

ANNIE BESANT

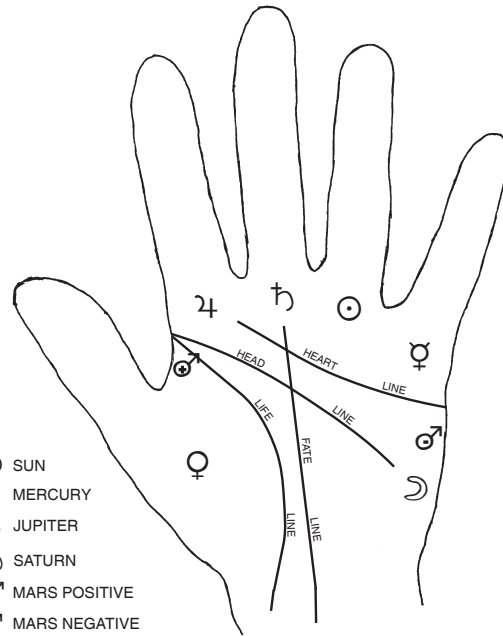
HER PASSIONS AND HER RELATIONSHIPS - PART II

Ernest Pelletier

As the hand is an extension of the mind, it is only logical that whatever motivated Annie Besant would be impressed in her hands.⁵⁴ Accordingly, one who is proficient in palm reading can, with a sufficient print of the hand if not the actual hand itself, determine with remarkable accuracy one's tendencies and even the motivational forces at that time. The hand changes as the mind changes but one's natural tendencies are generally imprinted on the hand at birth to the degree that reflects one's character carried over from prior incarnations.⁵⁵

From the shape of the hand, the fingers, the mounts, the lines in the palm and the intersecting lines, one properly trained can determine to a greater or lesser degree one's characteristics. Short of having the actual hands at the precise moment for a concise analytical view of the unfoldment of events, a hand frozen in time, that is, a good quality hand print taken at the time of critical issues in the life of that individual, is used for readings. A well-trained palmist can determine events happening or about to happen in one's life, even secrets being kept from loved ones.

Both Madame Blavatsky and William Q. Judge have been known to utilize the services of palmists. As recounted in his book, *Mysteries and Romances of the World's Greatest Occultists*, Cheiro wrote that it was near the end of March 1889 when Madame Blavatsky invited him to visit her on two occasions. She apparently requested Cheiro to read her palm and advise her "how much longer I must wait for my release",⁵⁶ adding "I want to have some of my own theories confirmed".⁵⁷ Following the reading Madame Blavatsky was quoted as saying "Thank you, Cheiro, you have told me exactly what I want to know. . . . Your warning will do me good, for I will now put my papers in order and prepare in earnest for the short time that lies before me."⁵⁸



- ☉ SUN
- ☿ MERCURY
- ♃ JUPITER
- ♄ SATURN
- ♂ MARS POSITIVE
- ♁ MARS NEGATIVE
- ♀ VENUS
- ☾ MOON

THE MAP OF THE HAND

DESCRIPTION OF THE FINGERS; four in number, each divided into three Phalanges: the first or nail one; the second; and the third connecting to the Hand Proper. The Thumb; composed of two phalanges only, as the lower portion of the thumb, attached to the wrist, is also one of the five metacarpal bones forming the Palm proper, and not a phalanx. (*The Study of Palmistry for Professional Purposes by Comte C. de Saint-Germain, A.B., LL. M.*)

Before Mme. Blavatsky's death she made arrangements for Cheiro to meet with a newcomer to the ranks of the Theosophical Society, Mrs. Annie Besant. In the book, *Palmistry The Language of The Hand* by Cheiro the Palmist, one of the prints included is that of Annie Besant's right hand. It is dated July 22nd, 1894. Unfortunately Cheiro did not provide a reading of Annie Besant's palm at the time the imprint was taken, although he did provide some remarks about her much later.

⁵⁴ Count Louis Hamon better known as "Cheiro" the noted palmist at the turn of the last century, stated: "As is the mind, so is the form' is the stand-point from which I defend a legitimate and scientific study of the hand." From: "The Mind and the Hand", *Metaphysical Magazine*, September 1895, p.177.

