisville was an immense improvement on that of St. Louis and Kansas City; the latter are poisoned by having become huge centres of slaughter, and pay the penalty of their ghastly trade. The following morning, September 16th, we were in the train for Chicago. It was sorrow to learn that Dr. Van Hook had been suddenly taken ill and had to submit to an operation, and would thus be debarred from attending the Convention. The business meeting of the Convention began on Sunday morning. Dr. Van Hook was elected General Secretary. The American membership has now reached 2,816, the highest point ever touched.

The Convention was beautifully harmonious, not a harsh word being said by anyone, and the spirit of those present was

evidently that of peace and goodwill. A wave of strong affection surged over the whole meeting on the proclamation of the election of the General Secretary, and it was evident that he had found his way to the hearts of the members. Happy indeed is the American Section in having secured the services of one so strong and capable, whose one thought is the service of the Masters. The audience on the evening of the 19th September was much larger than on the 17th, and it had again grown larger on the 20th; but still the Chicago lectures cannot be called a success. The work concluded on the 21st with a Masonic meeting in the evening; and we drew out of the city at 10.30, for Cleveland, Ohio.

There was an E.S. meeting in the afternoon, and in the evening I lectured at a pleasant 'summer theatre' packed to the doors with an audience of 1,200 persons. Cleveland is a pretty town with splendid parks, through which a friend kindly took us in his automobile. America is waking up to the demands of beauty, and on all sides one sees evidences that beauty is being recognized as necessary daily bread rather than a luxury than can be dispensed with. With such immense natural resources in this direction, with plenty of room and a scattered population, the great Republic of the West should be able in a few centuries to overtop on the ascending spiral of evolution the beauty which Greece gave to the elder world. On the afternoon of the 23rd we had a pleasant meeting of the Cleveland Lodges in the pretty rooms of the larger one. The rooms are simply and effectively coloured, and were tastefully decorated with flowers. Six o'clock found us at the station, bound for Washington; and we slept our way to the capital city.

Washington has built for itself a splendid new station, worthy of the chief city of the Republic, the finest station in the way of architecture that I remember having seen, though not the largest. Washington Lodges are active, and have prepared admirable courses of lectures for the autumn and winter. The press is not unfriendly, and is more sober and dignified than that of New York

and Chicago, so that an effective propaganda might be made through it, appealing to the thoughtful and the cultured. The second lecture was given on Sunday to a much larger audience, and then we started for Boston, hallowed by memories of Emerson and his friends—‘the Hub’, short for ‘hub of the universe’, as its lovers call it. Boston had prepared a very heavy programme of work. We arrived on September 27th before 8 a.m. and reporters soon appeared on the scene; at 10 began a two hours’ meeting of the E.S.; 3 p.m. found us in the rooms of the Metaphysical Club, packed to suffocation for a lecture on ‘The Use of the Imagination’. The second day repeated the first, the T.S. Lodges taking the place of the E.S. in the morning, and the afternoon being occupied by a very pleasant invitation meeting in the house of Mrs. Kehen, where I expounded Theosophy to a very cultured audience. The house was interesting as having been built by Edwin Booth, and the spacious salon I spoke in seemed to have been planned for such use. The ideas presented were very warmly welcomed, and Theosophy has evidently a future in the more exclusive circles of ‘The Hub’. A public lecture closed the work in the evening, and we spent the night in travelling to New York.

New York was in the midst of a tumultuous celebration, the Hudson-Fulton festival; and the papers were crammed with accounts of pageants, aeroplane flights, marches, naval displays. It naturally played havoc with the lectures, and the audiences were small—a new experience in New York. On October 1st there was a reception in the afternoon, at which a birthday gift was made to me by the New York Lodges, a gift which I have placed to the credit of the Blavatsky Gardens’ purchase fund. A member returning from Chile brought me a very prettily drawn address of greeting signed by members at Valparaiso, and a handsome silver triangle bearing the seal of the T.S. It will go into the memento case at Headquarters, to bear silent witness to the love which pours thither from all parts of the world.

October 2nd saw a group of loving and faithful members gathered round their President on the deck of the Cedric, which was to bear her back to the Old World. Two of them, Mr. Warrington and Mrs. Kochersperger, had travelled with me all the time over the 10,629 miles which measured the trip since I landed in New York on July 31st. My grateful thanks go to both for the unvarying and unwearied kindness which guarded me throughout the journey, shielding me from all discomfort and doing all that could be done to lighten the heavy work. We visited 33 towns, two of them twice; I gave 48 lectures to the public, and held 54 other meetings, at all but four of which lectures were also given. The work was arduous but very pleasant, save for the ceaseless malignity of Point Loma which followed me everywhere, but failed to injure seriously, despite the expenditure of time and money which might have been put to so much nobler uses. I rejoice to have been allowed to bear so much mud-throwing intended to injure the T.S.; for there is no privilege greater than to be allowed to shield a great cause with one's own body. The persecutors used to torture and murder, now they vilify and slander; the spirit is the same and the end is the same, defeat for them and triumph for the cause they assail. Well said Bruno: 'To know how to die in one century is to live for all centuries to come'. The messengers of the White Lodge are ever bespattered and assailed; it is the sign of their apostleship. Little need they reckon of the storm whose feet are on the Rock of Ages, but alas for the craft that dash themselves to pieces on that rock.

The White Star Line may well be proud of the extraordinary steadiness of their ships, if they are all like the Cedric. I have never been in a vessel so steady and so quiet. The throb of the engines is scarcely perceptible; and it is difficult to know that we are moving, unless one looks over the side and sees the water rapidly slipping past. The first two days were smooth; then on Tuesday we had a fog, and the unmusical voice of the ship blared out minute by

minute, to warn the fishing-craft of the monster steaming through their track; after fog followed wind and heavy seas, until the steamer lay off Queenstown and tumbled some of us off into the tender, which puffed away with us to the Emerald Isle. There Mrs. Sharpe met me, and the morning saw us in the train, a leisurely concern which lounged through the 177 miles which lie between the port and the capital.

Mrs. Besant on her return from U.S.A. visited Ireland, October 1909, and writes:

We had a pleasant gathering of the folk in Dublin in the evening, and on Monday I lectured to an audience of some 300 persons who had come by invitation from Belfast, Limerick, Wexford and other towns, as well as from Dublin. It was pleasant to see and feel the quick response and the growing enthusiasm of the listeners, and at the end Professor Barrett, F.R.S., President of the Royal College of Science in Ireland, spoke a few kind words of sympathy and thanks. The Land of Saints has not so far taken her rightful place in Theosophy, for she is to Europe what India is to the world, a witness for the spiritual life. The time has come when the light should burn up upon her altars, and Dublin has breathed upon the smouldering embers. The outcome of the visit to Dublin is the formation of two Lodges – a very satisfactory beginning for the T.S. in Ireland. Each will start with about 20 members. May their work prosper under the blessing on which all our work depends!

Counting these two and the Anglo-Belge, which has rebuilt itself and rejoined, 12 new Lodges have been formed since I came to England, and 240 new members have joined. The total number of members lost by resignation from the Section throughout the troubles of the last 16 months is 537. Some of these have formed independent Societies outside the T.S. – the Eleusinian, the Quest,

the Hermetic – and there is one Lodge of members who have resigned from the Section and attached themselves to Adyar.

On the 19th (October, 1909), many friends gathered, first in the Masonic Temple and then in the Headquarters of the T.S., to greet with kindest welcome one of our best workers in the North, Hilda Hodgson Smith, as the bride of Lieut. Powell, R.E. The marriage had taken place at Harrogate on the preceding day, and a considerable number of the bridal party came southwards with the bride and bridegroom to the little Theosophical festival held in their honour. Music, silent thought and an address by myself formed the graver part of the meeting, and then we went to Headquarters for the reception, at which the bride cut the wedding-cake with her husband's sword.

On the 20th October many friends gathered at Oxford for the lecture at the Town Hall. The building was filled with an interested audience, and Professor L. P. Jaks, the Editor of the *Hibbert Journal*, took the chair. One of the Colleges provided the stewards for the meeting, and a very large number of undergraduates attended. The last English lecture was given on the 21st to the Spiritualists' Alliance, and the Suffolk Street British Artists' Hall was crowded to listen to a talk on our relations with the three worlds. It is desirable that Theosophists and Spiritualists should co-operate where they agree, and discuss with friendly feeling where they differ; for both aim at knowledge and oppose materialism. The world is wide and temperaments are various, and the full recognition of liberty of thought and the showing of mutual respect will conduce to the general recognition of the reality of the unseen world. A crowd of kindly faces was the last impression of London, as the train steamed out of Liverpool St. Station, carrying Mrs. Sharpe and myself to Harwich, the first stage towards Amsterdam.

The sea was the reverse of kindly, for there had been high winds for days, and we arrived at the Hook of Holland more or less

ragged in feeling. It was dark and cold, but we were well wrapped up, and rumbled off contentedly across the Holland flats; and presently dawn broke, and we looked out of the window at the grazing cows, and thought how chilly their quaint shirts must feel on such a morning. Soon we arrived in Amsterdam, to be greeted by the General Secretary and Mrs. Windust and other friends, and ere long found ourselves in the familiar and hospitable Headquarters in Amsteldijk. How many memories cluster round that building, memories of the days when faithful Piet Meuleman and Esther Windust and W. B. Fricke first raised the banner of Theosophy in Holland! The only outward change is the acquiring of a piece of additional land at the back, whereon a good temporary building has been raised for the E.S. and Co-Masonry; and therein we held a meeting on the evening of our arrival, the 22nd. The next day we went to Haarlem and had first a Lodge meeting and then a public meeting. Members gathered from all parts of the country in surprisingly large numbers. On the 25th we started for the Hague, where there were interviews and a members' meeting. Returning to Amsterdam, in the evening there was a public lecture, held in the big Concert Hall; and, despite the rain, the audience numbered over 1,000 persons. That was the closing scene of the Dutch visit, for the next morning we took train for Brussels.

Followed the inevitable interviews, the usual E. S. meeting, members' meeting, more interviews; and at noon we left by the Paris train, which carried us across the green country beneath dripping skies, and landed us in the midst of a crowd of friends assembled on the Paris platform. Paris was great on interviews; eight mortal hours of them in three days! Members had come in from the provinces in such numbers that it was necessary to hire the Salle de la Societe de Geographie for the lectures to members, instead of meeting at Headquarters. The public lecture was held in the large Salle des Agricultures de France. The hall was packed ere the hour of meeting and many remained outside, to ours great

surprise, as no such rush had been anticipated. The lecture went well and aroused great enthusiasm; and I could not help being astonished that the Parisian public, always regarded as critical, cynical and materialistic, responded with eagerness and warmth to the ideas of the immanence of God, the mystical interpretation of Christian dogmas, the declaration that health could only be secured by right-thinking, right-desiring and right-living, and that the great social change must come by the self-sacrifice of the higher and not by the insurrection of the lower. The wave of spiritual life is indeed spreading when, in the intellectual capital of Europe, rent by the combats of clericals and anti-clericals and with a fiercely anti-clerical government, such views can find enthusiastic welcome.

After the lecture came a reception at the ever-hospitable home of the Blechs, where gathered members from Tunis, Algiers and very many provincial towns, old friends and new. In the evening the General Secretaries of France and Great Britain, Mme. Blech and myself quitted Paris for Geneva, leaving a crowd of friendly faces on the Paris platform, and being greeted by another crowd equally friendly on the Geneva platform on the morning of November 1st. In the evening I spoke on the same subject as in Paris, but felt weighed down by the atmosphere of heavy Calvinism, a line of thought not friendly to me. Geneva is an intellectual city, but one longs for the warm, soft breath of Theosophy ruffling its atmosphere and awakening its children to spirituality. Clouds hid Geneva's ring of mountains, and the prospect ended in grey curtains of mist; but autumn's tints glowed on the nearer hills, and her wand touched with soft radiance of browns and reds and yellows the trees which lined the roads and clothed the hillsides. The evening was given to a gathering of the four Lodges in their new locale, occupied for the first time on this occasion. The rooms occupy the whole of a large first floor in a house close to the Cathedral; three good rooms open into each other, with some smaller ones adjoining, so that the Society is well lodged, with

plenty of room for work and growth. The three rooms were crowded last night, not only the Geneva members being present, but others having come from Zurich, Lausanne and other towns.

We left Geneva for Lyons on the 3rd, and arrived in the great commercial city late in the afternoon. Lyons is intensely orthodox and Catholic; and as is ever the case under these conditions, there is a small minority fighting for its right to exist, and consequently very intransigent. The conditions being thus difficult, and members of the opposing parties forming the audience, I was doubtful of the reception which would be given to the lecture; but once more Theosophy triumphed by virtue of its inherent reasonableness and its pacific spirit. On the 4th we started for Marseilles, with many sweet flowers to make fragrant the carriage and many friendly smiles to speed us on our way. Among others waiting to receive us there were some members from Barcelona, Spain. At Marseilles I had the pleasure of contributing to the foundation of a new Lodge of Universal Co-Masonry.

Sunday found us in Toulon, where three meetings were held. The representatives of the southern Lodges met to form a Federation, on the model of those which have proved so useful in England and India. The public lecture was held in the large hall of the hotel. The hall was filled, but the audience was cold, though attentive. One feels in speaking in these provincial towns that one needs a fuller understanding of the people. Paris is cosmopolitan, but the provincial cities are not in touch with cosmopolitan thought, and people outside the T. S. are drawn by curiosity rather than sympathy. It is the breaking of new ground, and the people would be approached more effectively by one who knew the local currents of thought than by a stranger. At Nice, the audience was once more of the cosmopolitan type, and was warmly interested and finally enthusiastic. The Nice season is just opening, so the time was opportune. The leading journal gave us a column of report and interview; and we may hope that this, with the lecture,

will attract the outer public to the winter meetings held by the two Lodges.

Thus finished the tour in France. I leave that noble country—now in the grip of a persecuting materialism—with the hope that Theosophy may yet bring her back to idealism and to a liberal and national religion, and may thus preserve her in her place among the nations. I must not say Good-Bye to France without placing on record the good work being done by the General Secretary, M. Charles Blech. It was a difficult task to be placed before anyone, that of filling the place of the well-beloved Dr. Pascal; but M. Blech has done admirably well. His business ability, his firmness combined with courtesy, and above all his whole-hearted devotion to the Masters and Their work, have made him fully worthy of the place he holds.

At Genoa many gathered to bid us welcome; at Milan, Professor Penzig, the able General Secretary for Italy, shepherded us throughout our stay in his territory. The Ars Regia is doing excellent propaganda work in Italy. A lecture to members and an E.S. meeting at Turin finished the European work, and we sailed from Brindisi on the 14th November, for India.

Arriving at Bombay at the end of November, 1909, the President and party took train eastward. She says:

All went well as far as Dudhni, when – we were running very fast – the engine or mail-vans struck the points, and in a moment we were derailed. It was a curious sensation to see the sides of the carriage rise up suddenly then fall as the other side rose up; and for a moment overturning seemed inevitable. Then the carriage steadied itself, and the train stopped. The poor guard was stunned, having probably, been flung out, as he was found lying on the permanent way. The rails were broken, and fragments of wood and iron strewed our passage; but we found ourselves safe

and whole, with deep gratitude for a wonderful escape. A passenger train was in the station siding, waiting for us to pass; and we were transferred with the mails to some of its carriages, and went on our way after a delay of about three hours. Our adventures were not over, for a pipe in our new engine burst; but again conveniently at a station, and another three hours was spent waiting for another engine. The same helpful passenger train came up in due course, and we again annexed its engine, which drew us safely to Madras, where we arrived six hours late.

A large crowd of members gave us royal welcome on the platform, and at Adyar the household circle offered greeting in a prettily chanted song; and thus the journey ended, 37,176 miles of land and sea having been traversed between the parting in April and the welcome in November. May the work done, offered at the feet of the Holy Ones, serve Their good purposes for the world.

The Convention at Benares opened on the 27th December but on the 26th a very large crowd gathered in the Hall of the Central Hindu College, to hear the President's lecture on 'Mysticism and Occultism'. The Convention lectures were given by Bhagavan Das upon 'The Laws of Manu in the Light of Theosophy'.

The 11th January, 1910, was passed quietly, with much thought and solemn meditation. The cycle of the future has opened with the great planetary conjunction on the arms of the Zodiacal cross, a conjunction that comes in its present form but once in ten thousand years. A great peace brooded over the earth, and a deep solemn joy pervaded Adyar and Benares. For all was well.

On January 14th a pleasant ceremony was performed at Buddha-Gaya (where is the famous bo-tree under which the Lord attained illumination). The local Lodge has bought a piece of land well situated in the centre of the town; and the foundations of the proposed building are already dug. We gathered at 8 a.m. to lay the foundation stone. The members chanted some Sanskrit shlokas, and the sonorous Arabic of Al Qurān rang out from the lips of

Mr. Khaja Muhammad Noor; the beautiful chapter on Charity from I Corinthians was read by Mr. Leo; and a solemn chant in Sanskrit ended the singing. Then coins, a plan of the buildings and the alphabets now in use in these provinces were placed in a cavity awaiting them, the mortar was spread, and the stone lowered. A few words from myself, and the mystic taps consecrated the building to the service of God and man, and the ceremony was over. A lecture on 'The Opening Cycle' was given to a packed audience, in the evening.

Proceeding on her tour, Mrs. Besant addressed a crowded meeting in Bankipur, with Mr. Syed Hasan Imam in the chair; then the opening of a new Lodge at Bhagalpur, with lectures, and talks to Hindu and Musalman students who wanted to join the Order of the Sons of India, and a visit to two girls' schools, one for wealthy and one for poor girls. She writes:

The last work of the day was a Lodge meeting in the new Hall; and I was happy to congratulate the members on the services they are rendering to the town. In addition to the two institutions noted above, religious examinations are held annually for Hindu boys, on the initiative of our members.

The morning of the 25th found us in Calcutta in the Garden House of our ever-hospitable brother, Hirendranath Datta. Two lectures were given to immense audiences and other work was done, ere the train of the 27th carried us away to Madras. Here I went to visit the Rama Krishna Students' Home at Mylapore, on March 9th, and found it to be a very useful and well conducted institution. I also attended the Annual Meeting of the Madras Society for the Protection of Children, held at Government House, His Excellency the Governor was in the chair. The Society is in its infancy, but has begun its work on useful and well-chosen lines. It has opened a Home for destitute children. I was invited to join the

Committee, but felt that I could not give the time which alone would justify the acceptance of so responsible an offer; so I contented myself with becoming a member.

There is a terrible evil existing in southern India – it may exist elsewhere, but I have met it only here – the dedicating of little girls to certain temples, a euphemism for saying that they are given to a life of prostitution. This abomination can be dealt with best by Hindus, as its mingling with religious rites makes it difficult to attack without rousing religious antagonism. I know that the retort to this condemnation may be, ‘At least we do not throw our prostitutes on the public streets and leave them to starve, as you English do’. That is true. But ill-behavior in England does not excuse ill-behavior here, although it should make us modest in our disapproval of our neighbor.

We have been having a remarkably successful series of six popular lectures at Headquarters, the audiences growing with each lecture, till the large Hall was crowded. The series was issued afterwards under the title *Popular Lectures on Theosophy*.

From Calcutta, Mrs. Besant wrote:

An unexpected pleasure fell to my lot on March 19th, while passing through Calcutta, I had occasion, to visit Government House, and was told by Col. Pinley, the Private Secretary to His Excellency, that he had to attend the Durbar, at which the recently discovered relics of the Lord Buddha were to be handed over by His Excellency to the representatives of Burma, who will guard them with reverent and fitting care. Colonel Pinley was good enough to take me with him to this historic ceremony; and after a courteous greeting from Her Excellency, Lady Minto, a place was assigned to me. The proceedings were brief but stately. After the Burmese envoys had been presented, the fortunate discoverer, Mr. Marshall, the Head of the Archaeological Department, read a

statement as to the history of the precious relic. The Viceroy made a short speech, saying that he felt this relic should not go outside the Empire, and that Mandalay, the capital of Burma, a Buddhist country, seemed to be a fitting place for its guardianship. He then stepped down and, lifting a large golden platter which bore a golden casket, he presented it to the Burmese envoys. To the ordinary eye, it was merely a brilliant gathering—high officials of State, the Representative of earth's mightiest Empire, the Envoys of an ancient land, the committal of a relic of the Founder of a great Religion to his modern followers, a number of gaily dressed ladies and gold-laced officers. But to the inner eye, it was the vision of a perfect life, a humanity flowering into the splendor of a 'Divine Man', the tenderness of an all-embracing compassion, of an utter renunciation. Wave after wave of wondrous magnetism swept through the room, and all faded before the deathless radiance of a Life that once wore this dead fragment, which still rayed out the exquisite hues of its Owner's aura. A scene never to be forgotten, a fragment of heaven flung down into earth. And the actors therein all-unconscious of the Presences in their midst! It was over; one tumbled back to earth, to friendly greetings from one and another.

I was glad to meet Sir Lawrence Jenkins, the Lord Chief Justice of the High Court of Calcutta, whose name is so often mentioned with love and gratitude by Indians, as a man whose flawless impartiality and utter absence of race-prejudice is one of the assets of the British Empire in India. I had the honor of a short talk with His Excellency the Viceroy, urbane and gracious as ever; as cool and far judging a brain and as warm and strong a heart as Providence gives for the rulers in great Empires, when their sway is to be secure. Why does not England take advantage of such a son, and leave him here to finish the work so splendidly begun?

In May, Mrs. Besant writes:

I have been visiting a few towns accompanied by Babu Bhagavan Das, with a view to strengthening the educational movement fostered by the T.S. in India. At Allahabad, Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, a well-known Kashmiri gentleman, generously assumed the responsibility of raising a necessary additional Rs. 2,400 for the current year, and is forming a committee of Kashmiris in the United Provinces to raise further funds for the Shri Pratap Hindu College in Srinagar, Kashmir. At Gwalior, H. H. the Mahārāja Scindhia, a very capable and energetic ruler, became a patron of the Central Hindu College, as did his mother, the Dowager Mahāranā. He also gave a definite promise of financial aid; and as H. H. has just given Rs. 100,000 to Aligarh College and another Rs. 100,000 to Sir John Hewitt for Allahabad University, we may reasonably hope that he will do no less for his co-religionists in the Central Hindu College. H.H. the Mahārāja of Bikanir has also become a patron of the College, and has given me a cordial invitation to visit his state. From Gwalior, after four Theosophical lectures, we went on to Alwar, where the young Mahārāja is devoting himself to the duties of his high office with great diligence and capacity. He is arranging a scheme for primary education in his State, and H. H. of Gwalior is also devoting much time and thought to the elaboration of a scheme which shall leave no child in his State uneducated. This spreading interest in education among Indian Chiefs is of fairest augury for the future.

Besides 'The Watch-Tower' Mrs. Besant wrote for *The Theosophist* articles on 'The Protection of Animals and Education in the Light of Theosophy', 'Liberation or Salvation', together with short chapters on 'Elementary Theosophy' which were afterward published under the title *The Riddle of Life*.

Mrs. Besant writes:

On September 25th, 1910, five of us—Mrs. Van Hook and her son, my two Indian wards and myself—left dear Adyar behind us, and steamed out of Madras by the mail for Calcutta. Kind friends brought us milk and fruit on the way, and we travelled pleasantly through the rain-drenched districts. At Calcutta, the ever-hospitable Hirendranath Datta took us in charge; and we paid a visit to the Zoological Gardens and started again for Benares in the Bombay train that same evening. The Buddha Gaya brethren brought milk and fruits for our early ‘little breakfast’; and at Moghul Serai the Cadet Corps and a wave of boys and young men broke over us and submerged us. Our heads came above water at Benares Cantonment, but we sank in deep water on the platform, while other hundreds crowded, scattering flowers like devas and hurraing like Englishmen; and we were borne along to our carriages, and slowly drove to Shanti Kunja escorted by apparently the whole College and the School.

Very prettily decorated by loving hands was my dear old home, and by some miracle of ingenuity wrought by Miss Arundale, we were all packed into it. A great festivity was planned for October 1st, and began the evening before with the clever staging and acting by the students of a Bengāli play. On the 1st, we began with a meeting in Shanti Kunja itself, where a little shrine ream was dedicated in the Names of Those we serve, and very gracious was the influence which filled it in swift response. Then to the Saraswatī Temple in the College Quadrangle, where members of the seven great faiths were gathered; and Sanskrit, Arabic, Pāli, Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese, English, Prākṛit and Gurumukhi rang out in solemn sequence from the representatives of the religions, assembled in brotherly love. Very impressive are these meetings of professors of the world faiths whom Theosophy has united into one body.

The School Hall was the next meeting place, where the Order of the Sons and Daughters of India had gathered in loving

homage to its chief, and it was good to hear the warm acclaim of the tie between England and India bursting out spontaneously from these young hearts. A golden badge of the Order and a purse of nearly Rs. 600 were presented, and I spoke of duty to the Motherland and the Empire. In the College Hall we gathered in the afternoon, and many loving words were spoken by professors, masters, boys and girls and nearly Rs. 1,000 were presented in a handsomely embroidered Indian purse from College, School and Girls' School. Here I spoke on making Truth, Courage, and Reverence our ideal of life. A pleasant Theosophical Meeting in the Hall of the Indian Section closed the day, finishing it, as it had begun, with the benediction of the Presence of the Holy Ones. The purses contents have gone as follows: Rs. 500 to the Buddhist Schools, Rs. 200 to the Panchama Schools, Rs. 200 to the Almora Hill School, founded by the C. H. C. and carried on by local devotion, and Rs. 100 to the Building Fund of a Girls' School at Bombay. Then I promise myself the pleasure of giving some long desired musical instruments to the College for our Cadet Corps, Guard of Honor and Scouts, and the balance, if any, will go to Headquarters. As the water drawn up by the sun is useless save as it gathers into clouds and returns to earth as rain, so would gifts drawn forth by love profit little unless from the receiver's hands they fall where help is needed.

After a fortnight's stay in Benares, Saharanpur, Jullundhar, Lahore, Delhi, Agra and Cawnpore are to be visited, and then follows another fortnight at Benares. His Excellency the Viceroy and Lady Minto visit the College on the 10th November, and after the 14th we return to Adyar.

Of this tour, she writes:

At Cawnpore the audience numbered 4,000. Many more English people are now attending Theosophical lectures, a good

sign, as Theosophy draws the races together. The large meeting at Lahore was a surprise, because the defection of some of the oldest and most important members in 1907-1908 had almost killed the Lodge. We had a pleasant but short visit to Jammu, where we found H. H. the Mahārāja as friendly and gracious as ever.

The Thirty-fifth Anniversary of the T.S. held at Adyar from December 26th, 1910 to January 1, 1911, has been in every way a record one. The extension in days was necessary to find room for the various activities of the movement, without intolerable hurry. The extension in numbers, the attendance of members having risen to 1,200, was comfortably met by the extension of area in the Adyar compound, and a number of rooms in the ground and second floors of Leadbeater Chambers were in use, and were much praised by their fortunate occupants. The work of Convention began on December, 26th, with my lecture on 'The Opening of the New Cycle', delivered to an audience of over 2,000, packed into our Hall and another 1,000 left outside. A Masonic meeting closed the day, the evenings being divided between the E. S. and Masonry. On the 27th the Convention sat for the Presidential address, Reports from National Secretaries and from various subsidiary activities.

In the afternoon Mr. Leadbeater answered questions and Mr. Arundale gave the first of the four Convention lectures on 'The Growth of National Consciousness in the Light of Theosophy'. Mr Arundale acquitted himself well, speaking eloquently and with intense conviction, carrying his hearers with him, and closing amid much enthusiasm. The Reports showed progress everywhere, and harmony and good feeling prevailed throughout. A vote of thanks to Brother Leadbeater for his splendid work during the year was proposed by Brother James Scott seconded by a number of members, and carried by acclamation. Questions multiplied and made a formidable pile, and after the President had laboured

at it on the 28th, Brother Leadbeater generously sacrificed himself to the eager querents on the 29th and 30th. A born teacher he is, luminous, patient, and overflowing with knowledge.

In August and September Mr. Leadbeater and myself made a series of clairvoyant investigations on the past of our earth, the moon, and of the two preceding Chains. These will be published next year in book-form, under the title *Man: Whence, How and Whither?* We hope that the volume will prove useful to students, and will perhaps throw light on some of the questions arising out of the study of *The Secret Doctrine*. The first part of the *Universal Textbook of Religion and Morals* is now on sale. The Convention concluded on January 1st with an E. S. meeting, 46 initiations into the T. S., and a lecture from myself on 'The White Lodge and its Messengers'. Owing to the impossibility of accommodating the crowd in the Hall, the lecture was delivered under the Banyan Tree; and the benediction which fell on those whose hearts were tuned to a subject so inspiring, ended the memorable Convention of 1910.

The President, with Mr. Leadbeater and others, left for Burma on January 12th, 1911, and put in substantial work there. About a dozen public lectures and as many members' meetings were held, and Sons of India and Masonic Lodges had their share also. From Moulmein she wrote:

Our visit here was of only two days, but two lectures were given to very interested audiences, and a number of Burmans attended the second lecture on 'The Noble Eightfold Path', and seemed to enjoy it. It was pleasant to see their kindly faces break into smiles when some point was made that strongly impressed them. We left Moulmein for Rangoon, where the lectures on 'Zoroastrianism' and 'Islam' were well attended. On the 30th we had a Lodge meeting and an address on 'Temperance'. Alas, that such

an address should be needed in Buddhist Burma! We also visited a school for Buddhist girls, maintained for the last sixteen years by Ma Hla Sung, a wealthy Buddhist lady. She is not, unfortunately, supported in her good work by her co-religionists, and deserves the more credit in that she stands alone. She also maintains a school for Buddhist boys.

Having returned from Burma, the narrative goes on:

Miss Wilson, my two Indian wards and myself left beautiful Adyar on March 22nd, in the motorcar so generously given to me by Mr. and Mrs. Leo. For the last time for many months to come I drove the car which has proved so faithful a servant, never misbehaving, and with absolutely no injury to its account to man, animal or object, since it arrived in 1909.

After lecturing to exceptionally large audiences in Calcutta, one of which was attended by Lady Hardinge, they reached Benares and settled down for a brief stay of three weeks. On April 21st, 1911, the President, with J. Krishnamurti, Nityananda and Mr. Arundale, embarked at Bombay.

In the Watch-Tower written just before leaving, Mrs. Besant wonders:

What will fill the months between the limiting dates of March 22nd and the 7th October (date of the return)? The chief objection felt to Theosophy by the very orthodox of every faith seems to arise from the fact that we believe, as living facts in the present, in the powers and the Beings in whom they traditionally also believe, relegating them to the safe seclusion of the past. The orthodox Hindu believes in Avatāras and Rshis in the past, but grows furiously angry with the Theosophist who believes in such Beings as active Agents in the world-process now; the Pārsī

believes in a Prophet safely away in inaccessibility, but violently abuses the Theosophist who believes that a great Prophet may arise today; the Christian believes in Christ 'ascended into heaven', 'with flesh'; but is much annoyed with the Theosophist who believes in a visible return of that Christ on earth. Why? Why may we not agree to differ, and follow our respective tastes? Because of the fact that the beliefs of the various religions had become polite anachronisms, with only a bowing acquaintance with reality and life. Theosophy was sent to revivify religions, to breathe life into 'the valley of dry bones'. And there is much rattling among the skeletons naturally, as in Ezekiel's vision; but presently they shall be clothed anew with flesh, and shall stand again on their feet as living men. A new Hinduism is arising, a new Buddhism, a new Zoroastrianism, a new Christianity; but they are really the old ones as they were in their vigorous youth, awake and alive, not sleeping, comatose, dying. They arouse enthusiasm, they attract the young, they possess the future in fief. They arouse opposition—naturally; that is the inevitable reaction following upon action. We must choose between action plus reaction, and inertia. Moreover, a certain amount of inertia is useful. One particularly unpleasant part of the reaction is the unclean mud thrown by the baser sort; but that also has its part in the scheme of things, for it returns cyclically. The early Christians were accused of eating babies at their secret feasts, and the reflections of Jews on the birth of Jesus were of the most unpleasant character.

Christianity is none the worse for those whom St. Jude stigmatizes as 'filthy dreamers', and Theosophy cannot expect to escape the attention of their successors.

From London, she writes on May 12th:

Bombay gave us a noble farewell, and we passed through the entrance to the pier amid a chorus of good-byes from a crowd

of friends, through the medical inspection to the launch, from the launch to the ship Mantua, where we quickly settled down for the voyage. The P. & O. Co. is an old friend, and its stewards efficiently catered for our vegetarian party, attracting thereby some Indian travellers who asked to be allowed to join us. The passengers requested a lecture between Bombay and Aden, and I spoke on 'Reincarnation', and so gave rise to many questions during the voyage. My Indian charges proved quite good sailors; and for myself, it is the first voyage in my life during which I have not once been ill. On May 5th we arrived in England. Alcyone and Mizar are with me at Mrs. Bright's; Mr. Arundale sleeps at my son's, but is with us all day; Shri Prakasha is staying for a while in the hospitable home of Mr. and Mrs. Leo. All are well, and adapting themselves to the new conditions. A generous friend has put a motorcar at my service for three months, an immense boon in this city of huge distances.

Shri Prakasha and I visited the house lately opened for Indian students and societies in Cromwell Road, and had an interesting talk with Mr. Arnold, the Educational Adviser. Mr. Arnold is eminently fitted for his work by his keen sympathy and wide heart, and he is laboring against many difficulties. The rush of Indian students some years ago, who came over without proper guardianship and control, has led to much trouble. Some left the University with debts unpaid, and some injured their country's good name by loose behavior. Oxford practically closed itself against them; and Mr. Arnold, after prolonged efforts, has only lately succeeded in persuading one college after another to open its doors to them. Now only four remain obdurate. It remains for a better class of students to win respect for their country, and affection for themselves.

The first country work began with a visit to Oxford. Two public lectures were given in the Town Hall to good audiences; and a garden party at which Mr. Arundale and myself spoke on the

'Order of the Star in the East' occupied one afternoon. An E.S. meeting completed the work. On the 23rd we went to Manchester, where the League of Liberal Christian Thought was holding a four days' Conference. It was surely significant that the President of the Theosophical Society was asked to deliver the closing address on the 'Emergence of a World Religion'. The Rev. Mr. Campbell presided at a great meeting in the Free Trade Hall, which was roused to much enthusiasm.

On May 24th we motored from Hale to Bidston through a beautiful undulating and well-wooded country, in all the charm of the fresh green of spring. The rolling sweep of emerald meadows, the dropping yellow rain of the laburnum, the mauve of the lilac, the white and rosy snow of the hawthorn, the golden glory of the gorse, the brilliant plume of the broom, the white spike of the chestnut, brooded over by the calm serenity of the English countryside, made a scene as fair and peaceful as the eye could wish to rest upon. England cannot boast of snowy peaks or rushing torrents, but for rich and gracious beauty her landscape cannot be excelled. And it has a certain intimate and home-like aspect, with its butter-cup-flecked fields and its many-hued hedgerows, that distinguishes it from other lands.

Bidston Priory, a delightful house surrounded by beautiful grounds, is the residence of Mr. Joseph Bibby, a Theosophist of many years standing. It is near Birkenhead, Liverpool's twin city, the Mersey rolling between the two towns. Mr. and Mrs. Bibby had invited the Theosophists of the neighborhood to a garden party, and there was a large gathering, which was first fed intellectually by myself and then physically with tea and innumerable cakes. A little later we betook ourselves to Liverpool for a lecture presided over by Sir Benjamin Johnson and listened to by a large audience. I spoke on 'The Masters and the Way to Them', and it was interesting to note how the audience gradually changed from

cool attention to warm enthusiasm, warmer than a Liverpool audience is wont to show.

The next day we were in London once more, but not for long, as we leave on the 29th for Scotland. The large Memorial Hall, Farringdon St., was well filled on May 26th for the meeting of the Fabian Society, which I addressed on the subject, 'England and India'. Mrs. Sidney Webb presided. The opening of the Psychological Research Club on May 29th was a very successful function, and the rooms were crowded to excess. In a five minutes speech, I declared the Club open, and then conversation became general. Among those present were Mr. A. P. Sinnett, Mr. W. T. Stead, Lady Churchill, Lady Emily Lutyens, Mr. and Mrs. Hugo Ames, Mrs. Talbot Clifton, Miss Bright and many well-known Theosophists and Spiritualists and Psychological Researchers of all types. The Club has already 400 members. Later in the evening came the Women Writers' dinner, where gathered a great crowd of distinguished women, most of them very fashionably dressed and not at all recalling the 'bluestocking' of one's girlhood, though many were of the most cerulean hue in reality. It was interesting to meet again Mrs. Flora Annie Steel, and the wife of noble William Sharpe, and to see in the flesh many who were only names before. But a dinner, as a dinner, is a wearisome function; though in this case it was brightened for me by the interesting reminiscences of the veteran Mrs. Belloc on one side, and a pleasant discussion on reincarnation and clairvoyance with Mrs. Walter Fowler on the other. The two gatherings were not an altogether desirable prelude to the all-night journey to Scotland, but the train rocked me to sleep quite comfortably.

Right on to Aberdeen we travelled and arrived promptly to time at the granite town of the grey north. If the houses were of grey granite, the hearts that welcomed us were of rosy hue; and we had first a members' meeting and then a public one which grew into warm enthusiasm. The chair was taken by the Rev. A. Stuart

Martin, B.D., who made a very interesting speech, showing the value of Christianity of the Gnostic element, now represented by Theosophy. From Aberdeen we went to Dundee. Mr. Graham Pole, the General Secretary, who had flown up to Aberdeen for the afternoon, flown back to Edinburgh for business, and once more back to Dundee, presided; and we had a very full meeting. On June 1st we went to Leven, where there was a garden party at the beautiful home of our host, Mr. Christie, at Dune. In the evening came a lecture in a crowded schoolhouse in Leven. On the following afternoon we motored to Perth, thirty miles away, after a game of croquet, in which I revived memories of more than forty years ago. It was a delightful drive through a country less rich but more picturesque than that through which we drove from Hale to Bidston. The distant hills lent dignity to the horizon; and the varied tints of fir and pine and larch, clothing the nearer slopes, reminded us that we were in a northern clime. We passed through a thickly wooded ravine with a tumbling brook, a Kashmir gorge in miniature, and along a winding undulating road full of charm.

At Perth we held the usual two meetings, and then home again through the slowly deepening dusk. Even at ten o'clock the daylight had not quite faded. On June 3rd we regretfully bade good-bye to our kindly hosts, and started for Edinburgh, arriving before noon. There we scattered, Mrs. Hay kindly taking charge of Alcyone, Mizar, Mr. Arundale and myself; Mrs. Stead, who had accompanied us throughout, bearing off Miss Bright; Miss Arundale, who had joined us at Edinburgh mothered Shri Prakasha; and Miss Sharpe, who came up for the first Annual Convention of the Society in Scotland, found her home in the Theosophical family of the Pagans. Saturday afternoon was busy. At 2 p.m. I had the pleasure of opening the new Headquarters, a very fine and spacious house in Great King Street, secured at an extraordinarily low price by the rapid action of the able General Secretary, who picked it up with Adyar-like activity when it was offered for sale. The

Convention followed the opening, and the business went through without a ruffle, the officers being unanimously re-elected with much enthusiasm, which their good work had fully earned. The inevitable photograph succeeded Convention, and then we were comforted with tea. The day closed with a lecture to a crowded audience.

Today we are on our way to Forfar, where a good Scotch clergyman has been bitterly attacking Theosophy and has thus awakened much interest in it, responded to by the National Society by sending lecturers to his parish . . . At Forfar we were the guests of the hospitable Mr. and Mrs. Buchanan, and the Lodge meeting was held in their pleasant garden. Later in the evening there was a good-sized gathering which listened with intense interest to the 'Value of Theosophy to Christianity'. On the following day we took train to Glasgow, and I addressed a large members' meeting in the Lodge room, and at 8 p.m. there was an immense crowd to listen to a lecture on 'A World Religion'. The Rev. Canon Erskine Hill took the chair, and made a very charming speech of introduction. No speaker could wish for a more enthusiastic and intelligent audience than Glasgow gave me that evening. It was a splendid close to a successful tour, and the whole time spent in Scotland was a very happy one. Everyone was so kind and friendly, the arrangements made by the General Secretary were so thoughtfully planned and so comfortable, and he himself was the pleasantest and most helpful of companions.

Some interesting events lie ahead: a meeting with the Bishop of London; a drawing-room address at Mrs. Kerr's, whom our Adyar residents will remember; a drawing-room meeting at Lady Emily Lutyen's to meet Mr. Arthur Balfour, where I am to give an address; a lecture at the Literary Lyceum Club and one to the Islamic Society; a garden party and address at Mrs. Russell's, Haslemere; and a drawing-room address at Dover Castle on the invitation of the Constable's wife. We had a wonderful meeting at

Queen's Hall on June 11th, the first of a course of lectures to be delivered there. The great Hall was packed from floor to ceiling, it was a most inspiring sight, and a most inspiring audience. Some hundreds were turned away, unable to find room; so that our fears that the Hall would prove too large were entirely dissipated.

We left London by the 9 a.m. train for Paris on June 12th, 1911, and had a smooth passage from Dover to Calais. The General Secretary met us at Amiens, and a large crowd of members had gathered at the Paris terminus to give us welcome. The work began with an E.S. meeting that evening, and two lectures, to members only, followed on the 13th and 14th. Some 600 members had gathered in Paris for the meetings, and it was therefore impossible to hold them as usual in the Headquarters of the Society. So the hall in which I had given a Public lecture in 1909 was hired for the members, and we had two very pleasant meetings. We were all astounded by the wonderful success of the Sorbonne lecture. The vast amphitheatre was packed in every corner, and standing crowds filled the passages, some 4,000 in all. We came through hundreds who, it seems, could not succeed in gaining admission. It was a wonderful sight, for the hall is magnificent. It is semi-circular, the roof a single immense arch; so that the auditors are packed, tier after tier, and present one sea of faces to the speaker. Two large galleries carry the crowd up to the very roof. The lecture, 'The Message of Giordano Bruno to the Modern World' roused the enthusiasm of the audience.

In *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* (pp. 390-91), we read: 'In 1910, Mr Arundale has started among the boys of the Central Hindu College a private Order called, "the Order of the Rising Sun of India." It was intended to draw together those of his scholars who believed in the near coming of a great Teacher, and he did not expect it to spread beyond the limits of the College. The Trustees did not approve of this activity. On 11 January 1911, the

Order was made public, because Mrs. Besant found that many people “were ready for such a society.” In July she changed the name to “Order of the Star in the East,” and asked Krishnamurti to be its Head. Combined with this activity was a group of people devoted to Mrs. Besant and prepared to assist her in every way. By 1912 the Order was re-grouped with Krishnamurti, Mrs. Besant and Mr. Leadbeater and others as the inner group, using purple insignia, then a second group wearing golden yellow shalws, and third, the general bulk of the members. The Order declared as its main Principles: 1. Expectation of the Coming of a Great Teacher; 2. Special individual preparation and service done “in His Name.” 3. The Order started a magazine called the *Herald of the Star*, edited by Krishnamurti. As mentioned in *Krishnamurti; the Years of Awakening*, ‘the establishment of the Order of the Star in the East resulted in a more serious schism, Rudolph Steiner in Germany being one of the important members to break away, taking most of the German Lodges with him to form his own Anthroposophical Society.’

In 1912, Mrs Besant founded the Temple of the Rosy Cross, a ceremony which was performed at the Krotona Centre in Hollywood, California. In that same year she founded the Order of Theosophical Sannyasis. She reported hearing (clairaudiently) the oration of Pythagoras while at Taormina, in Italy.

There were problems in Germany. Dr Rudolph Steiner, General Secretary of the German Section, was denying membership of the TS to those who were members of the Order of the Star in the East, in contravention of the TS Constitution. Below are the proceedings of the General Council of the TS regarding on the matter of Dr Steiner’s policies. (From the *Annual Report of the Theosophical Society for 1912.*)

Admission to a National Society must not be refused to any applicant of good character who accepts the Objects, and is willing

to be bound by the Rules, of the T. S. The words “of good character” were objected to by several members of the Council in letter and speech, as implying distrust of the candidate’s sponsors, on whom the responsibility of his fitness should rest, and they were withdrawn: the votes then were: Yes – 26. No – 1. No vote – 6.

iii. What is to be done to carry out Rule 32, as in Switzerland?

iv. What is your opinion as to the issue of a charter to German Switzerland, not including the Lodges of Neuchatel and Lugano?

v. Can you suggest any way of preserving liberty of opinion in Germany, and of softening Dr. Steiner’s hostility to the P. T. S. [Parent Theosophical Society] and Adyar, and of removing the false impressions current in Germany?

Opinions were various, and it was decided to let the question stand over till the whole question as to Germany had been considered.

4. Khan Bahadur N. D. Khandalavala read a reply that he proposed to write to Dr. Steiner in answer to his letter to the members of the General Council, printed as Appendix B. Most of the points mentioned therein were thought to be very well taken, but it was considered preferable that the Council should not enter into a controversy with one of its members, but should decide on the materials before it, while Judge Khandalavala might send his letter to Dr. Steiner in his individual capacity as a member of the General Council.

5. The Recording Secretary read the following telegrams received from Berlin, signed by the German Executive, except the General Secretary, and unsigned ones from Lodges sent from Bale, Milan and Vienna:

Berlin, 11th December, 1912.

“To the Recording Secretary Mr. J. R. Aria for the General Council, T. S., Adyar, Madras.

“The Executive Committee of the German Section T. S. assembled in extraordinary Meeting in Berlin on December 8, 1912,

recognises in the proceedings of the P. T. S. a continual objective distortion and misrepresentation of facts contradicting the highest principle of the T. S., the demand of truthfulness. Basing upon the recognition that the President has continually and even systematically violated this highest principle of the T. S. 'No religion higher than truth,' and has abused the Presidential power in arbitrary way, thus hindering positive work, the Executive Committee here assembled, after minutest examination of documents, can only see in the resignation of the President the possibility of further existence of the Society. The detailed documentary proof will be sent shortly by the Executive Committee of the German Section to the Lodges.

We beg to submit this telegram to the thirty-seventh Convention T. S. The Executive Committee of the German Section here present unanimously: Scholl, Unger, Bauer, Arenson, Waudrey, Grosheintz, Noll, Kiem, Wagner, Kolbe, Noss, Smits, Kalckreuth, Sievers, Peipers, Mücke, Rainer, Monte, Tessmar, Wolfram, Seiler, Stinde, Bredow, Lerchenfeld, Hubo, Völker, Damnitz.

Bale, 19th December, 1912.

To Recording Secretary, Mr. J. R. Aria, for the General Council, T. S., Adyar, Madras.

"Assembled branches Lugano, Sangallan, Berne, Bale, Zurich, Neuchatel, blame President Besant's dissolving proceedings and protest with indignation against her unjustified accusations and misstatements regarding Dr. Steiner's activity in Switzerland. Milan, 21st December, 1912.

To Recording Secretary, Mr. J. R. Aria, for the General Council, T. S., Adyar, Madras.

"Groups Lombardia, Leonardo, Milano, Etruria, Firenze, earnestly protest against Mrs. Besant continuing President, T. S., her violating truth encouraging misrepresentations of Dr. Steiner's teachings."

Wien, 24th December, 1912.

To the Recording Secretary, Mr. J. R. Aria, for the General Council, T. S., Adyar, Madras.

“The Lodges of Vienna, Linzt, Klagenfurt, Graz, voice all round with the protest of German Executive Committee against President.”

The President remarked that as these telegrams were not signed by the General Secretaries of the respective National Societies, who were the recognised mediums of communication with the General Council, they were unconstitutional. But she advised that they should be considered.

The President also informed the Council that she had received a cable that members of the O. S. E. [Order of the Star in the East] who were Fellows of the German Section, had been expelled. She had cabled for further information. She also laid before the Council the refusals of Dr. Steiner in his own handwriting to charter Lodges, the members of which did not work in the method approved by the German Section. The Council strongly disapproved of that behaviour of the German General Secretary, and the following was proposed by Mr. Hunt, Representative of Australia, seconded by Mrs. Sharpe, Representative of England and Wales, and supported by the General Secretary for Burma:

That having before it the fact of the expulsion of a number of members of the T. S. from the German Section on the ground of opinion; the refusal of admission to others on similar grounds; the refusal to issue a Lodge Charter to Dr. Hübbe-Schleiden and other members of the Section in good standing; the hostility expressed to the President; and the insulting telegrams sent by the German Executive Committee and its adherents in other lands:

Resolved: That this General Council, seeing no other way of meeting the difficulty raised, advises the President to cancel under Rule 36 the Charter issued to the German Section.

Carried unanimously, Bohemia not voting.

Annie Besant mentioned the matter in her Presidential Address to the Convention held in 1912:

In last year's Address I referred to the difficulties which had arisen in India, and had caused some retardation in the progress of our movement in this sacred land, the Motherland of the true Founders of the Society. Those difficulties have been accentuated during the past year, and as some members of the Society have taken part in the accentuation, we cannot expect here the joyous report of progress which comes from other lands. There has been a certain discouragement felt, which has been shown by the falling into dormancy of an exceptionally large number of members. Nor must we readily blame these weaker brethren. It is hard to stand firmly and quietly against continued defamation, especially when libels printed here are reprinted in America, and circulated in many languages over the whole of the civilised world. The tireless malignity which has its centre at Point Loma has been exceptionally active, and has deluged every country with articles so unclean and so mendacious that one stands amazed at the spectacle. As you know, I have uttered no word against Mrs. Tingley, the head of Point Loma, during the seven years of her ceaseless attacks. Although the filthy literature written by her secretary, and circulated from her centre, was sent to every city in which I lectured in America, and was placed in the Reading Room of every hotel I stayed at, and though I was urged by the Press to answer, I never spoke a single word against her. European Consuls, Government officials, clergymen, teachers, in every part of Europe, have been circularised by her agents in many languages. Indian officials from the highest to the lowest have received her pamphlets. From European countries, from Java, Hongkong, Shanghai, from the cities of Australasia and New Zealand, reprints of foully worded articles without printers' names and with mendacious headings have been sent to me, all from the same source. Gross misrepresentations of my teaching, made by printing a part of a sentence and suppressing the context, have been circulated. Mrs. Tingley has been

asked to finance a suit against me in England, so that the present opportunity may be seized to ruin me. Through all this I have kept silence, hoping that patience and forgiveness would conquer this most cruel and wicked persecution. My hope has not been realised. In her own country, her misrepresentations have over-reached themselves, and no one now pays any attention to her. But where she is less well known, the falsehoods gain credence. Why she is animated by this malignant hatred, I have often wondered; lately I have found that she is only a tool.

Since her emissary—a well-known supporter of the anarchistic movement connected with India House in New York, whence *Free Hindustan* was issued—came to Madras, the special Indian campaign has been started. This also I met with silence, the silence that I have lately been compelled to break. On what is passing in the law-courts my lips are at present sealed. I notice that at least three Indians desire that I should be left to fight out this battle unassisted and alone, as a personal matter. I have naught to say against that policy, if it be the will of the Theosophical Society. I have never found in the past, when I won credit and wrought successfully in public work, that the T. S. was anxious to dissociate itself from that credit and success, and to proclaim that these were personal matters; and there is perhaps something a little less than generous in the wish to leave me alone when danger threatens. But I am the first to desire that any crown I win may be given to the Society, and that any stones flung at me may strike myself alone. So I thank the three Indian members who take this line. Moreover, I agree with them that Mr. Naraniah's suit against myself *is* a personal matter, although his counsel gave as a reason for the transfer of the suit from Chingleput to Madras High Court, that "the tenets of the T. S." would come into the suit. The T. S. has no tenets, and I shall take care that its absolute neutrality in all matters of opinion shall be scrupulously guarded. I am, however, most grateful for the love and sympathy expressed by officials of the T. S., by Lodges and Fellows, in this connection, for these are indeed, a real help, and a time of trial shows one's true friends. The T. S., with very few individual exceptions, shows itself to be such a friend.

While Mr. Naraniah's suit is a personal matter, the action taken by me in defence of the Headquarters and the T. S. concerns the Society itself. And wherever its honour and good name are attacked, I shall in future, as President, defend that honour and good name in the Press and in the law-courts, wherever the assailant is worth noticing; I will no longer silently permit mud to be thrown on the Society, but will use such honourable means of defence as are available, for to the level of the traducers I cannot stoop.

I have hitherto followed, as President, the practice I followed as teacher, bearing silently all slander and insult. This I shall continue to do where these are directed only against myself personally. But I think it has been a mistake to show this forbearance in the office of President, and where the T. S., which is placed in my charge, is concerned, I shall henceforth play the part of the warrior who protects. If the T. S. disapproves of this policy, it can very easily show its disapproval by instructing its General Council during the coming year not to propose my name for re-election as President in 1914.

In one Section, out of twenty-two, there is trouble – the German. I say in one Section only, because the trouble in India is not from the Section, but from a handful only of individuals. The German General Secretary, educated by the Jesuits, has not been able to shake himself sufficiently clear of that fatal influence to allow liberty of opinion within his Section. His repeated refusals to authorise admissions of individuals and of Lodges, on the definitely stated ground that they did not work in the method of the German Section, have been laid by me before the General Council. A telegram, demanding my resignation and couched in insulting language for the benefit of the public—as people of a certain type write insults on post cards—has been sent here by his Executive Council ; three unsigned ones, purporting to be from six German Lodges in Switzerland, from some German Lodges in Austria, and from some Italian groups—whose action has been repudiated indignantly by the Italian Executive—have also come, but none of these can be regarded as official communications, since they were not sent

through the General Secretary, the only channel recognised by the Constitution. They are merely negligible personal insults. The latest unconstitutional action of the German Executive is to expel from the National Society all members of the Order of the Star in the East. The expulsion is, of course, invalid, as no member can be expelled from a Section for his opinions, but the action shows that liberty of thought is not permitted in the German Section. There are, in Germany, 540 members of the Order, but I do not know how many of these are also members of the T. S. Whether they be many or few, they have the same right to their membership in the German Section as any Lutheran or Roman Catholic. The only thing left for me to do, as President, in face of this unprecedented outrage on liberty of opinion within the T. S., is to cancel the Charter of the National Society in Germany, and then to revive it in favour of the seventeen Lodges willing to work within the Constitution of the T. S.

We must not think of this tyrannical and unconstitutional action of Dr. Steiner's followers as German, for it is totally alien from the free German spirit, and has raised revolt in Germany. Germany has been, and is a leader in independence of thought, and can never deny herself. May the new National Society follow the old German path.

From 1912 to 1914 Mrs Besant was engaged in a lawsuit brought upon her by J. Naraniah, Krishnamurti's father, who wanted back the custody of his sons (Krishna and Nityananda) which he had given her a few years earlier. The reason for the lawsuit was his claim that C. W. Leadbeater had performed an 'unnatural act' on his older son, Krishna. The evidence from the London Advisory Board of 1906, which examined the charges against CWL regarding his advice to boys, was presented in court. The presiding Judge dismissed the charges against him but declared, in a separate comment, that CWL's views on his advice to boys were 'immoral'. There was a great deal of negative press reports against both Mrs Besant and CWL and also against the TS. Some of these came from a leading

newspaper, *The Hindu*, which was fed material by people associated with Katherine Tingley who had been running a ubiquitous publicity and defamatory campaign against Besant and Leadbeater.

Mrs Besant wrote in On the Watch Tower notes in *The Theosophist*, October 1913 issue:

From January to October 1912, the most cruel slanders against my elder ward [Krishnamurti] were circulated broadcast over the whole world; in October 1912, the suit was begun which has temporarily torn my dear lads from my protection, and forced them to fly for refuge to others... The struggle has been useful, for Alcyone's name has been cleared, the T.S. has been acknowledged blameless, and all the vituperation has now, fortunately, been turned on to me. The young life I have protected goes forward unstinted, the Society uninjured, and the mud showered on me it matters not...

In the November 1913 issue of the same magazine she wrote:

The Appeal has gone against me, and the judgements – probably because the Judges did not see the witnesses – are distinctly more harsh than that of the lower Court. All that was favourable to me in Mr. Justice Bakewell's judgement has been reversed except the one fact that the crime alleged did not occur. All that was unfavourable was confirmed. My grounds of appeal to the Privy Council are, roughly, that the Court has no jurisdiction, that the mandatory injunction is in the teeth of §55 of the Specific Relief Act, and that the judgement is against the evidence.
...

But for the boys' sake, I have offered to give up my right of appeal if the legal guardian will consent to allow the education of the young men to be completed in England, and to permit a

settlement to be made upon them that will amply suffice to cover all expenses.

On January 1st, 1913, Mrs Besant transformed the Theosophist Office into the Theosophical Publishing House at Adyar which became the main vehicle for the dissemination of Theosophy for several decades to come. In that same year, she established a Theosophical Educational Trust. It was “to establish Schools and Colleges open to students of every faith, ‘without distinction of race or creed’, and in which religious instruction should be an integral part of education”. (*A Short History of the Theosophical Society*, p. 402). ‘Another important development which took place under Dr Besant’s stewardship was the establishment of three strong spiritual centres consecrated to the great ideals of Theosophy and their practical realization: Krotana (first in Hollywood, then in Ojai), The Manor in Sydney, and St Michael’s in Holland, now known as the International Theosophical Centre in Naarden. She viewed these three centres as linked to Adyar by threads of sympathy and common aspiration, and as channels for the great Powers of Goodness and Wisdom in their compassionate work for suffering humanity.’ (‘The Living Tradition: Historical Review of the TS since 1907’ by Pedro Oliveira, full text available in the link below: <https://theosophicalsociety.org.au/articles/the-living-tradition-historical-review-of-the-ts-since-1907>)

In October [1913], under “direction,” Mrs. Besant, though beset on every side, re-entered the political field. To the criticisms of friends, she replied she had left this field, “because H. P. Blavatsky wished it. She thought, and thought rightly, that under the new conditions into which I entered when I became her pupil in the Divine Wisdom, it was necessary for me to devote myself to the mastering of the Theosophical standpoint, to the adjustment of the focus of the mental and emotional eyes to the new Light. Socialist as she declared herself to be—of the Socialism of Love and not of hate—she would not have me teach Socialism, until I had seen how, in the age-long

evolution of mankind, the Socialism of child-peoples, under an autocracy of Wisdom and Love, had necessarily passed away—exquisitely beautiful and happiness-giving as it was—to make way for the struggles, the antagonisms, the wars, in which adolescent Nations hewed their ways to Individualism and Self-reliance. In the old Pythagorean way, she imposed on me silence on the subjects I cared for most, to which my public life had been devoted. She did well. For my old crude views were thrown into the fire of silence, and nothing was lost of the gold they contained: that remained.”

Mrs. Besant expressed the joy with which she now took the opportunity “to let my longue speak freely that which had been burning in my heart, and to which all led up—the Freedom of the Motherland, and the dignity of an Eastern Nation self-ruled.” In pursuance of this task Mrs. Besant decided to start a weekly paper. (A *Short History of the Theosophical Society*, pp. 405-06.)

Josephine Ransom, in her book above mentioned (pp. 409-10), mentions an important development in Mrs Besant’s work for India: the starting of the newspaper *New India*:

On 14 July Mrs. Besant bought the *Madras Standard* and registered herself as the proprietor, and on 1 August changed its name to *New India*. By the end of the year the circulation had risen from one to over ten thousand. Its popularity was due to the fact that in its pages she fearlessly gave expression to her own and to her contributors’ opinions, and freely criticised the British Government with an openness to which it was not accustomed. Having organised the newspaper, she visited towns both in the South and the North, speaking often of the Coming of a World Teacher. But the supervision and editing of the newspapers kept her very much in Madras.

Mrs. Besant decided to exclude her social and political views from the pages of *The Theosophist*, lest they hurt the susceptibilities of some readers; others protested against being thus deprived of her leading in these matters. For these subjects she used *The Commonweal* and *New India*.

On 7 April 1917, Mrs Besant founded the Order of Brothers of Service, a religious and charitable organization, in which the members are united by certain vows of service and obedience. The Young Man's Indian Association was inaugurated by her on 15 March 1914. She also started the Women's Indian Association on 8 May 1917 (White Lotus Day) with 21 members. By 1918 the membership increased to 1,400. The President was Mrs. Besant and the Secretary was Mrs Dorothy Jinarajadasa. It campaigned, among other things, for women's suffrage.

On the Watch Tower notes for the June 1918 issue of *The Theosophist*, p. 211, we read:

Mr. Gordon Pearce, Vice Principal in Collegiate School, Galle, one of Col. Olcott's foundations, started a troop of Singhalese Boy Scouts and one after another schools took up in Ceylon. Then he sent a well-trained scout to Madanapalle, and so started the movement in India. ... Now Mr. G. Pearce has come to Adyar to serve as Chief Commissioner for India.

In the On the Watch-Tower notes in *The Theosophist*, April 1921, Annie Besant reported about an educational initiative:

A very admirable Educational Conference was also held for a day and a half. On the second day the walls of the Hall [at Adyar] were covered with most interesting charts, one of which fascinated me especially, for it was a chart of India, showing the numerous Universities that were scattered over the land, when students gathered from all parts of the known world to sit at the feet of her learned men, to bathe in the Wisdom of the East. Perchance those days may yet return, when India again rears her head among the Free Nations of the world. The Theosophical Trust, and the Theosophical Fraternity in Education met at Adyar, and the

Society for the Promotion of National Education at the Young Men's Indian Association, to be adjourned hither. A very beautiful ceremony was performed one evening by the Fellowship of Teachers, studying in the National Training College. A play was also acted by students of the National High School, Guindy, under the Banyan Tree, a fitting stage for Rabindranath Tagore's *Autumn Festival*.

In July 1924, at the Queen's Hall London, the Golden Jubilee of Annie Besant's public work was celebrated. C. Jinarajadasa quoted from a letter he received for the occasion which said: 'I am amazed... this is no narrow Jubilee; it is the history of the past fifty years.' Many of her former colleagues in the social and political struggle came to pay her homage, including the well-known member of parliament, George Lansbury. Five hundred delegates representing almost every branch of progressive work attended. Dr Marion Phillips in her speech said:

Her presence, her work, her spirit belongs to the ages of heroism in the world's history. ...She has made it possible for us to believe in and to put into practice today ideas that were regarded with horror when first put before the world.

Mr Ben Tillet, M.P., said: 'Her work should live not in monuments of stone but in the monumental progress she has helped to bring.' (The Living Tradition: Historical Review of the TS since 1907')

Indian Fellow-workers offer Tributes to Dr Annie Besant on the Occasion of Her Fiftieth Anniversary of Public Life

(From *Annie Besant – Servant of Humanity*, from the *New India Staff*, 25 August 1924. Published in Madras.)

I can only give here just a few of my impressions of her. The one thing that has struck me most about her is her earnestness. She believes in what she says, and it is no easy task for anyone to dislodge her from her belief. Not only does she believe in what she says, but she acts on her beliefs with unconquerable perseverance and pertinacity. Her admirers, particularly among Theosophists, describe her as a thinker, but she does not belong to the race of thinkers whose thoughts are generally sterile. Between her thought and action there is very little distance. She conceived the idea of the revival of Hindu culture and it materialised in the shape of the Hindu College at Benares. That College, today, is the rallying centre for the best elements of Hindu thought and culture. It has expanded into a University. I do not wish to rob those who have worked for its expansion of the credit that belongs to them, but let no one rob Dr. Besant of the credit that is exclusively hers in founding and nursing the College, which has now grown into a University.

In 1915, she conceived the idea of Home Rule for India. There was general unrest in the country. We were talking of reforms, and expansion of Councils, and swore by Swaraj, but our ideas were nebulous. Her clear-thinking gave concrete shape to our undefined and indefinite ideas, resulting in an organised movement for Home Rule for India. It was not considered quite safe and respectable before the Movement began, to use such direct language. Even if there was some clear thinking on our part, we so much qualified our ideas with elegant adjectives, adverse to the main idea, that it receded into the background. Her language was downright and her actions left no choice to her powerful critics but to lodge her safely in a place from which she could do no more mischief. That, at any rate, was what they said at the time. It is now seven years ago that I, one day, in Simla, suddenly called in company with Mr. Jinnah at the room of the Law Member of those days to discuss the question of her release. Very interesting conversation passed between Sir George Lowndes, Mr. Jinnah, and myself. Telephone messages were sent

to Lord Chelmsford. I refused to stand surety for her, not on any grounds of personal safety, but because I knew that no one in the world could stand surety for her. I also knew that the mistake had been discovered, and, surety or no surety, she was going to be released.

