

Hello everyone,

The title of this presentation is **TRUTH IS BEYOND ALL TEACHING.**

What we are going to explore is the pursuit of truth in the context of the theosophical movement.

The pursuit of truth is an essential aspect of the theosophical tradition.

Probably everyone agrees with the words that Jesus pronounced in which he said “truth will set you free.”

However, this is not as simple and direct as it may seem. The pursuit of truth, especially of spiritual truth, has actually been quite challenging for humanity. It has divided people, it has lead people to fight with each other, in the name of truth infidels have been tortured and killed. Those who dared to speak inconvenient truths have also been put to death or attacked in their reputation and influence.

So truth is a dangerous pursuit.

And for truth to set us free we must be extraordinarily wise and humble.

Now the pursuit of truth has also hurt the theosophical movement. As we are all aware, within our movement there are divisions and there is even ill-will between different groups.

In fact, this Conference was created to try to heal some of these wounds, in which the theosophical movement has incurred in the pursuit of truth.

With all the good that our movement has done in many fields, I think unfortunately in this particular area we have failed to be different from other religious and spiritual organisations.

Obviously I am talking about the theosophical movement as a whole. Many individuals and even groups have not engaged in this kind of division. But as I was mentioning, this Conference is an attempt at trying to gather all the people who feel in this way, who feel that there should no divisions within the theosophical movement and see if we can find ways to bridge this gap.

Unfortunately, even today we can hear or read, on internet or in books that are published by theosophical publishing companies declarations of truth about different theosophical authors and organisations. Phrases such as “this is theosophy”, “these are the authentic teachings”, and “that is pseudo-theosophy” can be found in publications. And this attitude of course makes it very difficult for theosophists of the different traditions to cooperate, to feel love and goodwill with each other.

If we think deeply and look carefully at this point, I think we will realise that deep cooperation is not really possible if we are coming with an attitude of “we have the true doctrine and not the other groups”. If we come from that spirit, there will be an attitude, in some way, of dominance. And also those other groups who are being said that they don’t hold the true doctrine, how can they have good-will with those who are saying this?

Of course, the fact that we are attending this conference means that we agree that this is not something that should happen. Especially since our movement is a movement that has been founded to promote Brotherhood, freedom of thought, to fight against dogmatism and intolerance. We could of course produce endless quotes from HPB, the Masters, many other theosophists in all the organisations about how central these goals are to the theosophical movement. For example, I give you just one quote that is connected to the aspect of wisdom that we are... is part of the subject of this Conference. Blavatsky said:

“Valuing freedom of thought above all things, as the only way of reaching at some future time that Wisdom, of which every Theosophist ought to be enamoured, we recognise the right to the same freedom in our foes as in our friends.” – HP Blavatsky, BCW 12, p.317

So, pay attention to these phrases that are quite radical in a sense : “above all

things,” “the only way,” “every theosophist,” ... The idea of freedom of thought is essential in the theosophical movement . And again, although there are many groups and many individuals who stand by this, I am not sure that we could say that this is a feature of the theosophical movement as a whole.

But of course there is always time to redress the wrongs, and to come closer to the ideal. And I think this is part of what we are trying to do here.

Now, besides the fact that the attitude of trying to declare what is true theosophy as opposed to what is not is not really helpful for the purposes of bringing unity, I would say that it is based on the lack of understanding of what truth is. Especially when we are referring to esoteric truths.

As the motto of the Theosophical Society that Blavatsky chose says “truth is beyond all teachings”. This of course is not the translation that has been officially adopted by the different theosophical groups. The traditional translation is “there is no religion higher than Truth”. But if you look at the sanscrit words, this is a good translation. “Satyã means Truth, nasti paro means “higher than” or “beyond all other”, dharmah means religion, spiritual teaching, doctrine, and many other things, but Blavatsky chose to translate this word dharma in the context of “teachings.” So, we could translate or paraphrase somewhat, this motto, in different ways, and they can give us a sense of what this means. For example: “no teaching can contain the truth”; think of that: no teaching can contain the truth. That’s what we are saying, right?

“There is no teaching, no religious teaching, no spiritual teaching higher than truth.”

“All teachings are lower than truth.” “No words can correctly express truth.”

Or, we could say: “truth is not what can be written or spoken.” Perhaps this may remind you of the Tao-Te-Ching that says “the Tao, (let’s say ‘the Truth’) that can be spoken of is not a truth, is not the real truth.”

Another paraphrase of this is “all descriptions of truth are partial, are relatively

wrong.” Right? If truth is beyond all words, that means that all words, all descriptions, or all books are not quite true; are at least partially or relatively wrong.

So, this is very important to keep it in mind and I don’t know if we think about this enough. Because this is the case of all esoteric truths. Esoteric truths belong to a plane that is beyond the domain of space as we know it; of time as we know it, of matter, of law as we know it. Truth belongs to a different plane, and all words that we use, all images, all concepts that we may use are created to describe the physical plane.

Perhaps for this reason one of the Masters, Master KH, said:

“The Occult Science is not one in which secrets can be communicated of a sudden, by a written or even verbal communication.”