⁵⁵ Character is defined here as the spiritual qualities of the skandhas carried over from previous births which follow the Pilgrim or Spiritual Monad from incarnation to incarnation and which give that spiritual entity its attributes or tools to work with in this life.

⁵⁶ *Mysteries and Romances of the World's Greatest Occultists*, by Cheiro (Count Louis Hamon), London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1935) p.176.

⁵⁷ *Mysteries and Romances of the World's Greatest Occultists*, by Cheiro p.177.

⁵⁸ *Mysteries and Romances of the World's Greatest Occultists*, by Cheiro p.178.

Edmonton is home to Dr. Art Basu,⁵⁹ a professional astrologer and palmist. Dr. Basu's family has been proficient in these ancient arts for many generations, and he has also studied with a Master palmist in India. When I approached him for this task, he told me he did not want to know any details about the subject except the date of birth to determine her age at the time of the hand print.

Dr. Basu's first impression in examining the print was that the fingers were well-proportioned to the size of the palm. He noted that the thumb was smooth, long and uniform indicating a cerebral approach which is methodical and logical. Such a person works with the evidence/information presented, and places each piece neatly in its proper place. Such a person becomes convinced of their position through continuous evolution of thought as ideas are slowly grasped (rather than through sudden enlightenment or inspiration), and can become *extreme* after having come to their logically deduced conclusion. He added that having been convinced of her position by this process this person could muster accompanying strength and energy to work tirelessly for this new-found purpose in life "20 out of 24 hours in a day".

The middle finger (second, or finger of Saturn) depicts career or success as a result of effort. It appeared straight indicating learning, focus, concentration and dedication. All the other fingers lean toward the middle finger. This indicated to him that this person depended on logic and logic alone to form her beliefs. The leaning index finger (finger of Jupiter) depicts personality and indicates her tendency to rely on her logic and learning rather than her charisma to promote her beliefs. The ring (or Sun) finger denotes relations with others and it also leans toward the middle finger indicating that she did not depend on her looks or "feminine charms" but rather entirely on her conviction of the truth of her beliefs. The little finger (Mercury) signifies money and relationships and it, too, leans towards the middle finger indicating that these matters became subservient to her work as well. Dr. Basu summarized Besant's perception of herself with the statement: "I believe I have the truth. I don't need anything else".

Dr. Basu explained that there are three major elements in the palm itself: lines, mounts and signs. He stated that it was difficult to read the mounts from a print and he could not, therefore, provide a thorough reading on these features of the hand, although he

could still give a good reading since the print had been well done.

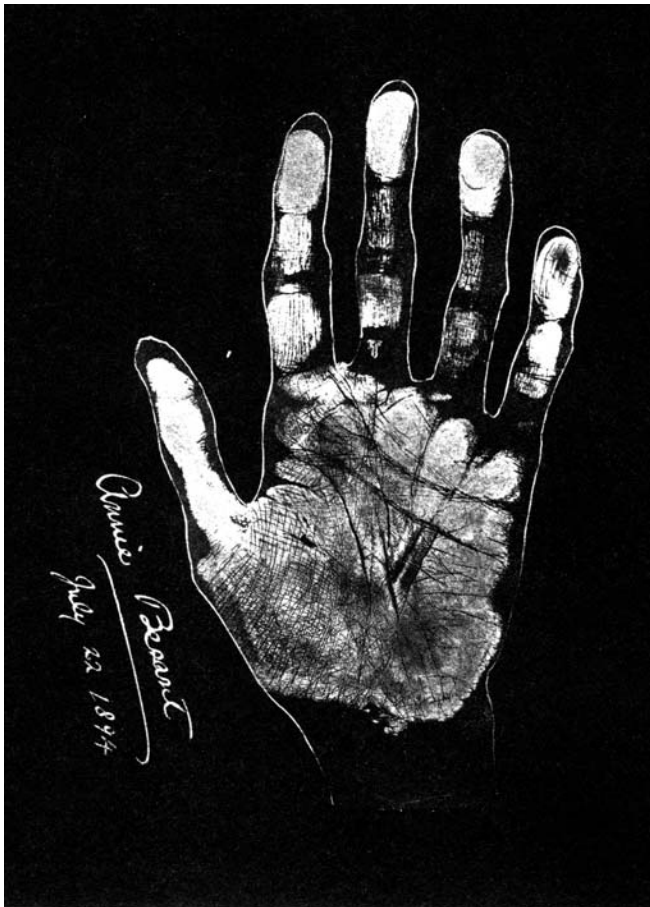
He stated that she had an extremely long head line, indicating that she was learned, intellectual, "sharp", with a huge information load from voracious reading. He noted that it was an "islanded" (that is, a composite) line insinuating that there had been a lot of influences on this woman and that at the time this imprint had been taken, the head line appeared rather "messed up". Noting her date of birth, Dr. Basu stated that even at the age of 47 her personality was not "rooted" and she had been/was being pulled in different directions by strong personalities around her. She was contradictory in that she was learned and intelligent but also had the inherent weakness of allowing people to convince her of things. This resulted in her later getting hurt, as evidenced by the islands. Because of this, her previous conclusions were shattered when the next influential person appeared in her life and she was drawn into something else. Dr. Basu's evaluation not only fits the unidentified lady's appraisal from *Review of Reviews* mentioned earlier, but also provides us with insight to Besant's character.