Her latest mission to England adds one more to the long list of services she has rendered to the country of her adoption. Special Correspondents of certain newspapers have been belittling her efforts and achievements in England. The Tory Press in England has either ridiculed her efforts or ignored her. All this was expected, nor was it expected that she would come back with the gift of Swaraj from the Labor Government. But those who are privileged to know something which does not appear in public print, know that she has succeeded. At least one thing she has unsettled—the *non possumus* attitude of certain people in high quarters in England. The success of her achievement can, at the present moment, only be measured by the amount of opposition her plans have evoked, and the length of Special Correspondents' letters to Indian papers. She lives and thrives in an atmosphere of opposition, but she has nearly always conquered opposition, and her personal history may once again be repeated. Whatever spiritual peace she may have to present to her followers, the fact is that in politics she has been a restless soul. She has been a fighter. She fought in her youth, she fought in middle age and at an age when another person might be thinking of peace. This life or next, she is fighting with all the ardor of youth for her ideas of Liberty, Self-Respect, Self-Government for a country, which is not hers by birth but by adoption, and in the destiny of which she believes so completely that none can argue her out of that belief. If it is joy for her friends to see her fight for the principles of life and liberty of India, it must also be an example to her hostile critics. I believe there is still charity enough, notwithstanding our many dissensions, which will move all of us, friends and foes alike, to wish this fighter more strength to her hand and success to her campaign.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, K.S.C.I., LL. D.

She parted from Charles Bradlaugh on the question of Socialism, she became a Fabian Socialist and worked for the right of public processions and meetings, for fair wages, etc. She has known by personal experience the pangs of starvation—her earnings after separation from her husband were at first so small that they were only “enough to buy food for two” (her two children) “but not enough to buy it for three”—yet, she has never cared for money except as a means of liberally helping the poor—the poor students from Brahmana to Adidravida whom she has helped, when she and her paper *New India* were popular and prosperous, must be counted by hundreds. The net cash-balance to her personal credit at the end of each year was always practically nil. Of far more value than mere gifts of money was the heartfelt sympathy and the wise and practical advice which accompanied her gifts, so that the recipients were never demoralised and the power of self-help in them was strengthened. The exact number of Indian students who have been helped by her when they were in difficulties in the British Isles will never be known. But many such students who are now in good positions have spoken to me with gratitude for such help rendered to them by her while they were in utter despair. In this connection, I have to notice, however briefly, her service in the cause of the Education of the public through the periodical press. Her incessant contributions to numerous monthly magazines are well-known. The most important item in this work, especially in the matter of the political education of India is, of course, her editorship of *New India* during the last ten years. She has been teaching through it, not only the ordinary public but the editors and conductors of all other Indian newspapers, so that the tone of many of these has been perceptibly improved by her example, though, of course, it is, as usual, not acknowledged by those benefited thereby.

Coming next to her work of social reform (in its restricted meaning) among Hindus, it must be admitted that in the beginning of her public work in India, she looked upon Hindu social reformers with a rather suspicious and unfriendly eye. One reason was that an appreciable proportion of Hindu social reformers attacked even the fundamentals of the Hindu religion, that they considered it was all a mass of superstition and that many of them accepted the view of the Western Orientalists and of the Christian missionaries of that time that the Vedas and Upanishads were but the babblings of infant humanity, who, in their ignorant fear looked upon natural forces as Gods possessing human weaknesses. The morality of the Gods and of the Avatar of Sri Krishna were considered to be lower than that of civilised Westerners. The Asiatics as a race were also considered as inferior to Europeans in culture and civilisation. Dr. Besant, who is the pupil of a Hindu Rishi, could never accept such a perverted view of the Hindu religion and of the Asiatic races. It may be that in her impulsive enthusiasm and love, she rather idealised even the modern degenerate Hindus and the modern degenerate caste system. When she first touched India's sacred soil in 1893, and saw her brown Indian brothers and sisters moving in their natural surroundings for the first time, the latent love for India and for Indians awakened in her was of that vivid intensity which one feels who has been separated for many years from one's native land and one's kith and kin and sees them again at long last. (She has never felt for England and her white-skinned English countrymen anything like the patriotic love for India and the close feeling of kinship with Indians which she rather brought back as a recollection than felt as a fresh experience when she first landed in India.) Her Indian patriotism and her love for Indians have never wavered and have, if anything, grown during the 31 years during which she has made India her home. She was never and is not now a mere cold intellectual thinker; she is a strong-willed kshatriya soul and yet a tender woman of the keenest intelligence, and she no doubt had some of the very amiable weaknesses

of her very outstanding virtues. Charles Bradlaugh, however, had taught her that one should be the “harshest judge” of oneself...

Krishna Dasa

It is generally admitted that there is a paucity amongst public men in India of workers who can be said to be steady and commanding sustained efforts for their particular work or hobby. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, to celebrate the Jubilee of a person, who may have worked for India according to his or her honest opinions and lights for a period of fifty years. In the category of such persons Dr. Besant's name would figure prominently, and although one may not agree with all her views, or with all the work that she may have done, it would be only right to pay one's homage, at a time like the Jubilee celebration of her work, to the great industry, perseverance and patience, with which she has chosen to keep up her activities in various directions for the welfare of India. Dr. Besant's first article regarding India was penned 50 years back, 18 years before she landed here, and her interest in India has steadily increased since then.

It is easy for critics to say that Dr. Besant began as a religious teacher of Hinduism and the other religions of the East, and then diverted her energy to other fields such as educational and, ultimately, political. It is not necessary to deny that this is approximately correct. Against that it is only fair to point out that, with more experience of the problems facing India, Dr. Besant can honestly be said to have changed her field of work according to her convictions, from time to time, as to what was most necessary in the interests of India.

It is perhaps too early to be able to judge Dr. Besant's work impartially and dispassionately at present. The work and worth of every person are best judged only when that person is no more to

carry on what he or she may have been engaged in of her own sweet will and without anybody's

History alone, it is generally recognised, can do justice to the work of a public person, and it is only the generations that follow who will be able to rise above the petty jealousies and other small considerations, which may, perhaps, belittle the value of Dr. Besant's work during her lifetime.

Dr. Besant, who is not an Indian by birth, has taken such interest in the welfare of Indians as only an Indian might. She was the first Lady-President of the Indian National Congress being then the most popular leader of the people's party in India. The applause of the masses would appear for the moment to have deserted her, but her solicitude for India continues to increase with her advancing age and with the approach of critical stages which India's problems reach from year to year.

My acquaintance with Dr. Besant is comparatively recent, and the little privilege that I had of seeing her at work or of watching the results of her great industry, have impressed me enormously regarding her great powers of organisation and her capacity for sustained hard work. She has a knack of standing by her views despite popular clamor against her, and she utilises every opportunity to justify her lines of thought and action. My one impression of her great efforts on behalf of India during recent years is regarding her earnestness in the lines of thought and action that she adopts.

India needs, many many, sincere workers of such calibre and strength of mind, and it is only right that at the end of fifty years of such work Indians should express their admiration of the devotion of Dr. Besant to the cause of India and Indians.

Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, Kt., M. L. A.

To me the most remarkable thing about the illustrious woman of versatile genius and of many-sided activities, who is the subject

of this humble appreciation, is the completeness with which she has identified herself for these many years with the uplift of a people with whom she had originally nothing in common. The history of the world records no other instance of a gifted and accomplished woman, who could have made her mark in so many ways in her own country and among her own people, sacrificing her prospects in life, her ease and comfort to serve a distant and alien people. Dr. Besant, I know, resents nothing so strongly or so deeply as being called a foreigner. She has herself told us in words which it is impossible to forget, how proud she felt when the late Mr. Gokhale once called her an Indian. No words of praise, she has said, could have appealed more strongly or been more gratifying to her heart. But this very fact only proves the truth of my remark.

And not the least remarkable thing about this identification of herself with the cause of Indian uplift is that she began with religion and Theosophy, the unseen forces that govern our destiny, and while still true to those lofty causes she has almost by a process of natural evolution come, in the evening of her life, to identify herself more and more with the cause of India's political well-being, to occupy herself more and more with the human and visible forces with which India has to make her account in her endeavor to realise her secular destiny. The order is the reverse of natural, for, as a rule, men and women begin with secular affairs and end by being religious. I call it a process of natural evolution because, like so many other purely natural processes, its links have been almost imperceptible. Who can say where the Besant of the early days, when she had nothing to do with Indian politics, when a few of her speeches were actually misinterpreted as an attack upon the political endeavor of some of India's choicest spirits, ended, and the Besant of the later days, the brave, dauntless and indefatigable mother of the Home Rule Movement, began? The logical and practical connection between the two he that runs can see. To so acute a mind as Mrs. Besant's it could not but become clear, as time passed, that the

spiritual salvation of the Indian people, so dear to her heart, was essentially and inseparably linked up with their secular salvation, and that nothing was more needful for this secular salvation than political and civic liberty, the freedom of the Indian people to manage their own affairs and to grow to the full height of their manhood. But the steps of this process of realisation are almost hidden from the naked eye.

Be its successive links what they may, the process itself marks a decisive step in India's onward march, the commencement of the final stage in the great battle for Liberty, on which India has now entered. Many are the great men who have toiled, in Mrs. Besant's own words, wrought for India's Freedom. The first were the great Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal and Swami Dayanand Saraswati in Upper India. The next in order were the noble band who founded the Indian National Congress and nursed it in its early days with true filial devotion. Then came the new School of Thought, as Lord Minto called it, of which Tilak was the high priest with Lajpat and Arabindo (sic) and Bipin as his comrades and associates. It is no injustice to any of these to say that, with the sole exception of Tilak, not one of them has done more or even as much to make Indian Home Rule the battle-cry of a united Nation as Mrs. Besant. It was literally like a meteor she rose in India's political sky and the splendor with which she shone for a time seems to overshadow all other workers, again with the exception of Tilak himself. Nor was hers a service of mere intellect. She was one of those, then not too many, who stood equally the test of sacrifice and suffering—the most crucial of all tests. Her suffering was not as great as Tilak's, but then she was older and the very fact of her being a woman made her sacrifice of unique value and importance.

It is not within my province in this short article to say which of the pair did most for Indian Freedom. It is at least undeniable that for about a year before the Calcutta Congress, over which Mrs. Besant presided, she was the foremost in the public eye, the centre from

which all Home Rule activities seemed to radiate, the personification of India's unquenchable desire and undying determination to be free. Nor although the actual leadership of the Congress, which is still India's only National and representative assembly, has since passed into other hands has she for a moment ceased to work on behalf of India and for the success of the great cause she has made her own, now for nearly a decade. The idea of the CONVENTION originated with herself and of the Indian Deputation, which is now on a visit in England and which, judging even from the meagre reports of its work, has been unceasing in its effort to induce the British Government and British statesmen to do that justice in India which is long overdue. She is the heart, the head and the soul. This arduous labor at an age when most persons even of the sterner sex would seek repose, is the crowning triumph of a life filled with splendid achievements and consecrated to noble purposes. That much tangible good will come out of her latest efforts immediately, I, for one, do not believe. But such efforts do not and cannot go in vain. When the moment of victory comes, as it is bound to come before long, one of the names that will be inscribed on the banner of Free and Self-Governing India in imperishable letters is that of the great woman whose Jubilee a grateful country is celebrating to-day.

Kali Charan Roy, Editor, *The Tribune*, Lahore

It must have been a youthful philosopher of the *blasé* brigade who said: "Youth's a dream, middle age a delusion and old age a mistake." There are doubtless people whose absence from the world's stage is not likely to be too poignantly felt, but her bitterest critic will hardly dare to include Dr. Besant, who has just concluded fifty strenuous years of public life, among that number. It gives me all the greater pleasure to pay my tribute of appreciation on this occasion that, in the mutations of Indian politics, the relations between Dr. Besant and *The Hindu* have often been those of acute conflict.

To have completed fifty years of incessant activity in public life and, at an age that has overpassed the allotted span of humanity, to continue to hold aloft with unpalsied fingers the banner of a just fight, is a record that is unique and indicative of a vitality so tremendous as to command the respect and even reverence of weaker beings. To parallel it in any degree, one must hark back to that tremendous effort that Gladstone made in his Midlothian Campaign. But even that was spasmodic. If one can envisage a Midlothian Campaign sustained through fifty years, one may gather some idea of the enormous dynamic force that Dr. Besant has represented in her public career.

But there have been others whose activities, perhaps, have been as incessant and unflagging as Dr. Besant's, and yet whom history will not acclaim as having added to the sum-total of human happiness. In Dr. Besant's record, you find no years that the locusts have eaten, for they have been years of chivalrous championship of the underdog, years dedicated to making the world saner, purer and happier. The cause of injustice has ever found in her a deadly and unrelenting opponent, and one pictures her as a feminine S. George questing out for dragons to slay. It gives one some hope for the future of humanity that she was able to slay a good few of them.

Energy is good and a fondness for the Right is better, but the one might be misdirected and the other might tail off into an emotional spasm but for the courage that stands undismayed in the face of odds. And of this quality Dr. Besant is blessed in abundant measure. It has been her experience in India, when she directed her activities to securing our political emancipation, in a few short years, to reach both the zenith and the nadir of her popularity. It would be untrue to say that she was not exalted or encouraged in the former state, for that would attribute to her a cold, passionless superhumanity that is belied by the passionate warmth with which she launched herself into each fresh humanitarian adventure. But it would certainly be true to say that she faced unpopularity with a heart, sorrow-stricken

perhaps, but undismayed. This is not the occasion for weighing political programmes, but wrong, as I believe Dr. Besant was in her policy towards the Reforms and in the details of her campaign against Non-Cooperation, sometimes unfair and uncharitable, I must pay a tribute to the courage with which Dr. Besant maintained a point of view which she believed was the right one. For courage is a quality less often to be picked up on the waysides in Indian Politics than one would desire.

On this occasion one is tempted to speculate as to how much pleasanter and how much more potent politics would be, if we could import into it some element of charity. The world may be too much with us, but need we always succumb to its littleness, to its mean-souled scale of values? We must be in the right, for without that conviction all action is inhibited; but need those who do not think with us necessarily be actuated by motives less worthy than our own?

This is not the place nor the time to attempt an estimate of the value of Dr. Besant's contribution to the cause of Indian Regeneration. When men acquire a truer sense of perspective, she will take her rightful place, but meanwhile it would not be unprofitable to take to heart the lessons of Dr. Besant's life work. Unremitting energy, patience, infinite faith and indomitable courage are qualities which ought to make some appeal to people who are perhaps inclined to be fretfully impatient for results. To the impatient, to the faint of heart to whom the path is thorny and the journey a weariness of spirit, Dr. Besant's record of achievement and service will serve as a beacon-light of hope and encouragement.

S. Rangaswami Aiyangar, B. A.
Editor, *The Hindu*, Madras

Dr. Annie Besant easily takes, by common consent, a very high rank among the foreigners who, by their consecrated service

to this ancient land, have earned the gratitude, love and reverence of Indians. On account of her long and intimate association with us in all our National Movements, Religious, Social and Political, we have indeed forgotten that she is a foreigner and cheerfully assigned to her an honored place among our great National Leaders. Her contributions to the National life of the people of Bharatavarsha are many and varied. There is no sphere of National activity which has not claimed her attention. When she first set foot on Indian soil, the young men of this country, who came under the influence of middle nineteenth century European culture as interpreted by two different sets of European teachers—the secular educationist and the religious missionary—had their faith in their National culture and traditional religion undermined. Some of them were drawn towards free thought and secularism, while others were attracted to Christianity. Among the causes that contributed to stem that tide of denationalisation I am disposed to place in the forefront the gospel of the revival of Hinduism which Mrs. Besant preached with rare insight and marvellous power. Not only did she expound the spiritual truths that lay embedded in the ancient Hindu Scriptures with a clearness and lucidity which is her own, but she also unravelled the mysteries of our ceremonialism and ritual so as to put new life and meaning into them. There will be always critics who estimate differently the real spiritual and rational values of her teachings, but it cannot be denied that many who had already lost their faith in their religion were helped to regain it by the influence she exercised over them by her teachings. This is a lasting achievement to her credit.

The Theosophical Educational Trust and the Society for the Promotion of National Education organised by her, afford clear proof of her true insight into the real educational needs of the country. She did much more than what a single individual can do to promote them, and the blame for not making them a successful as she wished them to become rests on us, for whose

benefit she launched the schemes.

Dr. Besant's contribution to the cause of political freedom of India and the part she took and is taking in the struggle for that freedom are too well known to require reiteration. I believe that her first active participation in the work of the Indian National Congress began in 1914. The circumstances which brought her into the Congress fold and the reasons that induced her to join the Congress furnish the real clue to her political faith. After the Surat Split, the two wings of the Congress politicians did not come together for some years. The Moderates had possession of the Congress and the Nationalists, under the leadership of Lokamanya Tilak, held aloof.

Mrs. Besant then saw that the fight for India's Freedom could never be carried to a successful issue unless we had a united Congress. She exerted all her influence to bring the "Moderates" and "Extremists" together at Madras, in 1914. She then appeared on the Congress platform and moved the Resolution regarding the position of Indians in the Colonies. Let me quote one sentence from that speech in which her political creed is summed up: "India claims the right as a Nation to Justice among the peoples of the Empire. India asked for this before the War. India asked for it during the War. India will ask for it after the War, but not as a reward, but as a right does she ask for it. On that there must be no mistake." She believes in a Commonwealth of Self-Governing Nations within the British Empire. National Autonomy inside a coming Federation of the British Empire is her watch-word. She is an Imperial Nationalist. She stands for nothing less than full Dominion Status for India. She never questioned the birthright of Indians to Home Rule, and she never denied the capacity of Indians to govern themselves. As in 1914, so now, she pleads for unity among all ranks of politicians. Differences of opinion in politics are inevitable, but all of us can surely combine in matters in which we agree and impart to our fight for Freedom all the strength and

inspiration which it can gain by combined action. Mrs. Besant pleads for such combination. I cannot do better than close this appreciation with the following words of one of her Biographers: "A magnetic personality, a finished orator, a capable organiser, endowed with large powers of imagination and sympathy and with a very rare combination of the subtle wisdom of the diplomat with the fervor of the prophet, Mrs. Besant's influence over a very large section of our educated countrymen has been hardly less than that of any other leader of thought in India of the present generation."

V. Ramadas, B. A., B. L., F. M. U.

I consider it a privilege to be asked to write about Dr. Annie Besant on the occasion of the celebration of her Jubilee, at the completion of fifty years of her public life. It is by no means easy to write about her. One feels overcome with one's inability to do full justice to the task. Were a layman to write about her and take a review of her work in the course of fifty strenuous years, during which, in some sphere or another, she has striven to serve humanity, and were he to assume the role of the severest critic scrutinising most minutely her contributions in different directions, I am afraid it would be difficult even for a not very friendly critic to avoid the conclusion that she is one of the few of our age, who, starlike, shines far above her fellow-beings, for she has striven to serve them, to uplift them, and all that the world may hold dear she has sacrificed at the altar of one supreme goal, Service to Humanity. And yet, for one who is not her follower, it is less difficult to write and speak about her than it is for one, like me, whose greatest privilege and joy in life is to rank among her numerous followers, as one, humble and weak, but yielding to none in his longing to be of use to her in the wonderful task she has undertaken. In the past, it has often fallen to my lot to write and speak about her. And yet at the end of every article or speech that I have written or made, I have been painfully conscious of my

failure to do full justice to her. However, it is no fault of mine if I have failed in the past, and if, as I am afraid, I may fail again. For, to recognise greatness to its fullest extent in a leader, one must have, latent or manifest, the germs of that greatness in oneself.

I need not apologise for prefacing my article on Dr. Besant with these remarks, because I wish it clearly to be understood that if my estimate falls short, it will be due to my unworthiness and unfitness to comprehend all that is great in her. It has been my privilege to be connected intimately with Dr. Besant. She is my Chief, my leader. I wonder if it is possible to give my definition of the word Leader. I am afraid, in these days of cheap notoriety, the word *Leader* has come down from the sacred pedestal it occupied in Indian thought to be regarded as a term to be exploited through lip-profession, by vulgar politicians. As a leader, Dr. Besant means to me an ideal for the sake of whose service everything must be sacrificed. And that act of sacrifice, whatever earthly consequences it may bring, should become a source of the greatest inner joy, strength and peace. Dr. Besant is primarily my spiritual leader, my Guru. Along with me, there are numerous men and women in India, of whom many may be Theosophists and others not, who will be prepared to admit that in restoring amongst Indians pride in India's past, faith in India's ancient religion and culture, and the consequent yearning to strive to make her future brighter and mightier than her past, all of which had been almost irretrievably lost, Dr. Besant would claim the most prominent share. I have referred above to the wonderful task she has undertaken.

What is that task? Throughout fifty years of her public life, there is one and only one goal which she has placed in front of her mind's eye—Service to Humanity. Before she became a Theosophist, when she was not sure of the existence of God, in her Atheism, she preached the necessity of service to our "forlorn" brethren and sisters. And she practised what she preached. When Theosophy supplied to her the key to the problems of life, she still preached and

practised the same ideal of service to humanity, no longer “forlorn,” because she believed in the existence of Higher Powers who always stretch out Their protecting hands to the most miserable of our kind, but because she believed that the path of service to our fellow-beings was the path whereby man may realise the Self within him, may come in contact with someone or other of Those Great Guardians of Humanity, one of Those Perfect Men Whose sole aim it is to enable Humanity through the instrumentality of Their agents on the physical plane to strive and attain perfection through gradual evolution.

It is but natural that Christianity, as crudely and inaccurately interpreted by the Church, should not only have failed to satisfy a keen and acute intellect like Dr. Besant’s, but should also raise doubts and opposition in her zealous and searching mind. Her unbelief in religion did not prevent her from applying all her wonderful energy, organising power, industry and other resources to the task of freeing men and women from slavery, whether it was found at home or in the factory, in the political, social or religious sphere. She revolted against tyranny of every kind and preached freedom in thought and action considering it the *sine qua non* of human progress and human happiness. Whenever she came into conflict with the authorities while carrying on her mission, she defied them, fighting them from the legal standpoint, declaring that no authority on the surface of the earth had a right to infringe on human freedom of thought and action. While even today in Great Britain we do not perceive a universal belief in the ideal of the realisation of the God within himself by man, for which the East, both Buddhism and Hinduism, stands, we do discern the result of the pioneer work done by Dr. Besant and her colleague, the chief of whom was Charles Bradlaugh, in the acceptance of the ideal, not spiritual in its ultimate aim, as understood in the East, but spiritual inasmuch as it is selfless from the individual standpoint, the ideal of striving, with every effort and sacrifice, to make all the classes materially happy.

After becoming a Theosophist in 1889, Dr. Besant embraced Hinduism and to this day she is a Hindu by religion. Being religious since her very childhood, she found in Hinduism all answers to the numerous questions born in her questioning and searching mind—questions which were left unanswered by the teachings of the Church Christianity. On her arrival in India, she took no time in grasping the fact that while India inherited a wonderful ideal, she had temporarily gone to sleep, and while the multitude slept the young Western-educated Indians were beginning to lose pride in their ancestors' past and faith in their ancient religion and culture. The restoration of these engaged her first attention. In her speeches and writings, she extolled the religions of the East and created a fervor for them by declaring that, shorn of the prejudices and superstitions that a period of civil war, mutual misunderstandings and consequent ignorance had helped to gather round them, they were the best remedy not only for the problems of India but the problem that the world would soon be called upon to face. She then founded the Central Hindu College in which religious and moral teaching on the broadest possible lines was the main factor. This helped to create the new type of Indian youth not only in the Central Hindu College; for the result of her teaching was not confined merely to the development of that spirit in the College founded by her, but it spread far and wide throughout India, and one reads of publicists, like Valentine Chirol, foreseeing what he calls danger, in Mrs. Besant's revival of Nationalism by restoring respect for all that was great in the past.

The Central Hindu College now forms the nucleus of the Hindu University towards the creation of which Dr. Besant has contributed no small share. The type of youth that was produced in the Central Hindu College, along with the band of servers in the Theosophical Society, brought a new life into Hinduism by their standing for the realities that underlay their religion and striving to rid Hinduism of all those evils, prejudices and superstitions which were impeding

the growth of India as a Nation. The lines along which social reform was to be carried out are clearly indicated in the collection of lectures given by Dr. Besant in 1913, called *Wake up, India*. It is true she holds to the Hindu Faith – that is the result of her past inclinations and her passionate love for India; but truly speaking, she is above all religions. She has always preached that all religions come from the same source, that the Fountainhead is one. While each emphasises the particular point which is necessary at a particular time for a number of people, their teachings are fundamentally the same. After bringing about the religious revival and establishing educational institutions, where the new type of Indian youth could be trained, and after indicating the lines along which, internally, social reform could be achieved, she saw clearly that if India was to be useful to the world, she had to be politically free. Nothing of importance could be accomplished until the rule of Indians themselves was substituted for the rule of a foreign bureaucracy not responsible to the people of the country. She started by successfully striving to secure unity between the Right and the Left Wings of the Congress, was largely instrumental in bringing about the settlement of the Hindu-Muslim question and was mainly responsible for founding Home Rule Leagues for the purpose of carrying on Constitutional agitation and political education amongst the masses of the people. For this she suffered at the hands of the authorities and was interned by the Madras Government in 1917. This gave rise to a unique agitation not only in India but in Great Britain and also in America, with the result that Mr. Montagu was appointed Secretary of State for India, the famous Declaration of August, 1917, was made by His Majesty's Government, and Mrs. Besant was set free.

Mrs. Besant did not and does not aim at India's separation from Great Britain. She looks forward to the formation of the Indo-British Commonwealth with India as an equal partner, managing her own affairs internally and participating freely and equally in the Councils of the Commonwealth. She was misunderstood by the

authorities. Many asked then how she, a Theosophist, who stood for the principle of Universal Brotherhood, could carry on the campaign in favor of one country as against another. Both the attitude of the Government of those days and the questioners of the latter type betrayed colossal ignorance. But the answer to this I will give a little later. When the movement of Non-Co-Operation was started by Mr. Gandhi as a protest against the Government's wrongdoing, while she condemned the Government for their wrongdoings, she opposed Mr. Gandhi's movement with the same vehemence with which she had fought the Government on the question of Home Rule for India. She was misunderstood by the people. To Dr. Besant, internment by the Government for her defence of India's right was as welcome as the misunderstanding by the people whom she loved, for whom she had striven so hard. The words which she uttered in the Subjects Committee of the Special Session of the Congress in 1920 are still ringing in my ears: "I would rather be chased out by the people whom I love most and whose love I consider the greatest joy of my life than support a movement which I know is going to bring disaster to this country and impede its progress." Only three years before that Dr. Besant was the idol of the people. She was howled down, hooted and hissed at meetings. Did she give up striving for India's Freedom? Even now, at 76, here or abroad, wherever she may be, she works for this country more than does any other person.

The other day, speaking at a send-off meeting, tired of the misunderstanding of her by some people, I said that "considering the influence that Dr. Besant wielded in England, considering the fact that the greatest men and women in England thought it a privilege to have an interview with her, it seems to me that it is a condescension on her part to do what she is doing for India, in spite of misrepresentation, opposition and calumny". After the meeting we were hardly seated in the car, when Dr. Besant said: "Why did you say that, my dear boy? You should not say that again. You know

that to serve India, my Master's Motherland, is the greatest privilege and joy of my life." Needless to say, I felt ashamed of myself; for other peoples' ignorance was no justification for me to indulge in remarks which I knew would be resented by her. She loves India with a devotion which it is hard to comprehend, and yet she did not hesitate to risk her popularity and incur the displeasure of the people she loves most for the sake of her principles. And the answer to the Government, who misunderstood her in 1917, to those who doubted her advocacy of Universal Brotherhood and those who misunderstood her opposition to the Non-Co-Operation movement is this: Dr. Besant's plan is the formation of the Indo-British Commonwealth, with India as a free and equal partner thereof. She does not believe in an exclusive India, separated from other Nations. She believes that the connection between Great Britain and India is not only necessary for both these countries but essential for the future progress of the world. She believes in the building up of a world civilisation, to which every Nation will contribute its quota. India's contribution is to be the greatest, that of the soul of that civilisation, her conception of spirituality; that the blending of all that is sound and wholesome in the Western civilisation and the ideal of the East will produce a wonderful world civilisation. It is remarkable that in her own person, she gives us an example of what this blending is likely to accomplish. With the industry, energy, organising power, capacity for continuous work and application, for which the West stands, is blended the knowledge of the God within and the consequent strength, power, joy and peace that passeth understanding, for which the East, represented by India, stands. The result is marvellous. It has given to the world Annie Besant, a personality unique in the present generation. A great internationalist, a great champion of Brotherhood, of Freedom, she strives for India's Freedom, because she believes that unless India grows to her fullest stature by means of Freedom, she will not be able to give her quota of spirituality to the world civilisation. The denial of freedom to India would

be a loss not so much to India as to the world.

In the short space of an article it is difficult to allude to all the different aspects of Dr. Besant. As a spiritual leader, as a political leader, she is a remarkable Chief to work under, who respects even the humblest of her followers. She is a Mother to many of us and practically so; many of us have dedicated our lives to her service, for in that bondage, we feel we have secured the greatest freedom. She takes burdens, which the people of the world like to avoid, and while many of us who work under her may desire to lighten a little of her burden, we know that in the very acceptance of our services and our dedication, she imposes on her own devoted shoulders new burdens, arising from our weakness and our shortcomings. A great leader, a great inspirer, a great world server, a great Seer, a great thinker, a loyal friend, and a brave fighter, Annie Besant is what she is, because she is the follower of the great ideal of Truth.

Jamnadas Dwarkadas, B. A., F. T. S.

... Mrs. Besant left England for India in 1893. Her first visit to Madras was about December of that year. Since then I have had unique opportunities of studying Dr. Besant's activities and her work for the uplift of India – opportunities which, I am proud to say, not many even among the multitude of her Theosophic followers can claim to have had. My work as a journalist brought me into contact with Dr. Besant's many-sided activities at many points and in a great many centres. Life in India in all fields has begun to pulsate with new aspirations and ideals, with the advent of Dr. Besant as one of the most dominating personalities, even if she is not to be reckoned as the main spring in all Indian activities. Armed with the master-key to all esoteric and exoteric knowledge relating to Indian thought and life, everywhere she found the treasures of Indian Wisdom open to her as the pages of a printed book to read and to expound the basic principles underlying them all. She staggered

Indian leaders with the profundity and depth of her knowledge and grasp of their religious beliefs and philosophical tenets. Proud as Indians are, brought up in the traditions of their enlightened orthodoxy, which in matters of philosophy and religion gave them liberty of thought almost amounting to liberty of free thought, they flocked to listen to Mrs. Besant's exposition of their philosophy and religion. It is unthinkable that she could have virtually walked into the Wisdom-Treasures of the East as she has done, without her equipment, which can only be explained by the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation.

Within a year of her arrival in India she came to be acknowledged as the one soul possessing the necessary previous preparation, equipment and the all-absorbing passion to lead India back to her days of pristine purity in religion, philosophy and social practices. Her admiration for the past of this land, her love for its Ancient Wisdom and historical traditions, and social and religious ideals, are born of an unerring insight and grasp of the fundamental and universal principles on which they are based. India has found no one critic more loving to her best points and more fearless in the exposure of centuries of evils which have gathered around her pristine foundations than Dr. Besant. Twenty years of unceasing activities to rid the religious beliefs and social practices of Hindu India of encrustations and impurities of centuries had endeared her to the heart of the millions of the grateful people of this land, when she felt the urgent call and turned her attention of political work, which has come to be looked upon as the principal road to India's goal of emancipation in all spheres of her existence. During her career as a social and religious reformer she had traversed the length and breadth of India scores of times returning every year to England, the fountainhead of all her energy. In these tours and travels, she acquired an intimate knowledge of Hindu Society of all grades and made her way into the heart of real India, where her loving services and sacrifices will have an enduring

place for centuries. This is by no means the language of exaggeration. As in the cause of Hindu religion so in the cause of Indian politics, she has rendered incalculable service to the people of this land and to the solidarity and permanence of British rule which she has, through good repute and ill repute, striven to convert into a National Government. Her unbounded love for India and her absorbing passion to link her future for ever and ever with the British Empire, had led to her motives being misunderstood and misrepresented by narrow-minded Imperialists and Extremists, both in this country and in England. But she has never allowed herself to be deflected from what she considered to be the sure and safe path to the goal of India's Self-Government or Dominion Status, as an integral part of the British Empire, a part which gives the only claim to Great Britain's Imperial status. Whatever the judgment of ill-informed and prejudiced critics, those that have followed Dr. Besant's Indian career for the best part of over a third of a century have no doubt as to the large place which she has already won for herself in the heart of the masses of India, by reason of her disinterested and genuine constructive work for her uplift in the religious, political, social and economic spheres.

When the history of India for the British Period comes to be written, even if the historian happens to be unfriendly, he cannot but recognise the large part which Mrs. Besant has played in shaping India's destinies at a critical period in the history of the British Empire and in binding her to the British Commonwealth with the silken ties of love of Freedom and Constitutional agitation for the achievement to her goal of Self-Government as an important Member of that Commonwealth. In no part of the world can the Jubilee of Mrs. Besant's fifty years of the most fruitful and the most selfless work be celebrated today with greater thankfulness and appreciation than in India, which she has made her Motherland, and the Hindu religion her life's inspiration. If love and service are passports to the heart of the people, no one can say with greater justification than

Mrs. Besant, adapting the words of *The Upanishads*: “I am she (India), and she is myself.”

So thorough has been the identity and so complete the merging. The prayers and the sincerest blessings of a grateful people will go forth today to the Ordainer of all gifts that Dr. Besant may be spared for many a long year to continue her devoted and disinterested work for this land, which is her Motherland as much as it is for every loyal Hindu.

Dewan Bahadur C. V. Muniswami Aiyar
Chief Reporter, *The Madras Mail* (Retired)

To anyone who surveys her life, from her childhood onwards up to today, her life, as a secularist and atheist, as a Socialist and a Theosophist, as worker for Education, Social Reform, or in the political field, the one thing that strikes him is the utter seriousness of her attitude towards life and its purpose, her constant awareness of the why and wherefore of human life, and her unflinching devotion in achieving that purpose. A mere glance at her face will convince anyone, how it is a faithful index of this inner attitude of hers. Social obloquy, persecution, questionings of her motives and good faith, defection of friends and co-workers have never been able to scare her away from her self-chosen path. In her ceaseless effort to achieve the highest purpose of life, she has transcended the regions both of body and mind; her vision has been illumined, and her life ever partakes of the “peace that passeth understanding”.

The next striking feature of her life is her wonderful energy. She has gone round the civilised world, not once but thrice within my living memory, travelling from continent to continent and from country to country, writing and speaking with matchless eloquence and consummate wisdom, illuminating and inspiring wherever she went. Everywhere she has fired people with her own zeal and

enthusiasm, ever tireless and energetic, proclaiming her divine mission and bringing men and women ever nearer to realities of life. In 1909, when she was touring in the United States of America, continuously for two months travelling by night and working by day, the late Mr. W. T. Stead, her staunch friend and admirer, wrote in his *Review of Reviews* that “she is sleeping in railway cars and *living* on public platforms”. Years have since passed away, and yet even to this day, in 1924, we read in English papers that at this age of seventy-seven, she is working with an energy and intensity which even younger workers can never aspire to reach. In her presence, when we are face to face with the shining splendor of her body and soul-fire, we *feel* that fatigue, illness, old age, and death are figments created by man’s faulty imagination.

It is this intense and energetic life of hers, which she has devoted to the cause of Indian Freedom, the Freedom of the “Motherland of my Master,” as she often says. It is, as she says, her last piece of work for this life, and which it is her privilege to be allowed to do. One has only to observe the intense life that she has poured into the field of Indian politics, since she entered it ten years ago, to be convinced of the truth of what I say. How she started *The Commonweal* and *New India* with “For God, Crown, and Country,” as their motto in 1914 ; how fearlessly she advocated the cause of Indian Freedom through their columns; how she rallied together all the divergent elements in the Congress camp of Hindus and Muhammadans, and of Moderates and Nationalists; how she started the Home Rule Movement and made it a watch-word in every home in town and hamlet, and set the country from one end to another throbbing and pulsating with the one idea of Home Rule; how the reactionary Government interned her along with her two associates; how the internment attracted the gaze of the whole civilised world to the Indian affairs and brought its influence, especially that of the United States of America, in the British Government, because of the historical letter of Dr. S. Subramania Iyer to President Wilson; how that led to the

famous Declaration of August 20, 1917, and to the visit of Mr. Montagu to India and to the passing of the present Government of India Act—all this is a matter of history, within the living memory of the present generation. All this history is a history of appreciation of her services by the sons of the Motherland. Then a change, and an unpleasant change, came—days of stress and trial for the leaders and masses of India. Reactionary forces in Indian Bureaucracy brought this disaster. The Panjab (sic) Tragedy and the Rowlatt Act were the manifestations of these reactionary forces. They shook the land from one end to the other. Mr. Gandhi proclaimed Non-Cooperation with Government. Mrs. Besant clearly saw that the time to inspire the people was over. Now was the time to control them. But none would heed her counsel of discretion and self-control and Constitutional methods of work. The leaders and masses judged her by the standards of her reactionary countrymen, with whom she had nothing in common except the color of the skin. They forgot their long-tried friend. They yelled at her; tried to gag her in their National Congress and on public platforms; tried to hound her out of the field of politics. But hers was a heart warm with Supreme Love, which no amount of hatred, ridicule, jeering or distrust could embitter. She saw in all that rage and gagging a demand for the payment of a debt for her white skin, and she silently and joyfully paid it. But she did not lower down her flag, she did not budge even an inch from her outlined path. She did not compromise; nor did she give a period of trial to Mr. Gandhi's plan and methods, as was done by Swarajists, which was supposed to be a great feat of strategic retreat and patriotism. She gave a bold and resistant tough fight to Mr. Gandhi's views and methods of work through her papers. She rallied round her flag National Home Rulers and Progressive Liberals who were willing to work the Reforms for what they were worth; started the Reforms Conferences and, lastly, the National Conference movement, which developed ultimately into the NATIONAL CONVENTION, the only method of constructive politics, and is now

working might and main for her Motherland with the aid of her whim friends and companions of the Labor Party in England, and she is bound to work on till she succeeds in delivering her Motherland from the bondage of a dependency and raising Her to the status of full Dominion Home Rule.

I have called her an UNIQUE WORLD FIGURE, and verily she is so. Four are the principal spheres of man's life's activities, corresponding to his four constituent vehicles, the body, the desire, the mind, and the spirit. These four spheres are Politics, Social Reform, Education and Religion; and, again, they subdivide into two in each sphere, *i.e.*, one of a thinker, a writer, a philosopher and another of a propagandist. I challenge any one of your readers to point out to me *a single instance on record* in any book of *living or ancient history or mythology* of a personage who worked in *all these four spheres* of human life, *both* as a thinker and a propagandist *in the span of a single physical life in this world*. And yet we see this unique wonder, wrought by this Great Lady, apparently putting on the veil of an English body in the present, but who is really a travelling ancient pilgrim both of the West and the East, and who is really the choicest tribute of Mother Earth.

At the feet of such an One I place this humble Flower of Love in silent and utter reverence.

W. L. Chiplunkar

High Court Vakil [Lawyer or Solicitor], Akola

To write about Dr. Besant is describe world-movements. She is unique and yet universal. As Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal said, "Dr. Besant is not a personality but an idea". She is not only an idea, but an ideal to thousands all the world over. Many may not follow her, but all admire her. To me and many others who, in early life, had the privilege of coming into contact with Dr. Besant and her work, she has been the polestar of our training, our work and our achievement. Public praise or blame of our work has counted for nothing, if the

work has been along the lines set down by her.

Her achievements have been a complete vindication of her methods. Well-planned, systematic, far-seeing and wise are her plans. When she came to India in the last decade of the last century, the goal of Swaraj was already in her vision; but realising that a Swaraj administered by men who were ashamed of their own religion and its mighty traditions would be but a mockery, she began her systematic work of the revivification of Hinduism, preaching to the Indian people the glories of their own past, which they had forgotten or had been made to forget under the careful tuition of foreign educationists. She started the Central Hindu College to keep the sacred fire of Hinduism burning in its purity in the holy city of Kashi.

Then came the work of social purification and the removal of injustices, which acted and still act as a canker in the fulfilment of Indian aspirations. She spoke and wrote vigorously against the injustices in Hindu Society to women, children and untouchables; she denounced early marriage and the extravagances of a deformed caste system. The seed was sown on a ground already prepared by the first phase of her work; achievement and practical realisation were merely questions of time. The ball of social reform had been set rolling and momentum was sure to come.

The third aspect of her work was the physical emancipation of the Indian people, the intellectual and moral emancipation having been begun and largely achieved by the first two phases of her work. The whirlwind agitation for Home Rule for India and the consequent Reform Act is modern history and need not be dilated upon. There has been no lack of opposition and misrepresentation, but there has always been appreciation.

Another big and, one hopes, final effort, for the achievement of the goal is in progress, and one feels that the Jubilee of her public work will be crowned with the attainment of Swaraj by India. But India must unite, and there is no reason why she should not, on the non-party platform of the NATIONAL CONVENTION, created by

her genius and industry.

To thousands the world over, she has brought spiritual consolation and light by her wonderful writings and has done more to bring the various Nations together than several Disarmament Conferences and Leagues of Nations. Her name is spoken with reverence and devotion by many in every country, where a visit from her for a brief day is looked forward to for months. We are, indeed, lucky in India that we have the services of one who can be said to have reached perfection in the methods and ideals of work. Such benefactors of humanity but appear in the world at intervals of centuries. May we be worthy of the privilege!

Y. Prasad

Secretary, The Theosophical Educational Trust

Of the greatness of Dr. Annie Besant, of her vast influence over the life and thought of the world it is difficult to form any adequate judgment. So various, so many-sided is her genius that it requires the perspective of a long period of time to be able to view her work as a unity. It is, therefore, not astonishing that superficial observers are bewildered by the amazing rapidity with which she turns from one activity to another, and are unable to understand the different roles that she assumes with all the skill of a quick-change artist. This dramatic quality in her temperament is often much misunderstood. The fact is that the circumstances of the age have imposed upon her a task so stupendous, so varied, that only a genius of extraordinary versatility and power could adequately deal with it. The estimates of her personality are as varied as the phases of her genius. Lord Haldane describes her as the greatest living statesman. In the country of her birth, she is looked up to with reverence and gratitude by thousands as the great champion of Liberty, as one who fought and suffered for freedom of thought and conscience and worked nobly for the poor and the oppressed.

Far-seeing statesmen realise that by her magnificent services in

India she has saved India for the Empire and has lifted to a higher plane the ideal of an Indo-British Commonwealth. To many others, to all those, whether Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Parsi or Musalman, who have broken away from the narrow orthodoxies of their own Faith, she is the great spiritual teacher who, having herself passed from the darkness of unbelief into the clear sunlight of an assured and serene conviction, has led thousands through the gateway of knowledge and opened their eyes to the Truth. To the few who have had the privilege of intimate touch with her, she is one of the Elder Brethren who have trodden the Way, the Ancient, Narrow Way, guiding the human race to its appointed end. It is of her magnificent work for India that I wish to write. Thirty-three years ago, in the winter of 1891, she was invited by the General Secretary of the Indian Section of the T. S. to come to India, because he found the educated youth of India steeped in materialism, and there was no intellectual basis on which a nobler idealism could be founded. But it was only 2 years later that Dr. Besant landed on Indian soil. For over thirty years in this incarnation she has made India her home and adopted her as her Motherland. It is difficult to describe her love for India. It is a sacred land to her, rendered holy forever by the presence and benediction of Those Mighty Rishis who still guide the destinies of Nations. As Their appointed servant, she has consecrated her marvellous power to the service of India. She made her home in Kashi, the great heart-centre of India. She studied India first-hand, her literature, her traditions, and gathered round herself the highest and best products of Hindu culture. Speaking of some of them, she said: "They are but few, very, very few, known within a very small circle. Their hope is of the future and not of today. They take part in no political controversies; they take part in none of the competitions for place and money, they care not for Western titles, they care not for Western privilege nor Western honors; their heart is in the past and in the future, and they are living, for that future today." She dreamed great dreams for India and raised her voice

which thrilled through the length and breadth of the land, and proclaimed once more the immemorial Dharma, and a generation brought up on the teachings of Spencer and Huxley and who had followed her during her Free Thought days became eager for the study of ancient religion and philosophy. Speaking in 1895 of the "Means of India's Regeneration," we find her trying to revive the study of Samskrit, urging Indians to translate the sacred books themselves and protesting against leaving that work to be done by "men who do not share your beliefs and have no sympathy whatsoever with your religion". We find her also urging the study of the vernaculars based on Samskrit, as one of the most important measures for resisting the denationalising process. We also find her speaking of the essentials of a National system of Education based upon an understanding of and reverence for the past.

Among the other points in the building up of the Indian Nation she mentions the maintenance of the traditional dress, ways of living and so on, the promotion of Indian arts and manufactures, by giving preference to Indian products over the foreign. It is useful to remember that as far back as 1895 she said: "Let all encourage Indian manufactures and arts and use Indian⁷made goods in India. Indian Art has gained a name all over the world because of its beauty and its artistic finish, and why should men who have such art on their own soil, why should they go and buy the shoddy productions of Birmingham and Manchester, why should they purchase foreign goods instead of home-made and encourage bad art instead of good. These arts would awaken a sense of Nationality, filtering down from the higher to the lower, regenerating the Nation, striking its roots deep down into the physical lives of the people, uniting all India, binding all India together closer and closer and closer till her oneness is realised, till Indians recognise in themselves a people.

"But these physical means of regeneration cannot succeed unless they flow down, as the lowest means of the spiritual ideal, and the unifying of India must be founded on and permeated by a spiritual

life recognised as the supreme good, as the highest goal.

“If India could be regenerated, if India could be purified, if India could be re-spiritualised, then the Nation as a whole, with her spiritual faculties, her intellectual powers, her ideally perfect social organisation, would stand forth in the eyes of the world as the priest-people of Humanity.”

This was her great dream for India, the revival of religion and learning, the study of Samskrit and the Vernaculars, National Education, the encouragement of Indian Arts and Crafts, Swadeshi—all aiming at the realisation of India’s mighty Dharma of being the Spiritual Teacher of Humanity.

How faithfully, how devotedly has she sought to accomplish the plan? What do we not owe to her, we who belong to a generation that found in her books and in her articles the answer to the challenge of materialistic science and the foul abuse, by the misguided missionaries of Christianity, of all that was sacred and dear to us? What do we not owe to her, we who believed India to be dead, who felt no pride in her past, no hope in her future? She restored to us our lost heritage, gave us life and hope. We were not a defeated Nation, our humiliation and suffering was the humiliation and suffering of the Cross; our glory and resurrection was at hand. We who lived in an atmosphere of inferiority dared to lift up our eyes and look the world in the face, with the calm and passionless serenity of age-long wisdom.

In 1897, the Central Hindu College was founded, and month after month, the youth of India thrilled to the message of hope and the inspiration of a new life that flowed abundantly through the pages of *The C. H. C. Magazine*.

The Central Hindu College has grown into a great University with a Samskrit Department attached to it, and all over India are a large number of Theosophical and National Schools, still largely financed by Mrs. Besant. *The Sanatana Dharma Textbooks* (sic), books like *The Story of the Great War* and *The Children of the*

Motherland are now used throughout India for the religious education of the Indian youth. She tackled the question of social reform, pleaded for the raising of the age of marriage for girls and boys, prohibited the admission of married boys into the Schools under her control, and when she found it impossible to restore the purity of the ancient Caste System, boldly urged the abolition of the present one which was a distinct violation of the ancient fourfold system based upon Dharma and not upon Birth. The League of Liberal Brahmanas is one of the most powerful influences working in the South for the reform of the Hindu social system. Under her leadership also, the Theosophical Society has continued its excellent work for the education and elevation of the submerged classes. Latterly the problem of Labor has been taken up by her lieutenants, and many other schemes of social reform are now being tackled under her leadership.

After twenty years' work in the field of religious, educational and social reform, she entered with dramatic suddenness the arena of politics. The beginning of 1914 saw the publication of *The Commonweal*, and on the 1st of August *The Madras Standard* came out in its new garb as *New India*. Her entry into the domain of politics was a signal for a general quickening and awakening of political consciousness among the people. Working at first in close cooperation with Mr. Gokhale, she brought about the union of the two wings of the Congress, and by ceaseless work brought the different parties to frame a scheme of reform, the famous Congress-League Scheme. In 1917, she was looked upon as a danger to the public peace and was interned, without trial, by the Government of Lord Pentland, and was released three months later. In December, 1917, she was elected as the President of the Indian National Congress.

As the result of continuous and great sacrifices and much suffering, extending over nearly a quarter of a century, she had gained a position in the country almost unique in the intensity of the devotion and reverence which she evoked in the hearts of the people.

A year later she threw away the leadership of Nation and the love and devotion of its people in the pursuit of what she considered to be the best interests of the country. No one will probably know what this sacrifice has meant to her. There is something pathetic in her love for the Indian people. She bears with extraordinary serenity the opposition and foul abuse that has been heaped upon her, and yet she is so sensitive to the kindness and gratitude of *her* people that she is moved to her very depths by the smallest expression of it. For she loves India and her people with deep and passionate intensity. The very soil is sacred to her. She is Indian in everything but her body and that she has placed upon the altar of the Motherland, so that through her sacrifice, the East and the West may realise themselves as one, and English and Indian may work together as comrades and brothers in a great and common work.

Her great work is nearing its completion. Her political life has been a stormy one. During the last few years it has been specially so, and yet, though she seems to be surrounded by darkness and the tempest is raging all round her, yet her head is raised beyond the clouds in the region of Perpetual Peace and Serene Light, and she calmly awaits the triumphant close of her work.

We know not how to thank her for the benediction of her presence—our hearts can only bow down in prayer that she may receive the reward of her magnificent work in the gratitude of the Motherland to one who through the centuries to come will be known and remembered as Her faithful servant.

B. Sanjiva Rao, M. A., I. E. S.
Principal, Queen's College, Benares

The rich and wonderful life of Dr. Besant is a theme which may be treated in different aspects. The present writer is content to dwell a little on that big subject so far as he knows it from personal knowledge. Her marvellous capacity for work is a phenomenon

which amazes one. She sits at her desk, writing page after page without break for hours together, apparently without being tired, corrects proofs with scrupulous precision, revises manuscripts in a way which the most conscientious of subs. does not do, works away at correspondence which does not seem to have any end, delivers her prescribed lecture with her marked eloquence, performs other duties in clock-like fashion, and goes to her well-merited rest apparently with the one regret of her life that the day is not longer than it is. You simply cannot overtake her. This tireless energy is due to her regular habits, simple food, the spirit of hopefulness which never deserts, her incurable optimism and enduring faith in a better future which inspire her work. Her equable nature and equanimity of temper enable her to withstand those fierce blasts of opposition which are the daily lot of a fighter, and it is remarkable how she adheres to the opinions she holds in the face of obloquy and unpopularity. She thrives on opposition which only whets her appetite, making her more determined than ever to achieve her purpose. Praise is welcome, but blame makes her put redoubled energy into her work. The Home Rule campaign and the NATIONAL CONVENTION movement stand as monuments in the political field to her unrivalled organising ability, her capacity to impart enthusiasm to those around her, her unique power of mobilising scattered forces, fixing ideas in the popular mind by advertisement and iteration. Dr. Besant is ever open to new ideas, the mind is alert, the intellect clear, the brain ever active. The will to conquer, combined with abundant self-confidence, drives away diffidence, doubt and despair. Of her earnestness, sincerity, unselfishness and love of India all the world knows, and her great gifts of oratory, intellect and the like have ever been freely and unreservedly placed at the disposal of India, which has benefited appreciably in her unequal fight for Freedom. One is surprised that, with such a hopeful outlook on life, she scarcely laughs; an explanation which has been suggested is that she has no time for it.

She loves her paper, is never weary of looking after it. Does the

affection of a parent change with the changing health of the child? When it reached the acme of popularity it drew the same loving regard from her as it does now when the line is curving down. It is not a newspaper in the strict sense of the term; it is mainly a propagandist organ devoted to the achievement of Indian Home Rule. It is a study to see her at the Office. She writes with her pencil—a bundle is always ready for use—in clear, rounded letters, in a hand which is marvellously steady. She never dictates, rarely makes any change in what she writes. It is sometimes said that Dr. Besant is a nominal Editor. That is a stupendous mistake. A whole time Editor with no other work to do cannot do a fourth of what she does. Her regular hours, her care in preparing matter for the press, her punctilious regard to punctuation and language, her fairness to admit mistakes, her close attention to the hundred details which a real editor has to attend to, all these are striking object-lessons to an young aspirant for a high position in the journalistic world.

V. S. Ramaswami Sastri
Assistant Editor, *New India*

Fifty years of public life consecrated to the service of humanity is a rare distinction: fifty years devoted to the pursuit of one ideal, and the greater part of that period spent in a movement for the regeneration of India in the religious, educational, social and political fields. What can one who is not old enough to take in one sweep the mightiness of Dr. Besant's work say on such an occasion? Older men may speak with greater authority on the changes that have been brought about in our status and outlook as the result of her efforts. Admirers and opponents alike have paid homage to the indomitable will, the stupendous energy, the utter honesty of purpose and the supreme disregard of all personal considerations with which she has fought every injustice, oppression and wrong. Noble and unselfish work is always elevating, but the spirit which underlies her work for India is unique. Many things of the spiritual life are true to me,

because I have seen them embodied in her. I have known her as the idol of adoring multitudes; the object of hatred and scorn of those who erstwhile would have followed her to death; the victim of base ingratitude, but ever the same through all the vicissitudes of public or private life seeking and imparting inspiration through ceaseless work executed with a beautiful and meticulous regard for precision and detail. I picture to myself that massive head bent over her proofs or letters or articles at her desk in *New India* or in her room at Adyar: and it is a never-failing source of happiness and a call to action. She, more than any other, reminds me of Shelley's lines:

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
 To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy power which seems omnipotent;
 To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates,
 Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent.
 This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free.
 This is alone Life, Joy, Empire and Victory.

Most cherished of all privileges is the personal relationship, which she extends to her own people. Her kindness and affection and generosity are indescribable; nor is it possible to speak of the influence she has been in my life, except that it makes all the difference between an aimless existence and a full life. I salute her with deep gratitude and veneration, who is both Chief and Mother to me.

B. Shiva Rao
of the Editorial Staff, *New India*

It is, indeed, a happy privilege to write of Dr. Annie Besant, but a very difficult task; for not only is she a many-sided personality, but she is so great in her qualities that to portray them adequately would require a master-hand. She is a vast theme, and one does not know where to begin and where to end. Yet it is but meet and fitting that

those of her admirers, friends and followers who have been inspired by some glimpse of the exquisite ideals she embodies in herself should lay at her feet, on this unique occasion, the homage of their testimony, gratitude, affection, reverence or devotion, as the nature of the tribute may be in each individual case. During the last fifty years. she has rendered unexampled services to mankind in so many different directions, she has been the champion of every good cause. Yet her life has been one of many ups and downs, many struggles. Even during the last ten years of her concentrated service to India in the cause of her adopted Motherland's Freedom, heights of popularity have been succeeded by depths of misrepresentation, prejudice and hostility, not to speak of lack of support from those for whose sake she was fighting. Yet through it all our dear leader has ever been the same, her eyes fixed on the goal she perceives to be essential for India and for the welfare of the world, pursuing the most direct and shortest means to reach it, her policy dictated by the clearest insight and wisdom, and undeflected by passing popular breezes, amounting sometimes to hurricanes, and working the whole time with magnificent energy and unflinching courage. Dr. Besant's youthfulness at the age of 78 is often remarked upon, and is a marvel even to her opponents. Indeed, in her the qualities of the different seasons of human life seem to be simultaneously present and wonderfully blended. Along with rare, child-like simplicity and trust shown even towards the untrustworthy, she shows the passionate ardor of youth, so often exhibited in her eloquence, the mature judgment and capacity of manhood, and the ripe wisdom of age. The dominant motive of all her activities is compassion, a divine sympathy for the weak, the oppressed, the suffering, all who lack opportunity for growth and happiness. From this never-ceasing fountain of sympathy and compassion flow the fertilising streams of her service in every direction. She expects no return in the shape of appreciation, or any other, but she is too tender-hearted and sympathetic not to respond with an increased endeavor to help those who give her gratitude and affection.

Because compassion is the essence of her being, and true compassion takes the form of service, all her joy is in work and in naught else. Everything dear to her, even the closest of personal relations, she sacrifices, if need be, without a moment's hesitation, for the sake of the work which means the good and the happiness of all. In her personal relations she is the very soul of gentleness, adapting herself to the needs and peculiarities of others, always full of comprehension, tenderness, and even, as it strikes me, reverence for those who are far below her in every respect. She has eyes only for the good points about others, except when it is necessary, either in order to help them, or for the sake of the work, to take note of undesirable ones. In her political campaign she has hit hard and perseveringly, where others have shrunk from a selfish regard for personal interests or popularity, yet always openly, impersonally, chivalrously, without the slightest feeling of ill-will towards her opponents, and without attributing to them any derogatory motives. She gladly gives credit for whatever is best in them, and readily forgives and forgets all injuries done to herself. Thousands in all parts of the world have been helped by the light of the Divine Wisdom which she has spread in right royal measure through her books, writings and speeches. The lives of many others have been changed utterly, and re-shaped by her example and her precept. Innumerable persons have been helped by her suggestions, advice and guidance in the choices they have had to make in life, and along the lines of their own special activity. The whole world has been uplifted more than most people can realise by her wonderful self-sacrifice. To those who have had the privilege of knowing her intimately she is indeed like a Star shining with steadfast splendor and beauty, guiding and inspiring men to all kinds of beautiful aims and activities, to be followed through the darkness and storm as well as the calm and fair weather of this life and of lives to come. Thinking of her, what wish or prayer will be more deeply voiced forth by the hearts of her followers than that all blessings from all quarters of space may ever rest upon and surround their

beloved Chief.

N. Sri Ram, B.A.
of the Editorial Staff, *New India*

Fifty years have brought in their train their failures and successes, their aspirations and achievements to Dr. Besant and to the causes which she has represented and stood for. It was my privilege to be associated for some years with the political work of this remarkable personality, and it is with great alacrity, therefore, that I have complied with the invitation to say a few, words about her and her work on the occasion of the Jubilee of her entrance into public life.

Five years before I was born she had commenced her work on *The National Reformer*, and, in the nature of things, it is impossible for me to speak, save by hearsay and on the basis of materials furnished by herself in her *Autobiography*, of the early years of her strivings and accomplishments. In her doubts as in her certainties, Dr. Besant has ever been firm and strong, and her long life has been one dauntless search for Truth regardless of consequences. The wife of a clergyman who gave up her creed, rather than follow the dictates of convention and conformity, it was ever the case that, in her own words, "in the worst crisis of blinding agony my will clung fast to Truth". An ultimate verity also is enshrined in the following sentence, the outer significance of which many will concede but the implications of which few dare follow out: "It is true now," she says in her life of herself, "that he who loves father or mother better than Truth is not worthy of her and the flint-strewed path of honesty is the way to light and peace." From a survey of her many-sided life it must not be inferred that hers was that facile temperament which exchanges one opinion for another and clings with obstinacy to the latest view. She had learnt from her comrade and co-worker, Charles Bradlaugh, not to form a final opinion on a subject until she had tried to study the strongest things said against the view to which she was inclined. So, in those early days of the preaching of atheism and the

flouting of self-satisfied orthodoxies in the Knowlton pamphlet, as in the later years of Socialism and in the still later days when she claimed to have reached peace in the religious sense, it was always the case that she was tolerant of contradiction and, in the language of Charles Bradlaugh, again, she was her own judge, always scrutinising her own speeches and criticising them, gladly reading abuse of herself and seeing what grains of truth there were in it.

Not sharing her religious beliefs and not being acquainted, save as an outsider, with the organisation or the tenets of Theosophy, it is impossible for me to speak with any authority of what has been, with one exception, the most significant part of her career. But I do know this: That it is due to Annie Besant that the Indian began increasingly to feel that sense of self-respect in matters of religion and culture which, during the early years of the English contact with this country, had been much to seek. Ignorant and prejudiced criticisms of superficial observers and a partial survey of the Indian History had led to this astounding result that it was possible for Macaulay to assert that there was more truth and consolation to be derived from a single English book than from all the literature of the East. A more astounding fact was that for about fifty years, educated Indians hung down their heads as if in shame at their own culture and their own past, and accepted superior patronising criticisms and a camel-like superciliousness on the part of uninstructed critics as their due. If today the Indian feels proud of his past and confident of his future, if he realises that his country is an entity in the procession of the Nations, these beliefs were cherished and fostered by persons like Col. Olcott and, later, by Mrs. Besant who popularised the Indian scriptures, and, let us admit frankly, made us acquainted with our own heritage. That work has been elaborated and perfected by Indian and European scholars and writers, until today there is a reaction and, indeed, a danger of hostility to the reception of foreign ideas. But if to one person more than another must be attributed the beginnings of that feeling of true patriotism, not many will hesitate before

mentioning the name of Mrs. Besant.

Side by side with her religious work was that great and secular struggle on behalf of labor and against oppression—a struggle in which some of the most prominent leaders of the present Labor Movement were her co-workers like Stead, Messrs. Burrows, Bernard Shaw and Webbs, and many more were her followers and disciples. Against hard landlords, against the farmers of children, in favor of the dockers, against the producers of cheap and sweated goods, in defence of the Match girls, she fought, and undoubtedly was the pioneer of the Movement which has borne on its tide Labor ideals until today Labor governs the most conservative country in the world. All this, as I have already said, is a matter of history.

But let me add a few words of tribute in regard to the political movement in which Dr. Besant and myself were associated for a few years.

It was as her opponent that I met her. I conducted against her a very important case concerning the guardianship of two young persons who had been entrusted to her by their father and whom the father desired to take back from her. It was, in many ways, a hard and pitiless fight; but after that fight and, curiously, by reason of it, we became friends, and soon after the termination of the case, which she lost in the Indian Courts and only won before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, she did me the honor to invite me to join her in the big political agitation which she was contemplating. The history of the Home Rule Movement, its many troubles and travails, the misunderstandings to which it was exposed, the internment of Mrs. Besant, the subsequent recognition of her real loyalty to the Empire and its underlying ideals, the embassy of Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford, which was almost the direct result of her labors, the formulation of the Reform Act and the inauguration of an experiment which is inevitably bound, if Indians unite practical wisdom with the pursuit of ideals, to make of India a co-equal partner in the great Commonwealth of Nations known as the British Empire, these are writ large in the history of later India. Ranadé was a great helper;

Mehta, a firm and dominating ruler; Gokhale, a wise counsellor, Gandhi, in certain phases of his activities, an inspirer of multitudes; but for patient, steady work, apparently humdrum in character but essentially regenerative, none has outpaced Dr. Besant in the field of Indian political activity. Failures did not daunt her, invective never turned her aside; by writing and by speech in her newspapers and on the public platforms, she exhorted, she rallied, and thanks to her indomitable constitution, the hours of her work were almost the hours of the day and night. And so she organised associations, she went from Panjab (sic) to Madras and from Bengal to Sindh, and she laid the foundations of that mass movement which has afterwards grown in demonstrativeness, but has never been really so strong and so well-knit as in the years 1916-19, when England was convinced of the reality of the political demand. A missionary zeal and a confident faith in the future and patient work to realise her ideals—these were her watchwords and are the lessons of her life.

Public memories are short and political fashions vary from hour to hour. The idol of the multitude today is the forgotten worthy of tomorrow. It may be that the exact line of advance chalked out by Dr. Besant may not command popular acceptance; but among the makers of modern India, she will maintain a secure place by reason of her educational endeavors, her labors in connection with the Benares Hindu University and the Madanapalle College, her inauguration of the indigenous Scout Movement, her generous benefactions designed to produce and encourage corporate life, her whole-hearted assimilation of Indian ideals and her strenuous labors in many spheres, social, educational and political, for the uplift of the country of her adoption.

The Hon. Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, C. I. E.
The Law Member, Government of Madras

On her 'On the Watch-Tower' notes in the October 1929 issue of *The Theosophist* (pp. 4-5), Annie Besant made the following comment regarding the Ommen Camp of that year and the

dissolution of the Order of the Star:

The Camp at Ommen this year was remarkably harmonious and friendly. Krishnaji was, of course, his own wonderful Self, full of outpouring force, insistent, uncompromising, with, now and again, an exquisite gentleness and tenderness. The latter comes out chiefly on the unessential things; the former on the essential. It is very instructive to study his method of dealing with the varied questions which arise, and also to note his clarity of thought and of diction. He is simplicity itself, and any apparent obscurity arises from the depth of the thought expressed, and also from the general fact that as words are attempted expressions of thoughts, and as the thoughts of most people are to a great extent vague, lacking in definiteness and with blurred outlines, the words selected for their expression are not always the most apposite. Also, of course, great spiritual truths, rays of the One Truth, cannot be fully expressed in human language, developed on the lower planes of Being.