So the Occult Science cannot be communicated by writings or even verbally.

“If so, [he says] all the “Brothers” [all the Masters] would have to do, would be to publish a Hand-book of the art which might be taught in schools as grammar is ...” - Mahatma KH, letter #20

“The truth, [however], is that till the neophyte attains to the condition necessary for that degree of illumination to which, and for which, he is entitled and fitted, [until that time] most if not all of the Secrets are incommunicable.

“Most if not all the Secrets are incommunicable”

So, what does this mean for all theosophical books that have been written and published? We normally read and study the books thinking that they are a faithful expression of esoteric truths. But if we really look into these, we will find many quotes from Blavatsky and the Masters and others, where they say, basically, that

the teachings that we see in a book can never be the esoteric truth.

There are many reasons for this. First, that no description is the same as direct perception. You know, we can have a description of an unknown country and of course it is not the same as being in that country. This example is not even close to the problem here, because, well, we know other countries, which have similar objects. So, a description may give us a fairly good idea although not the same as experiencing the country. But when we come to esoteric truths, as we said, we are talking about a different realm, a different dimension. What we are trying to do is like trying to describe what a colour is by means of smells. See, we are trying to describe what spiritual esoteric dimensions are by means of the physical dimension. And this is why Blavatsky, her Masters and many others say this really cannot be done. Books are published because something has to be done on the physical plane to turn the mind of people to other spiritual grounds, but the idea of books, as Blavatsky explains many times, is that they lead us into a meditation, into an inner journey so that eventually we can rise our consciousness to those spiritual realms, and then have a direct experience of them.

Of course there are some teachings that are about daily life, how to practice, how to prepare ourselves to do this. Those would not be “esoteric teachings”, let’s say, although they are teachings about the esoteric path, the esoteric life. But I am talking about the esoteric teachings, because many of the divisions within the theosophical movement have to do with things that are really not that relevant. We don’t discuss [argue] much about what kind of theosophical life should be lead. As we are going to see the discussions are about esoteric truth. But then they are not really about esoteric truths because few people at this point in evolution have access to direct perception of this esoteric truth. The discussions are about the words that different authors have chosen to try to depict these esoteric truths. And as we have seen, the words are not the truth.

So, declaring that anyone particular expression of esoteric teachings is correct and the other is not is fraught with dangers. This doesn't mean that there are no incorrect statements, that everything is correct. Obviously there are some statements that may have nothing to do with truth. But the problem is that determining which statements are correct and which are not, when we are talking about esoteric truths, is not easy at all, is not something that we can do just from reading the information on a book.

So, we need to examine this, how do we deal with esoteric information? You know, let me give an example so that this is not so abstract. You know, we encounter a large amount of esoteric information in theosophical literature. For example, the idea of the planetary chains: That the earth is part of a chain of globes through which evolution happens. But some authors say there are seven globes in the planetary chain, other authors say there are twelve. Some authors say that Mars and Mercury are part of the earth planetary chain, and some authors say that they are not. So, how do we decide? How do we determine which is truth? There is no way that any of us individually can verify these claims until we have actually gone through a few occult initiations. There is a quote in the Mahatma Letters where the Master says that they realise that people cannot research into this and write in an intelligible way about these things until after the third initiation. This was in the context of Mohini Chatterji and Laura Holloway trying to write this book on anthropogenesis, *MAN: FRAGMENTS OF FORGOTTEN HISTORY*.

So, we are in this position: we have these different theories about the globes and the chains, etc. and how do we determine which one we adhere to? If we are going to be honest, we just rely on authority, on belief, right? Sure, it may be a believe that makes rational sense to you, but there is not much, it's not saying much in the context of the theosophical authors. You know, all theosophical teachings are quite rational and internally consistent, and all authors that propose a model, you know, they have their logical and rational justifications. One may say what about intuition?

My intuition tells me that this is the truth.

Sure, but unless we are very arrogant, we have to recognise that there are very intelligent, earnest, intuitive people supporting all the different theories in the theosophical movement. As we know at this point in evolution we are in the process of awakening the intuition. Even though it is right for each individual to stimulate and follow our intuitions, we can't claim that our intuitions are infallible.

So, in practice, ultimately speaking, we simply rely on authority. How many times have you been in a situation where somebody brings up a quote of a teaching that is not known by people there, and people will ask, "who said that?" in order to decide whether to believe or not in what that information is saying, that quote is saying. How many times you can produce a quote without giving the author that wrote that quote, and ask people do you believe or not in this quote? And people may change whether they believe in that or not depending on the signature, the person that said that. So, this is common, and there is nothing wrong with it per se. There is no other way out at this point since we cannot perceive esoteric realities directly. So, I am not really saying that things should not be this way, what I am saying is that we should be aware, and honest and humble and recognise that this is the way, that this is what happens. Because that can lead us into a far healthier relationship with the teachings and with others.