Besant's heart line was also long, indicating an idealistic nature and therefore one more likely to be disappointed. Islands on her heart line indicate she had been very disappointed in her relationships in the past. She would also have been more attracted to philosophies of action versus theoretical and would have become active with helping people with popular issues of the times. Dr. Basu pointed out a change of direction in the heart line, a rather uncommon feature. The heart line was initially straight but then turned upward indicating she was initially open, welcoming, friendly and approachable but then her level of trust went down more and more, resulting in her keeping her true feelings to herself. Her many frustrations and disappointments earlier in life likely account for this. In one of Mrs. Besant's speeches at Chicago addressing the matter of social reform, she stated:

I who have spent so many years of life in dealing with these problems on the material plane, I who have given so much of time and of thought to the effort to bring some remedy to the social ills of man, I take it to be my duty . . . to bear witness founded upon knowledge that the employment of one hour in spiritual energy for the good of man works a hundred-fold more good than years of labor employed on the material plane.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Dr. Basu holds a Doctorate in Biology and worked in this field in Europe, USA and Canada. He remained a skeptic regarding the validity of palmistry and astrology until crucial experiences convinced him otherwise. Dr. Basu can be contacted by phone 780-448-1295 or through his web site at www.astrology-psyhic.com

⁶⁰ "Theosophy and Modern Social Problems" — *The Theosophical Congress: Report of Proceedings and Documents*, 1893, p.113.



Annie Besant palm print taken July 22, 1894. From *Palmistry The Language of the Hand*.

This is an interesting statement coming from a person who HPB had described as not spiritual in the least. It is also very revealing about her motives and desires in life.

Annie Besant was convinced that her purpose in life was to educate people and to sway them according to whatever she considered the correct course of moral conduct. This kind of philosophy is contrary to what the Masters taught and unacceptable especially for the Theosophical Society. Dogmatism, religious or personal, had never been part of the original theosophical teachings. H.S. Olcott made that point very clear to the participants who represented the Theosophical Society at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions.⁶¹ In addition, some years later she then demanded complete obedience from her followers, as evidenced in 1911 after Mrs. Besant

was elected President of the TS and appointed herself as Outer Head [OH]. Whereas the original Pledge stipulated allegiance to one's Higher Self, she re-wrote the pledge taken by members of the Esoteric Section to then read:

I pledge myself to support before the world the Theosophical Society, and in particular to obey, without cavil or delay, the orders of the Head of the Esoteric Section in all that concerns my relation with the Theosophical movement; to work with her, on the lines she shall lay down, in preparation for the coming of the World-Teacher, and to give what support I can to the Society in money and work.⁶²

When Annie Besant, at the age of forty-one, came in contact with the Theosophical Society she had finally found the podium she desperately needed to promote her beliefs. "Annie Besant wanted to become a famous occultist."⁶³ With the help of her new guru, Chakravarti, and later Charles Webster Leadbeater, she managed to fulfil her *desire to teach*. From 1893 to 1906 Chakravarti was the one who occultly manipulated Besant, although the table later turned.⁶⁴ Leadbeater then became the dominant man who would manipulate and control her for the rest of her life. Dr. Basu clearly identifies these two influences on the mount of Venus in her palm.

