

# Madame Blavatsky's Original Notes for an Inner Group Meeting

DANIEL H. CALDWELL AND DOSS McDAVID

**I**n a letter to Countess Constance Wachtmeister (dated Jan. 1887 in Ostende, Belgium), Madame H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) writes about her future plans:<sup>1</sup>

After a long conversation with Master [Morya] . . . [e]ither I have to return to India to die this autumn, or I have to form between this and November next a nucleus of true Theosophists, a school of my own . . . with as many mystics as I can get to teach them. I can stop here, or go to England.

Not too long after, several English Theosophists urged Mme Blavatsky to go to London to guide and direct the theosophical work there. During the last few days of April 1887, assisted by Bertram and Archibald Keightley, HPB moved to London. When HPB arrived in London on 1 May, she first settled in a house, called "Maycot". The Blavatsky Lodge was organized within a few weeks of her arrival in London and meetings were held in which HPB was the central figure giving out more theosophical teachings. In early September 1887, HPB

moved to a house at 17 Lansdowne Road in the Holland Park area of London and continued with her many theosophical activities there. From the latter part of 1887 into 1888, HPB continued steadily to write her great work, *The Secret Doctrine*, which was finally completed and published in two large volumes in the fall of 1888.

On 9 October 1888, at HPB's request, Colonel Henry S. Olcott, President of the Theosophical Society, chartered HPB's Esoteric Section (or School) for the deeper study of the esoteric philosophy by dedicated students. During 1889, HPB, as Head of the Esoteric School, wrote and privately issued three esoteric instructions which were mailed to members of the Esoteric School throughout the world.

On 10 May 1889, Annie Besant joined the Theosophical Society (TS). Then in August of the same year, Mrs Besant put her property at 19 Avenue Road, in the St John's Wood area of London, into trust as the future headquarters for the British Section of the TS. Plans were made to

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enlarge Mrs Besant's house for the new headquarters.

In a letter dated 24 March 1890, HPB tells her friends Madame Camille Lemaitre and her husband:<sup>2</sup>

Did you know that we are building a Headquarters for the British TS in London [at 19 Avenue Road]? There we are going to have an Occult Room and a pronaos where I will teach to the elect [of my esoteric school] that which I do not dare to entrust to the mails.

These words by HPB are the earliest known indication of her intentions and plans to form such an Inner Group once she moves to Avenue Road. Then on 3 July 1890, Mrs Besant's house at 19 Avenue Road was inaugurated as the new center of theosophical work, serving as the British headquarters of the TS and as HPB's residence.

Having settled down at the new headquarters, HPB lost no time in implementing her plan to have an inner group within the Esoteric School. At HPB's direction, Annie Besant and G. R. S. Mead wrote a letter dated 19 August 1890 to selected Esoteric School members inviting them to join the newly established Inner Group.<sup>3</sup> Then in September 1890, HPB announced the formation of this Inner Group to the general membership of the Esoteric Section:<sup>4</sup>

In consequence of the different rates of progress of members, it has been found necessary to form an inner circle of Esotericists, who are deemed to have progressed sufficiently to receive more

advanced teaching than those of the outer circle, and who are accordingly pledged to secrecy even as regards other members of the E.S. as well as conforming to a stricter mode of life.

The names of those in the inner circle will remain unknown to those in the outer . . .

It will always be possible for those in the outer circle to become members of the inner, but this will depend entirely on their own progress and merits.

Alice Leighton Cleather, a member of the Inner Group, gives the most detailed account of this inner circle of HPB's students. Mrs Cleather writes:<sup>5</sup>

The Inner Group was formed [in August 1890 by HPB], and held its weekly meetings at 19, Avenue Road, in a room which had been specially built for it, leading out of HPB's bedroom; into it no one but herself and her twelve pupils ever entered. We had each our own place, and our own chair; and HPB sat with her six men pupils on her right, and the six women on her left-hand side, in semi-circular formation, during our instructions.