The most impressive thing to me at the wonderful Ommen Camp was the huge crowd, motionless, silent, all eyes fixed on the slender figure, erect and calm, sending out a life force that gripped the great mass of the people, and held it intent on every word. The leaves did not rustle, the insects ceased to hum, and the rich tones rolled out through the evening air in waves of music, the melody of the Spirit embodied in a man, beautiful and mighty, as the Gandharvas themselves poised silent over the silent throng. The closing farewell was exquisite in its emotional power and perfect sweetness, full of compassion and tenderness, showing that "poise between Reason and Love" in which Truth is seen. Happy are we who live in such a period, if only we can open our hearts as He knocks, so that He may enter in and dwell with us.

The Dissolution of the Order of the Star will come as a shock to many, for in a world in which Life manifests itself in forms, the formless is generally regarded as the unmanifested. However, it is

only a change of form, practically, as three Trusts, a Foundation and a Corporation are the physical embodiments of the old physical Order, and the Life itself, the one essential, uses these for its work on the physical plane. It is just a practical object-lesson on the essential and the non-essential, and the need to upset no one. Let us all increase our efforts to act as channels for the Life. The “Chief Organiser, Order of the Star,” Rajagopal, has struck the right note: “Each individual is free to express his own inner convictions and beliefs in his own way, and where that conviction rests upon a sure foundation, it will produce its flower in a new life.”

Dr Besant last attended a Convention of the Theosophical Society in Benares, December 1929. Some were of the view that her mind and her faculties had been severely affected by the dissolution of the Order of the Star as she had put a great deal of energy into it since its formation. However, those who attended the Convention and those who later on had the opportunity to read the transcript of her lecture on ‘The Future of the Theosophical Society’ soon realized that her essential perception of the work before the TS was still vital, inspiring and profoundly relevant, as the following excerpts show:

The great danger which threatens every such movement is what we may call crystallization; putting it in a common phrase, the getting into a particular rut, because it is found more easy to run along a pathway which is already made, than to strike out pathways which are new. But, the vitality of any Society, as regards intellect, must depend on the intellect being open to the entry of new thought, new ideas, judging each entirely by its value, as it does or does not subserve the welfare of all, ultimately of the world at large. We must then be on our guard against becoming crystallized.

Freedom of thought, then, is vital for the future of the Theosophical Society. Encourage discussion; listen to it fairly and patiently; be willing to test your own opinion again. You might

have grown between the time when you formed an opinion and your present stage of consciousness. It does not follow that, because it is true under one set of circumstances, it is necessarily true under another set of circumstances. A certain congruity is necessary before we should act upon a thought.

Krishnaji and the World Teacher Movement

In her book *Krishnamurti: The Years of Awakening* (John Murray, London, 1975, p. 12), Mary Lutyens presents the early scenario for the expectation of the coming of the World Teacher:

As early as 1889 Madame Blavatsky had told a group of Theosophical students that the real purpose of establishing the Society was to prepare humanity for the reception of the World Teacher when he appeared again on earth, and this was repeated more publicly by Mrs Besant in 1896, five years after Madame Blavatsky's death. Theosophists also believed that each time a great religious teacher appeared it was to usher in a new sub-race. This time it was to be the sixth sub-race of the fifth root-race that was to develop in Australia. (Later the cradle of this sub-race was changed to California.) In 1909, at a public lecture, in Chicago on her favourite theme 'The Coming Race and the Coming Teacher', Mrs Besant announced: 'We look for Him to come in the Western world this time—not in the East as did Christ two thousand years ago.'

In *The Key to Theosophy* by H. P. Blavatsky, at its Conclusion, originally published in 1889, Madame Blavatsky alludes to the coming of 'the new torch-bearer of Truth in the twentieth-century. This is what she had to say:

Theo. Scarcely. But I must tell you that during the last quarter of every hundred years an attempt is made by those "Masters," of whom I have spoken, to help on the spiritual progress of Humanity in a marked and definite way. Towards the close of each century

you will invariably find that an outpouring or upheaval of spirituality — or call it mysticism if you prefer — has taken place. Some one or more persons have appeared in the world as their agents, and a greater or less amount of occult knowledge and teaching has been given out. If you care to do so, you can trace these movements back, century by century, as far as our detailed historical records extend.

Enq. But how does this bear on the future of the Theosophical Society?

Theo. If the present attempt, in the form of our Society, succeeds better than its predecessors have done, then it will be in existence as an organized, living and healthy body when the time comes for the effort of the XXth century. The general condition of men's minds and hearts will have been improved and purified by the spread of its teachings, and, as I have said, their prejudices and dogmatic illusions will have been, to some extent at least, removed. Not only so, but besides a large and accessible literature ready to men's hands, the next impulse will find a numerous and *united* body of people ready to welcome the new torch-bearer of Truth. He will find the minds of men prepared for his message, a language ready for him in which to clothe the new truths he brings, an organization awaiting his arrival, which will remove the merely mechanical, material obstacles and difficulties from his path. Think how much one, to whom such an opportunity is given, could accomplish. Measure it by comparison with what the Theosophical Society actually *has* achieved in the last fourteen years, without *any* of these advantages and surrounded by hosts of hindrances which would not hamper the new leader. Consider all this, and then tell me whether I am too sanguine when I say that if the Theosophical Society survives and lives true to its mission, to its original impulses through the next hundred years — tell me, I say, if I go too far in asserting that earth will be a heaven in the

twenty-first century in comparison with what it is now!

(<https://www.theosociety.org/pasadena/key/key-conc.htm>)

Also in *The Secret Doctrine*, Introductory, p. xxxviii, originally published in 1888 (facsimile edition, The Theosophical University Press Online Edition), Madame Blavatsky makes another allusion to the coming of an advanced disciple of the Masters:

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.

Blavatskyan orthodoxy has categorically denied that the above passages could possibly refer to Krishnamurti. But it could not deny that Madame Blavatsky made the two statements and included them in her books.

In her book *Krishnamurti – A Biography* (Harper and Row, Publishers, San Francisco, 1986, pp. 30, 31) Pupul Jayakar, a long-time associate of Krishnamurti and a former Vice-President of the Krishnamurti Foundation India, wrote about Annie Besant and the Indian sources that upheld the view of the Boddhisattva Maitreya's manifestation:

Speaking to learned scholars and the Brahmin pandits of Varanasi more than seventy years later, I gathered that in those early years Mrs. Besant had been in touch in Varanasi with Swami Vishudhanand and his disciple Gopinath Kaviraj. Swami Vishudhanand was a renowned tantric with many *siddhis* or mystical powers. He also claimed direct links to a secret cult and doctrine of Tibet; originating in India, this doctrine had survived in its pristine form in a heavily charged

psychic center beyond Mansarovar Lake in Tibet. At this center many great sages and bodhisattvas were said to gather, not in their physical form, but perhaps as centers of energy. One of their most guarded doctrines was an ear-to-mouth, whispered doctrine, concerned with the eternal cycle of time—with yoga or *kundalini* practices and with the transference of consciousness. This yoga, fraught with immense dangers, had originated in India long before the Buddha and his teaching. It later disappeared in India, but survived amongst adepts in that secret center in Tibet.

It is possible that through Swami Vishudhanand, Mrs. Besant grew aware of the doctrine of the “turning around” or transference of consciousness and its close links to *kundalini* yoga. Pandit Jagannath Upadhyaya 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. Krishnaji’s response had been swift. “The Maitreya cannot manifest, it would be like the sky manifesting. It is the teaching that manifests.” Another day, speaking on the same subject, as if through a rent in time Krishnaji suddenly saw an image. He said, “Amma [A.B.] visited the Kaviraj riding a horse.”

When Annie Besant announced to the world that the young J. Krishnamurti would be the vehicle for the coming World Teacher she probably knew she was courting controversy. Two eminent theosophists reacted quite negatively to the news: Dr Rudolph Steiner, General Secretary of the German Section of the TS, and Dr Bhagavan Das, eminent educationist in India, who was her close worker on

important educational projects. She was accused of indulging in a messianic adventure, of trying to create a religion, and of endangering the neutral spirit of the Theosophical Society.

As for C. W. Leadbeater, the criticisms were not less severe. Some are the opinion that he ‘created’ the Krishnamurti phenomenon to deflect attention from his ‘crimes’. In other words, the ancient legal maxim ‘innocent until proven guilty’ applied to everyone but not to C.W.L.

Madanapalle is a city in the district of Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh, India. It was in that city that J. Krishnamurti was born on 11 May 1895 to Jiddu Naraniah and Sanjeevamma. Naraniah had been a government servant and had retired as a Tahsildar, a minor administrative officer. After his wife died the family moved to Madras.

In *Clairvoyant Investigations by C.W. Leadbeater And “the Lives of Alcyone” (J. Krishnamurti) Some facts described, by Ernest Wood, With notes by C. Jinarajadasa*

(Privately published by C. Jinarajadasa, 1947), Ernest Wood describes the scenario that surrounded the beginning of Krishnamurti’s training:

I was there when Krishnamurti appeared with his father at Adyar and I knew him before Mr. Leadbeater did. He was a schoolboy. When we first knew Krishnamurti he was a very frail little boy, extremely weak, all his bones sticking out, and his father said more than once that he thought probably he would die, and he was having a bad time at school because he did not pay any attention to what his teachers said. He was bullied and beaten to such an extent that it seemed the boy might fade away from this life and die, and the father came to Leadbeater and said: “What shall we do?” Mr. Leadbeater said, “Take him from school and I will inform Mrs. Besant.” Mrs. Besant had done much for Hindu boys. She had the Central Indian College, in which many of the boys were entirely

maintained by her – food, shelter, education, everything. So it was nothing unusual for her to look after boys. Mrs. Besant was in America at the time. She replied that she would be very pleased to see to their welfare, so the two boys were taken from the school; Krishnamurti's younger brother was all right, but they didn't want to be separated; and some of us agreed to teach them a little each day so that they might be prepared to go to England for their further education. Seven or eight of us taught them a little each day. The boys used to sit in Mr. Leadbeater's or one of the adjacent rooms, with their teacher. I do not know that it could be said that Leadbeater trained him in any sort of particular way. To be anywhere near Mr. Leadbeater was a training for anybody. He made him drink milk and eat fruits. Krishnamurti did not like this. He [C.W.L.] attended to his health. He did not much like this eating fruits and milk, but did it. He also arranged for swimming and exercises in the way of cycling and other things, and they played tennis in the evening, so that very soon Krishnamurti was quite a healthy and strong boy and began to take more interest in the world. I think that he must have been always more or less psychic and therefore did not pay attention to his teacher. I noticed very soon that Krishnamurti used to collect people's thoughts, and I have seen him do some quite remarkable feats of conversation with dead people while still a little boy, and that developed quite naturally. I do not know of any special and deliberate training in that way. In Mr. Leadbeater's room and in his company, of course, he really received the best of training in courtesy, etc.

The following is part of the correspondence between Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, from a private collection, regarding the young Krishnamurti's preparation for his first Initiation into the Brotherhood of Adepts:

(January 3, 1910)

My dear Charles,

Many thanks for yours of Dec. 30th and 31st. You will have had mine about the rooms, and that is arranged. Mrs. Lübke moves over on her return. I told Naraniah exactly what you now say, that this ceremony was the last the boys would be allowed to attend, and that this was only for the sake of the weaker brethren.

I am very happy about Krishna, and am sorry I am of so little use, though I am doing the little I can. But I am happy that he is in such strong and loving hands as yours. I should not be surprised if the initiation followed very quietly, perhaps on the 11th.

(January 10th, 1910)

My dear Charles,

Many thanks for the photos and letter. None of the photos do Krishna justice in the least. Nitya looks well. I hope my telegram has made all right for you.

It is splendid, though not unexpected, as I knew it would be on the 11th. At the wish of Mars [M.] I am remaining here instead of going to Gaya, so hope to be with you much...

She finished the letter thus: "Love to His boys."

(January 12, 1910)

"I went over – but of course you know – at five and stayed until 6.15. So it is definitely fixed that the Lord Maitreya takes this child's body. It seems a very heavy responsibility to have to guard and help it, so as to fit it for Him, as He said, and I feel rather overwhelmed, but am consoled in the thought that we are together in it, and that your wisdom will illuminate. I feel that we have accepted and pledged ourselves to a very solemn task. And then Shamballa – "in the presence of the King." How much I should like to talk it all over with you. The dear boy looked so beautiful, like a picture of the child Christ, with his large solemn eyes, full of love and trust. Does he remember it all?"

It brought back to me, in a strange way, my own first initiation in this body.”

(January 16, 1910)

My dear Charles,

Thank you so much for your letter, and for Krishna’s exquisite account. It is very beautiful. And do you remember the tenderness of the inflexion in the voice of the Lord Maitreya when he said: “The body of the candidate is very young.” Krishna does not mention what he said to us; I hope I did not bring that through wrong, for it was so beautiful.

In a letter to George Arundale, dated 24 March 1911, C.W.L. wrote: ‘If anyone asks me whether his [Krishnaji’s] body is to be used by the coming Christ, I always say that is not my business, and I am simply doing what I am told in trying to prepare him for an important work in the future.’

Descriptions of Krishnamurti’s Initiation can be found in Mary Lutyens’ book mentioned above.

The following passage of Mary Lutyens’ book *Krishnamurti: Years of Awakening* contains an account by C.W.L. to Fabrizio Ruspoli, who was at Adyar, of an event that took place on 28 December 1911 in Benares, when Krishnaji, as the Head of the Order of the Star, was handing over certificates of membership to new members. Approximately 400 people were present, including Mrs Besant, C.W.L., Miss Francesca Arundale, J. Nityananda and a number of European members, besides many others:

All at once the hall was filled with a tremendous power, which was so evidently flowing through Krishna that the next member fell at his feet, overwhelmed by this mighty rush of force. I have never seen or felt anything in the like of it; it reminded one irresistibly of the rushing, mighty wind, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. The tension was

enormous, and everyone in the room was most powerfully affected. It was the kind of thing that we read about in the old scriptures, and think exaggerated; but here it was before us in the twentieth century. ... At a meeting [of the Esoteric Section] the President said for the first time that, after what they had seen and felt, it was no longer possible to make even a pretence of concealing the fact that Krishna's body had been chosen by the Bodhisattva, and was even now being attuned by Him. (p. 55)

Krishnaji and Nitya arrived in Taormina, Sicily, in March 1912, accompanied by C. Jinarajadasa, where they were joined by CWL and George Arundale. Taormina would be the place where Krishnaji (and Jinarajadasa) would go through his second Initiation. After some months there the boys were taken to London to continue their education.

While in England, Mrs Besant was served a summon to restore Krishnamurti and his brother to their father. This was the beginning of a court battle in Madras, surrounded by a hostile press which revived the 1906 charges against CWL regarding his sexual advice to some fourteen-year old boys in the United States. The accusations which were examined by an Advisory Board in London, in May 1906, presided over by Col. Henry S. Olcott, President-Founder of the TS, led to the resignation from CWL from the TS.

A central feature of the lawsuit brought by Krishnamurti's father, Narianah, was that CWL had committed an "unnatural act" on his elder son (Krishnamurti) which, if found true, would sentence both to several years in prison. This charge was dismissed by the presiding Judge but he gave the custody back to the boys' father. Mrs Besant appealed of the verdict and lost. However, after referring the case to the Privy Council in London she won, as the boys had attained the age in which they could decide by themselves, and they both chose Mrs Besant as their adopted mother.

In 1914, when Krishnaji and Nitya were in London, the former experienced a period of self-doubt and depression, feeling unsure

about his situation and his role as the vehicle of the World Teacher. This was conveyed to Mrs Besant, probably by George Arundale, and in a letter to Krishnaji she said: ‘Your happiness lies in the work, and you will be restless and unhappy if you turn away from it. Nothing else will last, you will find. A man called to the higher service loses “the lower life”, and if he is brave enough to let it go, he finds a splendid and changeless happiness.’⁷

While in Europe, Krishnaji and Nitya would spend time in England, France and Italy, surrounded by TS members like Lady Emily Lutyens, with whom he had a close friendship, and her family, and also Madame de Manziarly. At one time Krishna lived alone in a small flat in the South of France. During that time he became increasingly critical of the TS structure and mindset, including of ceremonies. In 1920 he was introduced by Jinarajadasa (Raja) to D. Rajagopalacharya, who would play a role in his future life beyond the Theosophical Society as his manager.’

Krishnaji and Nitya visited Sydney in May, 1922, together with a number of other well-known theosophists including C. Jinarajadasa, Fritz Kunz, A. P. Warrington. A violent press campaign was being held in Australia at that time against C.W.L., Annie Besant and the Liberal Catholic Church. Both Krishnaji and Nityananda made statements to the Sydney Police as part of their investigation about C.W.L.

After they returned to Ojai, California, Krishnaji would undergo experiences that would profoundly change his perception of both his role in life as well as of himself. Below are excerpts of Nitya’s account of Krishnamurti’s experience in Ojai, August 1922:

Now we were in a starlit darkness and Krishna sat under a roof of delicate leaves black against the sky. He was still murmuring unconsciously but presently there came a sigh of relief and he

⁷ Lutyens, Mary, *Krishnamurti – Years of Awakening*, John Murray, London, 1975, p. 86.

called out to us, 'Oh, why didn't you send me out here before?' Then came a brief silence.

And now he began to chant. Nothing had passed his lips for nearly three days and his body was utterly exhausted with the intense strain, and it was a quiet weary voice we heard chanting the mantram sung every night at Adyar in the Shrine Room. Then silence.

Long ago in Taormina, as Krishna had looked with meditative eyes upon a beautiful painting of our Lord Gautama in mendicant garb, we had felt for a blissful moment the divine presence of the Great One, who had deigned to send a thought. And again this night, as Krishna, under the young pepper tree, finished his song of adoration, I thought of the Tathagata [the Buddha] under the Bo tree, and again I felt pervading the peaceful valley a wave of that splendour, as if again He had sent a blessing upon Krishna.

We sat with eyes fixed upon the tree, wondering if all was well, for now there was perfect silence, and as we looked I saw suddenly for a moment a great Star shining above the tree, and I knew that Krishna's body was being prepared for the Great One. I leaned across and told Mr Warrington of the Star.

The place seemed to be filled with a Great Presence and a great longing came upon me to go on my knees and adore, for I knew that the Great Lord of all our hearts had come Himself; and though we saw Him not, yet all felt the splendour of His presence. Then the eyes of Rosalind were opened and she saw. Her face changed as I have seen no face change, for she was blessed enough to see with physical eyes the glories of that night. Her face was transfigured, as she said to us, 'Do you see Him, do you see Him?' for she saw the divine Bodhisattva [the Lord Maitreya] and millions wait for incarnations to catch such glimpse of our Lord, but she had eyes of innocence and had served our Lord faithfully. And we who could not see saw the Splendours of the night mirrored in

her face pale with rapture in the starlight. Never shall I forget the look on her face, for presently I who could not see but who gloried in the presence of our Lord felt that He turned towards us and spoke some words to Rosalind; her face shone with divine ecstasy as she answered, 'I will, I will,' and she spoke the words as if they were a promise given with splendid joy. Never shall I forget her face when I looked at her; even I was almost blessed with vision. Her face showed the rapture of her heart, for the innermost part of her being was ablaze with His presence but her eyes saw. And silently I prayed that He might accept me as His servant and all our hearts were full of that prayer. In the distance we heard divine music softly played, all of us heard though hidden from us were the Gandharvas.⁸

The following is Krishna's own account:

Ever since I left Australia I have been thinking and deliberating about the message which the Master K.H. gave me while I was there. I naturally wanted to achieve those orders as soon as I could, and I was to a certain extent uncertain as to the best method of attaining the ideals which were put before me. I do not think a day passed without spending some thought over it, but I am ashamed to say all this was done most casually and rather carelessly. But at the back of my mind the message of the Master ever dwelt.

Well, since August 3rd, I meditated regularly for about thirty minutes every morning. I could, to my astonishment, concentrate with considerable ease, and within a few days I began to see clearly where I had failed and where I was failing. Immediately I set about, consciously, to annihilate the wrong accumulations of the past years. With the same deliberation I set about to find out

⁸ *J. Krishnamurti' Process – Probing the Mystery* by R. E. Mark Lee, Edwin House Publishing, Ojai, California, 2020, p. 22. Reproduced by kind permission of the author.

ways and means to achieve my aim. First I realized that I had to harmonize all my other bodies with the Buddhic plane [the highest plane of consciousness] and to bring about this happy combination I had to find out what my ego wanted on the Buddhic plane. To harmonize the various bodies I had to keep them vibrating at the same rate as the Buddhic, and to do this I had to find out what was the vital interest of the Buddhic. With ease which rather astonished me I found the main interest on that high plane was to serve the Lord Maitreya and the Masters. With that idea clear in my physical mind I had to direct and control the other bodies to act and to think the same as on the noble and spiritual plane. During that period of less than three weeks, I concentrated to keep in mind the image of the Lord Maitreya throughout the entire day, and I found no difficulty in doing this. I found that I was getting calmer and more serene. My whole outlook on life was changed.

Then, on the 17th August, I felt acute pain at the nape of my neck and I had to cut down my meditation to fifteen minutes. The pain instead of getting better as I had hoped grew worse. The climax was reached on the 9th. I could not think, nor was I able to do anything, and I was forced by friends here to retire to bed. Then I became almost unconscious, though I was well aware of what was happening around me. I came to myself at about noon each day. On the first day while I was in that state and more conscious of the things around me, I had the first most extraordinary experience. There was a man mending the road; that man was myself; the pickaxe he held was myself; the very stone which he was breaking up was a part of me; the tender blade of grass was my very being, and the tree beside the man was myself. I almost could feel and think like the roadmender, and I could feel the wind passing through the tree, and the little ant on the blade of grass I could feel. The birds, the dust, and the very noise were a part of me. Just then there was a car passing by at some distance; I was the driver, the engine, and the tyres; as the car went further away from me, I was going away

from myself. I was in everything, or rather everything was in me, inanimate and animate, the mountain, the worm, and all breathing things. All day long I remained in this happy condition. I could not eat anything, and again at about six I began to lose my physical body, and naturally the physical elemental did what it liked; I was semi-conscious.

The morning of the next day (the 20th) was almost the same as the previous day, and I could not tolerate too many people in the room. I could feel them in rather a curious way and their vibrations got on my nerves. That evening at about the same hour of six I felt worse than ever. I wanted nobody near me nor anybody to touch me. I was feeling extremely tired and weak. I think I was weeping from mere exhaustion and lack of physical control. My head was pretty bad and the top part felt as though many needles were being driven in. While I was in this state I felt that the bed in which I was lying, the same one as on the previous day, was dirty and filthy beyond imagination and I could not lie in it. Suddenly I found myself sitting on the floor and Nitya and Rosalind asking me to get into bed. I asked them not to touch me and cried out that the bed was not clean. I went on like this for some time till eventually I wandered out on the verandah and sat a few moments exhausted and slightly calmer. I began to come to myself and finally Mr Warrington asked me to go under the pepper tree which is near the house. There I sat cross-legged in the meditation posture. When I had sat thus for some time, I felt myself going out of my body, I saw myself sitting down with the delicate tender leaves of the tree over me. I was facing the east. In front of me was my body and over my head I saw the Star, bright and clear. Then I could feel the vibrations of the Lord Buddha; I beheld Lord Maitreya and Master K.H. I was so happy, calm and at peace. I could still see my body and I was hovering near it. There was such profound calmness both in the air and within myself, the calmness of the bottom of a deep unfathomable lake. Like the lake, I felt my physical body, with its

mind and emotions, could be ruffled on the surface but nothing, nay nothing, could disturb the calmness of my soul. The Presence of the mighty Beings was with me for some time and then They were gone. I was supremely happy, for I had seen. Nothing could ever be the same. I have drunk at the clear and pure waters at the source of the fountain of life and my thirst was appeased. Never more could I be thirsty, never more could I be in utter darkness. I have seen the Light. I have touched compassion which heals all sorrow and suffering; it is not for myself, but for the world. I have stood on the mountain top and gazed at the mighty Beings. Never can I be in utter darkness; I have seen the glorious and healing Light. The fountain of Truth has been revealed to me and the darkness has been dispersed. Love in all its glory has intoxicated my heart; my heart can never be closed. I have drunk at the fountain of Joy and eternal Beauty. I am God-intoxicated.⁹

In a note, Annie Besant writes about the purpose of Krishnaji's first tour in the United States in 1923:

He will go from New York to Chicago, accompanied by Dr. Annie Besant, President of the Theosophical Society, Mr. L.W. Rogers, General Secretary of the T.S. in the United States, and others, including Mr. D. Rajagopal Acharya, the General Secretary of the Order of the Star in the East. There will be a large gathering of the members of the Order in Chicago, over which he will preside, and both he and Dr. Annie Besant will address members of the Theosophical Society and the Star at the Annual Convention of the former. His message and his work are aimed at the reconstitution of human society on foundations which will form a basis for widely spread and enduring happiness, enduring because based on intellectual and moral possessions by each citizen, possessions

⁹ *J. Krishnamurti' Process – Probing the Mystery* by R. E. Mark Lee, Edwin House Publishing, Ojai, California, 2020, p. 22. Reproduced by kind permission of the author.

which are not exhausted but increased by sharing, being gained not by struggling against others for material wealth, which perishes in the using, but by self-discipline, self-control, the minimising rather than the multiplication of bodily wants, the seeking of beauty, such as Nature flings broadcast on all to enjoy without cost or monopoly, but only to be enjoyed to the full by self-culture, by developing the power of keen delight in color, form, harmony, an education of the senses, the emotions and the mind which makes beautiful music afford an intense pleasure which does not lead to satiety or weariness, but refines and uplifts. He will call on the rich to abandon luxury and display which are essentially vulgar and coarsening, to simplify their life, setting an example of beauty, and using wealth for establishing centres of beauty and culture open freely to all, encouraging artists to make the common life beautiful in well-planned, well-decorated cities as in Egypt, in India, in Greece, and to a less extent in medieval times. Krishnaji aims at inspiring men and women to reconstruct their world, and to substitute grace for show in daily life. He aims at comradeship which is made possible by wider and deeper education, by mutual consideration and courtesy, by avoidance of hurry, in calmness and charity. For manners are not idle, but the fruit of loyal and of noble minds.

(From the Radha Burnier collection, Adyar Archives)

In August 1925, a number of statements were made during the Order of the Star's Ommen Camp, in The Netherlands, with reference to the supposed occult status of several Theosophical leaders which, in hindsight, made it clear that the Society was becoming a belief-based community. One can fully understand Krishnamurti's later decision to dissolve the Order of the Star in order to avoid spiritual authority being built around him. There is no doubt that his action, although shocking and upsetting to many, proved to be of fundamental significance for the Society's life and work, because it

helped the members worldwide to realize that the TS was never meant to be a community of believers, but a fellowship of seekers after Truth. Although in 1928 the Society reached the peak of its membership with over 45,000 members on its rolls, the events of 1929 provoked a drop of roughly 15,000 in a period of two years.

(<https://theosophicalsociety.org.au/articles/the-living-tradition-historical-review-of-the-ts-since-1907>)

Annie Besant's address at the Ommen Star Camp, 11th August 1925, illustrates the situation facing the TS:

First, it was said by Sri Krishna-Christ, as he is so often called in the outer worlds, that His life upon the earth would, like that of His predecessors, re-tell the story, so that you who know the gospel story, as I presume you all do, should know that the birth, and the transfiguration and the crucifixion and the resurrection and the ascension are the symbols of the journey of the human spirit through the four great Initiations; it will be once more lived out before our eyes as a drama on the great stage of the world. And so you should think of those four points in that wonderful oft-repeated story of the Saviours of man, so that your eyes maybe a little open to the significance of those when some of them are once more acted visibly before us by the Lord of Love Himself. His taking possession of His chosen vehicle is typified by the birth you read of in the Gospels, and that, as I have just said, will be soon. Then He will choose, as before, His twelve Apostles—a significant number, “the twelve”—and their chief, the Lord Himself. He has already chosen them, but I have only the command to mention seven who have reached the stage of Arhatship, which, seems to be the occult status for the small circle of His immediate disciples and messengers to the world. The first two, my brother Charles Leadbeater and myself, passed that great Initiation at the same time, together because of our future work together, at the

time that I became President of the T. S. Our younger brothers here, who were living through the stages, as it were, of discipleship, at certain points have passed the four great Initiations, and others were welcomed a little later by the King as among His Arhats, and one will be a few days later. They are, first: one whom you know, I think, well, that disciple of beautiful character and beautiful language, C. Jinarajadasa who must be known to very many of you, and to know him is to love him. My brother Leadbeater and myself were of course present at this Initiation, and also at that of Krishnaji and welcomed the new additions to our band. Then is my brother, George Arundale, whose consecration as Bishop was necessary, as the last step of his preparation for the great fourth step of Initiation; and my brother, Oscar Kollerström, not so well known, perhaps, to you, but beloved for his character and his wisdom by all who know him well, as I am thankful to say I do; and then one whom I have called my daughter Rukmini Arundale, this Indian girl of a glorious past, will be one in a few days, who, hearing the call of her Master very early in life, will be the Rishi Agastya's messenger to the women and young ones in India, taking up a large part of the work there I have been carrying on for years. Young in body, yet she is old in wisdom and in will-power; "child of the indomitable will" is her welcome in the higher worlds.

(The Herald of the Star, September 1925)

An event of significant proportion in Krishnaji's life – and in the life of the TS – happened on 13 November 1925, while he was on his way to India via Colombo: the death of his brother, Nityananda in California. Although initially it represented a tremendous blow to Krishnaji who, for some time, suffered intensely, he came out of this ordeal with a completely new

understanding of his own role in life. It also helped him to understand the inner, deeper significance of death.

The following was published in *The Theosophist*, February 1926:

A NOTE FROM ADYAR

Interviewed by the Associated Press regarding the rumoured proclamation of Mr. J. Krishnamurti as World Teacher, Dr. Annie Besant, President, T. S., made the following statement:

Similar statements were made more than once in London papers as to my supposed intentions while I was in London; and I said nothing, the imaginative authors stated that I had postponed the announcement. As a similar statement seems to be now cabled to London, I had better state, once for all, the bare facts which must lie at the root of these statements, which hitherto I have left unnoticed.

In 1909, I accepted from their father the guardianship of young brothers, promising to be responsible for their education. I have occasionally stated – as bidden by Madame H. P. Blavatsky, who brought Theosophy to me in this life through her wonderful book, *The Secret Doctrine* – that I was a disciple of the same Indian Rshi whose messenger she was. My reason for accepting the guardianship the boys was that I was told that the elder, J. Krishnamurti, had been selected to give his body as vehicle for the World-Teacher on His approaching Coming, if the lad proved to be worthy of the privilege, when he reached manhood.

In 1910, he wrote down teachings received from his Teacher during the sleep of the body, teachings which were published in the well-known little book, *At the Feet of the Master*. On December 28th, 1911, a remarkable overshadowing of the young boy took place in Benares, and a hall full of the members of the T. S. prostrated themselves before him. We kept the event as quiet as

we could, but rumours got abroad, causing uncomfortable followings of him about the grounds of our house, and manifestations of respect, leading me to return as soon as I could to Madras, as I feared, quite unnecessarily, that they might give rise to conceit.

The brothers were educated privately in London, and more than fulfilled the hopes cherished for them.

Last summer, in Holland, I mentioned to a large audience (in a Camp held by members of an Order to which only those are admitted who believe in the Coming of the World Teacher) that J. Krishnamurti was the chosen vehicle, a fact already largely recognised among them in consequence of his speeches and writings. I suppose this was the basis of the inaccurate statements made subsequently in the London papers. I have never had any idea of “proclaiming him as Messiah”. Modern psychology recognises some of the subtler and rarer aspects of consciousness, from the cases of the influence of one mind over another through higher cases of inspiration – such as those of “prophets” – to complete temporary change of “personality”. I believe, with many of the early Christians, that the World Teacher, named by them the Christ, assumed, at the stage of the Gospel story called the Baptism, the body of a disciple, Jesus, to carry on His earthly work at that time. A similar event is to take place among us. Without inflicting the reasons for my belief on this occasion – I have given dozens of lectures on the subject – I will merely add that which may have given rise to this telegram.

Mr. Krishnamurti was lecturing, on December 28th, to a very large audience under the Banyan Tree. He was concluding his lecture, speaking of the World-Teacher, with the words: “He comes to lead us all to that perfection where there is eternal happiness: He comes to lead us and He comes to those who have not understood, who have suffered, who are unhappy, who are unenlightened. He comes to those who want, who desire, who long, and

– There was a slight start, and a Voice of penetrating sweetness rang out through his lips:

“I come to those who want sympathy, who want happiness, who are longing to be released, who are longing to find happiness in all things. I come to reform, and not to tear down: not to destroy, but to build.”

The meeting shortly after broke up in silence. Probably some account of this filtered out. That the World-Teacher spoke through the then speaker I believe. Since 1909, as said above, I have known that he was chosen as the vehicle, and I expect an ever-increasing tenancy of the selected body by Him for whom it has been prepared. I believe that we are at the beginning of a New Age, a new civilisation, as has occurred five times already in the Aryan race – in Central Asia, Egypt, Persia, Greece and Palestine – as well as before in human evolution.

The following are excerpts of Krishnaji’s speech at the Dissolution of the Order of the Star, 3rd August 1929, Ommen, The Netherlands:

We are going to discuss this morning the dissolution of the Order of the Star. Many people will be delighted, and others will be rather sad. It is a question neither for rejoicing nor for sadness, because it is inevitable, as I am going to explain. “You may remember the story of how the devil and a friend of his were walking down the street, when they saw ahead of them a man stoop down and pick up something from the ground, look at it, and put it away in his pocket. The friend said to the devil, “What did that man pick up?” “He picked up a piece of Truth,” said the devil. “That is a very bad business for you, then,” said his friend. “Oh, not at all,” the devil replied, “I am going to let him organize it.”

I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my

point of view, and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally. Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or to coerce people along any particular path. If you first understand that, then you will see how impossible it is to organize a belief. A belief is purely an individual matter, and you cannot and must not organize it. If you do, it becomes dead, crystallized; it becomes a creed, a sect, a religion, to be imposed on others. This is what everyone throughout the world is attempting to do. Truth is narrowed down and made a plaything for those who are weak, for those who are only momentarily discontented. Truth cannot be brought down, rather the individual must make the effort to ascend to it. You cannot bring the mountain-top to the valley. If you would attain to the mountain-top you must pass through the valley, climb the steeps, unafraid of the dangerous precipices.

As I have said, I have only one purpose: to make man free, to urge him towards freedom, to help him to break away from all limitations, for that alone will give him eternal happiness, will give him the unconditioned realization of the self.

Organizations cannot make you free. No man from outside can make you free; nor can organized worship, nor the immolation of yourselves for a cause, make you free; nor can forming yourselves into an organization, nor throwing yourselves into works, make you free. You use a typewriter to write letters, but you do not put it on an altar and worship it. But that is what you are doing when organizations become your chief concern.

(Full text can be seen here:

<https://jkrishnamurti.org/about-dissolution-speech>)

* * *

Krishnaji was diagnosed with cancer while he was in Europe in 1985. He chose not to have any treatment for it and died at his

home in Ojai, California, on 17th February 1986, which in the Theosophical Society is remembered as Adyar Day. In his last statement, included in Mary Lutyens book¹⁰, he says that for almost seventy years a vast intelligence was operating through his body. Until the very end he refused to speculate about it or to name it, but his words seem to resonate with the vision of Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater from 1909, even when their vision may have been informed by their understanding of past experiences. Until the very end of her life Dr Besant maintained that Krishnaji was the vehicle for the World Teacher.

Radha Burnier once told me that while on a visit to Brockwood Park, the educational establishment started by Krishnaji and his associates in England in 1975, she took part in a conversation with him and others. Reminiscing about his younger years he said that among the theosophists of that time the only one who was close to inner transformation was Annie Besant. When asked why he said: ‘Because you don’t know how great her capacity for love was.’

¹⁰ Lutyens, Mary, *Krishnamurti – The Open Door*, London, John Murray Publishers, 1988, pp. 148-149.

Her Vision for India

The Means of India's Regeneration

[A lecture delivered by Annie Besant in 1895 and published in her book *India – Bond or Free? – A World Problem*, London & New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926.]

This afternoon, my Brothers, I will try to lay before you that which many people would say is the most practical of the subjects on which I have been speaking during the last week. "The means of India's regeneration" naturally suggests the idea of a proposal of some definite kind, a proposal on certain lines which may be adopted, which may reach the national mind, encourage national aspirations, and which may enable this ancient people again to hold their place among the nations of the world. I am going to try to suggest to you this afternoon certain definite lines, which are not only completely in harmony with the ancient thought of India, but are wholly inspired by the ideals which I have been striving to place before you during the last week. While, in fact, the existence of this ideal in the heart of the people is necessary in order to make them possible, they are yet, to some extent, the lines of action which may be taken by all those who work upon the physical plane, and may thus afford an outlet for their energies in dealing with the facts around them. In order that reforms may be in any sense successful, it is necessary that the ideal of which I have been speaking so much may both be true and be accepted throughout the length and breadth of the country; that the people should regard it as desirable. In order that the actions of Indians may be properly guided and may be inspired to activity, not only does it need to be taught as an ideal from the platform, to be taught as an ideal through the press, but also that

those who accept it should act up to it in their daily lives; that they should make it the subject of deliberation and collective thought, for *that thought* is after all the greatest force. The body is mutable, it changes, but a man's thoughts are potent, and his actions are moulded by the thoughts with which they come into contact, so that every person by thinking of that which he desires to accomplish, has really laboured for its accomplishment even more actively than those who are engaged in the outer work; for in every reform which is brought about, this agency of thought is above all things most necessary. By thinking definitely of what we desire to accomplish, we touch as it were the very springs of action, and improvement must inevitably result. Those who are neither speakers nor writers, those who are not much able to influence their fellowmen by any personal argument, by any personal attempt, they may still bring their thoughts to bear on India by a sustained and deliberate effort, by wishes for India's regeneration, and then these thoughts joining together upon the thought-plane shall in due time come out into action on the external plane, and every person who takes up action shall be strengthened and inspired and made more and more likely to succeed by those thoughts which are behind him and around him and which thus find expression upon the outward plane of deed.

Realising, then, that the ideal which I have put before you is a spiritual one, that above all, the spiritual greatness of India is the first point to be considered, everything else flowing from that, let us see by what means that may be called "practical" we can direct the stream of Indian energy into certain definite channels every one of which shall be directed to a single point, and in which we may set pouring together the various streams that are to work national regeneration. Now those of you who look at the Indian Society of today must see as a result of their observations that there is a continually increasing pressure put upon two especially of the ways in which educated men must gain their livelihood. The profession of the law and that of the civil service are becoming more and more

overcrowded. These are the only two avenues of livelihood for which young men are educated, where they show the higher intellectual faculties. So that you will find the ablest men, the men of action, the men of intellect, in these professions, and the most promising boys, who are the men of intellect of the future, are being continually passed either into the civil service under the government, or into the profession of law,—these being the two which are the best paid of all the professions, the professions in which intelligence and will are most likely to bring the largest natural results. Now, it is idle to quarrel with the tendency of an ordinary man to seek to employ his energies in the way that brings him what he regards as the best return; you may honour the self-sacrifice as noble, that gives itself to an ideal which brings no reward in the form of wealth, but you still must needs reckon with the mere man of the world who seeks the things of the world. So that the question arises, how are these energies to be directed, especially if regard is to be had to the common good, so that the various capacities of able men may cooperate towards the general advancement, having in view the object proposed—the helping of India—and also the due employment of individuals in a remunerative way. If you realise that these two means of livelihood are becoming overcrowded, then will come the question: “Is it possible to find some other means of using the national capacity, which at one and the same time shall not only offer an opening for those who desire to be really useful to the country, but shall also afford support to men whose gifts are not so high, but who are willing to devote themselves to forms of professional employment which will give them a reasonable and fair return for their labours, and enable them to keep themselves and their families in a respectable position in society?”

Now clearly there is one form of employment available in India if we could really form a public opinion strongly in favour of it; a form of employment which along one line would give work of the most vital importance to be done by some of the most spiritually-

mindful and intellectual men in the country, and which in its several branches would offer a reasonable means of livelihood not only to these but also to men of average intellectual capacity, and would at the same time stimulate certain of the trades of the country as it spreads, and so would actually benefit those different classes of the community, and benefit them ever more as it spreads more widely and more deeply. Now this special scheme is that which will include every branch of activity concerned with the spreading of Sanskrit learning, in all the many directions which are possible, not only by helping the learned men employed as advanced teachers and writers, but which also would help large numbers of subordinate teachers, and would link the Indian peoples more closely into one.

Of course the first part of this scheme would necessarily be an attempt to found, in one centre after another in the country, Sanskrit colleges where the teaching of Sanskrit would be in the hands of learned men *essentially* of the *Pandit* type, as opposed rather for the moment to that of the ordinary professors—I mean the men who look upon Sanskrit as a sacred study and who bring to it real enthusiasm and real devotion, as well as the idea of teaching it as a profession. Now it is true that a few such colleges do already exist in this country, but they ought to be very largely increased in number; that increase could be easily brought about if a public opinion could be formed, sufficiently strong, which made a knowledge of Sanskrit a real necessity, so that no man would be regarded as an educated man unless a knowledge of the Sanskrit tongue formed part of his education. Those who deal at all with the question of education will be aware that all those who regard it thoughtfully, as a training of the powers of man—not as a mere cramming with facts—take up certain types of study as necessary for the cultivation of the higher intellectual faculties. It is not the question of training a young man so that he should learn just exactly those things, and no others, that he can turn into opportunities for wealth-gathering in after life; the object of education is to turn out a man whose faculties shall have

been trained carefully in various directions, so that he shall have acquired delicacy of thought, the power of sustained attention, the habit of mental culture, which makes all the difference between an educated and an uneducated man, and which is absolutely necessary for the advancement of the race if intellectual advancement is to form a basis for future Spiritual development.

Now glance for a moment at the West, and see the changes that are going on there. For hundreds of years in the West the cultivation of the classics, Greek and Latin, was regarded as absolutely necessary for what was called the education of a gentleman, and men who were ignorant of the classics were regarded as *uneducated*; I do not mean they had to be scholars of the comparatively small class who gave the whole of their time to literary pursuits—I am speaking of the men who had no pretensions at all to stand before the world as scholars, i.e. as *Pandits*, of the ordinary nobles and middle-class gentry, as they were called ; the whole of these as a matter of course were trained in the knowledge of Greek and Latin, and no man could take any high position in the country unless he possessed these, essentials of a gentleman's education—a fair knowledge of the classics. For such a knowledge was always expected in ordinary discussions among men, and this training of the intellect gave a certain definite strength and refinement of thought, and what was called culture implied always a knowledge of these languages and of the great literature found in them; and only by *such* cultivation men could be trained to rigour and delicacy of thought, and refinement and polish of expression, and therefore it was a part of every gentleman's education, and was not confined to the literary class alone. Now in England, under the stress of the struggle for existence, these languages are every day more and more falling out of general education, and you will find amongst the thoughtful people of the country the complaint that these young men who are now being "educated" are by no means such cultured or educated men as were always found in past generations; that they pick up a mere smattering of knowledge,

just enough to enable them to pass their examinations, and which they forget as soon as the examination is over. So that society becomes more and more frivolous and less and less thoughtful, and you get numbers of people with only average mental capacity who have little chance of ever improving it to the very best advantage because of the loss of this higher mental culture.

Now the same is true of India, only with this difference, that whereas in European countries they have used Latin and Greek as the instruments of culture, you have your own ancient language which lies at the root of your vernaculars, a knowledge of which opens out to you the grandest literature the world has yet produced.

A knowledge of

that literature should be incumbent upon every man who claims to be educated, on every man who hopes to hold intelligent converse with his fellows; it is needed not only by *Pandits*, not only by teachers, not only by writers, but by every man who claims to have intelligence *at all*, who wishes it to be exercised for the sake of possessing intellectual knowledge, and not merely for the fact that knowledge may be sold for so much money. For mind you, this is a question of vital importance in the development of the race. Unless you develop the mental faculties, you cannot rise amongst the nations of the world. If your mental faculties are only directed to subjects which enable you to keep yourselves alive, then you strike at the very root of the development of your nation, and you must sink lower and lower amongst the peoples of the world. For the average intelligence is what you have to regard from the standpoint of the nation. And in order that men may be competent to meet the needs of this country it is requisite that they should have a knowledge of Sanskrit in order to encourage the opening out of its literature, and for spreading the knowledge of what was thought by the ancient men of this country among the people at large; so that the people shall look back to the past, and gain from that past knowledge and experience. And by the pride which grows up in the human heart in

feeling itself linked with a mighty past, all that is sympathetic in the past shall become capable of working in a future and impress on that future something of the spiritual greatness which that past has shown. Now it is clear that if it should be demanded in India that young men, taking them as a class, should be trained in this knowledge of Sanskrit, you would immediately have a demand for teachers far above anything which at present obtains, and you would increase, by thousands upon thousands, the number of those who desire to learn in order that they may follow teaching as a profession and thus would increase your teaching class enormously, to meet the demands of the multiplying numbers of pupils. And so you will train up large numbers of men who will not only find their means of livelihood at once, but also their pleasure, in teaching, knowing that by their teaching they were strengthening the national spirit, and pointing the way to the union between all cultured intelligences over the whole surface of the land. For be sure that a common language is something more than a mere convenience; it is a tie which binds heart to heart, mind to mind. You have the choice of two languages which might, either of them, form the common language of India. The vernaculars are different; men of one province cannot hold converse with men of another because of this difference of language which keeps them apart, more or less as strangers to each other. What is happening? At the present time the common language amongst the educated classes is a foreign tongue. The common language of the educated Bengali and the educated Madrasi is English, and this is really becoming the common tongue of India; the men of the different provinces converse in this language and use it for inter-communication, all being separated by their different vernaculars. But would it not tend far more to national feeling if you had as your common language the mother of these vernaculars? Would it not tend to more national feeling if intelligent men should naturally and, readily converse in the language of the ancient books, and find themselves on one common ground, as it were, of a common mother

tongue? You should not undervalue the effect of the communications which make men feel the tie of a common kindred, which make men feel as brothers instead of men of different races.

You should use the language now common to the *Pandits* of all the different Indian races—Sanskrit; you should use it as a bond to bind the different races into one, so that nations conscious of a common descent should feel a desire for common work, for common cooperation at the present time. Nor is that all. The *Pandit* at the present time is educating his son not to follow his own profession, but to follow that of the law or the civil service; he does not bring up his son to his own profession, knowing that that may mean for him starvation. But as this demand for a knowledge of Sanskrit increases, as I have said, larger and larger will become the number of those desiring teaching; and then *Pandit* after *Pandit* may educate his son to acquire the deeper knowledge which is necessary for the teacher, knowing that from it will come a reasonable source of livelihood, a definite and certain profession by which he may live in the land.

Nor again is that all. The colleges which will be founded should have two great characteristics. First, they should be endowed for the support of the teachers attached to the colleges; that is, the teachers should not have to depend for their support upon the payments made by the pupils. For it is an honourable and ancient rule of Sanskrit teaching that the pupils should be taught without fees. Any innovation on this ought to be resisted if you wish to keep up the revived ancient feelings; you should not introduce the modern method of fees, which is being protested against even in the West. The teaching to students must be free. Instruction should not be withheld because the boy is unable to pay a fee for being taught, and if some pay and some do not you introduce a vulgar money distinction between the pupils. *Every* son of India who desires to know the ancient tongue should find teaching open to him without the necessity for payment, as it was in the ancient days; and not only so, but there ought to be provision made for the maintenance of the students, so

that they may be able to pursue their studies without any anxiety, and may be able to learn in order to be fitted to teach afterwards what they have learnt. The colleges should further not only be thus endowed sufficiently for the maintenance of *Pandits* and pupils, but also sufficient endowment should be made for providing an income for those who, being endowed with special ability to serve the nation in this department, should be rendered able to employ their talents to build up a modern Sanskrit literature, not wholly unworthy of the literature of the past; that is, that there should be foundations which should support learned *Pandits* who would thus be enabled to give the whole of their time, of their talents, of their thoughts, not only to comment upon the ancient books but also to write original works which would be more and more in demand as the knowledge of Sanskrit spreads. So that you would have a class of writers, composed of some of the most brilliant brains amongst you, men who feel themselves able to influence their fellows with their pens, men who would find a way open to them to revive the past glories of the motherland, without being subjected to starvation, or obliged to make sacrifices which only come from the noblest, and therefore only from the few. So that in this way you would be building up a foundation for teachers, a foundation for pupils, a foundation for writers, and as the pupils grew into men, a general demand would arise for a wider circulation of the ancient literature, and thus would also be benefited the trades concerned with the printing, binding, and selling of books. This demand for Sanskrit literature would grow enormously, for it would be prized by the cultivated classes that would be evolved by this system of education. So that not only those who will be educated would benefit, but you will also have a vast increase of activity which would give employment to great numbers of people in the production of books; and in this way you would find, as in the West, great classes of labourers and of distributors who are wanted along these lines of activity, and who would supply the demands of the

cultivated classes which will have been brought into very active existence by the method above sketched.

But of course the question naturally arises: "How is this to be brought about from the pecuniary point of view?" The chief appeals should certainly be made to the wealthy rajahs of the country, who have vast sums of money under their control, and who may well be appealed to spend some of it at least in introducing and helping on the scheme. There are some men with enormous accumulations of wealth; there are others with wealth which they waste to a very considerable extent, but who may be stimulated, from a sense of national duty, to give money to found such colleges, which would rise as their permanent memorials, for the well-being of the Indian people. Surely this would be a more glorious employment for their funds than in mere show or in the raising of useless kinds of memorials; if a man wants to perpetuate his name, if he has a desire that his name should go down to posterity, how should such a man do more wisely than by founding a great educational endowment, which shall go on century after century as a source of help to the nation? Far more glorious would be such a memorial than the empty memorial of a statue or a monument merely left behind, without any thought of duty to the nation in the future and without any thought of the welfare of the Indian people. Nor is that all, if you can form a public opinion of that kind, if you can induce some of the wealthy princes to aid in such a national movement, I have little doubt that you would obtain support from and the movement would be helped by the supreme Government; and I have still less doubt that such a movement, if it were really supported by public opinion, and had the weight of the educated Indian community behind it, would receive at least the respectful consideration of the Government that rules the nation, so that some help might come from that Government as a tribute to a national movement which ought to be encouraged by the English Government which is ruling over the land. For if you take the Government as a whole, it has a desire to do justice and it has a desire to

meet the wishes of the people over whom it rules; and such a movement as this, a really national movement, could not and would not be neglected. And this would also bring you the support of those ambitious wealthy Indians who will help nothing that is not looked on with favourable eyes by the rulers of the day.

There is just another point I wish to put to you about Sanskrit. At the present time some of the greatest treasures of Sanskrit learning are going to England for translation, to be translated by Englishmen, by Orientalists who take an interest in these works, but who have no belief in their deeper meanings, who do not share in the religious faith which inspired them, who do not share the philosophic views which they embody, who have no sympathy with the national traditions, and therefore who will never give the spirit of the originals, however accurately, however grammatically they may translate them. I myself, with my limited experience, know of more than one priceless untranslated work which has been taken over to England to pass into the hands of English Orientalists for translation. Why? Because no one could be found here to do it. One work has been thus taken over lately to England to be translated and issued at a cost of £800, and this after a fruitless search of many months for a translator here. I ask you whether it would not be better that members of the Hindu religion should translate these Hindu religious books themselves; whether you think it creditable that they should be sent to the West for translation by men who do not share your beliefs and have no sympathy whatsoever with your religion? Is it likely that translations of this kind can be true to the spirit of the originals? Is it likely that the delicate points, the shades of thought will ever be truly caught? Is it likely that with the aid of a grammar and dictionary, a mere comparison of book with book, that the meanings of deep religious books will be faithfully rendered, that there will be understanding of the subtle distinctions in belief, only to be found in the hearts of men who are at one with the religion itself, and are contained in the true meaning of these books? Therefore you want to

build up a class in India, educated in Sanskrit and also in English, who will be able not only to give the *spirit* of the original Sanskrit, from their knowledge of the very delicate shades of thought of the Hindu religion, but who, also possessing a sound knowledge of English, will be able to give the most accurate equivalents of the terms and not simply give the dictionary English meanings which now disfigure the translations. So that you need to have men who shall at once be masters of the Sanskrit and masters of the English tongue to translate the treasures of this ancient literature, which are now being continually sent for translation to the Western world. But mind you, this desire to know the treasures of the Eastern thought is beginning to grow in the West; this desire to know the philosophy of India, to understand its subtleties, to realise something of its complexities of thought, is a growing demand at the present time, and you have many priceless works which need to be translated in order to elicit the meaning of the books which are already in an English form. A book, for instance, like the *Bhagavad Gita* has a very wide circulation in its English dress. Would it not be then well to circulate some of the commentaries, as for instance that of Sri Sankaracharya? Would it not then be well to have an English translation of it published, so that the thoughts of the great Hindu teacher may be made known, which should throw some light upon its contents?

And further, in this way you raise your nation. In this way again, in time, India will rule the world; when this is done, India will be able to challenge the judgment of the educated world, and with one voice it will pronounce for the supremacy of her literature, as everyone has done who has acquainted himself with it; for there is no dissentient voice amongst Sanskrit-knowing Western people; they all are of one mind as regards the value of Sanskrit literature, however much and variously they may disagree about special books; there is but one opinion as to its profundity and grandeur; and this opinion is spreading in the West, that all things spiritual come from the East. Do you suppose that when this is more widely recognised,

it will not react here, that the regard and respect and admiration of the West paid to your splendid literature will not avail to raise you as a people in the eyes of the world, by the homage of intelligent men gathered from every nation?

Supposing, then, that this Sanskrit revival takes place, and there are signs of it already, then you must remember that you need to do something for the younger boys who are entering the gates of learning, to prepare them for this higher education. Now the great thing to do with boys in primary schools is to inspire them with enthusiasm for the motherland, by choosing carefully the kind of books which are placed in their hands for study. First of all, you ought to encourage a study of the vernaculars that are based on the Sanskrit, and should preserve their type; for in the case of the Northern Hindus, their languages are derived entirely from the Sanskrit. But what is happening today to these vernaculars? More and more there is a change working; you have a vernacular, Hindi, which ought to be Hindi, becoming full of foreign terms, to the diminution of words taken from the Sanskrit. So that it is becoming less and less a Hindu language, and more and more a foreign tongue, associated with meanings and words drawn from Arabic and Persian sources. More and more the vernacular which is based upon the Sanskrit is being pushed aside and forgotten by the people, thus denationalising them still further and separating them from their most cherished and ancient traditions.

Now, in regard to this question of books and teaching. The teaching in every school to which Hindu boys are sent for purposes of study ought to be based upon the Sastras, so training the boys in the knowledge which is to guide their path in life. They should be taught the ways of Aryan morality; they should be taught the stern and rigid sense of duty, which should pervade all their character they should be taught the meanings which are expressed in symbolism, so that whenever they are challenged in the world, they may be able to justify their own faith intellectually, by explaining it; morally, by

showing purity, uprightness and blamelessness of life; and spiritually, by living *openly* a life which aspires to the life hereafter, thus becoming Hindus in the truest and fullest sense of the word.

Then with regard to secular learning. I saw the other day, in looking over some books in a school, that they were English school-books, and as I was turning over the pages I found that though the books would have been suitable for boys in an English school, they were remarkably inadequate for the boys of an Indian one. For the information on geography, productions, natural objects, etc., which was given about India was absolutely out of all proportion in comparison with the information given about European nations. Now if you take a primary book in an English school you will find that it deals mainly with England: its history, geography, products, industries, trades, and so on. But here the boys are taught much about England, and very little are they taught about their own country. The book gives a Hindu boy details of English towns—now what is the use of that knowledge to him? And he is left without any knowledge of the detailed history and geography and products and industries of his own country, where the whole of his life is to be spent, and to which his thoughts should ever be turned. The foundation of an intelligent knowledge of his own country should primarily be laid in every boy's mind, and the knowledge of other lands later, when that about his own has been mastered. Press upon the educational department the use of books relating more to India and the peoples of India, which shall give their history at greater length and the history of other nations more briefly. The history and geography of India should be soundly taught, and the acquiring of a wider knowledge may be left to those who have the time and inclination to pass on to higher schools. It is but just that the poor Indian boys should learn the history of their own land, rather than that of lands with which they will have nothing to do in the course of their lives. I have seen a boy give quickly the name of the capital of Switzerland, and hunt confusedly in the South of India for Kashmir. What sort of a national

education is that? Try to change it and make a public opinion which will call for this change as regards the work of primary education.

Thus, passing on, now rouse the boys to enthusiasm and pride by the history of Ancient India; tell them of that. Tell them how India was really great, cultured, full of piety; tell them all the wonderful tales which are to be found in the ancient literature, tales enforcing the noblest morality; so that they may grow up thinking of India with pride and devotion, and longing to do their share in serving the nation, because the nation is worthy of all sacrifice and service. Enthusiasm in the young is easily aroused; teach them what will fire their hearts; for the young are touched and moved easily by noble ideals, and if you give them anything to touch their hearts, if you give them anything to move their enthusiasm, if you familiarise them with the past history of their own country, if you wake their devotion to their national faith, the time will come when they will turn away from the West to the motherland. And these boys, grown into men, shall be bound with every bond that can link the Indian to his home, and from such men will come the salvation of India.

Pass from this ideal of education, which might breathe through India the breath of a new life, to another line of work, which is one of serious importance to a caste on the regeneration of which depends much of the hope of India's regeneration. It would be well to establish throughout the country organisations such as those which are actually at work in the Punjab, for helping and training the sons of Brahmans in sacred learning and in the intelligent discharge of religious rites. The organisations are called, "Brahman Sabhas", and the objects are stated to be: "To encourage the Brahmans to learn Sanskrit,

'*Dasa Karma Vidhi*', '*Sanskara Vidhi*' and to endeavour to ameliorate the condition of the Brahmanical religion". Every member is bound to learn Sanskrit, to regularly perform the daily rites of "*Nitya Karma*", and the ceremony of the investiture with the sacred thread, strictly in accordance with the *Sastras* at the proper age, with

the proper rites. Each Sabha should have a school attached to it for teaching Sanskrit, the daily rites, and “*Sanskara paddhati*” to the sons of Brahmans; a committee of *Pandits* should examine the school annually, and grant certificates to the students who pass. Only those Brahmans should be permitted to officiate at religious ceremonies who hold these certificates, and none others. Other important rules run:

Each Brahman shall be bound to teach Sanskrit to his children.

The Brahmans acting as priests shall be bound to perform the required ceremonies

strictly according to the Sastras and with sincere devotion, even if the *Yajman* be poor and unable to spend much money.

If the *Yajman* be a Brahman, and does not desire to have the religious ceremonies performed with a sincere faith, the priest shall decline to officiate, and on his refusal no other Brahman shall officiate for him.

Students from the city, or outside, who are poor and have no means of support, shall be fed and taught by the Institution.

Such Sabhas would do very useful work by encouraging well-instructed priests, and also by putting an end to the exactions of disputing priests, especially at places of pilgrimage, where many scandalous things occur from time to time from the sheer greed of gain. Information about the Sabhas may be obtained from Rai B. K. Laheri, Ludhiana, Punjab.

Useful also are the Sabhas for Hindu boys and students, started by Col. Olcott, President of the Theosophical Society, and now multiplying rapidly through the country. They are designed to give Hindu boys the strength that comes through association,

throughout the period of school and college life, a period so dangerous to their religious faith under present conditions. The boys bind themselves to speak the truth, live chastely, and perform their religious duties according to the *Sastras*. The Sabhas are united into a Hindu Boys' Association, founded at the end of 1894, which issues a boys' journal monthly. Information about this can be obtained from the Secretary of the Theosophical Society, Benares.

Those who, like myself, desire the maintenance of the Caste system, in its ancient fourfold order, would do well to consider the advisability of getting rid of some of those restrictions which are indefensible on any ground of reason or religion, and which interpose rigid barriers between members of the same caste, preventing intermarriage and so on. Sri Sankaracharya, the successor of the great Teacher of that name and the present head of the Sringeri Matha, has already declared himself in favour of marriages between members of the same great caste who are separated only by the artificial walls of subdivisions. Such a reform would greatly strengthen the Caste system against its assailants, and it therefore deserves thoughtful consideration.

The next point is the building up of the entire Indian nation, by the encouragement of national feeling, by maintaining the traditional dress, ways of living, and so on, by promoting Indian arts and manufactures, by giving preference to Indian products over foreign. Now this is a point which really goes to the very root of Indian revival. Do not undervalue the importance of sentiment, and do not try to do away with everything which differentiates India from other lands; rather strive to maintain the immemorial customs and follow the immemorial traditions, instead of trying to look as little Hindus as possible, as many of you are inclined to do. It is true, of course, that these are outside matters, but they have a very real effect on the generation and maintenance of national feeling. Take clothing and habits of life. There is no question that the Indian dress is the most suitable for the climate; it is healthy, it is beautiful; why then give it

up? I know it cannot be worn while a man is engaged in certain vocations, and that he is compelled to wear English clothes while working in offices where the dress of Western nations is compulsory. Now that is a thing which you cannot help; but what you can help is the not carrying on of these foreign clothes into private life: the Westernising of dress in the home as well as in the law-courts, in the home as well as in the office. This is not only folly, but a mistake as well. If Englishmen out here were wise they would adopt the Indian dress, instead of which we have Indians adopting the English dress at a possible risk to health. The Western man has to face a severer climate, and to bear a severer cold. In the Indian dress it would be utterly impossible to live in England, for men would simply die of the cold. But here, the wearing of English dress is simply absurd. There is nothing whatsoever to be said in favour of it, for it is absolutely ugly. If Englishmen would go back two hundred years and use the dress then worn, there would then at least be an artistic defence, for the dress then worn was beautiful, as compared with the peculiarly hideous clothing now worn, and which seems so much to attract the average young Indian mind. Now the matter is not simply a matter of sentiment; it is really a matter of health, of convenience, and of economy; for the Indian dress is suited to the Indian climate, not only because it is light, but also because its material can go through water daily, and so is far more suitable to a hot country than the cloth coat and trousers which are worn unwashed over and over again. Considered as a mere question of hygiene in a hot climate, clothes which come into daily contact with water are eminently desirable. There is no reason, no common sense, which should make the Indian lay it aside, when the experience of thousands of years has shown it to be the best kind of dress for India. But it is not only that. The inner feeling and outer expression often go together, and he who Westernises his outside attire is very likely to grow Western inside as well, and therefore instead of strengthening he really tends to weaken his motherland. Then again the question of economy comes in. Clothing

which fifty years ago cost very little is now a serious drain upon the purse. Then, dress was simple, dignified without being costly, save among the wealthy and the ruling classes. Ordinarily it was a simple dress, which did not make any marked distinction between the rich and the poor in the *same* caste, and was suited to the wants of the people. Suppose a man was learned but poor, he was not looked down upon for his simple dress, but in his pure white clothing he could make his way into every wealthy house in the land. Dress was not then, as it is today, a question of social appreciation and the increase in expenditure upon it means a heavy addition to the already large burden on many families, in the ever-increasing struggle and competition brought into Eastern life by the adoption of Western methods. Again to the ordinary Hindu this Westernising process means a far greater demand upon him in other matters than that of clothing; for not only does it mean a change of dress, but it also means an increase in the number of meals, a change in their character, increase of wants in furniture, and so on, until, if you work it out, you will find that it means a greatly increased cost of living.

See the benefits I told you of yesterday, of simplicity of life. I did not mean asceticism by that. I did not mean to say that men of the world should lead the life of asceticism. I did not mean to say that men should live as *Yogis* in jungles or under trees, but I did mean that they should lead a national, a simple, life with all the noble characteristics of the ancient times; that their houses should have the old simplicity and not be crowded over with a multiplicity of things of foreign manufacture.