Mrs. Besant generally had a lot of lines in her palm, indicating that she was thrown in different directions because of events, that is, being *reactive* versus *proactive*. At the end of the session when the palm was identified, Dr. Basu stated that with these lines Besant had had a lot of obstacles to overcome and it is rather remarkable that she had achieved such fame in spite of this palm. Besant also had islands on her fate line, an indication that she achieved what she did without the benefit of "luck". Dr. Basu added that these islands involve surmounting major obstacles and that fame under these circumstances was practically impossible.

Dr. Basu indicated that it was possible, however, that Besant *perceived* that there were obstacles along the way. He stated that for 95% of the population such obstacles do in fact exist but that for the other 5% the obstacles are in fact simply a strong perception of such on their part. Cheiro mentions that "Mrs. Besant was a reformer and a 'fighter' in every sense

⁶¹ "... it is to be distinctly understood that nothing shall be said or done by any Delegate or Committee of the Society to identify it, as a body, with any special form of religion, creed, sect, or any religious or ethical teacher or leader; our first duty being to affirm and defend its perfect corporate neutrality in these matters." *Lucifer*, July 1893, p.517.

⁶² *The Link*, Privately Issued by the Outer Head of the School, August 1911, p.43.

⁶³ *The Passionate Pilgrim, A life of Annie Besant*, by Gertrude Marvin Williams, (New York: Coward McCann, 1931) p.238.

⁶⁴ In a letter to Mrs. Alice Cleather, dated February 6th, 1922, The Anagarika Dharmapala (of the Maha Bodhi Society, Calcutta) wrote: "[Annie Besant] gets whatever she wants and is in league with politicians. . . . A.B. was duped by Chakravarti and later on she found she could dupe Chakravarti".

of the term. She did not know what fear meant. She courted opposition and in many ways encouraged it.”⁶⁵ Besant believed that obstacles, possibly individuals, were standing in the way of achieving her goals, her passion, and she worked harder than most to achieve them. Dr. Basu believes there is an organic connection between palm and mind; that the mind is a powerful tool and the palm, being rooted in the individual’s “reality”, would have reflected Besant’s *perception* of her circumstances. This, along with Dr. Basu’s earlier statements, show that she was driven by a strong need to believe. After logically deducing and arriving at a conclusion, she was hooked and would go through almost any hardships to promote her current belief. As mentioned earlier, in her own words, Mrs. Besant was well aware that strong convictions delivered via speech could “sway thousands”. This appeared to be one of her uppermost passions, if not her primary goal. Can we merely dismiss this as a passing phase in her life or was this her life’s motto?

On February 18th, 1923, Mrs. Cleather was vacationing in Sydney, Australia. She was a member of HPB’s “Inner Group” and “E.S. Council”. She was interviewed by *Truth* on her history in the T.S. Mrs. Cleather mentioned that she was with Mme. Blavatsky when she first met Annie Besant. She also added that:

So long as Madame Blavatsky was alive, Mrs. Besant was all right because Madame Blavatsky’s was the master mind. However, when Madame Blavatsky died, Mrs. Besant’s ambitious spirit got the upper hand. It was always her ambition to be a world teacher.⁶⁶

Did Theosophists embrace different standards in evaluating Mrs. Besant’s ambitions compared to that of other theosophical leaders? If so, WHY?