Mrs Cleather gives the names of these twelve members of the Inner Group:

- [1] Countess Constance Wachtmeister [C.W.]
- [2] Isabel Cooper-Oakley [I.C.-O.]
- [3] Laura Cooper [L.M.C.]
- [4] Emily Kislingbury [E.K.]
- [5] Annie Besant [(A.B.)]
- [6] Alice Leighton Cleather [(A.L.C.)]
- [7] Dr Archibald Keightley [A.K.]

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- [8] Herbert Coryn [H.A.W.C.]
- [9] Claude Falls Wright [C.F.W.]
- [10] G. R. S. Mead [G.R.S.M.]
- [11] E. T. Sturdy [E.T.S.]
- [12] Walter Old [W.R.O.]

There were twenty "regular" meetings of the Inner Group at which HPB gave instructions. All these meetings were held on Wednesday evenings. The first meeting was held on 20 August 1890 and the last meeting on 22 April 1891. Soon after this latter meeting, HPB became ill and died on 8 May.

Mrs Cleather informs us that "The I. G. [Inner Group] Teachings were given orally by HPB at its meetings . . ."6 The procedure for the Inner Group meetings seems to have been somewhat as follows:

- 1) Each of the members was asked to write down relevant questions and submit them to HPB prior to the upcoming meeting.
- 2) HPB made written notes of her responses which were to become the basis for discussion at the next meeting.
- 3) According to Mrs Besant, HPB's answers and comments at the meeting were "carefully written down by the students at the time, one of the number reporting it in shorthand".
- 4) Mrs Besant goes on to say: "All the notes thus taken were compared, and a fair copy was made by the two Secretaries. . . . This copy was again checked by questioning HPB on any point that seemed obscure."7

5) After the compilation was approved by HPB, Mrs Besant and Mr Mead recorded the final results as the official minutes of that meeting.

Thanks to the discovery of a set of notebooks in HPB's handwriting at the international headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Chennai, India we now have access to HPB's original notes made in preparation for the upcoming Inner Group meeting of 7 January 1891. In the following pages we present a verbatim transcription of these hand-written notes followed by the official minutes for the 7 Jan. 1891 meeting. The materials are presented in their original form with no attempt being made to add diacritical markings or to utilize modern conventions for Sanskrit transcription. Passages crossed out by HPB have been retained as they appear in the original.

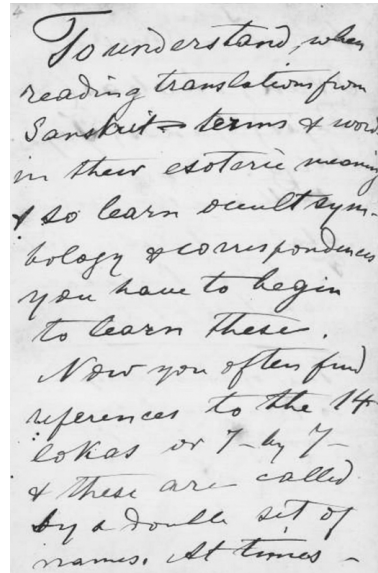


Figure 1. Page 1 of the Inner Group notes in HPB's Notebook No. 7

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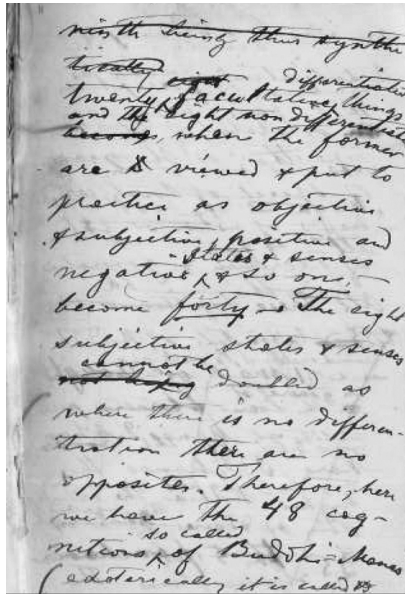


Figure 2. Page 15 of the Inner Group notes in HPB's Notebook No. 7

**HPB Notebook 7**

**[Page 1]**

To understand when reading translations from Sanskrit terms and words in their esoteric meaning and so learn occult symbology and correspondences you have to begin to learn these.