And this leads me to the next point namely, that it is the bounden duty of every patriotic Indian to encourage Indian art, Indian manufactures and Indian labour; and not to go across the seas to bring here endless manufactured articles, but to give work to his own people. Let all encourage Indian manufactures and arts, and use Indian-made goods in India. Indian art has gained a name all over the world because of its beauty and artistic finish, and why should

men who have such art on their own soil, why should they go and buy the shoddy productions of Birmingham and Manchester? why should they cast aside the labour of their own countrymen? why should they purchase foreign goods instead of home-made, and encourage bad art instead of good ? There is really no excuse for leaving Indian national art to perish, for this is an important thing in a nation's well-being, and especially the encouragement of all those forms of art which depend upon the delicacy of the human faculty, refine the people at large and increase the material progress of the nation. Why, if you take some of the foreign manufactured goods and compare them with the Indian, what do you see? You find that in the Indian the colours are most delicately graduated and blended, giving an exquisite softness of shading to the Indian carpet, and this is the result of generations of physical training in the sense of colour; while in the carpet of foreign manufacture it is harsh and crude, and there is no need to print upon it "manufactured in Germany", for you have only to look at its colouring to know it is not Indian. You are therefore injuring your own beautiful national art by using inferior goods of foreign make, and extinguishing Indian trade by continuing to encourage foreign goods, to the impoverishment of India and to the throwing of Indians out of employment. Look also at the large prices the people in England are ready to pay for Indian art objects. I urge you, therefore, to support your own labourers, thus strengthening your manufactures and arts, and laying a sound material foundation for national wealth. The strengthening and developing of these Indian industries is the work to which Vaishyas should devote themselves, for that is the work essentially belonging to their caste, on which of old the material welfare of the nation hung. You would also have coming to you constant demands from foreigners who purchase Indian goods because of their beauty. And we must press upon wealthy men that instead of sending to England to buy costly furniture, they spend their money at home in encouraging the arts which are around them in their motherland, so that a public opinion may be

formed which would cry “shame” upon a prince or rajah who filled his palace with foreign articles instead of having them produced in his own country, so that his wealth should add to the comfort and happiness of the people and strengthen the national prosperity. These would awaken a sense of nationality, filtering down from the higher to the lower, regenerating the nation, and striking its roots deep down into the physical lives of, the people, uniting all India, binding all India together closer and closer and closer, till her oneness is realised, till Indians recognise in themselves a people. See in the *Ramayana* how all the arts and handicrafts flourished, and how prosperity and happiness abounded among the people on every side, for the masses need physical comfort; they are not developed to the point of finding wealth in *thought*. These ideas should appeal to your reason and claim your judgment, for they are practical lines of working out a material regeneration, and deal with those concerns which the people at large can understand. The growing poverty of India is a matter you must reckon with, for you are already feeling the pressure of the struggle for existence, and that pressure must increase if you continue to feed its causes.

But remember that these physical means of regeneration cannot succeed unless they flow down as the lowest manifestations of the spiritual ideal that I have been setting before you, for they all have as aim the unifying of India, and that unifying must be founded on and permeated by a spiritual life, recognised as the supreme good, as the highest goal. Everything else is to subserve that, no matter how much material prosperity and wealth are needed for the encouragement of weak and undeveloped souls.

There is one other matter on which I must touch—the unification of religions, which can be done nowhere if it be impossible here. The glory of ancient Hinduism was its all-embracing character, its holding up of the perfect ideal, and yet its generous inclusion of all shades of thought. Under that wide tolerance, philosophies and religious sects grew up and lived in amity side by side, and all phases

of thought are found represented in the different Indian schools and the numerous Indian sects. This gives to Hinduism a unique position among the religions of the world. Therefore an effort should be made to draw into amicable relationship the religious bodies that went out from Hinduism, and have become oblivious of, or hostile to, the root whence they sprang. The Zoroastrians—the modern Parsis—have a noble and philosophical religion, holding the essential truths of all spiritual religion. This religion has become sadly materialised, and its adherents, in too many cases, have no idea of the deep meaning that underlies the ceremonies they so ignorantly perform. Alas! this materialising process has affected the masses in all religions; the more reason that the fundamental unity should be proclaimed by those who see spiritual truths, and that the daughters who have married into other families should not utterly forget their mother's home, but should recognise their descent and let love replace hatred.

And so with Buddhism. This also is a daughter of Hinduism, but at present the estrangement is too sharp, and has been caused very largely by misunderstandings. In the Buddhism of Tibet and China the ancient traditions have been preserved, and the Hindu gods and goddesses are worshipped under other names—sometimes even under the same names. Mantras are used, Japa is performed, many religious rites are the same. And in the great philosophical system, but little known, which is expounded in the Abhidhamma (I am told), there is found the metaphysics and the spiritual profundity so deficient in popular Buddhism. Nor is it lacking on the esoteric, the occult, side; in the definite training of the Soul in Yoga. And the Siddhis are acquired by the Buddhist ascetic as by the Hindu. No division exists in that inner region. Why should it not be recognised that the Hindu social system, which is the chief point of difference, while invaluable as a type to the world, and to be maintained and cherished by all true Hindus, is not suitable to many other nations, and that religious intolerance is no part of Hinduism? A true Hindu nation in its fourfold order would be the Brahman of Humanity, the

spiritual Teacher, the channel of Divine Life to the world. But other castes as well as the Brahman are necessary in a nation, and other social forms as well as the Hindu are necessary in the world. If India could be regenerated, if India could be purified, if India could be re-spiritualised, then the nation as a whole, with her spiritual faculties, her intellectual powers, her ideally perfect social organisation, would stand forth in the eyes of the world as the priest-people of Humanity, standing before the Gods in her collective capacity, fitted to be their mouthpiece to the world. That is the destiny to which India was appointed when she was peopled by the first men of the Fifth Race, and her religion and her social system were founded by the Rishis that she might serve as the model for that Race. Shall she ever again so serve? Shall she ever again rise from her present degradation, and fulfil the sublime charge laid in her hands? Who may pierce the darkness of the future? Who may read the scroll of destiny? This alone is sure, that no other future may be for her; that it is either this or death; and that it lies wholly with her children to give back to Humanity the India which may be the Saviour of Spirituality to the world.

India's Awakening

- 1921 April 6th, appointed Hon. Commissioner for All-India of the Boy Scouts Association;
 July 6th, re-elected President of the Theosophical Society;
 July 23-26, president of the first Theosophical World Congress at Paris (1400 delegates representing 39 countries);
 July 26th, lectured at the Sorbonne in French;
 Dec. 3rd, welcomed back to India J. Krishnamurti and brother;
 Dec. 14th, Benares Hindu University conferred on her the hon. degree of Doctor of Letters;
- 1921 December, instituted Adyar Day, to begin 17 Feb. 1922;
 Started the 1921 Political Club in Madras, from which came the idea of drafting a constitution for India
- 1922 October inaugurated the Brahmavidyā Ashrama at Adyar
- 1922-23 Engaged in the Martyn 'case'
- 1923 Inaugurated the Youth Movement in the Theosophical Society;
 Inaugurated the Brotherhood Campaign for which wrote the powerful universal prayer, 'O hidden Life'
- 1924 Attended in Queen's Hall, London, the Golden Jubilee celebration of her Public activities; also in Bombay and Madras
- 1925 Took the Commonwealth of India Bill to London, to be presented in Parliament;
 Attended a great Star Camp in Holland;
 Celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, to which 3,000 delegates came from all over the world;
 Established Temples of the religions in Adyar;
 Proclaimed three World Movements;
 Dec. 28th, was present at a memorable meeting of the Order of the Star

India's Awakening

[A lecture delivered by Annie Besant in 1910 and published in her book *India – Bond or Free? – A World Problem*, London & New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926.]

For many long years past I have urged on you, and on those like you in all parts of India, the necessity of a spiritual awakening before the awakening of a material prosperity becomes possible. You know that during many years past, since the Theosophical Society was established on these shores, the importance of religion, the necessity of spiritual knowledge, has been constantly insisted upon, has been constantly urged; and in doing this, those who brought the renewal of the message were only treading in the footsteps of their far-off predecessors, who have ever declared that from the Spirit come forth all things that exist, and that without the life of the Spirit not even animal, vegetable or mineral life were possible. That profound truth in the ancient philosophy of India is the only foundation for progress of every kind. One Spirit, and one only; one Life, and none other; every form from the one living Essence, every being rooted in the everlasting One.

In the past, I have sometimes traced for you the steps of India's descent; how from the time of her great spirituality, when the life of the Spirit was seen as the sun in the heavens, how from that time downwards, with the decay of spirituality, went also the decay of all desirable things. And I remember how often I have pressed upon you how first there came the lessening of the spiritual life, then the decay of the original side of intellectual thought, of the creative intelligence, and only when those had gone far down into the twilight, came the slow decay of material prosperity. You may remember that I have put it to you that the awakening, the reviving, of Indian life must follow the order in which the descent had gone. First of all, the reviving of true spirituality, of true religion, of the

vital understanding of the profoundest truths of all existence; then, after that has made its way to an appreciable extent, then must come the training, the culture, the guidance of the intelligence, so that a wisely planned and wisely guided education might train the future workers of the land. I remember saying to you that when the spiritual life has again become potent, when the educational life has again become pervasive, then only can material prosperity safely return. To men with the knowledge of the One, with the unselfishness which grows out of the realisation of the common life, to their hands only can be safely entrusted the material guidance of the people. It is along that line that Indian progress has gone for many a year past. First, the great revival of religion. It began with the revival of Buddhism in the island of Ceylon, where, as you may remember, education swiftly followed after the re-awakened faith. Then came the great revival of Hinduism, that has spread from one end of the land to the other, from the Himalayas to Tuticorin, and everywhere is recognised as a fact. Then followed the recognition that in a rightly directed education lay the only way of training for the motherland citizens who would be worthy of her past and therefore capable of building her future; out of that will arise all the varied activities of a full and rich national life, and we shall see the nation, which India never yet has been, but which India shall be in the days that are dawning.

Now the change to the material awakening has come somewhat more swiftly than most of us expected. I should say it has come a little too soon, were it not that I believe that over the destinies of nations there are hands so wise and so loving that guide, that nothing can really come either too soon or too late. But, to our eyes, looking with purblind vision, we should sometimes be almost inclined to say that events are travelling in India a little more rapidly than is well. For we need for the wise guiding of a material movement, men trained from boyhood in religion and in true wisdom, so that the brain may be balanced and calm, the hands strong and steady, for the

moment you touch the popular mind and the popular heart you awaken forces that are apt to go beyond the control of wisdom, and it needs a nucleus of wise and steady thinkers in order that a popular movement may find its way aright.

Let us, then, at this moment of immense importance to India's future, consider what ought to be the line most wisely to be followed in the great rush which is coming upon us. I pause a moment on the sentence just uttered, of the hands that guide, and the wisdom and the love which shape a nation's destinies. It is no new thought to you, who have grown up in the atmosphere in which the celestial and the physical worlds are mingling—it is no new thought to you that the Devas, the Shining Ones, mingle in the affairs of men. Nor should it be a new thought to you—although to many it may now seem strange—that every nation also has its own Devas who guide its affairs, who shape its present and its future.

Let me then remind you that in the vast unseen hierarchy who mingle in human affairs, there are Devas of many grades, as well as the great Rishis who are the planners and regulators of events. First of all, there is the plan of the Lord himself, of Ishvara, the Ruler of the system, who sketches, in the dawn of the creative days, the plan of evolution along which His universe shall go. Out of the innumerable conceivabilities in the mind of the Supreme, some are chosen by the Ishvara, who builds a system, as the material for His system, and woven into the plan for His unfolding. No pen, save that of His finger, writes that wondrous drama, which slowly is unfolded in the history of the evolving universe, written so that none may change, written so that none may amend, written by a wisdom inconceivable to us, and by a love of which the deepest love of the human heart is but the faintest and most shadowy reflection.

Then the working out of that plan is given into the hands of those whom we may call His ministers, the great Ones who come into the system, from systems long gone by, to co-operate with Him in the shaping of a new humanity; into their hands His plan is given,

and theirs the brains of wisdom and the hands of strength that bring that plan into the details that we call history. They plan out the working and give to every nation the acting of a part in that great plan; to the Deva who rules the nation, and who has under his control a hierarchy of lesser Devas, that part is given to be worked out in the history of the people. Now the plan is for all humanity, and not for one nation only, and each nation, in turn, has its part to play; each nation in turn is cast either for the moment's weal or the moment's woe; and those only can read aright the history of humanity who know the powers that work behind the veil; for you cannot manage a household unless you know the will of the householder, and before you can realise the wisdom of household guidance, you must know the wants of the children and of the other members of the house. So in the history of peoples you cannot judge by the Statesmen, the Generals, the Admirals, and the Monarchs, who all work out the various tasks that are given them to do. You must look behind them to those who guide, to the great Householder, the supreme Grihastha of the system. When we come to India, we know that all this is true of India and of India's Deva-King, who stands high above the nation and works out, millennium after millennium, the parts which are given to him for his nation to play in the world's history, these parts have outlined the nation's story through all the difficulties, the dangers, the humiliations of the past. On that I may not dwell long now. For the moment I leave them untouched, to turn to that which immediately concerns us. Now to the present and its working.

First of all, in order that India might again take her place amongst the nations of the world, mightier even than in the past—a glorious past—there came the spiritual messengers, the messengers who were to revive the varied religions of the land. That has been done to a great extent as regards Hinduism and Buddhism. But you must remember that the other religions must also have, and to some extent have had, each in its own place, the advantage of the same spiritual and enlivening influence. Look at the community called

Zoroastrian, and see how it has of late years become spiritualising in its tendencies instead of materialising as in the past. The great faith of Islam is the one which only shows in a very limited measure the enlivening influence of the new spiritual impulse, yet there also the same working is beginning, and there also there are signs of the spreading of the same influence, so that Islam also shall take her place, spiritually alive and spiritually potent, to bear her part in the re-shaping of India as she is to be. That work is not finished, in fact never will be finished, rather ever continuing, but all the first great steps are taken and success in that is assured.

Passing to education, there an immense amount has been done, and far more has yet to be done, as I shall put it to you in a few moments. We have only begun the very A B C of the educational reform which is necessary in order to make India what she should be. Now, when a nation does not move sufficiently swiftly along the path of progress, when she does not rouse herself enough to the voice that appeals, that warns, and that counsels, then the Deva of the nation takes other means in hand, in order to awaken his people and make them see along what lines their path should be trodden. And these other means used by the Deva are goads. They are like the whip that touches the horse when he is too lazy, and what you look on as national misfortunes, as things that you even cry out against with insistence and with passion, these are very often, rightly seen, the goads which make a nation move a little faster towards the goal on which the Deva's eyes are fixed. This is especially true just now, and will serve my purpose well as an illustration with regard to education. Education is a matter that belongs to the nation when rightly understood. Fathers and guardians are the people who ought to fashion the national education. How long have I been urging upon you to take this matter of education into your own hands, and not leave it for others to guide and plan. How long, in my travels up and down through the country, have I urged upon you the importance of this question of national education. I remember how about three years

ago when I spoke in Bombay, I urged on every man and on every woman, mother and father, that on them lay the heavy responsibility of the education and the training of the child. I remember how there I urged upon you that your own interests, if nothing else, should stir you to the guidance of your children's education; for you do not want to continue to overcrowd, as you are doing, the ranks of the so-called learned professions and the ranks of the Government service. Those are not things which make nations great, however necessary they may be, and however necessary they are, for the mechanism and administration of the nation. The things that make a nation great, from the material standpoint, are not the learned professions and Government service, but scientific agriculture, well-devised manufactures, thoughtfully planned arts and crafts, and the innumerable forms of workmanship that go to the building up of national wealth. But along the lines on which education has been going on, this has been left on one side, and, mind you, the blame for that does not lie on the Government; it lies on the people. It is useless and idle to blame Government, when you are the people who can do it, if you have the heart, the will, and the perseverance. Out of your pocket comes every rupee that the Government spends on education. Out of your pocket come the far too few rupees that build the colleges and schools, save the missionary establishments. If instead of sending your boys to Government colleges and missionary schools, you built your own schools, and had your own teachers, you might guide education exactly as you would. It is not that there is not money enough in the country. I know it is said that India is poor; so she is in a sense poor, that is as regards the masses of her people. But not too poor to build colleges and schools for your children, while you are able to maintain, as you are doing, large crowds of men as mendicants, in the full strength of vigorous life, who are innocent of all sacred learning, innocent of the light, who have nothing of the Sannyasi but the cloth that covers them, and who are yet fed and sheltered by the crore. India is not poor so long as your Chetties and Baniyas can give lakhs

upon lakhs of rupees for the restoration of ancient temples and the gilding of their pinnacles. You do not need to increase your charities, that is not wanted; but oh! if you would only turn them into channels that fertilise instead of channels that corrupt, India would have wealth enough to educate her sons and daughters, and to make possible a new life in the future.

I do not speak against the restoration of temples. That is well. It is well that man should worship, rightly, nobly and rationally. I do not speak against the restoration of temples, but I do speak against the mere restoration that leaves the priesthood ignorant and profligate. I do speak against the restoration of a temple where no school lives under its shadow, and where children are not taught by those whose duty it is to teach—less gilding on the pinnacles of temples, and more gilding of learning in the hearts of boys and girls. And if you still keep your temples in order, but spend some of the money that is wasted on vast crowds of idle mendicants on the education of your children, how rapidly would India rise in the scale of nations, and how quickly she would claim her right place among the peoples of the world.

And that is your work. Last year in speaking on “Theosophy in Relation to Politics”, I urged upon you the formation of Educational Boards in every district of India. Now Government has nothing to do with that. You do not need to ask for Government permission or authority. You have only to gather a few of your cleverest men and princes together and make them into an Educational Board, for a definitely outlined area. What is wanted is not Government help. It is your work. What is wanted is self-devotion, energy, initiative, the willingness to go through years of drudgery; for only in that way can true education be built up. This has not yet been acted on. The idea, when spoken about anywhere, causes a good deal of cheering, but only in a few places has there been any real earnest work, even in starting an Indian school. Hence a goad was needed, and it has been applied. An Education Commission goes all round

the country. The Education Commission presents its report, and the representative of the vast majority of those whose children have to be educated under the new law presents a minority report—a minority of one. Now certainly, if you weigh heads instead of counting them, that minority might outweigh many, for that one was Mr Justice Gurudas Bannerji. He knew very well what sort of education was wanted by the people, but he was only one, and the English majority shaped the Education Bill, and passed the Act. When it was passed, a number of very wise protests were made—thoughtful, well-considered, and rational; but why only protests? Why were not the protests followed by the formation of Boards, which should do that which the protestors wished? The protest was wisely made. Such protests are necessary, but they should be followed by action, for thought that is not followed by action acts like a gangrene in the human mind. Better remain silent, better not even think, if you are not prepared to act; better not think, unless you are prepared to put your activity into action, for in the higher spheres, as you know, thought produces action; down here, thought and especially talk, without action, does not get a nation very far along the line of progress. So all the energy flows out in the talk, and nothing is done. The national Deva thought something more in the way of pressure was wanted, and the Education Act became law. And very well it did. You do not approve of it, nor do I; but still it was wanted, because nothing else would stir the people into action. That was why I said that where a people would not move by exhortation and advice, some goad was used in order to stir them into activity. Now that you find education has become dearer, that to educate the boys strains to breaking the narrow incomes of the fathers; now that you see Higher Education is being more and more blocked to the class that needs it most—a class hereditarily learned, but always poor and now largely shut out from the costly education of the day; now that the education question has come in this form: “You must take this costly education or nothing”—you must begin to say: “No, it shall not be nothing. It shall be

something, created by my own hands and out of my own money and brains.” But in order that the goad may serve its purpose well, it is necessary that there should be hot and bitter feelings in the hearts of many of the people affected. It is that which makes the steam that drives the engine. It is that which presently makes the piston to go backwards and forwards and the wheels to turn. It is that which gives force, though it also causes an immense amount of excitement and foolish talk. These things are necessary, in order to generate the forces which make the engine of the nation move. So that, the Education Act is, as I regard it, a goad to make us struggle against it, as we are obliged to struggle at Benares, in keeping our fees low. I am glad it has passed, because it has—I hope it has—given the impulse which will make men take the education of their children into their own hands.

But now, how? By beginning at the right end and not at the wrong. First by making your Educational Boards all over the country; next by creating colleges and universities, and most of all by making such a public opinion, especially among the Indian princes, the great merchants, and employers of labour, as shall induce them to recognise the degrees given by the Indian universities as valid credentials for those who are seeking employment. Until you have done that, you have done nothing. It is no good even making a university, unless you have made a body of people who are prepared to take its graduates when they have taken their degrees, and thus open to them means of livelihood. It is no good beginning with boys. You must begin with men.

Now I will tell you why I object to boys being thrown into political conflicts. They may ruin their whole lives in a sudden surge of excitement, and in their manhood bitterly reproach those who took advantage of their inexperience. While education is under the control of Government, and the fate of every boy is in the hands of the officials of his town, it is cruel to fling the lads against them. A boy dismissed from school or college, and refused a leaving certificate,

has his education ruined and his future livelihood destroyed. When people unaccustomed to political action suddenly plunge into it, they are apt to think after they act instead of before. Here lies one of the dangers in India's Awakening, and that is why I said, I fear it has come too soon. Those who are trained in politics, as in my past life I have been—for I have taken a large part in the political struggles of the people in England, and I worked there in difficult times side by side with my old friend, Mr. Charles Bradlaugh—make it, as we made it, one of the rules of political life never to tell another man to go where there was risk, where we did not go in front; never to tell a procession to go where there was danger, unless we walked in front, so that we should be the first people on whom blows fell. It was the glory of Charles Bradlaugh, when he lay on his deathbed, that despite his struggles and difficulties, there was not one home that had been made desolate by him, not one man who had gone to jail for the work that he had asked him to do. The front is the place of the leader; it is the place of the man, and not the place of the boy.

There is another reason why it is bad to send boys to the front. There can be no wise politics without thought beforehand. People who shout first and think afterwards make a mob, they do not make a political party; and that is the thing that the boy does. How much do you think a boy of this height (pointing to a boy about four feet) knows about the good or the evil of the Partition of Bengal? He shouts out and protests. It is bad training for the future. In the College, students should discuss political questions, social questions and economic questions. They should debate them, discuss them, and talk them over in every possible way. We train them to do that in the Central Hindu College. But we do not allow them to protest against the Government. And the reason is a very simple one. When they have discussed these questions beforehand, when they have talked them over, then, when they have gone out into the world, they will be ready to form rational opinions. But if, before they study and understand the questions of the day, they shout their approval or

disapproval out of empty heads, they make a great deal of noise, but noise of no value, like bladders which, when beaten, make a noise, but collapse if you prick them with a pin. I do not want India to work along those lines. Train your boys to think first and then to form opinions, not to call out first and then wonder what they have been shouting for. That is bad moral training. It puts boys on wrong lines, and it takes away that profound sense of responsibility which ought to be at the heart of everyone who mingles in political life. For, remember what playing at politics means. Remember that it means playing with property; it means playing with liberty; it means playing with the lives of men. Leaders in the political arena have to remember all that, when they take the responsibility of calling men to action. When you have a man like Mr. Gokhale, who has trained himself by years upon years of study and of self-denial, by his self-sacrificing work in the Fergusson College, for twenty years on Rs. 75 a month and a retiring pension of Rs. 25 a month—when you have a man trained in that way, and who studies every subject to the very bottom before he speaks about it, then you have a man who may be trusted and of whom a nation may well be proud, a worthy leader in the political arena.

In the matter of education, why not begin to act? You know you send your boys still by thousands and thousands to missionary schools, and it is a disgrace—not to the missionaries, for they are doing work which they honestly think to be to the glory of God and for the good of all men; they believe that their religion is much better than yours, and I am bound to say that they love it better, because they work for it much harder, as a rule. You ought to remember that your religion is the oldest of all living religions, and the most perfect in its range and in its details. Surely, it is not for you to take the children, whose bodies you have given, and, robbing them of their birthright, put them into other hands and mould them in an anti-Indian fashion. The missionaries do not make many Christians. Here and there they do, as in Trichinopoly, but, as a rule, they do not make

many converts. But I tell you what they do. They dig up the roots of devotion and religion in the plastic soil of the boy's heart. They wither them with ridicule, they trample them down with sarcasm, and when the boy grows up, he grows up an unbeliever in all religion, a bad Hindu and not a Christian—a kind of hybrid, who is of no use to his country. When you despiritualise an Indian, you denationalise him. Why does that go on? *Because you do not care.* It sounds hard to say so, but it is true. If you cared, it would not last for another month. What does it want to bring about the change? A few men in every town to band themselves together into an Educational Committee; a few rich merchants to be visited and asked to subscribe so much per month for some years, and then the putting up of a building for a school, and the sending of the boys. There is one difficulty in your way—the recognition of the school by the Government, and that is a serious difficulty as things are for unless the school is recognised, the pupils of the school are not permitted to go on into the University. Still, if you would work well and steadily and perseveringly, you would, I think, be able to win recognition in the long-run, and, if not, to do without it. I have in my mind what happened in Trichinopoly two or three years ago, when I got a few people together who said that they would collect monthly subscriptions in the town to have a college of their own. The Roman Catholics have a college, and some other missionary body has a college, but the Hindus and the Mussulmans have no college of their own. Did they succeed? Not a bit of it. I myself drew up a proposal for the Madras University. The University took it into consideration. But where were the funds? The people of Trichinopoly did not care enough to keep their children from the missionary schools and colleges, to supply the small sum, comparatively, that is wanted to make a college there, where the Hindu and Mussulman boys might learn apart from Christian influence. Not long ago in another southern town there was a college for sale, and for sale without money. It is not often that you can buy anything without money. The Government wanted to get rid

of it, but the Government asked for a body of Hindu gentlemen who would pledge themselves to conduct the college. But they could not get them. The college went a-begging and still is in Government hands.

These are the things which you have to take seriously, especially now that the people are awakening. For things are going on swiftly, and unless you bestir yourselves to make your educational mechanism, the tide of enthusiasm will flow into channels that will be harmful instead of useful. Do not call your boys out from the present schools until you have others in which to receive them. When you can say to your son, "My boy, walk across the road to that school, which is our own", then by all means do it. Then you can do without missionary schools. Otherwise you will find yourselves in endless trouble. What you should do in Madras, and do at once, is to begin the formation of a great organisation of leading, wealthy, influential people, who will give employment to your boys, if so be, when the pinch comes, and Government refuses to recognise your colleges or universities. I believe in Indian universities for Indians, where Indian degrees shall be given in Arts and Science, and in industries that are useful for the national unfolding.

I see they are now going to teach French and German, Latin and Greek. Very useful, no doubt. So many of you will want to go to France, and talk French in Paris. So many of you will want to go to Germany, and enter into trade concerns there. Latin and Greek you may want to read, in order to understand medieval Christian writers, I suppose, for your spiritual training. Unless this absurdity is the idea, it is difficult to see why they should be preferred to Sanskrit and Arabic, for Sanskrit is as good and as intellectual a training as either of these two languages—Greek being but a child of Sanskrit—and Arabic is the language in which the Middle-Age learning of Islam is embodied. Our Mussulman brothers are not at present wise enough to vindicate Islamic learning by translating the treasures of that knowledge, which from Bagdad spread into Europe. Arabic

and Sanskrit, these are the two classical languages for India, not Latin and Greek. Instead of French and German, you should teach English and one vernacular, one common language which would serve everywhere as a means of communication between educated and uneducated alike. You ought to make Hindi a second language throughout the land. I have heard it said that Tamil has a literature which is magnificent, and this must certainly not be left to die. But in addition to the boy's own vernacular, he should always learn Hindi, for that is the most widely spread vernacular of the country, and one can go from one end of the land to the other and talk in Hindi to all, save the most illiterate people in every part of it. If you had Sanskrit or Arabic, according to the religion of the boy, Hindi as a common tongue, a thorough knowledge of his own vernacular, and then the necessary English for all dealings with foreign countries, and in Government and Court matters, you would have an education, so far as languages are concerned, that would make a boy ready for the future, and enable him to take up his work in the world as soon as he goes into it.

The most important thing, which I have often urged, is technical education, and above all thorough education in agriculture. Unfortunately you have got only one general business here, namely, agriculture. At least it might be made very much better than it is at present, so that famines, which are a recurring horror in the land, might be prevented. Famines are preventable things, and things that ought to be prevented. But they can only be prevented by a wiser system of agriculture on the one hand, and by the building up of manufacturing industries throughout the land on the other.

But, mind you, the manufactures that you want are the manufactures of this country. Here arts and crafts are fast dying. Your weaving craft is dying out of existence, because its products are not bought. That brings me to the next point, for education here slips into economics. Why is it that the weavers of cloths, the potters, the metal workers, and the makers of beautiful objects of all kinds, the weavers

of shawls in Kashmir, and of muslins, silks, in other parts of the land, why are they slowly disappearing? These people, who, by heredity, are fitted for the work, are swelling the ranks of the agricultural labourers, starving the land and overcrowding the fields. Why this? Because for many many years you have been wearing foreign goods in preference to home-made ones. It should not have wanted the Partition of Bengal to teach you to produce at home what you need. When you think of it, the Svadeshi movement has nothing to do with that. Whether Bengal has one Lieutenant-Governor, or two, may be a point of serious importance to the population over whom they rule. But the Partition of Bengal was not wanted to make the Svadeshi movement. The Svadeshi movement was not born after the Partition. It has been going on for years and up and down the country, but the difficulty was that only a few people were in favour of it, and the great mass of the people were totally indifferent. One thing, of course, was that the foreign-made goods were cheaper, but also less durable. Assuming that they are cheaper, how stupid that they should be so! You grow cotton, you send the cotton to Lancashire, Lancashire spins and weaves it into cloths and sends them out here, and sells them cheaper than you can spin and weave your own cotton! There is something very badly managed in this, to say the least of it. If a thing can be sold more cheaply after paying all the freight to Lancashire and back, after paying high wages in England instead of small wages to Indian handloom weavers, it is certainly by some queer kind of upside-down management. I am not forgetting, of course, the unfair duties levied on Indian mills for the benefit of Lancashire, and other difficulties that occur to your minds. But they do not practically touch your village weaving industry at all. You should have gone on supporting the Indian weaver, working in his own village, and giving you lasting and well-made cloths. If that had been done, the village weavers would have remained prosperous, and that prosperity would have reacted on the agriculturists, and so with everything else. Fashion has been more powerful than

patriotism. Now, thanks to the Partition of Bengal, poor patriotism has a chance. But the present enthusiasm for Svadeshi goods will only be a flare like the blaze of twigs, easily lighted and quickly dying out, unless a principle underlies the movement and not a passing political irritation. No durable things are built on violent passion. Nature grows her plants in silence and in darkness, and only when they have become strong do they put their heads above the ground.

Now I am glad of all this excitement, for, as I said before, it generates steam. It has made the Svadeshi movement a far more living movement than it was. So I am very glad of it. I am glad to see all the froth and the bubble and the fuss. Some of them are very foolish, I admit, but still it means life instead of stagnation. What all good men should set their faces against is any attempt to put forcible pressure on people to do what others think that they ought to do. Wear Svadeshi clothes, as I have been urging you to do for years, but if your neighbour chooses to wear an English coat, argue with him, tell him it is unpatriotic, but do not tear it off his back. That sort of violence has ruined some good movements in England, and it is always wrong. None has the right to force other people to tread his own path against their will. Every man has a right to choose, to follow, his own judgment. Convince him by argument and reasoning. Tell him that his conduct is unpatriotic, wrong and irrational; tell him he is making other countries rich while he starves his own. But do not carry on a mad crusade against everything English, especially with the help of the boys. Appeal to a man's brains. Surely there is argument enough: without home manufactures, there is no prosperity; without home manufactures, there are recurring famines; without home manufactures, there are overcrowded unproductive professions and undermanned industrial pursuits.

Every one of you can quietly, in his own town, go against the craze for foreign goods, and help forward Indian manufactures. It is so easy to do. Sometimes there is a little more trouble, I admit; sometimes I have had to wait patiently for four or five days, or even

weeks, before I could get an Indian-made thing, when I could have got a foreign-made one in a moment; but if you cannot be patient for the sake of building up the industrial prosperity of your country, what a poor thing your patriotism must be. Help this movement in every way that you can, save by ways that are wrong; for remember that the Devas are behind all national policies, and therefore that the wrong way is always the long way, and useless.

Utilise the enthusiasm of the moment by turning it into wisely planned channels. Band yourselves together, for cooperation strengthens and helps enthusiasm. Use the crafts and products of this country in preference to others. But be a little patient. If you find that Government, which has been favourable to this movement, is now frowning on it in one part of the country, remember that, after all, that is quite natural under the conditions that have arisen. Governments are not perfect, any more than the governed. After all, Governments are only men, just as you are, with the same faults and the same short-sightedness. Therefore the Government should learn to be patient with the governed, and the governed with the Government. Now in the past, Government has been favourable to the Svadeshi movement, and it will be so again. Naturally, for Government does not want famines in the land; it does not want the people to be poor, for, apart from all questions of humanity, if they are poor they cannot pay much in the way of taxes. It is to the advantage of Government that you should be rich; therefore it will help the movement again, when things are quieter; just now, it has been made into a political battle-cry, but that will pass. Politics are constantly changing, one burning question today and another tomorrow. Go on quietly and steadily without any fuss, building up your Indian manufactures, educating your sons. You think brains are wanted for pleading; much more brains are wanted for carrying on large agricultural and industrial concerns. We want the brightest brains for the building up of Indian industries at the present time. If an Indian prince wants to have an electrical plant installed in his capital, he has

to go to Europe to find an engineer who will set up for him his electrical machinery. That must be so, until you educate your boys on the right lines. Educate them on all the lines of the learning wanted to make a nation great. Get rid of the stupid idea that it is good, from the standpoint of class, to be a starving pleader, and had to be a flourishing merchant. It is a mistake. A nation that goes that way goes down. It is a man's business to make his livelihood respectable, and respectability grows not out of the nature of the livelihood but out of the man. A man of high character, of noble ideal, of pure life, can make any calling respectable, and do not forget that a calling which helps national prosperity is more respectable than a calling which does not. That is a lesson that has to be learned in modern India.

Many resent the changes which are coming about, but although many of them be not along the lines of the ancient civilisation, yet it must be remembered that the spirit of this time, as much as that of any other, is the Divine spirit. In whatever form it clothes itself, it is in the work of humanity today, as it was in the work of humanity in the past, to help humanity onwards, or to make it step forward in the right way. But it is not the right way now to tread only in the footprints of the past, simply to reintroduce what has been. Your duty is to be inspired by the same spirit that made the past great, and in that spirit to shape the form suitable for the India of tomorrow.

Why should you be afraid to tread a new path? What is the creator of every form save the spirit? Why then be afraid to go on with the life, and to leave dead forms behind? And the strange thing is that often men cling most passionately to the forms which do not really belong to the life, but which are only excrescences which have happened to grow up round the living forms, as barnacles grow on a ship's bottom, and can be knocked off without harming the ship. There is one rule that helps us in distinguishing customs that are only barnacles from the vessel that carries the life. That is to be preserved which is ancient, according to the Shastras, and universal. But that which is local, partial, modern, not according to the Shastras, these

are the things which may indeed have been useful at the time of their formulation, but are now the useless and even mischievous barnacles on the ship. Trust to life, to the living spirit. We were not there to guide the life, when it made the glorious past. Life can be trusted, for it is divinely guided, and all we have to do is to cooperate with it. That is the idea you must have above all things. Life is something greater than yourselves; you are only one tiny part of life, and the life makes its own forms. Study its tendencies and work with them, but it is life that builds, not men. Then you cooperate in the building of the forms, and if a form does not succeed it will be broken; and you should be glad in the breaking of the useless form as you should be glad in the form that means success. Failure often means winning, and it needs dozens, nay hundreds, of attempts before the perfect masterpiece shines out in full. Trust life; that is the great lesson for these days of change, for change is coming, change from every side. Those changes that are good will endure, and you must be very patient while they are in the making. But full of hope and full of courage.

All men die. You may say: Is that encouraging? Surely yes, for when a man dies, his blunders, which are of the form, all die with him, but the things in him that are part of the life never die, although the form be broken.

There is a new form to be built here, a form which has never yet been built, and that she exists in the world of spirit; as one nation, she exists in the world of mind. As one nation, she has never yet existed on the physical plane, but the day of her birth is near. Many States and Kings have been, many Maharajas, Rajas, and sometimes one Raja, great beyond his fellows, has held a wide imperial sway. But never yet has there been one India from north to south, from east to west. But she is coming. That one India, when she comes, will have her head crowned with the Himalayas, and her feet will be bathed in the waters that wash the shores of Tuticorin; she will stretch out her right hand to Burma and Assam, and her left hand to

Kathiawar and Beluchistan. That India has to be born. How? First, by believing in her with a strenuous faith, for faith is a mighty power; and then by thinking of her and aspiring after her as an ideal. For what a man thinks becomes actual in practice. And never yet was a nation born that did not begin in the spirit, pass to the heart and the mind, and then take an outer form in the world of men. That India, the sound of her feet is on the mountains, and soon the rising eastern sun shall glow upon her forehead. Already she is born in the mind of men.

But let your thought for unity be potent and resolute; learn to drop sectarian divisions; learn to drop provincial divisions and animosities; leave off saying: "I am a Madrasi; I am a Punjabi; I am a Bengali; I am an up country man"; leave all that behind and teach your boys and girls to say "I am an Indian". Out of the mouths of the children thus speaking shall be born the India of tomorrow. Many religions will grow within her; not only her own parent religion, but others too will be woven into her being. Hindu and Mussulman must join hands, for both are Indians. Mussulmans, Parsis, Christians, must join hands, for all are Indians. In the India of the future, all men of every faith must join.

If India is to be the spiritual light of the future, in her must be focussed the light that comes from every faith, until in the prism of India they are all united into the one light which shall flood with sunlight the world, and all lights shall blend in the Divine Wisdom. That is our work. My Brothers, I am now talking to you, but this thing will not be made by talking. It is made by living. I would not dare to speak to you and offer you counsel, if I did not strive to live that which I advise. Day by day, week by week, month by month, I strive to shape my life on the noble models which may serve the land, and in serving India will serve Humanity; for greater than any land is Humanity, and greater than any one people is the race of whom all people are but branches; and if we have such hopes of future India, it is because we believe that her coming will be a new light to the

world. There was an old people in the ancient days, and not very ancient either, that was conquered, and apparently cast away. One person of that race cried out: "If the fall of them be the riches of the world . . . what shall the receiving of them be but as life from the dead?" If India's humiliation has, in a very real sense, been the riches of the world—for this has been the means of spreading India's thoughts in the most widely-spoken tongue of the world, to the north and south, east and west, all round the habitable globe—what shall it be for humanity when India herself in her new glory is born into the world? India, from whose lips, in this land of the Rishis, came the religion that uplifts and spiritualises, the philosophy that illumines, and the science that trains; India, from whose mind, throughout the world of mind, came those great systems of thought which are now recognised as the noblest products of the human intellect; India, whose feet once passed through many States, and made every one of them fertile, prosperous, and wealthy India, who was perfect in spirit and mind when that India is born into the full vision of the eyes of men, perfect in body, is it too much to say that her coming will be as life from the dead? That is the glorious goal, for which we work; that is the splendid hope, that cheers our labour; that is the sublime aspiration, that rises perpetually to the ears of the Devas. For India's coming means the spiritualising of humanity; India's thinking means the lifting of thought on to a higher level; prosperity shall be the justification of religion, the justification of philosophy, as part of the life of a nation; and the world shall be redeemed from materialism because India is awake.

Home Rule for India

- 1926 Started the Theosophical Colony at Juhu, Bombay, laying a cornerstone
- 1927 Started the Happy Valley in California, appealing for the Happy Valley Foundation Fund;
Eighty years 'young' this year, she gave fifty lectures in twelve countries of Europe in twenty-one days, travelling by aeroplane
- 1928 July 6th, re-elected President of the Theosophical Society;
Recorded highest membership of the Society; 45,000 active members;
On invitation wrote a statement for the World Peace Union;
Was ill in London, and had to cancel Queen's Hall Lectures
March 25th, announced the existence and work of the World Mother
- 1929 August 26th, inaugurated the fourth Theosophical World Congress at Chicago, sending therefrom a letter to president Hoover pleading for the abolition of war

Home Rule for India

[Chapter V of *India – Bond or Free? A World Problem* by Annie Besant, London & New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926]

Events moved fast. The Congress of 1915 ordered its Committees to prepare a scheme outlining India's claim. It was done and was endorsed at Lucknow by the Congress of 1916, and also by the Muslim League. Two Home Rule Leagues had been formed in September, 1916, and these worked side by side, and the two Presidents, Mr. Tilak and myself, were members of both. Enthusiasm had risen higher and higher, guided by a vigorous propaganda of pen and tongue during the autumn of 1915 and the spring of 1916, and the Madras Government took fright. Lord Pentland, the Governor, a kind and well-meaning but weak man, wholly in the hands of the old type of Civilians, allowed some of these to ally themselves with some of the ablest of the non-Brahmanas to misrepresent the Home Rule Movement as the attempt of the small number of Brahmanas to tyrannise over the huge majority outside their own caste; by utilising religious feeling to stimulate political ambition, these Civilians and the non-Brahmanas formed an unholy combination which threw itself against Home Rule. The Government consequently thought itself strong enough to attempt repression, and the Press Act of 1910, which placed every newspaper in a Province at the mercy of the local Government, was used against *New India*, the leader of the Home Rule agitation. On May 26, 1916, a notice was served on myself levying a security of Rs. 2,000 on the paper. It was paid, and Lord Pentland and his Government became the chief propagandists of Home Rule, for *New India* continued cheerfully on its path, knowing that it was virtually doomed, unless the country rose in its defence.

Now came in the value of my political training by Charles Bradlaugh. "In fighting a bad law", he would say, "never give way, but utilise every opportunity of delay which the law gives you. For time is on the side of a just agitation, and stirs up the people." Little chance of delay was there in action taken under the Press Law, for it was by Executive Order to a magistrate, and the magistrate was bound to obey. Still the battle could be fought in the same spirit,

fought out step by step, undeterred by inevitable failure. And it was so fought.

The security was forfeited on August 28, and a new security of Rs. 10,000 was levied. The Press Act gave to the Editor the option of paying in cash or in Government notes, but the Government of Madras did not feel bound by the law it utilised, and insisted on cash. The Law Officer of the Governor-General's Council had promised that interest should be paid on any security levied. The Madras Government taking cash, paid no interest, so levied also a continuing fine. I began an action against the Government for the interest, but that disappeared in the course of the struggle and the final triumph.

The Press Act was so worded that defeat was apparently certain, so beginning with a Special Bench in the Madras Court on September 27, 1916, I fought on up to the Privy Council. The Advocate-General of the Madras Government was the prosecutor and I defended myself, aided by the very able advice, and on a technical point by the skilful pleading of Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar. As I knew that I was bound to lose the case, I arranged to sell the New India Press, and the Vasanta Press on which also security of Rs. 5,000 was levied as the printer of the Commonweal, to two different persons when the need arose, as the next step of the Government, under the Act, would be to forfeit the Presses. I was wholly acquitted under the charge of sedition and was admitted to be perfectly loyal to the Crown; but some of the articles were held to come under other all-embracing sections of the Act, so drawn that, as Sir Lawrence Jenkins, the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, had pointed out, no one attacked by the Executive under it could possibly escape. As time was wanted, I applied against the decision of the Madras Court to the Privy Council, as that prevented the Government from taking further action until the appeal was decided. The Government, having levied a second security could not forfeit it and then forfeit the Press, until the case had been decided in London—a way of fighting that had apparently escaped the notice of the Government of

India in its efforts to strangle the Indian Press. It had many successes with papers not trained, as I had been, in the way of fighting bad law legally. Charles Bradlaugh had abolished securities on the English Press by the policy he had recommended to me in case of need, and had received John Stuart Mill's congratulations thereon. He must have been pleased, I think, when the first reformed Legislative Assembly and Council of State, abolishing a mass of "emergency legislation", reduced the Press Act to an innocuous Registration Act.

A Home Rule (English Auxiliary) League had been formed in England in 1915, in aid of the Indian Movement, and it re-published a little book of mine, entitled *India — A Nation*, when the English Government, in 1916, persuaded the publishers to withdraw it from circulation.

The adoption of the "Congress League Scheme", mentioned above, gave fresh vigor to the agitation, and this so provoked Lord Pentland, that he told the Madras Legislative Council (May, 1917) that "all thoughts of the early grant of Responsible Self-Government should be put entirely out of mind". It was apparently decided by the Madras Government that as New India went on with the propaganda of Home Rule, and as it could not forfeit the security and then the Press, because of the appeal to the Privy Council, it would stop the paper by interning the Editor (myself), the Assistant Editor (Mr. B. P. Wadia) and a particularly breezy and popular contributor (Mr. G. S. Arundale), by interning this most objectionable trio. These three out of the way, the paper would probably collapse. The order was issued on June 16, no reason being given, and Lord Pentland refusing any explanation though he called me to see him—why or what for, I never learned; he may have supposed I would take the opportunity of asking for mercy, but I did not. As I wrote a little later:

"I suspended *New India* on June 18th, sold the Vasanta Press to Rao Sahab G. Soobhiah Chetty and recovered its Rs. 5,000 on June 19; on June 20, I sold the Commonweal Press to Mr. Ranga Reddi and the *New India* Press to Mr. P. K. Telang, recovering Rs.

2,000 and Rs. 10,000, and issued a notice to *New India* subscribers; the paper appeared again on the 21st; it was quick work, but the time was short, and I had to 'hustle'. So we had three brand-new press-owners, under securities of only Rs. 2,000 each, instead of Rs. 17,000. I do not think the Press Act was intended to have a motor car, driven by a lady of nearly seventy, rushed through it in this way, like the proverbial 'coach and horses'. But then it was drawn up by bureaucrats who had no experience of Home Rulers; they were accustomed to revolutionaries, and even passive resisters, but had never met with constitutional fighters for Liberty, who regarded them with amused unconcern and perfect good temper. Before we left, Mr. Horniman (Editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*) and Mr. N. C. Kelkar (Editor of the *Mahratta*) came over from Bombay and Poona to offer help, and each wrote an article for the *New India* of the 21st. As they were already Editors, we thought it was better that Mr. P. K. Telang should assume charge of *New India*, and he promptly filled the gap. He forfeited the security in due course, and another Rs. 10,000 was levied. When I resumed the editorship, Mr. Telang presented the Press to Mr. Ranga Reddi, who started again with another Rs. 2,000. The magistrate, however, most improperly kept the Rs. 10,000 on various excuses for over a year, but when another magistrate took his place, the money was at once refunded. The long fight with good propaganda had helped Home Rule immensely.

"For when we, the interned, foregathered at Ootacamund (where I had, as President of the Theosophical Society, a little house), a whirlwind broke out, raged up and down the country, stormed over to Britain, Russia, France, America, at several hundred miles an hour. Questions were asked in the House of Commons and in the Viceroy's Legislative Council. Members of Parliament, like the babes in the wood, were snowed under with leaves – of paper. 'Who would have thought,' said a very high official pensively, 'that there would have been such a fuss over an old woman?' Crowds of

people and many popular leaders joined the Home Rule League. Meetings were held; resolutions flew about; C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Congressmen everywhere, fanned the storm and rode it. They preserved perfect order; never a window was broken; never a riot occurred; never a policeman was assaulted; never man, woman or child went to gaol. For three months the vehement agitation continued unbrokenly, without ever breaking a law, and the students who wanted to strike were kept in their schools and colleges and then – came the Declaration of August 20, 1917, that the goal of Great Britain in India was Responsible Government, and an announcement that the Secretary of State for India was coming thither to learn the wishes of the people. To ‘obtain a calm atmosphere’ the three internees were liberated.

“It was a truly constitutional triumph, won by a United India, and was crowned by the election of the Home Rule President (myself) as President of the National Congress of 1917.

“Mr. Montagu, the Secretary of State, came to India, and travelled with the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, all over India, meeting Deputations representing every type of political opinion. The National Congress and the Muslim League and the two Home Rule Leagues presented at Delhi on November 26, 1917, memorials asking for Home Rule. The National Congress and the League were represented by a Joint Deputation from their respective Executives, and the memorial was read by Mr. Surendranath Bannerji. After a careful and argumentative presentation of the Indian case it wound up:

“We submit that the reforms for which the National Congress and the Muslim League plead, are needed as much in the interests of the good government of the country and the happiness and prosperity of the people as for the legitimate satisfaction of our National self-respect and for a due recognition of India’s place among the free and civilized Nations of the Empire and the outside world . Nor are they less necessary to strengthen and solidify the

British connection with this ancient land. India has given freely of her love and service to England, and she aspires to attain to her proper place of equality and honor in the Commonwealth of Nations, which are proud to own fidelity to his Imperial Majesty the King-Emperor. If, as has been said, the British Empire is the greatest secular power on earth making for the good of mankind, India is hopeful and confident that she will not be denied what is in every way due to her, especially after this great War of Liberty, in which it has been authoritatively recognised that she has played a distinguished and honorable part.’

“The two Home Rule Leagues were represented by Mr. Tilak and myself respectively, and we also read our memorials. At Madras, the All-India Home Rule League presented Mr. Montagu with a million verified signatures, gathered in the Presidency, and conveyed to him in three or four carts.

“It was the end of a strenuous struggle of three crowded years; to me the end of another stage in twenty-four years of steady labor; to the Congress the end of one stage in its thirty-three years of political efforts for Liberty.

“Thenceforth Liberty’s battle entered on another phase.”

As President of the National Congress – the gift that had, since its foundation, been regarded as the greatest proof of India’s love and of her trust – I sketched the causes of what I had called “the New Spirit in India”. These were six in number:

1. The awakening of Asia.
2. Discussions abroad on Alien Rule and Imperial Reconstruction.
3. Loss of belief in the superiority of the White Races.
4. The Awakening of the Merchants.
5. The Awakening of the Women to claim their ancient position.
6. The Awakening of the Masses.

The first was largely due to the Russo-Japanese War and to the English ideas of Liberty already mentioned; Lord Minto, as Viceroy of India recognised that “new aspirations were stirring in the hearts of the people, that they were part of a larger movement common to the whole East, and that it was necessary to satisfy them to a reasonable extent by giving them a larger share in the administration”. It is difficult for an English Viceroy, however sympathetic, to realise that India wants not “a larger share in the administration”, but Self-Government. Similarly I noticed Lord Chelmsford (the Viceroy) start when, in reading the memorial from the Home Rule League above-mentioned, I quoted Mr. Asquith’s words, as to the “intolerable degradation of a foreign yoke”, as expressing the feeling of the people of India towards the British rule over their country.

Really, the awakening of India is not only a part of the movement in Asia, stimulated by the aggressiveness of western peoples, but it is also part of that World Movement towards Democracy, which began for the West in the revolt of the American Colonies against the rule of Britain, ending in 1776 in the Independence of the Great Republic of the West, and in the French Revolution of 1789. The invasion of India by the European merchants in the seventeenth century and its fatal results in reducing India to ignorance and to poverty; the self-abnegation of the Samurai of Japan; the fall of the Manchu dynasty in China, followed by a Chinese Republic; the struggle of Persia to free herself from the “spheres of influence” of alien Powers; all these had their share in the awakening of India; and she has seen later the fall of the Russian, German and Austrian Empires, and the growth of Democratic institutions all over Europe.

European statesmen pretended that in the War of 1914 to 1918, they were, as Mr. Asquith said, “fighting for nothing but freedom, and for nothing short of freedom”. In the speech just quoted, he was promising to stand by France in her claim for the restoration of Alsace and Lorraine, rent from her after the War of 1870, and he defended her claim because those provinces were suffering “the

intolerable degradation of a foreign yoke". India has realised that all the talk about Freedom was only meant for white races, and held no sincere sympathy for the colored peoples, however civilized they might be; that the Empire of Britain meant only the rule of the five white Nations instead of one, over colored races, the exploitation of their mineral resources and of their crops for the benefit of Britain, and their working as subordinates, even as slaves, of the white men who had stolen their lands. Indians began to feel that they were not allowed to have a country of their own, like the other Nations of the world; they began to realise that though they had fought for the Freedom, nay, for the very life of the Empire, they were not to share in that Freedom; they glimpsed before themselves a future of subordination, of inferiority, of unbearable humiliation. They had fought as men, as equals; the danger over, they were to fall back into a "subject race".

Subject to whom? To a white race in whose superiority they had lost belief. First the triumph of Japan, and then the frank brutality and cruelty of the European War, the laying waste of cultivated lands, the bombing from the air of cities full of non-combatants, forced them to see the thin veneer of civilization over the savagery of European War, the slaughter of the defenceless, the destruction of magnificent buildings, the architecture centuries old scattered in fragments over a devastated tract. Nothing is left in India of the superstition "of the superiority of Christendom over Asia". "Gazing from afar at the ghastly heaps of the dead and the hosts of the mutilated, at science turned into devilry and ever inventing new tortures for rending and slaying, Asia may be forgiven for thinking that, on the whole, she prefers her own religions and her own civilizations."

The fourth sign of the New Spirit is very significant, for the merchant class had not, as a rule, concerned itself with politics; its special duty was that of the steward of the National resources, organizing agriculture and industries, accumulating wealth and dispensing it, largely in the form of gifts to education, charity to the

poor, and generally among useful public purposes. In the organization of the Nation, the merchant was the typical householder, including men of great wealth who made magnificent donations to temples, schools, colleges, universities, and also small traders who gave handfuls of rice or other food-stuffs for the meals of students, gathering such alms for themselves and their teachers. The normal attitude of the Indian merchant – save where denationalized by western competition – is the duty of charity, supremely to religion and to education. The War awakened them to the extent in which the foreign Government of India had alienated her natural resources, allowing them to pass into foreign hands; German industries were closed down, and no help was given for their replacement; Government securities became depreciated, and they were forced to sell them to meet their liabilities; Government paid for their goods in War Bonds instead of cash. They were compelled to realise the disadvantages of foreign rule; moreover the depreciation of Government paper made them doubt the stability of the Government. They also realised that India might be far more self-supporting than she was and might export her surplus, as of old, and they also saw the enormous advantage of Self-Government to a country, when they witnessed the rapid increase of Japanese trade under a Home Government. They also noted how strongly their trade rivals, the European Associations in India, opposed Indian Home Rule, and that their own interests would benefit by it. As Mr. J. W. Root had observed, to give Great Britain “the control over Indian foreign trade and internal industry that would be secured by a common tariff would be an unpardonable iniquity . . . can it be conceived that were India’s fiscal arrangements placed to any considerable extent under the control of British legislators, they would not be regarded with an eye to British interests? Intense jealousy of India is always cropping up in everything affecting fiscal or industrial legislation.”

The merchant class began to see that Home Rule would be to them an immense advantage, and this explains why, a little later, they

contributed largely to Mr. Gandhi's movement, which they mistakenly supposed would bring Home Rule to India.

The awakening of the Women of India was the fifth great factor in the production of the New Spirit. The Theosophical Society had, by strongly aiding the revival of Hinduism, intensified the repugnance felt by Indian women towards foreign and Christian rule. They resented the education that had led away their husbands and sons from allegiance to their own Hindu faith, and which had also for five or six generations pushed away Indian women from their husbands' sides in the new strange phase of public life, caused by the dominance of the foreigner. The home had been closed against him, but he dominated public life and masculine education; the culture of the men became utterly different from that of the women, and while they closed their home doors against him, he closed against them the interests of the larger life of the Nation. They cherished the names of the glorious women of their race, rulers, poets, ascetics, even warriors, and yearned for the re-winning of the elder world. The ill-usage of Indians abroad, the Indenture system with its dishonoring of Indian women, the partition of Bengal and other matters that touched their religion, led to a striking instance of their antagonism to British Rule, when five hundred highly born women of Bengal went to congratulate the mother of an Editor, sentenced for sedition, for having given birth to so noble a son. I wrote a little later:

“Deep in the heart of India's daughters arose the Mother's Voice, calling on them to help her to arise, and to be once more mistress in her own household. Indian women, nursed on her old literature, with its wonderful ideals of womanly perfection, could not remain indifferent to the great movement for India's liberty. And during the last few years the hidden fire long burning in their hearts, fire of love to Bhāratamātā, fire of resentment against the lessened influence of the religion which they passionately love, instinctive dislike of the foreigner as ruling in their land, have caused a marvellous awakening. The strength of the Home Rule movement is

rendered tenfold greater by the adhesion to it of large numbers of women, who bring to its help the uncalculating heroism, the endurance, the self-sacrifice, of the feminine nature. Our League's best recruits and recruiters are among the women of India, and the women of Madras boast that they marched in procession when the men were stopped, and that their prayers in the Temples set the interned captives free. Home Rule has become so intertwined with religion by the prayers offered up in the great Southern Temples – sacred places of pilgrimage – and spreading from them to Village Temples, and also by its being preached up and down the country by Sādhus and Sannyasins, that it has become in the minds of the women and of the ever-religious masses, inextricably intertwined with religion. That is, in this country, the surest way of winning alike the women of the higher classes and the men and women villagers. And that is why I just said that the two words, 'Home Rule', have become a Mantram.”

The Awakening of the Masses inevitably followed the lead of the English-educated Indians. The Indian peasant and artisan had never troubled much about the proceedings of the Governments of Provinces, Kingdoms or Empires. The freely elected Village Council, as we have seen, managed the village affairs for countless generations; since it had been destroyed all had gone wrong with them. The land they had cultivated to support their village Temple and its priest had been seized by some incomprehensible power, and the village school had vanished. The peasant had to pay cash, instead of a share of the crops, to some usurper, who represented the sacred person of the Indian King. His land rent is raised from time to time by some unknown power. He is punished for innocent acts, and for breaking irrational laws that did not exist in the time of his forefathers. He is tyrannised over by village officials who used to be controlled by the village. His educated countrymen lecture to him on interesting matters touching the village life, and help him to join with his fellows in a movement he finds useful – Co-operation. He may read in the *Quarterly Review*:

“The change of attitude on the part of the peasant coupled with the progress made in organization mainly through the Co-operative propaganda, is the outstanding achievement of the last decade, and at the same time the chief ground for the recent confidence with which agricultural reformers can now face the future.”

The submerged classes are also moving, much aided by the Brāhmanas, ashamed of their past indifference, and the monster petition of a million signatures, quickly gathered in favor of Home Rule, mentioned above, shows how the people of the Madras Presidency have been awakened to their need of political liberty.

We have seen how Gopāla Krishna Gokhale spoke of the stunting of his race under British Rule. The Hon. Mr. Bhupendra Basu had also declared:

“A bureaucratic administration, conducted by an imported agency, and centering all power in its hands and undertaking all responsibility, has acted as a dead weight on the Soul of India, stifling in us all sense of initiative for the lack of which we are condemned, atrophying the nerves of action, and, what is most serious, necessarily dwarfing in us all feeling of self-respect.”

The cry for Home Rule, Swarāj (Self-Rule), ringing from all parts of India, is really a cry for that which is most priceless in a Nation’s life, for the life of its very Soul, for its right to grow, to evolve, on its own National lines. It is an echo of the words:

“What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own Soul? What shall a man give in exchange for his Soul?”

India’s very Soul is in peril. The fact that she can deal with her own needs better than Englishmen can deal with them is seen in the action of her only partially free Legislatures since 1921, in giving Free Primary Education to her people, compensation for injury to her factory workers, and the suffrage to her women on the same terms as it is given to men by the Reform Act of 1919.

A very violent movement led by Lord Sydenham and others, called "The Indo-British Association", arose in Great Britain in 1918, and assisted by the bureaucracy in India, did all that greed of power could do to prevent the Secretary of State for India from proposing effective Reforms. When the Home Rule Leagues for India sent Deputations to England to work in favor of a generous and statesmanlike policy, they were stopped at Gibraltar by the War Cabinet, their passports cancelled, and their members held in Gibraltar for six weeks. This was done although both Mr. Tilak and myself, the respective Presidents of the Leagues, had declared that we would use to the utmost whatever Reforms were granted in order to obtain more. Much argument arose in India, some declaring, at a Conference held in the Madras Presidency in May, that they would boycott the new Councils if the Reforms were inadequate, and attacking those who would, even if inadequate, utilise them to the utmost.

I urged this utilisation in the *Commonweal*, and was asked why this question should be raised before the report on the tour of the Viceroy and Mr. Montagu was issued. I answered:

"Because if, in a natural surge of anger and distrust, on finding the Reforms to be inadequate, persons committed themselves to the policy of boycotting the new Councils, it might be difficult for them to retrace their steps, and Parliament, relieved from the fear of an 'Irish Party' in the new Councils, would ignore the agitation and sit tight, and pass their inadequate measure. There is such a thing as foresight in political work, and it may be well sometimes to look ahead."

Unfortunately the words proved to be prophetic. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report was published in 1918, and three views were taken in India, the basis of subsequent parties; the "Moderates" accepted it, but urged important amendments; the "Home Rulers" declined to accept them, and urged amendments; the "Extremists" declined them altogether. A Special Congress was held in Bombay

on August 31 and September 1, and a compromise was agreed to, declaring the proposed Reforms to be “inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing”, but resolutions were passed which would make them workable. A Conference of Moderates in October made similar amendments, but did not condemn the Report. The regular Congress meeting in December rejected the Pact made in Bombay by an Extremist majority against the protest of the Home Rulers and a few Moderates. Early in 1919 two Deputations went to London, one from the National Congress and one from the Moderate Conference. In February, 1919, the Home Rule League split in twain, in consequence of Mr. Gandhi starting “passive resistance” against the Rowlatt Act, a movement which I opposed, part of the League supporting him, while the other part supported me. Each part sent a Deputation to England, and both did useful work, co-operating with each other and with the Moderates and with the Deputations from the Muslim League and the Congress, and obtaining large amendments in the proposed Bill; we went before the Joint Committee of the two Houses of Parliament as witnesses, and also held various meetings in England. The Rowlatt Act had been passed in a form which could only be broken by revolutionaries, and it had been decided to break other laws, chosen by a committee, as a protest against it, laws such as those which enforced the printing of the printer’s name on all publications.

This seemed to me such an absurd proposal, that I declined to accept it. I was prepared to disregard a tyrannical law, which cancelled the ordinary rights of a peaceful citizen, and to suffer whatever penalty was imposed for the breach; but I was not prepared to break innocuous laws which I had hitherto obeyed at the command of a committee.

The passive resistance movement of 1919 had been stopped by Mr. Gandhi, who called it a “Himalayan blunder” when it broke into rioting. But the Non-Cooperation movement was none the less started in April, 1920. The Musalmāns were much disturbed

about the Khilāfat and Turkey, and had formed a Khilāfat Committee early in 1920, and Mr. Gandhi suggested, if the Turkish Treaty should be unsatisfactory, that, avoiding all forms of violence, people holding office under Government and Government menial servants should resign. “Non-Co-operation with the Government, free from all things of violence, is the only effective remedy open to the people.” A hartal (cessation of all work) was called for by Mr. Gandhi for March 19, and was kept all over India. A National week was fixed for April 6 to 13 (the day of the massacre the year before). All parties were represented, and on April 6 the repeal of the Rowlatt Act was demanded. Mr. Gandhi declared that if it were not repealed before the Reforms were started, the request for “Co-operation would be futile, and he, for one, would find the situation such as to make remaining within the Empire impossible” (*New India*, April 7). April 9 was Khilāfat Day, and a resolution was passed that if the just demands of the Musalmans were not agreed to, “it will be the duty of every Indian to withdraw Co-operation from Government until pledges fulfilled and Muslim sentiment conciliated”.

A great demonstration was held on April 17 in Madras, and Mr. Gandhi's “four progressive steps” in Non-Co-operation were passed as follows:

“In consonance with the spirit of the Resolution adopted by the All-India Khilāfat Committee, this Conference, in the events of the present agitation proving futile and ineffective, calls upon all Indians to resort to progressive abstention from Co-operation with Government in the following manner:

“Firstly, to renounce all honorary posts, and memberships of Legislative Councils.

“Secondly, to give up all remuneratory under Government service.

“Thirdly, to give up all appointments in the Police and Military forces.

“Fourthly, to refuse to pay taxes to Government.”

Moulana Shaukat Ali, after reciting these, as President of the Conference, said: "We do not embark on this step without fully realising what it means. It means a movement for absolute independence."

Mr. Gandhi did not endorse this, but some of us realised that Non-Co-operation was not a movement for Home Rule as a Free Nation among other Free Nations, with the British Crown as the link of the Federation, but was one of Mass Direct Action, directly revolutionary. As, personally, I regarded the union between India and Great Britain as the one great defence against a war of the white and colored races, I kept up a definite opposition to the Non-Co-operation movement.

