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~~~~~THEOSOPHY TODAY~~~~~

The Theosophical Society In Orlando  
School of Theosophy, Orlando  
Monthly Internet Newsletter.  
September, 2003 # 13

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Send all comments and literary contributions to Editor: T. Tday ?  
Schtsyorl@webtv.net

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~~STUDY~~MEDITATION~~SERVICE~~

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THEOSOPHICAL MEETINGS

First & Third Friday of The Month 8:00 P.M.

\*September 5th.? Meditation Service

Meditation on Life, Based upon the instructions  
of Mr. Nilkanta Sri Ram. Mr N. Sri Ram was for many years the  
International President of The  
Theosophical Society. His gentle presence and  
thorough incisive insight into the subtle Teachings of the Spiritual  
Life were an enlightenment and encouragement to many.

\*September 19th,? The Search Within

Chapter 10 of Christmas Humphries' book  
on Compassion: Universal Love

( Public Welcome To All Meetings )

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Meditation Practice Group

The Meditation Practice Group meets on the 2nd & 4th Friday of each  
month at 7:30 P.M.

Practice is based upon the Raja Yoga of Patanjali. Sessions with  
practice and discussion

last approximately one hour.? All are welcome to participate. No fees.  
September Practice Dates....12th & 26th

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Upcomming Special Annual Event

October 12th...Sunday afternoon 2:00 P.M.  
NATURE SANCTUARY DAY

In October of 1996 the members of Orlando Lodge dedicated our campus as  
a "Designated  
Nature Sanctuary." Each year on the anniversary of that date we gather  
to renew our

to renew our  
 commitment to Nature Awareness and the  
 Sanctity of All Life.?? Short program with readings and meditation  
 followed with lite refreshments.? Public Welcome.

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## TOWARDS THE ETERNAL

~~Radha Burnier

The great Indian epic Mahabharata depicts the training of the five Pandava princes in the martial arts. One incident above all others is remembered by most people, perhaps because it has significance for spiritual living.

The Pandava princes were tutored by the renowned and highly respected warrior Drona. On a certain occasion, he put an artificial bird in a tree and called the princes, one by one, and asked: What do you see?

Each of them replied, " I see the tree, the bird, my brothers, and yourself," upon which they were told to stand aside. But when it came to the turn of the hero Arjuna, he answered : " I see the bird."

When Drona asked him to describe it, Arjuna had to confess that he saw only the head of the bird. "Shoot", said the teacher. Arjuna was of course the best of the archers, because as Annie Besant points out in her fine lectures on the Mahabharata, he had the capacity for close attention to what he was doing. This is one of the qualities we need to cultivate on the Path--  
 the power of attention.

In the East, a tradition remains of symbolically relating archery to the spiritual life, but the target is of a totally different nature for the spiritually oriented student, being transcendental. The Mundaka, one of the most beautiful of the major Upanishads, clearly says that for the aspirant on the spiritual path, the target is the Eternal (Brahman), that which is always a boundless whole, not subject to destruction or diminuation.

The {Light of Asia}, which relates the life of the Buddha in inspiring fashion, describes how various princes were invited to a contest for the hand of the Princess Yasodhara, and each suitor had to demonstrate his prowess in archery and other martial arts. Devadatta, the cousin of Siddhartha, the future Buddha, put drum further away from all the others, making it appear as small as a cowrie shell, and shot an arrow through both its sides.

But when Siddhartha's turn came, every bow he bent broke, except for a special one kept in a temple. Siddhartha raised it and shot his arrow through all the drums placed in a row, symbolic of the strength and undeviating determination needed to overcome obstacles on the spiritual path.

We are told that American Indians who had acquired similar skills could shoot not only small objects at a great distance, but pierce several objects in a row with one well made arrow. One of the tests of the great archer was to shoot, say , five arrows into the sky so fast that all five were still in the air before the first one dropped to earth. Such feats were possible only when the bow and arrows were excellently fashioned.

Returning to the Mundaka Upanishad, the Absolute, the Eternal ( Brahman) is beyond word and thought, and hence not an easy target. It is the source and the cause of everything in the grosser as well as the subtler dimensions. It is life ( prana), speech, mind, truth, immortality.

Every name given to this causeless Cause, as H.P.B. called it, reduces the immeasurable to the confines of the conceptual mind. So we cannot know it in the ordinary sense. We must penetrate into it as the archers arrow does the target, using skill and the best weapons.

The mighty weapon or bow to lance the spiritual aspirant on the way is the essential teaching of the Upanishads, distilled into the esoteric meaning of the sacred syllable- " OM" -.

The arrow is the individual self, refined and well prepared by devotion and meditation (upasana). Such an arrow strung on the sacred bow of Upanishadic teaching, sent forth with an undistracted mind, solely concerned with eternal wisdom (brahmavidya), speedily reaches and becomes absorbed in the Imperishable. It cannot return or be pulled out, for it has become one with Universal Life. "The dewdrop slips into the shining sea".

The undistracted mind is not caught in the illusions and enticements of the non-eternal.