There is a major triangle in the middle of the palm indicating a long-lasting interest in the occult. A triangle on the Mount of Saturn indicates an acquired aura of mysticism and mastery of the occult — a later development, most likely through Chakravarti’s efforts. By 1894 Mrs. Besant had apparently developed some psychic tendencies. Dr. Basu identified lines on the Mount of Venus (at the base of the thumb) and specified that two persons exerted a very strong influence over her and that considering the appearance of the triangle, it had to be occult influence. It is interesting to note that in 1891 HPB

specifically stated that Mrs. Besant was “not psychic nor spiritual in the least”. Dr. Basu added that it was impossible to say if the influence was positive or negative from the print and in any case both hands would have had to be examined to potentially determine this. (The left hand indicates divine potential; the right hand, what one makes of it.)

She had a strong line of liver indicating good health and a strong constitution at this point in life although there were signs of vitamin deficiency.

There was a lot of travel indicated in the area of the Moon on the palm. It was impossible to read the relationship lines or the lines relating to children as they are not visible on the print.

In summary, Dr. Basu stated that this person must have been very practical, focused, energetic, hard-working, strong-willed and had the courage of her conviction. Such individuals become the “logic” and “organizer” behind whatever movement they are involved in. They quickly gain the confidence of superiors and become their favorite spokesperson for the organization. Their efficiency and management skills make them the right hand of the Leader.⁶⁷ Unfortunately in this case, it was a philosophical/religious movement where ambition had no place. Also, she allowed others to influence her. She likely had a tendency to let people convince her, she then joined them and later felt betrayed — she believed too easily. Dr. Basu stated that, for example an artist is moved by inspiration; she, however, “did not possess” such inspiration. He did not see signs of spiritual development in her palm. Dr. Basu summarized, in short — “I want to believe and work to make it real; and it becomes the purpose in my life.”

Conclusion

After HPB’s *Secret Doctrine* was published in 1888 the acceptance of Theosophy grew rapidly — lodges were forming, speakers were needed, information on starting new lodges was required. Mr. Judge had been left by himself to activate The American Section. Going from town to town and lecturing night after night started to take its toll on him — he was suffering from Chagres disease.⁶⁸ He welcomed the opportunity from HPB to meet with Mrs. Besant and invited her to attend the American Section Annual Convention in 1891 and to give a few lectures

⁶⁵ *Mysteries and Romances of the World’s Greatest Occultists*, by “Cheiro” (Count Louis Hamon), London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1935) p.184.

⁶⁶ *The Theosophical Crisis in Australia, The Story of the Breakup of the Theosophical Society in Sydney from 1913 until 1923*. John Cooper’s 1986 thesis for Master of Arts in Religious Studies, p.321 from “Truth”, February 18th, 1923.

⁶⁷ This implies a strong supporting role, with guidance, rather than a leadership one.

⁶⁸ “. . . Chagres fever [is] a malignant type of malarial fever which often leaves a predisposition to tuberculosis in its trail. . . .” *Theosophical Quarterly*, July 1932, p.31.

in various towns and cities. Mme. Blavatsky's March 27th letter seemed quite clear to him. He was to observe Mrs. Besant, first hand, to see how well they could work together.

Mrs. Besant set sail from New York on May 6th to return to England. On May 8th, 1891, Mme. Blavatsky died. The next day Mr. Judge sent a telegram to Avenue Road, HPB's residence, to tell them "Do nothing till I come".⁶⁹ On May 21st, Mr. Judge arrived in London. A Consultative Emergency Council, consisting of the European Advisory Council and the British Section Council, was held in the Lecture Hall at Headquarters, London. Mr. Judge, as Vice-President of the T.S., was in the Chair. Col. Olcott was on his way from Australia. Suddenly the Theosophical Society and the Esoteric Section faced their greatest challenge: Who would carry on The Work? On May 27th, 1891, an E.S. Advisory Council meeting was called by W.Q. Judge and A. Besant.