The part of the old Home Rule League, which rejected me as President in 1919 in favor of Mr. Gandhi, had accepted a new Constitution from Mr. Gandhi, and became the Swarāj League, a part of the Non-Co-operation movement. The Swarājists boycotted the Legislatures. H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught came to India to open the three Presidency and the Central Legislatures. Both he and the Viceroy declared that autocracy was abandoned, and the King's message proclaimed "the beginning of Swāraj within my Empire". Both King and Duke expressed "their sorrow for the Panjab tragedy and their sympathy with the sufferers. The Duke's words were broken by strong emotion, moved the whole great Assembly and have rung round India". The Central Legislature opened well by the Government giving way to the Hon. Mr. V. S. Srinivāsa Sastri, who "moved a resolution accepted by the Government, to examine the Repressive Laws on the Statute Book and report on their repeal or amendment. (The 'Repressive Laws' are those which substitute Executive for Judicial action, and since 1804 have been used arbitrarily to repress political efforts for Reform, placing liberty and property at the mercy of the Executive.) In the Assembly, following up this resolution, Mr. O'Donnell moved and carried a resolution for a committee to examine and report on the Press Laws. Under these fell

fourteen Acts dealing with Repression, and three under Press Laws. In the first set twelve and a half Acts were repealed at once, the remaining one and a half to be repealed when the country was less disturbed. In the second, only an amended Registration Act was left.

The first working day in the Assembly was given “to a resolution moved by Mr. Jamnadas Dwarkadas and accepted by the Government, that expressed regret for the unnecessary humiliations and hardships inflicted on Indians in the Panjab (sic) tragedy, asserted the equality of Indians and Europeans in the sanctity of life and honor, stated some of the punishments inflicted on guilty officers, and promised liberal compensation to families which had suffered in the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre, on a scale similar to that awarded to the British victims. General Dyer had been removed from the Indian Army . . . 1,700 condemned prisoners were released out of 1,786; a political reformer who had been condemned to an extravagant sentence of transportation and confiscation is now (1922) an honored Minister in the Panjāb (sic); the administration of Martial Law was reformed so that no such excesses could happen again, as was proved during the Malabar Rebellion in 1921, 1922.”

Other signs of the changed spirit, that it would take too long to recount, were also shown in the various Legislatures, and much useful work was done. I wrote in 1922 on these things, and concluded the recital by paying tribute to those English rulers who had worked for us so well:

“It only needs a little patience and courage on the part of India to win Home Rule through the Reform Act, and Mr. Montagu, as Secretary of State, will remain glorious in Indian History, as the man who opened the gate of the road leading to Home Rule, and stood firmly by India as she began to tread it. Nor should the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, be forgotten, who worked with Mr. Montagu through the initial stages, and had the courage to declare at the opening of the Indian Legislature that ‘autocracy was abandoned’, laying down, by his own work and will the mighty power he had wielded over more

than three hundred millions of human beings. Few are the autocrats, who, like Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu, being offered a great opportunity, have risen to the height of renunciation to which they attained, and, without the compulsion of Revolution, laid at the feet of a great subject Nation the splendid gift of Freedom to tread the path which led to Home Rule, working out her own salvation. The nobility of their action is not yet appreciated, for we are still struggling to reach our goal, and do but poor justice to those who have brought us within reach of it; we wanted more than they were able to obtain for us, facing the tremendous forces of race pride, consciousness of armed strength, contempt of oriental peoples, and the strong ground of possession unchallenged effectively for one hundred and sixty years, and all the wealth obtained by India's subjection. Against all these they struggled gallantly, and when India rules herself, she will do them justice and gratefully acknowledge the debt she owes them. History will write their names in golden letters, who found a Nation enslaved and set it free to win, by its own strength, its place among the Self-Governing Nations of the world.

Never before has so great a Revolution been accomplished without bloodshed; never before has the autocrat voluntarily resigned power into the hands of subjects, re-created into citizens."

These hopes were frustrated for the time by the success of the Non-Co-operation movement, which not only ruined thousands of school and college students by calling them away from education and then leaving them stranded, but also swept the country under a new tyranny, that of the Swarāj Party, which hooted off the platform those of us who opposed Mr. Gandhi and blocked for the time all political action save obstruction. As I said during that unhappy period:

"Under the Gandhi Rāj there is no Free Speech, no open meeting except for Non-Co-operators. Social and religious boycott, threats of person violence, spitting, insults in the streets, are the methods of oppression. Mob support is obtained by wild promises,

such as the immediate coming of Swarāj, when there will be no rents, no taxes, by giving to Mr. Gandhi high religious names, such as Mahātmā and Avatāra, assigning to him super-natural powers and the like.”

Mr. Gandhi never approved of violence, but he could not control his followers, and the result has been a great setback of Political Reform. Mr. Gandhi’s book, *Indian Home Rule*, is full of the wildest statements. At last he called for millions of volunteers and bade people pay no taxes, whereon the Government arrested him, very courteously, and sent him to prison. He said, very truly, that he could not control the forces he had raised. His real followers are non-violent and harmless, for they are now told not to break laws but only to spin and weave.

The National Congress of 1920 at Delhi had carried a resolution demanding (1) that the principle of Self-Determination should be applied to India; (2) asked for the removal of all hindrances to free discussion; (3) demanded an Act of Parliament establishing complete responsible Government in India, and that in the reconstruction of Imperial policy (4) India should be placed on an equality with the Self-Governing Dominions. The second point has been almost carried out; the third and fourth have not. But the Commonwealth of India Bill, as may be seen by referring to the Appendix, will carry them out when it becomes an Act. It has been delayed by the breaking up of political parties caused by the Non-Co-operation movement, now dead.

Shall India become an isolated country or be a Free Nation in a Commonwealth of Free Nations linked together by the British Crown? My own hope is to see an Indo-British Commonwealth of Colored and White Nations, as otherwise the “clash of color” may cause a fearful war, in which the present civilization will go down as other civilizations before it have gone down. Consider the position as to the ownership of land and the growth of population, as it arises

between the Colored and the White Races; here are some startling figures:

The population of the world is put at 1,800,000,000. Japan and China contain about 500,000,000; India and Burma 320,000,000. The rest of Asia south east of Burma has populations which bring up the total of Asia to nearly 1,000,000,000. And they are all awake, the students in the colleges are full of great ideals, and books are circulating with enormous rapidity, stirring these students to new ambitions.

On the other side of the Pacific and to the South are huge countries sparsely inhabited; Canada, with an area equal to Europe, has a population of 8,000,000. The United States has 3,000,000 square miles of territory and a population of 105,000,000, Australia has a territory the same as that of the United States and a population of 5,500,000. New Zealand, about the size of the British Isles, has a population of something over 1,000,000. China has territory half as spacious as that of the United States, and over 400,000,00 inhabitants. Let anyone visualise these facts, and ask himself what must be the inevitable issue. The author of the vividly written *The Clash of Colour*, from which these figures are taken, sees “a broad fluttering tide of human beings in Asia pressed by the urgent drive of their own incredible multitude eastward and southward towards the other shores of the Pacific – the relatively sparsely populated lands of America and the open spaces of Australasia”. This is not a movement of war but of economic compulsion, an inevitable irresistible movement of the hungry towards the empty fertile lands where Nature will reward labor with food. If resisted by legislation, it will burst into war, war implacable and sustained. Once the struggle blazes into war, numbers must tell. “In the clash of arms, laws are silent”. And such a war will not end before the present civilization has received its deathblow.

But if India and Britain come to terms, if India becomes an equal partner in the firm instead of a servant, then all will be

changed. As Mr. Rushbrook Williams says, in one of his masterly reports, *India in 1922-23*:

“The impending struggle between East and West, foretold by many persons who cannot be classed either as visionaries or as fanatics, may easily be mitigated or even entirely averted, if the British Commonwealth of Nations can find a place within its wide compass for three hundred and twenty millions of Asiatics, fully enjoying the privileges, and adequately discharging the responsibilities, which at present characterise the inhabitants of Great Britain and the Self-Governing Dominions.”

If India be fully admitted into the Commonwealth of Nations, if she possesses Dominion status at Home as well as abroad, then may a World Peace brood over our seething Nations. In 1919 I urged that India should determine for herself her own form of Self-Government, and reference to the Appendix will show how that idea has been carried out in the Commonwealth of India Bill, now before the House of Commons.

The Future of India will, I hope, be united with that of Britain for the sake of both Nations and for the sake of Humanity at large, for they supply each other's defects, and united can do for the world a service that neither can do alone. India in the Past has shown that the highest spirituality does not prevent, but ensures, the greatness of achievement in the many-aspected splendor of a Nation's life; under the shelter of her sublime religion she developed a literature of unparalleled intellectual power, philosophical and metaphysical; her Art flowered into exquisite beauty; her dramas still purify and inspire. Her physical prosperity endured millennium after millennium, and her wealth was the envy of the world. Let her have Freedom to develop on her own lines and she will again rival her ancient glory, and even excel it in the future. Robbed of Liberty, she is treading the path of death, and will soon leave the world only the memory of what she was. Critical are the coming years, wherein the decision must be made. Let India remember what she was and realise

what she may be. Then shall her Sun rise once more in the East and fill the western lands with Light.

Her salvation lies in Swarāj, Self-Rule, Home Rule, and in that alone. Nothing else can preserve and renew her vitality – slowly ebbing away before our eyes. Yet that vitality has endured from a Past for which archeological research has not as yet discovered a boundary, beyond which the Mother-Race of the present civilized Nations of the world did not raise her stately head, wearing the aureole of spiritual glory, holding her sceptre of intellectual and moral achievement over the countless millions of her children, spreading westwards ever till their setting Sun becomes the Rising Sun on their ancient ancestral Homeland.

PEACE TO ALL BEINGS

Commonwealth of India Bill: A Foundation for the Future

[Published as an Appendix of *India: Bound of Free?*, London & New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926.]

This Bill was not a sudden move, but was led up to by progressive steps.

In September, 1913, a small band of my immediate Theosophical workers formed themselves into a group called "The Brothers of Service" to prepare for steady advance not only along the lines named above of Religious, Educational and Social Reform, but also along Political, since the intolerable pressure of tyrannical legislation hampered all forward action. They drew up the following leaflet which was widely circulated:

"Theosophy must be made practical" was a sentence written and published long ago by one of Those whom Theosophists regard as Masters. Since Mrs. Annie Besant came to India in 1893, she has been seeking for ways of service to India, so that the country of her adoption might rise in the scale of Nations, and take the world-position to which her past entitles her and which her future will justify. Rightly or wrongly, she judged that the great Forward Movement must begin with a revival of spirituality, for National self-respect could only be aroused and the headlong rush towards imitation of western methods could only be checked, by substituting spirituality and idealism for materialism. Great success attended the work, and she then added to it educational activities, so as to appeal to the citizens of the future and shape their aspirations towards Nationhood, as an integral part of the coming World-Empire. Cautiously she carried on some Social

Reform activities, organizing propaganda against child-marriage, and in favour of foreign travel, helping the latter by the establishment of an Indian Hostel in London¹¹, and of a Committee of friendly Theosophists who would welcome youths arriving in England as strangers. For many years many of her more attached followers have been pledged to delay the marrying of their children for some years beyond the custom of their caste and neighborhood. In Politics, she has urged the larger ideals, and has especially in England, spoken for the just claims of India.

“Believing that the best interests of India lie in her rising into ordered freedom under the British Crown, in the casting away of every custom which prevents union among all who dwell within her borders, and in the restoration to Hinduism of social flexibility and brotherly feeling,

I PROMISE

“1. To disregard all restrictions based on Caste.

“2. Not to marry my sons while they are still minors, nor my daughters till they have entered their seventeenth year.

(‘Marry’ includes any ceremony which widows one party on the death of the other.)

“3. To educate my wife and daughters—and the other women of my family, so far as they will permit—to promote girls’ education, and to discountenance the seclusion of women.

“4. To promote the education of the masses as far as lies in my power.

¹¹ This is an error; we only kept a register of lodging-houses with trustworthy landladies, and of private families where Indian lads would be taken as paying guests.

“5. To ignore all color distinctions in social and political life, and to do what I can to promote the free entry of colored races into all countries on the same footing as white immigrants.

“6. To oppose actively any social ostracism of widows who remarry.

“7. To promote union among the workers in the fields of spiritual, educational, social and political progress, under the headship and direction of the Indian National Congress.”

It was further pointed out that while the Theosophical Society could not, *as a whole*, be committed to special lines of activities, it should work in India as it was doing in England, “ventilating plans for profound social re-organization with love instead of hatred as an inspiration. She (Mrs. Besant) aims at the ever-closer union of the British and Indian races by mutual understanding and mutual respect”. A further publication urged “the changes necessary to enable her (India) to take her equal place among the Self-Governing Nations which owe allegiance to the British crown”. Religious Hindus were warmly invited to join in the work, “in order that they may preserve to India the ancient and priceless religion of Hinduism, now threatened with decay by its practical separation from the movement of Progress in India”. It was stated that Hinduism should shelter all progressive movements, and not stand apart in selfish isolation. “Let her cling only to the essentials—the Immanence of God and the Solidarity of Man. All gracious customs and elevating traditions may be followed by her children, but not imposed on the unwilling, nor used as barriers to prevent social union. So shall she become a unifier instead of a divider, and again assert her glory as the most liberal of religions, the model of an active spirituality, which inspires intellectual vigor, moral purity and national prosperity.”

This was followed by a course of lectures delivered by me in Madras, in October and November, 1913, the subjects of which

show how definitely the Reform Movement was guided, and the chairmen the type of men who supported it.

Foreign Travel: Chairman, Dr. S. Subramania Iyer, late Acting Chief Justice of the Madras High Court.

Child-Marriage and Its Results: Chairman, the Hon. Dewan Bahadur T. S. Sadasiva Iyer, M.L., Acting Judge of the Madras High Court.

Our Duty to the Depressed Classes: Chairman, the Hon. Justice B. Tyabji.

Indian Industries as Related to Self-Government: Chairman, Dewan Bahadur M. Ādinārāyana Iyah.

Appendix to the above lecture.

1. Exports.
2. Weaving.
3. Political Effects.
4. Moral Effects.

Mass Education: Chairman, the Hon. Justice Miller.

The Education of Indian Girls: Chairman, the Hon. Mr. P. S. Sivaswāmi Aiyer, C.I.E., C.S.I., Indian Member of Executive Council, Madras.

The Color Bar in England, the Colonies and India Chairman: The Hon. Kesava Pillai.

The Passing of the Caste System: Chairman, Dewan Bahadur L. A. Govindarāghava Iyer.

It will be noticed that the three first Chairmen were Judges of the High Court, two (Theosophist) Hindus and one Musalmān, while an English judge was the Chairman of the fifth lecture. The eighth was also a Theosophist. All the lectures dealt with burning social questions, and were intended to lead up to a Political Movement.

With the object of training ourselves in Parliamentary methods, on January 1, 1915, it was proposed to form a "Madras Parliament," a Debating Society with Parliamentary forms. We passed a Pañchayat Act, presented by Mr., T. Rangachari, now a member of the Legislative Assembly and its late Deputy President; an Education Act, presented by Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, now Law Member, Vice-President of the Madras Executive Council, K.C.I.E.; and a Commonwealth of India Act presented by myself, the parent of the Bill now before the House of Commons. We flooded the country with pamphlets, bearing the stirring motto:

"We bring the Light that saves:
We bring the Morning Star
Freedom's good things we bring you,
Whence all good things are."

Another series, *New India* Political Pamphlets, had the motto

"How long ere thou take station?
How long ere thralls live free?"

How India Wrought for Freedom, the story of the Congress from 1885 to 1914, was published week by week in the *Commonweal*, and was published as a book with a Historical Preface, arousing great wrath in the I.C.S. and the Anglo-Indian press, being a narrative of facts, then known to few, but now used by writers on India, and familiar all over the country. In *New India* we wrote on grievances, demanded Home Rule, hammered away day in and day on how "Home Rule" was woven into scarves, borders of saris, handkerchiefs. Its red and green colors appeared everywhere. Then we decided to have a Home Rule League, and Dadabhai Naorogi approved, but the local leaders were more cautious, fearing it might weaken the Congress, whereas we wanted to carry on a continuous agitation to support Congress in the equality it had claimed in the

Congress of 1914. The effect of the agitation, aided by the before quoted words of Asquith, and the daily news from fields of battle, swept over the land, carrying all before it. Here are two extracts, a prose one and a song of my own writing, which show the feeling of those thrilling days:

“While this many-featured and powerful educational agitation—a thoroughly healthy and constitutional one, never once disfigured by violence—was going on all over the country, the circumstances of the time were such as to force the Nation rapidly forward into a consciousness of Nationhood, and of her then place in the eyes of the world, a place so unworthy of her storied past, and of the virility of her people in the present, when stirred by a call that moved them to exertion. That call came from the War, which became more and more terrible as it swept over the lands, and India became full of pride in the prowess of her soldiers, fighting side by side with the flower of European troops, and fighting against the mightiest army in the world. India felt herself living as her children died for Freedom, and the villages which sent their men became conscious of a wider and more stirring world. The words of English statesmen, spoken to enhearten their own countrymen, rang across the seas to India. Asquith spoke of what England would feel if Germans filled her highest offices, controlled her policy, levied her taxes, made her laws; it would be inconceivable, he cried, and intolerable. India listened, and murmured to herself: ‘But that is exactly my condition; here, these same Englishmen think it the only conceivable and the only tolerable life for me.’ He spoke of the ‘intolerable degradation of a foreign yoke; India whispered: ‘Is it so? Do Englishmen think thus? What, then of me?’ She had accepted English rule by habit; now she was shocked into realising the position which she filled in the eyes of the world. A subject Nation. A subject race. Was that really how the white Nations looked on her? Was that why her sons were treated as coolies in the outside world? Did a foreign yoke at home mean unspeakable humiliations abroad?

“Then the pride of the Aryan Motherland awoke. Had she not a civilisation dating back by millennia, beside which these white races, sprang from her womb, were but of yesterday? Had she not been rich, strong, and self-ruled, while these wandered naked in their forests, and quarrelled with each other? Had she not lived as equal with the mightiest Nations of a far-off past, when Babylon was the wonder of the world, when the streets of Nineveh were crowded, when Egypt was the teacher of wisdom, when Persia was a mighty Empire, when Greek philosophy was an offshoot of her schools, when Rome clad her haughtiest matrons in the products of her looms? Had not many a Nation invaded her, and had she not either driven them back, or assimilated them, and re-created them into Indians? Had not the gold of the world flowed into her coffers? Yet now she was poor. Had not great Empires, now dead, sent ambassadors to her Courts? But now she was ‘a Dependency’ of a little far-off Island in northern seas. She had been asleep. She had been dreaming. But now she awakened. She opened her eyes, and looked around her. She saw her peasants, starving at home, but holding their own as soldiers abroad. The coolies, despised in England’s Colonies, were cheered as heroes by Englishmen in the streets of their capital city. Yes, Asquith was right: ‘the intolerable degradation of a foreign yoke.’ If she was worthy to fight for Freedom, she was worthy to enjoy it. If she stood equal with Englishmen, Scotchmen, Colonials, in the trenches, and her poured-out blood mingled with theirs, indistinguishably soaking into French and Flemish soil, then she should be equal with them in her own ancient land. The souls of her dead in France, in Belgium, in Gallipoli, in Palestine, in Syria, in Mesopotamia, in East Africa, cried to her to claim the Freedom for which their bodies lay scattered far from home and kin. India sprang to her feet—a Nation.

“And then, because a white woman had been crying in her sleeping ears these truths about herself for more than twenty years, and was crying them aloud still in her ears awakened by the crash of

War, she turned to her for a while as her natural leader, who had blown the conch for Liberty's battle in India. And she sang!"

Here is one of the songs:

WAKE UP, INDIA

"Hark! the tramp of marching numbers,
India, waking from her slumbers,
 Calls us to the fray,
Not with weapons slaughter dealing,
Not with blood her triumph sealing,
But with peace-bells loudly pealing,
Dawns her Freedom's Day.

"Justice is her buckler stainless,
Argument her rapier painless,
 Truth her pointed lance,
Hark! her song to Heaven ringing,
Hatreds all behind her flinging,
Peace and joy to all she's bringing,
 Love her shining glance.

Mother, Dear! all victorious,
Thou hast seen a vision glorious,
 Dreamt of Liberty.
Now the vision has its ending
In the truth, all dreams transcending,
Hope and fact together blending,
Free! from sea to sea.

"By thy plains and snow-clad mountains,
By thy streams and rushing fountains,
 By Himalayan heights,
By the past of splendid story,
By the hopes of future glory,

By the strength of wisdom hoary,
Claim thy sacred Rights.”

And she claimed them.

The Commonwealth of India Bill.

We all considered it vital that the Indian Constitution should be framed by Indians, and in answer to a question from Lord Selborne – the Chairman of the Joint Committee of the Houses of Lords and Commons in 1919, addressed to myself as witness—whether India would ever be satisfied with a Constitution drawn up by Englishmen, I replied in the negative, basing the reply on the great age of her civilisation and the difference of manners and customs.

The practical framing of a Constitution for India by Indians took birth in February, 1922, in a discussion in the Political Section of the 1921 Club, Madras, on the method of winning Swarāj. Mr. V. S. Rāmaswami Sāstri, then Assistant Editor of *New India*, the brother of the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivāsa Sāstri P.C., suggested that India should resort to a Convention for the framing of a Constitution. The idea was adopted and discussed widely in the press. The Political Section sent Dr. Annie Besant to Simla in September, where the Indian Legislature was in session, to seek its views; informal meetings were held by members of each House separately, and both approving the idea of calling a Convention, a joint meeting was held which elected an Executive Committee from among themselves to call a Conference of members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures to arrange and call a Convention. The Conference met in February, 1923, at Delhi, during the session of the Indian Legislature, and after some days' discussion, outlined the essentials of a Constitution carrying out the resolution of the Congress of 1918 to place India on an equality with the Self-Governing Dominions of the British Empire. The Conference Executive drew up a pledge for candidates for the Legislatures at the forthcoming elections in the autumn, accepting the outline and binding them to call the Convention. This was done, and a second Conference met in February, 1924. This approved the work of the year 1923, and called the Convention, into which it then merged itself, to meet in April, 1924. It consisted of Members and

ex-Members of the Legislatures, Central and Provincial (231), the members of the Council of the National Home Rule League (19), the elected representatives of the Political Sections of the 1921 Clubs in Madras, Bombay and Calicut (3), the co-opted representatives of the Indian Women's Association (2), and the late Law Member of the Governor-General's Council, 256 in all, and this Convention is responsible for the Commonwealth of India Bill. Until now every member has been an elected representative, all but a handful belonging to the elected Members of the Legislatures.

It divided itself into seven Committees to deal with different Sections of a Constitution establishing Self-Government, and directed then to report in the autumn of the same year. A draft was based on these reports, and the Convention sat in Bombay in December and considered and amended it. It printed the results and circulated them to political parties inviting further amendments, and submitted the draft also to a sub-committee appointed by a Committee of all parties, presided over by Mr. Gandhi in November, 1924. This sub-committee made a number of amendments, and these with all others were submitted to the Convention sitting at Cawnpur on April 11, 12 and 13, 1925; it was finally submitted to a Drafting Committee in Madras, consisting of the Hon. Mr C. P. Ramāswāmi Aiyar, Messrs. Shiva Rao, Sri Ram, Yādunandan Prasād and Dr. Annie Besant, with power to correct any oversights in language where necessary, to see the Bill through the press, and publish it in the name of the Convention.

In May, 1925, it was sent to England to Major D. Graham Pole, the Hon. Secretary of the British Committee on Indian Affairs. He laid it before leading members of the Labor Party and it was backed by them, read a first time in the House of Commons and ordered to be printed. It then went before the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Labor Party, that examines every Bill before it is taken up by the Labor Government or Opposition, as the case may be. It was closely examined, clause by clause, and finally passed unanimously as embodying the resolutions passed by the Labor Party from time

to time respecting India. It thus passed into the hands of the future Labor Government, and was put on the list of bills balloted for as an official measure.

SUMMARY OF BILL.

General Principles.

India will be placed on an equal footing with the Self-Governing Dominions, sharing their responsibilities and their privileges.

The right of Self-Government will be exercised from the Village upwards in each successive autonomous area of wider extent, namely, the Taluka; the District; the Province; and India (excluding the Indian States).

The three great spheres of activity, Legislative, Executive and Judicial, will, as far as possible, be independent of each other, while correlated in their working.

Declaration of Rights.

The following Fundamental Rights will be guaranteed to every person: (a) Inviolability of the liberty of the person and of his dwelling and property, save by process of law in a duly constituted Court of Law. (b) Freedom of conscience and the free practice of religion, subject to public order or morality. (c) Free expression of opinion and the right of assembly peaceably and without arms, and of forming Associations or Unions, subject to public order or morality. (d) Free Elementary Education as soon as practicable. (e) The use of roads, places dedicated to the public, Courts of Justice and the like. (f) Equality before the law, irrespective of considerations of Nationality, and (g) Equality of sexes.

Legislative.

Legislative power is vested in the King, a Legislative Assembly and a Senate. "Parliament" shall mean only the Parliament of the

Commonwealth of India, The Legislative Assembly will consist of 300 Members, and the Senate of 150.

The Senate will have equal powers with the Legislative Assembly except in regard to Money Bills, which will originate only in the latter. The life of the Legislative Assembly will ordinarily be for five years, that of the Senate for six years. The Senate will have a continuous existence, with half the number of Members retiring every three years by a process of rotation.

In the Provincial Legislative Councils, the number of Members will vary from 100 to 200 according to the size and importance of the Province. The life of a Legislative Council will ordinarily be for four years. There will be at present only one Chamber in a Provincial Legislature, but provision has been made in the Bill for the addition of a Second Chamber in a Province, if it so decides.

In the District, Taluka, and Village Councils, which are termed the Sub-Provincial Units of Government, the number of members will vary according to local conditions. The ordinary life-term of the District Councils will be for three years, that of the Taluka for two years, and that of the Village Councils for one year.

Franchises.

The franchises for the various Legislative bodies have been graded, commencing with universal adult suffrage in the Village, and restricted by higher educative, or administrative, or property or other monetary qualifications in the case of each higher body.

The principle of direct election has been maintained throughout, except in the case of the Senate, where candidates will be nominated to a panel from which the electorate will make its choice. A distinction has also been observed between Members and Electors, the qualifications for the former being kept at a somewhat higher level than for the latter.

The powers of the various Legislative bodies have been embodied in a Schedule to the Constitution; and residuary powers have been vested in the Parliament.

Defence.

There will be a Defence Commission with a majority of Indians thereon, every five years, appointed by the Viceroy in consultation with his Cabinet. The Commission will recommend a minimum of non-votable expenditure for the Defence Forces and also report on the progress of the Indianisation of those Forces. In the event of disagreement, the Viceroy will have power to secure the minimum which, in his opinion, is necessary for the Defence Forces. No revenue of India may be spent on any branch of Defence Forces in which Indians are ineligible for holding commissioned rank. As soon as the Commission recommends favorably, Parliament may pass an Act to undertake the full responsibility of Defence.

Executive.

There will be a Cabinet in the Government of India consisting of the Prime Minister and not less than seven Ministers of State, who will be collectively responsible for the administration of the Commonwealth. The Prime Minister will be appointed by the Viceroy, and the other Ministers on the nomination of the Prime Minister. The Viceroy will be *temporarily* in charge of the Defence Forces. In all matters except Defence, the Viceroy will act only upon the advice of the Cabinet. The salaries of the Viceroy and of the Members of the Cabinet will be fixed by Parliament, but in the case of the former, no alteration will come into force during his continuance in office. The Cabinet will resign as soon as it has lost the support of a majority in the Legislative Assembly.

In the Provinces, the same principles will apply as in the Central Government, except that the minimum number of Ministers will be three.

The Secretary of State.

The powers and functions of the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State in Council over the revenues and the administration of India will be transferred to the Commonwealth Executive.

Judicial.

There will be a Supreme Court of India, consisting of a Chief Justice and not less than two other judges with original as well as appellate jurisdiction to deal with such matters as may be determined by statute. It will have power to deal with all matters arising out of the interpretation of the Constitution or of laws made by the Parliament. It will also be the final appellate authority in India, unless it certifies that the question is one which should be determined by the Privy Council.

The existing High Courts will have the same powers and authority as before the establishment of the Commonwealth.

Finance.

The revenues of Parliament will form a consolidated revenue fund, and will be vested in the Viceroy. No revenue may be raised by the Executive without the sanction of Parliament.

The allocation of revenues between Parliament and the Provinces will be decided by a Finance Commission every five years.

New Provinces.

Parliament will have the power to alter the limits of existing Provinces or establish new Provinces and make laws for their administration.

Minorities

Communal Representation as now existing will be abolished, and all elections will be held on the basis of purely territorial electorates. As a temporary measure, the number of seats now reserved for Mulsalmāns and Europeans will be guaranteed for five years, at the end

of which period the question of its continuance, modification or abolition will be examined by a Franchise Commission.

Bills affecting the religion or the religious rites or usages of a community or communities will be referred to a Standing Committee of the Legislature in which they are introduced; and if the Committee, on which there will be a majority of the members of the community or communities concerned, reports adversely, such Bills will lapse for the period of one year.

Public Services.

There will be a Public Services Commission to exercise full control over the public services of India as regards recruitment, discipline, promotion and pensions. Officers now in the service of the Government of India or of the Provincial Governments will be guaranteed their existing rights but, at the establishment of the Commonwealth, they will pass into the service of the Commonwealth or the Provinces, as the case may be.

Alteration of the Constitution.

Parliament will have power to alter the Constitution.

The Schedules.

The First Schedule gives the oath of allegiance and affirmation to His Majesty King George V and his heirs and successors.

The Second Schedule

(1) Electors must be at least 21 years of age.

(2) Qualifications for the graded electorates are given, beginning with the Village, where universal suffrage is provided for. The qualifications of the remaining electorates relate to (a) administrative experience, (b) education—literary or technical, (c) economic and industrial ministration (co-operative stores and banks, wells, tanks and canals, cottage industries, forests, local taxation, works of

public utility), (d) income, (e) possession of land property, (f) occupation of a house; thus including different classes of citizens. These qualifications are graded, being very low for the Taluka (collection of villages), and highest for the Senate. Only *one* of the various qualifications is required to qualify a man or woman as a voter in any council.

The Third Schedule.

The powers of each Council, from the Village Pañchayat to the Parliament, are fully stated.

The Fourth Schedule.

(1) There will be no communal electorates, but as a transitory provision, the same number of seats will be reserved for Musalmāns as is provided for in the Government of India Act, 1918, for five years, when a Franchise Commission will report on its continuance, amendment or abolition.

(2) Proposed legislation affecting religions shall be postponed for one year if a Committee of the House in which the legislation is introduced, and consisting of a majority of members of the religion or religions affected, decide against the measure.

(3) The number of members assigned to the Provinces for the various legislative bodies are given.

(4) The salaries of the Viceroy, Governors and the Commonwealth and Provincial Ministers are given.

The Departure of the Diamond Soul

- 1930 Celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Blavatsky Lodge in Bombay, the foremost Theosophical Lodge in India;
 Last visit to Benares;
 Last visit to England: presided over the Convention;
 Last visit to Europe: attended the Star Camp at Ommen, and presided over the tenth Theosophical European Congress at Geneva;
 Attended the wedding of her granddaughter, Miss Sybil Besant, to Commander Lewis, in London on Oct. 1st
- 1931 Celebrated the Blavatsky Centenary at Adyar in August;
 Resolved to make Adyar a Flaming Centre;
 Delivered her last address on Dec. 24th
- 1932 Celebrated the Olcott Centenary at Adyar in August;
 Summed up the lifework of the two Centenarians in 25 words;
 Awarded 'Silver Wolf,' the highest Scout honour

* * *

- 1933 September 20th, expired at Adyar, 4 p.m.

Below are some of the tributes to Dr Besant by well-known Indian political leaders and influential personalities:

MR. JINNAH (Leader of the The All-India Muslim League)

“No other person has worked and served our cause with that singleness of purpose, devotion, and transparent sincerity as has

Mrs. Besant. She has sacrificed all that she could. What for? For the freedom of India.”

20 February 1918, *New India*

LOKAMANYA B. G. TILAK

“You have adopted India to be your Motherland; you have suffered a great deal for her, and found her almost triumphant. India is united for the commonweal, and all our efforts are directed towards reaching the goal of Swaraj. Our reception may not be as magnificent as from others you may have obtained. But I may assure you it comes from the inmost of our hearts. If India is nearer the goal, it is due to your strenuous efforts, and, if I may be allowed to add also, largely to your internment. Regarding you as an embodiment of our principles and our success, we offer you our welcome and wish you long life and inexhaustible energy.”

15 October 1917, *New India*

POET RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Calcutta, Sept. 22—Sir Rabindranath Tagore sends to the press a copy of the letter which he has written to a literary friend in England. In the course of the letter he writes: “In your letter you seem puzzled at my conduct in sending a message of sympathy to Mrs. Besant. I am afraid, compared with your own troubles, it may appear to you too small, but yet sufferings have not lost their keenness for us, and moral problems still remain as the gravest of all problems in all parts of the world. The constant conflict between the growing demand of the educated community of India for a substantial share in the administration of their country and the spirit of hostility on the part of the Government has given rise, among a considerable number of our young men, to methods of violence, bred of despair and distrust. This has been met by the Government by a thorough policy of repression. In Bengal itself hundreds of men are interned without trial, a great number in unhealthy surroundings, in gaols and in solitary cells, in

a few cases driving them to insanity or suicide. The misery that is carried into numerous households is deep and widespread. What I consider to be the worst outcome of this irresponsible policy is the spread of the contagion of hatred against everything western in minds which were free from it. In this crisis the only European who has shared our sorrow, incurring the anger and derision of her countrymen, is Mrs. Annie Besant. This was what led me to express my grateful admiration for her noble courage. Possibly there is such a thing as political exigency, just as there may be a place for utter ruthlessness in War; but I pay my homage to those who have faith in ideals and, therefore, are willing to take all other risks except that of weakening the foundation of moral responsibility.” (A.P.I.)

25 September 1917, *New India*

MR. M. K. GANDHI

“Cultivate the great qualities of Dr. Besant, namely, firmness, simplicity, self-control, etc. She is one of the greatest orators of the world, because she speaks what she believes and acts according to what she speaks.... She has the courage of her convictions and always puts her words into action ... Imitate her unflinching determination and simplicity of life.... Obtain the same strength and indomitable will that she possesses which alone will bring Swaraj. India is not fit for Swaraj without these qualities. Remove India’s chains and then alone will we achieve our goal. Religion is interwoven in Dr. Besant’s life and she has built a bridge between politics and religion. Swaraj without religion is of no use. It is Dr. Besant who has awakened India from her deep slumber and I pray that she may live long to witness a free India.”

2 October 1928, *New India*

DR. BESANT ANSWERS

I do not know what I can say for the over-generous words.... I could not thank you sufficiently for your good thought of me, but I would

pray you not to pitch your thought too high, for then you will expect what none can give. I am no incarnation ... but only a servant of the mighty mother Shakti, who is embodied in no mortal body, but in the immortal body of India, the reflection of the Mother. I am only a poor instrument in far mightier hands, and you should no more praise me than you praise the chisel in the hands of the sculptor. The sculptor cuts the marble into some exquisite form of beauty. You praise the artist and not the tool.

The following tributes were included in *The Annie Besant Centenary Book*, published by The Besant Centenary Celebrations Committee, Adyar, Madras, 1 October 1947.

Annie Besant through an Indian Child's Eyes Sri Prakasa

Mrs. Besant was forty-seven and I was four when we first met each other. I am fifty-seven now—ten years older than what she was when first I set my baby eyes upon her, as affectionately described by herself on one occasion; but as I think of her today, I cannot help feeling that I am still a tiny child; and if I met her—and I wish I could meet her—I am sure I would feel much the same as I must have felt at that time: an eternal child before eternal age. And still Mrs. Besant was not a person who would make anyone feel that she was so wise, so great, so famous. She was herself as simple as a child with children, and made no child feel small before her. My earliest memory, confirmed by continuous contact of years, is that she was a very human person. She made every allowance for human weaknesses and did not put any strain on ordinary human nature in others even when she, more often than not, transcended it in her own person. She was so approachable, so sympathetic, so understanding.

She loved India with a fervour and devotion all her own. Our country's philosophy, our history, our legends, our spiritual heritage,

our achievements in the past, our sorrows in the present, our aspirations for the future, were part and parcel of Mrs. Besant's own life. India's climate, however, I fear, did not suit her; and any attempt on her part to pass a hot summer in the burning plains, made her very uncomfortable and even ill. But in India, she would live like an Indian; she would refuse to go to hill stations as so many Europeans did, and imitating them our own people do; and so she more often than not utilised the summer months for travels abroad, making India known to the world and drawing the attention of thinking men and women in many lands to this ancient country with its continuing traditions and its past glories.

And, as I think of it, it was just as well that she went abroad; for when she came back, she did not fail to bring a box of toys for the little children of her friends and colleagues here. It used to be a great day indeed for us when she came back from her annual pilgrimages abroad, came without fail to breakfast with us and to distribute the beautiful toys and the useful presents that she had brought. She had something to give to everyone; and not only to give but also to explain how the various mechanisms in the toys were worked and what amusement and instruction could be got out of them. No wonder all of us children clamoured round her as the "Bari Mem Saheb", the grand-old lady with her white hair, white face and white clothes, distributed these welcome gifts to us.

The gifts were suitable to the individuals concerned and they changed as the receiver grew up. For me, they began with little blocks with pasted pictures on them, and then changed into toy steamers, and at last books. It was Henty's "In Freedom's Cause" when I was fourteen; a book on travels a little later; and then, a book of the beautiful pictures of Scotland still later; and then the gifts stopped, for I was twenty and accompanied her to England for studies. Let me not forget that she was keen on these breakfasts—of which she ate so little that even a sparrow could scarcely break its fast on the amount. When my father was in jail in 1921 and she came

to Benares for the annual Theosophical Convention, and I, with the rest of political India, was angry with her for the attitude she had then taken up regarding Gandhiji's movement and the boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit, I had a note from her saying: "I have not had my usual invitation to breakfast!" And she came afterwards full of sympathy for us, despite obvious differences.

The great lesson that she can usefully teach to all, specially to us in India, is the simple art—which almost everyone here lacks—of encouraging others in good work. Where nobody seemed to encourage a boy to do anything, she offered the greatest possible encouragement, not only to the children of her friends' families, but to all students of her College. She published an article on the "Common Language of India" from me in the Central Hindu College Magazine that she edited and which I had ventured to send to her when I was only fourteen years of age. She came to tell my mother what a good article I had written; and later gave me the further privilege of translating into English a few stories on Rajput chivalry, published later with her own contributions in a book entitled the "Children of the Motherland". She prominently published my name in the Introduction as one of her "colleagues" in the work. Any boy of fifteen would feel proud—any man of even fifty-seven will feel proud—of such recognition at the hands of a famous author like her.

She would come down from the gallery and congratulate me for having made a very "fine" speech in the College debating society: to have such words of praise from the recognisedly greatest orator of the time, would make anyone feel elated and encouraged to do his best; and it was the sorrow of her life as I almost compelled her to tell me, that we in India were not a generous people and would not encourage the young and enable them to take their place in world affairs. I asked her: "What is it, in your opinion, that does not enable us to rise? You should surely be able to tell me after your whole life passed with us and in our service." And she hesitatingly said: "Your leaders do not help younger people to find their feet".

Another characteristic of Mrs. Besant, forcibly printed on my mind, is her capacity not only of attracting people, but of keeping them bound to her in chains of unbreakable affection. She would never neglect a friend. She would cling to him despite his weaknesses, his limitations and even his unkindnesses. It was this generosity of her nature which enabled her to make herself win friends and keep them attached to her work. It was—so it strikes me as I throw my mind backwards—the root of her success. She was able to build up her great institutions by making all her friends and colleagues feel all the time that they were doing her work, that she was constantly looking at them, admiring, helping and encouraging them throughout. She was full of praise of her friends and had not any unkind thought or word for them at any time, whatever befell.

She was a most punctual woman and punctiliously fulfilled all her engagements and her promises. We are often inclined to make vague promises of all sorts off-hand, without the least intention of fulfilling them. Not so she. She would fulfil her promises to a child. I took it in my head, for instance, to ask for a particular book as a prize for a recitation at my school anniversary. That book was not available in India. She wrote for it to England herself; got it at Madras and remembered that it was meant for me, months afterwards when it arrived. She packed it herself, addressed it herself, and sent it on to me. I was anxious on one occasion that a special silver badge in recognition of good work should be awarded to a fellow student. She had invited me to come and see her one morning and I mentioned this desire of mine to her. She then asked me to leave the name behind, and some weeks later, at a public function, unknown to anyone she called up this young gentleman to the dais and presented him with the badge and praised him, before all, for the good work that he had done for the poor students in the College.

Mrs. Besant kept herself in personal touch with all her colleagues and with all her students in the college—the Central Hindu College—that she made. I can never forget how during the anxious

days when I was scarcely fifteen, my father was dangerously ill and she came night after night, after busy days of hard work, to nurse him through the dangerous illness. The gratitude that we all felt for her efficient nursing, for her affectionate solicitude, could never be repaid; but she did what she did without thinking anything about it and took it all as part of the day's work. It was all second nature with her; she wanted no thanks; she expected no gratitude. My father was one of her dearest and closest colleagues in her Theosophical work in India. She wrote to him every day when in India, and every week when abroad. Along with her letters to him, came innumerable stamps of all countries, torn from envelopes sent to her, all meant for my brother who was at that time an enthusiastic stamp-collector.

She was a great letter-writer and kept in touch with all her friends all the time. From distant lands I have had letters from her, of congratulation on my marriage, of condolence at my wife's death. And I have known of fellow students who received letters of sympathy and enquiries when seriously ill and in great physical suffering. People would entrust her with missions of all sorts and she always executed them most carefully. I remember her old friend Dr. G. N. Chakravarty, wanting a dressing gown of a particular variety from London when I went with her, for the sample gown was packed in my box. She took great pains to have a similar one made in London for him and must have given it to him on return. She would scrupulously and promptly reply to every letter written to her, whether the letter came from a child or a great man. She made twenty-four hours yield the work of three times as many hours, for she was punctual to a second in everything, whether it was in taking her food, in delivering a lecture or in going to bed.

And then there was a third great characteristic of Mrs. Besant's: she was most scrupulous about the care of her health. No wonder who lived to be almost eighty-six. She was a great horse-woman in her comparatively younger days. She was old-fashioned and did not ride astride as ladies now do. She could keep on

horseback for long hours, fatiguing her companions a third of her age. She was an exquisite croquet player. She did not shun the theatre, and loved to play “patience” with her cards. She was indeed very human and she had no pretences. She dressed well, though always simply; she ate well, although frugally; and she always travelled in comfort without denying herself anything that was necessary to make her efficient and fit for her work in life. She had no prejudices, and would use any vehicle that came her way to travel about to carry her message far and wide.

My memories as a child of her are wrapt up also with her wonderful eloquence. I learnt English fairly early in life; so I remember even to have been able to follow her very early lectures on the “Ramayana” a few years later. She needed no notes, and spoke just for sixty minutes, keeping her audiences spell-bound all the time and leaving them at the very climax of her oratory, gaping and yearning for more. I think the best setting for her lectures was the Queen’s Hall of London, where I had heard her to the best advantage and in the most fitting surroundings. She was an artist in words, and she was keen both on the dress she wore when delivering her lectures and also the seating arrangements she wanted made at them. She did not like anyone to speak after her, and she always resented any attempts on the part of her chairman to give instructions to the audience after her lectures. At Oxford, a chairman after her lecture told his audience of the exits provided for them; and she said to the managers of her lectures afterwards that all notices of exits and entrances must be given before she began. She never liked an open vacant aisle in front of her when speaking. She felt as if she was lecturing to empty space even though the sides were crowded.

She was a most motherly person and she was essentially a woman. She would give good advice as to how to keep out the dust nuisance or to keep the room cool in the summer. She knew how babies should be treated, and she once pulled me up badly for standing behind my baby when she was holding it in her hands, because

the little one would try to turn its eyes backwards in order to see me. She wanted me to stand in front and not hurt the baby's eyes. As a speaker, she was great. She helped us to discover our own country and take pride in our ancient days. She ashamed us for our present and encouraged us to work for a really great future of freedom and of joy. She was a great master who taught us how we should live and build up happy homes, though her own was shattered. She was a woman who lent grace and dignity to whatever she touched, and kept her friends and her colleagues bound and attached to her in eternal affection and devotion. She was a person full of human kindness, full of sympathetic understanding, ever anxious that others should be helped to find their feet in life and trained to do the world's work in the right spirit, and for the right ends. And today, as we celebrate the centenary of her birth, I lay at her feet my tribute of admiration and of gratitude, and with the innumerable memories that crowd in my mind today, I offer her the love and reverence of a grandson to a grand-mother: I cannot offer less, I dare not offer more.

Annie Besant

B. Sanjiva Rao

“In life, through death to life again, I am but the Servant of the Great Brotherhood and those on whose head but for a moment the hand of the Master has rested in blessing can never again look at the world save with eyes made luminous with the radiance of the eternal peace.”

These are the closing words with which this great servant of Humanity concludes the first chapter of a life of storm and stress, of a ceaseless search for truth, battling against the tyranny of an age which had not outgrown the fanatic in tolerance of the middle ages. With the joining of the Theosophical Society and the taking up once more with her Teacher the link that had bound her to Him during

many lives in the past there dawned upon her the peace that broods over those who dwell in the eternal.

The readers of the 'Autobiography' are hardly prepared to realise that the close of that first chapter marks the beginning of a work so great, so wonderful, so far-reaching that I do not believe that contemporaries can do justice to its importance. Forty years ago India appeared to our fathers to be lost in a slumber so profound that even the greatest patriots of the day declared that it was dead and that the leaders of the Theosophical movement were attempting the futile task of awakening a dead people.

It was Mrs. Besant's supreme privilege to be given the task of awakening a whole nation from its sleep of centuries, of pouring into India that splendid stream of vitality which has created a new elation out of a people who had given themselves up as lost. It is true that so stupendous a task cannot be the work of a single individual, however eminent, however great. Yet history shows us that at every great crisis in human affairs there stand out great and towering personalities through whom the great Hierarchy of the Elder Brothers of humanity guides the destinies of nations till they reach their appointed end. There is only one name by which Mrs. Besant's personality can be adequately described: 'In life, through death to life again, she is but the great Servant of the Great Brotherhood'. It is as a Servant of the Great Brotherhood that she stands out before the outer world.

Throughout her long period of the service of India, the keynote of her life is that of a splendid consecration of all her faculties, of her supremely commanding will; of her magnificent organising capacity to the carrying out of a plan given to her to be worked out by the Guardians of Humanity.

"The most significant fact of modern days is this," says Rabindranath Tagore, "that the West has met the East. Such a momentous meeting of humanity, in order to be fruitful, must have in its heart some great emotional idea, generous and creative. There can

be no doubt that God's choice has fallen upon the knight errants of the West for the service of the present age The world today is offered to the West. She will destroy it, if she does not use it for a great creation of man." Splendidly equipped with the latest scientific culture of the West and having gained or rather regained a knowledge of the mystic and hidden wisdom of the East, Mrs. Besant came to India, to interpret India to the Western world, to restore to India the dignity and splendour of her ancient heritage of Aryan wisdom.

For many a long year, she studied India with reverent sympathy, fearing to condemn, lest through her ignorance she should destroy the delicate fabric of the ancient culture, she studied the writings of the Rishis, and by her sympathy and insight gained a marvellous power of entering into the spirit of Hinduism and of the Hindu people. She travelled incessantly through the length and breadth of India, proclaiming to a people who were unconscious of the greatness of their ancient inheritance, the priceless value of Indian philosophy and Indian religion. Those were happy days for our President, living in her Benares home, in loving communion with her Hindu friends, attracting by her wonderful sympathy, many an ardent soul to the cause of Theosophy, many people do not realise the vital connection between her work of reviving Hinduism and her present political work. She saw truly that the heart of India was deeply religious, that the secret of her culture lay in her profound religious consciousness. Placed amidst surroundings which by their vastness, their glory and majesty ever whisper of the Infinite the Indian mind turns to the Eternal within him to meet the touch of the Supreme Person. Social reform, Political and Educational reform to be successful must be viewed from the standpoint of the spirit in man.

The same truth was seen by that virile and fiery prophet of Bengal, the late Swami Vivekananda. It expresses itself in the life and work of Mr. Gokhale who declared that politics must be

spiritualized. It is the secret of the marvellous outburst of devotion of the millions of the Indian people at the call of the prophet of non-violence whatever one may think of the practical outcome of the movement of non-cooperation, one cannot be convinced, that it is the call of the ideal that brings out the supreme qualities in the Indian heart.

It was Mrs. Besant's privilege to help in the great revival of a people's latent genius. The testimony of one who had so long been the champion of scientific agnosticism to the deathless reality of the spirit in man, a testimony not based on mere tradition or authority by any book however sacred and ancient, but on the bedrock of personal realisation made on an instant and powerful appeal to the eager Intellect of educated India. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that almost every eminent man of our time has some time or other in his life been profoundly affected by the teachings of Theosophy. But religion, if it is vital, must express itself in life and work. This is the wonderful truth that our President brought from her western home. The true greatness of the West lies not so much in the marvellous development of her scientific research, but in the spirit of service devoted to the welfare of man.

It is this combination of the mystic with the soul in eternal communion with the Immortal Ruler within and the practical worker ever engaged in the work of the outer world, it is this union of the East and West that is seen in rare perfection in the personality of our President. She is certainly one of the most active workers of the world though she has attained the age of 75. Yet the atmosphere which surrounds her is one of peace and repose. It is as if in the midst of her ceaseless work, she holds unseen communion with a Power that is not of earth. Absolutely tireless in her efforts, it looks as if the work is not so much the result of any outer thing but rather the expression of an exuberant vitality of the spirit that must pour itself forth in active work for the welfare of man. It is as spontaneous as the music of the singer or the melody of the poet, the song of the

bird. Such vitality of the spirit is of the very essence of that creative power that gives birth to art and literature and there breathes in all that she does that spirit of harmony and beauty which we associate with a great poem, but what a magnificent poem it is! I have watched her at work, at committee meetings, in the railway trains, at all kinds of functions. There is no false note, no discord; it is as if one heard the far-off tones of a divine music of a spirit in harmony with the will of the Supreme.

It has been my privilege to listen to the wonderful eloquence of our President and be thrilled and inspired by it. But I believe I have learnt far more by watching her at work. I remember going up to her considerably troubled by an impending financial crisis that was about to take place in one of her many departments of work. She asked me not to worry. Foolish I asked her if she would not feel worried if her Master had some grave trouble. Her answer was characteristic – it was an emphatic “no”. “I give myself up to my Master – I hold back nothing”, she said. It taught me more than many lectures have done. It enabled me to realise the continual abiding consciousness of the Supreme, not as a vague, shadowy, far off reality to be felt in moments of rare insight, but as something which lay behind every action and thought of her, influencing, through the automatism of the body, every detail of her daily life,

I understood, as never before, how an occultist works. Seated in the heart of the Eternal, every detail of life on the plane of thought, feeling or action is but the spontaneous expression of that Divine will to which the human has been attuned. That central lesson of the Gita which teaches us to look upon ourselves as the instruments of the one worker was borne in upon me. It is said that all spiritual truths are taught to us through the medium of personality. The personality of our President is the supreme gift of the West and the East alike to the culture of a future age.

Dr. Besant as Constructive Statesman

By B. Shiva Rao

Dr. Besant's active participation in Indian politics synchronised with the commencement of the first world war. For a period of fifteen years thereafter she dominated the political scene, contributing and subsequently working out, with thoroughness and precision, two great conceptions which all progressive forces in the country immediately accepted as of vital importance. Home Rule for India as a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations; and second, when the goal of responsible government was accepted by Mr. Lloyd George's Cabinet at the end of the war, the principle of self-determination for India—a Constitution framed for India by Indians. In the middle of the world war (in 1916), when India's leading politicians were thinking modestly in terms of a fresh political advance on the basis of the Minto-Morley Reforms then in operation, Dr. Besant came out with the striking slogan of Home Rule for India. It captured the imagination of the younger generation which rallied round her as the leader of a new movement. Brushing aside the legalistic approach characteristic of the lawyer-politician of that generation, she built up for the Home Rule League an emotional mass support. The Indian National Congress and its auxiliary the Home Rule League became, under her inspiring leadership, instruments for carrying the message of Home Rule as our birthright to remote villages as much as to India's urban population.

Her technique was instructive. In the early stages of the Home Rule movement, the Moderates, apprehensive of the pace she was setting for India's political progress, placed themselves in opposition to the demand for Home Rule. She became the centre of an intense, if somewhat controversial, agitation for a British declaration promising India complete self-government. Internment not only proved ineffective, but provided a powerful stimulus for the movement. A British declaration came, associated with Mr. Montagu,

towards the end of the war “for the progressive realisation of responsible government through the increasing association of Indians with the administration.”

It sounded a feeble, half-hearted response to India’s passionate plea for equality of status. “Unworthy of Britain to offer, and of India to accept” was Dr. Besant’s first reaction. Then followed numerous conferences and deputations and two years of negotiations and detailed discussions—all intended to improve upon and enlarge the scope of the British declaration. She remained a critic, as long as there was the least hope of securing a more liberal scheme from the Lloyd George Cabinet. When the phase of negotiations finally came to an end and the scheme was ready for introduction, she became a discriminating supporter.

To many of her contemporaries this seemed an incomprehensible change of attitude. Lacking her realism, they could not see that acceptance of the British scheme at that stage meant only an advance towards the ultimate goal, not its repudiation. For Dr. Besant it was an extremely difficult decision to take in circumstances of extraordinary complexity. The British constitutional scheme (since known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms) bore little resemblance to the original conception of Home Rule or complete self-government for India. A scheme is the product of many inevitable compromises, and compromises cannot evoke mass enthusiasm.

Moreover, the political disappointment caused by the whitening down of the original reforms was negligible as a factor in comparison with the indignation which swept India over the tragedy of Amritsar in 1919 and the excesses of martial law administration in the Punjab. Gandhiji appeared for the first time on the scene as a political front-rank leader, with his non-co-operation movement and the boycott of the new legislatures.

With a courage which never failed her throughout her stormy life, Dr. Besant decided to oppose Gandhiji’s movement and the policy of boycott. The decision was painful and costly. It meant parting

company with several valued colleagues who preferred to throw the weight of their influence on Gandhiji's side, and the sacrifice of her immense popularity built up during the war. At a critical moment came Mr. Tilak's death, thus completely isolating her in the political field. But she did not abandon hope, nor remain idle. While the rest of India was busy with the boycott of the new legislatures and plunging into non-co-operation, she turned her attention to the next stage in India's political development.

Self-Government for India was no longer in dispute, though on the pace of advance there were sharp differences of opinion. The new idea was self-determination. It was Mr. Lloyd George's phrase, coined for a very different purpose, with no relevance or significance for India. Dr. Besant turned it to India's practical benefit. Self-Government, according to her, was meaningless, unless it was conceived by Indians in a form essentially in conformity with the country's political genius: a Constitution, in other words, which was modelled on her indigenous institutions.

In one sense, the project could not have been ushered into being under more unfavourable circumstances. Undeterred by the indifference and even the personal hostility of a number of Indian Nationalists, her erstwhile supporters, she pursued the idea with determination. Fortunately, there was an able collaborator in Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, like her a constructive statesman with a clear vision. Between them they produced a scheme for a National Convention of all parties in India, to draft a Constitution for India without interference from the British.

The National Convention met in New Delhi in 1924 and proceeded with its task of framing a Constitution and produced, in the following year, the Commonwealth of India Bill. It was not a fully representative body, lacking the support of the Congress. At every stage she sought it, but the leaders of the Congress—Gandhiji, C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru—were preoccupied at the time with capturing the machinery of the legislatures after realising the futility of

boycott. The Commonwealth of India Bill went, nevertheless, to the House of Commons, as Mr. George Lansbury's bill—a private member's measure—in the absence of official recognition from the Labour Government of that time under Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. There it remained, a bill which had obtained its first hearing in Parliament—but could progress no further. A fresh and belated attempt was made to secure the support of the Congress leaders. Mr. C. R. Das was willing to associate himself with the measure provided Dr. Besant would agree to some mass sanction in the event of British rejection. Gandhiji less pointedly made a similar stipulation.

Though the Commonwealth of India Bill was thus seemingly lost in the mass of private parliamentary bills, Dr. Besant's idea of self-determination for India, sown in the barren and unpromising soil of 1921, began gradually to bear fruit. Congress leaders like Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar and Mr. C. Vijayaraghavachariar, produced their own schemes, acknowledging the debt they owed to hers. Later came the All-Parties' Conference under Pandit Motilal Nehru's leadership, with the Nehru Report representing the largest measure of agreement then obtainable in India—the product of a movement very similar to her National Convention.

The completion of the Nehru Report, in the preparation of which Dr. Besant played as great a part as any of her associates, virtually marks the end of her political activities. Indian Nationalism took a sudden plunge towards complete independence, leaving behind all the old moorings, including the Nehru Report. She did not live to see the final stages of the Round Table Conference in London, nor the later political developments before and during the second world war.

A Constituent Assembly is sitting today in 1947 in New Delhi, to draft a new Constitution for an independent Socialist Republic of India. Whatever may be the ultimate shape of the Constitution, one thing India can never afford to forget: through all

the years of weary struggle for liberty, no one laboured more selflessly, or with greater courage and wisdom than Dr. Besant.

Dr. Besant as Leader
By C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar

If we analyse the character, the achievements, the life-work of Dr. Besant, we may best style her as the great and dauntless fighter, a great champion who nevertheless made up her mind from the beginning to fight within the law and never without the law. That, it seems to me, was one of her fundamental messages to us. Laws may be corrupt, laws may be wrong, but the way to proceed about the business of rectifying them was to strive to educate public opinion, to rouse popular conscience, so that the laws may be modified or eradicated. So long as the law remains law, notwithstanding all legitimate grievances which it occasions, she held that it should be obeyed. Dr. Besant was thus the most pacific of fighters and the most combative of peacemakers.

When she first came to India, I confess that most of us attended her lectures not so much for their religious inner vestures, but for the outer vesture, namely, language. Her voice and her elocution were the finest things we had known. Her voice was audible in every part of a crowded hall, a voice which could rumble like thunder, and yet thrilled one with the diapason of its music; a voice that was the vehicle of thoughts winged and dynamic, sometimes disruptive, sometimes creative. With this voice and this gift of language she did her work in India as few others have done theirs.

Mrs. Besant came to India as a champion of India and of the Indian way of life and thought. She came to India in 1893, but before leaving England she wrote a booklet on "England, Afghanistan and India" which people may well read today for its soundness and right outlook.

On arriving in India Dr. Besant made up her mind to rouse the

self-respect of Indians in India. Not that similar work had not been attempted before her time. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Surendranath Banerjee, Gokhale and Tilak had done a great deal in that direction, and Gandhi after her, and perhaps the contribution of Mahatma Gandhi was the greatest in this respect. But at the time that Dr. Besant came here, it was with somewhat shamefaced countenance that an Indian would wear Indian clothes. A man was so mixed up with his studies where he had to learn everything in English, that he had no time for shaking himself free of the obsession of the West. Great protagonist that she was, she defended everything good in India. You might differ from her way of proceeding, but to a people imprisoned in alien ideas and bewitched by the Western standards and modes of life, some voice had to come to release them from the dungeons of their own musings and imaginings and from their inferiority complex. Dr. Besant's was the voice that came.

Having begun thus, she started work in the educational sphere. I am not going to deal with her work in Benares which culminated in that magnificent educational institution, the Benares Hindu University. Many collaborated with her in this work, notably Pandit Malaviya. But she it was that compelled Indians to shed their lethargy and work for a common purpose.

After that, she turned to politics, and my only excuse for the narration of a personal episode is the light it throws on her life and character. In the years 1912 and 1913 it fell to me to oppose Dr. Besant in relation to a particular matter respecting the guardianship of J. Krishnamurti and his brother. I had to fight Dr. Besant, to fight Mr. B. P. Wadia, to fight Sir Subramania Iyer, and many others for whom I had great reverence and respect. Naturally, as a lawyer, I felt it my duty in cross-examination to suggest things that were resented. I had to suggest hidden depths of iniquity in what might have been a normal affair; but it was characteristic of Mrs. Besant that not one of the epithets I used or extravagances of speech on my part deflected

her from her purpose. It was after the conclusion of the case which, with childish vanity, I felt proud of winning, when I was wrapped up in my success, she said to me: "I think you have fought a clean fight. Will you come and join me to work for India's political uplift?" This was three days after the conclusion of the case.

The history of politics in India until Tilak, Besant and Mahatma Gandhi came on the scene was the history of debating societies in whose chambers met groups of twenty, forty or sixty people collaborating over resolutions academically faultless and essentially just, but so suave, so sweet, so reasonable that nobody bothered about them. To none of us had come the vision of going to the villages, of speaking to the people at large, of making them realise what they could do, and what it was their duty to do in the future. As a tried political and social worker, Dr. Besant brought into Indian politics for the first time this idea of propaganda and publicity, and of appealing to the masses, of studying group-psychology and crowd-psychology, and realising that good use could be made of this great gift. The awakening of India from a long sleep had to come. It came through Dr. Besant herself, and none of us who have been in political work can forget that Indian life, Indian politics and political agitation, Indian education, would not have been what it is today, the history of India would have been fundamentally different, if Dr. Besant had not come on the scene.

It was between the years 1914 and 1917 that all this happened. There was a reverberation of new life in the country. Dr. Besant became President of the Congress in 1917. She had been interned, and for a while was easily the best beloved popular idol of India. But popularity in politics is easy to acquire; and it is quite as easy to lose. By 1918 Mrs. Besant had lost her popularity by reason of her insistence on the need to obey the law and to shun non-co-operation. She could not command audiences or compel attention. But Mrs. Besant never for one moment dreamt of being either angry, disappointed or disgruntled. Through "New India" and "The Commonweal" and on

the public lecture platform she fought day in and day out against Mr. Gandhi—just as she wrote against the present (1943) system of government. She fought for Home Rule. She worked against Non-cooperation. Side by side she incurred the dislike of the authorities and of the masses which she herself had awakened, and she became comparatively friendless. But she was always the same silver-tongued orator, the sage counsellor with infinite patience, the fighter and yet the reconciler. I emphasise the word “patience.” Realising that all these setbacks are only temporary, she believed that one must learn to put up with failure, and then to transcend and surmount ill-success. That was the Besant policy.

After the year 1926 she travelled abroad with Mr. J. Krishnamurti, and came back to Adyar in 1927. I should like to say a few words of the period of 1928 to 1933, because I regard these years as specially indicative of her spirit. Easy it is, if success blesses us, to display some easy virtues and to prove and demonstrate them. But it is difficult for one living amidst calumny and obloquy, at such a juncture to remain sweet-tempered, patient and forgiving, long-suffering, and yet hopeful of the future. As one who came across her very often during these years, I can say that I did not see one bitter expression on her face, nor did I hear from her lips one vengeful word. She often said: “These are times through which India must pass. Having surmounted the present obstacles, she must come to her own. My work is done, but others must fulfil it.”

Dr. Besant’s life, as human life generally is, was an amalgam of success and failure. What was her success? And what was her failure? Her success, in my mind, lay in this—that she organised the people of India. She taught them the virtue not only of organisation but of business-like organisation. Politics and book-keeping seemed to be strangely at variance with one another. Dr. Besant showed that steady business-like habits and persistence are as essential for politics as for professions and careers. Her second success was the creation of an all-India spirit and the attempt to eliminate barriers

that are threatening us more and more as time goes on. The third success was the inculcation into us of respect for Indian personality and for Indian civilisation. What was her failure? I think her failure was that, notwithstanding her inmost desire, neither the religious harmony and religious unity of India nor India's political salvation was achieved. But if she failed in these, was it not primarily because we failed her and failed ourselves? I rather think the answer will be in favour of Dr. Besant.

The work of persons like Dr. Besant is not for a day, is not for a year, is not for a decade. The results of that work are not easy for us to keep alive and to profit by. Whether this battling for the right, battling always within the law, battling without any reserve, has been of avail, time alone will tell. She made us realise the impermanence of failure, and the certainty of ultimate success if we remain true to ourselves and our destiny. These were the lessons of our life. The efforts of such selfless workers as Dr. Besant, irrespective of their immediate fruits, are never lost, but provide the energies that, in her own words, "are making for peace universal in the future, when the need for the lessons of war will be over."