When wholly drawn towards the Eternal by study and meditation, lesser things recede into insignificance.

All aims except one fade away, as Thomas a Kempis wrote...The energy wasted at the physical, emotional, and mental levels on useless things, which seemed previously important, becomes available to proceed steadily and rapidly onward.

Such a mind, free and calm, allows one to act at the practical level, without being involved. Samsara is psychological involvement--in wife, children, business, and other things. But one who is inwardly free may fulfil duties and work for world welfare without being attached and involved.

AT THE FEET OF THE MASTER advises fulfilling duties, but not artificially acquiring new ones: and the BHAGAVADGITA refers to the sage Janaka, who carried on duties as a king for the welfare of the world.

All the Upanishads have only one message--- the theosophical message-- that life is unfragmented, undivided. Illusion makes one perceive all things as separate from everything else. But "YOU" are Brahman, the Eternal, which is everywhere, for there is nothing other than that.

Meditate on such sentences as ... "Thou art That" ( tat tvam asi), ... "I am Brahman" ( aham brahmasmi) and realize that "I" in the ordinary sense does not exist. Only "That" (the Everlasting) exists.

The sacred syllable "OM" represents the quintessence of that teaching, for it has no literal meaning, and therefore points to "That" which has supreme meaning---the One Reality within the known, the knowable, and unknowable at all levels.

The Yoga Sutra (I.28) says: Meditate on OM ( Pranava) with all your attention and heart. Try to experience it ever more deeply. We cannot become immortal bodily. All that exists in the world of form is

become immortal bodily. All that exists in the world of form is perishable.

To become immortal means merging with that which exists forever, and that is Everlasting, Universal Life.

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Radha Burnier is International President of The Theosophical Society, Adyar.

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There is no greatness where simplicity, goodness and truth are not.  
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~~~~~ORLANDO LODGE~~~~~

Orlando Lodge is an intentional community of Theosophical Students serving the objectives of the Theosophical Society, and is dedicated to the creation and maintainance of a Spiritual Center where the Theosophical Philosophy, the Ancient Wisdom, may be studied and lived

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We invite your inquiries about Theosophy & participation in our programs.
Schtsyorl@webtv.net

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LENDING LIBRARY-MEDITATION ROOM-NATURE SANCTUARY

The Lending Library-Meditation Room & Nature Sanctuary are open weekly to the public.

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN ORLANDO, FLORIDA (Orlando Lodge)

The Theosophical Society In Orlando was chartered in January 1935 and has been active in the Central Florida community since that time.

Theosophical Meetings are held on the first and third Fridays at 8:00 P.M. September thru May.

The Society maintains a lending library, nature sanctuary, and Meditation Room open weekly to the public, September thru May.

The School of Theosophy,Orlando presents classes in Basic Theosophy and Meditation twice a year, in the Spring and Fall Semesters. A school catalog and class syllabus are available upon request.

Theosophy is the Perennial Wisdom which lies at the root of all religion, yet is the exclusive possession of none. Members of the Society seek to promote a sense of tolerance, understanding, and universal brotherhood among all people.

The aims and objectives of the Society are purely altruistic in the highest sense. The Society does not involve itself in sectarian or political causes whatever.

Theosophy is non-dogmatic and does not promote any creed or specific belief. Rather, through Study, Meditation, and Service members attempt to gain a greater understanding of themselves and their purpose in the universe.

The Society is not authoritarian and has no clergy or leaders, other than democratically elected officers. It promotes complete individual freedom of thought and conscience, and refers the individual back to his own conscience as the only ultimate authority in regard to spiritual and moral decisions.

The Theosophical Society In Orlando is a local branch of a national and international organization with headquarters in Chennai, India. We invite your interest and participation in our programs.

The present campus of Orlando Lodge was acquired in 1976. In October of 1996 the members dedicated the campus as a designated Nature Sanctuary.

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~~~~~THE GOLDEN STAIRS~~~~~

A clean life, an open mind, a pure heart, an eager intellect, an unveiled spiritual perception, a brotherliness for all, a readiness to give and receive advice and instruction; a courageous endurance of personal injustice, a brave declaration of principles, a valient defense of those who are unjustly attacked, and a constant eye to the ideal of human progression and perfection which the sacred science depicts--- these are the Golden Stairs up the steps of which the learner may climb to the Temple of Divine Wisdom. ---H.P. Blavatsky

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AN EPITOME OF THEOSOPHY (Part 1 )

--W.Q. Judge

THEOSOPHY, the Wisdom-Religion, has existed from immemorial time. It offers us a theory of nature and of life which is founded upon knowledge acquired by the Sages of the past, more especially those of the East; and its higher students claim that this knowledge is not something imagined or inferred, but that it is seen and known by those who are willing to comply with the conditions.

I. Some of its fundamental propositions are:

1. That the spirit in man is the only real and permanent part of his being; the rest of his nature being variously compounded, and decay being incident to all composite things, everything in man but his spirit is impermanent.