It appears Mr. Judge found in Mrs. Besant a complementary worker for the TS, based on the results of what happened at the E.S. Council. They took their position at the front of the room where members had gathered. Mrs. Besant described what happened:

I took from William Q. Judge, on the afternoon of May 27th, 1891, certain papers selected from a number of letters in his possession. These I took one by one, read them, folded them up, tied them into a packet, and said I would read them myself to the Council, as they concerned Bro. Judge. I opened this packet myself in the Council meeting, in my place as chairman. I took up the papers one by one and read them (or parts of them) aloud, and on raising one of them saw a piece of paper lying between it and the next that was not there when I tied them together. After reading those remaining I took it up, and found it was a slip bearing some words written in red and signed with .'.s initials and seal. The words were: "W.Q. Judge's plan is right". (Signed) Annie Besant.⁷⁰

"Soon after that Council Meeting of May 27th, 1891, . . . Mrs. Besant sent to Mrs. Ver-Plank (now Mrs. Keightley), in New York, the slip of paper bearing in red the Council message, 'W.Q. Judge's plan is right,' and initialed by Master M." The letter included the above description of events which was "written out in full by Mrs. Besant, and signed." According to Archibald and Julia Keightley, and affirmed in written statements by others present, Mrs. Besant

claimed that no one could have had access to those papers other than herself.⁷¹

Mr. Judge must have been thinking about Mrs. Besant's position in the organization — she was Chief Secretary of the Inner Group of the Esoteric Section — and he must have remembered HPB's March 27th letter to him. However, knowing little of Mrs. Besant's abilities, he must have been concerned; after all, she was a relative newcomer to the Society. She was intelligent and appeared devoted, but had had little experience working with HPB. On the other hand, he had much more experience working with HPB and had written the *Book of Rules* for the Esoteric School of Theosophy (EST). He must have entertained the idea that he would try to work with Mrs. Besant as co-head of the EST. Judge may have expressed this idea or the Masters read his thoughts. Reading a chela's mind would have been acceptable. Agreeing with Judge's plan would account for the message found among Mrs. Besant's papers. From the standpoint of the Masters, they would have accepted Judge's idea — they would not have denied Mrs. Besant her opportunity to be tested.

Mrs. Besant had only joined the TS in May 1889, and all of a sudden she was thrust into great responsibilities. With Judge having returned to America there were few who could watch over her and give her the spiritual guidance and nurturing that HPB had provided. Olcott had virtually nothing to do with the EST and had returned to India.

It was in August 1893, during Mr. Chakravarti's visit, that members started noticing changes in Mrs. Besant. Dr. Archibald Keightley published his observations on his first-hand experiences with Annie Besant and Chakravarti. He wrote:

I was present at a psychic experience of hers. One evening, in my sitting-room at Avenue Road were present Mrs. Besant, Miss Cooper, Miss Stabler, Mrs. Keightley, Messrs. Mead, B. Keightley, Hargrove, James M. Pryse, Professor Chakravarti and myself. Mr. Chakravarti intoned a mantram, made sweeping magnetic passes in the air, then fell into a semi-trance, when a message on "Peace" was given through him apparently by audible telepathy. Mrs. Besant claimed to several, as I heard, and to Mrs. Keightley, Miss Stabler and myself together, that the voice was the Master's, and that she saw his presence. She was the only one who did so. She was not in a trance; and this was a psychic experience. I

⁶⁹ *Isis Very Much Unveiled, Being the Story of the Great Mahatma Hoax*, by Edmund Garrett. (London: Westminster Gazette Office, 1894, Second Edition), pp.27-28.

⁷⁰ *E.S.T. Circular*, by A. Keightley, pp.3-4.

⁷¹ *E.S.T. Circular*, by A. Keightley, pp.3-4.

did not believe in the phenomena as being ought but mediumistic. . . .”⁷²

It becomes apparent that Mrs. Besant’s mind was constantly shifting, influenced by intellectual men, drawn by passion for knowledge which she could impart and her desire to control events. She might have joined the TS with good intentions but her natural tendencies to dominate were strong. In addition, she was so weakened by outside influences that it further impaired her. If she had been guided for a much longer period of time under the tutelage of HPB⁷³ and/or WQJ, who was more diligent in his approach to the philosophy of Theosophy, she might not have generated so many drastic changes, in both the original philosophy and the writings of the Theosophical Society.