How Dr. Besant Worked for India's Freedom

A. Ranganatham

I cannot call Dr. Annie Besant a politician—as the word is generally understood. She was a great spiritual personage, but intensely practical. For her, there was no activity that was not spiritual. In her view, "the place of religion in national life is everywhere. No religion is a true religion unless it permeates the whole life of a nation, and a nation cannot be called religious unless it be inspired in the whole of its activity by religious feeling, religious thought, religious action."

She set foot on Indian soil on 16th November 1893, and in 1894, when about to leave India for England she said: "To be able to lay at

the feet of India any service is to me full of reward for the many sufferings of a stormy life through which the power of service has been won.”

But what kind of India had she in her mind? “The India I love and revere and would fain see living among the nations, is not an India westernized, rent with the struggles of political parties, heated with the fire of political passions, with a people ignorant and degraded, while those who might have raised them are fighting for the loaves and fishes of political triumph. The India to which I belong in faith and heart is a civilization in which spiritual knowledge was accounted highest title to honour and in which the people revered and sought-after spiritual truths. To help in turning India into another Great Britain or another Germany is an ambition that does not allure me. Therefore the India that I would give my life to help in building is an India learned in the ancient philosophy, pulsing with an ancient religion, an India to which all other lands should look for, spiritual life—where the life of all should be materially simple but intellectually noble and spiritually sublime.”

It was her firm belief that the future of India and the happiness of our people can be secured only by the revival of her philosophy and religion. When Indians told her that India was dead, her reply was: “India is not dead, but sleeping.” Subsequent events have more than justified her optimism. “Her interest up to 1898,” says Geoffrey West, “was primarily religious; from 1898 until 1903 she was busy with education, necessarily according to her ideas upon a religious basis; about 1903 she took up social reform, and it was not until 1913 that at last she definitely returned to politics.” But it would be a mistake to think that while she worked for religious revival she was not alive to the need of proper education or eradication of social evils or political freedom. All of them were present in her mind all the time, but the emphasis was shifted from one to the other in logical sequence.

Mr. West asks: “Did she realize that no true spiritual revival is

possible in a nation ruled by a foreign bureaucracy, seeking to impose foreign conditions and a foreign consciousness, that such a revival must be based on a living National self-consciousness, a pride in the past, in the tradition of the arts, in ancient industries and customs? Did she realize that such a living self-consciousness could never be created in schools intended to supply an officialdom with clerks and servants and that sooner or later the challenge and the break with that officialdom must come—beginning with the moulding of the stuff of politics (that is, with education) and ending with politics itself, leading her back sooner or later to as active an opposition to the British Government's policy as any campaign she had ever undertaken." Mr. West answers his question thus: "It is hard to believe that she did not."¹²

Not only did she realize all the above, but she was in constant touch with her Guru's plan for India's regeneration. It was not until some years before her passing that she disclosed this fact to the public. "I add for what it is worth, that in what I say of the Inner Government of the World, I speak from personal knowledge, for I have studied and practised Raja Yoga steadily during the last forty years. I shall be 82 on October 1st of the present year. During those years I have obeyed instructions given to me by my Guru in my political actions in India and England."

So, Dr. Besant began her political work in India, devoting her attention first to religion. There was no doubt in her mind that "each religion moulds the life of its own nation". But in India there were many religions. How should they affect her National life? Not by emphasizing the outer ways, outer customs and outer dogmas which are different, but by looking into "the uniting power of the religions in the spirit of Religion more than in the outer forms". According to her, "these many religions of the world on Indian soil are meant to

¹² *The Life of Annie Besant*, by Geoffrey West.

bring together into one mighty power all the powers of the world. The Indian nation of the future is not to be a nation of one single religion only but to embody the very essence of all religions; that it will have in it the philosophy of Hinduism, the valour and learning of Islam, the purity of Zoroastrianism, the love and tenderness of Buddhism, the self-sacrifice of Christianity.” Religious exclusiveness destroys love of country. It is the exclusiveness that is the enemy and not religion. Therefore the warring religions must learn their unity, and when they feel themselves as one they will strengthen, not weaken, patriotism.

Turning her attention to Education, she said that just as one cannot build a good house out of rotten bricks, so “you cannot build a great nation out of citizens of bad or indifferent character. The citizens are the nation; and as is their character so must be the character of the nation. Hence it is vital that the education given by any nation to its youth should include the building up of character by religious and moral methods, and an education that leaves out of account religion and morality is no true education at all.” She emphasized that one of the chief virtues necessary to the good citizen is public spirit, and that without public spirit there is no nation. She was equally emphatic that “with one’s patriotism should not be mingled the poison of hatred, for hatred is the root of vices as love is the root of virtues. When patriotism is poisoned by the hatred of other countries, it becomes diseased and loses its essence and its life.”

Soon after she came to India she saw the need for social reform. The illiteracy of the masses, the treatment of the submerged classes, the non-recognition of the rightful place of women in the life of the nation, all these could not but attract her attention; and when she found that the ancient ideals of Hindu life could not be restored, she did not hesitate to draw pointed attention to these social evils in the country and plead for their eradication.

In 1913 she organized a band of T.S. workers, who took a pledge the last clause of which was: “I promise to promote union among the

workers in the fields of spiritual, educational, social and political progress, under the headship and direction of the Indian National Congress.” It seemed to Dr. Besant that the National Congress could not ultimately succeed unless its programme included these four aspects of National life, but the Congress hesitated. Then she started a weekly paper, *The Commonwealth*, to popularize her ideas. In enunciating its editorial policy, she declared: “We stand, then, for Union among all workers in the National cause and ask only to be allowed to serve it in any of the four great departments.” She respected the wishes of the Congress leaders who thought that a separate organization for educative propaganda would weaken the Congress, and agreed to postpone the formation of a Home Rule League for the purpose till 31st August 1916, and to start the League after that if the Congress did nothing in the meanwhile.

The Congress took no action till August 1916, and so Dr. Besant duly formed the Home Rule League. The propaganda proposed for the Home Rule League was subsequently accepted by the Congress, and vigorous propaganda for Home Rule began in earnest with the result that the Government sought to stifle the movement by internment. Her internment, far from weakening the movement, rallied the nation as nothing else could have done, and the Government were forced to release her within three months of her internment, with a promise that the Secretary of State was coming to India to hear for himself what India wanted.

The great work done by Dr. Besant in this and other directions won the enthusiastic appreciation of members of all schools of thought and communities. Sir C. Y. Chintamani said that “Dr. Besant looked upon India and served India as her Motherland with a devotion and at a sacrifice equalled by few and surpassed by none”. Lokmanya Tilak, leader of the Extremist section, admitted that “if India is nearer the goal it is due to your strenuous efforts”. Mr. Jinnah of the Muslim League was no less appreciative; he said “No other person has worked and served our cause with that singleness of

purpose, devotion and transparent sincerity as has Mrs. Besant. She has sacrificed all she could. What for? For the freedom of India.”

Of her work since then up to about a couple of years before her passing in 1933, who can give a complete account? Many sided were her activities, and each one of them would fill a volume if justice is to be done to her. Her ideal was a World Federation, a “Commonwealth of Free Nations in which India plays her equal part. The East and West are to be brought together not for themselves alone but for the good of the world. India and Britain are to be the main constituents of the Commonwealth.” Hence her insistence on maintaining the link between India and Britain. She exhorted Indians “to work actively for the preservation of the link between India and Britain. It preserves peace between Asia and Europe. It stands out as a barrier against the breaking out of war between the two continents, a war which would mean a conflict of coloured and white humanity, probably accompanied by the destruction alike of Asiatic and European civilizations.”

The Swarāj she contemplated for India was no imitation of what obtained in other countries. She did not want a replica of English Self-Government “in the form in which England with the wide extension of suffrage is discovering to be unworkable”. She did not want devolution but evolution which is natural and easy. She organized a National Convention consisting of the elected members of the Legislatures in the country and a few distinguished workers outside the Legislative bodies, (practically a Constituent Assembly such as we have now), and helped them to draft a Commonwealth of India Bill. This Bill embodies a system of graded franchise suited to India’s millions. The village is the unit of administration with complete adult suffrage in it, the Village Council dealing with all matters concerning the village. Then come Councils for Towns, also with adult suffrage. Next in order come the Taluk Boards and smaller Municipalities, and then the District Boards and larger Municipalities, and the Provincial and National Parliaments with more and more

restricted franchise, for in her view “the voter should understand and be capable of forming an opinion on the questions which his representative is going to decide.” The Bill passed a first reading in the House of Commons. It did not go through further stages. Gandhiji would not put his signature to it, unless he had a previous guarantee that the Parliament would pass it as presented.

Dr. Besant knew that, to achieve Freedom, there should be a united front on the part of India without difference of parties or of Hindus and Muslims. The Congress had broken up in 1907 into two parties—Extremists and Moderates—and when it met again in 1908 it was without the Extremists led by Lokmanya Tilak. With the consent and approval of Mr. Gokhale, leader of the Moderates, Mrs. Besant went and saw Mr. Tilak in 1914, brought about a meeting between them, and a proposal was discussed to open a way for a return of the Extremists to the Congress. The necessary change was made in the Congress of 1915, and the Tilak party rejoined the Congress in 1916 at Lucknow.

No less remarkable was the success which attended her efforts to bring together Hindus and Muslims for common National work. The Hon’able Sir Syed Nabi handsomely acknowledged it in his tribute to her in the 1917 Conference of the All-India Muslim League. He said: “I shall be untrue to myself, untrue to the Muslim community, untrue to the community at large, if I failed at the moment to publicly acknowledge the services rendered by that great and sincere friend of India, Mrs. Annie Besant, who was mainly instrumental in bringing about the spirit of unity between the two great communities. It was she who made that union possible and we cannot be sufficiently grateful to her.”

It cannot be denied that Dr. Besant’s work has borne fruit (though not within her lifetime as she expected), significantly enough, in the Centenary year of her birth. Swarāj, independence, *Dominion Status*, has come, (though by a partition of India), within the British Commonwealth. But will this continue? Dr. Besant firmly

believed that it is in the plan of “the Inner Government of the world” that Britain and India should remain united as equals, and she wrote in 1928: “The Will of the Inner Government will be done at last, no matter what may be the size of the present parties. In the end, Their Will will triumph—the time is nothing. The Congress may pass whatever resolutions it pleases; whatever is against that Will will be broken.”

The relation between Muslims and Hindus began to change even during Dr. Besant's lifetime and she felt that the question as regards Muhammadans in India was both serious and urgent.

Can it be that the division of India into Pakistan and Indian Union, which one expects to be temporary, will ultimately pave the way for a united India without the menace of independence? God grant that the leaders of both the Dominions will see that these hopes are realized. In the words of Dr. Annie Besant, “nothing is too great a sacrifice if it secures a united front.”

In her political work she was strictly constitutional in her methods. She did not object to a leader disobeying a bad law and bearing its consequences in his own person. As a matter of fact, when the Rowlat Bill was before the public, she had resolved to protest against the Bill, when it became law, by disregarding its impossible instructions. But the Bill was largely modified in the Viceroy's Legislative Council leaving nothing that she wanted to disregard or protest against, without being a revolutionary. And when Gandhiji determined to carry on a campaign of passive resistance, by breaking other laws, she opposed him with all the power at her command. “To break other non-tyrannous laws, which one has hitherto obeyed, because a new tyrannous law had in it no clause that one could righteously disregard” was not her way of political agitation. “Such a policy was certain to give rise” (as it actually did) “among the ignorant and the criminal, to general lawlessness, destructive of all Government and fatal to society.” There were undoubtedly many in this country, who were of her way of thinking at the starting of the

Non-Cooperation movement and during its different stages, but who did not speak out their minds freely.

Dr. Besant always gratefully acknowledged the valuable training she had for political work at the hands of Charles Bradlaugh, and she has often stated that there was not one home that had been made desolate by him, not one man who had gone to jail for the work that he had asked him to do. This was strictly true of her also.

The policy she enunciated during those days, because of which she was so badly misunderstood by the public and lost all her vast popularity, is now being slowly vindicated. The recognition is slow in coming, but come it will, in due course. (The sooner it comes the better for India.) For instance: She was entirely against students still in schools and colleges taking part in active politics. She loved them far too much to stand aside and allow all their prospects and usefulness to the country ruined. During the days of the partition of Bengal, she took up that view and enforced it in her college and school at Benares. Bengal was furious with her. Bepin Chandra Pal was no exception to it. But, later on, he had the fairness to make amends for his previous harsh judgment of her: "In common fairness to Mrs. Besant, it must be admitted, however difficult it may have been for us to recognize it in those exciting days, that we did not stop to calmly consider the real psychology of her policy. We did not even impartially examine the facts of the case. Looking back upon that unfortunate misunderstanding today, when the old controversies have died away and the old excitement has given place to a newer and larger enthusiasm for the Nationalist cause, in which Mrs. Besant stands completely united and identified with the Nationalist party in India, we are forced to recognize the very wide difference between the attitude of the Government and that of Mrs. Besant in the matter. . . Mrs. Besant's attitude and action in this matter was strictly correct and constitutional."

Is it too much to expect the leaders who are administering the country today, to re-examine the attitude once adopted towards her;

to see whether there is not wisdom in the methods she recommended, and in her admonitions and warnings against risks she foresaw and wanted to guard against; and so to follow her counsels, adapting them where necessary, in the present circumstances of the country? That would rejoice her exceedingly, not because her policy was being vindicated, but that India's feet were set at last on the only and best way to achieve her high destiny and fulfil her mission to the world.

India's Debt to Annie Besant

By Jawaharlal Nehru

One of the outstanding events in my life is the day when I first met Annie Besant. I was twelve then and both her personality, the legends that already surrounded her heroic career, and her oratory overwhelmed me. With a young boy's admiration and devotion I gazed at her and followed her about. Then came a gap of many years during which period I hardly saw her; but that admiration continued for a great and unique personality. Long years afterwards I again came into intimate contact with her in the political field and again I became a devoted admirer. It has been a very great privilege for me to have known her and to have worked with her to some extent, for undoubtedly she was a dominating figure of the age. India especially owes a very deep debt of gratitude for all her to find her own soul. The child is a living spiritual intelligence, with an immemorial past behind him, and an incalculable future stretching in front of him.

Annie Besant - The Dazzling Pilgrim

By Sarojini Naidu

Fresh and vivid as dawn itself is my recollection of the rapture that enhanced my lyric girlhood, when I first set eyes on Annie Besant, and heard her speak in the Muslim City of Hyderabad in fervent

praise of Ancient Hindu Culture. To my young romantic fancy, this dazzling pilgrim from the West, with the glamour of her radiant presence and the magic of her golden speech, seemed the living embodiment of all the brave and splendid Women of Old Greek and Norse and Gaelic legend offering proud and joyous homage to the Eternal Genius of India. Today, pondering over her incomparable devotion and her incalculable service to the Indian cause, I can pay no finer tribute to her manifold greatness than to acclaim the sweet miracle wrought by her transcendent and transfiguring love for India, whereby she who came into our midst a stranger, has created for herself an honoured and legitimate place in the annals of the glorious and heroic women of our own race and tradition.

Dr. Besant's Work in India

[*The Times of India* of Bombay, one of the leading newspapers of India, but one that represents the interests of the English community, and so might have been expected to pay only a grudging tribute to Dr. Besant, wrote what follows on September 22, 1933. It is a most accurate description of her work in India. C. Jinarajadasa]

By the death of Mrs. Annie Besant after a lingering illness, India has lost one of its greatest champions in the cause of political freedom, the Empire a notable figure, and Theosophy one of its greatest exponents. There are many facets to Mrs. Besant's career, but the one of widest interest to this country was her tireless advocacy of India's right to Home Rule within the Empire. To the realization of that object within a measurable distance of time she subordinated everything else, unmindful alike of what her associates in the world of Theosophy felt about her incursion into controversial politics, or of what a section of Indians themselves thought of a foreign born woman trying to lay down their ideal for them. We are too near events to judge in the correct perspective the extent to which Mrs.

Besant's whirlwind campaign really helped the country's cause, but there can be no denying the greatness and constructive nature of her work. Her claim that India was her adopted land made an excellent appeal to the imagination of thousands of Indians. Her powers of organization and oratory, her skill as a journalist and her knowledge of the correct methods of agitation learnt in England at the feet of Bradlaugh, accomplished the rest and gave her a hold on the intellectual section of the community, far more powerful in its ultimate effect than the one which Mr. Gandhi has been trying to establish over the masses.

Mrs. Besant succeeded to the extent she did because her ideals and theories left no room for doubt. The Home Rule she contemplated was Dominion Status within the Empire. She had no use for people who indulged in talk of independence. Her political programme had a social as well as a religious background, and she insisted on the preservation of India's ancient traditions and culture, seeking only to adapt the western democratic system to modern Indian conditions. She would not hear of dispossessing the Princes or abolishing their order, and actually walked out from a convocation of Benares Hindu University as a protest against certain observations derogatory of the Princes made by Mr. Gandhi. Her Home Rule movement did far more to consolidate the forces of nationalism in this country than the Congress had achieved in the preceding thirty years. The Great War was her opportunity. Side by side with day-to-day insistence on the righteousness of the British cause and on the obligations which rested on this country to give of its best in seeing the struggle through, she organized the Home Rule movement. In a misguided moment the Madras Government interned her and this "martyrdom" brought her at one bound to the forefront, and compelled the late Mr. Montagu to order her unconditional release in order to ensure a peaceful atmosphere during his visit to India for the preliminary inquiry which preceded the Reforms Act of 1910.

Mrs. Besant repaid that gesture of goodwill by supporting the

Montagu-Chelmsford scheme through thick and thin as the first step in the transfer of power to Indian hands. But she was unable to control the forces which she had let loose. Militant Indian nationalism had no more use for her; her power and influence gradually began to wane. But with rare courage she kept up, at times almost single-handed, the fight with Mr. Gandhi's doctrines of non-cooperation and mass lawlessness. On the morrow of a particularly ferocious outbreak of mob fury, directly traceable to non-cooperation, she did not hesitate to declare in the columns of *New India* that "brickbats must be answered with bullets". Left wing nationalists never forgave her for this advocacy of strong action on the part of Government, but subsequent events proved that she was right in her appreciation of the terrible dangers of mass lawlessness. Mrs. Besant tried hard to prevent the national movement from flowing into wrong channels, and her failure in that direction must be regarded as the greatest tragedy of her amazingly varied life.

Reforming India's Education

C. S. Trilokekar

As a director of education, Dr. Annie Besant had her first field of activity in India in the Central Hindu College at Benares, which she started with the co-operation and support of Indian colleagues, some of whom were Theosophists and others nationalists, so early as 1898. Long before that, during her work as a Socialist in London, she had been elected as a member of the School Board in the largest district in East London against an opponent who tried to defeat her by taking advantage of her frank opinions about the Christian Religion and the application of its principles to the cause of human uplift.

In the very inception of the College, Dr. Besant, as a wise educator, promulgated certain regulations in the conduct of its policy which have a far-reaching bearing on the future of Indian Education. This has a two-fold implication and application. It was then about

half a century ago that she saw that the direction of education must mainly be in the hands of Indians, who must naturally be primarily interested in the bringing up of their young; that the Indians themselves should shoulder the responsibility, monetary and otherwise, of carrying on such education. That it should be patriotic, since it was intended for a free India; that it should be wholly Swadeshi but not divorced from the essence of Religion; that it should be through and through Indian and Oriental but chiselled and meticulously moulded by the scientific knowledge of the Occident; and that the final goal should be the production of a well-cultured full grown Indian with a virile intellect and a strong body: these points were chiefly implied in the scheme.

In its application, it was broad-based on the scientific and psychological foundations of right education as distinctly practised in far off ancient times in India. Free education, if possible, was the aim, but to suit the times, very low fees to be charged. Brahmacharya, as a necessary concomitant for intellectual, emotional and physical growth, was to be enforced, and in conformity with that the doors of the Central Hindu College High School were barred against married pupils. Religion was made the most important plank of that education, and the youths of the Nation were trained for social work, as a preparation for service later of the Motherland, through such organisations as Sons and Daughters of India, Scouts, Guards of Honour, and cadets of the school and college. Teachers from India and the West were sought for who would rather work for the love of the profession than for the emoluments which their posts offered; services of western savants in Science and the Humanities were secured for a very small pittance or for nothing at all. This was quite in keeping with the ancient Indian ideals of teachers and professors, and the management made up the yearly deficit by collection from the Indian public. Very often Dr. Besant's pocket, though not very deep, supplied a major portion of it. This great small venture in 1913 blossomed into the Benares Hindu University in 1919, the direction

of which passed into other hands, but predominantly in the keeping of highly patriotic Indians.

Though so far the guidance in education given by Dr. Besant was along liberal Hindu lines and culture, she was too big an idealistic educationalist to confine herself to such a narrow though sufficiently wide field. The starting of the Aligarh College for Muslims awakened her to the realisation of a probable schism that might arise in the future in education; and she thereupon launched a plan for a University of India under a Royal Charter. An appeal was issued under the joint signatures of herself and many eminent educationists belonging to almost all religious persuasions of India. Immediately the Central Hindu College at Benares was to be a nucleus of it, as later on the Aligarh College would have been another great Centre. But the venture ended as one of the "might have beens". Thus through our faulty vision, India missed the prophetic guidance of Dr. Besant which would have once for all cemented unity between Hindus and Muslims as early as the year 1910. From 1913 to 1918, and till almost the end of her career, she directed and inspired Theosophical education, as the foremost Theosophist of the time. She shaped and moulded its policy; and in her hands, it energised true education for humanity, based and fashioned on a pattern of ever abiding principles. Being possessed of the knowledge of the method and technique of this perennial craft, she temporarily applied it in the Central Hindu College, and later in Theosophical educational institutions. At last she put forth all her strength of organization, her spirit of enthusiasm, and her love of the motherland when in 1913 she rushed headlong into the arena of the political uplift of India. As President of the Indian National Congress, she got the opportunity of planning out a system of national Education in India. It was a graded scheme, suiting each type of unit to be educated, for example, village education supplying the needs of a village. From the village, to the town and the metropolis, it ascended tier after tier, till it culminated in the National University subserving the purpose of the whole nation

according to its natural genius. Regional Universities with the local mother-tongues as the media of instruction were to be established, with research encouraged in the indigenous knowledge of ancient literature, science, art and crafts, blending all these into a synthesis, aiming mainly that such knowledge be offered as a free gift to the motherland. Village education was to be country-wide; and on this foundation was to be raised the superstructure of higher education. There was to be specialisation after 14 years; in the ordinary High School with its art, science and Teachers' training division; the Commercial High School, the Technical High School, and Agricultural High School, culminating in the University with all these departmental subjects. This was a complete picture of a perfect all-round education for the young man and woman of the Free India.

Under the auspices of the Society for the Promotion of National Education, which she started in 1918, this well-framed scheme was given a trial for some time, with the establishment of a National University at Adyar, of which Dr. Rabindranath Tagore was the Chancellor.

As a practical politician Dr. Besant was not unaware of the strategy of statecraft. Knowing full well that India was proverbially poor in worldly possessions, she could not suffer to wait any longer. She boldly ventured to suggest that the problem of universal free education could be solved by the Brahmin caste coming forward to educate the ignorant; that the temple and the mosque should form themselves into places of instruction, the priests and moulvis being teachers; and the village Co-operative Societies throughout the land standing guarantee for their maintenance. Thus India, the Spiritual Mother of the world, could set before it a glowing living example of real reform in education. To this noble task of giving the right lead in national education Dr. Besant dedicated many years of her rich and full life, and this has earned her ever the gratitude of the Indian people.

The Religious and Social Reformer

By S. Muthulakshmi Reddi

When I was a school girl in the village town of Pudukottah I first heard about Mrs. Annie Besant as one who studied our sacred books and was an eloquent advocate of Hindu Religion; and people from that town when they visited Madras city never failed to attend her lectures and returned with the report that a western woman had embraced our religion and was one with us. This was a very strange thing to me as many of our educated intelligentsia then were not only becoming converts to Christianity but also were apeing western habits, dress, etc. and condemning Hindu customs and practices.

When I came to Madras for my medical studies I was taken by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu to attend the lectures in the Headquarters at Adyar. That was the first time I saw the great lady standing on a platform speaking about the glories of the Ramayana and Mahabharata to a spell-bound audience. That was in the year 1908 by which time she had become a well-versed Sanskrit scholar and had studied the original books on Hindu religion.

As I was fully absorbed in my medical studies till 1912, when I passed out as a full blown graduate, I had no opportunity to come in contact with her, though I was hearing glowing accounts of the service of Dr. Annie Besant and her associates to our religion and country.

In 1917 she was the chief inspirer of the Women's Indian Association and was its first President. This association through the influence of Dr. Annie Besant and her colleagues spread out all over India from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas, from Peshawar to Sylhet in Assam. The whole country was covered with a network of this women's organisation which worked for furthering the progress of women in education, industry, politics as well as women's reform. And so the women were banded together for the service of their country so much so that when the South-borough committee visited

India for enfranchising the people. Dr. Annie Besant and Mrs. Naidu and the members of the Women's Indian Association waited on Mr. Montague the then Secretary of State for India and presented a memorandum which stated that Indian women also should be made eligible for the franchise on the same terms as men. Mrs. Cousins took a leading part in this movement, also Mrs. C. Jinarajadasa, the then secretary of the W. I. A. Both these ladies were Theosophists and accompanied Dr. Annie Besant from their native country to India. At any rate Mrs. Cousins and her husband Dr. Cousins have adopted this land as their own and have been rendering yeoman service to the Indian people in all walks of life. It must not be forgotten that Dr. Annie Besant was the prime factor who influenced men and women of other lands in favour of Hindu thought and culture at a time when India's own sons and daughters were becoming strangers to their own religion and culture and were beginning to think that their ancestors were barbarians and forgetting to learn even their own mother-tongue, much less the language of the Vedas and the Upanishads. It was Dr. Annie Besant who translated in simple and pure English not only the Gita, but also compiled small booklets containing tales of Aryan greatness for the use of our little boys and girls. That was how the whole world came to know India's spiritual treasures which were engulfed in centuries of darkness and oblivion. She was the one who brought the light and illumined the hidden treasures of Indian thought. I need not dilate upon her great qualities of the heart and intellect which naturally revealed themselves in other spheres of human activity.

The service she rendered the women of India is invaluable. She has demonstrated to the world what women are capable of achieving and it looks that she came to India as an embodiment of Shakti the goddess of Power. She had revolted against the taboos and meaningless customs and convention that hampered women and kept her down as an inferior humanity. She for a woman had enormous courage, independence and conviction of her own and made her mark in

every department of life—namely religion, education, politics, economics and fundamental rights of human beings. She was a lover of children and started scout movements, child welfare and children-aid societies and other educational institutions like the Hindu University in Benares, the theosophical College, and encouraged Indian literature and art and made them known to the world as unique and common possessions of humanity. She has shown to Indian women what freedom, education and responsibility could do for them, and that if given opportunities women could rise to the highest stature of human thought and achievement. She was an honour to her sex and an inspiring ennobling example for women all over the world. It is the great fortune of India that she was thrown in the midst of Indian people to revive their religion, philosophy, literature and their arts and sciences. She believed only women could be the custodians of civilization and culture for any land. Through them only the redemption of not only India but the whole world could come.

If Indian women are Ministers today, and if they are Ambassadors to other countries, Presidents and Deputy Presidents of Public bodies and members of Legislatures, the credit must go to the foundation laid by Dr. Annie Besant and her friends. We may safely say that Dr. Annie Besant prepared the ground for the Gandhian freedom movement in which women have played a very prominent part.

Annie Besant and the Revival of Religion in India

By C. Rajagopalachariar

Just a hundred years ago a child was born who was destined to play a remarkable and varied part in the history of the progress of the world; and we are celebrating the event today. Among those who have materially contributed to the shaping of India, Mrs. Besant is one of the biggest personalities. She helped young India to feel sure of the greatness of Indian culture and religion. Christianity as well as Science has made a great and successful attack on Hindu religion.

Mrs. Besant's service in repelling these attacks and in conserving the self-confidence of India in these matters deserves most grateful appreciation. Mrs. Besant was one of those who, like Gandhiji, could not be put in a compartment. All things are interrelated; arid religion, politics, art, industry, education, all are interrelated branches of the same Truth. Mrs Besant therefore took as much part in politics as in the revival movement of Hinduism. Her contribution to the cause of Indian freedom is great. Lokamanya Tilak, Gandhiji and other Indian leaders were her contemporaries. Groups gathered round these great figures came sometimes in conflict with one another. I, as a young man, kept somewhat away from Mrs. Besant; that is to say speaking relatively. But I now see in the large perspective how great a person she was and how much she has done for India. The Theosophical Society, of which she was the Head, was the target of very severe attacks in Madras especially. I now see how foolish all these attacks were and how much she has been misunderstood. She was a firm believer in the immortality of the spirit. Let us pay our homage to her spirit on this day of memory a hundred years after she was born.

The Messenger of Hope

By Iqbal Narain Gurtu

It is very difficult to give in the space of an article any adequate idea of the outstanding greatness of Dr. Annie Besant. In fact true greatness can never be fully measured. Even those who violently differed from her cannot but acknowledge her transparent honesty of purpose, her indomitable will and unfailing strength, her matchless courage and energy, her extraordinary versatility and intellectual powers, and her remarkable capacity for organization coupled with practical idealism and commonsense; while those who had the privilege of working in close association with her at once felt struck with the boundless generosity of her noble heart, the utter simplicity of her life, her wise and understanding love, her lofty spirituality and

grasp of fundamentals which enabled her to offer happy solutions to the deeper problems of life not merely by precept but in her own daily life. Throughout her life, crowded with big events and equally big crises, she had had to sacrifice tremendously for her fidelity to what she believed to be true. But with all the heavy price that she had to pay for her intensity of convictions, the one outstanding feature of her noble character was its freedom from any trace of dogmatism or bitterness or intolerance.

Mrs. Besant looked at the future progress of the world from the standpoint of the Spirit. To her, man was God in the making, and his essentially divine nature must be allowed to express itself more and more fully through his mental, emotional and physical activities. She held with all the force of her conviction that the unfolding of the spiritual life in man did not depend upon his environment or circumstances, but upon his attitude towards life. She refused to share the general belief that the man of the world could not lead a spiritual life because the relation of the material and the spiritual was that of incompatibles. She maintained that the right course was to look upon the Spirit as the Life, and the world as the form; and the form must be made the proper channel for the expression of the Life. According to her, all useful activities were forms of Divine activity, and until we could see more and more one Life everywhere, and all things and activities rooted in that Life, our individual and social life was liable to be materialised and even vulgarised. A constant awareness of this depth of unity in the very centre of our being, which is a mystery to the ordinary man, formed a living and permanent background to all her multifarious activities. It was this inner spiritual urge that created in her an irresistible attraction towards India, and she resolved to leave her home and dedicate herself to the Service of humanity through service to India.

To her the uniqueness of the ancient Indian civilization consisted in the fact that it was essentially of a spiritual type deliberately planned and organised for the achievement of a spiritual end. She

was never tired of pointing out that even in its present degraded condition, when much of her dynamic life had disappeared, it was still a country where a higher value was set on the development of the soul than on mere material interests. With her matchless eloquence she proclaimed the great message that if Indians, who formed almost the last hope of the spiritual uplift of man, yielded to the lure of exclusive material advancement and power, then 'in their spiritual death humanity shall find its grave'. She constantly warned us not to look upon our ancient culture as a static ruin, and in our despair throw away into the dust heap the rich and accumulated experience of the past, treating it as mere putrid waste. Till the end of her earthly life she kept on reminding us that if India could be regenerated, purified and re-spiritualised she would become the "priest-people of Humanity" and achieve her proper destiny. She was at the same time careful to point out that it will not do to "tread only in the foot-prints of the past." There were three fundamental principles which she laid down in this connection: (1) That it was impossible for any nation entirely to reproduce its past, but it was possible to re-establish certain principles which in their application could be adapted to the demands of new conditions and circumstances. (2) That national ideals could be useful and effective only when they were in harmony with national genius and character and were not an exotic but grew out of its own past. (3) That nations like individuals embodied a fragment of Divine Life and had their respective and distinctive line of evolution, and therefore it would be disastrous for one nation slavishly to follow the evolution of another nation. Any such attempt was foredoomed to failure because it clashed with the purpose of the Divine World Plan. In her long and devoted services to this country and in her ceaseless and tireless efforts to rebuild the India of the future, her object was not merely the attainment of political and national freedom—although she strenuously worked for it with unflinching determination—but she aimed at building up a mighty and efficient spiritual organisation for the uplift of humanity as a whole.

Mrs. Besant looked upon the spiritual values of life as the true source of energy, and she proved from history that when the spiritual impulse weakened, growth and joy of life declined. Having neglected the roots of life from which sprang individual happiness as well as social and national progress, India had to pay the penalty of a rapid decay in originality of intellect and in creative intelligence which finally resulted in the decline of material prosperity and the loss of her political freedom. With this clear insight into the cause of India's subjugation and downfall she decided from the day she set her foot on Indian soil that the revival of Indian life must follow the order in which India's decline had come about.

Her first work, therefore, in India was to attempt to revive her faith in spiritual awakening. We know how assiduously she worked for it and how eloquently she described the grandeur and sublimity of India's ancient ideals which were almost lost in the mist of antiquity. Having laid those foundations she took the next step and started her great educational work. She had noticed sufficiently early that Indian education woefully suffered from the lack of nationalistic outlook and from the absence of the presentation of ideals which would cultivate the emotional side of Indian boys and girls. The inevitable result of that was the absence of necessary enthusiasm which could form the basis of noble character and develop public spirit and a right sense of true citizenship. "Children" she used to say "ought to grow like flowers in the sunshine and not like the weeds in the cellar".

She established the Central Hindu College at Benares with the object of filling the minds and hearts of Indian youth with the love of their country and knowledge of India's past glory which could be judiciously worked out in the future by training them to understand the present and keeping pace with the progress of events. In her scheme of education there was thus to be a proper integration of the past, the present and the future, as also between the outer and inner life. The object of true education that she placed before the country was that it should be organised in itself and fully integrated with life

in its completeness. Her passionate appeal to young students at one of the anniversary meetings of the College still resounds in our ears and gives us a glimpse of the vision of a creative education as she saw it and moves the heart to its very depth. She charged the students with these soul-stirring words: "Aim at progress, my sons, strive to make India's future worthy of her ancient greatness. Outgrow your fathers in knowledge, outstrip your elders in devotion. For the days of India's greatness are by no means over; her future shall be mightier than her mighty past. India shall wield a power greater than the Imperial if only her people will realize her true strength and utilise it, leading a life in which spirit shall guide and love shall inspire."

It is not possible in the space of an article to describe her great and solid work for India in the social and political field. Others better qualified than myself are sure to deal with her brilliant Home Rule Campaign and the principles on which she based her struggle for freedom and also on the pattern of democracy for India as envisaged in her Commonwealth of India Bill. Others will write about her no less important work for the uplift of the Depressed Classes and about the lines she chalked out for India's economic and industrial advancement and for reconstructing life in Indian villages which formed the main pivot in her scheme of India's material prosperity and cultural development. Her dream of a future India where the followers of different religions would live as brothers and weld themselves into one strong and united Nation by pooling together for common good their respective cultural inheritance seems for the moment to be almost shattered. What is still more serious is that the Indian nature, instead of further evolving spiritually, seems to be in imminent danger of losing its culture and descending to the level of the brute with its crude and unbridled passions and thirst for blood. The cynic may likely conclude from the present deplorable set-back that Mrs. Besant's lifelong efforts have proved a failure, and the country which she so dearly loved has rejected her completely within only a few years of her death. But the New India for which she lived

and worked for 40 years and more is yet to be born, and the present turmoil only marks the travail of a new birth. The great destiny which she proclaimed was awaiting India in the future is sure to become hers, for the Divine Plan cannot be ruined by mortal hands.

Some Memories of Dr. Annie Besant By Bhagavan Das

How can I tell my own heavy personal debt to her? I was never worthy to unloose the latchet of her shoes; yet she allowed me the privilege of doing so, and serving as her personal assistant, in Benares and on some of the long tours she made in India year after year in connection with her work, some ten years before she made Adyar her principal residence after taking up the Presidentship of The Theosophical Society. Once I fell very ill with malaria. She was, as usual, very busy with all kinds of work, and, besides, was preparing to leave Benares for England for the summer. One morning, on coming back to my senses after a night's mind-wandering, I was astounded to learn that she had passed nearly the whole of the night on a sofa, near my sick-bed, taking turns with my wife in trying to soothe my wretched worthless mind and body. What wonder that we all regarded her as veritable mother!

* * *

The following communication was sent to the compiler by Mr S. Sundaram, former General Secretary of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society:

Every year a public meeting is organized at the Indian Section Headquarters, Varanasi, on 17 November in order to celebrate the Foundation Day of the TS in which one or two distinguished speaker/speakers are invited to express their views. In the year 1966 the distinguished speaker was

Mr. Chandrabhal - second son of Dr. Bhagavan Das. During the course of his talk he mentioned that Dr. Annie Besant passed away in September, 1933. When her ashes were brought to Kashi several members of the TS, teachers and distinguished citizens of Varanasi assembled at the Indian Section HQ. The urn containing the Holy Ashes of Dr. Besant was held in hands by Dr. Bhagavan Das. He carried the urn in order to immerse the ashes in the Holy River Ganga. The huge procession followed him. After the ashes were immersed in the Holy River people proceeded to the Town Hall of the city where a public meeting was organized in order to pay homage and tribute to the Departed Soul. There, in the meeting, Mr. Chandrabhal's elder brother Mr. Sri Prakash narrated the following sensitive and heart touching incident:

Once when *Babuji* (Father) was seriously ill, Mrs. Annie Besant used to work and take care of the responsibilities of the Indian Section and the Educational Institutions at Varanasi during the day time and at night she, along with our mother, used to take care of and attend to our father. After the meeting when we were returning home, *Babuji* seemed to be in a very pensive mood. We thought that he is remembering the days which he had spent with Dr. Besant and the incidents associated with her. We did not disturb him. Then he slowly asked my elder brother: "Is it a fact what all you narrated in the public meeting about Dr. Besant taking care of me during my illness?" We (both the brothers), were at first surprised with the strange question raised by our father. Then, in a flash, we realized that till date father did not know about it, nobody informed him. Then, my brother said that it is a true story. To which our father's response was: "And I have come to know about it only after immersing her ashes in the Holy River".

We reproduce below the report by Josephine Ransom in her book *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* (Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1938, pp. 509-510) about Dr Besant's passing:

On 20 September the news flashed round the world that Annie Besant had passed away. With one accord the newspapers of the world recounted (more or less intelligently) the story of her life.

Dr. Besant left her body at 4 p.m. She was lying in her bedroom, and gathered about her were Bishop Leadbeater, Miss Willson, Mr. Sri Ram, and Mr. Jinarajadasa holding her hand. At 7 a.m. next day her body was brought down into the great Hall. It was robed in a favourite gold-embroidered sari and covered with a silk cloth bearing the emblem of The Society, also a red and green Home Rule flag, and on her breast was laid a small silk cloth on which was embroidered the seal of The Society. The great gathering which had come to pay its respects filed past, laying a tribute of flowers on the body. At 8 a.m. a religious service was held, and Bishop Leadbeater pronounced the benediction which Dr. Besant had composed [which appeared in the early liturgy of the Liberal Catholic Church]:

“May the Holy Ones, whose pupils we aspire to become, show us the light we seek, give us the strong aid of Their Compassion and Their Wisdom. There is a Peace that passeth understanding; it abides in the hearts of those who live in the Eternal. There is a Power that maketh all things new; it lives and moves in those who know the Self as One. May that Peace brood over us, that Power uplift us, till we stand where the One Initiator is invoked, till we see His star shine forth.”

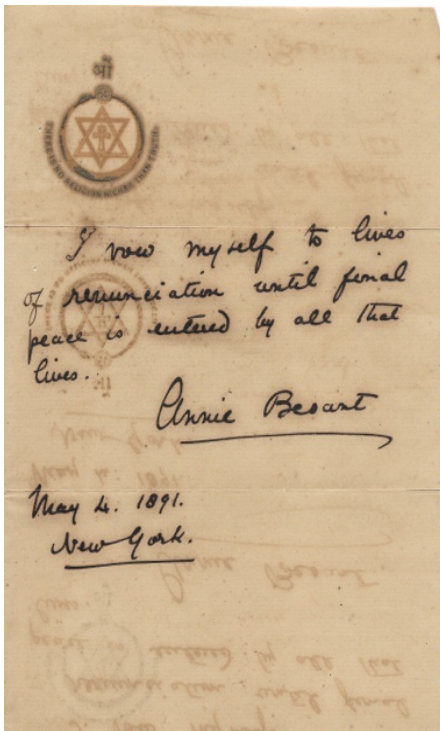
The body was then taken in procession along Founders' avenue to the Masonic Temple to receive a farewell, then along an avenue made through the casuarina groves to a place near the river and the sea. It was then rested upon a great sandalwood pyre. Tributes were paid to the great leader, and some verses chanted from the *Bhagavad Gita*. The pyre was lighted—and “the flames consumed the noble body.” A few days later the ashes were placed in a silver vessel and carried to Benares by way of Bombay, where it rested for a day. At Benares the silver vessel was placed in the Theosophical Hall, and a last tribute paid to Dr. Besant. Bhagavan Das carried the ashes to the Ganges, accompanied by a great procession, deposited them in a flower-decked boat, and they were immersed in the river. Dr.

Besant had said in 1915 that her ashes should remain in India, for in life and in death she was consecrated to the Motherland. [*The Theosophist*, September 1915, p. 550]. So passed one of the world's very greatest.

A crowded meeting was held in the Benares Town Hall, and Dr. Besant was extolled for her services to India. [She had taken to heart the words of Master in 1881: "Oh! I for the noble and unselfish man to help us effectively in India in that divine task. All our knowledge, past and present, would not be sufficient to repay him."

Meetings were held throughout The Society to put on record the great appreciation and gratitude all had for Dr. Besant's sacrifices and services to the world and to The Society. The Sheriff of Madras called a public meeting, presided over by the Mayor, "to express the citizen's appreciation of the services rendered to the country by the late Annie Besant and to take steps to perpetuate her memory."

Thus departed Annie Besant, the Diamond Soul. She is bound to return to continue her work for humanity for, as she herself wrote in 1891: 'I vow myself to lives of renunciation until final peace is entered by all that lives.'



Epilogue

For those who subscribe to the ‘received tradition’ about Annie Besant, she was a deluded woman, power-hungry, naïve, manipulated by men, including G. N. Chakravarti and C. W. Leadbeater. For such individuals she was responsible for the breakup the Theosophical Society in 1895, when the Judge Case culminated in the secession by William Q. Judge and the formation of the independent Theosophical Society in America.

The word ‘image’ is derived from the Latin *imago*, ‘image, imitation, likeness, statue, representation.’ The images of Annie Besant mentioned above were created by the intellectual and emotional passions of those who convinced themselves that that image was a true one. And with more than a century of strong, passionate, partisan image-making, that image acquired a living form in the minds of many people, academicians included, thus reducing her monumental, age-transforming work, to an exercise of vanity and egoism on the part of a woman who was perceived to be psychologically dependent on men. However, as Krishnamurti repeatedly said, the image or the word is not the thing.

This book is only a bird’s-eye view of Annie Besant’s immense work, encompassing education, social awareness and action, real politics, a theosophical *tour de force*, and the compelling and profoundly transformative work of an individual – a woman – who worked without fear for the spiritual, social, educational and political awakening of India. Such a woman is not an *image*, a representation, a statue, an imitation. She was an embodiment of a resistless spiritual force that has its spring in that spiritual intuition which renders all action effective, right, loving and transformative. Every one of the burning issues of India today can be seen mirrored in Annie Besant’s

work more than a century ago: the condition of women, child marriage, casteism and communalism, the duties of the parliament, the relationship between religious communities and the welfare of the poor. Her diagnosis of Indian society was spot on.

Annie Besant was and continues to be, subjected to nothing less than a markedly hostile treatment by some of the followers of William Q. Judge. She is portrayed as a traitor of the Theosophical Movement, and solely responsible for its fragmentation. Once again, image-making has played a very large part in this portrayal of her. But when one reads her motion to the 1894 Convention of the Theosophical Society, it can be clearly seen that her motives in that serious crisis were not personal animosity against Mr Judge but a plea for him to explain himself, which he refused. She never wanted him to be expelled from the Theosophical Society and he never was.

When she introduced J. Krishnamurti to the world as the vehicle for the coming World Teacher Dr Besant was again attacked, savagely so. But she continued to work and even when Krishnaji dissolved the Order of the Star in the East in 1929 she maintained her certainty that he would be the vehicle for a new teaching to humanity. Krishnaji's work from that time to his death in 1986, proved that Dr Besant's vision was not the ravings of a deluded brain, but the certainty of a spiritual intuition born in those spheres of consciousness in which there is no doubt, no fear, and no hesitation.

A number of years ago, in conversation with an Indian friend, I was told that when Annie Besant differed from Gandhiji publicly she was 'shelved' by the leadership of the Independence movement. Yet, the testimonies included in the last chapter of this book by her contemporary eminent Indians, and by Gandhiji himself, show a moving recognition of her legacy, as someone who had embraced India and its soul from the very moment she stepped on its soil in 1893. She gave India her all.

H. P. Blavatsky welcomed Annie Besant into the TS in 1889, in London, and the latter soon became her right hand. Below we

include Madame Blavatsky's appointment of Annie Besant to a significant position in HPB's inner, esoteric work. This happened less than two years of Mrs Besant joined the Theosophical Society:

ORDER

"I hereby appoint in the name of the MASTER, Annie Besant Chief Secretary of the Inner Group of the Esoteric Section & Recorder of the Teachings.

H.P.B. ∴

"To Annie Besant, C.S. of the I.G. of the E.S. & R. of the T.
"April 1, 1891.

"Read and Recorded April 11/91. William Q. Judge, Sec. U.S."

[Source: *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, volume 12]

The abbreviation C.S. of the I.G. of the E.S. & R. of the T. stands for Chief Secretary of the Inner Group of the Esoteric Section and Recorder of the Teachings.

In a letter to William Q. Judge, dated March 27, 1891, Madame Blavatsky stated:

UNSELFISHNESS AND ALTRUISM is Annie Besant's name, but with me and for me she is Heliodore, a name given to her by a Master, and that I use with her, it has a *deep Meaning*. It is only a few months she studies occultism with me in the *innermost* group of the E.S., and yet she has passed far beyond all others. She is not psychic nor spiritual in the least – all intellect, and yet she hears Master's voice when alone, sees His Light, and recognizes his voice from that of D— Judge, *she is a most wonderful woman*, my right hand, my

successor, when I will be forced to leave you, my sole hope in England, as you are my sole hope in America.

[See *Theosophical History*, July-October 1991]

The source of Annie Besant's dedication along with her constant, selfless service to India and to humanity was her direct, non-mediated realization of the indivisible unity of all life. For her, such unity was not a concept, an idea, but an ever-present and ever-renewed experience. Her activism, therefore, was not an ideology-based activity, trying to persuade people to her point of view. Her social, educational and political platform for India was the expression of a soul vision which maintained that undivided unity is the abiding truth of life and that it was such truth that should lead India into an inspiring nationhood:

Oh! if for one passing moment I could show to you, by any skill of tongue or passion of emotion, one gleam of the faint glimpse – that by the grace of the Masters I have caught – of the glory and the beauty of the Life that knows no difference and recognises no separation, then the charm of that glory would so win your hearts that all earth's beauty would seem but ugliness, all earth's gold but dross, all earth's treasures but dust on the roadside, beside the inexpressible joy of the life that knows itself as One.

Annie Besant, *The Laws of the Higher Life*

Annie Besant took to heart the following verses from *The Voice of the Silence* (1889), the last contribution of Madame Blavatsky to the world, which was published in the very same year Mrs Besant had joined the Theosophical Society in London. They speak of a commitment to the service of humanity that knows no end, that endures every difficulty and trial and that prepares the candidate to be a future saviour of the world:

Behold the Hosts of Souls. Watch how they hover o'er the stormy sea of human life, and how exhausted, bleeding, broken-winged, they drop one after other on the swelling waves. Tossed by the fierce winds, chased by the gale, they drift into the eddies and disappear within the first great vortex.

Fragment I

If through the Hall of Wisdom, thou would'st reach the Vale of Bliss, Disciple, close fast thy senses against the great dire heresy of separateness that weans thee from the rest.

Shalt thou abstain from action? Not so shall gain thy soul her freedom. To reach Nirvâna one must reach Self-Knowledge, and Self-Knowledge is of loving deeds the child.

Fragment II

To live to benefit mankind is the first step.

Fragment II

Hast thou attuned thy heart and mind to the great mind and heart of all mankind? For as the sacred River's roaring voice whereby all Nature-sounds are echoed back, so must the heart of him 'who in the stream would enter,' thrill in response to every sigh and thought of all that lives and breathes.

Fragment III

She was profoundly convinced that India was the spiritual Mother of the world, and that from ancient India had emanated a universal wisdom that had permeated all lands – *Brahmavidyā* – Divine Wisdom, Theosophy. For her India was suffused with deep and abiding sacredness for at the heart of India pulsed the *Śakti*, the invincible Mother-Goddess, who is at the same time Wisdom, Compassion, Truth and Spiritual Transformation. Thus her belief in the future of India was not emotional, transient, mere guess work, but

firmly rooted in her experience of India as a Divine Mother.

The younger generations may not remember her, those conditioned by the artificial image created about her may view her as a romantic westerner who tried to help India out of its mess and the cynics may see her as a power-driven woman who failed. But those who knew and worked with her always testified that they were in the presence of someone who was immensely great and yet who had a direct relationship with all of them. Her spirit of motherhood was so all-encompassing that it would enfold both humans and animals.

Every December she would start writing cheques for poor people, poor students, animals in need of care, schools and colleges. When 31st December came her bank account balance was zero. She did this because she did not consider that the money that came to her was her money. And yet, in the first few days of the New Year donations to her work would start again from different places.

Does India need the Besant spirit? That is for its citizens to answer. But in a time of such widespread moral darkness in the world, which includes some political leaders, it could hardly be questioned that human society needs a new vision. The novelty created by social media is skin deep and is already showing its dark side in the exploitation of women and children, to give one example, not to mention racists and supremacists groups. When one listens to or watches news reports, there is a distinct feeling that truth has been on a holiday and that untruth, deceit and lies have come to be regarded as the new normal.

The essence of the Besant spirit is a social organization based on timeless values, on a deep sense of duty to one's country as well as to one's deepest Self (Atman). On this foundation can be erected a living network of activities that benefits all sections of society, creating a true tissue of helpfulness and compassion. Her view of life was profoundly based on the truth that all life is one and she viewed education, social change, politics and welfare activities through that timeless realization.

Having lived and worked in India for several years, and travelled through it, I can understand Dr Besant's profound faith in that land: *Vasudeva kodumbakam* – the whole world is one family. In spite of its great challenges today, the profound spiritual ethos of India which Dr Besant discovered and worked for, is still alive. So, too, is her vision for India. May she return once more.

Appendix 1

A Besant Diary of Principal Events

(Source: *The Theosophist*, 1947)

- 1847 October 1st, born in London, 5.39 p.m.
- 1852 Death of father, October 5th
- 1855 Met Miss Marryat who undertook her education till
1864
- 1861 First travel abroad (in Europe)
- 1866 Easter, met the Rev. Frank Besant, whom she married
in Dec. 1867; A very devout Christian, she met her
first religious doubt and conquered it temporarily
- 1867 Met Mr Roberts, ‘the poor man’s lawyer,’ who awak-
ened her interest in the outer world of political
struggle, and became her first tutor in Radicalism;
First experience of an angry crowd, whom she paci-
fied
- 1868 Received first payment for writing: thirty shillings for
a story in *The Family Herald*
- 1871 Attempted suicide: for the first time heard her Mas-
ter’s voice

- 1872 Met Mr Thomas Scott who became her most helpful friend
- 1873 Discovered the gift of oratory;
End of marriage: left home and husband, compelled to leave her small son with his father, and permitted to take her baby daughter with her;
Left Christianity
- 1874 Various attempts to earn a livelihood;
May 10th, death of mother to whom she was deeply devoted;
August 2nd, joined the National Secular Society, and met Charles Bradlaugh;
August 30th, her first article under the name of 'Ajax' appeared in The National Reformer
August 25th, her first public lecture: on 'The Political Status of Women';
September 27th, her second lecture delivered: on 'The True Basis of Morality';
Took part in the election struggle of Mr Bradlaugh: her first experience of rioting, and of English politics
- 1874-86 Atheist
- 1875 January, resolved to give herself wholly to propagandist work, as a Freethinker and a Social Reformer;
Heard the voice of Truth;
Began lectures on the French Revolution, from the standpoint of the oppressed people

1875-76 Experienced attacks from angry Christians, and from stone-throwing audiences

1877 April 6th, arrested for selling the Knowlton pamphlet; subsequently her first appearance in a lawcourt as her own advocate; the trial led to the establishment of the Malthusian League

1877-90 Sub-edited The National Reformer

1878 Deprived of the custody of her eight-year-old daughter, though ably pleading her own case;

1878-79 Championed the cause of Afghanistan

1879 Met Edward B. Aveling, D.Sc., who became her tutor, 'a marvellously able teacher of science subjects, the very ablest in fact, that I have ever met';
Matriculated at London University;
Qualified as science teacher in eight different sciences

1879-88 Helped to conduct a science school

1880 August 25th, represented English Freethinkers at International Conference in Brussels;
With Charles Bradlaugh began the battle for the rights of Atheists

1881 Championed the cause of the Transvaal

1882 Championed the cause of Egypt and Ireland;

Moved her office to 63 Fleet Street, from where she carried on her public work till 1891

- 1884 Met George Bernard Shaw
- 1885 Joined the Fabian Society;
Helped to form a Society of the Friends of Russia; Championed the cause of the Soudan
- 1887 Met W. T. Stead;
Helped to form a Socialist Defence Association;
November 13th, in the course of a struggle to establish the right of people to hold open-air public meetings, led and defended one of the processions to Trafalgar Square which were violently attacked and dispersed by the police
- 1887-90 Member of the London School Board
- 1888 With Herbert Burrows organized and won the Match-Girls' Strike which made possible the birth of the New Unionism;
Organized the Match-Makers' Union;
With W. T. Stead started the project of building up a 'New Church, dedicated to the service of man'; Studied the hidden sides of consciousness, Spiritualism, etc., for a great despair oppressed her that her philosophy was not sufficient
- 1889 Heard a Voice bidding her take courage for the light was near;
Read and reviewed *The Secret Doctrine*;

May 10th, met H. P. Blavatsky;
May 21st, joined the Theosophical Society, and became the pupil of HPB;
August 4th and 11th, lectured at the Hall of Science on 'Why I Became a Theosophist';
September 4th, met H. S. Olcott

1890 Resigned from the National Secular Society;
Met C. W. Leadbeater;
Founded (with HPB) the Working Women's Club at Bow

1891 Succeeded H. P. Blavatsky [in her esoteric work.]

1893 September represented the Theosophical Society at the World Parliament of Religions, Chicago;
November 9th, arrived in Colombo, and on Nov. 11th lectured on 'Karma';
November 16th, landed in India, at Tuticorin, 10.24 a.m.;
December, her first Convention Lectures delivered: 'The Building of the Kosmos'

1893-94 First lecture tour in India, attracting audiences of thousands

1894 Engaged in the Judge case;
First lecture tour in Australia and New Zealand;
First address to Indian National Congress

- 1895 January, settled in Benares;
Translated the Bhagavad-Gita;
Awarded the Subba Row Medal;
Summer, began clairvoyant research
- 1896 April, lecture series in London, later published as *The Ancient Wisdom*
- 1897 Reorganized the American Section;
Edited and issued *The Secret Doctrine*,
Vol. III
- 1898 July 7th, started the Central Hindu College in Benares
- 1900 First lectured in India on Social Reform
- 1901 Started the *Central Hindu College Magazine*,
which soon attained a circulation of 15,000
1902 Joined Co-Freemasonry
- 1904 Started a Girls' School in Benares;
Paid a visit to the Pope at Rome
- 1906 Engaged in the Leadbeater case
- 1907 July 6th, elected President of the Theosophical Society;
August, pursued researches into occult chemistry
- 1907-1911 Increased the Adyar Estate from 27 to 253 acres

- 1908 Founded the T. S. Order of Service (renamed, in 1921, the Theosophical Order of Service);
Formed the Sons of India, and the Daughters of India;
Started the Vasanta Press at Adyar
Order of the Round Table started, with her as Protector;
Dec. 31st, made the first public announcement of the coming of a World Teacher
- 1909 Adopted J. Krishnamurti and his brother;
Travelled 45,000 miles during the year
Continued occult chemistry researches
- 1910 With C. W. Leadbeater engaged in clairvoyant research for the book, *Man: Whence, How and Whither*
- 1911 January 1st, first delivered the Star Invocation;
June, started the Order of the Star in the East;
Dec. 28, was present at memorable meeting of the Order; June 15, lectured at the Sorbonne, Paris, on the 'Message of Giordano Bruno to the Modern World'
- 1912 Founded the Temple of the Rosy Cross;
Founded the Order of Theosophical Sannyasis;
Heard the oration of Pythagoras at Taormina
- 1912-14 Engaged in a lawsuit with J. Naraniah
- 1913 January 1st, transformed the Theosophist Office into Theosophical Publishing House at Adyar
Entered Indian politics with the clearly stated object of claiming Dominion Status for India within the

British Commonwealth; Handed over Central Hindu College to become nucleus of the Benares Hindu University;
Started the Theosophical Educational Trust;
September formed a small band, which later developed into the Order of the Brothers of Service;
Reorganized the German Section

- 1914 January 2nd, started The Commonweal, a weekly journal of national reform;
July 6th, re-elected President of the Theosophical Society;
July 14th, started New India (daily newspaper) which lasted fifteen years and revolutionized Indian journalism;
Started the Y.M.I.A. [Young Men's Indian Association] and donated Gokhale Hall (Madras) to be a centre of free speech
- 1915 Wrote her famous summary of 'What Does India Want?'
Formed the Madras Parliament for parliamentary training and political propaganda: Dec. 16th, inaugurated Adyar Arts League
- 1916 Started the Home Rule League, which soon reoriented the National Congress to a new vigour;
Externed from the Bombay Presidency
Started the Girls' College, Benares
- 1917 April 7th, founded the Order of the Brothers of Service;

May 8th, Women's Indian Association organized in Adyar under her Presidentship, from which grew the All-Indian Women's Conference at Poona in 1927, and the All-Asian Women's Conference at Lahore in 1931;

June – September, interned by the Government of Madras;

August, elected President of the Indian National Congress;

Dec. 26th, delivered her presidential address to the Congress, later published as 'The Case for India'

Started S.P.N.E. [Society for Promotion of National Education] with a National University at Adyar under the chancellorship of Rabindranath Tagore

1918 Organized the Indian Boy Scouts, which amalgamated with the Baden-Powell Scouts in 1921

1920 At the session of the Indian National Congress stood against Mr Gandhi's plan of non-co-operation – stood alone (with five others supporting her) against shouting thousands, three brief years after being a national hero and acclaimed by vast crowds

1921 April 6th, appointed Hon. Commissioner for All-India of the Boy Scouts Association;

July 6th, re-elected President of the Theosophical Society;

July 23-26, president of the first Theosophical World Congress at Paris (1400 delegates representing 39 countries);

July 26th, lectured at the Sorbonne in French;

- Dec. 3rd, welcomed back to India J. Krishnamurti and brother;
- Dec. 14th, Benares Hindu University conferred on her the hon. degree of the Doctor of Letters;
- 1921 December, instituted Adyar Day, to begin 17 Feb. 1922;
Started the 1921 Political Club in Madras, from which came the idea of drafting a constitution for India
- 1922 October inaugurated the Brahmavidya Ashrama at Adyar
- 1922-23 Engaged in the Martyn case
- 1923 Inaugurated the Youth Movement in the Theosophical Society;
Inaugurated the Brotherhood Campaign for which wrote the powerful universal prayer, 'O hidden Life'
- 1924 Attended in Queen's Hall, London, the Golden Jubilee celebration of her Public activities; also in Bombay and Madras
- 1925 Took the Commonwealth of India Bill to London, to be presented in Parliament;
Attended a great Star Camp in Holland;
Celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, to which 3,000 delegates came from all over the world;
Established Temples of the religions in Adyar;

Proclaimed three World Movements;
Dec. 28th, was present at a memorable meeting of the Order
of the Star

- 1926 Started the Theosophical Colony at Juhu, Bombay,
laying a cornerstone
- 1927 Started the Happy Valley in California, appealing for
the Happy Valley Foundation Fund;
Eighty years 'young' this year, she gave fifty lec-
tures in twelve countries of Europe in twenty-one
days, travelling by aeroplane
- 1928 July 6th, re-elected President of the Theosophical
Society;
Recorded highest membership of the Society; 45,000
active members;
On invitation wrote a statement for the World Peace
Union;
Was ill in London, and had to cancel Queen's Hall
Lectures
March 25th, announced the existence and work of
the World Mother
- 1929 August 26th, inaugurated the fourth Theosophical
World Congress at Chicago, sending therefrom a
letter to president Hoover pleading for the
abolition of war
- 1930 Celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Blavatsky Lodge
in Bombay, the foremost Theosophical Lodge in
India;
Last visit to Benares;

Last visit to England: presided over the convention;
Last visit to Europe: attended the Star Camp at Om-
men, and presided over the tenth Theosophical Eu-
ropean Congress at Geneva;
Attended the wedding of her granddaughter, Miss
Sybil Besant, to Commander Lewis, in London on
Oct. 1st

- 1931 Celebrated the Blavatsky Centenary at Adyar in
August;
Resolved to make Adyar a Flaming Centre;
Delivered her last address on Dec. 24th
- 1932 Celebrated the Olcott Centenary at Adyar in Au-
gust;
Summed up the lifework of the two Centenari-
ans in 25 words; Awarded 'Silver Wolf,' the
highest Scout honour
- 1933 September 20th, expired at Adyar, 4 p.m.

Appendix 2

Books and Pamphlets Written by Annie Besant

(Source: *The Theosophist*, October 1947)

Pre-Theosophical

According to St. John, 1873, (Part 2 of On the Deity of Nazareth)

Atheism and Its Bearing on Morals, 1887, (debate with G. F. Handel Rowe)

Auguste Comte: His Philosophy, Religion and Sociology, about 1885

Beauties of the Prayer Book, The, 1876, (3vols.)