Further, that the universe being one thing and not diverse, and every thing within it being connected with the whole and with every other, of which upon the upper plane above referred to there is a perfect knowledge, no act or thought occurs without each portion of the great whole perceiving and noting it. Hence all are inseparably bound together by the tie of Brotherhood.

2. That below the spirit and above the intellect is a plane of consciousness in which experiences are noted, commonly called man's "spiritual nature"; this is as susceptible of culture as his body or his intellect.

3. That this spiritual culture is only attainable as the grosser interests, passions, and demands of the flesh are subordinated to the interests, aspirations, and needs of the higher nature; and that this is a matter of both system and established law.

4. That men thus systematically trained attain to clear insight into the immaterial, spiritual world, their interior faculties apprehending Truth as immediately and readily as physical faculties grasp the things of sense, or mental faculties those of reason; and hence that their testimony to such Truth is as trustworthy as is that of scientists or philosophers to truth in their respective fields.

5. That in the course of this spiritual training such men acquire perception of and control over various forces in Nature unknown to others, and thus are able to perform works usually called "miraculous," though really but the result of larger knowledge of natural law.

6. That their testimony as to super-sensuous truth, verified by their possession of such powers, challenges candid examination from every religious mind.

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( Part 2 )

II. Turning now to the system expounded by these Sages, we find as its main points:

1. An account of cosmogony, the past and future of this earth and other planets, the evolution of life through mineral, vegetable, animal, and human forms.

2. That the affairs of this world and its people are subject to cyclic laws, and that during any one cycle the rate or quality of progress appertaining to a different cycle is not possible.

3. The existence of a universally diffused and higher ethereal medium, called the "Astral Light"(1) or "Akasa," which is the repository of all past, present, and future events, and which records the effects of spiritual causes and of all acts and thoughts from the direction of either spirit or matter. It may be called the Book of the Recording Angel.

4. The origin, history, development, and destiny of mankind.

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(Part 3 )

III. Upon the subject of Man it teaches:

1. That each spirit is a manifestation of the One Spirit, and thus a part of all. It passes through a series of experiences in incarnation, and is destined to ultimate re-union with the Divine.

2. That this incarnation is not single but repeated. each individuality

2. That this incarnation is not single but repeated, each individuality becoming re-embodied during numerous existences in successive races and planets, and accumulating the experiences of each incarnation towards its perfection.

3. That between adjacent incarnations, after grosser elements are first purged away, comes a period of comparative rest and refreshment, the spirit being therein prepared for its next advent into material life.

4. That the nature of each incarnation depends upon the merit and demerit of the previous life or lives, upon the way in which the man has lived and thought; and that this law is inflexible and wholly just.

5. That "Karma," -- a term signifying two things, the law of ethical causation (Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap), and the balance or excess of merit or demerit in any individual, determines also the main experiences of joy and sorrow in each incarnation, so that what men call "luck" is in reality "desert," -- desert acquired in past existence.

6. That the process of evolution up to re-union with the Divine contemplates successive elevations from rank to rank of power and usefulness, the most exalted beings still in the flesh being known as Sages, Rishis, Brothers, Masters, their great function being the preservation at all times, and -- when cyclic laws permit -- the extension, of spiritual knowledge and influence among humanity.

7. That when union with the Divine is effected, all the events and experiences of each incarnation are known.

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( Part 4 )

IV. As to the process of spiritual development it teaches:

1. That the essence of the process lies in the securing of supremacy to the highest, the spiritual, element of man's nature.

2. That this is attained along four lines, among others--

(a) The eradication of selfishness in all forms, and the cultivation of broad, generous sympathy in and effort for the good of others.

(b) The cultivation of the inner, spiritual man by meditation, communion with the Divine, and exercise.

(c) The control of fleshly appetites and desires, all lower, material interests being deliberately subordinated to the behests of the spirit.

(d) The careful performance of every duty belonging to one's station in life, without desire for reward, leaving results to Divine law.

3. That while the above is incumbent on and practicable by all religiously-disposed men, a yet higher plane of spiritual attainment is conditioned upon a specific course of training, physical, intellectual, and spiritual, by which the internal faculties are first aroused and then developed.

4. That an extension of this process is reached in Adeptship, an exalted stage, attained by laborious self-discipline and hardship, protracted through possibly many incarnations. and with many degrees of initiation

through possibly many incarnations, and with many degrees of initiation and preferment, beyond which are yet other stages ever approaching the Divine.

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(Part 5 )

V. As to the rationale of spiritual development it asserts:

1. That the process is entirely within the individual himself, the motive, the effort, the result being distinctly personal.
2. That, however personal and interior, this process is not unaided, being possible, in fact, only through close communion with the Supreme Source of all strength.

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( Part 6 )

VI. As to the degree of advancement in incarnations it holds:

1. That even a mere intellectual acquaintance with Theosophic truth has great value in fitting the individual for a step upwards in his next earth-life, as it gives an impulse in that direction.
2. That still more is gained by a career of duty, piety, and beneficence.
3. That a still greater advance is attained by the attentive and devoted use of the means to spiritual culture heretofore stated.