Now you often find references to the 14 lokas or 7-by 7- and these are called by a double set of names. At times --

**[Page 2]**

Exoteric

Bhur loka, Bhuvar-loka, Swar-loka, Mahar loka, Jana-loka, Tapar-loka; Satya loka,

The Vedanta & Sankhya schools call these -- Brahma loka, Pitri Loka, Soma-loka, Indra loka, Gandharva loka; Rakshasa-loka, Yaksha loka: & add for a blind an 8th Pisacha loka, (or ghost-world-Kama loka).

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Esoteric

Bhuh, Bhuva, Svah, Mahar (or Tajas) Janar, Tapas, Satya.

The other classification.

Atala, Vitala, Sutala

Talatala, Rasatala,

Mahatala, Patala,

These of course correspond

To Brahma, Pitri,

Moon, etc etc

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But each and all correspond esoterically to both the Cosmic or Dhyan chohan and human states of consciousness. To appreciate this well, you have to understand the meaning of these.

Tala means "place"

1 Therefore Atala, is "no place".

2 Vitala, "vi" means a betterment, a change for better thus a better place.

3 Sutala from Su "good" good place

4 Talatala is — "place no place also called Karatala from Kara

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hand, a place of touch — kamic in its nature (?) (4?)

5 Rasatala — taste "Rasa" taste place or no taste place

6 Maha — Tala — great or including all place

7 Patala — under-world (Antipodes)

Now, how do they correspond? Thus. Each of these lokas or places or worlds correspond to and is transformed into (exoterically five) and esoterically seven

(1)Tanmatras which are the five and the seven

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senses of the outer and of the inner man, or of the material and the spiritual natures.

Note That which is Tanmatra in man and this world is called Tattwa in the subjective Kosmos.

(2) five and seven Bhuta or Elements.

(3) Five and Seven Gnanendriyas organs of sensation

(4) its 5 and 7 Karmandriya (or organs of action)

Let us divide and analyze these

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The Seven lokas

(7 positive, 7 negative.)

While the first — the Bhur, Bhuvah, Svah, Tejas, Janas, Tapas and Satyan are blinds. The 2nd series i.e. Atala, Vitala etc. relate to the states of the Dhyan Chohans or the Angelic Hierarchies hence to those of man.

1. Atala (Atmic state or locality, purely auric non substantial beings) meaning no state and no place.

Dhyani Buddhas, relates on earth but to the state of paraSamadhi or Dhar-makaya state no progress possible there

2. Vitala change for something better or more definite relates celestial Buddhas or Bodhisatva to Samadhi and Bhuddic state in man.

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Now come the five terrestrially corresponding

3. Sutala. Good place or state corresponds with H. Manas. Thus with sound or sabda (logos) The Manushi Buddha

state or the third degree of Samadhi (which is septenary.) Kumaras, Agnishwattas etc.

4. Talatala (a blind) the true name Karatala, for it corresponds with touch Sparsa. A Hierarchy of ethereal Semi objective (under condition) Dhyan Chohans, of the astral nature, of manasa manas or the lower before it is mixed with Kama. They are called Sparsa devas or touch-having. — affinity contact

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(See the names of the Tanmatras) from the sense of touch (Sparsa)

5. Rasatala, a state of the Hierarchy of the Rupadevas or "Sight devas, having sight or rupa on their planes, corresponds to Kama manasic Entities Highest Elementals Sylphs and Undins. Artificial state of consciousness such as produced by mesmerism hypnotism etc

6 Mahatala - Rasic taste or Ghanda state — so called from taste. It includes a state of consciousness embracing all the 5 senses and the sensations

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of life or living being. Correspond to Kama and life principles, in man and is the state of Salamanders and Gnomes so called in nature

7. The Gandha state and sense. Patala the Undines or the antipodes the Upadhi or antipodes of the highest state. Myalba. This state is that of irrational animals having no other feeling but that of self-preservation and gratification of the senses and of intensely selfish human beings.

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whether in sleep or awakened state.

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This is why Narada is said to have visited Patala (having been cursed to be reborn) and stated that life therein for those who had never left their birthplace was that of the greatest enjoyment. Earthly state the earth being the principle of smell — gandha.