So, since we rely on authority, let us look into this a little deeper. Who is the authority? Who is the person that we say we trust? We can say we trust Blavatsky. There are some people that say theosophy is just what Blavatsky and the Masters said. That's fine. We can have any particular approach, although it is quite an untenable position if you are going to use Blavatsky's own words. I showed in an article that I published in *The Theosophist* called "What is Theosophy?" with all quotes from HPB that it is not really possible to say that what HPB wrote is true Theosophy: she didn't agree with that; and that only that is Theosophy.

But most Theosophists don't stop with HPB; they also rely on later teachers that belong to their tradition. And here things get more complicated. Coming back to the previous example, one could say "Well, Blavatsky didn't talk about twelve globes,

she only talked about seven, so that is a theosophical teaching and the theosophical teaching about the twelve globes is pseudo-theosophy.

Or another person could say “well, HPB said that Mars and Mercury are not part of the Earth chain, that is Theosophy, and those who say that they do belong is pseudo-theosophy.”

But then when we are part of the tradition that says something that is different from theosophy, from what Blavatsky said, we don't say that that it is pseudo-theosophy. Then, in this case, it is not pseudo-theosophy, it is just that our favourite author is expanding on the teachings, and talking about esoteric teachings that HPB could not talk at the time. But when other authors belonging to other traditions do that, then in that case, yes, it is pseudo-theosophy. So you see this is a double standard that is not based on anything but our trust in authority.

So, I think it is very important to keep this in mind, especially when we are coming to details of the esoteric philosophy. Because we have to keep in mind that most theosophical authors agree in all of the basic theosophical subjects: of unity, karma, evolution, reincarnation, service, etc.

Now I'm not saying that this means that we should study all authors, like all authors, etc.. I think there is a place for preferences. Some of us may be attracted to certain subjects, to certain approaches, some people love Blavatsky's very abstract and complex way of presenting metaphysics, other people are not so inclined to that. They may not like metaphysics so much, they may like more the application of the teachings, or they may like a presentation that is more intellectually consistent, or they ... you know, we are all different. Some people may like certain style of writing, some other people may not like that style. For some people a certain style may feel arrogant, or condescending, for other people it may feel in a different way. So, personal preferences are perfectly fine; we as personalities are limited, and therefore we are going to resonate more with some aspects of the teachings or authors than with others. And that is fine; there is diversity. Unity, is not, as we all know, the erasing of diversity, diversity enriches the unity. Because through the different presentations we can find the one that is

more useful to our particular personality. Now what we have to be careful is to say that those things which ring true to us, those approaches that are more useful to us are therefore absolute truths; approaches that are absolutely right; and that everybody else should follow those; and whoever is not following those they are following a wrong path.

See? This seems quite rational, doesn't it? But then we many times fall into these kinds of attitudes. And the same with different organisations. It is not that we should merge all theosophical organisations into one. That is not really necessary, because again diversity is good. There are some organisations that are more focussed on a particular set of subjects, or a particular set of authors, and there are some people who feel much helped by that approach where there is a certain structure, there is a certain direction, there is a certain focus. But then there are some other people who would feel constraint in that situation. There are some people who need to have the freedom to explore in a wider way, not to have certain hints as to what subjects, what authors to study, etc.

So, all our organisations have developed their own personality, their own particular flavour and approach. And it's great that they are there. So that all humanity can be helped and not just those who think and feel just like us. Because my organisation may be perfect for me, and that organisation may be very good for people who are similar to me, but what about all those who are not? Again, there is no one absolute path, as we know.

So, it is fine for different organisations to be there and if we belong to one organisation, it is our duty to help that organisation; because this is the organisation that has helped me in my life and has helped me live in a better way, and understand the world better, etc. So it is natural that out of my theosophical duty is to help this organisation to stay alive, active and to help improve this organisation so that others, who like me can be helped by this approach, can come into this organisation. So, it is perfectly fine. And of course if we are so inclined, we can help more globally.

But I think, and this is the last point, that this is what is really important for us to

keep in mind: to try to generate the sense that we are working for Theosophy globally. What we want is people of humanity to be helped by Theosophy. And all theosophical traditions support the same basic truths: the idea of Unity, Celestial Beings, evolution, Karma, Reincarnation, the spiritual and personal natures, life after death, the path, compassion and service for humanity; there is no conflict in that. The differences are always in details. But humanity needs Theosophy, it doesn't matter in what flavour, in what dressing we are presenting the theosophical teachings. When a person comes to Theosophy through whichever organisation, that is all of our success; it's a success of all of us; it doesn't matter through which organisation. Because there is one more person that is being helped by Theosophy. And we have to trust that there is enough diversity in the world for all our organisations to have something to offer and to be successful in the particular approach that the organisations have chosen. What it is important, I feel, is to start thinking globally: we are all the same, it doesn't matter that these are different organisations, we are all the same trying to do the same thing, that is bringing Theosophy to a world that sorely? [30:33] needs it. I think that the ITC can be a great tool in bringing this sense of unity and this sense of cooperation and there is a lot that can be done in this direction. For those who may be interested, I wrote a little article in Theosophy Forward with some ideas for consideration: "Unity and diversity in the Theosophical Movement," just as I said, some ideas to consider in this very important work of trying to bring a global cooperation in the promotion of Theosophy.

Thank you.