Biblical Biology, about 1884

Blasphemy

Burden on Labor, A, about 1886

Christian Creed, The, 1883

Christian Progress, about 1878

Church of England Catechism, The

Circulation, 1882, (inc. in Physiology of Home)

Civil and Religious Liberty, 1883, (lecture of 1875)

Coercion in Ireland and Its Results, about 1882

Constructive Rationalism, 1876

Creature of Crown and Parliament, A, about 1886

Digestion, 1882, (inc. in Physiology of Home)

Disestablish the Church, 1896

Egypt, 1882, (second edition)

Electricity, (4 vols.), 1882, (Science lectures)

England before the Repeal of the Corn Laws, 1881, (inc. in Free Trade)

England, India and Afghanistan, 1878
England's Jubilee Gift to Ireland, about 1887
English Land System, The, about 1882
English Marseillaise, with Music
English Republicanism, 1878
Essays on Socialism, 1887, (collection of some pamphlets listed here)
Ethics of Punishment, The, 1880
Euthanasia, about 1875, (inc. in My Path to Atheism)
Evolution of Society, The, 1886
Eyes and Ears, Six Chats on Seeing and Hearing, 1882, (Science lectures)
Force No Remedy, 1882, (on Ireland)
For the Crown and against the Crown, (inc. in Sins of the Church)
Freethinker's Textbook, The, (AB., Ch. Bradlaugh and Ch. Watts)
Free Trade versus Fair Trade, 1881
Fruits of Christianity, The, about 1878
Giordano Bruno, 1877
God's Views on Marriage as Revealed in the O. T., 1890
Gordon Judged out of His Own Mouth, 1885
Gospel of Atheism, The, 1876 or 1877
Gospel of Christianity and the Gospel of Freethought, The, about 1874
Henry Varley Exposed, about 1882, (in defence of Ch. Bradlaugh)
History of the Anti-Corn Law Struggle, The, 1881, (inc. in Free Trade)
History of the Great French Revolution, vol. I, 1876, Vol. II, 1883, Vol. III, 1884
Idea of God in the Revolution, The, 1877, (trans. from French)

Influence of Heredity on Free Will, The, 1880, (trans. from German)
Is Christianity a Success? about 1885
Is Socialism Sound? 1887, (debate with G. W. Foote)
Is the Bible Indictable? 1877
Jesus of the Gospels and the Influence of Christianity on the World, The, 1880, (debate with A. Hatchard)
Labor and Land; Their Burdens, Duties, and Rights, (inc. in Free Trade)
Landlords' Attempt to Mislead the Landless, The, (inc. in Free Trade)
Landlords, Tenant Farmers, and Laborers, 1880
Law of Population, The, 1877
Legalization of Female Slavery in England. The, about 1885, (article of 1876)
Legends and Tales, 1885
Liberty, Equality, Fraternity
Life, Death, and Immortality, 1886
Light, Heat, and Sound, 1881, (Science Manual)
Marriage as It Was, as It Is, and as It Should Be, about 1879
Mind in Animals, 1880, (trans. from German)
Modern Socialism, 1886, (article of 1885)
My Path to Atheism, 1877
Myth of the Resurrection, The, 1886
Natural History of the Christian Devil, The, about 1885
Natural Religion versus Revealed Religion, 1874
On Eternal Torture, 1874
On Inspiration, about 1874
On Prayer, about 1875
On the Atonement, about 1874
On the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth, 1873

On the Mediation and Salvation of Ecclesiastical Christianity, about 1875
On the Nature and the Existence of God, 1875
On the Religious Education of Children, about 1874
Organs of Digestion, about 1882, (inc. in Physiology of Home)
Physiology of Home, 1882, (lectures of 1881)
Political Essays, 1888, (collection of some pamphlets listed here)
Political Status of Women, The, (her first lecture delivered in 1874)
Radicalism and Socialism, 1887
Redistribution of Political Power, The, 1885
Religion of Israel, The, about 1881, (trans. from French)
Respiration, (inc. in Physiology of Home)
Roots of Christianity, 1886
Secular Song and Hymn Books, The, about 1875, (edited by AB)
Sin and Crime: Their Nature and Treatment, 1885
Sins of the Church, The, 1886, (inc. in Disestablish the Church)
Social Aspects of Malthusianism, (Malthusian Tracts No. 10)
Socialism versus Individualism, 1890. (debate with F. Millar)
Socialist Movement, The, 1887
Story of Afghanistan, The, 1879
Story of the Soudan, The, 1885
Teachings of Christianity, The, 1887, (debate with G. F. Handel Rowe)
Threatenings and Slaughters, (five volumes, inc. in Sins of the Church)
Trades Union Movement, The, 1890

Transvaal, The, about 1881
True Basis of Morality, The, 1874
Two Secular Burial Services, (AB. A. Holyoake)
Vivisection, 1881
Vivisection in Excelsis
What Is Really Free Trade? 1881, (inc. in Free Trade vs. Fair Trade)
Why I am a Socialist, about 1886
Why I do Not Believe in God, 1887
Why Should Atheists Be Persecuted? 1884
Woman's Position according to the Bible, 1885
World and Its Gods, The, 1886
World without God, A, 1885

Biographical and Autobiographical

Annie Besant: an Autobiography, 1893
Autobiographical Sketches, 1885
Charles Bradlaugh, 1941, (article of 1983)
Colonel Henry Steel Olcott: His Life and Its Lesson, 1907
Fragment of Autobiography: 1875-91, A, 1891
Giordano Bruno: Theosophy's Apostle in the Sixteenth Century, 1913, (Sorbonne lecture of 1911, and story of 1877)

Theosophical

Address, 1931, (at Convention, 24-12-31, her last address)
Address to Ommen Star Camp, 1925
Against Vivisection, 1903
Ancient Wisdom, The, 1897
Australian Lectures, 1908

Basis of Morality, The, 1915
Basis of the Theosophical Society, The, about 1910, (article of 1907)
Birth and Evolution of the Soul, The, 1895, (inc. in Evolution & Occultism)
Brahmavidya, 1923
Building of the Kosmos, The, Convention Lectures of 1893
Changing World and Lectures to Theosophical Students, The, 1909
Coming Generation and the Coming Christ, The, 1928, (lecture of 1909)
Coming Race, The, 1917, (lecture of 1916)
Communication between Different Worlds, about 1909
Conferences du Congress Theosophique de 1900, (AB and JC)
Creating Character (old articles of AB and CWL)
Culture of the Soul, The 1894
Death — and After, (Theosophical Manual III), 1893
Development of the Spiritual Life and the Life of a Householder, 1907
Devotion and the Spiritual life, 1895, (inc. in The Spiritual Life)
Discipleship and Some Karmic Problems, 1935, (articles of 1906, et seq)
Doctrine of the Heart, The, (edited by AB), 1899
Do We Live on Earth Again? 1913
Duties of the Theosophist, Convention Lectures of 1916
Education in the Light of Theosophy, 1912
Elementary Lessons on Karma, 1912
Emergence of a World Religion, The, 1911, (inc. in Immediate Future)

Emotion, Intellect and Spirituality, 1898, (inc. in Psychology)

Essays and Addresses (4 Vols.: I. Psychology; II. The Spiritual Life; III. Evolution and Occultism; IV. India)

Evolution and Occultism, (Essays and Addresses, Vol. III), 1913

Evolution of Life and Form, The, Convention Lectures of 1898

Exposition of Theosophy, An, 1893, (a New York interview)

Future of the Theosophical Society, The, Convention Lecture I of 1930, (also inc. in the book of same title)

Future Socialism, The 1912, (article of 1908)

Future that Awaits Us, The, 1896, (inc. in The Spiritual Life)

God-Idea, The, 1914, (inc. in Mysticism)

Great Plan, The, Convention Lectures of 1920

Growth of the Soul, The, 1912

Guardians of Humanity, The, 1908

Gurus and Chelas, 1912, (Lucifer articles of 1893 by AB., and E. T. Sturdy)

Happy Valley Foundation, The, 1927

HPB, by her Pupils (inc. AB), 1891

HPB and the Masters of the Wisdom, 1907

Hypnotism and Mesmerism, 1935, (article of 1889, inc. in Psychology)

Ideals of Theosophy, The, Convention Lectures of 1911

Immediate Future, The, (pamphlet), 1910

In Defence of Theosophy, lecture of 1891

Individuality, 1898, (inc. in Psychology)

Influence of Alcohol, The, about 1892

Initiation, the Perfecting of Man, 1912

Inner Government of the World, The, 1920

Inner Purpose of the Theosophical Society, The, 1900, (lecture of 1898)
Interview with Mrs Besant, 1909
In the Outer Court, 1895
Introduction to Theosophy, An, 1894
Introduction to the Science of Peace, An, 1912, (lectures of 1904)
Introduction to Yoga, An, Convention Lectures of 1907
Investigations into the Superphysical, 1913
Is Belief in the Masters Superstitious or Harmful? 1919, (article of 1913)
Karma, (Theosophical Manual IV), 1895
Karma and Social Improvement, 1921, (Lucifer article of 1889)
Karma Once More, 1910
Ladder of Lives, The, 1912 (inc. in Popular Lectures on Theosophy)
Last Days of the President-Founder, and Mrs Besant's Presidential Address, (AB and others), 1907
Law of Action and Reaction, The, 1912, (inc. in Popular Lectures on Theosophy)
Law of Sacrifice, The, (lecture of 1896)
Laws of the Higher Life, The, 1903, (lectures of 1902)
Lectures in Ceylon, 1907
Letter to the Members of the TS., A, (by PTS and Vice-PTS), 1908
Letter to TS on L. C. C., 1920
Life after Death, The, 1919, (lecture of 1908)
Life after Death, The, 1912, (AB and CWL)
Life, and Life after Death, 1904
Lives of Alcyone, The, 1924, (AB and CWL)
Lodges of the Theosophical Society, A, 1902
London Lectures of 1907

Man and His Bodies, (Theosophical Manual VII), 1896
Man's Life in the Three Worlds, 1912, (inc. in Popular Lectures on Theosophy)
Man's Life in This and Other Worlds, 1912; (also in three volumes)
Man's Life in Three Worlds, 1919
Man's Place and Functions in Nature, 1897, (article of 1895)
Man, the Master of His Destiny, 1896
Manual of Theosophy, A, 1891, [?]
Man: Whence, How and Whither, 1913, (AB and CWL)
Masters, The, 1912
Master and the Way to Them, The, 1912
Masters as Facts and Ideals, The, 1895, (inc. in The Masters)
Materialism Undermined by Science, 1895, (inc. in Evolution and Occultism)
Meaning & Method of the Spiritual Life, The, 1911, (included, in Spiritual Life)
Meaning and the Use of Pain, The, (lecture of 1894)
Memories of Past Lives, 1918, (lecture of 1912)
Memory, 1919, (Lucifer article of 1889; inc. in Psychology)
Memory and Its Nature, 1935, (Lucifer articles of AB and HPB)
Messages (of 1913-31), 1931
Message to the Maharashtra Theosophists, 1913
Modern Science and the Higher Self, 1904, (inc. in Evolution and Occultism)
Mrs Annie Besant and Theosophy, lecture of 1891
Mysteries, The, 1917, (article of 1913)
Mysticism, 1912, (pamphlet)
Mysticism, 1914, (five lectures)

Nature of Theosophical Proofs, The, 1921
Nature's Finer Forces, 1918
Necessity for Reincarnation, The, 1904
November 17 Every Year, 1943, (lecture of 1918)
Occult Chemistry, 1905, (Lucifer article of 1895)
Occult Chemistry, 1908, revised 1919, (AB and CWL)
Occult Hierarchy, The, 1915, (lecture of 1894)
Occultism, 1919, (article of 1914)
Occultism, Semi-Occultism, and Pseudo-Occultism,
1898 (inc. in Evolution and Occultism)
On Karma, 1921
On Moods, 1906, (article of 1904 inc. in Psychology)
On Some Difficulties of the Inner Life, 1899, (inc. in
The Spiritual Life)
Opening of a New Cycle, The, 1911, (lecture of 1910)
Path of Discipleship, The, Convention Lectures of 1895
Path of the Initiated, The, 1911, (Sorbonne address in
French, trans. by S. E. F. of N. Z.)
Pedigree of Man, The, Convention Lectures of 1903
Perfect Man, The, 1906, (inc. in the Masters; also in The
Spiritual Life)
Pilgrimage of the Soul, The, 1895
Place of Peace, The, 1892, (inc. in The Spiritual Life)
Popular Lectures on Theosophy, 1910
Presidential Address, 1907
Principle of Freethought, The, 1904
Problems of Reconstruction, Convention Lectures of
1918
Progress of the Order of the Star in the East, 1912
Progress of the Theosophical Society, Presidential Ad-
dress, 1924
Proofs of the Existence of the Soul, 1903, (inc. in Psy-
chology)

Psychic and Spiritual Development, 1916, (article of 1913)

Psychology, 1911, (Essays and Addresses, Vol. I)

Public Spirit, Ideal and practical, 1908

Real and the Unreal, The, Convention Lectures of 1922, (AB and others)

Real and the Unreal in a Nation's Life, The, Conv. Lect. of 1924

Reality of the Invisible and the Actuality of the Unseen Worlds, The, 1914, (article of 1905)

Reception at Bombay, 1912

Reincarnation, (Theosophical Manual II), 1892

Reincarnation: Its Answers to Life's Problems, 1912, (inc. in Pop. Lects.)

Reincarnation: Its Necessity, 1915, (inc. in Popular Lectures)

Riddle of Life, The, 1911

Rough Outline of Theosophy, A, 1892

Search for Happiness, The, 1918, (article of 1908)

Secret Doctrine, The, 1893, (Third Edition ed. by AB and G. R. S. Mead)

Secret Doctrine, The, Vol. III, 1897, (ed. by AB)

Secret of Evolution, The, 1904, (article of 1900)

Self and Its Sheaths, The, Convention Lectures of 1894

Seven Principles of Man, The, (Theosophical Manual I), 1892, revised 1897

Short Glossary of Theosophical Terms, A, 1891, (AB and H. Burrows).

Sketch of Theosophy, A, 1911

Social Problems: The Message of Theosophy, 1912

Some American Lectures, 1927, (delivered 1926)

Some Problems of Life, 1900

Sphinx of Theosophy, The, about 1891, (Lucifer article)

Spirit of the Age, The, 1908
Spiritual Life, The, (Essays and Addresses, Vol. II) 1912
Spiritual Life for the Man of the World, 1907, (inc. in
The Spiritual Life)
Spirit Who Is Man and the Spiritual Life, The, 1913
Study and Practice, 1919
Study in Consciousness, a, 1904
Study in Karma, A, 1912
Superhuman Men in History and Religion, 1913
Talks on the Path of Occultism, 1926, (AB and CWL)
Talks with a Class, 1921
Theosophical Essays, 1895,
Theosophical Ideals and the Immediate Future, 1914,
(AB and others)
Theosophical Lectures and Answers, (Chicago), 1907
Theosophical Society and HPB, The, about 1891, (Lucifer
articles of 1890 by AB, and H. T. Patterson)
Theosophical Society and the Occult Hierarchy, The,
1925
Theosophical Society: The First Fifty Years, The, 1925,
(AB and others)
Theosophical Student, The, 1909, (inc. in The Changing
World)
'Theosophy,' 1892, (Melbourne)
Theosophy, 1912, (people's Books)
Theosophy: a Manual, 1932, (old articles)
Theosophy and Its Evidences, 1891
Theosophy and Its Practical Application, 1892, (Chi-
cago article)
Theosophy and Its Teachings, 1895
Theosophy and Life's Deeper Problems, Convention
Lectures of 1915
Theosophy and the Law of Population, 1891

Theosophy and the New Psychology, 1904
Theosophy and the Society of Jesus, 1892
Theosophy and the Theosophical society, Convention Lectures of 1912
Theosophy and World Problems, Conv. Lect. of 1921, (AB, and others)
Theosophy as the Basic Unity of National Life, Conv. Lect. of 1924, (AB and others)
Theosophy in Question and Answers, 1893, (a New York interview)
Theosophy in Relation to Human Life, Convention Lectures of 1904
Theosophy: Its Meaning and Value, 1909
Theosophy: Its Meaning and Value and Work in the World, 1935, (includes the above)
Theosophy Past and Future, Conv. Lect. of 1929, (AB and others)
Theosophy, the Interpreter, Conv. Lect. of 1923, (AB and others)
There Are No Dead
Thought-Forms, 1905, (AB and CWL)
Thought-Power: Its Control and Culture, 1901
Three Paths to Union with God, The, 1897, (lectures of 1896)
Three World Movements, The, Conv. Lect. of 1925, (AB and others)
Truth though Theosophy, The, (inc. in Theosophy: a Manual)
TS Order of Service, The, (no date)
Two Disciples, (Chicago souvenir), 1910
Two Great Theosophists, (Chicago souvenir), 1911
Use of Evil, The, 1895

Value of Devotion, The, 1911, (article of 1900; inc. in The Spiritual Life)
Vegetarianism in the Light of Theosophy, 1894
What Is Theosophy? 1891, (inc. in Evolution and Occultism)
What Is Theosophy? 1912 (inc. in Popular Lectures on Theosophy)
What the Mystic Means by the 'Eternal Now,' 1921, (talk of 1905)
What Theosophy Is About 1892
'When a Man Dies Shall He Live Again?' 1904
White Lodge and Its Messengers, The, 1911
White Lotus Day, 1929
Why I Am a Food Reformer, (old article)
Why I Became a Theosophist, 1889
Why We Believe in the Coming of a World Teacher, about 1912
Why You Should be a Theosophist, 1892
Wider Outlook, The, 1925, (article of 1916)
Word on Man, His Nature and His Powers, A, 1914, (lecture of 1893 inc. in Psychology)
Work of the Pioneer, The, 1942, (inc. in November 17th Every Year)
Work of the Ruler and the Teacher, The, 1930
World Religion, A, 1916
Yoga, 1935, (Convention Lecture II of 1893, and article from Evolution and Occultism)
You Create Your Own Future, 1930, (inc. in Discipleship, etc.)
Your World and Ours, Convention lectures I, II of 1922

On the Religions

Annie Besant in Ceylon, 1893, (on Buddhism)
Aspects of the Christ, 1912
Atonement and the Law of Sacrifice, The, 1898, (inc. in Esot. Christianity)
Avataras, The, Convention Lectures of 1899
Beauties of Islam, 1944, (new ed. of Islam in the Light of Theosophy)
Bhagavad Gita, The, 1895, (translated from Sanskrit)
Bhagavad Gita, The, 1905, (another translation jointly with Bhagavan Das)
Brotherhood of Religions, The, 1913, (article of 1907)
Buddhist Popular Lectures of 1907
Dharma, 1899. (lectures of 1898)
Esoteric Christianity, 1898; enlarged and entitled Esoteric Christianity or the Lesser Mysteries, 1901
Five Sermonettes (of 1927), 1929
Four Great Religions, Convention Lectures of 1896; later published in four parts, entitled: Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Christianity
Hidden Side of Religions, The, 1898, (inc. in Esoteric Christianity)
Hints of the Study of the Bhagavad Gita, Convention Lectures of 1905
In Defence of Hinduism, 1908
Islam, 1903, (inc. in The Life and Teachings of Muhammad)
Islam in the Light of Theosophy, 1912 (inc. in The Birth of New India)
Life and Teachings of Muhammad, The, 1932
Natural and Spiritual Bodies, 1898, (inc. in Esoteric Christianity)
Noble Eightfold Path, The, about 1907
Protestant Spirit, The, 1920, (article of 1905)

Questions on Hinduism with Answers, 1909
Reincarnation a Christian Doctrine, 1904
Relativity of Hindu Ethics, The, 1914
Religious Problem in India, The, Convention Lectures
of 1901 (later published in four parts, entitled: Islam,
Jainism, Sikhism, Theosophy)
Sacraments and Revelation, 1898, (inc. in Esoteric
Christianity)
Theosophical Christianity, 1922
Theosophy and Christianity, about 1892
Trinity: Divine Incarnation, The, 1898, (inc. in Esoteric
Christianity)
Universal Textbook of Religion and Morals, The, Part I,
1910; Part II, 1911; Part III, 1915
Wisdom of the Upanishads, The, Convention Lectures
of 1906

Queen's Hall Lectures

Britain's Place in the Great Plan, 1921
Changing World, The, 1909
Civilization's Deadlocks and the Keys, 1924
Education for the New Era, 1919
Future of Europe, The, 1927
How a World Teacher Comes, 1926
Immediate Future, The, 1911
India and the Empire, 1914
Is Theosophy Anti-Christian? 1904
London Lectures of 1907
New Civilization, The, 1927
Theosophy and Imperialism, 1902
United States of Europe, The, 1928
War and its Lessons, The, 1919 (also in four parts enti-
tled):

1. The War and the Builders of the Commonwealth
 2. The War and Its Lessons on Fraternity
 3. The War and Its Lessons on Equality
 4. The War and Its Lessons on Liberty
- Women and Politics, the Way Out of the present Difficulty, 1914
- Work of Theosophy in the World, The, 1905
- World Problems of Today, 1925

On Indian Culture, Education, Social Reform

- Ancient Ideals in Modern Life, Convention Lectures of 1900
- Ancient Indian Ideal of Duty, The, 1917, (lecture of 1910; inc. in *The Birth of New India*)
- Bearing of Religious Ideals on Social Reconstruction, The, 1916, (article of 1912; inc. in *The Birth of New India*)
- Children of the Motherland, (AB and others)
- Crisis in National Education, The, 1914
- Disunion of Friends, 1919
- Eastern Castes and Western Classes, 1895, (inc. in *India*; also in *The Birth of New India*)
- Education as a National Duty, 1903, (inc. in *The Birth of New India*)
- Education as the Basis of National Life, 1908
- Education of Indian Girls, The, 1904, (inc. in *India*; also in *The Birth . . .*)
- Fables from the Hitopadesha, 1918
- Future of Young India, The, 1915
- Hindu Ideals, 1904
- Hindu Reform on National Lines, 1932, (lecture of 1904)

Higher Education in India, Past and Present, 1924
Indian Education and the Trust, 1917
Indian Ideals, 1930
Indian Ideals in Education, Religion and Philosophy,
and Art, 1925
Indian Methods of Spiritual Self-Culture, 1894
Letters to a Young Indian Prince
Means of India's Regeneration, The, 1895, (inc. in India:
also in For India's Uplift)
National Education, 1918
Necessity for Religion Education, The, 1908, (inc. in
The Birth. . .)
On the Education of the Depressed Classes, 1909, (inc.
in The Birth of New India)
On the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 1910, (inc. in
The Birth of New India)
Our Elder Brethren, 1904, (AB and others)
Place of Religion in National Life, The, 1918
Preparation for Citizenship, 1916
Principles of Education, 1918
Protection of Animals, The, (inc. in For India's Uplift)
Protection of Children, The, 1913
Religion and music, 1908
Sanatana Dharma, Elementary Textbook, and Advance
Textbook, 1903
Schoolboy as Citizen, The, 1942, (lecture of 1923)
Shri Rama and Sita Devi, 1919
Shri Ramachandra the Ideal King, 1901
Social and Political Reform, 1911
Social Reform, 1923
Social Service, 1916
Stories for Indian Children
Story of the Great War, The, 1899

Theosophical Educational Trust, 1917, revised 1925
Transactions of the Education Conference of 1910
Value of Friendship, The, 1918
Value of Theosophy in the Raising of India, The, 1904,
(inc. in *The Birth. . .*)
Value of the Upanishads to Young India, The
Wake Up, India! 1913
Work of the Theosophical Society in India, The, (lecture
of 1909; inc. in *The Birth of New India*)

Pertaining to Indian Politics

A Bird's Eye View of India's Past, 1915, (enlarged four
times)
Apart or Together, about 1917
Birth of New India, The, 1917, (similar to *For India's
Uplift*)
Case for India, The, Presidential Address to Indian Na-
tional Congress, 1917 (pub. as *Charter of a Nation's
Liberty, A*, 1939)
Causes of the New Spirit in India, about 1923
Citizenship of Coloured Races in the Empire, 1913
Coercion and Resistance in India, 1919
Colonial Executive Councils and Cabinets, 1916
Commonwealth of India Act, The, 1916
Commonwealth of India Bill, The, 1925, (AB and
others)
Congress League Reform Proposals, 1918
Congress Speeches of 1914-1917
Congress Work, 1916
Criticisms of the Montagu-Chelmsford Proposals, 1918,
(AB and others)
District Work, 1916

Dominion Home Rule for India, about 1915
East and the West, The, 1908
East and West and the Destinies of Nations, 1906
England and India, 1903 (inc. in India; also in for India's Uplift)
England and India, (a Press interview), 1924
Farewell to My Brothers and Sisters in India, 1917
First Reform Conference, The, (Presidential Address, Malabar), 1921
For India's Uplift, about 1914
Fourfold Path, The, 1913
Future of Indian Politics, The, 1922
Gandhian Non-Co-operation, 1920, (AB and others)
Grievances Before Supply, 1923
Guild System, The, 1922, (address of 1921)
Home Rule, 1916
Home Rule and the Empire, 1917
Home Rule League, The, 1916
How India Wrought for Freedom, 1915
India, 1913, (Essays and Addresses, Vol. IV)
India: a Nation, 1915; enl. 1923
India and the Empire, 1914
India as She Was and as She Is, 1923
India: Bond or Free, 1926
Indian Government, The, 1917
India Nation, The, 1905, (inc. in India; also in The Birth of New India)
India Political Parties.
India Village System, The, 1923, (AB and A. Raganatham)
India, Present and Future, 1896
India's Awakening, 1906, (inc. in India; also in The Birth of New India)

India's Hour of Destiny, 1918, (address of 1913)
India's Struggle to Achieve Dominion Status, 1932
Industry under Socialism, 1931
Law, 1919
Lectures on Political Science, 1919
Memorandum and Evidence before the Press Act Committee, 1921
Memorandum for Fiscal Commission, 1925
Memorandum on Racial Distinction, 1923
National Home Rule League, 1919
Nation-Building, 1908
Nation's Right, A, 1917
Necessity for Home Rule, The, 1917
New Era, The, 1919
Notes on the Proposed Reforms, 1918
Organize! Organize! 1923
Our Secretary of State, 1924
Place of Politics in the Life of a Nation, The, 1895, (inc. in India)
Political Outlook, The, 1915
Present Crisis, The, 1915
Presidential Address to the U. P. Provincial Conference, 1915
Problem of Indian Self-Government, The, 1919
Reaction of Autocracy in England, 1923
Retrospect and a Decision, A, 1923
Self-Determination and Self-Government, 1922, (inc. in The Future Indian Politics)
Self- Government for India, 1915
Self- Government: Let Us Reason Together
Shall India Live or Die? 1925
Speeches and Writings of A. Besant, 1921, (enl. ed. of For India's Uplift)

To Great Britain
Under the Congress Flag, 1916
What Is the National Conference? 1923
Why India Wants Home Rule, 1919
Why Should Not Indians Volunteer, 1916
Winning Home Rule, 1921
Winning of Swaraj or Opposing the Ordinance, Which Comes First? 1925
Work of the Indian Legislature, 1923, (edited by AB)

Compiled from Her Works

Annie Besant Calendar, The, by Theodore Besterman, 1927

Annie Besant on Theosophy, 1903, (Preface by HSO)

Besant Spirit Series, The, (Forewords by G. S. Arundale):

1. The Besant Spirit, 1938
2. Ideals in Education, 1939
3. Indian Problems, 1939; (Nos. 4, 5 are reprints of books)
6. The High Purpose of War, 1940
7. The India That Shall Be, 1940
8. Essentials of an Indian Education, 1942
9. Annie Besant: Builder of New India, 1942
10. Guide and Index to No. 9, 1943
11. A Woman World-Honoured, 1943
12. The Great Vision: Her Plan for the New World, 1944

Coming of the World-Teacher, War and Evolution, The, 1917

Daily Meditations, by E. G. Cooper, 1922

Day by Day Books, by Mary T. Dunbar

Evolution and Man's Destiny, by Mrs Stevenson Howell, 1924
Few Helpful Thoughts, A, 1897
Mind of Annie Besant, The, by Theodore Besterman, 1924
Morning Thoughts for the Year, 1902
Origin and History of Reincarnation, The, by S. George, 1921
Path to the Masters of Wisdom, The, 1905
Selections from Mrs Besant's Writings, 1897
Three Great Truths Series: 1. The Law of Rebirth, 2. The Garment of God,
3. Whatsoever a Man Soweth
War Articles and Notes, 1915

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[This list does not claim to be exhaustive.]

Appendix 3

Annie Besant and the Judge Case

William Quan Judge was one of the Founders of the Theosophical Society in 1875 in New York. He worked tirelessly for it together with Col. Henry Steel Olcott and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. Both Col. Olcott as well as Madame Blavatsky regarded him as the leader of the TS work in the United States. The latter considered him as a Chela [Disciple] of thirteen years standing. All his books are still in print and continue to be promoted and studied around the world. He inspired the formation of a number of Theosophical organizations which emphasize the original Theosophical literature contained in the writings of Madame Blavatsky as well as in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*.

Below is some brief biographical information about Mr. Judge:

William Quan Judge was born in Dublin in 1851. He was brought up a Methodist, but early showed strong occult tendencies. The family migrated to New York in 1864. Judge became a naturalized American citizen at 21. At the time of the formation of The Society he was a law clerk in the office of the U.S. Attorney for the South District of New York. He was later admitted to the Bar, and made a speciality of Commercial Law. He was modest, unassuming, eager for occult instruction and ready to work. Though at first H.P.B. objected to Judge becoming a Councillor, yet he won her friendly regard and kept it. He developed leadership, and became one of the most important figures in The Society. Then difficulties arose, and he led the secession of the majority of American Lodges, in 1895. He passed away 1896.

(Source: *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* by Josephine Ransom, Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1938)

What was known as the Judge Case originated in the questioning, by some TS members, of certain messages and letters shared by Mr. Judge and purporting to come from the Mahatmas. The Case involved both individual and organizational reactions to such messages and came to a head at the meeting of the Judicial Committee of the TS in London, in July 1894, in which Mr. Judge was present and made a statement.

In this Appendix we include some relevant passages from *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* by Josephine Ransom, based on original documents and correspondence; Minutes of the Judicial Committee of the TS (July 1894); excerpts of separate Circulars by William Judge and Annie Besant from 1894 to members of the Eastern School of Theosophy; the part of the Presidential Address by Col. Henry Steel Olcott at the December 1894 Convention of the TS, held at Adyar, Madras, India, that dealt specifically with the Judge Case; an address by Mrs. Besant, 'Action on the Judge Case', followed by several statements by members of the Society who were present at that Convention; plus a quote from *Old Diary Leaves* by Col. Olcott regarding the secession of the American Section of the TS.

In an article entitled 'An Interesting Letter', published in *Lucifer*, April 1893, Mr. Judge speaks about his knowledge and experience of the Masters. The editors of the above-mentioned journal at that time were Annie Besant and G. R. S. Mead:

I belong to that class of persons in the T. S. who out of their own experience know that the Masters exist and actually help the T. S. You belong to a class which—as I read your letters and those of others who write similarly—express a doubt on this, that, or the

other, seeming to question the expediency, propriety and wisdom of a man's boldly asserting confidence and belief in Beings who are unprovable for many, although you say (as in your present letter) that you believe in and revere the same Masters as I do. What, then, must I conclude? Am I not forced to the conclusion that inasmuch as you say you believe in these Beings, you think it unwise in me to assert publicly and boldly my belief? Well, then, if this is a correct statement of the case, why cannot you go on your way of belief and concealment of it, and let me proceed with my proclamations? I will take the Karma of my own beliefs. I force no man to accept my assertions.

But I am not acting impulsively in my many public statements as to the existence of Masters and help from Them. It is done upon an old order of Theirs and under a law of mind. The existence of the Masters being a *fact*, the assertion of that fact made so often in America has opened up channels in men's minds which would have remained closed had silence been observed about the existence of those Beings. The giving out of *names* is another matter; that, I do not sanction nor practise. Experience has shown that a springing up of interest in Theosophy has followed declaration, and men's minds are more and more powerfully drawn away from the blank Materialism which is rooted in English, French, and German teaching. And the Masters have said "It is easier to help in America than Europe because in the former our existence has been persistently declared by so many." You may, perhaps, call this a commonplace remark, as you do some others, but for me it has a deep significance and contains a high endorsement. A very truism when uttered by a Mahatma has a deeper meaning for which the student must seek, but which he will lose if he stops to criticize and weigh the words in mere ordinary scales.

Josephine Ransom, in the book above mentioned (pp. 298-299), describes a relevant meeting which took place at Adyar

regarding the decision to refer the Judge Case to a Judicial Committee:

The problems arising in connection with Mr. Judge were growing acute. When Mrs. Besant arrived in Adyar, 20 December, 1893, she was called by the President into consultation with himself, Countess Wachtmeister, Sturdy, Edge, Old, and Judge Khandalavala. After many anxious talks, and at the President's request, Mrs. Besant undertook to formulate demands that the accusations against Judge "with reference to certain letters and in the alleged writings of the Mahatmas should be dealt with by a Committee, as provided by the Rules which had been specially altered at the Convention (1893), to meet this or any similar case. They provided for a Judicial Committee "which, by a three-fourths majority vote," could deprive the President or Vice-President "of office at any time for cause shown."

A copy of the demand for investigation was posted 7 February, to Mr. Judge. Mrs. Besant also sent him copies of all the papers upon which she based her statements, an action to which the President strongly objected. In an additional letter he gave Judge the option of retiring from office and leaving him as President to make public explanation, or of having a Judicial Committee, and making the proceedings public. This Presidential notice was taken exception to by Judge, Mead, and others. They thought it precipitate.

Mr. Judge denied all the statements and decided upon London as the meeting place of the Judicial Committee.

SUPPLEMENT TO THEOSOPHIST.

SEPTEMBER 1894.

EXECUTIVE NOTICE.

THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY,
PRESIDENT'S OFFICE,
LONDON, 21st, July 1894.

The following documents are published for the information of the concerned:

MINUTES OF A JUDICIAL COMMITTEE OF THE
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY,

HELD AT 19, AVENUE ROAD, LONDON, ON JULY
10TH, 1894:

To enquire into certain charges against the Vice-President.

PRESENT: Colonel Olcott, President-Founder, in the chair; the General Secretaries of the Indian and European Sections (Mr. B. Keightley and Mr. G. R. S. Mead); delegates of the Indian Section (Mr. A. P. Sinnott [sic] and Mr. Sturdy); delegates of the European Section (Mr. H. Burrows and Mr. Kingsland); delegates of the American Section (Dr. Buck and Dr. Archibald Keightley); special delegates of Mr. Judge (Mr. Oliver Firth and Mr. E. T. Hargrove).

Mrs. Besant and Mr. Judge were also present.

A letter was read by the Chairman from the General Secretary of the American Section, stating that the Executive Committee of that Section claims that one of the delegates of that Section should have an additional vote on the Committee, in view of the fact that the General Secretary himself would not vote, or that an extra delegate be appointed.

Resolved: that a substitute be admitted to sit on the Committee in the place of the General Secretary.

Mr. James M. Pryse was nominated by the other American delegates and took his seat.

The Chairman then declared the Committee to be duly constituted and read the following address:

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT-FOUNDER.

GENTLEMEN AND BROTHERS,

We have met together today as a Judicial Committee, under the provisions of Section 3 of Article VI of the Revised Rules, to consider and dispose of certain charges of misconduct, preferred by Mrs. Besant against the Vice-President of the Society, and dated March 24th, 1894.

Section 2 of Article VI says that “the President may be deprived of office at any time, for *cause shown*, by a three-fourths vote of Judicial Committee hereinafter provided for [in Section 3], before which he shall be given full opportunity to disprove any charges brought against him”; Section 3 provides that the Judicial Committees shall be composed of (*a*) members of the General Council *ex officio*, (*b*) two additional members nominated by each Section of the Society, and (*c*) two members chosen by the accused. Under the present organization of the Society, this Committee will, therefore, comprise the President-Founder, the General Secretaries of the Indian and European Sections, two additional delegates each from the Indian, European and American Sections, and two nominees of Mr. Judge; eleven in all—the accused, of course, being debarred from sitting as a judge, either as General Secretary of the American Section or as Vice-President.

Section 4 of Article VI declares that the same procedure shall apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the cases of the Vice-President and President; thus making the former, as well as the latter, amenable to the jurisdiction of the Judicial Committee for offences charged against him. Under this clause, the Vice-President is now arraigned.

In compliance with the Revised Rules, copies of the charges brought by the accuser have been duly supplied to the accused, and the members of the General Council, and the Sections and the accused have nominated their delegates respectively. I also suspended the Vice-President from office pending the disposal of the charges by this Committee.

Upon receipt of a preliminary letter from myself, of date February 7th, 1894, from Agra, India, Mr. Judge, erroneously taking it to be the first step in the *official enquiry* into the charges, from my omission to mark the letter "Private," naturally misconceived it to be a breach of the Constitution, and vehemently protested in a public circular addressed to "the members of the Theosophical Society," and of which 5,000 copies were distributed to them, to all parts of the world. The name of the accuser not being mentioned, the wrong impression prevailed that I was the author of the charges, and at the same time intended to sit as Chairman of the tribunal that was to investigate them. I regret this circumstance as having caused bad feeling throughout the Society against its Chief Executive, who has been the personal friend of the accused for many years, has ever appreciated as they deserved his eminent services and unflagging devotion to the Society and the whole movement, and whose constant motive has been to be brotherly and act justly to all his colleagues, of every race, religion and sex.

Three very important protests have been made by the accused and submitted to me, to wit:

1. That he was never legally Vice-President of the T. S. That an election to said office of Vice-President has always been necessary, and is so yet.

That he has never been elected to the office.

That the title has been conferred on him by courtesy, and has been tacitly assumed to be legal by himself and others, in ignorance of the facts of the case.

The legitimate inference from which would be:

That not being Vice-President, *de jure*, he is not amenable to the jurisdiction of a Judicial Committee, which can only try the highest two of the Society.

2. That, even if he were Vice-President, this tribunal could only try charges which imply on his part acts of misfeasance or malfeasance as such official; the pending charges accuse him of acts which are not those of an official, but of a simple member hence only triable by his own Branch or Lodge (*vide* Section 3 of Article XIII), at a special meeting called to consider the facts.

3. That the principal charge against him cannot be tried without breach of the constitutional neutrality of the Society in matters of private belief as to religious and other questions, and especially as to belief in the “existence, names, powers, functions or methods of Mahatmas or Masters”: that to deliberate and decide, either *pro* or *con*, in this matter would be to violate the law, affirm a dogma, and “offend the religious feelings” of Fellows of the Society, who, to the number of many hundreds, hold decided opinions concerning the existence of Mahatmas and their interest in our work.

These points will presently be considered *seriatim*.

At the recent (eighth) annual meeting of the American Section T. S., at San Francisco, in the first session of April 22nd, the following, with other resolutions, was unanimously adopted, to wit:

Resolved: that this Convention, after careful deliberation, finds that [the] suspension of the Vice-President is without the slightest warrant in the Constitution, and altogether transcends the discretionary power given the President by the Constitution, and is therefore null and void.

I now return to Mr. Judge’s protests.

That he practised deception in sending false messages, orders and letters, as if sent and written by “Masters”; and in statements to me about a certain Rosicrucian jewel of H.P.B.’s.

That he was untruthful in various other instances enumerated.

Are these solely acts done in his private capacity; or may they or either of them be laid against him as wrong-doing (sic) by the Vice-President? This is a grave question, both in its present bearings and as establishing a precedent for future contingencies. We must not make a mistake in coming to a decision.

In summoning Mr. Judge before this tribunal, I was moved by the thought that the alleged evil acts might be separated into (*a*) strictly private acts, viz., the alleged untruthfulness and deception, and (*b*) the alleged circulation of deceptive imitations of what are supposed to be Mahatmic writings, with intent to deceive; which communications, owing to his high official mark among us, carried a weight they would not have had if given out by a simple member. This seemed to me a far more heinous offence than simple falsehood or any other act of an individual, and to amount to a debasement of his office, if proven. The minutes of the General Council meeting of July 7th, which will presently be read for your information, will show you how this question was discussed by us, and what conclusion was reached. To make this document complete in itself, however, I will say that, in the Council's opinion, the point raised by Mr. Judge appeared valid, and that the charges are not cognizable by this Judicial Committee. The issue is now open to your consideration, and you must decide as to your judicial competency.

1. As to his legal status as Vice-President. At the Adyar Convention of the whole Society in December, 1888, exercising the full executive power I then held, I appointed Mr. Judge Vice-President in open Convention, the choice was approved by the Delegates assembled, and the name inserted in the published Official List of officers, since which time it has been withdrawn. At the Convention of 1890, a new set of Rules having come into force and an election for Vice-President being in order, Mr. Bertram Keightley moved and I supported the nomination of Mr. Judge, and he was duly elected. It now appears that official notice was not sent him to this effect, but nevertheless his name was duly published in the

Official List, as it had been previously. You all know that he attended the Chicago Parliament of Religions as Vice-President and my accredited representative and substitute; his name is so printed in his Report of the Theosophical Congress, and the Official Report of the San Francisco Convention of our American Section contains the Financial Statement of the Theosophic Congress Fund, which is signed by him as Vice-President, Theosophical Society.

From the above facts it is evident that W. Q. Judge is, and since December, 1888, has continuously been, *de jure* as well as *de facto*, Vice-President of the Theosophical Society. The facts having been laid before the General Council in its session of the 7th inst., my ruling has been ratified; and is now also concurred in by Mr. Judge. He is, therefore, triable by this tribunal for “cause shown.”

2. The second point raised by the accused is more important. If the acts alleged were done by him at all—which remains as yet *sub judice*—and he did them as a private person, he cannot be tried by any other tribunal than the Aryan Lodge, T. S., of which he is a Fellow and the President. Nothing can possibly be clearer than that. Now, what are the alleged offences?

3. Does our proposed enquiry into the alleged circulation of fictitious writings of those known to us as “Mahatmas” carry with it a breach of the religious neutrality guaranteed us in the T. S. Constitution, and would a decision of the charge, in either way, hurt the feelings of members? The affirmative view has been taken and warmly advocated by the Convention of the American Section, by individual branches and groups of “Theosophical Workers,” by the General Secretaries of the European and Indian Sections in a recently issued joint circular, by many private members of the Society, and by the accused. As I conceived it, the present issue is not at all whether Mahatmas exist or the contrary, or whether they have or have not recognizable handwritings, and have or have not authorized Mr. Judge to put forth documents in their name. I believed, when issuing the call, that the question might be discussed

without entering into investigations that would compromise our corporate neutrality. The charges as formulated and laid before me by Mrs. Besant could, in my opinion, have been tried without doing this. And I must refer to my official record to prove that I would have been the last to help in violating a Constitution of which I am, it may be said, the father, and which I have continually defended at all times and in all circumstances. On now meeting Mr. Judge in London, however, and being made acquainted with his intended line of defence, I find that by beginning the enquiry we should be placed in this dilemma, Viz., we should either have to deny him the common justice of listening to his statements and examining his proofs (which would be monstrous in even a common court of law, much more in a Brotherhood like ours, based on lines of ideal justice), or be plunged into the very abyss we wish to escape from. Mr. Judge's defence is that he is not guilty of the acts charged; that Mahatmas exist, are related to our Society, and in personal connection with himself; and he avers his readiness to bring many witnesses and documentary proofs to support his statements. You will at once see whither this would lead us. The moment we entered into these questions we should violate the most vital spirit of our federal compact, its neutrality in matters of belief. Nobody, for example, knows better than myself the fact of the existence of the Masters, yet I would resign my office unhesitatingly if the Constitution were amended so as to erect such a belief into a dogma: every one in our membership is as free to disbelieve and deny their existence as I am to believe and affirm it. For the above reason, then, I declare as my opinion that this enquiry must go no farther; we may not break our own laws for any consideration whatsoever. It is furthermore my opinion that such an enquiry, begun by whatsoever official body within our membership, cannot proceed if a similar line of defence be declared. If, perchance, a guilty person should at any time go scot-free in consequence of this ruling, we cannot help it; the Constitution is our

palladium, and we must make it the Symbol of justice or expect our Society to disintegrate.

Candour compels me to add that, despite what I thought some preliminary quibbling and unfair tactics, Mr. Judge has travelled hither from America to meet his accusers before this Committee, and announced his readiness to have the charges investigated and decided on their merits by any competent tribunal.

Having disposed of the several protests of Mr. Judge, I shall now briefly refer to the condemnatory Resolutions of the San Francisco Convention, and merely to say that there was no warrant for their hasty declaration that my suspension of the Vice-President, pending the disposal of the charges, was unconstitutional, null and void. As above noted, Section 4 of Article VI of our Constitution provides that the same rules of procedure shall apply to the case of the Vice-President as to that of the President; and, inasmuch as my functions vest in the Vice-President, and I am suspended from office until any charges against my official character are disposed of, so, likewise, must the Vice-President be suspended from his official status until the charges against him are disposed of; reinstatement to follow acquittal or the abandonment of the prosecution.

It having been made evident to me that Mr. Judge cannot be tried on the present accusations without breaking through the lines of our Constitution, I have no right to keep him further suspended, and so I hereby cancel my notice of suspension, dated February 7th, 1894, and restore him to the rank of Vice-President.

In conclusion, Gentlemen and Brothers, it remains for me to express my regret for any inconvenience I may have caused you by the convocation of this Judicial Committee, and to cordially thank Mr. Sturdy, who has come from India, Dr. Buck, who has come from Cincinnati, and the rest of you who have come from distant points in the United Kingdom, to render this loyal service. I had no means of anticipating this present issue, since the line of defence was not within my knowledge. The meeting was worth holding for several reasons.

In the first place, because we have come to the point of an official declaration that it is not lawful to affirm that belief in Mahatmas is a dogma of the Society, or communications really, or presumably, from them, authoritative and infallible. Equally clear is it that the circulation of fictitious communications from them is not an act for which, under our rules, an officer or member can be impeached and tried. The inference, then, is that testimony as to intercourse with Mahatmas, and writings alleged to come from them, must be judged upon their intrinsic merits alone; and that the witnesses are solely responsible for their statements. Thirdly, the successorship to the Presidency is again open (*vide* Gen. Council Report of July 7th, 1894), and at my death or at any time sooner, liberty of choice may be exercised in favour of the best available member of the Society.

I now bring my remarks to a close by giving voice to the sentiment which I believe to actuate the true Theosophist, viz., that the same justice should be given and the same mercy shown to every man and woman on our membership registers. There must be no distinctions of persons, no paraded self-righteousness, no seeking for revenge. We are all—as I personally believe—equally under the operation of Karma, which punishes and rewards; all equally need the loving forbearance of those who have mounted higher than ourselves in the scale of human perfectibility.

H. S. OLCOTT, P.T.S.

Mr. G. R. S. Mead reported that certain Minutes of Proceedings by the General Council of the Theosophical Society were communicated to the present Committee for its information, and they were read accordingly, as follows:

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING,
HELD AT 19, AVENUE ROAD, LONDON, JULY 7TH, 1894

“Present: President Colonel H. S. Olcott, Bertram Keightley, George R. S. Mead, and William Q. Judge.

“Colonel Olcott called the meeting to order, and Bertram Keightley, was appointed Secretary.

“Council was informed that the meeting was called to consider certain points brought up by William Q. Judge, and other matters, to wit:

“The President read a letter from William Q. Judge stating that in his opinion he was never elected Vice-President of the T. S.; and was not, therefore, Vice-President of the T.S.; whereupon the President informed the Council that at the General Convention at Adyar, in 1888, he then, exercising the prerogatives which he then held, appointed William Q. Judge as Vice-President of the T. S.; and the name was then announced in the official list of officers of that year. That subsequently, at the General Convention in 1890, the last one of such General Conventions, said nomination was unanimously confirmed by vote on motion of Bertram Keightley, supported by H. S. Olcott; hence, that although the official report of the Convention seems to be defective in that it did not record the fact and that Mr. Judge was thereby misled, the truth is as stated. The President then declared that W. Q. Judge was and is Vice-President *de facto* and *de jure* of the Theosophical Society.

“Another point then raised by Mr. Judge was then taken into consideration, to wit: That even if Vice-President, he, Mr. Judge, was not amenable to an enquiry by the Judicial Committee into certain alleged offences with respect to the misuse of the Mahatmas’ names and handwriting, since if guilty the offence would be one by him as a private individual, and not in his official capacity; he contended that, under our Constitution, the President and Vice-President could only be tried as such by such Committee for official misconduct—that is misfeasances and malfeasances. An opinion of council in New York which he had taken from Mr. M. H. Phelps, F. T. S., was then

read by him in support of this contention. The matter was then debated. Bertram Keightley moved and G. R. S. Mead seconded:

“That the Council, having heard the arguments on the point raised by William Q. Judge, it declares that the point is well taken; that the acts alleged concern him as an individual; and that consequently the Judicial Committee has no jurisdiction in the premises to try him as Vice-President upon the charges as alleged.

“The President concurred. Mr. Judge did not vote. The motion was declared carried.

“On Mr. Mead’s motion, it was then voted that above record shall be laid before the Judicial Committee. Mr. Judge did not vote.

“The President then laid before the Council another question mooted by Mr. Judge, to wit: That his election as successor to the President, which was made upon the announcement of the President’s resignation, became *ipso facto* annulled upon the President’s resumption of his office as President. On motion, the Council declared the point well taken, and ordered the decision to be entered on the minutes. Mr. Judge did not vote.

“The President called attention to the resolution of the American Convention of 1894, declaring that his action in suspending the Vice-President, pending the settlement of the charges against him was ‘without the slightest warrant in the Constitution and altogether transcends the discretionary power given the President by the Constitution, and is therefore null and void.’ Upon deliberation and consideration of Sections 3 and 4, Article VI, of the General Rules, the Council decided (Mr. Judge not voting) that the President’s action was warranted under the then existing circumstances, and that the said resolutions of protest are without force.

“On motion (Mr. Judge not voting) the Council then requested the President to convene the Judicial Committee at the London Headquarters, on Tuesday, July 10th, 1894, at 10 A.M.

“The Council then adjourned at call of President.”

The following Resolutions were then adopted by the Judicial Committee:

Resolved: that the President be requested to lay before the Committee the charges against Mr. Judge referred to in his address.

The charges were laid before the Committee accordingly.

After deliberation, it was

Resolved: that although it has ascertained that the member bringing the charges and Mr. Judge are both ready to go on with the enquiry, the Committee considers, nevertheless, that the charges are not such as relate to the conduct of the Vice-President in his official capacity, and therefore are not subject to its jurisdiction.

On the question whether the charges did or did not involve a declaration of the existence and power of the Mahatmas, the Committee deliberated, and it was

Resolved: that this Committee is also of opinion that a statement by them as to the truth or otherwise of at least one of the charges as formulated against Mr. Judge would involve a declaration on their part as to the existence or non-existence of the Mahatmas, and it would be a violation of the spirit of neutrality and the unsectarian nature and Constitution of the Society.

Four members abstained from voting on this resolution.

It was also further

Resolved: that the President's address be adopted.

Resolved: that the General Council be requested to print and circulate the Minutes of the Proceedings.

A question being raised as to whether the charges should be included in the printed report,

Mr. Burrows moved and Mr. Sturdy seconded a resolution that if the Proceedings were printed at all the charges should be included; but on being put to the vote the resolution was not carried. The Minutes having been read and confirmed, the Committee

dissolved. H. S. Olcott, P.T.S., *President of the Council*

APPENDIX.

STATEMENT BY ANNIE BESANT.

*Read for the Information of Members at the Third Session
of the European Convention of the T. S., July 12th, 1894.*

I speak to you tonight as the representative of the T. S. in Europe, and as the matter I have to lay before you concerns the deepest interests of the Society, I pray you to lay aside all prejudice and feeling, to judge by Theosophical standards and not by the lower standards of the world, and to give your help now in one of the gravest crises in which our movement has found itself. There has been much talk of Committees and Juries of Honour. We come to you, our brothers, to tell you what is in our hearts.

I am going to put before you the exact position of affairs on the matter which has been filling our hearts all day. Mr. Judge and I have agreed to lay two statements before you, and to ask your counsel upon them.

For some years past persons inspired largely by personal hatred for Mr. Judge, and persons inspired by hatred for the Theosophical Society and for all that it represents, have circulated a mass of accusations against him, ranging from simple untruthfulness to deliberate and systematic forgery of the handwritings of Those Who to some of us are most sacred. The charges were not in a form that it was possible to meet, a general denial could not stop them, and explanation to irresponsible accusers was at once futile and undignified.

Mr. Judge's election as the future President of the Society increased the difficulties of the situation, and the charges themselves were repeated with growing definiteness and insistence, until they

found expression in an article in *The Theosophist* signed by Messrs. Old and Edge. At last, the situation became so strained that it was declared by many of the most earnest members of the Indian Section that, if Mr. Judge became President with those charges hanging over him unexplained, the Indian Section would secede from the T. S. Representation to this effect was made to me, and I was asked, as well-known in the world and the T. S., and as a close friend and colleague of Mr. Judge, to intervene in the matter.

I hold strongly that, whatever may be the faults of a private member, they are no concern of mine, and it is no part of my duty, as a humble servant of the Lords of Compassion, to drag my brother's faults into public view, nor to arraign him before any tribunal. His faults and mine will find their inevitable harvest of suffering, and I am content to leave them to the Great Law, which judges unerringly and knits to every wrong its necessary sequence of pain.

But where the honour of the Society was concerned, in the person of its now second official and (as he then was thought to be) its President-Elect, it was right to do what I could to put an end to the growing friction and suspicion, both for the sake of the Society and for that of Mr. Judge; and I agreed to intervene, privately, believing that many of the charges were false, dictated and circulated malevolently, that others were much exaggerated and were largely susceptible of explanation, and that what might remain of valid complaint might be put an end to without public controversy. Under the promise that nothing should be done further in the matter until my intervention had failed, I wrote to Mr. Judge. The promise of silence was broken by persons who knew some of the things complained of, and before any answer could be received by me from Mr. Judge, distorted versions of what had occurred were circulated far and wide. This placed Mr. Judge in a most unfair position, and he found my name used against him in connection with charges which he knew to be grossly exaggerated where not entirely untrue.

Not only so, but I found that a public Committee of Enquiry was to be insisted on, and I saw that the proceedings would be directed in a spirit of animosity, and that the aim was to inflict punishment for wrongs believed to have been done, rather than to prevent future harm to the Society. I did my utmost to prevent a public Committee of Enquiry of an official character. I failed, and the Committee was decided on. And then I made what many of Mr. Judge's friends think was a mistake. I offered to take on myself the onus of formulating the charges against him. I am not concerned to defend myself on this, nor to trouble you with my reasons for taking so painful a decision; in this decision, for which I alone am responsible, I meant to act for the best, but it is very possible I made a mistake—for I have made many mistakes in judgment in my life, and my vision is not always clear in these matters of strife and controversy which are abhorrent to me.

In due course I formulated the charges, and drew up the written statement of evidence in support of them. They came in due course before the Judicial Committee, as you heard this morning. That Committee decided that they alleged private, not official, wrongdoing, and therefore could not be tried by a Committee that could deal only with a President and Vice-President as such. I was admitted to the General Council of the T. S. when this point was argued, and I was convinced by that argument that the point was rightly taken. I so stated when asked by the General Council, and again when asked by the Judicial Committee. And this put an end to the charges so far as that Committee was concerned.

As this left the main issue undecided, and left Mr. Judge under the stigma of unproved and unrebutted charges, it was suggested by Mr. Herbert Burrows that the charges should be laid before a Committee of Honour. At the moment this was rejected by Mr. Judge, but he wrote to me on the following day, asking me to agree with him in nominating such a Committee. I have agreed to this, but with very great reluctance, for the reason mentioned above: that I

feel it no part of my duty to attack any private member of the T. S., and I think such an attack would prove a most unfortunate precedent. But as the proceedings which were commenced against Mr. Judge as an official have proved abortive, it does not seem fair that I—responsible for those proceedings by taking part in them—should refuse him the Committee he asks for.

But there is another way, which I now take, and which, if you approve it, will put an end to this matter; and as no Theosophist should desire to inflict penalty for the past—even if he thinks wrong has been done—but only to help forward right in the future, it may, I venture to hope, be accepted.

And now I must reduce these charges to their proper proportions, as they have been enormously exaggerated, and it is due to Mr. Judge that I should say publicly what from the beginning I have said privately. The President stated them very accurately in his address to the Judicial Committee: the vital charge is that Mr. Judge has issued letters and messages in the script recognizable as that adopted by a Master with whom H. P. B. was closely connected, and that these letters and messages were neither written nor precipitated directly by the Master in whose writing they appear; as leading up to this there are subsidiary charges of deception, but these would certainly never have been made the basis of any action save for their connection with the main point.

Further, I wish it to be distinctly understood that I do not charge and have not charged Mr. Judge with forgery in the ordinary sense of the term, but with giving a misleading material form to messages received psychically from the Master in various ways, without acquainting the recipients with this fact.

I regard Mr. Judge as an Occultist, possessed of considerable knowledge and animated by a deep and unswerving devotion to the Theosophical Society. I believe that he has often received direct messages from the Masters and from Their chelas, guiding and helping him in his work. I believe that he has sometimes received

messages for other people in one or other of the ways that I will mention in a moment, but not by direct writing by the Master nor by His direct precipitation; and that Mr. Judge has then believed himself to be justified in writing down in the script adopted by H. P. B. for communications from the Master, the message psychically received, and in giving it to the person for whom it was intended, leaving that person to wrongly assume that it was a direct precipitation or writing by the Master Himself—that is, that it was done *through* Mr. Judge, but done *by* the Master.

Now personally I hold that this method is illegitimate and that no one should simulate a recognized writing which is regarded as authoritative when it is authentic. And by authentic I mean directly written or precipitated by the Master Himself. If a message is consciously written, it should be so stated: if automatically written, it should be so stated. At least so it seems to me. It is important that the very small part generally played by the Masters in these phenomena should be understood, so that people may not receive messages as authoritative merely on the ground of their being in a particular script. Except in the very rarest instances, the Masters do not personally write letters or directly precipitate communications. Messages may be sent by Them to those with whom They can communicate by external voice, or astral vision, or psychic word, or mental impression or in other ways. If a person gets a message which he believes to be from the Master, for communication to anyone else, he is bound in honour not to add to that message any extraneous circumstances which will add weight to it in the recipient's eyes. I believe that Mr. Judge wrote with his own hand, consciously or automatically I do not know, in the script adopted as that of the Master, messages which he received from the Master or from chelas; and I know that, in my own case, I believed that the messages he gave me in the well-known script were messages directly precipitated or directly written by the Master. When I publicly said that I have received H. P. Blavatsky's death letters in the writing H. P. Blavatsky

had been accused of forging, I referred to letters given to me by Mr. Judge, and as they were in the well-known script I never dreamt of challenging their source. I know now that they were not written or precipitated by the Master, and that they were done by Mr. Judge, but I also believe that the gist of these messages was psychically received, and that Mr. Judge's error lay in giving them to me in a script written by himself and not saying that he had done so. I feel bound to refer to these letters thus explicitly, because having been myself mistaken, I in turn misled the public.

It should be generally understood inside and outside the Theosophical Society, that letters and messages may be written or may be precipitated in any script, without thereby gaining any valid authority. Scripts may be produced by automatic or deliberate writing with the hand, or by precipitation, by many agencies from the White and Black Adepts down to semi-conscious Elementals, and those who afford the necessary conditions can be thus used. The source of messages can only be decided by direct spiritual knowledge or, intellectually, by the nature of their contents, and each person must use his own powers and act on his own responsibility, in accepting or rejecting them. Thus I rejected a number of letters, real precipitations, brought me by an American, not an F. T. S., as substantiating his claim to be H.P.B.'s successor. Any good medium may be used for precipitating messages by any of the varied entities in the Occult world; and the outcome of these proceedings will be, I hope, to put an end to the craze for receiving letters and messages, which are more likely to be subhuman or human in their origin than superhuman, and to throw people back on the evolution of their own spiritual nature, by which alone they can be safely guided through the mazes of the super-physical world.

If you, representatives of the T. S., consider that the publication of this statement followed by that which Mr. Judge will make, would put an end to this distressing business, and by making a

clear understanding, get rid at least of the mass of seething suspicions in which we have been living, and if you can accept it, I propose that this should take the place of the Committee of Honour, putting you, our brothers, in the place of the Committee. I have made the frankest explanation I can; I know how enwrapped in difficulty are these phenomena which are connected with forces obscure in their working to most; therefore, how few are able to judge of them accurately, while those through whom they play are always able to control them. And I trust that these explanations may put an end to some at least of the troubles of the last two years, and leave us to go on with our work for the world, each in his own way. For any pain that I have given my brother, in trying to do a most repellent task, I ask his pardon, as also for any mistakes that I may have made.

ANNIE BESANT.

[The above statements as to precipitated, written and other communications have been long ago made by both H. P. Blavatsky and Mr. Judge, in *Lucifer, The Path*, and elsewhere, both publicly and privately. A.B.]

[*Note by Col. Olcott.* I cannot allow Mrs. Besant to take upon herself the entire responsibility for formulating the charges against Mr. Judge, since I myself requested her to do it. The tacit endorsement of the charges by persistence in a policy of silence, was an injustice to the Vice-President, since it gave him no chance to make his defence; while, at the same time, the widely current suspicions were thereby augmented, to the injury of the Society. So, to bring the whole matter to light, I, with others, asked Mrs. Besant to assume the task of drafting and signing the charges. H. S. O.]

STATEMENT BY MR. JUDGE.

Since March last, charges have been going round the world against me, to which the name of Annie Besant has been attached, without her consent as she now says, that I have been guilty of forging the names and handwritings of the Mahatmas and of misusing the said names and handwritings. The charge has also arisen that I suppressed the name of Annie Besant as mover in the matter from fear of the same. All this has been causing great trouble and working injury to all concerned, that is, to all our members. It is now time that this should be put an end to once for all if possible.

I now state as follows:

1. I left the name of Annie Besant out of my published circular by request of my friends in the T. S. then near me so as to save her and leave it to others to put her name to the charge. It now appears that if I had so put her name it would have run counter to her present statement.
2. I repeat my denial of the said rumoured charges of forging the said names and handwritings of the Mahatmas or of misusing the same.
3. I admit that I have received and delivered messages from the Mahatmas and assert their genuineness.
4. I say that I have heard and do hear from the Mahatmas, and that I am an agent of the Mahatmas; but I deny that I have ever sought to induce that belief in others, and this is the first time to my knowledge that I have ever made the claim now made. I am pressed into the place where I must make it. My desire and effort have been to distract attention from such an idea as related to me. But I have no desire to make the claim, which I repudiate, that I am the only channel for communication with Masters; and it is my opinion that such communication is open to any human being who, by endeavouring to serve mankind, affords the necessary conditions.

5. Whatever messages from the Mahatmas have been delivered by me as such—and they are extremely few—I now declare were and are genuine messages from the Mahatmas so far as my knowledge extends; they were obtained through me, but as to how they were obtained or produced I cannot state. But I can now again say, as I have said publicly before, and as was said by H. P. Blavatsky so often that I have always thought it common knowledge among studious Theosophists, that precipitation of words or messages is of no consequence and constitutes no proof of connection with Mahatmas; it is only phenomenal and not of the slightest value.
6. So far as methods are concerned for the reception and delivery of messages from the Masters, they are many. My own methods may disagree from the views of others, and I acknowledge their right to criticize them if they choose; but I deny the right of any one to say that they know or can prove the non-genuineness of such messages to or through me unless they are able to see on that plane. I can only say that I have done my best to report — in the few instances when I have done it at all—correctly and truthfully such messages as I think I have received for transmission, and never to my knowledge have I tried therewith to deceive any person or persons whatever.
7. And I say that in 1893 the Master sent me a message in which he thanked me for all my work and exertions in the Theosophical field, and expressed satisfaction therewith, ending with sage advice to guard me against the failings and follies of my lower nature; that message Mrs. Besant unreservedly admits.
8. Lastly, and only because of absurd statements made and circulated, I willingly say that which I never denied, that I am a human being, full of error, liable to mistake, not infallible, but just the same as any other human being like to myself, or

of the class of human beings like to myself, or of the class of human beings to which I belong. And I freely, fully and sincerely forgive anyone who may be thought to have injured or tried to injure me.

WILLIAM Q. JUDGE.

Having heard the above statements, the following resolution was moved by Mr. Bertram Keightley, seconded by Dr. Buck and carried *nem. con.*

Resolved: that this meeting accepts the adjustment arrived at by Annie Besant and William Judge as a final settlement of matters pending hitherto between them as prosecutor and defendant with the hope that it may be thus buried and forgotten, and

Resolved: That we will join hands with them to further the cause of genuine Brotherhood in which we all believe.

The following important results have come out of the above inquiry: (a) The absolute neutrality of the Theosophical Society in all matters of personal belief, and the perfect right of private judgment in religious, mystical and other questions have been authoritatively and permanently declared by Executive affirmation, endorsement by the General Council, and confirmation by a Judicial Committee organized under the provisions of the Society's Revised Rules, and composed of Delegates chosen by the existing three Sections as possessing their respect and confidence; (b) The authoritative and dogmatic value of statements as to the existence of Mahatmas, their relations with and messages to private persons, or through them to third parties, the Society or the general public, is denied; all such statements, messages or teachings are to be taken at their intrinsic value and the recipients left to form and declare, if they choose, their

own opinions with respect to their genuineness: the Society, as a body, maintaining its constitutional neutrality in the premises.

As to the disposal of the charges against the Vice-President, the report of the Judicial Committee gives all necessary information: the public statements of Mrs. Besant and Mr. Judge contained in the Appendix showing how the case stands. No final decision has been reached, since the defence of Mr. Judge precluded an inquiry into the facts, and it would not be constitutional for one to be made by any Committee, Council or Branch of the Society. To undertake it would be a dangerous precedent, one which would furnish an excuse to try a member for holding to the dogmas of the sect to which he might belong. Generally speaking, the elementary principles of tolerance and brotherliness which are professed by all true Theosophists, teach us to exercise towards each other a generous charity and forgiveness for displays of those human imperfections which we all equally share.

H. S. OLCOTT, P. T. S.

William Q. Judge's and Annie Besant's E.S.T. Circulars of 1894

William Q. Judge issued a Circular Letter to the members of the E.S.T. (Eastern School of Theosophy, founded by Madame Blavatsky in London, 1888) in November 1894, entitled 'By Master's Direction', announcing among other things that Annie Besant's Headship of the E.S.T. had been terminated.

Annie Besant replied to the above-mentioned Circular with one of her own, issued in December 1894 from Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), as she was on an extended lecture tour, which included New Zealand and Australia.

Below are some excerpts from Mr Judge's Circular and Mrs Besant's replies.