Now see how this classification corresponds to the Tanmatras or senses — which are

1 The Alayic or Atmic or Auric sense (entirely subjective)

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1. A sense and state of full potentiality  
2. The Buddhist State, the sense of being one with the universe (Subjective)

3. The Sabda — state sound or Sabdic sense (hearing)

4. Sparsic state — akasic contact, affinity) or Sparsa sense of touch.

5. Rupic state i.e. feeling oneself a body and perceiving it thus from rupa, sight.

6. Rasic from rasa (taste)

7. The lowest and most material Gandha smell. The sense of all animals.

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All these Kosmic and anthropogian states and senses, correspond of course with the our organs of sensations, which are called the ———

1. Gnanendriyas or organs of receiving Knowledge through direct contact, sight, or hearing, etc. i.e. through the Sarira (body) Netra : eyes, Vach, tongue, nose, and so on.

2. The Karmandriya (or organs of action) which

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are also 5 objectively and 2 subjectively. Such as Vach, pani, pada, payu, upastha; or the organs of speech, of touch, through hands, of motion, or feet of excretion and generation. All these together with the Body adjuncts of ~~Buddhi which enable it, to (words illegible) — ie (1) Man or thought in general of the lower, personality; or Manas, (2) Ahankara (1) (3) Manas the higher, Kama the collectivity of desires these regarded as four on the subjective; and four on the objective planes the~~

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~~ninth being thus synthetically~~ twenty ~~eight~~ facultative differentiated things and the eight non differentiated becomes when the former are viewed and put to practice as objective and subjective, positive and negative states and senses, and so on, become forty . The eight subjective states and senses cannot be doubled as where there is no differentiation there are no opposites. Therefore, here we have the 48 cognitions so called of Buddhi Manas (exoterically it is called

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Buddhi simply. These cognitions or perceptions or states of consciousness become with Maya the root of all — 49.

And these are the 49 states of consciousness the 49 Fires etc. etc. The tanmatras or the “transcendental types” are in the exoteric philosophy 25. The 5 panchama

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habhuta.

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The following set of minutes<sup>8</sup> was transcribed from the handwritten copy of the minute book that was transmitted to W. Q. Judge by Alice Cleather.

**January 7, 1891**

**Present: A.B., C.W., I.C.-O., L.M.C., A.L.C., W.R.O., C.F.W., G.R.S.M., E.T.S., H.A.W.C., E.K.**

(Neither a dugpa, nor anyone else, can read your thoughts unless they are on his own plane. Association — of ideas — is owing to the Law of Harmony.)

H.P.B. began by saying that we ought to know the correct meaning of the Sanscrit terms used in Occultism, & should learn the Occult symbology. To begin with, we had better learn the correct esoteric classification & names of the fourteen (seven, &c., &c.) & seven (sapta) Lokas found in the exoteric texts. These were given in a very confused manner, & were full of blinks.

**Lokas:** To illustrate this, three classifications were given:-

(1) The general exoteric orthodox and Tantric category:- nothing but a list of blinks:-

Bhur	Loka	
Bhuva	"	
Swar	"	(second seven reflected)
Mahar	"	
Jana	"	
Tapar	"	
Satya	"	(the Highest)

(2) The Sankhya, & of some Vedantins:-  
Brahma Loka

Pitri	Loka
Soma	"
Indra	"
Gandharva	"
Rakshasa	"
Yaksha	"
Pisacha	" (of ghosts, "Kamaloka")

(3) The Vedantin, the nearest approach to the Esoteric:-

1. Atala
2. Vi-tala
3. Su-tala
4. Tala-tala (Kara-Tala)
5. Rasa-tala
6. Maha-tala
7. Pa-tala

Each & all correspond esoterically both to the Kosmic & Dhyani-Chohanian Hierarchies, & to the human states of consciousness & their (49) subdivisions. To appreciate this, the meanings of the terms used in the Vedantic classification must be first understood.