Annie Besant was a woman of great talent. Unfortunately, her passions and her relationships were the causes that quickly diverted the direction and purpose of the Theosophical Movement to suit what *she* believed in. The charges laid against WQJ caused division in the Movement from which it has never recovered. Her attacks on Mr. Judge caused him to die of a broken heart and damaged his reputation to the point where in some countries he is not recognized for his contribution as a Co-Founder of the Theosophical Society. The wounds were shrouded but the healing never occurred. What further contributed to the breakdown were Mrs. Besant’s new dispensations, the politics, new (supposedly non-affiliated) organizations, the ceremonies, the garbs she wore, misleading and controlling her membership, and expelling fellow members and Sections who did not comply to her views.

Mrs. Besant’s naïvete on Theosophical/occult matters, combined with her ability to convince the general membership, gained her enough support to do what she wanted, but her actions eventually split the Society into many parts.

One of Mme. Blavatsky’s dearest friends, the Anagarika Dharmapala, who joined the Theosophical Society in January 1884, described what happened to the Theosophical Movement. The Dharmapala traveled with Mr. Chakravarti from India to England, then to America where he participated in the World Parliament of Religions. He lived and traveled

throughout India and Ceylon. In 1888 the Theosophical Society started *The Buddhist*, a new journal at Colombo with C.W. Leadbeater as Editor and the Dharmapala as Manager. In letters he wrote: “Theosophy of C.W.L. and Besant is a travesty of the doctrine taught by H.P.B. . . . [Besant] is clever and managed to do what she willed.”⁷⁴ Also, he wrote the “T.S. has become a political organization and Mrs. Besant engaged in legal disputes spending thousands of rupees in defending immoral persons. . . . She is now absorbed in Indian politics. The T.S. has deteriorated much.”⁷⁵ Again he writes: “Mrs. A.B. I am afraid will eventually destroy the work of H.P.B. and the Masters. The T.S. will become under her management a Christian sect, and bishops, deacons etc. will rule the T.S. Brotherhood will disappear.”⁷⁶ Disgusted with what had happened the Dharmapala left the Theosophical Society in 1905.

Considering the evidence presented, how can we conclude that HPB was wrong? The *dark forces* were motivated from the beginning to destroy the Theosophical Society and its impetus to form a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood. Understanding the history of the Movement, one gathers that Mrs. Besant may have been a pawn, manipulated and in the end simply used to prevent the TS from establishing itself along the original program as outlined by HPB and the Masters. Mrs. Besant was a remarkable woman, especially for the times. Accepting HPB’s statement that Mrs. Besant was “not psychic nor spiritual in the least — all intellect”, explains how Mrs. Besant earned the admiration of a large following based on her intellect and personality. Unfortunately she lacked the wisdom and inner guidance to promulgate the original impulse for the Movement and to carry on the grander purpose for the TS.

Perhaps if the supporters of Adyar at the time had not been mesmerized by Mrs. Besant’s strong intellect, her charisma and her determination to achieve her aspirations; and if the later followers had taken the opportunity to impartially investigate this important period (1888-1896) of the Theosophical history, Universal Brotherhood would have had a better chance to flourish. Now the task, after all these years, to join as one is almost insurmountable but as the Masters assert, we should at least TRY. Perhaps, Phoenix-like, a renewed, dedicated group based on the original impetus is the answer. ☞

⁷² *The Path*, Vol. 10, June 1895, p.99.

⁷³ Letter (*A Voice from India*) from Mrs. Cleather to the editor of *Dawn*, November 1, 1922, p.27, concerning Mrs. Besant’s ‘authority’. She stated: “You all seem to cling to the idea that Annie Besant can be ‘saved.’ If you knew her as well as I do—or rather did—you could cherish no fallacious hopes. It is, I fear, too late—it always *was* ‘too late’ after H.P.B. left us.”

⁷⁴ Letter from The Anagarika Dharmapala, to Mrs. Alice Cleather, March 3, 1922.

⁷⁵ Letter from The Anagarika Dharmapala, to Mrs. Alice Cleather, Aug. 27, 1921.

⁷⁶ Letter of December 3rd, 1925, from Anagarika Dharmapala, *Buddhism in England*, Sep./Oct. 1933, p.83.