An Inner Group was later on formed by H.P.B. ♀♀ at London, so that she might give out teachings to be recorded by the members, and, if possible, teach them practical occultism. Of this Mrs. Besant, with George Mead to help her, was made the Secretary, because she had great ability in a literary way, was wholly devoted, and perfectly fit for the task. But this did not make her a *Teacher*. And even when she bid adieu to H.P.B. ♀♀ on her leaving Europe for America in April, 1891, the very last thing H.P.B. ♀♀ put into her hands as she left her presence, into which she never again entered, was the sealed statement that made her *Recorder* of the teachings. H.P.B. ♀♀ knew that she would not live to see Annie Besant again, and if she were to have been constituted a “Teacher”, that would have been the time to give her the position. But she did not. The death of H.P.B. ♀♀ destroyed of course any further value in the office of “Recorder.” I am a member of the Inner Group, and have been since 1891. It was needless to speak of this before now.

WQJ

The statements as to the I.G. and myself are misleading, because incomplete. I complete them. H.P.B. did, when I left her, give me a sealed statement, constituting me Chief Secretary of the I.G. and Recorder of the Teachings. She also wrote to Mr. Judge stating that I was her “Successor,” when she had to leave us, and Mr. Judge read that extract to our little group at Avenue Road when he came over after her death, as constituting – with her statements as to himself – the basis for the future arrangements. (On this matter of H.P.B.’s wishes as to the work I may be able to tell you more presently, but I cannot delay this circular.) Her dying gift to me was the ring she always wore – of which she had given me a duplicate in 1889. Ere leaving for America I asked her if I might discuss the I.G. Instructions with Mr. Judge; she answered:

No, not unless he took the I.G. pledge. When he came to London after her death I told him this, and the first of the spurious “messages” was the assent to his question if he might enter the I.G. without taking the pledge. It seemed to all of us natural and right that he should come in, and we joyfully welcomed him. The Instructions of H.P.B. to the I.G. were written down by each member, and these notes were handed to George Mead and myself, we always writing them down promptly, and H.P.B. often looking over the completed version, so as to ensure accuracy. There are other papers of teaching left in my hands by H.P.B. and in her own writing.

AB

Mrs. Annie Besant has been but five years in this work, and not all of that time engaged in occult study and practice. Her abilities as a writer and speaker are rare and high for either man or woman, her devotion and sincerity of purpose cannot be doubted. She gave many years of her life to the cause of the oppressed as she understood it: against the dread blight of materialistic belief in herself, she worked thus without hope in a future life and in every way proved her altruistic purpose and aim. Since 1889 she has done great service to the T.S. and devoted herself to it. But all this does not prevent a sincere person from making errors in Occultism, especially when he, as Mrs. Besant did, tries to force himself along the path of practical work in that field. Sincerity does not confer of itself knowledge, much less wisdom. H.P.B. •• and all the history of occultism say that seven years of training and trial at the very least are needed. Mrs. Besant has had but five. Mistakes made by such a disciple will ultimately be turned to the advantage of the movement, and their immediate results will be mitigated to the person making them, provided they are not inspired by an evil intention on the person’s part. And I wish it to be clearly understood that Mrs. Besant has had herself no conscious evil

intention; she has simply gone for a while outside the line of her Guru (H.P.B.), begun work with others, and fallen under their influence. We should not push her further down, but neither will the true sympathy we have blind our eyes so as to let her go on, to the detriment of the movement. I could easily retire from the whole T.S., but my conceptions of duty are different, although the personal cost to myself in this work is heavy, and as I am ordered to stay I will stay and try my best to aid her and everyone else as much as possible. And the same authority tells me that “could she open her eyes and see her real line of work, and correct the present condition in herself as well as the one she has helped to make in the T.S. and E.S.T., she would find herself in mental, physical and spiritual conditions of a kind much better than ever before, for her present state is due to the attacks of the dark powers, unconsciously to her.”

WQJ

On my own value or worthlessness (pp 3, 4) I have naught to say, beyond what I was bidden by H.P.B. to assert (else would I be silent) that I am a disciple of her Master, and know him independently of her, I add, without her permission, that her blessed hand opened to me the path to His Feet.

AB

The plot exists among the Black Magicians, whoever war against the White, and against those Black ones we are constantly warned by H.P.B. ❁❁ This is no fiction, but a very substantial fact. I have seen and also been shown the chief entity among those who thus work against us and who desire to destroy the whole movement and especially to nullify the great work which H.P.B. ❁❁ began for the Western nations. These Black Magicians have succeeded in influencing certain Brahmans in India through race-pride and ambition, so that these, for their own advantage, desire

to control and manage the T.S. through some agent and also through the E.S.T. They of course have sought, if possible, to use one of our body, and have picked out Mrs. Besant as a possible vehicle. One object of the plot is to stop the current of information and influence started by H.P.B. •• by deflecting thought back to modern India. To accomplish this it is absolutely necessary to tear down the tradition clustering around the work of H.P.B.; her powers and knowledge have to be derogated from; her right to speak for the Masters has to be impugned; those Masters have to be made a cold abstraction; her staunch friends who wish to see the real work and objects carried on have to be put in such a position as to be tied hand and foot so as not to be able to interfere with the plans of the plotters; it has to be shown that H.P.B. was a fraud and forger also. These men are not the Chelas of our Masters.

The name of the person who was worked upon so as to, if possible, use him as a minor agent of the Black Magicians and for the influencing of Mrs. Besant is Gyanendra N. Chakravarti, a Brahman of Allahabad, India, who came to America on our invitation to the Religious Parliament in 1893. At the first sincerely desirous of helping the race by bringing to the American people the old truths of his forefathers, he nevertheless, like so many before him, permitted ambition to take subtle root in his heart. Fired with the ambition of taking position in the world as a Guru, though doubtless believing himself still a follower of the White Brotherhood, he is no longer in our lines; on the contrary, his mediumship and weakness leave him a vehicle for other influences also.

WQJ

The “plot,” so far as I know, is the purest delusion. What is said of Mr. Chakravati I know to be false, and I can but feel the profoundest pity and sorrow for him who uses the holy name of the Master to cover such a charge. Believing in Karma as I do, compassion renders anger impossible. The statements about

myself are untrue, but they matter but little.

The statement on p. 9 as to “inside facts” is to me a little surprising. At the beginning of February, 1894, Mr. Judge wrote to me, saying the time had come for me to be the sole head of the E.S.T. and rejoicing in my closer touch with the Masters; a little later, on the 12th February, I had a peremptory telegram from Mr. Judge, sent to me *through Mr. Chakravati*, bidding me issue notice to the School that I took it over. I did not act on either letter or telegram, and shortly after Mr. Judge, having meanwhile received my letter telling him that I knew he had deceived me, telegraphed again, cancelling the telegram I had received on February 12th.

AB

A distinct object H.P.B. ●● had in view I will now on the authority of the Master tell you. The work of the dark powers and their conscious and unconscious agents is against this object. They wish to defeat it. It is an object of the highest value and of the greatest scope, unrevealed before by H.P.B. ●● to anyone else that I know of, though possibly there are those to whom she hinted it. All her vast work in the West, with western people, upon western religions and modern science, was toward this end, so that when she comes again as Messenger – as hinted at in the *Key to Theosophy* – much of the preparatory work should have been done by us and our successors. It is, *the establishment in the West of a great seat of learning where shall be taught and explained and demonstrated the great theories of man and nature which she brought forward to us, where western occultism, as the essence combined out of all others, shall be taught.* This stupendous object the Black Lodge would prevent. And even the exoteric theological Brahman would also prevent it, because it will in the end obliterate that form of caste which depends alone on birth, for there will be developed those whose inner vision will see the real caste of the inner man and put him down in a lower one for his discipline if he is not truly in his place. Today the four natural castes are all

confused, and those who are black within strut about as keepers of the key to the shrine of truth, when in fact they should be lower down, as learners. Shall her great object be worked against by us and its foundations overthrown? Never, if the vast powers of the Masters can be drawn to its support; never, if we are faithful to our pledges and to our trust.

WQJ

As to East and West, I follow H.P.B. Her Master is an Indian, Master K.H. is an Indian, her writings show her love for India, she named her School the *Eastern School*. Ere she died, she approved my seeking in India the help of which I was to be deprived by her approaching death, and that help came to me as she said. The importance put by the Masters on India may be seen in what Master K.H. writes on it in the letters quoted in *The Occult World*. The Eastern Occultism that was good enough for her is good enough for me. But I will be no party to setting West against East, nor East against West; the Great Lodge works for Humanity; IT seeks to bind men together, not to stir up racial passions; IT includes Masters of different nationalities. What to us are these battle cries of divided hosts? From the Supreme Self flow all human souls; the Egos are embodied wherever their Karma leads them; not for us the heresy of separateness; from the Diamond Soul all colours flash.

AB

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

By Col. Henry Steel Olcott

(Source: 'General Report of the Nineteenth Anniversary of the Theosophical Society, at the Headquarters, Adyar, Madras, December 25th,

26th, 27th and 28th 1894', pp. 8-11, included in the January 1895 issue of *The Theosophist*.)

THE JUDGE CASE. We are at a crisis that is the most serious within our history since that of 1884. The unavoidable failure to dispose of the charges against Mr. Judge last July, has set in motion most powerful opposing currents of feeling. By some he is enthusiastically supported, by others as unreservedly condemned. Petitions from Branches, Committees and lists of members have been sent in, asking that the Vice-President be called upon to publish a defence or resign; other Branches and individual members, even more numerous, recommend him to make no defence, as their confidence in his truthfulness and integrity is unshaken and unshakeable. From what reaches me I think that the opinions of our members may be classified thus:

1. The American Section, with the exception of some individuals of the best class

and some of lesser importance, stands solidly in his favour. I have even had it intimated that if Mr. Judge should be forced to resign, the Section will secede in a body, form an American Theosophical independently, and elect him President.

2. The Dublin, Brixton, and some other European lodges have passed votes of confidence; copies of a draft of Resolutions in his favour are circulating in France, Belgium, and Holland, and being sent me numerously signed; and I should not be surprised if a large number of excellent people in the European Section should unite with the Americans to form the new Section in the event of a split. The Bournemouth and some other British Lodges and a large number of English Theosophists call on him to explain or retire. German opinion is reported to me as being adverse to him. Spain is against him, France divided, Holland divided.

3. Australasia, so far as I have any direct intimations, is on the side opposed to Mr. Judge.

4. India has, to my knowledge, sent in no protest in his favour, although many members recognizing his immense services and his tireless activity in official work, deprecate any hasty action based on *ex parte* newspaper charges. The Poona T. S., through its President, “demands his expulsion from the Society.” The above facts prove the existence of the strong antagonistic currents of feeling above noted.

What courses are open to us and which should we choose? I offer the thoughts which occur to me with the hope that I may be judicially impartial, regardless of all personal feeling or bias.

Firstly. The Constitution of the Society must be rigidly adhered to at whatsoever cost. Not to save or to expel one man or twenty, will I swerve a hair's breadth from the strict letter of the law. In July last, both the General Council and Judicial Committee voted to quash the proceedings against the accused on a point which, although technical was nevertheless irrefutable. Whatever is now or may hereafter be done in this affair, therefore, must be constitutionally done. As we cannot legally try Mr. Judge, Vice-President, for alleged misdemeanours committed by W. Q. Judge, individual; and as the individual cannot be tried for his private opinions, we have to fall back upon the moral aspect of the case, and see how an individual accused of the immoral act of deception usually behaves. We have the familiar precedent of H. P. B. who, before leaving India—for the last time, as it proved—placed her resignation in my hands in order to relieve the Society from the burden of defending her against the charges of the Coulombs and the Missionaries. The Convention subsequently passed a vote of confidence, which I officially conveyed to her, and this restored her to her former status in the Society. State Cabinets invariably resign office upon the passage of a

legislative vote of lack of confidence. This is the unwritten, sometimes the written, law of honour. Frequently, the resigning official offers himself for re-election or again accepts office, if so requested. From the fact that I had to overrule the point made by him that he was not and had never been Vice-President de jure, I was led to believe that Mr. Judge was disposed to follow the same course as far as relinquishing that office was concerned. But, however that case may be, I should, if the case were mine, do as I have more than once before, both within and without the Theosophical Society, offer my resignation but be ready to resume office if my superiors or colleagues showed that I possessed their confidence, that there was a necessity for my so doing, and circumstances permitted. While the Society cannot compel Mr. Judge to resign and offer himself for re-election, and a very large body of our members advise him not to do so, he has it in his power to relieve the present strain by so doing and to thus enable the whole Society to say whether it still wishes to be represented by him before the world, or the contrary. Such a course would not affect his relations with the American Section or the Aryan T. S., those concerning only the Section and Branch and, having no Federal character, not coming under the purview of other Sections nor being open to their criticism. International action is only called for in Federal questions.

It is proper for me as a student of Practical Psychology of very long experience, to draw attention to the important fact that, even if the charges of forged writing and false messages brought against Mr. Judge were made good before a jury, under the exoteric rules of Evidence, still this might not be proof of guilty knowledge and intent. This must not be overlooked, for it bears distinctly up on the question of moral responsibility. Every student of Modern Spiritualism and Eastern Occultism knows that a medium, or psychic, if you prefer the word, is often irresistibly impelled by an extraneous force to do acts of turpitude of which

he is incapable in his normal state of consciousness. Only a few days ago, I read in the learned Dr. Gibier's "Analyse des Choses," a solemn statement of this fact accompanied with striking examples in his own practice. And the eminent Prof. Bernheim also proved to me this dreadful fact by hypnotic experiments on patients in the Hopital Civil, at Nancy. Equally well known is it that persons, otherwise accounted sane, are liable to hallucinations which make them sometimes mistake their own fancies for spiritual revelations and a vulgar earth-bound spirit for an exalted historical personage. At this moment, I have knowledge of at least seven different psychics in our Society who believe themselves to be in communication with the same Mahatmas and doing their work, who have each a knot of disciples or adherents about them, and whose supposed teachers give orders which conflict with each others'! I cannot impugn the good faith of either of these sensitives, while, on the other hand, I cannot see my way to accepting any of their mandates in the absence of satisfactory proof of their genuineness. So I go on my way, doing my public duty as well as I can see it, and leaving to time the solving of all these mysteries. My objective intercourse with the Great Teachers ceased almost entirely on the death of H. P. B., while any subjective relations I may have with them is evidence only to myself and would carry no weight with third parties. I think this rule applies in all such cases, and no amount of mediumistic phenomena, or of clearest visions of physically unseen Teachers by psychics who have not passed through a long course of training in Raja Yoga, would convince me of my duty to accept blindly the mandates of even well-meaning advisers. All professed teachings of Mahatmas must be judged by their intrinsic merit; if they are wise they become no better by reason of their alleged high source; if foolish, their worthlessness is not nullified by ascribing to them the claim of authority.

In conclusion, then, I beg you to realise that, after proving that

a certain writing is forged and calculated to deceive, you must then prove that the writer was a free agent before you can fasten upon him the stigma of moral obliquity. To come back to the case in point, it being impossible for any third party to know what Mr. Judge may have believed with respect to the Mahatmic writings emanating from him, and what subjective facts he had to go upon, the proof cannot be said to be conclusive of his bad faith however suspicious the available evidence may seem.

The way out of the difficulty lies with him, and with him alone. If he should decide to neither give any satisfactory explanations nor to resign his Federal office, the consequence will undoubtedly be that a large number of our best people of the class of Mr. Herbert Burrows will withdraw from the Society; while if he should, his numerous friends will stand by him all the more loyally throughout. I do not presume to judge, the case not being before me on its merits.

I must, however, express my profound regret that Mr. Judge should have circulated accusations of resort to Black Magic, against Mrs. Besant and Mr. Chakravarti; neither of whom have ever, so far as I have been able to judge in years of personal intercourse, done the least thing to deserve such a suspicion. As for Mrs. Besant, I can conscientiously affirm that in all my life I never met a more noble, unselfish and upright woman, nor one whose heart was filled with greater love for mankind. The Theosophical Society owes her a debt it can never repay.

The President wishes it known that his Address being a Presidential document, in the drafting of which the obligation of strict impartiality rested upon him, his private views with respect to the case of Mr. Judge were withheld. When the right time came, he should know how to act for the best interests of the Society.

ACTION ON THE JUDGE CASE.

(Source: Excerpts from the 'General Report of the Nineteenth Anniversary of the Theosophical Society, at the Headquarters, Adyar, Madras, December 25th, 26th, 27th and 28th 1894', pp. 39-61, included in the January 1895 issue of *The Theosophist*.)

After the reading of the foregoing official papers, general business being in order, Mrs. Besant rose and addressed the Convention as follows:

Mr. President-Founder, and Brothers, I bring you the greetings of the European Section as its delegate. I should not so bring them as a delegate, having in view the attacks that have been made upon me, were it not that the delegation was signed after all these attacks, so that I hold it from the European Section after the whole of the attacks were before them, and the delegation carries with it therefore an expression of confidence in me. Were it not for that, I should have placed my resignation as delegate in the hands of the President, and asked him to explain to you why it was I could not accept the delegation; but as it was signed after these attacks, I feel myself justified in bolding that place before you.

I rise to move a resolution with respect to the very difficult position in which the Society is placed in regard to the charges brought against its Vice-President, Mr. William Q. Judge, charges which have been now before the public in a more or less complete form for a very considerable time. I shall be as brief as I can in what I have to say, but I cannot sacrifice clearness to brevity, for I am bound to give you just the facts that are wanted for the formation of judgment, when many of you may not have seen the papers on which this resolution is proposed, and therefore to some of you at least, some of the facts may be new. For a long time past in different parts of the world,—in India, America and Europe—vague

statements were made accusing Mr. Judge of fraudulently simulating writings ascribed to the teachers of H. P. B. Those attacks were circulated very largely, and they were not worthy of being dealt with because they were vague and indefinite. Gradually they became more and more precise, and at last they reached a point so strong that when I came here last year appeals were made to me from different parts of India, and from very many members of the Society, asking me to look into the matter, and if, necessary take action upon it, so that it might be cleared up one way or the other, in order that Mr. Judge might have an opportunity of answering the charges that were circulated against him, if answer were possible. I looked into the mass of evidence which was in the hands of Col. Olcott but which, taken by itself, while arousing the gravest suspicion, was not sufficiently clear, definite and conclusive to justify Col. Olcott, or Mr. Keightley, the Secretary of the Indian Section, in a taking action which would commit the Society. But it happened that within my knowledge there were other facts unknown both to Col. Olcott and Mr. Keightley, which made the evidence which was in their hands complete and so rendered it, to my mind at least, convincing. What I knew by myself was not enough for public action, and what they knew by themselves was not enough for certain action, though that was stronger than mine; but all put together made so strong a body of evidence that it became a duty to the Society that it should be placed before it, and that Mr. Judge, as its Vice-President, should be given an opportunity of definitely meeting the charges if he could, so that an end might be put to a position so painful to all concerned, and so dangerous to the reputation and the honor of the Society. Under these circumstances, I wrote at first privately to Mr. Judge, having in view his long services and his devotion to the movement, and asked him to resign, but he refused by cable. That was in January last, and the cable came in February on his receipt of my letter. I then wrote a letter, which you will have seen in the published proceedings, to Col. Olcott as, President, and asked him

as President of the Society under the clauses of the Constitution which deal with charges against the Vice-President, to call together a Committee, to arraign Mr. Judge before that Committee, and so be the charges be dealt with by a body representing the Society. It naturally, with our widespread membership, took a considerable time before the communication could reach every part of the world, the Sections could appoint their delegates, and they could gather together in a place which should be settled for the adjudication. Consequently the Committee did not meet until July, the earliest date which was possible when all these communications had to be made and properly carried out. Before that Committee objections were raised by Mr. Judge as to its jurisdiction. Let me say I had drawn up six charges to lay before the Committee. Under each of these charges I had drawn up the evidence on which the charge depended. I had made what would be called a brief; the charges were the indictments: and the evidence was practically the speech of the counsel stating what the charges were. My only deviation from the legal action was this—that I sent a complete copy of the whole statement that I proposed to make to Mr. Judge; that, I knew was outside the legal duty, but I did it in order that the case might be met upon its merit, that he might know everything I was going to say, every document I was going to use, and every argument I was going to employ. Although it was irregular for me to do so, standing as I did, I thought that the Committee was to try a brother, and as we did not desire any sort of triumph or any kind of advantage but only absolute truth, every possible opportunity for explanation should be placed in Mr. Judge's hands. I thought it right to send the whole of the documents to him, so that he knew every word that I should speak before the Committee. As I say, when the Committee met Mr. Judge raised technical objections—one that was overruled, was that he was not legally Vice-President at all. That was one objection. The other objection was that, although he was Vice-President, the offence committed if an offence, was not committed by him as Vice-

President but as a private member. You will observe that that was what in legal terminology is called a demurrer. He did not challenge the facts of the case, but he challenged the jurisdiction of the Court before which the indictment was to be laid: the objection was held to be a good objection, and I agreed with the finding. I think the objection was well taken from a legal standpoint, and I hold that Mr. Judge had the right to take the legal objection if he preferred to rely on a demurrer rather than meet the case upon its merits. Every accused person has such a right in Courts of Law, and we are bound in dealing with members of our Society not to do anything which would be less generous than the Court of Law would allow him, and not to deprive an accused brother of peculiar right of defence which he would have in the courts of his country and which he had a right to use before ourselves. Regarding that action on Mr. Judge's part as fatal to his own dignity and reputation, I urged strongly upon him not to shelter himself under the technical plea. I could do nothing more than that. The technical plea was held, and I think rightly, to be a good plea. The Committee decided that it had no jurisdiction and therefore could not listen to the charges, much less of course to any evidence in the matter. According to my view—that is my own opinion—the Committee should have risen the very moment it had arrived at that decision. Having decided that it had no jurisdiction, its work was over, and it should have adjourned; but instead of that—very likely I may be wrong in my opinion—it thought it right to allow Mr. Judge to state what *would* have been his line of defence if the matter had been laid before the Committee. And on the statement of Mr. Judge that *if* he had defended himself it would have involved the question of Mahatmas the Committee further decided that it should not have tried the charges. Then the Committee rose and Mr. Burrows proposed that a jury of Honor should be held. Mr. Judge refused a Jury of Honor, on the ground that his witnesses were in America and that it would take six months to get together his evidence. The only importance of that is as having bearing on the

resolution of the Committee, which was passed by the Committee before this refusal was made: *i. e.*, that it believed that Mr. Judge was ready to go on with the case, and therefore that he did not try to evade enquiry. The Committee said this on the statement of Mr. Judge, that he was ready to go on: when the Jury of Honor was proposed, and when it might have gone into the case, he withdrew the statement that he was ready to go on, and said that his witnesses were away and that it would take six months for him to collect the evidence. On the following day, in consequence of the strong pressure put upon Mr. Judge by his friends, he wrote and asked suddenly for a Committee. Such a Committee though would never have been in any sense representative, and I felt the difficulty at once of refusing it or agreeing to appear before it—difficult to refuse because, however late in the day, Mr. Judge asked for it; and difficult to appear before it, because some of the best members had left the place; so that it would have been a Committee without authority and without dignity, and the whole matter would have been hurried though in a way not conducive to a proper investigation. Therefore, entirely on my own responsibility—here you have a perfect right to judge me if I was mistaken in the action I took on myself—I made a statement in which I declared my own firm belief that these letters were not genuine, that the writing was a simulated writing, and that it was done by Mr. Judge. I read that statement before a meeting of Convention delegates, and Mr. Judge followed it, with a statement denying it, and then it was printed and sent out to the world.

Now comes the point as to the articles that appeared in the *Westminster Gazette*. These articles were based on documents supplied by Mr. Old, including the documents which I was prepared to lay before the Committee, as well as certain other documents which belonged to the Esoteric Section, which I should not have laid before the Committee. I was and am under a promise of secrecy (*sic*) regarding those documents, and under no possible conditions would I have broken the promise I made. But in addition to the evidence

which was published in the *Westminster Gazette*, there was a considerable body of other evidence having an exceedingly strong bearing on the case; so in judging of the value of the statements of the *Gazette*, for the purpose of this movement, I take all the documents which deal with the exoteric and public matters. There were others in addition, which would have been laid before the Committee, had I been allowed to lay them. I now pass on to those proposals which I lay before you. Now it is said, and truly said, that the statements are *ex parte* statements; but while you admit that they are *ex parte* statements on the part of newspapers, you must remember that they are statements which would have been laid before a Committee where Mr. Judge would have been present,—statements that he might have answered if he desired to answer them, and therefore they are not *ex parte* statement in the ordinary sense of the term. If statements are made when a person has had no opportunity of answering them, it is right to demand an answer and to form no opinion until the answer is made. If the statements have been placed in the hands of the accused person, and he then, knowing the evidence in support of them, elects to shelter himself under a technical demmurre in order to prevent an open trial in regard to the statements made, then he has no right to claim the advantage of sheltering himself under the plea of the statements being *ex parte* statements, when they come before the world in the form in which they now appear. Therefore I consider that that is not a legitimate plea, because the defence and answer might have been made, and ought to have been made, at the time. In addition to the statement of fraud against Mr. Judge, there are statements against me for condoning the fraud, and against Colonel Olcott and Mr. Keightley for similar condonation. We are challenged to answer the accusation and I will deal with it in a moment. Let me say also that it is said that we had a conspiracy of silence. Against this there is this fact, that I was bound under a legal agreement of 1893, to be in Australia on the 1st September last for a lecturing engagement. I was therefore obliged to leave London, and

I took the last ship which made me land in Australia the day before that on which my first lecture was to be delivered. By sitting up all night before I started for Australia, I managed by myself to direct a copy of this inquiry, with my statement that I believed that these forgeries had been made, to all the leading London papers. In addition to that, I sent to all these papers a statement which I had drawn up and submitted to certain well-known persons, with regard to the policy of concealing or evading truth, or considering that ordinary morality was not binding on anyone who stood as an occultist. I drew up that statement and took weighty names to sign it, because I considered the protest was necessary against the policy adopted by Mr. Judge, and I desire that all the members of the Society should know that the President-Founder, Mr. Sinnett, Mr. Keightley, Mr. Sturdy, myself, Dr. Westcott (who has a peculiar following in Europe) and Mr. Leadbeater (who is well-known in Ceylon)—these people, who were known as eminent Theosophists, should be known to stand to absolute truth against any sort of paltering with it or evasion, against fraud of any kind; so that the Society might remain clear in the world's face. I sent that also to the London papers, and I sent it with a private note from myself asking them to give full publicity. I placed all these documents in the hands of my friend Miss Wilson, of the London headquarters, and asked her to deliver them by hand at the newspaper offices. The *Westminster Gazette* was one of the papers I wrote to asking for publicity. So I do not think there was much hushing up, as far as I was concerned. They say I "rushed" away. That is true, under the circumstances I told you. But Col. Olcott was there for over a month after I had left. He was there till the end of August, he would have answered any question that was asked, and he is the highest official in the Society. The papers did not say one word about the whole thing. The *Westminster Gazette* kept absolute silence, and three months after these facts were sent it by myself; when I was in New Zealand and when it knew that I could not possibly answer it in less than another three months, it then brought out all the

accusations, together with the accusations against myself for condoning fraud, and for endeavouring to hush the truth of the matter for advantages, monetary and otherwise, that were obtained by belonging to the Society, and for the sake of the general position which I hold as one of the leaders of the movement. A telegram came to New Zealand stating that an exposure had been made, and a little later another telegram saying that, in consequence of the exposure, Mr. Judge had expelled me from the Society. I was not able to answer them beyond saying there must be some mistake, not knowing what had really occurred, and the papers met me in Ceylon when I landed from Australia. I wrote at once to the *Daily Chronicle* to say that an answer would be sent as soon as I landed in England. But on reading the articles on my way to Madras, I saw no reason to delay the answer, and I wrote that answer without delay after I arrived here on Saturday evening, and took it yesterday down to the *Madras Mail*, where it will appear tomorrow. I went to Reuter's Agent and telegraphed to the *Chronicle* that the answer would come by the first English mail. That answer is now being printed as a pamphlet, to the number of 20,000 copies, and will be sent to every Branch of the Society, in order that the full facts may be laid before them in every part of the world. Now I say that to you, and you will see its bearing in a moment, on one of the proposals I make. There is in Europe a very strong feeling on this matter: I have received from the General Secretary of the Section a list of names eminent in the European Section, to whom have been sent out circulars asking those to whom they were sent to sign the circulars if they approved of Mr. Judge being called upon to make an explanation. Out of the eighty circulars sent, 65 answers have been returned. These 65 unanimously demand that explanation should be made. Out of these 65 signatories, 12 are signatures of President of Lodges and Society in Europe. In addition to that, there has been a kind of informal canvass which has been placed in my hands, in which twelve Lodges and centres demand that Mr. Judge shall explain or resign. One of them demands that he be

expelled and the rest only ask for explanation or resignation. There are then seven centres and branches which take a somewhat indefinite position. Three on his side; the others "counsel delay;" one looks to the Adyar Convention to discuss the matter, and does not wish to fan the flame. The President of one refuses to place the matter before his Lodge at all, and one expresses no opinion, content to leave action to Headquarters. A more definite expression than that it is not possible at present to obtain, because there has not been time for the General Secretary to get answers from all the Lodges. Mr. Mead wrote to me—I received his letter yesterday—stating what had so far been done and saying that he believed that an informal appeal had been sent to Col. Olcott—and that is true—by Mr. Judge's friends. No official notice had been sent to him, and the appeal had been circulated privately, so that he could only mention it as information for me, and not as the Secretary of the Section. I fully agree with what Colonel Olcott said. There is a strong feeling on both sides. Probably America is nearly unanimous in Mr. Judge's support; there are exceptions, but very few. Probably Australia is equally unanimous against him, but you must discount that by the fact that I have been lecturing there and exerting personal influence—not against Mr. Judge, I did not mention his name—but gaining influence, and you should bear this in mind when you are weighing the evidence of feeling. This is not a quarrel over individual opinions. No passion, no anger should come in; but you should endeavour to do justice. Therefore while Australasia may be unanimous against Mr. Judge, you ought to discount it by the fact that I have been lecturing everywhere with enormous success and that influenced many people; and therefore it may be a momentary rush and not a permanent resolution. With regard to Europe the division is very great. I do not feel as a European delegate that I have any right to vote as a delegate on this matter. I lay before you exactly the facts of the division in Europe and I tell you my own personal opinions. When I return, there will be a very strong if not an overwhelming party in favour of the policy

of truth, of absolute honour and uprightness, and unless something is done, some of our best people will immediately leave the Society and public propaganda will be rendered well-nigh impossible. In England, for a public man to be accused of dishonorable conduct and for him to refuse to resign office or to meet the charges, is a practically unheard of procedure. I do not mean to leave the Society, and I shall not resign even though Mr. Judge refuses to resign and is not willing to give explanation. I shall go on with my work. But I am bound to tell you that on every platform on which I shall stand, I shall be met with this difficulty as to dishonor. I will bear it. I will face it, and stand by the Society despite the difficulty. My own approval goes with those who challenge the action of Mr. Judge as dishonorable, and regard the Society as most seriously compromised by having for its Vice-President such an official second in command—and first in command when our President leaves us—and another President has to take his place. Now this is the first opportunity that we have had of speaking. Therefore it is that I move the resolution, and let me say that I quite admit, what Col. Olcott said as to the possibilities of unconscious fraud under mediumistic conditions, of wrong acts being thus done. But that is not a point which an official, such as the Vice-President of a Society that stands on a moral ground before the world, should take in his defence of official position. Mediumship is an excuse for the individual against moral judgment. It is no excuse for an official who under mediumship commits acts of moral turpitude, and has thereby shown that it is his duty to at once resign his official position, inasmuch as he is not responsible for his actions, and therefore must refuse to lead the Society into a position so detrimental to its honour. I had better read the resolution and then you can follow the remaining argument:

“Seeing that a series of articles has appeared in the *Westminster Gazette*, London, containing charges of deception and fraud against Mr. W. Q. Judge, now Vice-President of the Theosophical

Society; and

“Seeing that a strong body of evidence has been brought forward against the accused, and

“Seeing that the attempt by the Society to bring the matter to an issue last July was defeated by Mr. W. Q. Judge on a purely technical objection to the jurisdiction of the committee; and

“Seeing that Mr. Judge, being Vice-President of the whole Society, has issued a quasi-privately-circulated attack against one Section thereof, thus stirring up ill-feeling within the Society, and endeavouring to set the West against the East, contrary to the first object of the T. S. generally, and to the 2nd object specifically and

“Seeing that this is the first occasion since July on which a representative body of Theosophist has been gathered together; and

“Seeing that immemorial custom requires of every honourable man holding representative office in any Society to at once tender his resignation under such circumstances as are stated above.”

“Therefore the anniversary meeting of the Theosophical Society
Resolves;

“That the President-Founder be and is hereby requested to at once call upon Mr. W. Q. Judge, Vice-President, Theosophical Society, to resign the office of Vice-President; it being of course open to Mr. Judge if he so wishes, to submit himself for re-election, so that the Society may pass its judgment on his positions.”

Proposed by ANNIE BESANT

Seconded by BERTRAM KEIGHTLEY

The following are my reasons for submitting that resolution to you. I urge you to ask Mr. Judge to resign, because his office is an office for life, or rather during the life of the President. If it were only a yearly office, then at the end of the year you would have an opportunity of pronouncing your judgment as to whether you agree or disagree with having a man against whom certain charges had

been levelled as your officer. You have not the power of such an election, because the tenure of Vice-Presidentship is practically unique, save that of the President. The two stand apart. There is no re-election; therefore it is the more necessary that if a man is challenged, if his honor is challenged, he shall give his office back to the Society which has the right of saying either: "We will take you with the charges against you," or else, "We prefer to be represented before the world by some one else." I therefore call upon Mr. Judge to resign, and I say that he ought to restore to the Society its liberty of choice in this matter. Then I call on him to resign because that course is always taken by honorable people when a challenge is made; not that the challenge is necessarily true. H. P. B., as the President told you, resigned the Corresponding Secretaryship the moment the Coulomb charge was laid against her. She was there as the Secretary. She resigned office the moment the charges were laid, in order that the Society might not be compromised by the attack made upon herself; by the vote of the Society confidence in her was declared, and then she took back the office. Is not that the precedent for Mr. Judge to follow, claiming, as he does, to be the pupil of H. P. B.,—leaving the Society to put him back in his place, as it put her back, if on a review of facts, it considers him innocent of the charges that are made against him? I say it is always done. So strongly do I feel this that, though I hold no office in the Society as a whole, though I am nothing more than the President of a local Lodge, holding my office on a yearly tenure, although I was re-elected President of the Blavatsky Lodge in September last, yet, in that these charges had been made against me in the following month, the same mail that takes my answers to the newspapers charges, carries my resignation of the office of President of the Blavatsky Lodge, and then I stand for reelection. If they think my answer is sufficient, they will put me back as President. But I will not hold office, even a local office for a year or the nine months remaining, unless by their free-will they give it back to me, after my honor has been challenged and my good faith has been

impugned; and inasmuch as I am thus challenged—and challenged also by Mr. Judge with the practice of black magic and with working under black magicians, I say to the Lodge, the only body to which I am responsible: “Here is the office you gave me before the charges were made; I will take it back if you give it to me, having listened to the charges made. But I will not drag you into the charges against me, I will save your honor as the Blavatsky Lodge, and cut myself away from you until you re-elect me.” Then there is another and a serious point. I have in my hand a document that ought not in a public meeting to be held by me. This document appears as an esoteric document written by Mr. Judge, sent to a person in India expelled from the Esoteric Section, published in the *Westminster Gazette* in part and completely, I am told, in a newspaper in Bombay; so that the whole of what is now thus published is public property. In that certain statements are made. I see their force perhaps more than you do, for the report of the American Section read to us just now, says in a veiled way what this circular openly says. I have to draw your serious attention to this as a matter affecting the future of the Society. It is stated in the document now before you that there is a plot, and in this which is circulated under the pledge of secrecy—but which is circulated in such a manner that it reaches the public press, and everything in it, slanderous or otherwise, has its full public effect on public mind—it is distinctly said that there is a plot amongst black magicians,—influencing certain Brahmans in India through race-pride and ambition, to control and manage the T. S. That these magicians have picked me out as their agent, and have used as an intermediary my honoured friend, Mr. Chakravarti, chosen, you will remember, by the Indian Section and some Brahmanical societies as their Delegate to the parliament of Religions: that the Brahmans and their agents engineered the charges against Mr. Judge, and I practised black magic on Mr. Judge and two others. Mr. Judge further takes on himself to say that there are no true Initiates in India, and to praise the West as against the East, asserts that a great seat of

Western Occultism is to be set up, and that this was the object of H. P. B. I am ashamed to say that the holy name of the Master is attached to this attack on the East, on the Brahman caste, and on individuals. Now my reason for bringing this forward is that it is being circulated all over India, and with what result? The Vice-President of our Society attacks the whole of the Indian Section, and all its Brahman members. Charging one of them by name, and the whole of them in this general vague way, with a desire to guide and control the Society charging some of them with black magic; charging them with using me as an agent and a practiser of black magic, in order to bring about this plot; so that an officer of the Society secretly circulates this kind of attack against one of the Sections, setting the East against the West, stirring up disunion and unbrotherly feeling and strife in our midst; contradicting the very first declared Object of the Society, that we know no distinction between races; and contradicting our second Object, *viz.*, to familiarise the West with the literature, philosophy and religions of the East, and to demonstrate the importance of that study. I maintain that when an official takes up such a position, he ought at least to resign, so that the Sections may say if they desire to be thus represented in the face of the world; so that the Indian Section may have the right to say whether it endorses this slander, whether it considers that these attempts are being made under the shelter of black magicians, whether it considers, as it has the right to consider, that Mr. Chakravarti and myself are their agents; if so, we most certainly ought to be expelled. I say, when an official has to meet such charges, he is bound in the commonest honor to resign the office that protects him, and to allow the Society to re-elect him, if it endorses the statements he has made. These then are the reasons why I ask for his resignation. Let me say he misrepresents the feeling in the West. There is no such feeling against you, my Indian brothers; there is no such widespread belief in such a plot. Take America, and see how your own delegates were welcomed there. Take Europe, and see how Professor Chakravarti was

welcomed; and I may tell you from my own personal knowledge that, so great has been the effect of the speeches which he made before the Chicago Convention, that some of the noblest of our people in England look at the present time to him as one of the best representatives of Eastern thought in the movement; and they will be outraged and scandalised by such a charge, coming with all the authority of the Vice-President, against him. Therefore I ask his resignation, I do not ask his expulsion; to expel him would be to take action too hurriedly, would be to take action that, I hold, you have no right to take, until the very last effort has been made to deal with the matter in gentler and kinder fashion. Myself and brother Chakravarti are most hit at, both in public and in that circular. It is he and I against whom the worst and the foulest of these accusations come. I have had no opportunity of consulting with him; he is far away; he has taken no part in the whole of this business; and therefore, I am unable to say to you what his opinion is. I am acting on my own responsibility, without his judgment, and therefore I may not commit him, not having asked his views; but I venture on my knowledge of him, to say one thing in his name, as I say it in my own, that we are the two that or most outraged by this attack,—and we seek no revenge. I say to you, being thus charged, that I am not willing to expel my brother; I am not willing to forget the work he has done, and the services he has rendered. I have learnt that when you are struck at, you may not strike back in anger, nor deal with the matter with a personal bias, nor with passion, nor with wrath. I ask him to resign; and then he can be re-elected if the Society thinks it right. That, I hold to be the duty of any honorable man. That, therefore, I hold to be his duty. If I have any influence with you, if my words can go for anything in pleading, if my desire has any weight in any of your hearts, I ask you not to use bitter language, not to be carried away by the insult to our beloved India or by any other reason. Arjuna was told to strike; Arjuna was told to fight; but without passion, unattached, separate from the outer action, and at peace

within. Let us take that as our model; let us ask our brother to resign, and let him justify himself if he can. But do not prejudge him by expulsion, which puts another stigma on him in the face of the world. Ask him to take action which every honorable man may take, and which every honorable man ought to take. Ask our President to request him to do it, so that it may preserve the peace of the Society.

MR. B. KEIGHTLEY:

Mr. President-Founder and Brothers:

In seconding the motion which Mrs. Besant has just read to you, but very few words are needful on my part, after the admirably clear and lucid statement of the whole circumstances and events in this matter, and of the reasons which have led her to propose this step to the present meeting. With regard to my own position in the matter, my resignation will, in the course of today, be in the hands of the Convention of the Indian Section in due course. I am a yearly officer and it rests with my Section, charged as I have been with condoning fraud, either to choose to re-elect me or otherwise. I have tried in the matter to act honestly. When I thought we had a sufficiently well considered and strong case, I urged the President-Founder to take public action. When I return to Europe, I found that some links in the chain of evidence utterly broke down; I therefore advised my other colleagues here to proceed no further in the matter but to wait for further evidence. That further evidence was supplied by Mrs. Besant herself from her own knowledge. As soon as the case stood complete, action was taken immediately. I was a party to the Judicial Committee, I gave it as my opinion, that the technical objection raised by Mr. Judge was a sound and good one. As a lawyer, I held it was well taken, and hold it so even to this moment; and then finding that the Committee was abortive, I signed a strongly-worded protest against tampering with truth or deviation from honesty. It was signed by Mrs. Besant and others, and sent with the copy of judicial proceedings to every newspaper in London. If then you hold

with these facts before you, that I have condoned a fraud, it lies with you to elect someone in the course of today as General Secretary to the Indian Section in my place.

I hold that, be he guilty or be he innocent, Mr. Judge ought to have taken that course long ago. His resignation ought now to be in the hands of the Society. His resignation would neither have declared his guilt nor would it have proved his innocence. It would have been the course that any honorable man would have taken. I am reminded of another case in point, in which Mrs. Besant played a part; the famous case of the "Knowlton pamphlet." She was then Vice-President, while Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, Member of Parliament, was President, of the National Secular Society. They thought it right to publish a certain pamphlet known as the "Knowlton pamphlet" which became the object of a criminal prosecution. The very moment that these proceedings were commenced, both Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant tendered their resignations of their offices as President and Vice-President in the National Secular Society. Subsequently, they were triumphantly re-elected and re-instated. That was the precedent which every honorable man ought to have followed, a precedent which the creator of this movement, H. P. B., set before you; this is the precedent which Mr. Judge as Vice-President should have followed. His not having followed it, places him in my estimation in a false position. It places the Society to which we all belong, in a position which is absolutely untenable; and therefore I hold, that it is our duty here today to formally move, the President-Founder to request Mr. Judge to tender his resignation—not, thereby in any way prejudging his guilt or innocence, but simply reminding him of that duty which, as an honorable man and as an officer of this Society, he should have long ago recognized and performed. Therefore I second this resolution of Mrs. Besant's and endorse everything which she has said. Her statement of facts has been accurate to the letter and I trust that this meeting, this anniversary gathering of the Theosophical Society, will pass this resolution

without a single dissentient voice.

An amendment was moved by Captain Banon and seconded by Miss Muller, calling on the President-Founder to take steps to expel Mr. Judge from the Theosophical Society.

CAPTAIN BANON said: I beg to move the following amendment to the last part of the resolution, and that is that the President-Founder be and is hereby requested to take the necessary steps in accordance with previous precedents to expel Mr. W. Q. Judge from the Theosophical Society. I wish to say a few words. I have been a member of the Theosophical Society for the last 13 years. Mr. Judge is a perfect stranger to me: Mrs. Besant is a perfect stranger, and Mr. Chakravarti is a mere acquaintance of mine; but my particular care and my particular desire is for the welfare of the Society. I do not care for any person in it. I desire everything to be for the good of the Society, and I think public opinion expects us to take this course of expelling Mr. Judge. He has thrown out his challenge to us that we are afraid of expelling him. You may say I am pre-judging, but in the Esoteric pamphlet Mr. Judge has given his answer and you know what that answer is. It is not the first time a member has been expelled from the Society. Dr. Elliot Coues was expelled for an offence very much less than what Mr. Judge has done. We ought to treat Mr. Judge in very much the same fashion.

Dewan Bahadur S. SUBRAMANIER (sic) said:

Mr. President and gentlemen, I wish to make an observation before you come to a conclusion with reference to this resolution. I am not going to speak either in support of the original resolution or in support of the amendment, because, so far as I am concerned, the point I wish to suggest to be considered before you go to consider the question of what step you shall eventually take, is whether you will

ask Mr. Judge to resign or you will ask him to be expelled. I only wish to prevent our getting mixed, as appears to be the case. I would rather that Mr. Judge be called upon to defend himself upon the original charges of forgery which have been brought against him, I don't wish that further charge should be now added in this resolution. I think he should be called upon to defend himself on those two charges for the reasons which have been so eloquently explained to you by Mrs. Besant. I think we should not place ourselves in the position of judges. He has made an imputation upon Mrs. Besant; he has made an imputation upon Professor Chakravarti. And after the eloquent speech we have had from Mrs. Besant, it may be said—as Mrs. Besant remarked with reference to the Australasian Colonies – that we are under the spell of her eloquence, and we have made up our minds to do this in regard to it. This charge, I admit, is an extremely serious one. It is a charge, looking at it from a lawyer's point of view, which is rather difficult to establish. From its moral point of view, it is extremely grave, and on that the general public does not agree. As to the charges already brought against him, we know a *prima facie* case has been made against him with regard to forgeries, and with reference to those forgeries he was called upon to defend himself in London. He evaded the defence. Now, we should, therefore, confine our proceedings to the charges of forgery brought against him. If you are going to mix up the charges he brought against the Eastern Section; if you mix up with it the imputations he made against Mrs. Besant and Mr. Chakravarti, it would look as if we were actuated by some personal feelings. Now the attempt to produce disruption between the East and the West is an extremely discreditable one. To me, it appears, it is perfectly incapable of doing any harm or injury. The point is: Has the Vice-President been guilty of those charges of forging Mahatmas' letters, as it had been alleged? We should call upon him to defend himself against it. And if he fails to do it, other courses could be taken. I would, therefore, suggest to you that one small clause in Mrs.

Besant's resolution dealing with new imputations, should be left out, and that the rest of the resolution should stand as it does, and then in fact the ground would be absolutely clear. I can assure, you have a very astute man in Mr. Judge to deal with. This addition of a new charge will give him technical ground for another evasion. We must try to fix him at the point. He has been charged in Europe; and has not given any explanation. I think the Society is bound to call upon him to defend himself, and if he does not afford proper explanation, we will mete to him the condignest punishment he deserves. Whether we should come to the conclusion that he should resign, or, he should be expelled, it is somewhat premature. We are in a Society in which he has a legal position as a member and as an officer, and before we actually pass any punishment or pronounce any judgment he is entitled to be heard. I look at it purely as a lawyer, as if the question would be looked by a judge when it comes before the court. Undoubtedly, the guilt may be clear, and yet I think a most guilty person is entitled to be heard before he is condemned.

THE PRESIDENT: The Constitution of the Society requires the man to be heard.

Mr. SUBRAMANIER continuing: I do not know if the Constitution does not contain these rules. The court will impose these rules. If you catch a man red-handed at the scene of murder, he is entitled to bring his witnesses. He may be a monomaniac. I think therefore, gentlemen, Mr. Judge is entitled to say what he has to say before you condemn him. Therefore the resolution I would suggest is, that of Mrs. Besant with the exclusion of that clause in regard to the punishment, after we have received the explanation. I am extremely sorry that this matter has to be postponed. I know what discredit has been brought against the Society from the time the charges of forgery have been brought against us, I can assure you that for many years I found it difficult to own that I belonged to this Society. The

time has come, as Mr. Banon has said, when we are bound to go to the very bottom of this matter, and if it is found that Mr. Judge is guilty to have it proclaimed to the world that he has been guilty, and that the Society has been imposed upon. However strongly you may feel, we should not omit to take legal procedure. I, therefore, suggest that the resolution proposed by Mrs. Besant with that clause omitted, should in fact form the subject of the indictment that he should be called upon to submit his explanation and upon that explanation you should come to the determination as to what you should do. I don't think that the Society will suffer by the course we suggest. All that the public will like to know. Therefore, we may well delay, and call upon him to submit an explanation. If he raises any technical objection, then we shall arrogate to ourselves the deciding what we shall do.

THE PRESIDENT:

I may state that the argument of the honorable gentleman is entirely irrelevant, because every right of the individual is protected by our Constitution. No man would have any right to expel Mr. Judge, or make him resign, without giving him the chance of defence. This is nothing but an informal meeting of the Society to express its opinion. The members have a perfect liberty to ask me to take action as the Executive, subject to the approval of the General Council. The Motion of Capt. Banon can only be accepted as the expression of the opinion of those who will support his amendment. The time has not come when we should expel Mr. Judge. We may ask him to resign, but must, before expulsion, give him every opportunity of answering charges made against him. I will now request Dr. Huebbe Schleiden, as a renowned Doctor of Laws, to favour us with his views on the subject.

Dr. HUEBBE (sic) SCHLEIDEN:

Brothers and friends. Let me begin by saying that I agree with the amendment which has now been made. I understand it to be this:

1. that we first of all call upon Mr. Judge to resign his office in our Society;

2. that, secondly, we ask him to *give* a full explanation; and

3. that, in case Mr. Judge fails to comply with these requests within the year 1895, the President-Founder be pleased to take the necessary steps to remove Mr. Judge from his office of Vice-President of the Society.

I must say, that I think we ought to take no violent measures save for the most urgent reasons. I endorse fully all that Mrs. Besant has said. Mr. Judge has done a great deal for our Society and is doing so now. I have been good friends with him and I have personally nothing against him. But now at last the moment has come, that our Society ought finally to be purified of all phenomenalism with its unavoidable deception and fraud. Our principles ought to be changed.

I do not know whether all of you realise the importance of this move, whether you are aware that hundreds of our present and of our late members, those who are now members of the Society and many others who have sorrowfully left it, look—as it were—down upon us here now at this moment, for which they and we all have waited so long and which has now come at last.

Believe me, the reason why hundreds of good men—and some of the very best men there are in the world, in every race, here in India, in England, in Germany, in America and everywhere—believe me, the reason why these men have not joined our Society at all or have sorrowfully left it, although they quite agree that our movement embodies the greatest ideas that man can ever conceive, is that these ideas have not been carried out in practice. Our objects are the search after divine wisdom and its realization within us. But hitherto the main attraction to it has been made the reference to phenomena and the hunting after psychic powers, which have nothing

to do with the spiritual aspirations that are our final object. The authority of "Masters" is brought into play, instead of everyone being taught that there ought to be for no one any higher authority than his own conscience, his own intuition, and his own impartial and impersonal reasoning. All that playing at "Masters" and pretensions of psychic powers, precipitating letters and all the rest of that tomfoolery, is absolutely hostile to really genuine aspiration and is detrimental to all spiritual progress. And it is this which has brought our Society into all its calamities, almost from the beginning—and now again.

We must, therefore, now at last declare that we members who are here present at the celebration of this Anniversary of our Society, will not stand this nonsense any longer; that we will aspire to the realisation of divine wisdom, but have nothing to do with psychic phenomena, will not allow ourselves to be misguided and obstructed by them, and will not be deluded by any secret authorities or any other such sham pretensions.

Those who have left the Society because they could not wait for this moment to come, because they could not bear to see the noble aims of the Society dragged down into the mud, those cannot help us now. They are not here and if they were they would have no voice and no vote in the matter. But we who are here now, we have the right, nay, we have the duty to stand up for that which we aspire to as true and good and against all that we know is base and is perverted.

Truthfulness ought to be one of the first requirements for every Theosophist. And the honour of truth ought to be given to everyone to whom it is due. This is a particular reason why I recommend this amendment to you. Mrs. Besant said that she would continue to work for the Society, even if Mr. Judge did not give a satisfactory explanation and should still remain Vice-President, but that she would then have to stand on every platform under this shadow of being somehow linked to fraud and to deceit. We dare not accept

this sacrifice from her; we must rid her of this dreadful spell; we must force Mr. Judge to do what he is in honour bound to do, if he will not do it voluntarily. Mrs. Besant has been defamed publicly for things which were absolutely untrue. That is bad enough. But being blamed for things which are true, which oneself despises but still with some remote reason one is made responsible for, that is unbearable. We ought not to expose Mrs. Besant to such a disgrace. I do not know if any one of you would ever brave out such a position.

If, therefore, Mr. Judge will not comply with our demand to resign his Vice-Presidentship or to give a full explanation which will be satisfactory to the leading members of our Society—we shall then be obliged to remove him from his office. We ought not to allow a prominent member like her, the beloved exponent of Theosophy all over the world, to suffer under such a ban as she would be obliged to face. These are my reasons, and I second the amendment of the Honorable Subramanier.

MR. E. M. SASSEVILLE:

Brother Theosophists, I come from America. I am extremely glad to be present here today. I have been a Theosophist for over ten years. I little dreamt when I first joined, that this happy day of our meeting would ever come. I never expected that I would ever have the pleasure of looking at so many faces of my Hindu brethren. I must say that, if I speak in that way I am sure that I also represent the sentiment of probably ninety-nine per cent, or even a hundred per cent of the American Theosophists. Our leader, Mr. Judge—for I must still call him our leader—has been with us for years, and has done grand and noble work. We all acknowledge it. All the Americans would certainly stand by him, no matter what happened to him. Mr. Judge probably has been guilty of something, I am afraid. What it is I cannot say, because I have not heard his side of the case. But I think that the motion brought by Mrs. Besant, requesting the Presi-

dent to ask Mr. Judge to resign, is a just and proper one. Yet I am entirely against the amendment to the motion, which asks for his expulsion from the Society. If you expel Mr. Judge before having asked him to resign, before giving him a chance, as the honourable gentleman put it, to say what he has to say in his explanation—I think you will commit a hasty action, and it will charge heavily on the whole Society. Please remember that the American Section of the Theosophical Society is no very small branch. It would be a pity to expel Mr. Judge in a hasty fashion, and thus injure the cause of Theosophy in our country; and not only in our country, but all over the world. Please remember that Mr. Judge, although he may be guilty, still has done great work. He has been ever since the foundation of the Society in the harness and has worked for the cause. Please remember this, and do not act too hastily. I am happy to bring you brotherly greetings from all the American Theosophists.

MR. KEIGHTLEY:

With the permission of the President, I would like to clear up some misconceptions. We are getting confused in regard to the issues before us. My friend, Mr. S. Subramanier has contributed unwittingly to our confusion. He has endeavoured to make out that the Resolution as moved by Mrs. Besant, and seconded by myself, formulated a new and fresh charge against Mr. Judge, or in a way condemns him, or passes judgment. It does nothing of the kind. It recites a number of facts, none of which can be disputed. It recites, first, the appearance of the articles in the *Westminster Gazette*; secondly, it recites the charges of fraud and deception, supported by a large body of evidence. It then goes on to recite various other points, including the point that his recent publications have tended to raise strife in the Sections. It then shows that every honorable man, be he guilty or innocent, under circumstances of this kind would naturally tender his resignation of office in such a Society as ours, without hesitation. And it only asks him, in conclusion, as a matter of

common honour and honesty, to place his resignation in the hands of the President, and it asks the President to call upon Mr. Judge to do so. That is a clear issue. It does not pronounce any opinion on Mr. Judge. It does not expel him, it does not remove him from the office of Vice-President; but it simply reminds him of a duty which he ought to have long ago recognised on his own account. I wish to say also that I am strongly opposed to such hasty action as would be involved in the Resolution of expulsion. I fully agree with my friend, Mr. Subramanier and with Mr. Sasseville, who has just spoken. It would be a most untheosophical, most wrong, most injurious, as well as most illegal proceeding to pass a resolution expelling any member of this Society without first formally calling upon him for an answer to the charges against him. That you must remember. The Resolution of Mrs. Besant calls upon him to place the office of the Vice-President back into the hands of the Society, so that when his official answer is made, when his defence is before the Society, he may then offer himself for re-election, and by submitting to that ordeal, give an opportunity to the Society to pronounce its final verdict; because, owing to his own course of raising technical objections, it is impossible for this Society to take any judicial action against him, or bring him before any court before which he could make his formal legal defence. The only way to give him an opportunity to make his defence, is by his placing the resignation in the hands of the President-Founder, and then standing for re-election.

THE PRESIDENT:

There was an opportunity given Mr. Judge last July to make a defence. He has not yet refused to make an explanation, as I understand it, so far as I know, but I am in hopes that he will do so. I cannot conceive of his doing otherwise, however many affectionate friends may dissuade him. The tone of all his private letters to me is that he is innocent of wrongdoing, and as one of his oldest and staunchest friends I should deplore his shirking a full and precise

official explanation. It is for us to see whether he is disposed to meet the wishes of the Society in this respect. Further action may be taken later.

The COUNTESS WACHTMEISTER: An opportunity was given to Mr. Judge last Summer at the European Convention of the T. S. to give his defence on these charges, and he through a lawyer's quibble evaded that opportunity. Why should we come forward again to ask him for an explanation (hear! hear!) It seems to me that the course proposed by Mrs. Besant is the right one. I think that we should ask him to resign the Vice-Presidentship, and when he has resigned let him come forward as a gentleman and as an honourable man, and clear himself of these charges. If he does so satisfactorily, we will receive him with open arms as our brother. We have no enmity against him. We appreciate his work for the T. S. We know what he has done for the Society, and therefore if these charges of deceit and fraud can be answered in an honest and satisfactory manner, we will welcome him back most cordially. What strikes one as both heartless and cruel in Mr. Judge's conduct is the mine he exploded on Annie Besant when she was thousands of miles away in Australia, giving out publicly, as he did, that she is not only a victim of black magic, but that she herself has practised black magic. When this bomb exploded, the misleading news reached Australia that she had been expelled from the Society by Mr. Judge; the work was impeded; the public thought that she was in disgrace, and few people came to her lectures.

Last year when we were here, Mr. Old and Mr. Edge wished to bring forward all these charges before the Indian Section—but Mrs. Besant objected, on the plea that it would be unfair to Mr. Judge to bring these charges behind his back: honourable conduct on her part, very different to the mean tricks played upon her by Mr. Judge. The President-Founder in his Address deplored the conduct of Mr. Judge in accusing Mrs. Besant of black magic. It is a very grave

charge, my friends, and I beg you to think of it seriously, and if you will only endorse what the Colonel has so ably said in his Address, disapproving entirely of Mr. Judge's accusation against her, you will then give to Annie Besant a vote of confidence.

THE PRESIDENT:

Let us close the matter by bringing it to a practical issue. This meeting, although representative of several Sections, has no legal power whatever to expel Mr. Judge. This meeting can only recommend to the Executive of the Society, who represents the General Council, to take certain action. It has been suggested here, first, by Mrs. Besant, that Mr. Judge be requested to resign. In the second place, it has been suggested by Capt. Banon that he be summarily expelled; and in the third place, it has been suggested by Mr. S. Subramanier that he be requested to explain and if he does not explain or resign, that steps be taken to remove him from the office of Vice-President. Mrs. Besant has the floor for a rejoinder.

MRS. BESANT:

I need do nothing in reply except to sum up the points on which your decision has to be made, and I do ask of you to preserve a quiet dignity in so serious a matter. It is not a matter for laughter. It is not a matter for passion. It is a matter involving the future of a great spiritual movement, and you should, I think, show dignity and a quiet spirit. In giving your vote for it, you will have to answer in the future. The first amendment that will be put to you by the Chair is that of the Honorable S. Subramanier. If his speech had been delivered a year ago, I should have agreed, but we have done exactly what he now asks us to do again. We have asked Mr. Judge to explain. We have called him before the Judicial Committee, which is the only constitutional and legal way of trying him. We asked him there to meet the charges and he evaded the whole thing. To ask him over again is to put yourselves in the absurd position of finding

yourselves next year exactly in the position where you were at the commencement. He will probably go through the same succession of excuses, prevarications and evasions. And, remember that all the trouble of the best lawyers in your Society was taken last Spring to find out the way in which he could be brought to book. There is no other way in the Constitution except the one tried. and which failed; so that if you pass that amendment you will practically tell your President to do what he has already done—to waste another year in doing what the past year has been wasted in doing—and at the end you will be exactly where you are now. If Mr. Judge gives no explanation and keeps his position in the face of the world, then there comes the question, how are you going to force him to act. There is no other way. You have a Constitution and you cannot break it; you have laws and you must abide by them. There is no way of reaching Mr. Judge except the way you have tried. Then comes the question of expulsion; but you cannot expel him. You may start on lines which ultimately, you hope, will lead you in that direction, but nothing more. But remember that, supposing you pass the original Resolution and through the President call on him to resign, that does not deter the General Council from expelling him if he does not choose to make his explanation. I can conceive nothing more unwise, more rash than to plunge into the act of expulsion, because one gentleman says that my statement is true. That gives you no reason to refuse to hear Mr. Judge. That is not judicial, to expel him. To ask him to resign is to leave him absolutely free. To ask him to do what an honourable man would have done a year ago, is the only thing remaining to be done. I am seeking to clear the Society and not to raise party spirit. Mr. Judge says one thing; Mrs. Besant says another thing. Let them both look for one thing, that is the Society's welfare. Let the thing be fought out; but the Society should not be compromised in the face of the world. So I ask you to say "No" to both the amendments; that is, to keep your hands carefully at your sides without raising them, until the original Resolution is put

before you, and then to vote upon it. Let me say one thing—that mistake may not arise; one word with reference to the telegram which the Countess Wachtmeister said was sent by Mr. Judge to Australia. It was a newspaper telegram. I have no reason to believe that Mr. Judge sent it. With this public statement I leave the question in your hands.

At this stage a voice from the audience demanded an adjournment, but the motion fell through for want of a seconder.

The President then put the first amendment, that of Captain Banon [that Mr Judge should be expelled], to the meeting and it was lost.

Mr. S. Subramanier having withdrawn his amendment, the original Resolution of Mrs. Besant was put to the vote and carried, *nem. con.*

At the opening of Chapter XXIII of *Old Diary Leaves*, Fifth Series (The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1975, pp. 310-311), we find the following heading: ‘THE AMERICAN SECTION SECEDES (1895)’. And this was Col. Olcott opening statement:

I sailed from Bombay on the 10th of May in the French steamer “La Seine” and at Suez was transferred to the “Australien,” and sailed in her for Marseilles on the 21st. The reader may picture to himself my astonishment when, on reaching Marseilles on the 30th of the month, among the large number of letters awaiting me was one from Mr. Judge notifying me of the secession of the American Section on the 28th of April, last past. This was his first intimation to me of his intention, and his reward for my judicial impartiality and undiminished friendliness up to that moment. If this might not be called a crisis, what would? However, I lost no sleep

over it nor shed a tear; I simply regarded it as an act of moral suicide which concerned only the individual himself: as for its destroying, or even permanently weakening the Society I did not entertain the thought. The fact is that a dozen such “crises” would not make me pass a sleepless night or lose a meal, for down to the very roots of my being I have the conviction that those who are behind this movement are stronger than all adverse forces which could be combined together. If the eyes of our timid members could only be opened like those of Elisha’s servant, they, like him, would see “the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about”—the Society.

The emotional language used by Col. Olcott in this statement reflected, possibly, the serious gravity of the moment lived by the Society. The fact is that the new Society, established under the Mr. Judge’s leadership, attracted a considerable number of members and generated a lineage of distinguished writers and exponents of Theosophy, including Gottfried de Purucker, Boris de Zirkoff, Geoffrey Barborka, Charles J. Ryan, H. J. Spierenburg, James A. Long and Grace F. Knoche, among others.

With very few exceptions, the leaders of the several Theosophical organizations inspired by the work of William Q. Judge were not excessively critical towards the TS with Headquarters at Adyar. The latter, for example, cooperated significantly with the project of publishing *H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings*, edited by Boris de Zirkoff. And more recently, Tim Boyd, international President of the TS with Headquarters at Adyar, invited a number of speakers from other Theosophical organizations to participate at the International Convention at Adyar. Also, the International Theosophical Conferences have been attracting members from all Theosophical groups in an atmosphere of harmony and serious study. Theosophy is bound to remain the focus in all of them, in spite of their differences in approaching it. For as HPB wrote in her message to American Theosophists in 1888:

Many who have never heard of the Society are Theosophists without knowing it themselves; for the essence of Theosophy is the perfect harmonizing of the divine with the human in man, the adjustment of his god-like qualities and aspirations and their sway over the terrestrial or animal passions in him. Kindness, absence of every ill feeling or selfishness, charity, goodwill to all beings, and perfect justice to others as to one's self, are its chief features. He who teaches Theosophy preaches the gospel of goodwill; and the converse of this is true also,—he who preaches the gospel of goodwill, teaches Theosophy.

http://www.phx-ult-lodge.org/five_messages.htm