**Tala means Place, &c:-**

1. A-tala — no place.
2. Vi-tala — Some change for the better; i.e. better for matter, in that more matter enters into it; or, in other words, it becomes more differentiated. This is an ancient occult term.
3. Su-tala — good, excellent, place.
4. Kara-tala — something that can be grasped & touched (from kara - hand); i.e. the state where matter becomes tangible.
5. Rasa-tala — "place of taste"; a place you can sense with one of the organs of sense.
6. Maha-tala — exoterically "great

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place”, but esoterically a place including all others, subjectively & potentially, including all preceding it.

7. Pa-tala — something under the feet (from Pada foot); the upadhi or basis of anything, antipodes, America, &c.

Pancha maha Bhutas, Tattwas, &c: (cf. S.D. i 572, note; ii 102, 372)

Each of these Lokas, places, worlds, states, &c, corresponds with & is transformed into five (exoterically) & seven (esoterically) states or Tatwas, for which there are no definite names. These in the four main divisions, cited below, make up the 49 Fires.

5 & 7 Tanmātras, outer & inner senses.

5 & 7 Bhutas, or elements.

5 & 7 Gnyanendriyas, organs of sensation.

5 & 7 Karmendriyas, organs of action.

These correspond in general to states of consciousness, to the Hierarchies of Dhyān Chohans, &c. These five Tatwas transform themselves into the world of illusion.

**Lokas:** The 14 Lokas are made up of 7 with 7 reflections:- above, below — within, without — subjective, objective — pure, impure — positive, negative — &c, &c.

Explanation of the States of Consciousness corresponding to the Vedantic classification of Lokas:-

**1: Atala:** the atmic, or Auric, state or locality; it emanates directly from the Absoluteness, & is the first something in the Universe. Its correspondence is the

Hierarchy of non-substantial primordial beings; in a place which (to us) is no place; & a state which (to us) is no state. This Hierarchy contains the primordial plane, all that was, is, & will be; from the beginning to the end of the Maha-Manvantara, all is there. This statement should not, however, be taken to imply fatality; the latter is contrary to all the teachings of Occultism.

**Dhyani Buddhas:** These are the Hierarchies of Dhyani-Buddhas. Their state is that of Para-Samadhi, of the Dharmakaya, a state where no progress is possible; the Entities there may be said to be crystallized in purity, goodness, & homogeneity.

**2. Vitala:** Here are the Hierarchies of the Celestial Buddhas, or Bodhisattvas, who are said to emanate from the seven Dhyani Buddhas.

It is related on earth to Samadhi, to the Buddhist consciousness in man. No adept, save one, can be higher than this & live; if he passes into the Atmic, or Dharmakaya state (Alaya), he can return to earth no more. These two states are purely hyper-metaphysical.

**3. Sutala:** A differentiated state, corresponding on earth with the H. Manas, & therefore with Sabda (Sound), the Logos, our H.Ego; and also to the Manushi Buddha state, like that of Gautama on earth.

This is the third state of Samadhi (which is septenary). Here belong the Hierarchies of the Kumāras, Agnishwattas, &c.

**4. Kara-tala:** Corresponds with Sparsa (“touch”), & to the Hierarchies of ethereal, semi-objective Dhyān Chohans of the



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astral nature of the Manasa-Manas, or the pure ray of Manas that is the L.Manas before it is mixed with Kama (as in the young child). They are called Sparsa Devas, the Devas endowed with "touch."

(These Hierarchies of Devas are progressive: the first has one sense, the second two, & so on to seven. Each containing all the senses potentially, but not yet developed. Sparsa would be better rendered by "affinity," "contact.")

**5. Rasatala:** or Rupatala, corresponds to the Hierarchies of Rupa, or "sight"-Devas, possessed of three senses (sight, hearing & touch). These are Kama-Manasic entities, & the highest Elementals. With the Rosicrucians they were the Sylphs & Undines. It corresponds on earth to an artificial state of consciousness, such as that produced by hypnotism & drugs (morphine, &).

**6. Maha-tala:** Corresponds to the Hierarchies of Rasa, or "taste" Devas, & includes a state of consciousness embracing the lower five senses, & emanations of life & being. It corresponds to Kama & Prana in man, & to Salamanders & Gnomes in nature.

**7. Patala:** Corresponds to the Hierarchies of Ghanda, or "smell"-Devas; the underworld or antipodes Myalba. The sphere of irrational animals, having no feeling save that of self-preservation & gratification of senses; & also of intensely selfish human beings, waking or sleeping. This is why Narada is said to have visited Patala, when he was cursed to be reborn; he reported that life there was very

pleasant for those "who had never left their birthplace," they were very happy. It is the earthly state, & corresponds to the sense of smell. Here are also animal dugpas, elementals of animals, & nature-spirits.

### Further explanation of the same Classification:-

1. Auric, atmic, alayic sense, or state; one of full potentiality, but not of activity.
2. Buddhic, the sense of being one with the Universe; the impossibility of imagining itself apart from it. (It was asked why the term Alayic was here given to the Atmic, & not to the Buddhic state? Ans:- These classifications are not hard & fast divisions. A term may change places according as the classification is exoteric, esoteric, or practical. For the Inner Group the effort should be to bring all things down to states of consciousness. Buddhi is one & indivisible really; it is a feeling within, absolutely inexpressible in words. All cataloging is useless to explain it.)
3. Sabdic, sense of hearing.
4. Sparsic, sense of touch.
5. Ropic, the state of feeling oneself a body, & perceiving it (Rupa — form).
6. Rasic, sense of taste.
7. Ghandic, sense of smell.

All the Kosmic & anthropic (man) states & senses correspond with our organs of sensation, Gnyanendriyas, rudiments or organs for receiving knowledge through direct contact, sight, &c. These are the faculties of Sarira, through Netra — eyes, nose, speech, &c. & also with the

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organs of action, Karmendriyas, hands, feet, &c.

Exoterically these are five sets of five, giving 25. Of these twenty are facultative and five Buddhist. Exoterically Buddhi is said to perceive; esoterically it obtains perception only through the H. Manas.

Each of these twenty is either positive or negative, thus making forty in all.

There are two subjective states answering to the four sets of five, hence 8 in all. These being subjective cannot be doubled. Thus we have  $40 + 8 = 48$  "cognitions of Buddhi". These with Maya, which includes them all, = 49.

(Once you have reached the cognition of Maya, you are an Adept.)

#### Conclusion

The notes and minutes given above make it possible to trace the process by which HPB's spontaneous responses to questions submitted by her private students were transformed into a final set of teachings for theosophical posterity. Presumably, the same process was followed for all twenty meetings.

Acknowledgement: Thanks to Michael Conlin and Michele Sender for their hours of hard work in deciphering HPB's hand-written notes. ✧

#### Endnotes

1. Constance Wachtmeister, *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky and The Secret Doctrine*, London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1893, pp. 66-67; Quest Book reprint, Wheaton, Illinois: The Theosophical Publishing House (TPH), 1976, p. 54.
2. Charles Blech, *Contribution A l'Histoire de la Societe Theosophique en France*, Paris: Editions Adyar, 1933, p. 199. English translation by Boris de Zirkoff.
3. H. P. Blavatsky, *The Esoteric Papers of Madame Blavatsky*, Compiled by Daniel H. Caldwell, Whitefish, Montana, USA: Kessinger Publishing, 2004, pp. 240-241.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 296-297.
5. Alice Leighton Cleather, *H. P. Blavatsky as I Knew Her*, Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1923, p. 24.
6. *Ibid.*, *H. P. Blavatsky: A Great Betrayal*, Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1922, p. 83.
7. H. P. Blavatsky, *Collected Writings*, Wheaton, Illinois: TPH, 1982, Vol. XII, p. 655.
8. *Ibid.*, *The Esoteric Papers of Madame Blavatsky*, Compiled by Daniel H. Caldwell, Whitefish, Montana, USA: Kessinger Publishing, 2004, pp. 510-514.

**On the elevation of woman the world's redemption and salvation hinge. And not till woman bursts the bonds of her sexual slavery to which she has ever been subjected will the world obtain an inkling of what she really is and of her proper place in the economy of Nature.**

Mahatma Koot Hoomi

From *Daily Meditations*, compiled by Katherine A. Beechey